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

Progress Report 2

Project Brief DETSSNP1027

February, 2012
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Evaluation of the Take-up and Sustainability of New Literacy and Numeracy Practices in New South Wales Schools

Progress Report 2, February 2012

1. Introduction

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 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.

In NSW, cross-sectoral planning meetings occurred, schools were advised of their participation and these schools commenced planning and implementation in various aspects of each of the relevant National Partnership priority areas for reform. 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 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 has been 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 currently represent:

- 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 this state, evaluation of Smarter Schools National Partnerships implementation and initiatives is guided by a committee that was appointed by the previous Minister for Education and Training. 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. A key deliverable for the evaluation is this second Progress Report.

This second Progress Report of the Evaluation of the National Partnership in Literacy and Numeracy (NPLN) is organized under the following headings:

- Progress against projected timeline
- Data gathering completed to date
- Observations from the data gathering to date, including trends and issues identified from interviews with stakeholders, school case study visits and survey of participating schools (see Appendix 2)
- Next steps to be taken in the evaluation.
2. Progress against project timeline

Table 1 below highlights a summary of key evaluation activities undertaken since the commencement of the evaluation in early 2011.

Details of the data gathering completed since March/April 2011 is provided in the following section.

Table 1: Progress against proposed Evaluation Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Activity</th>
<th>Activity Completion Date</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finalisation of contract and signing of contract</td>
<td>Jan 2011</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial meeting with members of cross sectoral committee to clarify expectations, project refinement and timelines to ensure project achieves its desired outcomes. During this meeting the evaluation team will seek to identify key contacts within each sector to obtain any information gathered to date in regard to the planning stage of the initiatives.</td>
<td>Mid February 2011</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of schools to participate in interviews with school leaders and teachers</td>
<td>March 2011</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undertake document analysis. Coordinate and conduct key sector representative interviews and interviews with school leaders and teachers</td>
<td>March 2011</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Gathering of data re initial impact of the National Partnership from school representatives attending Smarter Schools Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership Celebrating Success, Embedding Change Conference, held in Sydney on 19 and 20 May 2011</td>
<td>May 2011</td>
<td>Results to be presented in second Progress Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finalise evaluation design, Evaluation Plan and develop instruments. Submit to NPEC for feedback/approval. Trigger for first progress payment.</td>
<td>June 2011</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First progress report. Trigger for second progress payment</td>
<td>August 2011</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finalisation of schools to participate in case study visits.</td>
<td>August 2011</td>
<td>Completed. List of potential schools supplied by sector representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online survey commenced</td>
<td>Early October 2011</td>
<td>Completed. See Appendix 1 for</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Data gathering completed to date

As indicated in Table 1 above, the bulk of the field data gathering planned for the evaluation has been completed. The remainder of the data gathering planned, which involves synthesis and analysis of secondary data, is discussed in Section 6 of this progress report. As noted in the first progress report, a key step in the early stages of the evaluation process was to identify the 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, and was described in Progress Report 1. This analysis is not repeated here, but will be used as introductory material in the Final Report of the evaluation.

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.

Despite this, the observations made in the preliminary analysis in Progress Report 1 have largely been substantiated by the later, more extensive data gathered. The data is discussed in more detail.
in the remainder of this report. The caveat expressed in the First Progress Report still applies to the observations recorded below. This observations presented in this report will be subject to further analysis and interpretation before final conclusions are drawn.

Table 2 provides a summary of data gathering conducted to date.

**Table 2: Summary of focus groups and interviews, February 2012**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus groups and interviews with school leaders and teachers in 12 schools</th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Independent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 completed</td>
<td>3 completed</td>
<td>1 completed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Literacy—6 schools</strong></td>
<td><strong>Literacy—2 schools</strong></td>
<td><strong>Literacy—1 school</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Whole school</strong></td>
<td><strong>Whole school</strong></td>
<td><strong>Whole School</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on Reading: 3</td>
<td>Focus on Reading: 1</td>
<td>Accelerated Literacy: 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accelerated Literacy: 1</td>
<td>Mindful Learning, Mindful Teaching: 1</td>
<td>Mindful Learning, Mindful Teaching: 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading 2 Learn: 1</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Individual Readers: 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual</strong></td>
<td><strong>Individual</strong></td>
<td><strong>Individual</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multilit: 4</td>
<td>Mindful Learning, Mindful Teaching: 1</td>
<td>Multilit: 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Learning Plans: 1</td>
<td>Individual Readers: 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Numeracy—2 schools</strong></td>
<td><strong>Literacy—1 school</strong></td>
<td><strong>Multilit: 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Whole school</strong></td>
<td><strong>Whole school</strong></td>
<td><strong>Multilit: 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOWN: 2</td>
<td>First Steps: 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual</strong></td>
<td><strong>Individual</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOWN: 1</td>
<td>First Steps: 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QuickSmart: 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interviews with key sector representatives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Independent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regional program facilitator: 3</td>
<td>Diocese program facilitator: 2</td>
<td>AIS representative: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DET Coordination (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Independent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- 15 visits planned</td>
<td>- 4 site visits planned and completed</td>
<td>1 site visit planned and completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– 14 completed</td>
<td>- includes 2 metropolitan, 2 regional or rural schools</td>
<td>-regional location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-7 regional or rural, 8 metropolitan schools</td>
<td>(All had a literacy focus)</td>
<td>-Literacy focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 literacy focused schools, 3 numeracy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Schools participating in 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 summarized 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 observations that follow.
4. Observations from the data gathering to date

Whilst all data gathering for the evaluation has not yet been completed, from the extensive data currently available it is possible to discern some clear trends and issues in relation to the implementation of the National Partnership for Literacy and Numeracy. As noted in the caveat above, some caution does need to be taken in drawing conclusions from these observations and their implications for future policy directions. The findings summarised here will be subject to further analysis and interpretation in the light of the final data to be gathered and reflection on the broader policy context of the National Partnerships strategy.

As noted in Progress Report 1, caution also needs to be taken in extrapolating from the observations made in relation to the schools involved in this evaluation and all schools in NSW. The schools selected for participation in the NPLN were not representative of all schools in NSW, but reflected those in which student literacy and numeracy outcomes were generally below average. The observations below in no way are meant to reflect the circumstances of schools across NSW. The observations 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 they 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 National Partnership.

Focus Area 1: What change has been attempted?

It is not necessary in this report to revisit the extensive discussion of the background and context of the NPLN provided in the document analysis undertaken in the initial stages of the evaluation, but it is useful to bear in mind the overall goals of the initiative in reflecting on the observations recorded in relation to its implementation in NSW schools. In brief, 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. These are:

1. effective and evidence-based teaching of literacy and numeracy,
2. strong school leadership and whole-school engagement with literacy and numeracy,
3. monitoring student and school literacy and numeracy performance to identify where support is needed.

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. Interviews with stakeholders and school leaders show that considerable effort has been expended in providing professional learning opportunities as part of the capacity building process, which in addition to enhancing
understanding of pedagogy, has 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 have identified some key factors they believe have contributed to the success of the initiative. 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 included in Progress Report 1 (specifically the NSW Progress reports to DEEWR in 2010 and 2011) 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 DET 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 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 evidence of 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 integration with whiteboard resources.

- 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 the solutions obtained during the NPLN may have not been common practice in many NPLN schools, nonetheless, the 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 to effectively achieve the changes required. The NPLN has been described repeatedly by school-based participants as having been successful as a catalyst for change, providing an infrastructure, expertise, and imperative that allowed them 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 1 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 1: How well did the NPLN "fit" with pre-existing priorities within the school**
Figure 1 above 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 the 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 Multilit, that they had already instituted, or were given permission to continue and expand other interventions they had recently developed.

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.

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 2 below). This is in line with the intentions of the NPLN priority Reform Area (3), concerning the enhanced use of student outcomes data in guiding teaching and learning and programming practices. Of the 147 schools participating in the National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy in New South Wales, 102 schools are undertaking literacy programs and 45 are undertaking numeracy programs.

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 student outcomes data as a key source of information). However, it is also clear that practical considerations, such as the easy 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.

**Figure 2: Reason for selecting the Literacy/Numeracy program(s) implemented in respondent schools**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived purpose of the selected program in relation to the identified learning needs of students in your school</td>
<td>59.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension or continuation of an existing school program</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of professional development support for the program</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of the program</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simplicity to implement</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff knowledge of the program</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional/diocesan/sector recommendation or decision</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note more than one influence could be reported

Principals interviewed 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.

Table 3 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 Multilit as an intervention program for low performing students). The main observation from Table 3 is that, as noted in Progress Report 1, Literacy programs were selected significantly more frequently than Numeracy programs.

Table 3: Whole school or whole class programs implemented as part of NPLN participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Percent of total NPLN schools</th>
<th>No. of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading to Learn</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on Reading</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accelerated Literacy</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Steps Literacy- Reading</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective School Wide Reading</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindful Learning: Mindful Teaching</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Literacy Programs</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking Off With Numeracy (TOWN)</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning in Numeracy</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other whole class numeracy</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Numeracy Programs</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All programs</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NSW SSNP 2010 Annual Report (NB Some schools may have adopted more than one program)

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

Although not one of the primary goals of the national partnership, the development of partnerships with universities, community organisations and parents/carers was strongly promoted throughout the implementation phase of the NPLN. The successful development of such partnerships may be seen as an additional benefit arising from the initiative. 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 locations. 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 3 below shows the extent to which survey respondents reported engagement with universities or other partners. 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 engagement with university or other partners. In contrast, it was far more common for NPLN schools to work with other schools in a cluster arrangement. This is examined below.

**Figure 3: How effectively have schools engaged with universities or other partners to develop new approaches or programs as part of the NPLN**

![Figure 3: How effectively have schools engaged with universities or other partners to develop new approaches or programs as part of the NPLN](image)

Table 4 reports the percentage of NPLN survey respondent schools that reported working with other schools during the NPLN. Table 4 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 4: Did your school work with other schools as part of your implementation of the NPLN?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent response</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4 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 4: In what ways did the schools work together?**

- Providing collegial support for school leaders (e.g. sharing resources, experiences, advice) 78.10%
- Providing collegial support for teachers (e.g. sharing resources, experience, advice) 78.10%
- Pooling funds for hiring an external consultant/teacher mentor or facilitator 38.10%
- Pooling funds for purchasing resources 3.10%

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 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."

"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 superficial 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. The provision of enhanced professional leadership at the school level through the appointment of literacy/numeracy co-ordinators (called classroom leaders in the government school sector) was perceived to have been particularly beneficial.

As Table 5 below indicates, over 95 per cent of schools participating in the survey identified that the appointment of in-school coordinators (classroom leaders) 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% 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% 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 by members of the school community being surveyed as having a positive impact (over 82%) on the ability of school leaders to enhance learning in schools.

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.

Armed with such a framework and the accompanying tools to both interpret and implement the framework, school leadership teams frequently 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 adapted by the Catholic sector as a key planning tool for guiding schools through both the self evaluation and initial planning phases of the initiative. The AIS developed its own leadership program tailored to the schools in the program, as well as using the school self-evaluation and
situational analysis tools. Much can be learned for future initiatives from closer examination of this strategy in terms of the effectiveness of early engagement of school leadership teams as key drivers of the school change process. (This will be further articulated in the evaluation’s Final Report).

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. In Table 5, it is noted that the local cultural immersion programs for Aboriginal education were rated as having the least impact overall, but was seen as beneficial in more than half of the schools surveyed. This program was not highlighted in any of the case study schools. It may be that this pattern of responses is a result of local implementation factors rather than systemic issues.

Table 5:  Extent to which each of the following system/sector NPLN capacity building initiatives have enhanced INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP/ LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Not at all (%)</th>
<th>Little extent (%)</th>
<th>Moderate extent (%)</th>
<th>Great extent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appointment of an in-school literacy or numeracy coordinator (classroom leader)</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>84.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support provided by external facilitators (e.g. regional /diocesan facilitators)</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>53.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Leadership for School Improvement course, or in Catholic schools, &quot;Leaders Transforming Learning and Learners&quot; or the AIS Leadership Program</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>45.2</td>
<td>40.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other specific teacher professional development courses to support NPLN implementation</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>63.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMART or SMART2 e-learning modules</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School self-evaluation supported by the Analytical Framework for Effective Leadership and School Improvement in Literacy and Numeracy</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>53.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis Self Assessment (DASA) tool</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of resource guides to assist planning</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of planning templates</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Education local cultural immersion program</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding for teaching resource purchase</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>70.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding for programs such as Multilit or Accelerated Literacy</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>76.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding to provide flexibility for teacher release</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>86.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 5 above indicates, 97 per cent of the survey sample 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 meet 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 schools 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 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 6 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 nurtured 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 6
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 6: Perceived changes observed in teachers as a result of their school's participation in the NPLN

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

While Table 6 above highlights some personal impacts on teachers’ participating in the initiative, Table 7 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, not only in the implementation process but also in the planning stages.

A key message of the leadership 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 7 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 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 be able to develop appropriate methodologies to ensure that enhanced student learning outcomes did occur.

At the heart of these changes was a genuine sense of 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 Five.

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 leadership 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 7 below demonstrates the very significant impact of the initiative on teacher behaviour perceived 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%) (aggregated percentages for both “moderate” and “great” extent in Table 7 below):
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.

Table 7: Perceived Impact of the NPLN on teacher behaviour

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

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. Teachers interviewed identified the fact that the enhanced content knowledge of pedagogy gained through NPLN experiences provided both the skills and the understanding to develop 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 5 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.

Figure 5: Effectiveness of the NPLN in developing teachers' content knowledge of pedagogy for literacy or numeracy

Each of the data gathering methodologies used in this evaluation have 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.

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 8 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 sectoral assistance appeared to have been quite successful, and Table 8 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 8: Extent to which system/sector NPLN initiatives have impacted on teacher capacity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Not at all (%)</th>
<th>Little extent (%)</th>
<th>Moderate extent (%)</th>
<th>Great extent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appointment of an in-school literacy or numeracy coordinator (classroom leader)</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>81.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support provided by external facilitators (e.g. regional/diocesan facilitators)</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>49.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Leadership for School Improvement course (or the AIS Leadership Program for Independent schools)</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other specific teacher professional development courses to support NPLN implementation e.g., Accelerated Literacy training</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>59.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMART or SMART2 e-learning modules</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School self-evaluation supported by the Analytical Framework for Effective Leadership and School Improvement in Literacy and Numeracy</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis Self Assessment (DASA) tool</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>32.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of resource guides to assist planning</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>37.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of planning templates</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Education local cultural immersion program</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding for teaching resource purchase</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>65.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding for programs such as Multilit or Accelerated Literacy</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>74.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding to provide flexibility for teacher release</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>80.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other forms of support however, varied in terms of their impact on teacher confidence and competence, 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, about 80 per cent of teachers considered that the Analytical Framework for Effective Leadership and School Improvement in Literacy and Numeracy enhanced their own capability, yet this was understandable as it was tool more designed for school leaders than classroom practitioners.

A similar result was achieved (80% for aggregated moderate or great extent) for those classroom teachers who attended the Leadership programs provided by systems and sectors. This is despite the fact that attendance at this program would have given classroom practitioners a broad overview of the nature and purpose of the literacy/numeracy initiatives at the outset. Because the percentages from the survey, in terms of the impact of the initiative, are generally so high, the other interpretation of this finding is that only one teacher in five did not find the experience so valuable.

Similarly, 69 per cent of teachers considered that the DASA tool had a moderate or great influence on building their capacity. 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 on building capacity, particularly 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 Multi-lit 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 among most teachers 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 organizational change.

Finally it should also be noted that almost 60 per cent of teachers considered that funding for the Aboriginal Education local cultural immersion program had little or no impact on building their capacity. It can only be assumed that this program had great relevance for only a minority of schools within the survey being sampled.

2.1.4 Impact on classroom pedagogy

For all the reasons highlighted above it is therefore not surprising that, as Figure 6 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 6: Overall perceptions by participating 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 by 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, and that some schools are still at a relatively early stage in terms of achieving sustained change.

Transferability of learning

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 9 below highlights, a range of classroom strategies are now being employed by teachers in participating schools. Many of those cited in Table 9 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 9 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.”

**Increased expectations**

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 also 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 9 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.

**Use of scaffolded learning**

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 to 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.

**More consistent use of terminology**

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 9 below highlights, in each of the responding schools, the NPLN had strong impact on teacher use of consistent terminology.

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.

Use of specialist support

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 9 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 9: Improvements in the teaching and learning environment as a consequence of the schools’ participation in the NPLN

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

In other schools, existing support mechanisms have been reorganized 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 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 discussion above has highlighted a range of key factors that would appear to relate positively to an improvement in the teaching and learning environment of teachers engaged in the National Partnerships initiative. While it is acknowledged that the teachers’ application of each of the strategies contributing to enhance pedagogy have been variable, the highly recurring percentages of teachers surveyed certainly reinforce the value of each of these factors in contributing to enhanced teaching and learning environments.

*Increased capacity to use data*

Table 10 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 10: Extent to which training in the use of student outcomes data has enhanced practice

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

### 2.1.5 Impact on whole school culture

The positive impact of the NPLN identified in Table 9 above is confirmed in Figure 7 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 7: Perceived impact of the NPLN on the quality of teaching and learning in relevant schools**

![Perceived impact of the NPLN on the quality of teaching and learning in relevant schools](image)

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 8 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 organizational change, this will be explored further in the next phase of the evaluation.
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 six 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 10 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%)

An analysis of each of the above issues highlights that they satisfy some key prerequisites for ensuring there is whole school participation in the initiative and thereby the contribution towards 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. It is logical that each one of these would contribute directly to whole school culture and has direct implications for systems and sectors in the future in terms of most effective means by which sectors and systems and support whole school and commitment can towards organisational and educational change within schools.

In contrast however, it is instructive to note that some system and sector initiatives did not have as positive an impact on the development of a whole school culture as 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 Data Analysis Self Assessment (DASA) tool (64.6%)
• provision of resource guides (71.2%) and planning templates (60.3%) to assist planning
• provision of the Aboriginal Education local cultural immersion program (43.3%)
• funding for specific programs designed to assess students’ targeted learning needs (71.6%)

Table 10: Extent to which the following system/sector NPLN capacity building initiatives enhanced the WHOLE-SCHOOL CULTURE in schools

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

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 had a more direct impact on aspects of the National Partnership initiative than others. 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 organization 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).

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 a significant challenge.

Moreover many Principals and classroom teachers would suggest that it is not due to a lack of interest or even a low priority. A lack of time in the busy lives that most families currently experience is frequently cited as a contributing factor. 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 9 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 engage parents/carers in decision making in any way.

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."

This quotation, made by a “typical” parent epitomizes 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 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.
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 the learning of literature 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 and school participation in the National Partnerships initiative. On the contrary, 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 powerful contributors in providing a systematic approach for identifying and targeting students’ learning needs. In this way
a range of strategies have been employed that were often ad hoc before introduction of the National Partnerships initiative. These include for example:

- 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

Many teachers have commented on the benefits of this approach and consider them part of their ongoing pedagogy in the longer term because of the genuine advantage it provides in focusing their teaching and learning. Moreover, the emerging results being produced for their students, not only in terms of improved attitudes but also in literacy and/or numeracy achievement have been encouraging.

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 slower 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 are relatively embryonic in terms of student learning. Yet they 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

As Figure 10 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 of fairly are substantial results 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 and the company discussions:

"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 has 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.

Given the importance of each of those pre-requisite strategies that have been employed, the overall impact of the initiative on students’ literacy and numeracy outcomes is clearly acknowledged as the major outcome the initiative.

**Figure 10: Perceived overall impact of the NPLN on students’ literacy and numeracy outcomes**

![Impact of NPLN on Literacy and Numeracy](image)

Table 12 below provides a further detail of the perceived impact 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 10 above, Table 12 again articulates schools’ perceptions at the NPLN has had a positive impact for students overall (98 per cent 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 (85 per cent) as well as those students encountering learning difficulties and/or disabilities (88.6%). Moreover an identification of such a positive impact (almost 98 per cent) for boys 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. Over 20 per cent of schools surveyed identified that participation in the initiative had little impact with this particular population group. 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 12: Reported improvement in Literacy outcomes as a consequence of the NPLN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student outcomes, overall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally and Linguistically Diverse students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with behavioural issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13 highlights the reported improvement in numeracy outcomes as a consequence of participation in the initiative. Comparison with Table 12 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.

While this may not be significantly different, (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 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.

Table 13: Reported improvement in Numeracy Outcomes as a consequence of the NPLN

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

As part of the participation in the initiative, teachers in participating schools were also required to develop Individual Learning Plans 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. However, a significant proportion of schools responding to the survey reported there had been only limited effectiveness with this population group.

Figure 11: Effectiveness of the integration of NPLN Individual Learning Plans with existing Personalised Learning Plans for Aboriginal students
2.2.2 Other impacts on students

Participation in the initiative did not have a significant impact on the attendance (over 55 per cent “not at all” or “to a little extent”) or behaviour (over 33 per cent “not at all” or “to a little extent”) of students involved in the initiative. Importantly, however two key prerequisites for effective student learning appear to have been impacted. In the first instance teachers report that student motivation and engagement had been impacted to a moderate or great extent in over 88 per cent of students. Similarly their confidence in their own learning abilities was impacted in a similar way in over 84 per cent of cases. These percentages are important in terms of the potential impact they have in facilitating student engagement on task and consequent learning and therefore encouraging results for teachers in classrooms as well as for systems and sectors in terms of the impact that such an initiative can have on student learning.

Other 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 language. This is a prerequisite for ensuring ongoing cooperation among students as they share their learning discoveries. It is apparent from Table 14 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 14: Impact of the NPLN on other aspects of student behaviour

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

2.2.3 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. Such leadership from the Head of the school ensures that the platform had been established among the staff and enabled open discussion of new approaches, both in terms of achievements and emerging
challenges and the opportunity for professional sharing of ideas, both concerning planning and resource development that had previously not been the case in many 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 six 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. Usually as an initiative from the Principal, many schools have adopted the practice that each morning there would be an uninterrupted two-hour period in all classrooms during which teachers would work with students to ensure on-task engagement. 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.

2.3 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.

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 initiative.

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.

At the heart of the enhanced student learning outcomes, many teachers would suggest that it is the cultural change that has been a fundamental driver in changing classroom practices. 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.

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.

Aligned with this observation by those being surveyed, many Principals believed that their effectiveness in managing and leading the change process was enhanced when they had the financial support provided by systems and sectors 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. Quite commonly in these situations educational providers only selected partners on those occasions where the Principal believed that partner skill, knowledge and expertise were absolutely superior to all other alternatives, including in-school expertise.
Focus Area 3: How effective has implementation been?

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 is further shown in Tables 8 and 10). In some cases, Facilitators have been 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 have 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 15 below shows schools' perceptions of other forms of system/sector support for the implementation of the NPLN.

**Table 15: Perceived helpfulness by schools of system/sector support for the implementation of the NPLN**

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

Table 14 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 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 to 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 percent) 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 our 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 SLSO 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 12 below.

Figure 12 confirms the comments made by principals interviewed for the evaluation and findings reported elsewhere in this report that the appointment of an in-school coordinator (classroom leader) 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 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 12: 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 suggest 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 conducted 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 the time required for implementation of the initiative (particularly the time taken for out-of-class professional development), or particular issues relating to one of the specific programs (TOWN), 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. Other schools see regional/diocesan decisions to discontinue regional support positions for particular programs as a challenge to the sustainability of the strategy.

- 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 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 prioritizing 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 on how to manage these issues to be transmitted. 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). 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 recognized 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 Commonwealth rewards for achievement of reform). 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. It is instructive that a small number of schools did not understand the nature of the reward payments built into the initiative at a state level, even at the end of the funding period, some believing that they would (or should) receive reward funding at the individual school level.
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 most success 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 in any future intervention strategies like the NPLN that may be contemplated.

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 13) 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 standardized 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. The usefulness of the Assessment Bank data in measuring progress across a broader range of grade levels than NAPLAN, and at more frequent intervals than external assessment programs was noted in many schools. These forms of assessment were seen to be of particular use in providing feedback on progress in a realistic timeframe. Many principals noted that they expected there to be some time lag between teacher professional development and improvement in NAPLAN scores.

**Figure 13: Frequency of methods used by schools to identify the success of their NPLN implementation**

It is evident that many schools have been encouraged to document their “journey” undertaken (as evidenced by the displays at the May sharing conference). Regional facilitators have encouraged this as a form of “action research”, using standardized 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.
Likewise, schools report increased teacher morale, enjoyment of teaching and greater collegiality as typical outcomes. None of these factors has been formally measured in any of the schools visited thus far, but were commonly noted as benefits of their NPLN participation.

Teacher expectations of student learning are said by stakeholders interviewed to have changed significantly, for example, teachers are more likely to accept the view that all students can learn. Data about what students know and can do (at whatever level) is 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 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 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 schools visited thus far, it has been noted by school leaders and teachers interviewed 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 the professional learning undertaken. (It was noted that the professional development provided by facilitators was of a very high quality). 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 to be undertaken. This has been found to be 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 introduction 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 SSLNNP Sharing Success, Embedding Change conference. In these presentations, as well as the school visits conducted, it was frequently noted that previous attempts to improve literacy and numeracy, new programs were often adopted by one or a few teachers, and while supported by other members of the school community, 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. 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.

Secondly, the high levels of support provided through NPLN funding has also been critical in facilitating pedagogical change. The appointment of classroom 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 sustainability. 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.

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.

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 Multilit. 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 can the initiative be sustained beyond the life of the Partnership?

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, 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 (for example, through retention of the classroom leaders, or some form of continuing regional support for intervention programs), 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.

Whole school approaches to planning

The adoption of whole school approaches to literacy or numeracy planning was consistently cited in case study interviews as likely to significantly enhance the potential for sustainability of both pedagogical and cultural changes achieved during the NPLN. These perceptions are reinforced in the survey findings. Indeed, as Table 16 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 justifiably 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.

The whole school approach has been important in developing both a greater sense of collective ownership of student learning, as well as empowering teachers to focus on pedagogy as their highest priority. The depth of understanding about particular intervention programs also provided by the whole school professional learning ensures that teachers can participate in the reforms as equals, providing a depth of both collaborative support and potential for leadership that may not have been present under previous reform efforts.

Ongoing focus on data

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 being 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."

Enhanced pedagogical skills

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

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

While Table 16 above clearly highlights those factors that may contribute to sustainability of the impact of the initiative in the near and mid-term future, Table 17 below highlights those issues that could readily inhibit effective sustainability. Importantly, the quantitative data within Table 16, 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 successful, 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, or even 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.

**Staff turnover**

The data in Table 17 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 a 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.

**Reliance on resources**

In a similar way the data also highlights the reliance that teachers still have on the resources needed to implement the initiative (85% of those surveyed suggested that the lack of ongoing funding support 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.

**Competing demands and priorities**

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. Principals suggested that the introduction of the National Curriculum is likely to be the priority for teacher professional learning in the near future, to the detriment of either learning in relation to specific intervention programs or broader school improvement approaches.

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 17 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 17: Perceived inhibitors to the sustainability of elements of the NPLN in schools in the next 2-3 years

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

Despite the findings highlighted above in Table 17, 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."

Involvement of parents

Several of the case study schools identified strategies they had used successfully to ensure ongoing parental support for the initiative, including ongoing communication and education workshops to help parents support their children in literacy and numeracy. These schools were acutely aware of the importance of building partnerships with parents/carers. It was equally clear that many schools are struggling for ideas about strategies that can reach a broader cross-section of their parent population. One in-school facilitator 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."

Mitigation strategies

Table 18 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:

- 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%).

Table 18: Strategies used by schools to promote sustainability of the NPLN approaches and outcomes

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

4.2 Have successful strategies been replicated in other contexts, e.g. in other KLAs?

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.

Within classrooms 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 teaching is targeted and learning is focused to maximise the opportunity for students. Many teachers acknowledge that such an approach cannot be used in all key learning areas. However this approach to pedagogy is employed with sequential conceptual and skill development as required of 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 occurring in relation to teaching resources also. 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 14 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.

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 it is still recognised as the beginnings of an enduring cultural
change where members of the school executive can make an ongoing contribution in the future in supporting staff.

**Figure 14:** Extent to which the implementation of the NPLN had impacts in other Key Learning Areas

![Bar Chart](chart.png)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Some extent</th>
<th>Moderate extent</th>
<th>Great extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>22.60%</td>
<td>58.10%</td>
<td>19.40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Focus Area 5: Lessons learned: Implications for systems/sectors

It would be premature to draw conclusions about systemic implications of the NPLN experience at this stage of the evaluation, but it is appropriate to note the perceptions of stakeholders in relation to the factors that have contributed to the success of the National Partnership. These observations may have relevance for future initiatives of this kind.

First, the importance of the support of the systems and sectors themselves 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 systemic 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 students at risk of low literacy and/or numeracy outcomes in all schools 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 commitment at a system/sector level noted above.

Third, the scope and scale of the NPLN and amount of funds available in NSW may 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 systemic 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 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 of leadership**

In identifying the key lessons to be learned for the Principals of participating schools, it should be noted that any attempt to enhance student learning achievement is not a relatively new phenomenon in most schools. 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 principals has been focused on school-wide cultural change which has been rarely attempted in the past in many schools. In addition the level of structured system and/or sectoral support was quite foreign to many principals prior to engaging in this 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 learned for systems and sectors should such an 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.

The specific content of the professional learning for school leaders was a key factor in enhancing the capacity of principals and other executive in the NPLN schools. Many would have been familiar with much of this material in a general sense in the past, but the close relationship between theory and practice required during the NPLN implementation gave it renewed relevance. In particular, the imperative for leadership to engage and support staff in a collaborative manner was highlighted, leading many principals to exercise a stronger level of instructional leadership than they had in the past. Such practice is strongly endorsed by contemporary research into school leadership. Many NPLN Principals undertook this effectively, achieving positive results in terms of staff commitment and enhanced development. Many of the principals of NPLN schools suggested that school leaders more widely might benefit from undertaking the leadership development program.

A specific aspect of leadership within the initiative that may have further implications for the future concerns the appointment of in-school coordinators, classroom leaders in government schools and Teacher Educators in Catholic Schools. This appointment was rated as one of the key success factors in each of the schools visited, and confirmed in the survey results. This appointment ensured a continuing focus for the initiative, reinforcement of professional learning at a personal level for teachers involved, a "champion" for literacy or numeracy among teaching staff, and a source of expertise around teaching and learning that may not have been utilised to best effect in the past. It is important to note that in the majority of instances, the coordinator was drawn from among the
school staff, but may not have been empowered or enabled to take this key leadership role. Principals noted that the NPLN funding allowed them scope to provide the coordinators with the time release and personal professional development to have impact among their peers, as well as credibility and legitimacy in promoting the change initiative overall.

While schools had considerable flexibility about the conditions under which the in-school coordinator operated, the ability of the person appointed to develop positive relationships with their peers was a common factor in their success. This “lower” level of operational leadership has proven in many schools to be 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. It was readily evident that the in-school coordinators had been specially chosen not only because of their interpersonal skills but also because of their ability to manage organisational change within the context of mutual trust with staff. The systematic professional support offered to these in-school coordinators was also a major contributor to their ongoing success.

This element of the NSW NPLN implementation is one that had significant cost implications for the initiative as whole, but also clearly delivered dividends that will be of lasting value to the individuals involved and the schools as a whole. Systems and sectors may wish to reflect on the value of such appointments in other change initiatives contemplated in future.

In addition to the insights identified above, one further lesson is worth reiterating. The success of this initiative has been significantly enhanced through the provision of financial resources to enable and empower principals to provide time release so that teachers could reflect on particular actions that they were undertaking in an interactive dialogue with their colleagues. The data throughout this report has consistently highlighted the value that teachers have placed on this particular opportunity. Without this level of system/sectoral support, the current level of success of the National Partnerships initiative may not be guaranteed in the future.

**iii. School planning**

School planning for the initiative has occurred on a wide range of levels. At the outset however the key ingredients for success of this initiative have been the opportunity for the principal and executive team to identify the overall vision for the initiative in terms of either literacy or numeracy. This has included not only the skeleton of a plan but some clear ideas about local implementation of the plan. Through targeted professional assistance by systems and sectors, school executive teams have then been prepared to ensure that they engage staff in a meaningful and collaborative manner in building a whole school plan for the initiative, that not only reflects with students starting point for students but also 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 has become apparent that both the school executive and teaching staff understand the importance of a well understood vision, accompanied by a whole school plan for its delivery, but 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, teachers had often 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 NPN, 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 concerned 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, 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 target to year 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 perceived credibility in the eyes of 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.
vi. Accountability

Strong accountability has been a feature of the implementation of the NPLN in NSW. This accountability has operated in a variety of forms and at a number of different levels. Firstly, the accountability between the Australian Government and the state through the bilateral agreements, with the requirement for stringent reporting of progress at regular intervals against specific, measurable targets provided a clear focus on the goals for the initiative. The rewards payments attached to the achievement of these targets by the Australian Government also arguably provided an imperative for action that has been absent from previous initiatives aimed at building teacher capacity and school improvement. The setting of ambitious but achievable targets produced a level of commitment to the completion of the state's implementation plan that signaled the seriousness of intent on the part of the systems and sectors that change was expected. It is instructive that no school "pulled out" of the initiative during the funding period.

The second aspect of strong accountability flowed from this top-level strategy through to the work of the regional facilitators. A significant part of the work of these facilitators was to ensure that the integrity of the intended implementation process was adhered to. This was demonstrated, for example, in not only providing professional learning about the conduct of school self-evaluations, but ensuring that each school had undertaken their evaluation and developed action plans as a consequence. Similarly, the regional, diocesan and sector facilitators ensured that all compliance reporting required of schools had been completed. They also played a strong role in promoting sustainability, through explicitly challenging schools to think about how their plans could be continued post-NPLN funding. In the process of modelling pedagogy in classrooms, and in coaching and mentoring school staff members, the facilitators created expectations that teachers and school leaders would put this learning into practice, questioning them on later visits to the school as to the success of their efforts. The data collected for the evaluation suggests that stakeholders perceive the success of the initiative was significantly influenced by the high level of professionalism and expertise of the facilitators. The provision of this infrastructure is a significant cost element in the program design, yet one that provided significant value to the project.

At a third level, the emphasis on evidence-based practice throughout the initiative strongly influenced the enhanced teachers' understanding of the role of measurement and analysis of student outcomes data. The initiative demonstrably helped to foster a culture in which teachers were more able to examine the effectiveness of changed pedagogy from an informed perspective, rather than anecdotal observation. Accountability is exercised in this sense by requiring teachers to justify the continuance of certain practices in the face of genuine evidence of impact. The use of certain techniques advocated in the professional learning programs, such as data walls, increased the transparency of this information.

Finally, the initiative helped to increase the level of accountability that teachers felt toward each other as professionals – and in the process, increasing a sense of collegiality and morale. Increased use of collaborative planning and peer observations in classrooms, for example, ensured that teachers completed assigned tasks in a timely fashion. This form of accountability is not externally imposed but arises from a sense of responsibility towards others through development of a shared
sense of ownership of results. The importance of school staff developed collective responsibility for all students in the school has been noted elsewhere.

There are several lessons from this experience for future initiatives of this kind, including the importance of creating a strong expectation of results, as well as providing the infrastructure, tools and in developing the capacity of teachers to use these tools. There may be benefits in future in examining how an enhanced sense of accountability can be further enhanced in existing system and sector structures and processes.
5. Next Steps in the evaluation

The next steps in the evaluation are as projected in the Evaluation Plan, and further described below.

Primary data gathering from schools has now been completed. Further quantitative data in relation to student outcomes from NAPLAN testing, as described below, and financial data in relation to the costs of the initiative are to be analysed and provided to the evaluation in February March 2012.

In preparing the final report for the evaluation, further consideration will be given to analysis of program-level evaluations conducted in 2011, for example, evaluations of the implementation of Multilit and TOWN.

The time frame for the remainder of this phase of the evaluation is as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Next Steps</th>
<th>Anticipated Completion Date</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prepare second progress report for NPEC. (Trigger for fourth progress payment)</td>
<td>End February 2012</td>
<td>This report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of student outcomes data</td>
<td>End February 2012</td>
<td>All three sectors have agreed to the use of NAPLAN data. Analysis brief (see below) has been developed. EMSAD will conduct the analysis and provide Erebus with specified outputs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of Cost data</td>
<td>End March 2012</td>
<td>To be negotiated with NPEC Secretariat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of Program level Evaluations</td>
<td>End March 2012</td>
<td>The NPEC Secretariat has agreed that Erebus will be provided with access to relevant documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare draft Final Report incorporating all data gathered 2011-12</td>
<td>March 2012</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback from cross-sectoral committee and NPEC</td>
<td>April 2012</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit a final report of the evaluation (Trigger for fifth progress payment)</td>
<td>April 2012</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Further details of the data collection yet to be conducted for Phase 2 of the evaluation (to take place during March 2012), which will be included in the final report, is described below and further articulated in the Evaluation Plan.

**Student Outcomes data analysis**

The ultimate measure of the effectiveness 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 will be required 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, we will restrict our analysis to use of already gathered outcomes data (NAPLAN literacy and numeracy available from ACARA) to illustrate trends pre and post implementation. This data will be indicative and not able to prove causality, but will be useful in demonstrating any readily observed trends. Data should be available for the two years prior to implementation and two years post implementation.

Data from all three sectors will be used, but not disaggregated by sector as agreed with the evaluation steering committee. The analysis will be conducted by the DEC and only aggregate results supplied to Erebus to ensure privacy and confidentiality of individual student results.

Three indicators of student performance will be presented, 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 (include standard deviations), shown as boxplots in the following hypothetical example. The NAPLAN Reading score will be used to represent the literacy score, as Reading was the specific focus planned for the NPLN intervention.

**Figure 15: Sample representation of NAPLAN data analysis requested for final report**
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 (include standard deviations) shown as boxplots, as in the following hypothetical example.

Figure 16: Sample representation of NAPLAN growth data for final report

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

Program cost effectiveness data

The evaluation is 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 data that allows inferences to be drawn about the relative effectiveness of other interventions. However, it is expected that data should be available in relation to the disbursement of funds across various program elements, and per pupil costs established. The program level evaluations (see below) will also be reviewed, and it may be possible to add a comparative analysis of their findings in relation to cost effectiveness.

Program level evaluations

For the final report, a brief review of the program level evaluations will be conducted to reflect, where relevant, on the findings produced from this evaluation. This analysis will not be extensive, as we understand this will be the subject of a separate project. The program level evaluations will this be used primarily as a source of triangulation for the current evaluation. It may be possible to draw conclusions about the relative effectiveness of the various programs, if they have attempted to provide analysis of impact on student outcomes.

Cross sectoral impact study

This survey conducted by the DEC for other National Partnerships programs asks some questions about areas of interest to the current evaluation, particularly about school pedagogical and leadership issues. The results of the survey are expected to be made available to Erebus.
data will be included in the Final Report, however, the cross sectoral impact study is expected to be of most relevance to the sustainability phase of this evaluation.
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 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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>78.9</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table A2: Number of Respondent schools by Location**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional city</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remote</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table A3: Enrolments of responding schools**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25 or less</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 to 159</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160 to 300</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301 to 450</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>451 to 700</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>701 or more</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A4: Number of Enrolments of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent in Respondent Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Count</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5%</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 -20%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21% or more</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Count</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>74.0%</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeracy</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Count</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>70.1%</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A7: Programs implemented as part of NPLN participation in respondent schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Count</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taking Off With Numeracy (TOWN)</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading to Learn</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on Reading</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accelerated Literacy</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MULTILIT</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Quicksmart; First Steps Reading)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: Schools may have implemented more than one of the above programs
Appendix 2: Case Study Interview Questions

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?