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COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

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1. Introduction

This report provides an evaluation of the third iteration of the professional development program, *Fast Tracking the Future*, delivered in 2023/2024 via the Education Knowledge Network and in partnership with Sydney Metro (Transport for NSW) and Western Sydney University. The report also provides a synthesis of the total program (2018-2024).

The Fast Tracking the Future professional development (PD) program was first conceived in 2017 and first delivered in 2018 in response to a call to providers of teacher PD to develop and deliver a program to assist in achieving Sydney Metro's goal of providing robust and credible learning experiences for students who attend schools within a 10km radius of the Sydney Metro lines under construction. The original iteration of the program was to be aimed at students in Sydney's Southwest. The Education Knowledge Network at Western Sydney University developed and delivered the program to three cohorts of teachers throughout 2018. A second iteration was delivered in 2021 and 22 with another three cohorts. During 2023 and 2024 the third and final iteration of the program was delivered.

The initial PD program was designed and delivered by Professor Catherine Attard and Dr Nathan Berger from the Centre for Educational Research within Western Sydney University. With each iteration, the program was refined in response to findings from the research evaluations conducted (Attard & Berger, 2022; Attard et al., 2019). The findings from research evaluations have also been disseminated to local, national, and international audiences (e.g. Attard et al., 2021) highlighting the positive impact of the program on increasing the awareness of the Sydney Metro project, improving student engagement, and increasing teacher capacity to teach using inquiry-based pedagogies.

In this report we provide:

- A brief overview of the current education landscape in NSW schools.
- A description of the professional learning course including its structure and participants.
- An overview of the research methods used to explore the impact of the program on participating teachers and their students.
- An analysis and discussion of the research findings.
- · A list of key achievements for the overall program.



2. Background

The Current Landscape of Education in NSW Schools

The landscape of education in NSW has changed significantly since the first iteration of the Fast Tracking the Future program in 2018. In response to a range of factors that include a shortage of teachers and changes resulting from COVID-19 pandemic, school systems have sought to improve the consistency of teaching quality across all subject areas. The desire for change has also been fueled by published reports from organisations such as the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) (2023a, 2023b), the Centre for Independent Studies (Pincott, 2024), and the Grattan Institute (Hunter et al. 2025; Hunter et al., 2023) that call for a return to more traditional teaching practices in an attempt to lift student achievement. These reports have sparked a pedagogical debate that has resulted in systemic pressures on teachers to engage in more teacherdirected practices that include a heavy emphasis on explicit teaching (for example, NSW Department of Education, 2024) and a shift away from inquiry-based approaches.

Although there is an abundance of research that supports the merits of inquiry-based learning (Abdul Rabu et al., 2023; Sam, 2024), the pressure on teachers to conform to system requirements regardless of their beliefs, school context, and student needs has undoubtedly had some influence on the decision for schools to participate in the *Fast Tracking the Future* professional development program. In response to the current landscape, the professional learning program was adapted to ensure it aligned more closely with the desired pedagogical approaches whilst retaining its integrity as true inquiry-based pedagogy.

Inquiry-based learning: Addressing current pedagogy debates within the PD program

As presented in the two previous reports (Attard & Berger, 2022; Attard et al., 2019), inquiry-based learning practices are underpinned by constructivist approaches that support learning that is active and contextualised, allowing students to build knowledge and understanding. This lies in direct contrast with more traditional, didactic practices that often include direct methods of teaching instruction such as those that are currently being promoted in schools.

Throughout the professional development program inquiry-based learning practice has been presented as a continuum that spans from highly teacher-controlled, to free inquiry where students direct their own learning (Figure 1). While it is a common assumption that inquiry-based learning is always student-led with little teacher input, the professional development program encouraged teachers to consider the model that was best suited to their classroom contexts and provided them with choice as to which model or combination of models they would implement with their students. In this third iteration, special emphasis was placed on the need to ensure students had the knowledge and capability to conduct their inquiries and advice was provided in relation to how and when strategies such as explicit teaching could fit into an inquiry model.

Figure 1: Models of Inquiry

CONTROLLED **STRUCTURED GUIDED FREE** The teacher controls specific Students are provided with High student agency is Students construct their learning activities and the several relative conceptual supported through numerous own question, research a resources students will use questions, unpacking various essential questions, with wide array of resources and to create understanding. resources predetermined students selecting resources customise learning activities. The teacher controls the by the teacher to provide directing their research and The students design assessment learners will valuable context and responses, allowing students their own assessment to complete to demonstrate meaning. The teacher to choose how they will demonstrate their learning. their understanding. controls the assessment demonstrate their learning. process and product.

The following section provides an overview of the professional learning program that includes a summary of changes implemented to address the current challenges followed by participant details and the project timeline.

3. The Professional Learning Program

Program Participants

The professional development program was delivered three times in 2023 and 2024. A range of primary and secondary teachers from government, independent, and Catholic schools participated in the program (Table 1). The 2023-2024 iteration of the program reached 22 schools, 46 teachers, and approximately 1150 students.

Table 1: Participating teachers

Course	School Type	Teachers	Approx. Students				
Course 1	10 Primary	23	575				
(Mid-2023)	2 Secondary	6	150				
Course 2	3 Primary	6	150				
(Early 2024)	1 Secondary	2	50				
Course 3	4 Primary	7	175				
(Late 2024)	2 Secondary	2	50				
TOTAL	22 schools	46 teachers	~1150 students				

Course Structure

Each of the three courses consisted of five sessions in a similar structure to previous courses. The first and last full-day sessions were delivered face-to-face at Western Sydney University's Parramatta City (Cohorts 2 and 3) and Kingswood campuses (Cohort 1). The remaining afternoon sessions were presented online using the Zoom platform. These sessions were recorded to allow access for those who were unable to attend.

The content of each session including adjustments that were made in this iteration is presented below.

Session 1

Introduction to Inquiry Based Learning and the Sydney Metro Project

Participants were introduced to the pedagogy of inquiry-based learning. This content was presented in a more in-depth format than prior iterations to ensure the participants had the skills to develop and teach high-quality inquiry units of work. Participants were then introduced to the Sydney Metro Project by a Sydney Metro representative. The workshop facilitators provided an overview of the activities and expectations of participation in the professional development program including the design and deliver of units of work for potential publication and dissemination. Participants engaged in handson activities such as the construction of a KWL (What I know, what I want to know, what I have learned) chart (Figure 2) to assist them in developing a strong understanding of inquiry-

I think inquiry-based is essentially paramount because essentially in teaching you have two main jobs, which is one, teach the syllabus but also create citizens. (Secondary teacher)

based learning pedagogy, student engagement and strategies for successful inquiry. The participants also had an opportunity to begin brainstorming ideas for their units of work.

Session 2

Developing a Unit of Work using an Inquiry Approach – Ask the Experts Session

Prior to this session, participants were asked to submit questions about the Sydney Metro project that may have arisen following the introductory session. It was anticipated that questions would be related to the curriculum area to be covered within units of work, hence submission prior to this session would ensure Sydney Metro personnel were able to respond and invite appropriate experts to the session. During the session participants had opportunities to ask further questions and seek clarification where required.

Session 3

Designing a Unit of Work using an Inquiry Approach – Promoting Critical and Creative Thinking, Aligning with Curriculum and Embedding Technology

Participants were provided with a brief template to share their progress and receive peer feedback on the draft units of work. Feedback was provided by course facilitators and Sydney Metro representative.

Session 4

Implementing a Unit of Work using an Inquiry Approach – Assessment Strategies and Evidence Gathering

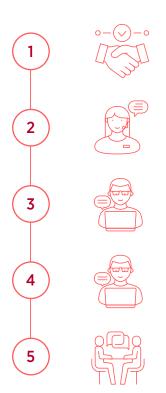
In this session participants shared progress on draft units of work and provide each other with feedback in preparation for implementation.

Session 5

Presentation, Evaluation and finalisation of Units of Work

In this final workshop, participants presented their Units, work samples (including assessments) and other evidence to their peers for feedback and discussion. Participants also had an opportunity to finalise documentation of their units.

Inquiry-based Learning Program Structure



INTRODUCTION & ORIENTATION

Full day, face-to-face session at Western Sydney University campus

EXPERT INPUT SESSION

After-school zoom session

UNIT DESIGN CHECK-IN

After-school zoom session

UNIT DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION CHECK-IN

After-school zoom session

SHARING & REFLECTING ON SUCCESS SESSION

Full day, face-to-face session at Western Sydney University campus



Figure 2: Participants' KWL chart



Course Mentors

A new element introduced in this iteration of the program was the introduction of mentors. The mentors were past participants of the program, and they were employed to assist participants in the development and implementation of their units of work. Two mentors were employed for Course 1 (one primary and one secondary), and one secondary mentor employed to support participants in Course 3.

We worked in groups and we got to choose one person we wanted to work with, but then the teacher chose another partner, someone that we wouldn't normally work with. And I feel like that increased the way we would look at our other classmates and peers and that increased the teamwork that we had between each other. We got to learn more about each other because normally it's just a friend group with a friend group and we don't normally communicate. So that helped a lot of communication, which does impact a lot in the future. If you're very social, you learn a lot more. (Primary student)

Project Timeline

The project timeline was extended by 12 months to allow appropriate spacing and timing of each course. Previous iterations showed there are optimum times during the school year to run sustained professional development programs (Terms 2 and 3) and the decision was made to spread out the courses to allow participants more time to plan and implement their units of work (see Table 2).

Table 2: Program Timeline

	20	23										
	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
Planning	Resource creation Recruitment Cohort 1 Course site design Ethics & SERAP extension applications									Recruitment of Cohort 2		
Course 1					Cou	rse 1						
Course 2												
Course 3												
Research Evaluation							ata ection					

2024 2025

Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	
	Recruitment of Cohort 3															
	Course 2															
				Course 3												
			ata ection	Data Collection							Data analysis and completion o Final Report					

4. Research Evaluation Design and Methods

Evaluation Participants

The research evaluation drew upon the experiences of three groups: primary and secondary school teachers who participated in the professional learning program, school students who undertook inquiry-based learning guided by the participating teachers, and school principals. Different data gathering methods were used with each participant group to explore their experiences with the professional learning, inquiry-based learning using Sydney Metro as a driving context, and school-industry engagement.

Ethical Procedures

The research was conducted in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2018* and the protocol was approved by the WSU Human Research Ethics Committee (H14097), the NSW Department of Education (SERAP 2020471), and Sydney Catholic Schools (201896). All prospective participants were provided with a plain language information sheet about the research. The research was conducted with participants who gave informed consent to participate.

Data Sources

Data informing this evaluation were drawn from the following sources:

- Semi-structured individual or group interviews with teachers
- · Semi-structured interviews with school principals
- Student focus groups
- Classroom observations

Teacher Interviews

Teachers were invited to participate in an audio-recorded interview during the final day-long session at WSU. The interviews were conducted by the principal researchers. Interviews were conducted individually or in stage or school groups depending on how teachers engaged with the professional learning. Interviews ran for approximately 20 minutes and were professionally transcribed prior to analysis.

A total of 12 teachers were interviewed with representation across primary and secondary, as well as public and Catholic school sectors.

Interview prompts:

- 1. Can you talk about your general experience participating in the professional development program?
- 2. Based on your experiences designing, implementing, and evaluating an inquiry-based unit of work, what are your current perceptions of teaching through an inquiry-based approach?
- 3. What are your perceptions about how an inquiry-based approach facilitates student access to the curriculum?
- 4. Can you talk about the benefits of such an approach for your students?
- 5. Can you talk about whether you believe the program assisted in the development of your skills in relation to inquiry-based learning?
- 6. Were there any unanticipated benefits or outcomes to your participation in the program for you, your colleagues or your students?
- 7. Can you talk about whether other teachers and/or stakeholders were involved in this project?
- 8. Do you have any suggestions for future iterations of the program?

When I told my parents, my dad actually did go to Metro and he told me all about it and how cool it is and how it's way better than a normal train. I also asked my mom if I could go to Metro as well. So then me and Janie, we both went to Metro together. (Primary student)



Student Focus Groups

Each participating school was invited to have students take part in focus group discussions. Three schools consented and teachers were then asked to select a representative sample of students to participate in the focus group. The discussions were held at school following classroom observations. They were audio-recorded and professionally transcribed prior to analysis. The following prompts were used:

- 1. You recently learned about the Sydney Metro project. Can you talk about what you learned?
- 2. Can you talk about the way that you learned?
- 3. Was it different to the way you usually learn? How?
- 4. Can you talk about whether you think learning in this way is effective?
- 5. Would you like to use this way of learning again? Why or why not?
- 6. Can you talk about the things your teacher did to help you in your learning?
- 7. Did you work with any experts from Sydney Metro during your learning? If so, what was that like?
- 8. What impact do you think the Sydney Metro project will have on your community and on your own lives?
- 9. Do you have any feedback to your teacher about your learning or that way that you learned?

Principal Interviews

In this iteration of the program an additional data source was added to provide a better understanding of the impact of the program at a school level. Two school principals agreed to participate in an interview, and were asked the following questions:

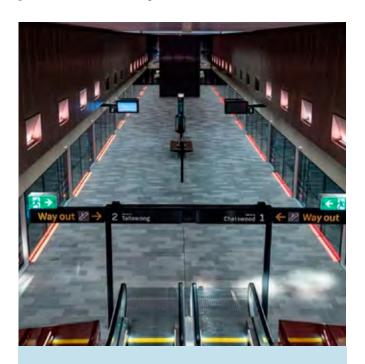
- Recently a member or members of your staff participating in a professional learning program with WSU and Sydney Metro. Can you talk about their involvement and the impact, if any, that it has had on their teaching and student learning?
- What supports, if any, did you provide during the program?
- What are your perceptions of working in partnership with Sydney Metro and their experts, and the University?
- Are there any other comments regarding your school's involvement with the program?

Classroom Observations

Inquiry-based learning lessons were observed in eight classrooms at three different schools. One or both researchers observed the classes, depending on availability. The naturalistic observations involved the researcher/s sitting at the back of the classroom and watching the teachers and students engaging in a lesson from the designed Sydney Metro inquiry unit of work. Notes were taken by the researchers about the pedagogical strategies employed and the observed student engagement.

Data Analysis

Data from teacher and principal interviews, student focus groups and classroom observations were analysed to identify emerging themes in response to the research questions. These themes, along with supporting evidence from the data, are presented in the following section.



Arrival: When we arrived we were greeted by the Metro expert "Robin".

Robin showed us around the Metro. She discussed the positives the Metro has such as saving travel time, all the safety features and booming impacts on local business / employment.

5. Program Results

The following section presents the evaluation results organised in response to the evaluation questions that were also used in past iterations of the program:

- 1. How did the Sydney Metro Phase 3 professional development program influence the implementation of inquiry-based learning?
 - a) What are the perceived outcomes of the professional development on teacher practice?
 - b) What are the observed teaching practices that result from the professional development?
 - c) What are the perceived outcomes of the professional development on student learning and engagement?

As with the previous reports, data from each participant group has been aggregated to protect the anonymity of participants.

Changes to teacher practice

The teachers in this iteration of the program had a range of prior experiences with inquiry-based learning pedagogies prior to participating in the program. Some had not tried it at all, while others had engaged in inquiry on a regular basis. Data gathered from the teachers indicates that each of them gained some new knowledge to influence their practice, regardless of their prior experiences.

As a direct result of the program, teachers adapted their practices and refined their skills in inquiry pedagogies. For example, the teachers at one school developed more robust assessment strategies that they made transparent to students via the use of success criteria. The following statement, highlighting the impact of this change, was made by a student at this school:

So they actually, they gave us a success criteria, which doesn't usually happen in the other grapples [inquiry units] because the other grapples are about other stuff like normal waste and other stuff like that. But this is different. So we have, my teacher teaches me with my class with success criteria, which I like because she gives us ideas of how we're finished or not. We don't know if we're finished. But the success criteria is telling us if we are finished because we check back and we basically tick in our head, tick everything, if we've done everything. And once we've done everything we done.

This adjustment appeared to have improved students' learning experiences and outcomes at this school. Other participants spoke about how some of the interactive activities they engaged with during the professional learning were replicated in their classrooms. For example, during the first session, participants took part in an activity that required them to practice writing inquiry questions on sticky notes. Participants then had to share their questions with the group and stick them on a continuum following feedback from the group. The continuum ranged from low-level (or 'Googleable'), to high level questions that required more than a simple answer. One student spoke about his experience, saying: "We watched videos, and we had to think of questions for it that you can't Google. And we ranked them from easily Googleable and not easy".

Other teachers spoke about how participation in the program gave them an opportunity to revisit curriculum content in a more integrated and practical manner:

...we pulled outcomes from science, from engineering studies, from maths, from arts and from science, and we looked at outcomes that the students had already learned earlier in the year. This was now an opportunity for them to reengage with our outcome, have a second attempt at demonstrating capacity and giving it a more real-world effect.

Students who participated in focus group discussions also reflected on the changes to teacher practices, noting the increase in choice and an increase in expectations from their teachers:

I like how my teacher is actually teaching me. She's giving me a lot of options. She's making the learning. She's not pressuring us saying, if you don't do this, you stay in for recess. She goes like, you do this. She even gave us more time to expand on stuff because she knows that we need to finish. She sees that we are not finished. She wants to help us, my teacher.

Changes to teachers' perceptions of inquirybased learning

Participation in the program influenced teacher practice and their perceptions of inquiry-based learning. This is particularly important given the current pressures for teachers to reduce their practices to more teacher-directed, explicit approaches. It is clear from the data that the teachers recognised the need for a balanced approach to pedagogy, and this was emphasised within the program. Participants recognised that there are many misconceptions about inquiry:

I think sometimes there's a misunderstanding from people from inquiry, and they think that inquiry is just letting kids go loose and without realizing that explicit teach and check in points and feedback is all part of that process. So I think that's sometimes a misunderstanding of what the inquiry process is. (Primary teacher)

The teachers also recognised that inquiry-based learning promotes more than an understanding of curriculum content. Inquiry promotes the development of the soft skills that are articulated in the Australian Curriculum General Capabilities. This reflects findings from our previous reports. The following quote exemplifies the participants' sentiments:

I think there has to always be a balance between explicit teach and inquiry, particularly when you have to be able to build that background knowledge, build the field basically before you allow kids to go and inquire. But inquiry builds a lot of other skills. That collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, communication, all of that is built through that inquiry process. So I think that is pivotal for kids to be successful in society, but we even in our process inquiry was embedded throughout the whole thing. (Primary teacher)

The use of the Sydney Metro project as the stimulus for inquiry was also an influence on teachers' perceptions. The real-life context allowed teachers to authentically integrate curriculum areas, and one teacher implied that the opportunities for this were so broad, it risked becoming overwhelming:

The amount of content that any inquiry process taps into is huge to the point that you only focus on your key things. But if you wanted to build stuff in, you could find authentic, genuine connections throughout most of the different syllabus. (Primary teacher)

In addition, the context of Sydney Metro lent itself to being suitable for inquiry for all stages of learning, including young kindergarten students:

I like that the metro topic can be embraced throughout from kindie through to stage three. I wouldn't have thought that many topics would. I thought that if you're doing a stage three inquiry, you are looking at a different sort of topic. And that kindie wouldn't be doing the same thing as you. But it was so interesting to see how it can go across everything because it's something so broad. It's transport. It's something that we all need and use and everyone knows about it. (Primary teacher)

Given the current educational landscape in Australia, it is important to note that although most units incorporated flexibility and choice, teachers still implemented explicit teaching and provided scaffolding to support their students, as illustrated in the following quote:

I think the kids like the student-centred direction of taking ownership and feel more empowered when it's, obviously they still need the scaffolding and the explicit teach and the structure, but it gives them opportunity to delve into their interests. (Primary teacher)

One of the most significant outcomes of implementing the inquiry units was a noticeable increase in student engagement, which positively influenced teachers' perceptions. This, along with the benefits to student learning, will now be examined.

Impact on student learning and engagement

It was evident from the student focus group discussions and lesson observations that the students had increased their knowledge about the Sydney Metro and specific curriculum content. As mentioned, they also improved their soft skills such as collaboration and critical thinking. The students were able to discuss many elements of the Sydney Metro project and along with the impact the project would have on their current and future lives. For example, this Year 6 student said:

...it gives us more income, gives us more tax, gives us more money on top of that when we go to it gives accessibility to people in wheelchairs, anything. And it also gives accessibility to people without obtaining a car, motorcycle or another vehicle to travel. And it's also cheap. One of the most cheapest in the world.

Other students discussed the new skills they learned as a result of their inquiries.

So we've been researching using reliable sources. So reliable websites. And some of the kids went actually to the Sydney Metro and they had an expert about the metros and stuff and we asked him questions and he answered it. And some people are using books from the library to get more information instead of using AI.

It [inquiry] makes us use critical thinking, problem solve, some researchers work with our group and it makes us learn a lot of skills.

The local context of the Sydney Metro was a major influence on student engagement. One teacher noted that it made it easier to 'sell' the inquiry to students:

We spoke about the fact that by the time it's ready, they're probably going to be the age that they might be getting jobs there all around the train station at restaurants or fast food opportunity. So we could really pitch it to them. So they definitely connected to it. It was a real-world example. (Primary teacher)

The flexibility inherent in most forms of inquiry-based learning contributed to increased student engagement. Teachers noted their students' positive responses to having choices in their learning, which enhanced their sense of agency. These choices also enabled students to pursue their interests and supported differentiation to meet the diverse needs within each class.

The depth of student engagement resulting from their work on Sydney Metro was evidenced in the following quotes, which illustrate greater attendance at school and students extending their learning outside the classroom through discussions with family.

And then when I had the parents telling me last night, we had our symposium and the parents were saying, you cannot believe how excited they've been about each of their lessons and how much they love coming for that lesson each week. (Primary teacher)

But the amount of kids that wanted to take their laptop into Lego and Chess Club, which is our social skills program during lunch, and work on their project during lunchtime, even boys that want to play soccer wanted to go and make their websites they wanted to go and work on things. Their level of engagement, which is really high, they openly were choosing. They weren't asked to go and do things in their own time, which was cool. (Primary teacher)

We've noticed that there were more students being involved. We saw our attendance too because they knew that because we did inquiry-based learning for me once a week. So they knew that was the day that we are doing inquiry-based learning and we were working on our projects and I think it was really beneficial. (Primary teacher)

Comments such as those above are a testament to the success of the program. Another import element that contributes to the success of professional learning programs is the support provided by school leaders. Findings from the two interviews conducted will now be explored.



Leaders' perspectives

Interviews with the two school principals revealed a range of supports prior to and during the program of learning. Initially, the teachers required the support of their leaders to attend the program. Although the program did not include a registration fee, participation did require a financial commitment in the form of teacher release to allow the participants to attend the two full-day sessions. Additional time to work on their unit of work was provided to teachers from one of the schools.

Each of the principals interviewed spoke about how the content of the program aligned with their school's pedagogical approaches, and teachers from each of the two schools had already begun to trial an inquiry approach prior to their engagement with the program.

The pedagogical approach of this project is very aligned with our school's pedagogical model. So it was really adding value and sort of going down the same path rather than an add on. And I think it's sort of brought the team together and given them a direction and a really meaningful project to work on. (Principal)

The principals spoke about other ways they supported their teachers through the duration of the program. This included taking part in some of the planning sessions, providing resources and supporting teachers with the dissemination of students' work. At one school this involved an expo where other grades were able to view students' work and hear then present their inquiry findings. At the other school, community members and other students were invited to attend. This same level of support was noted a teacher from another school, who said:

Having the principal come to talk to families yesterday about the projects and having the assistant principals as well. It shows that we are being supported. It was very nice to see and it's something that we want to continue in the future. (Primary teacher)

Overall impact of the professional development program

Overall, the data has revealed that the professional development program had a positive impact on participants and their students. The structure of the program was well received by participants, as was the utilisation of experts from Sydney Metro:

The kids were so excited. I think just having real people there. We used other resources that were available in terms of videos and going online, but just to actually have some there they could speak directly to...they were able to answer really specific questions. I think that's an outstanding part of the whole project. I really do.

I thought the PD was good. I thought the check-ins were fantastic. I thought the access to experts was really good. (Secondary teacher)

The data also indicates that the professional learning extended beyond the program participants. In some cases, participants invited other staff to engage with the Sydney Metro unit of work, allowing more students to experience inquiry-based learning. In others, participants provided professional development for their colleagues:

What I did do is I took the professional learning and I started training my team in kindergarten into inquiry-based learning. Obviously they didn't do the Metro project, but the open-ended questions were very good because that's what I took out of the initial training here. When we did the session on the open-ended questions and the driving question, that was something that I took out and I implemented with my team.

Most importantly, the program built the capacity of teachers to continue to use inquiry-based approaches and the Sydney Metro with future cohorts of students.

Key achievements

The inquiry-based learning program has been running as a partnership between Sydney Metro and Western Sydney University between 2018 and 2024. Over this period, there have been significant achievements, namely:

- Enhanced teacher pedagogical repertoires
 By engaging with expert teacher educators from Western
 Sydney University and the real-world context provided
 by Sydney Metro Australia's largest infrastructure
 project participating school teachers refined their skills
 in inquiry-based learning, incorporating evidence-based
 teaching and assessment practice to improve student
 engagement and learning.
- Increased student engagement through real-world contexts
 The real-world relevance of Sydney Metro as a stimulus
 of inquiry meant teachers reported significant boosts in
 student engagement, attendance, and enthusiasm.
 Students were engaged authentically in the curriculum by
 exploring an infrastructure project which was highly visible
 in their communities.
- An ongoing legacy through teacher capacity and student
 By focusing on the development of teachers' pedagogical
 repertoires, rather than developing learning materials like
 worksheets which can rapidly become dated or inaccessible,
 the professional development program has generated an
 ongoing legacy of teachers with transferable skills that they
 can implement across the curriculum and in other contexts.
- Deep reach into local communities to inform them about Sydney Metro

A grand total of 146 teachers from 58 schools and approximately 4150 students participated in the three iterations of the program from 2018-2024. Schools within a 10km radius of a Sydney Metro line were eligible to participate, representing deep engagement with the local communities most directly touched by this incredibly significant infrastructure project.

Western Sydney University and Sydney Metro Timeline 2018-2025















2018

Program launched. Three cohorts undertake professional learning program. 2019

Data Analysis and publication of research report.

2020

Commendation: Cutting Edge Research & Teaching Planning Industry Awards. 2021

Publication of academic journal article. 2022

Three cohorts complete program. Data analysed and research report published. 2023-24

Three cohorts complete program. 2025

Data analysed and research report published.

Increasing Teacher Capacity, Engaging Students



146

Total individual participants.



58

Schools.

Primary and secondary schools from public, independent, and Catholic sectors.



12

Published units of work.

Units of work published on Scootle from Phase 1 participants.



4150

Students.

Students have participated in inquiry–based learning using Sydney Metro as the stimulus for inquiry.

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