



**EVIDENCE
FOR LEARNING**

Guide to Supporting School Planning and Recovery

A stepped approach for 2020-21



This report was published by

Evidence for Learning

This guide has been adapted for the Australian context with additional research and supporting resources for schools and systems in Australia from two reports published by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF):

- EEF Covid-19 Support Guide for Schools
- Guide to Supporting School Planning: A tiered approach to 2020-21

The EEF's guides were created with advice and support provided by school leaders and teachers, and the following organisations: the Association of School College Leaders, the Chartered College of Teaching NAHT, the National Governance Association Sutton Trust and Teach First.

We thank the EEF for their support and their commitment to knowledge sharing. We would also like to thank Dandenong North Primary School, Wodonga Senior Secondary College and Monterey Secondary College who offered illustrations of their schools' practice that are such a valuable part of this guide.

October 2020

About Evidence for Learning

Evidence for Learning is an independent, national organisation supporting teachers and school leaders to use evidence of what works—and what doesn't—to improve educational outcomes, especially for disadvantaged children and young people.

Level 7, 1 Chifley Square Sydney NSW 2000

evidenceforlearning.org.au

ABN 94 100 487 572

info@evidenceforlearning.org.au

This report is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivatives 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/). Permission may be granted for derivatives. [Contact Evidence for Learning](https://evidenceforlearning.org.au/contact) for more information.



Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Part 1: Key areas and supporting strategies	
1. Teaching	6
– Supporting great teaching	
– Student assessment and feedback	
– Professional learning and support	
2. Targeted academic support	8
– One to one and small group tuition	
– Teaching Assistants and targeted support	
3. Wider strategies	12
– Student wellbeing	
– Supporting parents and carers	
– Use of technology	
Part 2: Promising interventions	18
Part 3: Implementation	20
Further reading and support	

INTRODUCTION

What does this guide cover?

The E4L Guide to Supporting School Planning and Recovery aims to provide school leaders with their planning for the academic year 2021. It proposes an approach that focuses upon three steps for school planning and recovery:

- high-quality teaching,
- targeted academic support, and
- wider strategies to aid school leaders' existing school improvement planning.

The recommendations of the stepped approach have been developed alongside best available evidence. It is likely to be beneficial that schools' chosen approaches are considered with existing school improvement priorities and policy frameworks.

We recognise that school leaders and teachers will face significant demands on their time as they manage a full-time or staggered return to school for all students. The needs of students and staff are heightened by the logistical challenges of providing safe school sites with the wider impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

There is no adequate evidence base to steer the many logistical challenges schools face, but there is evidence that reiterates the importance of great teaching to support all students, especially the most disadvantaged.

Using this guide

The guide has been written with a focus on supporting teachers and school leaders in primary and secondary schools in Australia. Further audiences who may find this guide relevant include:

- policy makers and system leaders,
- education researchers, in conducting further research,
- program developers seeking to create more effective interventions, and
- school councils and parents looking to support schools.

Some elements of the guide related to high-quality teaching, literacy and numeracy programs, and teacher capacity and professional learning, which may also be relevant to professionals working in early years settings and teacher education institutions.

It is not anticipated that schools will adopt all of the suggestions included. Rather, it is assumed that schools might prioritise a small number of approaches best suited to their context, balanced with the strength of evidence.

Signposts to suggest further reading, more detailed evidence summaries and practical resources are provided throughout. As with Evidence for Learning's [Teaching & Learning Toolkit](#), some approaches covered in the guide are included because they have been widely discussed as possible responses for schools to consider, while other approaches have been included because a

Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are likely to have been affected particularly more by the shift to remote learning and may need more support to return to school and settle back into school life. While the recommendations in this guide relate to all students, it is likely that some forms of support will be particularly beneficial to disadvantaged students.

For many students, compensating for the negative impact of remote learning will require planning and implementation in the remaining months of 2020 and sustained into the academic year 2021. It is also highly unlikely that a single approach will be enough. Every school will have been affected by Covid-19 differently and the right way to support students will differ between schools and must be informed by the professional judgement of teachers and school leaders.

The model is of course flexible, subject to the changes that will occur throughout the school year. This guide shares the best available evidence, referring to existing Evidence for Learning Guidance Reports, along with school illustrations to aid leaders in navigating these uncharted waters.

strong existing evidence base suggests they are likely to be particularly promising.

A range of school illustrations accompany this guide to offer useful points of comparisons for school leaders. In addition, there is a template on Page 21 to support school leaders to prioritise their efforts in the remaining months of 2020 and into 2021.

To maximise its impact, this report should be read in conjunction with other Guidance Reports, including [Putting Evidence to Work: A School's Guide to Implementation](#).

Limitations

It should be acknowledged that it is very challenging to bridge from the existing evidence base to provide guidance to support schools responding to the Covid-19 pandemic.

To respond to this challenge, Evidence for Learning draws the best available evidence from the Teaching & Learning Toolkit, the EEF reports and an evidence review conducted by Evidence for Learning in mid-2020 in response to the pandemic.

For this reason, it is essential that schools, policy makers and researchers continue to evaluate and monitor the impact of different approaches.

A STEPPED APPROACH TO PLANNING & RECOVERY

In the remaining months of 2020 and the academic year 2021, schools could implement three steps to support all students, especially students from disadvantaged backgrounds. A framework for implementing these steps is provided in Part 3 of this guide.

1. Quality Teaching

The best evidence base indicates that great teaching is the most important lever schools have to improve outcomes for their students. This was true before the Covid-19 pandemic and it will continue to be vital as schools plan for to support students in the upcoming school year.

Prioritising high-quality instruction in the classroom setting has new-found logistical barriers, but the principles of great teaching remain unchanged. The EEF's review of the evidence on [Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools](#) found strong evidence that explicit instruction, scaffolding, flexible grouping and cognitive and metacognitive strategies are key components of high-quality teaching and learning for students.

Having deep subject knowledge and a flexible understanding of the content being taught is clearly important. Other Evidence for Learning Guidance Reports will be useful here in identifying suitable approaches.

High-quality assessment is essential to great teaching, helping us understand what students have (or have not) learned. Targeted diagnostic assessments can support teachers to monitor students' progress, particularly as they re-establish classroom routines and recover any learning loss. Schools may also consider how they assess students' engagement with school and their wellbeing. This may prove useful diagnostic information, whilst also support establishing new habits and behavioural routines.

Whole-school planning that focuses on high-quality teaching requires the support of sustained professional development. Supporting improved teaching in the coming year may include training and support for early career teachers and teachers delivering targeted support. Areas such as effective remote teaching may need to be revisited in professional development, thereby ensuring effective remote curriculum provision should unplanned school closures occur.

2. Targeted Academic Support

Evidence consistently shows the positive impact that targeted academic support can have, including for those students who are not making good progress across the spectrum of achievement.

Considering how classroom teachers, Teaching Assistants and external partners can provide targeted academic support, including how to link structured one to one or small group intervention to classroom teaching, is likely to be a key component of effective planning for the new school year.

Approaches to interventions, such as one to one and small group tuition, require close attention to effective implementation, ensuring sessions are explicitly linked to the content of daily lessons and that effective feedback structures are in place. Such interventions are typically maintained over a sustained period and require careful timetabling and associated training so that delivery is consistent for staff and students.

3. Wider Strategies

Wider strategies relate to the most significant non-academic barriers to success in school, including attendance, behaviour and social and wellbeing support. These local needs and challenges will be different for every school community.

Re-establishing the routines of the classroom, and of school, will likely prove beneficial for students. Given the loss of routine, along with the potential for adverse experiences during remote and home-supported learning, attention on supporting students' social, emotional and behavioural needs, primarily as part of good teaching, is likely to prove an effective strategy to support learning.

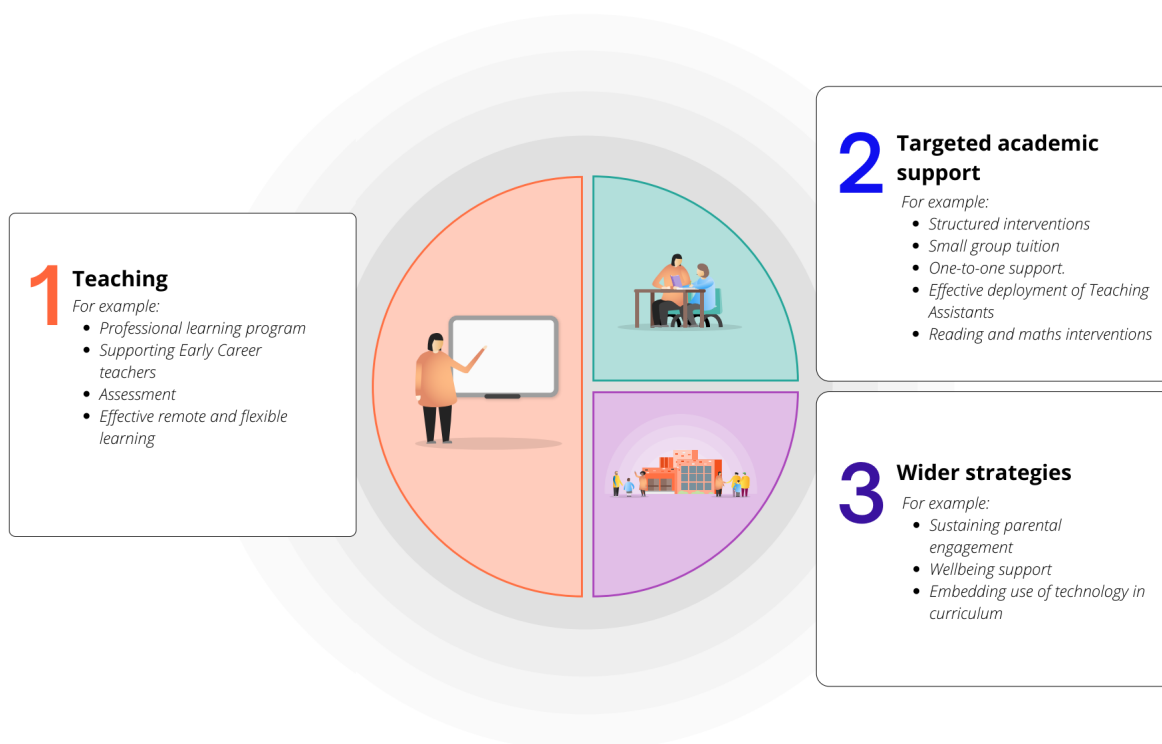
Attendance may prove problematic in the upcoming academic year and have a disproportionate impact on disadvantaged students. Some parents and carers may be hesitant to send their children back to school, which will require sensitive, supportive action on the part of the school. Staggered school returns or intermittent absences can prove more disruptive to students and prove harder for schools to manage. While there isn't much high-quality evidence to support specific strategies, it is clear that planning to support families and the necessity for the ongoing support of, and communication with, parents and carers will prove vital.

ADOPTING A STEPPED APPROACH

The stepped approach is a guide, not a prescription. Many strategies will overlap categories, and the balance between categories will vary throughout the school year as priorities change.

However, the idea of stepped support can offer a useful and complementary framework to support planning aligned to existing school and policy frameworks, as they balance different challenges created by partial and whole school returns. Schools can also use a stepped approach to help focus on a small number of strategies that are likely to make the biggest difference.

Figure 1: The stepped approach for school planning and recovery



An editable template is provided for schools to identify their priorities and strategies here.

The remaining sections of this guide are structured in three parts:

Part 1 outlines the key steps for school planning and recovery and its supporting strategies of the stepped approach;

Part 2 looks at the evidence of some promising interventions; and

Part 3 guides schools to plan and implement the stepped approach.



A checklist for implementing a stepped approach to planning in 2020-21:

- ☐ Are we confident that we have identified a small number of implementation priorities that we think we will be able to change?
- ☐ How many new routines and habits do teachers and other staff need to integrate into their work?
- ☐ Have we appraised our capacity to make those changes, so that they are feasible and likely to be sustained by all staff?
- ☐ Is there a clear and shared understanding of what is being implemented and how, e.g. targeted interventions are communicated clearly to teachers?
- ☐ Are we able to respond to new challenges that may arise during the academic year ahead, e.g. significant falls in attendance?



Part 1

Three steps

Quality teaching

Targeted academic support

Wider strategies

1 Quality Teaching

Supporting great teaching

Great teaching is the most important lever schools have to improve outcomes for their students.

Ensuring every teacher is supported and prepared for the new year is essential to achieving the best outcomes for students.

Providing opportunities for professional learning — for example, to support curriculum planning or focused training on the effective use of technology — is likely to be valuable.

Almost all schools will also have made significant adjustments to organisational and logistical aspects of school life. Ensuring teachers have training and support to adjust to these changes is likely to improve the quality of teaching as all students return to school.

Early career teachers, who may have had opportunities to develop their practice curtailed by a move to remote and home-supported learning, are particularly likely to benefit from additional mentoring and support.

Table 1 highlights some effective approaches for supporting high-quality teaching that should also be present in targeted learning support.

Student assessment and feedback

Assessment can help teachers determine how to most effectively support their students. Every student will have been affected differently by Covid-19.

Setting aside time to enable teachers to assess students' wellbeing and learning needs is likely to make it easier for teachers and other school staff to provide effective support.

For example, subject-specific assessments might be used to identify particular areas where students have forgotten or misunderstood key concepts, to ensure that new material being covered builds on secure foundations. Standardised assessments in literacy or numeracy might be used to identify students who would benefit from additional catch-up support.

Providing students with high-quality feedback, building on accurate assessment, is likely to be a particularly promising approach.

Additional information about this is discussed later in this report for literacy and numeracy and in the EEF's guidance on [Assessing and Monitoring Student Progress](#).

Professional learning and support

Providing targeted support in small groups requires unique teaching skills. There is evidence that teachers who are well trained in a particular intervention or program led to greater impact on student outcomes.

Schools considering the use of new programs should ensure they use skilled coaches with training and ongoing support for teachers as they implement. However, to be successful, any targeted support for students should be responsive to students' needs and pace. In effective interventions, teachers develop individualised student plans and actively tailor learning content and activity time according to student progress.

Schools should also consider how professional learning can be supported effectively remotely through coaching, mentoring and expert support given physical distancing requirements caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

To be successful, schools should continuously assess and grow the leadership of the intervention as informed by the implementation data and the best available evidence.

Supporting resources

For additional evidence related to high impact teaching pedagogies such as feedback and cooperative learning, see Evidence for Learning's [Teaching & Learning Toolkit](#).

Information about supporting effective remote professional learning has been published in the EEF's [Rapid evidence assessment on remote professional development](#).

Table 1: Effective approaches for supporting high-quality teaching

Component of high-quality teaching	Example
<p>Explicit teaching</p> <p>Explicit instruction refers to a range of teacher-led approaches focused on teacher demonstration followed by guided practice and independent practice. Several reviews of the research on effective support for students in mathematics and reading have provided support for explicit instruction.</p> <p>One popular approach to explicit instruction is Rosenshine's 'Principles of Instruction'.</p>	<p>A teacher might teach a student a strategy for summarising a paragraph by breaking up the strategy into small steps. The teacher would initially 'think aloud' while identifying the topic of the paragraph to model this process to the student. They would then give the student the opportunity to practise this skill, perhaps giving the student one paragraph at a time to support them to focus on the information that is essential to the task.</p>
<p>Scaffolding</p> <p>'Scaffolding' is a metaphor for temporary support that is removed when it is no longer required. Initially, a teacher would provide enough support so that students can successfully complete tasks that they could not do independently. This requires effective assessment to gain a precise understanding of the student's current capabilities. Support could be visual, verbal, or written. The teacher will gradually remove the support (the scaffold) as the student becomes able to complete the task independently.</p>	<p>Teachers may use task checklists as a visual scaffold to support students to independently complete a task.</p>
<p>Cognitive and metacognitive strategies</p> <p>Cognition is the mental process involved in knowing, understanding, and learning. Cognitive strategies are skills like memorisation techniques or subject-specific strategies like methods to solve problems in maths. Cognitive strategies are fundamental to learning and are the 'bread and butter' of effective teaching.</p> <p>Metacognition refers to the ways in which students monitor and purposefully direct their thinking and learning. Metacognitive strategies are strategies we use to monitor or control our cognition, such as checking whether our approach to solving a mathematics problem worked or considering which cognitive strategy is the best fit for a task.</p>	<p>Graphic organisers represent a cognitive strategy that has been extensively researched with students with SEND. Graphic organisers are used to organise knowledge, concepts, and ideas. Examples include Venn diagrams—(such as young students identifying the overlap between toys they play with and toys that their grandparent's played with) T-charts of pros and cons, mind-maps, cognitive maps, semantic maps, and chronologies or event chains. They can be effective tools for supporting learning.</p>
<p>Flexible Grouping</p> <p>Flexible grouping describes when students are allocated to smaller groups based on the individual needs that they currently share with other students. Such groups can be formed for an explicit purpose and disbanded when that purpose is met. It may be that a small group of students share the need for more explicit instruction to independently carry out a skill, remember a fact, or understand a concept.</p> <p>Allocating students to temporary groups can also allow teachers to set up opportunities for collaborative learning; research has indicated, for example, that collaborative learning can be effective in helping students to read history texts.</p>	<p>A primary teacher undertaking a history lesson may be exploring the chronology through a local history text, using images on cards. The teacher subsequently regroups students, to work with those who weren't able to draw upon any background knowledge to identify the images and form an adequate chronology. This small group can then seamlessly be supported to quickly initiate the subsequent writing task assignment.</p>

2 Targeted Academic Support

One to one and small group tuition

The evidence indicates that small group and one to one interventions can be a powerful tool for supporting students. High-quality teaching should reduce the need for extra support, but it is likely that some students will require high quality, structured, targeted interventions to make progress. These interventions should be carefully targeted through identification and assessment of need and the intensity should be monitored. Some students may make quick gains as they return to school, so assessment needs to be monitored—in a manageable fashion—over time.

Where interventions are necessary, schools should use structured interventions ideally with reliable evidence of effectiveness. Common elements include:

- Sessions are often brief (15-45 mins), occur regularly (e.g. 3-5 times per week) and are maintained over time (e.g. 8-20 weeks).
- Staff receive extensive training from experienced trainers or teachers.
- The intervention has structured supporting resources and lesson plans with clear objectives.
- Teaching assistants or academic mentors follow the plan and structure of the interventions.
- Assessments are used to identify appropriate students, guides areas for focus and track student progress.
- Connections are made between the out-of-class learning in the interventions and classroom teaching.

Table 2 below illustrates some promising literacy and numeracy interventions that have been rigorously tested.

Teaching Assistants and targeted support

The overriding principle from the evidence is that Teaching Assistants (TAs) should be deployed in a way that they supplement, not replace, the teacher.

Whilst schools inevitably have to be resourceful at the current time, replacing teachers with TAs could potentially widen gaps. As such, school leaders need to consider carefully how to maximise the impact of their TAs.

Schools have found it helpful to establish a draft agreement for teacher-TA interactions, which set out their respective complementary roles during lessons. For example, TAs may focus on developing students' independent learning skills, or (re)establishing important relationships with children and families.

Generally, the use of TAs to deliver high quality interventions, which complement the work occurring in the classroom, is a 'best bet' and could be a powerful way of mitigating any impacts of time away from school and see positive gains for students.

We suggest schools should adopt one or two well-chosen, and well-implemented, TA-led interventions, thoughtfully used to complement and extend class-based teaching and learning.

Structured, evidence-based programs, such as Nuffield Early Language Intervention Program ([NELI](#)) and [REACH](#) (a targeted reading support program designed to improve reading accuracy and comprehension in students with reading difficulties in Years 7 and 8) are examples of effective interventions led by TAs, that can improve the literacy of students. As for any structured intervention, ensure that learning in interventions is consistent with, and extends, work inside the classroom and that students understand the links between the two.

Supporting resources

Interventions should be applied using the principles of effective implementation described later in this report and in [Putting Evidence to Work: A School's Guide to Implementation](#).

For more about interventions on teaching assistants, see Evidence for Learning's Guidance Report [Making best use of Teaching Assistants](#).

Supporting strategies for one to one and small group tuition

Box 1. What does the evidence say?

- One to one tutoring has, on average, demonstrated an additional 5 months of learning, with a mean weighted effect size of 0.37.
- Small group tutoring can deliver up to four months of additional learning, with a mean weighted effect size of 0.31.
- Generally, more improvement is recorded where groups remain small, and evidence suggests that exceeding six or seven there is a noticeable reduction in effectiveness.
- Multiple reviews found paraprofessionals as effective as teachers in small-group tutoring. While volunteer tutoring with training had a positive impact (0.18), it was far less than those for teachers and paraprofessionals as tutors (0.53).
- Student engagement is important. The higher attendance at sessions, the greater impact. A meta-analysis of 96 studies found shorter programs delivered in small groups of 1-3 or more, 3-5 days over 20 weeks to be optimal.
- Successful implementation of small group tutoring depends on the extent to which instruction is individualised to the students' needs, attention to personal support and progress, and structured to ensure strong lesson design and purpose.
- Learning technology can motivate and improve learning for students in small group settings. Some successful programs combine the selection of effective computer-assisted programs and skilled teaching with high impacts of four months' learning on maths (0.47) and reading (0.45).
- Teacher quality in effective small group tutoring is crucial with the evidence supporting clear explanations, explicit teaching, feedback and scaffolding and opportunities for peer interaction as important ingredients. Read more about the elements of [effective feedback here](#).
- The adults delivering the intervention receive extensive training from experienced trainers and/or teachers (5–30 hours per intervention); The intervention has structured supporting resources and lesson plans, with clear objectives and possibly a delivery script.



A checklist for implementing targeted support:

- ☐ How are students identified to receive targeted support such as one to one or small group tutoring?
- ☐ How are teachers and paraprofessionals trained and supported to deliver targeted support for students?
- ☐ Are there plans and processes to deliver the sessions the structure and design of lessons and individualised plans and assessment?
- ☐ Are there processes and resources to guide lesson delivery and monitor student progress?
- ☐ Have we considered ways to actively engage students in tutoring sessions?
- ☐ How do we connect students' learning between the tutoring sessions and classroom?

Dandenong North Primary School: Supporting students through targeted reading interventions



Dandenong North Primary School (DNPS) is a large primary school in the outer eastern suburbs of Melbourne. Over the last decade the school has built a strong reputation for pursuing growth and learning gains for all students, no matter their starting point. They have been widely recognised for their consistent achievements in exceeding National and State benchmark literacy performance levels.

One element that contributes to this, is that leadership and staff ensure every student has the literacy support they need. This is particularly critical for the school, which caters for a diverse student population. Over 90% of students have a language background other than English and many are new arrivals, so students enter at all year level and often at different times throughout a school year without the literacy capabilities to access the curriculum being explored in the classroom.

All students at DNPS experienced prolonged periods of home-supported learning, or alterations to school-based learning during 2020. As students returned to school, after both formal home-supported learning periods, DNPS built on their strong foundations of small group support for literacy to proactively address learning losses for students.

Students throughout the school have access to several specific, evidence-based literacy interventions. The interventions are responsive to student need and learning gaps, identified by teachers, diagnostic testing and ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

Reading Intervention Program

Reading interventions have been in place for many years at DNPS, aiming to build student capability in learning, and to instil a love of reading. Classroom teachers refer students to the reading intervention program where a student is not meeting the expected benchmarks.

Sessions are run intensively – every day, for approximately 40 minutes – with the aim of students returning to regular classroom teaching and learning as soon as they have reached the set benchmark.

Staff leading interventions regularly assess and track student progress to modify their instruction and provide feedback to classroom teachers, ensuring strong lines of communication and a smooth transition for students as they move between intervention and classroom activities.

Education Support Staff are responsible for delivery in many of these small group settings, each receiving regular targeted professional learning opportunities on the specific literacy intervention as well as broader pedagogies required to best cater for DNPS students.

School type	Public co-educational Prep - 6
Enrolment	832
Geography	Metropolitan

Supporting strategies for targeted support in Literacy and Numeracy

Schools may consider the following strategies for supporting students' literacy and numeracy through one to one and small group tuition.

Box 2. Targeted supported for Literacy

- Engagement is a key ingredient across the spectrum of schooling, making connections to students interests through selecting appropriate texts and engaging in conversation about their lives is likely to have a positive impact on how students progress.
- Oral language is often a focus of interventions for younger students and can be supported through one to one or small group tuition through the use of open ended questions, for example: "What do you think might happen next", or by using strategies to keep a conversation going, such as by paraphrasing to model more complex language.
- When working with students who need support to develop reading fluency, it is important to understand what hurdles they are facing, as some students may require decoding support and others phonological awareness. Grouping students with the same challenges will allow structured interventions to be more targeted and therefore have greater impact.
- Secondary students may benefit from structured reciprocal reading targeted to their current attainment level, which is suited to small group learning and can be done in both traditional classroom and online environments.
- For secondary students struggling with Tier 3 vocabulary, it may be beneficial to take a disciplinary literacy approach and draw on vocabulary that from a number of subjects, particularly where words might be 'false friends' and have different usages from subject to subject.

These strategies are drawn from Evidence for Learning's Guidance Reports [Improving literacy in lower primary](#), [Improving literacy in upper primary](#), and [Improving literacy in secondary school](#).

Box 3. Targeted support for Numeracy

- Use planning time to identify common misconceptions in mathematics will ensure that the adult delivering the intervention is able to be responsive as misconceptions arise during the sessions, for example, by using examples and non-examples when exploring a topic.
- Manipulatives, such as number lines or blocks, are simple tools to scaffold discussions with students. Where students are working remotely, many everyday items can be used as manipulatives which reduces the need to prepare and send resources home. Despite being used commonly with primary aged students, using manipulatives where there is a clear purpose is likely to benefit students of all ages.
- During tutoring sessions, it may be advantageous for the adult leading the session to model metacognitive thinking such as 'What is this problem asking?', and 'Have I seen a problem like this before?'. Building a student's metacognition may impact how they respond to mathematical problems when they are working independently.
- Using stories and problems to explain the mathematical challenge, such as by developing a shopping exercise, may help students understand the task, however this may be limiting for students who have low literacy levels.
- For students of all ages, addressing maths anxiety proactively through one to one and small group tuition may be beneficial as students return to the classroom setting.

These strategies are drawn from Evidence for Learning's Guidance Report [Improving mathematics in upper primary and lower secondary](#).

3 Wider Strategies

Student wellbeing

All students and teachers will need support to transition back to school. Schools can create a positive school climate and learning environment such as running whole-school communication. Schools might share information about or run activities designed to help students express and communicate their feelings or issues. In the longer term, schools could target programs to support students' wellbeing. Short, focused sessions that promote social emotional learning as part of the curriculum is more effective than ad-hoc programs. Whole of school programs that involve families and the community's in children's early reading or mentoring for older children, for example, can build school connectedness.

However, there are particular challenges for students who may require targeted support to address trauma-related issues by external professionals or trained teachers. Identification for support might include using assessment to identify areas where students are likely to require additional support or create opportunities for teachers and students to share information about students' strengths and areas for development with colleagues, including between primary and secondary schools where possible.

Supporting parents and carers

Parents and carers have played a key role in supporting to learn at home and it will be essential that schools and families continue to work together as students return to school.

Schools have provided extensive wellbeing support to students and families throughout the pandemic. Additional support in the new school year could focus on providing regular and supportive communications with parents, especially to increase attendance and engagement with learning. There is a risk that high levels of absence after long periods of remote and online learning pose a particular risk for disadvantaged students.

Providing additional books and educational resources to families, during and after school term, with support and guidance, may also be helpful—for example, offering advice about effective strategies for reading with children.

Use of technology

Technology could also be valuable; for example, by facilitating access to online tuition or support. Some schools might find it helpful to invest in additional technology, either by providing students with devices or improving the facilities available in school.

Students' access to technology has been an important factor affecting the extent to which they can learn effectively at home. In particular, lack of access to technology has been a barrier for many disadvantaged students.

Schools should consider flexible learning techniques to provide catch-up and home learning support to help close the gaps. In-person lessons can be combined with online components. Asynchronous learning, for example could be introduced for expository instruction (e.g., videos or texts to explain ideas and model processes prior to small-group tutoring or whole class instruction) and synchronous time for interactive instruction (e.g., online tutoring with small groups or discussion and group work).

To support learning, how technology is used matters most. Ensuring the elements of effective teaching are present—for example, clear explanations, scaffolding, practice and feedback—is more important than which form of technology is used.

In addition, providing support and guidance on how to use technology effectively is essential, particularly if new forms of technology are being introduced.

Supporting resources

Information about student wellbeing has been published by Evidence for Learning in this systematic review on [Student Health and Wellbeing](#). A Guidance Report on Improving Social and Emotional Learning in primary schools (also relevant for secondary schools) will be published later this year.

Information about supporting and communicating with parents is available in Evidence for Learning's Guidance Report on [Working with parents to support children's learning](#).

Information about supporting effective remote and blended learning has been published in the EEF's [Best evidence on supporting students to learn remotely](#).

Information about supporting remote learning techniques to support home supported learning and catch up is published in the EEF's [Rapid evidence assessment on remote professional development](#).

Wodonga Senior Secondary College: A balanced and independent continuous learning approach



Wodonga Senior Secondary College is one of Victoria's largest Senior Colleges and is known for its extensive curriculum that caters for and values academic and vocational pathways equally, with strong VCE and VCAL programs, supported by an extensive range of Vocational Education and Training (VET) subjects.

"Every Student, Every Opportunity, Success for All" is Wodonga's vision for all students. Its remote learning model extends this mission to provide the maximum opportunity for personal and academic growth. The College works with all students to design an individual pathway which is supported by the College's Remote Learning model.

School type	Public co-educational 10-12
Enrolment	820
Geography	Regional

The remote learning model balances the full picture of student needs and entrusts students to take responsibility for their learning, with a strong focus on continuous learning, health & wellness, connectedness and independent learning. Broadly, three types of sessions are scheduled in a students' remote learning timetable:

Virtual classes: Students and teachers connect via MS Teams for one-hour session starting at the same time as the regular timetable. This includes up to 30 minutes of direct teaching and the remainder in collaborative learning facilitated by the classroom teacher. A Graduate Program Virtual Class is conducted every Monday using MS Teams and teachers contact students individually during the week to ensure they are supported and connected during remote learning. Where applicable, students continue with Impact Projects to support their pathways,

Independent learning: Students work independently on home study and revision for their classes. They may choose to complete this work at alternate times to allow them to fulfil other roles and take care of themselves. Teachers use this time to provide feedback to students using MS Teams and SIMS. Specific support and conferencing sessions may be run for students, including existing support programs.

Wellbeing: Students join Health and Wellbeing sessions in the afternoons at mid-week to refresh and recharge. Attendance is not taken for this session and teachers use this time to provide feedback to students using MS Teams and SIMS. Students and teachers are strongly encouraged to take regular breaks scheduled across three periods of the day with the Student Leadership Council running activities for students during breaks to support student connection, health and wellbeing.

Supporting parents with students of different ages

Schools should tailor their focus and strategies for helping parents support homework and shared activities to reinforce learning in school according to the age of the student.

For younger children (Early years to Year 6)

- Promote shared activities for parents such as reading together or playing with letters and numbers.
- When setting tasks to be completed at home, set short and focused learning projects that parents can more easily manage.
- Encourage establishing a positive home learning environment, ensuring that there are resources such as books, puzzles, and toys available.

For older children (Years 7 to 10)

- Parental encouragement for, and interest in, older children's learning is more important than direct involvement.
- Provide general information to parents on child development or curriculum content to create helpful context, whilst ensuring that the work is linked to specific actions that they can take to support learning.
- Set between one and two hours of homework per school day (slightly longer for older students). Positive effects of doing homework generally start to diminish when students spend more time than this.



A checklist for implementing support and communication with parents in 2021:

- ☐ *Are there barriers for parents that need to be recognised and supported, e.g. limited time due to work commitments, languages other than English or low literacy levels?*
- ☐ *Are existing approaches to supporting attendance adequate given a new context where many parents may have a heightened sensitivity to the health and wellbeing of their child?*
- ☐ *Are our school staff sufficiently skilled in engaging in sustained parental communications? If not, does our planning contain the right blend of professional development activities?*
- ☐ *Can new or existing technologies sustain a manageable and meaningful plan to communicate with and support parents?*

Box 4. Communicating with and supporting parents

School leaders and teachers have made tremendous efforts to sustain communications and partnerships with parents and care givers during school closures. Close engagement during this challenging time is clearly crucial to ensure that students are supported to learn and thrive, and that parents are able to provide this support without the expectation that they fulfil the role of teacher.

Sustaining communications with parents across an academic year can be challenging. Given the potential of continued challenges related to Covid-19, communications will need to be monitored and supported. For example, are parental responses to messages home remaining high? Are parents' evenings— either in school or remotely—well attended?

A clear purpose for such communication may mean that this communication is reduced in volume over the coming school year. More communication—increasing how many times we contact, or detail of the content—is not always effective when supporting busy parents. For example, evidence suggests text messages are an effective communication channels compared to lengthier approaches.

Consider these 5 tips for sustained communications with parents across the next academic year:

1. Avoid, where possible, complex communication about curriculum content, but focus support on self-regulation, such as establishing a quiet place to work, organisation of equipment, and work routines and habits. In some cases, schools will need to address absences directly, whilst sensitively exploring parents' and students' concerns that may be inhibiting school attendance. Helping students re-engage with school—feeling safe and ready to learn—will be at the forefront of school leaders' plans.
2. Develop a clear plan for your communications with families across the academic year.
3. Audit your current communications (especially with less-involved families) to assess what has worked well and what has not during the period of school closures and the planned return.
4. Try to personalise messages as much as possible, being aware of parents' varying literacy levels and the need for any translation.
5. Reinforce simple, encouraging messages around sustainable home learning, routines and study tips. Also, remember to celebrate successes with parents.

Box 5. How can technology be used to improve literacy?

Digital technology can be a useful tool to improve achievement in literacy. There is promising evidence that digital technology can improve students' writing—in particular when students are drafting, editing and revising. Digital technology can also be used to support students to write more and to a higher standard. However, technology is not a panacea and although on average it has positive effects, the range is very wide. This suggests that how technology is used is critical. The impact of technology can be maximised by considering the following:

- Clarify the rationale—will students work more efficiently, more effectively, or more intensively?
- Identify the role—will it help students to access learning content, teachers, or peers? Will the technology provide feedback or will it support more effective feedback from others, or better self-management by learners themselves?
- Better interaction—technology should support collaboration between students or teachers should use it to support discussion, interaction, or feedback.
- Training—for teachers, this should ideally go beyond mere technical skills and focus on how to use the technology to improve pedagogy.
- Supplement—digital technology usually works best as a supplement rather than as a replacement to normal teaching. Consider what it will replace or how the activities will be additional.

Monterey Secondary College: A focus on student wellbeing



Monterey Secondary College is a small secondary school located in Frankston, Victoria, catering for students with a broad range of backgrounds. The small school provides a safe, nurturing, and high performing learning environment, focused on catering to the individual needs of each student.

Monterey is part of the Frankston North Education Precinct, a neighbourhood-level community transformation project. The vision of the precinct is that 'every child and family is successful in learning and life'. Enacting this vision includes wrap around support for both the academic and wellbeing development of students supported by deep community support and engagement.

School type	Public co-educational 7-12
Enrolment	280
Geography	Metropolitan

Monterey students and staff experienced two extended periods of home-supported learning in 2020 in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. To ensure that all students remained engaged and on-track during those periods, leadership and staff developed a whole-school response to wellbeing, building on the foundations already in place in the school.

Wellbeing

Monterey developed a mentoring initiative to support students as they transitioned to learning from home. Each student was assigned a mentor who would check in with them at least twice a week. The importance of the ongoing communication with school was reinforced through rewards aligned to the Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) framework expectations of the school. Students received points for taking calls from their mentor, as well as for submitting work, attending on-line classes, or watching lessons. Top points earners from each year level then enter a draw for prizes such as vouchers.

The thoughtful and consistent communication with students enabled staff to identify any student who required follow up or further support and those students thriving in the home-supported learning environment. A diverse wellbeing team have been on-hand during this period for any students that requires support beyond what the mentor can provide. On-site support was maintained for students who could not engage with home-supported learning, with wellbeing and sub-school leaders providing in person support for those students requiring it.

Regular communication with families through platforms such as the school Facebook page ensured that those supporting students at home received the same messages as students, and the school has received positive feedback from the community about the experience.

The wellbeing focus will continue to grow in Term 4 and into 2021, as lessons from the home-supported learning period – such as the ongoing role of mentors – are adapted to the return to school.



Part 2

Promising interventions

Intervention and approaches

These interventions that used one to one and small group tuition have shown positive impact in rigorous trials conducted by the EEF. However, most of these interventions, to our knowledge, have not been used in the Australian context (except Abracadabra) but they offer insights into approaches for supporting literacy and numeracy through one to one and small group tuition in schools.

Literacy

How it works	School Level	Duration/ Grouping	Months of Impact (Effect Size)
Abracadabra (ABRA) is a small group literacy program delivered by specially trained teaching assistants that takes a balanced approach to teaching literacy involving both phonics and reading comprehension. It begins with a whole-group activity, such as reading a story, that reinforces the activity students will later complete independently using an interactive web-based tool. Students are then assigned to work individually or in ability groups and given specific instructions for activities which are tailored meet their needs. ABRA has been proven to be effective for students with additional learning needs and Indigenous students in disadvantaged schools in the Northern Territory and have shown positive impact in evaluated in several EEF trials.	Primary	20-week in four 15-minute sessions per week in groups of 3-5 students.	+4 months (0.37) (Students eligible for Free School Meals*) *Free School Meals is the equivalent indicator of low-SES.
The Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) program is an oral language skills program that involves scripted individual and small-group language teaching sessions delivered by a trained teaching assistant or early years educators to children identified as being in need of targeted language support. The program aims to develop children's vocabulary, listening and narrative skills and also involves work to develop phonological awareness and early letter-sound knowledge as foundations for early literacy skills. TAs are trained a total of 100 hours to deliver NELI for 20 weeks to five children. The Reception NELI program, through several robust EEF trials, has been shown to improve children's oral language and early literacy skills.	Primary	20 weeks in two ten-week blocks in groups of up to 5 students.	+3 months (0.26)
REACH is a targeted reading support program designed to improve reading accuracy and comprehension in students with reading difficulties in Years 7 and 8 delivered by specially trained teaching assistants (TAs). Students received three one to one 35-minute sessions each week for 20 weeks.	Secondary	35-minute sessions each week for 20 weeks in one to one sessions.	+4 months (0.33)

Numeracy

How it works	School Level	Duration/Grouping	Months of Impact (Effect Size)
1stclass@number is an intensive program which provides intensive support for students struggling with maths delivered in small groups of four students by specially trained TAs or teachers in small groups of up to three students. The program covers five topics (numbers, exploring place value, addition and subtraction, multiplication and division). Tutors receive six hours of professional learning, a handbook, detailed lesson plans and resources. No impact however was found for students eligible for Free School Meals in the EEF trial.	Primary	10 weeks of 30 lessons of half an hour, three times a week in small groups of up to four students.	+2 months (0.18) (general students)

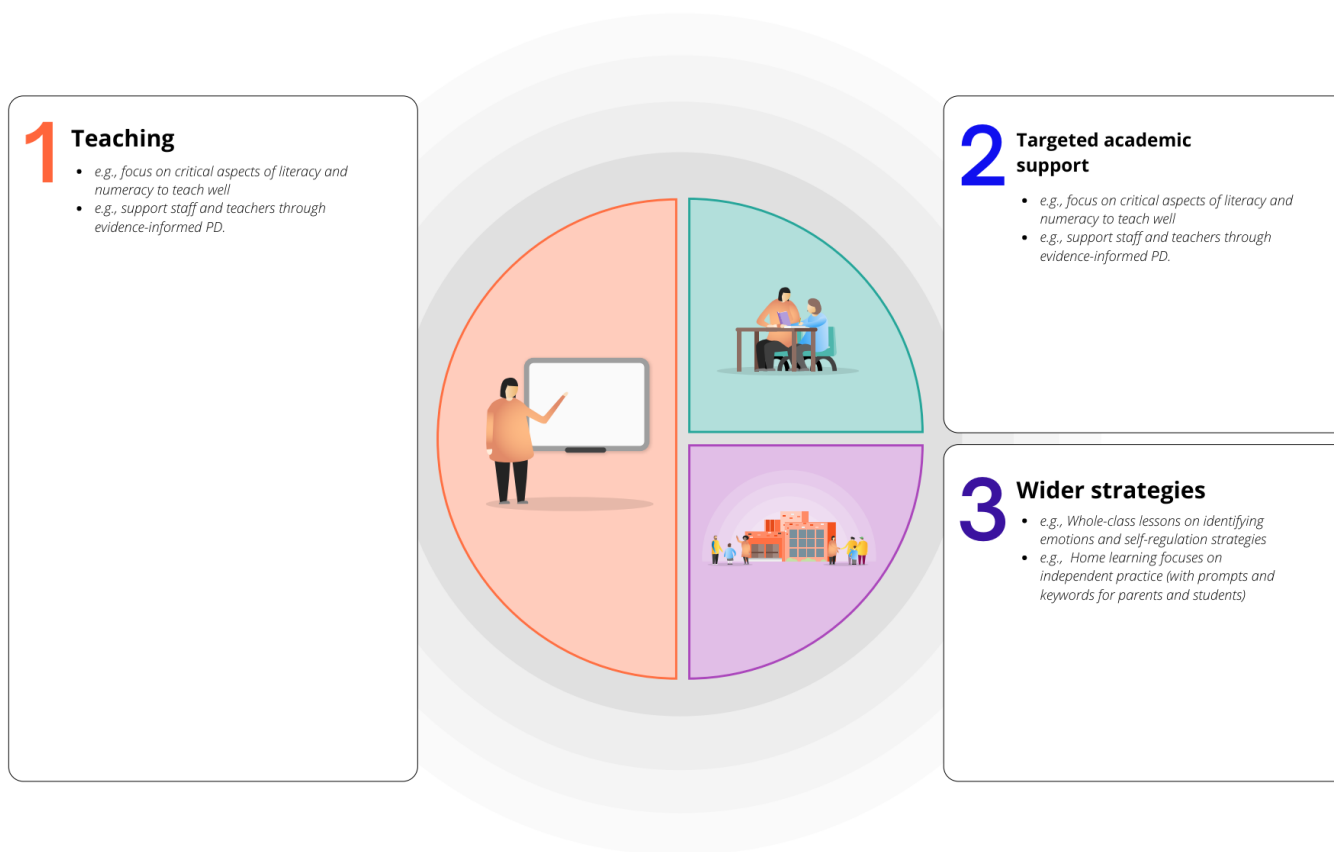


Part 3

Implementation

Guide to supporting school planning: A stepped approach

The stepped approach provides an overall framework for guiding school planning: 1) What quality teaching looks like, 2) how targeted support can be implemented and 3) what wider strategies should be considered in 2021. Schools could use this [stand-alone editable version](#) to plan and identify key priorities and strategies under the three key steps, contextualised for their context and considered with existing school improvement priorities and policy frameworks.



Implementation stages

Implementing and sustaining an intervention or new approaches require careful planning, such as ensuring a clear plan for adoption and resources and infrastructure in place to carry them out effectively. With the stepped approach and chosen strategies, it is helpful to breakdown the process of implementation into stages, along with meaningful questions to consider:

- Explore:** what problems are we seeking to solve in the academic year 2021? Are there adequate solutions, in the form of evidence-informed practices or programs?
- Prepare:** do we have a clear, logical and well-specified plan? Do staff fully understand what is being implemented and how? What is the readiness of the school and staff to undertake these changes?
- Deliver:** how best can staff best deliver new approaches? Are there mechanisms in place to improve their use over time? Can we reinforce our approaches with initial training and continuous wrap around support?
- Sustain:** how do we best maintain new practices, for both staff and students, across a full school year and beyond? How we will nurture motivation and ensure that we acknowledge and support good practice? Do we have the resources to support this in an ongoing manner?



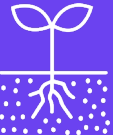

For much more guidance on effective implementation, see Evidence for Learning’s Guidance Report [Putting Evidence to Work—A School’s Guide to Implementation](#).

A helpful way to consider the difficult act of sustaining new practices across a school year is to consider what is expected, supported and provide opportunities for the teacher to share their practice with colleagues.

What is being expected?	What is being supported?	What is being rewarded?
e.g. teachers undertake regular diagnostic assessments	e.g. teachers are supported with professional development on high-quality diagnostic assessment	e.g. school leaders provide opportunities for teachers to share practices that worked with staff and lead working groups to scale good practices.



Schools could consider these questions when implementing the three steps

 Explore quality teaching	 Prepare staff	 Deliver targeted support	 Sustain effective practices
<p>Define the problem and identify appropriate programs or practices</p> <p>Identify a key priority that is amenable to change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you considered a tight and specific area for literacy and numeracy for targeted support? • How is student-level data used to identify student needs? <p>Explore programs and practices to implement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have we considered a program of activity and strategies based on what has – and hasn't worked before. • Is there reliable evidence on this approach if we implement it well? <p>Examine the fit and feasibility within the school context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this approach feasible within our school? • Who will deliver the approach for targeted support? 	<p>Create a clear implementation plan and prepare staff and resources</p> <p>Develop a clear, logical and well-specified plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we have a logical and well-specified plan to deliver targeted support? • Are staff and the school practically ready to adopt the new approach? <p>Assess the readiness of the schools to deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have we considered a teacher-led working group to lead and grow the leadership of the approach? • Can we use existing structures and processes or novel solutions required? <p>Practically prepare:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are learning and monitoring plans in place and designed to the level of support they need? • What training or support will be needed? And how will this be delivered? 	<p>Support staff to deliver targeted support and monitor progress</p> <p>Support staff and solve problems using flexible leadership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is the approach being implemented? • What solutions are needed to respond to the challenges or problems? <p>Reinforce initial training with follow-on support within the school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is appropriate follow-on support and monitoring of student progress available? • Have you considered the use of highly skilled coaches or mentor with expertise or specialist knowledge <p>Use implementation data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the approach being implemented as intended? • Does the data suggest we need to adapt our strategies to meet students' needs? 	<p>Plan for sustaining and scaling the intervention from the outset to nurture its use</p> <p>Plan for sustaining and scaling from the outset:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it appropriate to extend the use of the approach to other staff? • Have we created plans to involve parents and the community? <p>Continually acknowledge, support and reward good practices implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this approach achieving the desired outcomes? How will we know if this approach needs to be adapted or stopped? • How have data from 'pulse checks' to ensure capacity of staff and resources <p>Treat scale-up as new implementation process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can the existing capacity and resources support scale-up? • What does the evidence from the implementation and external sources tell us about the approach?

Further reading and support

Evidence

Evidence for Learning's [Teaching & Learning Toolkit](#) is an accessible summary of educational research designed to support teachers and school leaders who are making decisions about how to improve learning outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged children and young people.

Evidence for Learning also produces [Guidance Reports](#), offering clear and actionable recommendations on high-priority topics, including Literacy, Mathematics, Meta-cognition and self-regulated learning, Working with parents to support children's learning, and Making best use of Teaching Assistants.



Putting evidence into action

Many of the approaches suggested in this Covid-19 guide can involve adopting new approaches under challenging circumstances. As such, careful attention to implementing change is likely to increase the impact of any approach. We recommend this guide be read in conjunction with the Evidence for Learning Guidance Report, [Putting Evidence to Work: A School's Guide to Implementation](#).

The challenge of implementation often means that less is more: selecting a small number of priorities and giving them the best chance of success is a safer bet than creating a long list of strategies that becomes hard to manage.

Do a few things, well.



Evidence for Learning has produced a suite of resources in response to Covid-19:

- Resources designed for schools to help support home learning for schools, based on existing Guidance Reports;
- Resources to share with parents on how to support home routines;
- Commentary on the EEF's rapid evidence assessment on remote learning and other Covid-19 evidence reviews including the impact of school closures on the attainment gap, and remote professional learning.

These are all available at: <https://evidenceforlearning.org.au/covid-19-home-supported-learning/>

For any questions about or feedback on this guide or other Evidence for Learning resources please contact info@evidenceforlearning.org.au