PRINCIPALS AS LITERACY LEADERS:
Confident, Credible and Connected

Neil Dempster
Deslea Konza
Greg Robson
Mike Gaffney
Graeme Lock
Kevin McKennariey

Principals as Literacy Leaders:

Confident, Credible and Connected

Neil Dempster, Deslea Konza, Greg Robson, Mike Gaffney, Graeme Lock and Kevin McKennariey

Research findings from the Principals as Literacy leaders (PALL) Pilot Project

Foreword

The Principals as Literacy Leaders project (PALL) was initiated in 2008 by the Australian Primary Principals Association.

The project was funded by the Australian Government as part of its Literacy and Numeracy Pilots in Low SES Communities Initiative. APPA in turn, through the South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services, commissioned a research team from Edith Cowan, Australian Catholic and Griffith Universities to develop a two year program to support principals leading learning in their schools.

Congratulations must go to the universities for the quality of the work developed and also to the education jurisdictions in the Northern Territory, South Australia, Western Australian and Queensland for enthusiastically involving fifteen of their schools to be part of the pilot. The uniqueness of the overall team involved in PALL should not be underestimated nor overlooked.

From the research, we know that the role of the principal is a key factor in the effectiveness of students learning to read at school. However, APPA believed that the support for this role through a strategic professional development program had never been effectively addressed. This was the foundation for the PALL Pilot project.

This report provides a systematic way of evaluating the effectiveness of the program. What is hard to record are the numerous comments received from principals outside the project thanking APPA for this initiative and requesting how they could be involved.

Our sincere thanks must go to Leonie Trimper who initiated this work and was President of APPA at the time and John Binks-Williams who undertook the role of Project Manager. Christine Perri and Ann Williams must also be highly praised for the administrative role they played to ensure the program was successful.

The report is significant and deserves attention from all levels of government. We believe that the PALL project is an excellent example of the quality professional learning programs that all principals deserve to receive. The research also indicates that there are insufficient resources in primary schools to enable all of the most needy students to receive the support they need to learn to read. This finding is supported in previous research conducted by APPA including In The Balance: The future of Australia's primary schools and Targeting High-Support Students in Primary Schools.

APPA is proud to commend this research to you.

NORM HART
PRESIDENT, APPA

FEBRUARY 2012

Contents

Tables

Figures

Acknowledgements

The researchers whose work is reported here are particularly appreciative of the role played by the Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) in initiating the PALL Pilot Project and in making provision for its management.

In particular, special acknowledgement is made of the leadership of Leonie Trimper, the then national President of APPA whose enthusiasm for the project was unwavering throughout;

to John Binks-Williams, who emerged from retirement to tackle the multiple management tasks associated with a project being implemented in four state and territory jurisdictions with good humour, foresight and diligence; and

to Christine Perri and Ann Williams for their administrative efficiency and patience in getting principals from their homes to the professional development sessions which were integral to the Project.

The researchers would also like to acknowledge their appreciation of the following:

- The South Australian Department for Education and Child Development for hosting the Project;

- Catholic, Independent and Government jurisdictions from South Australia, Northern Territory, Western Australia and Queensland for supporting the involvement of their schools;

- Principals of the participating schools for their enthusiasm and contribution;

- The Literacy Achievement Advisors for the essential role they played in supporting principals; and

- Teachers who found the time to respond to a survey on the impact of the Project.

Principals as Literacy Leaders:
Confident, Credible and Connected

Introduction

This book is the result of research conducted during the Principals as Literacy Leaders (PALL) Pilot Project. PALL was funded by the Australian Government under the Literacy and Numeracy Pilots in Low SES Communities program. Some 60 Government, Catholic, and Independent school principals, 15 each in South Australia, Western Australia, Queensland, and the Northern Territory took part. They did so in a project hosted by the South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services; managed by the Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA); supported by the relevant State and Territory education systems; and designed and delivered collaboratively by three universities – Griffith University, Edith Cowan University and the Australian Catholic University. The ultimate purpose of the project was to undertake interventions which would enhance the literacy learning and achievement of children in schools, where doing so had proved difficult for many in the past.

Part of the motivation for the project was the knowledge that while it is well documented in the literature that within the school, classroom teachers affect student learning outcomes most and that the influence of school principals is second to this, no turnaround in the achievement trajectory of students has occurred without the dedicated action of school leaders (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006). With this and the significance of literacy in primary schools in mind, the project partners used two questions in designing the pilot which research and scholarly writing indicated were important if the daily work of principals was to be connected productively to children's learning and achievement. The two questions were:

(i) What capabilities do principals need in literacy?
(ii) What capabilities do principals need in leadership?

The weight of national and international research evidence behind the project justified a concentration on principals' capacities in these two aspects of their work because of the direct and indirect impact both (when combined) can have on student learning and achievement. The theoretical and empirical knowledge base was examined and discussed by participating principals in a series of linked leadership and

literacy (specifically reading) professional development modules. Each of the modules was followed by practical tasks carried out in their schools with the support of a mentor, an experienced school leader called a literacy achievement advisor (LAA). Four full-time equivalent mentors, working on a 1:15 ratio, provided essential support as principals applied the knowledge gained at the module workshops with teachers in their own schools. All of these activities led progressively to the cooperative planning and implementation of intervention strategies derived from analyses of local school data about children's learning and achievement (particularly in reading). These interventions were then implemented and evaluated from the beginning of the second year of the two-year project.

The chapters of this book describe the overall design of the PALL Pilot Project and the research program which accompanied it. Chapter 1 outlines background principles, the professional development modules, and the follow-up tasks expected of principals with their literacy achievement advisors. Chapter 2 explains the research questions and approaches to data gathering in order to gain a detailed understanding of the personal leadership and literacy capabilities of principals, and how those capabilities were applied in their schools and to what effect. The results derived from the suite of methods used are presented in Chapters 3, 4, and 5. Chapter 6 presents and discusses information gained through the evaluation of interventions in reading. Finally, Chapter 7 provides a brief summary of the project and important implications for the future.

Before presenting a general summary of findings, it must be emphasised that the views obtained from principals were checked against the views of their teachers and the literacy achievement advisors. The inescapable outcome is that the blending of leadership actions with an emphasis on reading yields encouraging outcomes in low-SES schools even after but a short time. It is fair to say that the analysis of data derived from the three main sources – principals, teachers, and literacy achievement advisors – resulted in six positive findings qualified by two negatives.

Six Positives

1. Principals found the research frameworks on leadership (the Leadership for Learning Blue Print) and learning to read (The Big Six) highly relevant and influential in their approaches to leading literacy learning.

2. Principals took direct action to re-connect their teachers with the importance of a widely shared school moral purpose – in this project, manifest as the improvement of children's lives through improved literacy learning and achievement.

3. Principals took a far greater and more active leadership role in professional development with their teachers than they had in the past. This, they attributed to increased confidence in their leadership and literacy knowledge. They engaged teachers in professional discussions using evidence of students' learning. This heightened involvement enhanced principals' curriculum credibility across the school.

4. Teachers reported a high degree of knowledge transfer from the work of their principals into teaching practices. Of the 56 principals completing intervention evaluations in reading, 28 reported the setting of new and clear targets. Principals increased the significance they and their teachers attached to evidence-informed reading strategies for students in need, and together they realigned the school's resources to support those strategies. That realignment included, for example, whole-school literacy blocks, new assessment processes, the use of explicit teaching in all aspects of The Big Six, and the development of scope and sequence documents in reading.

5. Moderate improvements in students' attitudes to learning and achievement in literacy were reported by teachers and a small, though noticeable, number of teachers and principals reported the positive effects of improved literacy skills on behaviour and self-esteem.

6. There was general improvement in the pilot project schools' results in the National Assessment Program in Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and pleasing gains by many students in school-based assessment results.

Two Negatives

1. A quarter of the teachers and principals in the project schools reported continuing difficulty in forming partnerships with parents and members of the wider community to support children's reading.

2. Many principals reported on their inability to extend interventions as well as they would have liked to some of the most needy children because of resource restrictions.

Overall, the project outcomes leave no doubt that principals' leadership for learning or instructional leadership capabilities for literacy were enhanced. Moreover, school-based intervention evaluations show the direct effects of changed strategies on improving children's learning and achievement in reading.

Findings regarding three concepts - principals' confidence, credibility, and connection – are embedded in the research data. Principals and teachers reported far greater connection with each other over pedagogical issues in learning to read than had previously been the case, with principals themselves reporting greater credibility and confidence in that educative leadership role. These concepts have found their way into the implications which are contained in Chapter 7.

In brief, the implications are concerned with the purpose and design of professional learning programs for principals. They advocate "blending" general leadership capability enhancement with high-priority learning areas such as literacy, recognising the need for substantial support from experienced others (such as the LAAs in this project), taking the time to connect professional learning with real curriculum issues for teachers and children so that knowledge transfer is maximised, and emphasising the use of evidence- and research-informed professional practice.

Finally, the point must be made that the PALL Pilot Project principals introduced changes into their schools and they showed growth in leadership and literacy knowledge and capability without any additional resources beyond those available through the immediate support from their literacy achievement advisors. These people were the coaches, mentors, and confidantes through which principals' learning evolved and they were acknowledged universally as such, by all in the pilot project. These facts are important should education authorities decide that the PALL Project approach is a sufficiently worthwhile investment in helping to "close the gap" in achievement between disadvantaged children in low-SES environments and other children in the Australian community.

Chapter One

The Design of the Principals as Literacy Leaders (PALL) Pilot Project

1.0 Introduction

The Principals as Literacy Leaders (PALL) Pilot Project was funded under the Australian Government's Literacy and Numeracy Pilots in Low SES Communities initiative. It was designed as an action research project to be implemented over two years (2009-10). The objectives of the project, as described in the submission to the Australian Government by the project proponents, were:

(i) to develop the capabilities of principals in low-SES and Indigenous school communities to:

a. examine school and system data for the purpose of evaluating performance and developing plans and strategies for the improvement and sustainability of high levels of literacy achievement;

b. lead the design and implementation of literacy improvement in their schools;

c. build a professional learning community for improving literacy in their schools;

d. contribute to literacy development from a system perspective; and

(ii) to assess student learning achievement in literacy in ways that inform the realisation of objectives (a) to (d).

In essence, the PALL Project synthesised knowledge about school leadership, literacy teaching and learning, effective professional learning and school improvement, and change management and applied that knowledge to the problem of raising the literacy achievement of students in low-SES school communities. A key challenge in the development of the project was to find an appropriate balance between the synthesis of knowledge and its application to the contexts and working life demands of the participating principals.

This chapter provides an overview of the PALL Pilot Project, the rationale and assumptions upon which it was based, and the design principles informing the particular approach taken to the components of principals' professional learning. These explanations are followed with a description of the professional development (PD) modules used to initiate in-school activity and a description of the project schools. A discussion of the connection between project resources and post-project sustainability leads into the chapter conclusion.

1.1 The rationale for the PALL Pilot Project

There were three significant factors in the PALL Pilot Project developers' decision to work with principals:

1. the performance of Australian children in international literacy achievement tests;
2. the growing body of research on links between leadership and learning; and
3. the outcomes of national and international research reviews of reading as a cornerstone of literacy.

An elaboration of each follows.

1.1.1 International test performance

Data from national and international surveys of student achievement in literacy pointed to a recurring problem in Australian schools (Thomson, De Bortoli, Nicholas, Hillman, & Buckley, 2011; National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), 2008, 2009, 2010). The overall outcome of these surveys was positive: the majority of Australian students achieved high standards, but a significant minority did not. Moreover, evidence from these sources and from a series of national reports and inquiries into our literacy learning shortcomings (Rowe, 2005; Louden et al., 2005) indicate that children who fall behind in the early years of schooling tend to fall further behind over the course of their school careers. In some quarters the phrase "high achievement/low equity" (McGaw, 2006) has been used to depict the outcomes achieved by Australian schools. Typically the analysis of these achievement data has been combined with contextual and demographic information that aligned low socio-economic status and indigeneity (and the schools students from those backgrounds attend), with outcomes in a semi-causal link. This analysis gave weight to the term "the gap" between high- and low-achieving groups.

It was to this issue that the Commonwealth Government allocated funding in 2009 - 2010, enabling selected schools and school systems to pilot strategies to address "the achievement gap."

1.1.2 The importance of leaders for learning

In spite of the long-standing and deeply entrenched nature of "the gap," there is a growing body of research evidence (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Hattie, 2003) generating the conviction that the problem, while difficult to overcome, can be addressed in positive ways by schools. In fact, evidence has continued to accrue that factors such as the quality of instruction (Hattie, 2009); the quality of school leadership (particularly sustainable leadership), (Leithwood et al., 2006; Robinson, 2007; Seashore-Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010) and the impact of well-designed PD and support programs (Darling-Hammond, Chung Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009; Hord, 1997) leads to the conviction that improving the quality of student learning and achievement, in a sustainable way, is feasible.

Taken together, the work of such authors has pointed to the need to concentrate PD on teachers and to emphasise it for school leaders. The latter has emerged as particularly important over recent years when the pressures of managing schools in risk-averse policy environments has tended to divert principals' attention from the central purpose of their work: student learning and achievement (MacBeath & Dempster, 2009). The press for "managerialism" is a 20-year-old phenomenon, which has deeply affected school leaders' practice. Such has been its sway that too many principals have become "office-bound" report writers managing the regulatory compliance and financial accountability demanded of them. It was felt by the project developers that paying attention to an educational focus in the professional learning needs of school leaders would hold promise for returns to schools and their students. Indeed, it has been demonstrated that principals are the second most important influence on improving student learning outcomes after teachers (Leithwood et al., 2006). Moreover, there is ample evidence to show that the trajectory of student achievement in schools that are struggling is not turned around without high-quality committed leadership. All of these factors taken from a substantial body of research underpinned the decision of the proponents of the PALL Pilot Project to focus its design on principals and their capabilities to lead literacy learning in their schools.

1.1.3 Principals' knowledge of literacy and learning to read

School leaders require more than leadership expertise; they need knowledge about literacy to be able to lead its school-

wide improvement. Given this understanding, the developers of the PALL Pilot Project designed it to enhance principals' knowledge of literacy and, in particular, their knowledge of reading.

It may be argued that school principals should already be experts in what it takes to learn to read. Why would they need a professional learning program about it? One answer lies in the fact that approaches to learning to read have been contested for decades, with differing views on how reading should be taught causing confusion and, in some cases, great division among principals and teachers. However, what has evolved over the past four decades is a compelling body of evidence (Anderson, 1985; Adams, 1990; Chall, 1996; National Institute of Child Health and Development (NICHD), 2000; Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), 2005; Rose, 2006; National Early Literacy Panel, 2008) that supports the conclusion that the reading process is broadly based on the oral language ability of an individual and that it requires the development of:

- specific phonological skills;
- rapid recognition of common letter combinations;
- a large vocabulary; and
- the ability to put all these elements together accurately and speedily in order to engage deeply with the meaning of text.

Given the persuasive and consistent message about the component skills required for the development of reading, PALL developers considered it essential that a clear research-based position consonant with the weight of empirical evidence be presented as central to the PALL Pilot Project design. That position, simplified as the "Big Six" framework, is briefly described later in the chapter and elaborated further in Chapter 4.

The PALL proponents were mindful of the evidence on student achievement, leadership and literacy, so they drew them together in the following statement about the way the project would be designed:

Addressing the literacy achievement gap in Australian schools requires a sustainable strategy conceptualised as a literacy AND leadership development challenge.

1.2 PALL Pilot Project foundational assumptions and design principles

One of the characteristics of an action research approach is the need for practitioners to be explicit about the knowledge and beliefs that inform their decision making and action. Hence in the PALL Project, it was felt that both the literature

on the components referred to above and the core beliefs and assumptions that led to the developers linking them together should be highlighted.

1.2.1 Foundational assumptions

The project developers, on the basis of the research evidence alluded to above, adopted the foundational view that the literacy problem in low-SES Australian schools was amenable to being addressed and that effective leadership of those schools would be essential for sustained school and educational improvement.

The other key assumptions were that the focus for principals in Australian primary schools should be on leadership for learning and that the main literacy approach in our schools should be a balanced regime in the teaching of reading, consistent with the research evidence.
It was also decided that evidence from research on leadership, PD and school improvement should be drawn together into a consistent framework in order to provide a useful guide for leadership action.

The final assumption recognised that PD should be paced over time in an improvement-linked sequence (involving the analysis and use of data for the planning, implementation and evaluation of literacy interventions) with supported leadership action for change.
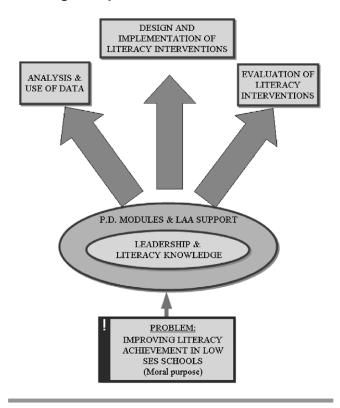
1.2.2 Design principles

From the research outcomes and assumptions briefly referred to above, the following set of design principles were crystallised to drive the development of the PALL Project:

• Empirical evidence about effective teaching and learning, effective leadership, strategic change management and the appropriate use of data in decision making should be the basis of positions and materials communicated to participating principals.

• There should be respect for and understanding of the diverse and challenging school and community contexts in which leaders and teachers are working.

• The concept of partnership between practitioners and those working in support roles (academics and mentors) should be central to the project.

• Leadership development opportunities as part of the project should be proximal (within the school context), spaced (to allow for practice), ongoing (with room for mentoring and coaching) and connected (based on relevant contexts, cases and issues).

• Workshop and support activities should be a blend of process and content knowledge in leadership and in literacy.

Figure 1.1 illustrates the links between the literacy problem and the components of the PALL Project. Each of the components is explained to the right.

Figure 1.1 PALL – Links between literacy problem and design components

1.3 The design components of PALL

The two key design components of the PALL Project were (i) mentoring support for principals and (ii) a program of professional development.

1.3.1 The provision of leadership mentoring - literacy achievement advisors

In each jurisdiction, a professional peer with expertise in leadership, knowledge and understanding of the significance of literacy in children's learning, and experience in disadvantaged communities, was appointed to act as a literacy achievement advisor (LAA) to work with principal participants in their state/territory. Each full-time LAA was responsible for supporting up to 15 principals. The LAAs' primary role was to mentor and coach school leaders.

As part of the project's action research approach, the LAAs' mentoring and coaching role was carried out through interaction over project tasks with principals in their school communities. Principals' knowledge of their communities was recognised as a critical factor in the shaping, planning and implementation of project tasks with their teachers to

address particular local aspects of the literacy "problem." The project tasks were not so pre-determined that they could be seen to disqualify the use of the term "Action Research". On the contrary, principals took many tools back into their schools with suggested tasks which called for adaptation to enable them to make decisions about the strength of the evidence required for the plans needed for interventions, the strategies best matched to those plans, and methods on how best to evaluate their effects before moving on to new plans after review and reflection. Unarguably, principals were seen during the project as the context knowledge holders: They designed, implemented and conducted evaluations of literacy interventions to improve the teaching and learning of literacy in their schools. The LAAs were "critical friends," providing support for the principals to carry out "homework tasks," and to ensure that there was follow-up action within a series of professional development modules. A particular professional quality used as a criterion in the selection of LAAs was their demonstrated capacity to work with student achievement data and related evidence, and to support principals to lead whole-school literacy development.

1.3.2 Professional development modules

The developers worked to a set of "writing criteria" in producing five PD modules to stimulate the learning of the participating principals. The modules had to:

- show explicitly the research sources on which they were based;

- provide critical sources as readings;

- engage principals directly in "hands-on" learning sessions to reach nominated outcomes; and

- set up in-between module activities.

As Figure 1.1 illustrates the first two modules were designed to enhance principals' knowledge about the connections between leadership and learning and their knowledge about the teaching of reading to provide a foundation for later modules. Modules 3, 4 and 5 built on that knowledge, and worked on how principals should lead the design, planning, implementation and evaluation of literacy interventions. In particular, interventions in reading were based on an analysis of data by principals and teachers from each school context. The follow-up activities referred to above were undertaken after each module, supported by the LAA around whose work the PALL Pilot Project hinged. A brief description of the five modules and in-school actions they helped initiate follows.
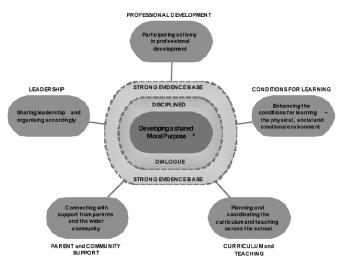
Module 1: A Leadership For Literacy Learning Blueprint

The first module explained how a leadership for learning (LfL) framework had been synthesised from five recent meta-analytical research reports into the connections between leadership and learning (see Leithwood et al., 2006; Robinson, 2007; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2008; MacBeath & Dempster, 2009; Masters, 2009). The synthesis, or Blueprint as it was called in the project, is illustrated in Figure 1.2. Eight dimensions for leadership action are considered important. The first of these places the moral purpose of school leaders centre stage. The framework when applied to literacy shows that keeping the spotlight on literacy learning and achievement is enhanced when there is "disciplined dialogue" amongst professional staff based on sound qualitative and quantitative evidence about children's learning. However, the framework is also based on evidence that this is not enough. There are five other dimensions. At the top of the figure is the active involvement of school leaders in PD about literacy learning with their teachers. The other four dimensions also play an important part. School leaders must pay close attention to their roles in "curriculum coordination" and in the monitoring of teaching; in creating the structures and processes for "shared leadership" responsibilities for literacy with their teachers; and in making connections with "parents and the wider community" that contribute to children's literacy learning, while never losing sight of the physical, emotional and social "conditions for learning."

The Blueprint, as shown in Figure 1.2 below, was applied in three ways in the project. First, using a series of pointers derived from the leadership literature cited, a Personal Leadership Profile (PLP) instrument was developed to enable principals to reflect on their own leadership actions. Second, a school-wide application of the Blueprint was designed so that principals and their teachers could reflect on how strongly they felt each of the LfL dimensions was evident in their schools. Third, a School Profiling Template was created to capture specific aspects of each school's context, in accordance with the research literature's emphasis on the importance of leaders knowing and understanding their school's circumstances if they are to make best use of the internal and external resources available to them.

Figure 1.2 Leadership for Literacy Learning Blueprint

Leading Learning – A Framework

*improving student learning and performance

The Leadership for Literacy Learning Blueprint (LLLB) was used as the basis to establish the kind of leadership actions expected of principals in the pilot project. Added to this, however, was the view that principals needed to know the essential concepts and processes in the teaching of reading if they (principals) were to participate actively in PD with their teachers. This was the motivation for Module 2.

Module 2: What leaders need to know about learning to read

Module 2 demonstrated the complexity of the reading process and the importance of the research-based "Big Six," namely, (i) linguistic knowledge: the underpinning importance of early literacy experiences and the significance of ongoing exposure to effective language use at home and in the child's out-of-school life; (ii) phonological awareness, and, in particular, phonemic awareness; (iii) letter/ sound knowledge; (iv) vocabulary; (v) fluency; and (vi) comprehension. Studies and reports were used to construct the substantive Big Six position on learning to read. The importance of a broad vocabulary, rapid word recognition and alphabetic knowledge to the point of automaticity were emphasised, as was the need for direct oral language teaching for many of the students in PALL Pilot Project schools. The primary goal in Module 2 was to turn "learning to read" into "reading to learn," not only for students experiencing difficulties but for all students. This goal underlines the overarching importance of comprehension as the outcome of learning to read. Principals were encouraged

to examine student achievement data to identify children with serial troubles in comprehension. Principals were also shown how to drill down into evidence of the child's performance to isolate where assistance should be targeted (that is, on which aspect of the Big Six) and to ascertain the kinds of teaching strategies that should be employed to help the child improve.

A key follow-up task for Module 2 involved principals in classroom observations using a structured observation instrument called a Literacy Practices Guide (see Chapter 4 for examples). The guide listed the kinds of observable materials, activities and classroom routines which typify a rich reading environment. The observation instrument could be completed by the principals alone but many principals asked their teachers to complete it for themselves. Data were then compared in discussions to identify good practice and the focus for improvements. Principals reported that this task, though difficult with some teachers, reconnected them with classroom curriculum and, in a very practical way, with pedagogy.

The focus on classrooms using the Literacy Practices Guide acted as a springboard into Module 3, where the gathering and use of data on children's learning and achievement were the focus.

Module 3: Leading literacy data gathering and analysis

The third module picked up the "sound evidence" theme highlighted in the Blueprint by focusing on the importance of evidence-based planning and decision making. This module helped principals explore the usefulness and limitations of different types of data about learning to read and reading achievement. Tools that could assist teachers to identify what they needed to know and how to gain that knowledge were shared. Local knowledge of school contexts and NAPLAN results about students was used to practise "disciplined dialogue" with principals so that they, in turn, could conduct this kind of dialogue with groups of teachers. "Disciplined dialogue" was the name given to planned professional conversations focussed on sound evidence about specific aspects of learning and/or achievement. This kind of conversation is constructed in a disciplined or systematic way around three enabling questions:

1. What are we seeing in these data?
2. Why are we seeing what we are?
3. What, if anything, should we be doing about it?

These three questions helped principals to dig into individual and group achievement data with their teachers, search for reasons for that achievement, and identify what specific improvement steps should be taken for particular children.

To add to the principals' data usage repertoire, informal and standardised assessment instruments related to each element of the Big Six were examined. Finally, the module created a link to Module 4 by emphasising the need for comprehensive data on children's achievements in reading before intervention strategies could be contemplated – the matter to which Module 4 was directed.

Module 4: Designing, implementing and monitoring literacy interventions

Module 4 defined the term "intervention," reiterating the pilot's ultimate purpose of improving children's literacy learning and achievement in project schools. Several change implementation and intervention planning processes were explored with the expectation that each school would produce an intervention implementation plan ready for the commencement of the second year of the project.

The intervention planning process was built on a "wave" metaphor. Consistent with research and practice about literacy interventions, three waves were used to describe the types of interventions that might be used by schools in the PALL Project.

The *first* wave applies to those deliberate acts that are taken across the school to ensure that the majority of students can participate productively in the general classroom curriculum.

The *second* wave identifies those students unable to achieve the goals of the general classroom curriculum, that is, students who need specialised assistance in the form of scaffolded learning, special programs or differentiated support structures.

The *third* wave applies to students with specific needs who require highly focussed or individualised intervention. These are students who cannot manage the general classroom curriculum because of a disability, or a difficulty with or a lack of understanding of the English language. This is almost always a minority of students (though in some of the PALL Pilot Project schools, the number of "Wave 3" children was higher than usual).

Concern for the sustainability of principals' intervention actions was raised during the module and this issue was highlighted as one of the hallmarks of successful interventions. Building the school's capacity for "shared leadership" (with a "no blame" culture) was recognised as an essential component for effective interventions.

As they set about implementing their interventions, principals were alerted to the need for ongoing monitoring leading to the eventual formal school-based evaluation of the effectiveness of the schools' efforts. This final phase of the project was the topic for Module 5.

Module 5: Intervention evaluation and future planning

Module 5 took principals through three necessary steps in planning school based evaluations of the interventions they had implemented – purpose, process and use. The platform for the design was that it is only through learning that achievement is improved. Therefore, what had been happening in teaching and learning was as much a focus for the evaluation as was the children's achievement. Primary and secondary questions were introduced as the focal points for the construction of the evaluation (see Chapter 6 for examples). The two important primary questions, for which principals were encouraged to gather qualitative and quantitative data, were:

What changes have there been in the teaching and learning experiences in which teachers and children are engaging? Are any changes being seen in children's achievement?

Principals were also introduced to a series of possible secondary questions in the module. These secondary questions were drawn from the Blueprint and were to be included in data gathering only if the principal and teachers believed that particular planned actions had an influence on the effectiveness of their interventions. The secondary questions they considered were:

What has been the influence of parents or members of the wider community in leading the literacy learning of their children at home and/or at school?
To what extent has the PD for teachers affected their literacy teaching and learning?
What effects have changes in the school's approach to coordinating and monitoring the literacy curriculum had on teaching and learning?
What has been the impact of shared leadership on the implementation of literacy intervention action?
What changes have been made to the conditions known to support learning (physical, social, emotional or resource-based) and to what effect?

1.4 The school context - the PALL Pilot schools

The PALL Project participants were selected in each jurisdiction on the basis of a combination of school context and principal characteristics. The contextual factors were low socio-economic status (based on parent income, education and occupation, indigeneity, student mobility and rurality) and low levels of student attainment (including low mean scores

in reading and the proportion of students who did not reach benchmark achievement levels).

The selection criteria for principals were: a stated desire to improve literacy outcomes in their school; willingness to promote and participate in leading literacy development; capacity to participate in a two-year project; and commitment to sustain their engagement within and beyond the project.

The project commenced in early 2009 with 60 participating schools and principals. By the end of 2010, only three schools had withdrawn from the project, which in itself is an indication of a high level of commitment by participants.

The 60 principals engaged in the first two PD modules in Adelaide. Subsequently, the third and fourth modules were delivered on a state and territory basis by the module developers from each of the universities responsible. The final module in the PD sequence was, like Modules 1 and 2, delivered to the whole participating cohort in Adelaide in May 2010.

During the course of the project, the Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) managed both a public website to disseminate information about the project to the broader educational community and a closed website to enable participants to share material and ideas. Supplementary podcast materials on reading and on the Leadership for Learning Blueprint were also uploaded to the PALL/APPA website.

1.5 Conclusion

The PALL Project was designed to address an issue of national significance, namely how to improve the literacy achievement of students in low-SES school communities. Research on literacy (in particular, the teaching of reading) and on the links between principal leadership and student learning were used as bases to tackle this issue. These bases influenced the project in two important ways. They informed (i) the content focus, development and delivery of the PD modules, and (ii) the role of the literacy achievement advisors in supporting principals to lead literacy improvement.

Having outlined the design of the PALL Project, we now turn in Chapter 2 to an explanation of the two-year program of research that accompanied it.

Chapter Two

Research Design and Data-Gathering Methods

2.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research purposes and data-gathering processes for the PALL Pilot Project during its two-year life. The research program blended approaches: It was part research and development, part action research, and part standard research design. Chapter 1 described how the project's proponents developed a series of professional learning modules and materials to assist participating principals to improve their leadership and literacy capabilities. This development work was also incorporated into action research tasks that leaders undertook as part of the working trial of leadership, literacy and intervention frameworks. In this way, the PALL Project was built on several specifically designed intervention and support components, the impact of which forms a central part of the research inquiry.

2.1 Research purpose and questions

An underlying concern of the researchers engaged in the project was to better understand the processes of knowledge transfer. As discussed in Chapter 1, new, refined or re-emphasised knowledge was stimulated by the professional learning modules, and transfer was anticipated as a result of the follow-up activities asked of principals as they attempted to implement literacy improvement actions following each module. Transfer was also sought through the supportive work of the leadership mentors, the literacy achievement advisors (LAAs). Thus, gaining an understanding of the extent to which knowledge transfer occurred and influenced changes in practice and outcomes lies at the heart of the research purposes and tasks described here.

2.1.1 Research questions

As outlined in Chapter 1, the overall purpose of the pilot project was to improve the literacy learning and achievement of students in low-SES school communities by developing the capabilities of primary school principals as "effective literacy leaders." With this as the central purpose, two general questions underpinned the project design for principals' learning:

What capabilities do principals need in literacy?
What capabilities do principals need in leadership?

The term "capabilities" refers to: "Qualities which integrate knowledge, skills and attitudes in such a way that they can be used appropriately and effectively in existing or changing circumstances" (Stephenson, cited in Duignan, 2006, p. 120).

Against this background, the key purposes of the research were to ascertain the effects of involvement in the project:

1. on principals' personal leadership and literacy capabilities (particularly in reading); and
2. on their use of these capabilities in their schools (for teachers and students) and for the system.

With principal capability as the main focus of inquiry, the supplementary issue to be explored was the extent of knowledge transfer, as outlined above. The diagram below represents the relationship between these focal points:

Figure 2.1 PALL research: Direction of impact and transfer
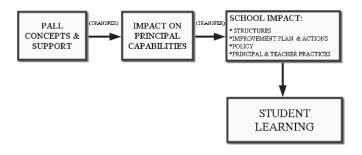
Figure 2.1 illustrates the direction of the anticipated impact of the PALL Project. Although it oversimplifies the nature of knowledge transfer as linear, the diagram acted as a guide to the research planning process. As that planning unfolded, the researchers acknowledged that knowledge adjustments can be convoluted, involving an iterative process of trial, reflection and refinement; therefore, the research methods chosen needed to accommodate this uncertainty.

2.1.2 Action research tasks

The principals in the project were enlisted as action research partners and requested to undertake three data collection and analysis tasks:

1. construct a School Profile to represent important elements of the context for and organisation of literacy in their schools, with the initial profile serving as a baseline for measuring changes over the period of the project;

2. collect school-level qualitative data using a leader's observational tool – the Literacy Practices Guide – to inform decisions about resetting literacy priorities; and

3. design, with their teachers, using both system quantitative achievement data and school-level diagnostic data, literacy interventions for their schools and evaluations of those interventions, with short reports on the impact of the interventions.

The planning-action-reflection cycle, supported by LAAs, provided a means for the leaders to consolidate their learning from the project in a "real world" context and for data to be used more broadly as sources of evidence about the main research questions being addressed through the project.

2.2   Data sources and methods

Data-gathering methods were linked to the two key research purposes so that the research findings would contribute to the five main objectives of the pilot project (as listed in Chapter 1). In other words, the research findings need to provide evidence of how and to what extent the PALL Project assisted in the development of principals' capabilities.

Gathering data entailed an extensive array of research methods, which were directed towards principals, teachers, students, and, in some cases, parents. A description of the data-gathering processes and the purpose of each follows, together with an explanation of the expected outcomes.

2.2.1 A mixed-methods approach

A mixed-methods approach to data gathering was considered the most useful for the participants in the project and so there was a need for data to be drawn from multiple perspectives on the key research purposes and questions. Mixed-methods research combines both quantitative and qualitative methods in single study design (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007) and is well supported in the literature (Brannen, 1992; Flick et al., 2007; Punch, 2005; Thomas, 2003). This approach was considered to best match the project's purposes because, as Wiersma and Jurs (2005, p. 277) argue, mixed methods provide a

"more complete understanding of the phenomenon being investigated" than individual methods.

As data-gathering techniques and instruments were developed, a close watch was kept to ensure there was a sufficient pool of common items for assessing the impact of major concepts and support initiatives from different perspectives. For example, data were sought from a variety of participant standpoints and in each of the instruments (the Principals' Leadership Profile, the principals' questionnaire and interview, the teachers' questionnaire and interview, and the LAAs' interview) a common set of items was generated to cross-check participants' perceptions of the usefulness and application of the Leadership for Literacy Learning Blueprint. This process of triangulation is known to be important in maintaining a rigorous but balanced perspective on the impact of a project.

2.2.2 Research questions, multiple data sources and methods

Within the general framework for the research, specific questions were composed to examine the issues of knowledge transfer and the impact of the PALL Project. These questions required interrogation using multiple data sources. What follows is a depiction of the relationships between each of the research focal points, research instruments and methods.

Research focus one: The impact of the professional development modules

The research related to the professional development modules included assessing the extent of knowledge transfer and the modules' perceived effectiveness in developing principals' understandings. Table 2.1 shows the PALL concepts and supports which are manifest as professional learning modules, the Blueprint, Big Six and so on, and matching data-gathering methods.

Table 2.1 PALL concepts and supports (professional learning modules)
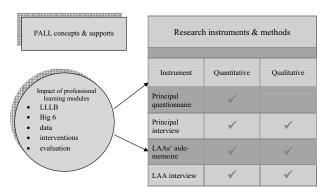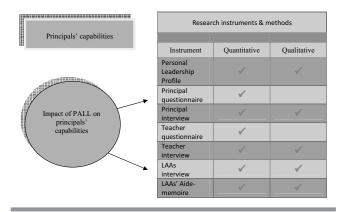
Table 2.1 shows that both qualitative and quantitative data were sought, through questionnaire and interview with key project participants, on the impact of each of the material inputs to the project.

Research focus two: The impact of the role of the literacy achievement advisors

Table 2.2 illustrates the range of data-gathering instruments and types of data sought to gauge the impact of the role of the LAAs.

Table 2.2 PALL concepts and supports (LAAs' role)

Research instruments & methods		
Instrument	Quantitative	Qualitative
Personal Leadership Profile	✓	✓
Principal questionnaire	✓	
Principal interview	✓	✓
Teacher questionnaire	✓	
Teacher interview	✓	✓
LAAs interview	✓	✓
LAAs' Aide-memoire	✓	✓
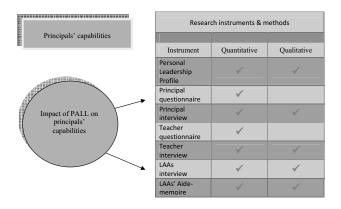
Again, it can be seen that the researchers in the project considered both qualitative and quantitative data to be important in assessing the impact of the work of the LAAs.

The collection and analysis of data, as represented in Tables 2.1 and 2.2 above, were concerned primarily with the usefulness and impact of the PALL professional learning modules and the role of the LAAs. The section that follows describes the approaches to data gathering used to gauge the impact and effect of involvement in the project on the capabilities of principals.

Research focus three: The impact of PALL on principals' capabilities

Figure 2.3 shows the data-gathering instruments used to ascertain the impact of the project on principals' capabilities.

Table 2.3 PALL impact on principals' capabilities

Research instruments & methods		
Instrument	Quantitative	Qualitative
Personal Leadership Profile	✓	✓
Principal questionnaire	✓	
Principal interview	✓	✓
Teacher questionnaire	✓	
Teacher interview	✓	✓
LAAs interview	✓	✓
LAAs' Aide-memoire	✓	✓
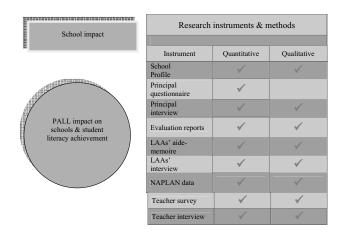
A central research objective was to illustrate the degree to which principals' capabilities had been enhanced. Again, Table 2.3 shows that both quantitative and qualitative data were employed.

Research focus four: The impact of PALL on schools and student literacy achievement

Finally, Table 2.4 shows that a number of instruments were used to gather data on the impact of the PALL Pilot on the schools involved and on the literacy achievement of their students.

Table 2.4 PALL impact on schools and student literacy achievement

Research instruments & methods		
Instrument	Quantitative	Qualitative
School Profile	✓	✓
Principal questionnaire	✓	
Principal interview	✓	✓
Evaluation reports	✓	✓
LAAs' aide-memoire	✓	✓
LAAs' interview	✓	✓
NAPLAN data	✓	✓
Teacher survey	✓	✓
Teacher interview	✓	✓

The purpose, and therefore the intended impact, of PALL was to improve the ways in which literacy (in particular reading) was being led, organised, taught, learned and evaluated in the participating schools. Table 2.4 shows that School Profiles and NAPLAN data, for example, were instrumental in this part of the research design.

2.3 Instrument design and data analysis

The PALL research program was constructed jointly by researchers from the three participating universities. Specific responsibilities for research tasks were allocated as outlined below.

2.3.1 School Profiles

The creation of a template for the development of School Profiles, and the analysis of these data from the 60 participating PALL Pilot Project schools, was the responsibility of Griffith University. The profiles contained information, such as the demography of the schools, their missions and values, literacy teaching and learning priorities, staff numbers and experience, and student and staff satisfaction data (see Appendix 2.1). These data enabled comparisons to be made about changes in the profiles influenced by the project, together with reasons for those changes. The changes were discussed by principals in partnership with their LAAs and reported online (see Appendix 2.2).

2.3.2 Personal Leadership Profiles

A Personal Leadership Profile instrument for the self-assessment of their capabilities by principals was developed by Griffith University from an inventory of research findings (Leithwood et al., 2006; Robinson, 2007; OECD, 2008; MacBeath & Dempster, 2009; Masters, 2009), and from this the Leadership for Literacy Learning Blueprint (LLLB) was conceptualised. This resulted in a questionnaire of 36 items with groups of items clustered around the eight LLLB dimensions (see Figure 1.2 in Chapter 1) describing key actions principals needed to take if they were to connect their leadership more deliberately with student learning and achievement (see Appendix 2.3). This questionnaire was administered again in November 2010, enabling principals to reflect on changes in their personal leadership and to identify reasons for those changes. This was completed by 57 principals using an online instrument (see Table 3.2 in Chapter 3).

2.3.3 Principal questionnaire and interview

A principal questionnaire was prepared by Edith Cowan University and distributed to all participating principals in September 2010 (see Appendix 2.4). The instrument was based on 37 items designed around a six-point Likert scale. The questionnaire drew from respondents their perceptions of the usefulness and impact of PALL Project elements on their leadership capabilities. The response rate for the questionnaire was 95% (n=57).

In each of the states and in the Northern Territory, an interview was conducted with each principal using a common interview schedule (see Appendix 2.5) developed by Edith Cowan University. The interview corresponded with the questionnaire (above) and provided the opportunity to interrogate further its key purposes through the use of a series of open-ended questions about the impact of the LAAs' role, the application of the LLLB, and the impact of the reading Big 6. The interview schedule contained 35 items using a four-point Likert scale and, like the survey above, was completed by 95% of the project principals (n=57).

The data were analysed in two stages:

1. initially, using the SPSS package, response frequencies, means and standard deviations were calculated; and
2. in the second stage, a selected set of items representing key variables was analysed.

For the selected items, measures of relationship were explored (using Spearman's Rho – a measure of relationship applied to non-parametric data). Overall, the data obtained through this process provided further evidence of particular effects the principals themselves attributed to their involvement in the PALL Project.

2.3.4 Teacher questionnaire and interview

The teachers' questionnaire (see Appendix 2.6) contained 23 items and was designed by the Australian Catholic University using a four-point Likert scale. It was conducted online using Lime Survey software, and a total of 296 teachers who had a direct involvement in school reading interventions in the project schools participated (see Appendix 2.6 for details). The purpose of the questionnaire and the interview schedule was to gather data on teachers' understandings about the key elements of the PALL Project and their observations of the actions of principals in leading literacy learning.

A teacher interview schedule was developed by the Australian Catholic University. The interview schedule contained 19 items to which participants responded on a four-point Likert scale. It contained items similar to those on the teacher questionnaire to enable triangulation and enhance the validity of the responses. In addition, the interview provided an opportunity to use targeted open-ended questions about key aspects of the PALL Project. A copy of the interview schedule can be viewed at Appendix 2.7. Interviews were conducted by telephone with two classroom teachers from each school. These were teachers who were involved in the school's literacy intervention. Principals were asked to select these teachers randomly by drawing two names from a hat. This resulted in 98 teachers taking part.

The data were processed to produce frequency counts and means for analysis.

2.3.5 Literacy achievement advisor interview

A face-to-face interview was conducted with all literacy achievement advisors (LAAs). The interview schedule was designed by the Australian Catholic University with a focus on triangulating items on knowledge transfer with data from other sources on the impact of PALL concepts on principals' capabilities. It also included items on induction into the LAA's role, how they managed the demands of the role and what changes they would advocate for the project in the future.

The interviews also addressed the LAAs' perspective on the utility of the LLLB, the reading Big 6, the modules, and intervention planning and implementation. In effect, this interview gathered qualitative data about the overall project and its purposes from the pilot's seven key principal support people. A copy of the LAAs' interview schedule is included in Appendix 2.8.

2.4 Other data collection

2.4.1 NAPLAN data

The management and analysis of NAPLAN data for the pilot project schools for 2008, 2009 and 2010 was a requirement of the Australian Government, as the funding agency. This was managed by the APPA office. The data and general findings from this analysis are included in Chapter 5, where the impact of reading interventions in schools is presented and discussed.

2.4.2 Literacy achievement advisors' aides-memoire

An aide-memoire was used by each LAA to record the focus and frequency of the support that they provided to school principals. A copy of the template and a sample aide-memoire are in Appendix 2.9.

2.5 Ethical issues

Each of the participating universities was required to obtain the approval of its Research Ethics Committee to undertake their respective research tasks and to gather, analyse and report the data referred to above. The ethics protocols adopted by universities are subject to scrutiny by the Australian University Quality Assurance Authority. Each of the data-gathering instruments contained assurances to respondents that their participation was voluntary and that the confidentiality of their information would be maintained. In other words, the identities of participating individuals and

their schools were concealed during data analysis and for reporting purposes.

The issue of confidentiality in the PALL Project was particularly important given the announced purpose for the funding of the project – namely, to improve the performance of schools and their students to address literacy shortfalls. Because of the publicity surrounding the Federal Government's decision to post school performance information on its My School website (www.myschool.edu.au), the possibility of PALL schools being publicly identified and scrutinised for their efforts and actions during the project was a concern for the project researchers. As a consequence, the researchers made every effort to maintain the anonymity of the participating schools by avoiding making school-by-school comparisons in data analysis. It was felt that, as part of the pilot project, the participating schools should not be compromised by their efforts to trial different approaches.

2.6 Limitations and qualifications

The research methodology of the PALL Project has been outlined in previous sections of this chapter. The project is part of an Australian Government-funded initiative to improve literacy learning outcomes in disadvantaged schools and their communities. Hence, part of the impetus for the project was to demonstrate actual improvements in literacy learning. In that context, it is important to acknowledge the likelihood for participants to respond positively and amplify the successes they have achieved. This is particularly so when data are derived through self-reports. Bush's (2009) comments are instructive:

> Leadership development programmes may be subject to evaluations but the approaches often employed are subject to two main limitations:
>
> (i) They rely mainly or exclusively on self-reported evidence. Participants are asked about their experience of the activity and, more rarely, about its impact on their schools. This is a weak approach because it is not subject to corroboration, for example by colleagues, and because it is inevitably subjective.
>
> (ii) The evaluation is usually short-term. Participants' views are often sought during and/or at the end of the development activity. It is widely recognised that the impact of interventions, such as a leadership programme, takes time. It is unlikely that significant changes in leadership practice will have occurred during the training period
> (Bush, 2009, pp. 375 – 389).

To address this issue, self-report data collected in PALL were "triangulated". For example, principals' data were set against views of teachers from their schools and also compared with evidence from the LAAs. Furthermore, the data that form the basis for most of this report were collected at the end of the two-year period of involvement and six months after the last professional development module was delivered, sufficient time for effects to (at least begin to) become apparent.

2.7 Conclusion

The research design and data-gathering methods in the PALL Pilot Project involved all participants. The researchers produced the modules to stimulate post-module activity; the LAAs worked to support principals in implementing those activities; and the principals themselves gathered and used data to help them reflect on their work. The collection of data on leaders' capabilities and their effects involved the use of a suite of nine research tasks and instruments. Such a set of processes yielded a comprehensive array of data, the analysis and discussion of which are undertaken in Chapters 3, 4, and 5.

Chapter Three

Enhancing Leadership Capability

3.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an account of what happened to principals' leadership capabilities as a result of their participation in the PALL Pilot Project. Three different but related sources of data are drawn into the discussion to show that significant gains were reported by principals themselves, and that these gains were confirmed by their teachers and their mentors, the literacy achievement advisors (LAAs). In addition, the role of the LAAs is given prominence as it is clear from the data that they were "linchpins" in the project's support for principals.
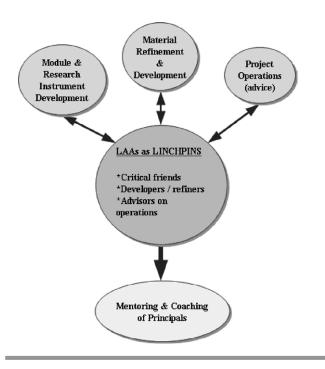
Following an explanation of that linchpin role, data taken from the LAAs' aides-memoire and interviews are discussed to highlight the central role these people played in supporting aspects of leadership and literacy with their principals. Information on the role of the LAAs and principals' views about it is then followed by a discussion of the outcomes of principals' leadership self-assessment. Third, findings from the principals' survey are linked to the results of their self-assessment and then examined. Fourth, both sets of principals' self-reported results are compared with the findings from the survey and interviews with teachers, particularly findings related to the leadership actions which they experienced with their principals. Finally, the chapter concludes with summaries of specific triangulated items from principals' and teachers' surveys and the LAA interviews, closing with major findings about the impact of the PALL Pilot Project on the development of principals' leadership capabilities and LAAs' reflections on the future of roles such as theirs.

3.1 Findings on the role of literacy achievement advisors

Rarely does the technical description of a position in an organisation capture accurately how, in reality, a role is played by individuals, and the case of the LAAs is no exception. Evidence on the success of the LAAs' relationships with principals is presented later in this chapter, but a key part of the value of the role was the LAAs'

contribution to developing the job beyond the bounds of the formal role description which concentrated on in-school support for principals. Figure 3.1 maps out the dimensions of the LAA role that arose during the two-year period of the project.

Figure 3.1 LAAs' linchpin role

The reasons for these serendipitous role extensions can be attributed to the depth of experience and background of the LAAs as a group and as individuals. They also reflect the style of the project as a collaborative enterprise in which the different groups of participants were encouraged to contribute to the shaping of concepts and input to project developments.
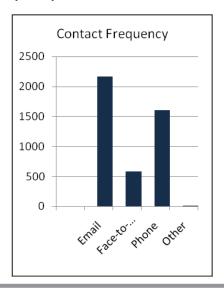
As Figure 3.1 illustrates, the LAAs provided a linchpin role, connecting the PALL Project concepts, tasks and materials with the participating principals. On the research and development aspects of the project, the LAAs acted as a sounding board (critical friends), bringing to bear a collective "leader/practitioner" perspective on unfolding tasks. As well, at several points in post-module delivery

discussions, the LAAs suggested refinements and supplements to project materials. Throughout the life of the project, LAAs participated in regular teleconferences with each other to discuss and adopt common approaches to project operations (such as the support processes to assist school leaders to develop their School Profiles).

3.1.1 Nature and frequency of contact with principals

LAAs were strongly agreed that their key responsibility was working with principals. In fulfilling this responsibility, LAAs' contacts with principals took a variety of forms and functions. As mentioned above, LAAs were asked to record summary details of each contact they had with principals in an aide-memoire.

Figure 3.2 Type and frequency of contact between LAAs and principals
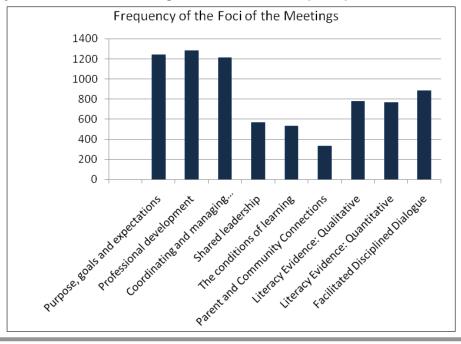
The results are presented in Figures 3.2 and 3.3.

Over the two years of the project, the seven LAAs had a total of 4363 contacts with principals. Approximately 68% of these were initiated by the LAAs, the remainder (32%) by the principals. As shown in Figure 3.2, the most common form of contact was via email (50%), followed by phone (37%) and face-to-face (12%).

The focus (or function) of the meetings ranged from general aspects of the PALL Project, such as purpose, goals and expectations; the nature and delivery of PD; and the coordination and management of the curriculum; to specific aspects of the nature and use of evidence (including "disciplined dialogue"), "shared leadership," the "conditions for learning," and "parent and community" connections. This pattern is reflected in the relative frequency and foci of the meetings, shown in Figure 3.3.

The data in Figure 3.3 suggest that LAAs' support contributed to the emphases that occurred in aspects of principals' knowledge transfer, findings reported later in the chapter. The fact that the first three dimensions in the figure were topics for over 1200 supporting discussions held by LAAs over two years goes a long way to explaining the impact on leadership actions reported by principals and teachers alike (see sections 3.2 and 3.3). Furthermore, the combined number of professional discussions of qualitative and quantitative data puts evidence-informed action above par with the first three dimensions (with over 1600 meetings on these topics), again reinforcing the importance of "disciplined dialogue" as a leadership strategy for improved literacy learning and achievement, at least in principals' and possibly LAAs' eyes.

Figure 3.3 Frequency and focus of the meetings between LAAs and principals

3.2 Impact of the LAAs – Their self-perceptions and the perceptions of principals

Data regarding the focus and frequency of the contacts between LAAs and principals, drawn from the aide-memoire data, correspond with the responses of the LAAs to interview questions on the extent to which they worked with principals on particular aspects of leadership and literacy. These responses are shown in Table 3.1. The responses in the second last column show the extent to which LAAs provided support on particular aspects of the Blueprint, while the last column shows the extent to which principals reported experiencing that support.

What stands out when the data from Table 3.1 are examined is the strong endorsement of the LAAs' role by the principals. It is clear that principals rated the LAA role highly across all components. As one principal commented in the open-ended response section of the interview, "LAAs have helped everything change and look totally different."

Table 3.1 The extent of support offered by LAAs and experienced by Principals

During the PALL Project, to what extent have you, LAAs or you, principals:	average response LAAS*	average response principals
Been supported to enhance leadership capability?	3.64	3.75
Engaged in regular professional dialogue on leadership for literacy learning?	3.86	3.80
Clarified aspects of PALL to improve understanding of the		
• Leadership for Literacy Learning Blueprint	3.43	3.69
• Reading Big Six	3.57	3.46
• Literacy Practices Guide	3.43	3.56
• Analysis and use of data	3.86	3.65
• Literacy interventions	3.79	3.53
Evaluations of interventions	3.79	3.62
Built trust so that both felt comfortable sharing thoughts on leadership issues?	4.00	3.94
Challenged principals to influence literacy learning and teaching in their schools?	3.14	3.73

* 1: not at all   2: to a slight extent   3: to a moderate extent   4: to a great extent

The highest-rated item in the table (at 4.0 for LAAS and 3.94 for principals) is on the building of relational trust. Comments from principals endorse this positive perspective on the LAAs' role, for example:

> [Their] supportive approach allowed me to be confident in my approach – a strong personal connect built trust and openness

> [They provided] the opportunity to discuss a range of issues to do with literacy and leadership with confidence and confidentiality

In summary, these data about the LAAs' role carry a clear message. School leaders have strongly appreciated the external support, expertise and stimulus that LAAs contributed. Perhaps it is predictable that the support would be highly valued by leaders subject to the pressure for improved performance and accountability, which is so much a feature of contemporary educational life. Nevertheless, it is apparent that the focus of the role on significant educational content has added weight to the impact of the LAAs' work with principals.

Having dealt briefly with evidence on the role of LAAs, the chapter now moves to analyse and discuss the personal views of principals on growth in their own leadership capabilities before turning to seek confirmation of their self-assessment with the experiences of teachers and LAAs.

3.3 Principals' leadership self-assessment

As explained in Chapter 2, the instrument for the principals' self-assessment process was constructed from the eight leadership action dimensions of the Leadership for Literacy Learning Blueprint (LLLB) described in Chapter 1. On two occasions, first early in 2009 and then some 15 months later in 2010, principals were asked to complete the instrument (see Appendix 2.3). The completed questionnaires were processed so that each principal could see his or her personal ratings (out of a possible 10) compared with those of the normed group of 60. Personal Leadership Profiles (PLPs) were confidential to principals but were shared with their LAAs in discussions about possible changes which might be made in the first year.

3.3.1 Changes in principals' Personal Leadership Profiles

Following the completion of the PLP in the second year of the project, combined reports which allowed for the comparison of results were produced and similar discussion processes were conducted between principals and LAAs. Figure 3.4 provides an anonymised example of one such comparison. Data from the first PLP are in shades of purple (light = John Smith; dark = normed group); data from the second PLP are in shades of blue (light = John Smith; dark = normed group).

As can be seen in Figure 3.4, "John Smith" improved the ratings he gave to his leadership actions over the period, now scoring himself above the normed group on all dimensions.

Figure 3.4 Sample Personal Leadership Profile
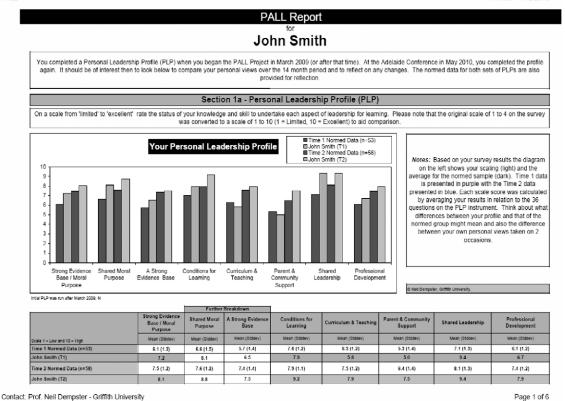
Table 3.2 Reasons for changes in principals' Personal Leadership Profiles

Dimension	Reasons for Change
Strong Evidence Base / Moral Purpose	I have increased in this area mainly due to the Blueprint mode. It made such good sense and gave me a way of assuring all the necessary facets of leadership in a school were attended to. I also found this an easy framework to use and to share with staff.
Shared Moral Purpose	In viewing the BPLL the shared moral purpose depicted the 'heart' –the why? I would ask myself 'Why?' I would then ask 'Is there evidence?' 'Does it fit the moral purpose?' Again the BPLL proved an easy tool to use.
A Strong Evidence Base	The tools and techniques provided me with ways to look at evidence and gave strength to the value of outcomes. They also gave ways of viewing the evidence. The Qld LPG and the disciplined dialogue questions were significant. The BPLL and tools are helping in my new setting.
Conditions for Learning	This area has increased as even though at the school we were providing a range of wonderful supports I shifted emphasis and focussed support for children when they were in the classroom.
Curriculum & Teaching	The Big Six gave a starting point even though our school was quite unique. I also placed more emphasis on scope and sequence suited to our clientele. The 'Wave' model provided me with a framework but the evidence and disciplined dialogue helped to adapt it to a unique model. I was able to deploy the school resources in a unique way according to the messages the data gave us.
Parent & Community Support	This has changed as I shifted my thinking about this. Instead of the school 'providing a one way service' we began to get parents involved in real partnerships. I believe we shifted from a deficit model and asked them what they wanted.
Shared Leadership	I have always done this but realising the importance I involved staff in every step. Due to this collaborative approach the intervention and PALL has continued in the school
Professional Development	The framework reinforced the necessity for me to be directly involved.. Participation of the principal is vital.

There were two dimensions where his leadership rating was below the normed group score in 2009, namely "curriculum and teaching" and "parent and community support." Why he rated these more highly in 2010 was the question discussed with his LAA, with reference to the evidence he used to verify the change. To assist in that discussion, a web-based on-line instrument was employed (see Appendix 2.4). The data from all PLP discussions were aggregated across the group of participants in order to develop an understanding of the perceived effects of the PALL Project on particular leadership dimensions. Table 3.2 records the responses provided by the fictitious "John Smith" using the online discussion tool with his LAA.

The table shows what John Smith wrote. For example, the reasons he gave for changes in "curriculum and teaching" included the use of the Big Six as a starting point for planning, while for "parent and community support" he attributed change to a shift from a "one way service" to the creation of real partnerships with parents. Fifty-seven (57) of the 60 principals completed the PLPs in 2010. A compilation of their reasons for the changes they described against the dimensions of the LLLB follows.

Shared moral purpose

Whereas the PALL Pilot Project acknowledged that the broader moral purpose of schools and their leaders was the improvement of children's lives as literate citizens, in effect, principals and teachers saw themselves as contributing to this bigger picture by concentrating on improvements in reading. Leadership action in this dimension encouraged principals and their school communities to set and hold high expectations, to agree on common goals collaboratively, and to embed these in school and classroom routines. The following justification offered by one principal was typical:

> I can now lead discussions to explore the moral purpose using the LLLB and the disciplined dialogue questions related to evidence. They are very powerful collaborative tools which help staff and members of the community to establish and support a shared vision for the school and our literacy program.

Another offered self-criticisms about a previous lack of emphasis on the school's "moral purpose."

> In 2009, I focussed more on building projects. Since then, I have revisited the core business of schools – it's about learning. Our core is about teaching and learning. I realised that I was so tied up in management that I forgot about teaching and learning. Staff meetings are now about professional learning.

A further example of change shows how attention to "moral purpose" influenced action on the school's "conditions for learning." This principal said:

> We are changing our processes and structures because our data is more focussed and our moral purpose is more defined. I believe that my efforts to lead learning have helped define our moral purpose and give it extra legitimacy.

To sum up, a "shared moral purpose" was seen by most PALL principals to be the core of the LLL Blueprint and their approach to leadership, providing them with a basis for change in their schools. It had also created a common language, added focus to professional conversations, and caused principals and teachers to think more deeply about the purpose of their work.

A strong evidence base

Many principals referred to the use of "disciplined dialogue," the generic process about which they had been informed in Module 1, to help shift the focus of professional conversations onto data or evidence as a basis for improving children's learning and achievement. Principals' responses to this dimension indicated that "disciplined dialogue" had become pervasive in both formal and informal discussions in their schools.

One principal stated: "The three disciplined dialogue questions are powerful, very simple and able to be kept in your head. I am now applying this knowledge."

A second principal wrote:

> Changes are the direct result of work undertaken through the PALL Project. I am more able to promote and lead the processes and discussions in relation to using the data to plan for teaching and learning. I have also increased my confidence and knowledge of the school context, staff and students.

Others maintained that they had far more skills and confidence in how to analyse data to inform teaching and learning programs, that there was now a team approach to collecting data, and that this was part of the school culture. One principal illustrated this view thus:

> I've become much more confident in this area and have put much more energy into gathering evidence. I've used this to back up opinions, help clarify our philosophy and help us set directions. I use the disciplined dialogue questions regularly. The staff are beginning to use them when we are discussing data at staff meetings.

Most principals acknowledged the power of "disciplined dialogue" after participation in the module where it was introduced and practised:

> [The] scary thing though was how do you run the conversations without naming, blaming and shaming and how do you get or develop that shared responsibility about where to take it and have the honest conversations, in a positive way with teachers about how they might do that? I actually have never seen a data workshop run in "education speak." We saw a third or more of the principals not really confident about reading their own data who walked out (of the workshop) with a notion of "I can do this with my staff." I couldn't wait to get back to school because I knew I could do this with my staff. Powerful simple questions that remained the same each time so people knew what they were asked.

To sum up, the key areas for comment by principals in this dimension were: the use of "disciplined dialogue"; the development of principals' confidence in curriculum connections and the leadership of learning; staff conversations and change processes within their schools; and the link between a "strong evidence" base and other parts of the LLLB.

Conditions for learning

In the reasons for changes made to the conditions for learning, one principal summed up the views of many:

> I have always been aware of this and used the Blueprint to explain what is meant by "conditions for learning" … therefore, (we) could discuss classroom environments with teachers in the lower school to ensure that we were creating environments that support learning. This resulted in an allocation of funds to teachers to improve their learning environments.

A second principal said:

I realised the power of an environment for learning and so have concentrated on making classroom print rich and stimulating. The Literacy Practices Guide (LPG) helped me to gain understanding of this and I plan to use it for reflective walks.

Five principals reported adjusting the structures within their schools to provide opportunity for, or to enhance, a common literacy block for all students. One of these principals commented: "Literacy blocks were all in place but were not as tightly regulated across the school. Some cross setting previously took place but it is now part of the whole school fabric."

Almost half the principals made reference to changes in the "conditions for learning" at their schools as a result of the project. Whereas most were positive, some were not. With respect to the latter, one principal spoke of his difficulties as he attempted to amalgamate two campuses. He said:

> Attention to the "conditions for learning" has always been a major focus of mine and a factor in trying to meet the needs of a diverse and often challenging clientele. The amalgamation of the two schools exacerbated this, particularly in regard to the social/emotional aspects of joining two school communities together, as well as in the development of physical resources within the school buildings and their refurbishment.

A second principal said that, because of a limited school budget, she had very little ability to allocate resources "beyond the normal status quo." She added:

> [I] always consider "If we did that, how much would it cost?" as there is no spare cash in the budget. Sometimes I feel guilty because I would like to have the money to implement additional options but don't have the budget.

In another school, where the principal indicated that there was a significant number of beginning teachers who required as much support as could be provided, she said that attention to such conditions was crucial.

Finally, one principal's comments reflect the importance he attached to improving the "conditions for learning":

> The PALL Project has raised my awareness and understanding about how important it is to have a supportive environment and the specific things I needed to target to establish that supportive environment to facilitate literacy improvement. For example, I have realigned the use of the human resources in the school to support literacy improvement and targeted resources in the annual school operational plan to facilitate literacy improvement. Now, [I am] acknowledging that literacy improvement requires resource support. For example, release days for teachers to meet with [the] principal and in collaborative teaching teams to discuss programs and determine further action for improvement.

In short, many principals saw "conditions for learning" as being an important part of the PALL leadership Blueprint – a dimension where action was needed in an ongoing way. Each of the aspects of human, physical and financial resources was commented on, and principals, as a group, reported that, when they worked on improvement with the school's "moral purpose" in mind, they had the capacity to enhance the physical, emotional and social "conditions for learning."

Curriculum and teaching

Changes in the principal's role in curriculum coordination and in the monitoring of teaching were featured in comments recorded in this dimension. Six principals reported this as a challenge. Their concerns related to a lack of time to engage in "curriculum and teaching" issues, their perceived lack of expertise, and their admitted management approach to their work. One principal stated:

> Because of the nature of the school, there have been difficulties finding the time to become fully involved in classrooms and so influence teacher practice. I have also felt I lacked sufficient efficacy in literacy to be able to influence teacher behaviours as I would like.

Another said:

> [I] don't think I have got as much out of the project as I could have because I was coming from an area of weakness. [This] hasn't been my strength. When you are not confident you tend to hold back a bit because of fear of not being seen as confident by peers. I haven't contributed as much as I would have liked to.

Most other principals wrote about progress in this dimension. They referred to various PALL tools and strategies that had been worthwhile. These included the LPG, the Big 6, the Wave model for interventions, instructional leadership, explicit teaching, principals' interventions, and scope and sequence documents. Some relevant statements made by principals about these tools and strategies give a positive view of engagement and change.

> Improvements have come from my ability to use the Literacy Practices Guide to help teachers question their current practice and make alterations as needed.

> I have improved my instructional leadership role by better undertaking observations of classroom practice and then providing feedback to staff. My strong involvement in literacy has meant it has been "front and square" in all professional learning sessions.

> [Teaching is] more explicit – not a softness anymore. Teachers can say what they are teaching and why. "I do, we do, you do." The Big 6 professional learning has had a strong influence on me and staff. It has helped me have professional conversations with staff and for them to develop their conversations as well. The school has now developed a workable scope and sequence document and has far more focus in its curriculum direction.

To sum up, as suggested by the common threads in their comments, most principals wrote positively about changes in their leadership of the "curriculum and teaching" dimension. They referred to a range of matters, in particular, their re-engagement as instructional leaders, their involvement in the production of scope and sequence documents, and their changed approach to professional conversations about curriculum and teaching. Some, however, were not satisfied because they were "caught up" in management tasks that took their attention from teaching and learning in the classroom. The Building the Education Revolution (BER) program, for example, was reported by many principals as an added demand during the PALL Project.

Parent and community support

Making connections with "parent and community support" continued to trouble a proportion of principals throughout the project. Few changed leadership actions were reported against this dimension. Almost one quarter of the responses indicated that taking actions to make stronger and more productive connections with parents and the wider community was an ongoing problem. This selection of responses illustrates the feelings of difficulty:

- Engaging parents has been an ongoing challenge
- I feel I have, and the school has, a long way to go in getting parents more involved
- As with all low-SES schools, it is a struggle to engage parents in the school's work

Further concerns recounted were the difficulties associated with the transient nature of families, which limited long-term parent involvement; and the reticence encountered from parents who may "want to be in the school, but who didn't want to be challenged academically."

Along with these negative comments, there were positive reports from several principals indicating that changes were happening. These included training programs for parents, inviting more parents who wanted to adopt support roles into the classroom and the introduction of strategies (where volunteerism was proving unsuccessful) to connect with parents in other ways. As one principal said, "our school events now have a focus on building a community … and having fun." This was in contrast to previous unrewarded efforts to bring parents and families into classrooms to support academic work. The principal who was implementing this strategy reported that there were potential beneficial effects of the increased numbers of parents visiting the school for non-academic purposes – effects such as an enhanced valuing of the school as a friendly community "hub."

Overall however, the findings drawn from the data gathered by the Personal Leadership Profile suggest that making connections beyond the school is still the leadership dimension that many principals find most difficult in low-SES school communities. The fact that only a quarter of the participants wrote of continuing problems may suggest that 75% had no problems. The general silence from this larger group may indicate that parent and community connections were not as high in priority as other dimensions of the framework and therefore were not addressed. Yet again, the silence may signal a voice of avoidance – the putting aside of tough problems. The data available do not provide a comprehensive explanation, leaving the question of parent and community support for literacy in these low-SES schools open to further investigation.

Shared leadership

When principals gave reasons for changes in the "shared leadership" dimension of the Personal Leadership Profile, they made particular reference to the central Blueprint dimension of "shared moral purpose," and it was linked closely with changes in the team approaches adopted by many schools. Some principals described benefits coming from a common understanding of the school's "moral purpose." One said "the constant attention to the shared moral purpose has meant there is stronger staff collaboration." Another principal noted that the LPG had supported "shared leadership"; and this had been used to try to lessen teachers' dependency on the leadership team. A third indicated, in the following words, that the LLLB led to "shared leadership": "I have learnt even more about the power of team work."

A few reported sharing leadership as problematic. One said that it had been "snail growth." Another stated that any attempt to develop "shared leadership" within the staff: "is often thwarted by staff unwillingness to take up leadership roles (perhaps based on their perceptions of their abilities in this area). This is a source of frustration but is being continually addressed."

A small number of principals argued that "shared leadership" within the school had the capacity to provide sustainability for changes. One said: "I have always done this, but now I consciously focus on this [sharing] and realise how important it is for sustainability."
Another wrote: "I have strengthened my understanding that 'shared leadership' strengthens school-change processes. It has needed work on my behalf to convince teachers that they have the capacity to take part in leadership processes in the school."

In summary, comments by principals about changes made in the "shared leadership" dimension linked improvements to the collaborative development of a "shared moral purpose', and increases in team approaches to literacy, particularly teacher leadership in intervention action – and the importance of "shared leadership" in sustaining change.

Professional development

The research underpinning the "professional development" (PD) dimension of the LLLB emphasised the significance of the principals' active involvement in the process (Robinson, 2007). Almost half (N = 27) commented in the second PLP that they had made participation in PD a priority in their schools.

A typical comment was: "Really, this is the first time I have been involved in everything the teachers have done. I know 200% more about literacy and can now supervise with authority." Another stated: "The framework reinforced the necessity for me to be directly involved. Participation of the principal is vital."

One of the benefits that many principals found through such engagement was growth in their own confidence, particularly in working on literacy issues with staff in their schools. A number of these referred to being instructional leaders. One principal said:

> Because of my own learning in Module 2, in particular, and knowing what teachers needed to know, I have taken more leadership of professional learning – my confidence is higher. I am more of an instructional leader. I know more about literacy.

More than a third of the principals made specific reference to the value and usefulness of the PALL materials. There was repeated reference to the modules and how they (principals) had benefited from them. Quite often, principals wrote that the LLLB, the Big Six, disciplined dialogue, data analysis, and the Literacy Practices Guide were useful and valuable in promoting whole-school professional learning.

One principal remarked:

> Being able to link PD to an evidence-based approach through the use of disciplined dialogue has meant that there has been a more coordinated approach to PD across the school. I have been able to develop strong internal PD processes in the school because of this.

Others said they were still learning. Two comments illustrate this point:

> I am still developing my confidence and skills in data analysis. However, working with the LAA is helping to develop [my] skills and confidence in this area.

I have been more actively involved in the planning and delivery of PD this past two years. The focus on PD has been sharpened through the project with the Big Six, in particular, providing a framework for staff learning. I have been able to demonstrate content knowledge to lead conversations regarding PD – however, I still have some development of key knowledge to take place.

Some principals said that their own views on PD had changed during the past two years. One reprised the thrust of Robinson's (2007) research findings thus:

I have been going to more training on professional learning. I now realise how important it is. In the past, I was negative because I thought it took teachers away from the school. I now believe in professional learning more.

The significance of Robinson's research on active involvement in professional development was not lost on the participants, one of whom acknowledged that it was sometimes easier for principals to organise professional learning for teachers and then remain in the office during the presentation. This person said that it was important for school leaders to go on the "journey" with teachers and this was what she had tried to do.

To sum up, principals valued the professional learning resources provided through the PALL Pilot Project and attempted to use them, especially as participants, in staff professional learning programs. Some schools adjusted their structures to include regular professional learning co-planning time. This was reported as helpful in building "shared leadership" through PD. In addition, principals reported increased personal participation in active learning alongside members of staff.
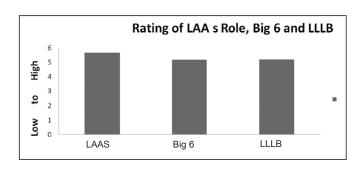
3.4 Results from the principals' survey and interviews on the LLLB

As explained in Chapter 2, the principals' questionnaire consisted of items designed to draw from respondents their perceptions of the usefulness and impact of PALL Project elements on their leadership capabilities (see Appendix 2.5). The principals' interview schedule (see Appendix 2.6) followed up the survey items and included a series of open-ended questions about how PALL concepts and support had impacted on principals in their schools. Overall, the data obtained through these instruments provide further evidence of particular effects the principals attributed to their involvement in the PALL Project. Selected analyses of data from the principals' survey and interviews are now discussed.

3.4.1 The impact of the Leadership for Literacy Learning Blueprint

First discussed are the effects of principals' actions on LLLB dimensions. As Figure 3.5 shows, there was an overwhelmingly positive response on the six-point scale, to the peer support provided by LAAs, the Big 6 learning to read framework, and the LLLB. Detailed discussion about the impact of the Big 6 is addressed in Chapter 4. Here, attention is paid to the impact of the literacy achievement advisors and the LLLB on the work of principals.

Figure 3.5 Data on the impact of LAAs, Big Six and LLLB

The results in Figure 3.5 show the high value placed on the impact of the LAAs and on the Leadership Blueprint. Why this was so for the latter is further elaborated in the following section.

3.4.2 The range of uses of the LLLB

Comments from the open-ended responses in the principal interviews reveal the extent to which the LLLB acted as a pervasive influence on leaders. The following general comment reflects the overall tenor of the leaders' perceptions of the LLLB. "The Blueprint added to, reinforced beliefs and gave confidence to the direction in which we were heading. It brought focus to improving the literacy approach in our school."

The following sample of the comments on specific aspects of the LLLB highlights its impact on the participants for a number of different but related purposes:

As a framework:

- the Blueprint has given staff a common language and framework for developing our literacy plan
- the scaffolding it provides for planning…
- provided a framework to base leadership skills…

As a reflection tool:

- it helped me to work through my role as principal
- analysis as a leader was good for me
- time to frame and reframe what we were doing and what I was doing as a literacy leader

As a confidence builder:

- assistance in leading "disciplined dialogue" with staff and more confidence in improving learning conditions for students
- taking a lead in literacy and responsibility for literacy in the school
- increased leader confidence to challenge and change structures

As a way of changing educational focus and sharing leadership:

- establishing "conditions for learning"
- building professional sharing including using "disciplined dialogue" to focus on teaching, learning and assessment
- "shared leadership" at a number of levels
- staff awareness of explicit, targeted "shared moral purpose"

As affirmation or redirection of the school's approach to leadership:
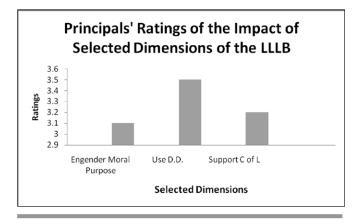
- the opportunity to fine-tune my approach
- it confirms the ideas we had

Threaded through the items on both the principals' questionnaire (with 15 items linked to the LLLB) and the interview schedule (with 8 items on the LLLB) is an emphasis on the application of the Blueprint and its literacy focus. The comprehensiveness of the LLLB as a leadership framework is clearly evident in the findings – but each leadership dimension is invariably linked to literacy.

3.4.3 The impact of different dimensions of the LLLB

Figure 3.6, drawn from data in the principal interviews, illustrates the relative ratings accorded to key dimensions of the Blueprint, namely engendering "moral purpose," the use of "disciplined dialogue" (DD) and the support for "conditions of learning" (C of L).

Figure 3.6 Principals' ratings of the impact of selected dimensions of the LLB

The bars record ratings of greater than 3 on a four-point scale clearly showing the particular value principals placed on "disciplined dialogue" in the work.

3.4.4 Section summary

In summary, the data from the principals' survey and interviews provide strong evidence of the direct impact of the LLLB on dimensions of leaders' actions. The data also reveal a considerable degree of principals' knowledge transfer and use in their schools. Taken together, the findings support the changes emphasised in the data from the Personal Leadership Profile, namely that the impact of the LLLB was most keenly felt in the dimensions of "moral purpose," "disciplined dialogue" and the "conditions for learning."

Having noted the impact of the Blueprint reported by principals themselves, the chapter now moves to findings from the teachers' survey and interviews and the LAAs' interview to gauge the extent to which they concur with the self-reported views of principals.

3.5 Teachers' views of principals' leadership in action

As explained in Chapter 2, the teachers' survey was completed by 296 teachers from the project schools (see Appendix 2.7). The findings show the extent to which teachers felt that they had participated with their principals in activities related to the LLLB dimensions. The findings summarised in Table 3.3 record the percentage of respondents who answered various levels of agreement for each item.

The dimensions that attracted strongest agreement from teachers about their work with principals were participation in "professional development" and an enhanced

Table 3.3 Relative percentage (%) agreement about teachers' work with principals to improve literacy (N=255)

Over the period of the PALL Project, together with the principal, we have	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
participated in literacy professional development	0.78	1.18	1.96	14.90	43.53	35.29
came to an enhanced understanding that our "shared moral purpose" is to improve children's literacy learning and achievement	1.96	4.31	2.75	9.80	40.39	39.22
enhanced the "conditions for literacy learning" across the school	1.96	4.31	4.71	20.00	40.78	25.88
conducted "disciplined dialogue" about data related to literacy teaching & learning	1.18	5.49	4.71	20.78	45.10	20.39
allocated resources to support the school's literacy program	2.75	4.31	5.49	15.29	39.22	30.59
explored ways to involve "parents and the community" in supporting literacy learning	1.18	10.98	9.02	34.51	33.73	8.24

Note 1: Between 1.57% and 2.35% of teachers provided a "no answer" response to each item, indicating that they opened/read the question but did not enter a level of agreement response

understanding of the school's "shared moral purpose." The related areas of action, such as enhancing "conditions for learning," conducting "disciplined dialogue" about evidence and allocating resources were also rated highly. A lower level of agreement was evident about ways to involve parents, which corresponds with the finding from the PLP and principals' survey that at least a quarter of principals found this dimension worrying and difficult.

3.6 Teacher, principal and literacy achievement advisor ratings of the principal's role in leading literacy learning

To draw this section of the chapter together, reference is made specifically to items that were common to the principals' and teachers' questionnaire and the LAAs' interview schedule. Table 3.4 compares the mean scores for teachers, principals and LAAs for items on the principal's role in leading literacy learning. The LAAs responded to a four-point rating scale, with one being the most positive and

four the most negative, whereas the teachers and principals completed a six-point rating scale, with six being the most positive. To assist in making the comparison, the means have been adjusted mathematically. This has been done using a simple multiplication factor of 1.5 for the 1-4 scale to become a 1-6 scale. There are anomalies in doing this but the outcome allows for indicative comparisons to be made.

As the results in Table 3.4 show, each group of respondents indicated that principals demonstrated a range of important actions associated with leading literacy learning. The more prominent areas of principals' action identified by teachers, LAAs and the principals themselves were the development of a shared moral purpose to improve literacy, enhancing conditions for literacy learning across the school, and conducting disciplined dialogue around data associated with student achievement.

The principals' ratings were generally more positive than those of their teachers but less positive than those provided by their LAAs. These differences present possibilities for

Table 3.4 Mean scores for teachers', principals' & LAAs' rating of items on the principal's role in leading literacy learning

Item	Teacher mean	Principal mean	LAA mean
came to an enhanced understanding that our shared moral purpose is to improve children's literacy learning and achievement	5.03	5.18	5.40
used the Big 6 to provide a framework for the teaching of reading across the school	4.53	5.39	5.57
reviewed assessment practices in light of our knowledge of the Big 6	4.49	5.23	5.57
conducted disciplined dialogue about data related to literacy teaching and learning	4.68	5.47	5.69
shared leadership in developing and implementing literacy intervention actions	4.53	5.50	5.36
enhanced the conditions for literacy learning across the school	4.75	5.18	5.79
shared accountability for implementing aspects of the Big 6	4.38	5.12	5.25
explored ways to involve parents and the community in supporting literacy learning	4.21	4.60	3.96

further investigation. One possible explanation might be that teachers were generally less aware of their principal's action than were the LAAs who were working directly with the principals.

The least positive LAA response was to the item "explored ways to involve parents and the community in supporting literacy learning." This was the same for the teachers and principals, which reinforces it as the dimension where impact was reported less positively.

3.7 Conclusion

The presentation and discussion of data related to the impact of the PALL Pilot Project on principals' leadership capabilities in this chapter suggests the following major findings or conclusions.

Principals emphasise the impact of the PALL Pilot Project on:

1. their leadership actions, especially in developing a "shared moral purpose" and making this more constant as a reference point in their work;
2. the active role they are taking in PD, including increasing their leadership of it because of their increased confidence in literacy knowledge, particularly in reading;
3. their confidence in the use of "disciplined dialogue";
4. the renewed significance they are placing on evidence-informed reading improvement strategies; and
5. the way they have been aligning the physical, social, financial and human resources to their schools' classroom reading programs.

The major messages from teachers correspond with the claims made by principals. In particular, teachers report that:

6. principals have been working with them actively on PD in reading;
7. they endorse an enhanced shared understanding of the school's "moral purpose";
8. they confirm the better alignment of resources to support them; and
9. they are engaging in professional dialogue about learning and achievement data on reading.

What principals said was supported by teachers' also attracting concurrence from LAAs who confirmed that their frequent direct contact with principals was primarily focussed on the dimensions of leadership.

It is also clear that the principals' self-reported lower levels of leadership action with respect to "parent and community support" correspond with reports by teachers and LAAs. Therein lies fertile ground for further improvement action, given the importance attached to parents' primary role in oral language development and the central place they occupy in enhancing vocabulary and in supporting their youngsters as they learn to read.

3.7.1 LAAs' reflections on the PALL Project

In their interviews LAAs were given the opportunity to reflect on their role and key factors contributing to principals' development through the PALL Project. They attributed the value of their support role to their independent advice, ongoing personalised feedback and clarification. Their view was that this helped principals maintain interest and momentum. The value of supporting resources and modules, in particular the Leadership for Literacy Learning Blueprint, was also noted.

LAAs emphasised that they supported principals (i.e., as a coach, mentor, facilitator, translator, and confidant), and provided them with ideas and supplementary resources (i.e., to the modules) when necessary. Recognising the unique circumstance of each school, as well as bringing groups of principals together to share insights, were other work features that they regarded as significant to the successful performance of their role.

Of the several factors that inhibited principals' development, LAAs most often cited the lack of time that principals had to focus on literacy leadership given the competing demands of their role. Other factors that inhibited progress were disengagement of a small minority of principals and principal turnover. Concern was also expressed about two aspects of the design of the PALL Project:

1. school choice and readiness, that is, how schools were selected or chose to be involved, and the observation that schools had "different baselines" before entering the project; and
2. the decision to have principals (only) as participants in module delivery was seen possibly as inhibiting a move to shared leadership with teachers.

LAAs were also asked to reflect on how they saw the future of the literacy achievement advisor role.

3.7.2 The role of literacy achievement advisors in the future

When LAAs were asked how they saw their role working to best effect in the future, they claimed that the role requires

appropriate physical resources and professional knowledge. Examples of these resources were reimbursement of travel costs; provision of an office; access to fast, reliable communication tools; connection with project directors (on site); and knowledge about literacy, curriculum and leadership.

LAAs also recommended that their mode of employment be independent of educational authorities. This would retain the advantages of a non-supervisory relationship between the LAA and the principals, conducive to developing trust and support without fear of judgement, and to independently gaining credibility and authority. These advantages were seen to outweigh the disadvantages, the most frequently cited of which was, paradoxically, the lack of power to require action or compliance. Another aspect of professional knowledge (i.e., apart from leadership and literacy) of importance to LAAs is that of system policies and structures. Familiarity with these matters provides LAAs with important insights into the pressures and competing demands, as well as opportunities, faced by principals. Possession of strong and positive interpersonal skills also attracted considerable comment.

When asked whether they would be willing to apply for a future LAA position, all seven LAAs answered "yes," and all commented on the personal and professional value of their experience. For some it was the opportunity "to make a real difference in schools that need support," whereas for others, it was the enjoyment and challenge of the learning journey in their work with principals.

3.7.3 Overall findings

The following overall findings are based on the discussion of results presented in this chapter.

1. *The role of LAAs as principals' supporters was crucial for improvement in literacy teaching and learning in the low-SES project schools.*

   The role of the LAA is seen as providing important on-going, personalised, informed support for principals. LAAs played a vital role in interpreting and translating content treated in the module workshops, and in helping principals maintain focus and momentum in the face of competing demands and distractions.

2. *The influence of LAAs on developing principals' capabilities was strengthened by the significant educational content of their role.*

   The focus of the LAAs' support on significant educational content (i.e., in the areas of leadership and literacy) had a big bearing on how principals integrated

knowledge, skills and attitudes in their work with teachers and on the ways that they developed their leadership capabilities.

3. *Principals' literacy leadership capability improved through the combination of LAA support, module development and delivery, follow-up tasks and associated resources.*

   The evidence for this conclusion was indisputable. It was substantiated by teachers and LAAs and in the assessment of principals themselves.

4. *Ongoing refinement of the professional learning modules needs to take place in order to meet the demands and opportunities of different school contexts.*

   While the general content, sequence and quality of the modules were highly regarded, evaluation has identified areas for potential refinement.

These are:

(i) the streamlining and alignment of concepts and frameworks regarding the nature of evidence about leadership actions, the development and implementation of literacy interventions, and the evaluation of those interventions;

(ii) the further articulation of research and practice on parent and community connections to enhance this dimension of the Leadership for Literacy Learning Blueprint ; and

(iii) the refinement in emphases in elements of the Big Six to take account of differences in context among low-SES school communities.

The findings and conclusions presented in this chapter show that developing the leadership capabilities of principals is a multifaceted undertaking. It involves attention to a range of interrelated leadership actions in literacy learning, use of data on school improvement through carefully targeted and research-based professional development, along with ongoing personalised professional support in situ. From the discussion presented, it is evident that the PALL Project was designed and implemented with these features in mind and that improvements in leadership capability were readily identifiable.

Chapter Four

Building Leaders' Literacy Knowledge

4.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the literacy position adopted by the PALL Project and explains the rationale for its development. It then briefly describes the elements of the "Big Six," an evidence-based framework that contains the components required for the development of independent reading skills; and the Literacy Practices Guide, a leadership support tool designed to assist principals in identifying effective literacy learning environments and practices across the primary school years. The chapter then provides a discussion of the impact of the framework and the tool on the principals' perceptions of literacy development and on their literacy leadership. The chapter concludes with statements about the major messages drawn from analysis of the various primary and secondary data sources.

4.1 The PALL focus on reading

Typically "literacy" is broadly defined and encompasses many elements, including reading, writing, listening, speaking, and digital literacies. An early realisation by the PALL developers was that not all areas of literacy could be covered in reasonable depth in the time available. Because reading is the foundational skill, and learning to read is a (if not the) core outcome of primary schooling, the decision was made to focus on reading.

If primary school students acquire at least functional reading skills, other avenues of learning are available to them. Without basic reading ability, success at school and in other avenues of life is likely to be limited (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007; CCCH, 2004; Dugdale & Clark, 2008; Firth & Cunningham, 2007; McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter, & McWhirter, 2007; OECD, 2002). Thus, for the purposes of the PALL Project, literacy was confined to reading.

4.2 The importance of literacy positions

Literacy is a divided field of knowledge. The differing views on how reading should be taught have caused confusion and, in some cases, great division among teachers. It is not surprising that practitioners are confused when academics representing different "schools of thought" quote research to support quite opposing points of view. What has evolved over the past four decades, however, is a compelling body of evidence that supports the view that the reading process is broadly based on the oral language ability of an individual and requires the development of specific phonological skills, rapid recognition of common letter combinations, a large vocabulary, and the ability to put all these elements together accurately and rapidly in order to engage deeply with text meaning. The evidence supporting these claims is expanded upon in a later section of this chapter.

It was deemed critical by PALL developers that a clear position on reading development, consistent with the weight of empirical research, be presented to the participating principals. It was acknowledged that this might be confronting for some principals and teachers. However, of the original 60 principals involved in the project, only one withdrew (on "philosophical grounds") once the literacy position was made clear. There were no subsequent withdrawals on this basis.

4.3 Literacy frameworks used in the PALL Project

The literacy approach presented to principals as part of the PALL Project utilised two major frameworks for the following purposes:

1. to scaffold principals' understanding of the empirical research on reading development
2. to provide a functional tool to enable principals to identify effective literacy teaching in operation

4.3.1 The Big Six: A reading framework

The reading Big Six is a research-based synthesis of the critical elements of reading development. Importantly it contains a clear position, buttressed by evidence, that learning to read is a complex process that builds on oral language facility, and encompasses both specific skill development (phonemic and decoding strategies) and the

use of comprehension strategies. The elements incorporated within the Big Six model that informed the development of Module 2 are briefly described as follows:

Oral language and early literacy experiences

Oral language provides the foundation for learning to read, and is related to overall reading achievement throughout primary and secondary schooling (Snow, Tabors, Nicholson, & Kurland, 1995; Wise, Sevcik, Morris, Lovett, & Wolf, 2007). Children who are surrounded by and included in rich and increasingly complex conversations have an overwhelming advantage in acquiring vocabulary, in understanding the structures of language, and in tuning into the sounds of the English language.

Experiencing books and other forms of print, and seeing people reading and writing as part of their everyday lives, also prepare children for reading. Children are not born with the knowledge that marks on a page can represent language, that English is read from left to right and from the top of the page down, or even the way a book is opened. This awareness develops gradually from a very young age if young children are able to observe people around them reading for pleasure and for a variety of other purposes. And if young children are fortunate enough to have stories read to them, and if individual words are pointed out as the stories are read, the process by which spoken language is transformed into written language becomes apparent. Some children also learn much more; for example, they begin to recognise what print looks like and how letters differ from punctuation; and they learn to identify some letters and commonly occurring letter patterns.

A strong message delivered through the PALL Project was that children who do not have the benefit of a language-rich and print-rich environment will enter school at a significant disadvantage. All young children need a stimulating language environment at school, but for children from less literacy-rich backgrounds, the need is urgent and paramount.

Phonological awareness, especially phonemic awareness

Phonological awareness is a broad term that refers to the ability to focus on the sounds of speech as opposed to its meaning, and it has a number of different levels or components. It is the realisation that a continuous stream of speech can be separated into individual words, that those words can also be broken up into one or more syllables, and that syllables are made up of separate, single sounds.

The most significant of these components for reading development is awareness of the individual sounds or phonemes, that is, phonemic awareness. The phonemic awareness of preschool children is the single best predictor of their future reading ability, better than either SES or IQ (Adams, 1990; Bowey, 2005; Ehri et al., 2001; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Stanovich & Stanovich, 2003; Wasik, 2001). Being able to blend together and to segment phonemes are the most crucial phonemic skills for reading and spelling.

Most children's early oral language and literacy experiences help them tune into the sounds of their language, and prepare them for learning to read. Children without these core experiences have much greater difficulty identifying the separate sounds in words, and further difficulties when faced with translating those sounds into an alphabetic script. The position represented through the PALL professional development (PD) workshops and support materials was that sound phonemic awareness skills are critical in preparing children for the next stage of reading development.

Letter-sound knowledge (phonics) and word knowledge

Once children understand that words can be broken up into a series of separate sounds, they need to learn the relationship between those sounds and letters – the "alphabetic code" or the system that the English language uses to map sounds onto paper. An understanding of the predictable relationship between sounds and the letters that represent them (graphemes) is at the heart of reading an alphabetic language. This letter-sound relationship is referred to as the alphabetic principle, or, more commonly, phonics.

An important part of the PALL Project position on literacy relates to the recommendations made regarding the teaching of letter-sound knowledge. The empirical evidence available supports a synthetic approach to teaching phonics for beginning and struggling readers (DEST, 2005; Johnston & Watson, 2003, 2005; NICHD, 2000; Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), 2010; Rose, 2006). A synthetic approach teaches the single letters and common letter combinations in a discrete, systematic, and explicit manner, and in an order that facilitates blending (synthesising) – typically from the first weeks of formal schooling. Thus, a synthetic approach to teaching letter-sound knowledge was strongly recommended in PALL Project presentations.

The teaching of letter-sound knowledge also includes quite sophisticated content, such as affixes, Greek and Latin roots, and irregular or "sight" words, which must also be taught explicitly and systematically. These words must be learned to the point of automaticity – a key concept highlighted in the PALL position on reading development.

Vocabulary

Being able to transform letters into words through decoding is of no use if those words do not have meaning: It is

vocabulary that builds comprehension and is thus a key component of reading for meaning (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002). If children know the meaning of a word, they are far more likely to be able to read it and make sense of it within a sentence.

Children who come from rich literate backgrounds will have the benefit of being exposed to a wide and rich vocabulary and will gradually learn the meaning of many words through this process. If they are being read to regularly, they will also learn a more literate vocabulary. Children from less rich literacy backgrounds hear a far more restricted range of words (Biemiller, 2005); therefore, they have less access to the vocabulary of books, and are more likely to have difficulty acquiring the skills of reading and less opportunity to use their own reading skills to develop their vocabulary.

The PALL Project endorsed the position that relying on indirect avenues of vocabulary development alone is not enough to help narrow the gap between different groups of children. This component of the Big Six acknowledged the evidence that direct instruction is effective for vocabulary learning (Beck & McKeown, 2007; Tomeson & Aarnoutse, 1998; Rinaldi, Sells, & McLaughlin, 1997), and that this is required if children from less advantaged backgrounds are to make substantial gains in this important area.

Fluency

Fluency reflects a pivotal point in reading development; it is that point where all the component skills of learning to read are in place and occurring without overt attention, so that cognitive energy can be focussed on determining the meaning. It is truly the point where learning to read transforms into reading to learn. Children who read very slowly and haltingly devote most of their cognitive attention to the subskills of decoding and word recognition. This places such a load on their working memory that they have no cognitive energy remaining to attend to what the text actually means. Memory limitations also mean that if a message is not transmitted within a certain timeframe, meaning is compromised. A rate of 90 – 100 words per minute is required for reading comprehension (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001, p. 29), a rate usually developed by the end of Year 2 for simple text.

The fluency component of the Big Six emphasises the interdependent relationship between all the elements of reading development. The point was strongly made within the PALL Project that unless the complete reading process is understood, it is not possible to identify just where the problem(s) might exist when a child struggles with reading.

Comprehension

Comprehension requires engagement with the text at a deep level, and an array of skills that go far beyond simple word recognition. This culminating element of the Big Six draws on several decades of research, indicating that good readers have particular characteristics not shared by poorer readers (Cunningham, 2000; Paris & Myers, 1981; Pressley, Mohan, Raphael, & Fingeret, 2007; Short & Ryan, 1984; Torgesen, 1982, 2000).

Typically, good readers:

- understand the purpose of their reading and so choose a suitable strategy for reading, such as skimming, scanning or reading carefully
- monitor their comprehension so they can integrate what they are reading with their existing knowledge
- focus on the relevant parts of the text and are able to distinguish major content from detail
- evaluate content as it is read.

Thus good readers have a repertoire of strategies they can draw on and, as a result of monitoring their comprehension, are able to adjust their reading strategies if meaning is lost. The position advocated through the PALL Project was that active comprehension strategies should be explicitly taught, especially to struggling readers. In the PALL professional development modules, an array of strategies to support the development of deep engagement with different text types was outlined.

4.3.2 The Literacy Practices Guide

The Literacy Practices Guide (LPG) was developed as a leadership support tool to enable principals to observe practices more astutely and to engage more directly in their leadership for literacy learning role. The LPG provides two-page checklists of what good literacy practice "looks like" in the junior primary, the middle primary, and the upper primary years. Five dimensions are addressed, each of which contains descriptive statements that reflect evidence of effective literacy practices in: the classroom, student work examples, planning documentation, reading instruction, and other curriculum areas. The LPG also provides the opportunity to record comments about each of these dimensions, and to record the informal and formal assessments used in the classroom.

The LPG was originally designed for principals to record their observations (Figure 4.1), but in some cases it was adapted to allow both the principal and the teacher to record their observations. Whereas different ways of using it provided the opportunity for a discussion about classroom

Figure 4.1 Original classroom environment section of LPG for junior primary years

LITERARY PRACTICES GUIDE K(PP)-YR1 Focus is on explicit teaching of phonological awareness, letter/sound knowledge and high-frequency sight words	Not observed –	Some evidence √	Ample evidence √√
CLASSROOM • Room design supports whole group, small group and individual instruction • Comfortable, well-organised informal reading area • Children's names displayed • Environmental print; labelling of resources, days of week, calendar, etc • Organisation of environmental print e.g. word families • "Living" word walls e.g. stickies, new words appearing • Accessible reading resources e.g. rhyming dictionary, picture dictionary • Range of text types in room: narrative, information, etc • Children's work displayed • Picture alphabet displayed • Imaginative play area (dress-up/shop/kitchen, etc) • Sets of magnetic/plastic letters for each child to manipulate • Evidence of community, family involvement, e.g. business or community partnerships, family reading nights, mentors			
Comments			

Figure 4.2 Adapted classroom environment section of LPG for junior primary years

LITERARY PRACTICES GUIDE R-YR1 Focus is on rich language development, explicit teaching of phonemic awareness, letter/sound knowledge and sight words	Self-reflection	Principal/peer reflection
Room design supports whole group, small group and individual instruction		
Comfortable, well-organised informal reading area		
Children's names displayed		
Environmental print; labelling of resources, days of week, calendar, etc		
Organisation of environmental print e.g. word families		
"Living" word walls e.g. stickies, new words appearing		
Accessible reading resources e.g. rhyming dictionary, picture dictionary		
Range of text types in room: narrative, information, etc		
Children's work displayed		
Picture alphabet displayed		
Imaginative play area (dress-up/shop/kitchen, etc)		
Sets of magnetic/plastic letters for each child to manipulate		
Evidence of group composition displayed		
Home readers		
Evidence of community, family involvement, e.g. business or community partnerships, family reading nights, mentors		
Comments		

(CLASSROOM)

literacy practices, the adapted version (Figure 4.2) was probably less threatening or "top-down" in its approach and so an improvement on the original. There was some anecdotal evidence from the PALL literacy achievement advisors (LAAs) that this was the case, although neither principals nor teachers mentioned it in their interview responses. Thus the LPG has been adapted for future use to incorporate responses from the teacher and to facilitate discussions between teacher and principal on the various dimensions explored in the Literacy Practices Guide.

4.4 The overall impact of the literacy approach

The following section summarises the findings of the impact of the literacy approach on the key stakeholders in the PALL Project – the principals. These findings were drawn from:

- the School Profile Instrument
- the principals' Personal Leadership Profiles, surveys and interviews
- surveys and interviews of a sample of the teachers involved in school intervention actions
- intervention evaluations provided by the principals.

Supplementary data were drawn from interviews with the LAAs and module feedback.

4.4.1 Principals' perceptions of changes to aspects of literacy and literacy leadership

The School Profile Instrument, completed at the beginning and at the conclusion of the PALL Project, asked participating principals to report on the major changes they believed arose from their involvement. A total of 54 principals responded, with categories developed according to the number of responses and the nature of the changes recorded.

Table 4.1 presents the profile fields where most principals believed there were significant changes in their schools. In a few cases, principals made two or more responses to a particular question. The last column presents the number of responses in which principals gave a reason for the change. The highest number of responses related to the School's approach to aspects of literacy learning (55 responses), with the second highest to Teachers' professional development (52), and the third highest number of responses to Facilities and resources for the school's literacy program (48). These

Table 4.1 Changes in aspects of the School Profile

Profile Field Number	Field description	Number of comments regarding notable changes	Number of comments giving reasons for notable changes
7	the school's approach to aspects of literacy learning	55	50
11	teachers' professional development	52	45
9	facilities and resources for the school's literacy program	48	36
4	the school's leadership positions and responsibilities	37	29
17	student literacy achievement	32	23
10	literacy targets	31	26
20	literacy strengths and needs	31	20
21	literacy priority area	27	15
6	committees/organisational structures	26	23
18	parental involvement in literacy learning	26	17
12	teacher induction	16	12
8	literacy related co-curricular programs	16	10
13	teacher satisfaction	14	6
15	parent satisfaction	12	5
19	links to the community	10	8
1	the school's demography	10	4
5	the school's staff complement and demographics	8	8
14	student satisfaction	8	4
16	attendance and absentee figures	7	4
2	the school's mission and values	6	5
3	the school's governance processes	2	5

three categories were areas of "high impact," attracting the most comments by a significant margin. The School's leadership positions and responsibilities attracted 37 comments, and Student literacy achievement attracted 32 comments, and so could also be regarded as significant. A discussion about the impact of the literacy component of the PALL Project on the principals forms the basis of the rest of this chapter. Chapter 5 extends the discussion by considering the effects of the literacy approach on whole-school systems and practices, on the teachers, and on student outcomes.
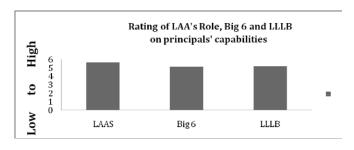
4.4.2 The impact of the literacy approach on the principals

The principal questionnaire and the principal interview schedule contained 26 items directly seeking responses to two key literacy components – the reading Big Six and the Literacy Practices Guide; therefore, this section contains an expanded discussion of the principals' responses to these frameworks.

Impact of the Big Six as a framework
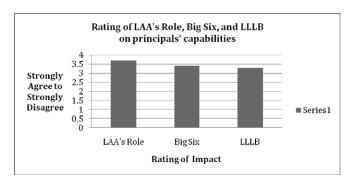
As can be seen in Figure 4.3, the principals' ratings in the principals' questionnaire of the impact of the literacy approach on their capabilities were uniformly high, averaging 5.5 out of a possible score of 6. The Big Six was perceived to be a useful framework to guide and shape leaders' awareness and thinking and supported their transformation from, in one principal's words, "principal as administrator to principal as instructional leader."

Figure 4.3 Impact of PALL key components: Survey responses

This was confirmed by the findings from the principal interviews (see Figure 4.4), which resulted in an average of 3.4 out of a possible score of 4. In the open-ended section of the principal interviews regarding this question, the majority of the leaders' comments can be summarised as follows: The Big Six provided a general framework; it built their personal literacy knowledge and a common language; and it facilitated a whole-school approach.

Figure 4.4 Impact of PALL key components: Interview data

Key concepts like explicit teaching, systematic teaching, and the need for automaticity resonated with principals. Their increased literacy knowledge allowed them to generate the confidence to conduct professional learning sessions with their teachers and teaching assistants, and to engage in sharing and collaborative behaviours in an area that many principals had previously left to the junior primary experts. It gave the principals the credibility to participate in discussions on classroom literacy instruction – they knew what questions to ask, what evidence to look for, and in many cases what advice to give.

Following are some sample responses given by principals.

The Big Six has provided a common language and pedagogy for literacy across the school.

The Big Six professional learning has had a strong influence on me and staff. It has helped me have professional conversations with staff and for them to develop their conversations as well…The school has now developed a workable scope and sequence document and has far more focus in its curriculum.

Because of my own learning in Module 2 in particular, and knowing what teachers need to know, I have taken more leadership of professional learning – my confidence is higher. I am more of an instructional leader. I know more about literacy.

Really, this is the first time I have been involved in everything the teachers have done. I know 200% more about literacy and can supervise with authority.

I have developed a stronger hands-on role here, including taking a major staff session on the Big Six and its implications for the school curriculum.

I have total ownership of curriculum within the school and am able to practise a high level of instructional leadership. I plan my week around what classes I will be involved in and the feedback I will provide to staff members.

In some cases, principals were able to extend the influence of their new knowledge more broadly than just in their own school.

> (I am) actually applying the knowledge from the PALL Project
> in an Acting Regional Director School Performance role now… can now walk into a school literacy program and look and know… can go into any school and see and understand what needs to happen next.

The Big Six and principal change

It would be misleading, however, to interpret the principals' responses as representing the view that the Big Six is just a general framework. Of the comments provided in the principal interviews, 40% were concerned with the use of particular aspects of the Big Six – to affirm reading priorities or targets (such as in vocabulary, letter sound knowledge, or comprehension), or to enable a change in teaching focus. These data suggest that the Big Six was perceived as both a broad general framework and as a more specific, usable tool for supporting and stimulating changed practices in the classroom.

It is worth noting that the reading Big Six and the vast body of research on which it is constructed were predicated on the notion that to achieve better outcomes for students the teaching of reading needed to change. The direction of that change should be towards explicit skills-based teaching, especially in the early years. Data arising from the principal interviews are interesting in this regard. When asked to rate the impact of the knowledge of the Big Six, the principals rated provision of ideas for better support for teachers and ideas to change *literacy policy and practices* as being more influential for teachers than for their own views of literacy. Yet in the principal questionnaire, the influence of PALL on *improvement in their personal literacy knowledge* was rated very highly (a mean rating of 5.5 out of a possible rating of 6). Perhaps the following comment by one of the principals on the impact of the Big Six best captures the leaders' perspective:

> The Big Six provided a return to and an introduction to staff to teach reading explicitly. It is *research based and the most effective way* of teaching children, and it *strengthened the principals' role.*

So from this perspective, the Big Six has provided a reinforcement of principals' personal views of literacy rather than a strong challenge to them. The framework built on their existing understandings and added to their knowledge base in a congruent way. It would appear that as a construct it has enabled them to lead (comfortably and from a position of strength) some changes of perspective in their schools. Additional data analysis provided further insight into the way in which the leaders made use of the Big Six literacy content knowledge. In the analysis of the principal questionnaire, the relationship between the leaders' ratings of their enhanced personal literacy knowledge and items clustering around the shared leadership dimension of the leadership Blueprint emerged as moderately strong.
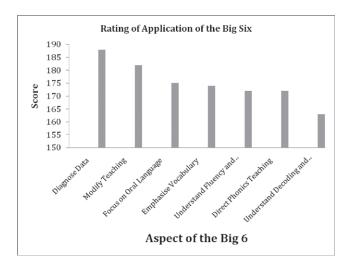
Table 4.2 Correlation between improved literacy knowledge and collaboration with teachers on interventions (r = .415)

		Teacher collaboration						
		strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree	total
Improved literacy knowledge	strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	disagree	0	0	0	0	1 (100%)	0	1
	slightly disagree	0	0	0	1 (100%)	0	0	1
	slightly agree	0	0	0	0	2 (67%)	1 (33%)	3
	agree	0	0	0	2 (15%)	7 (54%)	4 (31%)	13
	strongly agree	0	0	0	0	13 (33%)	26 (67%)	39
	total	0	0	0	3	23	31	57

Table 4.2 reveals that the higher the rating of improved literacy knowledge by leaders, the higher the rating on their propensity to share and collaborate with staff. Put simply, having a sufficient store of literacy content knowledge may have allowed leaders to generate the confidence to engage in sharing and collaborating behaviours.

The ratings from principals of various outcomes resulting from the application of the Big Six are presented in Figure 4.5. The two items ranked highest by principals in their assessment of the impact of the Big Six were use of diagnostic data and modifications to teaching. The lowest-ranked item related to understanding links between decoding and comprehension. Whereas the latter item contained a higher conceptual demand, the message about the use of the Big Six from the leaders' perspective is about the match between how they perceive their leadership role and what they can make the best use of. Leading the practicable and the doable, rather than the deeper and more technical understanding of aspects of literacy, has a clear implication about how to pitch the Big Six for leaders.

Figure 4.5 Rating of application of the Big Six by principals

Finally, data analysed from the principal interviews focussed on the relationship between items about the Big Six impacting on their (leadership) knowledge and behaviour and the broader application of the Big Six in their school. These data provide further insight into the links between the Big Six and changed orientation to leadership. What the correlational evidence reveals is that as the principals' propensity to change increased so did their ratings of the application of the Big Six. Quite strong correlations were evident between change and the teaching of phonics (r = .505), change and the application of the understanding of fluency and automaticity (r = .514), and change and the application of understanding of decoding and comprehension (r = .505).

However, the strongest link was found between the principals' propensity for change and the overall rating of application of the Big Six. There was a significant positive correlation (r = .771), such that as the propensity for principals to change increased so did overall application of the Big Six.

These relationships should be carefully qualified because the technical and measurement qualities of the instruments need to be subjected to stringent appraisal. Nevertheless, the above correlations strongly suggest that the leaders benefitted from the Big Six framework in two ways. One is that it reinforced and developed their technical literacy content knowledge; the other is that the Big Six framework provided leaders with a certain "kinetic energy" for change upon which they perceived they could build and influence literacy practices in a direct and practical way.

The LAAs' perceptions of the impact of the Big Six on principals

The positive impact of the Big Six as a framework for literacy knowledge was supported by data gleaned from the LAAs' interviews, because they reported on the ways in which principals responded to different elements of the PALL Project. The LAAs worked closely with the principals for the duration of the project and were in a good position to assess the extent to which different elements of the PALL Project had an impact.

Table 4.3 reveals that, in responding to a question regarding the extent to which they believed the principals had developed their knowledge of the Big Six, all LAAs responded that this had occurred "to a great extent."

In responding to questions relating to the extent to which principals used the Big Six in building literacy leadership knowledge (see Table 4.4), and in enhancing teacher knowledge and practice in literacy (see Table 4.5), the LAAs indicated a moderate to a large impact of the Big Six. These findings concur with those from the teacher survey and teacher interview, though the LAAs' assessments show a slightly greater extent of principals' actions than the assessments given by teachers.

The LAAs cited evidence from their school visits and discussions with principals. For example, the LAAs noted developments in principals' professional language and strategic thinking about school structures and teacher and student learning. Some LAAs noted feedback from teachers, in particular relating to their principals having more focussed conversations in meetings and staffrooms.

Table 4.3 LAAs' responses about the development of principals' understanding and knowledge of key elements of PALL

Over the course of the project, to what extent have principals	average response*
developed their knowledge of the key elements of PALL:	
Leadership for Literacy Learning Blueprint	1.14
Reading Big Six	1.00
Literacy Practices Guide	1.21
analysis and use of data	1.00
literacy interventions	1.43
evaluation of interventions	1.57

* 1: to a great extent 2: to a moderate extent 3: to a slight extent 4: not at all

Table 4.4 LAAs' responses on the areas and extent of principals' actions in building literacy leadership knowledge

Over the period of the PALL Project, to what extent have principals	average response*
used the Big Six to provide a framework for the teaching of reading across the school?	1.29
reviewed assessment practices in light of their own and their teachers' knowledge of the Big Six?	1.29

* 1: to a great extent 2: to a moderate extent 3: to a slight extent 4: not at all

Table 4.5 LAAs' responses on the type and extent of leadership capability exercised by principals

Over the period of the PALL Project, to what extent have principals	average response*
participated in literacy professional development with teaching staff?	1.07
enhanced conditions for literacy learning across the school?	1.14
conducted disciplined dialogue about data related to literacy teaching and learning?	1.21
changed their approach to the leadership of literacy learning?	1.43
shared leadership in developing and implementing literacy interventions?	1.43
shared accountability for implementing aspects of the Big Six?	1.50

* 1: to a great extent 2: to a moderate extent 3: to a slight extent 4: not at all
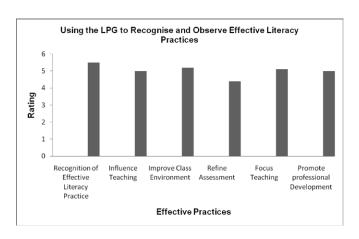
4.4.3 The impact of the Literacy Practices Guide on principals

The LPG received strong ratings, particularly as a means of enabling leaders to recognise and observe effective teaching practices. It was also seen to be useful in prompting discussion about literacy instruction. The principal questionnaire ratings on the use of the LPG to aid student assessment are slightly less positive; however, the LPG was designed to orient leaders to classroom practice rather than as an aid for intensive review of assessment practices.

The data from the principal questionnaire on the impact of the LPG were taken from the six-item section that asked the leaders to rate various aspects of their use of the instrument (see Figure 4.6). The patterns that emerge from the analysis are consistent with other trends that have been identified in the previous section about the impact of the Big Six, namely that principals benefitted in their roles as leaders of literacy learning.

Figure 4.6 Ratings of the impact of the LPG on principals as observers and influencers of teaching practice

It is not possible to draw definite conclusions about the effectiveness of the use of the LPG by linking items on it with items on the Leadership for Literacy Learning Blueprint (LLLB). However, in the correlational analysis between items about the two concepts, the higher the principals rated the LPG as an observational device the higher they rated the importance of "moral purpose" ($r = .32$); and the higher they rated their encouragement of the links between data, the higher they rated their sharing of data.

Supporting evidence for the effectiveness of the LPG was drawn from comments made during the principal interviews:

I realised the power of an environment for learning and so have concentrated on making classrooms print

rich and stimulating. The LPG helped me to gain understanding of this.

Even though at (this school), we were providing a range of wonderful supports in the social and emotional area, I added emphasis and focussed support for the physical conditions for children when they were in the classroom. The LPG was very helpful with this.

Improvements have come from my ability to use the LPG to help teachers question their current practice and make alterations as needed.

The LPG assisted me to gain skills – I'm more involved in professional learning.

I have improved my instructional leadership role by undertaking observations of classroom practice and then providing feedback to staff. My strong involvement in literacy has meant it has been front and square in all professional learning sessions.

In summary, the LPG was regarded as a useful tool in recognising effective literacy practices and in prompting discussion about literacy instruction. Particular reference was made to the helpfulness of clear guidelines on what an effective literacy-learning environment should look like at different year levels.

4.5 Final reflection on the impact of the literacy approach in the PALL Project

All the schools involved in the PALL Project were facing significant challenges, with large numbers of students experiencing literacy learning difficulties. Progress in these schools takes on special significance for the principals, the teachers, and, most importantly, the students and is thus a particular cause for celebration. Most principals and teachers reported an increase in literacy knowledge and skills developed through their involvement in the PALL Project, and a number of flow-on effects were reported in terms of student engagement and an expected reduction in teacher stress. While an enthusiastic response to professional development (such as that provided through the PALL Project) does not always result in desired longer-term outcomes, there have been glimpses of important changes occurring in the literacy-learning experiences of these children whose needs are great. The responses to the literacy approach from key stakeholders in the PALL Project give cause for cautious optimism.

As one principal commented in the interview:
It is clearly one of the most valuable and effective learning opportunities of my teaching career, and one of the most supportive and influential learning opportunities I have undertaken as an educational leader.

4.6 Conclusions

Major conclusions drawn from analysis of multiple sources of data regarding the literacy approach used in the PALL Project are as follows:

1. The Big Six and the Literacy Practices Guide were perceived to be useful frameworks to support an evidence-based approach to literacy instruction in the PALL schools.

2. The literacy focus provided by the PALL Project enhanced broader leadership capabilities. It built principals' knowledge and confidence, thus facilitating their involvement in the professional learning of their teachers and acting as a catalyst for changing school-wide systems and processes to support a new approach to literacy instruction.

Chapter Five

The Impact of PALL in Schools

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the leadership work of principals is "tracked" into schools to gauge some of its effects on teachers, students, and their schools overall. This is done with a little trepidation in the light of Leithwood and Levin's (2004, p. 25) view that: "A study that seeks to assess the impact that school leadership can have on school outcomes faces some formidable challenges."

In spite of the challenges, the main thrust of the Principals as Literacy Leaders Project (PALL) was for principals to apply leadership for literacy learning capabilities with their teachers in their schools and to record the effects. The first of the five PALL modules – leadership for learning – was anchored on the presumption that each principal's approach should be context specific, because in order to lead improvements in literacy, particularly in reading, they would require a sound knowledge of the school, and its teachers, students, and community. In addition, principals would need knowledge of the school's organisational structures, its curriculum, and the existing approach to literacy teaching, and an understanding of students' overall literacy learning and achievement. The follow-up activity for the first module was designed to provide principals with the means (in the form of a School Profiling Instrument – see Appendix 2.1) to gather baseline data about the schools they were leading. When completed, the combination of understandings from the profile laid a foundation for principals to begin their work as literacy leaders, and ultimately to track the effects of their leadership into their schools.

This chapter examines changes made to School Profiles noted by principals when they were asked to reassess their schools some 18 to 20 months after the project commenced. Principals' reasons for the changes arising from the application and impact of PALL were recorded using an online Profile Change Instrument (see Appendix 2.2). Towards the end of the chapter, other sources are used to validate the changes claimed by principals, namely NAPLAN results and findings from the teachers' survey and interviews.

5.1 Changes in School Profiles attributed to PALL

Principals were assisted by their literacy achievement advisor (LAA) to construct the School Profile using the instrument referred to above. Sharing the task was considered important because the LAAs also needed to know each of the schools well. Thus the School Profile provided the means for principals to share understandings of important school features with their LAAs.

5.1.1 Frequency of profile changes

Using the online Profile Change Instrument, 54 principals recorded changes they had made in their schools and the reasons for them (see Appendix 2.2). Understandably, perhaps because of the shortness of the project's implementation time and some matters outside a principal's control, profile fields such as the following did not attract comments:

• the school's demography

• the school's mission and values

• the school's governance processes and

• the school's staff complement

On other fields such as parent satisfaction, student satisfaction, attendance and absentee figures, and links with the community, principals were largely silent. Reasons for these silences are not known but it is reasonable to assume that, consistent with the research findings of scholars such as Hall and Loucks (1978), principals may have attended first to "concerns for self" (e.g., their knowledge of literacy and their leadership capabilities) followed by "concerns for task" (such as their gathering and use of evidence in their schools and their changed role in professional development with members of staff) well before they attended to "concerns for impact" (such as effects on parent satisfaction, student absenteeism, and links with the community).

Nevertheless, significant changes were reported in particular areas. While a record of the frequency of changes overall

has been presented in Chapter 4 and the six fields attracting most attention have been identified (see Table 4.1), the following sections detail the evidence principals provided.

5.1.2 The schools' approach to aspects of literacy learning

Changes to the schools' approach to literacy learning received comments from all 54 principals. Many principals wrote about their whole-school planning for literacy. Almost every school reported School Profile changes in this field. One principal commented:

> [Our] policy is explicit in terms of what students are expected to learn for each year level. It also outlines literacy resources to be used across the school (e.g., First Steps). It also includes assessment tools used across the school (e.g., Big Six checklist, PM Benchmark levels, students' literacy folders and what needs to be in them, moderation processes etc.). I have led focussed discussions with teachers based on literacy data to inform aspects for development. ... Now we know what we need to improve and what to do about it.

For many principals and teachers, the changes reported related to organisational structure and timetabling (e.g., literacy blocks). For others, it was the value of processes such as disciplined dialogue about literacy learning and achievement evidence, a more uniform approach to assessment across the school, or the collaborative approaches adopted by staff in their planning. These comments from principals highlight some of the changes:

> PALL has helped us to get there. It would have taken us longer if we had not been involved in the PALL Project and as principal I have developed the skills to have the disciplined dialogue to make this happen – knowing what questions to ask.

> PALL has provided the catalyst to look at what we were doing in relation to the components of the LLLB [Leadership for Literacy Learning Blueprint] and then to review our whole-school approach to literacy. The changes in intervention practices are directly related to learning from Module 4 around effective intervention. Assessment has also been linked with the Big Six and the intervention has been determined by the outcomes of this assessment.

The whole-school approach was exemplified in many schools by the introduction of dedicated literacy blocks as a direct result of involvement in PALL. These provided a focus for all staff and students. Specific comments by principals from the School Profile included:

The use of a literacy block for three sessions a week allowed support teachers and resources to be utilised in an effective manner. In surveying teachers on the impact of this strategy, 93% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that this strategy was effective in improving reading outcomes.

> The whole school has embraced a literacy block and made use of tools such as the Literacy Practices Guide to engage in self and administrative evaluation of their literacy practices.

> All teachers are using literacy blocks from years P-7. There has been an increase in the number of sessions per week.

If literacy blocks were already in place, they were re-examined and refocussed:

> Literacy blocks were in place but were not as tightly regulated across the school. Some cross setting previously took place but it is now part of the whole-school fabric. We have also allocated significant financial resources to help develop learning resources across the school to assist with the intervention.

Changes also occurred in schools where screening processes were used to create groupings for the use of "waves" (see Module 4 in Chapter 1) in school intervention planning. Some principals worked with their staff to deploy support personnel differently; some found approaches to explicit teaching in literacy to be of value; while others developed approaches to early childhood classes based on phonological awareness. The reading Big Six was seen as a key resource for learning to read and for the preparation of scope and sequence documents for long-term planning.

The value of PALL in assisting principals to make significant school-wide changes in literacy practices is illustrated by the following comments:

> The school's assessment plan was influenced by knowledge gained from PALL modules.

> The Literacy Practices Guides will be used across the school for reflective walks in 2011. Data is the first thing we look at when we plan. Disciplined dialogue around data is used. [The] Waves model [of intervention] is used as an approach to intervention.

> Previously [there was] no consistency – everyone was on their own adventure. Now we have a clear literacy policy in place that outlines elements of literacy across all year levels.

5.1.3 Teacher professional development

Teacher professional development figured strongly in principals' comments. Many principals reported a developing confidence about working with their teachers on literacy issues and claimed that they were much more engaged in professional development than in the past. One principal stated that she had "taken a leading role in organisation and direction of PD." Another commented that "There has been significant change. [PD] is now mainly internal with all involved, including all [of the] Administration Team." A third explained that "[There is] now a whole-school awareness of the need for school-wide targeted PD as part of a strategic and operational plan by the School Board and stakeholders."

Overwhelmingly, principals expressed the view that PD had become more focussed in their schools. They reported that PD staff meetings were characterised by specific discussions about literacy, using a stronger data base than had been the case previously. More PD was focussed on identified literacy needs through data analysis becoming commonly accepted and valued as the starting point for change.

Greater staff collaboration was also reported. For example, one principal used the term "openness" to describe the way teachers engaged in the discussion of data, and went on to say: "We are learning more from each other – de-privatising teaching. Teachers are more responsible for their own learning and initiating it."

Principals explained the value of PD and their direct involvement with their teachers in terms of their need to work with and through their staff to achieve improvement. They explained that PALL had provided the vehicle for them to engage with their teachers in this challenge.. As one of the leaders put it:

> If we were going to implement the learning from the PALL Project then we needed to ensure that people had the PD to do what needed to be done. ... We also needed to build capacity in using data to inform decision making in relation to teaching and learning of literacy.

Others noted:

> PALL has given me cause to reclaim my position as a curriculum leader.

> The professional learning I have received within the project has helped me to develop the professional learning of staff in literacy.

> I am more upfront as an instructional leader. There is more

team responsibility and staff are leading some of these activities. We have a common focus in professional learning.

Principals' increased engagement with staff through professional development and "disciplined dialogue" not only resulted in the development and use of a common language and agreed goals, but also in broader changes to leaders' views of professional learning:

> I have been going to more training on professional learning. I now realise how important it is. In the past I was negative because I thought it took teachers away from the school. I now believe in professional learning more.

The enhanced value and confidence in the use of data was also highlighted by principals as a significant outcome of their involvement in PALL and the teacher PD opportunities that resulted from it. Several schools indicated that the PALL emphasis on data led them to create centralised databases for the first time. Others commented that:

> [Our school's] Literacy intervention focus is now informed by identified individual needs.

> Data is the first thing we look at when we plan.

> Requests for teaching resources to support learning are now evidence based and specifically targeted to areas of need.

> We are changing our processes and structures because our data is more focussed.

5.1.4 Development of teacher capacity

More than 88% of the 296 surveyed teachers agreed that their school's involvement in the PALL Project had enhanced their professional capacity to teach literacy. Examining data from teacher surveys, teacher interviews, and principal interviews revealed that there were several ways in which this had occurred.

First, over 83% of teachers reported that they had an enhanced knowledge of how to teach reading using elements of the Big Six; second, more than 85% agreed they had an increased repertoire of teaching strategies; and third, teachers explained that their principals' use and delivery of PD on the Big Six supported the development of a common language, common understandings, and common approaches to the teaching of literacy, which strengthened staff collaboration and increased their capacity to engage in professional discussions. For example, they commented that:

> Everyone seems to be on the same page and can talk to colleagues about literacy aspects.

The whole school is working towards a common goal with common strategies and focus. Awesome.

These comments were supported by principals' views. The teachers' literacy focus, according to one principal "had developed a common language, increased confidence and simplified the structure and processes for dialogue and action." Other comments included:

I have observed more professional, explicit, focussed professional discussions around the teaching/learning process.

The major value of intervention actions is the increased professional knowledge and the level of empowerment created by the staff.

More than 83% of teachers agreed that they had an enhanced capacity to target specific students on the basis of assessment and monitoring of progress. This was reflected in the use of new assessment instruments and enhanced data analysis skills. The principals broadly supported this view; with one saying that it had helped "raise teacher consciousness about the importance of diagnostic assessment practices in literacy."

5.1.5 Facilities and resources for the schools' literacy program

Forty-eight principals made comments about changes to the deployment of resources for literacy programs in their schools. Of these, 36 principals described reasons for the changes. Many made reference to individual support for students, especially those in Wave 2 or 3 intervention categories. And different types of reading resources were itemised to indicate what the schools had spent in providing the best support for their school's intervention.

Many principals spoke of adjusting their budgets to allow for the purchase of items for either the library or the classroom environment. Resources included:

- Words Their Way
- Teaching Handwriting Reading and Spelling Skills (THRASS)
- the Key Links Program
- Word Shark (a software resource used for students in Waves 2 or 3)
- the Comprehension Strategies Instruction (CSI) program
- Comprehensive Assessment of Reading Strategies (CARS)
- Strategies to Achieve Reading Success (STARS).

Knowledge of various learning resources assisted principals and teachers (generally with the help of the LAA) to develop scope and sequence statements for student learning.

A second matter dominated comments in this profile field: changes in the use of the school's existing human resources. One principal indicated that he had restructured the deployment of Special Education Unit personnel to support all Wave 3 students, not just those with identified learning difficulties. A second said that rather than a librarian, she would employ a teacher/librarian who would be involved in the teaching of reading and other aspects of literacy with children across the school. A third principal wrote:

I have rearranged deployment of human resources and a lot of additional funding has been focussed on literacy. Teachers will use Jolly Phonics next year in the early years to target student needs. I have allocated a 0.5 FTE position in the early childhood area to support students with oral language and in the development of skills in the first three of the Big Six.

The introduction of school-wide literacy blocks prompted an examination of the way that staff members were deployed. In some cases, this meant the allocation of release days to support collaborative planning. In other cases, changes were made in the allocation of support staff. The following comments taken from the data on the School Profile are indicative:

Now I am acknowledging that literacy improvement requires resource support; for example, including release days for teachers to meet with the principal and in collaborative teams to discuss programs and determine further action for improvement.

The PALL Project has raised my awareness and understanding about how important it is to have a supportive environment and the specific things I needed to target to establish that supportive environment to facilitate literacy improvement. For example, I have realigned the use of human resources in the school to support literacy improvement and targeted resources in the annual school operational plan to facilitate literacy improvement.

This realignment resulted in some cases in an enhanced role for education assistants (EAs). One principal commented:

Our EAs have become vital to the success of the literacy intervention. All EAs are inducted into the program and trained to deliver instruction that is explicit and developmentally appropriate for the students they are working with.

The same principal provided a detailed statement describing how the EAs at his school presented a session at a staff development day on their work with Wave 3 students, reporting on the results of the program, and modelling the explicit teaching strategies they had learnt as part of a professional learning program he had helped implement. This was regarded as a "breakthrough" moment, adding great professionalism to the role of the EAs, building their personal confidence, and increasing the teachers' respect for the contribution they made.

Principals also referred to making changes to facilities and to the allocation of other physical resources to support the implementation of literacy interventions in their schools. Several commented on the use of resources to support Wave 2 and 3 students, and indicated that the LLLB provided direction on the importance of such resources and the need to improve the physical image of the school within the local community. For example, one principal indicated that he and his teachers:

> used the Literacy Practices Guide to help identify the ideal classroom conditions for literacy learning. This led to the "uncluttering" of classroom environments in Years P-2 to ensure resources such as a living "word wall" would be used effectively.

5.1.6 School leadership positions and responsibilities

Changes to leadership positions and responsibilities, shared leadership, and classroom and specialist positions drew comments from most principals. While some of these changes occurred because of factors unrelated to the impact of the PALL Project (e.g., those due to central office staffing decisions and appointments), the majority of principals indicated that their involvement with PALL had helped them initiate changes in school leadership roles and responsibilities. For example, more than 20 principals drew attention to the "increased leadership status

and responsibilities of their literacy specialist teachers." One principal described a change in the role of the person filling his literacy curriculum management position – a change from *specialist modelling good practice to specialist facilitating data interrogation and consequent planning for improvement.*

Principals related the development of shared leadership in their schools to the intervention process which followed Module 4. In responding to this profile field, they attributed their reasons for change to the Leadership for Literacy Learning Blueprint (LLLB), the Big Six framework, and intervention wave "theory." Indeed, PALL Project support resources were frequently described as contributing to the changes within their schools. One stated "because of the impetus of the PALL Project, the depth of leadership in literacy has increased in my school." In all, there were 29 comments about PALL resources as reasons why these changes in leadership had occurred.

5.1.7 Student literacy achievement

Changes in student literacy targets and achievement were reported by most principals. Three-fifths of the principals (31) reported changes in their schools' literacy (reading) targets. Many said that targets were now more specific, and better defined, being set for students who were part of Wave 2 and Wave 3 intervention actions. Several principals stated that targets formed a part of their School Operational Plans. One principal typified what many said:

> NAPLAN data show improvements in reading. We are now much better at collecting, interpreting and acting on data. Previous to participation in the project, collection and use of data was broad, general and had a "vagueness." However, as a result of PALL, it is now sharper and more purposeful.

A variety of reasons (26) was given for the revised focus on targets. For one principal, "it helped my teachers and

Table 5.1 NAPLAN summary – Year 3 reading

	Achievement bands									
	Total	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
All schools Year 3 reading										
percentage 2008	1801	19.32	21.93	20.04	16.93	14.10	6.88	0.8		
percentage 2009	1950	12.61	22.15	23.80	18.77	14.21	8.46			
percentage 2010	1688	12.10	20.30	21.80	23.10	12.90	9.80			

Table 5.2 NAPLAN summary – Year 5 reading

		Achievement bands								
	Total	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
All schools Year 5 reading										
percentage 2008	1855	0.90	1.88	21.30	20.53	25.55	17.14	8.23	4.15	0.32
percentage 2009	1960	0.45	0.68	15.15	23.52	24.48	17.80	13.32	4.60	
percentage 2010	1824			18.64	22.09	27.50	16.94	8.48	6.35	

Table 5.3 NAPLAN summary – Year 7 reading

		Achievement bands								
	Total	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
All schools Year 7 reading										
percentage 2008	1233				14.76	24.00	32.11	16.78	9.00	3.35
percentage 2009	1242				10.95	22.62	30.84	20.53	12.48	2.58
percentage 2010	1406				10.38	22.33	28.23	23.60	13.22	2.24

assistants to remain squarely committed to their intervention action." Another said that "it helped increase awareness, through PALL, of what should be targeted. The Big Six has helped here." For a third principal, "the PALL Project's emphasis on the use of evidence and disciplined dialogue about that evidence was significant."

Comments on student literacy achievement were made by 32 of the 54 principals. These related to improvement in the literacy skills of students, and an increase in the range and types of assessment techniques used. Many principals commented on changes to the National Assessment Program in Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results in their schools. Sample comments include:

> Improvement rates are higher in most aspects of NAPLAN, higher than the national improvement rate. NAPLAN also showed that for Year 3: all areas lifted; for Year 5: 2 of 4 areas improved, and the others maintained;

and for Year 7: 3 of 4 areas lifted.
Spelling and reading have improved. The mean band in NAPLAN literacy levels has risen one level in Years 3, 5 and 7.

For students who are in Year 5 in 2010, there was movement by all but one student by 2 Bands in NAPLAN from their Year 3 (2008) to Year 5 (2010) achievement. This was significant improvement given our students' needs in literacy.

NAPLAN results were considered to be one indicator of student achievement. All schools used other measures to record evidence about learning and achievement. However, to show a progressive record of PALL schools' performance in NAPLAN, outcomes for 2008 – 2010 have been aggregated to indicate the progress students made during that time. The results are broken into Years 3, 5, and 7, noting that Northern Territory schools have no Year 7 students.

Table 5.4 Teachers' interview responses on the application and impact of the PALL Project in schools (n= 244) as percentages

As a consequence of the school's involvement in the PALL Project , I have observed improvement in:	1 strongly disagree	2 disagree	3 slightly disagree	4 slightly agree	5 agree	6 strongly agree
student achievement in literacy	0.41	5.74	4.51	24.18	49.18	15.98
the use of evidence to inform literacy practices	0.41	4.92	6.15	19.26	45.90	23.36
our ability to diagnose student needs in literacy	1.23	4.51	6.15	24.18	45.49	18.44

In Year 3, as Table 5.1 shows, the improvement for students was in the lower achievement bands. This is partly explained by the fact that many PALL Project schools initiated intervention action to improve reading strategies for students in the early years. Most of these focussed on the reading Big Six and early literacy and this is reflected in the Year 3 achievement records.

In Year 5, similar improvements in student achievement were evident in the NAPLAN results (see Table 5.2). This is partly explained by the fact that most of the actions principals took were in Reception to Year 5 classes.

In Year 7, as Table 5.3 shows, there was discernable improvement, but not as much as for Years 3 and 5. It is expected that student achievement will be higher for Year 7 students in the pilot schools in 2011 because these children were involved in PALL Pilot-initiated interventions in 2010.

Using the NAPLAN results as a measure of the impact of the PALL Pilot Project must be accompanied by a cautionary note. Reading interventions in PALL schools had only just begun before the 2010 NAPLAN tests were administered (in May 2010). In the light of the caveat stated earlier about the need for longer implementation time frames, it is expected that the impact of the project will be more obvious in 2011 and 2012.

Moving beyond NAPLAN data, several principals commented on improvement in student literacy achievement using other assessment processes, both qualitative and quantitative. Some referred to their students' success as "distance travelled." Others noted their students' achievement in the Progressive Achievement Tests in Reading (PAT-R tests), running records, and oral language development, especially in prep/reception and Year 1, while yet others pointed to the broadening of the base for their assessment of students. Several principals made generic comments about the improvement of their students in literacy and how PALL had given them a more rounded approach to their work.

When principals were asked to explain why these changes in student achievement had occurred in their schools, they nominated PALL as a key contributor in 23 comments. Reference was made to a number of aspects of PALL, including a whole-school focus, which gave clear directions on what needed to be done. Related PALL features identified by principals included:

- explicit teaching
- literacy scope and sequence statements
- the use of the "waves" of intervention

- whole-school literacy blocks
- initial concern for phonological awareness and phonics
- sharing ideas and resources with LAAs
- the use of data (including the conduct of "disciplined dialogue")
- a focus on the Big Six
- general learning from the PALL Project modules
- the use of a wider repertoire of assessment tools.

One principal summed up her perspective on the changes she had made thus:

> Our participation in the PALL Project has brought a whole new awareness of the nature of explicit teaching required in the school. Consequently, we have been a lot more explicit in our teaching, we have raised our expectations, and we are using data to inform our teaching programs.

5.1.8 Evidence from teachers

Having described the most frequently cited School Profile changes reported by principals as a result of their involvement in the PALL Pilot Project, the chapter now brings data from the teachers' survey and interviews into the picture. The data gathered by these instruments records general support for two of the profile field changes claimed by principals.

The response rates in the first row of Table 5.4 show a reasonably high level of agreement by teachers on perceptions of improvement in children's literacy achievement. A substantial majority of teachers also indicate that they have strengthened their use of evidence to inform literacy practices, while almost two thirds of the teachers feel that they have improved their ability to diagnose student literacy needs.

Other generally supportive findings from the teachers' survey and interviews have been discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. Suffice it to say here that both principals and teachers report positive effects on particular School Profile fields relating to their involvement in PALL, with principals slightly more effusive about its impact than teachers. The proximal and distal effects of direct or indirect project participation could contribute to the difference in view.

5.2   Conclusion

When principals re-examined their School Profiles after being involved in considerable professional learning some 18-20 months after the PALL Project commenced, many of the 21 profile fields were reported as having undergone significant change. Evidence for the most prominent of

these has been discussed. The changes reported and the thinking behind them were apparent in an upward trajectory in NAPLAN results and in corroborating findings from the teachers' survey and interviews. The changes reported also provided evidence of the blending of leadership and literacy knowledge and capability in school-focussed action. Particular concepts from the LLLB and the Big Six framework appeared especially influential in principals' practice.

The major messages taken from the analysis of changes in School Profiles are presented now as a series of ten conclusions, using the twin purposes of the pilot project as headings.

5.2.1 Improving children's literacy learning and achievement

(1) Clear literacy targets were set and reported by half the project schools, based on disciplined dialogue amongst staff and school leaders. Both principals and teachers believed that student achievement had increased as a result of their involvement in the PALL Project.

(2) Student literacy achievement in the pilot schools improved. This was evident in summarised NAPLAN results, particularly in Years 3 and 5.

(3) Teachers acknowledged to a moderate extent that both student attitudes to learning and achievement in literacy had improved in their schools.

(4) Some principals and teachers reported positive effects of improved literacy skills on behaviour and self-esteem.

5.2.2 Enhancing Literacy leadership capabilities

(5) Consistent with the view of leadership advocated during the pilot project, there is strong evidence that there was a greater use of shared leadership in schools, even in some instances where there was a change of principal. When the latter occurred, departing principals devolved tasks to others, which assisted in creating sustainable processes in the affected schools.

(6) Concern to enhance the physical, social and emotional conditions for learning is evident in the way principals adjusted school budgets and physical and human resources to support literacy programs, without additional funding.

(7) Whole-school PD on literacy practices became prevalent in most pilot project schools. Principals indicated that they had a key leadership role in this process, with disciplined dialogue described as a valuable aide to PD. The use of a common approach and common professional language in PALL schools resulted in a higher level of engagement by classroom teachers in professional learning opportunities.

(8) Schools reported that through focussed professional learning processes they had developed a clear moral purpose.

(9) Schools changed their individual approaches to aspects of literacy learning. These changes resulted in new processes that included whole-school literacy blocks, new assessment processes, regular use of disciplined dialogue to help in the understanding and use of student data, screening processes for intervention "Wave" placement, explicit teaching, the development of literacy policies (such as scope and sequence documents), and the widespread use of the Literacy Practices Guide. In addition, the project resulted in a significant increase in the use of data to inform and manage literacy learning and teaching in participating schools.

This chapter has examined changes in aspects of the way PALL Project schools operated. The next, Chapter 6, presents a discussion of the intervention actions taken by principals and teachers in reading and the school-based evaluation of their effects.

Chapter Six

Evaluating Reading Interventions

6.0 Introduction

After principals had completed the fourth PALL PD module, their work was dedicated to the planning and implementation of literacy interventions, almost all of which concentrated on reading. Whereas interventions were planned towards the end of 2009, they were not fully implemented until the beginning of the 2010 school year. So, in effect, by the time principals were ready to evaluate the effects of their interventions, only six to nine months had elapsed (depending on how speedily principals collected data for the evaluation). It is important to make this point, because it is well documented in the implementation literature that where major changes in policy and practice occur, considerable time is required before patterns of improvement can be verified (Fullan, 2001).

This chapter discuses information taken from school-based intervention evaluation reports prepared by principals towards the end of 2010. In order to manage the discussion,

one school's intervention evaluation report is examined in detail by following the headings set down in the evaluation template which was provided to all schools. Collections of examples from the other 55 evaluation reports are used to illustrate the questions pursued, methods employed, and findings produced. To conclude the chapter, a summary of major messages about the impact of interventions in reading in the pilot schools is made.

6.1 School-based evaluation requirements

In undertaking school-based evaluations of the impact of the literacy interventions implemented in their schools, principals were asked to structure their data gathering and analysis around two key purposes:

1) a focus on changes to literacy teaching and learning experience and in student achievement in literacy

---

Table 6.1 Background to and nature of Future Heights' Intervention

> ### Principals as Literacy Leaders (PALL) evaluation report (November 2010)
>
> *Context*
>
> The school is situated on 6.28 hectares in the suburb of X in the city of #### some ZZ Km south of the GPO. The SES Index for the student population is 0.7391
>
> Analysis of parent occupations and circumstances shows significant unemployment and very few parents from professional backgrounds.
>
> Approximately 620 students are enrolled in years Prep to Seven. The school services a culturally diverse community that comprises 6% Indigenous students and students from 39 other cultural backgrounds. In the last two years the percentage of students from the Samoan cultural group has increased significantly (6.7%) with other significant groups being Maori (5.5% as a subset of the total New Zealander population of 9.2 %) and Hmong (3.7%).
>
> Enrolment trends indicate a high level of transience, with 9.3% of enrolments at the beginning of the year being new students (this does not include new enrolments into Prep) and the overall population of the school declining slowly.
>
> Within the school population, there are 32 students with disabilities who are supported by a Special Education Program. The majority of these have disabilities in the areas of Intellectual Impairment (31.5%), Speech Language Impairment (2.5%) or Autism Spectrum Disorder (66%). The school also manages an Early Childhood
>
> Developmental Program. This unit supports on a part-time basis 60 children aged birth to four who have disabilities or exhibit developmental delays.
>
> *Mission and values*
>
> The staff of Future Heights believes that all children are capable of success and we commit in partnership with parents and the community to foster each child's full potential to become a responsible, respectful, and contributing citizen.
>
> The school's beliefs about behaviour and learning state, "We expect that all students behave safely, respectfully and as learners in our community."
>
> *Description of the problem*
>
> School data (primarily NAPLAN achievement) leads to a conclusion that the school needs to:
>
> * ensure that there is a focus on the explicit teaching of reading, writing and spelling
>
> * align the teaching and learning practices, including student intervention, with student achievement data
>
> * engage in professional development and dialogue about the strategies for effective literacy learning

2) an examination of the impact of aspects of the Leadership for Literacy Learning Blueprint (LLLB) on the effectiveness of the literacy interventions.

In all, 56 intervention evaluation reports (of a possible 60) were completed and returned by principals. An analysis of the information contained in them provides a strong indication of the pilot project's application and impact in participating schools.

6.1.1 Analysis of the evaluation reports

To exemplify how the requirements outlined above were met in the evaluation reports, two school reports are referred to for examples. Identities have been protected by using pseudonyms – Future Heights School – principal: Barbara Beacon, and Hi Tech Primary principal: Bill Keystroke.

Nature of the literacy intervention - Future Heights

The "boxed" sections of the presentation contain direct extracts from the Future Heights' report. This begins with its first page (Table 6.1), which explains the school's context and the nature of its literacy intervention.

Principal Barbara Beacon is clear about some of the complexities of her school and equally clear about the school's moral purpose to lift literacy achievement for all children. Because of concerns with weak NAPLAN results, Barbara and her teachers targeted comprehension for their intervention, particularly in the middle primary years.

Other schools

All school-based evaluations included information about the school context, the nature of the intervention, its foci (in terms of Waves 1, 2, and 3 interventions), and the year levels where it had been applied.

There were interventions that covered oral language, phonological awareness and letter sound knowledge, decoding, vocabulary development, sight words, comprehension skills, the development of whole-school literacy plans, reviews of school timetables (often, in planning for whole-school literacy blocks), in-class learning support, professional learning for staff, and scope and sequence planning guides.

The major emphasis tended to be on Wave 1 and 2 intervention actions, with only a small number of schools working through to Wave 3 students. Some school interventions were applied across the whole primary school, whereas others were focussed on particular year levels, such as early years, middle years, or senior primary years.

Table 6.2 Future Heights' evaluation purposes, key questions, data sources, and methods

purpose	key questions	data sources	data methods
Primary purpose 1 To find out about changes in the reading comprehension teaching and learning experiences in which children are engaging and their effects.	• Are teachers explicitly teaching comprehension strategies (e.g., 'STARS' 12 strategies), 'SPRINGBOARD' 6 strategies? • Does the classroom organisation promote differentiated learning (group work, levels, alignment to individual skills)? • What can children tell you about comprehension strategies? • What actions are in place to support Wave 2 intervention at Future Heights?	• middle-school teachers • middle-school students • literacy coach (LC) • head of curriculum (HOC) • learning support teachers (LST)	• teacher* survey/ questionnaire/ interview # • student survey/ questionnaire/ interview # * includes LC, HOC,LST # see appendices
Primary purpose 2 To ascertain if there are any changes being seen in children's achievement in reading comprehension.	• Is there measurable improvement in student outcomes in reading comprehension? • Are there specific strategies that show particular strengths or trends?	• middle-school teachers • middle-school students • literacy coach • head of curriculum • learning support teachers	• PAT-r tests (March/ September 2010) • NAPLAN results • PROBE results • student report data (individual and aggregated) • CARS reports • anecdotal reports from teachers*

One state/territory jurisdiction summarised its 15 schools' reasons for undertaking the interventions as:

> poor student achievement against national and state benchmarks, availability of hard data within schools, a better knowledge and understanding of the Big Six framework, a realisation of the need for collaborative whole-school approaches to literacy and the need for professional learning by teaching and support staff.

Evaluation purposes, key questions, data sources, and methods

Future Heights

In Future Heights' evaluation report, a second extract (see Table 6.2) shows how Barbara and her teachers defined the purposes of the evaluation and how they matched key questions, data sources, and methods of data collection to them.

Examination of the other schools' evaluation reports showed that in almost every case a secondary purpose was identified. For example, an extract taken from the evaluation report prepared by Bill Keystroke from Hi Tech Primary shows that Bill's concern was to gather data about an initiative he and his teachers called "collaborative professionalism days." The aims of this initiative were: to provide opportunities for shared planning and coordination of classroom curriculum, teaching, and learning; and to improve team relationships and enhance shared leadership. Thus Bill and his teachers went about developing: "a set of 'team protocols" and strategies for improving or maintaining "team spirit" and effectiveness." With these aims and proposed outcomes in mind, they put the secondary purpose for Hi Tech's evaluation in question form: What changes have occurred in the school's approach to coordinating and monitoring the literacy curriculum, teaching, and learning?

Table 6.3 Results from a student survey at Future Heights State School
Question 2:

64 Survey responses from YEAR 5 How often do you use the following strategies in the classroom?				
	every day	once per week	sometimes	never
main idea	49	10	5	0
compare & contrast	38	22	4	0
predicting	40	14	9	1
sequencing	42	16	6	0
author's purpose	29	13	19	3
fact or opinion	54	6	4	0
Total	**252**	**81**	**47**	**4**
%	**66%**	**21%**	**12%**	**1%**
79 Survey responses from YEAR 7 **How often do you use the following strategies in the classroom?**				
main idea	29	38	12	1
compare & contrast	15	48	16	1
predicting	24	38	17	1
sequencing	24	41	14	2
author's purpose	10	22	39	3
fact or opinion	28	41	10	0
Total	**130**	**228**	**108**	**8**
%	**27%**	**48%**	**23%**	**2%**
143 Survey responses from YEAR 5 & YEAR 7 **How often do you use the following strategies in the classroom?**				
Total	**382**	**309**	**155**	**12**
%	**45%**	**36%**	**18%**	**1%**

Explanation:

1. Year 5 results are higher as this year level is receiving intensive intervention (introductory lesson + small group intervention + HOC or LC delivering follow up CARS).

2. Author's purpose response is low due to introductory lesson not completed by time of survey.

3. Some NEVER responses could be from students absent

Table 6.4 Some results about comprehension strategies from a teachers' survey at Future Heights School

1. Explicit teaching of comprehension strategies

a) How confident are you with the use of, and how often do you use, each of the following comprehension strategies within your classroom? Please place a tick (√) in the appropriate boxes.

Comprehension strategy	very confident	somewhat confident	not confident	often	seldom	never
1. main idea	6	1		7		
2. finding detail	7			7		
3. sequencing	7			5	2	
4. predicting	7			6	1	
5. cause & effect	5	2		5	2	
6. compare & contrast	6	1		6	1	
7. fact & opinion	5	2				
8. finding word meaning in context	3	4		4	3	
9. inferencing	4	3		4	3	
10. drawing conclusions	4	3		5	2	
11. figurative language	5	2		6	1	
12. author's purpose	4	3		5	2	

Other Schools

Key questions linked to primary purposes by other PALL Project schools reflected various issues. The following examples, taken directly from their reports, indicate the breadth of those issues.

For the primary purpose related to gathering data on changes in teaching and learning experiences, typical questions posed were:

Are teachers in the school employing more appropriate teaching strategies to address the Big Six?

Is teacher planning more explicit and targeted?

Has teacher collaboration and dialogue about the learning and teaching of reading changed?

To what extent has the development of a literacy block led to improvements in teaching and learning?

To what extent have the students' reading practices changed?

The other key primary purpose for the evaluations was to gather data on changes in student achievement, which led to questions such as:

- What changes have we seen from baseline data regarding student achievement in sight word recognition?

- What changes have we seen in student achievement in comprehension?

- What changes have we seen in children's silent reading behaviours?

Questions about the impact of the dimensions of the LLLB on the effectiveness of literacy interventions included:

What impact has the professional development of staff had on the teaching of phonemic awareness?

To what extent have parents gained confidence in the school's "take home" and levelled reading program?

What resources have been useful in implementing the intervention?

What changes have we seen in the involvement of parents in our reading program?

In short, these questions show that many schools were interested in gathering data on dimensions they considered prominent in changing literacy learning and, ultimately, achievement.

Data sources and methods – Future Heights

The intervention evaluation report from Future Heights highlights the kind of data Barbara and her teachers wanted to collect. Tables 6.3 and 6.4 record the data gleaned from

a student survey and a teacher survey matched to the key questions already shown in Table 6.2 above. Table 6.3 provides data on 143 Year 5 and Year 7 students regarding the use of six comprehension strategies. Some explanatory notes provided in the report are appended at the foot of the table.

Table 6.4 presents some of the results from the staff survey at Future Heights linked directly to the first of the key questions, about the explicit teaching of comprehension strategies. Seven teachers completed the instrument. It aimed to find both the level of teachers' confidence in using twelve comprehension strategies and the regularity of their use.

Data from the children's and the teachers' surveys (Tables 6.3 and 6.4) are quite similar. For example, students and teachers believed that the listed comprehension strategies were being used regularly within the classroom and that they

were understood. Furthermore, both groups were generally confident with their knowledge and use of the strategies. These data provide evidence of how the intervention contributed to changes in teaching and learning for comprehension.

The evaluation report from Future Heights also details some evidence about student achievement. Two sources are presented. The extracts in Figure 6.1 and Table 6.5 display Progressive Achievement Tests in Reading (PAT-R) results and NAPLAN results respectively. Both sets of data are directly relevant to primary purpose 2, namely, "to ascertain if there were any changes being seen in children's achievement in reading comprehension."

The PAT–R results show progressive levels of achievement for 47 children during the year. These Year 3 children were tested

Table 6.5 NAPLAN comparison of students in similar cohorts at Future Heights.
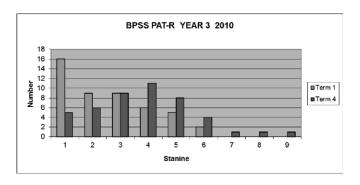
Measure	Year level and NAPLAN domains		2008	Same or similar cohort in 2010
NAPLAN – Percentage of students **at or above national minimum standard**	Year 3	reading	80%	
		writing	91%	
		spelling	86%	
		grammar & punctuation	78%	
		numeracy	91%	
	Year 5	reading	74%	79%
		writing	84%	82%
		spelling	82%	85%
		grammar & punctuation	81%	76%
		numeracy	88%	86%
	Year 7	reading		82%
		writing		87%
		spelling		85%
		grammar & punctuation		73%
		numeracy		87%
NAPLAN – Percentage of students in the **upper 2 bands of each domain.**	Year 3	reading	14%	
		writing	32%	
		spelling	23%	
		grammar & punctuation	10%	
		numeracy	9%	
	Year 5	reading	6%	8%
		writing	10%	8%
		spelling	15%	10%
		grammar & punctuation	11%	19%
		numeracy	4%	6%
	Year 7	reading		11%
		writing		13%
		spelling		19%
		grammar & punctuation		13%
		numeracy		14%

Key:
(Tolerance +/- 2%)
lesser result
similar result
improved result

in term 1 of 2010 and again in term 4. As can be seen, the number of children at the lowest stanines (1 and 2) dropped considerably during the year. There had been an increase to four students in term 4 at stanine 6, and there was one student at each of stanines 7, 8, and 9. Overall, important gains are indicated in these data.

Another method used by Future Heights to gauge improvement in student achievement to answer primary purpose 1 and its key questions was NAPLAN Comparative Data. Table 6.5 presents data regarding students in similar cohorts, comparing Year 3, 2008 with Year 5, 2010; and Year 5, 2008 with Year 7, 2010.

There is evidence of improvement here, particularly with the Year 7 students. Barbara and her teachers also used Like School Comparative Data to demonstrate that there had been steady improvement in the average NAPLAN scores for Future Heights.

Figure 6.1 Future Heights State School – Year 3 2010 PAT-R

Other schools

In other schools, a variety of data gathering methods was employed to better understand teaching and learning practices in reading. These methods included focus-group discussions with teachers and children, parent surveys, teacher interviews, class observation visits, and student interviews. The Literacy Practices Guide was often used as an instrument, student work samples were consulted, and photo records were mentioned, as were phone interviews and analyses of teacher planning

Schools used testing instruments to make judgements about improvement in student achievement. In many cases, they documented the "distance travelled" by their students, as in the PAT-R example included by Barbara, mentioned above. The Sutherland Phonological Analysis, Running Records, PM Benchmarks, student work samples, other standardised tests (e.g., PAT-R – Vocabulary), and Reading Target Achievement were additional assessment methods employed.

Evaluation report commendations and recommendations – Future Heights Commendations

In the extract reproduced in Table 6.6 Barbara and the teachers at Future Heights show the outcomes from their evaluation that were confirmed and commended in their eyes.

Many aspects of the intervention at Future Heights appeared to work well. There were changes to school structures and classroom teaching and learning processes, student achievement, teachers' confidence in teaching comprehension strategies, and general support for the LLLB.

Table 6.6 Future Heights' commendations

- The whole school [staff] has embraced a literacy block and made use of tools, such as the Literacy Practices Guide, to engage in self and administrative evaluation of their literacy practices.

- Most students have a high level of knowledge and understanding of comprehension strategies (coming from an almost zero level); now they are using a universal language.

- All staff surveyed identified that "targeted withdrawal intervention strategies" were effective.

- Significant gains have been seen in student achievement in reading comprehension (evidenced by PAT-R result).

- Student surveys show that teachers are using a variety of groupings during literacy time.

- All surveyed staff expressed confidence in the teaching of comprehension strategies and appreciated the support and active involvement of the principal and leadership team in following the LLLB.

Other schools

Many specific commendations were made by other pilot project schools on the basis of their evaluations. Some of these commendations are outlined in general terms below:

- The majority of schools commented on the value of developing and using a whole-school approach to the teaching of literacy.

- Schools cited improvement in student achievement as a result of their intervention; whereas this was not yet evident in national testing results for some, improved "distance travelled" results were frequently reported.

- Teachers were commended as being more interested and focussed when they had discussions about data and what it meant for teaching and learning; a typical comment from teachers was "the data make sense for my class."

These verbatim extracts from several reports indicate the ownership of school commendations:

> We have developed a whole-school approach to literacy, which clearly outlines our school's teaching approach to each strand of literacy, teaching strategies, school programs, resources, expected levels and assessment tools.

> Classroom teachers are now using a wider range of assessment practices to monitor student improvement in reading.

> Teachers are more focussed on literacy teaching; they are keen to engage in disciplined dialogue to improve student learning and classroom practice; they understand how to use assessment to inform future learning and are programming their work for explicit teaching.

Other extracts commended: the strong articulation of the school's moral purpose; staff openly sharing data and strategies in a "no blame" culture; shared leadership modelling, which fosters staff confidence and collegial responsibility for the teaching of reading; the value of relevant and high-quality professional development in literacy; and the worthwhileness of an explicit teaching focus for children in need.

Some schools reported that there had been positive feedback from parents and their school communities regarding their approaches to literacy practices, with a few principals commending the inclusion of community support in their intervention actions.

Future Heights' recommendations

Table 6.7 Future Heights' recommendations

- A focus on specific comprehension strategies needs to be maintained and students need to be explicitly taught.
- Teachers would benefit by having in-service education in the teaching of the higher order comprehension strategies; this would enhance their confidence and capacity.
- Maintenance and support for the whole-school literacy block is essential.
- Maintenance and support via resourcing for the targeted, small-group activities is essential.
- The continuation of Wave 3 strategies, such as a small-group targeted intervention, needs to be based on analysis of student achievement (NAPLAN, PAT-R, school reports), and choice of target groups via disciplined dialogue.
- Maintenance of principal and leadership team involvement in a collaborative approach to literacy education is needed.

The six recommendations made by Future Heights, listed in Table 6.7, illustrate how school-based evaluation has given Barbara Beacon and her staff the capacity to take knowledge from their current intervention into further work in the next school year.

Other schools

All pilot project schools made recommendations at the end of their evaluations. Many of these are aimed at ensuring that what happened as a result of their interventions continues and develops into other intervention cycles. The following examples provide helpful pointers to the kind of work planned for the new school year:

- Several schools flagged their intention to continue to use the LLLB for future school development.
- Many schools recommended the need to expand the data-driven "Wave approach" to intervention into other areas of the school or other aspects of the Big Six.
- Several schools mentioned the need to maintain or expand a shared-leadership model.
- The importance of continuing to develop sequential programs with common understandings about pedagogy was highlighted by several schools.
- Continuation of explicit teaching in literacy blocks was deemed to be essential.

- School-based, structured PD was considered to be essential by most schools, with many stating that this should be ongoing and include coaching and support for classroom teachers; and several schools recommended, as a future priority, quality induction for new staff and training for ancillary staff.
- Action research projects were noted as forming the basis of much of the work to occur in 2011, using the LLLB, Literacy Practices Guides, and resources to support the Big Six.
- One report advocated that PALL should be a PD requirement for all principals.
- The continuation of whole-school literacy blocks was recommended by many.

The following verbatim extracts reinforce the thrust of these recommendations:

> We have only begun the journey. We need to consolidate the effort that has been put in so far. We need to keep using our data and looking at how students are performing. This will give us the proof that what we have done is working or it will tell us that there are aspects of the program we need to change.

> A major focus in 2011 will be on the first three of the Big Six– linguistic knowledge, phonological awareness, and understanding of letter-sound relationships in the early childhood area of the school.

> We will continue to implement the reading intervention tutoring program for Wave 2 students.

6.1.2 Summary

Analysis of the intervention evaluation report from Future Heights and the other 55 schools demonstrates the strength of the application and impact of interventions in reading in the PALL Pilot Project schools during 2010. Schools developed consistent whole-school approaches to teaching reading linked to the Big Six. The use of disciplined dialogue by principals changed the nature of discussions they had with teachers about student achievement data and the implications of those data for changes to the teaching of reading and assessment practices. There were frequent references to development in the data literacy skills of principals and teachers, and reported observable improvements in student achievement in reading were often linked to PD in literacy.

6.2 Conclusion

In closing this chapter, major messages taken from the school-based evaluation reports on interventions are presented as four general conclusions.

1. Student literacy achievement in pilot schools improved. This was evident in summarised NAPLAN results, particularly in Years 3 and 5, and in other forms of school-based assessment as documented in the 56 intervention evaluation reports.

2. Most schools, however, were not able to implement Wave 3 individualised interventions for particular children because the resources necessary to support them appeared to be unavailable.

3. Interventions where principals and teachers developed and used a coordinated and multilevel approach to oral language in the early years were valued.

4. Finally, there was a positive overall feeling about the success of interventions.

The report now turns to the final chapter to present a summary of research findings and implications.

Chapter 7

Conclusions

7.0 Introduction

The challenges facing school leaders in Australia bring into sharp focus the need for effective leadership development programs. The zeitgeist of the age in education is reflected in the pervasive emphasis on school improvement, accountability, data-based decision making and the "closing the gap" theme. The responsibility for addressing these challenges is most often sheeted home to school leaders. The comment by leading scholars of educational change – "Change and sustained improvement are impossible without good educational leadership, particularly where whole school change is sought" (Fullan, Hill, & Crevola, 2006, p. 95) – seems particularly pertinent in this context.

Recognition of the importance of the leadership component of the national educational effort by government and policy makers is illustrated by the establishment of new national structures, such as the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), to give weight to and to acknowledge the renewed importance of the role of school leaders. The drafting of a national standard for school leadership under AITSL's direction underlines the emerging priority and profile accorded to the issue.

Accompanying these emerging trends, pressure is on government to lift the base level of resources in education and training and in specific areas of priority to seed and support initiatives to generate improvement – especially in core areas such as literacy and numeracy. The PALL Project outcomes provide some evidence and insights that bear upon the choices to be made by decision makers as to where resources might be targeted and the nature of the programs that seem likely to generate the sustainable improvements being sought.

This chapter has three components. It synthesises the specific findings outlined in preceding chapters, then examines the broader implications of the project. The chapter also contains suggestions for the consideration of policy makers and by education agencies charged with responsibility for designing leadership development initiatives.

7.1 Specific outcomes

7.1.1 Knowledge transfer and impact

The prime focus of the PALL Project was to enhance the leadership capability of participating principals. The extent to which enhanced capability translated into discernible improvement actions in schools and to changes in the approach to literacy teaching and learning was a second related objective.

The evidence (from the principals themselves, and confirmed by their teachers and the literacy achievement advisors) reveals that, as a consequence of their involvement in the PALL Project, school leaders placed an increased emphasis on:

*   development of a shared moral purpose with literacy as a pre-eminent improvement priority for the school and for the teachers;

*   leading and participating in professional development activity related to literacy;

*   use of professional dialogue with teachers about literacy and in particular in the analysis and use of achievement data on reading, and in the design and delivery of literacy interventions; and

*   the alignment of resources to facilitate literacy teaching and learning.

These outcomes reflect the influence of, and the emphasis paid to, the framework for leadership and the associated dimensions distilled from research evidence on effective educational leadership.

The translation of these capabilities and their effects in schools were seen in processes and structures; in teaching and learning practices; and in student outcomes (attitudes and achievement). Specifically, evidence of impact included:

- the establishment of clear literacy targets in 28 of the participating schools;

- the development of whole-school professional learning about literacy practices;

- the adoption of whole-school literacy blocks; screening processes for intervention placements; the development of literacy policies; and the widespread use of Literacy Practices Guides to aid classroom observations;

- the development of explicit teaching practices and interventions using a coordinated multilevel approach to oral language in the early years; and

- moderate improvements in student achievement and attitudes to literacy learning.

These outcomes can be regarded as positive. However, it must also be acknowledged that the PALL Project and the data relevant to it were not operating in a clinical environment with tightly defined control and treatment groups. Rather, the participating schools and principals were often building on existing practices and participating in related literacy development programs simultaneously. The timescale for the project was too limited to enable measurement of the longer-term impact of changes adopted. In particular, the reported increase in NAPLAN achievement scores by the participating schools, while encouraging, would need to be heavily qualified in the light of the contextual variables alluded to above.

One significant area worthy of comment was the lower level of leadership action on the building of connections with parents and the wider school community. Given the importance of parental roles in oral language development and in enhancing vocabulary this is clearly an area that warrants further attention in low-SES communities.

7.1.2 The importance of literacy content knowledge

Much of the scholarship and research in the area of school leadership has been focussed on the role of leaders in developing generic capacities to set directions (establish plans and priorities); to engender a culture of change; to build professional learning communities and processes; and to share leadership to sustain improvement. A leading writer on educational leadership, Michael Fullan (2009), has attempted to outline the "change knowledge" upon which to base programs to enhance leaders' capabilities. These codifications of knowledge and capabilities form a useful foundation for leadership development. Nevertheless, the PALL Project designers opted to balance the development of generic "change knowledge" by adding to it a substantial

input of literacy content knowledge in the professional learning program. The purpose of enhancing the leaders' knowledge base was to ensure they could participate in discussions with their teachers at an informed and professionally supportive level; engage in observations of classroom practice; and play an active role in decisions about the need for change in some of those practices.

The evidence from the project indicates a growth in leaders' knowledge of the research evidence on the effective teaching of reading. Moreover, the practical application of that knowledge yielded outcomes including:

- improved confidence in the principals themselves that led to their active involvement in professional learning and to their influence in changes to school-wide systems and processes for the learning and teaching of reading; and

- application of frameworks (the Leadership for Learning Blueprint and the reading Big Six) and the use of observational tools (the Literacy Practices Guide) to support an evidence-based approach to literacy learning in the schools.

One of the key features of the reading Big Six framework was the clarity of focus it provided for leaders in the midst of ongoing debates about literacy (its definition, the whole-language versus skills approach and the effectiveness of different teaching methods). The analysis of the research evidence provided the basis for presenting a clear, unequivocal position for leaders to consider.

Aside from the direct impact reported on principals' knowledge and capability, the in-depth emphasis on the foundational component of literacy (reading) has provided these leaders with a compelling practical illustration of the central feature of the "moral purpose" of educational leadership. Success in this area had important flow-on effects on related areas of principals' work with teachers, including: the increased use of data to inform teaching practices, the adoption of a common language to frame literacy discussions, and enhanced engagement in professional learning. But most important of all was the reported impact on teachers of the "knowledge transfer" from the PALL professional learning and support program into their teaching practices. This outcome provides an illustration of the "sponsoring" role of leaders in supporting change.

7.1.3 The "linchpin" role of the literacy achievement advisors

One of the disconcerting features associated with professional development programs in education has been the lack of concerted follow-up action in schools and classrooms. A common refrain from evaluators of professional development and training programs has been a lament about the low rate of return on the investment when measured by the take-up of change at the school level. The evidence about the critical role of the literacy achievement advisors (LAAs) in the PALL Project in linking the content and conceptual elements of the professional development modules to the designated follow-up activities and the ongoing support for the principals constitutes a useful counter to the usual pattern of low or patchy levels of take-up.

The key findings derived from the PALL data on the role of the LAAs revealed that:

- the role was significant in supporting principals to apply their inter-module tasks and in supporting principals in facilitating improvements in the teaching and learning of reading; and

- the LAAs played a part in enhancing principals' literacy leadership capabilities and that influence was strengthened by the educational profile of the individuals undertaking the role and their knowledge of the educational context developed through the project.

What needs to be highlighted about the educational context for the PALL Project, and its impact on the mentoring role, was the attention paid to balancing the emphasis on the leadership framework with the focus on developing a consistent content base of literacy knowledge. Further, the mentoring role, rather than being concentrated on generic or general support, was played out in the clearly established context of encouraging the pursuit of improving outcomes for students struggling to achieve benchmark standards in literacy.

7.2 Implications

7.2.1 Systemic investment and achieving sustainable improvement

The government's continuing investment in support programs to improve learning outcomes in education is increasingly tied to evidence demonstrating the impact of such initiatives – and justifiably so. However, the difficulties of measuring impact and the demands for immediate or short-term outcomes can create a dynamic where system leaders become wary of investing resources in programs where the pay off may not be immediately recognisable.

With the PALL Project, sustainability following the project was taken into account in the way in which resources were employed. The major expenditure was for the LAAs with the project providing no additional funds to the schools for other matters. Principals were asked to use their existing funds, materials and staff to resource their project work. Sustainability was also sought through the action research thrust of the overall project design. Leadership and literacy capacity building and the implementation and evaluation of interventions were to provide principals with the wherewithal to sustain the momentum of change.

Definitive longitudinal evidence to support further investment in a leadership-oriented project such as PALL – in terms of its ongoing impact on improved achievement outcomes – was not able to be gathered because of the limited timeline for the pilot. Nevertheless, the case for continuing a leadership-focussed investment has been bolstered by the PALL Project experience. The data assembled in the previous chapters and summarised in the sections immediately above point to returns that can be generated by targeting the critical leverage point of school leadership. The evidence reinforces the claim that a "systemic" school approach, orchestrated and supported by informed leadership, is a much better lever in which to invest than "heroic" individual teachers if improvements for students struggling to learn to read are to be made. In the context of low-SES schools where the challenge of frequent staff turnover often compounds the difficulty of developing a cohesive and sustainable set of teaching and learning (and intervention) strategies, the case for a leadership-focussed investment to build the "systemic" support (allocation of roles, resources for professional learning, development of data systems upon to which to base targeted interventions) is undeniable. In fact, such an investment is an imperative if genuine progress is to be made in reaching the significant numbers of students who constitute the group who, for many years, have formed the lower boundary of the "gap" in the distribution of achievement scores in literacy in Australian schools.

What is needed is a long-term (at least five-year) commitment of resources targeted at, and measured by, the development of a sustained (and sustainable) program of improvement based on the enhancement of the type of leadership capabilities demonstrated by the PALL Project. The central point of such an investment should be focussed on the moral purpose of closing the achievement gap in literacy in low-SES schools.

7.2.2 A blended "framework" for leadership development programs

The design of most leadership development programs to date has tended to focus on enhancing generic leadership capabilities. The outcomes of the PALL Project draw attention to the need for a balanced focus on generic capabilities and the building of a level of curriculum-specific content knowledge. While it is acknowledged that leadership roles require generalist capabilities, in the context of the primary school principalship, a focus on the development of foundational concepts and skills for students – especially in literacy and numeracy – is required. The PALL experience affirms that shared content knowledge provides, at worst, a "bridge" between principals, classroom teachers and other curriculum leaders and at best, a deepening relationship for continuing professional dialogue. It also raises the question of how much knowledge is needed to sustain that professional dialogue. The vast majority (if not all) of primary school leaders have moved from classroom teaching to their senior leadership roles. So they bring with them a reasonable level of curriculum knowledge, particularly in relation to core learning areas. In many instances within the PALL Project, the objective of building literacy content knowledge was seen as a "refresher" or an update for an already existing knowledge base.

An important feature of this blended approach was the use of frameworks such as the Leadership for Learning Blueprint and the reading Big Six. Because both frameworks were derived from broad syntheses of contemporary research evidence, and because in both, learning and achievement were central features, it was seen as desirable to integrate workshop activities using the dimensions of both. For example, use of the observation tool – the Literacy Practices Guide – provided an opportunity for leaders to gather data about literacy teaching practices (within the reading Big Six framework) and then to engage teachers in disciplined dialogue about their impressions (a component of the Leadership Blueprint). The highly positive response by the participating principals to the program rested, in large measure, on the enabling intellectual insights into their role provided by the frameworks.

A clear implication of this discussion is the need to try other "blended" leadership development programs, programs which tie leadership to particular purposes for learning. Further research into the effects of these blended approaches will help to substantiate the view from the PALL Project that blended professional leadership learning can yield powerful approaches to improvement in children's achievement.

7.2.3 Systematic leadership support for designing literacy interventions

One of the central intentions of the PALL Project was to provide school leaders with sufficient knowledge, capability and support to enable them to coordinate the design and implementation of literacy interventions in their schools. The "wave" framework to guide this aspect of their work was outlined in Chapter 1. The evaluation reports prepared by the principals (and referred to extensively to illustrate the impact of the project in schools) provide evidence of the extent to which they were able to apply their learning in their school contexts. However useful and positive the experience was for the participating principals, it is clear that in the time available the project was able to provide only introductory concepts. Much more needed to be done in each leader's school to complete the planning of detailed case management approaches in intervention programs for those students with significant and challenging literacy learning needs.

The lessons to be learned from an analysis of the performance of education systems in other countries – especially the Scandinavian experience – are instructive on this issue of intervention (McKinsey, 2010). Those lessons suggest that one element in successful attempts to ensure more equitable literacy learning outcomes is support for schools to intervene early and often and to use the best and most detailed diagnostic data to design individual learning programs for the most challenging students.

In the Australian context, drawing from the evidence of the progress made in the PALL Project, there is a clear need for further systematically designed support for school leaders and for teachers to refine the development of literacy interventions. The support should include the analysis and use of diagnostic assessment systems and processes, the establishment and maintenance of case management approaches and the capacity to deploy specialist resources (such as speech pathologists and paraprofessionals) to enable school leaders to design interventions confidently so that they consistently address the needs of students beyond the reach of most current programs.

7.2.4 Research and development in leadership for literacy learning

The design of the PALL Project, as outlined in Chapter 1, represented a synthesis of research findings, adopted a mixed-methods regime in data collection and placed a priority emphasis on the "development" aspect of the initiative. As a consequence, like most research and development projects in education, it has generated some interesting insights and a series of research questions to be posed for further exploration.

One of the choices to be made by the designers of research and development initiatives who have the objective of supporting change and improvement in education is the tightness of the design. Put simply – How prescriptive should a project be? Should it present a finely focussed teaching regime (treatment) and narrow outcome measures? Of course, in education in working with complex multilayered institutions such as schools, classic experimental or quasi-experimental design is rarely able to be attempted. The PALL Project adopted a design in which the degree of prescription, that is, the focus of the literacy teaching regime and the measurement of outcomes, was to be determined ultimately by participating principals – with some strong leadership and literacy framework guidance within which to shape their decisions. One of the key questions to be pursued for the future is whether or not projects such as this should be tightened to reduce variability in take-up. Would PALL have been a more effective program if it had been based on a much tighter design including, for example, mandating a particular reading program? Would prescription have led to more immediate short-term gains? Would prescription have ensured greater long-term improvement?

Another research and development question which arises from the implementation of the PALL Project relates to tracking the influence of leadership behaviours on teaching practice and on student learning outcomes. While the recent work of Robinson (2007) and Seashore-Louis et al. (2010) suggests that the influence of leaders occurs indirectly and most strongly through their sponsorship of professional learning communities, the PALL experience suggests that the influence might be more direct.

What is needed in future projects focusing on this issue is better tracking and more sophisticated measurement of the way in which specific leadership behaviours translate into actions and outcomes at school level. To do so a series of "How" questions would need to be addressed. For example, the use of "disciplined dialogue" and its deployment in analysing data with teachers was a core dimension of the leadership Blueprint adopted by the PALL Project. This was positively rated by all respondents involved in data collection on the impact of the project. Tracing the impact of this and other leadership dimensions in a more detailed and focussed research study may lead to clearer insights into the relationship between leadership and paths of influence (whether direct or indirect) on teaching practice.

Finally, one of the most consistent outcomes from the data analysis was the value accorded by principals to the role of the leadership mentors – the literacy achievement advisors. The contexts in which they worked and the focus of their mentoring and coaching have been described and commented on throughout this report. While the overall positivity in findings about this support role is clear, there is again a need to pursue in more detail some unanswered questions. Was the LAAs' approach more important than the project content? Would gains have been made irrespective of the subject matter offered in the PALL Project? In other words, was it primarily the ready availability of support that helped principals develop their leadership capacity? Looking ahead, how significant a factor in professional growth is the expertise that mentors bring to conversations with principals? Given the growing interest in the use of coaches and mentors to support leaders, questions such as this should be pursued so that a more detailed understanding is gained of how outside influence impacts on leaders' capabilities. Such an understanding would better inform discussions about the costs and benefits of more systematic investment in leadership mentors.

7.2.5 Balancing managerial demands with leadership for learning

The transparent purpose of the PALL Project was to engender in school leaders the central importance of their "leadership for learning." It is impossible to deny the wide-ranging responsibilities that school leaders have accrued in the current education policy context. The movement towards greater school autonomy and the consequent growth in requirements to attend to governance and accountability; to place significant emphasis on managing resources effectively; and to provide an increased range of services to meet the needs of communities have pushed school leaders towards these "managerial" imperatives. Yet if effective school leadership is one of the crucial pieces in the jigsaw of consistent improvement in student learning, it must be recognised by governments, policy makers and those responsible for leadership development that getting the balance right between managing schools and leading learning is an ongoing task for every principal.

If there is one outcome that should be heeded from the PALL Project's sample of leaders from a cross section of Australia's low-SES schools, it is their deep appreciation of the opportunity to develop and enhance their leadership for learning capabilities. In short, principals recognised and acknowledged the need to refocus their attention and their work on the centre-piece of the profession – children's learning and achievement. Maintaining constancy in this endeavour is a never-ending task for principals in the face of the management compliance pressures always at hand in modern education systems.

7.3 Conclusion

Taken together, the outcomes discussed above and in this research report indicate that there has been considerable knowledge transfer during the PALL Project. It is evident in the analysis that understandings gained by principals through the professional learning program (the modules) found their way into the workplace. Principals' active roles in teacher PD and in resource allocation to support literacy learning directly were two of the vehicles through which knowledge transfer occurred. There was observable evidence, too, of the influence of these two sets of actions on teachers' pedagogical practice – resulting in early, visible improvement in student learning and achievement.

Finally, the outcomes achieved by the project were based on an investment of $2.127 million, which supported improvements in learning to read and reading achievement in 56 schools over two years. This was inexpensive when compared with other projects funded under the Literacy and Numeracy Pilots in Low SES Communities Initiative. On the evidence produced during the PALL Project, working with and through principals is a cost-effective way to enhance teachers' professional competence directly and, in so doing, to share the leadership of helpful changes in teaching and learning, all of which ultimately enhance children's abilities in the vital skill of reading.

List of Appendices

Appendix 2.1 School Profile

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                                               │
│                 A School Profiling Template                   │
│                         for the                               │
│     Principals as Literacy Leaders Pilot Project (PALL)       │
│                                                               │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

Purpose:

The purpose of the *School Profiling Template* is threefold:

(a) to provide a common framework for the gathering and presentation of general information and specific data about participating schools at two points in the Pilot Project, namely, at the beginning (March 2009) and near the end (October, 2010);

(b) to enable researchers to compare information and data collected at the two points in time as a contribution to reporting on the effects of the Project in each school in particular and on the sixty schools in the sample in general;

(c) to ascertain the utility of the school profiling instrument as one of the tools for school principals seeking to improve their leadership capability for literacy learning.

Ethical Issues:

Principals as Literacy Leaders is a pilot project funded by the Commonwealth Government through the South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services in partnership with the Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) as lead agency. The information and data collected during the project will meet the ethical standards required of projects involving school system employees, students, parents and university personnel.

This means that the sixty schools participating will not be named publicly for the duration of the project unless specific and authorised approvals have been gained. It means that the 'School Profiles' produced using the template will be confidential to the schools and Project personnel, including university researchers.

Informed consent will be sought and obtained from participating Principals, teachers, students and parents as necessary, for all data gathering aspects of the Project.

Public reporting on the project which may occur from time to time on the Australian Primary Principals Association web site will anonymise the schools and present general information only, so that confidentiality is protected.

The interim and final reports on the Project will be confidential to the Commonwealth and the Project Team. Publications beyond the Project's contractual obligations (such as journal or newsletter articles) will require Commonwealth agreement.

Information, Data fields and Guidelines for assembling a school profile

In preparing each school profile, Principals and Literacy Achievement Advisors (LAAs) should use text, tables and figures. The guidelines offered for each data field below, sketch the scope of the information sought. The report should be assembled using the profile fields as headings. Where tables are employed they should be followed with brief explanatory text relating to key points in the data.

A document of no more than **15 pages** is anticipated. *Remember, the profile should record what has been happening at the school up until March this year.*

The School's Commonwealth Number: _____

Profile Fields	*Guidelines for Principals and LAAs*
1. *the school's demography* – (i) its SES index as used for classification purposes by sector authorities; (ii) where necessary, the indigenous student profile; and (iii) significant local factors in the community such as particular cultural groups; (iv) the school size; (v) class size; (vi) transience; and any other relevant demographic information considered informative	The introduction to the profile should combine some explanatory text about the school with tables and figures addressing each of the six items in this field. For SES, the IRSED index and decile level should be used. We should be able to compare the figures produced here with those to be reported in October 2010.
2. *the school's mission and values* – as they are represented in school documents	The school's mission and values (or like terms) should appear as text.
3. *the school's governance processes* – the structure and function of the school's Board, Council or Advisory Council as applicable.	This information could be produced in diagram form where appropriate. If not, a brief description should be provided.
4. *the school's leadership positions* and responsibilities (i) those represented in official positions; and (ii) those created informally within the school itself (eg a literacy coordinator)	A list of official positions with a brief description of their responsibilities should be provided (positions for which there is dedicated level-specific remuneration) followed by a description of unofficial or informal positions (those for which there is no added remuneration)
5. *the school's staff complement and demographics* – (i) age bands of staff; (ii) gender breakdown (iii) years of experience; (iv) duration at school; (v) how staff are deployed; (vi) whether there is specialist support available for particular needs; and (vii) whether the Principal has the authority to recruit and appoint teaching staff.	The information here should be provided in tabular form supported by text. For (i) use the age bands 21-30; 31-40; 41-50; 51-60; and over 60. For (ii) use the following experience bands; 0-5 years; 6-10 years; 11-15 years; 16-20 years; and more than 20 years. Use the same bands for (iii). Use text to provide brief explanations for staff deployment, specialist support and authority to employ staff.
6. *committee/organisational structures* – how the school is organised for key purposes (e.g. curriculum programming, teaching, assessment, reporting)	This information could be produced as a diagram showing school committees and their responsibilities. If not, brief descriptive text will be necessary.
7. *the school's approach to aspects of literacy learning* – features of literacy learning as they apply across the year levels. Are there specific literacy programs in place? Interventions? If so how are students identified? Who is responsible for intervention? What model/s of intervention is/are used?	A general description of the school's approach complemented by explanations of specific programs or interventions. Brief descriptive text addressing the five questions will be helpful.
8. *literacy related co-curricular programs* relevant to aspects of literacy (eg a writers' group, public speaking or debating groups, school newspaper, drama or musical productions etc)	Again, brief descriptive text outlining the nature of and participation in these programs will be helpful. A table recording participation could be included where appropriate and available.
9. *facilities and resources for the school's literacy program -* are there dedicated resources or facilities for particular literacy purposes. Are these readily available?	Descriptive text outlining available literacy related resources including the extent of the school's library, student borrowing patterns (with figures if possible), whether the school has quiet reading corners, outside reading courts, accessible visual media resources, special relaxed writing spaces and so on.
10. *literacy targets* – are there specific goals articulated for different year levels, particular children or groups of children Who determines these?	School targets may have been derived from NAPLAN data or from state wide standardised testing. Targets could be in the form of improving 'distance travelled' by students or they may be related to 'narrowing the gap' between one school's achievements and other 'like schools'. List specific targets as they have been defined in words and figures as appropriate and applicable.

11. *teachers' professional development* (i) Who is responsible for literacy PD; (ii) how is professional learning organised and accessed by teachers; (iii) the extent of professional development specific to literacy amongst the staff; and (iv) how is PD disseminated across staff / year levels / school?	Each of the four questions should be addressed in brief descriptions of what has been occurring in the school up to this point in time. Where it is known how many staff members have attended specific literacy in-service education programs in the last one to three years, this should be reported (along with how many have not)
12. *teacher induction* – How does a teacher new to the school know what to teach and what to assess?	A brief description of the induction procedure extended by the school to new teachers should be outlined here. Particular reference should be made to how teachers are made aware of the school's approach to literacy learning and assessment.
13. *teacher satisfaction* – reports of how satisfied teachers are with their place and conditions of employment (schools usually have access to existing data on this matter)	For the next three data fields (13, 14 and 15) brief descriptions providing analytical and interpretive accounts of teacher, student and parent satisfaction should be provided. This would be best outlined in a series of conclusions drawn from survey data where this is available.
14. *student satisfaction* – reports of student satisfaction with their school (again usually available in existing data)	As for 13
15. *parent satisfaction* – reports of parent satisfaction with their children's school experience (again usually available in existing data)	As for 13 and 14
16. *attendance and absentee figures* – usually available in existing school data	These data should be reported in tabular form. If historical data are available (say for the last three years) this may prove helpful for comparative purposes when data are collected again in 2010.
17. *student literacy achievement* – measures already obtained through State and national testing regimes. What school-based measures are already in place? What baseline data are available?	The NAPLAN data should be employed to show as a minimum; (i) where the school lies above or below the benchmark; and (ii) where the children are placed in band levels of achievement in each area of literacy at each year level.
18. *parental involvement in literacy learning* a description of the ways in which parents are included and involved in the school's literacy program either within the school or at home	A brief description of how parents are engaged (or not) is essential. Text could be accompanied by figures reporting parental participation where these are available.
19. *links to the community for particular literacy purposes* – including the professional community	Again, a brief description of particular community links would be helpful (eg is there school engagement with a local library, is students' writing shared in the community and so on, are researchers and other professionals engaged in any way directly with the school?).
20. *literacy strengths and needs* – a description of the school's greatest strengths, areas of expertise, and/or programs in the area of literacy.	This may be a qualitative judgment statement but it may also be a conclusion backed by referring to data available to the school.
21. *literacy priority area* – an open question such as the following: What do you believe is a priority area for your school if it is to improve literacy outcomes for students?	Again, this may be a judgment call but it may also be a priority backed up by reference, for example, to data relevant to teachers' professional development, students' performance or parents' participation and engagement.

Griffith University **Neil Dempster**
Greer Johnson
Margaret Fletcher
Gary Woolley
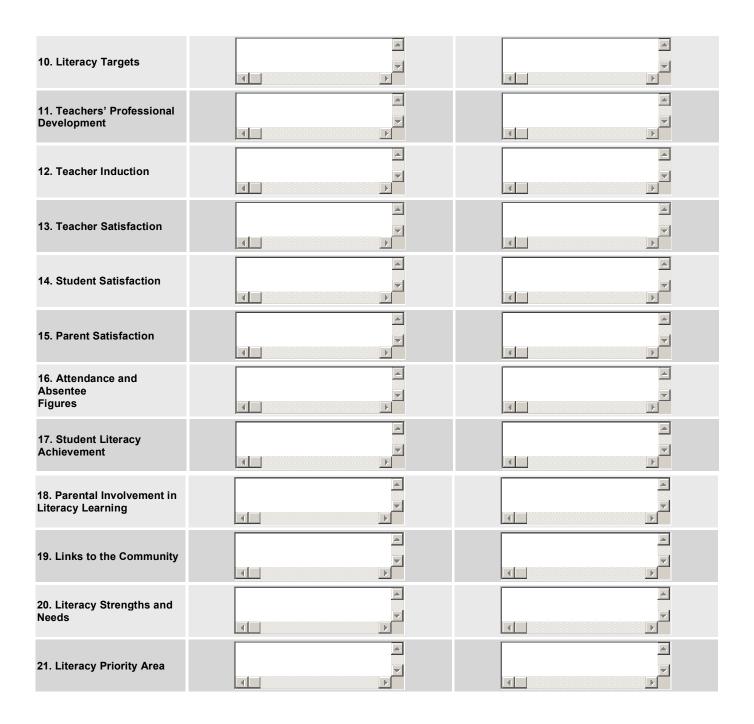
Appendix 2.2 Changes In School Profiles

School Profile Changes

Principals as Literacy Leaders Pilot Project (PALL)

Towards the end of the second year of the Pilot Project, all Principals were asked to look at the School Profile and to consider areas where they believed there may have been significant change. To assist with this process, a website was created. Working with LAAs, Principals were asked to examine their School Profile and to look at any of the areas where they noted that significant changes had occurred. Once some of the 21 areas from the template were identified, Principals were asked to identify what had happened in this area and why. 54 responses from Principals were sent through the website and appear in the data analysis that follows.

PALL School Profile	
School	
Principal's Name	

School Profile Fields (Completed by Principal in early 2009). Please peruse the electronic copy recently forwarded to you.	What are some of the significant changes made to your 2009 School Profile which clearly relate to the PALL Project? Please write about Items in this column ONLY where notable changes have been made.	Why do you believe these changes have occurred?
1. The School's Demography		
2. The School's Mission and Values		
3. The School's Governance Processes		
4. The School's Leadership Positions and Responsibilities		
5. The School's Staff Complement and Demographics		
6. Committees/Organisational Structures		
7. The School's Approach to Aspects of Literacy Learning		
8. Literacy Related Co-curricular Programs		
9. Facilities and Resources for the School's Literacy Program		

10. Literacy Targets		
11. Teachers' Professional Development		
12. Teacher Induction		
13. Teacher Satisfaction		
14. Student Satisfaction		
15. Parent Satisfaction		
16. Attendance and Absentee Figures		
17. Student Literacy Achievement		
18. Parental Involvement in Literacy Learning		
19. Links to the Community		
20. Literacy Strengths and Needs		
21. Literacy Priority Area		

Submit Survey

Appendix 2.3 Personal Leadership Profile (first completion)

Personal Leadership Profile

Rationale for and use of the Profile:

At the commencement of the PALL Project, a record of your personal views about leading literacy will help to focus later analysis on the effects of your participation in this Pilot. Completion of the profile calls on you to make judgments about your leadership now. The profile should be seen as a useful formative tool to help you and your Literacy Achievement Advisor discuss particular aspects of the leadership of literacy in your school.

We will return your personal profile to you after analysis. No data identifying individuals or schools will be reported. Aggregated data across the 60 Principals in the Project will provide insights into possible important priorities in areas of leadership practice in schools such as yours. While we ask you to put your name to your profile, it will be confidential to the Project Team. Your individual profile will be retained to allow comparison with your views in 2010 when you will be asked to complete this instrument again. The completion of the profile also records your informed consent.

Your name:...

How to complete the Profile:

For each question you are asked to rate the extent of your knowledge and skill about each of the leadership actions listed, using a four-point likert scale. The questions focus on aspects of leadership known to be linked with learning.

Please tick the point on the scale that reflects your judgment.

The status of my knowledge and skill to:	Limited	Sound	Very good	Excellent
1. Actively oversee the school's curriculum program	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Promote skills in data analysis and interpretation through PD amongst teachers	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Coordinate and manage the teaching and learning program	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Observe teachers in action directly and provide specific feedback	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Ensure that both school and system data are gathered	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Encourage team work amongst teachers	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Set high expectations	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Build vision and set directions collaboratively	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Plan school organisation structures to support improved learning	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Include parents as integral to the school's learning programs	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. See that goals are embedded in school and classroom routines	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. Ensure that teachers engage in extended learning about school priority areas	☐	☐	☐	☐

The status of my knowledge and skill to:	*Limited*	*Sound*	*Very good*	*Excellent*
13. Manage resources strategically	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. Are active in the local community and the professional communities	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. Align financial resources to priorities	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. Participate as 'leading learners' with teachers in professional development	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. Pursue systematic data gathering across the school's responsibilities	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. Seek the input of professionals beyond the school	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. Provide a safe and pleasant physical environment	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. Support, evaluate and develop teacher quality	☐	☐	☐	☐
21. Ensure consensus on goals	☐	☐	☐	☐
22. Maintain commitment to curriculum priorities	☐	☐	☐	☐
23. Support collaborative work cultures	☐	☐	☐	☐
24. Ensure social and emotional support for learners	☐	☐	☐	☐
25. Celebrate teacher and student successes	☐	☐	☐	☐
26. Display a keen interest in students' classroom work and achievements	☐	☐	☐	☐
27. Involve wider community support to improve learning	☐	☐	☐	☐
28. Share leadership systematically with teachers	☐	☐	☐	☐
29. Plan for student learning based on data	☐	☐	☐	☐
30. Network with other schools and teachers on good practice	☐	☐	☐	☐
31. Monitor student learning based on data	☐	☐	☐	☐
32. Share accountability tasks with teachers based on classroom, school and system data	☐	☐	☐	☐
33. Apply resources to the conditions of learning	☐	☐	☐	☐
34. Participate actively in curriculum decision making	☐	☐	☐	☐
35. Concentrate on the development of deep knowledge about key learning areas	☐	☐	☐	☐
36. Play an active 'hands on' role in professional development	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendix 2.4 Principal Questionnaire

<div style="border:1px solid">

Principals as Literacy Leaders Pilot Project (PALL)
Principal Questionnaire

</div>

You have recently participated in the *Principals as Literacy Leaders* (PALL) project being conducted by the Australian Primary Principals Association, in partnership with the Australian Catholic University, Edith Cowan University and Griffith University.

The project is funded under the Australian Government *Literacy and Numeracy Pilots in Low SES School Communities* initiative. The purpose of the project is to develop the capabilities of primary principals to lead literacy teaching and learning, and to improve student literacy achievement in their schools.

We invite you to complete the following questionnaire about your experience of the project to this point. The questionnaire has been designed by researchers at Edith Cowan University.

The questionnaire should take no more than 10 to 15 minutes to complete.
We wish to assure you that this is an anonymous questionnaire. Please ensure that you do not write your name, or any other comments that will make you identifiable on the questionnaire.

By completing this questionnaire you are consenting to take part in this research.
Later this year we will be asking you to add to your responses by participating in an interview about your experience of participating in the PALL project.
Thank you for your time and consideration in completing this questionnaire.

LKTrimper

Leonie Trimper
On behalf of the PALL National Reference Group

Instructions

- Please **tick** the box appropriate to your response
- Please ensure you respond to **each** item.

A low score indicates disagreement, while a high score indicates agreement.
The questionnaire contains a number of sections, which relate to different aspects of the PALL project.

Please complete the following, by ticking the box appropriate to your situation, before commencing the questionnaire.

In my school the PALL interventions concentrated on:

Reading ❑
Spelling ❑
Writing ❑
Oral Language ❑

I have been a member of the PALL project:

From the beginning ❑
After the project started ❑   If ticked, how many months ……….

Roles of the Literacy Achievement Advisers

I found the following roles of the Literacy Achievement Adviser to be useful:

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Slightly Disagree	4 Slightly Agree	5 Agree	6 Strongly Agree
1. Communicating information about leading literacy learning from the PALL project.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Providing support on the use of data to improve literacy learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Coaching related to literacy learning interventions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Organising professional learning for principals.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Delivering professional learning for principals.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Use of the Literacy Practices Guide

The Literacy Practices Guide data enabled me to:

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Slightly Disagree	4 Slightly Agree	5 Agree	6 Strongly Agree
1. Recognise effective literacy practices.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Influence literacy teaching.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Support the set-up of classroom environments that facilitate student learning about literacy.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Guide the refinement of assessment practices about literacy.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Focus programs for teaching literacy.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Promote and participate in professional learning to develop teacher knowledge about how students learn to read.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Leadership of Literacy Learning

As a result of participating in the PALL project I have enhanced my leadership of literacy learning by regularly:

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Slightly Disagree	4 Slightly Agree	5 Agree	6 Strongly Agree
1. Focussing on improving literacy learning for students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Using aspects of the critical components of reading development (the Big Six) to provide a framework for the teaching of literacy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Reviewing assessment practices based on knowledge of the critical components of reading development (the Big Six).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Assessing the critical components of reading development (the Big Six) to inform planning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Promoting aspects of the critical components of reading development (the Big Six) in strategies at school, classroom and individual levels.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Sharing accountability for implementing aspects of the critical components of reading development (the Big Six) with teachers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Conversing with parents about student literacy development.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Leading Literacy Data Gathering and Analysis

As a result of participating in the PALL project I have enhanced my leadership of literacy learning by regularly:

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Slightly Disagree	4 Slightly Agree	5 Agree	6 Strongly Agree
1. Applying my knowledge about the usefulness and limitations of different types of data.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Coordinating the collection of different types of data about literacy learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Engaging in focussed discussions about data related to literacy learning (disciplined dialogues).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Sharing the use of data to assess literacy achievement across the school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Encouraging recognition of the links between sets of data to enhance literacy learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Literacy Interventions

As a result of participating in the PALL project I have enhanced my leadership of literacy learning by regularly:

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Slightly Disagree	4 Slightly Agree	5 Agree	6 Strongly Agree
1. Discussing different levels (waves) of literacy interventions with staff.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Implementing literacy interventions in collaboration with teachers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Monitoring the different levels of literacy interventions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Working with staff on data to identify different target groups for intervention.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Evaluation of Interventions and Future Planning

As a result of participating in the PALL project I have enhanced my leadership of literacy learning by regularly:

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Slightly Disagree	4 Slightly Agree	5 Agree	6 Strongly Agree
1. Evaluating literacy interventions using a systematic approach.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Employing appropriate data collection methods.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Sharing the development of questions, criteria and approaches to evaluating literacy interventions with staff.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Analysing outcomes to determine the efficacy of literacy interventions in collaboration with staff.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Literacy Interventions

As a result of participating in the PALL project I have enhanced my leadership of literacy learning by regularly:

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Slightly Disagree	4 Slightly Agree	5 Agree	6 Strongly Agree
1. My personal literacy knowledge.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. My professional capacity in leadership for literacy learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Our school's capacity to address students' difficulties in literacy learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Our students' attitudes towards literacy learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Our students' literacy achievement.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendix 2.5 Principal Interview Schedule

Principal Interview Schedule[1]

Thank you for your time and for agreeing to be interviewed.

My name is …………………………. and my role is to conduct phone interviews with principals in schools involved with the Principals as Literacy Leaders Project (PALL). As you are aware, the project is being conducted by the Australian Primary Principals Association, in partnership with the Australian Catholic University, Edith Cowan University and Griffith University. The project is funded under the Australian Government Literacy and Numeracy Pilots in Low SES School Communities initiative. The purpose of the project is to enhance the capabilities of principals to lead literacy teaching and learning, and to improve student literacy achievement in their schools.

I wish to assure you that the information that you provide in this interview will remain anonymous. You are free to answer or refrain from answering any question, or to withdraw from this interview at any time.

You will already have completed a questionnaire on aspects of the PALL project. The purpose of this telephone interview is to ask you to add more detail about how you perceive the project has worked in your school.

I expect that this interview will take approximately 30 minutes.

Thank you again for your time in reflecting on your experience of the PALL project to this point.

[proceed to question 1 . . .]

PALL Principal Interview Questions

Background Information

1. What is the size of your school?

    a. Less than 100 students ☐

    b. Between 101 and 300 students ☐

    c. Between 301 students and 500 students ☐

    d. More than 500 students ☐

2. How long have you been a principal

    a. Up to three years ☐

    b. Four to seven years ☐

    c. Eight to fifteen years ☐

    d. More than fifteen years ☐

3. In your position as a principal do you undertake classroom teaching

    as part of the school's timetable?

    a. Yes ☐

    b. No ☐

If "Yes" in what area?   _____

If literacy, is it as a consequence of involvement with the PALL project?   _____

4. In what school sector is the school?

    a. Government ☐

    b. Catholic ☐

    c. Independent ☐

5. [In which Australian State or Territory is the interviewee's school located? – to be completed by interviewer]

    a. Northern Territory ☐

    b. Queensland ☐

    c. South Australia ☐

    d. Western Australia ☐

6. When did you join the PALL Project

    a. At the beginning ☐

    b. After the first workshop but before the end of 2009 ☐

    c. In 2010 ☐

75

Role of Literacy Achievement Advisors (LAAs)

During the PALL Project to what extent has the role of the Literacy Achievement Advisor:	1 To a great extent	2 To a moderate extent	3 To a slight extent	4 Not at all
1. Provided support to enhance your leadership capability?				
2. Engaged in regular professional dialogue with you on leadership for literacy learning?				
3. Clarified aspects of PALL to improve your understanding of the : a. Leadership for Literacy Learning Blueprint?				
b. Reading Big Six?				
c. Literacy Practices Guide?				
d. Use of data?				
e. Literacy interventions?				
f. Evaluation of interventions?				
4. Built up trust so that you feel comfortable sharing your thoughts on a range of leadership issues?				
5. Challenged you to influence literacy learning and teaching in your school?				
6. What has been the single most useful aspect of the role of the LAA's?
7. What aspect of the role of the LAA's could be improved?

Leadership Literacy Knowledge and its Application

As a result of your participation in the PALL Project to what extent has:	1 To a great extent	2 To a moderate extent	3 To a slight extent	4 Not at all
1. Knowledge of the reading "Big Six": a. Changed your view about literacy?				
b. Enabled you to make better observations of teaching practices?				
c. Provided you with ideas for better support for your teachers?				
d. Caused you to question teaching priorities and practices?				
e. Led you to influence changes to literacy policy and practice in the school?				
2. Application of the Reading Big Six in your school increased :				
a. Understandings of the critical elements of teaching reading?				
b. Understandings of the relationship between decoding and comprehension?				
c. Understandings of the importance of fluency and automaticity for students "reading to learn"?				
d. Collection and analysis of diagnostic data on students struggling to read?				
e. Direct, systematic teaching of phonics where necessary?				
f. Modifications to the teaching of reading for students struggling to read?				
g. The focus on the importance of oral language in the early years?				
h. The emphasis on the importance of vocabulary?				

What do you regard as the single most significant impact in your school of the reading Big Six? Can you give an example from your school?

Leadership for Literacy Learning

As a consequence of your involvement in the PALL project, to what extent have you:	1 To a great extent	2 To a moder-ate extent	3 To a slight extent	4 Not at all
1. Changed your approach to leadership of literacy learning?				
2. Used the Leadership for Literacy Learning Blueprint as a framework for informing your leadership actions?				
3. Applied the Leadership for Literacy Learning Blueprint : a. a. To engender b. commitment to c. improved literacy d. learning (moral purpose):				
- Across the school?				
- With the leaders group ?				
- With a particular year group of teachers?				
- With selected individual teachers?				
b. To conduct focused professional discussions (disciplined dialogue) about literacy learning with respect to:				
- Use of data to plan for and monitor student learning?				
- Student classroom work?				
- Setting directions for learning priorities?				
- School organisation structures?				
- Receive positive feedback about their classroom work?				
- Enjoy a supportive learning environment in their classroom?				
- Are involved in engaging and productive learning activities?				
- Celebrate their success?				

4. What has been the single most significant impact of the Leadership for literacy Learning Blueprint in your school? Can you give an example from your school?

Appendix 2.6 Teacher Questionnaire

Teacher Questionnaire

As you may be aware, your principal is a participant in the Principals as Literacy Leaders (PALL) project being conducted by the Australian Primary Principals Association, in partnership with the Australian Catholic University, Edith Cowan University and Griffith University.

The project is funded under the Australian Government Literacy and Numeracy Pilots in Low SES School Communities initiative. The purpose of the project is to develop the capabilities of primary principals to lead literacy teaching and learning, and to improve student literacy achievement in their schools.

Your principal has nominated you as a staff member who has been involved in literacy intervention actions associated with the project.

As a consequence, **we invite you to complete the following questionnaire about your experience of the project to this point.** To assist you in this task, we have included some background information on the key leadership and literacy ideas underpinning the project. Please click here to access.

We wish to assure you that this is an anonymous questionnaire. Please ensure that you do not type your name, or any other comments that will make you identifiable on the questionnaire.

By completing this questionnaire you are consenting to take part in this research. Thank you for your time and consideration in reflecting on your experience of the PALL project

Prof Michael Gaffney,
on behalf of the PALL National Reference Group

PALL Teacher Questionnaire

For each item, please check the box appropriate to your response.

Background

1. Your role*

    (a) Teacher

    (b) Coordinator (e.g. literacy leader, curriculum co-ordinator)

    (c) School executive member (e.g. Assistant Principal, Deputy Principal)

    [note* - more than one response may be appropriate for this item]

2. Current area of teaching responsibility

    (a) Lower primary (including pre-compulsory)

    (b) Middle primary

    (c) Upper Primary

    (d) All of the above

3. Years of teaching experience

    (a) Up to 3 years

    (b) 4 to 7 years

    (c) 8 to 15 years

    (d) More than 15 years

4. School sector

    (a) Government

    (b) Catholic

    (c) Independent

5. The Australian State or Territory in which your school is located

    (a) Northern Territory

    (b) Queensland

    (c) South Australia

    (d) Western Australia

Literacy Teaching Practices

As a consequence of the school's involvement in the PALL project, I have enhanced my:	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Slightly Disagree	4 Slightly Agree	5 Agree	6 Strongly Agree
1. knowledge of how to teach reading (e.g. using aspects of the Big 6)						
2. repertoire of literacy teaching practices						
3. understanding of how to assess student learning needs in literacy **						
4. understanding of how to assess student achievement in literacy**						
5. skills in the analysis of student achievement data to inform my literacy teaching practices						

Principal's Role in Leading Literacy Learning

Over the period of the PALL Project together with the principal we have	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Slightly Disagree	4 Slightly Agree	5 Agree	6 Strongly Agree
1. come to an enhanced understanding that our shared moral purpose is to improve children's literacy learning and achievement **						
2. applied components of reading development (aspects of the Big 6) to literacy learning						
3. used the Big 6 to provide a framework for the teaching of reading across the school**						
4. reviewed assessment practices in light of our knowledge of the Big 6**						
5. Integrated the Big 6 into literacy planning across the school						
6. conducted disciplined dialogue about data related to literacy teaching and learning **						
7. shared accountability for implementing aspects of the Big 6 **						
8. shared leadership in developing and implementing literacy intervention actions **						
9. participated in literacy professional development						
10. explored ways to involve parents and the community in supporting literacy learning **						
11. allocated resources to support the school's literacy program						
12. enhanced the conditions for literacy learning across the school **						

Outcomes

As a consequence of our school's involvement in the PALL project I have ob-served improvement in	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Slightly Disagree	4 Slightly Agree	5 Agree	6 Strongly Agree
1. our ability to diagnose student needs in literacy*						
2. the use of evidence to inform literacy* teaching practices **						
3. our attempts to support parents in assisting their child's literacy* development						
4. student attitudes to literacy learning*						
5. student achievement in literacy*						
6. my professional capacity to address students' difficulties in literacy learning.						

note * In light of the focus of the literacy intervention/s at your school, your response may refer to reading and/or to related elements of literacy

Appendix 2.7 Teacher Interview Schedule

Teacher Interview Schedule[1]

Thank you for your time and for agreeing to be interviewed.

My name is …………………………. and my role is to conduct phone interviews with teachers in schools involved with the Principals as Literacy Leaders Project.

As you are aware, your principal is a participant in the Principals as Literacy Leaders (PALL) project being conducted by the Australian Primary Principals Association, in partnership with the Australian Catholic University, Edith Cowan University and Griffith University.

The project is funded under the Australian Government Literacy and Numeracy Pilots in Low SES School Communities initiative. The purpose of the project is to develop the capabilities of primary principals to lead literacy teaching and learning, and to improve student literacy achievement in their schools.

You have been nominated as someone who has been involved in literacy intervention actions associated with the project.

We wish to assure you that the information that you provide in this interview will remain anonymous. You are free to answer or refrain from answering any question, or to withdraw from this interview at any time.

We expect that this interview will take approximately 20 minutes.

Thank you again for your time in reflecting on your experience of the PALL project to this point.

[proceed to question 1 . . .]

Note 1: Interview preamble and question schedule has been prepared by Prof Michael Gaffney, Australian Catholic University in consultation with the PALL university partners: Prof Neil Dempster, Griffith University; Prof Greg Robson and Assoc Prof Deslea Konza, Edith Cowan University.

PALL Teacher Interview Questions

Interviewee Background Information

1. What is your role*?

   a. Teacher ☐

   b. Coordinator (e.g. literacy leader, curriculum co-ordinator) ☐

   c. School executive member (e.g. Assistant Principal, Deputy Principal) ☐

   [note* - more than one response may be appropriate for this item]

2. What is your major area of teaching responsibility?

   a. Lower primary (including pre-compulsory) ☐

   b. Middle primary ☐

   c. Upper Primary ☐

   d. All of the above ☐

3. How long have you been teaching?

   a. Up to 3 years ☐

   b. 4 to 7 years ☐

   c. 8 to 15 years ☐

   d. More than 15 years ☐

4. In what school sector are you teaching at the moment?

   a. Government ☐

   b. Catholic ☐

   c. Independent ☐

5. [In which Australian State or Territory is the interviewee's school located?
   – to be completed by interviewer]

   a. Northern Territory ☐

   b. Queensland ☐

   c. South Australia ☐

   d. Western Australia ☐

Literacy Teaching Practices

As a consequence of your school's involvement in the PALL project, to what extent has your	1 To a great extent	2 To a moderate extent	3 To a slight extent	4 Not at all
1. knowledge of how to teach reading (e.g. using aspects of the Big 6) improved				
2. repertoire of literacy teaching practices increased				
3. understanding of how to assess student learning needs in literacy developed				
4. understanding of how to assess student achievement in literacy developed				
5. skills in the analysis of student achievement data to inform my literacy teaching practices increased				
What has been the most significant change in your teaching brought about by the PALL project?				
What has/have been the major factor(s) responsible for this change? [List up to 3]				

Principal's Role in Leading Literacy Learning

Over the period of the PALL Project, to what extent has the principal	1 To a great extent	2 To a moderate extent	3 To a slight extent	4 Not at all
1. enhanced your understanding that the teachers' shared moral purpose is to improve children's literacy learning and achievement				
2. used the Big 6 to provide a framework for the teaching of reading across the school				
3. reviewed assessment practices in light of your knowledge of the Big 6				
4. conducted disciplined dialogue about data related to literacy teaching and learning				
5. shared accountability for implementing aspects of the Big 6				
6. shared leadership in developing and implementing literacy interventions				
7. participated in literacy professional development with teaching staff				
8. explored ways to involve parents and the community in supporting literacy learning				
9. enhanced conditions for literacy learning across the school				

What do you regard as the <u>most significant action</u> that your principal has taken in leading literacy learning at your school?

What impact(s) has this action had on

(i) teachers' work

(ii) students' learning

Outcomes

As a consequence of your school's involvement in the PALL project, what improvement have you observed in	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Slightly Disagree	4 Slightly Agree	5 Agree	6 Strongly Agree
1. teachers' ability to diagnose student needs in literacy						
2. teachers' use of evidence to inform literacy* teaching practices						
3. students' attitudes to literacy learning						
4. students' achievement in literacy						

What has been the most important outcome of the PALL project to this point?

What has/have been the most significant factor(s) influencing this outcome? [List up to 3]

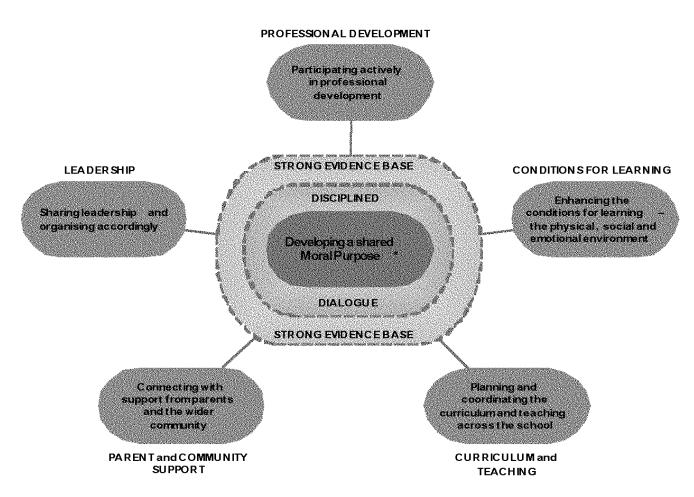# Appendix 2.8: Informing Frames for the PALL Project

There are two informing frames for the PALL Project:

• The Leadership for Learning Blue Print and

• The framework bringing together the foundational aspects of learning to read, namely The Big Six.

Both frames are reproduced below.

The Leadership for Learning Blue Print

Leading Learning – A Framework

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Participating actively
in professional
development

LEADERSHIP

CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING

STRONG EVIDENCE BASE

DISCIPLINED

Sharing leadership   and
organising accordingly

Enhancing the
conditions for learning   –
the physical, social and
emotional environment

Developing a shared
Moral Purpose   *

DIALOGUE

STRONG EVIDENCE BASE

Connecting with
support from parents
and the wider
community

Planning and
coordinating the
curriculum and teaching
across the school

PARENT and COMMUNITY
SUPPORT

CURRICULUM and
TEACHING

* Improving student learning and performance

THE BIG SIX in Learning to Read

EARLY LANGUAGE EXPERIENCES (Linguistic knowledge)

PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

LETTER SOUND KNOWLEDGE

VOCABULARY

FLUENCY

COMPREHENSION

Appendix 2.9 LAA Interview

Literacy Achievement Advisor Interview Schedule

Thank you for your time and for agreeing to be interviewed.

My name is …………………………. and my role is to conduct interviews with Literacy Achievement Advisors involved with the Principals as Literacy Leaders Project (PALL).

As a Literacy Achievement Advisor, you are aware that the purpose of the PALL project is to enhance the capabilities of principals to lead literacy teaching and learning, and to improve student literacy achievement in their schools.

The purpose of this interview is to ask you about your role and how the project has worked for the Principals and the cluster of schools that you have been advising.

I expect that this interview will take approximately 90 minutes.

I wish to assure you that the information that you provide will remain anonymous. You are free to answer or refrain from answering any question, or to withdraw from this interview at any time.

Thank you again for your time in reflecting on your experience of the PALL project to this point.

[proceed to 'Background Information Q1 . . .]

PALL Literacy Achievement Advisor Interview Questions

Background Information

7. What attracted you to the role of Literacy Achievement Advisor?

8. How would you describe your work as a Literacy Achievement Advisor:

    a. Your key responsibilities?

    b. Your typical work day activities? And, how do you spend most of your time?

    c. Your sources of satisfaction?

    d. Your sources of frustration?

9. What particular attributes (knowledge, skills and related personal qualities) do you believe that you have brought to the role?

    a. knowledge (what you know) in
        i.   literacy

        ii. leadership

    b. skills (what you can do) in
        i.   literacy

        ii. leadership

    c. professional qualities. How would you describe
        i.   your leadership style?

        ii. your orientation to literacy teaching and learning (i.e. how teachers teach, and students learn literacy most effectively?)

10. Of these attributes, what do you consider to be most important in performing the role effectively? Why?

11. What have been the important previous professional experiences that have assisted you in your role as a Literacy Achievement Advisor in the PALL project? Why?

12. [In which Australian State or Territory is the interviewee located? – to be completed by interviewer]

    ☐

a. Northern Territory   ☐

b. Queensland   ☐

c. South Australia   ☐

d. Western Australia

I would now like to ask you about particular aspects of the PALL project . . . . .

1. Your Work with Principals

In responding to the following questions, please frame your answer in terms of the principal group as a whole (i.e. rather than focussing on particular individuals).

During the PALL Project to what extent have you :	1 To a great extent	2 To a moderate extent	3 To a slight extent	4 Not at all
8. Provided support to principals to enhance their leadership capability?				
9. Engaged in regular professional dialogue with principals on leadership for literacy learning?				
10. Clarified aspects of PALL to improve principals' understanding of the : a. Leadership for Literacy Learning Blueprint?				
b. Reading Big Six?				
c. Literacy Practices Guide?				
d. Analysis & use of data?				
e. Literacy interventions?				
f. Evaluation of interventions?				
11. Built trust with principals so that they feel comfortable sharing their thoughts on a range of leadership issues?				
12. Challenged principals to influence literacy learning and teaching in their school?				

13. What have been the more useful aspects of your work with principals?

14. What, if any, aspects of your work with principals have proved difficult? [If no difficulties, go to Section 2.]

15. How have you dealt with these difficulties? Have the difficulties been resolved or not? Could you provide further details? Please keep your response anonymous - don't give any personal or school details that could identify anyone involved.

2. Principals' Roles in Leading Literacy Learning

In responding to the following questions, please frame your answer in terms of the principal group as a whole (i.e. rather than focussing on particular individuals).

Over the period of the PALL Project, to what extent have principals	1 To a great extent	2 To a moderate extent	3 To a slight extent	4 Not at all
3. changed their approach to the leadership of literacy learning?				
4. used the Leadership for *Literacy Learning Blueprint* as a framework to inform their leadership actions				
5. enhanced teachers' understanding that the their shared moral purpose is to improve children's literacy learning and achievement				
6. used the *Big 6* to provide a framework for the teaching of reading across the school				
7. reviewed assessment practices in light of their own and their teachers' knowledge of the *Big 6*				
8. conducted disciplined dialogue using data related to literacy teaching and learning				
9. shared accountability for implementing aspects of the *Big 6*				
10. shared leadership in developing and implementing literacy interventions				
11. participated in literacy professional development with their teaching staff				
12. explored ways to involve parents and the community in supporting literacy learning				
13. enhanced conditions for literacy learning across the school				

14. In light of the responses given above, think about the **two most <u>effective</u>** applications of PALL concepts.

    a.   **Application 1:**

        i. What was/were the PALL concept(s) involved?

        ii.   What actions did the principals take?

        iii. What impacts did these actions have on the principals themselves?

        iv. What role did you play as Literacy Achievement Advisor in this situation?

    b.   **Application 2:**

        i. What was/were the PALL concept(s) involved?

        ii.   What actions did the principals take?

        iii. What impacts did these actions have on the principals themselves?

        iv. What role did you play as Literacy Achievement Advisor in this situation?

15. In light of the responses given above, think about **two less <u>effective</u>** applications of PALL concepts.

    a. Application 1:

        i. What was/were the PALL concept(s) involved?

        ii.   What actions did the principals take?

        iii. What impacts did these actions have on the principals themselves?

        iv. What role did you play as Literacy Achievement Advisor in this situation?

    b. Application 2:

        i. What was/were the PALL concept(s) involved?

        ii.   What actions did the principals take?

        iii. What impacts did these actions have on the principals themselves?

        iv. What role did you play as Literacy Achievement Advisor in this situation?

3. PALL Project Implementation: Principals' Development & Staff Communication

In responding to the following questions, please frame your answer in terms of the principal group as a whole (i.e. rather than focussing on particular individuals).

Over the course of the project, to what extent have principals	1 To a great extent	2 To a moderate extent	3 To a slight extent	4 Not at all
1. Developed their understanding of the purpose of PALL?				

2. Developed their knowledge of the key elements of PALL
  a. Leadership for Learning Blueprint
  b. Reading Big Six
  c. Literacy Practices Guide
  d. Analysis and use of data
  e. Literacy interventions
  f. Evaluation of interventions				

3. What have been the key factors contributing to development? [list up to 3] On what evidence do you base your judgement?

4. What have been the key factors inhibiting development? [list up to 3] On what evidence do you base your judgement?

5. What role have you played as a LAA in supporting principals in this context?

Over the course of the project, how effective have principals been in	1 To a great extent	2 To a moderate extent	3 To a slight extent	4 Not at all
6. communicating their understanding of the purpose of PALL to their staff?				

7. communicating their knowledge of the key elements of PALL to their staff:
  a. Leadership for learning blueprint
  b. Reading Big Six
  c. Literacy Practices Guide
  d. Analysis and use of data
  e. Literacy interventions
  f. Evaluation of interventions				

8. What have been the key factors contributing to effective principal communication? [list up to 3] On what evidence do you base your judgement?

99

9. What have been the key factors inhibiting effective principal communication? [list up to 3] On what evidence do you base your judgement?

10. What role have you played as a LAA in supporting principals in this context?

4. Outcomes

In responding to the following questions, please frame your answer in terms of your school cluster as a whole (i.e. rather than focussing on particular schools or individuals).

As a consequence of the PALL project, what level of improvement have you observed in:	1 To a great extent	2 To a moderate extent	3 To a slight extent	4 Not at all
5. teachers' ability to diagnose student needs in literacy				
6. teachers' use of evidence to inform literacy teaching practices				
7. On what evidence do you base your judgement about teacher change?				
8. students' attitudes to literacy learning				
9. students' achievement in literacy				
10. On what evidence do you base your judgement about student change?				
11. principals' capability to lead literacy learning				
12. On what evidence do you base your judgement about principal change?				

Closing Reflections

In responding to the following questions, please frame your answer in terms of the project and the LAA role as a whole.

1. What features of the PALL project should be

• continued? Why?

• developed? Why?

• discontinued? Why?

2. To what extent have principals influenced leadership for learning in their clusters or systems?	1 To a great extent	2 To a moderate extent	3 To a slight extent	4 Not at all

3. Can you give an example(s) that illustrates principal leadership in literacy learning beyond their school?

4. How do you see the role of the Literacy Achievement Advisor working to best effect into the future?

   a. What resources are essential for the job?

   b. What mode of employment works best, e.g. LAAs attached to universities? LAAs seconded off line to the project? An alternative arrangement? Why?

   c. What do you see as

      i. advantages:

      ii. disadvantages:

of LAAs working in a non-hierarchical way with principals (i.e. not being in a position of supervisory authority)

d. What knowledge and skills are necessary to perform the role effectively – in addition to those stated earlier (see Background Information: Qs 3 & 4)?

e.   What advice would you give to potential Literacy Achievement Advisors about issues associated with

    i.   Getting started and the early stages of the project

    ii. Carrying on in the face of unanticipated changes, and unknown and unclear follow-up demands as the project unfolds?

5. In light of your experience and given the opportunity, would you be willing to apply for a Literacy Achievement Advisor position again? Why? Why not?

6. Do you wish to make any further comments?

Appendix 2.10 LAA Aide-Memoire

Literacy Achievement Advisors   **Date:** _____

Aide Memoire for each visit or for each contact with the Principal

LAA:_____   **Principal:**_____

| **Type of Contact:** | **Email** | ☐ |
| **Phone** | ☐ |
| **Face-to-face** |
| **Other (eg SKYPE)** |
| **Initiator:** | **Principal** |
| **LAA** |

Please tick as appropriate, the focus or foci of the meeting (from the Leadership for Literacy Learning Blue Print):

Purpose, goals and expectations	☐
Professional development	☐
Coordinating and managing curriculum, teaching and learning	☐
Shared leadership	☐
The conditions for learning	☐
Parent and Community Connections	☐
Literacy Evidence *Qualitative*	☐
Quantitative	☐
Facilitating Disciplined Dialogue	☐

Issues or outcomes from the meeting:

_____

_____

_____   _____

My personal observations or reflections:

_____

_____

_____   _____

References

Adams, M. J. (1990). Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Anderson, R. C. (1985). Becoming a nation of readers: The report of the Commission on Reading. Champaign, ILL: University of Illinois Press.

Armbruster, B. B., Lehr, F., & Osborn, J. (2001). Put reading first: The research building blocks for teaching children to read. Jessup, MD: National Institute for Literacy.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2007). Young Australians: Their health and wellbeing 2007. Retrieved from http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/aus/yathaw07/yathaw07.pdf

Beck, I. L., & McKeown, M. G. (2007). Increasing young low-income children's oral vocabulary repertoires through rich and focused instruction. The Elementary School Journal, 107, 251-271.

Beck, I. L., McKeown, M. G., & Kucan, L. (2002). Bringing words to life: Robust vocabulary instruction. New York: Guilford Press.

Biemiller, A. (2005). Size and sequence in vocabulary development: Implications for choosing words for primary grade vocabulary instruction. In A. Hiebert & M. Kamil (Eds.), Teaching and learning vocabulary: Bringing research to practice (pp. 223-242). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Bowey, J. A. (2005). Predicting individual differences in learning to read. In M. Snowling & C. Hulme (Eds.), The science of reading: A handbook (pp. 155-172). Oxford: Blackwell.

Brannen, J. (1992). Mixing methods: Qualitative and quantitative research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Avebury.

Bush, T. (2009). Leadership development and school improvement: Contemporary issues in leadership development. Educational Review, 61(4), 375-389.

CCCH (2004). "Let's Read" literature review. Parkville, VIC: Centre for Community Child Health. Available at: www.rch.org.au/ccch/research.

Chall, J. S. (1996). Learning to read: The great debate (revised, with a new forward). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Cunningham, P. (2000). Phonics they use: Words for reading and writing (3rd ed.). New York: Longman.

Darling-Hammond, L. Chung Wei, R. Andree, A. Richardson, N., & Orphanos, S. (2009). Professional learning in the learning profession: A status report on teacher development in the United States and abroad. New York: National Staff Development Council and the School Redesign Network.

Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST). (2005). Teaching reading: Literature review. Canberra, Australia: Commonwealth of Australia.

Dugdale, G., & Clark, C. (2008). Literacy changes lives: An advocacy resource. London: National Literacy Trust.

Duignan, P. (2006). Educational leadership: Key challenges and ethical tensions. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ehri, L. C., Nunes, S., Willows, D. M., Schuster, B., Yaghoub-Zadeh, Z., & Shanahan, T. (2001). Phonemic awareness instruction helps children learn to read: Evidence from the National Reading Panel's meta-analysis. Reading Research Quarterly, 36(3), 250-287.

Firth, N., & Cunningham, E. (2007). Engaging and empowering students with learning difficulties (Report No.CUN04724). Swinburne: Swinburne University of Technology.

Flick, U., Kvale, S., Angrosino, M. V., Barbour, R. S., Banks, M., Gibbs, G., et al. (2007). The Sage qualitative research kit (B. Jenner, Trans.). London: SAGE.

Fullan, M. (2001). Leading in a culture of change. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Fullan, M. (2009). Change knowledge. In J. Peterson & C. Rolheiser, 13 parameters: A literacy learning toolkit: Research resource book. Toronto, Ontario: Pearson.

Fullan, M., Hill, P., & Crévola, C. (2006). Breakthrough. Thousand Oaks, CA; Melbourne, Vic: NSDC Corwin Press; Ontario Principals' Council.

Gall, M. D., Gall, J. P., & Borg, W. R. (2007). Educational research: An introduction (8th ed.). Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.

Hall, G. E., & Loucks, S. F. (1978). Teacher concerns as a basis for facilitating and personalising staff development. Teachers College Record, 80(1978), 36-53.

Hallinger, P. & Heck, R. (1998). Exploring the principal's contribution to school effectiveness 1980 – 1995. School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 9, 157-191.

Hattie, J. A. C. (2003, December). Teachers make a difference: What is the research evidence? Keynote presentation at the Building Teacher Quality, Australian Council of Educational Research Annual Conference, Melbourne.

Hattie, J. A. C. (2009). Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses related to achievement. London: Routledge.

Hord, S. M. (1997). Professional learning communities: Communities of continuous inquiry and improvement. Austin, Texas: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. Available at http//www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/11Fens/Ch34.html

Johnston, R. S., & Watson, J. E. (2003). Accelerating reading and spelling with synthetic phonics: A five year follow up. Edinburgh: Research, Economic and Corporate Strategy Unit, Scottish Executive Education Department.

Johnston, R. S., & Watson, J. E. (2005). A seven year study of the effects of synthetic phonics teaching on reading and spelling attainment. Edinburgh: Research, Economic and Corporate Strategy Unit, Scottish Executive Education Department.

Leithwood, K., Day, C., Sammons, P., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2006). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership. Nottingham: National College for School Leadership.

Leithwood, K., & Levin, B. (2004). Assessing school leader and leadership programme effects on pupil learning: Conceptual and methodological challenges. London: Department for Education and Skills.

Louden, W., Rohl, M., Barratt-Pugh, C., Brown, Cairney, T., Elderfield, J., et al. (2005). In teachers' hands: Effective literacy teaching practices in the early years of schooling. Mt Lawley, Western Australia: Edith Cowan University.

MacBeath, J., & Dempster, N. (2009). Connecting leadership and learning: Principles for practice. The Netherlands: Routledge.

Masters, G. (2009). A shared challenge: Improving literacy, numeracy and science learning in Queensland primary schools. Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).

McGaw, B. (2006). Achieving quality and equity education. Lecture sponsored by the Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Centre, University of South Australia and the Committee for the Economic Development of Australia & Delphin Lend Lease. Melbourne Education Research Institute, University of Melbourne.

McWhirter, B. T., McWhirter, E. H., McWhirter, J. J., & McWhirter, R. J. (2007). At-risk youth: A comprehensive response for counselors, teachers, psychologists and human service professionals (4th ed.). Belmont: Thomson Brooks/Cole.

National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy. (2008). Achievement in reading, writing, literacy conventions and numeracy. National report for 2008. Sydney: Australian Curriculum and Assessment Authority.

National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy. (2009). Achievement in reading, writing, language conventions and numeracy. National report for 2009. Sydney: Australian Curriculum and Assessment Authority.

National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy. (2010). Achievement in reading, writing, language conventions and numeracy. National report for 2010. Sydney: Australian Curriculum and Assessment Authority.

National Early Literacy Panel. (2008). Developing early literacy: A scientific synthesis of early literacy development and implications for intervention. Jessup, MA: National Institute for Literacy. Retrieved from http://www.nifl.gov/publications/pdf/NELPReport09.pdf

National Institute of Child Health and Development. (NICHD). (2000). Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction (NIH Publication No. 00-4769). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/nrp/smallbook.cfm

Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED). (2010). Reading by six: How the best schools do it (Report Reference no. 100197). Manchester: Author.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2002). Reading for change: Performance and engagement across countries. Results from PISA 2000. Available at http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/43/54/33690904.pdf

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2008). Improving school leadership. Volume 1: Policy and Practice. OECD Publishing.

Paris, S. G., & Myers, M. (1981). Comprehension monitoring, memory, and study strategies of good and poor readers. Journal of Reading Behaviour, 13, 5-22.

Pressley, M., Mohan, l., Raphael, L. M., & Fingeret, L. (2007). How does Bennet Woods Elementary School produce such high reading and writing achievement? Journal of Educational Psychology, 99(2), 221-240.

Punch, K. F. (2005). Introduction to social research: Quantitative and qualitative approaches. London: SAGE Publications.

Rinaldi, L., Sells, D., & McLaughlin, T. F. (1997). The effects of reading racetracks on sight word acquisition of elementary students. Journal of Behavioral Education, 7, 219-234.

Robinson, V. A. C. (2007). School leadership and student outcomes: Identifying what works. Winmalee: Australian Council for Educational Leadership.

Rose, J. (2006). Independent review of the teaching of early reading: Final report. Available at http://www.standards. dfes.gov.uk/rosereview

Rowe, K. (2005). Teaching reading: Report and recommendations of the National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy. Canberra: Department of Education Science and Technology.

Seashore-Louis, K., Leithwood, K., Wahlstrom, K. L., & Anderson, S.E. (2010). Learning from leadership. Investigating the links to improved student learning. Final report of research to Wallace Foundation. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.

Short, E. J., & Ryan, E. R. (1984). Metacognitive differences between skilled and less skilled readers: Remediating deficits through story grammar and attribution training. Journal of Educational Psychology, 76, 225-235.

Snow, C. E., Burns, M. S., & Griffin, P. (1998). Preventing reading difficulties in young children. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Snow, C. E., Tabors, P. O., Nicholson, P. A., & Kurland, B. F. (1995). SHELL: Oral language and early literacy skills in kindergarten and first grade children. Journal of Research in Childhood Education, 10, 37-47.

Stanovich, P. J., & Stanovich, K. E. (2003). Using research and reason in education: How teachers can use scientifically based research to make curricular and instructional decisions. Washington DC: US Department of Education.

Thomas, R. M. (2003). Blending qualitative and quantitative research methods in theses and dissertations. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Thomson, S., De Bortoli, L., Nicholas, M., Hillman, K., & Buckley, S. (2011). Challenges for Australian education: Results from PISA 2009: The PISA 2009 assessment of students' reading, mathematical and scientific literacy. Victoria, Australia: ACER Press.

Tomesen, M., & Aarnoutse, C. (1998). Effects of an instructional programme for deriving word meanings. Educational Studies, 24(1), 107-128.

Torgeson, J. K. (1982). The learning disabled child as an inactive learner: Educational implications. Topics in Learning and Learning Disabilities, 2, 45-52.

Torgeson, J. K. (2000). Individual differences in response to early intervention in reading: The lingering problem of treatment resistors. Learning Disabilities Research and Practice, 15, 55-64.

Wasik, B. A. (2001). Phonemic awareness and young children. Childhood Education, 77, 128-133.

Wiersma, W., & Jurs, S. G. (2005). Research methods in education: An introduction (8th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Wise, J. C., Sevcik, R. A., Morris, R. D., Lovett, M. W., & Wolf, M. (2007). The relationship among receptive and expressive vocabulary, listening comprehension, pre-reading skills, word identification skills and reading comprehension by children with reading disabilities. Journal of Speech, Language and Hearing Research, 50(4), 1093-1109.

APPA
Australian Primary
Principals Association

ACU
AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

ECU
AUSTRALIA
EDITH COWAN
UNIVERSITY

Griffith
UNIVERSITY

Principals
as LITERACY LEADERS

9 781921 407031