

Evaluation of the take-up and sustainability of new literacy and numeracy practices in NSW schools

Final Report of Phase 1

September 2012



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While the information presented in this report draws on the contributions of a range of stakeholders, responsibility for the accuracy of the findings and the conclusions drawn are, however, the responsibility of the evaluation team.

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Within NSW, evaluation of Smarter Schools National Partnerships implementation and initiatives was guided by a committee that has been appointed by the Minister for Education and Communities. The National Partnerships Evaluation Committee (NPEC) has a major responsibility for overseeing the design and implementation of major strategic evaluations of the Smarter Schools National Partnership reforms, including the evaluation of the Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership (NPLN).

This report sets out the findings and conclusions of the first phase of the evaluation of the implementation of the NSW National Partnership for Literacy and Numeracy. The evaluation was conducted over the period from January 2011 to May 2012. Later phases of this evaluation will include a strategic review of the specific intervention programs used within the NPLN, and an investigation of the sustainability of the impact of the NPLN (see Figure 1 in main report).

The Smarter Schools National Partnership Agreements on Literacy and Numeracy, Low Socio-economic Status School Communities (Low SES) and Improving Teacher Quality were agreed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) on 28 November 2008.

The National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy between the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments was designed to deliver sustained improvements in literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students, especially those who were falling behind.

The priority areas for reform in the Literacy and Numeracy Partnership (referred to as the National Partnership or NPLN hereafter), were:

- effective and evidenced-based teaching of literacy and numeracy
- strong school leadership and whole school engagement with literacy and numeracy
- monitoring student and school literacy and numeracy performance to identify where support is needed (COAG 2008).

An important aspect of the National Partnerships approach was setting specific outcome targets for each state/territory, with significant financial incentives (reward payments) attached to the achievement of these mandated targets. The four mandated NAPLAN measures for the NPLN were:

- Students at or above the national minimum standard (All students) (Reading/Numeracy)
- Students above the national minimum standard (All students) (Reading/Numeracy)
- Mean scale score (All students) (Reading/Numeracy)
- Students at or above the national minimum standard (Indigenous students) (Reading/Numeracy).

In addition to the NAPLAN measures, NSW also negotiated a set of three local measures for the purpose of reward payments:

- National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy assessment

- Data Analysis Skills Assessment (DASA)
- Analytical framework to support school improvement in literacy and numeracy

The NSW Implementation Plan (Literacy and Numeracy) identified that \$41 million was allocated to NSW as facilitation payments in the first two years (2009/2010) of the NPLN and \$47.6 million per annum as reward payments in the final two years (2010/2011), triggered by the achievement of the mandated measures. To maximise the direct impact on student learning outcomes, at least 80 per cent of the funding available was to be used to support direct interventions in the classroom.

As part of the initiative, each school was expected to conduct a self-evaluation; select either a literacy or a numeracy focus for the school, and then choose one individual intervention strategy for students experiencing difficulties and one whole school/class program. The development of an Individual Student Learning Plan was required for students at or below minimum standard, and could also be considered for students experiencing difficulties in reading or numeracy development as a result of a language background other than English, a learning difficulty, limited opportunities to schooling, and students with a disability. The participation of teachers and leaders in the capacity building component of the NPLN was also required. By 2012, 102 schools in NSW were undertaking literacy programs and 45 were undertaking numeracy programs.

Methodology

The evaluation was designed to provide information in relation to the following key questions:

1. What change has been attempted?
2. What effects and synergies can be discerned?
3. How effective has implementation been, including cost-effectiveness?
4. How have schools approached issues of sustainability, resilience and transferability?
5. What are the implications for systems?

To address the key research questions above, a mixture of qualitative and quantitative data gathering methodologies was required. The data gathering included six principal sources, the interaction between each being guided by an approved Evaluation Plan.

1. Document analysis

A close examination of the important documentation that articulates key goals, funding, resourcing and support to the NSW Government, Catholic and independent school sectors provided the context and background underpinning this evaluation and is reported in Chapter 2 of the main report.

2. Interviews with key sector representatives and regional staff

Semi-structured interviews with key sector representatives (Government, Catholic and independent), regional education staff, and other stakeholders identified by the cross-sectoral committee, were undertaken to comprehensively understand issues relating to the planning and implementation of SSNP Literacy and Numeracy programs, and to identify issues that require further investigation with participating schools.

3. Interviews with school leaders and teachers in 12 schools

Semi-structured interviews or focus-groups with leaders and teachers in a sample of schools (from all sectors and across metropolitan and rural locations) were conducted to provide data about the early implementation of the program and any take-up issues.

4. Follow-up online survey of all schools participating in the implementation of SSNP activity

An online survey was developed to allow all 147 schools participating in the first stage SSNP Literacy and Numeracy programs to comment on the planning and implementation of the specific activities in which they have been involved.

5. Case studies with a sample of 19 participating schools

Nineteen case studies in selected participating schools were undertaken. In each school, semi-structured interviews were conducted with school leaders and teachers based around the key questions in the Research Plan, Examples of plans, teaching programs, student work samples and so on, as appropriate, were examined to illustrate the evidence given by teachers and school leaders.

6. Analysis of student outcomes data (NAPLAN literacy and numeracy data)

An analysis of NAPLAN literacy and numeracy data was conducted to illustrate trends pre and post implementation.

Findings and conclusions

The NPLN has differed from many reform efforts of the past in that it quite deliberately targeted multiple areas and levels of the educational enterprise: leadership and school management, planning, pedagogy, programs and resources, student engagement, and school-community relationships. Many previous programs have targeted one or other of these areas, but rarely have they been as comprehensive in focus as the NPLN.

The initiative's implementation in NSW was well planned, managed and resourced. Key characteristics of the NPLN implementation in NSW include the extent to which it was innovative, and its development of a strong support infrastructure, including cross-sectoral oversight and steering committees, central coordination, and regional/diocesan and sector consultancy support. The theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of the initiative drew on a sound body of evidence about both effective pedagogy and means for improving teacher practice.

The initiative also built from a sound evidence base that recognises the fundamental importance of quality teaching to student learning. Across all sectors and funded programs implemented as part of the initiative, professional learning programs reinforced the view that what teachers do, and how they do it, makes a difference in promoting student learning outcomes. The promotion of such messages was not only motivating for teachers, but provided a framework for differentiating good teaching from less effective practice, and for stimulating continuing dialogue between teachers on these themes.

The evaluation data shows that demonstrable progress has been made towards the three priority reforms identified for the initiative; enhancing teacher and leadership capacity, as well as moving towards more evidence based pedagogy and planning. There is evidence that teachers are making

more and better use of student outcomes data in both programming lessons and the scope and sequence of the curriculum, as well as in overall school decision making.

In line with the intentions of one of the priority reform areas, schools involved in the NPLN have increased their capacity to collect and analyse data, particularly in relation to student learning outcomes. In addition to the NAPLAN results, schools are using a variety of standardised tests and school developed assessments to better understand student learning. They are more likely, for example, to make use of pre- and post-testing to identify learning gains and areas they may need to re-visit for individual students and whole classes.

Classroom teachers also report that, where relevant, they more consistently engage in what they describe as an “explicit teaching” approach to their pedagogy. Participation in the initiative has ensured that they understand the importance of identifying at the outset key learning outcomes for students, based on ongoing data and specific student results. Moreover they have adopted an approach to pedagogy that directly targets key learning points, with appropriate resources to ensure that learning is focused to maximise the opportunity for students.

There is also evidence of positive impact on student learning, although this has not yet necessarily translated into improved NAPLAN scores. However, across the majority of NPLN schools, teachers and principals perceived higher levels of student engagement with learning, enhanced enjoyment of learning, and participation in learning activities by a wider range of students. School level data show an increase in mastery of the specific skills and knowledge targeted in class work. All of these are important precursors for later improvement in external standardised testing programs.

What were successful elements in this initiative?

The scale of funding available in NSW for this initiative was an important determinant of the success of the initiative, allowing significant lengths of time for professional learning and school-based implementation of new teaching strategies on a scale that may not have been possible otherwise. What has been different in the NPLN from previous capacity-building initiatives has been the emphasis on whole school change, rather than individual teacher development. What has also differed has been the extent to which follow-up implementation of the professional learning has been mandatory, with a strong expectation of change in school and classroom practice embedded in the program design.

What was also different about the NPLN was the requirement for participating schools to implement one or other identified specific programs, which were supported in each school by intensive professional development. It is not possible from the evidence at hand to say unequivocally that any one of these programs was better or worse in impacting on student outcomes: indeed each was affected by a range of implementation issues which may have affected the outcomes observed. However, what can be concluded is that this element of program design was important in providing a framework for the professional development and capacity building efforts, and for focusing the efforts of the school on improvement rather than overcoming deficits. It is noted that all of the programs have similar underlying pedagogical principles, including:

- Scaffolded learning and explicit teaching

- Close monitoring of each child's progress, and sharing of expectations and feedback with students
- Emphasis on hands-on learning
- Emphasis on students achieving mastery in lessons rather than superficial curriculum coverage.

It is also important to note that the schools that had appeared to have achieved most success from the NPLN and had a greater likelihood of sustained impact were those that were able to see that the initiative was about more than just implementing a new Reading or Numeracy program, but was instead about the larger picture of school improvement.

The data collected for the evaluation also shows clear changes in the way in which schools go about their business, both in terms of day to day routines, approaches to planning and interactions between individuals. There has been clear enhancement of the competence and confidence of individual teachers, especially those with the "big picture" of the initiative in mind.

Stronger whole school strategic planning is taking place in NPLN schools, informed by outcomes data, including but not limited to NAPLAN data. There is evidence that in successful NPLN schools, there is now greater involvement of staff and community in annual evaluation and planning. The process of broadening involvement and engagement of the whole school community in school planning may well be one of the lasting legacies of the NPLN.

It is evident that more focused evaluation of progress towards targets is now being conducted by schools, and armed with this knowledge, teachers are more willing to change directions as a consequence of better informed decision making rather than acting on opinions and passing enthusiasm for the latest innovation. The provision at a central level of tools and professional learning to use these tools effectively has contributed strongly to this position, but more importantly, the pressure placed on NPLN schools by regional, diocesan and sector facilitators ensured that practices already undertaken by high performing schools have now been taken up more widely.

A clear outcome, demonstrated across all forms of data gathering, has occurred in relation to the way in which teachers in NPLN schools now relate to each other as professionals. The evidence demonstrates that in general, teachers are more collaborative in their planning, delivery and evaluation of lessons, have increased professional dialogue, and increased sharing of resources.

Overall, it is fair to conclude that the NPLN has played a significant role in providing not only rejuvenation but also hope for the future in many schools, which had become "stuck", facing seemingly insurmountable barriers in often very disadvantaged communities. The NPLN provided not only a vision for change but also the resources for achieving this change, and an imperative for change that was sometimes previously resisted actively or passively by often well meaning but ultimately unhelpful views of the past. Teaching in these schools is now more frequently in line with research based best practices.

An important aspect of this National Partnership was setting specific targets for improvement in student learning outcomes. Setting these specific targets was important from both practical and symbolic perspectives in focusing on student learning as an essential priority.

Strategic implications for future initiatives

The experience of the NPLN provides insights which may help define the strategic directions for future initiatives. The following is a brief summary of the key features of the NPLN which have broader implications for system and sector planning for school improvement and capacity building intervention:

- Future professional learning efforts need to be of a scale that can allow engagement of whole school staff, rather than short term, one-off programs aimed at individual staff members (although there will remain a place for this).
- There will be a continuing need for a multi-layered or tiered approach to pedagogy that recognises that there are times when it is appropriate for whole class teaching, support for individuals within classrooms, short-term withdrawal programs for individual and small groups of students, and intensive one-on-one support when needed. No single approach will meet the needs of all students.
- Professional learning programs and reform efforts need to carry strong expectations for change as a consequence of the professional learning – not left to chance or the hope that it might happen. There needs to be a strong accountability and leadership in place to reinforce these expectations. Similarly, there needs to be sufficient high quality support infrastructure inside and outside the school to provide momentum, focus, support, and expertise. The importance of the roles of the in-school coordinators and the regional facilitators in this regard has been emphasised in the body of the report.
- There is a need to engage the commitment of the whole school staff to ensure consistency of approach. Principals require authority to ensure that participation in the reforms is not optional for teachers, which may require a mechanism that allows teachers who are resistant to find alternative placements.
- There is a need to accept that change of the scale required takes time and some things may need to be given up in order to achieve impact. Intensive whole school professional learning requires a good supply of quality relief teachers so that minimal disruption occurs when teachers are undertaking professional learning. As noted previously, the provision of tools and associated professional learning has been important.
- There is a need for strong buy-in and support from regions, dioceses and districts for continued ownership of the process and to ensure there is no disconnection from mainstream school management processes and priorities.
- An early focus on sustainability was important to ensure schools are not reliant on external funding to maintain momentum and to begin to think about how they could apply practices and principles from the experience using own or alternate funds. (Note the success of impact in the longer term will be monitored through later phases of this evaluation).
- Encouraging greater depth of leadership has been an important strategy for planning for staff turnover, especially in-school coordinators who are likely to be promoted. A strategy that

focused on teachers without changing leadership behaviours is not likely to have achieved equivalent success.

The overall conclusion to be drawn from this evaluation is that the NPLN has been a worthwhile endeavour, and provides a useful model for future strategic initiatives. The experience shows that at a policy level, in attempting to address the fundamental challenges of enhancing student achievement, building teacher and leader capacity, and reforming school management, there is a place for state-wide, cross-sectoral, systemic improvement initiatives.

At a strategic level, the NPLN was characterised by a high degree of conceptual coherence in its design and delivery, with elements simultaneously addressing the factors known to be correlated with school effectiveness:

- Strong leadership
- Best practice teaching
- An organisational climate that supports teachers to work collegially and collaboratively
- A curriculum that fosters an emphasis on academic success
- A student monitoring system that provides feedback on both teaching and learning.

It is not possible to separate one single factor as the critical success factor for the NPLN, nor is it likely that the design of the intervention at a strategic level for future similar initiatives can be simplified to one or two key elements. Rather, it has been the combination of elements that have combined to produce the results observed. From a policy perspective, it must be acknowledged that the problem of underperforming schools is complex, therefore it must be expected that the efforts to address these problems will also be complex. There is no "magic bullet" that will achieve large scale transformational change: rather there will be an ongoing need for systematic and sustained efforts.

Evaluation of the Take-up and Sustainability of New Literacy and Numeracy Practices in New South Wales Schools

Final Report 2012

Chapter 1: Introduction

This report sets out the findings and conclusions of the first phase of the evaluation of the implementation of the NSW National Partnership for Literacy and Numeracy (NPLN). The evaluation was conducted over the period from January 2011 to May 2012. The evaluation now comprises a suite of related projects, which includes a strategic review of program evaluations of specific literacy and numeracy intervention programs (Phase 2), and examination of the medium term sustainability of the impact of the NPLN (Phase 3). The interconnection between the different phases of the evaluation is represented diagrammatically in Figure 1.

1.1 Policy context for the National Partnership

The Smarter Schools National Partnership Agreements on Literacy and Numeracy, Low Socio-economic Status School Communities (Low SES) and Improving Teacher Quality were agreed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) on 28th November 2008.

The three Partnerships align with the COAG National Education Agreement, where States and Territories agreed that "all Australian school students need to acquire the knowledge and skills to participate effectively in society and employment in a globalised economy."

The National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy between the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments is designed to deliver sustained improvements in literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students, especially those who are falling behind.

The priority areas for reform in the Literacy and Numeracy Partnership (referred to as the National Partnership or NPLN hereafter), are:

- effective and evidenced-based teaching of literacy and numeracy
- strong school leadership and whole school engagement with literacy and numeracy
- monitoring student and school literacy and numeracy performance to identify where support is needed (COAG 2008).

From a national perspective, the intention has been to ensure a strong focus on high quality literacy and numeracy teaching, combined with strong school leadership and whole school approaches, which together are needed to support students to develop effective, strong literacy and numeracy skills.

Since the launch of the Smarter Schools National Partnership in 2008, state and territory jurisdictions have been working generally in a cross-sectoral and collaborative manner to develop strategies to plan and implement the three National Partnership priority areas for reform in schools.

The roles and responsibilities of the NSW Government are outlined in the COAG NPLN agreement. A key aspect of this was the development of implementation plans to form the basis of bilateral agreements to be negotiated between the Commonwealth and the NSW Government. Hence, the *National Partnership Agreement for Literacy and Numeracy: Bilateral Agreement between the Commonwealth of Australia and the New South Wales* (2009) (the 'Bilateral NPLN Agreement'), outlines the ongoing participation, reporting, monitoring and auditing responsibilities of reforms and rewards between DEEWR and the NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC)¹, the Catholic Education Commission NSW (CEC) and the Association of Independent Schools NSW (AISNSW) consortium.

The *NSW Implementation Plans for Smarter Schools National Partnerships 2009* ('NSW Implementation Plans') contain three implementation plans, one for each National Partnership. Among other things, the NSW Implementation Plans mandate "Reform Areas" which align with the three aforementioned priority areas detailed in the COAG NPLN Agreement, and thus are in accord with consistent evidence that teacher quality is the single greatest in-school influence on student engagement and outcomes, that literacy and numeracy is a cornerstone of schooling, and that socio-economic status remains a significant determinant of educational outcomes (NSW Implementation Plans 2009:4).

The extensive literature surrounding the NPLN clearly demonstrated that strategies employed under the NPLN (e.g. the NSW Implementation Plan) were in alignment with, and supportive of, system-wide and cross-sectoral intentions to improve and sustain literacy and numeracy gains for NSW students. The logic which linked the goals and activities in the NPLN across a national, state, school system/region, and individual school levels, was guided by the consistently held position that literacy and numeracy are essential foundation skills that allow young people to achieve at school, to go onto further learning, and to participate fully in society and work.

The consistency of this message was demonstrated by the priorities set out in the COAG NPLN Agreement being reiterated in the NPLN reform areas, and the tailoring of the COAG NPLN performance indicators to the NSW performance measures. The NPLN formed a cohesive platform with the other two National Partnerships, founded on the shared emphasis on building the capacity of the school leadership to implement well researched and evidence-based strategies/programs, and to be accountable for this through the effective measurement of identified outcomes.

¹ Note that at the commencement of the National Partnership program, the government school sector was administered by the Department of Education and Training (DET), now the Department of Education and Communities (DEC). In the remainder of this report, the former Department of Education and Training is referred to as the DEC.

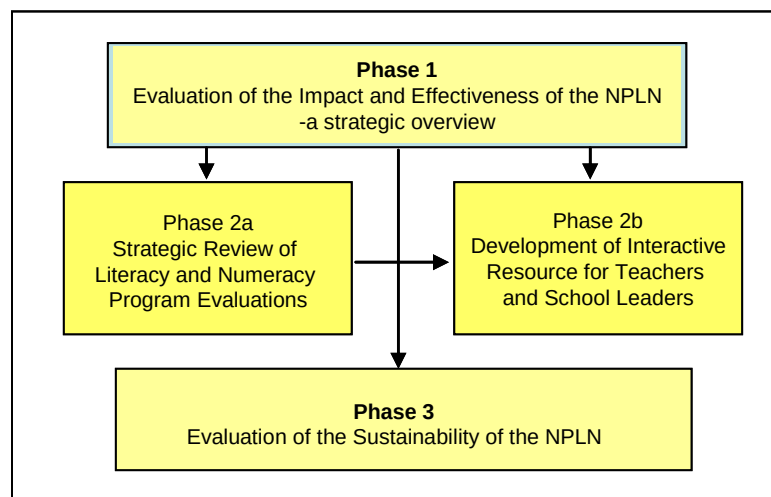
While the majority of schools involved in NSW are from the Government sector, both the Catholic and independent sectors have also systematically commenced initiatives to address each reform area. At the time of writing this final report, 147 schools across NSW had implemented Literacy/Numeracy two year initiatives, including 114 government schools, 26 Catholic schools and 7 independent schools. Funding for the Literacy/Numeracy initiatives was committed for a four year period, delivered to schools over two financial years (2009/2010 and 2010/2011).

In New South Wales the students participating in the National Partnership represented:

- 16 per cent of Aboriginal primary students in New South Wales
- 7 per cent of first phase ESL primary students in New South Wales government schools
- 12 per cent of refugee primary students in New South Wales government schools
- 11 per cent of students in remote New South Wales schools. (Source: 2011 NSW Implementation Plan)

Within NSW, evaluation of Smarter Schools National Partnerships initiatives is guided by a committee that has been appointed by the Minister for Education and Communities. The National Partnerships Evaluation Committee (NPEC) has a major responsibility for overseeing the design and implementation of major strategic evaluations of the Smarter Schools National Partnership reforms, including the evaluation of the Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership, referred to in this report. Key deliverables for this phase of the evaluation have included two Progress Reports and this Final Report. Further reports are due at the conclusion of Phases 2 and 3 of the evaluation (See Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Outline of NPLN Evaluation stages



1.2 Structure of this report

The remainder of this report is structured as follows.

- Chapter 2 provides further detail of the background to the NPLN.

- Chapter 3 describes the methodology used to collect data for the evaluation, and the next steps to be taken in Phase 3 (sustainability phase).
- Chapter 4 describes the major findings of the evaluation, structured around the five major research areas for the evaluation as set out in the Terms of Reference. This Chapter also discusses the lessons learned from the initiative that could be applied to like initiatives in future.
- Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the findings and concludes with a consideration of the implications of the evaluation findings at a strategic level.

Appendices provide copies of the tools used for data gathering purposes for this evaluation.

Chapter 2: Methodology for the evaluation

2.1 Methodology for Phase 1

All intended data gathering for Phase 1 of the evaluation was completed as described in the Evaluation Plan. As noted in the progress reports, a key step in the early stages of the evaluation process was to identify the existing situation in relation to the planning, early implementation and roll-out of the NPLN. For this purpose, data was collected from three main sources: a review of available documentation relating to the NPLN; a series of interviews/focus groups with school leaders in 12 school sites, and interviews with key stakeholders from NSW school systems/sectors. The review of the project documentation identified the context and background for the initiative which forms the basis for Chapter 3 of this report.

The first progress report also provided some preliminary analysis of data collected in a series of interviews and focus groups conducted early in 2011. The views and opinions expressed by participants at that time reflected their experience with the NPLN at a relatively early stage of implementation of the initiative. The data gathering conducted late in 2011 represented a more considered reflection based on participants' experience of the initiative over the life of the funding period.

The early observations made in the preliminary analysis in Progress Report 1 have largely been substantiated by the later, more extensive data gathered. The full range of data is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 of this report. The caveats expressed in the earlier reports still apply to the observations recorded in Chapter 4. Table 1 below provides a summary of data gathering conducted for Phase 1.

Table 1: Summary of data gathering conducted for the evaluation

Focus groups and interviews with school leaders and teachers in 12 schools		
All planned focus groups with selected schools were completed by June 2011		
Government	Catholic	Independent
8 completed <u>Literacy—6 schools visited</u> <i>Whole school program</i> Focus on Reading: (3 schools) Accelerated Literacy: (2 schools) Reading 2 Learn: (1 school) <i>Individual intervention</i> MulitLit: (4 schools) Individual Learning Plans: (1 school)	3 completed <u>Literacy—2 schools visited</u> <i>Whole school program</i> Focus on Reading: (1 school) Mindful Learning, Mindful Teaching: (1 school) <i>Individual intervention</i> Mindful Learning, Mindful Teaching: (1 school) Individual Readers: (1 school)	1 completed <u>Literacy— 1 school visited</u> <i>Whole School program</i> Accelerated Literacy: (1 school) <i>Individual intervention</i> MulitLit: (1 school)

<u>Numeracy—2 schools visited</u> <i>Whole school program</i> TOWN: (2 schools) <i>Individual intervention</i> TOWN: 1 QuickSmart: (1 school)	<u>Numeracy—1 school visited</u> <i>Whole school program</i> First Steps: (1 school) <i>Individual intervention</i> First Steps: (1 school)	
Feedback from Participants at <i>Celebrating Success, Embedding Change Conference</i>,		
Views of over 200 participants at the Celebrating Success, Embedding Change Conference, held in May 2011 were gathered in relation to key questions about significant changes occurring as a consequence of the NPLN.		
Interviews with key sector representatives		
Government	Catholic	Independent
Regional program facilitators (3) DEC Coordination (2)	Diocese program facilitators: (2)	AIS representative: 1
Survey of NPLN Schools		
All 114 eligible schools were invited to participate in an on-line survey. 79 responses were received, giving a response rate of 69 per cent. Further details of the survey are provided in Appendix 1.		
School Case studies		
Government	Catholic	Independent
- 15 visits planned – 14 completed -7 regional or rural, 8 metropolitan schools 12 literacy focused schools, 3 numeracy	- 4 site visits planned and completed - includes 2 metropolitan, 2 regional or rural schools (All had a literacy focus)	1 site visit planned and completed -regional location -Literacy focus
Cross-Sectoral Impact Survey		
Preliminary data from the Cross-Sectoral Impact Survey was included in the analysis of impact of the NPLN		

Schools participating in the both rounds of interviews/focus groups were identified by the relevant system/sector coordinators as being representative of schools participating in the partnership, including a selection of those in metropolitan, regional and rural locations, proportionate to the number of schools in each sector. Schools were selected to be representative of the range of practices and outcomes achieved by those participating in the National Partnership: they were not selected to represent best practice. The first round of interviews took place over a four week period in March-April 2011, while the school site visits were conducted in October-November 2011.

Depending on the particular circumstances of each school, interviews were conducted either individually with the principal or other school leaders, or more frequently, together with the school NPLN coordinator (classroom leader). In most schools, small groups of classroom

teachers also participated in interviews. These arrangements were made to suit the school timetable, other priorities and commitments of school staff, and the time they could make available to the evaluators. In all cases, the arrangements agreed were designed to minimize disruption and inconvenience to the school. Questions used as discussion starters during these interviews are shown in the interview schedule attached as Appendix 2. All of the interviews were conducted in a very positive spirit and the evaluators were made to feel very welcome in the schools. We very much appreciated the generosity and openness displayed. Schools were provided with the interview questions prior to the evaluator's arrival, to allow them time to prepare for the interviews. Some spent a considerable time in preparing their responses, and all were happy to share their experiences, both positive and negative. Several of the schools also commented that they found the evaluation experience to be of value to them in its own right, causing them to reflect on the progress they had made and the directions they intended pursuing in future.

A content analysis of the responses to the interview questions was conducted to identify common trends and issues occurring in the sample of schools. The preliminary observations from this content analysis are summarised in a later section of this report.

An additional data collection opportunity became available at the *Smarter Schools Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership Celebrating Success, Embedding Change Conference*, held in Sydney on 19 and 20 May 2011, which was attended by over 200 school representatives and other stakeholders. The evaluation team was asked to participate in this conference. In one session, there was a short opportunity for the evaluation team to pose three questions to the plenary group that was then asked to discuss and record its responses.

The participants were asked to respond to the following questions:

- “As a consequence of the Literacy & Numeracy SSNP what has been the most significant change for your school (or schools that you work with)?
- Why has it been significant?
- What have been the consequences of this change?”

The results of this data gathering have been included in the findings in Chapter 4.

Student outcomes data analysis

Further quantitative data in relation to student outcomes from NAPLAN testing, as described below have been analysed and are included in this Final Report. The ultimate intentions of the professional learning provided through the National Partnerships is whether changed teaching practice and school approaches impacts on student learning. Therefore, a brief analysis of student learning outcomes was conducted to further explore the top-level data presented in the NSW Annual Reports to DEEWR in relation to performance against targets.

While outcomes data is important in understanding the overall impact of policy decisions and the strategy adopted to implement this policy, it must be remembered that measured student outcomes are just part of the consideration of impact. Given the timeframe

available for the evaluation, available NAPLAN literacy and numeracy data was used to illustrate trends pre and post implementation. This data will be indicative and not able to prove causality, but is useful in demonstrating readily observed trends. It should be noted that because of the relative short time period of the intervention, the capacity of the initiative to impact of NAPLAN scores in the time period observed is limited.

Data from all three sectors was used, but not disaggregated by sector as agreed with the Project Reference Group. The analysis was conducted by EMSAD and only aggregate results supplied to Erebus to ensure privacy and confidentiality of individual student results.

Three indicators of student performance were calculated, as follows.

1. For literacy and numeracy (separately), at Year 3 and Year 5, trends in mean scale scores 2008-2011 for students in relevant NPLN schools vs rest of state. The NAPLAN Reading score will be used to represent the literacy score, as Reading was the specific focus planned for the NPLN intervention.
2. Percentage of students (a) at or above the benchmark, and (b) below benchmark in literacy and numeracy (separately) at Year 3 and Year 5 in NPLN schools vs rest of state, 2008-2011
3. For reading and numeracy (separately), trends in mean growth scores (ie value added) 2008 and 2009 Year 3 cohorts for students in relevant NPLN schools vs rest of state and for a selection of "like schools". The "like school" scores were calculated as follows:
 - Calculate an ICSEA value for a 'virtual' NPLN school by taking a weighted (by school enrolments) average of the ICSEA values of the NPLN schools.
 - Identify the 20 non-NPLN schools with ICSEA values above and below this value
 - Use the aggregated data for these 40 schools as the SSSG (Statistically Similar School Group) comparison data.

This approach is similar to the Statistically Similar Schools Group (SSG) SSSG approach in the SMART package² and attempts to capture the impact of school average SES on student outcomes over and above the impact of individual student SES, which can be substantial. Note only data for government schools was used in the "like school" calculation.

Appropriate statistical tests of significance were conducted for all three indicators to establish the significance of any differences observed.

Program cost effectiveness data

The evaluation was required to comment on the cost effectiveness of the intervention. Only a limited amount of analysis on this issue is possible, because of the absence of comparative

² The SMART package is a data analysis tool developed by the NSW DEC to assist schools interpret their NAPLAN results.

data that allows inferences to be drawn about the relative effectiveness of other interventions.

Program level evaluations

A brief review of the separate program level evaluations was conducted to reflect, where relevant, on the findings produced by this evaluation. This analysis will not be extensive, as this will be the subject of a separate project (referred to as the *Strategic Review of Literacy and Numeracy Programs*). The program level evaluation data will thus be used primarily as a source of triangulation for the current evaluation. The programs included in this analysis were:

- Taking Off With Numeracy (TOWN)
- MultLit
- Mindful Learning Mindful Teaching
- Focus on Reading 3-6
- Accelerated Literacy
- Individual Learning Plans
- QuickSmart
- Reading to Learn

Cross-Sectoral Impact Survey

This survey was commissioned by NPEC, managed by the DEC NPEC Secretariat for the Smarter Schools National Partnerships and conducted by EMSAD. It asks some questions about areas of interest to the current evaluation, particularly about school pedagogical and leadership issues. Preliminary results from the Cross-Sectoral Impact Survey are briefly discussed in later sections of this Final Report; however, the Cross-Sectoral Impact Survey is expected to be of most relevance to the sustainability phase of this evaluation, as described below.

2.2 Next steps in the evaluation

Building on the methodology outlined above for the evaluation of the implementation and take-up phase of the Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership, a subsequent phase will extend the evaluation to include a focus on the medium-term sustainability of the initiative.

The primary objective of this phase of the evaluation is to investigate what systems, sectors and schools have done to sustain the gains made by the Literacy and Numeracy National Partnerships initiative. This phase of the evaluation will address the following key questions:

- How sustainable has the impact of the national partnerships strategy been?
- What has helped or hindered sustainability (including any systemic support)?
- What lessons can be learned for future implementation of literacy and numeracy initiatives?
- Further research questions will be identified to inform reporting on each of these key issues.

Details of the methodology for this new phase of the evaluation are as follows:

a. School case study visits. We propose to visit each of the 20 original case study schools to observe how the implementation of the initiative has progressed since the time of the initial case study visits. School leaders, national partnerships coordinators and classroom teachers would again be interviewed. A new set of instruments will be developed to guide the interviews.

b. Analysis of student outcomes data - continuation of NAPLAN time series data to include 2012 results.

The results of the above data collection will be provided in a Sustainability Progress report (due March 2013).

c. Key stakeholder interviews. Face to face or telephone interviews will be held with appropriate stakeholders, to document any changes in the overall policy and organisational context for the initiative. Stakeholders will also be asked about their perceptions of the progress of implementation and achievements of the initiative in 2012-13. Similar protocols will be used for these interviews as in Phase 1.

d. Online survey. We propose to administer a slightly modified version of the survey used in Phase 1. All schools receiving literacy and numeracy funding in this phase will be asked to participate.

e. Analysis of student outcomes data - continuation of NAPLAN time series data to include 2013 results (if available).

The Final Sustainability report is due in December 2013.

The Key Research Question for Sustainability Phase, as set out in the approved Evaluation Plan is: "to what extent has the reform change agenda been sustained post-funding, in terms of:

- How sustainable has the impact of the national partnerships strategy been?
- What has helped or hindered sustainability (including any systemic support)?
- What lessons can be learned for future implementation of literacy and numeracy initiatives?
- Which programs and strategies have proved to be most sustainable and resilient and how has this been achieved?
- What impediments to sustainability of initiative goals can be identified? How have they changed over the life of and beyond the Smarter Schools National Partnership? How have they been addressed?
- To what extent, how and under what conditions can successful strategies be scaled up to be replicated in other contexts?

In addition, a further extension of this evaluation will conduct a strategic analysis of the separate program evaluations conducted on eight intervention programs used in the NPLN.

This analysis will identify principles of effective practice, which will be illustrated in an interactive resource to be released in 2013.

Chapter 3: Background and context of the National Partnership for Literacy and Numeracy

From the extensive literature surrounding the NPLN, it is evident that the strategies employed under the NPLN (e.g. the NSW Implementation Plan) were in alignment with, and supportive of, system-wide and cross-sectoral intentions to improve and sustain literacy and numeracy gains for NSW students. The logic which linked the goals and activities in the NPLN across a national, state, school system/region, and individual school levels, was guided by the consistently held position that literacy and numeracy are essential foundation skills that allow young people to achieve at school, to go onto further learning, and to participate fully in society and work. The consistency of this message was demonstrated by the priorities set out in the COAG NPLN Agreement being reiterated in the NPLN reform areas, and the tailoring of the COAG NPLN performance indicators (see Table 3 below) to the NSW performance measures. The NPLN formed a cohesive platform with the other two Smarter Schools National Partnerships, founded on the shared emphasis on building the capacity of the school leadership to implement well researched and evidence-based strategies/programs, and to be accountable for this through the effective measurement of identified outcomes.

The analysis of documentation surrounding the take-up and sustainability of new literacy and numeracy practices in 147 schools provides context for investigating whether strategies employed under the National Partnerships on Literacy and Numeracy (NPLN) match system-wide and cross-sectoral intentions. The literature review included program requirements identified at the national level, state level, the school system/sector level, and the school level, and a review of previous NPLN evaluations, progress reports and annual reports.

The *MCEETYA Four-Year Plan 2009-2012* (companion document to the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians 2008*) outlines the key strategies and initiatives that Australian governments will undertake to support the achievement of the educational goals for young Australians. These strategies and initiatives include the:

- *National Education Agreement*,
- Schools Assistance Act 2008, which confirms the Australian Government's financial support for the non-government school sector,
- Smarter Schools National Partnerships Agreements on Literacy and Numeracy, on Low Socio-Economic Status Communities, and on Improving Teacher Quality.

The *MCEETYA Four-Year Plan 2009-2012* provides a framework for the planning of collaborative federalist activities in education and the overarching objective of the COAG reform agenda to improve the wellbeing of Australians now and into the future.

The Smarter Schools National Partnerships, endorsed by COAG on 29th November 2008, contribute to the strategic aims of *the National Education Agreement*. While each of the three National Partnerships has its own rewards and reforms, they operate together to form a cohesive platform with the aim of achieving higher standards in all schools.

Specifically, the *National Partnerships Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy* (COAG NPLN Agreement) outlined that the Australian Government is providing \$540 million over four financial years to facilitate and reward the implementation of evidence-based strategies that improve student literacy and numeracy skills, and so recognised that literacy and numeracy are essential foundation skills that allow young people to achieve at school, to go onto further learning, and to participate fully in society and work. The COAG NPLN Agreement cited the analysis of national and international research together with stakeholder feedback on the influences on students' literacy and numeracy learning outcomes, as providing the evidence base for the identification of three priority areas of reform.

The roles and responsibilities of the NSW Government were outlined in the COAG NPLN agreement. A key aspect of this was the development of implementation plans to form the basis of bilateral agreements negotiated between the Commonwealth and the NSW Government. Hence, the *National Partnership Agreement for Literacy and Numeracy: Bilateral Agreement between the Commonwealth of Australia and the New South Wales* (2009) (the 'Bilateral NPLN Agreement'), outlined the ongoing participation, reporting, monitoring and auditing responsibilities of reforms and rewards between DEEWR and the NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC), the Catholic Education Commission NSW (CEC) and the Association of Independent Schools NSW (AISNSW) consortium.

The *NSW Implementation Plans for Smarter Schools National Partnerships 2009* ('NSW Implementation Plans') contained three implementation plans, one for each National Partnership. Among other things, the NSW Implementation Plans mandate "Reform Areas" which align with the three aforementioned priority areas detailed in the COAG NPLN Agreement, and thus were in accord with consistent evidence that teacher quality is the single greatest in-school influence on student engagement and outcomes, that literacy and numeracy is a cornerstone of schooling, and that socio-economic status remains a significant determinant of educational outcomes (NSW Implementation Plans 2009:4).

An important aspect of the National Partnerships approach was setting specific outcome targets for each state/territory, with significant financial incentives attached to the achievement of these mandated targets. The four mandated measures are:

- Students at or above the national NAPLAN minimum standard (All students) (Reading/Numeracy)
- Students above the national NAPLAN minimum standard (All students) (Reading/Numeracy)
- Mean NAPLAN scale score (All students) (Reading/Numeracy)
- Students at or above the national NAPLAN minimum standard (Indigenous students) (Reading/Numeracy).

To maximise the direct impact on student learning outcomes, at least 80 per cent of the funding available was to be used to support participating schools to provide direct interventions in the classroom. In particular, the performance measures for NSW required that:

1. The percentage of students above the minimum standard in the 'focus domain' of either literacy or numeracy should increase from 68.9% to 70.5% in 2010
2. The average of the mean scores in the focus domain should increase from 414.8 in 2008 to 424.8 in 2010
3. The percentage of Indigenous students at or above minimum standard in the focus domain should increase from 74.9% in 2008 to 76.2% in 2010
4. The percentage of students at or above the minimum standard in the focus domain should increase from 88.5% in 2008 to 89.1% in 2010

Optional local measures were also identified to provide additional indicators of the effectiveness of interventions within a jurisdiction, reflective of the different groups of schools and contexts. NSW elected to use three local measures:

1. the series of National Partnership Literacy Numeracy assessments developed by the DEC Educational Measurement and School Accountability Directorate (EMSAD).
2. completing the Data Analysis Skills Assessment (DASA)³.
3. conducting school self-assessment using *The NSW DEC Analytical framework for effective leadership and school improvement in literacy and numeracy*.

The COAG NPLN measures are indicated in Table 2:

Table 2: Outcomes and Performance Measures, COAG NPLN Agreement

Outcomes	Performance Indicators
Young people are meeting basic literacy and numeracy standards, and overall levels of literacy and numeracy are improving.	Literacy and numeracy achievement of Year 3, 5, 7 and 9 students in national testing.
Australian students excel by international standards.	The proportion of students in the bottom and top levels of performance in international testing.

The previous history of literacy and numeracy programs implemented by schools in NSW has given the state a sound base from which to undertake reforms embedded in the National Partnerships, as detailed in the NSW Implementation Plan. Literacy and numeracy have been ongoing priorities in NSW government and non-government schools. In government schools, the implementation of programs (e.g. *Best Start* and *Reading Recovery*) was guided by policy, the *Office of Schools Plan 2009-2011* and the *NSW DEC Literacy K-12 Policy*, and full cohort testing in basic skills that has been in place for two decades. In the Catholic sector and in independent schools, literacy and numeracy have been priorities in accordance with the relevant policies or frameworks (e.g. REACH Parramatta Catholic

³ Data Analysis Skills Assessment is designed for teachers to develop skills in the analysis of NAPLAN data.

Education Framework or independent school policies) and the educational accountability and assessment requirements of the *Schools Assistance Act 2008* (e.g. targeted funding for the Literacy, Numeracy and Special Learning Needs Program).

Reflective of these reforms was the comparative strength of the performance of NSW students in the 2008 NAPLAN results (NSW Implementation Plans 2009:6). The NAPLAN results have also identified a need for further improvement in Stages 2 and 3 in NSW schools, as well as the particular need to focus on developing gains for indigenous students and students from socio-economically disadvantaged communities. The NSW schools participating in the NPLN understood the importance of building on student achievement in reading and numeracy in the middle and upper primary years. The NSW Implementation Plan set out participation for continued National Partnerships funding. These include:

- capacity building in leadership,
- school self-evaluation,
- focus on the achievements of Aboriginal students enrolled in participating schools.

Participation in the two year NPLN (2009/2010 and 2010/2011) was designed to give schools opportunities to embed practices that would deliver sustained improvement in literacy and numeracy outcomes for their students. It was intended that effective teaching and leadership practices be disseminated to support system and sector-wide improvements.

Participation of eligible schools was managed by each school sector. Schools targeted by the NPLN were identified as eligible using a range of criteria including:

- 2008 NAPLAN data: schools in which the percentage of all students at or below minimum standard is above the state percentage (using Reading and Numeracy at Years 3 and 5)
- Assessment of schools' suitability and readiness to participate in the National Partnership, as determined by the relevant DEC regional and Catholic Education Commission diocesan offices or the AISNSW
- Regional/diocesan capacity to support school leaders and teachers as they participate in bold and innovative lasting school change
- Schools' characteristics including enrolment size, student language background, student demographic data (e.g. proportion of refugee students and/or Aboriginal students), and the degree of disadvantage of the schools

The full list of government and non-government schools included in the Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership can be found at:

www.nationalpartnerships.nsw.edu.au/resources/documents/SchoolList-LN.pdf.

To support targeted implementation of the reforms in NSW schools, including the selection of specific literacy or numeracy programs, an *Information Package for Schools* was provided to government and non-government schools in 2009. The information package detailed NSW performance measures, the roles and responsibilities of schools, regions/dioceses, the

literacy and numeracy state coordination team, the school/classroom program facilitators, the learning and teaching classroom leaders, guidelines on using funding, the use of Individual Learning Plans and the Aboriginal Education local cultural immersion program.

The *Information Package for Schools* also presented a detailed overview of literacy and numeracy initiatives to be selected by schools, following their self-evaluation, for Stages 2 and 3. These options included selecting either a literacy or a numeracy focus for the school, and then choosing one individual intervention strategy for students experiencing difficulties and one whole school/class program. The development of an Individual Student Learning Plan was required for students at or below minimum standard, and may also be considered for students experiencing difficulties in reading or numeracy development as a result of a language background other than English, a learning difficulty, limited opportunities to schooling, and students with a disability. The participation of teachers and leaders in the capacity building component of the NPLN was also required.

As noted in the *Smarter Schools National Partnerships NSW Annual Report 2010* (SSNP NSW Annual Report 2010), 102 schools in NSW are undertaking literacy programs and 45 are undertaking numeracy programs. A summary of these options in government and non-government schools is provided below in Table 3 from information extracted from the *Information Package* to government and Catholic Schools, the NSW Implementation Plan, and the SSNP NSW Annual Report 2009 and 2010. Where schools could demonstrate effectiveness of existing intervention approaches in regards to raising student literacy or numeracy achievement, they could nominate to continue that program.

Table 3: Summary of NPLN program options

WHOLE SCHOOL/CLASS PROGRAMS			
Program	Developed/provided by	Program	Developed/provided by
Taking off with Numeracy (TOWN)	NSW DEC using cross-sectoral funds with contributions by CEC and AIS staff	Focus on Reading 3-6	NSW DEC using cross-sectoral funds with contributions by CEC and AIS staff
Learning in Early Numeracy (K-4) Learning in Numeracy (5-8)	AIS NSW	Reading to Learn	Dr David Rose, USYD
Numeracy Matters	CEO, Sydney	Accelerated Literacy	<i>Accelerated Literacy</i> trainer
		Mindful Learning: Mindful Teaching	CEO Parramatta with USYD Faculty of Education
		First Steps Literacy 2nd Edition - Reading	CEO Canberra and Goulburn, Wilcannia-Forbes and Wagga Wagga
INDIVIDUAL INTERVENTION PROGRAMS			
Program	Developed/provided by	Program	Developed/provided by
Taking off with Numeracy (TOWN)	NSW DEC	MULTILIT	MULTILIT Pty Ltd
QUICKSMART Numeracy Program	University of New England	Supporting Individual Readers	CEO Wollongong
Numeracy Matters	CEO Sydney	Using Individual Education Plans (IEPs) with LEXIA	CSO Maitland-Newcastle
Individual Learning Plans		Targeted Reading Intervention	NSW DEC (Riverina Region)
		Working Out What Works	Department of Education, Science and Training
		Successful	Joint initiative of the NSW

	Language Learners	DEC and CEC NSW
	Mindful Learning: Mindful Teaching (Intervention)	CEO Parramatta with USYD Faculty of Education and Social Work
CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMS		
Program	Developed/provided by	
Team Leadership for School Improvement Program	Developed and delivered by NSW DEC, for DEC schools and schools in the Armidale, Bathurst, Canberra and Goulburn, and Wagga Wagga Dioceses	
SMART Data Analysis e-learning module	NSW DEC	
The NSW DET Analytical framework for effective leadership and school improvement in literacy and numeracy	Developed and delivered by NSW DEC, for DEC schools and schools in the Armidale, Bathurst, Canberra and Goulburn, and Wagga Wagga Dioceses	
Learning Together: Building Leadership Team Capabilities	CEO Parramatta	
Leaders Transforming Learners and Learning	CEO Lismore, Wollongong and Wilcannia-Forbes, with the ANU	
Leadership Matters	CEO Sydney (for Sydney and Maitland-Newcastle schools)	
ACEL Leadership Capability Framework and Curriculum – Creating 21st Century Leaders	CSO Broken Bay, and ACEL facilitator	
Leadership for Enhancing Data Driven Reading and Numeracy Improvement	AIS NSW (Independent Schools Leadership Centre (ISLC) Course)	
Connecting to Country	NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) and the Aboriginal Education and Training Directorate (AETD)	

The overall "logic" of the NPLN intervention in NSW is shown diagrammatically in Figure 2 below. This Figure shows the relationship between the program elements described below and the intended outputs and outcomes for the initiative.

At the system/sector level, the NSW Department of Education and Communities, Catholic Education Commission of NSW and the Association of Independent Schools of NSW worked together as managers of the reforms to achieve the intended outcomes of the three Partnership Agreements, and to share best practice.

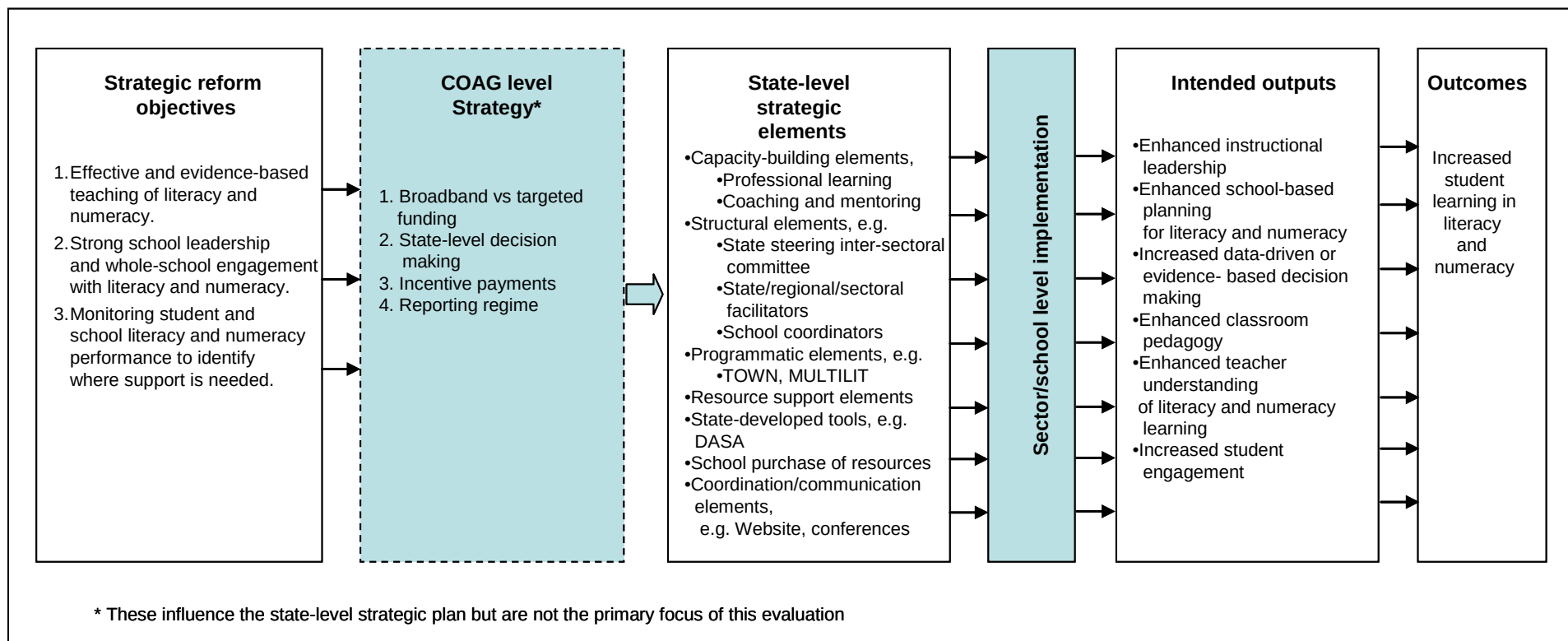
In managing NPLN school participation, each sector provided documentation, resources, consultancy and mentoring support, and professional learning in a variety of ways. For example, the Wollongong Catholic Education Office provides a Learning and Teaching Framework that contains guidelines for implementing literacy/numeracy initiative in their schools. Government schools developed their initiatives from the NSW DEC's Office of Schools Plan 2009-2011. AISNSW provides facilitators and mentors to support independent schools in the delivery of required NPLN outcomes.

At the school level, a range of literature and other resources have been developed and/or purchased by individual schools, or within a cluster of schools, to assist their staff to implement the NPLN, to monitor students' progress, and to put in place strategies for the sustainability of the programs. Schools from all three sectors are given the opportunity to participate in a Community of Schools, grouped around a common focus on literacy or numeracy. The SSNP NSW Annual Report 2009 notes that several communities of schools have been formed, such as government sector regions of Sydney (literacy), Western New South Wales (literacy), North Coast regions (literacy) and the Catholic Diocese of Parramatta (literacy). These arrangements have continued in 2010-11.

Reporting on milestones and outcomes, for accountability purposes is managed at the school level by the relevant school sector e.g. the DEC School Education Director or the Diocesan Catholic Education Office. The reporting and accountability of independent schools is managed by the AIS NSW. Schools in NSW targeted for the NPLN are requested to report to the relevant organisation annually on the following:

- Development and online publication of a school plan which encompasses the reforms to be undertaken as part of their participation in the NPLN.
- Development or amendment of a School Improvement Plan aimed at achieving improvements in the focus area, either reading or numeracy.
- Completion of the Data Analysis Skills Survey (DASA) baseline data collection and teachers having ongoing access to e-learning modules SMART Data Analysis.
- All students in Years 3, 4 and 5 in participating schools complete the NPLN assessment.

Figure 2: Program Logic for the NSW LPLN Implementation



A suite of resources developed by the NSW Department of Education and Communities was made available to all NSW schools in 2009 and 2010 to enable them to undertake the school self-evaluation and to monitor their progress. The NSW Implementation Plan (Literacy and Numeracy) detailed schools' participation in a supported self-evaluation review process. This self-evaluation process included participation in regional self-evaluation workshops, undertaking a situational analysis in literacy and/or numeracy and using the School Measurement, Assessment and Reporting Toolkit (SMART and SMART 2 online e-learning modules) in their analysis, and the Data Analysis Skills Assessment designed for teachers to develop skills in the analysis of NAPLAN data.

The NSW DEC Analytical framework for effective leadership and school improvement in literacy and numeracy was a critical resource that supported all NSW DEC schools and Catholic schools participating in the NPLN to conduct a self-evaluation. Following the evaluation each school was provided with a school profile and a set of practical strategies to support school improvement in literacy and numeracy. This self-evaluation was complementary to the professional learning in the *Team Leadership for School Improvement* program. The AISNSW conducted a leadership program for independent schools participating in the NPLN that employed similar tools, resources, guides and templates to that produced by the NSW DEC.

The NSW DEC Analytical framework for effective leadership and school improvement in literacy and numeracy consists of 25 statements, each with descriptors, strategies, questions and resources, which form the basis of a school evaluation into their capacity to develop a culture of high performance in literacy and numeracy across the whole school. To enhance teachers' understanding of what actions can be taken when planning for improved student outcomes, the framework covers the five leadership dimensions identified by Viviane Robinson (2005) as being the most critical in terms of improving leadership practice and impacting on student performance. These dimensions are: strategic resourcing, establishing goals and expectations, ensuring an orderly and supportive environment, planning and coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum, promoting and participating in teacher learning and development. In addition to the dimensions identified by Robinson, an additional dimension was included in the analytical framework to meet the requirements of the National Partnership. This dimension provided strategies and resources to support effective partnerships with parents, carers and school community.

The professional learning component, the *Team Leadership for School Improvement* program, is scaffolded by seven key concepts, including teacher quality, teachers as leaders, beliefs and values about teaching and learning, results-focused teamwork, data-focused school improvement, strategic professional learning, and sustainability.

A comprehensive website provides a range of resources and support materials to assist schools in using *The NSW DEC Analytical framework for effective leadership and school improvement in literacy and numeracy* and NSW DEC policies such as Leading and Managing the School (see www.det.nsw.edu.au/proflearn/areas/sld/programs/tlsip/index.html).

The monitoring and reporting arrangements for the NPLN are reflective of the requirements in Schedule C of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations. The SSNP NSW Annual Reports 2009/10 highlight that each school had undertaken a self-evaluation to determine whether their focus should be on literacy or numeracy. Of the 147 schools participating in this National Partnership, 102 schools had committed to implementing literacy programs and 45 schools committed to implementing numeracy programs. The SSNP NSW Annual Report 2009 also noted that during the year each of the 147 schools had formed a school leadership improvement team that completed facilitation training. This self evaluation has enabled the school leadership improvement team to work with the support of the program facilitators during 2010 and 2011 to enhance their in-school capacity to improve student achievement. It is further acknowledged that such enhancements are reported by participants to have also been strongly influenced by the range of tailored professional learning experiences that have been experienced by both teachers in classrooms as well as school leadership teams. These experiences, made possible through the NPLN initiative, appear to have enhanced teachers' and leaders' confidence and capability in more systematically addressing student learning needs and driving cultural change within schools. These issues are explored further in the preliminary observations from the evaluation field data gathering below.

The 2010 SSNP NSW Annual Report to the Commonwealth Government Minister provides details of achievements against targets and milestones. In summary, there are four targets for National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy schools related to NAPLAN results. Three of the four targets were exceeded:

- the percentage of all students below the national minimum standard decreased from 11.5 per cent to 9.5 per cent, exceeding the target by 1.4 percentage points
- the percentage of all students at or below the national minimum standard was decreased from 31.1 per cent to 28.3per cent, exceeding the target by 1.2 percentage points
- the percentage of Aboriginal students below the national minimum standard decreased from 25.1per cent to 20.3per cent, exceeding the target by 3.5 percentage points.

The mean score for all students in 2009 increased from 414.8 to 423.7, just 1.1 scale score short of the target (424.8).

NAPLAN results for 2010 have shown an increase to 90.5 per cent of all students at or above the national minimum standard in either literacy or numeracy (from 88.5% in 2008). This result exceeds New South Wales' 2010 performance target of 89.1 per cent.

The following extract from the 2010 Annual Report also highlights achievements against the three local measures, as follows.

Local Measure 1: National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy Assessment

All 147 schools implemented the National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy assessment

for students in Years 3, 4 and 5 in 2010. Targets were based on 18 months' progress on this measure and followed students who were originally tested for baseline data in Years 2, 3 and 4. All targets for improvement were exceeded. The reading target for Year 3 was exceeded by 0.7 scale score points for year 4 by 0.4 and for Year 5 by 0.2 scale score points. For numeracy, the Year 3 target was exceeded by 2.3, the Year 4 target by 3.1 and the Year 5 target by 1.0 scale score points.

Local Measure 2: Data Analysis Skill Assessment

In 2010, the second Data Analysis Skills Assessment (DASA) was completed by schools participating in the National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy, following the baseline data assessment completed in 2009. The National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy target was to reduce the average percentage of teachers in phase 1 (the lowest phase) across the 7 domains of DASA from 65.5 per cent in 2009 to 60 per cent in 2010. The 2010 DASA assessment revealed that the target had been significantly exceeded, showing that the average percentage of teachers in phase 1 has now been reduced to only 30 per cent.

Local Measure 3: Literacy and numeracy leadership programs

The 2010 target for Local Measure 3 was achieved in 97 of the 125 schools⁴ (77%). These schools achieved a growth of one (or more) band levels in half of the 25 framework statements in *The NSW DEC Analytical framework for effective leadership and school improvement in literacy and numeracy*.

There were two significant subsets of the 77 per cent of schools who achieved the Local Measure 3 target:

- 31% of schools achieved growth in 80% of the statements
- 13% of schools achieved growth in 100% of the statements.

In March 2010 the *Smarter Schools National Partnerships in NSW: Evaluation of Initial Implementation* (Initial Implementation Evaluation Report) report published by ARTD Consultants presented findings into the effectiveness of the implementation across all three National Partnerships.

The Initial Implementation Evaluation Report found that, by early 2010, schools' capacity to monitor student performance was increased and new literacy and numeracy programs were introduced as planned. Challenges to implementing reforms included the need to take into account how different sectors and systems operate, and teachers learning how to use student data routinely. Overall, the Initial Implementation Evaluation Report presents an encouraging picture, especially given the relatively short timeframe since initial implementation had begun. The report notes, for example, that schools had increased their expectations for improvements in their students' NAPLAN results and that teachers' understanding of pedagogical issues for whole-school literacy and numeracy improved.

⁴ Data for Local Measure 3 is collected from the 125 schools participating in the *Team Leadership for School Improvement Program* and using the *NSW DEC Analytical Framework for Effective Leadership and School Improvement in Literacy and Numeracy*[®] to benchmark their progress.

Further, the report observes that schools were beginning to see the benefit, especially in terms of sustainability, of the NPLN approach which involves whole school/class, individual, as well as capacity building programs.

As detailed in the Smarter Schools National Partnerships NSW Progress Report 2010 (SSNP NSW Progress Report), NSW has responded to the National Partnerships by undertaking 'ambitious and significant reform' (2010:1). The changes that were pursued have been systemic, not simply isolated or short-term programs, leading to early signs of cultural change in schools. By mid-2010, all relevant NPLN schools were implementing reform. Some significant achievements within the National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy during the first six months of 2011 included:

- whole school or whole class reading programs were implemented by 1459 teachers
- whole school or whole class numeracy programs were implemented by 437 teachers
- 4655 students attending Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership schools participated in individual reading or numeracy interventions or received Individual Learning Plans, developed in consultation with parents and carers
- individual reading programs targeted 3285 primary students
- individual numeracy programs targeted 1370 primary students, with 387 students achieving the exit numeracy goals for the QuickSmart Numeracy individual student intervention program in the first six months of 2011.

These achievements identified in formal NSW reports to the Commonwealth suggest that progress was being made in each of the three priority areas of reform.

Chapter 4: Evaluation findings

From the extensive range of both qualitative and quantitative data now available, it is possible to discern some clear emerging trends and issues in relation to the impact, effectiveness and implementation of the National Partnership for Literacy and Numeracy. As noted in previous Progress Reports, caution needs to be taken in extrapolating from the observations made in relation to the schools involved in this evaluation to all schools in NSW. The schools selected for participation in the NPLN were not representative of all schools in NSW, but were those in which student literacy and numeracy outcomes were generally below average. The emerging findings below are in no way meant to reflect the circumstances of all schools across NSW. The findings summarised below should not be taken to imply that the changes or enhancements noted have been achieved in all NPLN schools, nor that the issues addressed during the NPLN were present in all schools or schools generally across NSW. It is also important to note that the NPLN has not been implemented in a vacuum; indeed in many instances the reforms are an extension of previous initiatives at either a state or local level. A significant number of the schools involved in the NPLN were also involved in the Low SES School Communities Smarter Schools National Partnership.

The findings summarised here are also subject to consideration within the broader policy context of the National Partnerships strategy, cognisant of the fact that the data reflects a limited snapshot of time (2009-2011) in relation to the longer timeframe required to enable sustained cultural change in terms of changes in school leadership practices, teacher attitudes, knowledge and skills and ultimately enhanced student learning outcomes in literacy and/or numeracy. Despite these caveats, some clear strategic implications for system/sector policy directions do emerge from the findings and these are addressed in this Final Report.

Focus Area 1: What change has been attempted?

The National Partnerships Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy (COAG NPLN Agreement) outlines the Australian Government provision of \$540 million over four financial years to facilitate and reward the implementation of evidence-based strategies that improve student literacy and numeracy skills. The agreement recognises that literacy and numeracy are essential foundation skills that allow young people to achieve at school, to go onto further learning, and to participate fully in society and work. The COAG NPLN Agreement identifies three priority areas of reform.

A key part of the NSW NPLN strategy has been concerned with building the capacity of schools and individuals to deliver more effective literacy and numeracy programs. The various data gathering events and the consequent findings clearly demonstrate that considerable effort has been expended in providing targeted professional learning opportunities, which, in addition to enhancing understanding of pedagogy, have had additional benefits in terms of increased motivation and enthusiasm of leaders, teachers and students. In particular, school leaders reported that they have appreciated being brought

together (within sectors) to train, share ideas and engage in the planning process. The opportunity that these occasions provide for participating schools to exchange ideas and share solutions to anticipated problems has been a feature of the sector based professional learning workshops. In addition, school leaders interviewed for the present evaluation identified some key factors they believe have contributed to the success of the initiative, each of which has been strongly vindicated by the survey data. These factors include:

- involving program facilitators/support staff in planning and implementation
- providing the SMART package and NAPLAN data to assist school planning, to identify where improvement is needed and where it can be achieved
- providing training in using student data and completing needs-based systematic school self-evaluations and support for completing this task
- providing leadership training reinforcing the importance of effective instructional leadership and enhanced student outcomes in Literacy and Numeracy.

The information considered in the document analysis above (and in particular, the NSW Progress Reports and Annual Reports to DEEWR in 2010, 2011 and 2012) demonstrates that the National Partnership initiative is meeting its planned targets. Further, the initiative has been well planned, systematically involving the cooperation of all education sectors in New South Wales. The resources developed to support the initiative, including the tools to assist schools undertake their self-evaluations (such as the *NSW DEC Analytical framework for effective leadership and school improvement in literacy and numeracy*, DASA, and SMART data analysis professional learning) are of high quality and have been well-received and utilised effectively by participating schools.

As discussed below, there is growing evidence from all sources of data gathered for this evaluation that the National Partnership reform initiative has already made a contribution in terms of changed practices within schools, enhanced teacher knowledge and skill in relation to use of student outcomes data in lesson planning and delivery, changed teacher attitudes and expectations, enhanced leadership capacity, and improved pedagogy in the schools involved.

1.1 How have schools implemented the NPLN?

All sources of data available to this evaluation suggest that there has been implementation of activities and programs aimed at whole school pedagogical change.

Teaching practices that have been substantially enhanced in the schools participating in the NPLN included:

- Programs that involve greater in-class participation of students, dialogue and cooperative learning.
- Use of higher quality teaching resources, including a focus on understanding electronic texts and visual literacy. There is now more use of interactive whiteboards, especially in Accelerated Literacy lessons. The NPLN funding has also

been used in some schools to buy an extensive range of classroom sets of novels, and picture books, which are used in conjunction with whiteboards.

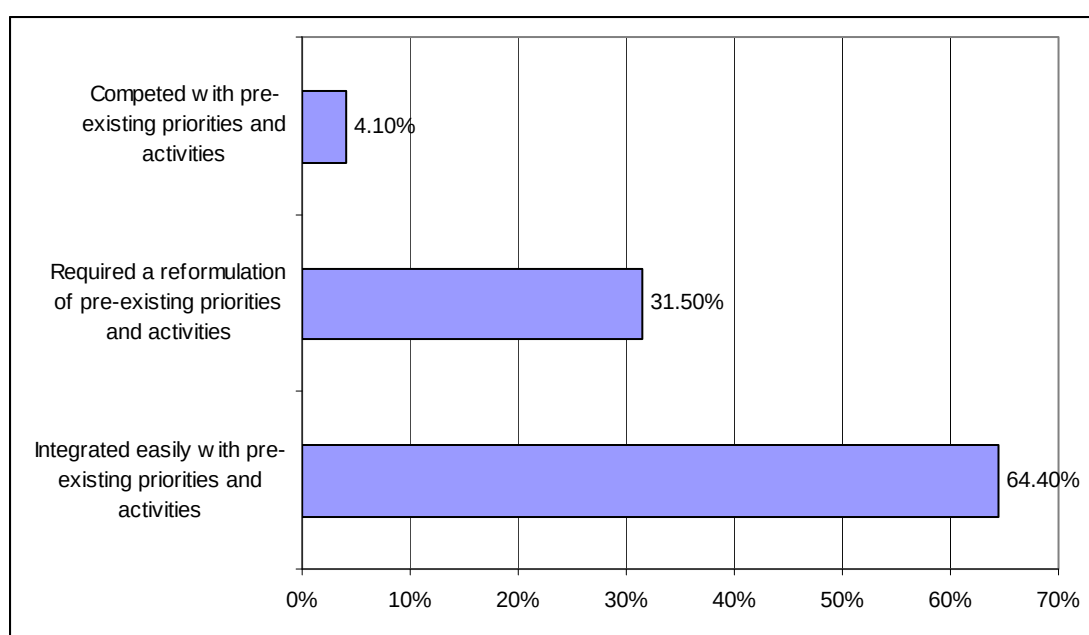
- Structural changes to the school day, including use of extended blocks of time for literacy and numeracy
- Greater use of teaching techniques that encourage student-centred learning, more group work, and recognition of individual student needs
- More structured, scaffolded and explicit teaching, language and writing skills, e.g. through promoting understanding of concepts such as the author's intent and language features
- Greater use of paraprofessionals within classrooms, instead of, or in addition to, withdrawal of students from the classroom.

The above list of changed practices is not exhaustive, but indicates the kinds of areas targeted by schools during the NPLN funding period. As noted above, while some strategies employed during the NPLN may have not been common practice in many NPLN schools, nonetheless, goal of better literacy and numeracy learning was one shared by the majority of schools involved. Most acknowledged that improvement was necessary, but may not have had the resources or expertise to effectively achieve the changes required. The NPLN has been described repeatedly as having been successful as a catalyst for change, providing an infrastructure, expertise, and imperative that allowed schools to achieve their ambitions for adopting more successful strategies.

The close fit between school goals and the intentions of the NPLN is reflected in Figure 3 below. It is possible to speculate that a key, and early, pre-requisite for the success of the initiative has been the close alignment of local, systemic and national goals, ensuring greater acceptance and uptake of the program elements. International research on change process (e.g. Fullan, 1997; Kotter, 2008) suggests that school "ownership" or "buy-in" of reform goals is necessary for change to occur.

Figure 3 shows that for about two-thirds of responding schools, the NPLN was perceived to have fitted very easily with existing priorities. The case study visits confirm that many of the schools in the NPLN had already begun on improvement journeys, or had already engaged with some of the specific program elements in some way. For these schools, the NPLN was not seen as an imposition, but to complement existing priorities in the school.

The comment was frequently made that the NPLN allowed schools an opportunity to "fast track" planned improvement strategies, and to do so on a scale that would not otherwise have been possible. Several schools visited had either expanded programs, such as MuliLit, that had already been instituted, or were given permission to continue and expand other interventions they had recently developed.

Figure 3: How well did the NPLN "fit" with pre-existing priorities within the school

In some Catholic dioceses, the NPLN was seen to support the approaches and philosophies inherent in improvement efforts already in place, such as "Mindful Learning, Mindful Teaching". In only a small number of schools (less than 5 per cent) was the NPLN seen to compete with other priorities or require a complete change of direction. Around 31 per cent of schools required some reformulation of their existing activities and priorities, but as shown in later sections of this report, this was generally not seen to be problematic, but indeed helpful, as the existing policies did not reflect contemporary best practice or current student learning needs.

1.2 What were the reasons and rationales for selecting literacy or numeracy as the focus for the intervention?

The selection of literacy or numeracy programs within schools was strategic and aligned with the rationale of the NPLN to achieve sustained improvements in student outcomes, especially for those falling behind (see Figure 4 below). This is in line with the intentions of the NPLN priority Reform Area (2), concerning the enhanced use of student outcomes data in guiding teaching and learning and programming practices.

Participation in self-evaluation workshops provided by DEC regions, dioceses or AISNSW, along with executive team leadership improvement programs, was designed to assist schools to select a literacy or numeracy focus for students in Stages 2 and 3. Professional learning also involved a focus on building capacity amongst staff in data analysis (such as through the SMART e-learning modules), and school-based assessment data. Within each sector, leadership teams from each of the 147 participating schools in NPLN were engaged in self-evaluation workshops, including the provision of tools to enable them to identify whether they should focus on literacy or numeracy for students in stages 2 and 3.

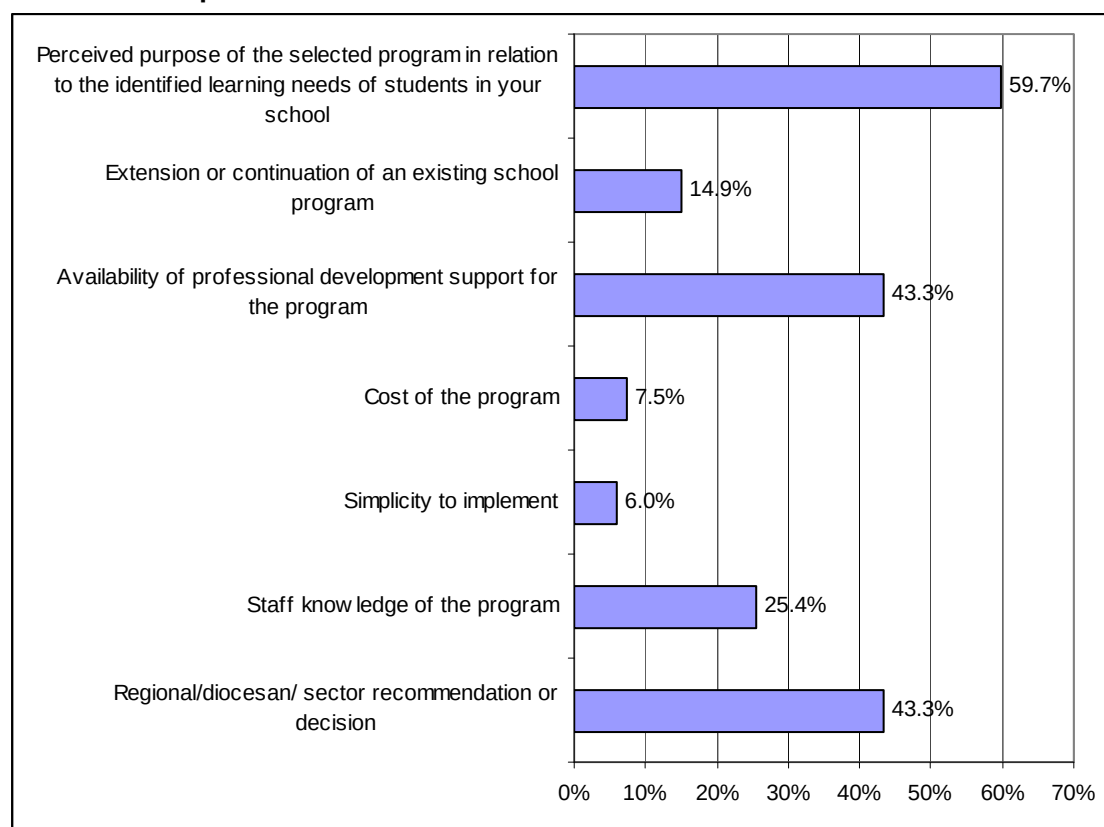
Once a literacy or numeracy focus was selected, schools chose particular whole-school/class programs as well as individual intervention strategies. Schools were provided with materials

in the Information Packs which detailed the evidence base for the program options, and were encouraged to consider their schools' particular context and strengths, areas most in need of student outcomes improvement, and student demographic data (such as indigenous student or ESL communities). The requirements of individual students were also considered when selecting individual interventions or when developing Individual Learning Plans.

Where schools could demonstrate an existing intervention in literacy or numeracy was effective, they could nominate to continue this intervention and build on its strengths. Another factor in decision making noted in some cases included the capacity of the region/diocese to support/facilitate the implementation of a particular program.

Figure 2 below shows the reasons for selecting a literacy or numeracy focus as reported by schools responding to the evaluation survey. As would be expected from the discussion above, it is clear that the most common reason for selecting the particular focus was the result of an analysis of school needs (using outcomes data as a key source of information). However, it is also clear that practical considerations, such as the availability of professional development to support particular programs, and teachers' prior experience or knowledge of the programs, was also important. Discussions with principals confirmed that in many schools, literacy programs were chosen even though they had equal concerns for improving students' numeracy outcomes, in the belief that improving students' reading and comprehension would assist students' capacity to understand numeracy problems.

Principals also expressed the view that they expected to apply the wider learnings about pedagogical improvements in a literacy context to other areas of the curriculum at a later date. It should also be noted that in a significant number of instances, schools said they had little input into the specific program adopted, as this was selected at a regional or diocesan level (to maximise the efficiency of resource support available or to reinforce existing systemic/sector initiatives). Principals interviewed for the evaluation in general understood and respected the regional/diocesan involvement in decision making about the particular programs they adopted. While some principals were critical of some aspects of some of these programs, all saw the wider benefits of participating in the NPLN as of greater importance.

Figure 4: Reason for selecting the Literacy/Numeracy program(s) implemented in respondent schools

*Note more than one influence could be reported

Table 4 below shows the proportion of schools implementing each of the programs supported by the NPLN. Note that some schools implemented more than one program (e.g. used Focus on Reading as an omnibus approach for all students, but also MultLit as an intervention program for low performing students, as required in the initiative guidelines, however, in some cases waivers were given for this provision). The main observation from Table 4 is that Literacy programs were selected significantly more frequently than Numeracy programs in respondent schools, in line with the data reported in the SSNP Annual Reports to DEEWR. This provides a strong level of confidence in the survey results overall as being representative of the full range of NLNP schools.

Table 4: Programs implemented as part of NPLN participation in respondent schools

	Response Percent	Response Count
Taking Off With Numeracy (TOWN)	14.5%	16
Reading to Learn	8.2%	9
Focus on Reading	14.5%	16
Accelerated Literacy	24.5%	27
MULTILIT	28.2%	31
Other (Quicksmart; First Steps Reading)	10%	11

NB: Schools may have implemented more than one of the above programs

1.3 How have schools fostered partnerships with universities or cluster groups to develop new approaches or programs? Have these been effective?

There has been little evidence of widespread engagement of universities or other partners in relation to development or delivery of the NPLN. While it is clear that the NPLN draws heavily on an identified research base, this is distinct from specifically commissioned assistance or support. (This is not to say that such support has not been sought, simply it has not been highlighted by stakeholders). The exceptions concern particular academics who have been employed as critical friends, evaluators or providers of professional learning in particular jurisdictions. In addition, professional learning in relation to specific programs funded under the NPLN has been delivered in some instances by contracted providers. In all of the instances cited, the relationship between university and other partners has been viewed positively by the relevant jurisdiction or school concerned, and considered to have contributed to the success of the initiative.

Figure 5 below shows the extent to which survey respondents reported how effectively they had engaged with universities or other partners during the NPLN. Figure 3 confirms the observations noted in case studies and other interviews that the majority of schools (more than 70 per cent) had little or no effective engagement with university or other partners. This is distinct from working with clusters of other schools, which is examined below.

Figure 5: How effectively have schools engaged with universities or other partners to develop new approaches or programs as part of the NPLN

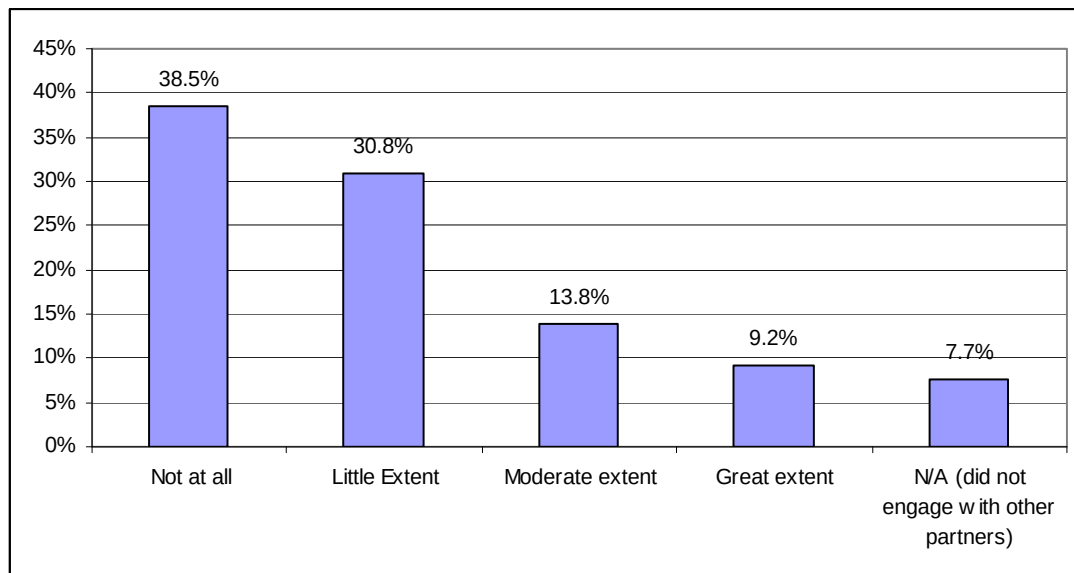


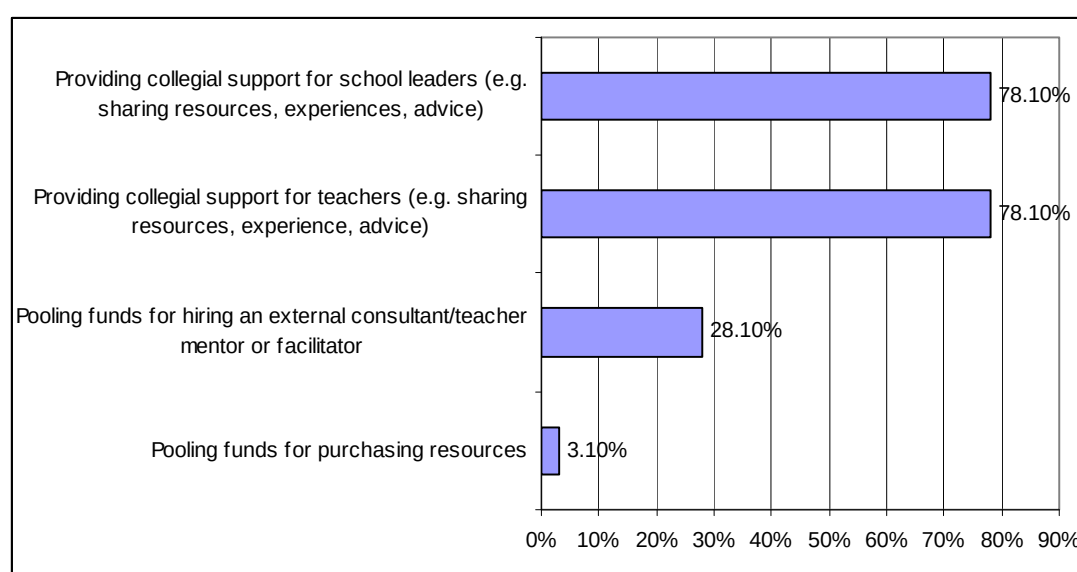
Table 5 reports the percentage of NPLN survey respondent schools that reported working with other schools during the NPLN. Table 5 shows that this was a relatively common experience with half of the schools reporting being in a cluster arrangement. Some of these clusters were established specifically for the NPLN, while in other instances they were complementary to other systemic initiatives such as Communities of Schools established in some locations.

Table 5: Did your school work with other schools as part of your implementation of the NPLN?

	Percent response
Yes	50%
No	50%

Figure 6 shows that the most common ways that NPLN schools worked together was to provide collegial support for school leaders and teachers, with this noted in nearly 80 per cent of responses. As suggested in the first progress report, a significant number of schools (28 per cent of responses) pooled funds to hire an external consultant or facilitator. This was typically a strategy adopted by smaller schools, whose funding allocation would not have been sufficient to provide their own dedicated resource.

Schools that had worked in cluster arrangements were asked to comment on the benefits they had received from these arrangements. The majority of comments made related to the opportunities that the clusters provided, including greater access to a variety of ideas, general support of one another, affirmation of practices, including after the funding period had ceased.

Figure 6: In what ways did the schools work together?

A smaller number of responses noted that working with other schools was useful for developing a shared understanding across like schools of student expectations, for sharing results, comparing work samples for consistency of judgment and discussing methods for attaining higher success. The cluster meetings were also said to have assisted teachers to become more effective in their teaching through verbalising the strategies learnt to their colleagues. The following comments were typical of survey responses received.

"The opportunity for external facilitators was most beneficial. It gave classroom teachers the opportunity to be exposed to professional learning that they would normally not have."

Similar sentiments are represented in the following comment from a case study school principal:

"The principals in the eight schools were able to network and create a strong professional learning community. We met at least once a term together to discuss accountability issues, professional development plans for their communities and they built their own professional knowledge about Leading Learning in their environments. In these schools staff were able to develop networks with each other and visit each others schools to share ideas and celebrate success. The schools were also able to engage experts and hold joint professional learning days."

Focus Area 2: Impact of the initiative

2.1 What outcomes have been achieved from the initiative?

This section of the report focuses on the key impacts that have been achieved by the initiative since its inception. More particularly, this section focuses on four key focus areas. The first area examines the impact of the initiative on school leadership teams, including the school principal, members of the school executive and other members of staff with delegated responsibility for leading the initiative. The second area focuses on the impact of the initiative on the changed behaviour of teachers, including their actions in classrooms, changes in content knowledge, pedagogical skills, the teaching and learning environment and the overall school culture.

The third and most important area in terms of the impact relates to the area of students, their learning outcomes their attitudes and behaviour and other factors that have emerged throughout the implementation of the initiative. The fourth area focuses on parents/carers and the impact that the initiative has had on their level of participation and ability to support their children on the learning journey. In discussing each of focus areas it is important to note that the data is derived from both school case study interviews as well as extensive survey data.

2.1.1 Impact on instructional leadership

At the most general level, it can be concluded that a broad range of factors have influenced the overall success of the initiative in the vast majority of schools. Yet, overwhelmingly, the data from both surveys and the school case study interviews reinforce the fact that at the heart of the school change process is the school leadership team in terms of the influence of its actions and its ability to build engagement and commitment of teachers and other members of the school community in relation to the initiative.

While the data below highlights the broad range of factors that has facilitated change in schools, it is clearly the level of support from both systems and sectors directly towards school leadership teams that would appear to have had a very significant influence on the overall direction and early success of the initiative in schools.

As Table 6 below indicates, over 95 per cent of schools participating in the survey identified that the appointment of such an individual made either a moderate or substantial impact on leadership for student learning in the local school. Many teachers cited the advantage of having a fellow colleague in the school in whom they could confide if they have problems or to whom they can turn for advice and support when necessary. This in no way diminishes the overall leadership responsibility of the principal in most schools. However, many schools identified the school principal as having the overall leadership/strategic responsibility for the initiative at a whole school level, while in-school facilitators had the responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the initiative in classrooms and in supporting teachers.

In a similar way, the external leadership support and facilitation offered by systems and sectors was not seen as a substitute for in school leadership, but rather an additional form of support as 82 per cent of schools surveyed actually considered that such assistance added value to the work being undertaken.

Both survey data as well as in-school discussions vindicated the importance of the initial leadership training programs provided by systems and sectors in not only providing an overview of the nature and purpose of the initiative, but of equal importance, identifying the key leadership behaviours and skills necessary to lead and manage the change process in schools.

The fact that these professional learning programs provided an opportunity for school leadership teams to actively participate together was also seen to be a very valuable assist in facilitating emerging discussions during professional learning programs. Indeed in many of these professional learning workshops, school leadership teams developed a proposed action plan to share and discuss with other members of the school community. School leaders constantly referred to the value of collaboration and discussion with their own school leadership teams during these professional learning programs in building a solid foundation and understanding of the nature of their leadership responsibilities back in the school context. Indeed over 85 per cent of survey schools highlighted the real advantage of these professional learning programs.

A range of other forms of direct assistance by systems and sectors also contributed to the effectiveness of leadership in schools in relation to the initiative. These included mini courses designed to increase content knowledge as well as tools to measure growth in understanding and overall success of the initiative, as well as resource guides and planning templates. In particular, over 95 per cent of teachers surveyed considered that tailored professional learning courses designed to facilitate implementation of the initiative built the capacity of the teachers to engage more effectively with the objectives of the initiative. Similarly the SMART modules were also cited as having a positive impact (in over 82% of NPLN schools) on the ability of school leaders to enhance learning in schools, by providing teachers with a greater depth of understanding of student learning outcomes and an evidence base for decision making than had been the case previously.

Among the various forms of support offered by systems and sectors, constant reference was made during the case study interviews, particularly in government schools, about the overall value provided by the *“Analytical Framework for Effective Leadership and School Improvement in Literacy and Numeracy”*. This framework provided schools with structured and comprehensive support to identify school priorities and plan appropriate actions for school improvement. This framework consisted of 25 statements that enabled schools to engage in the process of self evaluation with the ultimate objective to assist school teams to analyse, consider and gauge their school’s capacity to develop a culture of high performance in literacy and numeracy across the whole school.

Table 6: Extent to which each of the following system/sector NPLN capacity building initiatives have enhanced Instructional Leadership/ Leadership for Learning

	Not at all (%)	Little extent (%)	Moderate extent (%)	Great extent (%)
Appointment of an in-school literacy or numeracy coordinator (classroom leader)	3.2	1.6	11.1	84.1
Support provided by external facilitators (e.g. regional /diocesan facilitators)	0.0	16.4	29.9	53.7
Team Leadership for School Improvement course, or in Catholic schools, "Leaders Transforming Learning and Learners" or the AIS Leadership Program	3.2	11.3	45.2	40.3
Other specific teacher professional development courses to support NPLN implementation	0.0	6.3	30.2	63.5
SMART or SMART2 e-learning modules	4.8	11.3	41.9	41.9
School self-evaluation supported by the Analytical Framework for Effective Leadership and School Improvement in Literacy and Numeracy	3.2	4.8	38.7	53.2
Data Analysis Self Assessment (DASA) tool	3.0	9.1	51.5	36.4
Provision of resource guides to assist planning	6.5	19.4	33.9	29.0
Provision of planning templates	4.9	21.3	44.3	29.5
Aboriginal Education local cultural immersion program	18.5	27.8	31.5	23.2
Funding for teaching resource purchase	0.0	6.3	23.4	70.3
Funding for programs such as MultLit or Accelerated Literacy	9.1	3.6	10.9	76.4
Funding to provide flexibility for teacher release	0.0	1.5	10.6	86.4

Armed with such a framework and the accompanying tools to both interpret and implement the framework, school leadership teams constantly cited the advantage of having a structured and systematic approach based on the identification of school needs and a set of strategies that could be achieved within a realistic timeframe. This overall framework was developed by the NSW DEC and also used in Catholic dioceses as a key planning tool for guiding schools through both the self evaluation and initial planning phases of the initiative. Much can be learned for future initiatives concerning the adoption of such a strategy which school leadership teams clearly identify as the major assist in driving the school change process. Discussions with school teams and observations of documentation indicate that schools steadily improved in both the ability to engage in the self evaluation process and then to articulate emerging priorities. The increasing clarity and focus in documentation has

also been a very positive feature of school development as a result of systemic/sectoral support. The benefit of this comprehensive tool for school leaders was also articulated in case study interviews in terms of its ability to be utilised in a broad range of future school priorities. Indeed, of those members of the school community surveyed, over 93 per cent considered that the framework had either a moderate or great impact on leadership capability and activity in schools.

The availability of time in schools to engage in professional learning, collaborative planning, action research and similar self reflection activities has always been a challenge. Funding for the release of teachers therefore by systems and sectors has been very favourably reviewed as an important element contributing to the overall success of the initiative in schools. Indeed, as Table 6 above indicates, more than 97 per cent of the survey respondents highlighted that such release had a positive impact on leadership for learning within schools. This finding also reinforces the fact that while support can consistently be provided for schools, school leadership teams need the financial resources to release teachers from the core teaching tasks to fully engage them in developing the capabilities necessary to actively participate in such an important initiative.

However, acknowledging the importance of ongoing funding for teacher release, perhaps the key message for systems and sectors is that this initiative provided a genuine educational context in which school leadership teams could actually lead their school community into the future in a committed and collaborative manner. This initiative provided a genuine context and sound purpose for true educational leadership, where the skills and understandings of both leaders and teachers could be developed and refined for the ultimate benefit of students in their schools. Comments from school leaders consistently reinforced the importance of linking educational change with enhanced student outcomes – the key reason for schools' existence. In this way the initial motivation was provided for both school leaders and teachers to engage in an important change process and the level of leadership and support provided by systems and sectors to facilitate participation has been a significant contributor to the overall success of the initiative.

2.1.2 Impact on teacher behaviour

A key responsibility of school leaders in relation to the initiative alluded to above, related to the development of a shared school culture focused on enhanced student performance in literacy and/or numeracy. Such a culture however could not be developed and sustained without the total commitment towards and engagement of teachers in the initiative. It is therefore most encouraging that among the sample being surveyed, 100% identified that teachers' willingness to engage in professional learning and their actual participation in professional learning were identified as perceived changes in teacher behaviour from immersion in the initiative (see Table 7 below). Such a positive outcome was vindicated by teacher discussions during case study interviews also. The recurring theme in such discussions was that this particular change initiative focused directly on improving student learning and was therefore very practical in its outcome. It consequently related to teachers' core business. Many teachers considered that the practical focus of the initiative was a pre-requisite for their engagement in the whole school initiative.

Among the many advantages that teachers cited for their participation in the initiative was that it provided an agreed language of teacher communication. Acknowledging that this was a direct function of the professional learning opportunities provided by the initiative, teachers clearly appreciated the new-found skill to engage in a level of professional dialogue with colleagues using terminology and language previously somewhat unfamiliar to them. School principals also valued these opportunities for professional dialogue as an important vehicle for nurturing and sustaining school culture about enhanced student performance in literacy and numeracy. Indeed as Table 7 below also indicates, 98 per cent of those surveyed identified the willingness of teachers to exchange ideas about practice, representing an important change in the way they undertook their professional activities. Such a finding accords directly with the recent research of Robinson (2008), who identified the importance of teacher dialogue as an important prerequisite for enhancing student learning outcomes.

Table 7: Perceived changes observed in teachers as a result of their school's participation in the NPLN

	Not at all (%)	Little extent (%)	Moderate extent (%)	Great extent (%)
Willingness to engage in professional learning	0.0	0.0	38.1	61.9
Participation in professional learning	0.0	0.0	31.7	68.3
Willingness to exchange ideas about professional practice	0.0	1.6	17.5	81.0
Intention to seek higher levels of NSWIT accreditation	29.0	33.7	27.4	9.9

While Table 7 above highlights some personal impacts on teachers' participating in the initiative, Table 8 focuses on a range of bigger picture issues that have had a direct impact on teacher behaviour. As indicated above, this initiative provided both the context and purpose for genuine instructional leadership by school leadership teams. The enthusiasm with which school leadership teams generally accepted this challenge has also been reflected in terms of teachers' engagement in the initiative both planning and implementation stages.

A key learning in relation to the management of professional learning programs offered by the various systems and sectors was the importance of ensuring that the school leadership involved all members of the school community, especially at the planning stage, to ensure that a whole school approach was adopted towards the implementation of the initiative. It is therefore very encouraging, as indicated in Table 8 below that over 95 per cent of teachers considered that their active participation in determining the overall teaching vision and school goals for the initiative positively influenced their behaviour in relation to this initiative. Consistent with the abounding research in relation to managing cultural and organisational change, when leaders empower teachers to participate in planning, the latter's engagement in the implementation process will be enhanced. In a similar way almost 97 per cent of teachers clearly acknowledged the impact of focused instructional

leadership on their own behaviour as a contributor to student learning. These are important messages not just for the literacy/numeracy initiative but also for the effective role that school principals can play in leading and managing any initiative involving cultural or organisational change, resulting in enhanced student learning.

The engagement of teachers in whole school planning processes was also endorsed during focus group sessions in schools with both leadership teams and classroom practitioners. However teachers also cited the opportunity during case study interviews many of the other benefits that flow from a sense of being involved and indeed, "owning" the school's NPLN initiative. Many teachers spoke of their sense of responsibility for enhancing student outcomes in the classroom in literacy/numeracy. However, more importantly, the opportunities for professional learning, provided by systems and sectors, provided them with the capacity to develop appropriate methodologies to ensure that enhanced student learning outcomes did occur.

At the heart of these changes was a genuine sense of shared accountability for the outcomes achieved by students. It is noteworthy however that many teachers conceptualise this accountability responsibility at two levels. In the first instance, most probably due to school leadership influences, teachers clearly articulated their contribution to a "whole school responsibility" for student outcomes. Such a cultural change has most certainly emerged as a result of the constant discussion in schools that, for example, in primary school settings, outstanding or disappointing results in NAPLAN results in Years 3 and 5 cannot be attributed just to the endeavours of teachers at those year levels, but rather all year levels from Kindergarten to Year 5.

At another level however, many teachers identified greater confidence and competence in being able to interpret a broad range of test data in literacy/numeracy as the basis for planning and tailored pedagogy in the classroom with their own students. Both these findings are clearly reinforced by the survey data, highlighting that over 98 per cent of teachers felt a greater sense of collective responsibility for student outcomes, while more than 97 per cent of teachers surveyed considered that they were now far more proactive in dealing with accountability issues relating to student outcomes. Both these findings have unlimited potential for improved pedagogy in classrooms and the adoption of whole school approaches with targeted efforts need to be made to enhance student outcomes across particular Key Learning Areas. Moreover school leadership teams have adopted these strategies with considerable success and can see the real benefits of applying them in a range of different instructional initiatives and projects.

In addition to the major issues identified above, a range of other impacts on teacher behaviour are also worth citing. In particular, teachers through this initiative have:

- developed a greater understanding of the characteristics of good practice in teaching literacy/numeracy,
- seen the benefits of cooperative planning in literacy/numeracy,
- witnessed the advantages of engaging in professional dialogue with colleagues about teaching and learning ideas in relation to literacy/numeracy,

- tested their own beliefs, and in some cases changed them about the way children learn literacy/numeracy

Indeed Table 8 below demonstrates the very significant impact of the initiative on teacher behaviour observed by principals in relation to:

- Improved teaching and learning: (98.4%)
- Rethinking of teachers' beliefs about best practice: (98.4%)
- Improved professional discourse and conversations amongst school staff: (98.4%)
- Improved collegiality and cooperation amongst school staff: (96.8%)
- Greater use of a range of assessment tools for decision making about student learning: (98.4%) (note: the percentage figures cited above are aggregated percentages for both “moderate” and “great” extent from Table 8 below):

Table 8: Observed Impact of the NPLN on teacher behaviour

	Not at all (%)	Little extent (%)	Moderate extent (%)	Great extent (%)
Increased teacher involvement in setting whole school strategic vision and goals for literacy or numeracy	0.0	4.8	28.6	66.7
Improved instructional leadership/leadership for learning	0.0	3.2	23.8	73.0
More proactive attitudes towards accountability for student outcomes	0.0	1.6	25.4	73.0
A greater sense of collective responsibility for student learning outcomes	0.0	1.6	17.7	80.6
Improved teaching and learning	0.0	1.6	11.1	87.3
Rethinking of teachers' beliefs about best practice	0.0	1.6	15.9	82.5
Improved professional discourse and conversations amongst school staff	0.0	1.6	14.3	84.1
Improved collegiality and cooperation amongst school staff	0.0	3.2	19.0	77.8
Greater use of a range of assessment tools for decision making about student learning	0.0	1.6	25.4	73.0

These changes in teacher behaviour reported in the survey were also repeatedly noted in case study interviews with principals of NPLN schools. These figures suggest the NPLN has been a very significant influence on teacher behaviour. The next phase of this evaluation will examine whether school leadership teams have been able to sustain these encouraging results. However it should be noted that each of the impacts relate directly to “what we should be doing on a day by day basis”, as one teacher described it, which provides a strong indication that the new ways of working promoted by the NPLN will become embedded as normal practice in future.

2.1.3 Impact on teachers' content knowledge of pedagogy

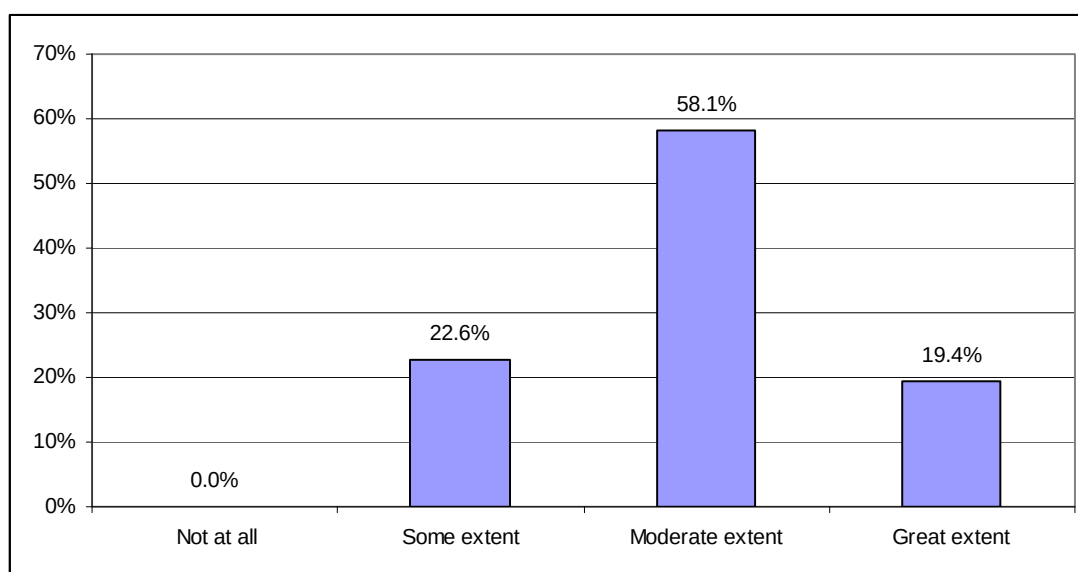
In addition to the advantages cited above, participants in the NPLN commonly acknowledged the emphasis on increasing teachers' pedagogical repertoire through NPLN professional learning had proven to be beneficial in broadening the range of strategies used to support students' learning. Teachers interviewed identified the fact that the enhanced content knowledge of pedagogy provided had helped them develop the skills and understanding to design appropriate strategies that would lead to the outcomes sought for students. The professional learning opportunities and in-school facilitation opportunities provided by systems and sectors made a significant contribution to their achievement of both content understanding and skill development through this initiative. In the case study interviews, principals highlighted the benefits of:

- team teaching with in school facilitators as well as their own colleagues,
- stage level discussions of student assessment data including both NAPLAN and day to day student assessment data used by teachers in classrooms
- participating in whole stage programming
- professional learning opportunities that focus on developing pedagogy in literacy and numeracy, particularly small group teaching and learning strategies and
- the provision of dedicated blocks of time to focus on teaching literacy/numeracy without interruptions.

The impact of this range of practical initiatives to build teacher content and pedagogy knowledge is further demonstrated through the survey findings shown in Figure 7 below. More than 77.5 per cent of respondents believed that involvement in the NPLN initiative positively impacted to a moderate or great extent on teacher content knowledge of pedagogy. None of the respondents believed that the NPLN had no impact in this area.

Each of the data gathering methodologies used in this evaluation has confirmed the importance of high-level teacher knowledge, skills, enthusiasm and confidence if student learning achievement in literacy/numeracy is to be lifted to the next level. For this reason the focus on building capacity within the NPLN has been well justified, as have the strategies used to deliver the professional learning that has demonstrably increased teachers' current capacity.

Figure 7: Effectiveness of the NPLN in developing teachers' content knowledge of pedagogy for literacy or numeracy



While many school leadership teams have been proactive in adopting a range of approaches at the local level to build teacher capacity, systems and sectors have also initiated a range of strategies across the various jurisdictions which appear to have had a positive impact on initially building teacher capacity. Most successful among these would appear to have been the appointment of an in-school literacy or numeracy coordinator. Data in Table 9 identifies that 96.9 per cent of survey respondents suggested that this appointment had a moderate or great impact on building teacher capacity. In particular NPLN strategies supported by systems/sectors that provided opportunities for teachers to engage in professional dialogue with such personnel; to trial ideas suggested by the in-school facilitator; and to engage in teacher observation and team teaching approaches that contributed to enhanced pedagogy in literacy or numeracy were perceived to have had considerable impact.

In some cases the in-school facilitators developed professional learning goals with classroom teachers accompanied by regular visits over an extended period of time, discussing strategies and goals being achieved. In several cases, classroom practitioners described the in-school facilitators' roles as personal learning coaches. Irrespective of the depth of the role of such facilitators with classroom practitioners, the common ingredient would appear to have been that the in-school facilitators were able to start with teachers where they were in terms of professional expertise and move forward together. Some principals indicated that this was the case in spite of the fact that some teachers were significantly more advanced than others, yet each was taken on an individual learning journey that had a significant impact on their teaching capability.

The opportunity provided by external facilitators for ongoing support in the form of regional, diocesan or sector assistance appeared to have been quite successful, and Table 9 below highlights that over 87 per cent of teachers believed that this form of assistance impacted positively on their capacity (medium/great extent). Information provided through discussions with teachers indicated that these external facilitators provided advice which

was often of a generic nature. Teachers in focus group sessions suggested that the initial visit, involving assistance with school self-evaluation, initial planning and implementation was particularly useful, as it generally set schools on the correct path in those situations where it was necessary.

Table 9: Extent to which system/sector NPLN initiatives have impacted on teacher capacity

	Not at all (%)	Little extent (%)	Moderate extent (%)	Great extent (%)
Appointment of an in-school literacy or numeracy coordinator (classroom leader)	3.1	0.0	15.9	81.0
Support provided by external facilitators (e.g. regional/diocesan/sector facilitators)	1.5	10.8	38.5	49.2
Team Leadership for School Improvement course (or the AIS Leadership Program for Independent schools)	4.9	15.9	45.9	33.3
Other specific teacher professional development courses to support NPLN implementation e.g., Accelerated Literacy training	1.5	6.2	33.3	59.0
SMART or SMART2 e-learning modules	6.2	13.8	48.7	31.3
School self-evaluation supported by the Analytical Framework for Effective Leadership and School Improvement in Literacy and Numeracy	6.2	13.3	51.6	28.9
Data Analysis Self Assessment (DASA) tool	9.2	21.5	36.9	32.3
Provision of resource guides to assist planning	6.2	25.6	30.8	37.4
Provision of planning templates	4.6	31.2	31.2	33.0
Aboriginal Education local cultural immersion program	20.8	39.6	22.6	17.0
Funding for teaching resource purchase	0.0	6.3	28.7	65.1
Funding for programs such as MultLit or Accelerated Literacy	7.7	5.8	11.6	74.9
Funding to provide flexibility for teacher release	0.0	1.6	17.9	80.5

Other forms of support however, varied in terms of their impact on teacher capacity, essentially because of the intended focus of the support. In contrast to the impact of various forms of support on school leadership, the survey identified differences in terms of the perceived value for teachers and their capacity building. For example, 69 per cent of respondents considered that the DASA tool had a moderate or great influence on building their capacity to use student outcomes data effectively. This somewhat lower percentage can be partly explained by the fact that in discussion with teachers there was a growing understanding of the nature and purpose of the DASA tool. Moreover it is fair to assume that in some schools the NAPLAN data and its interpretation would appear to still be the

domain of the school leadership team rather than being driven down to individual classroom teachers.

While this trend appears to be changing, the transition towards total classroom ownership would appear to be a function of the school leadership team's ability to communicate with staff and to have the confidence and competence to demonstrate the efficacy of such data as part of classroom teachers' planning repertoire.

The provision of planning templates and resource guides was also seen to have some impact, particularly indirectly in terms of their efficacy as a support for planning, as less than 70 per cent of teachers cited these tools as having a direct impact on building capacity. In contrast however, over 93 per cent of teachers considered the opportunity to purchase tailored and relevant resources was of direct assistance in building capacity in teaching literacy/numeracy. Funding for programs such as MultLit was also seen to be extremely valuable (85%). This was essentially because it often provided an opportunity for team teaching or classroom practitioners to observe the teaching of funded programs in action, whereby they would have the opportunity to improve both knowledge and understanding of particular programs designed to address student learning needs in literacy and numeracy.

During focus group discussions with teachers and also with school leaders, one of the greatest forms of funded support was the flexibility of participating schools to provide teaching release. It is not surprising therefore that amongst schools being surveyed, over 97 per cent considered this aspect to be fundamental in helping to build their capacity. In closer discussions with teachers during these focus group sessions, this issue was perceived as pivotal because it provides a time away from the classroom where teachers could concentrate on practical learning with colleagues and engage in dialogue to fill learning gaps.

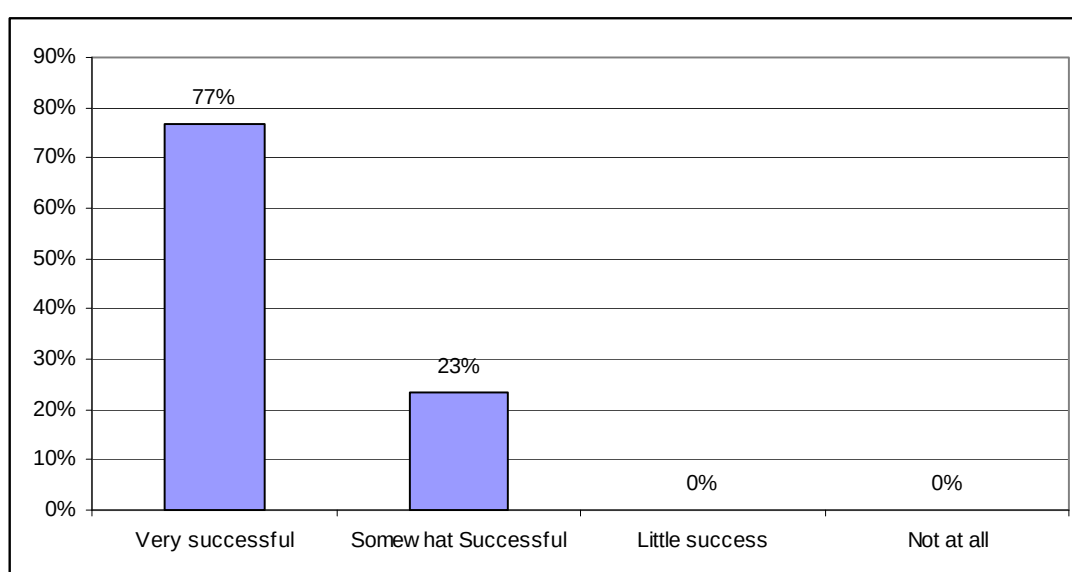
Importantly however, teachers also identified great value in the opportunity to engage in team teaching to trial these new ideas in classrooms and have the opportunity to reflect on their learning, including aspects for possible improvement. This finding is therefore not surprising, as was the case with school leaders, and has direct implications for systems and sectors in terms of the future introduction of learning programs that engage teachers in capacity building and are founded on cultural and organisational change.

Finally it should also be noted that almost 60 per cent of respondents considered that funding for the Aboriginal Education local cultural immersion program had little or no impact on building their capacity. This program was infrequently mentioned by teachers or principals in the case study visits, although the importance of addressing the learning needs of Aboriginal children was widely recognised. Given that many of the intervention programs used were originally explicitly designed for Indigenous students, it can only be assumed that teachers found this to be a more important source for informing practice than the immersion program.

2.1.4 Impact on classroom pedagogy

For all the reasons highlighted above it is therefore not surprising that, as Figure 8 indicates, 100 per cent of survey respondents considered that this initiative was either “somewhat successful” or “very successful” in enhancing classroom pedagogy. In some cases this related to the building of teacher capacity, while in others it related to the development of the content knowledge. It remains to be seen however whether these changes will be sustained over a longer period. It is noteworthy that many of the experienced teachers involved in the case study discussions highlighted the importance of having the opportunity to contribute to decision making about local school implementation in the development of a whole school approach with accompanying goals for the school’s focus on literacy or numeracy.

Figure 8: Overall perceptions by schools of how successful the NPLN has been in enhancing classroom pedagogy in literacy or numeracy



Of interest however, discussions with less experienced teachers indicated that the opportunity to work with an in-school facilitator, hands-on mentoring and role modelling, and ongoing professional learning had the greatest impact on improving their pedagogy in classrooms. In both cases it is important to note that teachers (at this stage of implementation) were extremely positive about their participation in the NPLN initiative and provided universal acclaim for the support and assistance that has been received from systems and sectors. Few, if any of the teachers interviewed for the evaluation would say there had been no impact on their pedagogy in classrooms. It is acknowledged, however, that not all teachers have progressed at the same rate, just as some schools are still at a relatively early stage in terms of achieving sustained change.

While teachers universally accepted that this initiative has had a significant impact on pedagogy in classrooms, it is instructive to understand the nature of specific activities and actions that teachers are undertaking that are impacting on their pedagogy. This finding also has direct transferability to the teaching of other key learning areas. Indeed some teachers are already using their newly found pedagogical skills, particularly in terms of explicit teaching, in other key learning areas and are seeing positive outcomes.

As Table 10 below highlights, a range of classroom strategies are now being employed by teachers in participating schools. Many of those cited in Table 10 have a strong research foundation and have been demonstrated to have a positive impact on the quality of the teaching and learning environment in diverse school settings. These strategies have been achieved with teachers using in-school and external facilitators, through the provision of professional learning courses and through ongoing professional dialogue among peers, highlighting strategies that appeared to work.

Among those relating to literacy and numeracy teaching, the adoption of a more explicit approach to teaching has had a very positive impact in classrooms with all survey respondents reporting that “explicit teaching” strategy is making a significant improvement to the teaching and learning environment. This strategy has involved teachers in undertaking a range of tasks in the classroom but most particularly developing a tailored approach for each student with clearly identified outcomes and targeted strategies to produce results. The emphasis on explicit teaching encouraged through each of the specific intervention programs supported by the NPLN was identified by principals in all case study sites as a critical outcome of NPLN professional learning, and which has a demonstrable impact on student learning.

In a similar way, NPLN professional learning had achieved significant impact in assisting teachers to more closely link teaching and learning experiences with student learning outcomes – a key goal sought as a National Partnership reform priority. Table 10 shows that in each of the schools responding to the survey, respondents believed that the NPLN had a significant impact on achieving this goal, and in consequence had greatly enhanced the quality of the teaching and learning environments. Discussions with teachers highlighted the additional time in preparation that both these tasks take, but considered the professional rewards as well as the rewards for students to be worth the extra effort. Teachers also highlighted the fact that they could see the transferability of these pedagogical strategies in relation to other key learning areas.

A key aspect of a more explicit approach to teaching includes classroom practitioners’ explicit articulation of student expectations for learning. Many teachers identified during discussions that being very clear about what they wanted to achieve with particular students focused their teaching and learning strategies. One teacher described it in the following way:

"One of the main ways that National Partnerships has helped me is not only to directly assess student needs but also to understand what the test results actually mean. This has meant that I can now really target just what students need and the professional development courses have helped me to be really specific about their learning outcomes. I know I am making a difference with these students because I can measure the outcomes and we can even discuss students' learning together."

The quality of the teaching and learning environment has also been enhanced through the emphasis provided through all NPLN sponsored programs on increasing expectations for student learning. All sources of evidence available to the evaluation suggest that this has been a key outcome of the NPLN thus far. Over 98 per cent of survey respondents

highlighted articulation of student learning expectations as a key contributor to an improved teaching and learning environment (see Table 10 below.) The issue of common terminology has not only enabled staff to engage in meaningful professional dialogue with each other but has also given the teachers the skills to openly communicate with students about their own learning.

Many teachers commented during the case studies that they now understand the importance of explaining key literacy and numeracy terms to students as a vehicle for communication. These teachers are regularly using such terminology as part of their own pedagogy also in discussing student outcomes, with the ultimate goal that students take greater responsibility for their own learning. The first step in this process appears to have been achieved in terms of the survey results, highlighted in Table 9 below, demonstrating that principals in 97 per cent of responding schools believe teachers are now in a position to more comfortably discuss learning outcomes and expectations with their own students as a consequence of the NPLN.

For many teachers in New South Wales schools the pedagogical skill of “scaffolding learning” is not necessarily new. However, according to school case study visits, this initiative through the provision of practical examples of scaffolding has reinforced its importance as a teaching/learning tool and is reported as being used by many teachers involved in the initiative. Indeed over 98 per cent of teachers, as Table 9 highlights, asserted that this strategy has improved the teaching and learning environment in their classroom. It has been similarly reported that teachers spend a lot of time discussing ideas in Stage meetings about how to most effectively scaffold their learning in literacy or numeracy and exchange ideas in doing so.

At another level many teachers have also identified the more consistent use of terminology that has arisen from participation in this initiative as contributing not only in assisting communication and dialogue among peers but also as a tool in teaching students. Several teachers gave examples of where students were more readily able to communicate about numeracy issues using appropriate terminology that facilitated understanding not only of key concepts but also among peers in relation to their learning of numeracy. The benefits of consistent terminology were therefore identified for both teachers and students in relation to teaching and learning. Indeed, as Table 10 below highlights, in each of the responding schools, the NPLN had strong impact on teacher use of consistent terminology.

The NPLN has assisted schools to rethink how specialist support is provided in classrooms. At one level, teachers in some schools have appreciated the opportunity of additional assistance in the classroom. This has ranged from direct support in the development of teaching resources to working with classroom teachers in small group settings where teachers are addressing identified needs of targeted students. It is noteworthy that in relation to the latter form of support, some teachers have attempted to engage the help of parents/carers to undertake this task in the future, should funded support be no longer available. While they acknowledge that this requires a significant commitment of time in terms of training and development of parents/carers for the task, some teachers are

prepared to undertake this task, cognizant of the outcomes it may produce for their students. Indeed as Table 10 below demonstrates, almost 95 per cent of survey respondents reported that the NPLN had lead to more effective use of learning support staff in the classroom

Table 10: Improvements in the teaching and learning environment as a consequence of the schools' participation in the NPLN

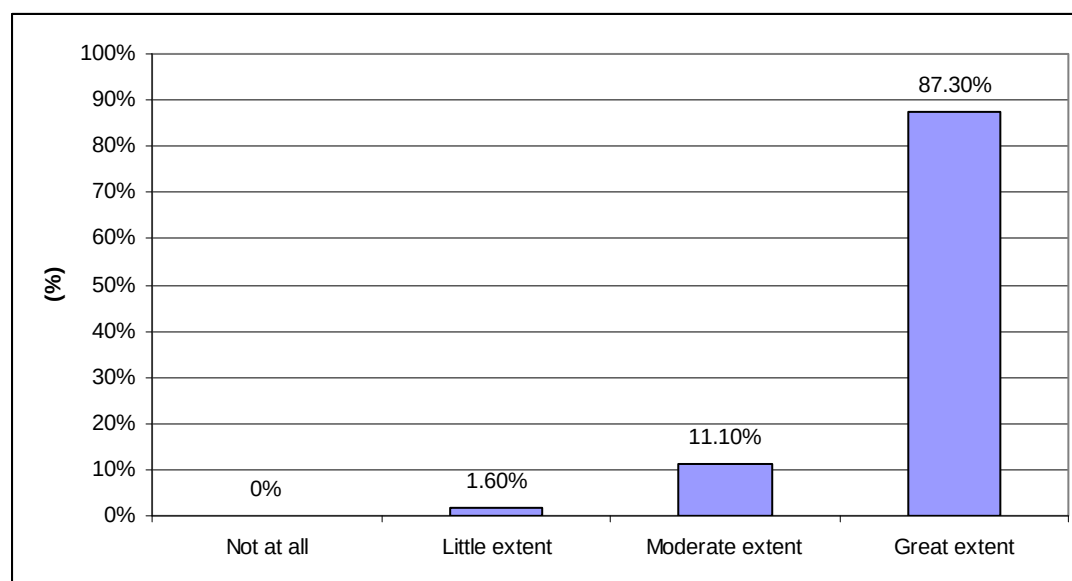
	Not at all (%)	Little extent (%)	Moderate extent (%)	Great extent (%)
Adoption of a more explicit approach to teaching	0.0	0.0	15.6	84.4
More direct links made between student outcomes and teaching/learning experiences	0.0	0.0	17.2	82.8
More consistent use of terminology in relation to literacy or numeracy by teachers and students	0.0	0.0	12.5	87.5
Increased use of scaffolded learning	0.0	1.6	17.2	81.3
More effective use of learning support staff in the classroom	0.0	6.3	28.1	65.6
Increased collaborative planning of literacy or numeracy teaching/learning strategies at stage level	1.6	4.7	18.8	73.4
More explicit articulation for teaching staff of expectations for student learning	0.0	1.6	9.4	89.1
More explicit communication to students of expectations for learning	0.0	3.1	15.6	81.3
Tailored approaches to classroom groupings	0.0	4.7	29.7	65.6

In other schools, existing support mechanisms have been reorganised to provide more effective use of resources. For example, the approach to more targeted grouping would appear to have been a significant contributor to improved pedagogy in classrooms. While the NPLN did not have the same level of impact on classroom organisational practices as it achieved in areas like consistent use of terminology, it is instructive that very few respondents believed it had little or no impact in this area. It may be assumed that many teachers engaged in the initiative would have previously used small group strategies to enhance student learning. However, while there is variation from school to school, teachers report that their engagement with National Partnerships has meant a deeper level of understanding of student need relating to literacy or numeracy and consequently more informed placement of students in appropriate small groups for teaching and learning.

The positive impact of the NPLN identified in Table 10 above is confirmed in Figure 9 below, which shows that overall, in more than 98 percent of the schools surveyed it was believed that participation in NPLN had impacted on the quality of the teaching and learning environment to either a moderate or great extent. Conversely, only a very few schools felt

that the NPLN had little or no impact on the quality of their teaching and learning environment. These very positive findings are not only encouraging in terms of the apparent impact of the NPLN on teachers, but also strongly suggest that the overall package of measures adopted by systems and sectors in NSW as part of the NPLN strategy have been successful in achieving the goals set for the initiative in the bilateral agreement with the Australian Government.

Figure 9: Perceived impact of the NPLN on the quality of teaching and learning in relevant schools



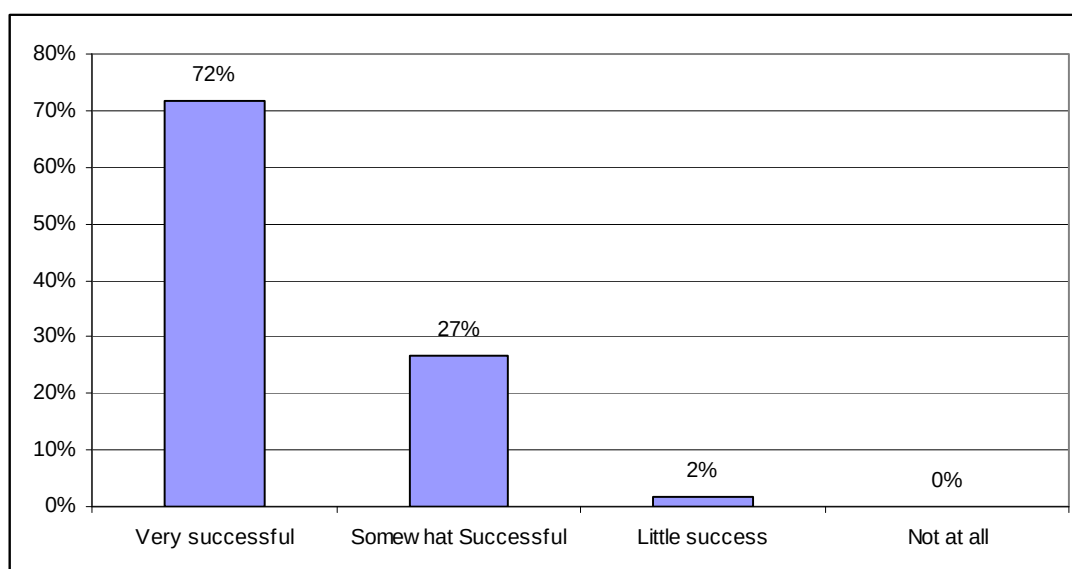
2.1.5 Impact on whole school culture

The development of a whole school culture for teaching and learning in literacy/numeracy has been a key priority for the vast majority of schools participating in the initiative. A major priority of a whole school commitment towards the National Partnerships initiative has been widely promoted throughout the leadership training programs offered by the various systems and sectors. This related to the development of a whole school culture for organisational change that would facilitate implementation and sustainability of the change in the longer term. The notion of a whole school culture is also underpinned by a range of contemporary literature in educational leadership that emphasises the importance of building whole school commitment and ownership by all members of the school community, in particular those charged with the responsibilities for implementing the initiative. It is therefore not surprising that many school leadership teams have taken considerable effort and time in ensuring that they have the buy-in and commitment of teachers in focusing on the identified targeted areas in literacy and or numeracy, designed to enhance student learning outcomes.

At the most general level, Figure 10 below highlights the pervasive impact of the initiative in enhancing a whole school learning community with 99 per cent of schools surveyed indicating they believed that the initiative had been either “very” or “somewhat” successful

in building a whole school culture. While limited data has been collected at this stage about the potential of a whole school culture transferring to other areas of educational and organisational change, this will be explored further in the next phase of the evaluation.

Figure 10: Overall perceptions by schools of the success of the NPLN in enhancing a whole school culture of teaching and learning in relation to literacy or numeracy in the school



Discussions with principals in case study schools suggest that achieving cultural change in all schools has not been easy. The comment from one principal is illustrative of the initial reluctance that they needed to overcome:

"Teachers are very practical people. When I first spoke to [my staff] about being involved in the literacy initiative, their first response was "How will this help the kids?" Once they were convinced of these benefits for the kids, they were immediately on board and in favour of participating. Once I had indicated to them that there may also be opportunities for professional development and time release to build their own pedagogy, many teachers saw this as icing on the cake and have been quite positive ever since about the whole thing. Now I am looking at what else I can do in the school to leverage off this whole school approach that they suddenly enjoy."

Principals and delegated leaders within the school have adopted a range of strategies to ensure a whole school culture and commitment to the initiative, but the most commonly reported strategies include:

- the establishment and maintenance of open communication channels between the school leadership team and other members of the school community, particularly teachers,
- the opportunity for teachers to contribute to decision making about the future direction and target areas of the literacy/numeracy initiatives,

- targeted support based on identified professional needs of teachers to ensure that they feel equipped to undertake the tasks required,
- opportunities for regular feedback with teachers at both Stage and whole school levels to ensure constant avenues for professional dialogue exchange of professional ideas,
- ongoing support and acknowledgement of the in-school facilitators with adequate time release to ensure that they are working with all teachers from Kindergarten to Year 6 in the primary schools.

While school leaders have also used other strategies, case study visits would indicate that these have been the most constantly recurring because they have produced the most positive results both in terms of teacher capacity building and enhanced student learning outcomes. These findings align essentially with the data outlined below in Table 11. However further discussion illustrates the impact of individual strategies on the development of a whole school culture. At the outset it is noteworthy that many school leaders identified that it was the combination of the range of NPLN strategies rather than one individual strategy that had impact on a whole school culture that is necessary for enhancing student outcomes. Conclusions drawn from an analysis of Table 11 on the impact of individual capacity building initiatives on enhancing whole school culture should therefore be treated with caution. Despite this caveat, the survey revealed that, at an individual level, the following capacity building strategies appear to have an important influence on the development of a whole school culture:

- the employment of an in-school coordinator (88.1%) and external facilitator (82.1%)
- tailored professional learning courses for teachers to facilitate implementation (91%)
- attendance at SMART e-learning modules (78.8%)
- school self-evaluation supported by the Analytical Framework for Effective Leadership and School Improvement (83.6%)
- funding for the purchase of teaching resources (89.4%)
- funding for teacher release (92.3%)

Each of the above issues were key prerequisites for ensuring there was whole school participation in the initiative and thereby contributed towards building a whole school culture. More particularly, the initiative provided an opportunity for building teacher capacity and confidence, a framework in which to engage in self evaluation, planning and implementation and an opportunity for teacher release so that teachers could plan collaboratively engage in professional dialogue and become part of a whole school team around a common goal. Each of the above factors has been demonstrated to have supported organisational and educational change within NPLN schools.

Table 11: Extent to which the following system/sector NPLN capacity building initiatives enhanced the whole school culture in schools

	Not at all (%)	Little extent (%)	Moderate extent (%)	Great extent (%)	N/A
Appointment of an in-school literacy or numeracy coordinator (classroom leader)	4.8	3.0	9.0	79.1	4.5
Support provided by external facilitators (e.g. regional/diocesan/sector facilitators)	1.5	16.4	41.8	40.3	0.0
Team Leadership for School Improvement course, or in Catholic schools, "Leaders Transforming Learning and Learners" or the AIS Leadership Program	3.0	20.9	31.3	37.3	7.5
Other specific teacher professional development courses to support NPLN implementation	0.0	7.5	38.8	52.2	1.5
SMART or SMART2 e-learning modules	6.1	12.1	45.5	33.3	3.0
School self-evaluation supported by the Analytical Framework for Effective Leadership and School Improvement in Literacy and Numeracy	1.5	9.0	43.3	40.3	6.0
Data Analysis Self Assessment (DASA) tool	4.5	28.4	31.3	35.8	0.0
Provision of resource guides to assist planning	6.1	13.6	37.9	33.3	9.1
Provision of planning templates	5.9	23.5	39.7	20.6	10.3
Aboriginal Education local cultural immersion program	16.4	19.4	26.9	16.4	20.9
Funding for teaching resource purchase	0.0	7.6	27.3	62.1	3.0
Funding for programs such as MulitLit or Accelerated Literacy	6.0	3.0	10.4	61.2	19.4
Funding to provide flexibility for teacher release	0.0	4.6	10.8	81.5	3.1

In contrast however, it is instructive to note that some system and sector initiatives, while still largely positive, had less impact on the development of a whole school culture than the factors identified above, but with one exception were still rated as having a positive impact in more than half of the schools surveyed. These include:

- team leadership training programs offered and developed by systems and sectors (68.6%)
- provision of the DASA tool (64.6%)
- provision of resource guides (71.2%) and planning templates (60.3%) to assist planning
- funding for specific programs designed to assess students' targeted learning needs (71.6%).

It is important to stress that each of the points above should not be dismissed in future initiatives similar in focus to the current National Partnerships initiative because of their relatively low percentage efficacy in relation to developing whole school culture. On the contrary, it is clear from the data gathered in relation to the initiative that some strategies have acted as catalysts for other aspects of the National Partnership initiative. For example while the provision of planning templates and resource guides may not have a big impact on the development of whole school culture, they serve directly to enhance teaching motivation and teacher capacity, which, in turn have a significant influence on the enhancement of student learning outcomes. These findings therefore highlight the multi-pronged nature of successful implementation of organisation-wide initiatives and those particular strategies that have the greatest impact on different aspects of implementation. Each of these has obvious implications for the potential contribution that systems and sectors can make to future organisation wide change.

In addition to the many advantages of a whole school approach towards addressing issues around literacy and numeracy, teachers perceived a real advantage in discussing and addressing issues around students' key learning challenges from a whole school perspective. This was particularly the case in those schools where principals had developed a culture of K-6 ownership of students' learning and accompanying test results. From this perspective, the change in attitude towards NAPLAN results was an example of the way that teachers had been helped to develop a greater sense of responsibility as a consequence of adopting a whole school approach in planning and identification of priorities. Once this step had been achieved, principals then empowered staff on a year and stage basis to engage in the day to day monitoring of students' results, collaborative planning and shared development of appropriate teaching resources.

One experienced teacher in one of the participating schools described changes in approach in the following way:

"I've never been in a school before where so much time was devoted to helping us to analyse what students' scores in numeracy actually mean. In the past we did this on our own and in our own classrooms and really didn't chat to anybody else about our students' results because they were considered confidential between the student and ourselves as teachers. Because of this program, there is now a real sense of openness across our Stage. We help each other and we can ask each other questions without feeling silly or embarrassed. We are constantly learning from each other and it has made a big difference in our teaching and it is having a good effect on our kids' learning. Now we are even talking about planning collaboratively in other key learning areas. It makes teaching more enjoyable and we all believe we are doing a better job."

Such sentiments were also endorsed in the survey data that highlighted the positive impact of NPLN on enhanced whole school planning (100% of those surveyed) and to a slightly lesser extent, on stage wide planning of literacy/numeracy (86.9%). One of the concomitant outcomes of such approaches provided the platform for teachers to engage in constant

dialogue about student outcomes as a starting point for planning. Not surprisingly many teachers (over 98% of those surveyed) identified this opportunity also as a major contributor to enhancing their own practice. Similar perceptions were reported in relation to the development of classroom programs on a collaborative basis where 96.8 per cent of respondents agreed that this was impacting positively on their own teaching practice as a learning tool. Similar findings were also identified for the use of individualised learning plans for students, based on identified learning needs and personal learning goals students (92 per cent of those surveyed).

Table 12 shows that training for teachers in the use of student outcomes data has enhanced practice in each of the areas of practice identified. Greater understanding of analysis tools and techniques, as well as greater appreciation of the role of data in the measurement of change (for example in the use of pre and post-testing) had the greatest impact on classroom practice, and in increasing dialogue between teachers about effective pedagogy. While still positive, fewer survey respondents said this training had a great impact on stage-wide planning or in the use of individualised learning plans. Along with the findings in relation to other impacts of the initiative discussed earlier, these results are an important indicator of the success of the NSW strategy in reaching the key goals of the National Partnership overall. They are illustrative of the stronger appreciation at the school level of genuine evidence-based practices, and the close link between effective classroom teaching and enhanced student learning outcomes.

Table 12: Extent to which training in the use of student outcomes data has enhanced practice

	Not at all (%)	Little extent (%)	Moderate extent (%)	Great extent (%)	N/A
Whole school planning in literacy/numeracy	0.0	0.0	24.2	75.8	0.0
Stage-wide planning in literacy/numeracy	0.0	3.3	29.5	57.4	9.8
Classroom program development	0.0	3.2	19.4	77.4	0.0
Effective classroom teaching of literacy/numeracy	0.0	1.6	17.7	80.6	0.0
Use of individualised learning plans	0.0	8.1	33.9	58.1	0.0
Dialogue between teachers about effective pedagogy	0.0	1.6	17.7	80.6	0.0

2.1.6 Impact on school relationships with parents/carers and community

Ongoing research in the field of educational effectiveness highlights the beneficial impact of the three-way relationship between student, teacher and parents/carers, in terms of its influence on enhanced student achievement. Such information is not a surprise to the vast majority of members of the teaching profession. Yet the vast majority of schools involved in the initiative identified as one of their major challenges, the opportunity to genuinely engage parents/carers in their children's education. This goes beyond parental involvement

in the school canteen or assistance with covering books in the library. At the heart of parental participation is an understanding of what the school and the teacher are trying to achieve with their own children. Without a commitment to ongoing dialogue between teacher and parent or even open channels of communication, success will always be limited.

In light of these scenarios many schools involved in the National Partnerships initiative have held numerous parent evenings, conducted face-to-face meetings and prepared many newsletters but with limited success in securing the attention and motivation of the majority of parents/carers. Indeed the vast majority of schools would suggest that securing and sustaining the long-term interest of parents/carers in relation to the important initiatives being undertaken in literacy and numeracy is the greatest challenge in relation to this National Partnerships initiative.

Moreover many principals and classroom teachers would suggest that it is not due to a lack of interest or even a low priority. It is simply a lack of time in the busy lives that most families currently experience in conducting their lives. In the most common scenario where both parents/carers are working and the children are involved in a range of extracurricular activities, often being transported to those by one of their parents/carers, additional time just cannot be found for engaging in the activities that so many classroom teachers know would help their children in literacy and numeracy during out of school hours.

It is therefore not surprising that the survey data demonstrates that very few schools have increased engagement with parents/carers as a result of their participation in the NPLN. Indeed, as Figure 11 highlights below, approximately 46 per cent of schools have experienced little or no impact on parent engagement. While the NPLN had achieved a moderate impact on engagement of parents/carers in about 40 per cent of schools, participation in the initiative had impacted to a great extent in only 16 per cent of schools. Case study interviews suggested that the vast majority of schools kept their parent community informed of the NPLN and program elements, but few attempted to significantly increase the engagement of parents/carers in decision making.

The common situation in most schools was described by one parent in the following way:

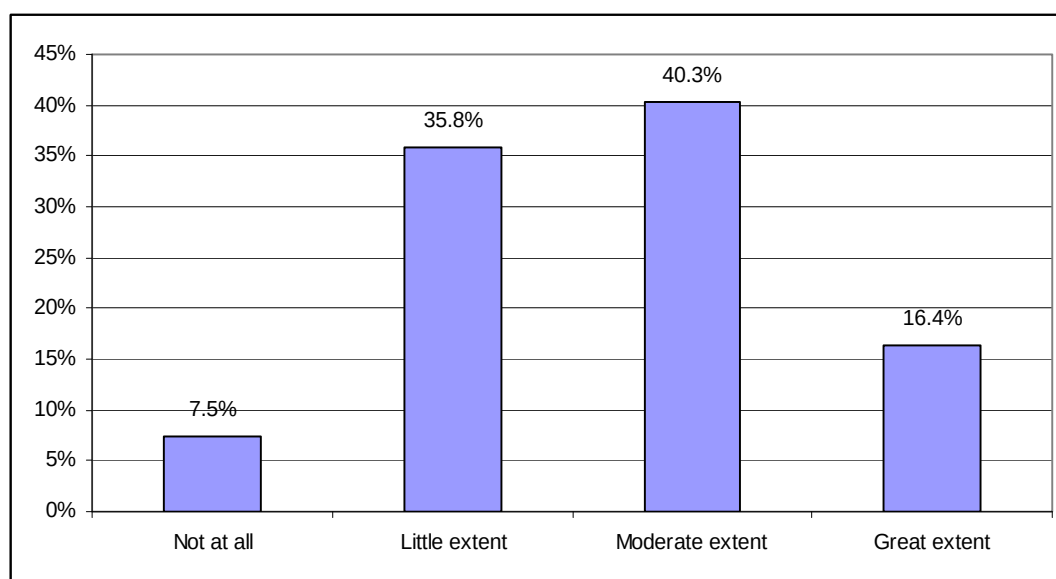
"My husband and I are strong supporters of public education and my daughter's school in particular. We have the greatest faith in Emma's teacher and know that she is doing a good job. In fact Emma rarely expresses dissatisfaction with anything happening at school. We read the newsletters and we have a general idea of what is happening in the school. Unfortunately however we just don't have the time to get involved in the P&C or to do many of those additional tasks that some of our friends seem to find the time to do, as parents of children in our daughter's school. Besides we pay our school fees and we expect that teachers do a good job and they do. We are always happy to help Emma with any homework problems she may have but the time doesn't allow us to do much more."

This quotation, made by a "typical" parent epitomises the current situation in relation to the challenges in attempting to engage parents in their children's education. It is to the credit of

schools that they continue to engage parents in the learning process because of the advantages that they know will result. Yet there is no doubting the size of this challenge or the impact that it may have on the longer term sustainability of that impact on students in schools involved in this initiative.

Importantly however, the issue of parent participation in this initiative emerges as a future area of attention at the strategic policy level in terms of both direction and support, acknowledging the pivotal role that parents can have in positively influencing their children's education.

Figure 11: Extent to which schools have increased engagement with parents/carers in relation to literacy and numeracy as a result of participation in the NPLN



2.2 What effect has implementation had on student learning outcomes, student attitudes and behaviour?

Comments from teachers during case study discussions highlight a wide range of impacts on students as a result of participation in the initiative. In the first instance, teachers have detected a more positive attitude by students towards reading and/or numeracy. More particularly the motivation to actively engage with the key learning area and complete set tasks, including homework, is seen as one indicator by teachers in schools of increased motivation and focus on learning within literacy and/or numeracy.

At another level, parents indicated through focus group discussions that the children were more willing to discuss what they have learnt at school and even talk about aspects of new learnings and share those with the parents. In relation to reading, parents had also detected among their children an increased appetite and development of enjoyment for reading at home, not only with books and related literature brought home from school but also with other reading material located in the home context.

This observation has been readily reinforced by many teachers in schools where literacy is the key priority. In these settings teachers have identified a significant increase in the volume of students' reading, and particularly reading for enjoyment, including set texts and modelled reading.

Such increases in skill development and level of enjoyment, particularly by students in relation to reading have not arisen however through chance. The case studies demonstrated that many schools have invested considerable time and effort in developing structured approaches to both literacy and numeracy initiatives. In relation to literacy, for example, schools have found the structured funded programs such as Reading to Learn, Focus on Reading and Best Start Literacy to be powerful contributors in providing a systematic approach for identifying and targeting students' learning needs. Teachers in NPLN schools now regularly and systematically implement a range of strategies that may have been previously employed in an ad hoc fashion. These strategies include:

- initial literacy assessment of students upon entry into kindergarten in relation to the critical aspects of literacy such as comprehension, aspects of speaking, aspects of writing, phonics and phonemic awareness,
- purposeful integration of literacy with Connected Outcomes Groups (COGs)
- placement of students in particular cluster groups for each critical aspect of literacy
- constant gathering and monitoring of data collected on students about their learning
- identification of students who do not appear to be on track for meeting year level expectations by the end of the year
- provision of ongoing scaffolded support to ensure that students become independent learners
- fortnightly meetings among relevant staff at year or stage levels.

While not novel strategies in the wider context, many teachers in the NPLN schools commented on the benefits of adopting the above approaches. They considered the strategies would become part of their normal practice in the longer term because of the genuine advantages they provide in focusing their teaching and learning. Moreover, the emerging results observed since the adoption of the new teaching strategies in terms of improved student attitudes and literacy and/or numeracy achievement have encouraged teachers to persevere with the new approaches.

One teacher described the change that she had observed in the following way:

"I've witnessed a huge shift in the attitudes of some of my less able students to participate in learning and to be prepared to show what they really know. There has been a greater focus on student interest in learning and this has allowed access to the curriculum at their own level, thereby ensuring greater ownership of their learning and their goals."

Other teachers have used the following descriptors to describe students' emerging attitudes to learning: *excited, confident, engaged, enthusiastic, keen to share*.

Outcomes such as those described above provide an element of anticipation and excitement for teachers to give them the momentum to try new ideas and to be more systematic in their teaching and learning.

2.2.1 Impact on student learning outcomes

The following sections of the report consider the impact of the NPLN initiative on student learning outcomes; first, in terms of teacher and principal perceptions of impact across a range of outcome areas; second, in terms of changes in NAPLAN scores over time; and third, a summary of impacts recorded in relation to student outcomes in the program-level evaluations.

As Figure 12 below demonstrates, the most encouraging feature for teachers, in terms of their participation in the initiative has been enhanced results for students. For teachers engaged in the numeracy based initiative, all responding schools cited that participation in the initiative had a "moderate" or "great" impact on students' numeracy outcomes. Similar results were achieved in relation to schools which had focused on literacy, with 98 per cent of responding schools indicated that the NPLN had impacted on student outcomes to a moderate or great extent. These perceptions at the individual school level have provided a strong driving force for teachers to continue with the initiative. Indeed, the comments of one teacher typify the reactions provided by teachers during case study visits:

"I was really delighted with the results our children received in NAPLAN. It has been made very clear to us by the principal that this initiative in our school is all about improving results in numeracy. We have had lots of support from our in-school facilitator, including opportunities for PD, consultation about what resources would be best to purchase, time out for planning at our year level and so on. Yet all of this would have come to nothing if our students' results had not improved. We have learnt a whole lot of new skills for teaching and we now have access to some very modern technology. But I am guessing there would have been some questions about just what we were doing with the results we produce if they had not been as good as they are. The real challenge for my colleagues and myself is to ensure that the group continues and we build what we have learnt for the benefit of our kids."

While it is acknowledged that enhanced student learning outcomes have been an important driving force in this initiative and that message has been very clearly communicated to staff, the data clearly demonstrates that such student learning outcomes would only have been achieved with clear and articulate school leadership about the future, accompanying action plans, regularly monitoring targets within those plans and making appropriate adjustments for the future, ongoing support in its many forms for teachers, including both an opportunity

for skill development as well as time release for collaborative planning and funds to purchase appropriate teaching and learning resources.

Each of the above strategies is an important pre-requisite for impacting on students' literacy and numeracy outcomes.

Figure 12: Perceived overall impact of the NPLN on students' literacy and numeracy outcomes

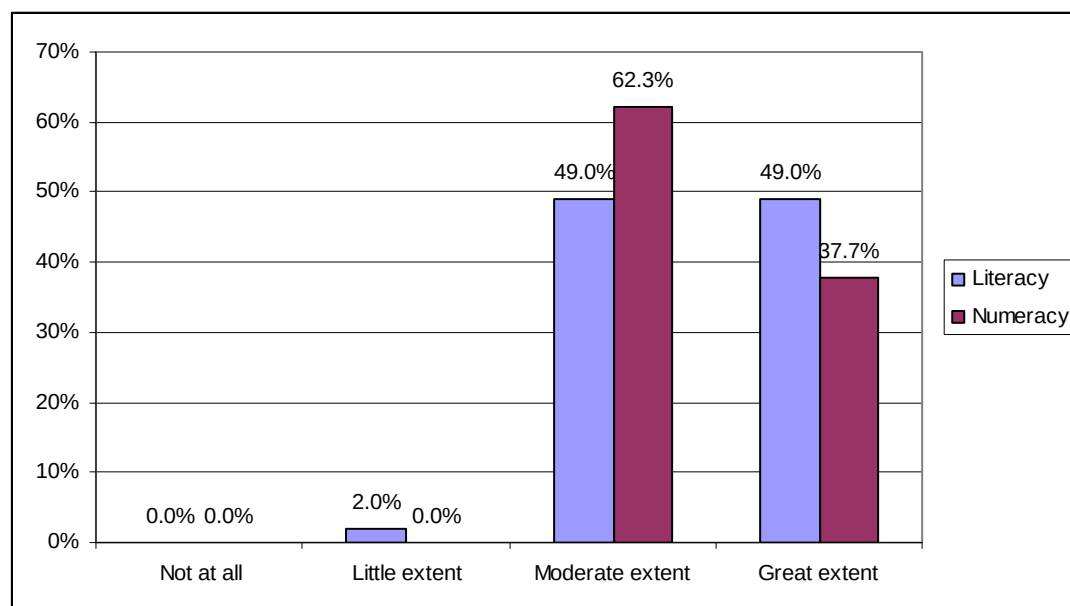


Table 13 below provides further detail of the perceived impact of the initiative on students' learning outcomes in literacy according to a range of student characteristics. Acknowledging the overall impact on students generally, highlighted in Figure 12 above, Table 13 again articulates schools' perceptions that the NPLN has had a positive impact for students overall (98% reporting impact to a moderate or great extent). The more detailed results for different student groups are also encouraging. For example the initiative has positively impacted on the culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) students in the majority of NPLN schools (85%) as well as those students encountering learning difficulties and/or disabilities (88.6%). Moreover an identification of such a positive impact for boys (in almost 98% of NPLN schools) participating in the initiative is most encouraging and reflects an increased awareness of the distinctive needs of this population in relation to the teaching and learning of literacy.

A further exploration with teachers for such findings suggests that each of these outcomes was achieved more commonly because of the opportunities for stage-based or year-based discussions about addressing the particular needs of such students, rather than generic professional learning opportunities across schools or clusters. One conclusion that may be drawn from this situation is the importance that teachers are attaching through this initiative to student engagement, irrespective of students' background or abilities. Teachers commented that while professional learning opportunities significantly enhanced and challenged existing pedagogical skills, the opportunities to address students with both special cultural and learning needs, arose more at the local school level. Despite their origin,

it would appear that such students have not been disadvantaged through their participation in the initiative.

In contrast, however, it may be a little more difficult to draw such conclusions for Aboriginal students. Whilst the majority of schools reported that the NPLN had achieved a positive impact on the Literacy outcomes for Aboriginal students, more than 20 per cent of schools surveyed identified little or no improvement for these students. Whilst this relative lack of impact of the NPLN on Aboriginal students is consistent with trends observed at a state level in relation to outcomes for Aboriginal students generally, the specific reasons for lack of impact in some schools requires further exploration in later phases of this evaluation.

Table 13: Reported improvement in Literacy outcomes as a consequence of the NPLN

	Not at all (%)	Little extent (%)	Moderate extent (%)	Great extent (%)
Student outcomes, overall	0.0	2.0	49.0	49.0
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse students	2.4	12.3	46.3	39.0
Aboriginal students	0.0	20.6	53.8	25.6
Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	0.0	11.4	47.7	40.9
Students with behavioural issues	2.3	13.6	47.7	36.4
Boys	0.0	4.2	63.8	32.0

Table 14 highlights the reported improvement in numeracy outcomes as a consequence of participation in the initiative. Comparison with Table 13 above highlights that the impact of participation is virtually the same for each of the identified student groups except for Aboriginal students. In this case Aboriginal students appear to have performed marginally higher in relation to numeracy outcomes than in literacy outcomes. In relation to literacy, teachers reported that participation in the initiative had either a moderate or great impact on 79.4 per cent of Aboriginal students. In contrast however, a moderate or great impact was achieved for 87.1 per cent of all students.

Table 14: Reported improvement in Numeracy Outcomes as a consequence of the NPLN

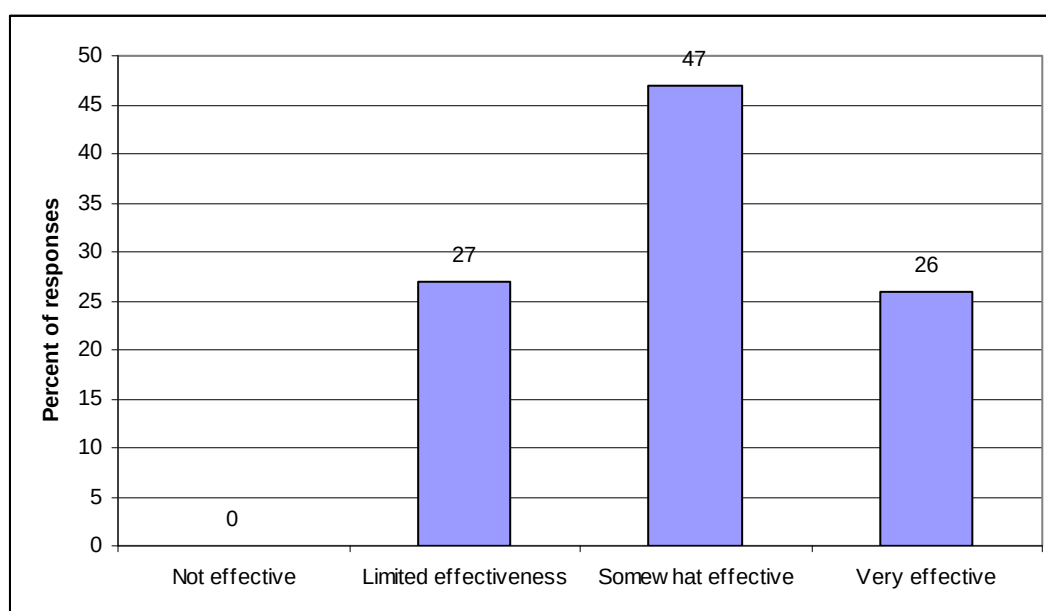
	Not at all (%)	Little extent (%)	Moderate extent (%)	Great extent (%)
Student outcomes, overall	0.0	0.0	62.3	37.7
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse students	0.0	16.1	61.2	22.7
Aboriginal students	0.0	12.9	67.7	19.4
Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	0.0	11.4	62.9	25.7
Students with behavioural issues	0.0	14.7	58.8	26.5
Boys	0.0	0.0	65.7	31.3

While this may not be statistically significant, (as the numbers of Aboriginal students involved in the numeracy element is relatively small) one explanation for the increased

impact may be that support offered to teachers to address the numeracy needs of such students has been more effectively employed for the teaching of numeracy with Aboriginal students. It may be however that a greater range of appropriate resources had been purchased to suit the needs of Aboriginal students in facilitating their learning of numeracy.

As part of the participation in the initiative, teachers in participating schools were also required to develop integrated Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) with existing Personalised Learning Plans for Aboriginal students. Over 65 per cent of schools surveyed indicated that such planning contributed to the teaching of Aboriginal students (see Figure 13 below). However, a significant proportion of schools responding to the survey reported there had been only limited effectiveness with this population group. The relative ineffectiveness of the ILPs related generally to perceptions that the process was time-consuming and did not add to the planning already conducted for the general cohort of students.

Figure 13: Effectiveness of the integration of NPLN Individual Learning Plans with existing Personalised Learning Plans for Aboriginal students



The program evaluation of ILPs (NSW Department of Education and Communities Student Engagement and Program Evaluation Bureau, 2012) found that there was a consistent view across all schools that Individual Learning Plans have improved reading outcomes for all or most students. Very few respondents said that no students improved. In the majority of schools, ILPs were not the sole literacy intervention. It is acknowledged that it is difficult to attribute any improvement solely to any ILP intervention.

Teachers and other support personnel highlighted some positive features that contributed to successful use of ILPs, including:

- the quality and consistency of ILP tutors and support staff
- strong school leadership and commitment to literacy improvement
- the availability of funding to allow in-school coordinators and mentors appropriate relief to

- maintain professional learning and support
- regular monitoring of student progress using quality school based assessments and SMART data
- minimising disruption to general class participation for students

2.2.2 Other impacts on students

From the survey data, it would appear that teachers and principals perceive that two key prerequisites for effective student learning have been impacted by the new teaching strategies adopted during the NPLN. Table 15 shows that student motivation and engagement had been impacted to a moderate or great extent in over 88 per cent of schools. Similarly, student confidence in their own learning ability was impacted in a similar way in over 84 per cent of cases. These results are important in terms of the potential impact they have in facilitating student engagement on task and consequent learning and are therefore encouraging results for teachers in classrooms as well as for systems and sectors in terms of the impact that an initiative like the NPLN can have.

Despite these positive impacts, participation in the initiative did not have a significant impact on student attendance (over 55 per cent “not at all” or “to a little extent”) of schools involved in the initiative (although this does not imply that behaviour or attendance is problematic in these schools). While the overall impact on attendance may not have been great in the majority of schools, it may be that the changed classroom environment has had a significant impact on particular individual students, giving rise to teachers' anecdotal impressions of increased attendance. It should be noted also, that student behaviour generally was perceived to have improved in over two-thirds of the schools responding to the evaluation survey, and that in more than 25 per cent of these schools, student behaviour had been impacted to a great extent.

As noted elsewhere in this report, the more positive behaviour exhibited by students was directly credited to the changed pedagogy introduced through the NPLN. For example, the uninterrupted two-hour literacy blocks and explicit teaching gave more focus to lessons. The use of cooperative learning activities, more hands-on activities and scaffolded learning gave students more opportunities to fully participate and to experience greater success than previously, leading to more on-task behaviour. Table 15 shows that cooperation among students in class increased in over 75 per cent of schools involved in the NPLN.

Previous sections of this report have alluded to the advantage of giving students the communication tools to be able to discuss with each other their emerging insights through use of common language. This is a prerequisite for ensuring ongoing cooperation among students as they share their learning discoveries. It is apparent from Table 15 below that this initiative has had a positive impact on cooperation among students, with over 75 per cent of students being positively impacted. Each of these three factors of student co-operation, motivation and increased confidence in their own learning abilities provide a sound foundation for on-task learning and enhanced student learning outcomes.

Table 15: Impact of the NPLN on other aspects of student behaviour

	Not at all (%)	Little extent (%)	Moderate extent (%)	Great extent (%)
Student attendance at school	14.5	41.9	35.5	8.1
Student behaviour	9.7	24.2	38.7	27.4
Cooperation among students in class	4.8	19.4	50.0	25.8
Student motivation and engagement	0.0	11.3	48.4	40.3
Student confidence in their learning abilities	0.0	4.8	53.2	41.9

2.2.3 Impact on NAPLAN results

The following Figures track changes in average NAPLAN scores in NPLN schools and schools in the rest of NSW over the period 2008 to 2011. It should be kept in mind that the first full year of implementation of the NPLN for a full year was in 2010. NAPLAN data for 2008 was used as the primary basis for selecting schools eligible for the NPLN, hence it is shown here for comparison purposes as representing the state of affairs "before" the implementation of NPLN. However care must be taken in interpreting the NAPLAN results, as not all year to year changes may reflect either changes in cohort performance or program effects. NAPLAN tests have been calibrated to be of equal difficulty year on year only since 2009.

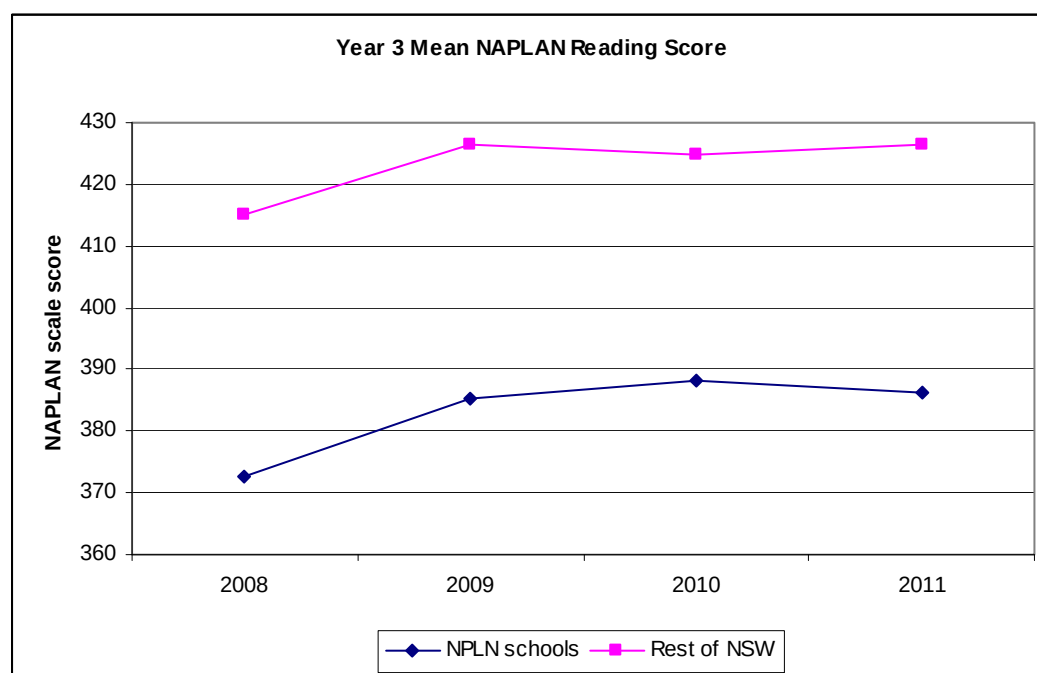
Figure 14: Year 3 NAPLAN Reading Scores, NPLN schools vs Rest of NSW, 2008-2011

Figure 14 shows that average Reading scores have increased in NPLN schools since 2008, however, these gains have been matched by students elsewhere in NSW as well. The gap in average Reading scores between students in NPLN schools and those elsewhere remains large, and has not closed significantly. As seen in Table 16 below, the variations in scores over the period 2009-2011 are statistically significant.

Table 16: Significance of Differences in Year on Year NAPLAN Scores

Difference in Annual Mean NAPLAN Score from Baseline Year (2008)				
Comparison	Year 3 Reading		Year 3 Numeracy	
	NPLN	State	NPLN	State
2009 - 2008	12.7	11.4	1.1	-3.8
2010 - 2008	15.7	9.9	-0.4	-7.8
2011 - 2008	13.5	11.3	5.8	-3.5
	Year 5 Reading		Year 5 Numeracy	
	NPLN	State	NPLN	State
2009 - 2008	15.3	8.3	14.4	13.3
2010 - 2008	5.7	2.4	10.6	10.0
2011 - 2008	5.0	1.4	14.9	10.9

	Difference is NOT statistically significant ($p < 0.05$)
	Difference is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$)

Much the same trends are evident in relation to Year 5 NAPLAN Reading scores (refer to Figure 15). Whilst the average reading score has increased since 2008 in NPLN schools, it has also increased in other schools as well, such that the gap between students in NPLN schools and elsewhere, on average, has changed little. There has been a trend towards declining average performance for all Year 5 students since 2009, although the apparent decline since 2009 is not statistically significant.

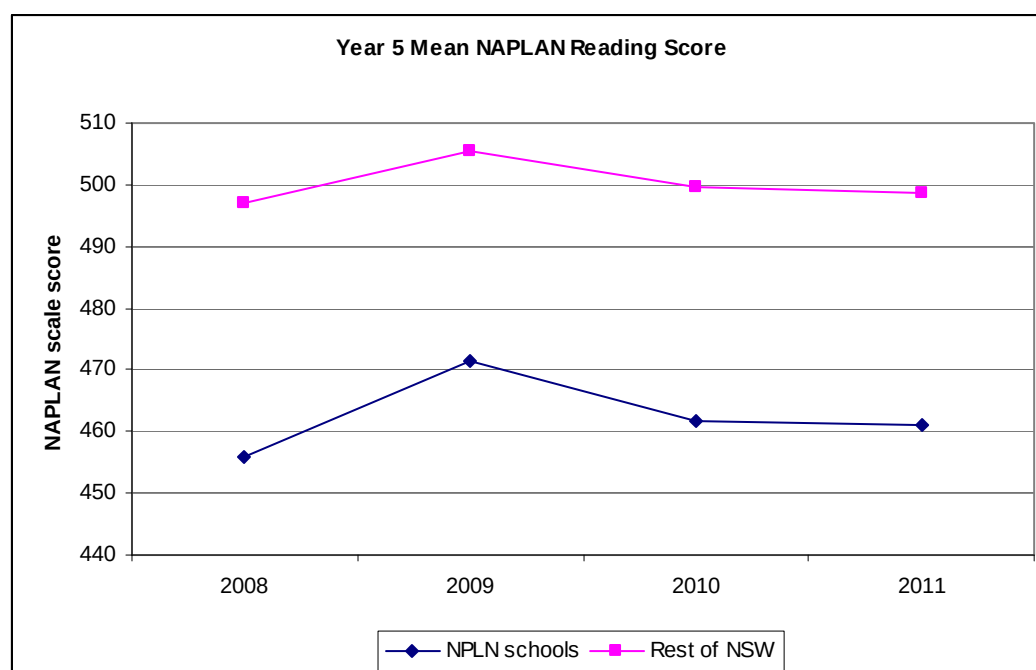
Figure 15: Year 5 NAPLAN Reading Scores, NPLN schools vs Rest of NSW, 2008-2011

Figure 16 below shows that average NAPLAN numeracy scores have increased in NPLN schools since 2008, while average numeracy scores have declined in other schools in NSW

over the same period (however, the year on year change is not statistically significant). The difference between students in NPLN schools and other schools still remains large, on average, but the difference has decreased since the commencement of the NPLN.

Figure 16: Year 3 NAPLAN Numeracy Scores, NPLN schools vs Rest of NSW, 2008-2011

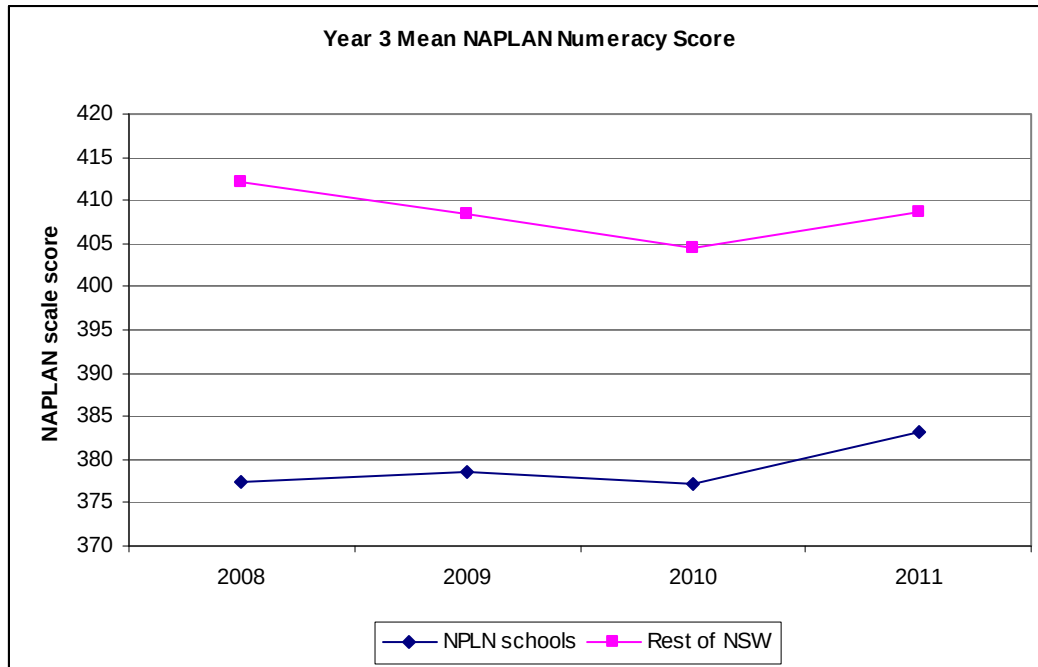
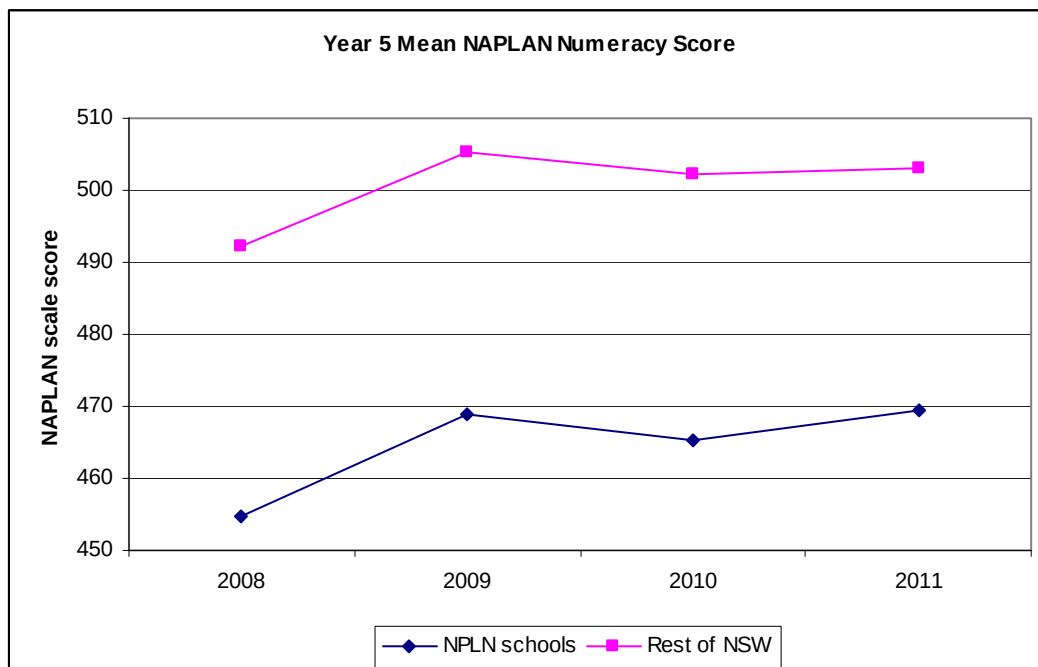


Figure 17: Year 5 NAPLAN Numeracy Scores, NPLN schools vs Rest of NSW, 2008-2011



The trends for Year 5 Numeracy are similar to those observed for Year 3. Numeracy average scores have increased at roughly similar rates for students in NPLN schools and those elsewhere in NSW. Scores in 2011 are significantly greater than they were in 2008 for both groups but the gap remains large.

An alternative way of looking at the relative NAPLAN performance of students in NPLN schools and elsewhere in NSW is to examine the percentage of students in each category who fail to meet the national minimum standard in each learning area. Figures 18 to 22 below show that in general, the percentage of the cohort in NPLN schools who are below the NAPLAN minimum benchmark score has decreased since 2008. For Reading, there was an apparent significant improvement in 2009, which in subsequent years has been slowly eroded. For Numeracy, there was a similar apparent dramatic improvement in 2009, but the trends from there onwards are very different for the Year 3 and Year 5 cohorts. At Year 3 level, there has been a decrease in the percentage of students who do not meet the benchmark, but for Year 5 the picture is not as positive. For both Reading and Numeracy, at all Year levels, the percentage of the cohort below the national minimum standard is considerably higher in NPLN schools than schools elsewhere in NSW.

Figure 18 shows that overall, the percentage of students below the national minimum standard has declined since 2008, but has gradually increased since then (but remains below the 2008 level). The percentage of students below the benchmark in other schools has also risen during this period, but at a slower rate than in NPLN schools.

Figure 18: Year 3 NAPLAN Reading Scores - Percent of Cohort Below National Minimum Standards, 2008-2011

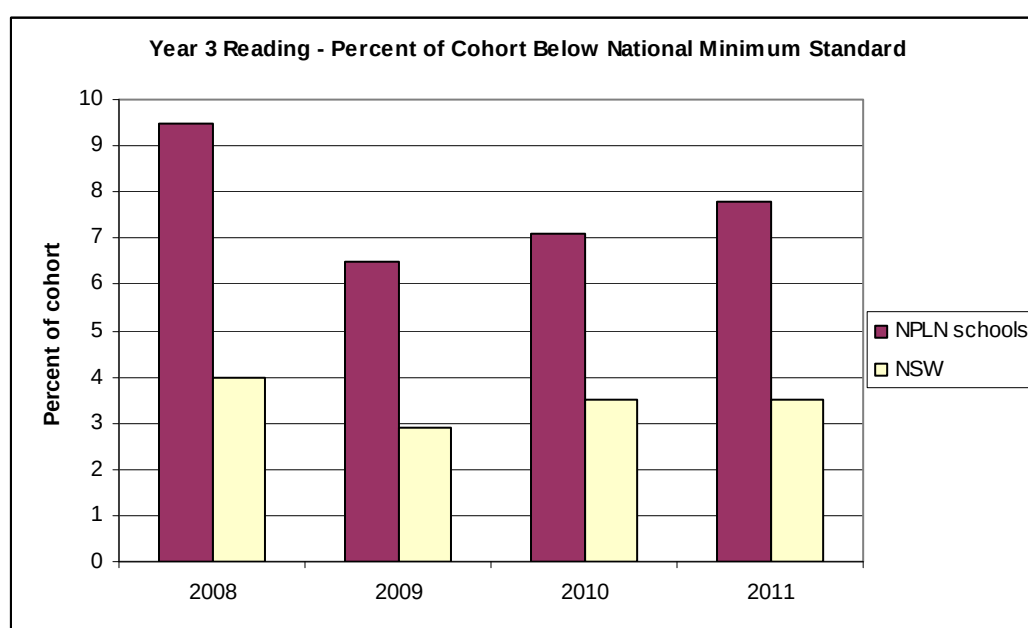
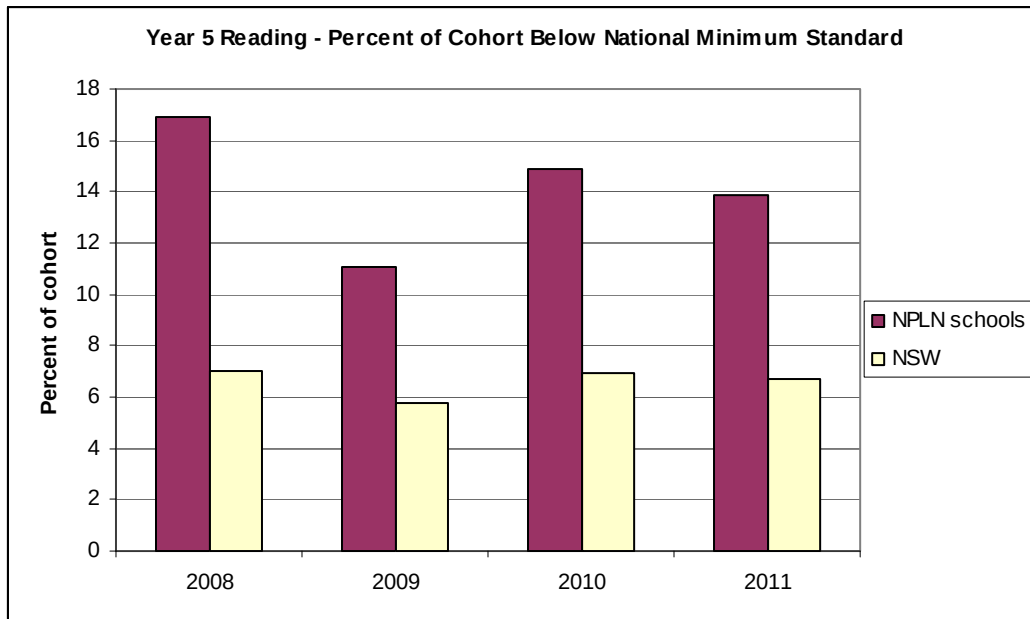


Figure 19 below shows that for the Year 5 cohort, there has been a similar overall improvement in the number of students below the national minimum standard in NPLN schools since 2008, but the subsequent variation has been greater in NPLN schools than in other schools. The trend since 2008 in NPLN schools has not been consistent, and it will remain to be seen whether the overall positive trend apparent in 2011 is maintained.

Figure 19: Year 5 NAPLAN Reading Scores - Percent of Cohort Below National Minimum Standards, 2008-2011



It should be noted that the percentage of the cohort of students in NPLN schools at Year 5 level who are below the national minimum standard for Reading is significantly greater than that for Year 5 in the rest of NSW. While the percentage of students below the benchmark standard has decreased in NPLN schools since the start of the initiative, Figure 19 illustrates the extent of the challenge faced by teachers in NPLN schools in helping students to achieve at the same level as students across NSW as a whole.

Figure 20: Year 3 NAPLAN Numeracy Scores - Percent of Cohort Below National Minimum Standards, 2008-2011

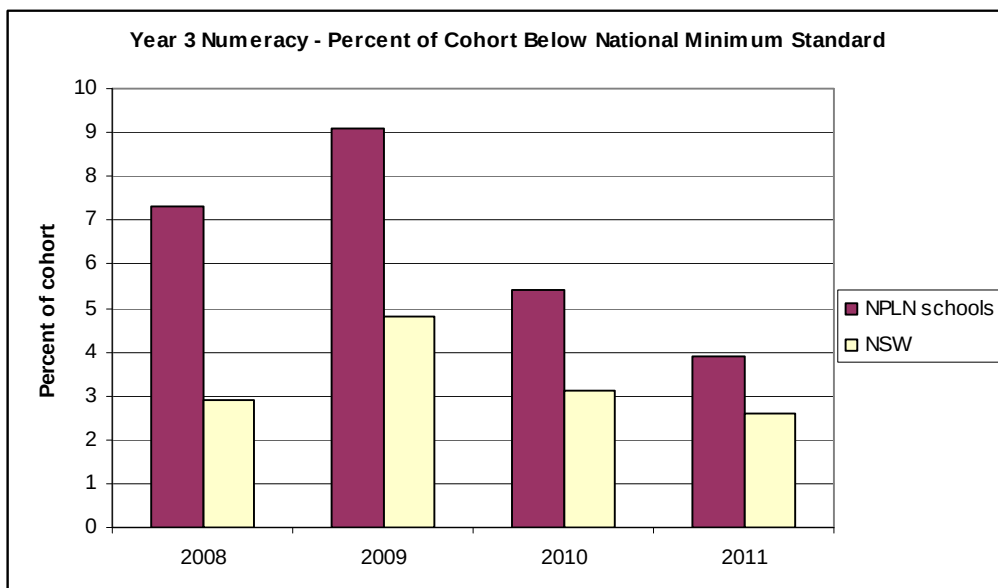


Figure 20 above shows that the percentage of students below the Year 3 Numeracy national benchmark has decreased significantly in NPLN schools since 2008. The trend for Year 3 Numeracy tends to mirror that for NSW as a whole towards improving performance against

the benchmark. Less than 4 per cent of Year 3 students in NPLN schools were rated as below the benchmark in 2011. The percentage of students scoring above the benchmark in both NPLN schools and other NSW schools has been statistically significant (see Table 17).

Figure 21 below shows that the percentage of Year 5 students below the national minimum standard for Numeracy has also fallen overall, but the change has not been consistent on a year by year basis. This Figure confirms that the results obtained in 2009 were extraordinary, in the sense that they represent a break in the overall trends for NSW as a whole. It is important to note that the change that occurred in 2009, was evident across the state in all learning years and all levels, suggesting that the cause lies outside the intervention *per se*.

Figure 21: Year 5 NAPLAN Numeracy Scores - Percent of Cohort Below National Minimum Standards, 2008-2011

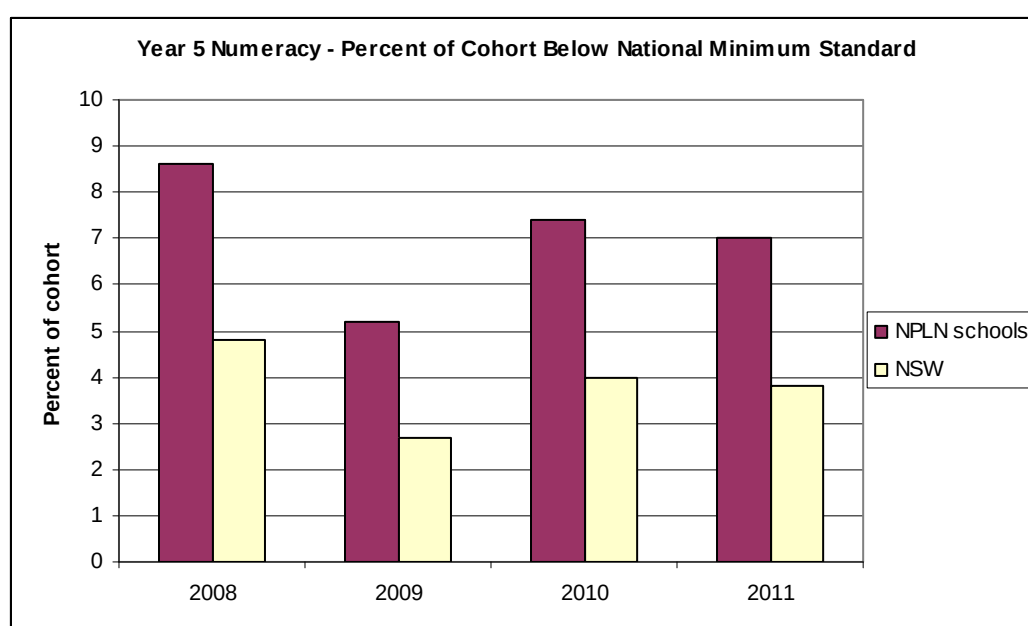


Table 17: Significance of Differences in Percentage of Cohort Below National Minimum Standard

Comparison	Difference in Annual Mean NAPLAN Score from Baseline Year (2008)			
	Year 3 Reading		Year 3 Numeracy	
	NPLN	State	NPLN	State
2009 - 2008	3.0	1.1	-1.8	-1.9
2010 - 2008	2.4	0.5	1.9	-0.2
2011 - 2008	1.7	0.5	3.4	0.3
Comparison	Year 5 Reading		Year 5 Numeracy	
	NPLN	State	NPLN	State
	NPLN	State	NPLN	State
2009 - 2008	5.8	1.2	3.4	2.1
2010 - 2008	2.0	0.1	1.2	0.8
2011 - 2008	3.0	0.3	1.6	1.0

	Difference is NOT statistically significant ($p < 0.05$)
	Difference is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$)

Table 18 below shows the average growth for students that occurred between the point they were measured in Year 3 and again in Year 5 for the 2008 and 2009 Year 3 cohorts. The Table shows that there were no significant differences between the rate of growth for students in NPLN schools and those in the rest of the state, for either Reading or Numeracy. In other words, as suggested in the earlier analyses, while there are individual variations, on the whole, students in NPLN schools and elsewhere tended to grow at similar rates. The "value added" in the NPLN schools, therefore, must be considered from the perspective that the initiative has perhaps prevented a greater decline than might have occurred otherwise rather than closing the gap between students who were generally in the lowest performing schools in 2008 and their peers elsewhere in the state.

Table 18: Mean Growth between Year 3 and Year 5, NPLN Schools vs Rest of State (matched students at same school)

	Reading Growth		Numeracy Growth	
	NPLN Schools	Rest of State	NPLN Schools	Rest of State
Year 3 Cohort 2008- Year 5 2010	85.8	83.6	84.2	89.1
Year 3 Cohort 2009-Year 5 2011	75.6	72.1	91.0	93.8

Table 19 below examines the expected growth in literacy and numeracy between Years 3 and Year 5 for students in NPLN schools and the rest of NSW for two cohorts since the commencement of the NPLN. In both cohorts, the rate of growth in NPLN schools was less than that observed in schools in the rest of NSW.

Table 19: Expected growth data for NPLN schools and 'Rest of the State' below.

	Reading Expected Growth		Numeracy Expected Growth	
	NPLN Schools	Rest of State	NPLN Schools	Rest of State
Year 3 Cohort 2008- Year 5 2010	49.4	57.7	48.8	56.2
Year 3 Cohort 2009-Year 5 2011	50.4	56.5	49.9	57.0

It should be noted that the same caveats that apply to all analyses of NAPLAN data apply here – that given the short time for implementation of the NPLN it should not be expected that the effects of the intervention would be immediately apparent in such scores. In addition, this data is not a fair assessment of the performance of NPLN schools because expected growth is quite strongly related to socio-educational advantage as measured by the ICSEA scale, which explains 22.6 per cent of the variance in expected growth across DEC schools. Given this situation, the small but not statistically significant trend towards increased expected growth in both literacy and numeracy in NPLN schools is a positive observation that will be monitored during the sustainability phase of the evaluation.

Table 20 shows a comparison of NAPLAN growth rates for NPLN (government schools only) and a group of "like" schools, matched on the basis of similar average school socio-economic status scores (see Appendix 1 for details). The data shows that the growth scores for both groups are in the main very similar, but the scores for the NPLN schools in the 2011 cohort (the second year of implementation) show a small but consistent trend towards greater growth. This data, together with that in Table 19 shows that there is a considerable gap in achievement remaining between NPLN schools and those in the rest of NSW.

It should be noted that the cut-off point for selecting schools to participate in the NPLN was determined as much by the amount of funding available as the need for intervention. There are evidently many more schools in NSW that could benefit from intensive literacy and numeracy intervention than could be catered for in the NPLN. It should also be noted that the majority of the schools in the comparison group have been receiving funding from the low SES School Communities National Partnership for improvement programs.

Table 20: Expected versus actual growth: like schools comparison

	Reading Expected Growth		Numeracy Expected Growth	
	NPLN Schools	Like schools (Non NPLN)	NPLN Schools	Like schools (Non NPLN)
Year 3 Cohort 2008- Year 5 2010	50.5	51.0	48.4	45.3
Year 3 Cohort 2009-Year 5 2011	50.1	49.9	46.7	46.3

Impact on Indigenous students' NAPLAN results

The following analyses disaggregate the general trends in NAPLAN score in NPLN and other schools in NSW in terms of apparent impact on Indigenous and non-Indigenous students over time.

Figure 22: NAPLAN Scores - Year 3 Reading for Indigenous and Non-Indigenous students, 2008-11

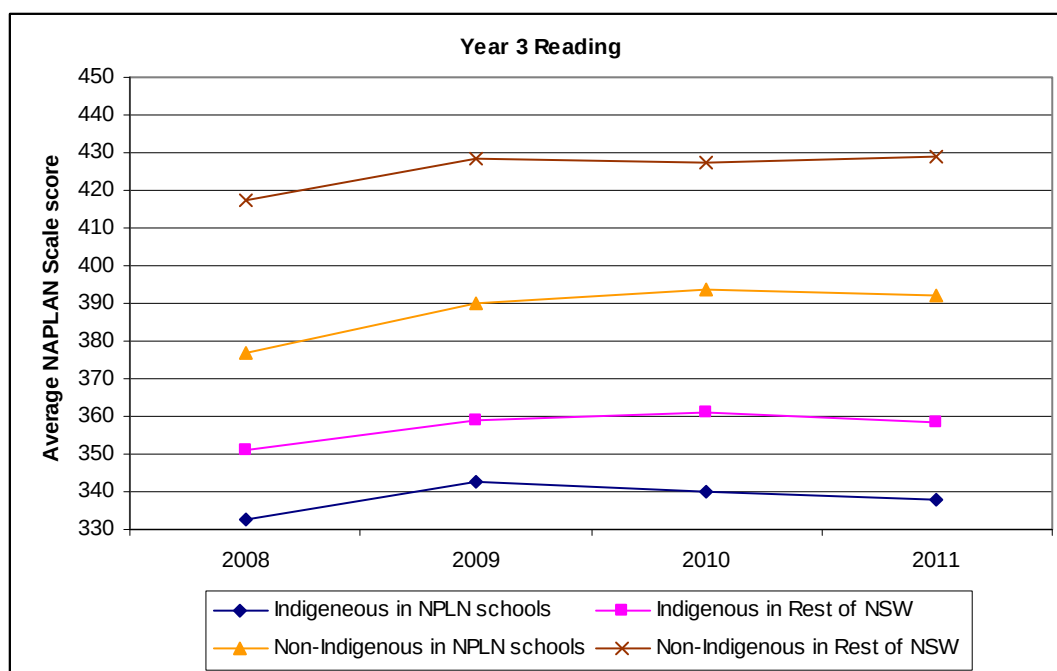


Figure 22 above shows that for Year 3 NAPLAN Reading scores, the pattern of results is similar for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in NPLN schools over the period 2008 to 2011. Students in NPLN schools, whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous started from a lower base, on average, than students in other schools. While there were some apparent early gains for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in 2009, the average Reading scores remained significantly behind the average for students in the rest of NSW. The gap between Reading scores for Year 3 Indigenous students in NPLN schools and the rest of the state slightly increased over the period measured.

The situation in relation to Year 3 NAPLAN Numeracy results is more complex. It must be remembered that the total number of students in the NPLN numeracy schools was relatively small, compared to the number in schools that focussed on Reading, so extrapolation of these results need be made with caution.

Figure 23: NAPLAN Scores - Year 3 Numeracy for Indigenous and Non-Indigenous students, 2008-11

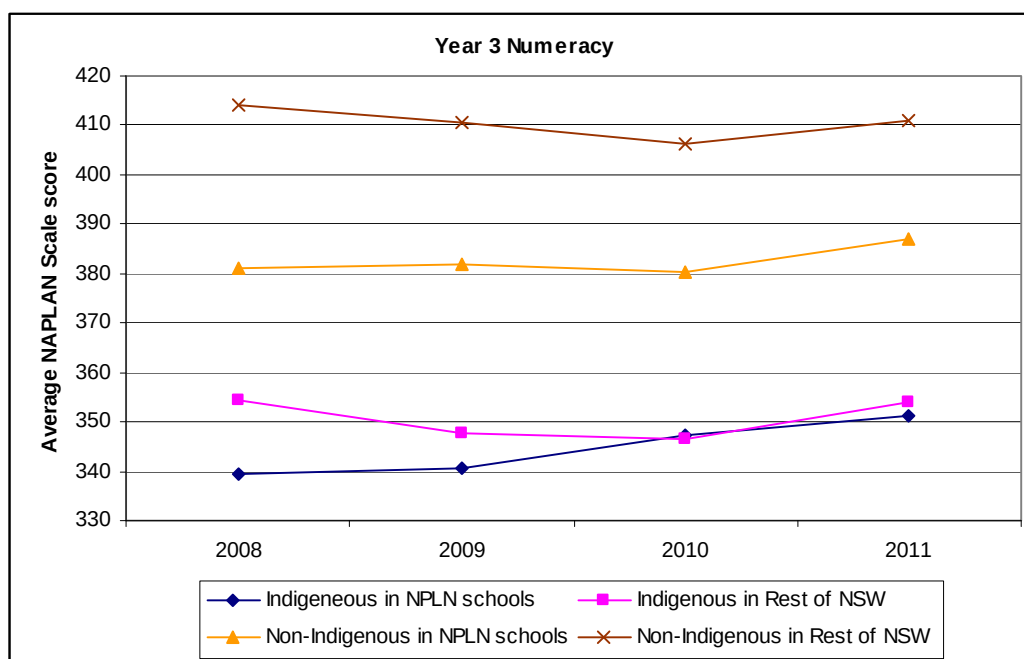
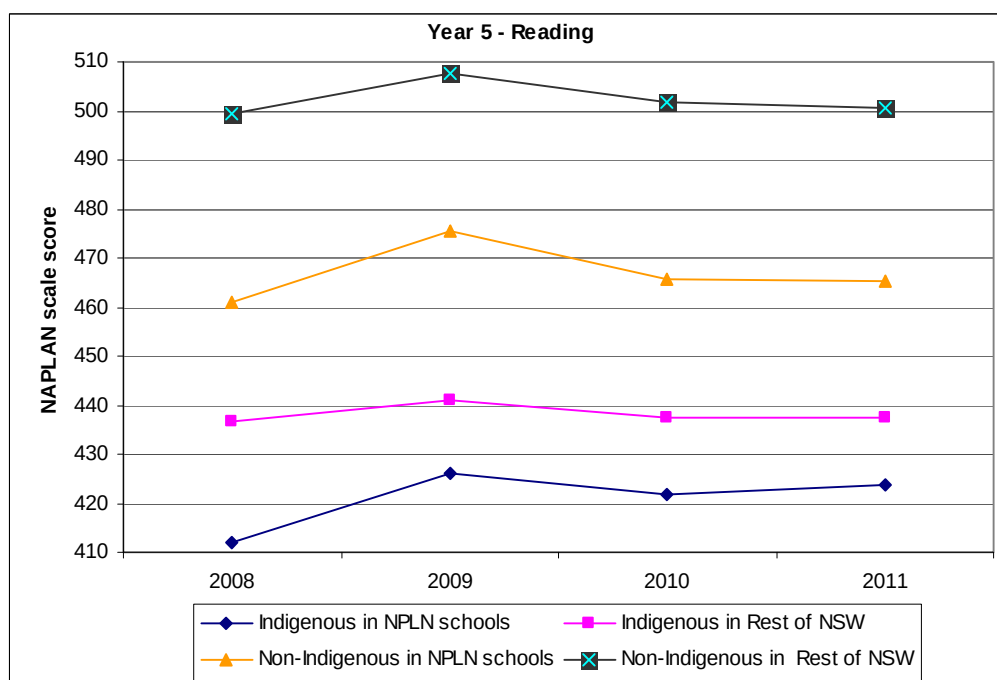


Figure 24 shows that the average Numeracy scores for Indigenous students in NPLN schools rose significantly and consistently over the period 2008-2011. At the same time Numeracy scores for Indigenous students in other schools declined for 2009 and 2010, but returned to the baseline level in 2011. Nonetheless, the gap between students in NPLN schools and the rest of the state was significantly less at the conclusion of the funding period.

Figure 24: NAPLAN Scores - Year 5 Reading for Indigenous and Non-Indigenous students, 2008-11

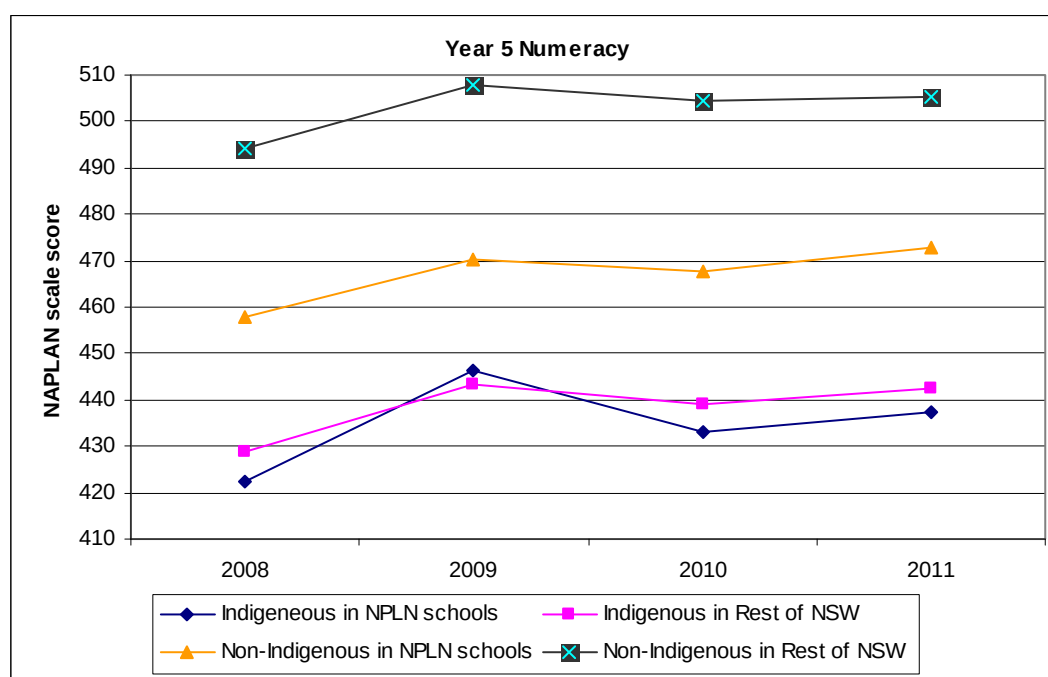


At the Year 5 level, NAPLAN Reading scores similarly show inconsistent trends. Overall, average scores for Non-Indigenous students, whether in NPLN schools or not, are higher than for Indigenous students. Scores for students in NPLN schools are, on average, lower for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

As for Year 3 Reading scores, there was an increase in Year 5 average Reading scores in 2009, followed by a decline in following years. However, for Indigenous students in NPLN schools, there has been a significant increase in Reading scores, which has been maintained over the period measured. Despite this increase, scores for these students still remain on average significantly below those for Indigenous students in the rest of NSW, and for non-Indigenous students in general.

Figure 25 below shows similar trends in relation to NAPLAN Numeracy scores for Year 5 students as for those in Year 3. There has been a sustained increase in Numeracy scores for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in NPLN schools, however this has tended to mirror increases in Numeracy scores for students in other schools across NSW. The gap between students in NPLN schools and those elsewhere has narrowed only slightly between 2008 and 2011. The gap in average scores between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous students remains significant, regardless of their location.

Figure 25: NAPLAN Scores - Year 5 Numeracy for Indigenous and Non-Indigenous students, 2008-11



Impact on school-level NAPLAN results

Table 21 below shows the number and percentage of NPLN schools in which the school mean NAPLAN scores for Reading or Numeracy had significantly, improved, declined or remained the same between 2008 (the benchmark year) and 2011. The Table shows that the school mean NAPLAN scores had either improved or remained the same in the great majority of schools involved. However, as earlier Figures show, while differences between

2008 and 2011 may not have changed significantly, it is possible that in individual schools there may have been significant changes in year to year results. There were no consistent trends in relation to the relative improvement in schools choosing literacy or numeracy or for Year 3 or Year 5 students.

Whether this volatility reflects changes in cohort or changes in the nature of the NAPLAN tests, or the effectiveness of school or programmatic interventions is not able to be established. It is also not possible to say what might have happened had the NPLN not been implemented in these schools. It is conceivable that student performance may have declined in a much greater proportion of the schools involved. Importantly, it should be noted that there were very few schools involved in the NPLN initiative that had significantly lower scores in 2011 than at the commencement of the initiative.

Table 21: Number of schools in which NPLN school mean NAPLAN score had significantly improved between 2008 and 2011

	Total schools	Number of Schools		
		Significantly improved between 2008-2011	No significant change	Significantly lower in 2011 than 2008
Year 3 Reading	102	19 (18.6%)	81 (79.4%)	2 (2.0%)
Year 3 Numeracy	45	5 (11.1%)	38 (84.4%)	2 (4.4%)
Year 5 Reading	102	10 (9.8%)	88 (86.3%)	4 (3.9%)
Year 5 Numeracy	45	17 (37.8%)	28 (62.2%)	0 (0.0%)

The NAPLAN data considered above does not present an unambiguously positive impact on student learning outcomes at this stage of the implementation of the initiative. Whilst the data does suggest that students in NPLN schools have improved their NAPLAN results, so have students in other schools. It is not possible to say that the NPLN has had no impact on measured learning outcomes, nor is it possible to say what might have happened had the NPLN not been implemented. The NAPLAN results need to be considered in the context of other evidence about student outcomes gathered. Since the early part of the initiative has focused most heavily on teacher and leadership capacity building, it would be likely that it would take some time for the changed practices to take hold, and then translate to student learning outcomes.

It is also instructive that teachers and principals repeatedly said that students had responded to the new instructional methods in ways that are not measured by NAPLAN, including greater enjoyment of reading, more interest in lessons, more sustained engagement in class, and so on. These may be necessary precursors for improving NAPLAN results, but not have contributed to measured results in the time frame considered. What must also be kept in mind is that many, if not the majority of students in NPLN schools are starting from a very low base in terms of academic achievement — that is why they were

selected for the initiative in the first place. It is unrealistic to think that any program or school based intervention will be able to overcome the level of disadvantage experienced in NPLN communities or the deep-seated cultural attitudes towards learning in the families concerned in the short term.

2.3 How effective are the new approaches compared to previous strategies? Can these be described as short, medium or long term achievements?

The findings arising from separate data gathering events both in May 2011 and then throughout Term 4, 2011 highlighted a number of common trends in terms of new pedagogical approaches that were being employed by teachers as a result of participation in the initiative. At the heart of these new strategies was a unified approach in many schools from kindergarten to year six, that arose directly from a focus on whole school instructional leadership. As indicated earlier in this report, many teachers have commented on the confidence that they have derived from this initiative, knowing that they were part of a team working towards agreed common goals for students. The NPLN was credited by participants as having provided leadership teams with the capacity to establish a platform to enable open discussion of new approaches, achievements and emerging challenges among the staff. The opportunity for professional sharing of ideas about planning and resource development had previously not been common practice in many NPLN schools.

From this platform teachers were motivated to develop skills that would help them to adopt new strategies for teaching literacy and or numeracy in more effective and efficient ways. Because this happened essentially at an individual whole school level, teachers had the opportunity to trial new approaches, discuss them and, importantly, ensure that a consistent approach towards pedagogy was being adopted from kindergarten to Year 6. Most commonly this resulted in the use of consistent and common language as a tool for open communication not only among staff but also students. The unified approach resulting in a common pedagogy from Kindergarten to Year 6 appears to have been the catalyst that has particularly drawn teachers together both at the year level and at the stage level. Several teachers commented that the agreed common approach not only facilitated class programming but also the ongoing sharing of resources and discussions about student achievements, including appropriate measurement methodologies.

In attempting to embed this common approach to teaching numeracy and/or literacy, many Principals and teachers have highlighted the advantage of a consistent daily block of uninterrupted time for teaching and learning. Many schools have adopted the practice that from 9:30 am till 11 am in all classrooms, there would be an uninterrupted block of time during which teachers would work with students to ensure on-task engagement for one and a half hours each day. Teachers have consistently commented about the benefits of this daily practice, highlighting that in the past there were multiple interruptions by visitors to the classroom and announcements on the loudspeaker in the classroom. These interruptions no longer occur.

The competence that has been built and the ensuing confidence experienced by teachers have now also transferred in many schools to year level and even Stage level programming

where teachers openly and willingly plan learning experiences together according to students' ability levels in numeracy and literacy. In some schools this level of collaboration has also now extended to the development and sharing of in-class assessment tools. In such settings the results of such assessment efforts have also become the subject of year level or even stage level professional discourse among teachers.

Many of these new strategies are only in an embryonic stage. It is therefore difficult to assess whether they are perceived to be short or long-term. However the majority of these new approaches have been driven directly through school leadership, which becomes a valuable tool for cultural change. Acknowledging that many principals are commenting around the theme of "this is the way we now do things for teaching literacy/numeracy", the foundation is being set for longer term cultural change that will need to be supported, monitored and constantly reviewed. With the ongoing teachers' success and motivation, time will determine whether these short term outcomes become medium or long term achievements.

Importantly however there are major lessons for the roles that systems and structures can play in leading, nurturing and supporting such change at both classroom and whole school levels. Foremost among these however would appear to be the role that systems and sectors play in supporting and nurturing principals in the first instance and then provision of ongoing support in the classroom teachers through professional development and time release for professional dialogue and reflection on action.

2.4 Impact of the Initiative: summary statement

This section of the report has discussed the key focus area relating to the impact of the initiative. In particular key outcomes have been identified from the initiative in relation to changed teacher expectations, pedagogical skills, improved teaching and learning environments and whole school strategies. Importantly this section of the report has also focused on the impact of the initiative on student learning outcomes, including their attitudes, and behaviour as well as other key student factors. In completing this section of the report, it is therefore instructive to identify in what ways systems and sectors have developed and provided structures and processes that would appear to have strongly influenced impact that has been experienced in schools at both student and teacher levels.

Supporting school self-evaluation capacity

Most significantly, the data arising from the case study interviews as well as surveys clearly indicate that some initiatives appeared to have been more successful than others in supporting schools. In the first instance the support provided for schools both in terms of the development of frameworks and professional learning opportunities relating to school self-evaluation processes, priority and target setting within schools has been greatly appreciated by school participants. Many principals cited the opportunity for professional leadership training and the provision of frameworks to engage in self-evaluation, planning, implementation and ongoing measurement as the primary driver for instituting and maintaining change in their schools. Indeed almost 78 per cent of those schools surveyed

identified that this particular support was considered to be either helpful or very helpful in terms of implementing the NPLN initiative.

Importance of capacity building

Similar results were achieved in a related area that assisted principals to ensure engagement and commitment of the teachers towards the initiative. More specifically, schools surveyed identified that the initiative taken by systems and sectors in working with school principals, and executive leadership teams, through both professional learning and external facilitators, to facilitate school capacity building and team leadership was greatly valued. Indeed almost 80 per cent of schools surveyed suggested that this strategy was seen as being helpful or even very helpful towards successful implementation.

Cultural change as the fundamental driver of pedagogical change

Many teachers would suggest that it is this cultural change that has been the fundamental driver in changing classroom practices and improving student outcomes. Pivotal to such change however has been the opportunity for teachers to engage in in-school professional learning for literacy or numeracy intervention programs. Schools appear to have been acutely aware that this overall strategy has been initiated and coordinated at the system/sectoral level and has identified this as a key strategic support provided to schools. Indeed over 80 per cent of schools surveyed identified that this particular system/sectoral strategy was considered helpful or very helpful in facilitating implementation process.

Sharing good practice

To a lesser extent schools have also valued the opportunity to share insights, good practices and achievements at conferences and related professional sharing opportunities. Among those schools being surveyed, participants identified that over 71 per cent considered the opportunity either helpful or very helpful in facilitating implementation.

In terms of the strategic support being provided, schools generally found the opportunity for developing school partnerships with, for example, universities to have less of an impact than other strategic support initiatives provided by systems and sectors. With only 58 per cent of participants identifying this strategy to be really useful, many schools suggested that partnerships with relevant University staff had been somewhat less than successful because of their lack of understanding both of the initiative and the professional requirements of their staff.

Flexibility in use of funding

Aligned with this observation by those being surveyed, many principals believed that their effectiveness in managing and leading the change process was enhanced when the program funding provided them with a range of options from which to select to build the capacity of staff. In these situations principals felt well equipped to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of types of support available, cognisant of the professional development needs of staff and then make appropriate decisions that would target emerging needs most effectively.

The factors that have helped to facilitate and hinder the implementation of the initiative are discussed in more detail in the following section.

Focus Area 3: Effectiveness of support for implementation

The support provided by all systems and sectors in NSW for the NPLN has been extensive. As discussed in the document analysis in Progress Report 1, these operational arrangements included professional learning programs, accountability responsibilities at both system/sector and school levels, school plans, resource development, dedicated support and coordination personnel, communication systems, among other things. Importantly, the focus has been on both school leadership teams, at the whole school level and classroom teachers. This dual thrust has created synergies in schools that have enhancing the role of school leadership and deepened the impact of teaching in classrooms.

All schools visited made extensive use of these support mechanisms. Most have made use of the DASA tool and SMART2 professional learning packages to enhance their integrated use of data. While the level of confidence in the use of such data may vary between schools and within a school's staff, teachers are reporting that they are now engaging in a level of dialogue that is new yet meaningful for them.

Both the case study visits and the survey of participating schools revealed that the significant majority of schools felt that all the resources they needed for NPLN implementation were readily available, were of high quality with a sound research base. In addition schools have valued the opportunity to engage in a process of self-evaluation, resulting in the development of a tailored school plan and appropriate whole school/class programs to address the reform areas. Many schools have cited a dual advantage in this process. Not only has it provided a clear direction, but also a set of strategies and accountabilities for action. In addition teachers have valued the opportunity it has provided in enhancing their skills in evaluation and planning, which are directly transferable to other areas of responsibility.

As indicated in the first progress report, further evidence from the school visits conducted in late 2011 also highlighted the value of the regional/sector/diocesan facilitators as "critical friends" for school teams throughout the planning and implementation process (this finding was further shown in Tables 8 and 10). In some cases, facilitators were directly involved with schools, helping them to achieve milestones and targets relating to the NPLN program, providing professional development, mentoring school executive members, or providing demonstration lessons for teachers. In other situations, facilitators helped to establish clusters of schools which meet regularly to share good practice.

In the early stages of this evaluation, the factors that were reported to have hindered the implementation of the NPLN appeared to be more reflective of the kinds of factors that limit the introduction of any new program or approach in schools, rather than the result of any structural or systematic shortcoming in the design of the NSW NPLN implementation. As discussed below, further evidence gathered by this evaluation in the survey of schools and school case studies suggests that in the majority of cases, these inhibiting factors did not have a significant impact on the achievement of program outcomes as a whole. In the

experience of schools visited for the evaluation, the majority of problems encountered have been overcome with sensitivity, clear communication, and persistence.

Table 22 below shows schools' perceptions of other forms of system/sector support for the implementation of the NPLN.

Table 22: Perceived helpfulness by schools of system/sector support for the implementation of the NPLN

	Not at all helpful (%)	Little help (%)	Helpful (%)	Very helpful (%)
Support for school self-evaluation processes, priority and target setting	1.6	20.6	44.4	33.3
Working with school principals and executive leadership teams to facilitate school capacity building and team leadership	1.6	19.0	41.3	38.1
Facilitation of partnerships with the community	8.1	33.9	43.5	14.5
Coordination of in-school professional learning for literacy or numeracy intervention programs	3.2	15.9	39.7	41.3
Facilitating sharing of good practice through conferences etc	1.6	27.0	50.8	20.6

Table 22 shows that all of the various forms of support provided by systems and sectors were perceived to have been helpful by at least half of the schools responding to the survey. The most helpful forms of support were overall coordination provided by the regional facilitators, in particular the facilitation of professional learning experiences in relation to the specific intervention programs, and working with principals and executive teams to build leadership capacity. Over 80 per cent of survey respondents found this support to be helpful or very helpful. Facilitation of partnerships with the community was rated as the least helpful form of support provided by systems and sectors. This reflects observations recorded elsewhere that working with parents and the community was perhaps the least well developed aspect of the NPLN.

While sharing of good practice was considered helpful by about 70 per cent of respondents, it was rated as being of little or no help by around 30 per cent of principals. This finding similarly supports other observations that of all of the forms of systemic support provided by systems/sectors, this aspect was positive, but not essential. The sharing conferences were most useful in forcing schools to reflect on and document their developmental journey in a systematic way and to highlight the key factors that had contributed to their particular outcomes. This form of self-learning was perhaps more important than hearing about practices in other schools (which were often shared in other ways throughout the implementation phase). However, the feedback about the sharing conferences also

reinforced for many schools that the issues they were encountering were not unique to themselves, (which in turn had a positive impact on teachers' motivation), and in helping schools to develop networks and to share resources. The case study visits recorded instances where schools from different regions using the same intervention program (specifically TOWN) had continued to correspond and share resources after the funding period had ceased.

3.1 What has particularly helped or hindered implementation of the initiative?

3.1.1 Facilitating factors

The survey sought qualitative comments from respondents in relation to factors that had facilitated implementation of the NPLN. By far the most common responses (over 80%) related to the provision of funding for the purchase of professional learning, resources and release time.

In particular, principals perceived that the scope of the funds that allowed implementation to occur on a whole school basis was particularly valued. In addition, the funding was perceived to have allowed more time to do things well, and engage more rigorously and deeply in learning and implementation that was otherwise possible. The ability to set and determine the school's own direction, taking into account local factors, was also valued. These themes are illustrated in the following example.

"Releasing all teachers from class at one time so they can learn the strategies together and have a depth of professional discussion not able to be had at a general staff meeting. Being able to observe, demonstrate and learn from their teaching colleagues and time for reflection together has provided a renewed approach to their own teaching, with a greater emphasis on quality teaching. A K-6 approach involving all staff - principal, executive, teachers and support staff has resulted in a strong approach to literacy learning with all staff on the same page using common strategies, language and resources."

The capacity for NPLN funding to give time for the school to engage in improvement processes was also noted in the case study interviews. As one principal said, reflecting the view of many:

"The NPLN gave us the opportunity to do things differently, to use the capacity teachers have, by giving them the time away from the classroom to think and innovate."

The second theme emerging from analysis of survey comments about facilitating factors concerned the personal attributes and qualities of the people involved, particularly the in-school coordinator and the regional/professional learning facilitators.

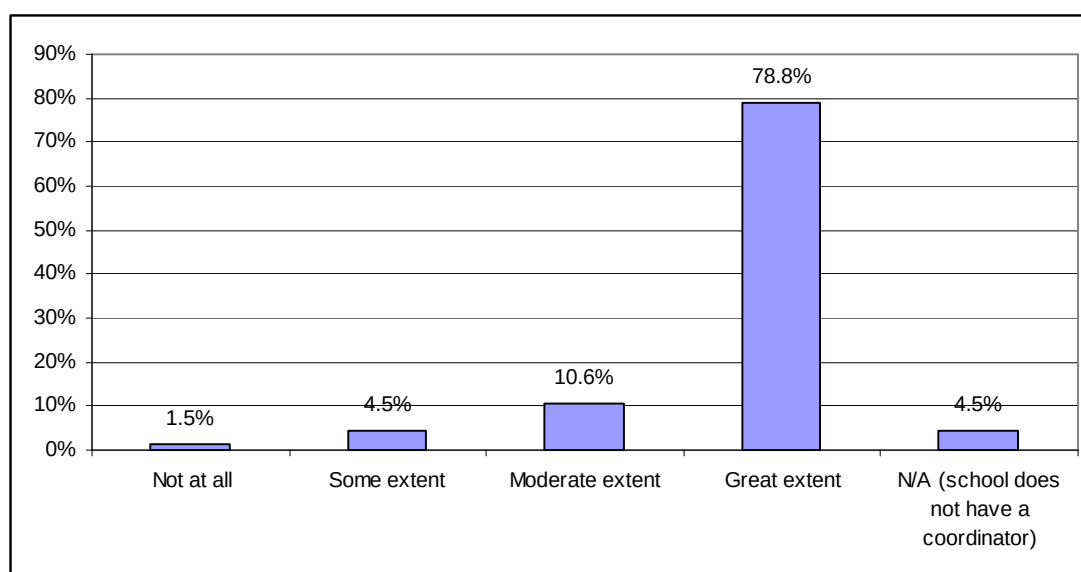
These comments typically noted that the enthusiasm, knowledge and ongoing commitment that these people brought to the task was critical for the success of the initiative. The following example is typical of responses of this kind.

"The quality of the facilitator and her professionalism and commitment and support of staff, and her belief in the school and the staff to make changes her positiveness and positive feedback to staff about progress, her unrelenting follow-up and continuity and her lesson demonstrations and modelling of best practice."

The importance of the key role of the classroom leader in facilitating the implementation of the NPLN is shown in Figure 26 below.

Figure 26 indicates that the appointment of an in-school coordinator (classroom leader) was critical for the success of the NPLN interventions at the school level. More than 80 per cent of principals responding to the school survey said that the coordinator had enhanced literacy or numeracy teaching to a great extent. Less than 2 per cent of respondents said that the in-school coordinator had made no impact. In the small number of cases where the coordinator was reported to have had little impact, interviews suggest that this was due to personal issues with the appointed person rather than a limitation of the position *per se*.

Figure 26: School perceptions of the extent to which support from an in-school facilitator/coordinator (classroom leader) has enhanced literacy or numeracy teaching and learning



Comments made during case study visits confirmed that the vast majority of principals considered the classroom leader to have been a critical part of the NPLN strategy, and without such a resource, many believed that their attempts to enhance literacy or numeracy teaching would not have succeeded. This belief was further illustrated by the intention of many principals to retain this position (using school or other funds) even after the NPLN funding had ceased.

A small number of responses acknowledged that the willingness of staff to engage in the process was also an important facilitating factor. Staff willingness to change teaching methods was also noted to be an important pre-requisite for this process of engagement. Balancing this observation, principals also noted that while the commitment of staff was

high, the amount of work involved was exhausting. They also acknowledged that as the initiative has progressed, the work load in some areas has decreased as efforts have become more focussed and confidence in using new pedagogical techniques and programming practices has grown.

It should be noted that the majority of successful schools visited during the case studies identified the holistic nature of the NPLN strategy as the most important of the factors facilitating the overall outcome of the initiative. While individual elements were important facilitating factors, they noted that it was the combination of all of the elements combined that gave the initiative its greatest strength, compared to improvement efforts of the past. The NPLN has encouraged a greater focus on consistency, as well as a data driven approach, which separates it from efforts in the past that tended to be "one-off". The funding has allowed all teachers to be part of the process, through professional learning as well as involvement in collaborative planning and lesson observations. It has given time for all staff to reflect on what they are doing and "how the jigsaw fits together", whereas previous efforts tended to be disjointed, with different individuals pursuing different directions. It was stressed repeatedly, that it was the relatively high level of funding involved that allowed the schools time to link all of the elements together. The comments from principals below were typical of those made in many schools:

"The National Partnership has encouraged our school to take more risks – but to evaluate and change different things when needed. We now look to see how programs support our central focus, rather than them being ends in themselves."

"We had already begun on the path to becoming more student centred in our approach, but the National Partnership helped to facilitate this in a more concentrated way. The knowledge gained [in relation to Literacy] has been applied in other areas – putting the theory into practice. The demands of the NP have given a common agenda – and an increased dialogue. All teachers are reading the research, and discussing it. This has helped to reduce teacher insecurity about seeking advice – they now see critiquing and being critiqued as getting more ideas, not being judged. Teachers now have a greater sense of themselves as learners."

The holistic nature of the initiative has itself been facilitated by the focus at a strategic level on building from a coherent research base. The initial leadership capacity development exercises were important in ensuring that school leaders understood this research base and what it implied for practice. Indeed, many of the principals in the case study schools cited this research, and how it had inspired them to view their work in a different way.

3.1.2 Inhibiting factors

The survey also asked principals to comment on any factors that had inhibited their school's implementation of the NPLN. More than 40 per cent of the recorded responses stated that there had been no inhibiting factors. Of the remaining responses, the most consistent theme

concerned (predictably) the time taken by the various aspects of the initiative, or issues that were specific to the individual school. Examples of issues cited include:

- Staff turnover, and in particular, loss of key personnel such as the in-school leader. As noted elsewhere, the impact of this factor has been addressed by adopting team-based approaches and whole-school professional development to ensure widespread understanding and ownership of the programs, approaches, strategies and activities adopted. Other schools commented on the difficulties they encountered because of the high number of part-time, temporary or beginning teachers they employ, for example because of an unusually high number of teachers on maternity leave. As discussed in the later section of this report in regard to the sustainability of strategic outcomes, some schools have already considered how new staff can be inducted into the "new way of doing things" or the implementation of specific intervention programs adopted during the funding period.
- Difficulty in obtaining casual teachers (particularly in rural areas) to allow the whole staff to attend professional learning.
- Time pressures and competing priorities. It must be expected that an initiative of the scale, scope and complexity as that of the NPLN will take time for all the processes to be completed and for benefits to become obvious. NPLN funding has made purchase of release time possible. At the same time, communication from system/sector level coordinators and facilitators has helped schools better understand the importance of prioritising literacy and numeracy learning as the foundation for successful learning in other areas.
- Variability in the initial skill and confidence level of key school staff, which has been addressed through structured professional learning, modeling by facilitators, availability of resources and tools and so on.
- Initial teething problems such as unfamiliarity with processes for managing grant funds. The close contact between the schools and their regional/diocesan/sector facilitators allowed timely information to be transmitted on how to manage these issues. Formal and informal professional development was cited by interview participants as a significant factor in helping teachers and school leaders learn new skills, for example in conducting the situational analysis that informed their literacy or numeracy plan.

It should be noted that some schools commented that the deadlines for the implementation of the NPLN were considered to be too short, especially in the initial stages. (The majority of schools went on to say that they considered the total funding period itself to be too short – an issue taken up later in this report). Some of the time pressures resulted from schools' inexperience with, for example, self evaluation based on the analysis of student outcomes data. While this was seen as being very demanding on teacher time, as the initiative has progressed, schools have found ways to streamline these processes. Similarly, some teachers complained that there was "too much paperwork involved" to meet administrative needs, and that it was difficult to meet some requirements in a way that was collaborative

and engaging of all staff. While it is possible that some streamlining in accountability requirements can occur, as noted elsewhere in this report, the high levels of accountability involved in the strategy was also recognised as contributing to its overall success in NSW. It has also been noted that the tight timeframes also gave a sense of urgency to the initiative, which many principals believed sped up the improvement process.

The tight timeframes were compounded in some schools by the perception that the goals and intentions of the initiative were unclear. (It was instructive that some schools misunderstood the nature of the incentive payment scheme even at the conclusion of the funding period). In schools where the leadership team had a clear vision of what the initiative could do to help them achieve the schools own improvement goals, this initial lack of clarity was not an impediment to later implementation. Such schools typically adapted the specific intervention programs to suit their own needs. These schools understood that the NPLN was not just about a resource driven program, but rather a change in philosophy of teaching and learning. For other schools, which were less clear about the bigger picture of school improvement afforded by the NPLN, changes to systemic requirements were more problematic. Schools that took a narrow view of the NPLN, on the whole, obtained less benefit from the experience and are perhaps less likely to sustain the outcomes achieved.

A small number of responses identified the time commitment demanded of staff as being a significant issue, although this had not necessarily hindered implementation. These comments echo the theme concerning staff engagement identified above as critical to facilitating the implementation of the strategy. A typical comment of this kind is as follows:

"Much extra time was given by staff to collaborate after school hours to ensure the best outcomes possible."

This theme was also frequently noted in the case study interviews. Principals said that obtaining staff "buy-in" to the NPLN was by no means automatic or easy. They noted that there was often a high degree of reluctance and scepticism on the part of teachers to engage in what they saw initially as "just another passing fad". Principals noted that the availability of funding to provide release time, the sense of team work "all being in this together" engendered by the whole school approach, and evident enthusiasm of the school executive (and particularly classroom leaders and teacher educators) was essential in providing an appropriate platform on which wider teacher involvement was possible. The high degree of collaboration between teachers in all aspects of implementation was also identified as a key issue facilitating teacher engagement.

"We have recognised the importance of collegial support. Everyone is now on the same page. Classrooms are more open places, teachers feel willing to learn from one another, regardless of status. The biggest change, however, is in distributed leadership. Everyone feels greater ownership."

In the small number of case study schools where implementation had been less successful, it was clearly evident that school leadership had not successfully engaged staff on a wider scale. In part, this was caused by individual teachers' intransigence to change, in other

instances, in other instances it had been a result of leadership styles which largely excluded staff from decision making (illustrated for example, by the lack of teacher involvement in the situational analysis and self evaluation process early in the initiative's implementation phase). There are some key learnings from this experience that could well be included in early professional learning for school leaders for future intervention strategies similar to that of the NPLN.

3.2 How have schools recognised and celebrated the success of the initiative and rewarded students' and teachers' achievements?

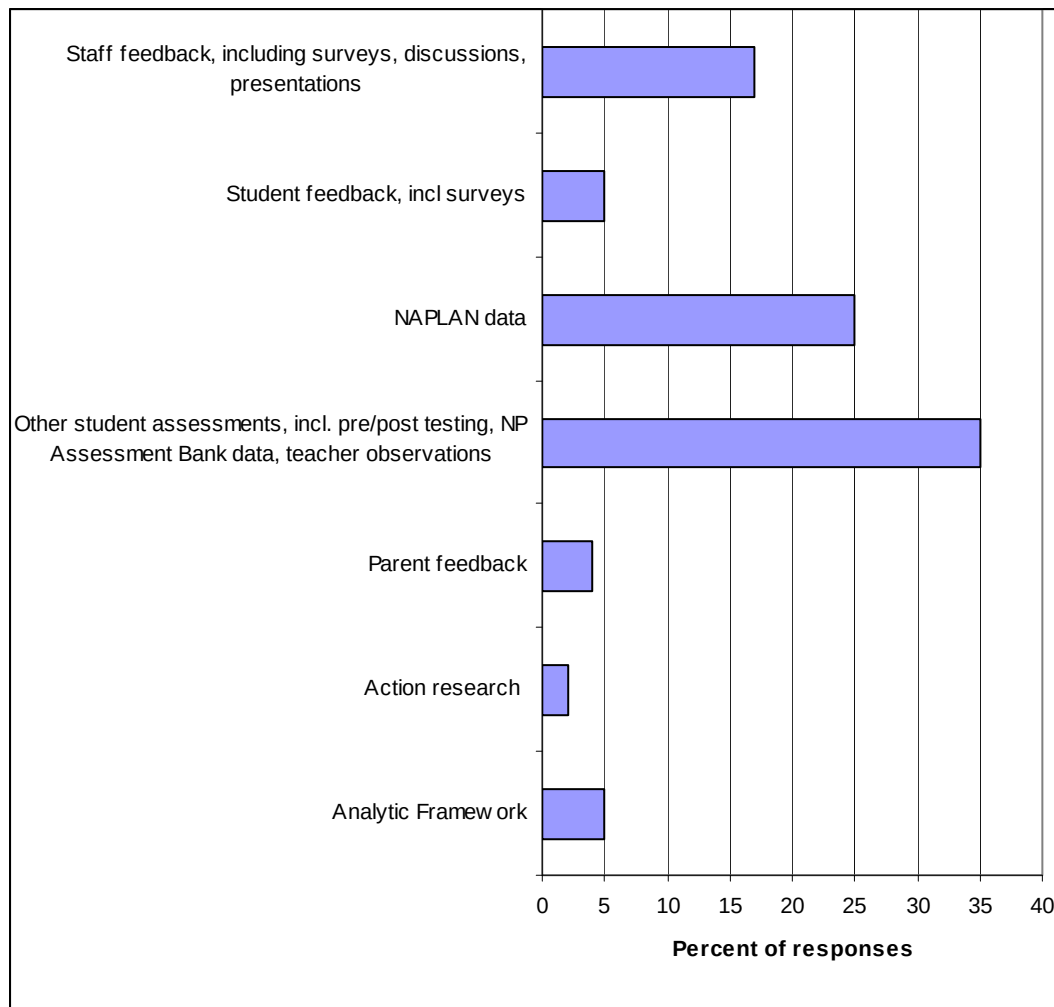
The survey of schools collected data about the various methods used to identify the success of their NPLN implementation. These results (shown in Figure 27) together with the data from school case studies and interviews, show that schools used a variety of methods (often using multiple formal and informal methods simultaneously) to track the progress of their NPLN implementation.

In line with the intentions of one of the priority reform areas, schools involved in the NPLN have increased their capacity to collect and analyse data, particularly in relation to student learning outcomes. In addition to the NAPLAN results, schools are using a variety of standardised tests and school developed assessments to better understand student learning. They are more likely, for example, to make use of pre- and post-testing to identify learning gains and areas they may need to be re-visited for individual students and whole classes.

While the use of such assessments is not necessarily new, even in the NPLN schools, what is new is the way the data is used on a more transparent, reflective and holistic basis. The professional development provided around analysis of NAPLAN, and the processes involved in conducting school self-evaluations have been cited as providing important models and tools that have encouraged the adoption of these new approaches.

It is evident that many schools have been encouraged to document their "journey" undertaken (as evidenced by the displays at the May *Smarter Schools Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership Celebrating Success, Embedding Change Conference*). Regional facilitators have encouraged this as a form of "action research", using standardised reporting formats. In the interviews with school leaders conducted, participants identified enhanced student and teacher engagement with learning, better student behaviour, more sophisticated conversations about learning, and increased enjoyment of learning as typical outcomes of their NPLN work. The displays and presentations from schools reflected the renewed emphasis on data as a means of documenting progress against their intentions.

Likewise, schools reported increased teacher morale, enjoyment of teaching and greater collegiality as typical outcomes. None of these factors has been formally measured by any of the schools visited, but were commonly noted as benefits of their NPLN participation.

Figure 27: Frequency of methods used by schools to identify the success of their NPLN implementation

Teacher expectations of student learning were said by stakeholders interviewed to have changed significantly, for example, teachers were more likely to accept the view that all students can learn. Data about what students know and can do (at whatever level) was more frequently used as the starting point for devising strategies for progressing forward. The adoption of this “strengths based” approach to teaching and learning, was frequently noted as one of the benefits accruing from NPLN participation in the majority of case study schools.

3.4 Cost effectiveness of the NPLN

Cost effectiveness can be considered from a number of perspectives, identifying both tangible and intangible costs and benefits, both financial and non-financial. The use of simplistic indicators of cost-benefit based on aggregated costs and outcome measures in this instance would neither be a helpful nor accurate reflection of the true benefits of the NPLN. It is not possible from the data available to conduct a quantitative cost benefit analysis of the NPLN. Given the complex nature of the initiative, as shown in Figure 2 above, it is not possible to reduce either the program inputs or outcomes into separately identifiable costs or benefits. Indeed the relationship between many of the program inputs are indirect, long

term, and diffuse. Attempting to demonstrate causality between any of the program inputs and their eventual impact on measured student outcomes is problematic, and even if feasible, perhaps undesirable. As will be argued below, the evaluation suggests that it has been the interaction between the elements that has contributed to the success of the initiative.

That said, it is clear that some of the interventions are more costly than others in their demands for release time for professional learning, purchase price of resources, ongoing need for consumables, and so on. It is also obvious that the scope of whole school programs such as Reading to Learn is much greater (and therefore lower per student cost) than individual interventions like Multilit, which are generally intended to be one-on-one withdrawal programs. Despite these cost differentials, it is not possible to say that any particular program was more or less beneficial on cost grounds, as the choice of the particular intervention should be driven by the needs of the schools at the time. More expensive options including those that are more labour intensive may be more appropriate in some circumstances than cheaper options.

Despite this, the principals interviewed for the evaluation were unanimous in their belief that the NPLN had provided good value for money. They believed that while it may have been resource intensive in the preparation phase, because the emphasis was on building capacity, the benefits would continue to flow well after the funding period had ceased. The sustainability phase of this evaluation will test these assertions further.

Principals commented that the structure and guiding principles for the NPLN had allowed resources to be used more effectively. As an example, they pointed to the fact that the targeted approach to professional learning, where the whole school staff attended the same activities, was much more effective than when individual teachers pursued their own interests. The overall expenditure on professional learning may have been similar in both models, but the former leads to a more consistent approach to teaching across the school and increased professional dialogue, while the latter often has no effect beyond the individual classroom. Likewise, purchase of resources using NPLN money was more often decided on the basis of evidence of effectiveness in meeting school needs and used by teachers across the school, whereas in the past, such purchases were often made on the basis of the passing enthusiasm of individuals.

Principals pointed out storerooms that were full of kits and folders of material that had been purchased for teachers who had long left the school, and which had no current place in the scope and sequence of learning being developed for students. In addition, examples were given where resources already in the school, such as electronic whiteboards, were now being used more effectively than in the past. In this way, schools have been able to leverage from the NPLN professional learning to achieve greater benefit across the curriculum, not only in literacy and numeracy.

What must also be considered is the opportunity cost of investing in initiatives like the NPLN, that is, what else the funds could have been spent on and how else the funding could have been used to achieve these desired outcomes. At the school level, it is legitimate to ask how

the time and energy invested in literacy and numeracy have impacted on the curriculum as a whole, and whether this has been beneficial or not. To a certain extent, the opportunity cost is a moot point, as comparisons with other approaches taken at other times or other jurisdictions tend to be contextually bound. For example, in smaller jurisdictions it may have been appropriate to either mandate a particular intervention program as the quantum of funds available to them does not allow for the establishment of an infrastructure such as that in NSW.

The best evidence in relation to the issue of effectiveness of alternatives comes from questions asked of principals and teachers in NPLN schools about what they would suggest be done differently next time, and what if any elements they would suggest leaving out of the overall design. The answer to this question, in both survey responses and case study interviews, was to change nothing. The view was strongly asserted that all of the elements were important for the overall success of the initiative. This did not mean that particular schools would not have chosen a different intervention program with the benefit of hindsight but supported the notion of inclusion of an intervention program to provide a focus for effort across the school.

It should be noted that the issue of cost effectiveness was a high priority in the management of the initiative as a whole in NSW. Overall administrative expenses were kept within the 20 per cent limit required by the bilateral agreement. As argued elsewhere in the report, this modest investment in strategic and cross-sectoral coordination, communication and planning was pivotal in giving the NSW direction, linking the reform priorities in to concrete activities. This consideration of costs drove decision making about the particular intervention programs chosen in some locations. A primary consideration in rural and regional settings was achieving economies of scale by using similar programs which could be feasibly supported by consultants and in which inter-school cooperation could be encouraged. In these circumstances, it was not possible to adequately support a wide range of choice of intervention program.

At the school level, the regional, diocesan and sector facilitators were instrumental in fostering consideration of cost-effectiveness in school spending by challenging principals to justify why they had made the decisions they had taken. The inclusion of a wider range of school staff on whole school planning and evaluation committees also tended to make expenditure decisions more transparent in the majority of schools. While the regional facilitators were no longer employed in this role after cessation of the funding period, the legacy of the model of more informed decision making remains.

When considering the issue of the cost effectiveness of the NPLN from a strategic perspective and in comparison to other possible approaches, it is important to remember that the data collected for this evaluation (for example Figure 10) shows that the NPLN has had a significant impact on school culture. This outcome is one that should also provide lasting benefit and ultimately lead to improved student learning outcomes. This benefit of the NPLN is tangible but not easily measurable. Cultural change of the kind and magnitude is not usually evident in approaches that focus on the individual student in isolation from

mainstream practice. The NPLN has shown that both models (which are indeed part of a continuum of pedagogical strategies) are needed for sustained effect.

Cultural change, as a precursor for school improvement, is similarly not usually found in intervention models that target students outside the mainstream school setting. Such tuition style models can be effective in the short term, but evidence that they lead to long term change is less clear, and by their nature they do not address the causes of reading or numeracy failure in the first place. If, as Hattie (2009) suggests, teacher quality is the most significant variable under the control of schools that influences student learning, then approaches that target teacher competence and confidence are likely to produce better long term outcomes. Whether the short duration of the NPLN was sufficient to embed the positive changes observed in this evaluation is an issue that requires further investigation.

3.5 Overall effectiveness of the initiative: In Summary

While there is emerging evidence of changed classroom pedagogy, of equal importance has been the change in overall approach to teaching identified by stakeholders. It has been noted that the NPLN has provided schools with a stronger sense of purpose for literacy and numeracy, and has made it more possible for them to adopt a team focus with common goals, rather than teachers working as individuals. The interviews conducted with principals and other leaders of NPLN schools to date suggests that teachers in these schools are now more likely to meet on a weekly/fortnightly basis as a team to plan and review progress. Descriptions of current practice and case studies presented by NPLN schools at the 2011 Sydney *Celebrating Success, Sharing Change* conference also reinforce the more frequent prevalence of such practices. Teacher and student enthusiasm has been reported to be much greater as a consequence and the quality of learning has noticeably improved.

Teachers are now more able to support each other – even new teachers have benefited through exposure to the same professional learning as other staff members. This has been further encouraged by the NPLN helping principals to give a focus to staff professional development and provided a focus for communicating to the community and to set goals and celebrate success. It has also provided a framework to talk to staff about pedagogy. Staff meetings have changed, for example, from discussion on administrative matters to a focus on professional learning centred on improving teaching practice.

In the majority of schools visited, school leaders and teachers interviewed noted that teachers in these schools are now much more confident in their use of the new pedagogy. This has come about as a result of professional learning. (It was noted that the professional development provided by facilitators was of a very high quality and targeted to particular school needs). There is also now more professional conversation and sharing of ideas among teachers. In general, the specific programs and activities have been new to teachers, and have required extensive professional learning—a useful way of achieving consistency in pedagogy across the school.

Not only has the NPLN assisted to increase dialogue between teachers, it has also increased dialogue between schools. A common strategy adopted by schools was to form clusters that

enabled pooling of funds, for example to allow employment of teacher leaders for professional development, which may have been beyond the resources of any one school. In addition, there has been some interest from non-NPLN schools in learning from the experiences of those that have adopted new practices and programs as part of their participation in the NPLN. It is also noteworthy that the majority of NPLN schools are now citing the increasing use of a common language about literacy or numeracy being employed by both teachers and students.

From the teachers' perspective, an advantage of the initiative is that they now have a common understanding of the teaching of literacy (thanks also to the use of evidence based research findings in the professional development) – they believe in what they are doing and are seeing success at student level. Teachers are talking about learning and student achievement in a positive way.

The teacher focus groups conducted thus far suggest that, for some teachers in NPLN schools, there has also been a significant change in the way that they view students in the classroom. For example, there is now greater understanding of techniques for responding to individual differences in students' learning styles and stage of development. Teachers interviewed said that individual pathways are now used more frequently in follow up to whole class instruction and support staff were used in the classroom to enhance this trend.

The increased monitoring and assessment of student progress and the use of individualised learning plans has allowed teachers to more effectively tailor their approaches to the needs of individual students.

While such practices may have been common in many schools and classrooms, including NPLN schools for many years, stakeholders expressed the view that the basis for such practice was implicitly understood by teachers, rather than the consequence of an explicit, planned and coordinated approach. The major difference from past practice in many NPLN schools noted by stakeholders, is the strategic and holistic nature of the approaches now being adopted, drawing together elements of good practice. While the use of specific programs remains an important component of practice, use of such programs was reported to now be made on a more considered basis, and be part of a suite of responses rather than the sole or main response to student under-performance.

Systems and sectors have made a consistent effort during the NPLN to ensure that all schools understood the fact that the three priority areas for action must work together, rather than as discrete areas of activity. All communication with schools has stressed this focus. Systems and sectors have also worked with facilitators to reinforce this message, e.g. through conferences and also built it into the professional development courses.

An important aspect of the NPLN has been the emphasis placed on engagement of the whole school community in the development process, rather than focusing on building the capacity of individuals. Stakeholders working directly with groups of NPLN schools report that they have observed that the implementation of the NPLN has also been achieved on a whole school basis, and involved school executive teams and teaching staff, and in some instances casual, temporary and support staff, enabling cultural change to be instituted.

This was also evident in the case studies and reports presented at the 2011 *Sharing Success, Embedding Change* conference. In these presentations, as well as during the school visits, it was frequently noted that in previous attempts to improve literacy and numeracy, new programs had often been adopted by one or a few teachers. While individual changes may have been supported by other members of the school community, this approach did not require a commitment to holistic change. It was commonly reported in the NPLN schools visited, for example, that all teachers were now using a common approach, using the same pedagogical model as part of their whole-school plan for literacy or numeracy.

Previous programs were said by the teachers from NPLN schools interviewed to have operated more as "add-ons" in their classrooms to existing modes of teaching literacy or numeracy. The capacity to train all staff in the use of a particular program, such as Accelerated Literacy, has been one of the factors that has facilitated change in core literacy practice as a consequence of NPLN funding.

Drawing from all of the data available thus far, it is possible to identify several factors which appear to have made an important contribution to the successful uptake of new teaching practices.

Staff attitudes

Firstly, teachers have readily embraced the philosophy of NPLN because of their attitude and desire to help their students. It has been readily observed in the participating schools that the majority of staff have commenced the learning journey and are already well ahead of where they were in 2010. The match between systemic and sector policies and directions was also said to have been important in providing philosophical or theoretical alignment with the NPLN objectives. Similarly important has been the emphasis given to making explicit the research base upon which the strategies have been based. It was noted that when staff understand the rationale behind changes to teaching practices, and are provided with a research base that supports this as best practice, they are generally willing to attempt change. In the schools visited thus far, school leaders frequently expressed the view that most of their teachers have welcomed the initiative and have been further encouraged by their observation of early signs of improvement in student learning and behaviour.

Targeted support

Secondly, the high levels of support provided through NPLN funding has also been critical in facilitating pedagogical change. The appointment of classroom instructional leaders – skilled teachers who have received additional training in literacy or numeracy pedagogy and tasked with coordinating and facilitating the implementation of new literacy or numeracy approaches in their school or cluster of schools – was also very important. Most of the schools in NPLN did not have someone in this role previously. This strategy required a high level of investment in the initial stages, for example in identifying what these leaders were expected to do, training them so they had the skills necessary for coaching and mentoring, understanding best practice etc. These leaders will also have a strong role in ensuring the sustainability of the gains made by the NPLN. These classroom leaders are a strong resource developed from the initiative, and while they were always a part of the intended

implementation model, their impact has been stronger than expected, according to stakeholders.

Enhanced accountability

Thirdly, the strong level of accountability built into the initiative, through establishment of firm targets and tied incentive payments at a state level, have provided an imperative for action, which has elevated the priority of the reforms and requiring staff at both school and systemic levels to take direct action. Regional and sector facilitators have played a strong role in fostering this sense of accountability, ensuring continuous attention was given to all required aspects of implementation. Strong accountability at school level has also been facilitated by provision of tools and knowledge to assist schools to conduct more effective self-evaluations, allowing them to better monitor the effectiveness of their implementation efforts.

Alignment of NPLN with system/sector and school goals

As noted above, the NPLN gained acceptance in the schools largely because the goals of the NPLN were in alignment with system/school goals and were intellectually and operationally consistent with existing policy directions. Without this alignment, the reform process would have been much more difficult. The NPLN allowed schools to progress much further on the reform trajectory than they might have otherwise.

Limitations

While the experience of the vast majority of schools participating in the NPLN has been positive, mention was made of some perceived limitations. One area that has not developed as strongly as desired during the NPLN in the schools visited thus far has been increased engagement of parents/wider school community in supporting student learning. Schools have typically promoted their NPLN activities to parents in newsletters, P&C meetings and so on. Some have conducted information sessions for parents in relation to how parents can support their children's literacy and numeracy learning, and the particular application of the programs adopted under the NPLN. Some schools have also said that they have trained some parents as volunteer tutors, for example, to assist them to implement MultLit. These activities are not typically different from the ways that schools have attempted to engage parents in the past, and (at least in the schools visited thus far), not considered to have been more effective than previous efforts. However, all of the schools visited acknowledged that this was an area in which further work was needed.

All schools visited have identified the substantial investment of teacher time that the initiative has required. The additional funding from the NPLN has made purchase of release time possible, but some schools find it more difficult than others to employ casual relief staff, and some indicated that it will be challenging for them to maintain the present level of commitment from within their own resources. However, while demands and expectations have been high, it has also been a common perception that the investment has been worthwhile given the results achieved.

Focus Area 4: How have schools approached sustainability, resilience and transferability?

4.1 How have schools planned for sustainability after SSNP funding has ceased?

The issue of sustainability of the National Partnerships initiative has been front of mind in the daily deliberations of some schools. In the discussions with principals, some indicate that, cognizant that program funding would not be internal, they planned strategically from the outset of the initiative to maximize the potential for sustainability once funding had ceased. Several principals identified the importance of planning to ensure that the initiative remained a priority, accompanied by ongoing capacity building of staff and the implementation of appropriate longer term structures (e.g., whole school approaches to pedagogy in numeracy) irrespective of staff turnover as the fundamental elements of sustainable cultural change. By adopting this approach, some principals remain confident that with appropriate in-school levels of support, the impact of the initiative will be sustained over the next few years. Similar results were also achieved for the importance of adopting a whole school approach towards professional learning with over 91 per cent of schools suggesting that this will also contribute to future sustainability.

These anecdotal comments, repeated several times over in discussions with principals during case study data gathering, are also partly reinforced by quantitative data from the surveys. A closer analysis of the data indicates that those elements most likely to have a positive impact on sustainability may be grouped according to both leadership/whole school initiatives as well as key teacher actions/behaviours.

It would appear that the adoption of a whole school approach to literacy or numeracy planning is seen to significantly enhance the potential for sustainability. Indeed, as Table 23 indicates, over 96 per cent of those schools surveyed agreed with this proposition. Furthermore, at a leadership level, the provision of identified leadership positions for coordination purposes of literacy or numeracy also appears to be a strong facilitator for future sustainability (81.7%).

Of great importance also, and endorsed by the vast majority of schools was the importance of enhanced instructional leadership, with more than 90 per cent of schools suggesting that this would facilitate sustainability. It is noteworthy that many of the schools included in the case study discussions have clearly addressed each of the above three factors and are confident that value from the initiative will be sustained over the next 2 to 3 years as a result of the principal's earlier strategic actions.

At the classroom level several key actions were also identified that had the potential to contribute to enhanced sustainability. Foremost among these was the teachers' constant focus on data driven planning for both literacy and numeracy. It has been most encouraging, in discussions with teachers, to listen to the ways in which they are now able to interpret student test results (not just NAPLAN) in a way that has clear implications for future planning for individual students as well as groups of students. Over 96 per cent of schools surveyed

cited this element as being pivotal to future sustainability. Indeed, as a key tool for cultural change, the approach to data as an essential tool for planning is now seen by many teachers as being a key aspect of the planning process for their students.

Similar results were also achieved for enhanced teaching practices for literacy and numeracy learning, with over 98 per cent of schools surveyed identifying this element as a key facilitator.

At a personal level, many teachers have been delighted with enhanced skills that they have achieved from participation in this initiative and appear to be strongly committed to using their new found pedagogies for the benefit of students over the longer term. One experienced teacher described her enthusiasm in the following way:

"Being involved in this program has been an absolute revelation for me. After so many years in teaching, I really thought I had it all worked out but this program has opened up a whole new set of horizons for me and given me a new lease of life for teaching literacy. I've tried many of the ideas given to me through professional development and I now know they work. I will continue to use them in my literacy teaching but also can see how they can be applied in other areas too. This initiative from the Department has been a real blessing."

In building pedagogical skills, teachers have also been appreciative of the structured funded programs that have been provided as part of the overall initiative. Acknowledging potential for ongoing cost with related resources etc, schools have also cited this area as an element that can contribute in the future to sustainability of the project's impact.

Table 23: Anticipated sustainability of NPLN elements in participating schools over the next 2-3 years

	Very likely to sustain (%)	Likely to sustain (%)	Unlikely to sustain (%)	Not sustainable (%)
A whole school approach to literacy or numeracy planning	45.0	51.7	1.7	1.7
Identified leadership positions to coordinate literacy or numeracy	26.7	55.0	6.7	11.7
Specific programs introduced with NLNP funding, e.g. TOWN or Focus on Reading	33.3	41.7	15.0	10.0
Data driven planning for literacy or numeracy	60.0	36.7	3.3	0.0
Enhanced teaching practices for literacy or numeracy learning	48.3	50.0	1.7	0.0
Enhanced instructional leadership	45.8	45.8	8.5	0.0
A whole-school approach to teacher professional learning	50.0	41.7	6.7	1.7

While Table 23 above clearly highlights those factors that may contribute to sustainability of the impact of the initiative in the near and mid-term future, Table 24 below highlights those

issues that could readily inhibit effective sustainability. Importantly, the quantitative data within Table 24, substantiated by discussions in teacher focus groups highlights that the transition towards sustainability is still at an embryonic stage. In those scenarios where sustainability has been demonstrated, many of the following characteristics are evident:

- the new culture from the change initiative is well embedded within the organisation, that is, “the way we do things around here” is well understood, accepted and part of teachers daily routines
- teachers feel confident and competent to be able to undertake the required tasks with decreasing levels of support
- systems and structures are in place in the school’s organisation to ensure that with turnover of staff, including the school principal, neither the routines nor the culture will be challenged
- tools are in place to regularly monitor the impact of the change and staff are motivated to constantly make the change even better.

The data in Table 24 clearly highlights the impact that would occur should there be a changeover of staff or school leader: in both cases over 70 per cent of those participants surveyed believe that sustainability would be inhibited to either a moderate or great extent. This clearly indicates that there is still a strong reliance on both instructional leadership and the capabilities of existing staff in order to implement the initiative and that in their absence there is a lack of certainty about continuity of the initiative. The conclusion that may be drawn is that ongoing support may be required by systems and sectors, for both teachers and instructional leaders in the short to medium term, to ensure that new approaches are well embedded within the school’s curriculum, accompanying structures and processes and its overall culture. It would appear that without these elements in place the future of the initiative is still not certain.

In a similar way the data also highlights the reliance that teachers still have on the resources needed to implement the initiative (85 per cent of those surveyed suggested that changed levels of resources could negatively impact on sustainability either to a moderate or great extent). One conclusion that may be drawn from this finding is that there is still a strong reliance on the resources that are provided in the initiative and a consequent lack of confidence about the continuity of the initiative should those resources be withdrawn. Such dependence does not promote effective sustainability of the initiative in both the medium and longer term.

The survey data showed that approximately 80 per cent of survey participants suggested that “competing demands and priorities” could negatively impact sustainability over the next 2 to 3 years. This finding would suggest that should other priorities emerge, the ongoing focus on the literacy/numeracy initiative could very well be challenged and lose its focus in the future. If the new initiative really reflects “the way we do things around here”, competing demands generally would not challenge in any significant way the sustainability of the initiative under discussion.

While the data in the next phase of this evaluation will clearly identify the need for ongoing levels of support to ensure sustainability, it is important to note the potential negative impact that some of these factors highlighted in Table 24 may have, particularly in the short term, on the sustainability of literacy or numeracy both in the classroom and in the schools of participating teachers.

Table 24: Perceived inhibitors to the sustainability of elements of the NPLN in schools in the next 2-3 years

	Not at all (%)	Little extent (%)	Moderate extent (%)	Great extent (%)
School leadership turnover	1.7	25.4	49.2	22.0
Teaching staff turnover	0.0	30.0	36.7	33.3
Changed levels of resources beyond the National Partnership funding period	0.0	15.0	35.0	50.0
Competing demands and priorities	0.0	28.8	42.4	28.8
Student mobility	5.0	45.0	35.0	13.3
Changed demographics of the school community	8.3	53.3	25.0	10.0

Despite the findings highlighted above in Table 24, the data below clearly highlights a range of strategies currently being employed by participating schools to facilitate sustainability in the near future. It is noteworthy at the outset that the issue of sustainability for several schools involved in the case study analysis has been a priority since initial planning of the initiative. These schools have ensured that appropriate structures, values and cultural changes were initiated from the commencement of the initiative that would contribute directly to sustainability. A comment representative of the perception of many principals is as follows:

"We have been involved in programs like this before that have involved funding for a limited amount of time, in fact just enough time for schools to become dependent on the level of funding. With the National Partnerships, we were determined that this would not happen again. It was made clear to us that the level of financial and resource support would not go on forever and we have planned accordingly from the time we developed our first School Plan to ensure that certain things were built in over the three years, so that when funding ceased we were not left in the lurch.

My staff were very aware of the situation and so we have devoted a large amount of our NP funds to teacher capacity building, and the implementation of policies and structures that ensure that when it reached the inevitable stage of no more funding, we were well positioned to carry on without the ongoing support of the Government for this particular program. We believe we have now been successful and even if we lost some of our existing staff, we now have a critical mass of teachers who are not only committed to the new pedagogy, but

also have the skills to be able to implement the new approach and believe in it to such an extent that they would help new colleagues to do the same."

Table 25 highlights significant steps that schools have taken in an attempt to build sustainability into this initiative. Similar to the principal's statement outlined above, teacher capacity building has been a key feature of the majority of schools, with all schools surveyed using this step to wisely facilitate sustainability. Similarly, over 98 per cent of schools surveyed also undertook to build a culture of using student outcomes data as a key aspect of school planning. Many schools have generated such significant cultural change through teacher capacity building.

These two steps alone augur well for ongoing sustainability of the initiative, should they be continued. Facilitated by the development of in-school resources and documentation (100% of schools surveyed), a platform is well established the future of the initiative and it may be assumed that the vast majority of schools, with such high percentages, have all been involved in undertaking such tasks.

In ensuring the ongoing continuity of the initiative, leadership has been shown to be a key ingredient for success. For this reason the explicit identification of NLNP approaches as a whole school priority in school policy documents has occurred in over 85 per cent of schools being surveyed. It has been clearly acknowledged through other data in this report that such an approach not only builds commitment among all members of the school community, but also ensures a more consistent approach to pedagogy. Both would appear to be key ingredients that facilitate short-term and mid-term sustainability of the initiative. More specifically, the data highlighted above throughout the report has also consistently emphasised the importance of the role of an in-school facilitator/coordinator to assist, guide and lead teachers towards implementation of the initiative. Importantly, participating schools perceive the ongoing importance of this role with over 87 per cent of surveyed schools, using funds to train in-school facilitators/ coordinators for the purpose, to ensure continuity toward sustainability.

Other factors that have contributed toward sustainability included the following:

- training of a whole school improvement team (77.2%)
- professional learning for non-teaching staff (64.9%)
- engaging volunteers or community support (58.2%)
- planning for teacher mobility (67.3%)
- identifying alternative sources of funding for activities made possible by NPLN funding (74.5%).

Each of those strategies listed immediately above has contributed in some way towards sustainability of the initiative and should therefore not be ignored as possible tools for facilitating future success. However the data relating to engaging parents/carers from the Table below as a tool for building sustainability presents as possibly the most challenging of the strategies presented. While 80.3 per cent of schools surveyed have used this particular

tool, the challenge remains as to how schools can do that most effectively to ensure that parent engagement initiatives continue to support the school and their children.

Table 25: Strategies used by schools to promote sustainability of the NPLN approaches and outcomes

	Used to promote sustainability	Planned for later in 2011	Not used to promote sustainability
Purchasing of teaching and learning resources	87.9	6.9	5.2
Training of an in-school facilitator/ coordinator for literacy or numeracy	81.4	6.8	11.9
Training of a whole school improvement team	68.4	8.8	22.8
Professional learning for teaching staff	91.4	8.6	0.0
Professional learning for non-teaching staff	59.6	5.3	35.1
Development of in-school resources and documentation	86.2	13.8	0.0
Explicit identification of NLNP approaches as a whole school priority in school documents	71.9	14.0	14.0
Building a culture of using student outcomes data as a key aspect of school planning	93.2	5.1	1.7
Engaging volunteers or community support	41.8	16.4	41.8
Engaging with parents/carers	57.1	23.2	19.6
Planning for teacher mobility	41.8	25.5	32.7
Identifying alternative sources of funding for activities made possible by NPLN funding	50.9	23.6	25.5

While many schools discussed important strategies relating to ongoing communication to help parents support their children in literacy and numeracy, this had not been planned in the majority of schools. Although school leaders are acutely aware of the importance of building partnerships with parents/carers, many are struggling for ideas about other methodologies that can be employed to ensure that parents are not only aware of, but actively involved in their children's education. One in-school coordinator described the situation in the following way during case study interviews:

"Part of my role in relation to National Partnerships is to help parents to become better equipped to work with their children in out of school hours and to support what our teachers are doing in the classroom. Parents now have very busy lives and find it hard to get the time to come up to the school to attend school-based functions, specifically designed to help them with their children, e.g., in literacy and numeracy. We have sent home information sheets and even put ideas on the school website. We have opened up discussion forums that parents can use to share ideas and discuss issues and ask questions, but none of these appears to hit the spot for most of their parents. We would be keen to hear how other schools are doing this task successfully."

It should be noted that one of the products to be developed from Phase 2 of this evaluation is an online resource that will be designed to provide teachers and school leaders in a range of circumstances access to the experiences of successful schools.

4.2 Have successful strategies been replicated in other contexts, e.g. in other KLAS (Key Learning Areas)?

There is some evidence that replication has occurred in many of the participating schools at two different levels. In the first instance teachers report that school leadership teams (including the principal), more consistently exhibit increasing collaborative and democratic approaches to decision-making, particularly in relation to curriculum issues and related areas of daily concern to teachers. These teachers report that consultation occurs on a more regular basis and that, for example, staff meetings are more interactive and less characterised by information delivery sessions as they had been prior to the initiative.

In addition, some principals have obviously recognised the importance of proactively leading the school, particularly on educational issues, in contrast to supporting teachers from a reactive perspective. One example of this behaviour is where several principals have now mandated that the first in-class session of the day be totally uninterrupted on-task time for students in relation to their learning in the basic skills areas. They have seen the benefits that have accrued for students from participating in this initiative and have now mandated the morning learning time as an uninterrupted learning period for students.

Classroom teachers also report that, where relevant, they more consistently engage in what they describe as an “explicit teaching” approach to their pedagogy. Participation in the initiative has ensured that they understand the importance of identifying at the outset key learning outcomes for students, based on ongoing data and specific student results. Moreover they have adopted an approach to pedagogy that directly targets key learning points, with appropriate resources to ensure that learning is focused to maximise the opportunity for students.

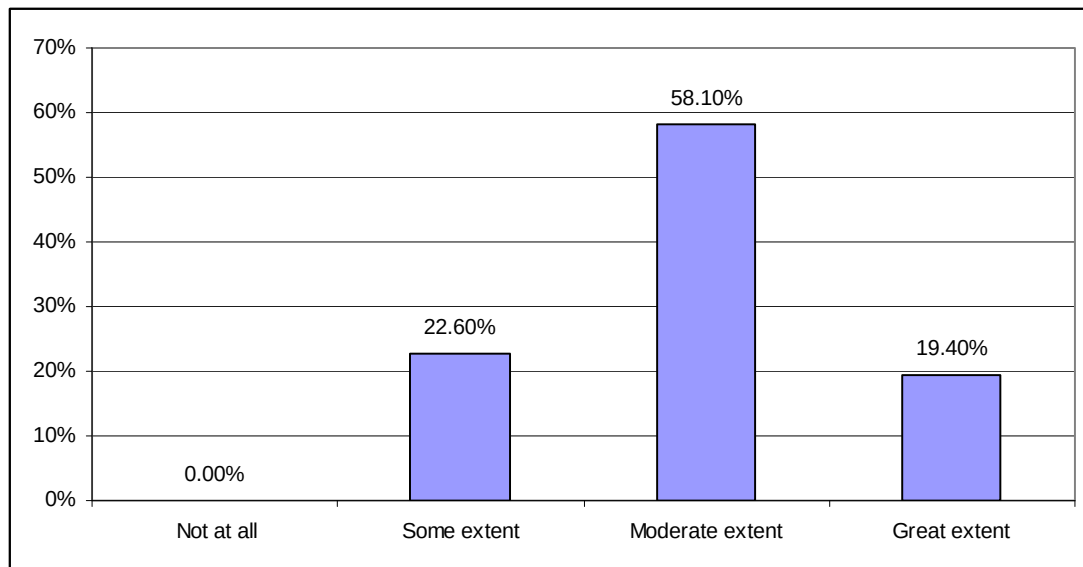
In terms of generalising learnings from the current project, teachers consistently enjoy the opportunity to collaboratively plan not just literacy and/or numeracy but are now actively engaged in developing cross curriculum themes and units across a wide range of key learning areas. Many teachers identified that this is a learning opportunity for themselves and are therefore very willing to share information with their colleagues because of the benefits that they enjoyed themselves.

Such sharing across key learning areas is also occurring in relation to teaching resources. More rarely however are teachers taking the opportunity to engage in team teaching or peer observation as a valuable professional learning opportunity. This comment is made in light of the fact that several principals consider this to be an important professional learning strategy that they are seeking to achieve with teachers during the current school year.

Each of the above comments identified during case study visits and discussions with principals is clearly vindicated from the more generic data that was supplied through the surveys, where over 77 per cent of those surveyed identified that there had already been

impacts in other key learning areas (see Figure 28 below). While not cited as part of this data, some principals did indicate however that such transferability requires active support and leadership by members of the school executive team. In some schools this has involved structured sessions in staff meetings when members of the school executive team engage in dialogue with teachers at Stage level talking about key learnings and how they can be transferred to other key learning areas.

Figure 28: Extent to which the implementation of the NPLN had impacts in other Key Learning Areas



A frequent focus of discussion in the sessions has been the use of data as a starting point for planning, including its adequacy to make informed decisions about students' future learning. Many principals acknowledge that it is still early days in terms of teachers habitually using student data as a starting point for planning, but there is recognition of an enduring cultural change through which members of the school executive can support staff.

Focus Area 5: Lessons learned from the initiative

While final conclusions for this evaluation will need to take into account the findings of the investigation of the sustainability phase of the project, it is possible to draw some preliminary conclusions about systemic implications of the NPLN experience. These observations may have relevance for future initiatives of this kind.

It should be noted at the outset that the NPLN implementation in NSW was a very significant undertaking. Within this context, the importance of the support provided by the systems and sectors at the highest level should not be under-estimated. This high level support gave credibility, legitimacy and priority to the NSW implementation in all sectors, enabling it to be seen as relevant to the local context, rather than a standardised program imposed from outside. The fact that the initiative was conceived as, and adopted as, a genuine partnership at a system and sector level was important in ensuring that implementation proceeded in a manner that respected both the letter and spirit of the Bilateral Agreement. This spirit of partnership, being evident in state-level processes and communication, was carried through in this same spirit to school level, ensuring that implementation was not an exercise in compliance with external requirements, but seized at all levels as a genuine opportunity to achieve common objectives. Indeed, the alignment between the COAG reform priorities and current NSW system/sector policies was a further determinant of the success of the partnership referred to above.

Second, the high level of cross-sectoral cooperation was similarly important in ensuring that the needs of students at risk of low literacy and/or numeracy outcomes in all school sectors were able to be addressed. The spirit of cooperation was evident in all phases of implementation, from planning to evaluation. The success of the cross-sectoral cooperation appears to owe much to the personal contributions of the individuals involved, but was also empowered by the formal cross-sectoral governance structures and the genuine commitment at a system/sector level noted above.

Third, the scope and scale of the NPLN and amount of funds available in NSW appears to have had a significant bearing on the extent of change possible, and in turn, impact on student learning outcomes. The intensity of effort seen in NSW may not have been possible in smaller states and territories (with a concomitant impact on the achievement of desired outcomes). The national evaluation of the Smarter Schools National Partnership may shed some further light on this issue. However, preliminary interviews with NSW system and sector stakeholders suggest that the scale of the NSW initiative provided for the development of a significant infrastructure to support implementation. The extent to which this may have contributed to the success of the reform strategy will be further investigated in later stages of the evaluation.

It would appear that this infrastructural support was critical to the success of the initiative. Stakeholders have commented that it has not been one element, but the totality of the overall strategy that has underpinned success. At the same time, achieving integration across the various elements has not been a matter of chance. The scope of funds in NSW

allowed for employment of sufficient people, and at a sufficiently senior level to allow for high quality planning, coordination, liaison with the Commonwealth government, extensive and accurate reporting of progress, among other things. It has been a dedicated effort, not an add-on to other responsibilities.

The size of the project has also been important in providing scope for the development of new resources (such as TOWN), which may not have otherwise happened. (This issue is discussed further below). Likewise, the amount of funds available at school level has been important in allowing access to professional learning on a scale that is uncommon; for the purchase of release time to allow for planning and reflection, and for purchase of resources that may not have been contemplated previously.

Fourth, there was a high degree of fidelity between the conceptualisation of the initiative, as expressed in the NSW Implementation Plan, and the reality of implementation. While the strong accountability built into the initiative through target setting and incentive payments was viewed as a positive feature, in situations such as this there is always the possibility that the incentives will have perverse effects. For example, schools might be encouraged to attempt to raise NAPLAN scores by “teaching to the test” rather than genuinely attempting pedagogical change. That this did not happen in NSW is testimony to the support and direction of systems/ sectors and leadership of the initiative by the individuals concerned, including the work of the regional/diocesan/sector facilitators in ensuring the processes (e.g. in conducting the school self-evaluations) were conducted as intended.

Fifth, the fidelity noted above was only possible through thorough advance planning by the NSW systems and sectors. The investment in time and effort for this upfront planning is great, and impacts on the timeliness of start-up, but ultimately pays dividends. The lessons for systems and sectors from this experience is that it is far better to have a well thought out and coherent project plan than to accept easy options.

Last, again as a consequence of the thoroughness of planning, it would appear that the NSW implementation has benefited from a great deal of in-kind support from all systems and sectors, as well as the resources developed and made directly possible through NPLN funds. Examples of this in-kind support noted here include the contribution of EMSAD in the development of the NPLN Assessment Bank of student outcomes test items. Other examples can be cited from the other sectors. The implication from this experience is that initiatives such as NPLN have to be accepted as having system-wide importance, not an activity on the periphery that is “owned” by a particular group of individuals. Initiatives of this scale have implications for a wide variety of stakeholders in different locations, which should be explicit rather than reliant on good will.

There have been some specific areas identified during the data gathering that may have relevance for any future initiatives of this kind. These are summarised below.

i. Financial management

The level of financial accountability and the relatively large amount of funds made available through the National Partnerships was found to present some challenges for some schools,

especially those that had little prior experience with financial management on this scale. Several principals interviewed noted challenges for their administrative staff in the early stages of implementation of the initiative. These challenges had been overcome by the conclusion of the funding period, and questions were quickly resolved when referred to the regional facilitators or state office staff. However it was noted that these issues could be avoided in any future initiatives of this kind with greater information about requirements for financial accountability in early briefings for principals.

ii. Role as Principal/NPLN coordinator

In identifying the key lessons to be learned for the principals of participating schools, it should be noted that efforts to enhance student learning achievement are not a new phenomenon in most schools, NPLN schools included. Yet in contrast to previous, often *ad hoc*, attempts by principals to lift student standards, the National Partnership initiative represents an effort and a scale that has been reported to be quite unfamiliar to many school leaders. In the case of this initiative, the key outcome for many school leaders has been a focus on school-wide cultural change, which has been rarely attempted in the past in many literacy or numeracy interventions. In addition, the level of structured system and/or sectoral support had not been experienced by many principals prior to engaging in the NPLN initiative. In particular, the level of financial, physical and resource support offered to schools pleasantly surprised many principals and their teaching colleagues.

Despite the scope and scale of this initiative, several lessons can be learnt for systems and sectors should a similar initiative be repeated. At the outset, systems and sectors wisely recognised that school leaders would be at the heart of the cultural change and implementation process and therefore they needed targeted and ongoing support, through professional learning opportunities and “at the elbow” support in schools. It has been consistently reported that such support was not only appreciated by school leaders but found to be extremely valuable. Moreover structured learning sessions gave school leaders a very clear perspective of the bigger picture of the initiative and the nature of the task ahead as well as their particular responsibilities in ensuring the delivery of key project outcomes.

As with any school-wide initiative, and supported by contemporary research on good leadership in school practice, it was imperative that school leaders engaged and supported staff in a collaborative manner around key decisions concerning the implementation journey in each school if they were to expect staff commitment. Many principals undertook this effectively with pleasing results in terms of staff commitment and enhanced development.

In addition however, several principals have reported that specific advice was provided through system/sectoral professional learning opportunities, about the nature of the leadership style that they should adopt in the early stages of the initiative. Due to the fact that many schools were walking on a journey into a somewhat unknown future, it was explained to principals about the importance of exercising direct, but not authoritarian, leadership in the early stages of the initiative to ensure that staff and the broader community were clear about the focus, the direction and their responsibilities in relation to the National Partnerships initiative.

It was further explained that once a sense of clarity had become evident among staff, this signalled the opportunity to begin to become more collaborative and consultative in their leadership style with staff. These principals clearly appreciated the very specific and targeted nature of support offered to them by system/sectoral leadership sessions. Indeed a valuable lesson can be learned concerning the very specific nature of leadership support that principals required in ensuring project success.

In many participating schools, principals reported that they had a better understanding of what the term "instructional leadership" meant in practice, and felt more empowered to undertake this role. They better understand, for example, the importance of actively providing targeted support to teachers. This concept of leadership embraces the notion of "leadership density" or distributed leadership, in which the entire executive team, and indeed other teachers throughout the school have a role to play. In this model, instructional leadership is not the province of a single operator but allows the talents and abilities of others to be harnessed, creating greater ownership of the innovation and enhancing sustainability in the process. The leadership provided by the in-school coordinator, for example, was cited as a key ingredient for success, because it enabled classroom practitioners to regularly interact with such respected people on the staff, resulting in enhanced levels of support and the reduction of tensions and conflict that can sometimes arise when teachers are asked to move into the unknown.

The role of internal "champion" for reform of literacy and numeracy teaching undertaken by the coordinators was important in maintaining the momentum of the initiative at school level. It was readily apparent that in-school coordinators require high level interpersonal skills and the ability to manage organisational change within the context of mutual trust with staff, as well as technical expertise in literacy or numeracy. The systematic professional support offered to the in-school coordinators by systems/sectors was also a major contributor to their ongoing success. This level of operational leadership provided through established and identified positions of responsibility like the in-school coordinator role would appear to be essential in future initiatives of this kind.

In addition to the insights identified above, it should be stressed that the opportunities for the NPLN schools to progress further towards consistent best practices would have been unlikely without the high level of financial support provided. Without this level of funding, or the flexibility to apply available funds at the school level, it would not have been possible, for example, for principals to provide time release for teachers to reflect on particular actions that they were undertaking with their colleagues and respond to identified successes and emerging challenges.

iii. School planning

Enhanced school-level planning was both a key objective and achieved outcome for the initiative. Considerable efforts were directed towards embedding the concept of evidence-based decision making as the heart of the planning process from the very outset of the initiative's implementation in NSW. Across all schools involved in the NPLN, high priority was given to enhancing schools' capacity for self-evaluation. The regional and sector facilitators

played a key role in providing direct assistance and critical feedback in this planning process. The tools developed by the DEC including the SMART package for analysing NAPLAN results and the Analytical Framework (and the professional development provided in the use of these tools) continue to provide an important source of support for NPLN schools.

A further key ingredient for success of this initiative has been the opportunity for the principal and executive team to identify the overall vision for the initiative in the local context. This vision often included identification of the imperative for reform and in line with the research literature, teachers' capacity for, and responsibility for, improving student learning outcomes. Through targeted professional assistance by systems and sectors, school executive teams have then been more prepared to engage staff in a meaningful and collaborative manner in building a whole school plan for the initiative that reflects students' specific learning needs in each school. Leaders in NPLN schools now have a broader range of strategies to ensure all key stakeholders in the school community contribute to the plan and are aware of its implications.

In the more successful schools it was apparent that both the school executive and teaching staff appreciated the importance of a well-understood vision, accompanied by a whole school plan for its delivery, which is then translated into stage-based or year-based action plans for teachers through classroom programs. The cascading effect of such planning ensures an integrated and cohesive approach towards delivery of outcomes for the initiative, and also facilitates the opportunity to measure ongoing success of delivery of the plan.

Professional learning opportunities for both school executive and teachers highlighted these aspects of school planning and provided a platform by which teachers could begin to engage in measuring the success of the delivery of the plan with their colleagues. Each of these steps represent important lessons that can be replicated in future system/sector projects that impact on so many schools, their executives and the teaching staff.

iv. Teaching and Learning

Improving the quality of teaching and learning is at the heart of the NPLN initiative. The NPLN has allowed schools to re-focus on their central mission of providing quality teaching and learning experiences. Principals frequently noted that, for one reason or another, some teachers had lost sight of what that really means in practice. For example, some believed there had been an over-reliance on "busy work" and pre-prepared stencils as the main teaching method (but which was in reality a measure used to control student behaviour). It was common to hear that such methods had been abandoned after the adoption of the NPLN programs, replaced by more student-teacher dialogue and questioning. This more meaningful form of engagement often meant that the former behaviour problems disappeared, as students experienced success and developed a genuine sense of achievement. It was common to hear teachers say "since the NPLN, we now ask students to do less writing, but higher quality writing".

The NPLN has also helped some teachers to clarify what the concept of "student-centered learning" actually means. It does not imply that teachers take a passive or "back seat" role in

the classroom – far from it. The rigorous research base underpinning the NPLN, including the work of Hattie, Robinson and others, all clearly demonstrate that the biggest impact on learning is the class teacher. Reaffirming this central principle has been critical in many NPLN schools in reinforcing to teachers that "what they do, matters".

There has also been, in many schools, a new understanding that "good teaching" involves more than just the face-to-face interactions between teachers and children in classrooms. A key part of the NPLN approach has focused on increasing awareness of the importance of effective "out of the classroom" work of teachers, in planning, monitoring and reflection on what happens in classrooms. Understanding how analysis of student outcomes data helps in this process was also a key learning for many teachers. In schools that had been part of the NPLN, teachers regularly said they now made fewer assumptions about students, and instead, sought solid evidence on which to base their planning.

A key lesson from the NPLN then, has been that teachers are (or should be) learners themselves. More successful practice has been observed in schools where teachers have embraced this concept in a way that stresses the collegiality of the staff as a community of learners. It was common to hear that NPLN schools had developed stronger bonds between staff members and had higher morale as a consequence of the learning models adopted. As noted in the body of this report, classrooms were noted to be "more open and transparent places", with teachers no longer working in isolation from each other. One of the key learnings concerned the need for consistency between teachers, so that students experience a greater sense of the continuity of learning as they progress through school. Learning is now better understood as a continuous journey than a set of discrete experiences that vary from year to year.

In reinforcing what is important, principals thus considered the NPLN to have been money well spent.

v. Professional development of existing teachers

As noted in the discussion above, the success of the NPLN has rested largely on the professional learning for teachers and school leaders it has afforded, through the specifically designed capacity building exercises; the tailored instruction for each of the intervention programs; mentoring and modelling by regional/diocesan facilitators and Teacher Educators; as well as informal dialogue among school staff and networking between schools. The amount and quality of professional learning available through this initiative have been extensive, and of a scale and scope rarely seen in most intervention programs. This has been made possible through the relatively large amount of funds available to participating schools, as well as the infrastructure at state and regional/diocesan levels developed by systems/sectors. As noted above, without this investment, the level of success observed may not have been achieved. In light of this, it is perhaps not surprising that the majority of principals interviewed or responding to the survey were concerned about continuing access to the kind of support that has been made available to them.

Some principals have been able to continue the professional learning approach using their own funds or funds from other National Partnership programs. Others were concerned that

the professional learning support for the particular intervention program chosen may not be available from their relevant system/sector in future.

It is clear that individual schools, and individual school leaders and individual teachers must accept responsibility to some extent for their own professional development. It is equally clear that it would not be financially viable for every regional/diocese/sector to provide ongoing consultancy support for all of the intervention programs used by schools in the NPLN. There may be a need for system/sector guidance in some schools as to how the "bigger picture" messages from the NPLN experience can become embedded into recurrent school practice, in which improved pedagogy takes priority, rather than continuance of the specific programs as ends in themselves. At the same time, some thought may be required at a strategic level as to how support for the specific programs, each of which has proved valuable to a greater or lesser extent, can be retained in the most rational and efficient way possible.

The NSW NPLN experience also offers some insight into good practice in relation to teacher professional learning that may have relevance to future initiatives. The experience suggests that better outcomes are achieved when:

- all teaching staff are involved in the professional learning (including school executive, specialist teachers, and teachers from different school sites (where relevant)). The evaluation suggests that while the initiative was specifically targeted at Years 3-6, successful schools typically also included staff from K-6.
- the learning program is sustained over a considerable period of time. It is not a "one-off" effort but designed to encourage not only "theoretical" learning, but the practical application of this learning over 12-18 months. There should be time for practice of the skills and concepts learned, as well as time for reflection, discussion and refinement of the application of those skills and concept.
- the learning program is entered into in a spirit of collegiality by the staff involved. It must be framed within the context of the context of the continuous improvement required of all organisations and professionals, rather than the consequence of some perceived deficit.
- there is a high level of expectancy for change, and accountability for the achievement of change as a consequence of the professional learning. Previous models of professional learning in which individual teachers typically attended an "in-service" course, but may not have been given the time, incentive, or framework within which to implement their new learnings back in the school context were considerably flawed. This has been avoided in the NPLN model through the emphasis on collective learning.
- the site of the learning is less important than the fact that it is focused and free from interruption. Many schools found value in attending professional learning off-site where they were free from day to day interruptions that typically occur in a busy school day. This model is, however, expensive, as it requires teachers to be covered

by casuals if conducted during normal school time. An equal number of schools considered on-site learning to be preferable, reducing travel time and disruption to school routine. Schools need to find their own best solution, depending on their own circumstances.

- the professional learning by teachers is supported symbolically and practically by the school leadership, and the principal in particular. The evaluation has highlighted the importance of educational leadership by school executives. The involvement of principals in the professional learning helps strengthen the concept of collective responsibility discussed earlier in this report, as well as signalling the importance of the learning that is undertaken.
- facilitators of the professional learning need to be of high quality and have credibility with participants. Considerable time was lost in those situations where the facilitator was seen as an "outsider" who did not understand the context of the school. This does not mean that the facilitator must always come from within (as it is rare for school staff to have the higher level understanding or specific program knowledge required without further professional development of their own). Credibility is established not only through demonstration of personal competence, but in the development of strong interpersonal relationships with participants. It is also demonstrated through attention to issues such as reliability, punctuality and flexibility in responding to emerging issues.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions

The NPLN has been an ambitious and innovative undertaking, unusual in its scope and scale. It differs from many reform efforts of the past in that it quite deliberately targets multiple areas and levels of the educational enterprise: leadership and school management, planning, pedagogy, programs and resources, student engagement, and school-community relationships. Many of the previous programs have targeted one or other of these areas, but rarely have they been as comprehensive in focus as the NPLN.

The initiative's implementation in NSW has been well planned, managed and resourced. Key characteristics of the NPLN implementation in NSW include the extent to which it was able to develop a strong support infrastructure, including cross-sectoral oversight and steering committees, central coordination, and regional/diocesan and sector consultancy support. The theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of the initiative drew on a sound body of evidence about both effective pedagogy and means for improving teacher practice; drawing, for example, from a diverse range of concepts including the reflective practitioner (Schon, 1983) and mindfulness in teaching and learning (Schoberlain, 2009); the design reflects the principles of effective schooling (Sammons *et al* 1995; Hill, 1995) and the school improvement movement (Hopkins, *et al* 1994; Hargreaves, 1995) and reiterated in more recent work by Hattie (2009) and others. The design of the initiative also effectively incorporated Fullan's (2006) fundamental principles of pressure and support necessary for educational change. Support in this instance was provided through extensive professional learning, hands-on mentoring and extensive resource provision, while pressure was brought to bear through strong accountability, target setting and reporting requirements. As discussed further below, the regional facilitators as well as the in-school coordinators played a central role in facilitating both pressure and support.

The initiative also built from a sound evidence base that recognises the fundamental importance of quality teaching to student learning. Across all sectors and funded programs implemented as part of the initiative, professional learning programs reinforced the view that what teachers do, and how they do it, makes a difference in promoting student learning outcomes. The promotion of such messages was not only motivating for teachers, but provided a framework for differentiating good teaching from less effective practice, and for stimulating continuing dialogue between teachers on these themes. As Hattie (2003) notes..."It is what teachers know, do, and care about which is very powerful in the learning equation."

Implicit in this message has been acceptance that change in the level of student outcomes achieved is necessary, and possible, and within the capacity of schools and teachers to influence. This belief in the educability of all children was not always entirely self-evident in all NPLN school communities, reflecting past educational ideologies that have at times variously attributed differential outcomes to students' personal or socio-economic circumstances or to the notion that achievement is distributed according to a normal curve.

Within the NPLN there has been a strong expectation that all children can learn. This expectation of learning may be one of the most powerful and lasting legacies of the NPLN.

The evaluation data shows that demonstrable progress has been made towards the three priority reforms identified for the initiative; enhancing teacher and leadership capacity, as well as moving towards more evidence based pedagogy and planning. There is evidence that teachers are making more and better use of student outcomes data in both programming lessons and the scope and sequence of the curriculum, as well as in overall school decision making.

Preliminary analysis of data from the state-wide Cross-sectoral Impact Survey (CSIS) of principals, school executives and teachers further reinforces the observations of positive impact of reforms across all sectors found in the case studies and surveys of NPLN schools conducted for this evaluation, especially in schools participating in the Partnerships for two years. CSIS findings, which align strongly with the results of this evaluation reported in Chapter 4 above, include the following:

- 98 per cent of principals, 94 per cent of executives and 89 per cent of teachers said that the overall quality of teaching had increased as a result of the Partnerships
- 92 per cent of principals reported that Partnership strategies in their school had further developed their skills or capabilities in instructional leadership
- almost all schools (90%) are now using student achievement data and analysis in the school planning process more, with 96 per cent of principals reporting increasingly rigorous monitoring of effects of new initiatives
- approximately 82 per cent of teachers also reported that their use of student achievement data to inform lesson planning had increased, more often planning their teaching to meet individual student need
- a similar proportion of teachers reported an increase in the quality of their collaboration and networking with other teachers around teaching practices and student learning
- a large proportion of teachers reported increased availability of in-school professional learning support, noting effective mentoring, focus on teaching and learning in staff meetings, in-class professional support and learning support staff as all contributing substantially to this improvement.

There is also evidence of a positive impact on student learning, although this has not necessarily translated into increased NAPLAN scores. However, across the majority of NPLN schools, teachers and principals perceived higher levels of student engagement with learning, enhanced enjoyment of learning, and participation in learning activities by a wider range of students. School level data show an increase in mastery of the specific skills and knowledge targeted in class work. All of these are important precursors for later improvement in external standardised testing programs.

What were successful elements in the initiative?

The scale of funding available in NSW for this initiative was an important determinant of the success of the initiative, allowing significant lengths of time for professional learning and school-based implementation of new teaching strategies on a scale that may not have been possible otherwise. In contrast to previous capacity-building initiatives, the NPLN has placed a strong emphasis on whole school change, rather than individual teacher development. What has also differed has been the extent to which follow-up implementation of the professional learning has been mandatory, with a strong expectation of change in school and classroom practice embedded in the program design. This contrasts with former models of professional development aimed at individual teachers, in which there was frequently no requirement for the learning to actually be implemented. Indeed, in many teacher professional learning initiatives of the past, new pedagogy was often at best taken up by individual teachers in isolation from their peers, and at worst, sometimes not accepted or supported by school leaders or colleagues.

The NPLN also required participating schools to implement one or other specific literacy and/or numeracy programs, which were supported in each school by intensive professional development. It is not possible from the evidence at hand to say unequivocally that any one of these programs was better or worse in impacting on student outcomes: indeed student, teacher and school contexts are critically important and each program was affected by various implementation issues which may have affected the outcomes observed. However, this element of program design was important in providing a framework for the professional development and capacity building efforts, and for focusing the efforts of the school on improvement rather than overcoming deficits. (This distinction is important in setting the "tone" of the initiative: schools and teachers are much less enthusiastic in participating in an initiative if they feel they are being singled out for attention because they are failing rather than on an improvement journey).

It is noted that all of the programs have similar underlying pedagogical principles, including:

- Scaffolded learning and explicit teaching
- Close monitoring of each child's progress, and sharing of expectations and feedback with students
- Emphasis on hands-on learning
- Emphasis on students achieving mastery in lessons rather than superficial curriculum coverage.

It is also important to note that the schools that appeared to have achieved most success from the NPLN and had a greater likelihood of sustained impact were those that were able to see that the initiative was about more than just implementing a new Reading or Numeracy program, but was instead about the larger picture of school improvement. Indeed, it is encouraging that many of the NPLN schools have since chosen to modify or abandon the specific program initially selected on the basis of reviewing evidence of its effectiveness at their local level, using the skills in data analysis and collaborative

engagement in planning also developed in the early stages of the NPLN implementation, rather than citing "lack of funding" as the reason for their decision-making.

The data collected for the evaluation also shows clear changes in the way in which schools go about their business, both in terms of day to day routines, approaches to planning and interactions between individuals. There has been clear enhancement of the competence and confidence of individual teachers, especially those with the "big picture" of the initiative in mind. This is not to say that every teacher in the NPLN schools has benefited equally, or embraced the changes equally enthusiastically. Some have found the new ways of working to be very confronting, especially the demands for greater transparency and openness. There is no escaping the fact that the NPLN has demanded much from teachers; it has required considerable time over and above that provided by the funding available, and not all have been willing to make this investment to the same extent as in the best practice examples observed.

It would appear that stronger whole school strategic planning is now taking place in NPLN schools, informed by outcomes data, including but not limited to NAPLAN data. There is evidence that in successful NPLN schools, there is now greater involvement of staff and community in annual evaluation and planning. In the past, such activities may have been conducted by the executive alone, producing documents which may have met minimal requirements but had little impact in reality.

The process of broadening involvement and engagement of the whole school community in school planning may well be one of the lasting legacies of the NPLN. As an example, it is evident that more focused evaluation of progress towards targets is now being conducted, and armed with this knowledge, teachers are more willing to change directions as a consequence of better informed decision making rather than acting on opinions and passing enthusiasm for the latest innovation. The provision at a central level of tools and professional learning to use these tools effectively has contributed strongly to this position, but more importantly, the pressure placed on NPLN schools by regional, diocesan and sector facilitators ensured that practices already undertaken by high performing schools have now been taken up more widely.

A clear outcome, demonstrated across all forms of data gathering, has occurred in relation to the way in which teachers in NPLN schools now relate to each other as professionals. The evidence demonstrates that in general, teachers are more collaborative in their planning, delivery and evaluation of lessons, have increased professional dialogue, and increased sharing of resources. Specific programs and pedagogical approaches are not "owned" by individual teachers but have become part of the collective responsibility of the school. Alongside this has come a greater transparency in the way that individual classrooms, and the schools as a whole, operate. There is clearly now more public data about progress and openness of decision making. At a classroom level, a successful practice noted in many schools involved greater use of peer observations of lessons, conducted not for supervisory purposes but as part of continuous improvement and refinement of pedagogy.

This greater openness has led to greater collaboration between schools in some cases. This collaboration has taken different forms in different places – sometimes expressed as principal support networks, at other times giving a focus for initiatives such as communities of schools already established in some districts, and at other times has included partnerships between individual schools in different geographic areas implementing the same funded program.

Overall, it is fair to conclude that the NPLN has played a significant role in providing not only rejuvenation but also hope for the future in many schools, which had become "stuck", facing seemingly insurmountable barriers in often very disadvantaged communities. The NPLN provided not only a vision for change but also the resources for achieving this change, and an imperative for change that was sometimes previously resisted actively or passively by often well meaning but ultimately unhelpful views of the past. Teaching is now more frequently in line with research based best practices. The *The NSW DEC Analytical framework for effective leadership and school improvement in literacy and numeracy*[®] tool (referred to as the *Analytic Framework* in the remainder of this document) provides a means for ongoing review and discussion of pedagogy elevated beyond the experiences of individuals. The challenge for the future will be to ensure that the spirit intended in use of tools like the Analytic Framework as the basis of collective improvement continues, rather than their use becoming exercises in compliance with imposed requirements.

An important aspect of this National Partnership was setting specific targets for improved student learning outcomes. Setting these specific targets was important from both practical and symbolic perspectives in focusing on student learning as an essential priority. Many programs in the past have not been specific in this regard. This is not to say that the other reform priorities such as enhancing teacher and leadership capacity are unimportant, but the setting of targets for student achievement reinforced for systems and sectors, and individual schools, the importance of ensuring each child develops to their full potential.

Challenges faced

While the discussion above suggests that the NPLN implementation in NSW has been largely successful overall, it should not be assumed that the implementation was problem-free, nor that there will be significant challenges in sustaining the benefits of the initiative into the future. There are some significant lessons that can be learnt from this experience and that could be taken into consideration in the design of similar initiatives in future. Many of the initial challenges were overcome, not by 'happenstance' but by deliberate action on the part of the initiative's managers. The communication channels established, along with the rigorous monitoring and reporting regime established, ensured that problems were quickly identified and addressed.

Other challenges however, were not so readily addressed, and arise from the constraints of the National Partnership agreements themselves. Chief amongst the constraints faced by the initiative was the relatively short time frame for the implementation period – in reality little more than 18 months in most instances. Many of those interviewed believed that this timeframe was too short to make a lasting difference to the entrenched cultures and

histories of underperformance in many of the participating schools. The short time frame was exacerbated by a necessarily slow start to allow for adequate planning, and initial implementation issues in some instances (referred to in the ARTD evaluation report of the Pilot Phase). The vast majority of the principals of the schools participating in the NPLN argued that they would have preferred the initiative to have been funded for a minimum of three, and ideally four, years. While none argued for an open-ended continuation of the initiative, it was commonly believed that two years was too short to achieve the level of impact that would be necessary to close the gap in NAPLAN scores between students in NPLN schools and the rest of NSW, for example. Noting that some other National Partnerships have much longer time scales, it would seem beneficial for any future initiatives of this kind to have a longer planning and implementation period.

There would be significant resource implications arising from this decision, but the kinds of activities funded in third or fourth years would not necessarily be identical to those supported in the earlier years; nor would the quantum of funding necessarily be the same in later years of implementation. While it would appear beneficial to maintain the systemic/sectoral support infrastructure, and to provide flexible funding for time for teacher release, there would be lesser need for large scale professional learning in support of particular funded programs, resource purchases and so on.

It is important to note that not all schools within the NPLN have progressed at the same rate nor achieved the same level of impact as others. While the NPLN has not been inconsistent with other NSW initiatives, instituted before or concurrently with the National Partnership, it is also noteworthy that many schools felt overwhelmed by the pace of change required. Principals in NPLN schools noted, for example, that it was not uncommon for significant numbers of teachers in their school to have not received systematic professional development in recent years, or for the school to have high student and staff mobility, or large numbers of temporary or beginning teachers. Such conditions point to the need for flexible approaches to school support being adopted within the overall initiative framework. The implication from this is that future funding beyond the initial implementation period could be targeted and specific rather than allocated on a "one size fits all" formula. In doing so, it will be important to avoid perceptions of "rewarding failure", by linking the NPLN more strongly with mainstream system/sector management and support systems to ensure alignment with accountability systems.

A further challenge, which in many respects forms the *raison d'être* for the NPLN, concerns the extent of the student learning differentials that need be addressed. The data in Figures 12 and 14 for example, show that by the time students are tested in Year 3 on the NAPLAN assessments, there is a considerable gap in achievement between students in NPLN schools and those elsewhere in NSW. Given the high proportion of students in the NPLN schools who come from Aboriginal, nonEnglish speaking, and low socio-economic backgrounds, it is likely that this differential exists from the early years of schooling, if not before. It is noted that the NPLN is specifically targeted intensively at Years 3-6, but both the outcomes data and the observations of teachers and school leaders in interviews and case studies suggest that intervention needs to begin much earlier. Many of the schools involved in the NPLN chose to

include K-2 teachers in the professional learning activities and have applied the principles of effective pedagogy across K-6, and applied other new practices including team based planning on a whole school basis. However, it would seem preferable that any future implementation of similar initiatives should formally adopt a K-6 focus, ensuring consistency of approaches throughout the primary school years. It is acknowledged that not all of the funded programs are at present appropriate for the early stages of learning – but the broader principles of effective pedagogy and school management underpinning the NPLN remain relevant.

Strategic implications for future initiatives

The experience of the NPLN provides insights which may help define the strategic directions for future initiatives. The following is a brief summary of the key features of the NPLN which have broader implications for system and sector planning for school improvement and capacity building intervention:

- Future professional learning efforts need to be primarily of a scale that can allow engagement of whole school staff, rather than short term, one-off programs aimed at individual staff members (although there will remain a place for this).
- There will be a continuing need for a multi-layered or tiered approach to pedagogy, that recognises that there are times when it is appropriate for whole class teaching, support for individuals within classrooms, short-term withdrawal programs for individual and small groups of students, and intensive one-on-one support when needed. No single approach will meet the needs of all students.
- Professional learning programs and reform efforts need to carry strong expectations for change as a consequence of the professional learning – not left to chance or the hope that it might happen. There needs to be a strong accountability and leadership in place to reinforce these expectations. Similarly, there needs to be sufficient high quality support infrastructure inside and outside the school to provide momentum, focus, support, and expertise. The importance of the roles of the in-school coordinators and the regional facilitators in this regard has been emphasised in the body of the report.
- There is a need to engage the commitment of the whole school staff to ensure consistency of approach. Principals require authority to ensure that participation in the reforms is not optional for teachers, which may require a mechanism that allows teachers who are resistant to find alternative placements.
- There is a need to accept that change of the scale required takes time and some things may need to be given up in order to achieve impact. Intensive whole school professional learning requires good supply of quality relief teachers so that minimal disruption occurs when teachers are undertaking professional learning. Casual teachers need to also be part of the professional learning programs so they too are consistent in their understanding of the new pedagogy. (Note that in rural areas, the

issue of casual relief is somewhat problematic). As noted previously, the provision of tools and associated professional learning has been an important source of support.

- There is a need for strong buy-in and support from regions, dioceses and districts (and the independent sector) for continued ownership of the process and to ensure there is no disconnection from mainstream school management processes and priorities.
- An early focus on sustainability was important to ensure schools are not reliant on external funding to maintain momentum and for them to begin to think about how they could apply practices and principles from the experience using their own or alternate funds. (Note the success of impact in the longer term will be monitored through later phases of this evaluation).
- Encouraging greater depth of leadership has been an important strategy for planning for staff turnover, especially in-school coordinators who are likely to be promoted. A strategy that focused on teachers without changing leadership behaviours would not have achieved equivalent success. There has been a strong sense developed within the NPLN that school communities are "all in this together". Such a strategy avoids the appearance of "blaming" any particular group of stakeholders for the level of performance observed in the school, developing a sense instead of collective responsibility for student achievement.
- As part of the above concept of leadership density, the appointment and professional development of a literacy or numeracy "champion" in the school, in the form of classroom leaders, teacher educators or NPLN coordinators was of critical importance in maintaining the momentum of the initiative within individual schools, as well as providing the level of specific expertise necessary to enhance existing practices. For the classroom leaders to fulfil this role effectively, a significant amount of release from classroom responsibilities is needed. This time release was provided by external funding during the NPLN, but schools will need to identify alternative funding sources to continue this appointment in future.

Conclusions

The overall conclusion to be drawn from this evaluation is that the NPLN has been a worthwhile endeavour, and provides a useful model for future strategic initiatives.

Over and above the operational considerations discussed above, the experience shows that at a policy level, in attempting to address the fundamental challenges of enhancing student achievement, building teacher and leader capacity, and reforming school management, there is a place for state-wide, cross-sectoral, systemic improvement initiatives. The factors observed to have contributed most to the success of this initiative would generally have been beyond the resources of any individual school to achieve within current funding arrangements.

The policy problems targeted by the NPLN are long-standing and by no means unique to Australian school systems – with the strategies adopted to address these challenges many

and varied. These diverse strategies have met with varying degrees of success, with many of the structural "solutions" (such as smaller class sizes) or "teacher proofing" the curriculum making little impact (Hattie, 2009). At a time when increasing principal autonomy is high on the policy agenda, the experience of the NPLN provides a timely and relevant reminder that the answer to improving student learning outcomes may not lie only in approaches that seek to fund individual schools, or go outside the school system to support individual students (as in previous programs such as the *Tutorial Voucher Initiative* and successors), although there may be a place for both these strategies. The commonly expressed view recorded during the NPLN evaluation was that although many of the schools had already begun on the improvement journey on their own initiative (or as art of a local decision), change to the extent observed would not have been possible within the same time frame without the strong central coordination, planning and support provided by the NPLN.

At a strategic level, the NPLN was characterised by a high degree of conceptual coherence in its design and delivery, with elements simultaneously addressing the factors known to be correlated with school effectiveness:

- Strong leadership
- Best practice teaching
- An organisational climate that supports teachers to work collegially and collaboratively
- A curriculum that fosters an emphasis on academic success
- A student monitoring system that provides feedback on both teaching and learning.

Clearly, the success of the NPLN has been highly dependent on the level of funding available, but it has been the way this funding has been used to systematically address the above elements holistically that has been critical to its success. The same quantum of funds, added to global school budgets without the structures and frameworks provided through the NPLN model may have resulted in much more piecemeal efforts.

A second major, but often overlooked role for education systems and sectors concerns establishment of culture in which the changes sought in the NPLN reform priorities are not only lent credibility but seen as normal, desirable and attainable. Just as the NPLN professional learning programs have promoted the view of changed pedagogy and school management as "the way business is done here", so system and sector leaders have an important role in promoting best practice as the norm, not the exception in all schools in their jurisdiction. This role is well recognised in the change management literature. Hargreaves *et al* (2010) for example, refer to this role as creating the *moral imperative* for change, whilst Kotter (2002) speaks of *creating a sense of urgency* in his principles of change management. At a time when schools are experiencing many demands for change and reform, the importance of evident commitment to the initiative by the highest levels of educational leadership and policy makers cannot be under-estimated. Educational leaders need to provide a clear and consistent message that reinforces the expectations for all schools to implement the key principles embedded in the NPLN change agenda:

- that student learning is the central purpose of schools

- that all students can learn
- that what teachers do, and how they do it, is important and makes a difference to student learning
- that all who work in the school have a collective responsibility for all of the students of the school.

This symbolic role for systems and sectors remains relevant even within the context of devolved autonomy for local schools. As noted above, the challenges faced in addressing student learning and teacher and leadership capacity are not confined to any single school system or sector. The NPLN cross-sectoral implementation support team, over time, was highly successful in developing consistency in the messages communicated to participating schools – a strategy that any future similar initiatives would do well to adopt. Indeed, the NPLN achieved traction in NSW schools primarily because it aligned with existing systemic directions.

At the same time, the experience of the NPLN highlights the importance of flexibility of implementation at a local level within a broader holistic framework. This was particularly evident in relation to the selection of intervention programs adopted by particular schools and local authorities. The "waivers" of the general provision given to accommodate particular circumstances recognised the pragmatic realities faced by school communities, and helped create wider acceptance of the initiative in the longer term. While the principles and tenets of school improvement are well known and well documented, the record of education reform projects provides little support for approaches that attempt to apply these principles mechanistically, without reference to a school's history and context. Allowing schools considerable control over the budget for the initiative was also a significant contributor to both the success of the initiative in operational terms but also in developing the supportive environment necessary for engaging the school community. It should be noted that the schools' control over spending was not completely open-ended – schools were constantly challenged by the regional facilitators to defend their decision-making on the basis of available evidence. This greater transparency in decision making provides a higher level of internal and external accountability, which should be factored into any similar initiatives in future.

This form of accountability was perhaps unusual in many funded initiatives where schools are required to report on their activities, but for which there are few or no consequences. While the NPLN required extensive reporting by schools at frequent intervals, what differentiated this from other initiatives was the conscious way in which this data was used by the management team to shape the emerging direction of various program elements. Participants were confident that the effort required in reporting was purposeful - not the collection of data for its own sake. The implication for future strategic interventions from this experience is two-fold: first, investment in dedicated central coordination should be considered an essential element in initiatives of this scope and scale; and secondly, providing communication and feedback should be an essential component of the role of this central coordination function. As with almost any activity, commitment and outcomes are enhanced

when participants know what they are expected to do and how they are progressing relative to appropriate benchmarks.

To this end, it has been noted previously that the setting of clear quantitative targets was considered a positive feature of the NPLN initiative. While arguments can be sustained about the metrics of the targets themselves and the specific scores identified in the targets, the concept of *target setting* was strongly supported. Doing so foregrounds what the initiative aims to achieve in specific terms, rather than generalised aspirations. This "harder edge" to the design of the NPLN may be a useful model for future initiatives. However, it needs to be emphasised that the use of performance measurement systems should not be used in lock-step decision making at either school or policy levels.

In this context, the reward payment model attached to the NPLN was a novel feature in Commonwealth-State funding arrangements for educational programs, but in the long run, was not necessarily helpful. While schools were aware of the existence of the reward funding (but not necessarily understanding the exact nature of the reward process), the reward payment process was not a strong motivating factor for schools, did not influence the structure of the initiative in NSW or behaviours at a local level, and therefore did not strongly influence the outcomes observed. It may, however, have more closely focused the attention of state level bureaucrats on the substantive detail of the National Partnership than might have been the case otherwise. In hindsight, it may have been better for the Commonwealth to have used all of the available funds to support the whole initiative from the outset.

All of the above point to the conclusion that, overall, it is not possible to separate one single factor as the critical success factor for the NPLN, nor is it likely that in similar initiatives that the design of the intervention at a strategic level can be simplified to one or two key elements. Rather, it has been the combination of elements that have combined to produce the results observed. From a policy perspective, it must be acknowledged that the problem of underperforming schools is complex, therefore it must be expected that the efforts to address these problems will also be complex. There is no "magic bullet" that will achieve large scale transformational change: rather there will be an ongoing need for systematic and sustained efforts.

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Appendix 1: Characteristics of Survey Respondents

This evaluation provided an opportunity for all schools participating in the implementation of National Partnership activity (114 eligible Literacy and Numeracy schools) to comment from their own perspective about their experience of the National Partnership, and the outcomes achieved from this involvement. The survey was delivered on-line survey for this purpose. This methodology was proposed as a means for obtaining accurate and efficient results within a short timeframe, that provided quantification of the impact of the partnership against desired outcomes, and also qualitative data that could help to explain trends observed. Because the number of schools participating in this National Partnership was relatively small, the full population of schools (other than those involved in case studies or piloting the instruments) were invited to participate to ensure the broadest coverage of schools in the various contexts across the state. To minimise time requirements on school representatives, wherever possible, the survey included a mix of qualitative questions that provide rich data and closed questions that when aggregated provide quantitative analysis of the extent to which changes have occurred in various factors across NSW.

The survey was administered in early Term 4 2011, to allow maximum time for the partnership to impact on schools, yet also interfere as little as possible with other school priorities that typically occur in Term 4. The survey was ultimately conducted later than intended so as to not interfere with other data gathering being conducted in relation to National Partnerships.

The survey was initially targeted to the school principal, but the introductory letter advised that they could delegate the survey to the most informed member of staff, or consult with other staff in the preparation of the school response. The survey did seek to gather the personal experiences of the principal, but rather the experience of the school as a whole.

The on-line survey had a two week turn-around time, with a further extension of two weeks to ensure maximum participation in the survey. Assistance to use technology to complete the survey was available at all times via an Erebus administrator contact number included in the initial communication from sectors and identifiable in the on-line survey. However, very little assistance was sought, with only two enquiries received. Both of these were easily resolved, suggesting that (as was the experience of the pilot testing phase), school personnel had little difficulty using the online survey.

Initial analysis of the survey data is provided in this second progress report, and will be further elaborated in the Final Report where necessary. Analysis of the quantitative data is largely at the descriptive level, e.g. number/percentage of respondents giving a certain response (disaggregated as appropriate). Content analysis was used to identify trends and themes in the qualitative sections of the survey.

The survey had the limitation inherent in all surveys, that as it involves self-reporting, it is not possible to verify independently the ratings given by respondents, although the survey results have been triangulated against observations made during school visits and interviews with principals and teachers. As this was not a high stakes survey, and was completed anonymously, there was less pressure on respondents to give inaccurate answers. There were practical limitations as to the number of questions that could be asked, but the complexity of the national partnership

arrangements meant there were a large number of areas that were of interest to the evaluation. A compromise was needed between depth of questioning and breadth of coverage possible. The trade-off was addressed to some extent by the inclusion of the case studies as a means of gaining greater insights into the quantitative responses.

A total of 79 responses were received from the 114 schools invited to participate in the online survey, giving a response rate of 69 per cent. Schools that participated in case studies and interviews earlier in the data gathering for this evaluation were not asked to also complete the survey, to help reduce the data burden on schools participating in the NPLN.

The characteristics of those schools that did respond to the survey are shown below. Note that not all respondents answered all questions, percentage responses shown in the Tables represent the proportion of valid responses received for the relevant question.

Table A1. Number of Respondent schools by sector

	Response Percent	Response Count
Government	78.9	60
Catholic	14.5	11
Independent	6.6	5

Table A2: Number of Respondent schools by Location

	Response Percent	Response Count
Metropolitan	35.1	27
Regional city	33.8	26
Rural	29.9	23
Remote	1.3	1

Table A3: Enrolments of responding schools

	Response Percent	Response Count
25 or less	0.0	0
26 to 159	18.2	14
160 to 300	29.9	23
301 to 450	22.1	17
451 to 700	28.6	22
701 or more	1.3	1

Table A4: Number of Enrolments of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent in Respondent Schools

	Response Percent	Response Count
None	7.9%	6
1-2%	15.8%	12
3-5%	19.7%	15
6-10%	30.3%	23
11-15%	7.9%	6
16 -20%	10.5%	8
21% or more	7.9%	6

Table A5: Component of the National Partnership for Literacy and Numeracy (NPLN) Implemented by Respondent Schools

	Response Percent	Response Count
Literacy	74.0%	57
Numeracy	26.0%	20

Note these figures are similar to the breakdown of the full cohort of NPLN schools, in which 69% chose a Literacy focus and 31% a Numeracy focus.

Table A6: Respondent NPLN Schools also in the Low Socio-Economic Partnership

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	29.9%	23
No	70.1%	54

Appendix 2: Case Study Interview Questions

2.1 School Case Study Interview Questions

Section 1: Contextual information (in discussion with Principal/school leader only)

Please provide a brief profile of the school – geographic location, special features, recent history, enrolment size, socio-economic profile etc

Section 2

Focus Area 1: What change has been attempted?

1. Please briefly outline how the school implemented the NLNP? (e.g. did they do a self-evaluation, work with SED or Regional facilitator, develop and publish a school plan. Did it include professional development, teacher facilitators, resources, any specific programs used e.g. TOWN or MULTILIT) Please describe any issues or challenges that needed to be overcome in doing this)?
2. What were the reasons and rationales for selecting literacy or numeracy as the focus for the intervention?
3. How has the school fostered partnerships with for example universities, or cluster groups to develop new approaches or programs? Have these been effective?

Focus Area 2: Impact of the initiative?

4. What outcomes have been achieved from the initiative? (Prompts; changed teacher expectations, pedagogical skills, improved teaching /learning environments, and whole school strategies?
5. What effect has implementation had on student learning outcomes, student attitudes and behaviour, other?
6. How effective are the new approaches compared to previous strategies? Can these be described as short, medium or long term achievements?

Focus Area 3: How effective has implementation been?

7. What has particularly helped or hindered implementation of the initiative?
8. What resources were needed for implementation and were they available?
9. How has the school celebrated the success of the initiative and rewarded students' and teachers' achievements?

Focus Area 4: How have schools approached sustainability, resilience and transferability?

10. What is the sustainability of the initiative after SSNP funding has ceased? What do you think will be the future of the initiative in this school?

- Has there been a shift in approach to teaching literacy and numeracy resulting in improved literacy and numeracy teaching capability that is sustainable and transferable?

11. How has the school addressed:

- Teacher mobility
- Casual and temporary staff
- Competing priorities or demands e.g. National Curriculum, new system or school policies, events and excursions

12. Have successful strategies been replicated in other contexts? E.g. different KLAs, other stages, schools or systems

Focus Area 5: Lessons learned

17. What lessons have you learned from the NPLN experience in relation to:

- Financial management
- Your role as principal/NPLN coordinator
- School planning
- Teaching and learning
- Professional development of existing teachers
- Other?

18. Are there any other comments you would like to make?

19. Are there any documents or students' work that you would like to share?

2.2 Online Survey

PART A: Background Information

1. Is your school:

- Government ☐
- Catholic ☐
- Independent ☐

2. Is your school:

- Metropolitan ☐
- Regional city ☐
- Rural ☐
- Remote ☐

3. Is the student enrolment of your school:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| • 25 or less ☐ | • 451 to 700 ☐ |
| • 26 to 159 ☐ | • >701 ☐ |
| • 160 to 300 ☐ | |
| • 301 to 450 ☐ | |

4. Is the student enrolment engaged in the National Partnership Literacy and Numeracy (NPLN) initiative: (including new enrolments)

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| • 10 or less ☐ | • 51 to 70 ☐ |
| • 11 to 30 ☐ | • 71 to 90 ☐ |
| • 30 to 50 ☐ | • >90 ☐ |

5. Who is answering this survey? (Please select more than one option if appropriate) Are you the:

- School Principal ☐
- Assistant or Deputy Principal ☐
- In-school NPLN facilitator or leader ☐
- Classroom teacher ☐
- Other ☐

If 'Other', please specify _____

6. Is your school implementing the literacy or numeracy component:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| • Literacy ☐ | • Numeracy ☐ |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|

7. Is your school implementing any of the following:

- Taking off with Numeracy (Town) ☐
- Reading to Learn ☐
- Other, please list ☐
- Focus on Reading ☐
- Accelerated Literacy ☐

8. Has your school also been targeted under the Low Socio-Economic Communities National Partnership?

- Yes ☐
- No ☐

PART B: What change has been attempted?**9. What factor most significantly informed your school's selection of literacy and numeracy strategies?**

- Self-evaluation process ☐
- Staff/ executive decision ☐
- Already doing the program ☐
- Program cost ☐
- DEC Region or Diocese initiative ☐
- Principal's area of interest ☐
- Community Support ☐
- Other ☐

10. How well did the NPLN "fit" with existing priorities within your school (e.g. ESL, new arrivals programs?)

- Integrates easily with existing priorities and activities ☐
- Required a reformulation of existing priorities and activities ☐
- Competes with existing priorities within the school and activities ☐
- Other ☐

If 'Other', please describe _____

11. To what extent have capacity building initiatives supported implementation of the NPLN in your school?

	Great extent	Some extent	Little extent	Not at all
• Team Leadership for School Improvement Course? (Or the AIS Leadership Program for Independent schools?)	☐	☐	☐	☐
• SMART or SMART2 e-learning modules	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Appointment of a in-school literacy or numeracy coordinator (note this position may have been shared	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Great extent	Some extent	Little extent	Not at all
between schools in some instances)				
• Support provided by external facilitators (e.g. regional facilitators in government schools)	☐	☐	☐	☐
• School self-evaluation supported by the NSW <i>Analytical Framework for Effective Leadership and School Improvement in Literacy and Numeracy</i> ?	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Other, please describe				

12. In attempting to implement literacy or numeracy programs, to what extent have teachers increased or improved use of:

	Great extent	Some extent	Little extent	Not at all	Not applicable
• visual or electronic texts?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• electronic resources (e.g. Interactive white boards)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• group-work and working in pairs for students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

13. In implementing the NPLN, to what extent has your school engaged parents or the wider community in consultation around the NPLN?

Great extent	Some extent	Little extent	Not at all
☐	☐	☐	☐

Please describe in what ways this was done?

14. How useful were the following in helping teachers integrate the use of data into lesson planning and individual programs?

	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Limited usefulness	Not useful	Don't know
• SMART or SMART 2 e-learning modules	☐	☐	☐	☐	
• Data Analysis Skills Assessment (DASA)	☐	☐	☐	☐	

15. Did any teachers or members of staff attend the “Aboriginal education local cultural immersion program”?

- | | | | |
|-------|--------------------------|------|--------------------------|
| • Yes | ☐ | • No | ☐ |
|-------|--------------------------|------|--------------------------|

If 'YES', how useful was this program?

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Very useful | • Somewhat useful | • Limited usefulness | • Not useful |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

PART C: Impact of the initiative**16. As a result of your school's involvement in NPLN, to what extent has there been a significant change in teaching and learning:**

- | | Great extent | Some extent | Little extent | Not at all |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| • Can you please provide one example? | | | | |

17. Did your school have the opportunity to work with a cluster of nearby NPLN schools?

- | | | | |
|-------|--------------------------|------|--------------------------|
| • Yes | ☐ | • No | ☐ |
|-------|--------------------------|------|--------------------------|

18. If applicable, on what activities did the cluster of schools work together?

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| • Pooling funds for purchasing resources? | ☐ |
| • Pooling funds for hiring an external consultant/teacher mentor? | ☐ |
| • Collegial support for teachers (e.g. sharing resources, experience, advice) | ☐ |
| • Collegial support for school leaders (e.g. sharing resources, experiences, advice) | ☐ |
| • Other, please describe | ☐ |
| • Not applicable | ☐ |

What benefits resulted from this joint activity?**19. To what extent has training in the use of NAPLAN (e.g. SMART e-learning modules) been used for:**

- | | Great extent | Some extent | Little extent | Not at all |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Whole school planning | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| • Stage-wide planning | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| • Developing classroom programs | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| • Developing and monitoring Individual Learning Plans | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| • Other | | | | |

If 'Other', please specify _____

PART D: How effective has implementation been?

20. To what extent has the adoption of NPLN approaches and programs in your school produced:

	Great extent	Some extent	Little extent	Not at all
• Improved leadership	☐	☐	☐	☐
• More proactive attitudes towards accountability for student outcomes	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Improved teaching and learning	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Rethinking of teachers' beliefs about best practice	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Improved professional discourse and conversation amongst school staff	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Improved collegiality and cooperation amongst school staff	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Greater use of a range of assessment tools for decision making about student learning	☐	☐	☐	☐

21. To what extent has the adoption of NPLN approaches and programs produced improved outcomes in *literacy* for:

	Great extent	Some extent	Little extent	Not at all
• Student outcomes, overall	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Students with behavioural issues	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Aboriginal students	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Boys	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Non-English speaking background students	☐	☐	☐	☐

22. To what extent has the adoption of NPLN approaches and programs produced improved outcomes in *numeracy* for:

	Great extent	Some extent	Little extent	Not at all
• Student outcomes, overall	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Students with behavioural issues	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Aboriginal students	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Boys	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Non-English speaking background students	☐	☐	☐	☐

23. To what extent has the NPLN program improved:

	Great extent	Some extent	Little extent	Not at all
• Student behaviour in class	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Student behaviour amongst the lowest performing students in the cohort	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Student cooperation with other students	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Student motivation and engagement in learning	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Student confidence in their learning abilities and potential	☐	☐	☐	☐

24. How effective has engagement been with universities or other partners developing or delivering new approaches programs?

Very effective	Somewhat effective	Limited effectiveness	Not effective	N/A (did not engage with other partners)
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

- If such engagement has occurred, please provide an example:

25. How effective has the NPLN been in developing teachers' content knowledge of literacy and/or numeracy?

Very effective	Somewhat effective	Limited effectiveness	Not effective	N/A (teachers already had high standards of content knowledge)
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

26. How effective is the integration of NPLN Individual Learning Plans with existing Personalised Learning Plans for indigenous students?

Very effective	Somewhat effective	Limited effectiveness	Not effective	N/A (school does not develop PLPs)
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

27. As a result of completing SMART e-learning modules, how confident do teachers feel about using NAPLAN data as a regular part of lesson planning or developing ILPs?

Very confident	Somewhat confident	Limited confidence	Not confident
☐	☐	☐	☐

28. Have teachers increased their collection, analysis and monitoring of student data aside from NAPLAN testing?

Yes, to a great extent

Yes, to a limited extent

No

☐☐☐**a. If YES, please select the relevant examples of data sources used for ongoing students monitoring:**

- National Partnerships Literacy and Numeracy Assessment ☐
- Other external assessments ☐
- Regular (e.g. weekly or fortnightly) in-school assessments ☐
- End of term assessments ☐
- Other ☐

If 'Other', please specify _____

29. To what extent has tailoring elements of the program to your particular school context had effects on:

	Great extent	Some extent	Little extent	Not at all
• Student outcomes	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Program sustainability	☐	☐	☐	☐

If applicable, please provide some examples of strategies employed to make the program more suitable to your school's context:

30. To what extent has support from your in-school facilitator enhanced the implementation of the NLNP in your school?

Great extent

Some extent

Little extent

Not at all

☐☐☐☐**31. How helpful were other forms of systemic support in enhancing the effectiveness of NPLN implementation:**

	Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Of little help	Not helpful at all
• Support for school self-evaluation processes, priority and target setting	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Revision and publication of school annual report in light of the NPLN targets	☐	☐	☐	☐

• Working with school principals and executive leadership teams to facilitate school capacity building and team leadership	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Facilitate establishing communities of schools in the Partnership	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Coordinating localised professional learning for reading and numeracy intervention programs	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Recruiting school/classroom program facilitators and teaching and learning classroom leaders	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Facilitating/sharing good practice in reading and numeracy	☐	☐	☐	☐

32. Where the resources required for the implementation of the NPLN easily available to your school?

• Yes, easily available	• Partially	• Not available
☐	☐	☐

33. How helpful were the available resources in the implementation of the NPLN initiative?

	Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Little help	Not helpful
• Teaching materials	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Learning materials	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Other	☐	☐	☐	☐

If 'Other', please specify _____

34. Under the NPLN, how effective have the following elements been in producing improved learning opportunities and student outcomes?

	Very effective	Somewhat effective	Of little effect	Not at all
• New or reworked organisational arrangements between the school and Region/Diocese/AIS	☐	☐	☐	☐
• New or reworked in-school operational arrangements	☐	☐	☐	☐
• New or reworked teaching programs	☐	☐	☐	☐
• New or reworked teaching practices	☐	☐	☐	☐
• New or reworked learning environments	☐	☐	☐	☐
• New or reworked student learning responsibilities and behaviours	☐	☐	☐	☐

35. Has your school developed ways to identify success and keep staff informed of successful implementation and outcomes?

- Yes ☐ • No ☐

If YES, please specify _____

PART E: Sustainability, resilience and transferability of outcomes

36. How sustainable do you anticipate the following NPLN initiative elements will be in your school?

	Very sustainable	Somewhat sustainable	Challenging to sustain	Not sustainable at all
• The whole-school/class literacy or numeracy program to the end of 2011?	☐	☐	☐	☐
• The whole-school/class literacy or numeracy program over the next five years	☐	☐	☐	☐
• The individual program intervention/s to the end of 2011?	☐	☐	☐	☐
• The individual program intervention/s over the next five years?	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Capacity building programs for teachers and school leaders to the end of 2011?	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Capacity building programs for teachers and school leaders over the next five years?	☐	☐	☐	☐

37. To what extent do you believe the following will inhibit sustainability of outcomes in your school in the next 2-3 years?

	Great extent	Some extent	Little extent	Not at all
• School leadership turnover	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Changed levels of resources beyond the National Partnerships initiative	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Teaching staff turnover	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Competing priorities and demands	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Student mobility	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Changing demographics of the school community	☐	☐	☐	☐

38. Have strategies to promote the sustainability and resilience of the NPLN program been developed in your school?

- Yes, comprehensive strategies are in place ☐
- Yes, some strategies have been developed ☐
- No, but there are plans to do this in 2011 ☐
- No, no plans have been made as yet ☐

a. If YES, what strategies have been most effective in promoting sustainability and resilience to date? (Please select up to five options)

- Purchasing of teaching and learning resources ☐
- Support from regional/diocesan/sector facilitators ☐
- Training of an in-school facilitator ☐
- Training of a whole school improvement team ☐
- Professional learning for teaching staff ☐
- Professional learning for non-teaching staff (support staff and school leadership) ☐
- Development of in-school resources and documentation ☐
- Explicitly identifying the NPLN as a whole-school priority in school policy documents ☐
- Engaged volunteers or community support ☐
- None of the above ☐
- Other, please specify ☐

39. To what extent has implementation of the NPLN had impacts in other Key Learning Areas across the curriculum?

Great extent

Some extent

Little extent

Not at all

☐
☐
☐
☐

40. Has the NPLN engendered new pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning throughout the whole-school?

- Yes, to a great extent ☐
- Yes, to some extent ☐
- No, but there are early signs that this may happen ☐
- No, there is no evidence of this occurring ☐

41. Overall to what extent do you believe the NPLN has brought change in culture regarding Literacy and Numeracy in your school?

Great extent

Some extent

Little extent

Not at all

☐
☐
☐
☐

42. Any other comments about the NPLN you would like to make