



Australian Government

Department of Education, Employment
and Workplace Relations

Literacy and Numeracy Pilots

*FINAL
REPORT*

TASMANIA'S LITERACY PILOT RAISING THE BAR CLOSING THE GAP

Section I – Executive Summary

Aims of the pilot

The *Raising the Bar Closing the Gap (RTBCTG)* pilot aims to increase the number of students completing primary school with functional literacy skills through strengthening the leadership roles in literacy in schools, whole school approaches and initiatives to cater for individual student need. The pilot supports schools most in need, by providing additional literacy teachers, targeting additional professional learning according to the identified needs of teachers and their students, and by releasing the principal to lead the improvement strategies.

Raising the Bar Closing the Gap **Group 1 and 2** schools are participating in a four-year state government funded Literacy and Numeracy initiative which commenced in schools in mid 2008. The initiative was expanded to include secondary schools from 2011.

Raising the Bar Closing the Gap **Group 3** was a two-year Commonwealth Literacy and Numeracy Pilot funded under the 'Education Revolution – Improving our Schools – National Action Plan for Literacy and Numeracy' 2008 Budget measure.

The Literacy and Numeracy Pilot initiatives focus on reforms that accelerate progress towards the 'Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) literacy and numeracy targets to improve outcomes for students in Indigenous and/or low Socio-Economic Status (SES) school communities.

Thirty-six target primary schools, across three groups, were selected by the Tasmanian Department of Education to participate in the pilot project, as follows:

Group 1 Schools

Schools with a high Year 5 under achieving number (11+), high percentage of school enrolments (33%+) with high Educational Needs Index (ENI) (60+):

- Ravenswood Heights Primary School
- Invermay Primary School
- Mayfield Primary School
- East Devonport Primary School
- East Derwent Primary School*
- Fairview Primary School
- Gagebrook Primary School
- Herdsmans Cove Primary School
- Rocherlea Primary School
- St Marys District High School
- Port Dalrymple School
- Risdon Vale Primary School
- Waverley Primary School
- Rokeby Primary School
- Warrane Primary School

*East Derwent Primary School is a new school resulting from the amalgamation of Bridgewater and Greenpoint Primary Schools.

Group 2 Schools

Schools with a high Year 5 under achieving number (>12) and a high percentage of school enrolments (25%+) with medium ENI:

- Exeter Primary School
- Table Cape Primary School
- Huonville Primary School
- Smithton Primary School
- Deloraine Primary School
- St Helens District High School
- Claremont Primary School
- New Norfolk Primary School
- Glenorchy Primary School
- St Leonards Primary School

Group 3 Schools (funded by DEEWR)

Schools with a high number of Year 5 students underachieving (11+): 11 schools

- Bowen Road Primary School
- Brighton Primary School
- Howrah Primary School
- Kingston Primary School
- Lilydale District School
- Mowbray Heights Primary School
- Nixon Street Primary School
- Riverside Primary School
- Sorell School
- Summerdale Primary School
- Youngtown Primary School

All *RTBCTG* schools engage in focused professional learning appropriate to their context and the learning needs of their students. All schools systematically analyse data to support staff to make precise, informed and appropriate interventions. Data informs the selection of the most appropriate professional learning for staff to ensure targeted intervention and precision in individual teacher's practice. Some of this professional learning has occurred outside of regular school hours as part of the five days additional professional learning provided for teachers through the pilot. Managers Learning and Literacy Support Leaders provide local support.

RTBCTG schools design/alter organisational structures and use staffing flexibly to reinvigorate and model excellent literacy practice and to enable targeted literacy interventions. Staff meet on a regular basis to assess and review the needs of individual students, align resources and direct efforts to the goals of *Raising the Bar Closing the Gap* in order to bring about a sustainable approach to the teaching of literacy.

Additional teachers are employed to support personalised and differentiated literacy learning.

All schools continue to develop their Literacy Improvement Plans and revisit targets while maintaining their commitment to targeted professional learning and to a whole-of-school approach to literacy.

While the Department of Education's four Learning Services have progressed the initiative in varying ways, the following activities are common to all *RTBCTG* schools:

- All schools have developed whole-of school Literacy Plans and are implementing these plans, adopting a process of both short-term and long-term review. In many cases, Literacy Plans are developed with a two-year projection, which better reflects the time taken for sustainable whole

school change. Precision in, and specificity of, programs are emphasised with detailed scope and sequence documents to guide and direct programs in spelling, reading, comprehension and vocabulary development. These programs are based on individual language development and are not grade-based.

- Workshops by Educational Performance Services (EPS) have informed principals and staff of more extensive data available to inform their practice. This is enabling schools to make precise decisions using data to meet the needs of identified individual students and groups of students.
- Regular meetings of, and with, principals to share and discuss progress and to identify future success criteria have taken place. Each Learning Service has developed an approach that facilitates principals working collegially, sharing and collaboratively supporting each other to address literacy needs and to develop their capacity to effectively build the capability of teachers in their own school settings. As the focus of meetings is in response to local need, priorities differ across the four Learning Services but include:
 - sharing of emerging effective and excellent literacy practice and implementation that is occurring in schools
 - sharing of effective practice in relation to leadership
 - the interrogation of data and building principals' capacity to lead the school in the use of data
 - collaboratively problem solving to progress real literacy challenges and issues occurring in schools
 - professional learning, including the sharing of current research
 - principals networking and supporting each other.
- Professional learning workshops have been conducted for all staff/groups of staff re whole school literacy programs, classroom differentiation, flexible grouping, specific programs, personalising learning, whole school evaluation screening processes and tools, (including diagnostic assessment, data collection, collation and interpretation). Further professional learning was conducted with an early years focus including early intervention and vocabulary development. Professional learning was conducted around specific programs such as First Steps, Deb Sukarna (3 day professional learning session), Carol Christensen's reading program, David Hornsby (5 day professional learning session), Bridges, LEXIA, Writers' Notebook, Writers' Workshop, ALEA Comprehension Project (a year-long project), Guided Reading and Literacy and a Master Class with Professor Ian Hay (4 day program) through the University of Tasmania (UTas).
- Participation by principals in this learning has been a focus. Specific programs vary from school to school as determined by school priorities.
- Meetings to discuss leadership of literacy in a school, including content, process, accountability, support structures and research sharing have been conducted. School visits have taken place by the Managers Learning and/or Literacy Project Leaders to provide supportive constructive feedback and the opportunity for discussion in each participating school across the state.
- A RTBCTG Evaluation Steering Group continues to meet monthly. An evaluation schedule was distributed to schools in July 2010, and all schools have participated in a variety of assessment procedures as required by the Evidence Framework. Schools have supported the UTas Evaluation team by meeting assessment timelines, following assessment protocols, as well as participating in surveys and interviews. A very positive relationship between the UTas team, Managers Learning, principals and schools has enhanced the evaluation process.
- A statewide RTBCTG Symposium conducted on 27 November 2009 was attended by the majority of RTBCTG schools and provided an opportunity for principals and teachers to workshop ideas, celebrate success, and learn from each other. As well as presentations from RTBCTG schools, a presentation from the UTas Evaluation team made explicit the interim findings from the UTas Evaluation, providing very elucidating data from their evaluation and presenting a synopsis of research-based best practice.

- Regular occasions to inform and skill parents in assisting their children with literacy have included differing opportunities, including morning teas to share information using displays and DVDs. A variety of strategies to engage families in their child's literacy learning have been implemented in schools.
- Literacy focused pre-kinder sessions emphasising the importance of sharing books, stories, poems and songs with young children before they start school have been implemented. This initiative reinforces the parent as the child's most influential teacher and as a crucial partner with the school in promoting their child's learning. Schools implementing the state-funded Birth to 4 *Launching into Learning* initiative have aligned this effort with RTBCTG. Strong links with the *Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* are apparent.
- School Literacy budgets are informed by data and teacher professional learning needs in order to prioritise the purchase of teacher reference texts, whole school texts for the teaching of spelling, and grammar, quality literature for the library, engaging guided reading sets and home reading books.
- Celebration of student work through assemblies and Writers' Festivals where all students display examples of quality work to share with the wider school community have occurred.
- Literacy Support staff in schools facilitate and model best practice. Their roles vary from school to school but generally include responsibility for the administration of initial assessments, grouping of students according to their developmental stage and providing ongoing support for staff through advice, provision of materials and revision of data. Literacy Support staff ensure that groupings of students remain fluid and responsive to individual student need.

Other significant activities undertaken in some, but not all, RTBCTG schools include:

- Intensive support provided to individual schools whose data indicates that there is more to be done to improve outcomes and performance. In these schools, creating leadership density has been identified as a priority.
- Some principals and Literacy leaders use an evidence-based Learning Centred Leadership Model as a guiding framework for leading literacy improvement. This model identifies three key behaviours; modelling, monitoring and dialogue as high leverage leadership strategies. The network utilises an Instructional Framework that identifies six key features of literacy teaching and learning, based on research evidence. This framework assists schools to develop a common language and understanding of literacy teaching, a vital component of whole school approaches to literacy improvement.
- A number of RTBCTG schools have been supported to undertake research on literacy interventions. This has included the first Australian pilot studies on Levelled Literacy Intervention & Catch Up Literacy.
- The Department of Education participated in the National Literacy and Numeracy Pilots forum on March 18 2010 in Canberra. Three Group 3 school representatives presented a session describing the RTBCTG initiative. Their presentations left the audience in no doubt as to their enthusiasm, passion and commitment to the approach taken in schools through the RTBCTG initiative.

Evaluation of the Project

The Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania, was contracted by the Tasmanian Department of Education to evaluate the literacy pilot project, *Raising the Bar Closing the Gap (RTBCTG)*.

Evaluation Team

The evaluation team brought significant expertise across the numeracy and literacy education domain, as well as strong experience in quantitative and qualitative research design and analysis. In particular, Professor Ian Hay and Associate Professor Rosemary Callingham have experience in conducting and writing up state based, national, and international evaluation studies.

The University of Tasmania's Evaluation Team:

- Professor Ian Hay, Dean, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania
- Associate Professor Geraldine Castleton, Head of School, School of Education, University of Tasmania
- Associate Professor Rosemary Callingham, Associate Professor, Mathematics, Science and ICT, School of Education, University of Tasmania
- Dr Tim Moss, Faculty of Education
- Dr Sally Milbourne, Visiting Principal, School of Education, University of Tasmania
- Visiting Consultants: Dr Peter Grimbeek, Data Analyst and consultant, University of Queensland; Professor Peter Freebody and Dr Ruth Fielding-Barnsley.

Evaluation Steering Group

The University of Tasmania's Evaluation Team was directed by an Evaluation Steering Group consisting of Department of Education and University of Tasmania personnel:

Department of Education

- Jan Batchelor, Principal Policy Analyst, Strategic Policy and Performance Unit, Department of Education Tasmania (now Manager, State and National Programs)
- Judy Travers, Manager Learning, Learning Services (South)
- Lucy Fisher, Manager Learning, Learning Services (South-East)
- Kevin Fagan, Manager Learning, Learning Services (North) (now Kelly Heathcote)
- Kim Bennett, General Manager, Learning Services (North-West) (now Jodee Wilson)

University of Tasmania

- Professor Ian Hay, Dean, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania
- Associate Professor Geraldine Castleton, Head of School, School of Education, University of Tasmania

Research Manager

- Bill Edmunds, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania

The evaluation aimed to answer the following questions:

- What model of literacy teaching is most effective? Seeking an evidence base, why is this model the most effective?
- What does effective leadership for literacy education look like?
- What intervention strategies are schools using to assist under-performers?
- What value-adding literacy activities do schools and classrooms provide to students?
- How effective are literacy plans, their implementation and evaluation?
- How effective is professional learning in improving literacy outcomes?

Evaluation Design and Methodology

The evaluation team investigated the six core research questions using a mixed design within a field-based quasi-experimental design framework. Performance data collected from participating schools from 2006 to 2008 was used as a baseline against which the *RTBCTG* project was evaluated.

The effectiveness and impact of the key *RTBCTG* strategies and interventions were investigated using and comparing information obtained across the three school sets on:

- the leadership training for principals and their ability to affect positive outcomes associated with *RTBCTG*
- the effectiveness of the development, implementation and evaluation of school based literacy and numeracy plans
- the usefulness of value-adding activities that are school based
- the effectiveness of ongoing professional learning for teachers
- the value of classroom specific activities related to *RTBCTG*.

The research aimed to measure changes associated with *RTBCTG* using both qualitative and quantitative procedures:

Quantitative Research

Quantitative data was gathered from selected targeted schools, principals, teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholders from each of the three sets of schools. The evaluation team:

- selected appropriate assessment instruments, surveys, and outcome measures
- established the design and the statistical procedures and statistical modelling that were employed
- conducted an analysis and interpretation of EPS baseline performance data for 2006–2008
- where appropriate, implemented whole school, class group, and individual data collection and screening using research instruments. This was followed by data input into spreadsheets, data analyses, data interpretation, and initial data writing up of results.

Qualitative Research

Based on qualitative data results and other criteria, more in-depth qualitative research was conducted using a case study model. This procedure further targeted principals, teachers, students and parents as separate data sets and through surveys and interviews:

- a set of interview questions and protocols were developed out of the survey results, resulting in surveying the attitudes of students toward reading and the support parents provided to their child/children in targeted schools within each of the three sets of schools
- where appropriate, case studies of selected schools, classroom and individuals were undertaken.

Deliverables

The University of Tasmania's Evaluation Team presented the following deliverables:

- data collection instruments – surveys, questionnaires and screening procedures
- attendance at bi-monthly meetings to review progress of the project with stakeholders within the Tasmanian Department of Education
- a presentation of findings and issues each semester to stakeholders within the Department of Education
- evaluation reports on *RTBCTG* as required by the project
- reports as appropriate, to the Minister of Education, the media, state and national conferences, and to key stakeholder groups
- academic and professional publications in cooperation with the Department of Education.

Project Implementation

The collection of data, as proposed by the UTas team, commenced in August 2009.

The following section provides a summary of measurement instruments delivered over 2009–2010 and an analysis of the data collected to date in relation to:

- Students
- Teachers
- Principals/Leaders
- Parents/Community

Abbreviations

Commonly used abbreviations in this report are listed as follows:

| | |
|---------------|--|
| ACER | Australian Council of Educational Research |
| BURT | BURT Word Reading Test |
| KDC | Kindergarten Development Check |
| ENI | Economic Needs Index |
| ICSEA | Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage |
| NAPLAN | National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy |
| One Way ANOVA | Analysis of Variance |
| PAT-R | Progressive Achievement Tests in Reading: Comprehension |
| PIPS | Performance Indicators in Primary Schools |
| <i>RTBCTG</i> | <i>Raising the Bar Closing the Gap</i> |
| SWST | ACER Single Word Spelling Test |
| t-test | Assesses whether the means of two groups are statistically different from each other |
| UTas | University of Tasmania |

Please note: This report provides a snapshot of the evaluation of the RTBCTG undertaken by the University of Tasmania. Please see the full report attached.

Codes for school level analyses

| RTBCTG Target Group | School Name recorded | Level of need category (ENI) | ICSEA category | School Name recorded |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Group 1 | H01 | High | Lower third | H01 |
| Group 1 | H02 | High | Lower third | H02 |
| Group 1 | H03 | High | Lower third | H03 |
| Group 1 | H04 | High | Lower third | H04 |
| Group 1 | H05 | High | Lower third | H05 |
| Group 1 | H07 | High | Lower third | H07 |
| Group 1 | H08 | High | Lower third | H08 |
| Group 1 | H09 | High | Lower third | H09 |
| Group 1 | H10 | High | Lower third | H10 |
| Group 1 | H11 | High | Lower third | H11 |
| Group 1 | H12 | High | Lower third | H12 |
| Group 1 | H14 | High | Lower third | H14 |
| Group 1 | H15 | High | Lower third | H15 |
| Group 2 | M04 | Medium | Lower third | M04 |
| Group 2 | M07 | Medium | Lower third | M07 |
| Group 3 | L06 | Low | Lower third | L06 |
| Group 1 | H06 | High | Mid third | H06 |
| Group 2 | M01 | Medium | Mid third | M01 |
| Group 2 | M05 | Medium | Mid third | M05 |
| Group 2 | M06 | Medium | Mid third | M06 |
| Group 2 | M09 | Medium | Mid third | M09 |
| Group 2 | M10 | Medium | Mid third | M10 |
| Group 3 | L01 | Low | Mid third | L01 |
| Group 3 | L02 | Low | Mid third | L02 |
| Group 3 | L07 | Low | Mid third | L07 |
| Group 3 | L09 | Low | Mid third | L09 |
| Group 3 | L11 | Low | Mid third | L11 |
| Group 1 | H13 | High | Upper third | H13 |
| Group 2 | M02 | Medium | Upper third | M02 |
| Group 2 | M03 | Medium | Upper third | M03 |
| Group 2 | M08 | Medium | Upper third | M08 |
| Group 3 | L03 | Low | Upper third | L03 |
| Group 3 | L04 | Low | Upper third | L04 |
| Group 3 | L08 | Low | Upper third | L08 |
| Group 3 | L10 | Low | Upper third | L10 |

A summary of outcomes of the RTBCTG evaluation 2010 (Professor Ian Hay)

Students

An analysis of the whole data set including students' attitudes scales, their NAPLAN and the other testing results identified the following 'predictive' pathways (sample = 6751 children).

- Students' reading for pleasure and reading fluency were highly correlated and were highly predictive of students' academic progress.
- While there needs to be a focus on improving children's skills set, this needs to be achieved within a learning environment that motivates and engages the students in literacy.
- Reading fluency is one of the core tasks and this has a positive impact on students' NAPLAN Grammar, Spelling, Reading, Writing, and Numeracy scores.
- Students' word attack skills including their phonological knowledge were highly correlated with the students' comprehension scores.
- Students' word attack skills and their vocabulary knowledge need to be systematically and actively taught across all year levels.
- Females outperformed the males on the literacy tasks, but this was not noted for numeracy.
- Home SES factors were predictive of students' comprehension, word attack and phonological performance, as well as the amount of reading for pleasure that is occurring and their level of reading fluency.

School level

Teacher interview data highlighted the following as positive actions:

- Supporting learning groups with a focus on problem solving, reflection, and sharing
- Using a literacy mentor teacher
- Reviewing and interpreting students' NAPLAN and other literacy tests and record
- Focusing on the students' strengths and weakness to better inform the teacher about how to personalise and advance the students' program
- Looking at students' writing as a strong window into the students' level of literacy
- Looking at 'in class' case studies and reflecting on why some activities worked better than others
- Encouraging more frequent reading of the same material for longer periods to develop readers' fluency and confidence
- Incorporating a greater variety of literacy texts into the program including poems and songs because of the need to continue to develop children's auditory skills
- Practicing vocabulary and grammar development using cloze as a strategy for teaching and learning but not as a testing procedure.

Principals reported that they were now more engaged in how the students in their school advanced in literacy.

Teachers reported that the funding had been beneficial in enabling them to have more support and time to work with their students and their literacy program.

Observations from the evaluation

- In addition to the NAPLAN tests, having a standard set of valid literacy tests and measures across the RTBCTG schools has enabled greater communication to occur between classrooms and between schools. It has also highlighted the reality that teachers need to link assessment and programming and to be able to interpret why some children are successful or not on specific items.
- As students move through the school the literacy program should continue to provide opportunities for teachers to actively teach comprehension and fluency strategies, especially in the middle and upper school. This is particularly important for those students who are performing at an average level. With continued instruction in these skills, these students have the potential to achieve at an above average level. This is a common problem in very mixed ability schools and the challenge is to advance all children including those children who are performing at a satisfactory level.
- Some teachers may benefit from further opportunities to learn to use data to inform their practice in a more effective way.
- Teachers who engaged with the additional professional learning provided through the project reported positive benefits for students. They reported that they were able to provide more effective learning opportunities for students.
- It was interesting to note that teachers who followed up their professional learning with further study were able to put their new learning into practice and made positive adjustments to their literacy teaching.
- Having groups of teachers from the same school doing the same professional learning was also identified as being beneficial. A community of scholars focusing on a common set of issues is advantageous.
- Increased opportunities for on-going in-service and learning in specific literacy and individual and group reading support strategies for teacher aides would be beneficial.
- Speech therapists working in schools located in low SES communities, who focused on language programs in the early years of schooling, were reported to be value adding to the overall program.
- In low SES communities, improving the quality of the learning time between the teacher aides and the students is likely to provide greater effect size outcomes, compared to relying on home reading programs alone.
- Better use of the *Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS)* data could be made within the early years of schooling. This is a “growth point” assessment instrument and has the potential to better inform educational practice beyond Year 1, particularly for those students who show any delays on these sequential benchmark tasks.
- For children with low scores across PIPS subscales, teachers could consider a stronger language and vocabulary program for these children and then move them into a systematic program of letter sound knowledge. These students are also likely to need ongoing vocabulary and language development work past Year 3.
- Recommended best practice for teachers would be to:
 - encourage more frequent reading of the same material for longer periods to develop readers’ fluency and confidence
 - incorporate a greater variety of texts into the program including poems and songs to assist develop children’s auditory skills
 - practice vocabulary and grammar development using cloze as a strategy for teaching and learning but not as a testing procedure
 - link children’s needs to a systematic phonological program.

Section 2 – Framework Data

Students

Specifically in relation to students, the *Raising the Bar Closing the Gap (RTBCTG)* pilot aims to increase the number of students completing primary school with functional literacy skills.

STUDENT BASELINE DATA

Executive summary of growth data (refer to Appendix A – full evaluation report from the University of Tasmania)

Indices of literacy proficiency were collected from those students in *RTBCTG* schools regarded as experiencing some level of literacy need. The indices included:

- a measure of comprehension, the ACER Progressive Achievement Test in Reading (PAT-R)
- a measure of spelling, and phonological and alphabetical knowledge, the ACER Single Word Spelling Test (SWST)
- a measure of reading/vocabulary the BURT word recognition test
- four NAPLAN indices: Grammar & Punctuation, Spelling, Reading and Writing.

These measures were all significantly correlated. This is consistent in that the focus is on a common theoretical construct, that is, literacy.

Given the interest in year to year changes in level of literacy proficiency, the various literacy scores were reported in terms of the mean score per year and as growth scores computed by subtracting 2009 scores from their 2010 equivalents. Plots of these scores demonstrated that the mean level for all measures of literacy increased in the 12 months between the two surveys and were consistent with advances in literacy across year levels.

A number of statistical analyses were conducted on all of the test results over the two intervention periods. One measure, the Cohen *d* statistic, demonstrated an effect size greater than 0.4 when used with the cohort data by test instrument (such as 2009 compared to 2010 on PAT-R scores). An effect size of 0.4 or more is considered to represent meaningful growth and an improvement that is greater than what can be expected by normal development – i.e. growth that can be linked to an intervention or some program or activity.

Changes in literacy scores over the 12 month period between the two surveys were scrutinised in terms of two school level variables: Level of need (groups 1, 2 and 3) and ICSEA rankings for the schools divided into three groups (lower third, middle third, upper third), where ICSEA provides a reasonable approximation of socio-economic status (SES).

A common pattern across the schools was the variability in growth measures. Although low needs schools typically started from a higher academic starting point compared to high needs schools, the level of growth varied. Typically, some of the schools with high growth scores (high level of student improvement) came from the high needs schools. Such a finding demonstrates that growth statistics may be a fairer method to assess the value adding that teachers provide to children, rather than just outcome measures, which may be more influenced by SES home factors.

In terms of which literacy measure is less affected by home SES factors, the indicators are that Spelling, word-recognition and Grammar & Punctuation are less affected and more influenced by classroom level instruction, while Writing and Reading comprehension are influenced more by home SES reading behaviours. Across the different literacy measures, different schools demonstrated different levels of growth. This suggests that different schools have somewhat different focuses in their programming.

RTBCTG student outcomes: (see full report)

Analyses reported in the following sections utilise a common sequence of tables and figures (see full report). These focus on:

- the average score in 2009 versus 2010
- the year levels in which specific tests were administered plus the mean scores per year level and difference scores per year level

Further stages focused on component and difference scores grouped by:

- level of need
- ICSEA bands
- reports of difference scores also include information about the statistical significance of those differences with regard to the level of need or ICSEA grouping.

For the PAT, SWST and BURT, a further step of analysis was to report difference scores at the level of individual schools:

- compartmentalised by level of need
- across the target schools

Schools were omitted from analyses if the number of test takers were zero, one, or two at most.

Associations between measures of literacy

Table 1 Correlations between measures of literacy proficiency based on 2009

| Test | | PAT –R | SWST –R | BURT –R | Grammar & Punctuation | Spelling | Reading | Writing |
|------------------------------------|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|---------|
| PAT-R | R | I | | | | | | |
| | N | 1675 | | | | | | |
| SWST | R | .651** | I | | | | | |
| | N | 1577 | 2453 | | | | | |
| BURT | R | .735** | .795** | I | | | | |
| | N | 538 | 777 | 829 | | | | |
| Grammar & Punctuation ¹ | R | .682** | .650** | .713** | I | | | |
| | N | 1582 | 1583 | 545 | 1997 | | | |
| Spelling ¹ | R | .643** | .795** | .814** | .808** | I | | |
| | N | 1586 | 1588 | 545 | 1997 | 2002 | | |
| Reading ¹ | R | .730** | .606** | .730** | .808** | .780** | I | |
| | N | 1578 | 1581 | 545 | 1961 | 1966 | 1991 | |
| Writing ¹ | R | .584** | .610** | .679** | .701** | .724** | .685** | I |
| | N | 1585 | 1587 | 545 | 1981 | 1986 | 1965 | 2000 |

R= correlation N= Number *= $p < 0.05$, **= $p < 0.01$, ***= $p < 0.001$ I NAPLAN test

- As indicated in *Table 1*, all scores were associated at statistically significant levels consistent with these being aligned with some common construct of literacy.
- The advantage of knowing these correlations is that while each of these test instruments belongs to a common construct, they are not identical tests and each test focuses on a related but different dimension of literacy. The strong correlation between the reading comprehension PAT-R test and

the other measures is important to note, as this instrument is one of the key measures used in the evaluation of the RTBCTG project.

Student Literacy Outcomes 2009–2010

Reading comprehension PAT-R scale scores

- Across all schools, based on the same cohort of students' PAT-R scale scores (i.e., level of comprehension) there was an increase on average from 18.91 in 2009 to 21.17 in 2010. That is, the overall cohort had improved in terms of their reading comprehension as measured by the PAT-R test see *Figure 1*.

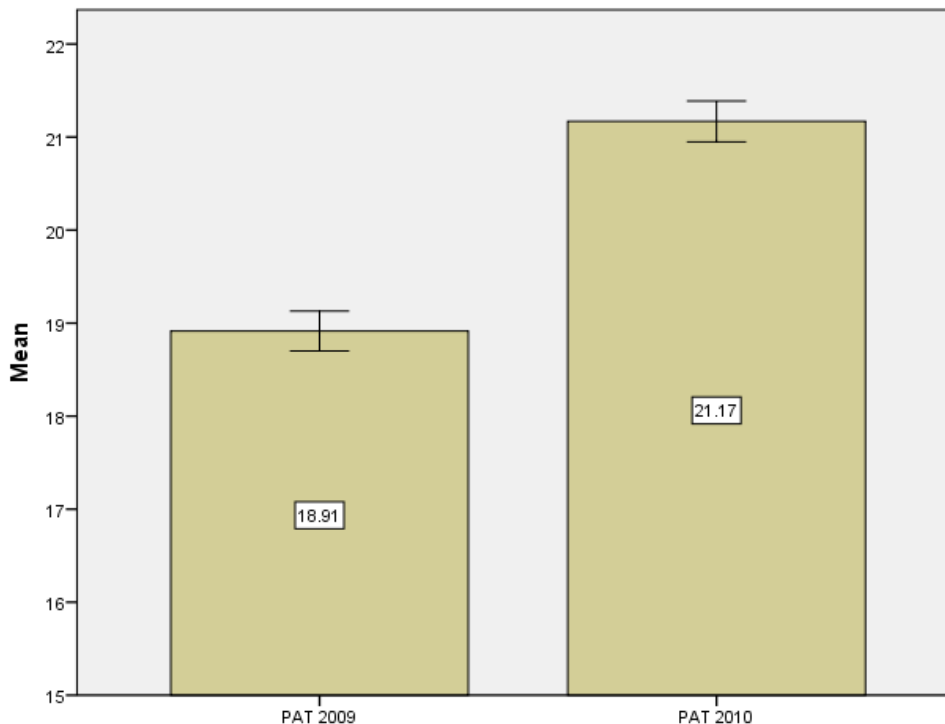


Figure 1 Mean PAT-R scaled scores by year (standard errors visible)

Post-hoc testing indicated that PAT-R scores obtained in each successive year level was statistically significantly larger than that of the year before.

Growth by school classification

- Across the three school groups, the cohort mean scale scores for PAT-R increased for the 12 months from 2009–2010, see *Table 5*. That is, students from higher needs schools on average obtained lower PAT-R scores in 2009 than those from medium or lower needs schools. It is also worth noting that students from lower needs schools on average were more likely to complete the PAT-R test in both years.
- In terms of growth calculated at the individual student level, by subtracting 2010 PAT-R scale score from 2009 PAT-R, there is a consistent level of improvement across all schools classified by literacy needs.

Table 5 (see full report) Growth descriptive statistics for PAT-R by level of school literacy need

| Test | High need schools | | | Medium need schools | | | Lower need schools | | |
|-------|-------------------|------|------|---------------------|------|------|--------------------|------|------|
| | N | Mean | SD | N | Mean | SD | N | Mean | SD |
| PAT-R | 1135 | 2.01 | 4.74 | 1123 | 2.18 | 4.53 | 1734 | 2.46 | 4.40 |

ICSEA – groups (home factors)

The Tasmanian Department of Education classified the schools into three groups using, as one of a number of measures, the frequency of students with reading difficulties based on initial NAPLAN scores in 2008. Since this point in time, the Commonwealth has further developed its home and community social-economic status measure called ICSEA. Those schools with a low ICSEA score have more parents with an economic or educational disadvantage (i.e., more parental unemployment); while higher or upper ICSEA score schools have more parental employment and parents with higher educational qualifications.

Regrouping the schools in the study by their ICSEA score is another way of reviewing the schools in this study.

Table 7 (see full report) **Growth statistics for PAT-R by ICSEA school grouping**

| Test | Lower third | | | Mid third | | | Upper third | | |
|-------|-------------|------|------|-----------|------|------|-------------|------|------|
| | N | Mean | SD | N | Mean | SD | N | Mean | SD |
| PAT-R | 1363 | 1.91 | 4.67 | 1338 | 2.01 | 4.49 | 1291 | 2.87 | 4.38 |

- Table 7 suggests that while schools in the more economically disadvantaged communities still made sound and very positive gains in terms of reading comprehension, children in the higher socio-economic schools increased at a faster rate in terms of growth in reading comprehension.
- Given that reading comprehension is highly influenced by the level of student background knowledge and home reading patterns, such a finding is not unexpected, however, schools in the lower third of ICSEA should still be pleased with their level of growth.

Literacy Growth across all the RTBCTG schools

- There is variability between schools as identified in the standard deviations obtained. In the following section, this variability will be reviewed by schools as grouped by the Department of Education in terms of literacy needs.
- What is interesting is the mix of high, medium, and low needs schools within the high growth (improvement) grouping, which have a PAT-R scale score growth of two or more. The graph suggests that individual programming and school learning culture are making a difference but the distribution of growth scores is not particularly aligned with level of need.

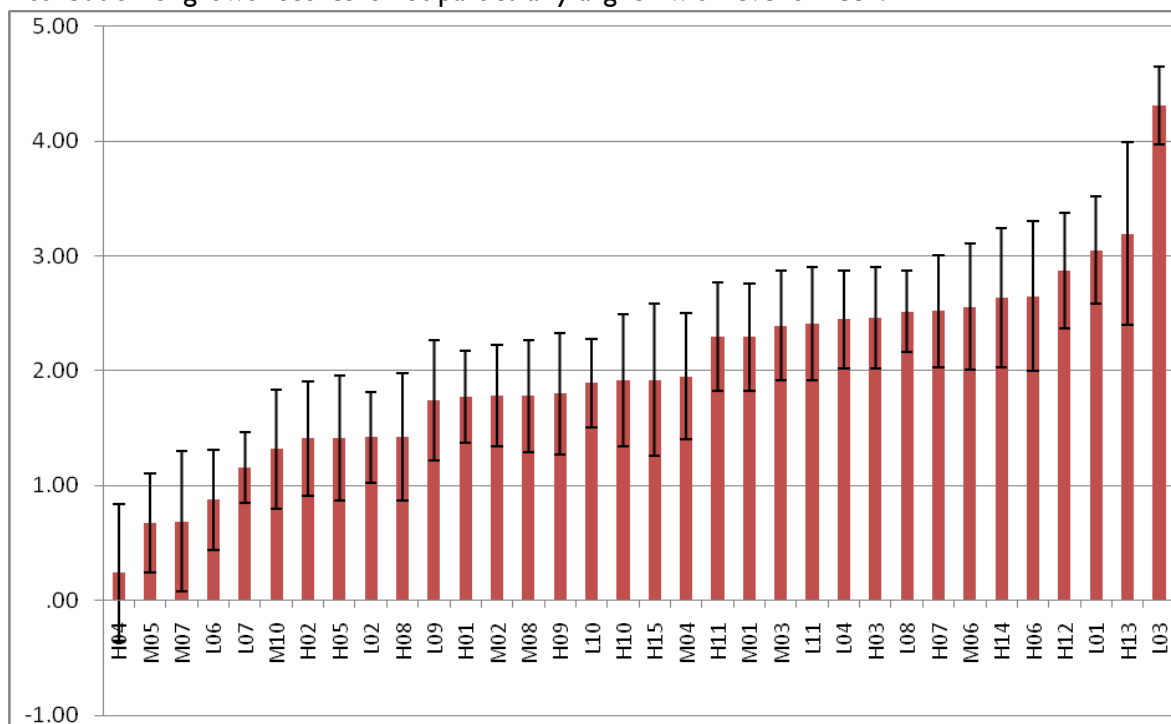


Figure 5 (see full report) **PAT-R growth scores ordered by magnitude of growth** (standard errors visible)

Single Word Spelling Tests (SWST) scores

The Single Word Spelling Tests scores provide an index of literacy development because spelling uses visual word memory and phonemic awareness and letter blending skills. For this reason, the Single Word Spelling Test is, in part, used in this research to measure young children’s literacy, for as shown in *Figure 6*, this instrument has a 0.65 to 0.75 correlation with the other literacy tests used in this evaluation.

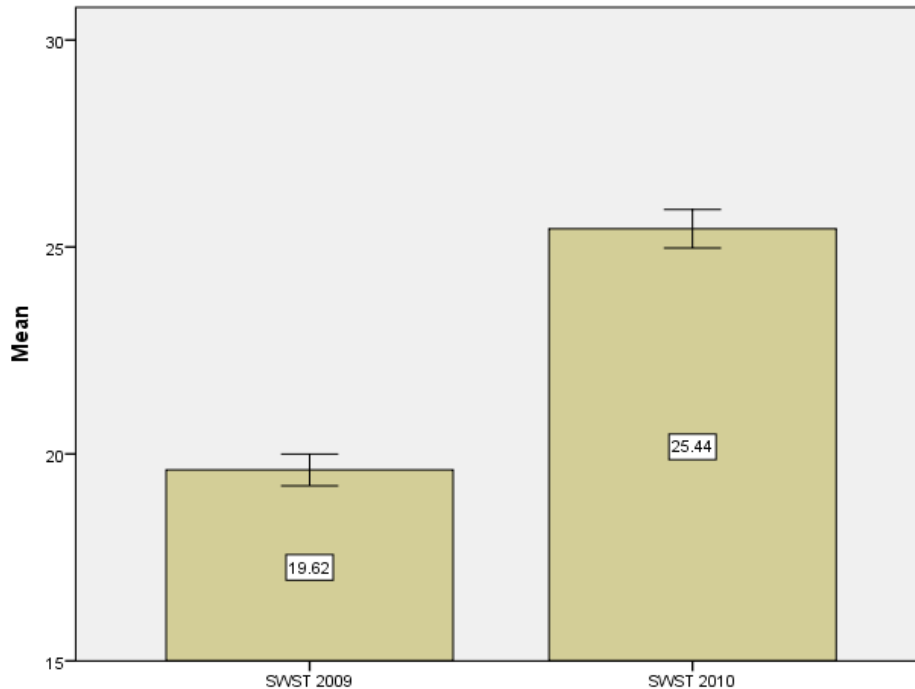


Figure 6 (see full report) **SWST scores by year** (standard errors visible)

- As illustrated in *Figure 6*, SWST scores increased on average from 19.62 in 2009 to 25.44 in 2010 across the entire target group, Years 2 to 6.
- Because the PAT-R is not designed for young children’s assessment of literacy, how children in the Years (grades) 2 to 3 perform on the SWST is of interest. Of particular interest to this study is the children’s improvement in literacy as measured by the SWST from Years 2 to 3 and from Years 3 to 4. This involved testing and then retesting the same children between the two years and obtaining for each child a grow measure, the overall mean growth measure are reported in *Table 9*.

Table 9 (see full report) **Growth statistics for SWST from Years 2 to 3 and Years 3 to 4**

| Test | Years 2-3 | | | Years 3-4 | | |
|------|-----------|------|------|-----------|------|------|
| | N | Mean | SD | N | Mean | SD |
| SWST | 1093 | 7.14 | 5.56 | 1123 | 4.54 | 6.34 |

School level analysis

- The mean score for SWST generally increased across the 12 months from 2009–2010. Students from higher needs schools on average obtained lower SWST scores in 2009 than those from medium or lower need schools. That is, not all children start from the same base point.
- Given that the students are starting at different points, the uniformity of the growth improvement is a very positive outcome of the investment in teacher time and resources. It suggests that home SES factors may have less of an influence on children’s spelling and decoding skills development than it does with other literacy measures, such as reading comprehension, and that it is a skill enhancement that is more influenced by educational and teacher practices for its growth.

SWST: ICSEA

To investigate the influence of ICSEA (home socio-economic factors) on Spelling, the schools were analysed by ICSEA bands.

- In terms of ICSEA groupings, the average score for SWST increased over the 12-month period.
- Consistent growth across the sector needs to be acknowledged.
- Plotting schools by their improvement on the single word spelling test, the study demonstrates variables across those schools, the distribution of growth scores is not particularly aligned with level of school need.
- It is interesting to note when comparing the schools that achieved higher or lower in terms of their PAT-R growth scores the list is different to that of the SWST list. This suggests that different schools may have different focuses in their teaching programs, resulting in different learning profile outcomes on different measures. *Figure 10*

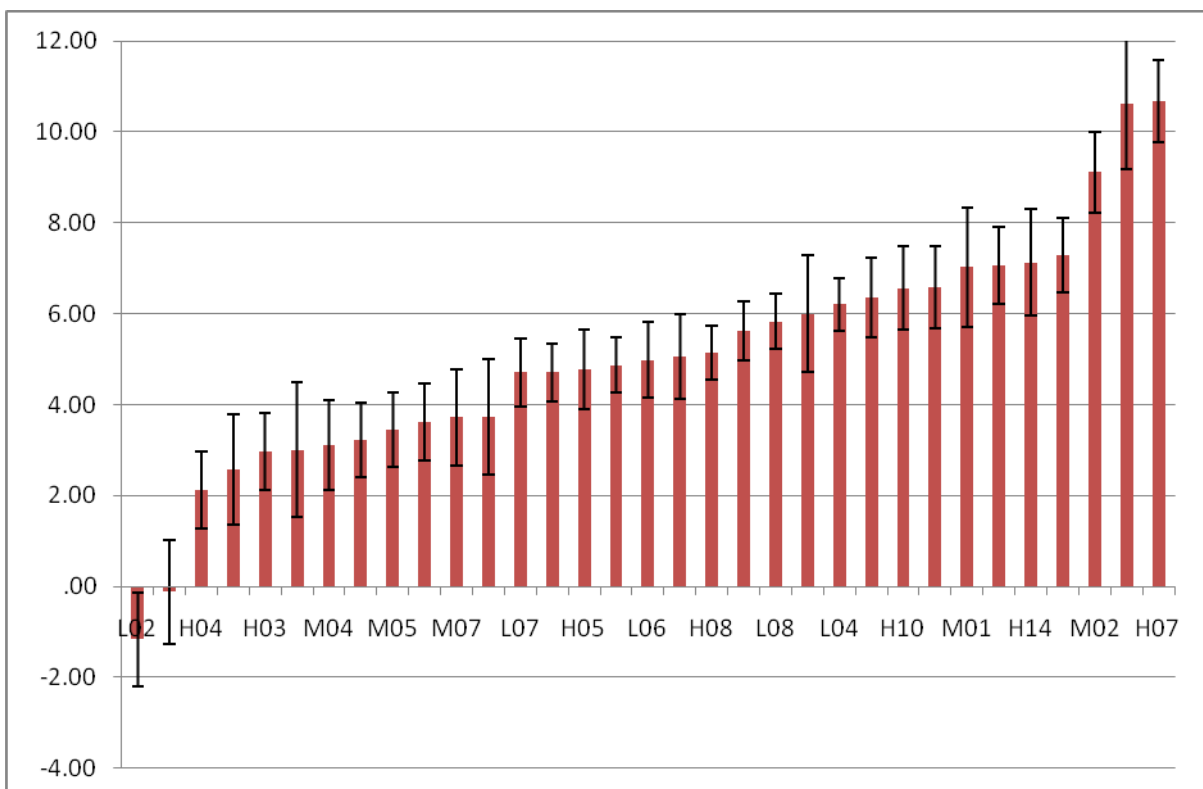


Figure 10 SWST growth scores for schools ordered by magnitude of growth (standard errors visible)

As illustrated in *Figure 10*, the distribution of growth scores is not particularly aligned with level of need.

BURT word recognition outcomes

BURT word recognition scores are regarded as providing an index of reading and vocabulary.

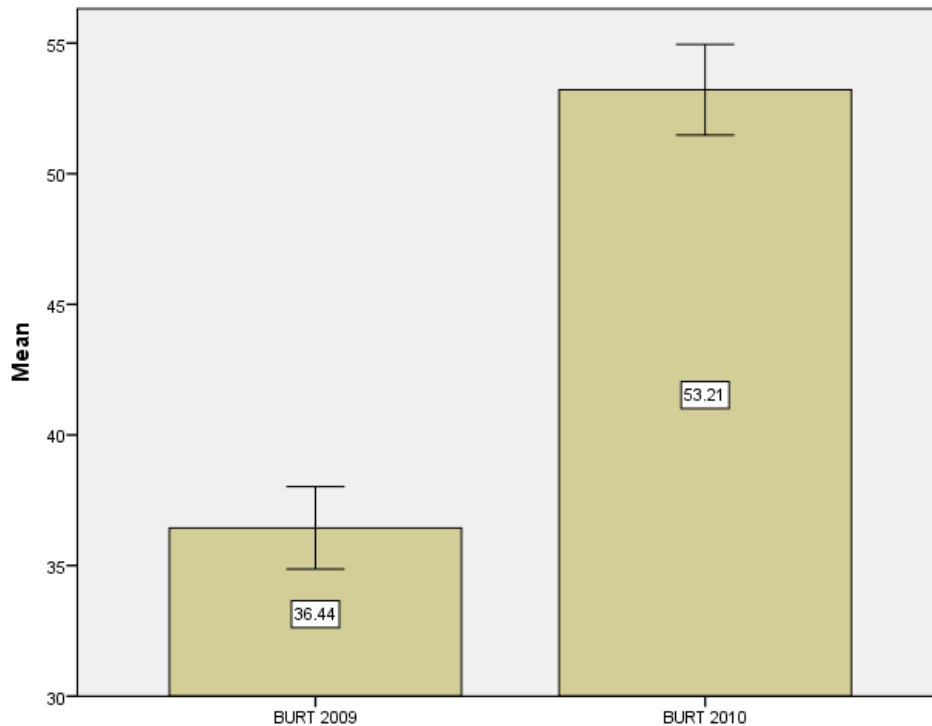


Figure 11 (see full report) **BURT scores by year** (standard errors visible)

As illustrated in figure 11, BURT word scores (i.e., vocabulary/reading) increased on average from 36.44 in 2009 to 53.21 in 2010 across the entire target student cohort in this study.

- The BURT word recognition test was used as an indicator of the children's reading, particularly in the early years of school. These scores trended positively at both year levels.
- Looking at the change in BURT word recognition by school cluster across the three bands of high, medium and low literacy groups, improvements were identified based on an increase in mean scores from 2009 to 2010 (see *Table 16* in full report).
- Investigating the growth data obtained at the student level for the 12-month period positive increase is noted across all schools. There was, however, a larger increase (growth) for the low need schools compared to the medium or high need schools. The fact that all schools are improving and growing in terms of word recognition skills is recognition of effective practice through this initiative.

BURT: ICSEA

To investigate the influence of ICSEA (home socio-economic factors) on children's word recognition skills, the schools were analysed by ICSEA classification.

- The average score for BURT increased over the 12-month period with the upper third children starting from a higher base compared to the children in the lower third.
- Students in schools ranked in the upper third of ICSEA schools obtained higher average growth scores than those from medium or lower third ranked ICSEA schools.
- Student improvement across the ICSEA groupings was statistically similar.
- This is important and seems to suggest that word recognition skills are less influenced by home factors and that teacher and school practices make a difference in the development of this literacy competency.

- It also demonstrates that growth statistics may be a more reliable method to assess the value adding that teachers provide, rather than just outcome measures that may be influenced by home factors.
- The variability of this growth by schools is interesting. Some of the largest growth is occurring in schools with high literacy needs such that they are in reality closing the gap between their students' performance and that of their peers who do not have a literacy difficulty.

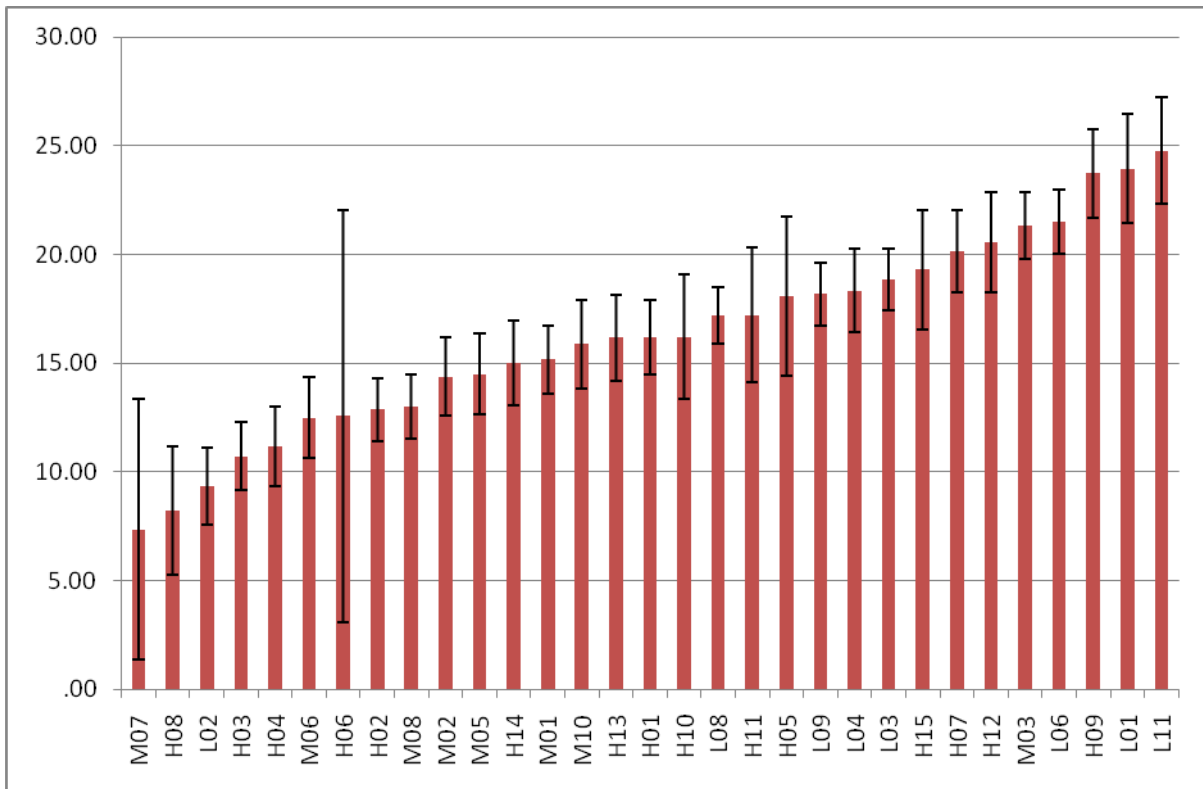


Figure 15 (see full report) **BURT growth scores for 31 of 36 target schools ordered by magnitude of growth** (standard errors visible)

NAPLAN outcomes

- The four NAPLAN literacy measures are regarded as comprehensive indices of literacy, with each test designed to measure related but different dimensions. The four tests are Grammar & Punctuation, Spelling, Reading, and Writing. The NAPLAN tests correlate with the other literacy measures used in this evaluation but the correlations are in the 0.6 range. In part, the difference between the test scores reflects how the tests are constructed with the NAPLAN tests being multi-choice group tests.
- As illustrated in *Figure 16*, across the four NAPLAN measures, scores increased almost uniformly from 2008–2010 (2008–09 data collected in 2009).

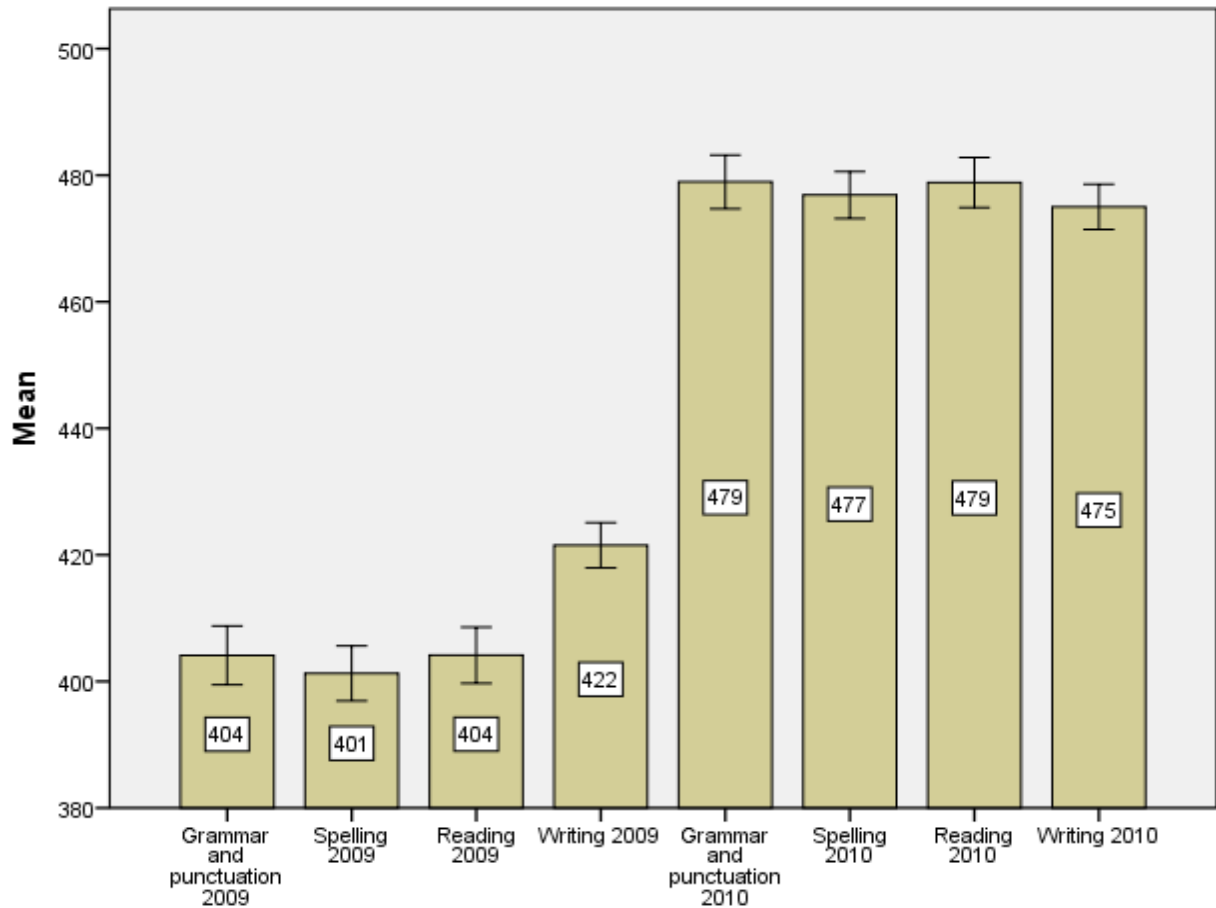


Figure 16 (see full report) Descriptive statistics for NAPLAN Literacy measures by year of survey

Given [redacted] report focused on whole-of-school data.

- There was no significant difference across schools for the Grammar & Punctuation and Spelling tests, but there was a statistical difference in the Reading and Writing tasks tests.
- This suggests that Spelling and Grammar & Punctuation are more influenced by classroom practices and interventions and improvements in these domains are more directly related to teacher effects.
- Reading comprehension as measured from a series of disconnected reading passages and evaluated by multiple-choice responses and the Writing task may be drawing more on students' general background knowledge, life experiences, and general vocabulary knowledge. This broad literacy knowledge is difficult to influence over a one-year period.
- In contrast, Spelling and Grammar & Punctuation are more technical skills, based on the students' ability to understand and recall information in a particular setting. Providing learning opportunities for students to understand and recall information in a variety of settings where the content knowledge can be organised and practiced will support an increase in students' achievement.

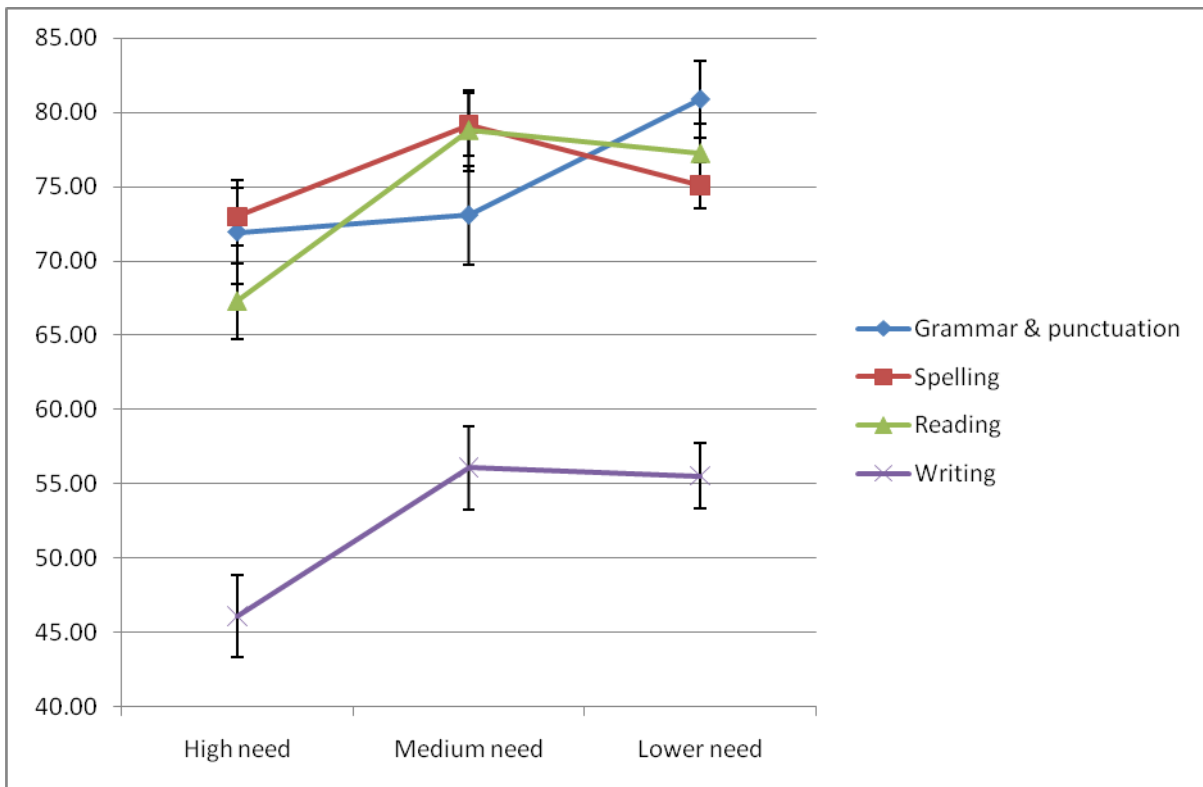


Figure 17 (see full report) **Growth statistics for NAPLAN literacy measures by level of need** (standard errors visible)

As illustrated in *Figure 17*, the level of growth seems to be related to level of need such that students from low or medium level need schools tend to obtain larger growth scores (improve more) than those from high need schools especially in terms of Reading and Writing.

NAPLAN: ICSEA and schools

The schools in the study were organised by the ICSEA scores, which is a measure of home factors. The schools were grouped into lower, middle, and upper bands based on their ICSEA scores.

- The level of SES categorisation of schools found statistically significant growth for two of the four NAPLAN literacy test scores (Reading and Writing).
- Post-hoc tests indicated that higher SES schools obtained significantly larger growth scores for both Reading and Writing than did low SES schools.
- In the case of Reading, high ICSEA schools did better than either medium or low ICSEA schools.
- In the case of Writing, low and high ICSEA are statistically distinct with medium ICSEA not distinctly different from either of the others.
- Again, these findings suggest that Grammar & Punctuation and Spelling are more influenced by classroom practices and interventions and improvements in these domains are more directly related to teacher effects.

For ease of comparison, these trends in growth scores are illustrated in a separate graph (over).

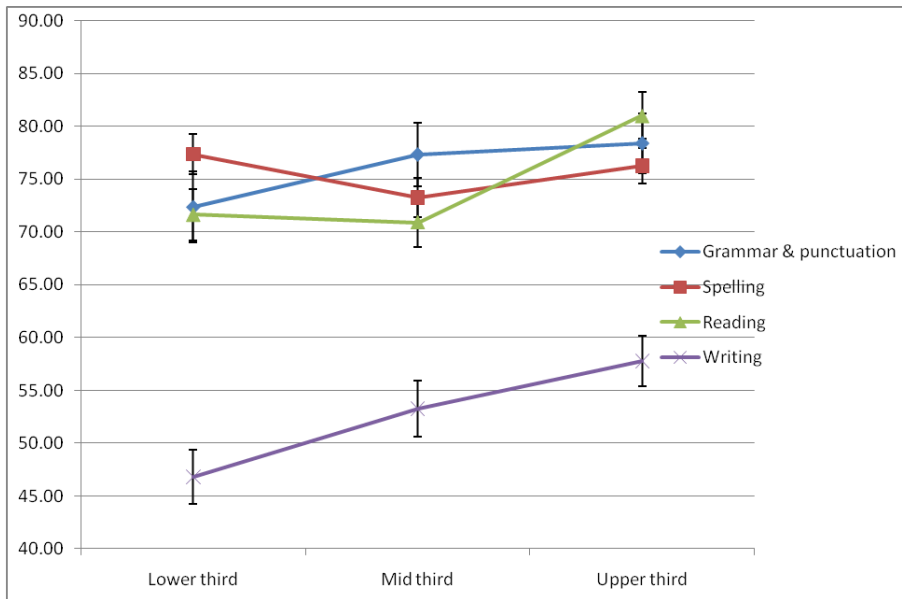


Figure 18 (see full report) **Descriptive statistics for NAPLAN literacy measures by ICSEA grouping** (standard errors visible)

- As illustrated in Figure 18, except for Spelling and Grammar & Punctuation, growth scores seem to be positively associated with ICSEA groupings such that students from high ICSEA schools obtained larger growth in Reading and Writing than did students from the low ICSEA schools.
- It is interesting to note that the low ICSEA schools outperformed the high ICSEA schools in Spelling.

Emerging issues for consideration in response to the analysis of the student data

- There is real evidence that schools are working to close the gap in students' literacy performance and raise the bar across the literacy domain.
- Students from more disadvantaged homes gain significant effect size growth when their program systematically teaches Spelling and Grammar & Punctuation. These students benefit from having a core set of sight recognition words and methods of understanding and decoding those words. This is one way to advantage the students' learning that is less influenced by home socio-economic factors.
- While students from higher socio-economic homes may start their academic years from a higher base compared to other students, the growth in students' learning occurs across the school sector, with many schools with high literacy needs students showing impressive growth in their students' learning and demonstrating some of the highest growth in student performance across all schools.
- The student growth measures within a school may be a better measure of teacher value adding than just the output measure, which can be influenced more by prior home learning experiences.
- The fact that a comprehensive set of literacy measures has been systematically introduced across all schools has meant that systematic data has been able to be collected. Teachers within the school and across schools are in a better position to review their students' progress and to reflect on and enhance the learning that is occurring in their classroom.
- The introduction of the Single Word Spelling Test with its focus on systematically teaching spelling patterns and its focus on student error analysis has provided teachers with an effective way of linking testing to their teaching and learning program and developing Personal Learning Plans for individual students.
- The use of a range of assessment instruments, in addition to the NAPLAN tests, has provided teachers with increased opportunities to objectively measure students' performance, reflect on the data and plan for future learning opportunities.

- Reading comprehension tests scores show significant improvements. On analysis of the reading comprehension data it is clear that students' background knowledge and their ability to read texts fluently are key factors. In order to further improve reading comprehension, a strategy such as whole class discussions about words, vocabulary, and the context of the text being studied is useful.

Reflecting on why there is variability in the student measurement data

During the course of this study, the research team visited schools, talked with teachers and others, and met regularly to discuss the project and its objective. The following are reflections and comments on what effective practices are working in schools and what is making a positive impact on raising the bar and closing the gap in terms of children's literacy development.

- Within the school and the different year levels, there are informal teacher learning groups occurring, where ideas, success, pedagogy, barriers to learning, effective use of data to inform practice, etc. are shared and discussed.
- Schools are developing a systematic approach to provide teacher aides or paraprofessional support staff with in-service training. Some are developing their own programs or enrolling in programs such as QuickSmart, which is very focused on training teacher aides.
- Teachers have high expectations for all students, in all classrooms. There is an expectation that all students will achieve.
- The students' interests and present achievement level is the starting point for all learning.
- Students are organised and task focused.
- Teachers are providing well-paced instruction in a systematic way.
- There are many opportunities for interacting and talking with students.
- The library materials and a range of texts are well used as classroom stimulus material.
- Teacher professional learning is occurring and being enacted upon.
- The principal is committed to students' learning and demonstrates this commitment by being engaged in conversation with students about their learning. They also engage in professional discourse about students' learning with teachers.
- Positive partnerships between school and home exist. There is family and community involvement in student learning and parents are informed of their child's progress.
- The mentor teacher has a crucial role in student learning.
- Literacy development in the early years focuses on vocabulary and basic grammar and the elements addressed in the PIPS (Performance Indicators in Primary Schools) assessments conducted twice yearly in the Prep year.
- Teachers use a range of evidence and data to review their students' performance including students' reading running records and analysis of students' writing to inform their practice and development of appropriate interventions.
- The employment of another teacher in the school to work alongside teachers has encouraged teachers to continually review their programs and their pedagogy. In some schools, this teacher can provide differential instruction to students in the classroom.
- Some schools utilise off-the-shelf literacy programs to assist students develop and practice skills. Often, only aspects of these programs are used as tools to further enhance student's individual programs.
- Successful classrooms are those where there is a real sense of engagement. The classroom walls display students' work and the students are interested in sharing and talking about what they are doing.

Case Studies

Invermay Primary School – Group 1 school

Invermay Primary School is a member of the East Tamar Federation of Schools, funded under the Smarter Schools National Partnership. It is also a Raising the Bar Closing the Gap school. The school caters for approximately 270 FTE students. Invermay Primary School is committed to working with its community and supporting teachers working together, designing personalised learning opportunities for all students.

Original classrooms have been re-developed to serve as 'flexible learning spaces' that acknowledge and reflect the need for dynamic learning, regrouping, personalisation, de-cluttering and visible learning. Prep – Year 6 classes have mandated Literacy and Numeracy blocks of time. This is an uninterrupted learning time with 'agreements' or 'non-negotiables' supported by whole school structures, additional resourcing and time. Kindergarten children also participate in a mandated Oral Language block supported by Speech Pathologists, speech aides, a music teacher and additional teachers.

An EAL (English as an Additional Language) teacher 0.8 assists with English immersion and personalisation.

The school's ENI (Educational Needs Index) is 70.82.

- The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage is 932, (AV = 1000)
- 7% of students identify as Indigenous students
- 17% of children are from a Language Background Other than English
- The attendance rate is 94%.

(Reference: MySchool 2, March 2011)

Invermay Primary School demonstrated strong improvement in literacy and numeracy performance both from 2008 to 2009 and 2009 to 2010.

As a participating *RTBCTG* school, Invermay Primary has engaged in focused professional learning appropriate to their context and the learning needs of their students. Invermay Primary has been working to better diagnose learning needs, interpret data and support staff in increasingly precise, informed and appropriate interventions.

Key improvement strategies undertaken included:

- A targeted literacy and numeracy cycle of learning which includes collaborative planning, collecting and analysing evidence and data and planning appropriate Personalised Learning Plans for students.
- Collaborative professional learning practice
- A whole school approach to teaching literacy and numeracy including the provision of non-negotiable elements
- Dedicated literacy and numeracy instructional blocks
- A targeted home reading program Prep–6
- Employment of additional literacy support staff to work alongside teachers in classrooms.

All 27 teachers, including specialist teachers and the principal participate in the teaching of literacy for a designated block of time each day. Improvement strategies under the *RTBCTG* initiative have revealed some upward trends in teaching practice namely: increased collective responsibility for all children, including the transition between Years 6 and 7, Indigenous students, students below the National Minimum Standard and non-attendees.

Teachers implement well-researched intervention strategies, use data to drive teaching, learning and assessment and support building cultures with high expectations.

Major aspects of Invermay Primary School's approach to improving outcomes in literacy and numeracy have been to focus on building teacher capability and to ensure sustainability beyond the life of the *RTBCTG* funding.

Kingston Primary School – Group 3 school

Whole school approach to literacy teaching and learning

Kingston Primary School is located in the southern suburbs of Hobart in the municipality of Kingborough (Tasmania's fastest growing area). The school has a population of 438 students from Kindergarten to Year 6 and also is a *Launching into Learning* school providing birth to four educational programs to approximately 35 children.

Kingston Primary School is located in a medium to high socio-economic area, with the majority of parents with tertiary qualifications and employed in professional areas.

The school's (Educational needs Index) ENI is 49.1

- The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage is 961, (AV =1000)
- 10% of students identify as Indigenous students
- 10% of children are from a Language Background Other than English
- The attendance rate is 95%.

(Reference: MySchool 2, March 2011)

The *RTBCTG* resource provided the school with an opportunity to better support its underachieving students with a Literacy program based on theoretically informed best practice. The work of Crevola and Hill and David Hornsby informed Kingston Primary School's planning and implementation.

A whole school approach was developed for Literacy (and Numeracy) supported by extensive professional development including a five day David Hornsby program delivered at a summer school. Many classroom and intervention teachers also attended the ALEA/TATE national conference. Structured time-release for teacher planning and regular extended planning and review meetings for the literacy team became the basis for teachers to work collaboratively.

Implementation during 2009–2010

Raising the Bar Closing the Gap funding provided individual and small-group targeted support for students who were at or below the National Minimum Standard in literacy, from Prep to Year 6. The teachers who implemented this support were members of the school's literacy team.

Outcomes–2010

Through *RTBCTG*, the school implemented practices and approaches which resulted in significantly improving the Literacy and Numeracy outcomes of identified at risk students.

2008–2010 Growth

RTBCTG support has contributed to the teaching and learning programs across the school.

Of particular interest, 10 students requiring intense *RTBCTG* support over the past two years have shown excellent improvement.

In Reading, 8 students have increased their percentile by between 9–35% from Years 3 to 5.

For example Student A was in the 1st percentile in 2008 and is in the 27th percentile in 2010 for Reading.

In Writing, 3 students have increased their percentile by between 8–29% from Years 3 to 5.

For example student B was in the 34th percentile in 2008 and is in the 63rd percentile in 2010 for Writing.

In Spelling, 6 students have increased their percentile by between 6–30% from Years 3 to 5.

For example Student C was in the 3rd percentile in 2008 and is in the 33rd percentile in 2010 for Spelling.

In Numeracy, 7 students have increased their percentile by between 5–35% from Years 3 to 5.

For example Student D was in the 27th percentile in 2008 and is in the 62nd percentile in 2010 for Numeracy.

Section 2 – Framework Data

Teachers

Specifically, in relation to teachers, the *Raising the Bar Closing the Gap (RTBCTG)* pilot aims to build teacher capacity around literacy and numeracy teaching and learning through developing whole school approaches and initiatives to cater for individual student need. The pilot supports schools most in need by providing additional literacy teachers and targeting additional professional learning according to the identified needs of teachers and their students.

Teacher data outcomes

Tasmanian School On-line Survey 2009

The Tasmanian School Survey was completed by 345 teachers and 21 principals from RTBCTG schools.

Principals and teachers provided information about personal characteristics related to their work and also answered Likert Scale questions about their literacy program, teaching activities and their school's capacities as well as a series of scenario based questions. Teachers answered further Likert Scale questions about using literacy skills, assessing literacy, and the extent to which the assessment informed teaching and classroom practice.

Quantitative Findings

- A great majority of teachers (91%) consider the teaching of literacy to be of very high importance.
- A significant majority of teachers (72%) strongly agreed that the programs in their class make a difference in the development of literacy skills in students.
- A significant majority of teachers (55%) strongly agreed that professional learning has led to improved teaching of literacy in their class.
- A majority of teachers strongly agreed or agreed (95%) that they encouraged students to take books home to read. Nevertheless, there is less agreement on the effectiveness of home reading programs, with only 59% strongly disagreeing or disagreeing that home reading programs are ineffective.
- While school vision statements around literacy and numeracy are generally considered to be well articulated, discussed and communicated to members of the school and external community, the spread of results suggests that there is variability across schools.
- While the majority of teachers reported being challenged with regards to their values and knowledge in relation to their teaching of literacy; 69% agreed or strongly agreed, 30% gave a neutral or negative response, suggesting greater effort must be made to challenge staff.
- Teachers rate understanding words, their meaning and structure as very important, with 58% giving this very high importance in their literacy program.
- Teachers believe that Writing is linked to Reading, with 58% giving this very high importance (e.g. journal writing).
- The syntax of sentences was given some priority, with 45% giving this very high importance in their classrooms.
- In terms of assessment, spelling and reading comprehension tests are used by more than 50% of teachers regularly or very often.
- A very low number of teachers use homework published in textbooks (over 80% of teachers rarely or never use this form of assessment). This suggests teachers are tailoring homework to their students' needs and/or that homework activities are seen as only supplementary to classroom work.

- Teachers report that the use of running records and 1:1 conferencing with students have the most significant influence on the classroom practice (with a 74% and 76% respective rating for making a 'major' or 'lot of' difference).
- Assessment procedures are generally positive across the data in terms of current best practice. There is a strong focus on re-telling activities and using running records, both of which are regarded as evidence of a quality program (Hattie 2009)

Other observations:

- Teachers with more years of teaching were likely to favour home-based literacy activities.
- Teachers of Years 4 or 5 students and teachers in Group 1 schools were less likely to favour home-based literacy activities.
- Teacher preferences for class-based literacy activities were not significantly predicted by any of the personal or school level variables.
- Teachers of Year 6 students and those in Group 3 schools were more likely to express agreement about their school's capacities to increase the literacy outcomes of their students.
- Teachers in schools that utilised literacy programs were less likely to express agreement about their school's capacities to increase the literacy outcomes of their students.
- Teachers of Year 1 students were more likely to rate formal texts as important.
- Teachers of Years 4 or 5 students or those in schools using prioritised strategies as developed at the school level were more likely to rate applied texts as important.
- Teachers with Masters or Doctorate degrees were less likely to rate applied texts as important.
- Teachers of Year 6 students were more likely to use project-based assessment.
- Teachers of Year 1 students and those in Group 1 schools were less likely to use project-based assessment.
- Teachers of Year 5 students or those whose highest qualification was at the certificate or diploma level were more likely to use formal tests as assessment activities.
- Female teachers were more likely to report using informal assessment activities such as individual interviews.
- Teachers of Year 5 students and those in schools using prioritised strategies as developed at the school level were less likely to report using informal assessment activities such as individual interviews.

Qualitative Findings

A review of the scenarios suggests that teachers across the board have a common set of strategies and generally employ a common language to discuss them.

Outcomes of teacher and principal Interviews:

Thirty-six (36) principals and one-hundred and five (105) teachers were interviewed from the *RTBCTG* schools during Term 3 in 2009.

Analysis of the data collected revealed:

- Teachers report that they use explicit teaching strategies and that this is having the desired effect of raising student literacy outcomes.
- Teachers have a high level of commitment to meet the needs of their students.
- Teachers express confidence in their capacity to improve the literacy levels of students and engage purposefully in the work of the school.

- There are high levels of collegiality evident amongst the teaching staff, as the appointed literacy leaders inspire and work with teams of teachers to provide explicit teaching programs that specifically focus on the needs of the students for whom they are responsible.
- Teachers are empowered to work with the leadership team in each school to develop a whole school approach to the teaching of literacy in that school.
- Professional learning is effective and has led to enriched teaching and learning practices.
- A shared understanding of student development in various aspects of literacy is developing across individual schools as a result of professional learning.
- Collegiality is improving due to professional learning with discussions being scheduled after professional learning sessions leading to shared planning as well as a consistency of approaches to teaching and strategies used by both teachers and students and in the recording of student achievement.
- Teachers have a common professional language to describe their work in teaching literacy.
- NAPLAN data are used in conjunction with other data to identify the particular needs of students.
- *RTBCTG* is seen as making a difference, but to assist current and future students continued commitment to support schools implement change in the long-term may be required to achieve generational change.

Two recurring themes are evident from the interviews (data compiled from the interviews – see full report)

1. The use of supportive teaching approaches usually school-wide, emphasising the following elements:
 - Consistent whole school commitment
 - School culture based around student learning
 - Teacher collaboration
 - Whole school collective responsibility
 - Similar, consistent school-wide approaches
 - Whole school framework/commitment containing non-negotiable items.
2. Explicit and intentional teaching to individuals and small groups supported by literacy teachers, including:
 - A focus on student needs
 - Effective literacy support teachers working with teams of teachers
 - Grouping students according to need and an emphasis on
 - Explicit, focused teaching.

Emerging issues or actions taken in response to the analysis of the data

- The teacher survey results confirm that teachers have an underlying belief that language and language structures are important in the learning process.
- Professional learning opportunities to enable teachers to develop their capabilities as literacy and numeracy teachers. Professional learning is most effective if it involves whole of staff, is not a one-off occurrence and informs whole-of-school approaches to literacy.
- Encouraging teachers to engage with and implement new and best practice in literacy and numeracy teaching may require effort but it is a leadership challenge worth undertaking.
- The implementation of literacy enhancement programs needs to be sustainable. It is acknowledged that ongoing work to build capacity and ensure sustainability will be required if generational improvements in literacy outcomes are to be achieved.

Case Study

Howrah Primary School–Group 3 school

Impact of the *Raising the Bar Closing the Gap* pilot on building teacher capacity and the flow on effect for improving literacy outcomes for students

Howrah Primary School provides a supportive and creative learning environment which aims to build a community of learners and prepares children for life. Key values of quality, excellence and equity underpin curriculum design and delivery and are encapsulated in the motto: Every child, every chance, every day. The school is situated on the eastern shore of Hobart, adjacent to the beach, with magnificent views of Mt Wellington. Howrah Primary School enjoys strong community support and involvement.

The school's ENI (Educational needs Index) is 34.85.

- The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage is 1006, (AV =1000)
- 4% of students identify as Indigenous students
- 3% of children are from a Language Background Other than English.
- The attendance rate is 95%.

(Reference: MySchool 2, March 2011)

The *RTBCTG* pilot provided Howrah Primary with the capacity to place Literacy co-teachers in all Year 2–6 classes for eighteen months. All co-teachers possessed deep knowledge of literacy and strong leadership skills. Co-teachers planned and taught alongside classroom teachers for a minimum of three blocks per week with planning explicitly documented and curriculum differentiated to meet the literacy learning needs of all students with particular emphasis on targeted students.

Teachers and co-teachers worked closely together articulating their own understanding of reading strategies and text types and deepened their shared understanding through tailored professional learning opportunities as a result of the pilot. Planning teams regularly interrogated student learning data valuing both formal and informal collection of data as a valuable resource to strengthen teaching and learning in the classroom to determine specific learning goals tailored to meet identified learning needs of specific students.

Teams then planned together tailored interventionalist teaching and learning programs supported by high quality texts and teaching resources. Differentiating learning experiences to meet student need and explicit teaching of key features became more refined through the two years. Professional learning was aligned to meet identified needs at grade group level, specific cohorts of students and the whole cohort of students. Ongoing monitoring of student assessment data was undertaken to both ensure that teaching and learning programs were tailored to meet student needs as well as to ensure that each students made significant progress in literacy.

Teachers and co-teachers effectively utilised teaching and learning resources tailored to meet targeted teaching and learning and classroom displays reflected a common language and demonstrated shared understanding - moving towards a whole school approach to teaching Literacy.

A significant aspect of the pilot was the introduction of literacy conversations on regular basis. The conversations focused on student achievement data, the incorporation of agreed core elements in each teacher's teaching program and the setting of specific goals focusing on raising student literacy achievement levels. Feedback from these conversations demonstrated the powerful nature of this initiative. Teachers reported a deepening of their understanding of literacy acquisition, the explicit teaching of specific aspects of the literacy program e.g. text types, reading strategies and the satisfaction gained from increased student achievement levels, and, the positive feedback from parents. It was also observed that teachers gained a greater understanding of accountability for their teaching program as well as accountability to colleagues of their collaborative team.

Section 2 – Framework Data

School Leaders

Specifically, in relation to school leaders, the *Raising the Bar Closing the Gap (RTBCTG)* pilot aims strengthen the leadership roles in literacy and numeracy in schools. The pilot supports schools most in need by providing additional leadership support by releasing the principal to lead the improvement strategies.

School Leaders: Outcomes

School literacy plans

School literacy plans for 2009 were collected from each school and analysed using an in-house rubric. The following significant outcomes were identified:

- Considerable emphasis had been given to sustained professional development within the school plans.
- Literacy instructional programs were clearly defined (e.g. First Steps, Writers' Notebook, Lexia).
- A high number of schools reported the establishment of literacy leaders/coordinators and teams.
- There was a strong emphasis on parental involvement.
- While leadership positions were defined, roles/responsibilities for those positions were not.
- Very few schools stated a vision of literacy within the plans.
- Specific details of what was planned in terms of literacy teaching were not commonly included.
- Intended outcomes were not commonly phrased with specificity in relation to particular strategies/programs, and/or the curriculum.

Tasmanian On-Line School Survey 2009

The Tasmanian School Survey was completed by 345 teachers and 21 principals.

Principals and teachers provided information about personal characteristics related to their work and also answered Likert questions about their literacy program, teaching activities and their school's capacities as well as a series of scenario based questions.

Quantitative

- Analyses reported here are based on the teacher survey, specifically sections where the 21 principals also responded. The small number of principals completing this survey worked against the likelihood of analyses producing significant outcomes, however, the following significant results were noted:
- A direct comparison of average and minimum scores suggested that principals were somewhat more positive than the teachers in their responses.
- Formal statistical testing indicated that the responses of the principals was significantly more positive than that of teachers with regard to the importance of literacy activities, level of agreement about class-based literacy activities, and level of agreement about school capacities.
- Principals were more likely to implement home-based literacy activities if they were prioritised in the school literacy plan.

In addition, the following significant points were identified. All responses were strongly aligned to teacher responses, although generally more positive in their rating:

- All principals (100%) consider the teaching of literacy to be of very high importance.
- All but one of the principals (95%) strongly agreed that the approaches in their school make a difference in the development of literacy skills in students. The remaining principal agreed, rather than strongly agreed.
- A significant majority of principals (85%) strongly agreed that professional learning has led to improved teaching of literacy in their class.
- A majority of principals strongly agreed or agreed (90%) that they encouraged students to take books home to read. Nevertheless, there is less agreement on the effectiveness of home reading programs, with only 70% strongly disagreeing or disagreeing that home reading programs are ineffective.
- The majority of principals report being challenged (with regards to their values and knowledge in relation to their teaching of literacy; 92% agreed or strongly agreed). Unlike teachers, there were no neutral or negative responses.

Qualitative

An initial review of the scenarios suggests that principals have a reasonably common set of strategies and generally employ a common language to discuss them.

Principal Interviews

Thirty six principals were interviewed in Term 3, 2009. Analysis of the data collected revealed:

- The extra resources provided by RTBCTG were seen to be making a difference to the schools ability to meet the learning needs of the students.
- Extra staff, such as literacy leaders, were working with teams of existing staff to provide support to teachers and students by being able to manipulate the size of teaching groups, whether they were whole class groups, small groups of students or 1:1, to best suit the learning needs of students.
- Flexible school structures enable a variety of approaches to teaching e.g. utilising teaching staff across different grades, grouping students by ability, interest, etc.
- Many schools have identified 'non-negotiable' components in the teaching of literacy programs that focus specifically on students' needs. For example, teachers use the same literacy teaching framework/program, have consistent approaches to marking and assessment, use the same guided reading approaches etc.
- Literacy leaders often work with students and model best practice for their colleagues.
- A whole school approach to the teaching of literacy has been fostered.
- Emphasis is being placed on professional learning, with all school staff participating in a wide range of opportunities with a literacy focus, led either by experts in the field or by the literacy resource teachers in their schools.
- Many schools have implemented the strategy of teachers themselves undertaking the NAPLAN tests in order for them to better understand better the nuances of the assessments. By participating in the analysis of the data from the assessment, teachers gain further appreciation of the value and purpose of the assessment and realise the possibilities that data present to assist them plan to meet the needs of individual students.
- External influences were reported to impact on a student's capability to learn and the school's effectiveness to positively impact on student learning outcomes. These include societal issues and poor attendance.

Case Study

Brighton Primary School – Group 3 school

Developing Leadership Capacity

Brighton Primary School is located in Brighton, Tasmania. The school was established in 1830 and has a tradition of providing quality state funded education for students in Years K to 6 from the surrounding community. Like all Tasmanian government schools Brighton Primary School is committed to the goal that every student has the opportunity to learn and achieve his or her potential. The school is guided by the Learner at the Centre framework and embraces the government's priority areas including Literacy and Numeracy - improving the basic literacy and numeracy skills of all school-aged children. Brighton Primary School is committed to working with its community and supporting teachers working together designing personalised learning opportunities for all students.

The school's ENI (Educational needs Index) is 40.34

- The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage is 932, (AV =1000)
- 7% of students identify as Indigenous students
- 2% of children are from a Language Background Other than English.
- The attendance rate is 95%.

(Reference: MySchool 2, March 2011)

The strong focus on leadership contributed strongly to the improvements in Reading and Writing outcomes that resulted from the project. The emphasis was on building leadership density and developing an intensive team approach to achieve the goals and priorities that had been established from an analysis of both in-school and external data.

A school literacy support teacher from the early childhood sector and one from the primary area were members of the core literacy leadership team. The principal was strongly committed to the project and worked closely with the key literacy leaders to implement strategies that supported teachers in achieving the overarching goal of improving the literacy outcomes of all students. There was a very strong emphasis on the provision of quality, consistent and comprehensive whole school approaches.

The priorities set were:

- analysis of data in order to identify and target specific areas of need
- building the capacity of leaders, through professional learning, to support a whole school approach using the First Steps resources in Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening and Viewing
- leading staff in professional discussions about quality, evidence-based literacy teaching practices
- provision of opportunities for on-going quality teacher professional learning

A collaborative approach was taken to each priority through grade level and cross grade teams working together on very specific, focused targets. Targeted whole school professional learning provided by the leadership team and external sources was a central feature of the project. A strong emphasis was placed on utilizing the considerable expertise within the staff to learn from each other.

The literacy leaders worked regularly in classrooms alongside teachers to model and support excellent teaching practice. They also provided assistance during collaborative planning meetings when teachers of the same grade level would plan the literacy program.

Section 2 – Framework Data

Parent and Community

Parent/ Community: Outcomes

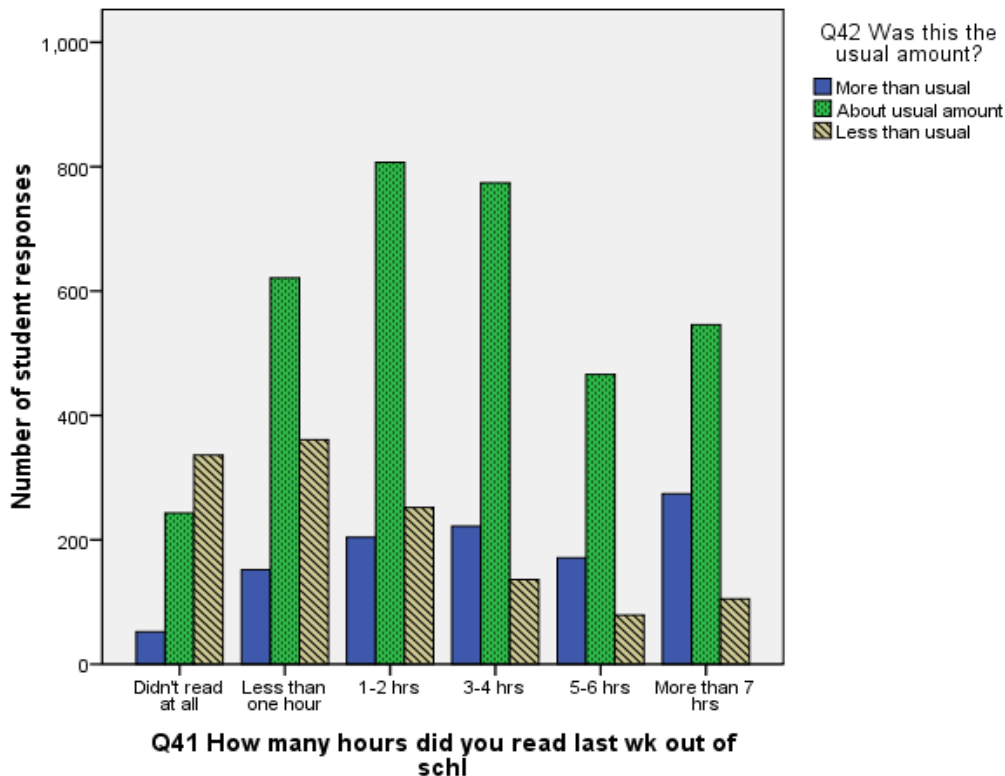
The Year 3–6 Tasmanian Student Reading Survey provided items which can be grouped for the purpose of providing information about the importance of the parents'/community's role in fostering student literacy.

The key outcomes follow:

- Female students were more likely to report family and community support for their literacy activities.
- Students in schools where teachers and students developed a shared language of literacy were more likely to report family and community support for their literacy activities.
- Where parents were encouraged to use similar literacy language, they improved their capacity to participate in their child's learning.
- Students in upper primary were less likely to report family and community support for their literacy activities.
- Parent's role in fostering their children's literacy was enhanced in those schools where opportunities were provided to inform and skill parents to assist their children with their literacy development.

Two additional items on the student reading survey addressed the number of hours of out-of-school reading that students had undertaken in the previous week and the extent to which that amount was usual.

As illustrated below, these students were mostly likely to report reading of between 1–2 hours or 3–4 hours in the previous week. From the analysis it appeared that these numbers of hours were considered to be the usual amount.



Important information gleaned from the student reading survey, and the online surveys for principals and teachers note the following.

- There was a general concern about the language competency of some students upon entering school. Low syntax and vocabulary skills were noted in particular. This suggests that the level of language development of significant numbers of students in *RTBCTG* schools is often limited and impacts on the learning outcomes of the students.
- A relatively low number (40%) of teachers and principals agreed that families are actively involved with the literacy learning of their children (reference teacher online survey). As a consequence, some teachers are choosing not to provide homework activities for some students.
- While there is an emphasis, in most schools, on sending books home, parents may not have the skills, ability or time to operationalise this.
- Some teachers suggested that where home reading programs occasionally stall, this may indicate that some parents don't value literacy in the home.
- Despite the above, there is a general sense that the majority of families are supportive of schools' literacy programs. Only 12% of teachers and principals suggested some negativity from families with regards classroom literacy programs and their child's literacy development.
- While home/family dialogue is important, the data suggests that teachers and principals are accepting responsibility to be the change agents for children's literacy development (when given appropriate support).

Surveying parents would add to the information reported above, however, this was beyond the resources of this project.

Case Study

Brighton Primary School – Group 3 school

Parent Involvement – ‘Reading With Children’

Brighton Primary School is located in Brighton Tasmania. The school was established in 1830 and has a tradition of providing quality state funded education for students in Years K to 6 from the surrounding community. Like all Tasmanian government schools Brighton Primary School is committed to the goal that every student has the opportunity to learn and achieve his or her potential. The school is guided by the Learner at the Centre framework and embraces the government's priority areas including Literacy and Numeracy - improving the basic literacy and numeracy skills of all school-aged children. Brighton Primary School is committed to working with its community and supporting teachers working together designing personalised learning opportunities for all students.

The school's ENI (Educational needs Index) is 40.34.

- The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage is 932, (AV =1000)
- 7% of students identify as Indigenous students
- 2% of children are from a Language Background Other than English.
- The attendance rate is 95%.

(Reference: MySchool 2, March 2011)

‘Reading with Children’ is a parent volunteer program, which was established during third term of 2010. It was developed by a literacy leader within the school after she attended a full day workshop examining strategies to support children experiencing difficulty with learning to read. The program was based on a relatively simple model of reading several books individually with a child to increase their fluency, comprehension and confidence. There were a number of children in Years 1 and 2, who, had been identified from running record assessments as not making satisfactory progress with their reading.

The support provided by ‘Reading with Children’ was in addition to the normal assistance already being given by the literacy support teacher. The children needed more support than they were receiving but it was as much support as resources would allow. The program developed from a desire to increase the support in a meaningful and effective way.

An advertisement in the weekly school newsletter recruited two keen parents and a third person from the wider community. Although three 20-minute sessions per week is what the school was aiming for, the volunteers were only able to commit to one 20-minute session per week. The school was appreciative of any amount of time that could be given and was confident the time could be well spent to help improve children's reading.

The literacy leader trained the volunteers and a teacher aide already working in the school. The training focused on how to read with children in a positive and supportive way. It also examined ways of discussing the text with children and questioning skills to promote thinking and comprehension of the book.

The parents worked in the classroom with the students. They worked individually with each child for 20 minutes per week. They read several simple texts at an appropriate level for the child. The books were selected by the literacy leader and placed in each child's folder. The parents recorded the books read on the inside of the folder and gave written, positive feedback. The children also listened to a story read by the parent that the child selected from a basket of quality literature provided by the literacy leader. Children spent a few minutes at the end talking about the story and thinking about the special qualities of the book.

Weekly communication with the parents and literacy leader was an essential aspect of the program. Close, ongoing monitoring to ensure high quality provision was vital. The volunteers were excellent with the children and provided wonderful support and encouragement of their reading. They were reliable and committed. The progress made by the children over an eight-week block was amazing. The children's fluency, comprehension and confidence all showed significant improvement as assessed by a running record and teacher observation. One parent in particular was outstanding in her work using her initiative to suggest many new strategies to assist the children. ‘Reading with Children’ has become an ongoing program in the school.

Section 3 – Delivery Summary

Administrative issues encountered in the management of the pilot and outcomes taken

A change to the Principalship of some schools mid way through the project has been an issue and created some challenges. Nevertheless, the Learning Service structure and the networks of schools established through the *RTBCTG* initiative have been in place to support new principals and staff. These networks have contributed to the sustainability of the project.

The appointment of a Mentor Principal (0.4) to support the transition between principal and School Leadership Teams has enabled the continuity of the *RTBCTG* elements to be maintained i.e. continued development of the principal as instructional leader; continued development of teacher capacity which includes supporting growth in teams, ensuring high degree of efficacy and developing a collective professional responsibility for all learners; Closing the gap between the understanding of effective literacy teaching practices and implementation.

Additional support was provided to one school in the form of an experienced principal working alongside teams of teachers as they work toward putting theory into practice (0.5).

Some *RTBCTG* schools have become Inquiry Focus Project Schools in 2011. These schools will provide support to non-project schools to implement best practice professional learning processes that focus on linking professional learning directly to improved learning outcomes for students.

The ability of some schools to actively engage all, or indeed the majority, of teaching staff in out of school hours professional learning has also been a challenge. The *RTBCTG* initiative has responded to this challenge by allowing some flexibility in the professional learning component of the approach.

The Audit group agreed to some flexibility in the use of *RTBCTG* professional learning funds. Whilst whole of staff professional learning, out of school hours, is the preferred professional learning model, in schools where this has been impossible to achieve, principals were able to conduct professional learning opportunities in school hours, utilising funding to release teams of teachers (in consultation with Managers Learning, and in ensuring alignment with the priorities established in their school's Literacy Improvement Plan).

In schools where teacher assistants are active participants in particular instructional programs (e.g. Bridges), *RTBCTG* funds have also supported their professional learning. This included accessing some of the funds to facilitate team planning and programming in school hours.

The Evaluation and Measurement Framework demanded an assessment regime which was considerably more intensive to that which a number of schools was used to.

The UTas Evaluation team provided significant support to schools in the form of assessment timelines and protocols. This information supported schools as they prepared and implemented the various assessment tools. Schools have been further supported by highly informed, knowledgeable and intuitive Managers Learning and Literacy Officers based in Learning Services. By developing strong relationships and open communication channels schools have been very well supported and will continue to be.

On reflection, the scope determined by the evaluation of *RTBCTG* was too broad. The capacity of the team and the funds to effectively fulfil the demands of the evaluation, especially in areas of parent and community engagement was underestimated.

The required meetings of the *RTBCTG* evaluation team and the project team were highly valued and instrumental in ensuring that the outcomes of the initiative were on track and achieved.

Implementation of the pilot was supported by the fact that the pilot was part of the larger state funded initiative. This ensured that oversight and governance of the initiative remained a priority. The administration of the project was therefore managed within the context of a much larger initiative.

Lessons learned early in the implementation of *RTBCTG* are informing and streamlining future evolutions of the initiative. *RTBCTG* is being extended into secondary schools in 2011 (state funded) as well as into five

selected government schools as a program specifically addressing the needs of Aboriginal students (Commonwealth funded).

It appears at this stage that this pilot is best suited in those schools with high levels of need under the leadership of a principal prepared to think flexibly and innovatively. Principal leadership, modelling and commitment are crucial.

The intention of the pilot and the broader initiative is to build capacity, leadership density and whole-of-school commitment to literacy planning and implementation. This, in turn, results in quality leadership, teaching and impacts positively on student learning outcomes.

The resources provided through the initiative would be welcomed, and effective in achieving the above, in any school with a cohort of underachieving students, however, schools with higher levels of disadvantage and significant numbers of students achieving below National Minimum Standards are best placed to utilise the resource for maximum gain. Furthermore, the quality of professional learning and whole school commitment to improving teacher quality would make an appointment at a *RTBCTG* school a particularly influential experience for an early career teacher or group of teachers.

Detailed itemised Income and Expenditure statement against the Budget as specified at Attachment B of Tasmania DoE's Funding Agreement.

Raising the Bar Closing the Gap Group 3 YTD expenditure against Budget

| | Project Budget | Actual YTD |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Summerdale Primary School | 393,651 | 322,580 |
| Mowbray Heights Primary School | 351,363 | 327,724 |
| Youngtown Primary School | 335,048 | 358,255 |
| Lilydale Primary School | 323,167 | 292,499 |
| Riverside Primary School | 384,993 | 371,108 |
| Sorell School | 354,117 | 298,432 |
| Brighton Primary School | 386,325 | 277,386 |
| Howrah Primary School | 368,677 | 322,586 |
| Nixon Street Primary School | 380,666 | 367,784 |
| Bowen Road Primary School | 326,087 | 390,378 |
| Kingston Primary School | 347,700 | 415,323 |
| Evaluation | 48,206 | 48,206 |
| Monitoring and Administrative Support | - | 43,873 |
| Student Support | - | 163,866 |
| | 4,000,000 | 4,000,000 |

Section 4 – Sustainability

The *RTBCTG* initiative was designed on the principle of sustainability

Evidence of this and the fact that participating principals anecdotally have reported achievement of sustainable elements in their schools have led to the extension of the program beyond groups 1, 2 and 3.

In particular, the pilot has changed school approaches and strategies as well as informing school literacy planning and school improvement planning. Through the evaluation, and in conversation, principals reported that teachers' participation in the initiative has led to enlightened literacy practice, increased focused and explicit teaching around literacy and the importance of using and understanding data and evidence to inform their planning for individual students.

Some schools reported increased willingness and understanding of the collective and individual benefits of team planning. Without exception, all schools recognised the importance of a whole school approach to the teaching of literacy, the value and the reasons behind scheduled regular assessments as well as a whole school approach to using evidence and data to inform teaching and learning.

Through participation in network meetings, principal–principal meetings and teacher–teacher meetings, participants are better able to share and articulate their understanding around their increased capacity in literacy teaching and learning.

It has been pleasing to note that a number of teachers have continued their own professional learning an undertaken further study including post-graduate studies at UTas.

The following features of the initiative describe the sustainability of the strategies and approaches undertaken through the initiative.

Evidence-based leadership framework:

An increase in the capacity of leaders in relation to leading collaborative work and providing high-level curriculum content and pedagogical knowledge will continue to support teachers to build their capacity. It is through this process that an increase in leadership density and quality will contribute to an ongoing positive impact on learning outcomes.

Some principals and school leaders have continued to use an evidence-based Learning Centred Leadership Model as a guiding framework for leading literacy improvement. The three key behaviours identified in this model; modelling, monitoring and dialogue are high leverage strategies.

Some of the pilot schools have opted to become Inquiry Focus Project Schools in 2011. These schools will provide support to non-project schools to implement best practice professional learning processes that focus on linking professional learning directly to improved learning outcomes for students.

This will support and build on the work that has been started through involvement in the pilot.

Research and innovation:

Schools have been supported to undertake research on literacy interventions. Levelled Literacy Intervention and Catch Up Literacy have been implemented in several schools and networks have formed to investigate the potential of these interventions to inform further provisions in schools.

Collective inquiry:

Through attendance at monthly network meetings, many *RTBCTG* principals are involved in a systematic and rigorous agenda including looking at current research on literacy improvement and issues of leading literacy in schools. Literacy leaders engage in dialogue and provide feedback to colleagues on current literacy improvement challenges.

Quality teaching and teacher capacity:

Where the *RTBCTG* resource has been used effectively and targeted at building teacher capacity in relation to literacy pedagogy, then improved practice should continue to benefit all students.

Building diagnostic capacity:

A major focus has been on developing the capacity of teachers and school leaders to interrogate data and develop strategies to address identified needs. The questions; are students learning what they need to; how do we know if they are learning; and what do we do with those who are not learning, guide data analysis and collaborative planning. Building robust monitoring strategies to enable schools to assess progress toward targets is crucial.

Whole school professional learning:

Professional learning has been a cornerstone of the *RTBCTG* initiative. Principals and leaders have benefited enormously from the wide variety of professional learning provided and knowledge gained has contributed to the increase in student performance. Across the Learning Services, professional learning will continue to be supported as schools strive to develop effective professional learning communities and in particular, for school literacy leaders to develop their capacity to deliver effective professional learning that builds understanding and impacts on classroom practice.

Schools and networks have examined models to support teachers in using data to support classroom practice. Learning Services undertake a variety of models to assist their principals to provide relevant and timely professional learning to their teachers. These models include but are not limited to: The LAP (Literacy Assessment Project), Data Wise Professional Learning module and Instructional Rounds which will further increase teachers' capacity to collect data and support student learning.

School structures and processes:

The re-organisation and or development of structures and processes that lead to a school operating in a more efficient and targeted way e.g. literacy blocks, collaborative team planning processes and increased levels of data literacy will contribute to ongoing improvement in student achievement.

Community partnerships and support:

Where parents and school community members are provided with additional skills and knowledge and are involved in contributing to school literacy programs, there is likely to be sustainable improvements in student learning.

Impact of the *RTBCTG* initiative on National Partnership activities

Activity through the pilot has increasingly informed Smarter Schools National Partnership activities. Particular features of the pilot include the development of whole school approaches, increased utilisation of data, more purposeful and effective school organisational structures and the development of networks of schools that work together to achieve shared targets.

Case Study

Nixon Street Primary School– Group 3 school

Evidence of Sustainability

Nixon Street Primary School is committed to the goal that every student has the opportunity to learn and achieve his or her potential. The school is guided by the Learner at the Centre framework and embraces the government's priority areas including Literacy and Numeracy - improving the basic literacy and numeracy skills of all school-aged children. Nixon Street Primary School is committed to working with its community and supporting teachers working together designing personalised learning opportunities for all students.

The school's ENI (Educational needs Index) is 50.1

- The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage is 938, (AV =1000)
- 9% of students identify as Indigenous students
- 2% of children are from a Language Background Other than English. An EAL teacher 0.8 assists with English immersion and personalisation. The EAL teacher teaches in the Literacy block.
- The attendance rate is 95%.

(Reference: MySchool 2, March 2011)

The *RTBCTG* pilot at Nixon Street Primary School was successful as evidenced in the school-wide improvement data. Successes will be sustainable, in part, due to the ongoing strategies that have been identified as effective.

The pilot focused on establishing consistent school-wide practice and instructional expectations. The implementation plan drew on an evidenced-based framework and specifically focused on nine foundation blocks – 'CIERA: School Change Framework' (Taylor, Pearson, Peterson & Rodriguez, 2005). These elements are interdependent and are fundamental to a whole school approach to literacy. The foundation blocks are:

- building strong leadership
- staff collaboration
- whole school focus on improving student learning
- ongoing professional learning
- sharing of student assessment data
- school organisational development
- directing resources to areas of most need
- reaching out to parents
- ensuring continuous improvement and accountability frameworks in schools (Taylor et al., 2005)

An audit of practice against the nine foundation blocks indicates that the following are potentially sustainable practices:

Whole Staff Focus on Improved Student Learning

- Learning Team structures – Regular team meeting where teams analyse data, identify student need, reflect collectively on practice, define Consistent Instructional Expectations, develop formative assessments and plan for further data collection
- Continued development of key Consistent Instructional Expectations for school-wide practice
- Literacy Blocks utilising Whole, Small, Whole grouping approaches
- Literacy intervention processes at all levels

Strong Building Leadership

- Distributed Leadership model – network and line management structure and curriculum task teams
- Expect and support teachers to contribute
- Opportunities to lead and clearly define roles
- Literacy team with strong links to all staff or all staff on the Literacy team
- All teachers sharing their strengths in Literacy with colleagues in teams and whole school setting
- Strong links to Literacy ‘experts’ outside the school

Ongoing Professional Learning

- Defined Professional Learning Model – In school time learning teams, professional learning days
- Structures within the school to support that learning
- Structured Literacy professional learning around whole school and individual teacher needs
- School based professional learning if at all possible
- Opportunities for teachers to consolidate professional learning with practice,
- Planned and regular opportunities to learn in teaching teams

Staff Collaboration

- Staff learning in teams
- Time given for curriculum team meetings
- Focused team work based on student outcomes
- Teacher engagement in collegial inquiry
- Spending designated team time on Literacy teaching issues (analysing data and planning teaching sequences together, helping a teacher with a complex teaching problem, sharing skills in specific areas)

Reaching Out to Parents

- Effective partnerships – Strengthening Family School Partnerships
- Pathways to school readiness
- Parent information sessions
- *Launching into Learning* – Tiny Talkers : Play and Stay: Play group sessions

Sharing of Student Assessment Data

- With whole staff
- School data collected and recorded and discussed in teams and used to inform and decisions
- All data on each student available at the start of the year – in-depth look at this and plan and set goals from the data

School Organisational Development

- Effective management practices – network structure
- Dedicated literacy blocks at least four times per week – no interruptions.
- Literacy Block structure to maximise small group and individual teaching time
- Streamlined aide time to support students in the Literacy block,
- Dedicated Literacy Block – no interruptions

- All whole school interruptions occurring on one particular day
- Tailored and maximum use of support staff in Literacy Block
- Tight and succinct student behaviour management

Directing Resources to Areas of Most Need

- Based on equity and inclusion
- Intervention processes in place at all levels

Ensuring Continuous Improvement and Accountability Frameworks in Schools

- School planning processes in place – curriculum task teams
- Participative decision making – curriculum and learning teams contribute in authentic ways to the decisions
- Planning based on data – qualitative and quantitative
- All staff involved in planning processes
- Plan documented and available for all stakeholders

Contact details:

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- www.education.tas.gov.au/dept/strategies/raising-the-bar

Attachment: Appendix I U Tas Raising the Bar: Closing the Gap Literacy Pilot Project Final Evaluation Report to the Commonwealth

Declaration

In providing the information in this Final Report we declare that we have complied with the obligations under the Agreement.

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Signature

Liz Banks
Print Name

21 April 2011
Date

Acting Deputy Secretary Early Years and Schools
Position

