



Stories of strength: using educators' reflections on implementing a strength-based approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education to understand mechanisms for change.

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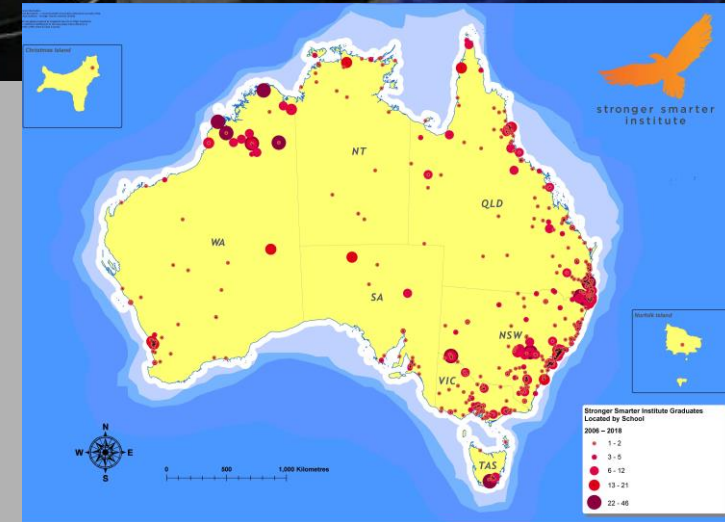


About us

Our professional development programs are about transformative change in academic outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.



Our footprint is across the country.

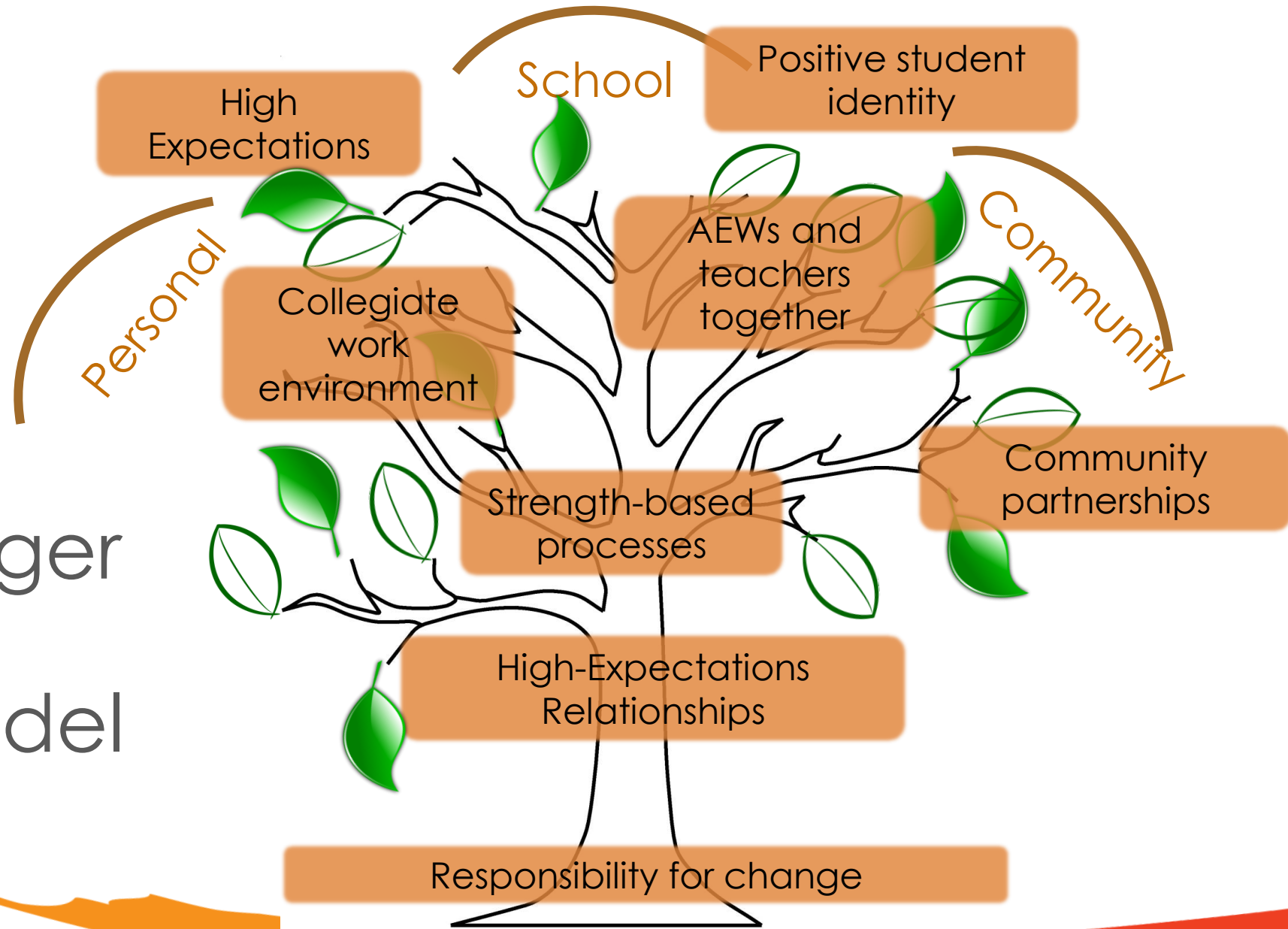


Our research is about participants telling their stories of transformative change.

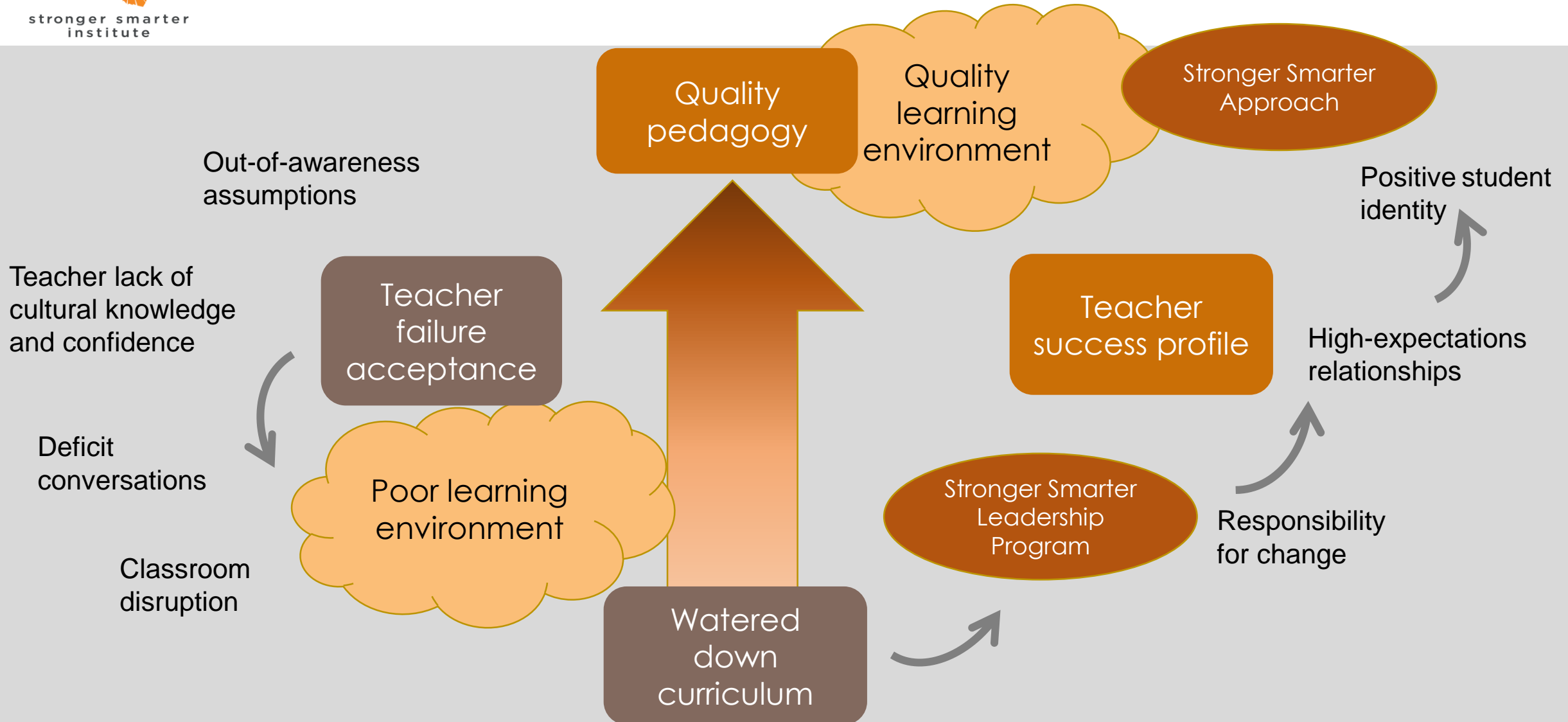




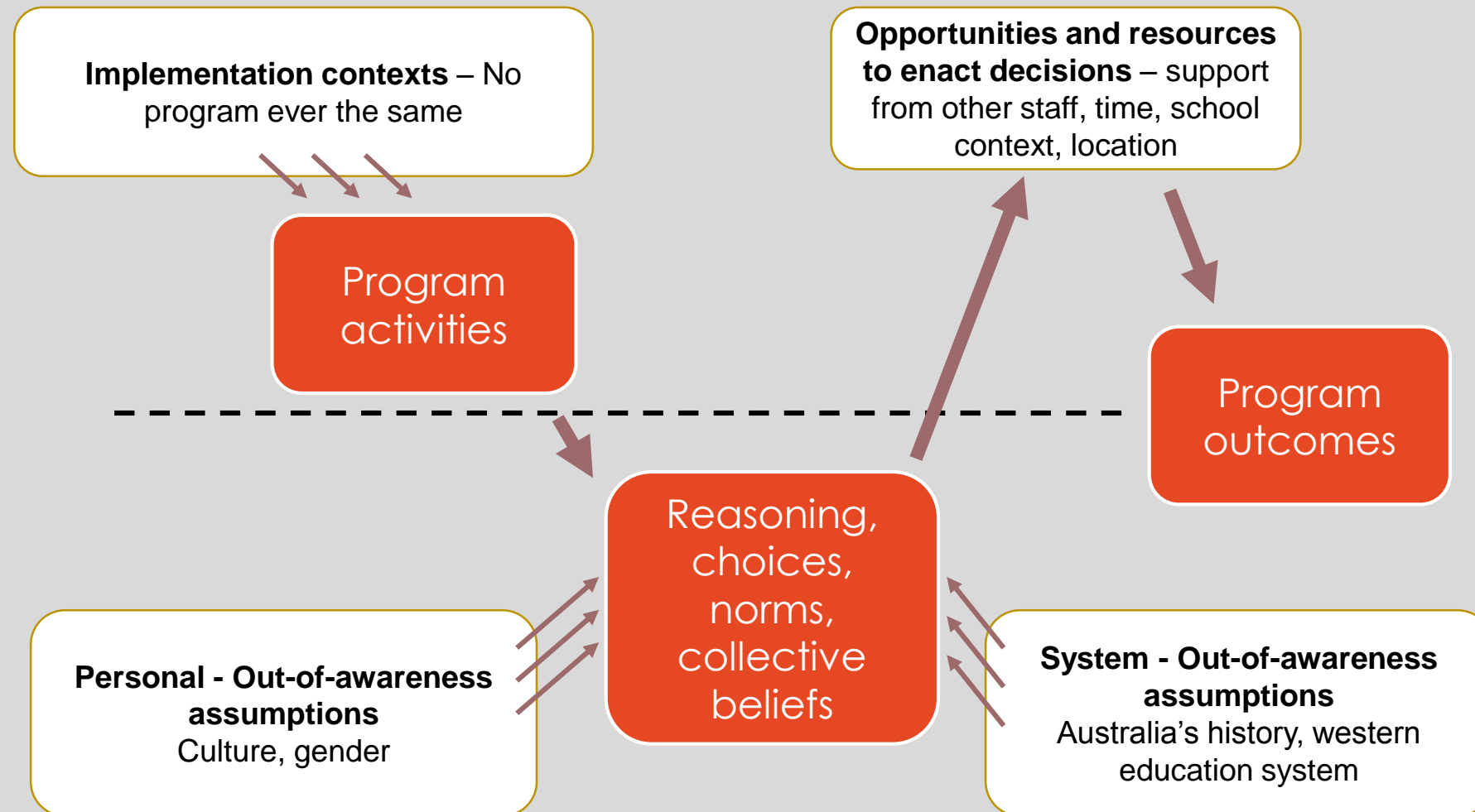
The Stronger Smarter Logic Model



Transformative change



Realist evaluation



“We don’t see the world
as it really is...
we see it as we are.”

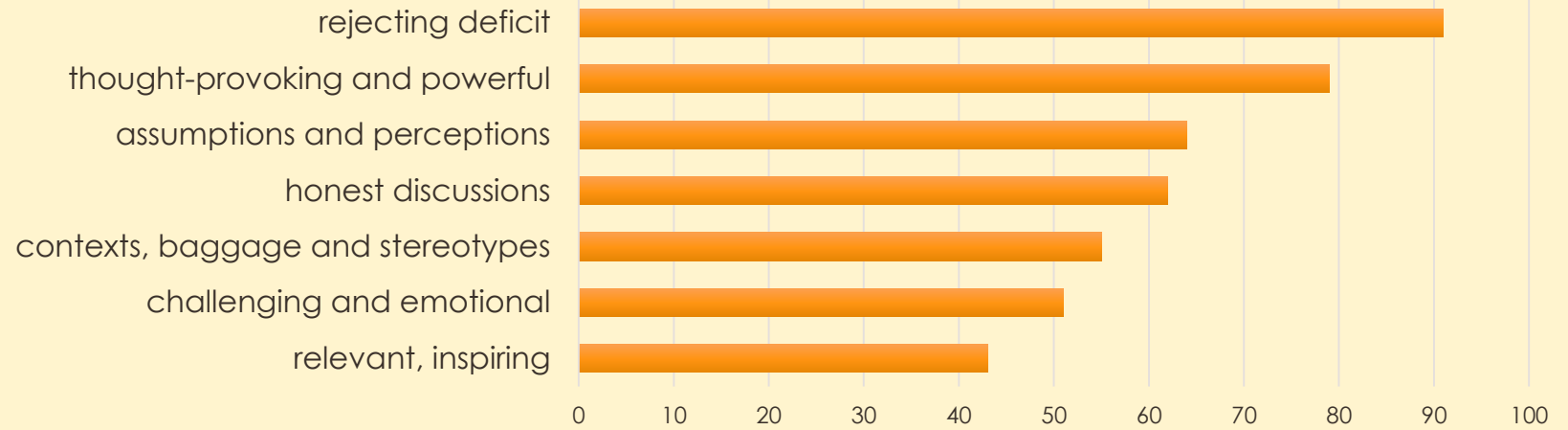
- Gandhi



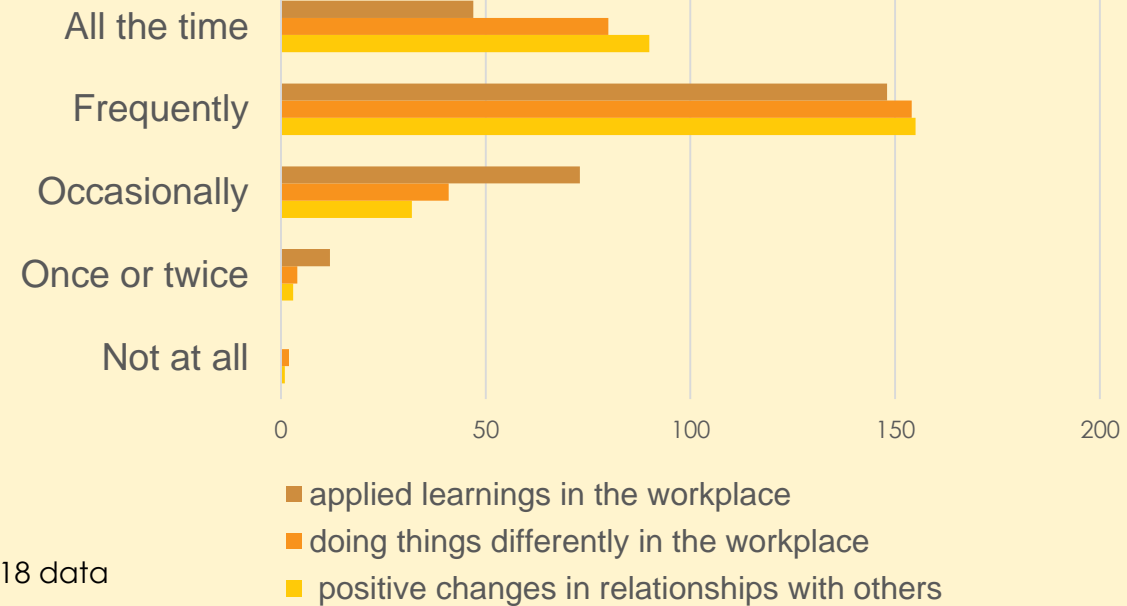
90% of respondents to our ‘Census’ say Stronger Smarter continues to impact on their relationships and leadership.

Motivation

Common themes from daily evaluations on Day 3 de-brief

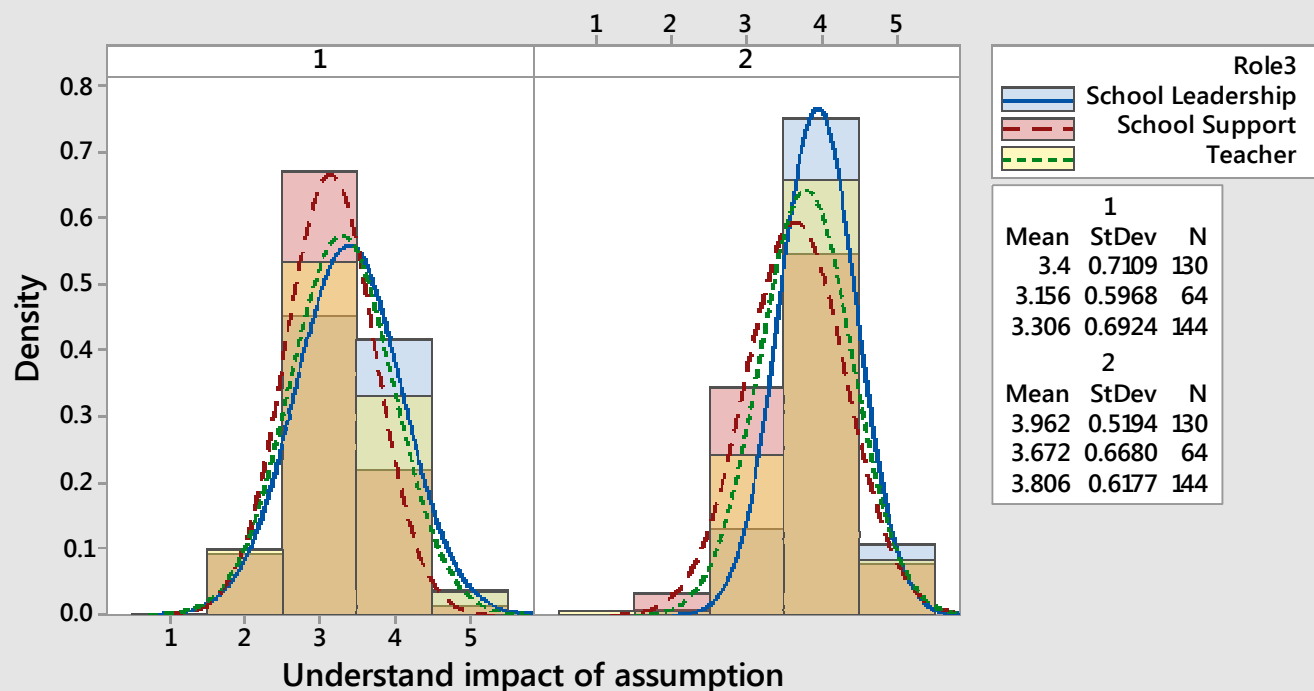


Did we motivate you?



2018 data

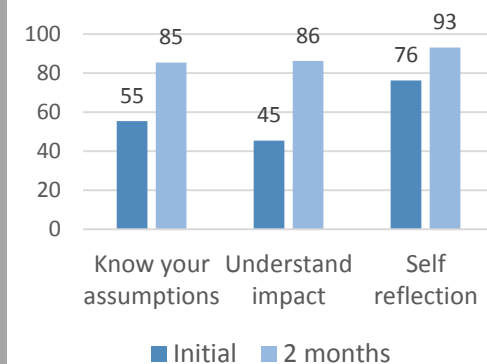
Histogram of Understand impact of assumption
Normal



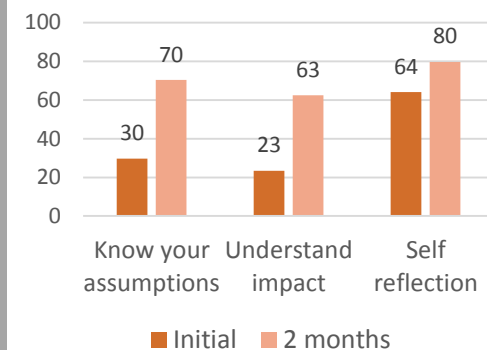
Panel variable: Group

Understanding Assumptions

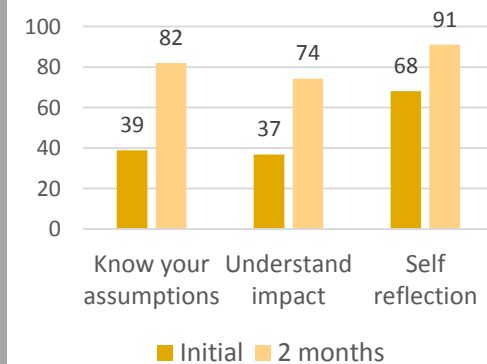
School leaders



School support



Teachers





Menindee Central School

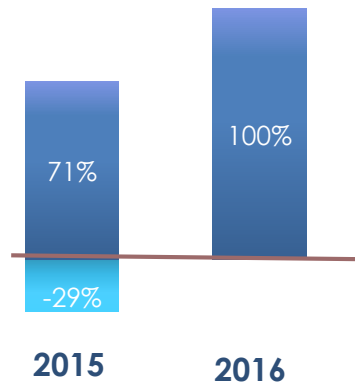
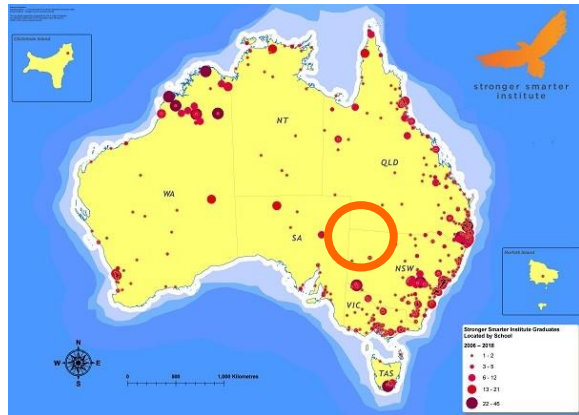


"I went to Stronger Smarter and came back Stronger and Smarter"

Fiona Kelly, Principal

RESULTS

"It's the feeling you get when you walk into the place... You see it. You feel it. You hear it. People are happy, people are prepared to work together. It is not just one person's responsibility."



100% reaching national minimum standard



School captains co-present at international conference



Improved staff retention



Lockhart State School, Qld

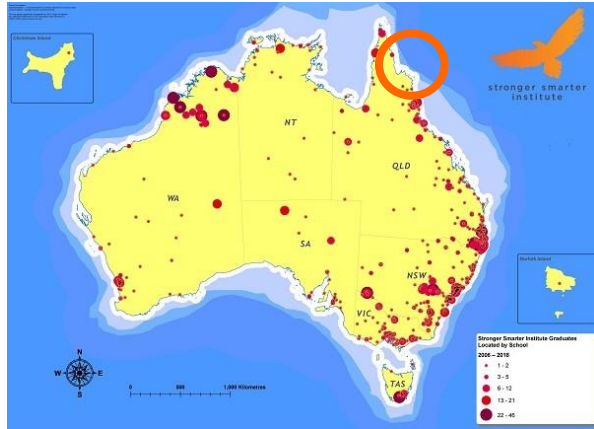


"When I did Stronger Smarter, I felt like it really changed my life. I suddenly said, 'no, I'm not going to dumb down the curriculum. These kids are so smart. I need to change my approach.'"

Evelyn Allard, Teacher

RESULTS

A group of about 20 kids are nearly all about to graduate grade 10 this year. It's taking the time to build those relationships and valuing the students and learning about them that makes you realise they actually can do it



Breaking down assumptions



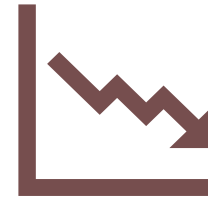
High expectations

100% of parents and children agree their teachers motivate them to learn



Building relationships

Behavioural incidences dropping



Positive learning environment



Halls Creek District High School

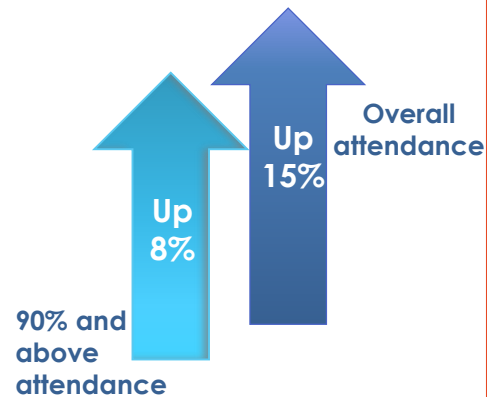
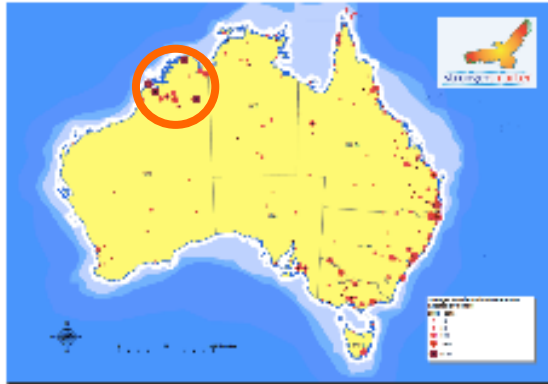


"We've had a consistent belief that kids at this school are deserving of the same education they would get in a city school"

Jake Petterwood, Associate Principal

RESULTS

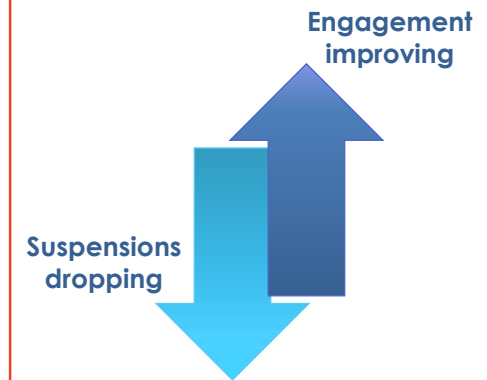
"The one thing that keeps kids coming back in the positive relationships they've got with their teachers."



Attendance improved 2013 to 2017



Academic results improving



Student engagement and behavior improving

Themes from the interviews



Responsibility for change as

- Leadership
- Rejecting deficit discourse
- Courage and motivation
- Self-reflection – understanding self
- Sharing high expectations

High-expectations relationships as

- Community connections
- Listening, equal power sharing
- Open relationships
- Starting a conversation

“90 to 95 percent of our daily perceptions, thoughts, judgements, responses and behaviours are habitualised.”

- David Snowden



Hidden perceptions

It's deeper than just a program, it's a process I went through and coming back to this notion of challenging yourself and really unpacking who I was as a leader and who I wanted to be.

Principal 2011 program

It was about unpacking my own collusion with low expectations. It wasn't ever intentional lowering of expectations, but when I really critiqued some of my practice, that's what the end-result was, and I wasn't even aware that it was happening.

Principal 2010 program

I'd come from pretty much a white middle class background and it really opened my eyes into the hidden cultural perceptions.

Graduate 2007 program

It's such a personal reflection journey that I don't think you're the same person It changes your ideas and thinking about things which then influences how you will teach kids

Assistant Principal 2016 program

“Be the change you want to see in the world.”

- Gandhi



One of the sayings that stuck with me – the Ghandi quote, “Be the change you want to see in the world” – and we decided we were going to not walk past anything, just take on a more pronounced leadership role, a more involved role, not step back, and try and step forward

Principal, 2010 program

We used Stronger Smarter to really shape our thinking and our conversations, to really , highlight the importance of positive, self-affirming conversations that aren't deficit.

Principal, 2012 program

Be the change

It's made me much more aware of not jumping to conclusions not making any assumptions.

Deputy Principal, 2013 Program

It's not something that you consciously think what part of Stronger Smarter can I use in this situation. It just happens. You use it without even thinking about it. ...

Principal, 2015 program

Mechanisms – first level

Context: Time and space for self-reflection, use IKs to set up a safe space

Mechanism: Look deep within yourself

Outcome: recognise different perspectives

Context: willingness to be open and honest with self and listen to others

Mechanism: Deep listening - Reach to the heart

Outcome: open eyes to a different world view

Mechanisms – second level

Context: When see the world through a different lens

Mechanism: Can't ignore what is now within awareness

Outcome: Motivation is now in a place of agency

Context: have the backing of a respected organisation

Mechanism: have 'permission' to change how do things

Outcome: Reject deficit thinking (Strength-based approach)

For Aboriginal Education workers – a different mechanism is happening at the same time

Context: When IKs are recognised

Mechanism: equal power relating

Outcome: confidence to 'have a voice'

Mechanisms – third level

Context: When recognise what you can control and change - agency

Mechanism: link actions to words

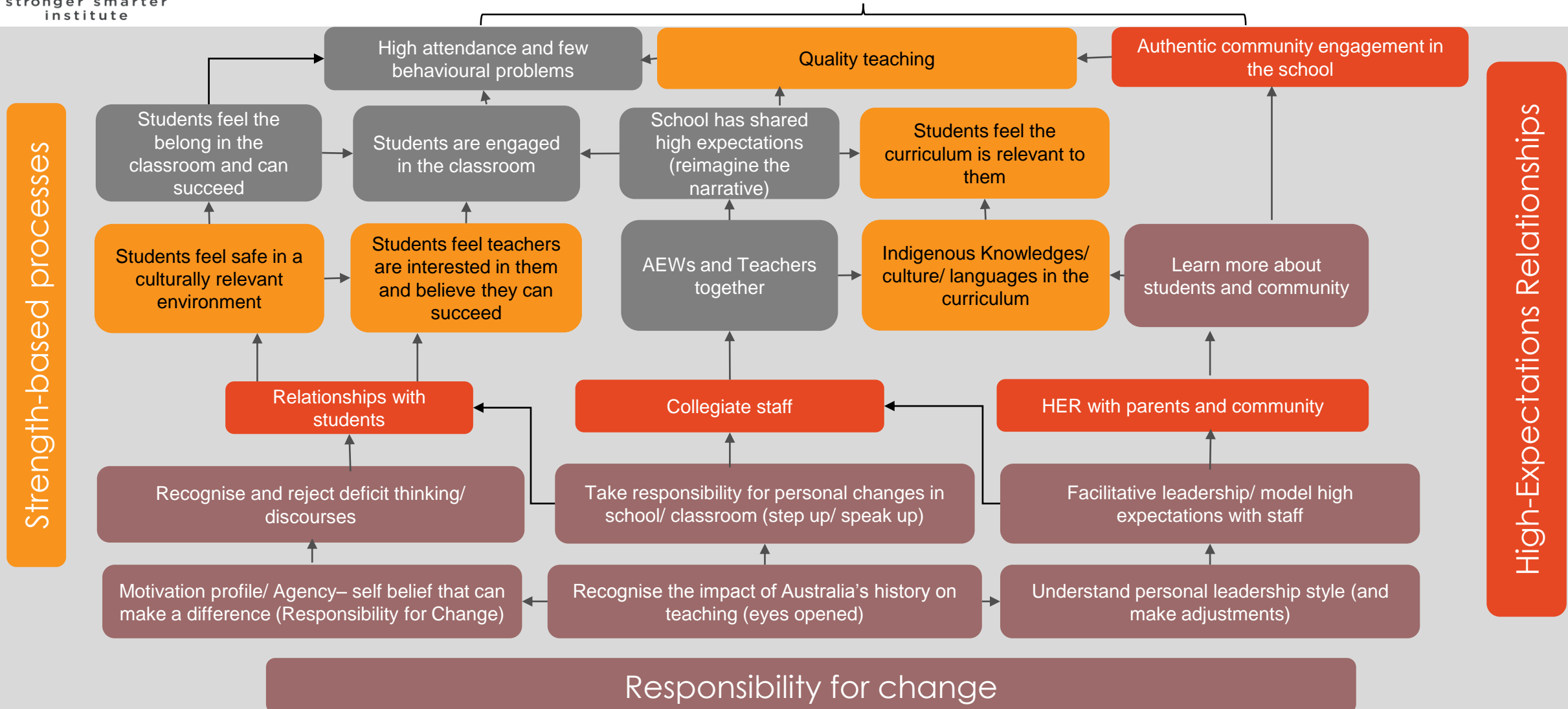
Outcome: Bring others on board

Context: When recognise what you can control and change - agency

Mechanism: flipping the coin – high expectations of self, and for students (not 'of' students)

Outcome: Rewrite the narrative of the school

Environment for Learning (Strong and Smart)



When dealing with complex challenges, the question of truth is irrelevant... multiple perspectives are all we have to work with.



Conclusion

The SSLP's success comes from

- Using Indigenous Knowledges to build a safe environment for deep listening and self-reflection.
- Empowering educators, placing them in a mindset where they believe they can make a difference
- Tools to build equal power relating where school leaders can bring the whole school community to a shared understanding of high expectations.

Unless you have quality relationships and a safe, positive environment, you're never going to get anywhere. And no one is going to learn, whether it's teacher or student.

Principal 2018 program