

Q CONVERSATION

NOVEMBER 2022

SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE FOR QUALITY RESEARCH USE

As part of Monash Q Project's aim to improve the use of research in schools, we want to develop a shared understanding of what it means to use research well. Facilitating rich and reflective conversations amongst practitioners is key to such understanding.

Q Conversation is a resource designed for school practitioners to promote discussion and reflection about research use attitudes and practices, using Q's emerging findings and considerations as prompts.

We suggest that this resource can be used in professional learning or discussion contexts within a school, a community of practice, or a school network.

WHAT IS THIS Q CONVERSATION ABOUT?

This **Q Conversation** is focused on what elements of **school infrastructure** educators most value and how these contribute to **using research well** in practice.

Despite most educators believing in the value of research use, research is not used often in practice ([Rickinson et al., 2020](#)). One reason for this is a lack of appropriate resources and supports provided by schools for educators' improved research use and/or research use not being embedded into school structures and processes ([Coldwell et al., 2018](#); [Rickinson et al., 2021](#); [van Schaik et al., 2018](#)). School leaders can increase and improve educators' use of research by understanding what elements of school infrastructure are most valued by educators, and providing these such that research use is embedded in every-day decisions and practices within schools.

From two Q Project surveys ($n=906$) conducted between March 2020 and September 2021, our key findings suggest:

- (i) **Embedding research use into school infrastructure is important and is associated with educators' greater use of research.** In particular, educators value processes and meetings, such as scheduled staff professional development meetings or working sessions, where they can collaborate and learn together when engaging with research.
- (ii) **Learning opportunities, particularly those provided within the school, are viewed as important ways for educators to engage with research and improve their use.** These include participating in professional learning communities or inquiry cycles, and having access to peer-led demonstrations.
- (iii) **School-provided resources are also viewed as important for educators' improved research use.** In particular, educators value access to 'experts' who can guide their research use, such as instructional leaders, mentors or coaches. They also value access to tangible resources, such as online research databases, academic journals or professional subscriptions.
- (iv) **Having scheduled time while at school is of critical importance to educators' increased and improved use of research.** However, most educators do not believe that their schools provide sufficient time to engage with research. In response, educators access and use research in their own time.

This **Q Conversation** draws on a suite of Q publications:

- (i) **Q Data Insight** reporting key findings regarding the types of infrastructure that educators most value for their improved research use;
- (ii) **Q Narrative** showcasing how Seadale Primary School has provided time, learning opportunities and processes for their school community to engage with research; and
- (iii) **Q Behavioural Insight** highlighting how different types of social and physical infrastructure can provide opportunities for educators to use research well.

Q CONVERSATION

NOVEMBER 2022

SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE FOR QUALITY RESEARCH USE

Q Conversation is designed to be: (i) **informative** – by sharing Q insights from Australian educators; (ii) **thought-provoking** – by encouraging school leaders and teachers to think about their own attitudes and practices in light of Q insights; and (iii) **action-oriented** – by prompting leaders and teachers to convert their reflections into actions for school improvement.

Several **Q Conversation** structures are offered – some shorter and more targeted around specific findings or behaviours, and others more encompassing and challenging by drawing on broader findings and complementary research. Accompanying presentation slides are available.

Q CONVERSATION SUGGESTIONS

Using the **Q Narrative** as a guide, the following questions may be helpful as prompts for individual reflection or small group discussion, with insights shared with the broader group:

- (i) In the narrative, how is infrastructure supporting educators' research use? What benefits and opportunities emerged from the approaches adopted?
- (ii) In what ways does this narrative resonate (or not) with our own situation? (iii) How might insights gained inform our own research use activities, practices and processes? What would our narrative be?

The **Q Behavioural Insight** and **Q Data Insight** suggest different types of physical and social infrastructure that provide school communities with greater opportunities to engage with research. Reflecting on these, consider the following questions for individual reflection or small group discussion:

- (i) To what extent am I/we providing different types of infrastructure for staff to engage with research?
- (ii) How do I/we know that these infrastructure types are valued by staff and are supporting their research use?
- (iii) How can I/we increase, diversify or improve the types of infrastructure we provide that supports research use?

Coldwell and colleagues (2018), in their report about evidence-informed teaching practice in the UK, outline the differences between (i) a weak evidence school culture, (ii) a school leadership evidence culture, and (iii) a whole-school evidence culture. Using the table on p. 61, consider the following for small group discussion:

- (i) If we were to describe our school evidence culture, what would it look like? What categorisations on p. 61 best describe our culture?
- (ii) How motivated or committed are we, as a school community, to have a whole-school evidence culture? How much change is involved to build and sustain such a whole-school evidence culture?
- (iii) In what ways can the categorisations on p. 61 help us to identify ways to improve our research use infrastructure?

According to the Q Project's **Quality Use of Research Evidence (QURE) Framework**, using research well involves embedding research use into school infrastructure. The extent to which leaders provide adequate learning opportunities, scheduled time and other research use supports and resources is therefore important.

Share your experiences and school's insights generated from **Q Conversations**. To connect with us,



[Q Project Website](#)



[@MonashQProject](#)



MonashQProject@monash.edu