Evaluation of the Literacy Leadership Initiative: The Enhancement Programme 2001

Report to the Ministry of Education
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The Enhancement Programme 2001

Final Report to the Ministry of Education

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research was undertaken in order to evaluate the Literacy Leadership initiative, one of a number of initiatives that built on recommendations from the Literacy Taskforce. With the ultimate aim of raising student achievement in literacy, principals and literacy leaders in schools were up-skilled in literacy matters through workshops and site visits. The model involved establishing multi-level professional communities. A community of expert literacy facilitators was established whose task was to run workshops, then work with school leaders to establish literacy goals for individual schools; to mentor leaders in carrying out classroom initiatives in literacy, and to promote the development of self-supporting learning communities within schools. It was anticipated that schools would draw on further specific expertise to assist them in meeting their literacy goals.

Data for the evaluation were obtained from structured interviews and from documentary sources, namely the resource materials supplied by Learning Media and achievement data from their classroom initiative supplied by individual schools. Facilitators at interview nominated schools that they perceived to have been differentially successful in terms of the Literacy Leadership initiative. Personnel interviewed from the purposively selected sample of 29 schools were the principal, literacy leader and up to two teachers who had been involved in the classroom initiative. These schools were asked to provide achievement data related to their classroom initiative and also standardised testing data.

This evaluation attempted, at the Ministry’s request, to find evidence of improved student achievement as a result of the Literacy Leadership initiative. Two thirds of the schools were able to provide the evaluators with some student achievement data regarding their initiative. The data that were provided, however, did not enable an independent judgment about improved student achievement to be made. This does not mean there were no improvements; it is just that we were unable independently to verify them. Principals and literacy leaders reported that they believed their class-based projects were successful because they focused on teacher practice and beliefs. Further, many believed the projects had worked because they perceived that reading levels had improved or that instruction was more focused. Over half the teachers reported that they had learned something that resulted in changed teacher practices. Most others indicated that it had reinforced or affirmed what they already knew.

Some possible explanations for the limited availability of student achievement data that would have enabled us to verify independently the claimed success were investigated. Teacher feelings of self-efficacy and expectations of students were examined and dismissed; teachers did not report low expectations of their students nor did they perceive that they had little influence on outcomes in literacy. Similarly, other
explanations for lack of evidence, like the existence of a high degree of satisfaction with student achievement reported by teachers that may have obviated the need for data, were considered. This notion of perception of success rendering the collection of evidence less likely is a possible explanation. More likely, is that schools lacked the capacity to engage in such data based review. They may have lacked knowledge and skills to the level required to obtain data useful for evidence-based decision-making in their class-based projects. This finding is based on the responses to the scenario that examined knowledge of principles of evidence-based decision-making.

The Literacy Leadership model was partly premised on sufficient capacity already existing in schools that would allow them to benefit from the mentoring of the facilitator and, partly, on the development of a literacy community of support and feedback systems for each school so that it could be largely independent in working to raise literacy achievement. The evaluation demonstrated that the assumption there is capacity to make evidence-based decisions about literacy initiatives may be unfounded. Similarly, the professional communities of support and feedback within the schools tended to focus more on the support aspects than providing critical feedback. The literacy community extended also to the facilitators and to Learning Media itself where an advisory board was set up for consultation purposes. The establishment of a community of professionals appeared to be more successful at the level of the facilitator than the schools.

The evaluation concluded that there was room for strengthening the model, for example, through testing assumptions about capacity and knowledge and providing professional development to ensure appropriate levels of such and matching the support given to leaders to analysed needs.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Education requested this evaluation of the Literacy Leadership initiative, the primary purpose of which, as negotiated with the Ministry of Education, is to understand the extent to which the broad recommendations of the literacy taskforce are achieving their aims of improving the literacy achievement of primary school students through professional development and the development of literacy leadership. This initiative was part of a broader mix of strategies designed to raise literacy achievement. It was not intended to stand alone, but rather be followed by second-wave support from advisors and consultants.

This brief introduction aims to describe pertinent features of the context for the present research. The Government goals for literacy achievement, the current achievement levels of New Zealand children in literacy, and the approaches and initiatives aimed at raising achievement levels are outlined. Then the notion of professional leadership, including the notion of professional communities is considered in relation to relevant international literature and the background and aims of the New Zealand Literacy Leadership initiative. The questions that guided this research are outlined at the end of this chapter.

Context for the Research: Literacy Achievement in New Zealand

The well-publicised Government goal was that ‘by 2005, every child turning nine will be able to read, write and do maths for success’. The Literacy taskforce was set up to advise the Minister of Education on ways to ensure this goal was met. A newsletter from Learning Media entitled ‘How well do New Zealand children read?’ (Pitches, Thompson & Watson, 2002), states that we are not reading poorly (they say nothing about writing) in terms of our international ranking. The authors reiterate the conclusions of the Literacy Taskforce that New Zealand children are high achievers in reading. In the latest Programme for Student Assessment (PISA) study (Ministry of Education, 2002), concerning the reading of 15 year olds, New Zealand had the third highest scores for reading with the highest proportion at the top level of proficiency (1 in 5).

However, the relatively high proportion at the lowest level in the PISA study has caused concern. There was similar concern following the 1990 IRA Reading Literacy Study where results showed a wide gap between the highest and lowest levels of reading achievement and a significant difference between the performance of Maori and Pacific Nations children and others. Maori performed significantly below the international average with boys below that of girls (Wagemaker, 1992). Within New Zealand there were marked differences between children whose home language was English and those who spoke another language at home; many of the latter were Pacific Nations children.
Analyses like that of Wilkinson (1998) show the increased level of diversity that New Zealand teachers are faced with in their classrooms.

This notion of increased diversity is supported by the School Entry Assessment data that suggest that there are large disparities in performance on entry to school (1998). According to the Literacy Taskforce (1999), these tended to increase over the first four years of school. However, Flockton & Crooks (2001) have demonstrated, using data from the National Assessment Monitoring Project, that we have made a dramatic improvement at least in oral reading scores in Year 4 from 1996 to 2000 and so that disparity has apparently been reduced in this area of accuracy in reading.

To address the issue of disparity and how to reduce it and to ensure that any gains are maintained, a number of areas have been identified as central. There is an increasing international body of knowledge in the two key areas of teacher effectiveness and school effectiveness that support policies aimed at improvement of literacy (Reynolds, 1998). The Taskforce chose to focus on some of these. Amongst them is the notion of professional leadership in the schools whereby the principal, ‘as professional leader should have a thorough understanding of how learners learn as well as the ways in which the school should be organised and the teachers supported to achieve the best results possible’ (Report of the Literacy Taskforce, p.14).

The notion of professional leadership is echoed in documents and professional writings with respect to other systems internationally. In a report of the teaching of reading in 45 inner London schools, the conclusion was that the leadership, management and co-ordination of reading were generally effective in only about a third of the schools in the sample. In schools with good leadership, the report suggested that the principals were knowledgeable about reading and clear in their overall assessment of the school’s strengths and weaknesses in reading. An overall weakness in the management and coordination of reading lay in the way it was monitored and evaluated with few evaluating by classes or year groups and the underdeveloped use of ‘objective indicators’ (Office for Standards in Education, 1996). The evidence is strong that if teachers collect data about their students’ progress as a routine part of classroom practice, standards are raised (Black & William, 1998).

The Literacy Taskforce noted that ‘it is possible for schools to be using many different literacy programmes without knowing enough about their effectiveness in meeting the needs of children’ (p. 14). An observation of the Strengthening Education in Mangere and Otara Project (SEMO) researchers (Timperley, Robinson & Bullard, 1999) was that a multiplicity of literacy programmes and materials was reported to be present in these schools. A common response of SEMO schools to poor achievement in literacy was to try an alternative approach or programme. Thus, multiplicity of programmes and resources and also the lack of a data-driven evaluation characterised literacy programmes (Timperley, et al., 1999). More recently, data from the professional development in
literacy project (Timperley & Wiseman, 2002) has established the importance of using data and how particular types of use can be linked to improved achievement. The same programme in different schools can have very different achievement outcomes.

With regard to monitoring and assessing, the Literacy Taskforce voiced concern about the wide range of teacher expertise in the area, clearly drawing on anecdotal evidence and that arising from SEMO. The concern is shared internationally. As part of the ongoing evaluation of the National Literacy Strategy in England, it was noted that assessment in literacy is necessary for wise decisions; that data and evidence are important parts of educational decision-making (Earl, Watson & Torrance, 2002). However, Earl (1995) noted that most people are not sufficiently ‘data literate’ to interpret and use data appropriately.

The launching of large-scale national projects, designed to assist teachers with assessment, a different focus to that of the National Education Monitoring Project (e.g. asTTle and Exemplars) has arguably begun to promote a changing culture in terms of diagnostic assessment for tailoring teaching, for promoting evidence-based teaching. The evaluators of the National Literacy Strategy in England suggest that it would be timely to focus on programmes to help principals, teachers and advisors collect, interpret and use data (Earl, Watson & Torrance, 2002). The Literacy Taskforce suggested that, along with the notion of professional leadership by the principal, is the notion of literacy leadership, someone with the expert professional knowledge to drive - to guide and support in classrooms- literacy programmes and to evaluate their effectiveness. They suggested that a major role of what they termed a literacy leader would be to develop the expertise needed to carry out such evaluations.

**Instructional Leadership**

What it means to be a leader in a school has undergone considerable transformation internationally and nowhere is this more apparent than in New Zealand with the introduction of self-governing schools in 1989 (Education Act, 1989). The focus on developing effective school managers that followed from the increased responsibilities principals undertook under a self-governing system has now shifted to a focus on more professionally oriented leadership. This professional orientation has been variously named as ‘instructional leadership’ or ‘learning-centred leadership’ depending on its orientation (Southworth, 2002). The literacy leadership enhancement programme is designed to focus school leadership towards both the quality of literacy instruction within their school and of student learning and achievement (Ministry of Education, 2002).

A key concept in instructional or learning-centred leadership is to reduce the dichotomy between school management and student learning. Murphy (1991) expressed concern about the separation of these two facets of schools by commenting,
‘Organisationally clueless teachers and educationally uninformed administrators provide a poor foundation for school success’ (p.5). Learning-centred leadership requires principals to be leaders of instructional practices that have proven outcomes for students, while encouraging others to lead and to assume some of the management tasks involved in creating the learning environment. Leadership is not confined to the principal (Southworth, 2002) but the principal has a central role in creating the opportunities for both teachers and students to learn because as Southworth advocates, ‘... nothing (or very little) should be decided in schools unless it can be justified in terms of children’s / students’ learning’ (p.10).

Accompanying this focus on instructional leadership is an increasing emphasis in the leadership research literature on task-focused leadership (Bryman, 1996; Robinson, 2001). Earlier conceptions of leadership attempted to define generic traits, such as, being collaborative, motivational or visionary and were divorced from specific organizational tasks. In these earlier conceptions, task-relevant knowledge and skill play little role because effective leaders are supposed to be able to motivate and inspire regardless of task demands (Robinson, 2001). This task-independent view of leadership, however, sits uncomfortably with the notion of literacy leadership because we would argue that the development of effective literacy programmes requires more than vision and motivation. Such programmes require the promotion of specific knowledge and skills related to literacy teaching and learning, and to be a good leader in this context requires that the leaders develop both their own expertise and that of their teachers.

Professional Learning Communities and Leadership

The notion of professional learning communities where key participants share instructional knowledge has been gaining popularity as one way leaders can exercise task-focused instructional leadership and to enhance student achievement. The central argument for the development of professional learning communities is the presumed link between a school’s social organization and purpose and the ability to make meaningful changes in the teaching technology of classrooms (Dilworth, 1998). If teaching involved routine drills and worksheets, then professional learning communities would not be necessary (Toole & Louis, 2001). They become important only when schools attempt to make deeper level changes. The type of knowledge that teachers require to be successful includes in-depth subject matter content that emphasizes meanings and connections, not just procedure and information; in-depth knowledge of what individual children are like; an expanded sense of what it means to learn; and pedagogies that help them connect children and content (Ball & Cohen, 1999). Kruse & Louis (2001) contend that strong professional communities hold several potential advantages for schools including increased responsibility for the performance of students and teachers, increased personal
commitment to work, self-regulation instead of bureaucratic rule-based control of teacher behaviour, and innovation leading to greater organizational learning and effectiveness.

Five interrelated variables, distinct and critical to such strong professional communities have been commonly identified (Bryk, Camburn & Louis, 1999; Louis, Kruss, & Marks, 1996; Louis & Marks, 1998; Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996). They are shared values and expectations about children, learning, teaching, and teachers’ roles; a clear focus on student learning that leads its members to construct their work to promote students' intellectual growth; opportunities to hone their skills by sharing expertise through collaboration; de-privatised practice through peer coaching, team teaching and structured classroom observations, and engagement in reflective dialogue whereby teachers examine assumptions basic to quality practice and deepen their understandings of the process of instruction and the products of teaching and learning.

Professional communities, however, have the potential to lower student achievement as much as to promote it. The ‘professional’ dialogue may well support traditional norms and practices that reinforce prevailing prejudices. Shared expectations may be collectively low, with the dialogue and peer coaching resulting in reinforcement of ineffective practice. Little (1990) explains that from the beginning of the American movement to increase teacher professionalism, constructs involved in building professional learning communities were ‘conceptually amorphous’ (p. 509). For example, ‘collegiality’ was often confused with congeniality, or conviviality – a friendly staff that enjoys each other’s company (Barth, 1990). Simply having a happy staff room or teachers sharing their favourite bag of tricks is not sufficient. In this weak form of professional community, staff’s collaboration takes place only incidentally, through the telling of classroom anecdotes, offering help when asked, or sharing ideas without critically examining or refining them. These weak ties of collaboration or collegiality may simply reinforce bad habits (Little, 1990), and are bounded in ways that protect norms of privacy and exclude deep investigation into teaching and learning (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996). When professional communities are conceptualised in these weak forms, it is not surprising that implementation of reforms aimed at fostering teacher communities are often received with a mix of confusion, mild concern, and doubt (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; Little, 1990; Merz & Furman, 1997; Smylie, 1992).

Timperley and Wiseman (2002) demonstrated that student achievement can be enhanced when those within the professional community interrogate achievement information for its implications for teaching practice. In two schools with higher student achievement than other schools, the teachers and literacy leaders involved examined the students’ text reading levels and focused their efforts on developing strategies for those not achieving well. Follow-up classroom interventions focused on solving the learning and teaching problems experienced by the students and their teachers. Engagement in this process required those involved to take a learning orientation towards developing the best
possible strategies for improving student learning, rather than a defensive position that all teaching is equally successful.

The Literacy Leadership Initiative

The Literacy Leadership initiative, launched in 2000, is one of a number of initiatives that have resulted from the Literacy Taskforce recommendations. The aim of the Literacy Leadership programme was to raise achievement in literacy in New Zealand primary schools, particularly for those not performing to potential. Outcomes for principals in terms of attitudes, skills, and knowledge include: an understanding of how students and teachers learn and how teachers teach; an understanding of effective literacy teaching practice; knowledge of strategies, support and materials for enhancing literacy programmes; learning about frameworks to put processes in place to improve literacy achievement, and enhancing ability to gain data about literacy practices and achievement. Principals were supported to produce a literacy vision, expressed through recognisable and measurable goals and with strategies for attaining goals. Each goal was to be accompanied by action points and evaluation and reflection (Ministry of Education, 2000).

The Literacy Leadership initiative was designed to achieve these objectives through a ‘flow-down’ model, whereby Learning Media Ltd (an organisation external to the Ministry of Education) won a contract from the Ministry of Education to develop materials and to recruit and develop the knowledge and skills of a group of national facilitators to work with leadership in schools. The aim was to improve the principals’ and literacy leaders’ understandings of effective practice in literacy so that they, in turn, could assist teachers with aspects of their practice. The model involves essentially building and strengthening a professional community of literacy educators in order to raise literacy achievement of students. The model we have described as a ‘flow down’ model in that, while the contractor, Learning Media, primarily focussed on creating a strong community of facilitators to work, in turn, with leaders in schools, the latter focussed on teacher capability so that improved and refined practice would result in improved literacy achievement amongst students. The model of the literacy leadership enhancement programme, where school leaders are assisted to develop skills to help their teachers enhance literacy achievement is consistent with theories of effective professional development because the professional learning opportunities are ongoing and embedded within the challenges of daily teaching experiences.

The role of the facilitator was to deliver the workshops on Literacy, based around the resource materials provided to participants. The role was also to advise and assist the school leaders implement an initiative aimed at enhancing teacher practice, through visits to individual schools, and by developing the skills and knowledge needed to continue
leadership in literacy in the school once the visits and workshops associated with the programme had concluded. Included in this role was the notion of facilitating the utilisation of resources from the wider professional community of literacy experts so that personnel from school support services such as advisors or independent consultants could form a ‘second wave’ to continue working with the schools when the facilitator had completed the visits. In this sense, the Literacy Leadership enhancement programme was based on a professional learning model, whereby schools undertook a classroom-based project involving evidence-based self-review processes. From this perspective the programme is soundly based and it is on this aspect that we focus in the evaluation.

Professional readings were provided, together with a set of ‘tools’, such as the ‘Where your school is at’ and ‘Leading the Literacy Focus: Developing and Implementing the Literacy Action Plan’ and ‘Using Literacy Materials’ found within The Enhanced Programme booklet (Ministry of Education, 2001 & 2002). Case studies of successful projects in New Zealand schools were also provided (Ministry of Education 2000). The materials, like other aspects of the programme, have evolved. New materials were added in 2002 and 2003, including a 2003 module on analysing and using data. An example of a change in the operation of the model is that facilitator visits have been increased, clearly in response to feedback from both schools and facilitators regarding needs.

The programme has two strands. Strand 1 was available to all schools with Years 1-4 students and consisted of two, one-day workshops, a Principal’s Literacy Leadership Workshop and a Using Literacy Materials Workshop. Groups of school principals and literacy leaders attended one or both of these workshops. Schools who completed at least one workshop could apply for the Enhancement Programme and this consisted of a further workshop and a minimum of three school visits from a facilitator to assist them to undertake classroom projects that were designed to enhance student achievement, particularly those who were underachieving.

It is important to note that the form of the programme evolved during the tenure of the contract, for example, stronger messages about the role of student achievement data are included in a new module on data analysis. It is inevitable that this evaluation provides a snapshot of one point in time when, in reality, the model was not static. This one point in time was earlier rather than later in its evolution as we wished to capture a complete cycle.

**Research Questions**

Given the origins of the initiative in the literacy task force, the needs were clearly those of the students and their literacy achievement. In our initial discussions, the Ministry of Education indicated that they wished us to ascertain whether student
achievement had improved. We were dependent on the schools collecting and analysing achievement data in order to answer this question, so we agreed to investigate the alternative question ‘What is the nature of the evidence collected by schools to monitor the progress and success of the literacy goals identified as part of the initiative?’ The answer to this question is provided in Chapter 3 of this report. Possible other criteria for judging success of the Literacy Leadership initiative are provided in Chapter 4, including perceptions of the success of the classroom initiative and self reported learning from the Literacy Leadership programme.

The second area of focus related to the research question asking about the contextual pre-conditions for Literacy Leadership to be a catalyst for documented improvement in student achievement to occur. These were identified as facilitators’ and school leaders’ knowledge and skills. This question is addressed first through responses to a hypothetical scenario reported in Chapter 7 but also through the self-reported learning data in Chapter 4.

The third focus of the report is related to the third research question that addressed issues of school-based structures and processes needed for improvement and sustainability of evidence-based practice. Issues related to this question occur throughout the report, but it is a particular focus of Chapters 8 on leadership and Chapter 9 on professional communities.

Other chapters explore possible reasons for the limited evidence on student achievement. These relate to beliefs about teacher efficacy in improving achievement and satisfaction with student achievement (Chapter 5), understanding of the literacy leadership initiative (Chapter 6) and of the role of leadership (Chapter 8).

The concluding chapter, in its critique of the model, aims to provide ideas with respect to avenues for strengthening the model.
CHAPTER 2: METHOD

Our evaluation framework took into account that a researcher contracted to Learning Media had previously reported on results obtained from a questionnaire sent to 200 schools that participated in the workshops (Shouler, 2001). Ninety schools responded, of these the majority were enhancement programme participants (65). The work was expanded to include interviews of ten principals involved in the enhancement programme (Shouler, 2002). These were admitted to be an unrepresentative sample. In view of this earlier work, we decided not to do a questionnaire survey of participants’ perceptions of the workshops. In addition, it is generally accepted that workshops alone have limited impact so we decided not to include schools whose participation was limited to this. Rather we focus this evaluation on schools that participated in the enhancement programme. This allowed us to focus beyond the principal and literacy leader to the classroom teacher.

In order to answer the research questions, a tiered interview structure comprising the different participant groups was used to reflect the ‘flow-down’ model of the initiative itself. Firstly, there were discussions with key personnel from Learning Media. Interviews were conducted with facilitators who were nationally trained and responsible for leading the initiative throughout the country (through the presentation of seminars and providing school-based support). Facilitators nominated a total of 30 schools involved in the enhancement programme in three categories, according to their perception of the extent to which the school had been successful in the initiative. In each of these schools the principal, literacy leader and two teachers were interviewed and documents relevant to the school-based initiative were sought.

The information sought by the research team focused primarily on the following topics:

- Facilitator and school understanding of the intent of the Literacy Leadership Programme;
- Perceived and actual impact of the initiative on student achievement;
- New learning for teaching and management staff;
- Expectations of student achievement;
- Facilitator and School understanding of evidence-based self-review practices;
- How such practices were evident in the school-based initiatives and
- The nature of professional communities established through the initiative.
Participants

In June 2002 all facilitators were contacted by telephone and were sent participation information sheets, consent forms and a letter via e-mail explaining the purpose and format of the interview with a request for some information on the schools with which they were involved in 2001. The year 2001 rather than 2002 was selected in order to ensure that schools had sufficient time to complete their school-based initiative.

Twenty out of twenty one facilitators involved in the programme in 2001 agreed to participate in the evaluation. Unfortunately one facilitator did not respond to repeated attempts to make contact. Ten facilitators based in the greater Auckland area and Bay of Plenty were interviewed face to face while the other ten were interviewed by telephone. The interview medium was not deemed to influence responses. A consideration of ratings in response to the hypothetical scenario showed no difference between the mean response of those interviewed by phone and those interviewed face to face.

Eleven facilitators from the greater Auckland, Bay of Plenty and Taranaki regions were asked to nominate either three schools (if involved in ten or less schools in 2001) or six schools (if involved in ten or more schools in 2001) that represented a range of success in the enhancement initiative. Depending on how many schools they had worked with, facilitators were asked to nominate one (or two or three) schools in each of three categories, namely schools that were considered ‘most successful’, ‘somewhat successful’ and ‘least successful’. The sample was designed to yield 10 schools in each category. No criteria were given so the selection by each facilitator was largely relative to the sample of schools that the facilitator had worked with. All schools were decile 1-4 to ensure that the evaluation findings were not confounded by decile rating because the school sample size was not sufficiently large to divide the schools into separate decile groups.

Once schools had been nominated, the Principal was contacted by phone and the evaluation was introduced and outlined. Contacting principals proved to be problematic in a third of the schools, requiring up to five phone calls. All but one principal agreed to be interviewed with another proving too difficult to contact. Finally interviews took place in 29 out of the 31 schools nominated (Table 2.1).
Table 2.1
Schools Interviewed by Geographical Location

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number of schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auckland</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bay of Plenty/ Waikato</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taranaki</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>29</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While keeping within the decile rating of one to four, variations of schools did occur by school size (i.e. student population) and type. Type refers to year levels taught in the school. For this purpose full primary indicates that students attend from Year 1 to Year 8, while contributing primary indicates that only students from Years 1 to 6 attend. Table 2.2 shows the school population and type involved in this evaluation.

Table 2.2
School roll and type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roll Numbers</th>
<th>Full Primary</th>
<th>Contributing Primary</th>
<th>Total Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-100</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-200</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200-300</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300-400</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400-500</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td><strong>29</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In each school, we asked to interview the principal, literacy leader and two teachers (involved in the classroom based project) in each school. For a variety of reasons, not all schools could provide the personnel for interviewing and, thus, there were variations in numbers of personnel interviewed. This was usually due to school composition, staff turnover and/or illness. The variations included:

- Three of the principals were also the literacy leader for their school;
- Two schools had two literacy leaders. In one school the literacy leaders were interviewed separately, while in the other they were interviewed together at the principal’s request;
- Three literacy leaders had been appointed during or after the initiative. It was decided to interview these literacy leaders as it was assumed the initiative information would have been handed on to them;
• Six principals were appointed during or after the initiative. These principals were included in the evaluation on the same assumption as interviewing newly appointed literacy leaders;

• One deputy principal was relieving in the principal’s position at the time of the initiative. It was decided to interview this person rather than the principal as it was assumed this relieving principal would have more knowledge of the initiative.

• One school had no teacher to nominate for the interviews, one school released three teachers for interviewing and five schools released only one teacher to be interviewed. Various reasons were given for this including teacher resignation and teacher illness.

Table 2.3 indicates the total number school personnel interviewed.

Table 2.3
Schools and School Personnel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Principals</th>
<th>Principals / Literacy leaders</th>
<th>Literacy Leaders</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviewed</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most school interviews took place during a one-day visit. Generally the literacy leader(s) was interviewed first as it was assumed s/he had the most detailed knowledge of the day to day running of the initiative. Then the principal and the teachers were interviewed. On a number of occasions the interviewer returned at a later date to either interview a participant who was absent or to collect the student achievement data.

**Interviewers and Interviewing**

The research team consisted of four interviewers, namely, two principal investigators, one project manager and one interviewer (employed specifically to interview school personnel in the Taranaki area). Consistency in the interview process was crucial; therefore the project manager and both principal investigators were involved in the piloting of the interview schedules. For the Taranaki based interviewer one-to-one training occurred in Auckland where procedures, interview schedules and expected student achievement data were discussed in detail.

All but four interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. Four participants did not wish to have their responses recorded. The interviewer then took extensive notes, typed
them up and sent them back to the participant to be checked for accuracy of meaning. The same process was followed if a tape failed to record (2) and when a packet of tapes went missing (5).

INSTRUMENTS

The interviews were mostly semi-structured with lead questions consistent across all interviews with follow-up probes to further explore comments made by participants. This allowed for consistency across interviews with opportunities to explore comments made by the participants if the meaning was unclear. The interviews consisted of responses to a hypothetical scenario and a series of questions about their role, their understandings and learning (see Appendix).

Figure 2.1

THE HYPOTHETICAL SCENARIO

Totara School is a decile two school. The staff teaching in Years 1 to 3 decided to participate in the Literacy Leadership Enhancement initiative because the teachers were concerned about the students' comprehension of text. The students seemed to be able to learn new vocabulary quickly, but the teachers were concerned that the students did not understand what they read.

The teachers met and brainstormed all the different ways they could help improve comprehension. Some of the teachers knew the RTLB had introduced Peer Tutoring: Reading in a neighbouring school and the teachers in that school had told them how much the students enjoyed it.

The teachers agreed to try Peer Tutoring: Reading in their classes and asked the RTLB to assist with the training of the student tutors. At the fortnightly syndicate meeting the literacy leader gave the teachers time to talk about implementation issues, such as, how to match the student tutors with student tutees appropriately, and organize the right books. Other teachers described how they managed these kinds of problems.

At the end of the six-week period, the teachers reported at the syndicate meeting that their work with the Peer Tutoring: Reading appeared to be bringing about significant gains in comprehension. The teachers completed their usual end of term running records and the literacy leader noticed the results showed nearly all the students were reading with greater accuracy and had improved their text levels compared with the previous term. She reported this to the teachers and they decided to continue with Peer Tutoring: Reading the following term.
The hypothetical scenario was deliberately constructed so as not to meet the evaluators’ criteria on a number of dimensions (see Figure 2.1). Part A of the scenario related to the identification of students’ needs. In the scenario, these needs were based on teachers’ expressed concerns about reading comprehension rather than using achievement data to determine the extent to which reading comprehension was a problem. This basis for identifying needs also made comparison with outcomes difficult to determine.

Part B focused on the needs / programme match. The basis for the decision to adopt a particular programme (in this case peer tutoring: reading) was that the students had enjoyed the programme in a neighbouring school. As evaluators, we considered this to be insufficient evidence of a programme that was likely to address comprehension difficulties.

Part C addressed meeting processes. In the scenario, the focus of meetings was to address self-identified organizational issues, rather challenging and addressing any concerns that the leadership might have of teachers’ professional knowledge about this, or any other approach to reading. While organizational issues are important, it is unlikely that the processes described would enhance teachers’ professional knowledge of reading instruction, which was a major focus of the literacy leadership initiative. The results for this part will be discussed in the following section on leadership.

Part D focused on the match between the initial need (comprehension) and the assessment used to determine progress and the decision to continue with the programme. The scenario specifically mentioned improvement in accuracy as the basis for the decision to continue with no mention of data on comprehension – the originally identified need.

Part E concerned the literacy leaders’ role in the process. Very little was mentioned in the scenario about the literacy leaders’ role except that it was passive and facilitative of teacher talk, rather than or challenging of teachers. The data analysed by the literacy leader did not focus on the identified need, and she did not share the details with the teachers in ways that they could learn how to improve their practice. This part will also be discussed in the following section on leadership.

A rating scale of 1 – 7 was used, where 1 represented ‘not effective / not appropriate’, 4 represented ‘Neither effective nor ineffective’ and 7 represented ‘Highly effective / highly appropriate’. Reasons for the ratings were open-ended and subsequently coded into categories based on the participants’ responses and reflective of the evaluators’ criteria. Responses that included more than one reason were coded separately so the number of responses is typically greater than the number of participants.

Initially the interview schedules were piloted with three facilitators and three schools (principals, literacy leaders and teachers). The interview schedules were then reviewed and modified accordingly.
Facilitators’ Interview Schedule

The facilitators interview schedule (Appendix 1) was divided into six sections:

- Common Understanding of the Key Messages;
- Scenario (designed to ascertain understanding of principles of evidence-based self-review);
- Classification of schools as least, somewhat and most successful and reasons for this classification;
- Expectations of student achievement;
- Skills and knowledge relevant to being a facilitator;
- Understanding of Professional communities.

Principals’ / Literacy Leaders’ Interview Schedules

The principal and literacy leader interview schedules followed similar themes to that of the facilitator, with additional questions about the school’s own initiative. The sections are as follow:

- Common Understanding of the Key Messages;
- A hypothetical scenario (designed to ascertain understanding of action research and data based initiatives);
- Discussion of own school initiative;
- Influences on student achievement;
- Professional communities and/or their role in the initiative

Teachers’ Interview Schedule

The interview schedule for the teachers was structured very differently (Appendix 1) with the following sections included:

- Discussion on their classroom initiative;
- Teaching and learning skills acquired during the initiative;
• Influences on student achievement;
• Interaction with colleagues.

**Student Achievement Data**

One of the main purposes of this initiative was to raise student achievement through the professional development of leadership within the school. For the purpose of this evaluation, schools were asked for any student achievement data they had collected either pre and/or post the implementation of the classroom based project generated by the initiative. As the schools’ initiatives encompassed many aspects of literacy (e.g. oral language, reading comprehension, writing letters) so, too, was there a variety of student assessment data that was reportedly collected or was provided.

In five schools in the Auckland region, the principals indicated that literacy-related achievement data was regularly discussed with staff. The meetings were observed in four of these schools.

**Data analysis**

The qualitative data from the transcripts of the interviews was subject to an iterative analysis. The principal researchers and project manager worked together to devise coding categories using both theoretical concepts and the responses themselves. The categories were specific to each question but had some common themes. Some examples of these themes include:

• A process (e.g. collegiality) or outcome (e.g. raised student achievement) focus
• An unchallenging / supportive or a challenging / learning form of interaction
• A strong (driving / challenging) view or facilitative view of leadership (both for facilitators and school management)
• Self or external attributions about needs and how to meet them
• Whether reported changes in perceptions translated into practice
• The extent to which judgment of success appeared to be supported by evidence
• The extent to which student achievement was salient as an organising principle
They then applied these tentative categories to the data, calculated a reliability coefficient on the sample they had coded, then refined the categories until a satisfactory level of reliability (approximately 85%) was obtained. Then the project manager and a research assistant coded the remaining transcripts. If they were unsure of a coding decision, they checked with the principal researchers. Finally, a sample (approximately 10%) of transcripts was checked by the principal researchers to ensure that the reliability coefficient remained above the criterion.
CHAPTER 3: EVIDENCE OF IMPROVED STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT (WITH RESPECT TO SCHOOLS’ PROJECTS)

In this chapter, we examine information related to the first research question concerning the evidence for improvement in student achievement. We begin by identifying the focus of each school’s project and then examine the evidence related to identifying success.

Specific Focus of Schools’ Class-based Projects

Schools selected a number of different literacy foci for their class-based projects. In schools with only one focus, the nominated initiatives included reading (3 schools), reading comprehension (7 schools), writing (6 schools) and oral language (2 schools) and assessment in reading (2 schools). An additional seven schools nominated two foci, including reading and writing (5 schools), oral language and reading (2 schools), reading comprehension and assessment (1 school). Of the total sample, five schools indicated that both teacher and student needs were the focus of the initiative, with an additional two schools indicating that teacher needs in assessment practices was the main target of their initiative.

Evidence of Improvement in Student Achievement

No programme can be considered effective or ineffective independently of the context in which it is implemented. As many of our respondents indicated, children arrive at school with varying literacy needs that require teachers to be flexible in how these needs are met. Teachers have varying levels of skill in teaching literacy, so implementation may vary. Changes in teaching practice are not necessarily associated with improved outcomes for children. These issues, combined with the Literacy Taskforce’s focus on improving student achievement and the focus of this initiative on promoting school self-review, has led us to focus this chapter on the nature of the evidence that student achievement improved as a result of the school-based initiatives of those schools involved in the enhancement programme.

Few schools were able to provide student achievement information that leant itself to an evaluation of progress over time. The details of the data and associated difficulties are presented in the section below. In summary, 20 of the 29 schools were able to provide achievement data about their class-based project and only 9 of the 20 collected data at more than one point in time. Of those nine, the data for four schools were unable to be
analysed for a variety of reasons. In the remaining four schools, there were difficulties with interpreting the data, but in no case could we unequivocally state from the data provided that achievement had improved. We do not wish to imply that there were no improvements in student achievement, but rather that the problem was the lack of evidence.

For the schools that nominated both staff skills and student achievement as the focus of their classroom projects, such a focus could not be expected to have a direct impact on student achievement within the time frame. The absence of data on staff skills, for example, in administering or analysing running records either at the beginning of the initiative, or towards its end, means that no conclusions can be reached as to its success in terms of staff becoming more skilled in this activity.

We suggest that the reasons for this lack of evidence were complex and these findings should not be interpreted as a failure of the literacy leadership initiative. Other studies (e.g. Parr, Aikman, Irving & Glasswell, 2003) show that schools do not routinely collect data to establish the effectiveness of initiatives and so the fact that some schools collected some evidence may indicate a considerable shift in thinking. In addition, the skills needed to undertake an evidence-based analysis are considerable and may have been considered by many facilitators to be beyond the scope of their role.

In the next section, details of the above summary are provided to indicate some points of intervention if the initiative is to result in evidence-based learning for the schools involved.

**OBTAINING INFORMATION ON STUDENTS’ PROGRESS**

In the school interviews, principals and literacy leaders were asked how they identified their students’ needs (probing for the collection and use of pre- or early-initiative data), and how they knew the initiative had been successful (probing for the use of post-initiative data). It was difficult to collect accurate information from this section of the interview schedule because, typically, schools were vague about the data collected, with many unsure about the information requested by the interviewer. Some principals referred to the literacy leaders for details of the assessment information, but this was not always helpful because the literacy leaders were also unsure. For example, one principal responded like this when asked how she identified the students’ needs:
Interviewer: How did you identify your students’ needs?

Principal: Testing I suppose.

Interviewer: I realise that [the literacy leader] may know more about this.

Principal: Oh certainly, much more.

Interviewer: Okay so you did testing, Do you know if the data was benchmarked in any way?

Principal: No

When the literacy leader was interviewed about the data collected to establish needs and identify progress, she was more specific, but we found it difficult to determine the basis of the judgments of success.

Interviewer: Did you collect any data to see if it was successful?

Literacy Leader: Yes I had a look at the [teachers’] journals. I collected those in and had a look at those, collated some of them you know and with those children the comments from the teachers. Or from the running records, teachers had said you know this kid has more re-call and reciprocal reading helped. We used the 3 level guides also. So you know that was a child who had some comprehension but was unsure, so they’d moved from 10 to 10 ½ years to 10 ½ and 11 years so that was the reading age. And that was I mean...

Interviewer: Did they work out the comprehension, for example like on the back of the PM benchmarks there are 4 or 5 questions and you can take 3 out of 5?

Literacy Leader: No, not really so it was just a basic either they could understand, yes we weren’t that specific. I mean if they weren’t getting more than 3 out of 5 you’d think well their understanding wasn’t good.

EVIDENCE FOR MEETING STUDENT NEEDS

After considerable probing in many cases, we established that 20 of the 29 schools had collected some student achievement data in relation to their identified initiative. In many cases these data were not systematically analysed, for example, one school decided
to target oral language ‘… because the SEA results looked low’. In all but two of these cases the school was able to supply us with copies. Although more than 20 schools routinely completed other assessment information, such as the Progress Achievement Tests, they did not refer to this information when asked about student achievement related to their initiative so we have not included these results in this analysis but rather have discussed the use of these routinely administered assessments in a later section of this chapter. This first section focuses only on the data the schools indicated they collected or used in relation to the school’s project that was part of the literacy leadership enhancement programme.

In order to monitor the progress and success of the literacy goals identified as part of the initiative, it was necessary for schools to have data on students at more than one point in time. Only 9 of the 20 schools with data had collected data both on needs prior to, or at an early stage of the initiative, and at some subsequent time to determine if those needs had been met. Of the remaining eleven schools, eight had collected data on needs only and three had collected information towards the end of the initiative only. Those who did not collect data on needs nominated one or more of the following: Teachers’ perceptions of students’ needs (three schools) e.g. ‘Teachers highlighted the students they felt they could move’; used writing samples from teachers’ own rooms that were idiosyncratic to each teacher (three schools); were unable to state how student needs were identified (three schools) e.g. ‘Not sure’ and ‘We just knew’; discussed possible needs (one school); or intended to collect writing samples but did not do so (one school).

The assessments used to collect data at two or more points in time by the nine schools with pre-post data included one or more of the following:

- PAT (1 school)
- PROBE (3 schools)
- PM benchmarks (5 schools)
- Informal Prose Inventories (1 school)
- Running records – instrument not indicated (3 schools)
- Written language samples (1 school)

We were unable to obtain copies of the data from one school of the nine schools with pre- and post-data so have not included it in the following analysis. Another was eliminated because the principal indicated that he believed the data collected to identify student needs was probably inaccurate (and accounted for the decline in test scores over the initiative) because teachers were not sufficiently skilled in administering running records at the beginning of the initiative. Developing this skill became the focus of this
school’s initiative. This problem reduced our sample of schools to seven. Issues of data accuracy may have applied also to another three schools that similarly targeted teachers’ administration and use of running records as part of their initiative, however, neither the principal nor literacy leader at the school mentioned data accuracy to be an issue, so we retained these schools in the sample for the purpose of this analysis.

If judgments of progress are to be made, a reasonable sample of targeted students must be collected. In one school, the four lowest children in each class were targeted in the initiative, but data on only one child was collected with no indication of how this child was selected. We removed this school from our sample because few conclusions can be drawn from a sample of one child. We were puzzled by the literacy leaders’ explanation for this sample size as ‘the facilitator only wanted a sample’, which suggests that the data were collected for the facilitator, rather than for their own self-review purposes. The principal confirmed this perception by stating that he did not know how the data had been used.

The achievement data from the remaining six schools were then examined in terms of whether they assessed the aspect of literacy targeted by the initiative itself, or whether the data collected related to some other aspect of literacy. Only four of the schools met this criterion. In one that did not meet it, the teachers were encouraged to choose their own classroom initiative, so there were a variety of initiatives operating throughout the school. The data supplied to the research team were students’ writing samples, but the person who supplied the data was unsure if these classes had targeted writing in their initiative and indicated that they did not have pre-post data in relation to the classroom based initiative. In the second, improvement in reading comprehension was targeted, but the recorded data related to accuracy only, although the principal expressed disappointment with the limited gains in comprehension. We were unclear on what evidence this judgement was based.

Of the four remaining schools that collected data that related to the initiative, one collected reading accuracy data only, but as the school identified their initiative as ‘reading’ rather than ‘reading comprehension’, they were retained in the sample for further analysis.

Finally, the data from these four schools were inspected to see if student progress was greater than would be expected for the time period. The data supplied to the research team were very difficult to interpret with conclusions difficult to substantiate. Each school’s data will be described with tentative conclusions reached.

A school whose initiative focused on reading provided the most promising set of data in terms of its completeness. The pre-post data (over a three month interval) given to the research team were for five students in eight classes for reading text level / age, percentage of words read accurately and percentage of comprehension questions
answered correctly. Each student was listed separately and the data were not collated. Four senior classes used reading ages and the four junior classes used text levels.

On the basis of the reading ages supplied for senior students for the 3 months between pre-post tests, 5 of the 20 students for whom reading ages were given appeared to improve six months, three appeared to make a year’s progress, one appeared to improve 18 months and one student improved an impressive two years. However, this picture was complicated by variation in the criteria used by the different teachers to determine the reading age. The percentage of words read correctly ranged from 90% – 100% suggesting that some text may have been too easy for some children. The second issue related to the percentage of comprehension questions correctly. They ranged from 44% - 90%. This testing of comprehension through specific standardised questions is not a component of the original running record procedure and age-related norms have not been established using standard psychometric procedures. In the absence of established norms, it is difficult to interpret the data. How should progress be evaluated for this child?

Pre-test: 8 ½ - 9 ½ reading age; 99% accuracy; 70% comprehension
Post-test: 9 ½ - 10 ½ reading age; 90% accuracy; 60% comprehension

It could be said that reading age improved one year over the three-month period, but the high level of accuracy for the pre-test suggests that the text read at this point in time was too easy. This raises doubts about interpreting the data as showing a year level in improvement. If percentage of questions were considered to be an accurate measure of comprehension, then the child did not appear to understand the second text well.

A second example of the results for a child who supposedly improved two years is similarly difficult to interpret:

Pre-test: 10 – 11 years reading age; 99% accuracy; 45% comprehension
Post-test: 12 – 13 years reading age; 99% accuracy; 40% comprehension.

Probably, the only conclusion that can be justified for this child is both texts were read with high levels of accuracy but that the child was struggling to comprehend either text although alternative measures of comprehension would be needed to establish whether this was the case. We were surprised that the principal did not comment on the fact that comprehension scores remained low. The interviewed literacy leader was new to the school.

A second school targeted three ex-reading recovery students in each class. The pre-post tests administered in June and November were also analysed by individual student, rather than collated for the group. Thirty-five children were involved, for whom 29 had
both pre-post test scores. Unfortunately the pre-test for four of these children referred to colour codes (such as Blue 2) with the post-test referring to reading ages (such as 6:00 years) which made their scores difficult to interpret because the reading ages were reported in bands of 3 and / or 6 months, while the text levels were more fine-grained. Of the remaining 25 students who used equivalent scores for pre- and post-test, 16 were assigned reading ages at both points in time. Three improved the equivalent of 2 years, four improved the equivalent of 1.5 years, five improved 1.0 year. The remaining four improved 0.5 of a year that would indicate progress similar to that of other New Zealand children, given that six months had passed between the time of the pre and post test. What cannot be evaluated from this data, however, was whether this rate of progress was better than that experienced for these students prior to the initiative because no equivalent data were available. Unfortunately no comprehension data were supplied.

Of those children assigned colour codes for their reading levels, three improved four levels, two improved three levels, and two remained at the same level. These results do not indicate progress beyond what would be expected over the time period if the New Zealand average were taken. Once again no information on comprehension was available.

The research team’s evaluation was similar to that of the literacy leader’s written evaluation of the senior schools project which stated, ‘... of the questionnaire returned all teachers indicated that all children, except one, had made progress, even if it was limited. The teachers’ comments included, ‘... became more fluent in her reading’, ‘... could talk more about what he had read’ and ‘... made remarkable improvement and this has carried through into other curriculum areas’. The literacy leader’s evaluation also noted the limited progress of the junior children. Neither the principal nor the literacy leader indicated in their interviews that they used these data to assess the effectiveness of the initiative.

The third school with pre-post data targeted all students and the teachers’ administration of running records. This school also collected reading accuracy data using running records. Students’ scores were both individually listed and collated into graphical form comparing the number of scores in each reading age band between March and November. These graphs were very difficult to interpret because progress would be expected over this time and the reading age scale on the x-axis varied between two to four months at the youngest ages, six months for between 7 and 8:5 years, and a year for the remaining students, but the progress of all students was indicated on this one graph. In Year two, for example, 14 children were reading between 5 and 5:4 years in March and only five in November; eight children were reading between 5:4 and 5:6 years in March and only three in November. At the other end of the scale, no children were reading between 11 and 12 years in March, but four children were in November.

An additional difficulty with the data became evident when one of the two interviewed teachers indicated that she used her own informal prose inventory rather than
the standardized texts as indicated by the literacy leader. An independent analysis of the individual students’ results for the whole school was beyond the resources of the evaluation team, and the probable inaccuracies in the data meant that no conclusions about progress can be made with respect to this school. The principal and literacy leader, however, were enthusiastic about how the data enabled them to better track student progress.

In the fourth school the focus of the literacy initiative was on the ‘second to bottom’ group in each of years three to six. Data were collected on reading ages, percent accuracy and comprehension in a pre-test at the end of term one and in an undated post-test. The absence of any indication of elapsed time made an independent judgment about progress inappropriate. The literacy leaders’ written interpretation of the data for senior students was difficult to interpret. For example, the results for Year 4 - 6 were reported as, ‘Year 4 – 5-6 classes have improved reading levels and comprehension by an average amount i.e. 6 months- to enhanced improvement i.e.: 18 months. ’ Comprehension improvements as per Probe Tests were good i.e. up to 35% better.’ The interpretation statement for the junior school was easier to understand: The Year 0-2 classes just kept pace with C.A. movement in reading levels and basic sight vocab. acquisition’. The principal stated that the data showed that success could be achieved when teachers worked with a targeted group.

Discussion

EVIDENCE FOR MEETING STUDENT NEEDS

The answer to the research question pertaining to the nature of the evidence collected by schools to monitor student achievement appears to be that little data were collected that could be used by the evaluators to draw any conclusions about student progress overall. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, the reasons are likely to be complex. Facilitators may have seen it as beyond their role to provide hands-on assistance to schools to acquire the relevant skills and schools may not have prioritised this aspect of their initiative. On the other hand, the underpinning of the initiative by evidence-based self-review practices is referred to in various ways throughout the material given to the schools involved in the enhancement programme (e.g. action research). It may be that the Literacy Leadership model was premised on their being some capacity in schools to engage in such evidence–based review. This capacity may have been overestimated. It appears that if these practices are to be established in these schools, more intensive assistance needs to be given than that available to facilitators, through once-a-term visits to the schools, because the skills involved in data collection, analysis and interpretation are complex.
Meeting Teachers’ Needs

The initiatives in several schools focused on teachers’ needs, as well as student needs, in terms of improving assessment and literacy programmes, so it is the evidence related to this need that we turn next. These schools (n = 7) indicated that teacher, as well as student needs were the target of their initiative. These needs included:

- Assessment practices, particularly the administration of running records;
- Teaching literacy programmes;
- Both assessments and teaching programmes.

IMPROVEMENTS IN ASSESSMENT PRACTICE

No school formally assessed the teachers’ skills, either before or after the initiative, although one literacy leader commented that she informally observed and worked with teachers and was able to observe and give feedback on assessment practices. One school included assessment practices as a criterion in their performance appraisal system, but it was unclear from the principals’ reports the specifics of how this was put into action and what evidence was used. Another school required small teams of teachers to give a presentation on the research and classroom application of a literacy area they investigated.

IMPROVING THE TEACHING OF LITERACY PROGRAMMES

The improvement in teaching programmes was similarly informally rather than formally assessed, although one school indicated that observations were carried out with feedback given on guided reading programmes, and another indicated that these teaching programmes formed part of their performance appraisal systems. As above, the specifics of the performance appraisal process were not clear to the evaluation team. In the absence of any data on either assessment or teaching practice, the evaluation team is unable independently to establish if these assessment practices and programmes improved as a result of the initiative. Participants’ self-reported learning, however, summarized in Chapter Four, indicates that many teachers felt they had learnt from the initiative. It was not necessarily that they reported new learning but they had been helped to recall important things they had forgotten or their learning had been refined or re-focused.
All but one school indicated that student achievement information was routinely collected. They used the Observation Survey (Clay, 1993) for students turning six years and either Progressive Achievement Tests, informal prose inventories and / or more recently published assessments, such as STAR and PROBE for older students. It is the use of this routinely collected, standardised achievement information to which we turned next.

Five Auckland-based schools indicated that they collated data from these standardized assessments and discussed the results with their staff, so the evaluation team arranged to observe meetings in four of these schools. The meetings included a whole staff meeting (one school), a whole staff meeting followed by syndicate meetings (two schools), and a syndicate meeting only (one school). The team were particularly interested in how the data were used to promote evidence-based self-review and improvement in practice. A brief sketch of the data presentation in each of these schools follows, firstly, by describing the type of data that was discussed, then the type of self-review that appeared to follow from the presentation.

School 1

Data presented. This school was in the early stages of computerising their achievement data and at the November meeting presented the data to the staff for the first time. Reading accuracy data were aggregated by year level in the form of at, above and below achievement expected for students of the same age. The format of the data was explained to staff but not discussed at this meeting.

Apparent purpose and self-review. Despite this early stage of aggregating the achievement data, the school was very focused on drawing teaching implications from the data, particularly in areas identifying skill weaknesses. A written analysis accompanied the summarised data that accurately summarised that an increasing percentage of students were reading at or above their chronological age as they moved through the year levels. Specific difficulties were noted for students in the junior school with blends and reading and writing basic sight words. Strategies were suggested (written and oral) about how to overcome these difficulties.

In the senior school, comment was made about the data showing the positive progress students were making in word reading, but concern expressed about lower comprehension levels, although no data was presented to support this concern. The teaching suggestions focused on raising comprehension. The school may have had other
data on comprehension that were recorded elsewhere. If not, the effectiveness of these strategies in raising comprehensions will be difficult to determine in the future.

School 2

Data presented. Maths data from the early numeracy project were listed for individual students and reading data were presented in a syndicate meeting in November. Most of the time was devoted to numeracy because this programme had been introduced very recently.

Apparent purpose and self-review. The numeracy data for individual students were discussed briefly, but most time was spent discussing understandings of the programme and the assessment process. The teachers indicated that they valued the programme by referring to high progress students, but were also very aware of their own professional development needs. For example, one commented, ‘We will have to consolidate next year because I don’t think ... that I’m that skilled in teaching ENP yet. It will take another year, maybe another two years’. The syndicate leader indicated that further professional development would be provided the following year. These comments did not arise from the data itself, but rather the teachers’ reflection on their confidence in teaching the programme. The reading data were briefly discussed in terms of class placements for 2003.

School 3

Data presented. Reading accuracy data were presented by year level with each class teacher given individual student data on reading accuracy and writing levels in the November meeting.

Apparent purpose and self-review. In syndicate groups teachers were asked to look at students who were below average, students who had not moved over the year, and children achieving at high levels and to make recommendations for the coming year. The recommendations that arose from these discussions focused on the implications for grouping students or alternative assistance that could be sought for them. For example, the observed syndicate leader noted that, ‘Most of our writing came out low ... and if they continue to struggle we can put their names forward for group withdrawal’. No comments were made about possible implications for classroom teacher practice.

School 4

Data presented. Reading accuracy levels from informal prose inventories for each year level were summarised according to the number of students at, above and below
expectations and presented to the whole staff in January. The principal noted how well the students had achieved that year.

**Apparent purpose and reflection.** After the whole staff presentation, they were divided into the syndicate groups and asked to discuss the following questions. What are the special features of our programmes that allow us to do this? (i.e. achieve good results)

What are the strengths? What are the problems for those not achieving and what should be done about this? The syndicate observed by the evaluation team focused on identifying perceived strengths of their programme rather than identifying programme changes or addressing any problems.

**DISCUSSION: USE OF ROUTINELY COLLECTED STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT INFORMATION.**

The evidence-based self-review practices documented in Timperley and Wiseman (2002) when the achievement information was used to focus the development of teaching practice to meet better the needs of low-progress students were not evident in any of meetings observed in these schools. The teachers’ activities during these meetings could have been influenced by the time of year the data were collected (November and January). School one’s meeting came closest to promoting reflection on the adequacy of programmes and how they might be changed because specific recommendations for the emphasis of the next year’s teaching programme accompanied the data presentation. In contrast, in School three, solutions to student achievement problems were seen to lie outside the classroom and in School two, the reading data were used for the purpose of class placement only. In School four, the celebratory tone of the meeting meant that strengths, rather than weaknesses or changes in practice were the focus.

Of particular concern to the evaluators was that in all these schools the reading data documented word recognition / accuracy rather than comprehension. At senior levels, in particular, using oral reading accuracy as a measure of reading competence is highly problematic as readers who typically read silently and fluently may not read aloud in ways that accurately reflect their ability to read silently or to comprehend text. However, the lack of evidence related to comprehension is understandable given current debates about the assessment of comprehension and the limited number of tools available.
CHAPTER 4: PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF THE INITIATIVE

Benefits of the initiative, other than those measured by improvements in student achievement may have accrued so, in this chapter, we report some of these aspects. They include the proportion of schools categorised in each of the success categories; the teachers’ ratings for the success of their initiative, and the perceived learning on the part of participants.

Proportion of schools categorised as most, somewhat and least successful.

Facilitators were asked how many schools they worked with in 2001 and 2002, then asked the number they would classify as most, somewhat and least successful in terms of the success of the initiative in each year. In 2001, a slightly higher proportion of schools were categorized as ‘somewhat successful’ than ‘most successful’. Both these categories, however, had higher proportions of schools than the ‘least successful’ schools. One facilitator did not give proportions of schools in each category. In 2002, fewer schools were categorised, but a higher proportion were considered most successful, with correspondingly fewer as somewhat and least successful.

This shift suggests that facilitators perceived the initiative to be increasingly successful. Some attributed this increased success to their increased confidence in the facilitator role.

Perceptions of Initiative Success

Most school participants also viewed their school-based initiatives as reasonably successful. A seven-point scale was used in which a rating of 1 represented ‘Unsuccessful’ and a rating of 7 represented ‘Highly successful’. A rating of 4 represented the neutral ‘Neither successful nor unsuccessful’. The average success ratings were 5.2 for principals and 5.6 for literacy leaders and teachers suggesting that the latter two groups, in particular, believed the initiative to be successful. Initial drafts of the interview schedule did not have this question included for principals and literacy leaders, so the numbers asked were only 24 and 20, respectively. Fifty teachers were asked this question.

Figures 4.1 – 4.2 show the reasons for each point on the rating scale. Reasons were categorised according to whether they focused on changes in student achievement; were
related to students but were not achievement focused, such as improved motivation; focused on changes in teachers’ perceptions or practice; described issues related to school organisation, such as too many initiatives; or were external to the school, such as child or family characteristics.

**Figure 4.1**
Reasons for Success Given by Literacy Leaders and Principals for Each Rating Point (N=44)
The most common reason, particularly for high ratings, was related to changes in teachers’ perceptions or practice (teacher focused), such as becoming more focused and more collaborative. A principal explained his rating of seven like this:

Because for a whole pile of reasons. For the things I’ve just said to you so we’ve got better people outcomes. We’ve got better teaching. I’m not sure if outcomes is the word. But better teaching practice – better people outcomes, better teaching practice. Because it was a whole school thing, there was buy-in and input from most of the staff so everyone had a role to play. Everyone could have a say in the whole thing
Two literacy leaders gave reasons similarly related to teacher involvement:

Lit Leader 1: Participation in the final presentations was very good. Everyone participated, literally. They didn’t sort of leave it to anyone else to take on.

Lit leader 2: The classroom programmes

Interviewer: What do you mean by that?

Lit leader 2: I believe they’re fuller. When you go into a classroom you can see a reading session ...

Lit leader 1: You can see all types of reading taking – the shared, the guided, all of that is taking place.

Lit leader 2: And teachers are far more aware of the sort of things they can do in a guided reading session.

Lit leader 1: And I think the collection of data – they can understand now is very important and needs to be consistent

Reasons related to student achievement were much less frequent, and were based primarily on perceptions of students’ achievement (11 principals and literacy leaders; 10 teachers) rather than actual assessment data (1 principal; no literacy leaders; 1 teacher). For example, one teacher said ‘It was because the standard of writing went up in my classroom so it was highly successful for the children.’ One teacher expressed a sentiment that appeared to underlie many others in relation to the collection of achievement information,

I don’t need data to see that it has been successful. I mean you can see by the children’s attitudes and all the extra things that we are putting in. I mean I look at my three bottom children and even though they are not catching up, they haven’t caught up but they have made gains. I mean we do little extra things for those children.’

School organizational issues featured relatively frequently and often referred to ‘initiative overload’, as illustrated in the following quote, ‘It happened when we were doing a lot of other things .... There was pressure on a lot of other areas at that time.’ Several facilitators raised this issue as a reason for classifying their schools as ‘least successful’; however, most of the schools gave external reasons, such as, transient children or poor facilitation, rather than internal reasons as the cause of low success.
Self-identified professional learning with respect to literacy

A major aim of the Literacy Leadership initiative was to enhance the knowledge and understanding of principals and literacy leaders so that they could assume a leadership role with their staff in relation to the teaching of literacy in the school. Additionally, it was assumed that teachers would learn something relating to their own literacy practice from participating in the classroom initiative that the school undertook.

We had two sources of information with respect to knowledge and learning. One was self reported learning and the other responses to the questions relating to the scenario. The latter give an indication of the extent of understanding of the principles of evidence-based decision-making with respect to teaching and of the role of management in this. These data are reported in Chapter 7 and 8. Self-report data concerning learning are considered below.

There were different questions asked of each group of participants: facilitators, principals, literacy leaders and teachers as to their perceived learning as a result of their role in the Literacy Leadership initiative.

FACILITATORS

Facilitators were asked whether the training provided by Learning Media had had any impact on them and about the key areas that had the most impact. In an attempt to ascertain whether facilitators, too, were acquiring new knowledge, skills or understandings, we asked them the extent to which they had the skills needed before they began as a facilitator. We were interested in whether they felt they were receiving the training they needed to be effective. Given this is a flow down model, if facilitators were shown to have inadequate knowledge or understanding, then it is less likely that the schools they work with will acquire appropriate understandings.

The overwhelming response of facilitators to the question of impact on them personally was that participation in this Literacy Leadership initiative had, indeed, had an impact. ‘It’s been brilliant...being able to listen to key research and be at the cutting edge of literacy development in New Zealand’. The professional development was highly praised, described a ‘stunning’ by one facilitator. The largest category of response (by over two thirds of the facilitators) with respect to the impact of the training provided by Learning Media was that it had increased their understanding, for example of the process for people to change their practice, or enhanced their knowledge of effective literacy practice or refined or focussed their thinking. However, only 16 percent of them felt that it had provided new learning or that they had acquired new professional knowledge.
In response to the question of whether they felt they had the skills to take on the role of facilitator before they began, it seemed that a minority (16%) felt that they had all of the skills and that there had been no development. Where facilitators may have felt that they had the learning or knowledge and that this was only refined, it is clear that some perceived there to be other skills necessary for the role that they did not already have. Included here were skills of ‘working alongside principals’, or what another described as the skills of ‘facilitation’. Those who had been advisors commented on having had to move from expert to guide or mentor, from ‘sage on the stage to guide on the side’. The majority felt, however, that their skills had been honed and extended it seems partly in the process of their ‘training’ but largely ‘on the job’ in the course of work as a facilitator.

There were a number of impacts mentioned that referred more to process and were, thus, related indirectly to learning. The major one of these, given by 58 percent of facilitators, concerned the provision of information and resources by Learning Media. Another significant impact included the notion of acquiring a sense of collegiality, support and of mutual respect from meeting and working as a group which over a third of facilitators mentioned.

Facilitators were asked to rate how effective Learning Media had been in providing the training they needed. Overwhelmingly, the ratings were high, averaging 6.3, with a small range. Reasons centred on the genuine desire of Learning Media personnel to help; on the level of support and on features of the professional development hui, including the building of a team. Some mentioned they felt that the training had evolved in order to try to meet their needs. Sevens were given as Learning Media were seen as ‘supportive... can’t do enough, available... wanting to do the very best for learners’. Likewise another facilitator rated seven and mentioned the ‘support, the direction and the passion’. Although they may have rated highly overall, some felt there were areas that warranted comment. This included that the training had been ‘spasmodic’, that is at times, particularly initially, highly effective, then later not so effective at all. There were some doubts expressed as to whether what it meant to be a mentor had been made explicit.

PRINCIPALS

There were a number of questions asked of principals that were concerned both with their own learning and with whether the school body had learnt in that something was being done differently or that some other initiative had arisen from the earlier, Literacy Leadership, one.

The principals were asked to rate how worthwhile they had found their school initiative in terms of their own learning; that is how much it had added to their own knowledge. They were probed for an explanation of the rating and further asked where the knowledge had come from. With respect to how much the classroom initiative had
added to their existing knowledge about literacy, principals were somewhat lukewarm. They gave an average rating on a seven-point scale of 4.4, where 4 represented ‘of some value’, with ratings ranging from 2 to 6. There are a couple of possible explanations for this relatively low rating. The first is that the question was asked in relation to the classroom initiative and principals may have felt that they were not centrally involved in this. Second, the finding that principals largely did not see the Literacy Leadership initiative as concerning their needs might support a reasoning that if it was not concerned with them, why should they be expected to learn from it?

What the knowledge was that they may have gained came from the comments as principals completed the rating scale. The largest category of response was that the initiative clarified or reinforced existing knowledge. For 17 percent there was some new knowledge acquired, although almost all did not specify what this was. Where knowledge came from is interesting. The majority of responses suggested it came from resources or readings (31%), next from the facilitator (29%) although this response could also have included the resources or readings that the facilitator provided. Likewise, there is likely overlap between categories as 17 percent of principals named the Literacy Leadership workshops that were run by facilitators and used the resource materials. Clearly, for those who reported learning, the facilitator, workshops and materials were highly salient. An additional source nominated by 21 percent was peers.

The principals were asked whether they, as a school, had decided to continue with any changes brought about by the initiative and, in the same vein, whether they were doing anything different this year (the year after the initiative being discussed). Later, there was a question asked about whether input from the Literacy Leadership initiative had led them to undertake subsequent initiatives in the school that they had approached in a similar way.

Principals who indicated that they were continuing with the thrust of the initiative sometimes made reference to outcomes as the basis for their decisions. [We decided to continue because] ‘we could see that the programme was working and catering to individual children’s needs; classrooms are more focussed and students more focussed on their work’. A more general reason given was that ‘good things had happened so far’. Another school reported that they wanted to keep up the professional reflective journals but rather than on an individual basis to do them as a school. They continued with changes brought about by the consultant who supported what was begun by the Literacy Leadership initiative because they felt there were ‘benefits and teachers wanted to’. In one case a school reported going back to the workshops and taking additional people along who will take over facilitating the programme within the school as they were concerned with ‘making sure they keep it up’.

There was a sense from some that they had learned things that would be ongoing, things they could not quite put their finger on like ‘there are probably things that I’ve
internalised in terms of the process and how I’d go about it’. Others were quite specific about what aspects contributed to the continuation like the principal who said that ‘we have decided to continue with the use of data but we haven’t decided what we will do. The closer analysis of data has got us looking at what we are doing for our targeted children’. This is a very interesting statement that suggests an appreciation of the necessity and perhaps power of the use of data. Hopefully, the doing part contained the link forward to practice although this is unclear given that they had not decided what to do.

Some principals were able to give examples of subsequent initiatives that had been approached in a similar way, ‘Yes, we have continued this year in a similar way and the guided reading this year has been a new focus so that has been done in a similar way as well’.

**LITERACY LEADERS**

Similarly, literacy leaders were asked about how much the classroom initiative added to their existing knowledge and to explain their rating and where they felt this knowledge came from.

The rating of how much it added to their knowledge was slightly higher than that of principals at 4.7, with the full seven-point scale employed. Like the principals, the largest category of response was that what they had learnt clarified or reinforced existing knowledge. Those who claimed to have acquired new knowledge (around 45%) were more able than principals to specify what this was and named areas like working with staff, literacy concepts, current research, goal setting and reflection and using data. Only two literacy leaders were clear that they had learnt nothing new.

The knowledge reportedly came from resources and readings and the facilitator (around 30% of literacy leaders for each). Next largest category was from peers and colleagues that just over 20 percent nominated. In total, about the same percentage (20%) mentioned professional development; more commonly professional development other than the workshops was specified (presumably the workshops were subsumed under the nomination of the facilitator).

**TEACHERS**

There were several inter-related questions for teachers with respect to learning. The first was whether they had learnt anything new as a result of the initiative. Allied to this was the notion of not only having learnt something but of changing practice as a result, so the question concerned whether they were doing anything differently. Then there was a
question about how much the classroom initiative added to their existing knowledge and, in addition, where this knowledge came from.

With respect to whether they had learn anything new, over half the teachers felt that they had learnt something that resulted in changed teacher practices. The comments clearly illustrated the new learning and the significant nature of some of it. The following comment came from a teacher who had completely changed her practice from what is considered far less effective ‘round robin reading’ to guided reading. *Definitely. With guided reading, I used to have my little group all in a circle and we would read. Joe, then Mary, just reading aloud.... Now... like prediction and getting the children to put in their own knowledge and experience*. There were several examples offered that concerned learning about choice of text and about encouraging children to talk a lot before they actually get into reading.

There was a range of different examples of teacher learning. A teacher explained that s/he had learnt that s/he was probably underestimating the abilities of the children. Another had learnt about working with others to rewrite schemes. Yet another talked of discovering the power of modelling to children in writing. One teacher was very honest and revealed that she now actually understood running records, why you did them and what you could use them for. And, another with reference to running records said, ‘I always used to do them but I wasn’t always so good at checking them in the same way. They are actually a very good way of seeing where the children are at’. Referring to a different area of learning, a teacher said s/he had learnt about the teaching of different genre. *With the littlies, you sort of get stuck in expressive writing a lot but we’ve tried out a lot of different things- report writing for one. Gathering information and recording that*. The percentage of teachers giving a response that indicated that they had learnt something was highest in schools nominated as least successful.

About a fifth of teachers gave a response that indicated that what they had learnt had reinforced or affirmed what they already knew. *It just reinforced ideas and brought back things. I mean when you have been teaching for a long time, you forget. As soon as the three level guides were mentioned, I thought, ‘oh, I did those with form one and two in H. primary and that was a long time ago’. A perceptive teacher noted ‘I have learnt that there are a lot of basic techniques that you need to revisit- there’s a lot of areas I forget about and it’s important to go over them again’. Another made it clear that it reinforced ‘the fact that if you want things to happen, it won’t happen if you don’t do something about it and you’ve got to be on the ball all of the time.’

Around 13 percent of respondents stated that they had not learnt anything new at all and this percentage rose to over a third in the ‘somewhat successful’ schools.

The follow-up question concerned whether teachers were doing anything differently as a result of participating in the classroom initiative in their school. In
general, the majority of teachers reported doing something differently, even those who claimed not to have learnt anything new! Here is a classic example. Often, in response to the question of whether they had learnt anything new, they might say ’No, but it refocused me’, and then in response to the question about doing anything differently say, ‘Yes, [I am doing something differently], I am doing a lot more prediction’. A possible explanation for these apparent contradictions is contained in the following example. This teacher did not think that she had learnt anything but when asked if she was doing anything differently, proceeded to say ‘I do more running records and collecting and collating data a lot more I think’, a comment that might suggest learning something about the value of doing this. However, the response to the enquiry as to why this happened was that s/he did not know. In other words, there was a new practice but, in her thinking, it had no learning associated with it.

Half of the teachers interviewed said that it had changed some aspect of their teacher practice while eight percent specifically mentioned assessment practice. Some of the examples were similar to those given in response to what they had learnt. An example of the former was where a teacher claimed that it made her now spend much more time thinking about how to introduce a <writing> topic to the class and made her think more specifically about what was wanted as an outcome. Another is a teacher who reported asking more questions that will help children ‘think about what’s in the book’, while another reported looking in a structured way at the level of questions being asked of different children. An example relating to assessment practice was a teacher who thought that it helped to standardise her practice with running records.

Over 40 percent of teachers gave a status quo type response, namely, that they were continuing as they had always done (37%) or that they were not doing anything differently (8%).

In response to the final question asking how much it had added to their knowledge, both a rating and an explanation were asked for. The average rating of 5.2 (range 2-7) was not high, relative to teachers’ ratings of other areas like interaction with colleagues or even usefulness of feedback. However, the comments by those who said they learnt something new or from those who claimed to be doing something differently, were indicative of significant areas of learning, areas that could be expected to have considerable influence on practice and, related to this, outcomes. Many gave medium ratings claiming that a lot of the things they ‘already knew’. The initiative had helped, as above, to fine-tune or refine. Sometimes the explanation of the rating suggested that the knowledge they learnt was actually simply re-cued, that is much of it had been there, but it needed to be activated

Questions about new learning or about doing things differently were followed by a probe that asked from where the knowledge or learning had come. The teacher who said s/he had learnt to have greater expectations said that s/he had used ‘some books in the
school’ and had extended the children more in the area of grammar. Some others also mentioned professional readings. However, the teachers who reported learning largely attributed it to their literacy leader and their teaching colleagues.

It is interesting that teachers tended to rate the initiative relatively low in terms of their own learning but were inclined to rate feedback given as a result of peer observation higher. Yet, often the feedback was directly related to, and is likely to have emerged from, the thrust of the initiative. For example, a young teacher rated the initiative at 4.5 in terms of adding to her existing knowledge and the reason was that she already knew a lot of the things before; it had just consolidated knowledge. The initiative was concerned with improving student comprehension levels by concentrating on the guided reading process. The feedback received from observing her teaching, feedback she claimed to value highly, related to choosing texts and matching them to instructional levels. The teacher rated learning from this feedback higher at 6.5 and interaction with colleagues similarly. The feedback, however, appears to be directly related to the thrust of the initiative and is likely to have been related to it.

Sometimes, third parties commented on the learning of teachers. One principal commented ‘It’s actually making teachers think a bit more professionally and a bit more philosophically about learning and what comprehension is all about… All of our eyes have been opened a little bit more in that regard [getting children involved in terms of emotions and intellect] and thinking about making material meaningful for kids to read’.

Conclusion

There is evidence from the facilitators’ judgements of proportions of schools in 2001 that were nominated as most successful versus the proportion nominated in 2002 that saw progress being made. As the model is one that is able to adapt and to change, this perception could have resulted from facilitators becoming more skilled, or from additional visits or materials provided. Similarly, schools judged their classroom initiatives to have been successful. There may be aspects that qualify as learning and success that did not meet our criterion of evidence of improved student achievement. An example is the evidence from the comments that teachers, in particular, were learning (or having such recalled or reinforced), about significant aspects of their practice, aspects arguably associated with ‘best practice’ teaching of literacy. The fact that they did not necessarily attribute learning to the classroom initiative is interesting but perhaps does not matter. What is heartening is that they reported learning and could specify what it was.
CHAPTER 5: GENERIC EXPLANATIONS FOR LIMITED EVIDENCE

In the next section of this report, we analyse possible reasons for the limited information collected on student achievement in relation to the school-based projects. In this chapter we sought two ‘generic’ explanations for the lack of evidence about improved student achievement. In the first, we examined issues of teacher efficacy and expectations because if teachers do not believe they can make a difference with low achieving students, or if their expectations of that achievement are low, then there is little reason to collect any achievement information. The evaluation data did not support this explanation. A second ‘generic’ explanation that did appear more likely was that teachers were already satisfied with student achievement in their classes, therefore they were able to make judgments of success without the need for achievement information.

Teacher Efficacy and Expectations

A series of five questions probed participants’ beliefs about teacher efficacy and expectations. They included the influence of school decile on achievement, causes of differences in achievement, interventions with the greatest leverage in improving achievement, and whether involvement in the literacy leadership initiative enhancement programme had changed the participants’ beliefs. These questions were designed to find out if the school professionals believed that they were able to influence student achievement, or whether achievement was considered to be something outside of their control. If the latter situation were the case, then an initiative like literacy leadership that was designed to change achievement by targeting school beliefs and practices would be facing a daunting task. It could also explain why most schools did not collect achievement information related to their classroom-based project because such an exercise could be construed as irrelevant to student achievement.

In summary, the above scenario was not evident in the data collected. Most of our respondents expressed beliefs consistent with a perception that they had considerable influence on student achievement, and that these beliefs had been held prior to the initiative and were based primarily on previous experience. Beliefs about efficacy and expectations did not appear to be the basis for the limited achievement data collected on the school-based projects.

There was little difference between the pattern of responses for those from most, somewhat and least successful schools, so we have combined their responses when reporting the results.
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DECILE AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Each participant was asked to rate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement ‘The link between the literacy achievement of students and decile of schools is very difficult to change’. A 1-7 scale was used with a rating of 1 representing ‘disagreement’ with the statement, and 7 representing ‘agreement’. Average ratings of 2.3 for principals, 2.5 for literacy leaders and 2.9 for teachers indicated that overall, most of our respondents expressed the belief that decile of school did not determine students’ achievement. The most commonly identified basis for this belief was the participants’ personal or teaching experience. A typical example from a principal comprised, ‘Well we’re a decile one and we have got some very high achievers’ and from a teacher, ‘I’m just basing it on the results within my own classroom’.

Participants were also asked to rate the extent to which their involvement in the literacy leadership enhancement programme had changed their views about the relationship between school decile and student achievement. A 1 – 7 rating scale was used with 1 representing ‘Unchanged’, 4 representing ‘Somewhat changed’ and 7 representing ‘Significantly changed’. Most principals and literacy leaders indicated that their perceptions had not changed, with both groups giving an average rating of 1.9. For example, a principal explained, ‘Pretty much unchanged and that is not the fault of the literacy initiative. I didn’t feel that they were trying to set out to change my views, I think I was pretty aware of where we were at and whether we can be at and what happens in our school anyway’. Teachers gave a slightly higher average rating of 2.4. These averages, however, should not be taken to indicate that no change had occurred for anyone as a result of the initiative. For example, one principal, five literacy leaders and six teachers gave ratings of 5 and 6 citing reasons such as, ‘I’m more reflective of my own practice’. ‘I’m more aware students in low deciles can achieve’, and that, ‘Professional readings had contributed to my own professional development’.

REASONS FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND HOW TO IMPROVE IT

Two more open-ended questions asked about reasons that might contribute to high and low student achievement. The first asked for two reasons why the achievement in a school might be below national profiles and the second asked for two reasons why the achievement might be at or above these same profiles. The answers were coded according to whether the causes were attributed to school-related factors (e.g. low expectations or teaching quality), external factors (e.g. parenting skills, English as a second or other language) or the interface between school and community.

As can be seen from Table 5.1, principals and literacy leaders divided their reasons fairly evenly between school-based and external factors, although teachers were much more likely to attribute low achievement to external factors, while reasons for high
achievement were more evenly distributed. A typical response giving school-based factors as a reason for low achievement from one principal was, ‘No enthusiasm for literacy by the teachers, I would say the programmes that are being run in the classrooms are not vibrant, they’re just the boring ‘open the book,’ round robin all that sort of style of teaching. Not enough professional development has been given to the staff and probably not enough enthusiasm from the top.’ Another principal who gave more weight to external influences as the reason for low achievement summarized a number of themes evident in others’ answers, ‘The background – children’s background is one, is certainly one, where they’ve come from. What language – pre-school language they got and I think the lack of support that they have from home and there’s no motivation at home.’ The interface between home and school was mentioned infrequently by any group which is surprising given the emphasis on the literacy leadership initiative in improving that interface.

Table 5.1
Percentage of principals’ literacy leaders’ and teachers’ reasons for low and high achievement

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<th>Reasons for low achievement</th>
<th>Reasons for high achievement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School-based</td>
<td>External</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>42.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lit. leaders</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>48.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>60.6</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Principals’ and literacy leaders’ suggestions about how achievement might be improved in cases when achievement was below national profiles of achievement were reasonably consistent with the balance of reasons given for low achievement (see Table 5.1). These participants gave slightly more weight to changing school-based practices than to changes in factors external to the school. Teachers, on the other hand, nominated a much higher percentage of external factors when identifying the reasons for low achievement, but saw the solution to the problem as lying primarily with the school. A more detailed analysis of the ways in which school-based practices might need to change showed a surprising consistency among the three groups. Just over half the suggested strategies for each of the groups (55.5% principals’ strategies; 54.5% literacy leaders strategies; 54.5% of teachers’ strategies) placed the emphasis on improving teacher skills, practices or knowledge. For example, one principal said, ‘I wonder if the teachers have got a love of literacy, love of reading, you know they do amazing things for kids. It doesn’t matter what decile they are, I think that’s really important, I think and I know we
only talk about literacy here but I think it’s the relationships that staff can build up with students. All of those things have a major impact on literacy levels, and on all curriculum areas’. Others talked about specific programme strategies, as this teacher explained, ‘It is sort of like the whole language approach, early intervention with reading recovery, peer tutoring, just small group teaching of early literacy.’ A relatively small proportion of each groups’ strategies (13.9% principals; 6.1% literacy leaders; 7.2% teachers) targeted management skills, practices and policies. Improving resources (5.6% principals; 6.1% literacy leaders; 3.6 teachers) or reducing class size (2.8% principals, 6.1% literacy leaders; 10.9% teachers) also did not feature strongly. Targeting expectations of students was more important for literacy leaders (9.1%) than the other two groups (2.8% of principals; 3.6% of teachers) as one literacy leader described, ‘Teacher education, expectations and just fostering an environment’.

Table 5.2
Principals’ literacy leaders’ and teachers’ suggestions about how to improve achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>School-based</th>
<th>External</th>
<th>Interface</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principals</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy leaders</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>57.7</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion: Beliefs about Student achievement

Overall, beliefs about the causes of low achievement and the nominated strategies to improve it did not appear to account for the limited data collected on student achievement. Most participants gave views that were consistent with the literature on the causes and remedies for low student achievement. Both external and internal factors were seen to contribute, with changes in teaching practices in schools likely to have the greatest leverage.

SATISFACTION WITH STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Teachers were asked to rate their satisfaction with levels of student achievement in their class using a 1-7 scale with extreme descriptors of ‘Unsatisfactory’ and ‘Highly satisfactory’ and to give reasons for this rating. Again, if participants expressed high levels of satisfaction with student achievement, then this could explain why they did not
perceive a need to test whether their initiative was having an impact by collecting information on student achievement. Testing would be irrelevant.

The teachers’ average rating of satisfaction with achievement on the seven-point scale was 5.8, indicating a generally high level of satisfaction.

**REASONS FOR SATISFACTION RATINGS**

The most common reason given by teachers for their satisfaction rating was a general reference to class achievement as a whole \((n = 17)\). Others, like the following teacher quoted were more focused on the highest achieving children \((n = 7)\) when giving their rating, ‘I had some of the best readers I’ve ever had’ (rating 6). Of particular interest was the role the lower achieving children played in the teachers’ ratings because this group was of particular importance to the literacy taskforce. Only one teacher related her rating to the positive progress of her lower achieving students, but she qualified her response by noting that progress was still slow. ‘I’ve seen improvement in the targeted children but they are still low and progress is slow’ (rating 6). Ten others specifically mentioned the lower achieving students when giving reasons for their ratings, usually in relation to their lack of progress, for example, one teacher said, ‘Some children have not made progress, but I’m happy with the majority’ (rating 5). The ratings were variably influenced by concern about the lower achieving students with five of the teachers giving a rating of 6 and five teachers giving a rating of 5 on the seven-point scale. The lowest rating of 4 was given by one teacher who made reference to these students, ‘Because I am satisfied with some children and not with others. Some children are progressing well and others, I feel, are stuck or really struggling.’

Other reasons given by the teachers for their ratings were factors outside of the schools’ control \((n=11)\), such as poor skills at school entry, attendance, or the ‘nature of the children’ (rating 7). Two teachers giving ratings of 5 and 6 based their ratings on a belief that there is always room for improvement. Other reasons mentioned by only one teacher referred to feeling more comfortable with guided reading, and more work was needed for the initiative to make a difference.

Given these generally high levels of satisfaction with student achievement, it is not surprising that teachers did not see a need to test if their efforts were having an impact. Of particular concern, however, are the teachers who gave high satisfaction ratings while noting the slow progress of some children. It is these children who are likely to form the ‘tail’ in achievement as identified in the various literacy reports noted in the introduction.
CHAPTER 6: UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE INITIATIVE’S MESSAGES AND ROLES

In this chapter we examine the participants’ understandings of the initiative, its purpose; the main messages and key ideas to be promulgated, and their understandings of roles within it. Included in the latter was an analysis of whose needs were considered to be a focus of the school’s initiative. The aim is to look for possible explanations for the limited data collected to examine student achievement. If participants did not think the Literacy leadership initiative was primarily concerned with raising student achievement, then this would contribute to an explanation of the lack of evidence relating to it. We also examined the facilitators’ reasons for classifying the schools as most, somewhat and least successful to see if these reasons bore any direct relationship to student achievement and its improvement. In addition, we provide an analysis of the messages contained in the materials supplied and used in the workshops in relation to crucial aspects of evidence-based self-review and leadership.

Understandings of the literacy leadership initiative: Purpose and main messages

It is important to establish the participants’ understandings of the initiative and what the key messages were seen to be. Clearly, if none of the messages were seen to contain elements relating to the issue of collecting evidence of improved student achievement, then this could explain, at least in part, the tenor of the data and the inferences presented in Chapter 3.

The extent of shared understandings within any one group, like facilitators, is of interest in and of itself with respect to the consistency of messages delivered by Learning Media. However, given a major premise of this whole Literacy Leadership enhancement programme is the ‘flow down’ effect, then a further aim of our questioning was to gauge the extent to which the ideas and beliefs that facilitators held about the programme, derived from the Learning Media sponsored meetings and materials, were conveyed to schools and received by them. Although an earlier chapter (Chapter 4) dealt specifically with what principals and literacy leaders reported learning from the Literacy Leadership programme, their understanding of the purpose and messages could also be considered a part of this learning.
FACILITATORS

We were interested in three aspects in relation to the understandings of facilitators with respect to the initiative, namely, what they considered the main purpose of the initiative, the main messages they took from the Learning Media Hui, workshops and materials including the stability of these messages, and the key ideas they gave to their schools.

Purpose of initiative

There was a focused range of responses to the question about the purpose of the initiative, reflecting a fairly consistent and accurate understanding on the part of the facilitators. Responses were, in many cases, multi-faceted as most facilitators included more than one purpose and may have, in addition, talked of how the purpose was to be achieved.

The enhancement programme, for example, was ‘to provide a format for the principal and literacy leader so that they had the skills to develop literacy within their school’, ‘.... for them to get an understanding of their role as leader’, ‘... the kinds of things they needed to implement at their school’. The need for ‘data to validate the process and to actually get across to teachers...some new facets of professional development that would raise kid’s achievements by refining their practices’.

The largest category of response concerned raising student achievement which 58 percent of the facilitators mentioned. The above quote was the only instance that recognised the necessarily data driven nature of this process. If responses suggesting the purpose was to improve literacy generally (a rather broad, and obvious response) are added then around three quarters are nominating the purpose in terms of improving literacy and student achievement.

Closely related to this was the next largest category that contained responses to the effect that the purpose was to change programmes and practices, or to improve capability (53% of facilitators). Extending and up-skilling personnel and helping to consolidate and support their programmes and practices were categories of response mentioned by 32 and 21 percent, respectively. A much smaller percentage of facilitators nominated the purpose as involving developing independence in schools, helping them to self-review and empowering the leaders and assisting them to take responsibility.

Responses were also analysed in terms of the personnel mentioned in them. Just over half of the facilitators named the principal, plus a couple of responses talked of management generally. The next most frequently mentioned were teachers (42 percent of facilitators). The literacy leader was separately identified in a smaller number of cases, as were the school and children.
Main messages

Facilitators were asked about the main messages that they took from Learning Media, from the Hui, seminars and supplied materials. There were many individualistic slants on these messages but also some common themes. The largest category consisted of responses that emphasised that practice should be informed. Some facilitators stated explicitly that practice should be informed by data and/or by research. Allied to this were responses suggesting that the message focus was that change should come out of a process of reflection and self review which, some facilitators added, should be ‘action research’ or data based (a quarter referred to data driven). Two facilitators identified a main message as being to challenge school personnel in relation to teaching practices. If these response categories are seen to express a common theme of informed change in practice, then almost all facilitators considered this to be a main message from Learning Media. There were individual responses from facilitators that amplified this theme, mentioning that the message focus was that practice can be improved and discrepancies in achievement addressed. These more specific amplifications mentioned focussed instruction, and data driven identification of need.

Another message facilitators took from the Learning Media Hui related to the notions of leadership and of community. A little over a third noted that a main message concerned leadership, that is the importance of the presence of strong leadership or that the principal and literacy leader should lead and that they should promote a ‘learning community’. The notion of community underpinned responses that either explicitly mentioned building a literacy community or talked of working together to achieve the goals or vision; of helping them to help themselves or of being collaborative. Responses in this vein came from over a quarter of the facilitators. One response, of the ilk ‘be an expert and share’, was difficult to reconcile with the idea of community although it may well have been intended to imply such. There were also a small number of responses from facilitators that talked of a national programme, of common practices and of consistency. These can be viewed as linked to the notion of all working together towards common goals.

However, there were isolated responses from a small minority of facilitators that seemed to run counter to the tenor of responses from the majority. In these responses, the element of change and improvement appeared to be absent. Such responses seemed to either couch the message in terms of process, like develop goals or vision or work through a process or, in summarising the main messages, they emphasised consolidation, affirmation and support rather than change in order to improve.

Interestingly, the personnel focus reflected in responses as to the main messages was the whole school. This was the focus identified by over half of the facilitators. Whereas principals were the major personnel focus when asked about the purpose of the
Literacy Leadership initiative, they rated little mention in terms of the main messages. Main messages did not as centrally concern principals as did purpose.

It could be argued that any programme such as this tends to evolve in light of the context, including the political or financial context. The programme may also evolve as a result of feedback including self-evaluation. Yet another possible reason for messages to change, for example, could be the publication or availability of new research findings that are subsequently incorporated into the programme. Therefore, we wanted to ascertain whether facilitators felt that the key messages from Learning Media had changed over the course of the two or more years they had been involved.

The minority felt that, basically, the messages had not changed and these facilitators were evenly split into a group who definitely felt there had been no change, a group who felt that the messages had been clarified or had ‘gone deeper’ and a group who saw no change but claimed that their own personal understanding of the messages had sharpened.

*I don’t think that those main messages have changed, maybe some emphasis might have changed… this year we’re really pushing the message that we’re going deeper into looking at literacy practice and how that affects student learning.*

The majority of respondents sensed a changing message, one that became more focused in certain crucial respects. Most of those who said there was change were able to identify the nature of it. They saw the messages as having two changed emphases and this suggests that the programme was being developed and honed as it was implemented. One changed emphasis was that the messages became increasingly focussed on the use of data and/ or research. The other change was that the messages emphasised an in depth and focussed consideration of classroom practice. Both of these would seem to accord with Ministry emphases (e.g. on assessment) and initiatives or with recent research reports like that of Philips, McNaughton and McDonald (2001) and Timperley and Wiseman (2002).

The responses from some who claimed there was change were often similar to those who claimed that there was no change. For example, a group said the messages had become more focussed and clarified although they did not specify how. Similarly, one facilitator thought the programme was ‘evolving and moving forward’ but did not specify in what way. These responses were, however, in the minority.

**Key ideas given to schools**

We were interested to explore whether the messages the facilitators took from Learning Media sponsored activities were related to the key ideas that they reported giving to the schools they worked with.
Perhaps the major set of key ideas that facilitators said they took to their schools concerned the role of information or data. A key idea that they imparted was that the school needed to look at student achievement; there needed to be measurable goals set; to focus on data (not further specified); to use data to develop and plan and to sharpen and adjust practice and to ‘link data with classroom practices and student achievements’. In all, around 90 percent of facilitators reported one or more of these facets of the use of data in self review and planning as key ideas that they gave to schools.

*I guess one was how the action research process could support them in raising achievement. Very much that review, plan and reflect model.*

Clearly, facilitators were articulating to us that they felt they were giving key ideas to schools in relation to evidence based self-review. Whether schools had sufficient preparation in terms of knowledge and skills to respond is an assumption that was not tested.

Another set of key ideas, named by just over half of the facilitators, concerned goals, and this included having a vision or having goals, setting goals that were manageable, developing common understandings and raising expectations in terms of those goals.

The facilitators also reported taking to schools a series of ideas about process. These key ideas were largely offered in non-specific terms like the general notions of reviewing practice or reviewing and reflecting (37%), of having an action plan (42%), and of linking theory to practice (5%). More specifically, around a third of facilitators reported giving key messages to schools like the necessity to sharpen, adjust, and make changes to practices; to strengthen practices, making them different and better. Professional development in this regard was an associated key idea.

A final major key idea was that leaders should know what is going on and be shaping events and about a quarter of the facilitators alluded to this.

*... That they needed to be in there leading... discussing the data with... initiating the collection of baseline and comparative data and really making that action research model work.... that they led that and the point was to raise student achievement.*

**PRINCIPALS**

Principals were not only asked, like the facilitators, for their views about the main purpose of Literacy Leadership and their understanding of how it was to work but first they were asked why they chose to participate. Then they were asked about the messages they took from the workshops and materials and the key ideas they imparted to staff.
Why chose to participate

The answers principals gave to the question of why their schools chose to participate give some indication of commitment on the part of school leadership and, by implication, of the schools themselves. Commitment could be considered a significant ingredient in terms of the likely success of the Literacy Leadership initiative in terms of principals’ knowledge and skills and in terms of both teacher skill and student learning.

Over a third of principals gave a somewhat generalised answer to the question of why they chose to participate in the initiative. Such an answer was to the effect that it would assist with a literacy focus or that literacy issues needed addressing. Another 14 percent indicated that it was part of the review cycle. Just over a third identified the reason they chose to participate as relating to improving either achievement or practice.

*We wanted to access some of the professional development that’s available.*

*We wanted to… sharpen the focus a little. I wanted to get a chance for some of my people to up-skill themselves.*

Of the latter group, only 10 percent mentioned that their purpose in participating was to improve student achievement but a slightly larger percentage (17%) saw it as an opportunity to up-skill teachers and ten percent as an opportunity to ‘do better’.

However, it is clear that not all participated with the primary purpose of leading a refinement of literacy practices amongst their staff in order to affect student achievement. A significant number admitted that they chose to participate in order to tap into resources.

*Well, number one, it was offered to us and there was going to be some funding which is, let’s be realistic, is a carrot…*  

For a small percentage (14%) it was a previous management decision to participate and for a further 10 percent they either regarded it as government policy or felt compelled to participate.

*It was part of our long-term plan and it was obviously an important crux of government policy.*

Purpose of initiative

Given the somewhat pragmatic and generalised responses expressed by the principals in response to the question of why they chose to participate, it was interesting to see that when asked about what they perceived to be the purpose of the Literacy Leadership programme, the largest categories of response concerned changing programmes and practices in order to improve capability. If responses that thought the
purpose to be extending or up-skilling staff are added, then nearly half of the principals thought of the purpose in these terms.

The next largest categories were responses that identified the purpose as improving student achievement (28%) or improving literacy generally (21%).

I guess it comes up all the time…. The importance of raising achievement at the lower end of literacy.

Not one mentioned using data to determine success in the course of discussing such purposes. Other purposes mentioned related to processes of self-review and goal development (14%). Clearly, the majority of principals understood the major thrusts of the initiative; it was just that these purposes were not necessarily the reasons why they chose to join.

Revealingly, when responses from principals about the purpose did mention personnel, the majority contained a personnel focus on teachers. About half the principals spoke of the initiative as concerning teachers rather than themselves. Only three principals mentioned that the purpose of the LL initiative concerned principals.

...the best part of it was to start off with the principal and it was going to be really the principal to come back and enthuse the staff.... and it was really looking at if you wanted to improve literacy levels with children, it had to come from the top.

A further 17 percent thought the initiative concerned management and this could be considered as including them (the royal ‘we’?).

Main messages

The question about the main messages that the principals took from the workshops and materials yielded responses that were largely unable to be categorised, that is classified into categories of similar responses. Thus, the largest category of response was ‘other’, a somewhat unsatisfactory state of affairs. For example, in this category we placed vague responses like that the main message was the initiative is ‘a package to be worked through’ or very specific responses like that the message was that ‘reading has to be fun’ and another that they should ‘provide a balanced programme’ and another that they should ‘make literacy relevant to students’ while another said the message was to ‘make links between reading and writing’. The specific responses could all be considered to be part of good literacy teaching practice – enjoyment, relevance, balanced programmes and making links- but are hardly the main messages identified by facilitators. These principals seemed to have missed the main messages that facilitators reported they were giving to schools.
Where responses to the question of main messages could be coded they still showed limited consensus among principals about what these might be. After the ‘other’ category of responses, the next largest category of response mentioned a message about the need to have a framework or model. Three principals recalled the message that good practice makes a difference and another that they should focus on practice.

‘The main messages I think would be that we really need to improve classroom practice and that good classroom practice makes a difference.’ There were only between one and three mentions of messages like: the need for self-review or goals and vision; the need to develop an action plan, the need to lift expectations or that research informs practice.

It did appear to us as evaluators that most principals had difficulty recalling the workshops that may have taken place a considerable time before the interview. Even if, at the time, they had rated the workshops positively, there was little remaining that they could articulate. Similarly, questions about the case study materials yielded little specific recall. Our attempts to find out whether the principals remembered any of the case studies from the workshops or materials and if they did whether it influenced the initiative were equally unsuccessful. Most simply said that none was memorable. Three cases were named and a further three principals thought one was memorable but could not remember what it was, a contradiction in terms! Relevance to own context was the reason given for the case being memorable. In terms of influence four claimed that the cases showed effective teacher practice, although, as an answer, this does not actually specify influence.

**Key ideas taken back to staff**

The key idea most frequently nominated by principals in response to what they took back to their staff was that teachers should focus on teaching; they should review their practice and/ or that they should engage in different classroom practice. As around 40 percent considered the general practice-related issues key ideas, clearly the message that the Literacy leadership initiative was concerned with practice was one received and reportedly passed on. One of these practices, namely, to focus on and target specific children was a key idea, according to 14 percent of principals. One or two principals nominated other specific aspects of a literacy programme or of literacy practice as key ideas. These were the same specific messages that they reported above, for example concerning a balanced programme and making links between reading and writing.

*The key ideas that came out of that was the need to write- for children to write every day because that wasn’t happening.*

Associated with changing practice was another key idea reportedly taken to staff and that concerned professional development (17% of principals). For one principal the
message of what was needed was ‘a lot more professional yak’. Other key ideas concerned identifying goals and having higher expectations (each offered by 10% of principals).

Idiosyncratic key messages were offered by a handful of principals. These included the message to staff that ‘low student achievement is not your fault’. Single mentions were given of central messages that facilitators said they brought to schools like collect data or look at student achievement or employ an action research type framework. Two principals clearly did not consider it part of their leadership role to pass on key ideas from the workshops to staff. They responded, ‘The literacy leader gave the key ideas to staff’.

THE LITERACY LEADER

The literacy leaders were only asked about what they considered to be the main messages they took from the Literacy Leadership initiative. Their understandings are reported below.

Main messages

Literacy leaders (who were not principals) were asked about the main messages that they took from the workshops and associated materials. Relative to the principals, literacy leaders as a group seemed to acquire some common messages. It is noticeable, but understandable, that the main messages that the literacy leaders took from the workshops nearly all concerned practice. However, the principals did see improving practice as a major purpose of the initiative.

Other than responses that simply defined the main message as focus on literacy, there were four other clusters of responses from literacy leaders. One group considered that the main message was about self-review/reflective practice and feedback. A second group thought the message was that needs drive the direction of a literacy programme or that it was about conducting a needs analysis. Another cluster of responses considered a main message to be that there is a framework, model or process to work through and a fourth cluster that the main message concerned practices. This latter group included responses like the main message was ‘what good practice looked like’; to ‘focus and sharpen teaching practice; to focus on details in reading programme’ or it was concerned with ‘consistency of teaching practices’.

Other responses echoed messages that facilitators said they were taking to schools but these were offered by only one or two literacy leaders. These messages included important messages (from the facilitator’s point of view) like the fact that the main
message was about improving literacy achievement; that research informs practice and that it is important to develop goals or a vision.

Asked about memorable case studies from the materials, literacy leaders were more able than principals to name a few they felt stood out. They named four and claimed they were memorable because they were relevant to their school in terms of presenting either a similar school or a similar initiative. In terms of influencing their own school initiative, the literacy leaders who found them memorable, mostly said they got ideas from them, a very general response. However, in one instance, the case study provided a template and in three cases it showed effective practices.

Understanding of roles

While the previous section has explored understandings of the purpose of the initiative and the key messages associated with it, this section presents data concerning the perceived roles of various participants. The data from both sections provide an indication of how the model could be expected to work in practice. The role that participants felt they occupied as well as how the role was perceived by others was important because the aims of the initiative and the model it employed are premised on participants fulfilling certain roles. Facilitators have to be more than an expert in literacy; they have to be a mentor and a coach to principals in leadership roles in literacy. Principals have to be curriculum leaders in the area of literacy, driving initiatives from a position enhanced by knowledge of how to maximise the success of any undertaking to improve literacy outcomes. Literacy leaders have a newly envisaged role to provide expert leadership in this curriculum area.

ROLE OF FACILITATOR

In an effort to understand the perception of the role of facilitator held by each of the parties, they were asked for their views. Most important was the way in which facilitators conceived of their role. They were asked a general question about how they conceived the role of facilitator and about the key skills that they felt were needed to be an effective one. Then, facilitators were questioned about their role in each of the categories of school they nominated (least, somewhat and most successful). They were asked to describe their role and the skills needed to work with that category of school. We wanted to get a sense of whether somewhat different skills were required for schools that were nominated as differentially successful or if facilitators felt they took a different role in some schools than others. In addition, we asked about whether the facilitator had also acted in any other capacity, particularly as a consultant for the school in order to explore whether there could have been the potential for role confusion.
Facilitators’ responses to role and key skills needed

Regarding the facilitator role, one commented, ‘We have had it drummed into us that we were mentor, to drive a process—find resources, motivate, challenge’. The most common response, given by 47 percent of facilitators, was that the facilitator’s role involved actions to support, affirm, encourage and motivate, to convince schools that have so much on their plate that literacy is a priority. The ability to inspire and motivate was a key skill according to a quarter of the facilitators and, along with this, empathy that was, in fact, the most frequently mentioned key skill (equal with knowledge). The next most frequently offered response to role was that it involved mentoring (37%). Then there were the more developed responses like the role is not just to ‘keep schools on board and engaged’, but ‘to challenge them, take them out of their comfort zone if that is what it takes to get them thinking about what they are doing’. Several facilitators said that you have to be able to challenge (31%). Along with this was needed an ability to, what one facilitator called, ‘pace it’, meaning to know when to push hard and when to back-off or lose them. Being able to scaffold a school towards independence was mentioned by a quarter of facilitators as a part of their role.

There were the predictable responses like the need to keep professionally up to date in order to provide knowledge and advice and this was the equal most frequently cited skill; to be able to be effective in how this knowledge is put across to schools; to be able, not only to talk, but to demonstrate. Being a good communicator was nominated as an important skill by about a quarter and, similarly, being able to model and demonstrate. Another given was that you needed people skills, ‘dollops of them’, including good listening skills and the ability to ask the right questions. Mentioned also as part of the role was the ability to give effective feedback and to be responsive to needs.

In terms of whether the role was the same in schools rated as differentially successful, most facilitators thought that it was but that they had to be cognisant of the context. However, despite often saying they had the same role and employed the same skills, there were differences like ‘you had to break things down and make them fairly simple’. Some thought that the involvement was different with the least successful schools as they ‘needed help much more with the process’. These comments are supported by the data across all facilitators. Considerably more facilitators (53%) described their role in the least successful schools as involving an active, intervening role compared to that in the most successful schools where only 20 percent mentioned this aspect. Similarly, over a quarter of facilitators mentioned taking staff meetings as part of their role in the least successful schools and likewise more nominated a keeping them focused role and a role that involved providing appropriate steps.
Principals’ view of the role of facilitator

Principals and literacy leaders were simply asked what they saw as the role of the facilitator. The majority of principals (70%) saw the role of the facilitator as one of providing advice, information, ideas and expertise. ‘our facilitator was great and highly skilled’. Another said ‘we are so lucky we had X as a facilitator’ and talked of ‘the wealth of knowledge’ s/he had and of ‘picking the brains of the facilitator’. Over a third mentioned support and guidance with some (14%) specifically mentioning ‘working alongside senior staff/the literacy leader’. About a quarter felt the role was one of ‘keeping in touch’, monitoring or ‘checking up on how we were going’ and a similar number mentioned a motivating or enthusing role that seemed to have something in common with the keeping in touch, keeping on track role.

A small number of principals conceived of the role as one of providing professional development, equal numbers saw this as for them as saw it for teachers. A further handful thought that this provision of professional development was a desirable if not the actual role. There was clearly some confusion as to what the role of facilitator was especially for schools that were part of the Numeracy project ‘This is no criticism of anyone in particular but when I compare this contract with say the Maths contract that we are currently going through…like for example, there was little modelling for this contract and little real training and or resources provided and I don’t believe there was ongoing support like we have in the current maths…’

Literacy leaders’ views of the role of facilitator

The responses of literacy leaders to the role of the facilitator were predominantly around the support, guidance and mentoring aspect of the role. Over 80 percent mentioned this aspect, a much higher percentage than principals. About half regarded the facilitator’s role as that of providing ideas, information and expertise. A small number nominated specific roles like help with the review, with setting targets or collecting data. Similarly, a few viewed the role as one of driving the process and of challenging them.

PRINCIPALS’ VIEW OF THEIR OWN ROLE

In order to gauge the way in which principals viewed their role relative to that of the facilitator, they were asked what their role in the school initiative was. Responses to the question of the purpose of the Literacy Leadership Initiative also yielded information about their understandings of their role.
The response to the question of their role in the school initiative was most interesting in terms of obtaining a view of the principals' understanding of their role with respect to literacy in the school, one of the key areas of learning for them from this project. Although the range of responses was wide, there were two key clusters with about 20 percent of respondents in each. One group gave a description of their role in terms of support, guidance, coach or mentor. ‘I was just a coach or support person for the literacy leader’. Another group viewed the role in some way as a shared responsibility. If the notion of advocacy is included here, the percentage of principals with such a view of their role is around half. These are, arguably, not descriptions of strong leadership roles.

The number of principals who voiced their role as one did as ‘pivotal’ was somewhat smaller. Only about 18 percent of principals described their role in active leadership terms, either to actually drive the initiative ‘making sure it happened’ or to lead it and implement it. ‘I see the role of the principal strongly as being instructional leader. So, I was their leader, and their initiator and the encourager and the motivator and, occasionally, the prodder’. One further principal described the role in more general leadership terms as ‘educational leader’. A small number, in describing a shared role intimated a strong but shared leadership role like ‘we drove it together’ or ‘we have the professional responsibility to drive’.

Principals who were also literacy leaders often described roles like running PD for the staff or going into classrooms and modelling and observing, then giving feedback. Principals who were not literacy leaders also saw their role as ‘working with teachers to produce a [literacy] vision and work out what we needed to do to make this vision happen’.

Then there were principals who saw their role as either giving an initial impetus ‘I am the initial communicator and motivator. Then I hand the responsibility over to the literacy leader’, or their role as reporting, for example to the Board, or attending workshops or organising generally (in total 21%). ‘Well, I guess really I was just... co-ordinated the meetings and yeah basically just co-ordinated things’. For some, they felt that they were ‘so busy in all the other things...I had to rely heavily on [the literacy leader] and senior management to ensure that what we discussed was at least being tried’. More than one principal claimed to not be involved but to have delegated the role. There were reports of [previous] principals who had not even informed the literacy leader about the workshops or passed on any information.

There is a sense that for some principals the notion of Literacy Leadership was ‘quite complicated, quite time consuming, a little bit big, a little bit unwieldy and just a bit too demanding in terms of time and professional development’.
TEACHERS’ VIEWS OF THEIR ROLE

Teachers were asked what their involvement was in the initiative. Most of them (63%) said they were involved as a classroom teacher although a number went on to note that there were other things they were involved in like professional development (37%) or attending team or staff meetings related to the initiative (30%). About 12 percent also mentioned that they engaged in professional reading related to their project. Other roles that participating teachers saw themselves performing were collecting data (approximately 10%) or being observed (approximately 10%). In addition, a significant number (28%) gave roles that were not able to be readily categorised from their descriptions like ‘to be involved’ or ‘do little projects’ or ‘organise’ or ‘rewrite the scheme’. Some of the responses that we categorised as ‘other’ may have contained a professional support role like being a literacy buddy, supporting teachers, syndicate leader or tutor teacher duties.

Whose needs were the focus?

Each group – facilitators, principals, literacy leaders and teachers - were asked whose needs were the focus of the schools’ initiative. If the needs were directed towards someone else in the school, rather than towards themselves, then there is little incentive to engage in self-review, let alone collect evidence of the impact of the initiative. There was a general trend in the responses towards focusing on needs of the next group of people in the ‘flow down’ model. Most facilitators nominated school managers/leaders as the focus, school leaders nominated teachers and students, and most teachers nominated students (Table 6.1). Some respondents nominated more than one group. Within the schools, no respondents nominated either principals or literacy leaders, which is surprising given that this was an initiative that targeted leadership.
Table 6.1
Whose needs were the focus of the schools’ initiative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nominated group</th>
<th>Facilitators n=19</th>
<th>Principals n=29</th>
<th>LL n=30</th>
<th>Teachers n=50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole school</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals / Literacy leaders</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Facilitators’ Beliefs about ‘Success’

Facilitators described purposes and messages of the initiative that were consistent with establishing evidence-based self-review in the schools when asked directly about the initiative itself. As such, the answers were, undoubtedly, influenced by the formal programme goals. The evaluation team also wanted to understand whether these purposes underpinned the facilitators’ judgments when defining initiative success in particular schools because how success is judged is likely to influence the facilitator’s practices when interacting with schools. These ‘facilitator criteria for success’ were derived in two ways. The first way examined the reasons given for allocating schools to the most, somewhat and least successful categories. The second way derived from comparisons of most and least successful schools in a more general sense at the time of initial contact and, subsequently, during on-going contact.

FACILITATORS’ REASONS FOR CATEGORIZING SCHOOLS

Facilitators gave a variety of reasons, often more than one, for categorizing schools as most, somewhat and least successful. The reasons were then coded according to the six categories listed in Table 6.2. For each category, the reasons were then divided into whether the description referred to a positive or negative attribute of the school and its initiative. As can be seen from Table 6.2, schools’ self-review processes was the least
frequently mentioned category, so did not appear to be foremost in the minds of the facilitators when making their judgments of success. Rather, facilitators’ reasons mirrored those given by the schools as reasons for judging the success of their initiatives.

Table 6.2
Frequency of reasons given by facilitators when categorizing schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Most</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Least</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Committed / supportive</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative (with others)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased knowledge (includes professional development)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership (action oriented, skilled)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership experience</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-review (includes any data reference)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reasons coded as committed / supportive also included responses such as enthusiastic leadership (or their negative equivalents). When this code was referred to in positive terms, facilitators mostly included both the literacy leader and the principal (16). Principals alone were referred to in six responses and literacy leaders alone referred to in two responses (both in least successful schools). When referred to in negative terms such as uncommitted or unsupportive the reference was typically to the principal alone (17) as opposed to the literacy leader alone (1) or to both (3).

One facilitator explained her reason for classifying one of the schools as most successful in this way:

The principal who was absolutely dedicated, who attended every meeting, who sat alongside me as I observed in classrooms, who at every professional development day would be right here taking notes or being part of it…. And a literacy leader who was equally as keen to make it work.

The opposite typically applied to schools categorized as least effective in terms of their commitment:

I don’t think they put effort into what they were doing. They weren’t interested in it particularly … sometimes they’re just doing it rather than being really interested in it.

Being collaborative and involving of others was a second dimension of an affective-type response, but in these cases was more focused on relationships. When using this code, facilitators typically referred specifically to the involvement / lack of involvement of teachers (7 positive references; 6 negative references), rather than the community (no references), although seven positive and two negative responses referred to the ‘whole school’ which may have included the community. When taken together with the responses coded as committed, these two codes account for nearly half (47%) of the total number of reasons given as the basis for the facilitator’s categorizations of the schools.

The following quote was typical of the positive responses about the collaborative nature of schools. They were typically very brief:

They had a well-developed school culture of collaborating and supporting each other.

Negative responses were more likely to be about a lack of teamwork and teacher isolation:
An absence of that lovely school culture, you know, and no sense of team. Often all the teachers are working very much in their single cell classrooms doing their own programme.

Having knowledge about literacy or a culture of learning or developing knowledge through professional development accounted for 16% of the total number of reasons. A typical example of this coding for a school categorised as ‘most successful’ comprised,

As part of what they did they identified a number of areas in reading that teachers were not too knowledgeable about. We organized for teachers to work in small groups and to source professional readings about their given area, critique and summarise the readings and key ideas for the classroom.

An example for a school coded as least successful with regard to knowledge follows:

In one of those cases, I spent more time with the literacy leader, going through, showing what reading and writing programmes look like. Going out to schools and sitting and watching what it looks like. Going back to the school and writing down the aspects that were effective. Then watching her in her classroom so I needed to build her up because she had no means of assisting her class or staff.

Positive references to leadership were typically associated with leaders who were action-oriented, skilled, had systems in place and were organized. These leaders engaged in complementary rather than competing activities within the school. Three of these references were to ‘strong leaders / leadership’ and were not defined further. Negative references to leadership were associated with leaders who were unskilled, disorganized and / or involved in competing activities, which detracted from the schools’ focus on the literacy leadership initiative. Leadership comments more frequently referred to the principal (7 positive; 7 negative) than the literacy leader (3 positive; 4 negative), or both (6 positive; 4 negative).

A positive response about leadership in a school categorized as ‘most successful’ comprised the following:

The principal at this school is strong, she’s smart, she doesn’t muck around…. She definitely knew what she wanted and she had read up on the material and she had looked at what the school was doing.

On the other hand, two responses about leadership in least effective schools went like this:

They had non-participatory principals and literacy leaders who weren’t able to lead. In one of those schools I spent the majority of my time with the literacy
leader working with her and taking her round schools watching, making notes, videoing so that indeed, she could lead her school.

They were overwhelmed by other things they were involved in. There were several other contracts out there and although we told them not to do two at once, they sometimes did or they said, ‘Oh well, our junior teachers will work with you and our senior teachers were doing something else’. That doesn’t really work.

The experience category was not used with reference to any school classified as most successful, but inexperience was given as a reason in 17 cases for classifying schools as somewhat and least successful and accounted for 9% of the responses. Often this lack of experience was associated with poor leadership (coded above) and had arisen from changes in staff.

He was inexperienced as a principal and a poor manager. He was a ‘getting around to it’ person – never really getting around to it so he was always going to get around to it.

The final, and least used category in the coding system was relatively broad and referred to anything that implied self-review, such as schools use of data, self-reflective or self-sustaining practices, or action research. Such references were made in 12 (6%) of the total number of responses. Four facilitators referred to this aspect when categorizing two of their schools, and four others used it once in relation to the most effective schools only, and 12 facilitators did not mention this aspect of school functioning in any of their responses. Given the importance of promoting this aspect of practice in the literacy leadership initiative, several responses are quoted.

Positive self-review responses included:

... the other thing is they’re having lots of review and reflection - reviewing what they are doing so they are using that action research model fairly well.

Well those three schools had some very good features in place prior to the development starting and those were things like they had a history of a really solid self-review and planning and all those sorts of things.

... and all but one of those schools completed an initiative that showed gains in student achievement, school-wide.

More negative references to self-review processes comprised:

As a facilitator I did not see as much evidence of self-reflection and shifts in practice at this school as I did at some of the others. The school had not yet
embraced the climate of self- and peer critique, that is, they were not comfortable with observing each other and giving feedback over the period of this year.

There was a lack of assessment data and low expectations.

Their data was bits. They kept wanting others to come in and do it for them. The literacy leader was excellent, but the principal had low expectations of the staff and said they were too busy.

Some responses were given only once or twice and were not included in the tables above. These responses are paraphrased as effective literacy programme already in place; good teaching modelled; no accountability; small school; inherited the initiative from predecessor; literacy leader had personal problems (two schools); denied existing problems; lack of resources; depended too much on the facilitator; only some aspects of initiative were used (two schools); interface with the community problematic; no common understandings throughout the school.

Comparison of Schools at Initial Contact and Ongoing Contact

Facilitators were also asked to think about a school in each of the most and least successful categories and identify what differentiated them from one another at initial contact, then during the facilitator’s involvement with the school. The categories used for the coding were the same as those developed for Table 6.2. Tables 6.3 and 6.4 show that the pattern of responses for these two questions was similar as those in Table 6.2, except that leadership was mentioned more frequently. As in Table 6.2, self-review was rarely mentioned.
Table 6.3
Comparison of Schools at Initial Contact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Most</th>
<th>Least</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Committed</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collaborative</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experience</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-review</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A response that captured most of the coding categories above follows:

There needed to be a school culture of ‘we’re all going forward together’. So you needed a united staff, led by a very effective and respected principal to have the ideal happen. You needed to have a principal who was totally involved in the development and thought about how to boost achievement.... And a principal who was prepared to thoroughly support that literacy leader and a literacy leader who was prepared to make changes in their own programme, to lead by example. To support people where they were at but give honest feedback and, in turn, be observed and appraised by her own as to her next steps as well. You needed a staff who were prepared to read professionally and you also need a staff that were prepared to set next steps in their teaching and talk about those and reflect on practice and discuss where they were at and be very open about where they were at.
Single responses that are not included in Table 6.3 included the following: lack of student focus, difficulty making contact, poor student attitudes towards learning.

Table 6.4

Comparison of Schools during Ongoing Contact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Most</th>
<th>Least</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Committed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative / involving</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-review</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A summary by a facilitator who included several codes in her description of the characteristics of least successful schools on an ongoing basis follows:

Well you can tell that you often end up just talking to the principal and by the chat you can tell the dictatorship, ‘This is what is happening’. You can tell the low level of conversation in the staff room like when you are talking about theory or what your beliefs are or the staff beliefs about teaching oral language. They will give you ideas and activities.

Single responses indicating positive reasons comprised, the school had a student focus, was in a supportive school cluster, and they used the facilitator as an expert. Single
responses that were more negative included, the school needed constant checking up on and insisted on doing it ‘our way’.

DISCUSSION: FACILITATORS’ BELIEFS ABOUT SUCCESS

Being committed, supportive and inclusive accounted for nearly half of the reasons for the initial classification of the schools. Given the emphasis of this initiative on improving literacy knowledge, developing leadership and data-based self-review strategies, this weighting, is surprising. While we can appreciate that a committed leadership team prepared to take action can provide a very positive working environment, being more circumspect about the quality of that action may lead to more substantive gains in student achievement. Of concern, however, is the relative absence of any reference to effective self-review processes in schools when facilitators were evaluating the relative success of the schools and their projects.

Main messages contained in the materials

The material distributed by Learning Media contained 37 case study descriptions of literacy initiatives undertaken in schools. In the materials, the cases are described as the literacy ‘journeys’ that each of the schools had taken. Some of these cases formed the basis for discussion at workshops. As it was unsatisfactory to consider that any individual case would exhibit all the desirable features of an effective literacy intervention, the cases were considered as a whole for the purposes of the evaluation. They were analysed in terms of five main dimensions. These dimensions were drawn from a theoretical conception of a robust and systematic way to establish whether interventions to change practice are effective. These dimensions are:

- Evidence of an analysis of the current situation (and whether needs identified are data based)
- Action taken (and whether the goals arose from data; were clear and able to be measured and whether the initiative related to the goals).
- Evaluation of action (whether the claimed outcome was supported and the nature of the support).
- Process (collaborative, resources/support identified, consistency, learning cycle).
- Leadership role (facilitative, organisational (weak form) versus giving direction, challenging, feedback (strong form).
The cases are acknowledged as ‘work in progress’ stories, representing the beginning of a journey for the schools. If one were to consider individual cases, there are many salient ‘teaching and learning’ points to be gained. For example, Plateau School have done an analysis of their students’ needs; Manurewa East presents an excellent analysis of outcomes data; Mornington School have comparable pre and post data and use an appropriate measure to test the effectiveness of their oral language initiative, and Ohaeawai Primary are able to use data to show the results of their programme and their involvement of parents and community.

There are also numerous deficiencies in the processes apparent in the cases. For example, there are untested assumptions like the fact that teachers have high expectations of their students. There are goals stated in terms that are not measurable; there are outcomes presented that are perceptions, albeit sometimes professional judgements. There are initiatives planned, apparently without reference to an analysis of student need.

Given the non-technical and general way in which the cases were written, often considerable leaps of inference had to be made. With respect to the analysis of the current situation, the results suggest that about half of the cases indicate that evidence was used to work out the literacy needs of the children. The initiatives were matched to the literacy goals in most cases (70%). The cases contained frequent process examples like references to collaboration and/or a consideration of the provision of support or resources. The majority, too, were written in a manner suggestive of an iterative cycle of learning.

The two areas where, overall, the cases did not succeed in illustrating ideal practice concerned how an evaluation of effectiveness was made and whether this allowed a judgement or not and the portrayal of leadership. The latter is highly relevant in a programme. Less than half of the cases contained examples of a strong form of leadership and of those that did it tended to be the literacy leader assuming this role. Principals were mostly portrayed as facilitating and organising with respect to the initiatives described. Similar to data in other sections of this report, the lowest percentage of cases (about 40%) illustrating a dimension was with respect to indicating that data were used to gauge the effectiveness of the intervention.

While it is not suggested that every case has to contain all the elements of effective evidence based decision-making regarding literacy interventions, there are some concerns if the overall pattern does not strongly endorse it. The construction of such cases is a skilled undertaking and it may have been better to make one or two points with each case and to be explicit about these in the commentary or introduction. In tone they are positive which, while not undesirable, does give the impression that they are exemplary models, even though it is stated in introducing them that they are work in progress. In many cases, the schools are still developing effective literacy practices in some areas and a positive comment about what has been achieved, plus an honest evaluation of what remains may be more helpful in terms of learning.
In addition, the Literacy Review tool, the starting point for workshops and facilitator initial discussion and inroads in a school had some problematic features. The initial question in the tool, designed to make schools begin to think about the needs of their students, is a multi-barrelled question that engenders in us, as experts, disquiet in terms of our ability to answer it systematically. It seems to equate, in importance, finding out about attitude or interest and about skills and knowledge. There appear to be two problems. The first is the breadth of the question, given available tools. The second is that the question is problematic given the level of knowledge about tools and assessment procedures amongst practitioners. It is, in our view, likely to be unable to be systematically addressed in a way that would allow decisions about practice to be addressed, given the level of skill and knowledge demonstrated by the schools that formed our cases.

Conclusion

This chapter explored various sources that were likely to yield an indication of messages with respect to the Literacy leadership programme. Participants’ understandings of the Literacy Leadership initiative, its purposes and key messages and their role in relation to it were explored in various ways. Facilitators, in their understandings of the purpose of the Literacy Leadership initiative; in their reporting of the main messages they took from Hui and the key messages they took to schools, largely demonstrated a superior understanding of the thrust of the initiative. Most viewed their role in a way congruent with the model. The analysis of the implicit basis of facilitators’ notions of what makes for a successful school in literacy, are somewhat discrepant from their responses to direct questions about messages and programmes goals.

At the school level, particularly amongst principals, there was a far less developed set of understandings with respect to the Literacy leadership programme and the role of the facilitator within it. Although it may be tempting to conclude that the emphases in the materials did not help clarify the main messages associated with the initiative, the fact that school personnel were generally unable to recall much from them weakens this explanation. Of greatest concern was the finding that participants tended to report that the initiative was to address the needs of someone else, not them.
CHAPTER 7: SKILLS / KNOWLEDGE IN EVIDENCE-BASED SELF-REVIEW PROCESS

In this evaluation we have not assessed knowledge of literacy teaching because it is highly contested what constitutes effective or good practice and descriptions of practice do not necessarily reflect what school leaders and teachers do in their schools and classrooms. It was beyond the resources of the evaluation team to observe teachers in action. We have, therefore, examined the generic skills of analysing needs, matching needs to a targeted intervention and using evidence to evaluate success. This was achieved by asking a series of questions in relation to a hypothetical scenario, one that exemplified problematic features in terms of such generic skills.

The Hypothetical Scenario

Facilitators, principals and literacy leaders were asked to respond to a standardised hypothetical scenario described in the method section. It was deliberately constructed so as not to meet the evaluators’ criteria on a number of dimensions. Responses to Parts A, B and D (identification of student needs, basis for decision to adopt peer tutoring reading, the use of running records to continue peer tutoring reading) have been used in this chapter because they relate to skills and knowledge in evidence based self-review.

FACILITATORS’ EVALUATION OF EVIDENCE-BASED ASPECTS OF THE SCENARIO

The average rating and range of ratings given by the facilitators for each aspect of the scenario are provided in Table 7.1. As can be seen from this table, the facilitators were generally critical of the scenario and were more negative about the data-based aspects than the leadership aspects which are discussed in Chapter Eight. However, as can be seen from the range of ratings, some facilitators rated all aspects positively. We next examine the reasons given for the ratings for each part of the scenario.
Table 7.1
Facilitators’ average ratings and range of ratings for the scenario

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average ratings</th>
<th>Range of ratings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identification of student needs</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basis for decision to adopt peer-tutoring reading</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>1-6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying issues at staff meetings</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of RR to continue PTR</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy leaders’ role in the process</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>1-7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. A scale of 1-7 was used with 1 representing ‘not effective / appropriate’, 4 representing ‘Neither effective nor ineffective’ and 7 representing ‘Highly effective / appropriate’.

Part A: Identification of students’ needs.

For all but two of the facilitators, the reasons underlying their ratings for the identification of student needs through staff discussion were the absence of achievement information. The vast majority of facilitators noticed the absence of such information, but the absence was of varying concern to them, with the ratings ranging from 1 (2 facilitators) to 5 (2 facilitators). The most frequent rating given was 2 (8 facilitators). A typical response was,

Well basically it’s been on their [the teachers’] feelings … but you get that all the time. But there’s no data or anything to support it at all. (Rating 2)

The two exceptions came from one facilitator who gave a relatively high rating of 5 that was based on the commendation that they had identified a need, saying, ‘I think there are good things that are happening in this school and they’ve identified that there is a need for these children.’ The second gave the same rating but implied in her answer that she understood that the school had achievement data.

Part B: The basis for the decision to adopt peer tutoring: reading.

The similarly low ratings for this aspect of the scenario were most frequently (11 facilitators) based on the lack of a needs / programme match. As with the identification of student needs, however, this lack of match was of varying concern and formed the basis
of ratings from 1 to 5. The most frequent rating was 1 (7 facilitators) and was described by one facilitator,

*I gave them a one for that because it was just the fact that someone had basically heard about it. The RTLB had introduced it and said the children enjoyed it. It's not a valid reason for introducing it. There was no evidence or no mention of it that in fact it improved comprehension, which is really what they were aiming to do.* (Rating 1)

Other reasons for low ratings included not finding out enough about the programme (4 facilitators), not providing professional development for the teachers (2 facilitators) and not having an action plan (1 facilitator). Reasons for high ratings included everyone having the same focus (2 facilitators), how well peer tutoring: reading works (1 facilitator), the practice of teachers brainstorming ideas (1 facilitator), and the use of external experts (1 facilitator).

**Part D: Use of running records in the decision to continue.**

This aspect of the scenario was rated mid-way between those aspects rated most positively (Parts C and E) and those rated most negatively (Parts A and B), with the range of ratings covering the complete scale from 1 to 7.

The most frequent reason for a low rating (11 facilitators) was the lack of a match between an identified learning need and the means used to measure progress in terms of this need, as illustrated in the following quote,

*Well probably ineffective when you’re talking about comprehension, they are reading with more accuracy but we still don’t know about the comprehension do we.* (Rating 2)

All four positive ratings given by facilitators were based on the apparent success of the programme. As one said,

*Well, they’d obviously showed success. I’d say it was a good 6 because they’re going to continue with developing literacy perhaps doing something even more, going deeper, or something else.* (Rating 6)

**Patterns for individual facilitators**

The ratings given to each aspect of the scenario were categorized as low (ratings 1-3), neutral (ratings 3.5 – 4.5) and high (5 – 7). The patterns for individual facilitators are presented in Table 7.2.
Table 7.2
Pattern of ratings for individual facilitators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pattern of ratings</th>
<th>Facilitators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All low</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All high</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 11 facilitators giving consistently low ratings to the three aspects of the scenario discussed in this section agreed with the evaluators on the criteria for an effective initiative. At the other extreme three facilitators disagreed with the evaluators’ judgment giving high ratings to all items.

PRINCIPALS’ AND LITERACY LEADERS’ EVALUATION OF EVIDENCE-BASED ASPECTS OF SCENARIO

Principals and literacy leaders were also asked to rate these aspects of the scenario so we could develop an understanding of the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with our criteria. The ratings and reasons for their ratings are given separately for each part of the scenario, comparisons discussed and the reasons for the ratings described.

Part A: Identification of students’ needs.

Average ratings by principals and literacy leaders were similar and slightly higher than those for the facilitators (Figure 7.1), suggesting that, as a group, the school-based respondents were not as critical of the way the school went about identifying needs as the facilitators. The wide range in the ratings for each of the respondent groups revealed that different individuals, rather than different groups, reacted to the scenario very differently.
The participants’ ratings are divided into three groups: Low (1-3), neutral (3.5-4.5) and high (5-7) and reported for the most, somewhat and least successful schools (see Table 7.2).

Table 7.3
Frequency of Principals’ and Literacy Leaders’ Reasons for Rating the Scenario: Identification of Needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Low ratings</th>
<th>Neutral ratings</th>
<th>High ratings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No data used to identify need</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus too narrow</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did identify a need</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussed the need</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note*: A scale of 1-7 was used with 1 representing ‘not effective / appropriate’, 4 representing ‘Neither effective nor ineffective’ and 7 representing ‘Highly effective / appropriate’. Low ratings were those below the neutral point (1-3), neutral ratings were at the neutral point (3.5-4.5) and high ratings were above the neutral point (5-7).

The most common reason for ratings was the absence of an adequate measure to establish the need and, as with the facilitators, this reason spanned the range of ratings,
although it was most common for those giving low ratings (39 reasons). As one of these principals said,

   I’d say they were a two because it’s just based on teacher perceptions rather than hard data. (Rating 2)

Some gave high ratings while noting that there was no hard data, which lowered what would have been an even higher rating. The following principal’s quote was coded as both a lack of achievement data and the staff discussed the need:

   I’d say that was a 7, no a 5, because all the teachers got together and they all talked about it and they talked about the different ways they could help improve comprehension etc. so an all combined group effort and the reason I changed it to a 5 was because they didn’t mention any specific testing that they’d done beforehand. (Rating 5)

A literacy leader who also gave a rating of 5 but was concerned about the lack of data had a different reason for her rating,

   Well there is no sort of hard data but that’s always a bit subjective isn’t it with comprehension, students seem to be able to learn their vocabulary quickly, yes, I guess there is no data to back that up. (Rating 5)

The main reason for giving a high rating (24 reasons) was that a need had been identified. Typical of this response are the quotes from a principal and literacy leader, respectively:

   Because they identified a problem, looked at how to deal with it, the process they went through was appropriate.

   Let’s face it, teachers’ intuitive knowledge is highly valued and often far more valued than data and I think the powers that be are starting to recognize that.

The answer from one principal, who gave a high rating because a need had been identified, implied in her response that she thought that they had data to support the needs diagnosis. She may have given a different rating on a closer reading of the scenario. The only other reasons given for a particular rating was that the staff had discussed the need (2 respondents), and the focus was too narrow (1 respondent).

Part B: The basis for the decision to adopt peer tutoring: reading

The pattern of ratings for the basis of the decision to adopt peer-tutoring reading was similar to that for the identification of student needs (Figure 7.2). The ratings were
mostly at or below the mid-point of the scale and slightly higher than those of the facilitators. Again the wide range of ratings suggests that the scenario was perceived very differently by individuals, but there was not a great difference between the groups.

Figure 7.2
Basis for Decision to Adopt Peer-tutoring Reading

Reasons for the ratings are summarized in Table 7.4.
Table 7.4
Frequency of Principals’ and Literacy Leaders’ Reasons for Rating the Scenario: Basis of the Decision to Adopt Peer Tutoring: Reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>No. of low ratings (1-3)</th>
<th>No. of neutral ratings (3.5-4.5)</th>
<th>No. of high ratings (5-7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need / prog. match missing</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not find out enough about it</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher brainstorming</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTR works / does not work</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student enjoyment important</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used external advice / experts</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. A scale of 1-7 was used with 1 representing ‘not effective / appropriate’, 4 representing ‘Neither effective nor ineffective’ and 7 representing ‘Highly effective / appropriate’. Low ratings were those below the neutral point (1-3), neutral ratings were at the neutral point (3.5-4.5) and high ratings were above the neutral point (5-7).

The most common reason for a low rating (18 respondents) was a perceived need / programme mismatch. A typical quote from a literacy leader follows:

I’d give them a two, I suppose, because they based it on another school having children that liked it or something. Children enjoyed it rather than on a needs basis.

The person who gave a high rating, but indicated that a needs programme / match was problematic, also included the importance of enjoyment in her rating:

Because they are making a positive move and enjoyment is probably the criteria – but enjoyment doesn’t mean it was going to improve their skills in comprehension. (Rating 5)

The second most common reason for a low rating was that the teachers did not find out enough about the programme (13 respondents reasons). A rather extreme quote follows:

I think useless actually because it’s based on a whim and a prayer basically... if you’re into the self-reflective model, they need to look at themselves and their own teaching, and their understanding of kids.
As with the needs/programme mismatch, neutral and high ratings associated with this reason gave greater weighting to a positive reason, then lowered the rating somewhat because they felt the teachers did not find out enough about the programme, for example,

*I would have liked a little more research, but we’ve introduced that in one of our rooms…. I like the idea of brainstorming. That means they all got together and brain stormed. They actually used everybody’s ideas. (Rating 4)*

Brainstorming by teachers also formed the basis of an additional nine respondents’ ratings. Another 12 respondents based both positive and negative ratings on their previous experience and beliefs about the effectiveness of peer tutoring. Those who thought peer tutoring was effective rated it highly, while those who thought it ineffective gave lower ratings to this aspect of the scenario. While those who tempered this reason with others, usually gave it a neutral rating, as did this literacy leader:

*I’m sure that the peer tutoring would have helped because the one to one would have been fine if you paired them up with a higher and lower age. I don’t know how effective the RTLB’s would be in that way. I would give them a 4 because they’ve obviously gone to a lot of trouble to find out where the needs were. (Rating 4)*

Others were more positive about the use of external advice (4 respondents) as the following quote illustrates:

*Obviously they’ve done some research through tapping into another school to see how that programme is run. (Rating 5)*

The final reason for neutral and positive ratings given by more than one respondent was student enjoyment (5 respondents).

*They’re making a positive move and enjoyment is probably the criteria. (Rating 5)*

Those who considered enjoyment was not a sufficient reason for the adoption of a programme were typically coded as needs / programme match missing.

Other reasons given by only one person in the most successful schools that are not listed in Table 7.2 included no faith in the RTLBs (rating 1.5), peer tutoring is better than doing nothing (rating 2.5) and peer tutoring is OK provided other things are in place rating 5). In somewhat successful schools, reasons given by only one person include: enjoyment doesn’t guarantee success (rating 4), they had help (rating 5.5). An additional reason for a positive rating from a least successful school was that the teachers knew a bit about peer tutoring: reading (rating 5).
**Part D: Use of running records in the decision to continue with Peer Tutoring: Reading**

The average ratings for all school-based respondent groups of this aspect of the scenario were higher than for the facilitators (Figure 7.3). There was also a trend in ratings between the ‘most successful’ schools (low ratings) to the least successful schools (high ratings).

**Figure 7.3**
**Use of RR to Continue PTR**

Re reasons given for low ratings focused primarily on concerns about the lack of needs / measure match and reasons for high ratings were that the data showed success (Table 7.5). Some respondents’ answers indicated that they assumed comprehension had been assessed, even though the scenario explicitly stated that accuracy was the basis of the measure.
Table 7.5
Frequency of Principals’ and Literacy Leaders’ Reasons for Rating the Scenario:
Use of running records in the decision to continue with Peer Tutoring: Reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Low ratings</th>
<th>Neutral ratings</th>
<th>High ratings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No needs / measure match</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No attitudinal data</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showed success</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showed success (assumed comp)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerns about reliability of RR</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note 1. A scale of 1-7 was used with 1 representing ‘not appropriate’, 4 representing ‘Neither appropriate nor inappropriate’ and 7 representing ‘Highly appropriate’. Low ratings were those below the neutral point (1-3), neutral ratings were at the neutral point (3.5-4.5) and high ratings were above the neutral point (5-7).

A typical response from those concerned about the lack of a needs / measure match is illustrated in the following quote:

*She noticed the results showed nearly all the students were reading with greater accuracy and improved their text level ... but their issue was actually comprehension. (Rating 1)*

Concerns about the lack of attitudinal data were expressed in the following quote:

*I think running records are pretty much objective data but I think too it would be really good to sort of enhance, if that had been enhanced by the attitudes of the tutors and tutees what was that doing for the enthusiasm to read etc.? Were kids reading at other times, looking at targeting books at other times and not just during the peer-tutoring sort of role. (Rating 5-6)*

One of those who rated this aspect of the scenario highly, was positive about the use of running records:

*There is value in using running records and the analysis of them. (Rating 6)*

Some indicated in their answers that they assumed comprehension was measured, even though the scenario explicitly stated that accuracy only was measured:
Running records are an excellent way of finding out these sorts of things and it does say that they appeared to be bringing about significant gains in comprehension so they must have checked on comprehension as far as the running records, as long as they did that. (Rating 5)

Two respondents were concerned about reliability of running records, as illustrated in the following quote:

Running records are no good whatsoever unless they are standardised and have comprehension included. There is also a need to include staff training to ensure consistency when taking running records. (Rating 2)

Reasons given by only one respondent included two codings from schools categorized as most successful (running records give focus and staff were untrained) and two from schools categorized as somewhat successful (no in-depth analysis of running records and the unreliability of running records).

Discussion: Evidence-Based Aspects of the Scenario

Facilitators were more able than principals or literacy leaders to identify problems in all aspects of the scenario. Their ratings of the parts dealing with the use of evidence-based decision making showed that most understood the problem. The neutral to positive ratings of the evidence-based aspects of such a problematic scenario by a small number of facilitators and, in general, by principals and literacy leaders is a concern to the evaluators and provides one potential explanation for the lack of evidence of student achievement in many schools. Many principals and literacy leaders expressed little concern with a process that based an initiative on teacher perception, implemented a programme that was not matched to need and evaluated an aspect of reading that was not targeted by the initiative.

There was a trend towards more negative ratings in schools categorized as most successful over those categorized as least successful. Overall, this trend was not as marked as we anticipated, apart from the item related to the use of running records to continue with peer tutoring: reading which clearly differentiated schools in different categories. This general lack of clear differentiation between the three categories of schools is probably due to the basis of the initial categorization by the facilitators. Committed leaders who were supportive of the initiative and collaborated with their teachers formed the main basis of the categorization of the schools. We suggest that if student achievement is to improve, more than commitment and collaboration is needed. Rather schools need to collect evidence of need, so that they can later use that evidence to assess if the needs have been met.
CHAPTER 8: LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Leadership Dimensions Salient to Facilitators

Facilitators were clear that foremost in the goal to raise student achievement in literacy was the need to up-skill school leaders. They nominated school leaders’ needs as paramount when responding to whose needs were the focus of the initiative. When facilitators were asked about their reasons for categorizing schools as most, somewhat and least successful, all the reasons given had leadership elements, e.g. being committed and collaborative, with 26 percent referring specifically to leadership qualities within the school. These leadership qualities were focused primarily on whether the leadership was action oriented and sufficiently skilled to get to an initiative underway. Seven percent of the reasons (all negative) related to a lack of leadership experience, and frequently related to recent changes in leadership within the school. As noted above, leadership qualities in terms of evidence-based self-review were rarely mentioned. The hypothetical scenario allowed us to examine more of the specifics of facilitators’ beliefs about effective leadership.

THE HYPOTHETICAL SCENARIO: FACILITATORS’ VIEWS OF LEADERSHIP

Two questions about the hypothetical scenario referred specifically to the literacy leader’s leadership style and role. Part C addressed leadership in relation to the meeting processes. In the scenario the focus of meetings was to address teachers’ self-identified organizational issues, rather challenging and addressing any concerns that the leadership might have about teachers’ professional knowledge or others aspect of teaching reading. While organizational issues are important, it is unlikely that the processes described would enhance teachers’ professional knowledge of reading instruction.

Part E asked about the literacy leader’s role overall in the process. Very little was mentioned in the scenario about the literacy leaders’ role except that it was passive and facilitative of teacher talk, rather than teacher challenge. She did not share the details of the achievement information with the teachers in ways that they could learn to improve their practice but rather reported general comments on improved reading accuracy.

As can be seen from Table 7.1 (see previous chapter), the facilitators rated the leadership aspects of the scenario more positively than the evidence-based aspects. Five facilitators consistently gave high ratings to both leadership aspects of the scenario and low ratings to the evidence-based aspects. The average rating given for the meeting
process was just above the midpoint of the scale and was seen more positively by the facilitators than the other parts of the scenario, although different facilitators used the full range of the scale. Ratings of 1, 5 and 6 were each given by at least three facilitators. The most frequent positive reason for high ratings was the pragmatic focus of the meeting and the way problems were solved (8 facilitators) and the way they worked with one another (3 facilitators). One, who gave a rating of 5 combined both these reasons in her response:

_They did well because they were talking, they got together. They identified the goals. They had expectations. They brainstormed ways of achieving that. They’d heard from another school – a neighbouring school and I think that contact is excellent. They used the RTLB, which is really good, and they were building a shared language and I think they had time to talk through that and I think that was a good positive step that they did. And they supported each other._

Reasons for low ratings were all very similar and focused on concerns about the failure to base the meetings on an analysis of the teachers’ learning needs (4 facilitators) or those of the students (2 facilitators), having a very pragmatic rather than professional focus (2 facilitators) and not using evidence (1 facilitator). One facilitator’s response captured a range of these dimensions:

_Well the issues should have been children’s comprehension. There was no focus on teacher practice and instructional strategies to deal with children’s comprehension. There was no professional development so to me they were talking management stuff and not teaching practice. (Rating 1)_

Other reasons included the lack of structure at the meetings (1 facilitator) and little involvement by the literacy leader (1 facilitator).

The overall ratings of the literacy leader’s role in the process were not quite as positive as the meeting process, but were still more positively rated than the evidence-based aspects. Once again the full rating scale was used. The main reason underlying positive ratings related to the facilitative role adopted by the literacy leader (6 facilitators) and the extent to which the teachers were allowed to talk (5 facilitators). One facilitator captured these aspects in her answer:

_I think she allowed the time for the staff to come together and they had fortnightly syndicate meetings and she obviously knew that teachers need to have time to talk – that it wasn’t dominated by her so I think she showed good leadership skills in that area._

Those giving lower ratings were critical of the passive nature of the leadership style (4 facilitators), and that the literacy leader did not develop the teachers’ professional knowledge (2 facilitators). Other reasons identified by one facilitator each included the
lack of grounding of the initiative in any theory or best practice, and that the literacy leader did not really understand the initiative or the data.

Leadership dimensions: Principals and literacy leaders

Previous chapters have presented material that indicated that principals, in particular, tended not to view their role in strong or active leadership terms. Less than 20 percent described their role as such, with most nominating a mentoring, coaching type role. In responding to the question about the purpose of the Literacy Leadership programme, they largely mentioned improving programmes in order to improve capability; then raising student achievement or improving literacy generally. A handful thought that the programme concerned them or, more broadly, management. They saw teachers’ and students’ needs as being the focus of their school initiative.

THE SCENARIO: PRINCIPALS’ AND LITERACY LEADERS’ VIEWS OF LEADERSHIP

Principals and literacy leaders were also asked to rate these two aspects of the scenario. A similar pattern was evident in the principals’ and literacy leaders’ view of the scenario, in that the leadership dimensions were rated more highly than the evidence-based dimensions (Figure 8.1).

The Meeting Process

Those who were particularly positive about the meeting process were the ‘least successful’ group of schools and literacy leaders in the ‘somewhat successful’ schools. However, these ratings cannot be considered reflective of whether a school was least or most successful, because those most critical of the staff meeting processes were the principals in the ‘most successful’ schools and the literacy leaders in the ‘least successful’ schools. In both cases, they were more critical than the facilitators. The range of ratings were for the most successful schools (1-6) with the principals (1-6), Literacy leader (1-5); somewhat successful schools (2-6) with the principals (2.5-6) and literacy leaders (2-6); and least successful schools (2-7) with principals (2.5–5.5) and literacy leaders (2-7).
Reasons for the ratings were similar to those of the facilitators (Table 8.1). The most frequently nominated positive reason was the pragmatic focus of the meetings and the active way problems were dealt with. Two respondents, gave a low rating, because of other aspects of the meetings, such as they were not based on an analysis of teacher learning needs and the frequency of meetings, but considered the pragmatic focus of the meetings to be positive. A typical quote from a principal who was positive about this aspect of the meeting, indicated:

*At least they were discussing issues. It was concrete, the implementation, matching of students, selection of texts etc. (rating 6)*
Table 8.1
Frequency of Principals’ and Literacy Leaders’ Reasons for Ratings of the Scenario: Identifying Issues at Staff Meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>No. of low ratings</th>
<th>No. of neutral ratings</th>
<th>No. of high ratings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatic focus</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive of teachers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of meetings</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not based on st/tchr needs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More guidance needed</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students should have been focus</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note1. A scale of 1-7 was used with 1 representing ‘not appropriate’, 4 representing ‘Neither appropriate nor inappropriate’ and 7 representing ‘Highly appropriate’. Low ratings were those below the neutral point (1-3), neutral ratings were at the neutral point (3.5-4.5) and high ratings were above the neutral point (5-7)

Responses related to literacy leaders being supportive of teachers, mostly referred to providing the opportunity for teachers to share their ideas, as illustrated in the following quote:

Because it’s a really good idea to share and brainstorm because sometimes you can’t see the trees for the wood and we try to do that too. (Rating 6)

The frequency of meeting attracted both positive and negative comment with four respondents considering them appropriately frequent and an equal number considering that they were insufficiently frequent. This literacy leader’s answers were coded as both supportive and positive for frequency of meetings:

They talked about issues and just the fact that they were meeting fortnightly and given time to talk.

This principal, however, was critical of the frequency of meetings:

You know fortnightly syndicate meetings ... how long is it going to take them to implement this if they’re still talking about implementation if they only meet once a fortnight? (Rating 2-3)
Some were concerned that the meetings were not based on an analysis of student and teacher learning, as illustrated in the following quote:

_They’re having a bit of a yap about how they’re going to implement it and how to match student tutors with the tutees and organising the right sort of books and stuff and like the teachers describing how they manage their sort of problems and nothing’s nitty gritty. It’s just about organizational things._ (Rating 2)

Some respondents thought that more guidance needed from literacy leader:

_I think the literacy leader needed to give a bit more guidance there because I don’t think other teachers described how they managed these kinds of problems, then the literacy leader has to say, ‘Well look this is what I want you to do. We have talked about these things, that’s a good idea, this is a guide some that everybody has to be consistent right through.’ _ (Rating 2.5)

The two respondents who were concerned that students rather than the teachers should have been the focus were not concerned about the impact on students’ learning, but rather that students need to be taught how to undertake peer tutoring, as illustrated in the following quote:

_The thing is that student tutors as tutees is fine ... but the students actually have to be taught how to conduct peer tutoring in the first place ... And having done this I know, I’ve done it._ (Rating 3)

Single response reasons in the most successful schools are paraphrased as: assumed other things happening as well as peer tutoring: reading, positive that everyone on the same path, and concerns that the meetings should have been with the whole staff because the principal needs to know. Responses given by only one person in the somewhat successful schools included: the literacy leader provided little detail, a wider focus and more professional development for teachers was needed. In the least successful schools, single responses comprised: the whole school should have been involved and undertaken a strengths and weaknesses analysis.

**The literacy leader’s role in the process**

The pattern of principals’ ratings from ‘most’ to ‘least’ successful schools evident in the previous section on the meeting process was reversed for the literacy leaders’ role in the process (Figure 8.2). The literacy leaders’ ratings were more mixed. All but one rating for the ‘most successful’ literacy leaders were higher than those of the facilitators.
A wide range of reasons were given for both positive and negative ratings of the literacy leader’s role because different respondents focused on different aspects of the role as described in the scenario (Table 8.2). The most common reasons given for a negative rating were concerns about the passive role taken by the literacy leader and that she failed to develop the teachers’ professional knowledge, as described by this principal:

*She didn’t appear to give any guidance. It is fine that they were brainstorming but I think she or he needed rather than just saying, ‘They knew the RTLB, let’s just have that person in’. I think the guidance needs to come from the literacy leader who needs to know what sort of best practice is for a start and needs to impart that to the teachers – what they are aiming to do. (Rating 2)*
Table 8.2  
Principals’ and Literacy Leaders’ Reasons for Ratings of the Literacy Leaders’ Role

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>No. of low ratings</th>
<th>No. of neutral ratings</th>
<th>No. of high ratings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Too passive</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failed to develop prof. knowledge</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate initiative</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate assessment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitative role</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gathered data</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative successful</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developed ownership</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note 1. A scale of 1-7 was used with 1 representing ‘not appropriate’, 4 representing ‘Neither appropriate nor inappropriate’ and 7 representing ‘Highly appropriate’. Low ratings were those below the neutral point (1-3), neutral ratings were at the neutral point (3.5-4.5) and high ratings were above the neutral point (5-7)

Others were concerned that the initiative itself was inappropriate:

*I would question her decision to do peer tutoring as I believe reading needs to be more strategic and systematic* (rating 4)

Four respondents were more concerned about the use of an inappropriate assessment:

*To me she should have looked at how good they were at taking running records and what was the school’s benchmark at passing comprehension if that is what they are looking at…. I mean improving text levels doesn’t mean a thing, like they still don’t understand a thing.* (Rating 1.5)

The most common reason for a positive rating was the facilitative role adopted by the literacy leader as illustrated in the following quote:
Her ability to guide them and she was there with the fortnightly syndicate meetings to facilitate discussions. And I think also she was part of bringing them together so that they were all gelled together as a group and all on the same wave length. (Rating 7)

Seven respondents were positive about the fact that she gathered some evidence about the students’ achievement:

She’s got the idea that she needs the standardised test to indicate difference and the literacy leader noticed the results. She’d found nearly all the students were reading with greater accuracy compared to the previous term, so she’s got a relevant comparison. (Rating 5)

Related to this reason were those who considered that the initiative successful, as these two respondents described:

Obviously she had been very effective at bringing about some change and kept it rolling. (Rating 6)

They got the staff tuned into teaching and improving the learning and improving the teaching of kids in reading. So from that point of view it has been quite successful. (Rating 6)

The final group of positive reasons related the way in which the literacy leader developed ownership:

Well I think the staff had ownership of this (rating 5)

Two respondents were concerned that the focus of the initiative was too narrow. Responses given by only one person included: concerns about training students rather than teachers and the time frame being too short to expect gains in student achievement.

Discussion of Leadership aspects of the scenario

Those who gave positive ratings to the leadership aspects of the scenario appeared to hold a view of effective leadership as one that is facilitative and non-challenging of teachers or their practice. Leaders who organize meetings, are facilitative of teacher talk, and concerned about organizational issues are viewed positively. Our concern with this view is the assumption that teaching practice is improved when teachers can share their concerns and get the organisational issues right. The literacy leadership initiative was designed to improve professional knowledge about literacy and it is difficult to see how that professional knowledge was improved or poor pedagogical practice that might impact negatively on students’ achievement was challenged in the scenario.
As with the evidence-based aspects of the scenario, the ratings failed to differentiate those schools nominated by facilitators as most, somewhat and least successful in undertaking their own initiative. This lack of difference is more surprising than that for the evidence-based aspects of the scenario because the facilitators appeared to use action-oriented leadership and the provision of professional development as reasons for categorizing the schools. However, they also used criteria related to being committed, supportive and collaborative in their categorization process, all processes that could be attributed to the literacy leader in the scenario. Although commitment, collaboration and support may be necessary preconditions, in and of themselves, they do not necessarily translate into better outcomes for students.
CHAPTER 9: UNDERSTANDING OF PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITIES

An aim of the Literacy Leadership initiative was to strengthen professional communities of practice with respect to literacy and to accomplish this at more than one level. Clearly, part of the function of the regular meetings for all of the Facilitators and of the email contact initiated by Learning Media was to give coherence to the Facilitators as a group and for them to be able to locate expertise and support within their group. The notion of facilitators having principals as mentors was to provide another, different professional forum for them. The school was the other level where the building or strengthening of a professional community would be seen as a way to support enhanced literacy outcomes. The community, in this sense, would have a shared focus on improving literacy achievement for students. The Literacy Leadership model was premised on the fact that facilitators would work with school leaders while development work with teachers would be supported by expertise both within and outside the school community such as that contained within the advisory service. The role of the facilitator in this regard would be to foster links between services that could offer expertise in literacy.

There were several ways in which we attempted to gain some insight into the likelihood of forms of professional communities developing under Literacy Leadership auspices. As it is conceivable that part of the task of the facilitator would be to help principals recognise the value of, as well as to help establish, professional communities led by the principal, we examined their understandings. It was assumed that facilitators would have such an understanding so they were asked directly what this was and also what they thought the rationale for professional communities might be. Another way in which we enquired about the existence of a professional community serving the school was to ask if they consulted anyone else about their initiative. We also asked about the sources of information participants used in order to develop their ideas about literacy and literacy teaching. Finally, as peer support was seen as an important component of a professional community in terms of the aims of the Literacy Leadership initiative, we asked teachers, particularly about whether they had been observed, by whom and what the outcome from that had been.

With respect to facilitators’ understanding of the notion of professional community, the major feature mentioned was the ‘sharing’ aspect of collegiality and collaboration that they felt would characterise a professional community. Almost three-quarters of facilitators alluded to this although in doing so some of the facilitators gave multi-faceted responses.
I guess it’s a group of people with a similar purpose... for example within our professional community of facilitators there is a common purpose there and that’s kind of drawn us together you know within those meetings and so forth. But the professional communities that we are trying or hoping to facilitate within schools, I guess, has a similar nature but slightly different purpose. So my understanding of that term is it varies depending on the purpose that those communities might see for themselves. **But the key concept is one of collegiality and collaboration** (note: researchers’ emphasis).

The next most frequently mentioned feature of a professional community was that they would be likeminded, have a shared understanding and pursue a similar purpose or goal (68% of facilitators). A professional community is:

... the community of professionals who have a shared vision and it’s a community of people who are committed for life long learning which they go about achieving by professional reading, engaging in professional dialogue with peers and colleagues, engaging in critical reflection of their own practice and seeking feedback on their practice, contributing to a culture of learning.

The aspect of learning as a component of a professional community was noted by just over half of the facilitators who talked of a learning group or of an opportunity to move practice forward, particularly through the mechanisms of feedback and reflection. ‘So, you know, one where it’s openly growing, lots of professional talk and discussion and feedback and reading.’

Interestingly, in response to this question of their understanding of professional communities, most facilitators appeared to direct their remarks in a generalised way so, for the most part, it was unclear to whom they felt the notion was to be applied. However, a quarter of facilitators alluded to schools in discussing what they understood by the term. ‘It is a school with vision and goals; it’s a school that is able to talk about teaching practice; it’s a school that might have a common jargon about learning, teaching and learning.’ Some identified a community within a school, then other communities outside the schools.

The major reasons advanced for professional communities were quite general. A third of facilitators thought the rationale to be to increase literacy achievement; similarly a third mentioned providing more effective teaching and learning.

**By professional community I would see people seeking out current research, reading, taking implications for classroom teaching to assist more development; to provide more effective learning for different children, and to provide more effective teaching; to provide teachers with a safe environment to work in.**
An interesting rationale for professional communities, namely, to provide consistency or common messages, was what a quarter of facilitators thought was a reason for them. ‘I think it is a lot about giving a common message and a lot of it about providing people with the support mechanisms that they need at all levels of those communities’.

About 20 percent saw professional communities as a way of helping schools by providing support mechanisms or by helping them to make use of resources.

I guess it is making use of all the resources that are available, so that people have a common understanding of what we’re trying to do. Make links between the different personnel involved in literacy, whether it is in the school or outside the school.

We have professional communities when schools go to outside support through partnership whether it’s parents community, other schools, other networks, RTLB’s, RT Lit’s, University personnel…. there are different layers again of professional communities. But a big part of that is helping teachers to expect that it’s ok for them to ask for help and be part of network where you can ask for help and so forth.

Support was also seen to come from the molding of a team within a school.

I think that teachers are really busy and they also come in with lots of varying states of training and expectations and levels of expertise and I think having that community you know builds them into a team and provides them with that support. A chance to talk about research and programmes and effective practice and it’s all very supportive when it’s done in a team way, you know in that community. A chance to sort of show them how and achieve in that team environment rather than everyone doing their own thing I guess and not having that chance to connect with other people and grow.

A further two facilitators specifically saw the rationale for developing a professional community as being to help schools help themselves.

Around a quarter of facilitators approached this question from their personal point of view and conceived of the rationale for a professional community in terms of a vehicle to increase their own knowledge and skills. ‘I think it keeps us up-to-date and with the most recent research and information that we can advance our own knowledge and use that with helping the schools’. Two facilitators understood the rationale to be to benefit professionals in general. A rationale given by a minority of facilitators was that professional communities were to make use of collective resources (16%).
With regard to their professional community, facilitators clearly viewed their colleagues as a community and rated interaction with them highly. They were asked to rate on a seven-point scale, how important interaction with their colleagues was for them from 1, not important to 7, most important. The mean rating was 6.7 with scores ranging from 5 to 7. Often as part of the response to the question of how the Literacy Leadership impacted on them personally, facilitators mentioned that what they appreciated was the building of a community. In such comments were a few that referred to desirable hallmarks of such a community, for example, discussion and argument or challenging viewpoints. Some felt that when they met together there was too much time devoted to telling and not enough to true discussion although it was conceded that facilitators were ‘at different points’ and not all were necessarily prepared for the level of discussion that would be desirable.

... two days of the three largely dedicated to presenting national workshops and what we say and when we say it, especially when they’re written out in so much detail and you know you could do it with your eyes closed. I’m more interested in debate over issues and being up to date in research ....I think it’s Linda Darling-Hammond that talks of the fact there’s nothing better in terms of professional development than debate and argument and I think that’s really, really important.

It is clear that facilitators developed a network of like others that they could contact and utilise in many ways. ‘I guess what.... I see happening within the team is that there are a few people who now use each other as a support network beyond the others. I think you’ve got a team there but I think as friendships and interests have grown you have a network now of others like you that you can also contact.’

A design feature of their community was the principal as mentor, intended to give facilitators a peer with a different network and perhaps a different standpoint. While facilitators were all highly positive about each other as colleagues in a professional community, they were far less united in their view of the value of the principal mentor. Generally, they were positive about the concept but a number noted that it was a difficult role. The average rating of how useful it had been to have a principal as a mentor was 5.2, on a seven-point scale from 1, not at all useful to 7, most useful. However, there was a wide difference of opinion about their value with ratings ranging from 2 to 7.

The most common description of the role of the principal mentor was that of a somewhat passive, reactive role, as a ‘sounding board’, someone who would listen, and be affirming and supportive. Nearly 80 percent of the facilitators spoke of the principal mentors in these terms.

Learning Media have often talked about how effective has your principal mentor been in terms of all sorts of things that are deeply professional in terms of changing my practice and da de da de da and that hasn’t been what it’s been about.
It’s been about supporting me in my journey. S/he and I have gone over a lot of the professional readings, we’ve read them and talked about them, we’ve done all the first lot of modules. We read and discussed them because we had some concerns that the research was old. I go over every workshop with him/her, so personally I’ve found it very valuable.

However, about two thirds of the facilitators went on to speak of their principal mentor in more active terms as someone who could give feedback and provide a different perspective. ‘That sort of feeling, s/he is a teaching principal, s/he has her finger on the pulse, s/he is a wonderful sounding board and I get a lot of professional feedback.’

Valued and mentioned by just over a third was that the principal mentor had local knowledge and networks. ‘His/her networking to a certain extent – you know, networking in his/her district. S/he’s helped me solve a couple of problems with principals and s/he’s helped me with – like new strategic planning – those sorts of things like if I’m not sure about something like the appraisal system.’ Some also saw the mentor as a way to keep them in touch with how schools were thinking and operating. ‘I think it’s good because it keeps me in touch with schools that are doing … thinking.’

About a quarter saw the principal mentor as actually helping to problem solve with the facilitator and as an impetus to changed practice. The same number noted that the relationship was one of mutual benefit. ‘And I think it’s been a win-win for her/him too because s/he’s comfortable and I think from what I’m learning, I can share that research and understanding and programmes and resources with him/her for his/her school’. One facilitator even felt that there was more mentoring on his/her part than on the principal’s part.

There were issues where the principal and mentor were geographically isolated or where there was a limited pool from which to select a mentor. Two facilitators saw no need for such a system.

**Principals**

Most principals were not asked about their understanding of professional communities. The response to early piloting suggested that this was not a term they were familiar with. ‘I have no idea what you are talking about’ was the response of one principal. Responses to other questions suggested some had an underdeveloped notion of this as ‘professional discussion; swapping stories, success stories’. Principals were, however, asked about their role in relation to the initiative. These results were reported in Chapter 6 where understandings of the initiative and of roles within it were explored. They were further asked whether they consulted anyone else (other than the facilitator)
about the literacy initiative and, in addition, whether they obtained or allocated any other resources, additional to that provided by the Ministry of Education.

Principals clearly utilise literacy experts that are available to their schools. Most of the additional resources were personnel. Largely, they nominated either consultants, some of which were employed under some Ministry of Education contract like Exemplars that they then hired to do professional development, or advisors. In two schools they employed the facilitator as a consultant to take a professional development day. Some principals mentioned getting in consultants who were successful facilitators but were not the facilitator for their schools. Other personnel resources utilised were a local resource teacher of literacy (RTLit) and the resource teachers of learning and behaviour (RTLb). There was a school that named three consultant type persons who totalled several days, plus the senior staff attended a literacy-related conference.

A few schools indicated that they had allocated additional resources from their budget for more release days for the literacy leader to do tasks like ‘gather more data and more information about the things we are doing’. One school had allocated additional resources particularly in relation to written material.

**Literacy Leaders**

With respect to the literacy leaders, the interviewer introduced the notion of professional communities by saying that she would like to ‘discuss professional communities as they relate to you and your staff’. Then the literacy leaders were asked what sources of information they used to develop their own ideas about literacy. There were two major ways literacy leaders developed their ideas. The first was through professional readings ‘stuff that comes into the school’ (some of which were named like the Gazette, SET, Ministry publications, Reading Association material or even material from publishers) or recommendations from the facilitator. Presumably, some of the latter came from those materials associated with the literacy leadership workshops and a couple actually nominated them as a source ‘the case studies, what we have come across in the workshops’. One literacy leader specifically mentioned the use of internet sites like TKI.

The second source of information was colleagues, both specific like ‘I love listening to my reading recovery teachers’ or specific names of facilitators and resource teachers were offered or the non-specific ‘talking with colleagues’. These two sources were each mentioned by about a quarter of literacy leaders. Other sources mentioned by around 20 percent were conferences and other professional development. ‘I get my ideas from my courses and from the professional development days that I go to’. Sometimes the professional development was associated with a Ministry contract like ABLE. More infrequently cited were visits to other schools and the use of external experts. Where the
latter were specified, they tended to be consultants, advisors and resource teachers. A few mentioned formal tertiary courses that they were involved with.

Another mark of a professional community in a school would be the existence of peer support and feedback systems. Literacy leaders were asked whether they had changed the way peer support among teachers worked as a result of their participation in the Literacy Leadership initiative. The question, unfortunately, assumed that some form of system would be in place and that such a system would be seen as more than the notion that ‘this is a very small school and we will always be supportive of each other’. In about a third of cases, it was unlikely that peer systems had operated as respondents talked of the fact that they were in the process in 2002 of developing peer systems. Another third responded to the effect that they did not have peer systems operating.

About a quarter said that they had peer systems in place but most had not changed the way they operated. One literacy leader noted the system had become more formalised, yet more personal as teachers had an actual, nominated buddy to talk to. Another, in reporting change said that ‘we do a cross-syndicate thing now with the critical friend’. One school that had set up critical friends as a result of the initiative were going to change the way they operated in that teachers could select their friend, rather than pairs being allocated. In one school they had moved from syndicate leader to teacher to teacher. Yet another form of change noted by one school was that in the previous year teachers had visited each other’s classrooms but that was no longer happening. Some interpreted peer systems as involving senior teachers who filled the ‘challenge and support role’. Sometimes, a peer system involved sending teachers to other schools to observe ‘We’ve got three teachers that are sent to other schools to look at different programmes at the same level’.

**Teachers**

With regard to finding out about professional communities that may exist for these teachers, we first asked about the importance for them of interaction with their colleagues. To get a sense of what teachers thought they obtained from interaction with one another, they were asked to rate and then give reasons for their rating. The average rating on a seven-point scale, where 7 indicated most important, was 6.3. Seven was the most frequent choice and there was considerable agreement about the importance of colleagues. Colleagues were described as ‘walking bags of information’ (which, as interviewer, I was compelled to observe was not an elegant description!). They were described as having different knowledge, experience and teaching styles to learn from. They were further identified as a cohesive group that supported one another. ‘Working as a team and making sure that you are going to be backed up or given other alternatives’.
The majority of teachers (59%) claimed they got ideas, suggestions and alternatives from their colleagues. Obtaining ideas for activities was a common response in explaining the rating given, ‘I’ve picked up some really awesome ideas from other teachers in the school’. A quarter justified their rating because they said simply that they learnt from their colleagues. A smaller percentage viewed interaction in affective terms like supporting, affirming and motivating. There were a small number, however, who gave examples of where colleagues challenged and discussed. ‘When we were working out how to grade children’s writing particularly, we’d bring books together in our syndicate and look at what we thought was a three. Somebody else might not and we’d get into the why and how and why did you do that’. This was an excellent example of collegial problem solving.

To explore the extent to which schools were developing a culture not simply of sharing and affirmation but of collegial feedback amongst teachers aimed at improvement, we also wanted to know if anyone had observed their teaching and about the nature and perceived usefulness of the feedback they had received. Again, whether they were doing anything differently as a result of the feedback was of interest.

The responses, however, suggest that peer feedback was underdeveloped in schools. Given that the majority of teachers reported being observed by management (46%) this suggests an appraisal format ‘I always get feedback because we are continually assessed by our senior staff’, rather than a format that might develop within a professional community of practice. However, the observation by senior staff need not be appraisal, as in the case where the principal observes, looks at all of the teachers’ reading plans ‘making sure the purpose and focus are on track’, then spends time talking about what could be improved on, giving new ideas and explaining.

A quarter of teachers reported being observed by their peers although it is clear that they included in this cases where other teachers or trainee teachers observed them in order to learn. This is certainly one use of observation but such is generally not intended to provide feedback, particularly feedback that might help to bring about improved practice.

About 13 percent of teachers said that the literacy leader had observed them and a further six percent named a consultant or the facilitator as the observer. From interviews with the principal and literacy leader in one school we gathered that the literacy leader was released on one day a week to work with individual teachers and to observe them in small group teaching.

The nature of the feedback received was reported by the majority to be positive and affirming type feedback. About a quarter of teachers, in responding to this question about the nature of the feedback, said that they received either ideas or advice as a result. The feedback was seen as useful in terms of confirming their practice (25%); providing
alternatives (25%); allowing them to learn something (14%) and helping them to reflect on practice (7%).

The average rating of how useful the feedback was, again on a seven point scale where seven was extremely useful, was 5.9 with the range from 3 to 7. Clearly there were contrasting views. There were several strong voices of appreciation for the system.

She constantly gave feedback, constantly gave good ideas, looked more closely at anything that you could possibly be doing wrong...done in such a positive way, like you always felt that if you were not doing the best possible job, then you could see how to, be shown’. Another said ‘I’ve got to give it [the feedback] a seven because it is showing in my kids, showing in my classroom’.

There were specific examples offered of feedback that was given like where a teacher was giving too much information at the start of a story and not getting children to predict and also asking too many closed questions. Feedback about this changed her practice. In another case a teacher said that she now used a book for the week in guided reading rather than one a day and was much more selective about the choice of text. There were also occasional voices of dissent that saw the feedback as ‘not constructive at all’.

Overall, nearly half said that the feedback resulted in changed practices, while some specifically mentioned planning. The percentage who had changed practice was highest for the least successful schools. Between 20 to 25 percent of respondents said there were no changes made as a result of the feedback and a further 10 percent could not specify any changes although they did not claim there were none. The no change response was highest in the schools seen to be most successful. Here over a third said they had made no change.

Of interest was whether teachers were involved in other initiatives and professional development in addition to that associated with the Literacy Leadership programme. Overall, slightly more teachers claimed to be involved in other initiatives than said they were not. Across the three differentially successful groups of schools the proportions were somewhat different with more teachers in the least successful schools claiming not to be involved in other initiatives concerned with literacy. The proportions of involvement in other initiatives versus no other involvement were, respectively, from most to least successful, 3:2, 4:1 and 1:1. There were greater proportions of teachers in the somewhat successful and most successful schools with additional involvements in literacy-related programmes, projects and professional development than in the least successful schools.

Some of the most telling data with respect to participation in other initiatives came from interviews with the principals. These indicated blurring of boundaries and, often, likely over-commitment. In one school, for example, they began on Literacy Leadership,
‘then we got offered the chance to go on the HPP and PPP thing, we thought, literacy is a focus so we can do that and we did and that is the way it worked’. In this instance, repeated attempts by the interviewer to find out exactly what the Literacy Leadership classroom initiative was were unsuccessful. Probes about a focus elicited this response ‘It was the whole lot. It was giving good value literacy from comprehension right through to reading, the whole aspect of it, no we didn’t focus in on anything special. We were in the process of getting the focus when everything started to fragment’. The low rating the principal gave to the LL classroom initiative was ‘because we lost our way and we had too many outside pressures’. In another school the same initiatives (HPP and PPP) ran parallel to the Literacy Leadership one.

In the responses of other principals to questions about changes and learning from or continuing with changes, it was difficult to unpick the changes as they were often tied up with other initiatives like the introduction of Jolly Phonics or work with asTTle or Exemplars. ‘Yes, we introduced Jolly Phonics and there were a whole raft of things. It wasn’t just comprehension’. Some schools, too, moved from the Literacy Leadership in 2001 to the Numeracy Project in 2002. In some cases there may have been insufficient time for consolidation. However, one principal was clear that there needed to be time for teachers to put into practice what they had learnt the previous year as s/he did not ‘see any point in moving on until you have got that established’. In another case, the learning that had resulted was turned into a greater push in literacy with further consultant help sought and funding applied for.

Conclusion

The aim of establishing multi-level professional communities through the auspices of the Literacy leadership initiative was a laudable one. The data presented suggest that it was realised to some extent. The facilitators definitely thought of themselves as a close and supportive collegial community, although some felt that an important aspect of a professional community, the cut and thrust of challenge and discussion needed to be developed to a greater extent. They saw such communities as a way of helping schools to establish a support network both within and outside the school. Principals, although often unfamiliar with the term professional community, reported utilising resources from the wider community of literacy educators. Literacy leaders drew on professional reading and colleagues to develop their ideas about literacy. Teachers found interaction with their colleagues very important and there were examples of collegial problem solving offered rather than simply ideas for activities swapping. Generally, during the time frame selected for the evaluation, peer systems of feedback in schools were under-developed.
CHAPTER 10 CONCLUSIONS

The Literacy Leadership model of professional development is essentially one of providing an expert in literacy to mentor leaders within schools so that they can assume appropriate leadership roles in order to further develop teachers. By developing these leadership roles, the aim was to improve classroom practice and, therefore, student achievement outcomes in literacy. Both in New Zealand and internationally, there is considerable momentum to focus leadership roles within schools on ‘instructional leadership: or ‘learning-centred leadership’ (Southworth, 2002). The Literacy Leadership model was, in part, an effort to develop the role of principal more in the direction of this style of leadership and, alongside this, to develop the skills of a literacy leader within the school who could also lead in the area of literacy.

The model had novel aspects compared with traditional professional development delivery in that the facilitators as literacy ‘experts’ were required also to be mentors to school leaders. The model was partly premised on capacity already existing in the school to benefit from the mentoring of the facilitator and, partly, on the development of a literacy community of support and feedback for each school so that it could be largely independent in working to raise literacy achievement. The literacy community extended also to the facilitators and to Learning Media itself where an advisory board was set up for consultation purposes.

The establishment of a community of professionals was successful at the level of the facilitator and, to a lesser extent, at the school level. The instantiation or form of the community at the school level tended to be the weaker one of sharing and supporting rather than the fully developed one of reflective dialogue that challenges assumptions and examines and refines practice as a result.

The Literacy Leadership initiative clearly focused participating schools on literacy. Self-report data have been presented that show that many participants, particularly teachers, felt that learning had occurred on their part. The perception of the classroom initiatives was that they had been successful, a judgement often reportedly based on student progress.

This evaluation attempted to find evidence of improved student achievement as a result of the Literacy Leadership initiative. The limited availability of evidence that could be interpreted did not allow an independent judgment about improved student achievement as a result of the school-based projects to be made. This does not mean there were no improvements; it is just that we were unable to verify them independently. The reasons for this lack of evidence are complex and should not be interpreted as a failure of the literacy leadership initiative.
In this report we have examined, and dismissed, some possible explanations for the lack of evidence of success, such as, teacher efficacy and expectations. We entertained a number of explanations for lack of evidence like the existence of a high degree of satisfaction with student achievement reported by teachers that may have obviated the need for data. Aside from this notion of perception of success rendering the collection of evidence less likely, there is also the possibility that schools lacked the capacity to engage in such. We have contextualised the potential explanations below in the different levels of the model and discussed how it might be strengthened.

In our discussion and critique of ‘the model’, we wish to acknowledge that the Literacy Leadership model is not a static one, but rather one that has evolved throughout the contract. The snapshot we have provided covers a relatively early period and may not necessarily represent accurately later or current forms. Indeed, some subsequent materials have addressed some of the points we have raised, particularly with reference to using student achievement data to examine initiative progress. What may have helped to enhance the delivery of the programme would be a formative, ongoing evaluation involving all relevant stakeholders.

Enhancing the ‘flow down’ model

We would argue that the model employed is a form of ‘flow down’ model of professional development. Multi-level professional communities were envisaged. A strong community of facilitators worked with school management who, in turn, were to lead teachers. There are several layers at which this model could be strengthened and rendered more effective.

The first level comprises Learning Media, and its associated advisors from the Ministry and the specially constituted advisory group. Coming from this level is the training and support of facilitators through professional development hui and through the production of more widely disseminated written materials and resources. The next level involves the facilitators with their understandings of the rationale for the model and their own level of expertise, not just in literacy but in key associated areas like how to mentor effectively, what constitutes educational leadership, and knowledge of assessment including data collection and interpretation. Then principals’ and also, although perhaps to a lesser extent, literacy leaders’ conception of their role; their motivation for participation and their knowledge of how to lead evidence-based teaching improvement form the next level. Finally, directly mediating between the other layers of the model and improved student outcomes in literacy, there are classroom teachers, their ideas, knowledge and skills and support systems.

There are areas that have been identified from the data that may indicate untested assumptions about capacity and knowledge of both facilitators and schools that were problematic in terms of the envisaged model. Related to this is the nature of the professional development provided to facilitators. In summary, the professional development was probably not sufficiently focused on enskilling the facilitators in leadership mentoring roles and on refining their knowledge about how to guide schools in the effective utilisation of evidence to inform and improve practice. Many school leaders did not have sufficient skills to implement some of the key messages implicit in the model. In addition, the written materials as a whole under-emphasised the crucial teaching points relating to using evidence to improve student achievement.

Facilitators were chosen for their undeniable expertise in literacy teaching. That does not mean that they possessed other, equally important, skills. The hui, as the major vehicle for professional development of facilitators, reportedly contained many interesting speakers. All facilitators greatly valued being kept up to date with literacy-related research. It is telling that few felt that they learnt anything new; rather they had their literacy knowledge refined, reinforced or broadened. Yet, equally, few felt that they had all of the skills needed to be a successful facilitator when they began. What, arguably, should have been key and explicit emphases and areas of development for facilitators (expanded on below) were either missing or overshadowed and lost, perhaps in the wealth of information about literacy programmes seen to be currently making a difference to achievement.

The first example relates to mentoring skills. A perceptive facilitator saw that s/he had had to develop a different set of skills, those related to mentoring for leadership in general (where literacy, in effect, acts as the context) and, particularly, skills in challenging the practices of the school leaders. Such skills were seen to move beyond the high level of expertise in literacy that s/he clearly possessed. There is no indication that the level of such mentoring skills was established among the facilitator body or that they were explicitly taught and developed by Learning Media at facilitator hui.

Further to this point, there is evidence that suggests that a number of facilitators held a view of leadership and, for that matter of professional communities, as involving facilitation and co-operation, arguably a somewhat weak view of leadership. They may have been comfortable assisting a principal and literacy leader to act in such a way, providing them with knowledge and resources. Some facilitators may have viewed their role primarily as coach in terms of literacy expert, a role they were comfortable with and had filled before.
Although all were considered literacy experts, like the matter of mentoring skills, it is also questionable whether all possessed the level of knowledge to guide schools and their leaders in the effective utilisation of evidence to inform and improve practice. There was general agreement amongst facilitators that improving practice was a main message but support is required for such a message to be realised. This is particularly so, given the base level schools appeared to be starting from in regard to the use of evidence to inform practice.

Some facilitators questioned whether more time should have been spent on debate and discussion and whether there was more crucial research that could have been highlighted and the skills associated with its implications developed. This applies, particularly, to the area concerning obtaining and using appropriate assessment tools to get valid data for the purpose, and interpreting evidence to aid decision-making in teaching. It is difficult to assess the extent to which Learning Media hui addressed the question of data gathering and analysis and, particularly, its feed forward into teaching, with facilitators. Evidence, in part from the scenario responses, suggests that not all facilitators may have had the skills to mentor principals/literacy leaders to a level where these leaders could analyse and use assessment data and, in turn, assist their staff to interrogate class data with a view to using findings to hone teaching.

In addition, the assumption that school leaders all had sufficient skills to lead the implementation and evaluation of an evidence-based classroom initiative was unfounded. We would argue that this finding regarding the limited capacity of schools to undertake this process would not have and, possibly, could not have been, anticipated by Learning Media, the Advisory Group and the Ministry of Education. Further issues as they relate to school-based projects are given in greater detail in the relevant section.

The written materials can be considered to be an instantiation of the messages about how to achieve improvement in literacy achievement. These messages were not always clear and, again, many were based on untested assumptions about skills and capacity of the users. A consideration of the case material shows that certain messages were highlighted perhaps at the expense of others. In particular, some cases presented conclusions that were not supported by evidence related to student achievement. Additionally, taking action was portrayed as a desirable goal, rather than taking action established to be effective. Goals and data were often not related or data were, at best, proximal indicators like student engagement, or teacher participation and collaboration. The portrayal of leadership in many cases was focused on qualities of collaboration and support, rather than a more focused instructional leadership role involving challenging practice.

The construction of such cases is a skilled undertaking and it may have been better to make one or two points with each case and to be explicit about these in the commentary or introduction. In tone they are positive which, while not undesirable, does
give the impression that they are exemplary models. In many cases, the schools were still developing effective literacy practices and a positive comment about what has been achieved, together with an honest evaluation of what remains may have been more helpful in terms of learning from them.

THE SECOND LEVEL: FACILITATOR LEVEL

Facilitators largely claimed to have benefited from the training provided and to have increased and refined their understanding with respect to literacy. Discussed above are some components of professional development that might have enhanced the facilitator’s skills and knowledge specific to this initiative.

The argument was heard that, at least initially, the model as implemented contained too few scheduled visits to schools for facilitators to make any difference. As evaluators we were initially unclear whether such comments or observations were a result of facilitators having worked previously within an advisor or consultant framework or whether they stemmed from the fact that the learning curve for school leaders was seen to be steep. From the data, both these reasons seemed to be implicated. However, more of the same is not necessarily a sound solution. More time to do ‘hands on’ seemed to be implied as necessary by some facilitators and this would clearly be a different model, more akin to that of the Numeracy Project professional development. Part of the facilitators’ complex role was to develop networks for schools so that others could provide the more ‘hand-on’ assistance.

At this level, there was a further complexity that made the model a challenging one to implement. It was not intended that the facilitators actually set the goals, undertake coaching of teachers, or sit down and help to analyse data etc. It was envisaged that other people resources would be used as a second wave of support. However, these personnel were not closely involved with the delivery of the Literacy leadership training and mentoring. Thus, the possibility existed for mixed messages or non-aligned messages. If second wave support is to be aligned with the intended model of implementation of the classroom intervention, it needs to be established that those providing it understand the model and have the mix of skills and knowledge required, particularly with respect to using valid assessment data to inform teaching. The notion of building a professional community for schools to help them raise literacy achievement is successful only to the extent that such members of the community give schools messages that are consistent with the aims of the initiative and are appropriately skilled and knowledgeable.
THE THIRD LEVEL: PRINCIPAL AND LITERACY LEADER

A problem at this third level became evident in the evaluation in terms of the extent of commitment to the programme. Principals’ responses to questions about their purpose for participating and facilitators’ reports of difficulty contacting or ‘pinning principals down’ indicates that the extent of commitment was an issue in some schools. From a pragmatic point of view, more screening to allow limited resources to be used where they are most likely to have maximum effect may have alleviated this problem.

Another possibility for enhancing the model at this level concerns the idea of establishing needs and tailoring the programme to meet the identified needs of the individual principals and literacy leaders. Their responses to the scenario give some indication of a wide range of skills and knowledge amongst this group. The model includes no facility for a needs analysis of this type; the literacy review tool attempted to help leaders to analyse the needs of the school but not of themselves. In fact, the finding that it was the view of principals that the Literacy Leadership initiative concerned teachers, not them, is revealing and is a likely impediment to success of the model with its emphasis on leadership. Further, responses of principals with respect to how they saw their role also suggest some do not hold a strong view of leadership. They saw their role as organisational or supportive or, occasionally, as one of delegation. Again, this may militate against an initiative aimed to develop them as instructional leaders who take responsibility for providing expertise for their school-based initiatives.

THE FOURTH LEVEL: THE CLASSROOM TEACHER

Teachers reported learning from the classroom initiative and mostly cited the literacy leader and colleagues at school as the source, suggesting that, at least here, the flow-down model operated successfully. The self-reported learning, the high ratings of the usefulness of interaction with colleagues all point to foundations for a self-sustaining professional community amongst teachers. It appeared, however, that their views of such communities did not involve critiquing one another in the sense of challenging practices. Literacy leaders did not describe peer feedback systems in these terms and few teachers reported receiving feedback as a result of classroom visits.

In addition, they did not necessarily link their positive comments to the Literacy Leadership initiative. Like the levels described above, teachers did not primarily view this initiative as concerning them. Teachers thought it concerned students, a view that is quite reasonable as raised student achievement in literacy is the bottom line aim. It is teacher skill, however, that is most powerful in raising that achievement.

Another issue at this level was the indication of a proliferation of commitments to largely Ministry driven projects on the part of schools and teachers. Numerous teachers
were unable readily to recall the classroom initiative that had formed part of the school’s participation in Literacy Leadership. Their energies appeared to be dispersed.

**Conclusion**

The view of the evaluators is that the lack of evidence of improved student achievement in literacy does not necessarily mean that the basic model itself is faulty. The findings of the evaluation do, however, show that, in order for the flow down model to work, it requires honing particularly in terms of checking out assumptions about the skills and needs of participants, and the understandings of those involved in the multiple levels of the developing professional community.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX

Facilitators’ Interview Schedule

When did you begin as a facilitator for the literacy leadership programme?

1. Common Understanding of Key Messages

2. What was the main purpose of the Literacy Leadership initiative in your view?

3. What were the main messages you took from the workshops and materials?

4. Have the messages changed over time?

5. What were the key ideas you gave to your school?

6. Has there been a change in the key ideas from 2000 to 2002?

School's Understanding of Action Research in the Context of Literacy Leadership

Read scenario card (see scenario)

Questions from Scenario:

Please rate how appropriate or effective you think Totara School seemed to be in their approach to the following tasks in their classroom initiative and give reasons for your rating:

a. The way they identified the students' needs?

b. The basis for their decision to adopt Peer Tutoring: Reading?

c. Identifying issues at syndicate meetings?

d. The use of the running records in their decision to continue with Peer Tutoring: Reading

e. The Literacy Leader’s role in the process?

f. The Literacy Leaders use of the running record data.

Rating Scale  (Effectiveness / appropriateness ratings 1-7)
1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7
--- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | ---
Not effective/appropriate | Neither effective nor ineffective | Highly effective/appropriate

Schools’ Application of Action Research in their Classroom Initiative

1. How many schools did you work with in 2001 on the Literacy Leadership?

2. Please name a decile 1 to 4 school that you consider to be
   a. most successful
   b. somewhat successful
   c. least successful
   in their Literacy Leadership initiative?

3. a. What number of your schools would have been like school (a) (i.e. most successful) in 2001.
   
   b. What number of your schools would have been like school (b) (i.e. somewhat successful) in 2001?
   
   c. What number of your schools would have been like school (c) (i.e. least successful) in 2001?

4. Is 2002 different proportionally from 2001?

Exploring the ‘most successful’ school (s)

1. Why have you nominated this school as the most successful school?

2. Briefly describe your involvement with the school?

3. What were the key skills you used with this school?

Exploring the ‘somewhat successful’ school (s)

1. Why have you nominated this school as the somewhat successful school?

2. Briefly describe your involvement with the school?
3. What were the key skills you used with this school?

Exploring the ‘least successful’ school(s)

1. Why have you nominated this school as the least successful school?

2. Briefly describe your involvement with the school?

3. What were the key skills you used with this school?

Student Achievement

1. Imagine you are the Literacy Leader in a school where most of the children’s literacy achievement is below national profiles of achievement.

What do you think might be two reasons for this low achievement?

2. Please rate the following statement from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

   **The link between achievement and decile of schools is very difficult to change.**

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<td>Strongly disagree</td>
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3. If the achievement of the students were to be improved, what kind of intervention do you think would have the most impact on literacy levels? We want you to think very broadly and consider any interventions that you might want to include.

   What are your reasons for these choices?

4. Please return to imagining that you are the literacy leader in a school but this time most of the children are achieving at the national profiles of achievement. What do you think might be two reasons for this high achievement?
5. To what extent has your involvement in the literacy leadership enhancement initiative changed your views about student achievement in low decile schools?

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**Reasons for schools being successful or unsuccessful**

Please think of a school you have nominated as most successful and one that you have nominated as least successful and identify what it was about the successful school that differentiated it from the least successful school when you first made initial contact?

Was there anything that differentiated these schools during your involvement that impacted on the success of their initiative?

**Skills and Knowledge**

1. Has the Literacy Leadership training had any impact on you personally?

If yes, can you tell me about the key areas of training that had the most impact?

2. What do you see as the role of the facilitator?

3. In your opinion, what are the key skills needed to be an effective facilitator in this role?

4. Has you view of the key skills changed over time?

5. To what extent do you think you had these skills before you began as a facilitator for the Literacy Leadership initiative?

6. Can you please rate on a scale of 1 to 7 how effective you think Learning Media has been in providing you with the training you need?

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7. In terms of your own learning, how important has been the interaction with other facilitators and colleagues involved in literacy?

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**Professional Communities**

1. What do you understand by the term ‘Professional Communities’?

2. What is your understanding of the rationale for developing networks and establishing professional communities?

3. How useful has it been for you to have a principal mentor?

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4. What has been the main contribution of your mentor?

Thank you for your time.
Literacy Leaders’ Interview Schedule

When did you first begin the Literacy Leadership contract?

Common Understanding of Key Messages

What was the main purpose of the Literacy Leadership initiative in your view?
What were the main messages you took from the workshops and materials?
3. What were the key ideas you gave to your staff?
4. What was your understanding of how the Literacy Leadership initiative was to work?
5. What did you see as the role of the facilitator?
6. How much did the classroom initiative add to your existing knowledge about literacy?

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7. Where did this knowledge come from?

**Scenario Questions**

Same as for face-to-face facilitator Interview

**Schools' Application of Action Research in their Classroom Initiative**

1. Briefly describe your classroom initiative.
2. Whose needs were the focus of the initiative?
3. About your initiative …
a. How did you identify your students’ needs?

b. What was the basis for selecting your Literacy Leadership initiative?

c. How did you identify issues in collegial discussions?

d. How did you use the data collected to find out how well the intervention was working?

e. What was your role in the process?

f. How did you use the data?

4. Can we take a copy of the pre and post data?

5. Is there anything important, that we haven’t already covered with respect to your enhancement initiative that you would like to tell us?

6. Apart from your facilitator, is there anyone else you have consulted about your literacy initiative?

7. Have you decided to continue with the changes brought about by this initiative?

8. Is there anything different you’re doing this year as a result of the initiative?

**Participation in Initiative**

1. On a scale of 1 to 7 how successful was this initiative?

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2. How satisfied are you with the achievement of students in the junior school in reading?

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Influences on Student Achievement

See Principals Interview Schedule

Professional Communities

1. What sources of information do you use to develop your ideas about literacy and literacy teaching?

2. Have you changed the way peer support among the teachers, works in your school as a result of your Participation in the Literacy Leadership initiative?

3. I want to ask about syndicate/staff meetings in your school.

For which meetings are you most involved and have responsibility for?

How often do you have these meetings?

Do you ever discuss student achievement data at these meetings?

4. Do you compare your student’s achievement with the national profiles?

5. Is this in relation to individuals, class and/or whole year level?

6. What do you do with this information?

7. If not mentioned do you discuss this with your teachers? How and in what forum?

8. To what extent has this process been influenced by your participation in the Literacy Leadership Initiative?

Use of School-wide reading data for children in their first year at school and Year 4

(as a prior condition for developing a sustainable initiative)

We would like to take copies with us today of …

Year Four PAT results in reading comprehension and vocabulary.

6 year net results in: written vocabulary

BURT
Reading Text level

Concepts of Print

Please provide PAT (reading comprehension and vocabulary only) aggregated information in the form of scaled scores and/or raw scores; 6 year net data in the form of raw scores if this is possible.

1. How was the reading data was analysed?

2. With whom was this data shared?

3. How was the information shared?

4. What implications did you draw from the data?

5. Who were these implications shared with?
Principals’ Interview

Common Understanding of Key Messages

1. Why did you choose to participate in this Literacy Leadership initiative?

2. What was the main purpose of the Literacy Leadership initiative in your view?

3. What were the main messages you took from the workshops and materials?

4. What were the key ideas you gave to your staff?

5. What is your understanding of how the Literacy Leadership initiative was to work?

6. What do you see as the role of the facilitator?

7. How much did the classroom initiative add to your existing knowledge about literacy?

   |   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
   | Not of value | Some value | A great deal |

8. Where did this added knowledge come from?

   Schools understanding of Action Research in the context of Literacy Leadership
   Same as for face-to-face facilitator interview
   Schools' Application of Action Research in their Classroom Initiative

1. Whose needs were the focus of the initiative?
2. We now want to ask you about the same things that we’ve just asked you about in the scenario, but in relationship to your initiative.

   a. How did you identify your students’ needs?

   b. What was the basis for selecting your Literacy Leadership initiative?

   c. What was the principal’s role in the process?

   d. How the principal used the data?

3. On a scale of 1 to 7 how successful was this initiative?

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4. Is there anything important, that we haven’t already covered with respect to your enhancement initiative that you would like to tell us?

5. Apart from your facilitator, is there anyone else you have consulted about your literacy initiative?

6. Have you decided to continue with the changes brought about by this initiative?

7. Is there anything different you’re doing this year as a result of the initiative?

**Sustainability and Resourcing**

1. Did you obtain or allocate any resources additional to that provided by the MOE for the Literacy leadership initiative?

2. How have you used these resources?

3. Has the input from the literacy leadership initiative led you to undertake subsequent initiatives in the school that you have approached in a similar way?
Influences on Student Achievement

1. Please rate the following statement from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

   The link between the literacy achievement of students and decile of schools is very difficult to change.

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2. Imagine you are the Principal in a school where most of the children's literacy achievement is below national profiles of achievement. What do you think might be two reasons for this low achievement?

3. If the achievement of the students were to be improved, what kind of intervention do you think would have the most impact on literacy levels? We want you to think very broadly and consider any interventions that you might want to include.

4. Please return to imagining that you are the Principal in a school but this time most of the children are achieving at or above the national profiles of achievement. What do you think might be two reasons for this high achievement?

5. To what extent has your involvement in the literacy leadership enhancement initiative changed your views about the relationship between student achievement and school decile?

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Professional Communities

1. What role did you have in relationship to the Literacy Leadership initiative in your school?

2. I want to ask about syndicate/staff meetings in your school.
   a. For which meetings are you most involved and have responsibility for?
   b. How often do you have these meetings?
c. Do you ever discuss student achievement data at these meetings?

3. Do you compare your student’s achievement with the national profiles?

4. Is this in relation to individuals, class and/or whole year level?

5. What do you do with this information?

6. If not mentioned do you discuss this with your teachers? How and in what forum?

7. To what extent has this process been influenced by your participation in the Literacy Leadership Initiative?

For principal if Literacy Leader cannot explain

Use of School-wide reading data for children in their first year at school and Year 4

See Literacy Leaders Interview schedule
Principals’ and Literacy Leaders’ Interview Schedule  
(Combined)

When did you first begin the Literacy Leadership contract?

Common Understanding of Key Messages
What was the main purpose of the Literacy Leadership initiative in your view?
What were the main messages you took from the workshops and materials?
What is your understanding of how the Literacy Leadership initiative was to work?
What were the key ideas you took back to your school?
What do you see as the role of the facilitator?

Action Research in the Context of Literacy Leadership
Same as for face-to-face facilitator interview

Schools’ Application of Action Research in their Classroom Initiative
See 1-9 in Principals Interview Schedule

Participation in the Initiative

1. On a scale of 1 to 7 how successful do you feel about implementing this classroom initiative?

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Please state your reasons for rating this rating.
2. How satisfied are you with the achievement of students in the junior school in … (the focus of their initiative?)

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Please state your reasons for this rating.

3. How satisfied are you with the achievement of students in the junior school in reading. *(Not applicable if initiative is reading)*

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Please state your reasons for this rating.

**Sustainability and Resourcing**

As for Principals Interview Schedule

**Schools' Expectations of Student Achievement**

As for Principals Interview Schedule

**Professional Communities**

1. What sources of information do you use to develop your ideas about literacy teaching?

2. If you haven’t already mentioned ‘people’, are there any professional contacts you use to develop you skills and knowledge in literacy?

3. Are there any professional contacts you use to assist you develop and implement initiatives?

4. Please tell me how you established peer support for teachers within your school?

5. I want to ask about syndicate/staff meetings in your school.
For which meetings are you responsible?

How often do you have these meetings?

Do you ever discuss student achievement at these meetings?

If yes, please tell me what kind of information on the student achievement you take to the meeting?

Please tell me about a typical discussion.

   How the data is discussed

   How problems are identified

   • from the data?
   • as identified by teachers?
   • not identified
   • teacher specific/ teacher non-specific

How problems are solved?

Accountability mechanisms?

6. Is this description the same or different from how you organized syndicate/staff meetings before the Literacy Leadership initiative?

7. If the meeting organisation was different, what was the catalyst for them to be different?’

**Use of School-wide reading data for children in their first year at school and Year 4**

(as a prior condition for developing a sustainable initiative)

As for Literacy Leaders Interview Schedule
Teacher Interview Schedule

Literacy Initiative

1. Briefly describe the focus of the initiative?

2. What was your involvement in the initiative?

3. Whose needs were the focus of this initiative?

4. On a scale of 1 to 7 how successful did you feel about the implementation of this classroom initiative?

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5. Are there any other initiatives in literacy that you have been involved in?

6. How satisfied are you with the achievement of students in your class in reading?

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<td>nor dissatisfied</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

7. Can you tell me what kind of data related to the initiative you collected before you began?

8. Did you collect any data to show how the initiative had gone?

9. What did the data show about the success of the initiative?

10. Did you discuss the data with your colleagues?

11. Do you compare your students’ literacy achievement with the national profiles?

12. Is this in relation to individuals, class and/or whole year level?

13. What do you do with this information?

14. Do you discuss this with your colleagues?
**Teaching skills and learning**

1. Is there anything new you have learnt about classroom literacy teaching as a result of your involvement in this initiative?

2. Is there anything different you’re doing this year as a result of the initiative?

3. In terms of your own learning, how important has been the interaction with your colleagues?

   |   |   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Not important | Somewhat important | Most important |

4. Has anyone observed your literacy teaching?

5. How useful has this been?

   |   |   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Not useful | Moderately useful | Extremely useful |

6. Have you changed anything as a result of this feedback?

7. How much did the classroom initiative add to your existing knowledge about literacy?

   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nothing | A reasonable amount | A great deal |

**Influences on student achievement**

As for Principals Interview Schedule