

The Reading and Numeracy Program evaluation

Final report

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation



Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

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Authors

Zina Baghi, Wendy Moran, Rohan Pigott and Annette Waters

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For more information about this report, please contact:

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

Department of Education

GPO Box 33

Sydney NSW 2001

info@cese.nsw.gov.au

education.nsw.gov.au/cese

We acknowledge the homelands of all Aboriginal people and pay our respect to Country.

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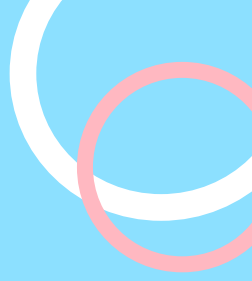
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Summary



The Reading and Numeracy Program

The Reading and Numeracy Program (R&N) is an initiative of the NSW Department of Education focused on improving reading and numeracy outcomes for students. One of the program's original aims was to meet the then Premier's Priority to increase the proportion of students achieving in the top 2 NAPLAN bands by 15% (an extra 16,000 students in reading and 9,000 students in numeracy) by 2023.

The program was developed, implemented and evaluated in the context of the School Success Model (SSM) and adopts the School Support Delivery Framework (SSDF) tiered model of support. It should be noted that the SSM was superseded by [Our Plan for NSW Public Education](#) in October 2023. The model of support incorporates:

- **Universal Support (US)** – support including teaching resources, assessment tools and professional learning (PL) focused on reading and numeracy, provided through a dedicated online Universal Resources Hub (URH) and accessible to all 2,200 schools and their staff across NSW. At the time of writing, 344 reading and numeracy resources were available on the URH.
- **Guided Support (GS)** – provision of shoulder-to-shoulder support by directors, educational leadership (DELs) to a subset of schools that were determined to have the highest number of students with potential to move into the top 2 NAPLAN bands in reading and numeracy.
- **Strategic School Support (SSS)** – provision of targeted, timely support by the Strategic Delivery Unit to a subset of schools (3 tranches across 2021–2022) with the 'largest gap to lift' against identified reading and numeracy outcomes. The 6-step replicable process has been undertaken in partnership with the DEL, principal (and school leadership teams) and principal education officer (PEO), with the support of principal, school leadership (PSL) and delivered by content specific specialists. Support aims to build the capability of school leaders to drive improvement through a co-designed agreement with identified improvement goals and specific strategies that are evaluated, monitored and adjusted throughout the delivery.

More detail about this SSDF model is provided in Chapter 1. The program utilises a cyclical approach to improving reading and numeracy, so that regardless of the level of support, each school would move through the improvement steps using resources to assist them as needed. Once completed, the school's focus would shift to the next area in most need of attention, starting the process again.

The R&N Program launched in Term 1 2021. Although elements of the program continue at the time of reporting, and therefore extend beyond the current evaluation, it is anticipated that the program will gradually be absorbed into the department's [literacy and numeracy priorities](#).

The evaluation

The evaluation period ran from July 2021 to December 2022. The evaluation initially intended to assess both process and outcomes of the program, but the compounding impacts of COVID-19 restrictions, bushfires and floods meant that the program could not be implemented as intended. Evaluation scope was therefore necessarily restricted to assessment of process issues, with a limited assessment of certain outcomes. The final terms of reference included 3 main evaluation questions:

1. How well was the R&N Program implemented?
 - What aspects worked well? What aspects didn't work well?
 - What were the factors that supported or hindered successful implementation?
2. To what extent has reading and numeracy knowledge and practice changed for school leaders and teachers as a result of the program?
3. What lessons have we learned about the School Support Delivery Framework (SSDF) in the R&N Program? What could be improved?

The evaluation methods used by the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) incorporated both qualitative and quantitative data collection activities, including:

- qualitative interviews with school leaders, DELs and program owners
- surveys with teachers, principals, DELs and users of the URH
- analytic data, for example, URH website data, professional learning (PL) data
- SSS evaluation findings provided by TQI.

Evaluation findings

To what extent was the R&N Program implemented as intended?

Program implementation did not fully align with the intended vision. The program commenced during the pandemic and faced additional challenges from natural disasters. Stay-at-home orders reduced school attendance, high levels of student and staff absenteeism persisted, and communication embargoes limited contact with schools. To alleviate pressure, external demands on schools were paused, impacting the implementation of various programs, including the R&N Program.

Key program elements were delivered, but GS was hindered by COVID-19 restrictions, communication embargoes, and natural disasters. SSS activities were also impacted by these issues resulting in schools being placed on hold or delivery transitioning online. Across the evaluation period, targeted support was delivered through SSS to 135 schools in 3 separate tranches. Some schools received SSS in 2021 and then GS in 2022, and some schools received GS in 2022 only.

The program developed a suite of universal resources accessible to all schools on the URH and delivered online, as well as blended professional learning. The Leading Collaboration for Schools Improvement Toolkit aided discussions, and individualised NAPLAN data packages were made available to all schools through Scout (the department's online data platform).

What aspects worked well?

There were several aspects of the program that worked well.

- **Heightened overall awareness of R&N strategies** appears to have been the result of the introduction of 3 distinct types of support, and schools receiving tailored assistance based on reading and numeracy requirements. Also, a state-wide emphasis on identifying specific needs and allocating resources and support to enhance those aspects constituted a novel and explicit improvement endeavour.
- The program has demonstrated **considerable agility and resilience**. Despite challenges from COVID-19 and natural disasters, critical program components successfully pivoted to online delivery.
- The department increased its focus on reading and numeracy with **provision of resources to not only identify needs, but also specifically address them**. The evaluation revealed a great deal of support for the R&N Program's reading and numeracy improvement objectives among various stakeholders within the department, including teachers, school leaders, DELs and Education Support teams in department offices.
- **The URH has proved to be a source of high quality, relevant R&N resources to many users**. All resources were reviewed by a panel to provide assurance that resources were evidence-based and suitable for NSW schools. Each classroom resource was explicitly linked to the NSW syllabus and the National Literacy and Numeracy Progressions. The URH website was well used, having been accessed by staff from nearly every school in NSW, while the resources themselves were viewed highly favourably by principals, DELs, specialist staff and teachers.
- **The shift to online learning expanded the reach of reading and numeracy professional development**, benefiting many schools, and improving access for regional and small schools that typically have trouble accessing PL. Between 2018 and 2022, the total number of enrolments in R&N courses through MyPL reached 122,951.
- **Schools gained comprehensive data on reading and numeracy strengths and weaknesses** through the data packages on Scout. The direct links to resources on the URH proved to be highly practical.
- **A cohort of schools with the highest assessed levels of need** in relation to reading and numeracy **received targeted, timely and customised support** delivered by content specialists, over an extended period, through SSS. The process was reported to be coherent, flexible and streamlined; the support was relevant and tailored to meet school needs, structures and context; and the assistance of the lead specialists was highly valued by schools for their knowledgeable expertise that strengthened implementation.

What aspects didn't work well?

There were also several elements of the program that didn't work as well.

- **The GS component was inconsistently implemented.** GS was not well understood, not well overseen, and sometimes not well supported by DELs, who were tasked with implementing it (partly due to perceived inequities in school selection). DELs were neither required to implement GS, nor were their GS activities monitored. Without clear directions about the GS component, DELs drew on their expertise to support schools in the way they thought best, rather than following the intended GS approach.
- **Secondary schools were not well catered for in the overall program.** The overall program lacked the strategies and resources required to meet the unique needs of well-defined curriculum areas in secondary structures, especially in GS and US. This made it difficult for secondary teachers to identify how any relevant resources might apply to their students' needs. The CESE Principal Survey found that half as many secondary principals felt well supported in reading and numeracy, compared with their primary counterparts. Secondary schools may have responded better if the program targeted specific application of literacy and numeracy knowledge and skills in a range of subject areas.
- **The URH was not well known by many teachers, particularly secondary teachers.** While the URH was viewed as being a valuable, high-quality resource, it was better known by school leaders, AP, C&Is and DELs, than by classroom teachers. Just under 65% of teachers were either unaware of the URH, hadn't looked at it, or hadn't used any resources. For secondary teachers, that percentage was almost 80%. Use of the URH was also limited by teacher perceptions that searching for resources was time-consuming and/or beyond the capacity of teachers with less experience or a less sophisticated understanding of approaches to reading and numeracy improvement.
- **Systemic issues put some schools at a disadvantage in terms of accessing support.** For example, small schools were effectively excluded from GS and SSS due to the volatility of data inherent in small groups. Small schools may also have been excluded from GS because small enrolment numbers reduced the likelihood of lifting the percentage of students in the top 2 bands in reading and numeracy. If schools were not included in GS or SSS, then accessing specialist support was reported as challenging.

What factors supported or hindered successful implementation?

The evaluation revealed a number of factors that impacted on program implementation. Supporting factors are elements that have facilitated the success of the R&N Program, bolstering its implementation and outcomes. In contrast, hindering factors have impeded such progress. They are grouped here under the headings system-level factors and school-level factors.

System-level factors

The overall progress and implementation of the R&N Program at the system-level were greatly influenced and effectively supported by a synergy of several factors. These include:

- **Parallel related initiatives created a synergised focus on reading and numeracy** (for example, COVID ILSP Program, introduction of the AP, C&I role, External Validation, Strategic Improvement Plans, Maths Strategy).
- **Schools felt supported by the assistance offered** and the collaboration taking place at the network level (often initiated by DELs and PSLs) and this made a difference. The lead specialists were highly valued as knowledgeable experts that strengthened implementation.
- **The Literacy and Numeracy (L&N) team successfully boosted the availability of quality resources** on the URH during implementation which was pivotal in advancing the program. Initially a part of the program, the scope and role of the R&N resources on the URH were elevated during implementation, becoming a core element on which other components relied. The L&N team's agility played a crucial role in supporting success of the URH and in particular, the R&N resources.
- **A strong focus on recruitment and deployment of specialist literacy and numeracy non-school based teaching staff (NSBTS)** and a partnership process for SSS ensured the consistency and fidelity of implementation combined with a responsiveness to context.

The system-level factors that hindered successful implementation of the R&N Program, include:

- Despite an increased focus on reading and numeracy **the system's response to COVID-19 and floods, for understandable reasons, shifted the focus away from R&N**. The deliberate effort to lighten the load on schools by delaying all non-essential activities and communication with schools in Term 4 of 2021 and in Terms 1 and 2 of 2022 hampered successful implementation of the program.
- **The selection method used to identify schools for GS was not well-supported by DELs**, as it was seen as favouring schools with the greatest chance of lifting students into the top 2 NAPLAN bands, rather than on the basis of need. Without the imperative for or monitoring of the implementation of this component, GS was largely not implemented. The difficulties with engaging with schools during COVID-19 restrictions further contributed to this issue.

- **Staffing difficulties** caused by system issues as well as COVID-19 **hampered school efforts** to establish improved systems and practices for improving reading and numeracy outcomes.
- **Limited access to specialist support** (for example, Literacy and Numeracy Strategy Advisors, LaNSAs) in US and GS schools made it difficult for some to make the most of the supports offered and address barriers they were experiencing in relation to reading and numeracy improvement.

School-level factors

The success of the R&N Program's implementation can be attributed to several factors at the school level. These factors played a role in shaping the overall progress of the program. These supportive factors include:

- **The uptake of strategies and resources were influenced by the schools** themselves – by their professional cultures, leadership and the extent to which they had already begun to focus on reading and numeracy improvement.
- **Seizing opportunities that arose through COVID-19 restrictions** created positive changes to teaching and learning practices in some schools. For example, without face-to-face teaching, staff had time and impetus to undertake online PL and explore the URH, and staff found themselves with 'breathing space' to plan improvement strategies.

The school-level factors that created challenges during implementation and hindered progress include:

- **Some schools made the call to prioritise other concerns**, such as student and staff wellbeing, attendance, and delivery of HSC content during COVID-19 restrictions. These took priority over improving reading and numeracy outcomes.
- **The nature of secondary school faculties**, and the focus of program strategies and resources on primary, made it difficult to achieve whole-school buy-in. The tendency for secondary teachers to 'stay in their lanes' means that responsibility for reading and numeracy commonly defaults to the English and Maths faculties.
- **Lack of school readiness** meant that some schools were not in a position to participate in SSS at the time they were offered it.
- **Pockets of teacher disinterest, discomfort and/or resistance** to proposed strategies or resources, which influenced take-up in some instances.

To what extent has reading and numeracy knowledge and practice changed?

While the absence of a direct measure of scale poses a challenge, the evidence strongly suggests a substantial and ongoing uptake of new reading and numeracy practices in schools. The evaluation revealed a compelling pattern of the R&N Program's practices gaining traction within school settings, which are explained in more detail in these next 3 paragraphs. Self-report measures also indicate that schools believe changes in practices are likely to be sustained. Multiple indicators point to a growing adoption and integration of these practices, although a precise quantification remains elusive. It is encouraging to observe the increasing prevalence of these approaches, suggesting a positive trend towards their widespread implementation. These changes are more prevalent in primary than in secondary recognising that secondary have a further way to come.

The prioritisation of reading and numeracy is evident in the increased demand for support, and the establishment of clear goals. What we can say is that schools are increasingly prioritising a reading and numeracy focus, and seeking additional support in these areas, with a collaborative plan that aims to promote a shared language, framework and discourse around effective teacher practices. Principals are asking for additional support (reading and numeracy were among the top areas of support indicated in the annual CESE Principal Survey), while school leaders and DELs are taking a more strategic and focused approach in these areas. The vast majority (93%) of SSS Tranche 1 schools achieved some or all of their identified short-term outcomes. It is likely that this has resulted from the combined and sustained efforts being made across several related departmental initiatives, rather than as a result of the R&N Program alone.

The importance of a shared understanding about effective reading and numeracy pedagogy is gaining more focus. Teachers claim a deeper understanding of effective practice in reading and numeracy and effective practices, while schools note that they are shifting towards evidence-based resources like the URH to establish a reliable foundation for their practices. Practices such as school-wide plans to improve reading and numeracy outcomes, use of student data to identify reading and numeracy needs, collaboration and sharing of practices and resources, and strategies for formalising reading and numeracy supports within schools are evident. Teachers are reported to be increasingly 'speaking the same language' around reading and numeracy.

Professional learning, URH resources and access to reliable data to inform teaching and learning decisions are contributing to a shift in skills and practice. Teachers have enthusiastically embraced professional development opportunities within the reading and numeracy fields. As a result, many teachers have become more proficient in utilising data to reflect on teaching practice, which leads to more informed decision-making for planning and preparation. Schools are prioritising reliable and evidence-based R&N resources like the URH to ensure improved student outcomes and have embraced these to enhance their practices (89% of respondents in the URH user survey said the resources had impacted their practice). The collective efforts of various R&N initiatives have fostered a common language for discussing and advancing reading and numeracy improvement. To this end, school leaders and DELs have observed shifts in practice over the past 2 years, although perceptions about the pace and magnitude of these changes have varied.

Lessons learned leading to final recommendations

Implementation of the R&N Program over the past 2 years has provided the department with the opportunity to better understand how the SSDF might work in the context of reading and numeracy focus areas. Thirteen lessons can be learned about implementation, expectations and outcomes from such an initiative, and these are detailed in Chapter 5. These lessons guide the following 8 recommendations.

Recommendations for program design

1. The department should consider developing a team approach to GS rather than placing the responsibility on individual educators or DELs.
2. When designing a tiered support strategy, the department should build in mechanisms to ensure that the initiative:
 - a. promotes equity (that is, ensuring that schools with similar levels of need are offered similar levels of support), and
 - b. provides support to both primary and secondary schools, recognising the different organisation and unique needs of each.
3. Focusing a program on improving teacher practice and student outcomes is more effective for engaging schools in what they consider to be a worthwhile purpose and might ensure steady improvement is achieved and established. Achievement-based targets may diminish school buy-in and genuine gains.

Recommendations for program implementation

4. Communications with participating schools should include:
 - a. clear messaging regarding their selection for targeted supports such as Guided and Strategic, and procedures to facilitate school readiness to engage in targeted support
 - b. conversations about the key resources – who they are for, how they can be used and what the benefits might be
 - c. explanation of any changes that have needed to be made and why.
5. The structure of briefings, support documents and the availability of guidance should be differentiated to meet the needs of key personnel who vary in expertise and experience. Thorough preparation of the personnel who are to take on key roles is vital especially when the role they are fulfilling is pivotal in a program and involves various aspects that require specific expertise.
6. The inclusion of self-serve resources available in a range of modes enabled the R&N Program to continue support for schools (even if reduced), when most other programs were either paused by the department or ignored by schools. In fact, the URH and online professional learning maintained a substantial presence in many schools and, whether by accident or design, has demonstrated that inclusion of self-serve features can be highly advantageous in program design. Future programs should be designed to include similar features to protect against unexpected and damaging events.

7. The accessibility of central and significant R&N resources such as the resources found on the URH and professional learning which have been made available for every school, leader and teacher is an important component of this program's success. Ensuring that all participants can easily navigate the range and volume of resources and can access expert guidance at a local level is critical to making informed choices about what is the most appropriate and relevant for the user's needs.

Recommendations for program expectations and outcomes

8. Program owners should plan and prioritise work programs for the long-term ensuring decisions are based on a comprehensive needs assessment. A forward-thinking approach not only avoids decision-making based on premature results, but it also minimises change fatigue and the burden on schools. With outcomes not expected to be achieved in the short-term, schools can work with their teachers and students slowly and steadily building capability. Necessary changes should be in response to unavoidable circumstances to ensure continuity of the program. Implementing over long timeframes facilitates time for evaluative activities to observe and track what is not shifting, the barriers to engagement, the changes that have been adopted, if changes are embedded and, measure changes in student outcomes. Without a long-term view, evaluations will not be able to accurately capture the desired outcomes of the program.

Despite the period within which the R&N Program has been implemented – one filled with enormous challenges – the program has in many aspects demonstrated resilience. It has also shown that the SSDF has the potential to be effective provided the identification of schools requiring supports is driven less by targets and more by clearly defined school needs.

List of acronyms

AP	Assistant principal
AP, C&I	Assistant principal, curriculum and instruction
CESE	Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation
COVID ILSP	COVID Intensive Learning Support Program
CSI	Collaborative school improvement
CSUS	Collaborative support –unique settings
DEL	Director, educational leadership
EAL/D	English as an additional language or dialect
EV	External validation
FOEI	Family Occupation and Education Index
GS	Guided Support
HSIE	Human society and its environment
IfSR	Interview for Student Reasoning
IPM	Implementation and progress monitoring
K	Kindergarten
KLAs	Key learning areas
LaNSA	Literacy and Numeracy Strategy advisor
LEED	Leading Evidence, Evaluation and Data
L&N	Literacy and Numeracy team
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program –Literacy and Numeracy. An annual online assessment for students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9
NSBTS	Non-school based teaching staff
PDHPE	Personal development, health and physical education
PEO	Principal education officer
PL	Professional learning
PSL	Principal, school leadership
R&N	Reading and numeracy
RFF	Release from face-to-face (teaching)

SEF	School Excellence Framework
SIP	Strategic Improvement Plan
SLSO	Student learning support officer
SSDF	School Support Delivery Framework
SSM	School Success Model
SSS	Strategic School Support
TQI	Teaching Quality and Impact directorate
URH	Universal Resources Hub
US	Universal Support

Chapter 1:

The Reading and Numeracy Program

Introduction

The Evaluation and Effectiveness unit in the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation has undertaken this evaluation of the NSW Department of Education's Reading and Numeracy Program. The evaluation began development in March 2021 and data collection concluded in November 2022. The evaluation provides an assessment of the program's implementation, seeks to answer key process questions about the initiative, and provides insights about what the initiative has achieved, focusing on outcomes around change in school practice. It is intended that the evaluation will contribute to the department's understanding of how to improve reading and numeracy outcomes for public school students.

The program

The Reading and Numeracy (R&N) Program is an initiative of the NSW Department of Education which aims to improve the reading and numeracy outcomes of NSW public school students. The R&N Program is aligned with the School Success Model Workstream 4 – 'School Needs and Support' which seeks to deliver 'more support for schools that need it the most'. It was implemented to support progress towards the Premier's Priority through the School Success Model (SSM), that is, to increase the proportion of public school students in the top 2 NAPLAN bands for Reading and Numeracy by 15% (an extra 16,000 students in Reading and 9,000 students in Numeracy) by 2023.¹ It should be noted that the SSM was superseded by Our Plan for NSW Public Education in October 2023.

The R&N Program launched in Term 1 2021. Although elements of the program continue in 2024, and therefore extend beyond the current evaluation, it is anticipated that it will gradually be absorbed into the Literacy and Numeracy Five Priorities initiative.

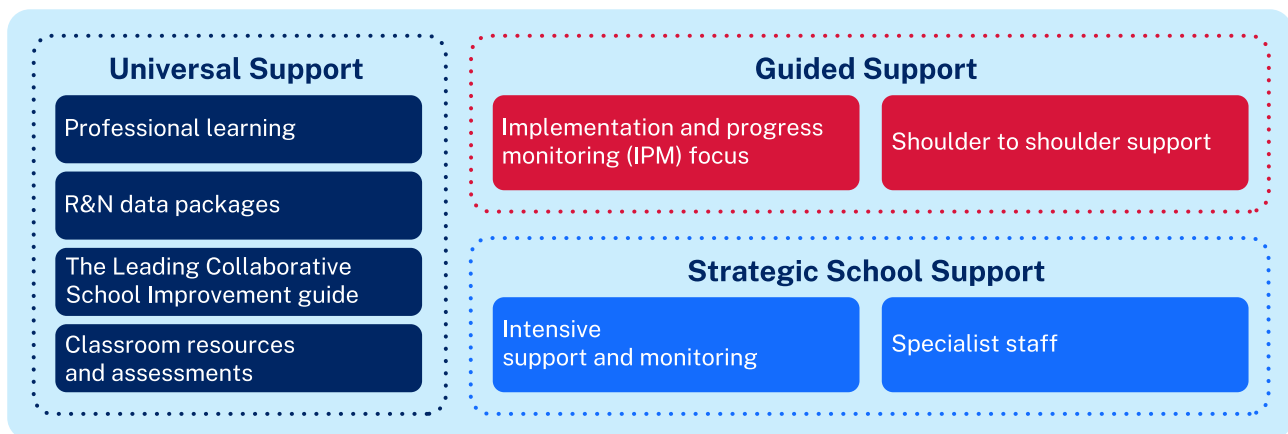
¹ NSW Government (2021), Premier's Priorities: Bumping up education results for children, accessed 16 August 2021.

The School Support Delivery Framework

The R&N Program adopted the tiered support model developed under the School Success Model Workstream 4 – ‘School Needs and Support’, known as the School Support Delivery Framework. The SSDF comprised 3 types of support; Universal Support, Guided Support and Strategic School Support (Figure 1). The program structure reflects a stepped approach to providing support to schools. Schools in most need of support were offered Strategic School Support; those with the greatest number of students likely to move into the top 2 Reading and Numeracy NAPLAN bands were offered Guided Support (to assist in achieving the Premier’s Priority); and all other schools were encouraged to access Universal Support. Schools which undertook SSS in 2021 were identified for Guided Support in 2022 to ensure continued focus on areas identified for improvement in 2021.

Figure 1

School Support Delivery Framework 3 levels of support and the resources that underpin them



Universal Support

Universal Support was aimed at school leaders and teachers. A key component was the Universal Resources Hub, an online repository for evidence-based, universally available resources. Resources covering a variety of content areas, including reading and numeracy, are available on the URH. The reading and numeracy resources were designed to assist schools to improve teacher practice around reading and numeracy, and thereby lift more students into the top 2 reading and numeracy NAPLAN bands. US was the responsibility of the Literacy and Numeracy team in Educational Standards. Resources include practical teaching strategies, activities, tasks, guides, assessments and the ‘Collaborative School Improvement’ (CSI) toolkit. Some were developed specifically for the R&N Program, while others had been previously developed and were modified to facilitate the Premier’s Priority. Nonetheless, all underwent a quality assurance process to be included.²

² The resources uploaded to the URH underwent a quality assurance process involving a panel of director-nominated representatives from key sectors across the department. These nominees, with expertise in reading and numeracy, were asked to review resources. They rated the resources on categories such as alignment to department best practices, alignment to the School Excellence Framework, feasibility of school implementation, clarity of instructions, inclusivity of students with disabilities and additional learning needs, and readiness for publication, providing a rationale for each rating. Each resource was reviewed by at least 2 panel members and self-assessed by the author. The collated ratings determined whether a resource was ready for publication or if revisions were necessary.

Guided Support

Guided Support provided targeted guidance to support the implementation of the universal resources for a specific reading and numeracy focus area. GS was the responsibility of the Capability, Implementation and School Excellence team in Transformation. Under GS, it was intended that DELs would guide identified schools to identify focus areas for improvement, using NAPLAN and other assessments (for example, school-based tests and assessments). Having helped schools to identify focus areas, DELs would then support each school's leadership team to select and implement appropriate universal resources and professional learning.

Strategic School Support

Strategic School Support was the responsibility of the Strategic Delivery Unit team in the Teaching Quality and Impact (TQI) Directorate. SSS was designed as a partnership between each identified selected school and the Strategic Delivery Unit in TQI, which provided targeted, timely support to build the improvement capacity of schools in specific outcome areas. SSS was aimed at schools that had the 'largest gap to lift' against targeted outcomes. Schools were identified through analysis of school-level data and their progress towards achieving the Premier's Priority targets. Under the 6-step process (Figure 2), school leaders in partnership with the DEL, PEO, content specialists and PSL conducted item-level analyses of NAPLAN data to identify specific school needs. These were then mapped to the universal resources and other resources, as needed. Improvement goals were formalised in a support agreement with Strategic Delivery and progress toward these outcomes was monitored. School staff were provided with professional learning and assistance from Strategic Delivery content specialists.

Figure 2

SSS 6-step process



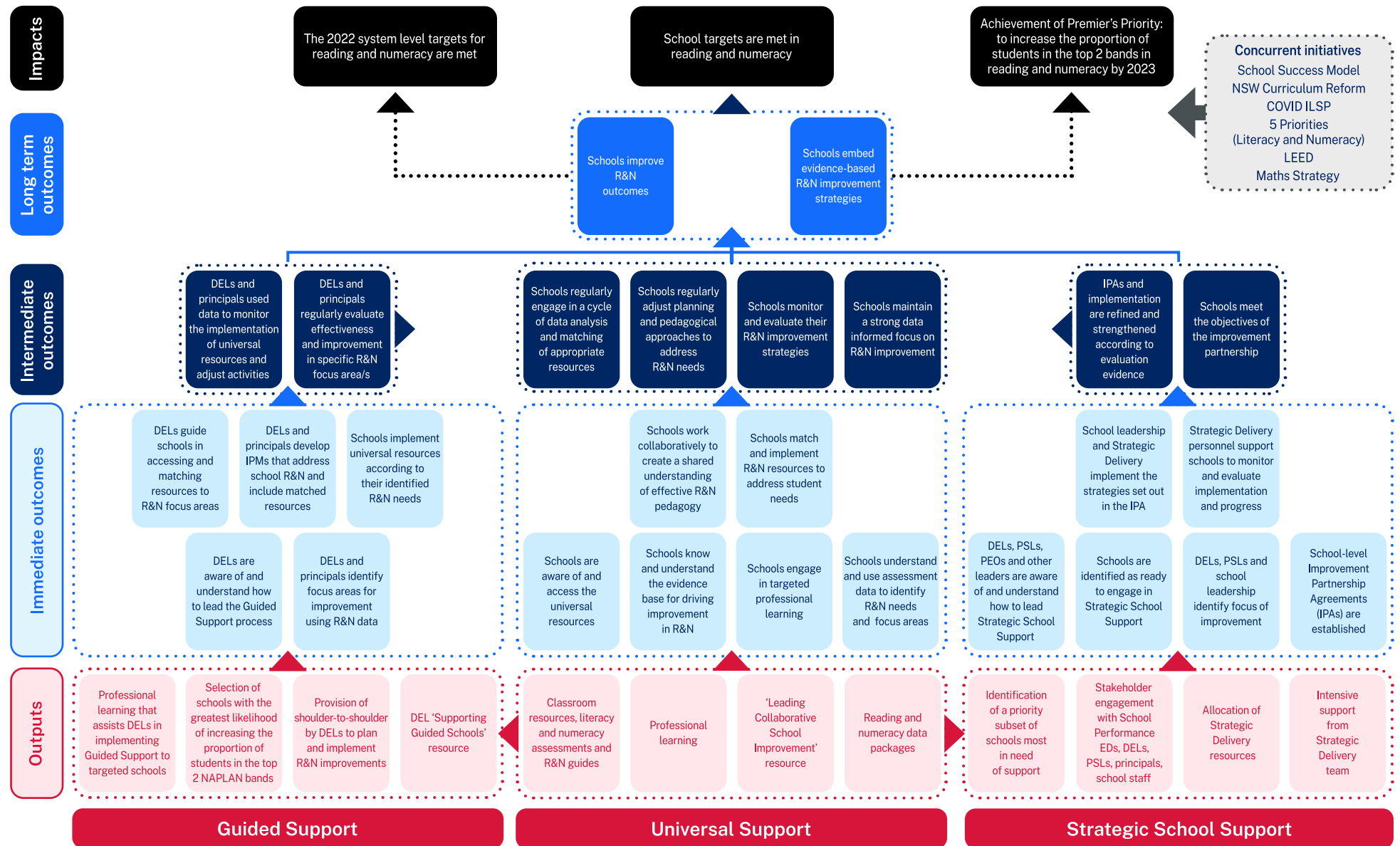
Source: TQI Evaluation Team.

Program logic

The R&N Program logic model (Figure 3), developed by CESE with program owners and the TQI evaluation team, encapsulates the way the program was intended to work. It draws out the relationships between the activities and outputs and the intended immediate and intermediate outcomes, through to the intended long-term outcomes and impacts. The program logic represents the theory of change that sat behind the R&N Program.

Figure 3

Overall program logic for the R&N Program



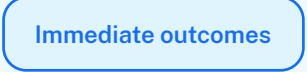

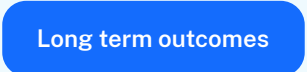




Relationships and key points of the logic

There are a number of relationships between elements of the logic which are explained in Table 1.

Table 1

Overall program logic explained

	<p>The 3 supports are clearly defined in the program logic by the 3 dark red bars and the individual support names at the bottom of the page.</p>
	<p>Directly above the 3 support names are light pink rectangles which outline the unique outputs delivered in each project. Note that the dark pink arrows drawn from the universal outputs out to Strategic School Support and Guided Support show that both of these projects also utilise the universal outputs.</p>
	<p>Each support has its own set of immediate outcomes (in light blue) which are arranged in 2 layers.</p> <p>Across all 3 projects, the first layer (the lower of the 2 levels) is concerned with the understanding of sound R&N pedagogy, using data to identify reading and numeracy focus areas in need of improvement, and awareness and access of resources as schools become familiar with project intentions and processes.</p> <p>The second layer of immediate outcomes (the upper level of light blue immediate outcomes) describes the next group of expected outcomes in the immediate stage where schools begin to match and implement resources that will assist them to improve student results.</p>
	<p>The dark blue intermediate outcomes are concerned primarily with the spread of the support across the school. Some outcomes are unique to the Strategic and Guided Supports whilst all 3 projects also aim to achieve the Universal Support project outcomes as well. The intermediate outcomes show an expectation that schools will regularly use the resources and processes in achieving improvements and will monitor and track the effects of what they are using and doing.</p>
	<p>All 3 supports are expected to achieve 2 main long-term outcomes: a) embedment of evidence-based R&N improvement strategies; and b) improvement in R&N student achievement.</p>
	<p>The R&N Program aims to achieve the reading and numeracy system targets and Premier's priority, yet, as pointed out in the 'concurrent initiatives' box, is not the only influencing program. Therefore, 2 of the 3 impacts related to the long-term outcomes cannot be causally attributed to the R&N Program. We show this lack of certainty with a dotted line between them. Attribution to school targets may be more easily defined.</p>
	<p>A range of initiatives operate concurrently with the R&N Program. The supports listed in the logic all have the capacity to influence student achievements in reading and numeracy thereby co-contributing to targets set by the department and those set by the Premier.</p>

Nested and related initiatives

The R&N Program, as previously referenced, is aligned with Workstream 4 in the School Success Model. Workstream 4 is focused on delivering support through the School Support Delivery Framework to lift outcomes in a range of areas, such as, attendance, wellbeing, Aboriginal education, and overall student growth.

Other workstreams within the SSM share similar goals in terms of lifting student outcomes. Related initiatives that overlapped with the R&N included:

- COVID Intensive Learning Support Program (COVID ILSP)
- NSW Maths Strategy
- Curriculum Reform
- Assistant principal, curriculum and instruction (AP, C&I)
- Collaborative support – unique settings (CSUS)
- Leading Evidence, Evaluation and Data (LEED) project.

To at least some extent, the objectives of these parallel initiatives overlapped with R&N Program objectives. This needs to be considered when interpreting results, as findings may be somewhat attributable to other programs and a causal link to the R&N Program cannot be assumed.



Chapter 2: Evaluation questions and methodology

The Evaluation and Effectiveness unit within the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation was engaged to evaluate the overall R&N Program. The evaluation period ran from July 2021 to December 2022.

CESE was tasked with evaluating the Guided and Universal Supports, as well as the overall evaluation of the R&N Program. An internal evaluation of the Strategic School Support component began at the end of 2020, shortly after the program launched, and was undertaken by an evaluation team within the TQI Directorate. The Strategic Delivery evaluation team shared selected findings relevant to the SSS component with the CESE evaluation team. CESE evaluated the GS and US components. Where data collection methods involved all government schools in NSW, CESE identified findings from all 3 components of the program. The evaluation overview of all schools was important due to the fluidity of schools who were, for example, an SSS school in 2021 and then a GS school in 2022.

It was envisaged that the resulting report would assess both the processes and outcomes of the R&N Program.

Original evaluation questions

Key evaluation questions were originally developed with all program owners and the TQI evaluation team (Table 2).

Table 2

Original evaluation questions

Evaluation questions
<p>A. How well was the R&N program implemented?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. What aspects worked well? What aspects didn't work well? ii. What were the factors that supported and hindered successful implementation?
<p>B. To what extent has reading and numeracy knowledge and practice changed for school leaders and teachers as a result of the program?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. How widely have the changes been adopted? ii. How regularly do schools engage in the R&N approach?
<p>C. To what extent has student achievement in reading and numeracy changed since the program commenced?</p>
<p>D. How effective are the 3 types of support (Universal, Guided and Strategic) as a mechanism for influencing school improvement?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. How well has the SSDF delivered support to schools in reading and numeracy? ii. What lessons have we learned about the SSDF in the R&N Program? What could be improved?

The TQI evaluation team asked 3 key evaluation questions, 2 of which are mirrored in the overall evaluation questions: Question A and Question A i. Their third question asked: 'To what extent is school need matched to specialist support?'

Revised evaluation scope due to unforeseen complications

As part of the process of developing an evaluation plan, a number of risks were identified which could impact the ability for the evaluation team to complete the evaluation. One identified risk was that the program may not be implemented as intended, thereby undermining the ability to evaluate the program's effectiveness. While programs are not usually implemented exactly as intended, the variation to the R&N Program was such that a change in scope was necessary.

Both 2021 and 2022 were challenging years for education in NSW, with the system having to manage the cumulative difficulties caused by COVID-19 lockdowns, and ongoing staffing and attendance issues as a result of both COVID-19 and floods. For the first half of 2022, a decision was taken to try to insulate schools from excessive administrative requests, allowing them to focus on the day-to-day business of teaching students and managing the significant pressures they were experiencing. This included a pause in many projects, including elements of R&N Program delivery, as well as evaluation activities such as data collection.

Furthermore, we originally hoped that we would be able to use NAPLAN data to analyse academic outcomes, especially for the primary years. However, we were unable to use NAPLAN data because it was not administered in 2020 due to COVID-19. This also meant that baseline data was missing for the year preceding R&N Program implementation. In addition, the timing of NAPLAN testing changed from Term 2 to Term 1 in 2023, disrupting time series data and our ability to measure change over time. By the second half of 2022 it became clear that the R&N Program, as originally envisaged, would not be able to be fully implemented.

As this key outcome data was missing, it was agreed that the evaluation would instead focus on process and implementation questions only. It was hoped that answers to these evaluation questions would provide useful information for the implementation of similar initiatives such as the evolving Five Priorities initiative. Table 3 lists the revised evaluation questions.

Table 3
Updated evaluation questions

Evaluation questions
<p>A. How well was the R&N Program implemented?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. What aspects worked well? What aspects didn't work well? ii. What were the factors that supported and hindered successful implementation?
<p>B. To what extent has reading and numeracy knowledge and practice changed for school leaders and teachers as a result of the program?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. How widely have the changes been adopted? ii. How regularly do schools engage in the R&N approach?
<p>C. What lessons have we learned about the SSDF in the R&N Program? What could be improved?</p>

Methodology

Our methodology contained 2 key approaches: phenomenological, with a focus on interviews; and post-positivist, with a focus on surveys and analytic data from professional learning participation and Universal Resources Hub use.

The data collection strategy was originally developed to address significant known gaps in data relating to program outcomes. Table 4 shows the revised data sources used to conduct the evaluation.

Table 4

Data sources

Research method	Data sources
Surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CESE Teacher Survey (2022) • CESE Principal Survey (2021, 2022) • School Needs and Supports Survey (2021, 2022) • CESE URH User Pop-up Survey (2022) • SSS Partnership surveys* • SSS Evaluation Toolkit surveys*
Stakeholder interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School leaders conducted by CESE • Directors, educational leadership conducted by CESE • Program owners of overall program, US, GS and SSS conducted by CESE • SSS interviews and focus groups*
Document and data analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • URH user data analysed by CESE • Professional learning participation/completions analysed by CESE
Other data sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagnostic assessment participation data

* Note that the analysis from the SSS data sources listed in Table 4 has been provided by the TQI evaluation team in 2 key documents: the SSS interim report (2022) and the SSS final process evaluation presentation (2023).

Surveys

CESE Teacher Survey

Evaluation and Effectiveness in CESE administered an online CESE Teacher Survey in Term 3 2022. All NSW government school teachers, including middle leaders (assistant principals, head teachers and instructional leaders), specialist teachers (including COVID-ILSP tutors) and classroom teachers, were invited to participate. The survey included questions about a range of initiatives, including the R&N Program. The R&N questions from the survey are included at Appendix A and covered the extent to which their school was focusing on specific reading and numeracy areas as well as the universal immediate outcomes. In total 7,703 responses to the questions relating to the R&N Program were received. A summary of findings is included in Appendix B – 2022 Teacher Survey.

CESE Principal Survey

The CESE Principal Survey is typically administered online annually to all government school principals. The 2021 survey was implemented in May, Term 2 while the 2022 survey was implemented in July, Term 3 due to delays caused by the pause on communication with schools as a result of COVID-19 and floods. The annual survey includes a set of consistently worded questions that enable tracking of views and perspectives over time. While there were no specific questions relating to the R&N Program, some questions related to the resources made available through the R&N Program and to the support provided by DELs to school leaders (refer to Appendix C – CESE Principal Survey R&N questions). A summary of findings is included in Appendix D – CESE Principal Survey analysis summary.

School Needs and Supports Survey

The online School Needs and Supports Survey began as an annual data collection process in Term 4 2021. The CESE evaluation team was invited to include questions relating to this evaluation. Like the CESE Principal Survey, it contains a consistently worded set of general questions to enable tracking of responses over time and includes questions pertinent to key initiatives taking place across the department. Questions included in 2021 and 2022 have relevance to the overall R&N Program evaluation as well as the US and GS projects. The survey included questions relating to the DELs' leadership of GS and US schools, with particular reference to the identification of focus areas, use of the resources, working with principals on the IPMs and the personnel in the department that have provided the most support to undertake their role in the program (refer to Appendix E – School Needs and Supports Survey questions). A summary of findings is included in Appendix F – School Needs and Supports Survey analysis summary.

CESE URH User Pop-up Survey

A series of short multiple-choice questions were developed to seek user feedback on the R&N resources on the Universal Resource Hub whilst the user was browsing. Carefully programmed inclusion criteria triggered a single pop-up question that users were asked to answer. Questions appeared either on the 'Home' page or on an R&N resource page. Resource pages were selected based on the top visited R&N resources at the time of the survey. One question only was asked for a given period (approximately 4 weeks, or until sufficient responses had been collected). The questions (refer to Appendix G – URH User Pop-Up Survey Questions) asked users about matters such as their motivations for visiting the URH, intended use of the resources, and their overall user experience. Controls were put into place to avoid a user having to answer more than one question during their visit, or during subsequent visits. The URH User Pop-up Survey was undertaken between February and June 2022. A summary of findings is included in Appendix H – URH User Pop-up Survey analysis summary.

SSS Partnership surveys

Several surveys were distributed to DELs, principal school leaders, principals, school SSS R&N leads, principal education officers and lead specialists (Table 5). There was some variability of distribution and collection process between iterations of the surveys in different tranches and stages. These surveys were implemented to better understand the outcomes achieved by schools and how schools could be supported further. The surveys were implemented at the conclusion at the Plan, Deliver and Embed and Sustain stages. The Tranche 3 Embed and Sustain data will be collected 12 weeks after the Embed and Sustain phase is complete, will be analysed in Term 2 2023 and is therefore not included in this report. Raw survey data were not made available to the CESE evaluation team but were summarised by the TQI evaluation team and provided in a slide deck. Findings have not been independently verified.

Table 5

SSS survey details during the Plan, Deliver, Embed and Sustain stages of the Support

Data source	Tool description	Tranche and timing
Plan survey	Designed to better understand how the planning process can be best supported, specifically relating to the diagnosis of school need/s and the collaborative planning of improvement partnerships.	1a, 1b, 2, 3 – conclusion of Plan stage
Deliver survey	Designed to gather feedback on the Deliver stage, including appropriateness of specialist support and usefulness of tools, as well as any outcomes.	1a, 1b, 2, 3 – conclusion of Deliver stage
Embed and Sustain survey	Designed to understand outcomes and how positive changes in practice can be embedded and sustained in SSS schools, while also assisting with future planning.	1a, 1b, 2–3 months post Embed and Sustain stage

SSS Evaluation Toolkit surveys

The evaluation toolkit was developed to support Strategic Delivery personnel to evaluate each SSS improvement partnership. It was designed to cater for a variety of improvement strategies and included a range of evaluation planning resources and data collection/analysis templates. The resources enabled lead specialists to select data collection approaches that met the needs of their schools. For instance, the toolkit supported document analysis, interview guides, and survey templates that were aligned to the focus areas contained within an improvement partnership. These were used with Tranches 1a, 1b, 2 and 3 and various timepoints in each tranche. Feedback on the evaluation toolkit resources was gathered via surveys conducted before and after the Delivery stage. Again, the CESE evaluation team provide findings in this report based on a summary of selected data insights provided by the TQI evaluation team. Raw survey data were not made available.

Stakeholder interviews

CESE interviews with program owners

Interviews with the program owners of each R&N Program support type (US, GS, SSS) were conducted in Term 4 2021 and again in Term 3 2022. Each project team was invited to nominate team members to participate. There were 7 people interviewed in 2021, and 4 in 2022 (some representatives from GS and SSS advised that due to the pause on programs in the first half of 2022, there was too little progress to report any change from 2021). All interviews were conducted using MS Teams. Focus questions were provided ahead of each interview (refer to Appendix K – Program owner interview guide). In 2021, participants were asked about their experience so far in the R&N Program, including elements that worked well and not so well, challenges experienced, lessons learned, and areas of focus for the next phase of implementation. In 2022, interviews focused more on outcomes. All interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and analysed according to themes.

CESE interviews with school leaders

28 school leaders (defined as staff who have responsibility for reading and numeracy improvement within a school) were interviewed from 24 schools. The schools in the sample were randomly selected using factors such as location, school type, and program participation (US, GS, SSS). Some school leaders experienced 2 types of support across 2021 and 2022. Interviews were conducted using MS Teams with individual staff members, or with school leadership teams, where appropriate. A semi-structured interview guide was used in the 45-minute interviews (refer to Appendix I – School leader interview guide). Staff were asked to discuss their experience of and views on the strategies employed by the R&N Program, the extent to which knowledge and teaching practice has changed as a result of the R&N Program, and any challenges and/or benefits they experienced. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed using NVivo software.

CESE interviews with DELs

There were 11 DELs interviewed during Term 3 2022. The sample was purposively selected to reflect a range of principal network locations. All interviews were conducted using MS Teams. A semi-structured interview guide was used, and interview duration was 45–60 minutes (refer to Appendix J – DEL interview guide). The interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and analysed using NVivo. Discussions covered a range of issues, including how they provided reading and numeracy support to schools, how support was received, their experience of providing support, challenges and benefits and any changes they have observed in schools.

DEL and school leader interviews were sampled from a range of geographical and demographic backgrounds providing views about all 3 types of support. All DELs interviewed were able to comment on their experiences with their schools who participated in SSS, GS and US.

SSS interviews and focus groups

Towards the end of Tranches 1 and 2, over 15 interviews and 5 focus groups were conducted. The focus groups aimed to obtain insight into collective experiences with the SSS partnership process while the interviews explored the participants' perceived effectiveness of the SSS model, as well as their experiences with the implementation process. Participants were sampled to ensure there was representation across School Performance Directorates, the focus areas of improvement (reading or numeracy), and types of schools (primary, secondary or central). Preliminary themes, subthemes and coding were identified through NVivo. Analysis examined patterns within and across themes, subthemes, and participants. The interview and focus group data were analysed by the TQI evaluation team and a summary was provided to the CESE evaluation team for this report.

Document and data analysis

All document and data analysis in this section was undertaken by the CESE evaluation team.

URH user data

The universal R&N resources are housed on the URH, located on the department website. A range of 'back-end' data were collected around the URH's use.

- Google Analytics and Google Big Data, as well as Department of Education Human Resources data are used to capture and interpret the data.
- URH analytics use Google Analytics to determine 'New' or 'Returning' users. This is measured by checking for a tracking cookie placed on a device from visiting the URH.
- Distinct schools are measured using a combination of URH Backend (Google Big Query) and School Master Data to count the schools.
- Distinct School Users – this is a unique count of users associated to a school. This is measured using URH Backend (Google Big Query).

Analysis looked at both user profile (for example, user email address, school, frequency of use, duration of visit, clicks/views/downloads) and resource profile (for example, clicks/views/downloads). The data were provided to the evaluation team and analysis provided some insights into user numbers and patterns of use. However, there are several factors that limit the usefulness of the data:

- The data may underestimate actual usage as schools use shared computers (for example, during staff meetings); data for 'Distinct school user' and 'Distinct school session' may or may not reflect multiple users viewing the URH.
- School leaders may act as a 'filter' for the resources. We cannot be certain of overall usage of a specific resource as an individual may download and share with multiple people via email or printed copy.

- Some data are drawn from Google Analytics which uses ‘Tracking cookies’ at a device level which does not capture discreet Single Sign On (SSO) logins. User behaviour, such as clearing tracking cookies, using Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) or signing in on a different device, may distort the data.
- The data only includes counts where the user has accessed resources through the URH (rather than via another platform).

Professional learning completions

As part of the R&N Program, bespoke online professional learning opportunities designed by the L&N team and delivered on MyPL (the department’s online professional learning portal) are available to all department staff. The number of staff, the schools and networks they represent, and the type of professional learning undertaken were provided to and analysed by the evaluation team (refer to Appendix L – Professional learning available under the R&N Program for more details and Appendix M for an analysis of MyPL course data).

Analysis, undertaken by CESE, used MyPL course data drawn from Term 1 2018 through to end of Term 3 2022 to identify trends, and the most relevant professional learning for teachers and schools. This data period enabled reporting on course uptake trends. Comparisons between the levels of school and the types of support are drawn from the trend data.

Further information is extracted from other data sources including R&N project data, R&N course catalogue, HR data, and Master data. Some courses that were available before the introduction of the R&N Program were re-purposed with the same content. Professional Learning has been released at different times throughout the year. Enrolled courses are reported in 3 status categories:

- **Completed.** Includes school staff who completed a PL in any time across the given time period. This includes the PLs that have been completed but the expiry date has lapsed.
- **Incomplete.** Includes school staff enrolled in the PL and started the PL but not yet completed. This includes those that enrolled but the due date for completing this course has lapsed.
- **Not attempted.** Includes school staff enrolled in the PL but not started the course. This includes those that have cancelled their enrolment in the course.

Diagnostic assessment participation data

Summary data relating to downloads of a selection of optional diagnostic assessments from the URH were made available to the evaluation team (refer to Appendix I). The data related to:

- assessment resource/tool
- lodgements by calendar year, scholastic year and school
- number of individual students who lodged by calendar year, scholastic year and school
- total school enrolments by calendar year, scholastic year and school.

We anticipated that analysis of the data might indicate change in uptake over the course of the R&N Program. However, our analysis found the data was not very helpful for the following reasons:

- Data relating to use of assessments are not necessarily an accurate reflection of use. Although they can be completed online, they can also be completed by downloading. But downloading does not guarantee that they were used.
- Further, individuals may download then share the assessments both within and across schools/networks – again, the number of downloads then does not necessarily reflect use.
- For the 5 assessments examined, data was limited to one or 2 years. Only one had data for 3 years (2020–22). Drawing conclusions about trend data is not possible based on 2 years of data.

The SSS interim report and process evaluation presentation.

Strategic Support provided an interim evaluation report which included insights at the conclusion of the first tranche of support. The report was made available to the R&N evaluation team. A presentation of process evaluation results was also provided.

Citing of sources and data

Some groups of participants have been interviewed and surveyed by both the CESE evaluation team and the TQI evaluation team, therefore, in this report when surveys and interviews are cited, we note which evaluation team supplied the evidence.

Limitations

An outcome evaluation, even prior to the unexpected events impacting on the program, is likely to be severely impeded by several factors:

- There is no mechanism for including control schools with which to compare Universal Support schools, as all schools in the state have the resource support available to them.
- Disaggregation of each of the 3 levels of support to determine their degree of causal impact on student outcomes is impossible.
 - DELs may choose to utilise the same strategies and offer the same level of shoulder-to-shoulder to non-Guided schools. Unless we can identify the level of support given to each school over the course of implementation there is no means for identifying the ‘dose’ a school has received.
- Many of the universal R&N resources composite on the URH were previously available to schools and teachers well before the commencement of this project, reducing the likelihood of a) identifying new changes to knowledge and practices for schools and their teachers and b) measuring the impact on student performance as a result.

- The likelihood of seeing an impact on NAPLAN results in 2022 is highly unlikely. The R&N Program largely targets the school leadership filtering down to teachers. The effect on students is unlikely to be evident for at least 2 years.
- The possibility of directly attributing outcomes exclusively to the R&N Program is confounded by the related initiatives that overlap with the R&N: COVID Intensive Learning Support Program, NSW Maths strategy, Leading Evidence, Evaluation and Data project, Curriculum Reform and the instigation of the assistant principal, curriculum and instruction role in every school with a K to 6 enrolment.

Independent evaluation of the SSS

As mentioned earlier, one component of the program, the SSS, was independently evaluated by the TQI evaluation team. While both the CESE evaluation team and TQI evaluation team kept abreast of each other's work, it is feasible that methodological approaches differed in some aspects leading to some small discrepancies between the findings of both teams. For example, analytic approaches to survey data may have differed. Where findings have been provided by the TQI they have been noted as such. CESE has not independently reviewed these data points.

The following chapters present the evaluation questions and their findings.

Chapter 3:

How well was the Reading and Numeracy Program implemented?

This chapter answers our first evaluation question – ‘How well was the R&N Program implemented?’ – and 2 sub-questions:

- i. What aspects worked well, and what aspects didn’t work well?
- ii. What were the factors that supported and hindered successful implementation?

To answer the evaluation question, we need first to describe the extent to which the R&N Program was implemented and so we also ask: ‘To what extent was the R&N Program implemented as intended?’

Throughout the chapter, we provide a comprehensive set of summary dot points at the beginning of each of the following sections, highlighting our key findings and providing succinct insights:

To what extent was the R&N Program implemented as intended?

What aspects have worked well?

What aspects did not work well?

What factors supported successful implementation?

What factors hindered successful implementation?

Conclusion

To what extent was the R&N Program implemented as intended?

Each of the 3 types of support was not delivered exactly as intended. This section describes how events and changes affected the delivery of Universal, Guided and Strategic School Support.

Box 1

Summary points for 'To what extent was the R&N Program implemented as intended?'

Universal Support (US)

- The universal resources, containing reading and numeracy guides, lessons and other resources, were developed over the course of the program to meet the needs of schools.
- The original intention was to deliver face-to-face, blended and online professional learning, but due to disruptions caused by COVID-19, universal professional learning was limited to online and blended delivery (using Microsoft Teams).
- The Leading Collaboration for School Improvement toolkit provided DELs with a clear discussion protocol with principals.
- Individualised NAPLAN data packages were made available for each school on the department's data reporting platform, Scout.

Guided Support (GS)

- Guided Support schools were selected according to their likelihood of shifting students into the top 2 NAPLAN Reading and Numeracy bands.
- COVID-19, other natural disasters and the department executive decision to embargo communication to school personnel impacted all components of the program; GS most of all. As a result, implementation of GS was limited and largely left to DELs to decide how to implement.

Strategic School Support (SSS)

- Tranche 1 in 2021 was impacted by COVID-19 and much of the delivery was converted to online.
- Tranches 2 and 3 were implemented for 2 cohorts across 2 compressed and overlapping timelines due to COVID-19 and SSS activities were also restricted to some extent by COVID-19.

Before we assess **how well** the R&N Program was implemented, we need to consider to **what extent** it was implemented as intended. The evaluation found that the program was not fully implemented in the way the initiative was envisaged. While a number of key elements of the program were delivered, including universal resources, online professional learning, data packages for schools, guidance resources for DELs and school leaders, and 3 tranches of SSS (with some modifications), a key element of the support model, GS, was substantially impacted by COVID-19 restrictions.

Implementation of the R&N Program commenced at the start of the 2021 school year, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, and alongside a series of natural disasters including bushfires and floods which further disrupted teaching and learning. In July 2021, localised and state-wide stay-at-home orders to help combat the spread of COVID-19 resulted in attendance levels in NSW schools falling to around 5%, the majority of students engaging in online learning between July and October 2021.³ While there was a gradual return to face-to-face learning in Term 4 2021, schools continued to deal with the significant daily challenges of high levels of student and staff absenteeism due to COVID-19 infections for the rest of 2021 and throughout the first half of 2022.

In response to these challenges, the department paused all non-essential external demands on schools for Terms 1 and 2 2022. The aim was to minimise external demands to allow schools to focus on teaching and learning during this critical 'recovery' period. This decision to 'lighten the load' on schools had a significant impact on the implementation of a range of programs, including the R&N Program. Table 6 summarises the implementation status of each of the key activities designed under the R&N Program.

3 National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance, 2022. COVID-19 in schools – the experience in NSW: 18 October 2021 to 17 December 2021. Accessed on 17/02/23.

Table 6
Summary of implementation status of R&N Program activities

R&N Program	Output	Implementation status
Universal Support	Teacher, school and classroom resources	Delivered
	Professional learning	Modified delivery
	Leading Collaboration for School Improvement toolkit	Delivered
	Reading and numeracy data packages	Delivered
Guided Support	Professional learning to assist DELs to implement Guided Support	Modified delivery
	Selection of schools with the greatest likelihood of increasing proportion of schools in top 2 NAPLAN bands	Delivered
	Provision of shoulder-to-shoulder support by DELs to plan and implement R&N improvements	Modified/ delayed delivery
	DEL Supporting Guided Schools resource	Delivered
Strategic School Support	Identification of a priority subset of schools most in need of support	Delivered
	Stakeholder engagement with School Performance EDs, DELs, PSLs, principals and school staff	Delivered
	Allocation of Strategic Delivery resources	Delivered
	Intensive support from Strategic Delivery team	Modified/ delayed delivery

Universal Support

The universal resources, containing reading and numeracy guides, lessons and other resources, were developed over the course of the program to meet the needs of schools.

The Literacy and Numeracy team developed a methodology for assessing resources for inclusion in a shared repository located on the department's online staff portal. The repository changed name several times – curriculum hub, digital learning hub, reading and numeracy hub – before it became the Universal Resources Hub. Initially the repository began as a SharePoint site owned by the L&N team before being housed with other non-literacy and numeracy resources on the department website. The assessment methodology involved a rigorous quality assurance process to ensure the selected resources merited the labels 'high quality' and 'evidence-based'. Initially the assessment process proved to be somewhat laborious and time consuming, but over time was streamlined through development of an explicit process including a new 'app' to assist. Between the start of 2021 and the end of 2022, a total of 350 reading and numeracy resources and guides had been uploaded to the URH (6 were removed during 2022). At the time of writing, 344 reading and numeracy resources (uploaded by the L&N team) were available on the URH. A breakdown by resource type is presented in Table 7.

Table 7
Number of resources uploaded to the URH

Reading/ Numeracy	Resource type	Total number	Number suitable for primary	Number suitable for secondary
Reading	Teacher guides	13	13	5
	Classroom resources	119	91	46
	Assessments	11	9	7
Numeracy	Teacher guides	6	6	1
	Classroom resources	194	182	34
	Assessments	1	1	1
Total (6 removed)		344	302	94

Source: L&N Unit.

The original intention was to deliver face-to-face, blended and online professional learning, but due to disruptions caused by COVID-19, universal professional learning was limited to online and blended (using MS Teams) delivery.

The L&N team developed a suite of self-access online professional learning courses. 24 courses were aimed specifically at improving focus areas in reading and numeracy aligned with the syllabuses: 9 designed for secondary; 10 for primary; and 4 for both primary and secondary (a full list is included Appendix L).

A range of on-demand literacy and numeracy courses are also available on MyPL (the department's online professional learning system). These are listed in Appendix M.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the L&N team redesigned 6 face-to-face professional learning courses into a blended learning mode of delivery, meaning participants engaged with some of the material through self-paced online learning and some of the material was delivered by lead specialist facilitation through a synchronous MS Teams meeting. These sessions began towards the end of 2021 and continued through 2022.

The Leading Collaboration for School Improvement Toolkit provided DELs with a clear discussion protocol with principals.

Another key element of US was the development of a resource aimed at DELs and principals/school leaders. The resource, entitled Leading Collaboration for School Improvement Toolkit, was drafted by a project team including members of the L&N team and a group of DELs, tested with other DELs and subsequently revised, and then distributed to DELs and principals. The resource was intended to support differentiated conversations between DELs and principals, and between principals and staff, with the aim of driving improved literacy and numeracy practices within schools. The finalised resource was made available to all on the department's website.

Individualised NAPLAN data packages were available for each school through the department's data platform, Scout.

The fourth component of US was the development and provision of access to data packages through the department's data platform, Scout, that provided individualised analysis of areas of weakness identified from the previous year's NAPLAN results, with hyperlinks to resources on the URH that target those specific areas. Initially the data packages were intended for GS and SSS schools only but quickly extended to all schools.

Communication with schools about the universal resources, professional learning and data packages was undertaken by the L&N team via DELs, lead specialists, Staff Noticeboard and through the Strategic Delivery staff implementing SSS. However, the pause on non-essential communications in the last term in 2021 and first half of 2022 (to allow schools to focus on teaching in the initial post-COVID-19 return to face-to-face schooling – refer to description under Guided Support) meant that further notifications about the resources had to be suspended until communication with schools resumed in Term 3, 2022.

Guided Support

Guided Support schools were selected according to their likelihood of shifting students into the top 2 NAPLAN Reading and Numeracy bands.

Guided Support was the last of the 3 R&N Program components to commence, in May 2021 (at the DEL summit) and a higher profile approach from the start of Term 3 2021. An initial cohort of 397 schools was identified to participate in GS in 2021, and 432 schools were identified in 2022.⁴ Schools were selected based on 2017/2018 NAPLAN scores and on the highest number of students that were most likely to move into the top 2 NAPLAN bands by 2022/2023. DELs were informed at the start of Term 3 2021 which of the schools in their principal network were identified for GS.

At this time a resource entitled DEL Supporting Guided Schools was developed by the GS program owners. The resource provided an overview of the GS process for DELs, including a description of the process and timing of the key components: identification of schools, determining an improvement focus, guidance in the use of universal resources, review, adjustment and evaluation.

Drop-in weekly professional learning sessions were offered to DELs during Term 3 2021 to assist them to implement GS. The sessions were optional and aimed to help DELs prepare for their work with school leaders in developing Strategic Improvement Plans (SIPs) that would articulate 2 key actions:

- a. identification of focus areas for reading and/or numeracy most in need of improvement, and
- b. identification and implementation of appropriate universal resources to assist in addressing the specific focus area needs.

COVID-19, other natural disasters and the department executive decision to embargo communication to school personnel impacted all components of the program; Guided Support most of all. As a result, implementation of GS was limited and largely left to DELs to decide how to implement.

The embargo on all non-essential departmental communication with school personnel (including DELs) effectively restricted the L&N team from providing additional guidance or support to DELs until restrictions were lifted in Term 3 2022. Between Term 4 2021 and Term 3 2022, the L&N team were not able to communicate with schools and they had limited communication with DELs about the support. Further, there was no monitoring of GS activities during this period. Information that had been provided to DELs in the initial stage, Term 3 2021, largely had to be sufficient for sustaining GS.

Further to this, during 2021 and 2022 the effects of teacher shortages, absenteeism of staff and students due to COVID-19 and severe floods in Terms 1 and 2 2022 likely also shifted the focus of DELs when working with schools.

⁴ This included some from the first cohort, most of the first tranche of SSS schools (which transitioned into GS), as well as some newly identified schools.

Anecdotally, it was understood that some DELs were engaging schools in GS, however the activities of DELs were neither mandated nor monitored. Thus, the core component of GS, the shoulder-to-shoulder support provided to schools by DELs, to plan and implement reading and numeracy improvement, was not implemented in the way that was envisaged.

Strategic School Support

There were 3 tranches of SSS delivered to 135 identified schools between the beginning of 2021 and the end of 2022, the majority being primary schools.

Tranche 1 in 2021 was impacted by COVID-19 and much of the delivery was converted to online.

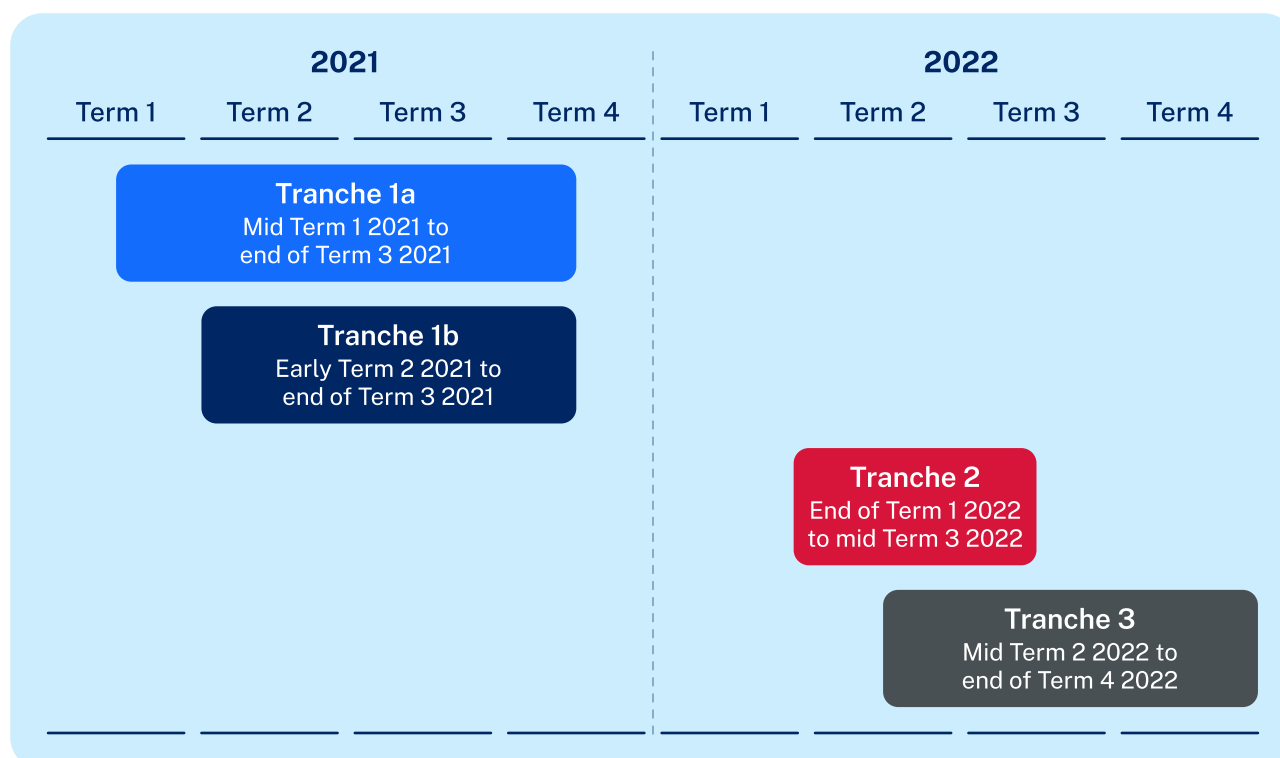
COVID-19 restrictions in 2021 resulted in SSS shifting to online delivery. These restrictions significantly impacted the ability of schools to implement the Tranche 1 model as intended. The specialists supporting schools reported regular difficulty with facilitating as intended due to restrictions. Similarly, teachers were not able to apply the new practices as effectively.

Tranches 2 and 3 were implemented for 2 cohorts across 2 compressed and overlapping timelines due to COVID-19 and SSS activities were also restricted to some extent by COVID-19.

Communication with schools was also limited, which delayed the start of Tranche 2. As a result, the implementation of Tranche 2 overlapped with Tranche 3 (Figure 4). SSS activities were also restricted to some extent by COVID-19, due to the communication embargo and natural disasters.

Figure 4

The general timing of the SSS tranches in 2021 and 2022



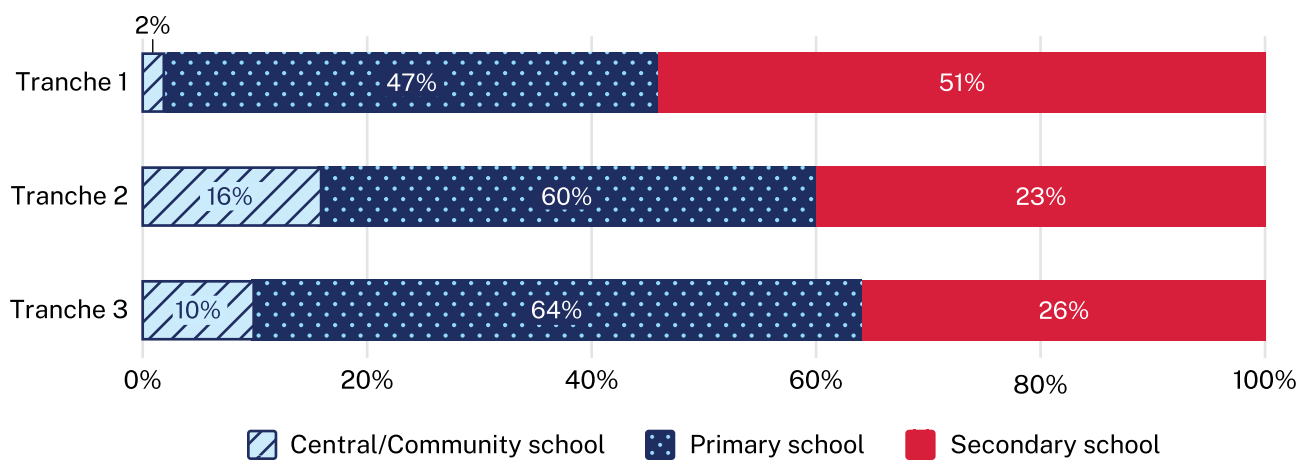
Note: The timeline shows the general weeks allocated to schools, but not necessarily the actual weeks in school due to COVID-19.

Source: SSS R&N process evaluation.

The specialists supporting schools reported difficulty with being unable to model or validate new strategies or practices in classrooms. Similarly, teachers were not able to apply the new practices as effectively. Stakeholders reported this impacted planned outcomes. PEOs claimed in August 2021, that a significant level of adjustment was required as a result of COVID-19 restrictions. The impacts of COVID-19 restrictions were noted in 6 of the 7 requests of schools that were placed on hold. Figure 5 provides more detail regarding the number of schools that actively participated or were withdrawn/on hold.

Figure 5

Number of schools who participated or were withdrawn/on hold in SSS Tranches 1 to 3



Schools			
Tranche	Withdrawn or on hold	Active	Total
1	2	53	55
2	1	43	44
3	8	39	47
Total	11	135	146

Source: SSS R&N process evaluation.

What aspects have worked well?

The R&N Program has delivered many key elements, for example, the reading and numeracy resources available on the Universal Resources Hub and professional learning, despite unexpected necessary modifications and adaptations to meet rapidly changing contexts.

Box 2

Summary points for 'What aspects have worked well?'

Aspects that worked well

- Critical components of the program were delivered despite the obstacles presented by COVID-19 and natural disasters.
- There has been increased focus across the department on reading and numeracy.
- Many principals and DELs recognised that multiple resources have assisted schools to identify and target their specific reading and numeracy needs.
- The URH has proved to be a source of high quality, relevant R&N resources to many users. However, not everyone has been using it, particularly in secondary schools.
- The necessary pivot from blended to online learning increased the reach of reading and numeracy professional learning. This was of particular benefit to regional schools.
- The program has provided schools access to comprehensive data about their strengths and weaknesses in relation to reading and numeracy.
- SSS participants reported high levels of satisfaction with collaboration between participants in all 3 tranches, with higher satisfaction recorded during the Delivery Stage than during the Plan Stage.
- A strength of the SSS process was the relevant and customised support that addressed schools' focus for improvement.
- The program has generally provided DELs and principals with clear guidance on how to lead reading and numeracy improvement, although this experience was not universal.
- Over 90% of DELs and PSLs indicated that the support offered to schools matched their system- and school-identified data and individual needs.
- SSS has been provided to schools with the highest level of need.

Critical components of the program were delivered despite the obstacles presented by COVID-19 and natural disasters.

In the 2 years of program implementation NSW schools experienced a global pandemic; severe flooding in regional areas which wiped out some schools entirely and critically affected the operation of many others; and high absenteeism of staff and students due to illness. These events disrupted schooling in NSW in ways that are unprecedented. Nevertheless, many of the key components of the R&N Program were delivered despite these events and the fragmented educational experience that has characterised these 2 years. This should be viewed as a significant achievement.

As discussed in the previous section, core components of US and SSS proceeded, even while schools shifted between online and face-to-face learning and dealt with significant staff and student absences. Indeed, it was widely viewed that initiatives such as the URH resources and online professional learning were especially important in the context of lockdowns and online classrooms, schools still had some access to vital resources.

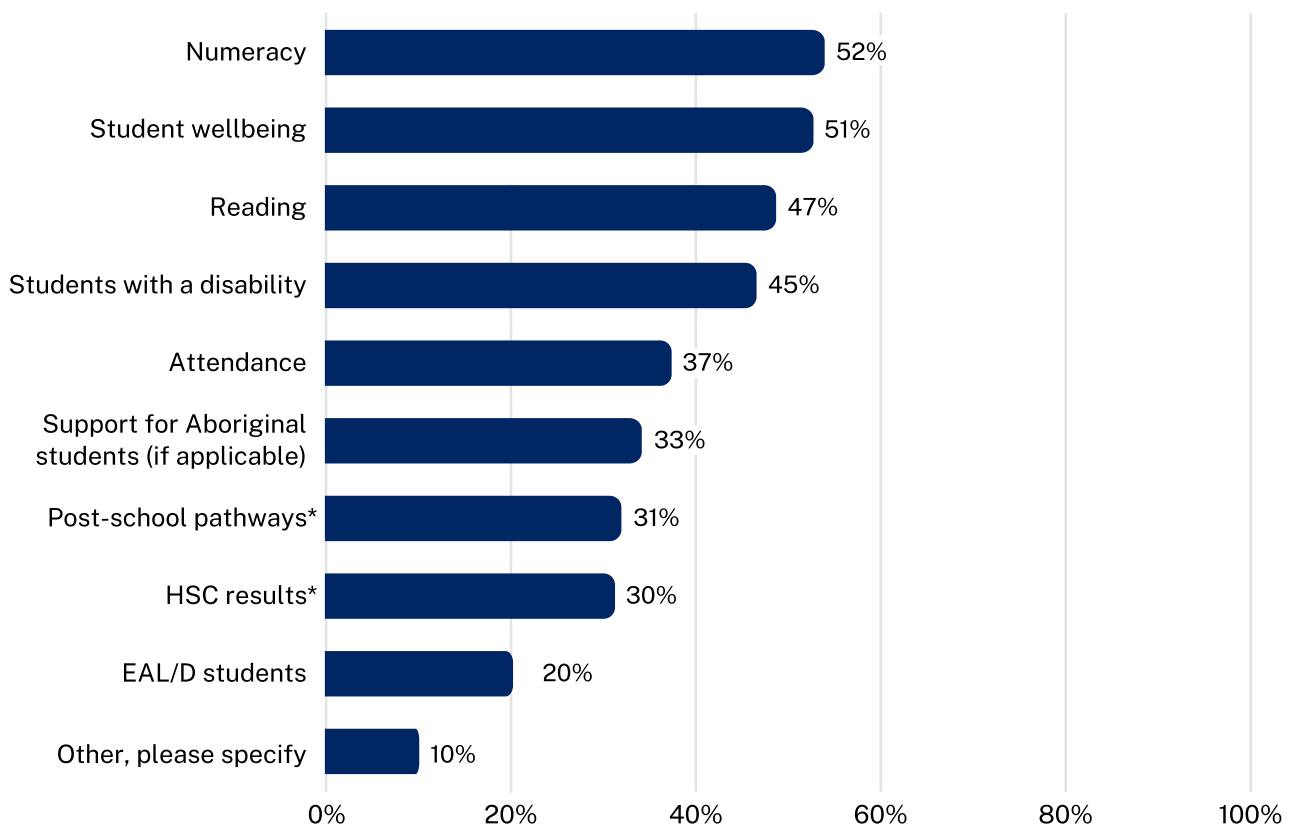
There has been increased focus across the department on reading and numeracy.

The combination of a series of recent reading/literacy and numeracy initiatives, including the R&N Program, has had the effect of increasing the focus on, and elevating the importance of, reading and numeracy across the department. The combined effect of concerning NAPLAN results, the Premier's Priorities, and initiatives such as Bump It Up, the Maths Strategy, the focus of SIPs and IPMs on reading and numeracy, the external validation process, as well as key R&N resources and, more recently, the Literacy and Numeracy Five Priorities, has resulted in an elevated explicit focus on reading and numeracy within the department. This focus is being evidenced at the school level.

The evaluation found a high level of support for the reading and numeracy improvement objectives of the R&N Program across the department, including teachers, principals and other school leaders, DELs and program owners. Clearly, reading and numeracy improvement ranks highly in departmental staff priorities. This was evidenced in the 2021 and 2022 CESE Principal Surveys, as well as qualitative interviews with school leaders and DELs.

Figure 6

2022 Principals' responses to the areas where they would like additional support to improve student outcomes



* Only secondary principals were asked to respond to the items on post-school pathways and HSC results.

Source: CESE Principal Survey.

The CESE Principal Survey revealed that reading and numeracy were both listed in the top 3 areas in which principals wanted additional support (Figure 6). When disaggregated we note that primary principals indicated they needed more support in numeracy (55%) than in reading (50%), while secondary principals indicated a need for more support in numeracy and reading (44% and 37% respectively). For further analysis of the findings of the CESE Principal Survey, refer to Appendix D).

“At least this process for me gave an opportunity to provide clarity for schools of what support was going to look like because previous to that it was a little bit all over the place. I’m not saying this is a perfect model, but it was better than we were at.” (DEL, CESE interviews)

“That was a critical juncture because we’ve done a lot of high-level conceptualisation. We’ve done situational analysis, we’ve identified needs in each school, but there is a point now. So OK, we need to work out how we’re going to meet our targets or the improvement measures that we have developed based on the targets. And this is where the reading and numeracy program was needed.” (DEL, CESE interviews)

Many principals and DELs recognised that multiple resources have assisted schools to identify and target their specific reading and numeracy needs.

In interviews, many school leaders and DELs reported taking a more strategic and focused approach to improving reading and/or numeracy and articulated a range of practical strategies they were using to do this. Strategies included:

- guidance in reading/numeracy by a dedicated instructional leader (for many this has now become the AP, C&I role)
- a deep dive into NAPLAN, check-in and other data
- professional learning focused on lifting leadership in R&N
- development of reading and/or numeracy strategies
- use of the resources on the URH
- collaborative planning
- researching evidence-based R&N strategies
- leadership strategies, for example, establishing reading and numeracy teams.

The TQI evaluation team reported that SSS participants rated resources as high quality and supported effective implementation. Across all tranches, the resources were reportedly well received and rated as useful, especially the logic model, theory of action and outcomes matrix. The evaluation resources also reportedly provided evaluation guidance and fostered evaluative thinking and reflection. Data reported for Tranche 3 showed that of those who used the evaluation toolkit, 100% reported it to be at least somewhat useful with 58% reporting it to be extremely useful.

“The tools that have been developed have been extremely useful and supported collaborative and open conversations.” (PEO, Tranche 1, SSS R&N process evaluation)

SSS schools reportedly also appreciated having external support to guide the process and deliver professional learning, particularly from specialists with relevant expertise. The lead specialists were highly valued as knowledgeable experts that strengthened implementation. Schools particularly appreciated the way specialists tailored supports and strategies to meet school needs and support the strengthening of teacher practice.

“Lead specialists were exceptional. I cannot thank them enough for their positivity, problem solving skills and commitment to make a difference. The consistency of support provided by the program was a strength – it always kept the process and expectations at the forefront of our mind.” (Principal, Tranche 2, SSS R&N process evaluation)

The range of resources available to target literacy and numeracy has been very helpful as noted in these sample comments.

“5 or 6 years ago, when someone said, ‘What’s your reading strategy?’ I think a lot of schools would have gone, ‘I don’t know, this is really difficult.’ Having these little booklets out gives us a more of a plan of what there is. So, I guess more confident that my teachers can understand what the plan is and when we’re talking comprehension or cohesiveness, there’s a bit more of a plan than just anything that people find and say, ‘Well, this is a good idea.’” (Principal, GS, secondary, CESE interviews)

“I guess prior to using the Hub, it was very much on teachers’ interests, whereas it has definitely targeted the way we do it now. It’s targeting literacy and numeracy, and it’s targeting our bottom achievers, and it’s targeting our needs in our NAPLAN data.” (Principal, GS, primary, CESE interviews)

In the School Needs and Supports Survey (November 2022), more than 80% of respondents (DEs and PSLs) stated that the reading and numeracy supports made available by the department are either somewhat or fully meeting the needs of schools in their networks. Further to this, just under 95% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that all reading and numeracy resources are relevant to schools. For further analysis of the School Needs and Supports Survey refer to Appendix F.

According to some DEs we interviewed, the department’s messaging regarding what to focus on is providing some clarity to schools.

“I can now see that there’s a big plan and the department is trying to make sure that everyone uses data informed practices that are tried and tested, and evidence-based resources to support those practices available. So, there’s a very clear way forward.” (DE, CESE interviews)

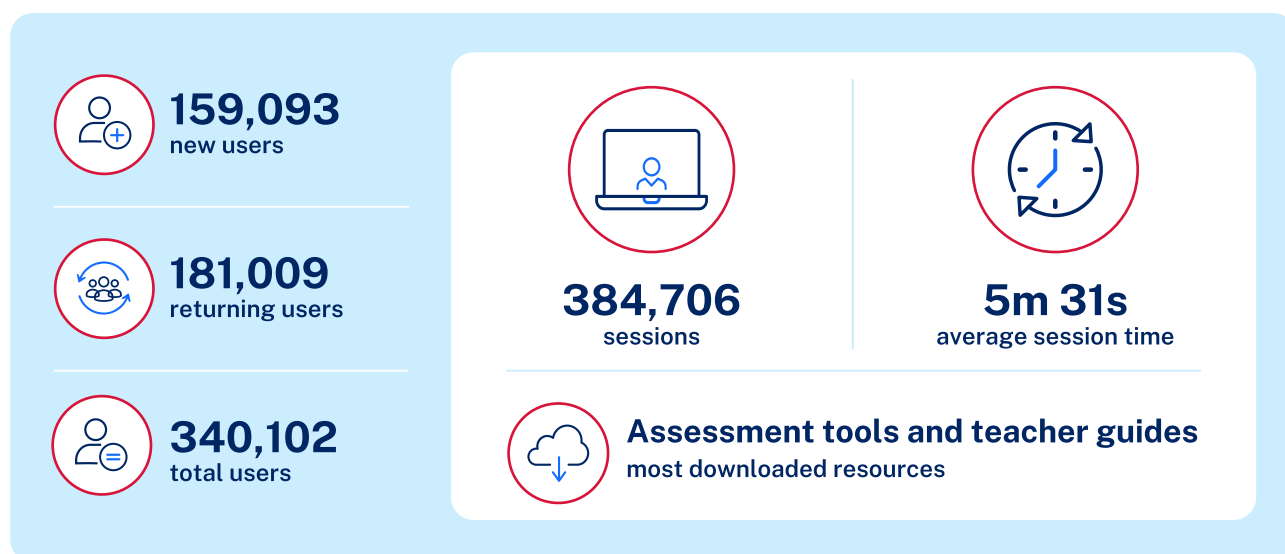
The evaluation found that there is a great deal of interest and concern amongst staff to improve reading and numeracy as a priority. Therefore, the department’s decision to focus on these 2 areas, and the broad objectives of the R&N Program, have been well supported and welcomed.

The URH has proved to be a source of high quality, relevant resources to many users. However, not everyone is using it, particularly in secondary schools.

A key pillar of the R&N Program are the reading and numeracy resources available through the URH. US provides a growing suite of practical resources, accessible to all schools. Website user data shows that the URH was well used, with nearly half of users returning at least once more, and with an average time on the website at just over 5 minutes (Figure 7).

Figure 7

URH user data for R&N resources, October 2022



Source: URH user data for R&N resources (analysed by CESE).

There is a wealth of evidence from the qualitative and quantitative evaluation research that show that the R&N resources made available through the URH were needed, well-regarded, useful, and well-used (Table 8).

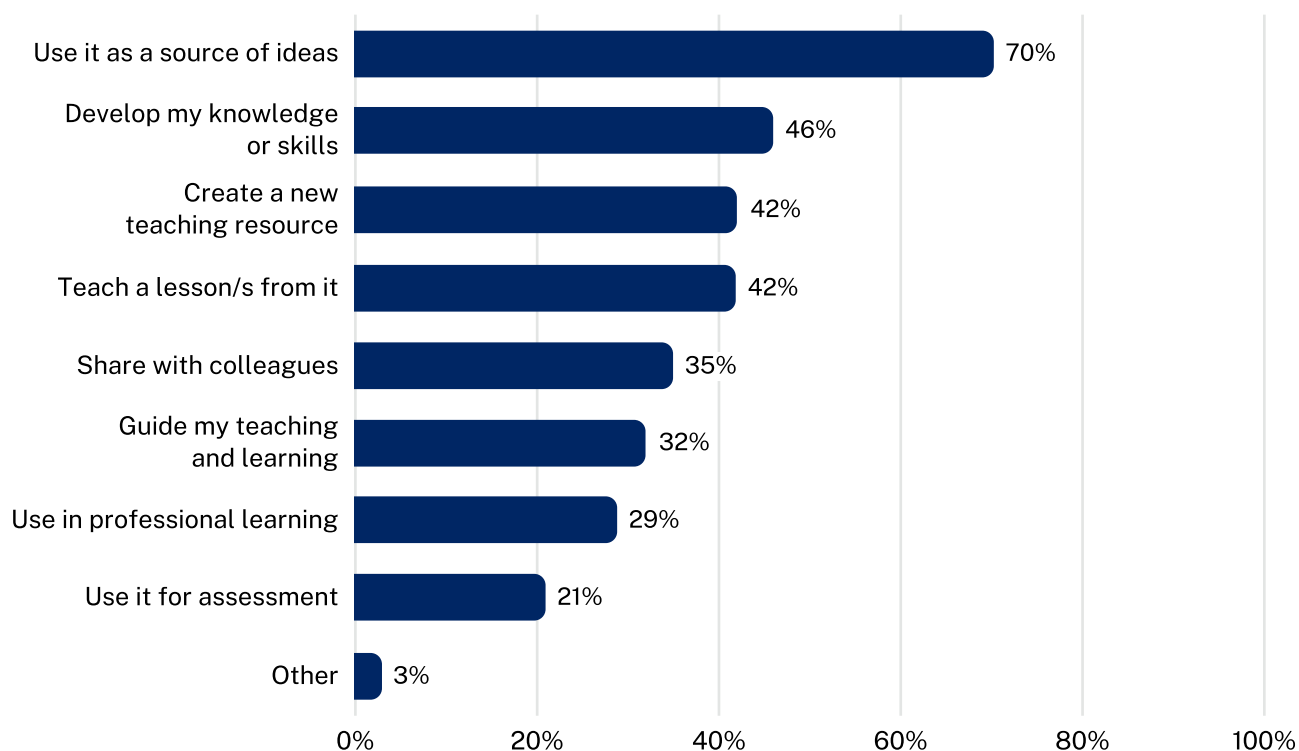
Table 8

Summary of evaluation evidence about the URH

Data source	The perspectives of URH user groups
URH User Pop-up Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most respondents found something useful on the URH. • Even those who didn't find exactly what they were looking for, generally found something else that was useful. • 54% of respondents found exactly what they were looking for. • 24% said they found something else. • 22% said the URH did not have what they were looking for. • 82% said the R&N resources supported knowledge and skill development in students very well or quite well.
CESE Teacher Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 72% of primary teachers looked at or explored the URH; 51% have used some of the R&N resources. • 46% of secondary teachers looked at or explored the URH; 19% have used some of the R&N resources. • 37% reporting that their school does not use URH resources in R&N professional development, while another 37% said the resources had been brought to their attention and 33% said they were discussed and/or shared during meetings. • Of those who have used the R&N resources, around half said they found them useful (that is, somewhat, quite or very useful). The remainder either didn't find them useful or didn't know. • Those who have used the R&N resources report multiple uses. The most common use was 'as a source of ideas' (70%), followed by 'to develop my knowledge or skills' (46%), 'create a new teaching resource' (42%), 'to teach a lesson/s from it' (42%), 'shared with colleagues' (35%).
School leaders' interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R&N resources are seen as high quality and are much appreciated by teachers. The department's approval and QA process gives staff confidence about the quality. • Teachers have used the R&N resources as-is, however they have also adapted as needed. • Some issues with usability were raised, for example, that teachers needed to be fairly experienced and know what they were looking for to find it useful, that it could be overwhelming because of the volume, and that it could be difficult to navigate. • The URH is a great resource but should not be seen as a one-stop-shop. • According to the CESE Principal Survey, of all the online sites available on the department's website, the URH was viewed as very effective or effective by 62% in 2021 and 55% in 2022.

Data source	The perspectives of URH user groups
DEL interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The URH is a significant contribution that provides quality R&N resources to educators. • DELs directed schools to R&N resources on the URH and used resources in their support sessions. • The availability of modifiable, lesson-ready R&N resources was particularly useful. • If anything, there is too much on the Hub and it is becoming a bit overwhelming.
Program owners' interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of the URH was a significant achievement in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, particularly with limited staff resources. • Over time the process of building up the URH through addition of new R&N resources has been streamlined and has become an efficient process. • Consistency of messaging across the R&N resources on the URH was achieved. • The R&N resources on the URH have been accessed by staff from nearly every school in NSW. • There has been much positive feedback from schools about the URH R&N resources: the resources are trusted by teachers and schools feel listened to about their needs.

Those who have used the URH R&N resources, have used them in a variety of ways. Responses between primary and secondary were quite similar for most options. The 2022 CESE Teacher Survey found that the main use was as a 'source of ideas' (70%), followed by to 'develop knowledge or skills' (46%), to 'teach lessons' (42%) and to 'create new teaching resources' (42%) (Figure 8).

Figure 8**Overall use of the URH reading or numeracy resources by teachers**

Source: CESE Teacher Survey.

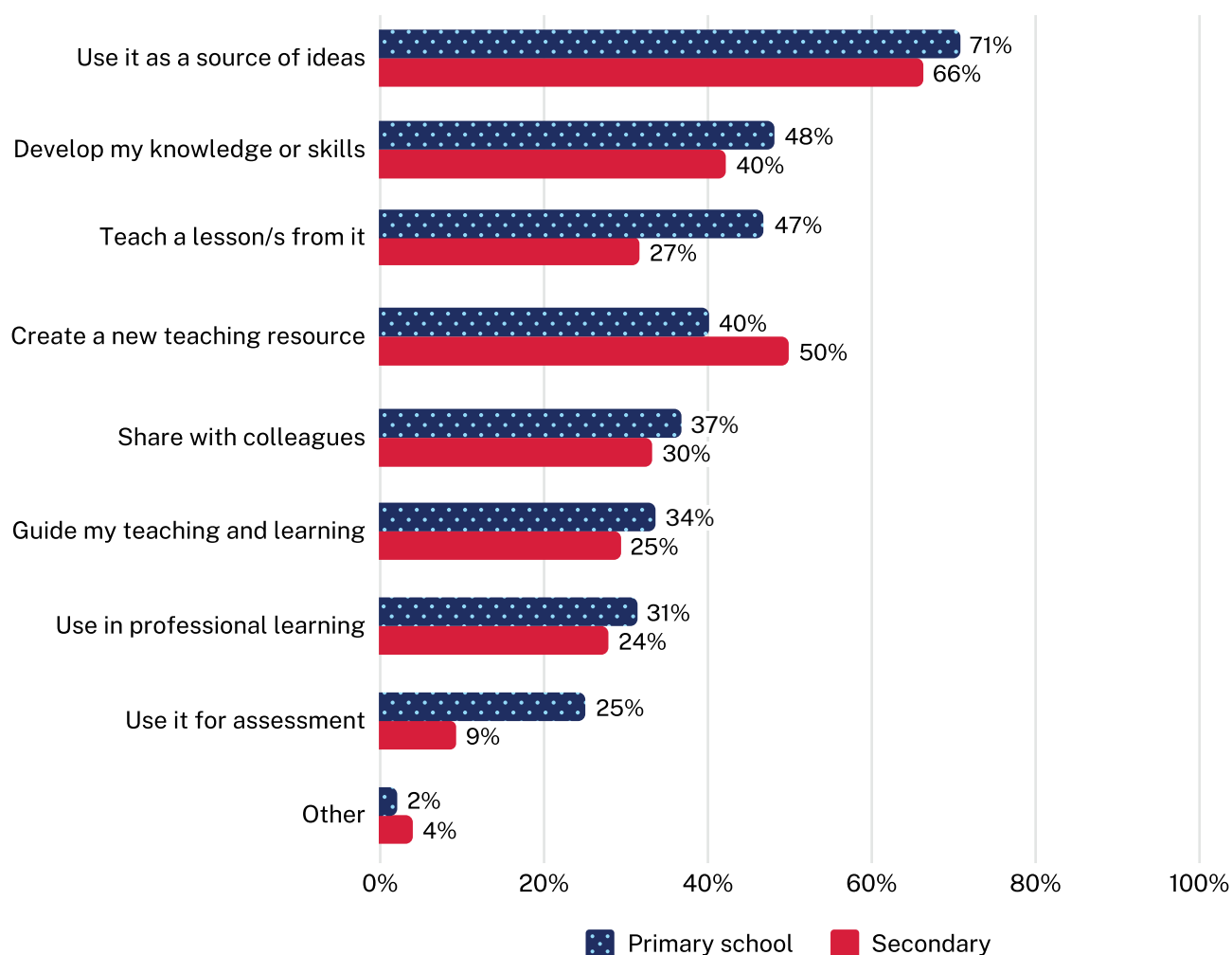
Notably, many teachers appear to be sharing the R&N resources they find with colleagues. About a third of CESE Teacher Survey respondents (35%) said they shared with colleagues, whilst 61% of the URH User Pop-up Survey respondents said they shared with colleagues.

However, utilisation of the URH in internal staff development was variable. When asked how URH resources were used in any internal staff development activities, over one-third of CESE Teacher Survey respondents (37%) reported that their school does not use these resources in professional development, although about the same proportion said these resources had been brought to their attention (37%) and reported that URH resources were discussed and/or shared during meetings (33%).

When the survey responses are disaggregated according to primary and secondary (Figure 9), we note that uses of URH resources, such as, for 'teaching a lesson' (47% primary contrasted with 27% secondary) and 'using for assessment' (25% primary contrasted with 9% secondary) are significantly different between primary and secondary teachers. Further to this, 'creating a new teaching resource' is the only response item where the proportion of secondary teachers is higher than primary. These differences between primary and secondary teacher responses likely suggests that for secondary teachers, the R&N resources could not be easily 'lifted' from the URH for use but required substantial adaptation to be appropriate for their classes. For further analysis of the findings from the CESE Teacher Survey refer to Appendix B, and for further analysis of the URH User Pop-up Survey refer to Appendix H.

Figure 9

Typical use of the URH reading or numeracy resources by teachers (primary vs secondary)



Source: CESE Teacher Survey.

These findings suggest that, while schools are using the URH resources in different ways and to varying extents, the URH is a significant resource for many schools.

Successful aspects of the URH that were highlighted included:

- the quality and reliability of the R&N resources – the fact they are endorsed by the department gives staff confidence that they are evidence-based. School leaders especially like that they can direct new teachers to a bank of resources they can trust, rather than have teachers source materials from less trustworthy sources
- the fact that the resources linked from Scout data and linked directly to the curriculum and IPMs
- access to online professional development (or links to the L&N website or MyPL) which could be accessed by individuals and as part of school-based professional learning sessions
- the multiple ways the database can filter results assisting users to focus on what they need.

However, some criticisms of the URH were also noted, namely:

- The URH can be difficult to use if you don't have the teaching experience to know what to look for. For this reason, many school leaders felt that guidance (for example, from an instructional leader, AP, C&I or head teacher) was important.

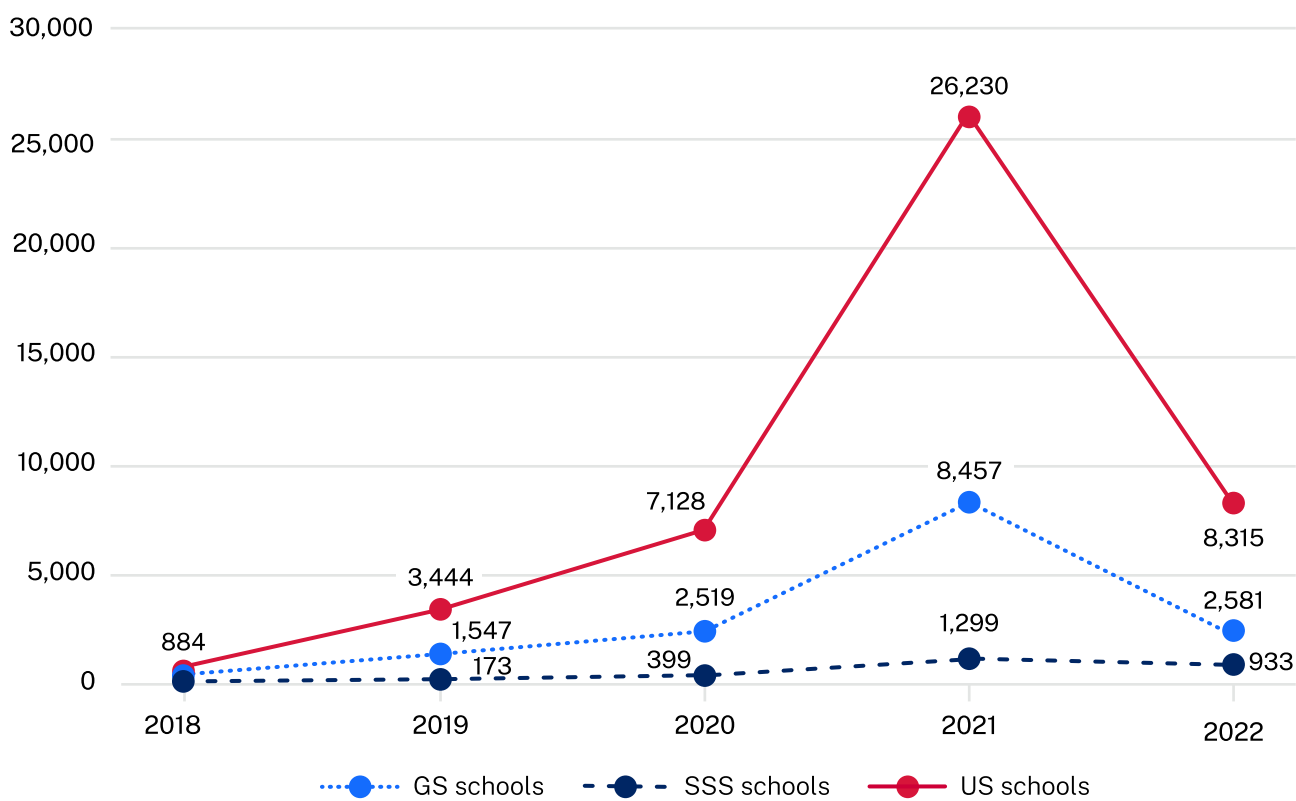
“The universal resources are fantastic. But they need the theoretical background, they need the why, they to some extent, they are the how. And beginning teachers or early career teachers, or any experienced teachers or even just you know time-poor teachers, you wouldn't want them to be accessing those resources without the understanding that goes behind, that needs to accompany it to know about the appropriate use that leads to deep learning on the part of the children.” (Deputy Principal, GS, Primary, CESE interviews)

- The URH was said to be focused on primary schools, with far fewer suitable R&N resources available to secondary schools. It should be noted that the number of resources for secondary schools has increased over time. However, during the evaluation period, there were more than twice as many R&N resources targeting primary schools as there were targeting secondary schools.
- There is more recently, a view that the URH has grown too big, that there are now so many resources that the database is now quite overwhelming for the individual teacher, without suitable guidance.

The necessary pivot from blended to online learning increased the reach of reading and numeracy professional learning. This was of particular benefit to regional schools.

While some of the professional learning components of US and GS were not implemented as planned, the pivot to online delivery due to COVID-19 also presented an opportunity to design and deliver online learning packages in reading and numeracy that proved to be highly popular. More than 60 online reading and numeracy focused courses were added to the MyPL suite and take-up with teachers was enthusiastic, many of them doing more than one course in the suite.

Between 2018 and 2022, the total number of enrolments in R&N courses through MyPL reached 122,951. MyPL course data reveals a noticeable surge in completed R&N courses starting from 2020, reaching its peak in 2021 (Figure 10). It is worth noting that 2021 was a significant year for the program, as it marked the introduction of many specific R&N courses, resulting in a notable increase in enrolments. In that year alone, the number of enrolments reached 60,150, reflecting the growing interest, high uptake, and recognition of the R&N courses. The decrease in enrolments in 2022, with a total of 24,376, is likely attributed to the fact that many individuals had already taken the R&N courses in the preceding years. For further analysis of MyPL course data, refer to Appendix M.

Figure 10**Number of completed R&N courses 2018 to 2022 according to a school's type of support**

Source: MyPL course data (analysed by CESE).

Out of the total enrolments during this period, 57% were completed, indicating an average completion rate. Meanwhile, 27% were left incomplete, and 16% were not attempted.

About 2 in 3 enrolments in R&N courses (67%) were from staff in US Schools, which accounted for approximately 80% of the schools in NSW. This indicates a high level of participation and interest among US Schools, reflecting the value they place on the R&N courses.

The pivot to online learning effectively broadened access and increased reach. In particular, teachers in non-metropolitan and small schools benefited from the availability of online professional learning resources: some leaders in small and regional schools reported that whereas traditional face-to-face professional learning can often be out of reach for them (due to many courses being located in Sydney and/or difficulties small schools experience in arranging teacher release), the online courses could be accessed by anyone, anywhere.

“What we’ve been able to do as a result of that [online learning] is really meet the needs of the regional and rural areas, as well as the metro areas by supporting them with their professional learning at different times.” (Program owner, CESE interviews)

Key elements of the PL delivered in SSS were not delivered as a course per se, but across a longer period of time and in more depth and with more supported implementation. Some of the specialists delivering the statewide PL also delivered the SSS PL. However, they used the content and strategies in more customised ways.

The program has provided schools access to comprehensive data about their strengths and weaknesses in relation to reading and numeracy.

The data packages developed by the L&N team and provided to schools through Scout, were initially available only to GS and SSS schools. However, after feedback from DELs, the L&N team broadened access to the packages for all schools. The extension of access to all schools has been identified by program owners as a key achievement for the R&N Program.

“We know that data was a pain point for a lot of schools and DELs, in being able to narrow down exactly what it is they wanted to focus on. Anecdotally, we got a lot of feedback that, yes, schools know they need to improve reading and numeracy in general, but struggled to actually pinpoint or forensically identify what they should be putting their energy into. The overwhelmingly positive feedback we had from DELs, asking if they can have access to these data, really shows that they found it useful in being able to drive some of those conversations with principals. And in addition, we received feedback that the data package needed to be put into Scout so that principals can access it.”
(Program owner, CESE interviews)

Since their release, the data packages have proved to be popular. In 2021 the data package report was the second most downloaded report in Scout’s NAPLAN report suite. Downloads remained consistent through 2022 as well.

School leaders reported that the packages gave them the ability to identify, in granular detail, the key areas of reading and numeracy that they need to focus on. Another valuable feature was the ability to match identified areas for improvement with resources in the URH that specifically target each area.

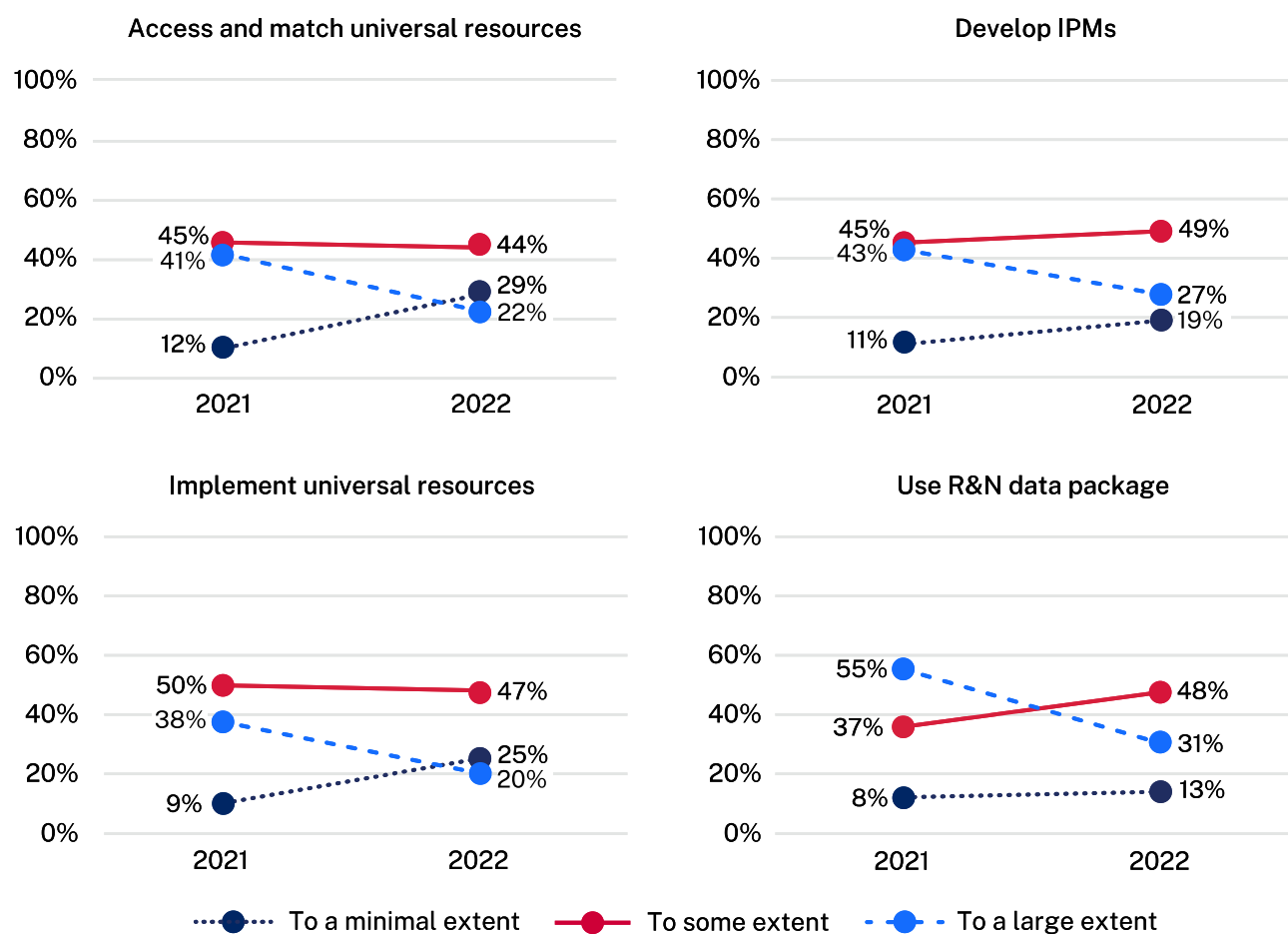
“The data that we were getting from Scout, and then that goes into PLAN2 as well, both of those were really important as to what areas we wanted to focus on. Obviously, we already know from our own teaching practice where there are some things that we’re doing well at and where we’ve got some deficits, but to have that extra lot of data come through where it was very quick to come back as well.” (Principal, US, secondary, CESE interviews)

When asked about how they supported their GS schools, around 90% of DELs in the 2021 School Needs and Supports Survey indicated that they used the R&N data packages, accessed and matched the universal resources and developed IPMs with schools to address focus areas to some extent or a large extent.

The responses to the same question a year later in 2022 differ in that supporting schools ‘to a large extent’ is less prominent. This may be an indication that they either felt that they needed to guide schools less in 2022, or that the data packages, universal resources, and development of IPMs were less of a priority in 2022 (Figure 11).

Figure 11

The extent to which DELs used resources to support their Guided schools in 2021 and 2022



Source: School Needs and Supports Survey (analysed by CESE).

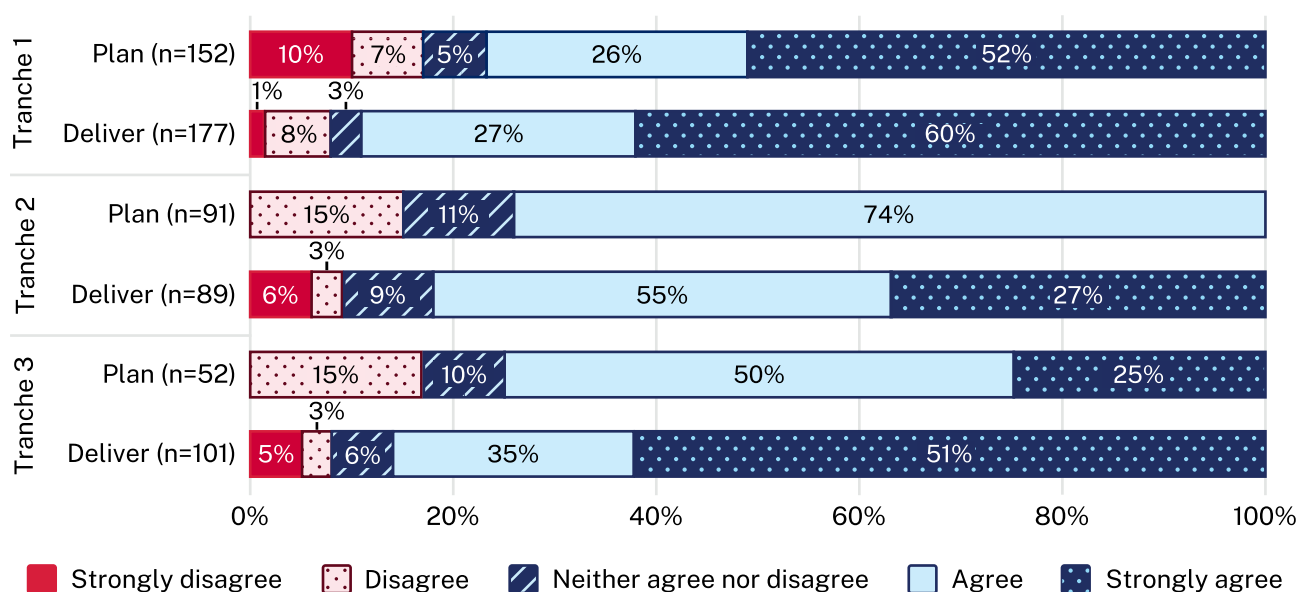
SSS participants reported high levels of satisfaction with collaboration between participants in all 3 tranches, with higher satisfaction recorded during the Delivery Stage than during the Plan Stage.

Participants were asked about their level of satisfaction regarding the collaboration between participants during the planning and delivery phases of SSS. Satisfaction with collaboration in the delivery stage was higher than in the Plan stage across all Tranches (Figure 12) according to the TQI evaluation team. This may be attributed to stronger relationships being developed over time or the involvement of lead specialists in the Deliver stage for Tranche 2 and 3. One DEL noted:

“The Strategic Support provided by the team was tailored, comprehensive and built positive practices at all levels of the school. Not only did the team take time to understand the school, they worked side by side with teachers to authentically engage each individual in the improvement journey.” (DEL, Tranche 2, SSS R&N process evaluation)

Figure 12

Participant agreement for the statement, ‘I am satisfied with the level of collaboration that has occurred with DELs, PSLs, PEOs, support specialists and school staff during the Plan/Delivery phase’



Source: SSS R&N process evaluation.

However, despite the tailored approach adopted in SSS, it is important to acknowledge that a notable percentage of respondents were not satisfied with the collaboration in the Plan stage of Tranche 1. According to the TQI team, who employed a slightly different scale for Tranches 2 and 3, approximately 17% of the respondents were not satisfied with collaboration in the Plan stage of Tranche 1. Similarly, in Tranches 2 and 3, 15% of the respondents were not satisfied with the Plan stage. When respondents were asked to elaborate on barriers to collaboration, lack of school readiness, lack of engagement from team members, inadequate communication and unclear roles and responsibilities were identified. Importantly though, over 80% of respondents reported satisfaction with collaboration in the Deliver stage across all Tranches.

A strength of the SSS process was the relevant and customised support that addressed schools' focus for improvement.

The SSS Program was well-resourced and frequent interaction with individual schools facilitated a customised support process that could be responsive. Two principals in Tranche 1 explain how the process worked well for them:

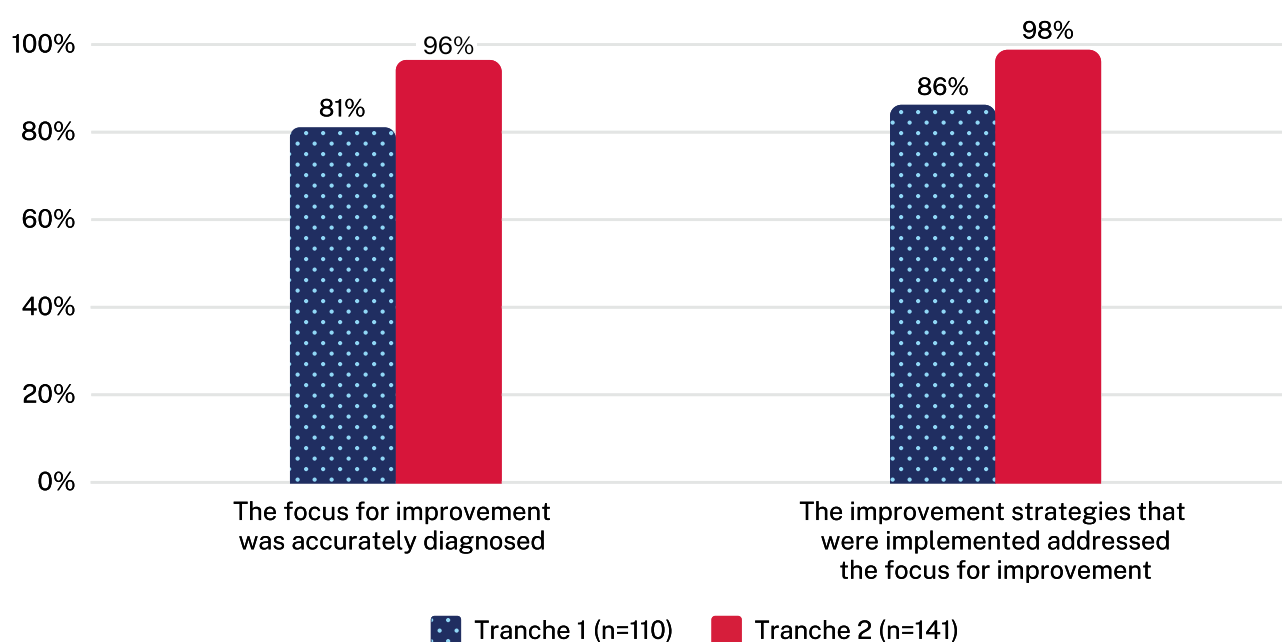
“The delivery constantly changed to suit the context of our school. While there was specific information related to the program, this was constantly reviewed to make it school specific.” (Principal, SSS, Tranche 1, SSS R&N process evaluation)

“There was an open 2-way communication process, where strong relationships were formed between the school and Strategic support team. PL, resources and advice was easily shared.” (Principal, SSS, Tranche 1, SSS R&N process evaluation)

Further to this, Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 participants also responded positively when asked about the accuracy of the focus diagnosis and the matched support provided (Figure 13). Twelve weeks after the Embed and Sustain stage has been completed a survey was sent to all participants at relevant SSS schools – DELs, PSLs, school principals, school R&N leads, PEOs, and lead specialists. The participants were asked to comment on the extent to which they believed that the focus for improvement had been accurately diagnosed, and the extent to which the improvement strategies addressed the focus for improvement.

Figure 13

Percentage of Tranche 1 and 2 respondents who agreed that the improvement focus was accurately diagnosed and addressed by improvement strategies



Source: SSS R&N process evaluation.

Participants/respondents in Tranche 1 demonstrated a relatively high level of agreement, with 86% of them expressing that the strategies effectively addressed the focus area. In Tranche 2, an even stronger consensus was reached, with an impressive 98% of participants/respondents indicating that the strategies were successful in addressing the intended focus area.

The program has generally provided DELs and principals with clear guidance on how to lead reading and numeracy improvement, although this experience was not universal.

One key focus of the program has been building capability amongst DELs and principals/school leaders to plan and lead reading and numeracy initiatives. DELs and school leaders were generally very positive about several of these activities, such as the Leading Collaboration for School Improvement Toolkit, workshops led by Transformation, and tailored data packages provided through Scout.

Nearly 95% of DELs indicated in the School Needs and Supports Survey that to some extent (between 40% and 44% in 2021 and 2022) or to a large extent (between 50% and 53% in 2021 and 2022) they understood how to lead the Reading and Numeracy Guided Support process.

“[Transformation has been] supporting us with leading and guiding the professional learning for DELs ... I thought it was top quality work.” (DEL, CESE interviews)

“I think that breadth of materials, the breadth of resources and the different platforms that could be presented on, that was a winner.” (DEL, CESE interviews)

“What we did really well is that we were provided with time to do this learning and then have those professional discussions with colleagues at our level.” (DEL, CESE interviews)

A number of school leaders reported benefiting from focused support from DELs and PSLs around reading and numeracy. Supports included regular meetings to discuss focus areas and other issues, DEL-led professional learning workshops around leading reading and numeracy improvement, collaborative development of leadership strategies, guidance around URH resources, development of data literacy, and helping to sustain schools' focus on reading and numeracy, including through COVID-19.

In the 2022 CESE Principal Survey respondents were asked if they had participated in a conversation with their DEL about 'Engaging in the Right Support'. The question was phrased to include a range of areas including reading and numeracy. Approximately 55% of principals stated they had participated in this conversation, although just over 30% were not sure. Of those who had participated in this collaborative process of identifying supports needed for their school, about 40% found the process to be very effective and nearly 50% found the collaborative process somewhat effective.

School leader interviews confirmed that this had been a useful process for reading and numeracy as well as for other areas.

“So, she’s [the DEL] organised other people within the department to be able to support those [focus] areas, not necessarily reading and numeracy, but I suppose more around using the data meaningfully and what the data tells us.” (Principal, GS, primary, CESE interviews)

“I think when we were first setting up some of our numeracy strategies [the DEL was] quite helpful as well. I was explaining what we’re going to do and what it was supposed to look like. [The DEL] is actually really good at giving lots of probing questions and picking apart the idea, ‘Well, how is this going to work? Is this going to happen here?’ Sometimes you need somebody to actually point out where the problems could be.” (Principal, US, secondary, CESE interviews)

“I feel really supported by our DEL, she’ll regularly come and we share what we’re doing with her there ... We can affirm that we’re on the right track and sort of give our staff encouragement.” (Principal, GS, secondary, CESE interviews)

Responses in the 2022 CESE Principal Survey support the notion that the discussions around the right type of support explicitly for reading and numeracy are not crystal clear. About 45% of principals either could not recall having discussions with their DEL about the areas where they needed support at the end of 2021, or they did not have these conversations at all. The high level of uncertainty suggests that the extent and intensity of DEL support varied considerably with some principals receiving very clear guidance regarding the main areas of focus from their DELs and others not at all.

“The frequency with which the DEL comes into the school is not a lot. I guess I’ll just be straight up. When the DEL comes in and looks at targets, it’s not very often. Usually, they come in for other reasons, such as PDP. Sometimes targets will come up, sometimes, and our performance towards that. And sometimes we’ll talk about what we’re doing. Can I say that I tend to create those conversations more than the questions are being asked about that? That’s just the way it is with my particular DEL.” (Principal, GS, primary, CESE interviews)

“In the first 3 weeks of school, my DEL has principals out [of school]. I’m out for almost 3 days of meetings in the first 3 weeks, about an attendance strategy, about school planning, the new behaviour policy. And it looks like professional learning, they dress policy and compliance up as professional learning. That’s what the department does to make it look like the DELs are there to support us. They’re just compliance, they’re just making sure that we do enough that, you know, we don’t get the department into trouble. And when it comes to literacy and numeracy, it was almost like, ‘There are all these resources, they should be in your plan, you should be referencing them in the plan’. It wasn’t from the point of view actually, genuinely improving things in schools.” (Principal, GS, secondary, CESE interviews)

Over 90% of DELs and PSLs indicated that the support offered to schools matched their system- and school-identified data and individual needs.

The 2022 School Needs and Supports Survey received responses from just over 100 DELs and PSLs asked respondents to comment on the extent to which Guided and Strategic Support matched their system- and school-identified data and individual needs. Nearly 60% said that needs were matched to a certain extent while a further 30% claimed needs were matched to a large extent.

It is important to note that the survey questions in this section asked DELs and PSLs to select response options in relation to **both** GS and SSS in each question. GS and SSS have very different processes with very different levels of support. If a respondent’s experience of both types of support were similar this poses no problem. However, should their perspectives of the supports be quite different they had no option for them to distinguish and we have no means to understand to which support type they were thinking about when answering the question.

DELs and PSLs were also asked to comment on the extent to which schools were provided with sufficient and appropriate support, able to implement those supports, and able to integrate improvements in their leadership and teaching practices (Table 9).

Table 9**DEL and PSL views on the extent to which Guided and Strategic schools have been supported**

In your experience, to what extent ...	To a minimal extent	To a certain extent	To a large extent
Has the Guided and Strategic supports offered to schools in 2022 matched the schools' system-and school-identified data and individual needs?	9%	59%	32%
Have schools been provided with sufficient and appropriate support to implement Guided and Strategic supports?	9%	67%	24%
Have schools been able to implement Guided and Strategic supports and integrate improvements into their school leadership and teaching practices?	6%	66%	28%

Source: School Needs and Supports Survey (analysed by CESE).

SSS has been provided to schools with the highest level of need. SSS targeted schools were identified as having the highest number of students in the lowest NAPLAN bands, and as such, had some of the state's highest level of reading and/or numeracy needs. Schools that participated in SSS entered into a formalised partnership with the Strategic Delivery team, where clear objectives and measures were identified, strategies planned, outcomes monitored, and results evaluated. Critically, the support partnership was not a one-off, but rather lasted 8 weeks (this was extended to 11 weeks in Tranches 2 and 3, informed by TQI's evaluation data).

The intensive support approach has mostly been welcomed by participating schools, some school leaders describing it as a 'rare opportunity' and 'a privilege to be involved'. In Tranche 1 81% of participating schools agreed the focus for improvement was accurately diagnosed, and the improvement strategies addressed the focus for improvement. In Tranche 2, this figure rose to 96%.

Further, TQI data showed that most (93%) of the Tranche 1 schools achieved some or all of their short-term outcomes. The resources, tools, shoulder-to-shoulder support provided and professional learning, were identified by participants and other stakeholders as strengths of the SSS project.

The TQI process evaluation found that participants perceived the intervention:

- was coherent, flexible and streamlined
- was supported by resources that participants found useful
- facilitated collaboration between schools, DELs, PSLs, PEOs and specialist staff.

In interviews with DELs, significant improvements in working with principals, teachers' knowledge, and teachers' abilities and practice were reported.

“Having had the SSS experience changed the way that I was working around school improvement with my principals because it gave me a very clear structure that I have confidence in something that actually I can see does actually work and part of the reason why it works is that it's just so bloody sensible. I've had the benefit of seeing it work in 5 of my schools now.” (DEL, CESE interviews)

“I think one of the things that the schools have all said with going through Strategic Support in particular is that they're not feeling like something's being done to them. They're feeling like something's being done with them.” (DEL, CESE interviews)

“There was an open 2-way communication process, where strong relationships were formed between the school and Strategic support team. PL, resources and advice was easily shared.” (Principal, SSS R&N process evaluation)

Over the course of 3 separate tranches of schools, and 2 years of implementation, SSS has adapted its approach in response to feedback. Areas of improvement were identified during each tranche, leading to some modifications in implementation. Specifically, the following improvements were identified in Tranches 2 and 3, and are being actioned in Tranche 4 in 2023:

- extending the timeframe for delivery (from 8 to 11 and then 20 weeks)
- involving the lead specialists earlier in the process to aid with focus area identification and planning
- revising the evaluation tools
- using a broader range of data during school selection and Plan phases.

Modifications have included improving early communication with schools and readiness assessment processes, as well as adjustments to the evaluation toolkit.

What aspects didn't work well?

Some aspects of the program did not meet the needs of all recipients, especially secondary schools and schools who experience substantial disadvantage.

Box 3

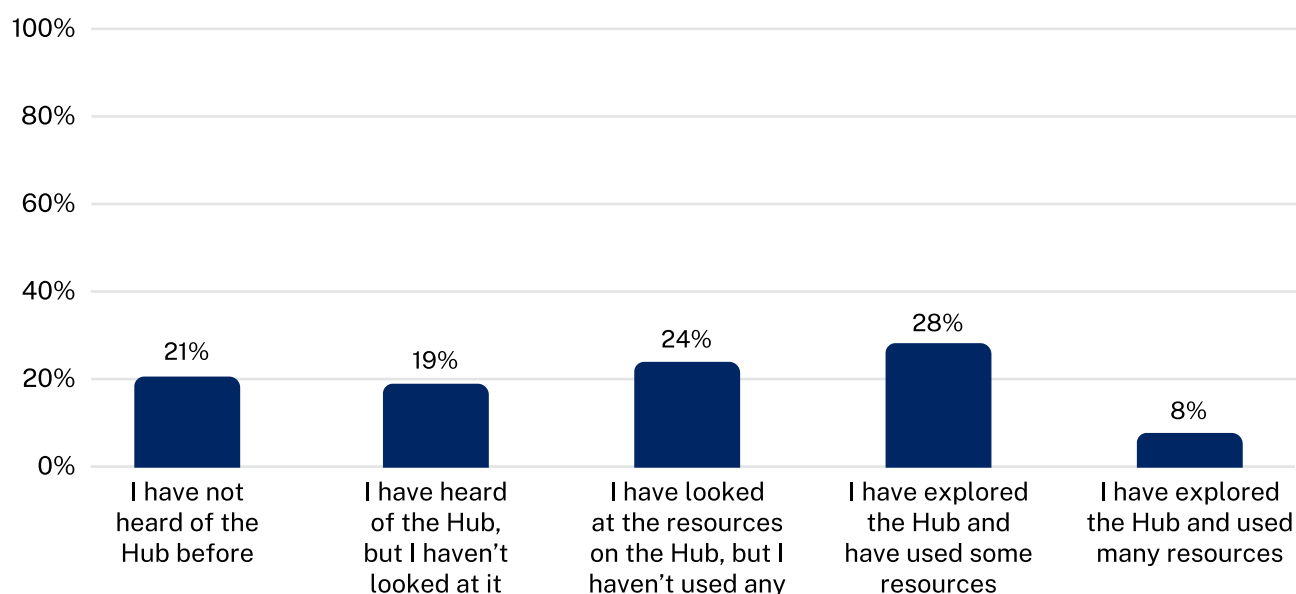
Summary points for 'What aspects didn't work well?'

Aspects that didn't work well

- The reading and numeracy resources, accessible through the URH, are a key component of all tiers of R&N support. While the URH resources were well received by those who used them, they are much better known by school and system leaders than by classroom teachers, and by primary staff more than secondary staff.
- Guided Support was neither well understood nor delivered as intended.
- Barriers to collaboration were reported by a small proportion of participants in SSS. These barriers varied across each tranche and stage.
- Secondary schools did not feel well catered for by the overall program.
- Some schools experienced disadvantages that were not ameliorated by the program.
- Outside of Strategic School Support, the support of literacy and numeracy specialists is difficult to access.

The reading and numeracy resources, accessible through the URH, are a key component of all tiers of R&N support. The resources, however, do not appear to be well known by teachers, especially secondary teachers.

The CESE Teacher Survey administered in Term 3 of 2022 moderately or somewhat suggests that, while DELs and principals believed that the URH was useful and effective as a resource, just under 65% of teachers were either unaware of it, hadn't looked at it or hadn't used any resources (Figure 14).

Figure 14**Teacher familiarity with the reading and numeracy resources on the URH**

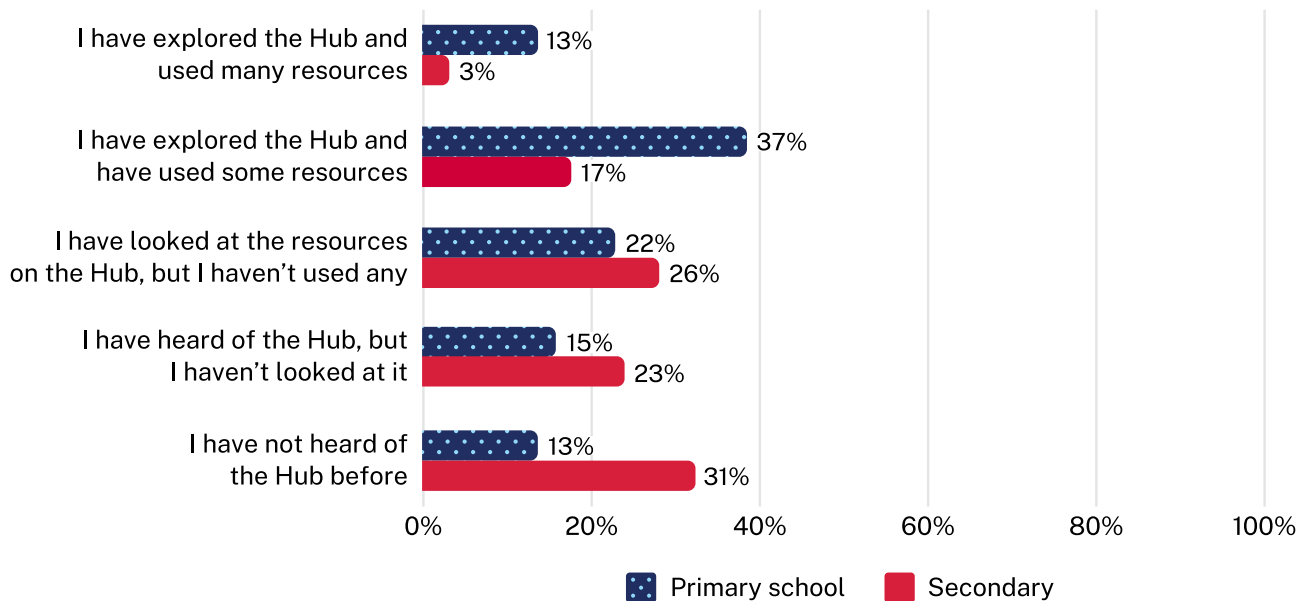
Source: CESE Teacher Survey.

When the above percentages are disaggregated according to primary and secondary (Figure 15), we see more primary than secondary teachers have heard of the URH. Further to this, of all the teachers who explored the URH, more than double the number of primary teachers have used 'some' R&N resources and more than 4 times as many primary than secondary teachers have used 'many' R&N resources.

It is possible that teachers received some of the URH resources from other teachers and school leaders without knowing the source of the resources. As is so often the case, one person finds something useful and then shares with others. Further to this, many of the URH resources were not completely new and so teachers may have been using earlier versions of these resources. Therefore, these low usage responses may not be an accurate reflection of use. Nonetheless, when more than 30% of secondary teachers have not heard of the URH then that can be considered an aspect that did not work well.

Figure 15

Teacher familiarity with the reading and numeracy resources on the URH by primary and secondary teachers



Source: CESE Teacher Survey.

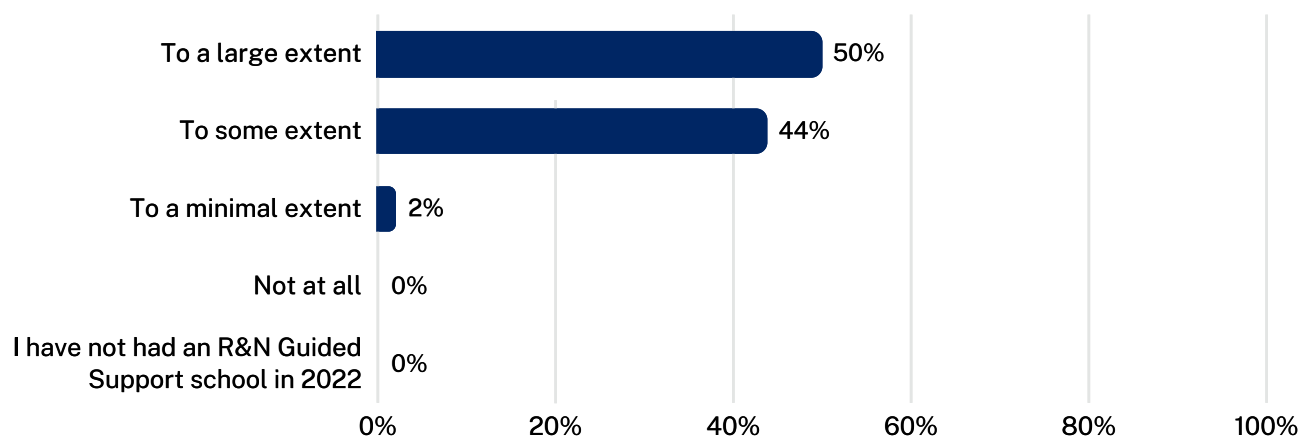
Guided Support was neither well understood nor delivered as intended.

There was little consistency in the delivery of GS, meaning that effectively one pillar of the intervention model was not distinctly active. While the US and SSS components were visible and seemingly well understood by staff across the department, GS was less visible, less well understood and (as discussed 'To what extent was the R&N Program implemented as intended?') was not implemented to the extent and in the way that was intended.

DELs were the key stakeholders on whom the GS depended, and at the end of 2022 in both interviews with DELs and the School Needs and Supports Survey (Figure 16) revealed that some DELs themselves did not fully understand what the GS process involved.

Figure 16

The extent to which DELs understood how to guide schools



Source: School Needs and Supports Survey (analysed by CESE).

“I really haven’t engaged as strongly as I need to with Guided and I was just looking at it the other day actually thinking, ‘Where do I go next? Given I’ve already sort of set my focus for this term with my crew as a whole?’” (DEL, CESE interviews)

It was also clear from the interviews that many DELs did not support the methodology for selecting GS schools, many of them viewing the selection of some of their schools as the recipients of additional help as problematic in terms of equity. Indeed, few DELs appeared to use the term ‘guided’ around their work and many found it unnecessary to distinguish between GS and US schools.

“[Lots of] schools really need that support, but because they’re so far away from where they need to be, [the support] is going to the school down the road who’s close to it. It seemed like a contradiction.” (DEL, CESE interviews)

“Not enough time was spent working out the validity and the reason why particular datasets were being looked at. So, we wasted a lot of time arguing over the validity of data and where to actually target it to start with.” (DEL, CESE interviews)

“[Guided Support] allowed us to say all those schools have been identified. So, these are the ones we really need to be looking at and supporting and focusing on. But I was also very conscious that there a lot of other schools going, ‘What about me? Hey, I need help too!’” (DEL, CESE interviews)

“I don’t know that there’s that much difference, to be honest, in the way that that’s playing out, except for the fact that the DELs were given guidelines on how to work with the Guided schools, but I think they ended up working with the majority of the schools.” (DEL, CESE interviews)

“That ‘universal’ language is continually used, but ‘guided’ is very rarely used in that way.” (DEL, CESE interviews)

With the suspension of contact with schools in 2022 came a loss of leadership and oversight around GS. In the absence of clear instructions, paired with concerns around equity, DELs tended to deliver support to their schools in ways that made most sense to them. While DELs utilised the universal resources made available through the R&N Program, their approaches to supporting schools varied considerably, based on their knowledge of schools' needs, time and resources available (including the support of PEOs, PSLs and lead specialists), their own understanding of reading and numeracy improvement, and established mechanisms in each network. In practice, DELs supported their schools according to their capacity, but with little regard to the GS model. The most common comment was that DELs endeavoured to support all their schools, regardless of whether they were identified as Guided – “I like treated them all as Guided schools anyway” said one DEL. While others noted:

“Even though the system had picked, or not picked in my case, schools, I still provided a level of strategic and guided support for them because universal resources were made available to everyone.” (DEL, CESE interviews)

“I was trying to guide most of them, because the universal support really, they were just left to their own devices. It was, you know, ‘Off you go, fly, be free, good luck!’” (DEL, CESE interviews)

“I’m not going to go in there and pigeonhole someone as a particular level, because I think that will get their backs up. The last thing I need is more resistance and less resilience. So rather than pigeonhole them as a Guided school, we’re just basically looking at the strategies to lift performance.” (DEL, CESE interviews)

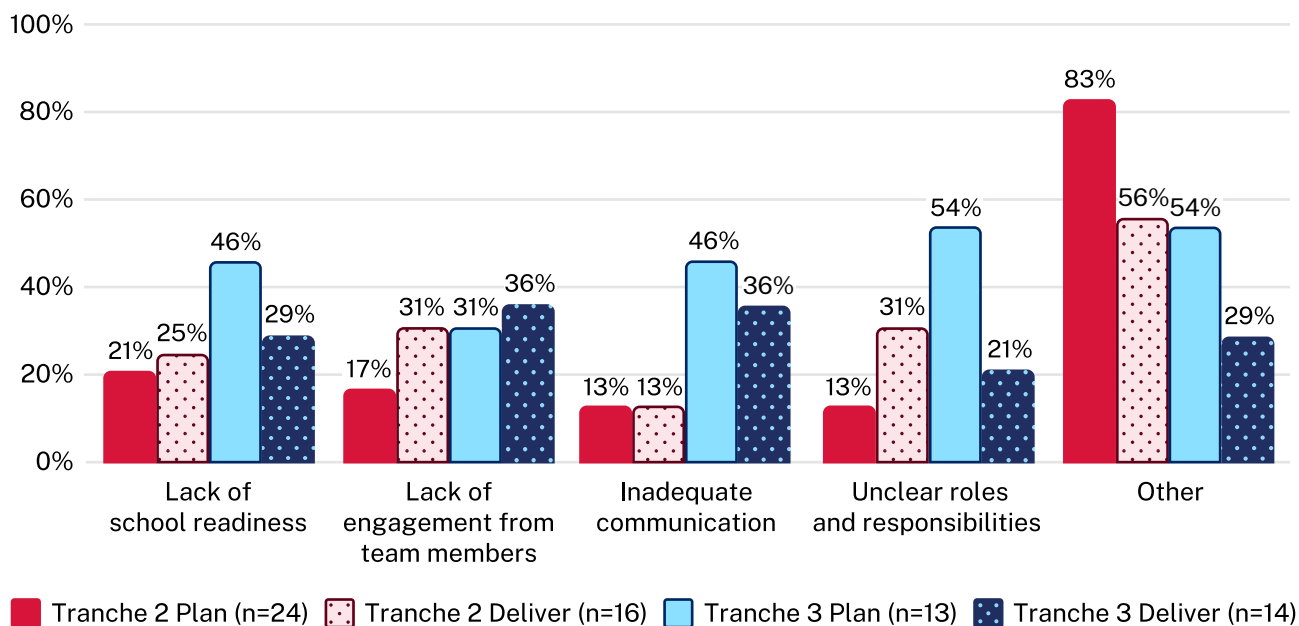
Barriers to collaboration were reported by a small proportion of participants in SSS. These barriers varied across each tranche and stage.

While many participants were satisfied with the collaboration that occurred throughout their specialist support, some barriers to collaboration were identified. The highest level of dissatisfaction with collaboration was reported in Tranche 1 Plan Stage at 17%. Barriers to collaboration were identified by 67 respondents in Tranches 2 and 3 who were less satisfied. Identified barriers included a ‘lack of school readiness’, ‘lack of engagement from team members’, ‘inadequate communication’, ‘unclear roles and responsibilities’, and ‘other’ barriers. ‘Other’ included a lack of understanding of the support, staff changes and turnover, and inappropriate timeframes and was particularly high in the Tranche 2 Plan Stage at 83%. Across all tranches, satisfaction with collaboration was higher in the Deliver stage than the Plan stage. Factors that may help to explain this include the development of stronger relationships through implementation and the involvement of lead specialists in the Tranche 2 and 3.

Concerns regarding a lack of engagement from team members was mostly consistent across tranches and stages, while inadequate communication was noted as a more common barrier in Tranche 3 compared to Tranche 2. Further details are displayed in Figure 17.

Figure 17

Perceived barriers to collaboration in Tranches 2 and 3 across the Plan and Deliver stages



Source: SSS R&N process evaluation.

Secondary schools did not feel well catered for by the overall program.

While the R&N Program sought to target all schools, the evaluation data clearly showed that secondary schools were less well catered for than primary schools. Specifically, secondary schools generally felt there were relatively few universal R&N resources available on the URH that were suitable for secondary use, and that the types of resources they needed were not available. There was a perception that the R&N resources for secondary schools were somewhat lacking.

“Look yes, there are things on the Universal Resource Hub, but to be honest, most of it tends to be primary focused. It’s very poor for stage 6, it’s non-existent for stage 6. It’s a bit there for stage 4, and there’s a little bit there for writing. Not a great deal, not as much as you would like. At there’s limited numeracy resources as well on that stage that we’ve found to be useful for students. There is a lot more for primary than there is for secondary, and it’s a bit disappointing.” (Principal, US, primary, CESE interviews)

“I have to admit the English ones are great. So, in terms of literacy, they’re really good. I have to probably be a bit judgmental and say that the primary school ones are fantastic and some of the secondary ones are a little bit not so fantastic.” (Principal, GS, secondary, CESE interviews)

“Secondary people see a lot of the programs developed as bastardised versions of a primary program.” (DEL, CESE interviews)

A scan of the available URH resources bears this criticism out. While more resources suitable for secondary teachers have been progressively added, there continues to be more than twice as many URH resources for primary schools as there are for secondary schools. Surveys of school principals in 2021 and 2022 revealed that secondary principals felt less well supported in reading and numeracy than their primary counterparts (around half as many secondary principals as primary/central principals said they felt well supported), and felt quite lukewarm about the effectiveness of the URH (45% of secondary principals compared with 27% of primary principals rated the URH as somewhat effective in 2021; in 2022 the figures were similar at 43% and 29% respectively).

As well as a lack of resources for secondary schools, the program has not provided the kind of support secondary schools most need, such as resources and strategies suitable for older learners (up to HSC level). Another critical area of need is assistance in targeting one of the key impediments to improving reading and numeracy in secondary schools – namely the fragmented and siloed way that secondary schools tend to operate, as an aggregation of KLAs, which makes whole-of-school approaches difficult to realise (this is discussed in greater detail in ‘What factors hindered successful implementation?’).

“There needs to be some sense of development, of respect for and understanding of the differences and the similarities between primary school teachers and secondary school teachers and the context within which they work. I think there are times when you know if we’d had a numeracy specialist come in who had a high school background, I think my high school teachers may have been in the first instance willing to listen more carefully than they potentially did.” (Principal, SSS then GS, secondary, CESE interviews)

“They need to be, I suppose, convinced a little bit more of how the reading and numeracy [program] works. It’s got to really impact outcomes, especially HSC results, if they’re really going to engage with it more.” (DEL, CESE interviews)

“I think in high school it is hit and miss. I have found, I reach out to the LaNSAs, and they come in once. And they looked at us and we’ve gone, ‘What do we do?’ I’ll be very honest with you, and I’ve said it to my Director, if there is a high school that’s got a good program on literacy and numeracy, I’d like to adopt it, because I’ve yet to see one.” (Principal, GS, secondary, CESE interviews)

Some schools experienced disadvantages that were not ameliorated by the program.

Secondary schools were not the only ones to feel under-supported in relation to program elements. Small schools, which have long felt disadvantaged by their difficulty in accessing programs and professional development due to budgetary and staffing constraints, also felt their needs were overlooked in relation to the reading and numeracy supports available. In particular, being a small school meant they were effectively excluded from either SSS or GS, and this was seen as unfair. Both supports utilised a selection methodology that favoured schools with the greatest number of students. Two reasons were given to explain this: a) small schools were largely excluded from GS and SSS due to the volatility of data inherent in small groups – accurate assessment of their inclusion could not be conducted; b) small schools may have been excluded from GS because small enrolment numbers reduced the likelihood of lifting the percentage of students in the top 2 bands in reading and numeracy.

“Rural and remote school numbers basically excluded us from [supports]. I had to go in and fight to get Strategic Support on the ground for my community of [small] schools. I had to fight to get my 2 central schools put onto this because they needed it, but, you know, ‘computer says no’ – it was a ‘Little Britain’ moment. You don’t have the numbers, therefore you don’t qualify for this. I had to nominate them and I had to go into bat to say, look, I really want this to happen for them. They need this because this will change their approach to how they’re doing the teaching and learning over the course of the next 4 to 5 years. You know, it’s not fair that my small schools become backwaters of education.” (DEL, CESE interviews)

“It’s super tricky, often at professional learning. I always go on my own, but I’m often sitting at tables with teams from schools, so executive teams. Like whole teams of Early Stage 1 teachers and things like that, so I’m usually there on my own. I tend to go because I’m not on class ... and then I can go back and feed back into the school. What would be great is to be able to find casual or relief teachers that can handle a fairly tricky school, so we could go or send a team. But we never do that, so the only time we have a team of professional learning is on a staff development day. ...There’s a lot of financial issues with a small school, so not only are you taking teachers out, you’re paying for them to cover you, you’ve got to pay for the resource you’re doing. So financially, it’s very difficult, human resource-wise, it’s very difficult.” (Principal, US, primary, CESE interviews)

While this may have been true of small schools, results from the CESE Principal Survey in 2021 and 2022 (refer to Appendix D) suggest that more remote and regional school principals than metropolitan principals perceive they are gaining system support and implementing strategies into everyday practice.

Importantly, although the program itself did not address the specific needs of small schools, program owners became aware of the issue through their engagement with schools, and through the evaluation process. They also identified gaps in the lack of autonomy to deliver consistent, rigorous support to schools with unique settings (including small and remote schools), and the under-utilisation of opportunities to build PSL and DEL capacity to do so. Program owners' flexibility, adaptability, and responsiveness to identified needs resulted in a system level approach to support small and remote schools – Collaborative support – unique settings (CSUS). The CSUS is an intensive support pathway within the overall School Success Model and was designed to complement other intensive supports in reading and numeracy, including LEED and SSS.

Outside of Strategic School Support, the support of literacy and numeracy specialists is difficult to access.

Schools participating in a SSS partnership were generally assigned one or more literacy or numeracy lead specialist/s to work with during the partnership. The perceived value of lead specialists has reportedly been high. However, many schools that are not part of SSS broadly reported considerable difficulty in accessing support from these specialists.

“Here’s the other component that’s a problem with the current system. There are so few of these consultancy positions around, my school never, ever sees them, so we have to become self-reliant. My question is, why wouldn’t we be focusing on keeping those people in a classroom in a school and get the people to come to see them?” (Principal, US, primary, CESE interviews)

“Probably the thing that’s missing the most is the human resource, and the support and the, you know, support from the LaNSAs and being able to access the LaNSAs. It’s been something that’s been very thin on the ground and we find the process of accessing them to be quite difficult, particularly having to go through your director and you have to actually provide a case for why you want to access that support.” (Principal, GS, primary, CESE interviews)

“At a network meeting I was told we could apply for assistance. We went ahead and applied and twice I was knocked back. And I get it. My results might not be as bad as, you know, whatever school down the road. But I still have a level of need here and I just feel like there’s either not enough of them, or the way that they’re divvied up. It’s not equitable.” (Principal, GS, secondary, CESE interviews)

Some school leaders have felt this to be one of the key weak points of the system; that there is often only so far a school can go without specialist help, but that help is not available when they need it. System resourcing decisions have left them somewhat stranded.

What factors supported successful implementation?

There are both system-level and school-level factors that supported the implementation of the R&N Program.

Box 4

Summary points for ‘What factors supported successful implementation?’

What factors supported successful implementation?

System-level factors

- Parallel related initiatives (such as the COVID ILSP Program, introduction of the AP, C&I role, the external validation and the Strategic Improvement Plan (SIP) processes, the LEED Project, the NSW Maths Strategy) created a synergised focus on reading and numeracy.
- Network level support and collaboration, often initiated by the DEL.
- Appropriateness of SSS specialist allocation grew across each Stage and Tranche.
- The URH and the professional learning opportunities were substantial additions to the bank of supports available to all schools.
- Key areas for SSS improvement from Tranche 1 were promptly actioned in Tranches 2 and 3 planning and implementation demonstrating that embedded evaluation has been important to success.
- Collective commitment, shared collaboration and a clear process for determining school readiness in SSS program were seen as success enablers.

School-level factors

- School professional culture and leadership considerably influenced R&N uptake.
- For some schools, COVID-19 created opportunities that could be used for benefit.
- School readiness and stakeholder commitment were key success factors for SSS.

There were some key factors that influenced the extent and success of program implementation. These influences are grouped here under the headings **system-level factors**, which stem from and affect the whole NSW public school system, and **school-level factors**, which may or may not stem from local factors, but which impact schools in individual ways.

System-level factors

Parallel related initiatives (such as the COVID ILSP Program, introduction of the AP, C&I role, the external validation and the Strategic Improvement Plan processes, the LEED project, the NSW Maths Strategy) created a synergised focus on reading and numeracy.

A number of related initiatives have run in parallel to, or in some cases preceded, the R&N Program, and the significance of these initiatives in paving the way for, or complementing, R&N activities should be acknowledged. In this sense, the R&N Program has not operated in isolation, but rather worked alongside some key initiatives, including:

- the COVID ILSP Program, which has funded literacy and numeracy tutors in every school to help make up lost ground as a result of the disruption to learning caused by COVID-19
- the introduction of the role of AP, C&I in a growing number of schools
- the external validation process, supported by DELs and PSL teams, which focuses on data and school systems that support improvement
- the Maths Strategy
- the LEED project
- introduction of the SIP process, which requires schools to analyse their data to understand their current and aspirational situations.

A number of principals identified intersecting or related initiatives or processes that have encouraged them on their road to reading and numeracy improvement:

“We had EV when I first started here and the Premier’s Priorities changed. We implemented the LEED program here, so the LEED program was really great for the situational analysis and school planning. Because that showed us how to drill down our data, and look at what what’s working, what’s not working, just really analysing every aspect of the teaching and learning here at the school.”
(Principal, GS, primary, CESE interviews)

“I think with the external validation last year, we were already on that path to some extent, in really understanding that we needed to go back to teaching basics and literacy and numeracy. But that external validation really helped us to solidify that we were on the right track, in terms of going back to basics.”
(Principal, GS, primary, CESE interviews)

Network level support and collaboration, often initiated by the DEL.

The capacity to support and the accessible resources of principal networks vary based on factors such as position vacancies, availability of literacy and numeracy specialists, the experience, quality, and local knowledge of DELs and PSLs, and the level of coordination and resource sharing among network schools. Several school leaders highlighted the positive impact of having significant resources accessible at the network level.

“Our DEL is brilliant...He’s really good. And the beauty of that is his relationship with the LaNSA [sic] and my PSL, in particular, meant that I had 3 people coming from District Office, not including the Strategic Support literacy consultant that we also had. So, I had 3 people that were on board from the start ... and it felt like a system team approach. ... It’s only because of that relationship and the support that I’ve got in that trio of people, that we could leverage the system as hard as we do. Like it’s one of those things where if you don’t know what to ask, you don’t know who to ask, you sit there and try to do it yourself.” (Principal, SSS then GS, secondary, CESE interviews)

While network resources were a strength for some schools, it should be noted that a lack of sufficient network resources was a weakness for others, and several school leaders disclosed the difficulties they experienced because they could not depend on DEL support and could not access specialist resources.

Appropriateness of SSS specialist allocation grew across each Stage and Tranche.

According to the SSS process evaluation presentation, most respondents agreed that specialist allocations were appropriate, with highest levels of agreement generally seen in the final step of the process Embed and Sustain stage. This may be attributed to strengthened understanding of the process, context and relationships between stakeholders.

Schools seemed to appreciate having external support come in to guide the process and deliver quality professional learning, particularly from specialists with relevant expertise.

The URH and the professional learning opportunities were substantial additions to the bank of supports available to all schools.

While the URH was only one key strategy of the R&N Program, the URH soon became the main component that all 3 projects relied on. As time went on, both the scope and scale of the URH grew, such that the repository eventually came to represent a significant library of trustworthy, freely accessible R&N resources that were linked to both NAPLAN data and the curriculum. In this sense, the URH could be viewed as a ‘benefit’ – something that acknowledged and started to address a particularly problematic part of a teacher’s daily experience.

“The establishment of the website, and the refinement of that website and continual addition of resources, does make our job a little bit easier because we’ve got the system messaging behind us, we’ve got the central repository of information, that single source of truth, all schools can access and it helps us, helps us do our jobs.” (DEL, CESE interviews)

“I think the Universal Resource Hub is outstanding and it’s very rare that you hear the diversity of praise about a resource that ... I’ve heard, or that I continue to hear about the Universal Resources Hub.” (DEL, CESE interviews)

“It was landing really well ... they were really excited that teachers were developing these resources, that they were quality assured, that they were all there for them.” (DEL, CESE interviews)

Key areas for SSS improvement from Tranche 1 were promptly actioned in Tranches 2 and 3 planning and implementation demonstrating that embedded evaluation has been important to success.

The SSS team responded promptly to issues raised by Tranche 1 participants so that improvements were in place for Tranches 2 and 3 (Table 10).

Table 10

Key areas for improvement from Tranche 1 were promptly actioned in Tranche 2 planning and implementation

Areas of improvement	Sample quote from participant	Actioned in Tranche 2 and 3
Improve messaging around why the intervention is being used and why schools have been selected. Consider including schools earlier in the process.	“A lot of initial time was spent explaining to principals and staff about why they had been chosen and convincing them that this was not a deficit model.” PEO, Tranche 1	The Identification stage of the SSS process changed to being coordinated centrally by Transformation as part of SSM as part of ‘Engaging in the right support’.
Conduct a more thorough readiness assessment, which includes the willingness of the school to engage, and the stability of staff and school leadership.	“The principal is new at the school and needed more time to become familiar with the staff and culture at the schools was not a deficit model.” Curriculum Advisor, Tranche 1	Transformation co-developed the ‘Engaging in the right support’ process to support DELs and principals to assess the readiness of schools to engage in SSS and make informed decisions about which support to prioritise.

Areas of improvement	Sample quote from participant	Actioned in Tranche 2 and 3
Clarify the role of PSLs throughout the process.	<p>“I had support and guidance around the contributing factors and data analysis component but from there I wasn’t really sure of my role.”</p> <p>PSL, Tranche 1</p>	<p>Strategic Delivery worked closely with PSLs to clarify their role at each step of the process supported by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facilitated focus groups with PSLs to refine their roles and responsibilities – ‘What good looks like’ • delivery of drop-in session for PSLs to strengthen understanding of the process • updated SSS guide to reflect clarification of key activities and roles in each step of the process.
Provide a longer timeframe during the Plan stage for sufficient preparation and during delivery stage for sustained impact.	<p>“By the time we were notified of inclusion our PL budget had been allocated and the PL plan devised for the year.”</p> <p>Principal, Tranche 1</p>	<p>Strategic Delivery reviewed the evaluation to consider current state and develop future state via conversations with DELs, PEOs and PSLs. As a result, PEOs engaged earlier in the process to support relationship building and strengthen understanding of contextual factors. Additional time was also built into 2022 co-diagnosis to co-design stages to ensure a co-designed approach is applied as intended.</p>
Refine some tools and documentation to minimise administration burden and provide greater clarity on outcomes.	<p>“Too many surveys for schools to complete – could they have been rolled into one?”</p> <p>Teaching Quality Advisor, Tranche 1</p>	<p>TQI evaluation team reviewed the evaluation toolkit and made adjustments following stakeholder feedback. This included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • online platforms developed for supporting documents • evaluation tools streamlined to decrease the amount of engagement required, and subsequently minimise the burden on school principal, school R&N lead • one survey completion for multiple program staff working across multiple schools (rather than separate).

Source: SSS R&N process evaluation.

Collective commitment, shared collaboration and a clear process for determining school readiness in SSS program were seen as success enablers.

The SSS process evaluation found that strong commitment by all stakeholders was also identified as a key success factor in SSS. Commitment by the school leadership and staff to invest time and resources into co-planning, implementing and monitoring progress, making time for professional learning and collective reflection, and working in partnership with the Strategic Delivery team, were critical.

Developing strong processes for communication enabled clarity of role, and facilitated agreements concerning outcomes and activities for improvement as well as shared accountability.

School readiness for entering into an improvement partnership influenced schools' willingness to embrace changes. This was a particular learning from Tranche 1, after which school readiness assessment and early communication with schools were refined. The readiness assessment considers whether or not a school is well positioned to receive support and takes into consideration things such as: whether the school has appropriate staff available, whether they are willing to lead the partnership with the allocated specialist/s, whether the school free from extenuating circumstances that may interfere with delivery of the support, for example, floods, COVID-19 impacts, and whether the school in a position to prioritise and commit to improving reading or numeracy practice across the school.

School-level factors

School professional culture and leadership considerably influenced R&N uptake.

Some school leaders identified that a key factor in the uptake of elements of the R&N Program was the nature of a school's professional culture in relation to improvement, and the extent to which the principal had made a whole-school, data-led improvement a focus in recent years. According to interview data, a school's leader makes all the difference to what is prioritised in a school, and the evaluation team encountered several school leaders who were dynamic, ambitious for their schools, well-informed around effecting change in professional cultures, and had high level understanding of complex pedagogical issues. A number of the leaders talked confidently about bringing about whole-school change in relation to building shared understanding and responsibility through professional learning.

“Really structured PL and that feedback loop, and our staff meeting agenda items are set from the exec, and they just rotate and then also, you know, no spoilers, it all gets driven straight from our school plan. So, they're really transparent systems around ‘What are we learning?’ ‘Why are we learning it?’ ‘What is the school going to get from it?’ So that's one, then the second part is we actually had some consultants through in the 3 1/2 years before that which helped us set up our non-negotiables, on what a data-driven, student-driven lesson looks like.” (Principal, GS then SSS, secondary, CESE interviews)

Data plays an important role in driving change and a number of schools had focused on whole-school, data-led improvement for some time. Further to this, schools that already had systems in place for collaboration, routine peer-led professional learning, and data-informed planning, reportedly found it easy to embrace the reading and numeracy improvement strategies encouraged by the R&N Program.

“I’m getting buy-in at last. We are all focusing in the same area that we’re working together with our increased synergy. That’s what’s starting to change. When you can get cohesion of practice across the school, you get that dynamic synergy where you’re working together, and then when you work together, you can start to respond as a unifying team to issues, rather than the teacher going off in one direction, saying I could do this, another teacher having no idea. That’s what the big change is. It’s bringing teachers together in a shared practice means shared accountability ... It’s not just the children in my class. The children in the class next door, the year below the year above, are my responsibility as well. So that’s the shaping of practice.” (Principal, US, primary, CESE interviews)

“Transformation in schools needs to be whole-school approaches to responding to data and supporting teachers and giving them that space. So, on that point I can’t see how the department can help there, because it’s got to be shaping a school community and it does rely, I think, at a principal level.” (Principal, US, primary)

“You’ve got to build the environment where people see that what they’re doing is bigger than just any individual. So, building trust in cultures, collaborative cultures, and using data because data just tells the story about what’s happening, as we know.” (Principal, GS, primary, CESE interviews)

For some schools, COVID-19 created opportunities that could be used for benefit.

COVID-19 will be discussed in the next section as a hindrance to implementing the R&N Program, however this was not the experience of all schools. Indeed, for some schools, COVID-19, and the resulting lockdowns and shift to online learning, presented an opportunity to review and improve systems, focus on data, develop targeted strategies for improving reading and/or numeracy outcomes in both whole school and individualised ways. These schools typically talked about being given time and space to breathe, to analyse, and to plan, while the myriad distractions and interruptions were absent.

“When we were in lockdown it was sort of weird because people would do their lessons or prepare it and they had time to think a little bit more.” (Principal, GS, secondary, CESE interviews)

“It was a great opportunity for explicit teaching, to articulate universal design for learning where we have to make sure that the resources that we’re developing are accessible, which they should be in face-to-face teaching, but often they are the collateral of busy classrooms, where teachers just don’t have that time. There was more time for teachers to prepare resources ... really effective resources. ...If anything, I think COVID was a time of great learning for us as teachers, to improve our focus on explicit teaching and effective feedback. ... It was just an outstanding opportunity for professional growth and development and improving what we did as schools.” (Principal, GS, primary, CESE interviews)

“With the learning from home periods ... parents didn’t want their kids in front of a screen all day every day, so we did a real focus on literacy and numeracy.” (Principal, US, primary, CESE interviews)

School readiness and stakeholder commitment were key success factors for SSS.

The SSS evaluation found that school readiness for entering into an improvement partnership influenced schools’ willingness to embrace changes. This was a particular learning from Tranche 1, after which school readiness assessment and early communication with schools were refined. The readiness assessment considers whether or not a school is well positioned to receive support and takes into consideration things such as: whether the school has appropriate staff available, whether they are willing to lead the partnership with the allocated specialist/s, whether the school is free from extenuating circumstances that may interfere with delivery of the support, for example, floods, COVID-19 impacts, and whether the school is in a position to prioritise and commit to improving reading or numeracy practice across the school.

Strong commitment by all stakeholders was also identified as a key success factor in SSS. Commitment by the school leadership and staff to invest time and resources into co-planning, implementing and monitoring progress, making time for professional learning and collective reflection, and working in partnership with the Strategic Delivery team, were critical.

And finally, developing strong processes for communication and collaboration was key to successful implementation.

What factors hindered successful implementation?

There are both system-level and school-level factors that hindered the implementation of the R&N Program.

Box 5

Summary points for ‘What factors hindered successful implementation?’

What factors hindered successful implementation?

System-level factors

- The system’s response to COVID-19 and floods, for understandable reasons, shifted the focus away from the R&N focus.
- Staffing difficulties hampered efforts to establish improved practices.
- Limited access to specialist support for Universal and Guided schools.

School-level factors

- Some schools decided that other needs required a greater focus.
- The structure of secondary school faculty areas makes buy-in difficult.
- Pockets of teacher disinterest and/or resistance.

System-level factors

The system’s response to COVID-19 and floods, for understandable reasons, shifted the focus away from the R&N focus.

The school years 2020-2022 were dominated by ongoing COVID-19 management. At any point during these 3 years, the school system was managing one or more of the following: transition to/from online learning, mixed online and face-to-face learning, student and staff absences due to illness or contact with COVID-19 cases, staff attrition due to vaccination mandates and teachers leaving for other reasons, strategies for making classrooms safer, COVID-19 transmission prevention strategies, and student and staff wellbeing during the pandemic.

On top of the pandemic came the floods of 2021 and 2022, which impacted many schools throughout NSW, forcing school closures and further disruption to learning as schools and communities focused on surviving and then recovering from the devastating impacts of the floods.

The compounding stress and trauma as a result of these natural disasters meant that initiatives such as reading and numeracy improvement were bumped down the priority list for many schools, as they focused on day-to-day learning and student and staff wellbeing. This approach was supported by the department’s deliberate effort to lighten the load on schools by delaying all non-essential activities and communication with schools in Term 4 of 2021 and in Terms 1 and 2 of 2022.

Staffing difficulties hampered efforts to establish improved practices.

In recent times, teacher shortages have become commonplace in NSW schools. The causes of the teacher shortage are complex and systemic, and the situation has been exacerbated by COVID-19.⁵ We heard from many school leaders that difficulties in getting enough teachers to staff their schools, both on permanent and casual basis (especially casual cover for staff illness and RFF) have hampered their efforts to establish systems and practices for improving reading and numeracy outcomes.

Limited access to specialist support for Universal and Guided schools.

In relation to reading and/or numeracy support, many schools reported experiencing difficulties in accessing additional support from literacy and numeracy specialists (a number of schools referred to the LaNSAs that had previously been available). While schools participating in SSS were provided access to lead specialists, US and GS schools felt unable to access additional specialist support if they needed it. A couple of principals said they had applied several times for help and were 'turned down' each time.

School-level factors

Some schools decided that other needs required a greater focus.

A key barrier to implementation at a school level related to differing school priorities both during and after COVID-19 lockdowns. A number of schools said that, when they were focused on issues such as student wellbeing, attendance, behaviour, staff shortages, staff wellbeing, HSC and day-to-day running of a school, there could be little room to prioritise reading and numeracy improvement strategies.

This was especially so in secondary schools where, during a couple of highly disrupted school years, the focus appeared to be more on delivering syllabus content rather than isolating the reading and numeracy demands in each subject area.

The structure of secondary school faculty areas makes buy-in difficult.

Another key factor that hindered implementation was the nature of secondary schools and the way they operate. We heard repeatedly that secondary schools tend to operate as a collection of silos, each faculty working largely independently of others. In this context, it was said to be difficult to coordinate whole-school initiatives in which faculties were expected to view reading and numeracy as their responsibility. Commonly, the challenge of improving reading/literacy is seen as the job of the English faculty and numeracy the job of the mathematics faculty. It should be noted that some secondary schools have instituted structures to overcome this siloed approach by forming cross-faculty teams to address reading and/or numeracy.

⁵ Evidence provided to the 2022 [Inquiry into Teacher Shortages in New South Wales](#) included a Teacher's Federation survey in which 97% of teachers said their school had difficulty recruiting enough casual teachers; and DoE data that confirms that instances of sick leave increased by 60 per cent between 2019 and 2022 and were 38% higher in 2022 compared with 2020.

Pockets of teacher disinterest and/or resistance.

Unsurprisingly, the level of interest and commitment of individual teachers can either support implementation or be a barrier. We heard that some teachers, particularly some approaching retirement, are simply not interested in learning and adopting new practices and feel confident and secure with the pedagogical approaches they have been using. We were also made aware that a few schools encountered resistance from a small number of teachers who did not consider R&N support to be helpful.

Conclusion

The implementation of the R&N Program was hampered by challenges due to COVID-19 and natural disasters. Despite this, critical components were delivered, and there was increased focus on reading and numeracy. The URH provided valuable R&N resources, but it was not widely known among teachers, especially in secondary schools. GS implementation was limited, while many secondary schools felt neglected. Specialist support beyond SSS was difficult to access. Successful implementation was supported by parallel initiatives, collaborative networks, school culture, and leadership, while hindrances included crises, staffing difficulties, school-level priorities and resistance.

The evaluation found that the R&N Program was not fully implemented as intended due to COVID-19, floods in NSW and the decision by the department's executive to 'clear the decks' by minimising communications to schools. Many key elements of the program were mostly delivered: the universal resources, professional learning (using some delivery modes different from originally intended), data packages for schools, guidance resources for DELs and school leaders, and 3 tranches of SSS. Yet other aspects required greater modification or, in some instances, could not be delivered at all. Guided Support which relies heavily on DELs for its delivery, was greatly restricted by the DELs needing to prioritise the wellbeing of each school community over and above the expectations of the R&N Program. Support for DELs was affected by the embargoed communication between corporate and schools. These events resulted in a form of GS that was not fully realised.

Nonetheless, the R&N Program has shown some resilience despite the unexpected challenges, and this has been largely due to the foundational component of US. The notion of 3 different types of support and schools being offered specific support according to reading and numeracy needs raised the level of awareness about R&N generally. A state-wide focus on identifying specific needs and matching resources and support to improve those areas was part of an explicit improvement process not undertaken in quite this way before.

Efforts to improve reading and numeracy were buoyed by other strategies:

- small group support for literacy and numeracy in COVID ILSP
- using data to inform planning through the LEED (Leading Evidence Evaluation Data) project

- the establishment of AP, C&Is in schools with K–6 enrolments
- the new K–2 syllabus units of work in English and Maths.

The work of some DELs who stimulated network level support and the efforts of many school leaders who actively supported the implementation of R&N strategies also provided momentum.

However, the evaluation also found 5 main areas in need of improvement. First, the URH, while housing useful quality-assured R&N resources, appeared to be better known by school leaders, AP, C&Is and DELs than by the teachers. Just under 65% of teachers were either unaware of the URH, hadn't looked at it or hadn't used any resources. That percentage increases to almost 80% for secondary teachers.

Second, the selection method used to determine GS schools was not well-received amongst many DELs and others. Favouring schools whose population had the greatest chance of lifting into the top 2 NAPLAN bands, was seen by many as an unfair and neglectful selection approach. The result of the selection process was that some schools did not receive the extra focused support they needed and yet also did not qualify for SSS. The methodology for GS selection has been re-dressed through by program owners in 2022.

Third, secondary schools with strong faculty structures, potentially required a different approach overall to primary – one that would seek to build shared accountability and responsibility for literacy and numeracy in every key learning area (KLA). For many secondary teachers, reading and numeracy resources and professional learning were not necessarily relevant to their subjects despite the program's attempt to provide support that was secondary focused; buy-in at a secondary level was marginal.

Fourth, with much of the time and priorities of specialist support being channelled into SSS, the schools who missed out on both GS and SSS were left to ask for extra support yet rarely received much needed assistance.

Finally, the widespread illness of staff due to COVID-19 and influenza was compounded by staff shortages and generally hampered efforts to establish improved reading and numeracy practices consistently across the system.

Despite some aspects of the program not working well, one of its greatest strengths lies in the accessibility of US. Regardless of which type of support a school was designated, the resources of US were available to all and could be 'tapped into', as needed. During a tumultuous period, this was a unique and distinct strength. The URH containing a range of resources and the provision of online professional learning for focus areas in numeracy and literacy are both aspects that worked very well, especially for primary schools. The data packages in Scout facilitated school leadership teams to identify syllabus areas in need of improvement and provided links to appropriate URH resources. Regional, rural, remote and metro schools were equally able to access the URH, the professional learning and the data packages. However, while secondary schools experienced less attention tailored to their needs, it appears that better support is under

consideration for the future. Another strength was the SSS process which targeted schools with high levels of need and provided relevant and customised support matching and addressing the schools' areas in need of improvement.

To conclude, strong school leaders who championed the program and actively took advantage of support type provisions appear to have experienced broader and more established take-up of improved practices across their schools.

Chapter 4:

To what extent has reading and numeracy knowledge and practice changed?

This chapter presents findings of our second evaluation question: ‘To what extent has reading and numeracy knowledge and practice changed?’ and delves into the growing integration of R&N practices, the professional development opportunities embraced by teachers, and the positive impact of regular engagement with the R&N supports on teaching practice.

We do not aim to establish a definitive causal relationship between R&N and the changes in practice. Instead, we aim to explore the broader shifts in practices and assess the degree to which they correspond to the objectives of R&N. In Box 6 we provide a comprehensive set of summary dot points highlighting our key findings and providing succinct insights.

Box 6

Summary points for ‘To what extent has reading and numeracy knowledge and practice changed?’

To what extent has reading and numeracy knowledge and practice changed?

Schools are prioritising reading and numeracy, leading to increased demand for support and collaborative research. Teachers show stronger grasp of effective practices, while schools adopt evidence-based R&N resources like those found on the URH, as a foundation to their practice. Introduction of R&N initiatives have led to a greater recognition of the importance of R&N support in schools.

Changes in understanding, knowledge and practice

- Schools are recognising the need for reading and numeracy support.
- The combined R&N initiatives are promoting a shared language for thinking and talking about R&N improvement.
- Some teachers are demonstrating better understanding of reading pedagogy and effective teaching practice.
- Teachers have embraced professional development opportunities in reading and numeracy.

- Many teachers are more adept at using data to inform their practice.
- Schools are using more reliable, evidence-backed sources of resources, such as the reading and numeracy resources available on the URH.

Indications of embeddedness

- There are indications that practices encouraged by the R&N Program are becoming embedded in some schools.

Changes in understanding, knowledge and practice

Schools have been increasingly encouraged by reading and numeracy initiatives to direct their focus towards these areas and actively seek additional support. The R&N Program, as a collaborative effort, aimed to foster a shared language and discourse surrounding the improvement of reading and numeracy practices.

Schools have been increasingly encouraged by reading and numeracy initiatives to direct their focus towards these areas and actively seek additional support.

Data indicates a shift in schools, with a growing emphasis on reading and numeracy. This shift has prompted an increased demand for support, leading to the development of specific R&N initiatives. Teachers, especially, appear to have a stronger grasp of reading pedagogy and effective practices than before, as schools are shifting towards more reliable and evidence-based R&N resources, including the adoption of the URH, as a foundation to their practice.

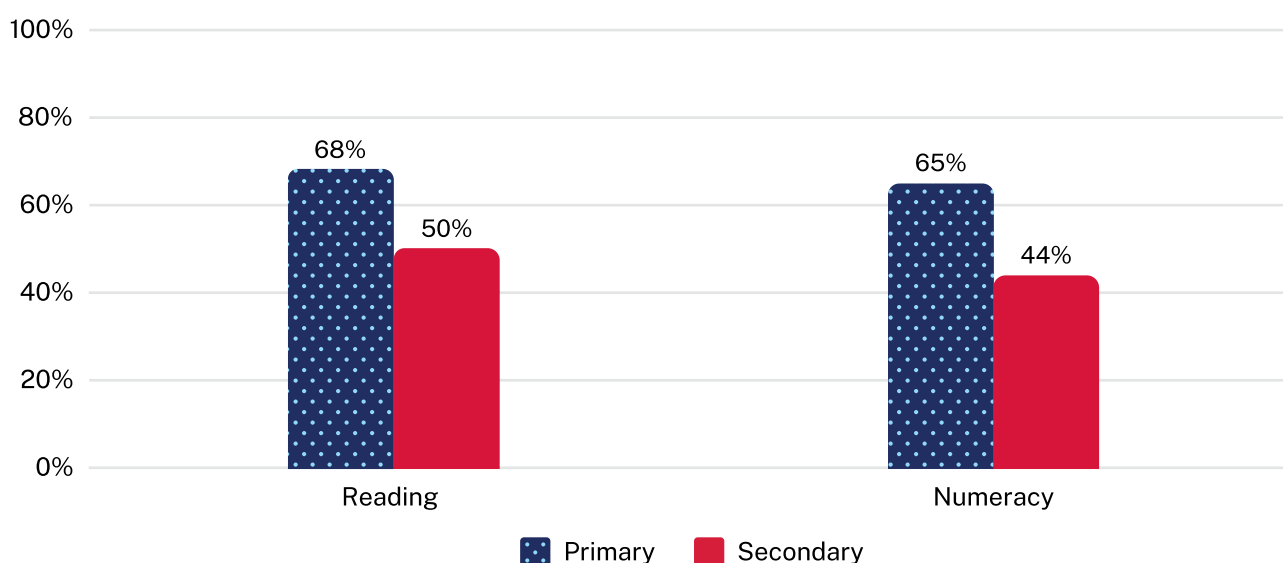
Schools are recognising the need for reading and numeracy support.

While there is no clear measure of the extent to which schools are focusing on reading and numeracy at a system level, data collected for the evaluation suggests that many schools are making reading and numeracy a key focus. With that focus has come a recognition by many schools of the need for further support around reading and numeracy.

The CESE Teacher Survey, for instance, showed that teachers were cognisant of the system supports available to address reading and numeracy and had a view about the adequacy of these supports. 60% of teachers agreed there are adequate supports in place that assist them to improve the reading outcomes of students, while 55% of teachers agreed with the adequacy of supports in numeracy. It is worth noting that again, the perspective of primary teachers was considerably more positive than that of secondary teachers (Figure 18).

Figure 18

Secondary and primary teacher agreement regarding the adequacy of supports for improving reading and numeracy outcomes



Source: CESE Teacher Survey.

Principals were also clearly concerned about the need for additional support around reading and numeracy, as demonstrated by the results of the 2021 and 2022 CESE Principal Surveys, which (as previously discussed) placed reading and numeracy in the top 3 priority areas for additional support. It is interesting to note that principals felt better supported in reading and numeracy in 2021 than in 2022 (Table 11) and it is difficult to understand why that might be. What we can say is that the level of support for other areas also dropped in 2022 in comparison to the previous year. In 2021, principals felt well or very well supported in wellbeing (45%), attendance (45%) and support for Aboriginal students (43%). In 2022 these dropped to 27% (wellbeing), 33% (attendance), and 28% (support for Aboriginal students). It appears that principals overall felt less supported in 2022 than 2021.

Table 11

The percentage of principals feeling well- or very well-supported to improve reading and numeracy outcomes

	Reading			Numeracy		
	Primary	Secondary	Total	Primary	Secondary	Total
2021	60%	35%	54%	58%	35%	53%
2022	39%	19%	34%	34%	23%	32%

Source: CESE Principal Survey.

The CESE Principal Survey data also shows that principals are aware of the need for further support, specifically in relation to reading and numeracy improvement. In 2021 over half (55%) of respondents said that they had engaged in discussions with their DELs regarding support areas for 2022, indicating an awareness of the need for support and a desire to address it. Approximately half of the principals found that the system support matched with the school's needs, but fewer (45%) reported receiving sufficient and appropriate guidance to implement the system supports. Despite the lack of guidance, nearly 55% of the principals reported having implemented the supports into everyday school practices. While this could indicate that changes are being adopted, the program requires time to fully integrate in order to enable the collection of further evidence. This evidence would then help determine the extent to which changes have been adopted or implemented by teachers.

The combined R&N initiatives are promoting a shared language for thinking and talking about R&N improvement.

A number of school and system stakeholders have observed that staff are increasingly 'speaking the same language' around reading and numeracy, informed by the professional learning and resources to which they have been exposed. This sense of alignment in thinking and talking about reading and numeracy improvement was reported by DELs, principals, and teachers, with impacts also extending to parents.

“What I've noticed in a number of my primary schools, is that they are running sessions on how to use decodable texts or guided readers with the parents as well so that they can know what to do at home to support the kids in their learning. I think this is empowering, not just the teachers, but the parents as well. And it's often those parents who ask the question, 'Well that doesn't look like maths to me. Why are they doing this activity?' It's giving the teachers the language to be able to talk to the parents.” (DEL, CESE interviews)

“So, I think the model itself has provided a timeline for activities. It's provided an identification of need and it's provided a structure around PL and then transition to classroom practice and it's brought a focus for the school to say to the numeracy team or the team they're gonna lead. ... We've got to continue to have a structure around PL intervention to the classroom delivery, so the model itself I actually quite like.” (DEL, SSS R&N process evaluation)

“I think a greater emphasis on evidence-based practice, so there was research and readings provided, and bringing that around at the explicit understanding of quality teaching practices. So that certainly came through, and I think that's something that the 3 schools will fall back on when they are looking at other initiatives or focus areas.” (DEL, SSS R&N process evaluation)

Having a shared or common language was thought to be particularly crucial for secondary schools which were said to operate as a conglomeration of independent 'silos', each focused on the content and language of their particular KLA.

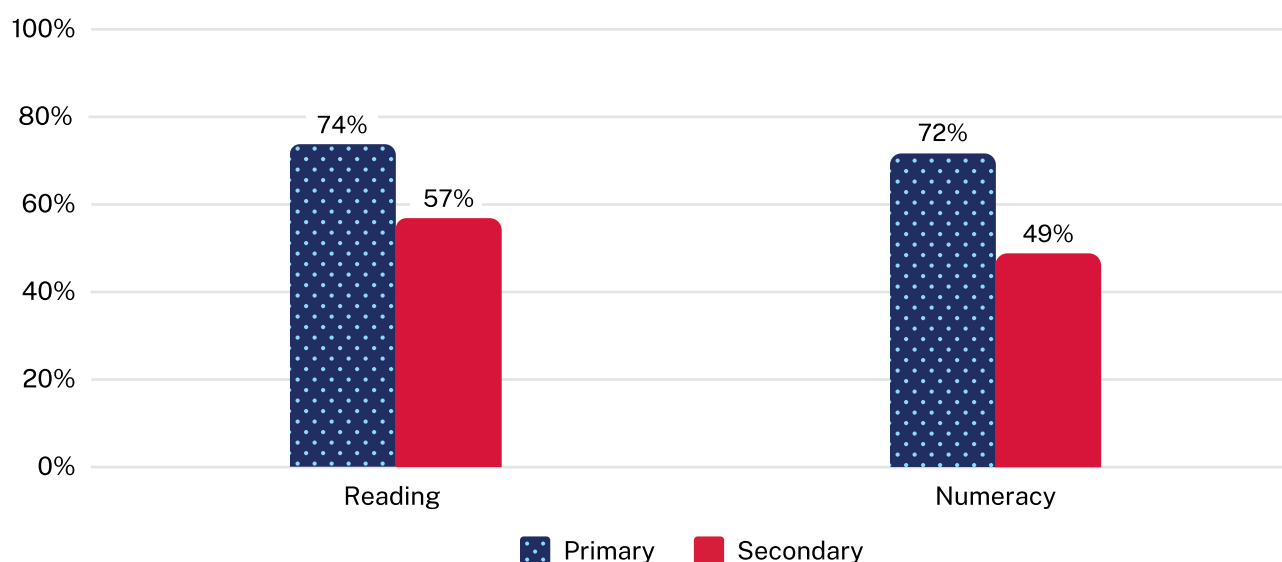
“I think probably the first thing about the resources is that they allow, especially secondary schools, to develop a common language. And I think that’s probably the greatest benefit of the resources, that rather than me going in just talking about inferential comprehension, and one of my colleagues from another faculty going, ‘What? No idea what you’re talking about’. The resources actually do provide you with a starting point to develop that common language. And I think, as the first step in terms of our change processes, that’s incredibly important, that the resources provide us with a starting point where we’re actually on the same page.” (Principal, GS, secondary, CESE interviews)

“I suppose that’s where we’re up to at the moment, getting stuff to head teachers to really look at those Stage 4 reading strategies, explicit reading strategies, and to actually embed them in their units of work and evaluate them, and again have that common language across the school.” (Head Teacher, GS, secondary, CESE interviews)

These qualitative findings were reinforced by some of the survey findings. For example, the 2022 CESE Teacher Survey found a high level of agreement amongst primary teachers that a shared understanding of effective reading and numeracy pedagogy had been created in the school (Figure 19). Agreement levels were considerably lower for secondary teachers which is consistent with other findings around the relevance of the program to secondary schools.

Figure 19

Teacher agreement regarding their school’s/faculty’s collaborative work in creating a shared understanding of effective reading and numeracy pedagogy



Source: CESE Teacher Survey.

Around two-thirds of the teachers who said they found the URH resources useful also reported that they found them useful for increasing R&N knowledge, improving understanding, applying knowledge into practice, as well as collaborating to create a shared understanding of effective reading and or numeracy pedagogy.⁶

Some teachers are demonstrating better understanding of reading pedagogy and effective teaching practice.

According to some of the interviewed principals, teachers have benefited from the professional learning and resources, including the overall increased focus on reading and/or numeracy over the past couple of years.

“Less (sic) assumptions are being made, I think, and much more understanding of how the kids are progressing with their reading and really understanding the steps of what they [the students] need to be able to do to be successful with reading. Fewer kids are needing that intervention now than needed it before, so that’s been positive for us. So, I suppose taking on the Science of Reading means that the teachers are much more aware of how kids need to learn to be able to be successful reader. That makes sense. I mean, that seems like a statement that all teachers should have known all along. But things change and it’s been a real revelation for some teachers who are very experienced, to go ‘Well, I’ve always been able to teach kids how to read, now I’m doing it slightly differently’. But they’re also finding that kids are picking it up much quicker, and there’s much less need for kids who aren’t getting it to be successful in classrooms.” (Principal, GS, primary, CESE interviews)

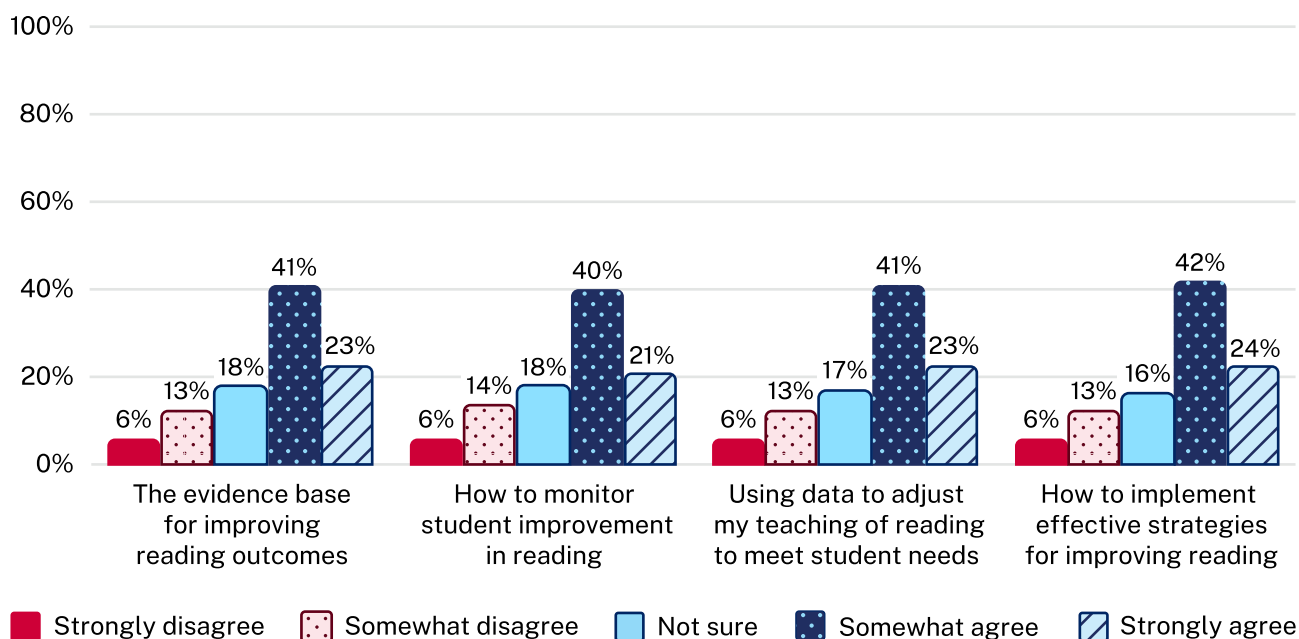
“I can see it clearly. Even in lesson observations, we can see that the practices are drawn from the Hub. And I’ve encouraged teachers in lesson observations, they don’t have to have a written lesson that they’ve created themselves, we’ve been more than happy to see one they’ve grabbed from the Hub. So that’s what I’ve definitely seen. And in the professional learning, looking at the Big Six in Reading, and the Reading Rope and things like that, which we’ve been going through in our learning, less direct influence, but developing teachers’ understanding of reading and what it takes to be successful reader.” (Principal, US, primary, CESE interviews)

These comments are supported by views revealed in the 2022 CESE Teacher Survey, in which teachers were asked to reflect on any changes to their understanding of some reading strategies compared to 12 months earlier (Figure 20). Respondents generally indicated a stronger understanding of various aspects of reading and numeracy pedagogy, especially understanding of the evidence base for improving reading outcomes, and how to monitor reading improvement.

6 2022 Teacher Survey.

Figure 20

Teachers' self-assessment of changes in their understanding of some reading strategies compared with last year



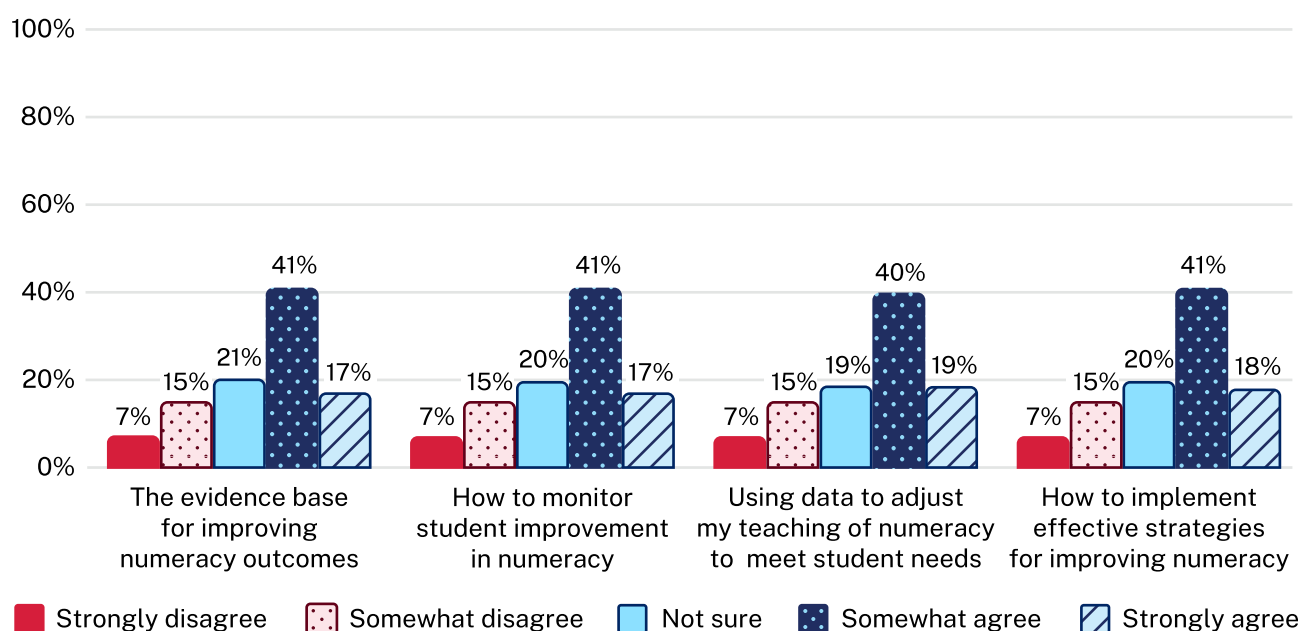
Source: CESE Teacher Survey.

Similar, albeit slightly lower levels of agreement, were found in relation to numeracy (Figure 21). Furthermore, of those who found the URH resources useful, approximately 40% reported that the resources somewhat increased their knowledge and understanding and a further 45% reported that the resources increased their knowledge and understanding quite a lot or a great deal in:

- the evidence base for reading and or numeracy development
- reading and or numeracy pedagogy
- contributing to their ability to apply reading and or numeracy pedagogical knowledge into practice.

Figure 21

Teachers' self-assessment of changes in their understanding of some numeracy strategies compared with last year



Source: CESE Teacher Survey.

Teachers have embraced professional development opportunities in reading and numeracy.

The wide range of online and blended learning resources made available through the R&N Program have been embraced with enthusiasm by teachers. As reported earlier nearly 16,000 teachers completed at least one course, with about half of those completing 2 or more courses. We heard in the interviews with school leaders (particularly in primary schools) that the staff have embraced the professional learning offerings in reading and numeracy, both those offered online through the URH, and intra-school delivered professional learning.

“Our professional learning sessions have also changed. So that’s been a big shift in our school, professional learning for us now always has to be on our focus area, but also has to come from an evidence base and we always try and look for what’s in the Universal Resource Hub first in terms of what can support our learning further.” (Principal, GS, primary, CESE interviews)

“We have a strategic approach to embedding literacy and numeracy that we will continue.” (School Lead, Tranche 2, SSS Partnership Survey)

MyPL course data shows that there was a marked increase in enrolments in reading and numeracy courses in 2021, but a decline in 2022 (particularly for Universal schools). The reasons for this are unclear but may be related to the fact that teachers are only expected to do a course once so once completed there is no need to repeat it, as well as the likelihood that, during 2021 and the beginning of 2022 (due to COVID-19 restrictions), teachers could only access online professional learning offerings and so there may have been greater demand. It is also interesting to note that again, the results were much better for primary schools than for secondary schools. Between 2018 and 2022, primary schools accounted for 73% of the professional learning completions in reading and numeracy topics, while secondary schools accounted for just 13% of completions.

Many teachers are more adept at using data to inform their practice.

Evidence was presented from both the 2022 CESE Teacher Survey and interviews with school leaders to support the finding that teachers are becoming more proficient at routinely using data such as NAPLAN results to guide student outcomes planning and teaching practice.

Use of data, particularly in planning sessions is likely to be the basis for teachers agreeing in the 2022 CESE Teacher Survey that they regularly adjust planning and pedagogical approaches to address students' needs in their school/faculty in reading (67%) and in numeracy (61%).

Further to this, teachers agreed that, looking back to 12 months ago, they had improved understanding in how to use data to adjust their teaching to meet student needs in reading (64%) and numeracy (59%).⁷ Moreover, in a similar reflection, teachers agreed that they had a better understanding about how to implement effective strategies, particularly in relation to reading improvement (65% agreement) and numeracy improvement (59% agreement).

A number of school leaders and DELs said that they had observed changes in teacher practice over the past 2 years. From their perspective, the speed, intensity and extent of change varied considerably. Some thought that changes have been gradual while others felt they had been more rapid, and some felt changes had been subtle while others thought that had been substantial. Many felt that change had only just begun, and more time was needed to embed practices.

“We need people to be given time to embed, to change their practice, to incrementally, I’m going to use the world evolve. You could call it grow...the reality is to change practice takes time.” (DEL, CESE interviews)

“Hopefully we’ll start to see some of that impact on student learning outcomes maybe next year, if not the year after.” (Principal, GS, secondary, CESE interviews)

7 2022 Teacher Survey.

“I was only talking to our LaNSA [sic.] the other day and I said I think it’s even too soon for me to give a definitive ‘Yes, it is working’. Anecdotally, I know it’s working because we now have vocab embedded in every classroom, every day, which is really cool to be able to say. But I don’t have definitive, quantitative, summative data yet to say, yes, it really works.” (Principal, GS, secondary, CESE interviews)

“So, in numeracy we’ve used [the URH] a lot ... When we first jumped into the Hub, people were amazed at how much is in there. And I know that there’s been a fair bit of time sort of exploring and playing. So, it definitely would have had an influence. But I know that numeracy has been very strong.” (Principal, US, primary, CESE interviews)

The role of resources and more specifically, the URH, has been crucial in providing much needed momentum.

Schools are using more reliable, evidence-based sources of resources, such as the reading and numeracy resources available on the URH.

Interviews with some school leaders suggested that the introduction of the URH had resulted in staff choosing to select evidence-based R&N resources from the URH, rather than some potentially less reliable sources on the internet.

“Well, the resource hub has been amazing, it’s been huge for us. The beginning of this year is really the first time that I had jumped into it, and then from that we’ve done some professional learning on that. We even went back and did professional learning on the Hub about how to navigate; that sounds so basic but typing the search bar and finding things.” (Principal, US, primary, CESE interviews)

“The fact that [teachers] don’t have to sit back and spend a night guessing, or trying to learn from me when I have time, or share an idea, or you know the other classic thing that young teachers do jump on the Internet and grab someone’s lesson from one of those websites, Butterfly Wings (sic) and all those things that people love which are found there, they’re fine. But they can go to the proper department resources that are directly linked to syllabus, the outcomes, and they can start delivering them.” (Principal, US, primary, CESE interviews)

“[The URH] really helped us around our reasoning and our problem-solving skills, and changing practice, providing teachers with examples, suggestions, samples of units and lessons, and those sorts of things.” (Deputy Principal, GS, primary, CESE interviews)

Users of the URH generally felt that the R&N resources improved their practice. Of the respondents to the URH User Pop-up Survey, 89% said that the resources had impacted their practice (the survey question was asked while users were on a specific resource page, but it related to their use of R&N resources on the URH platform in general; most responses were recorded on the ‘vocabulary recognition tool for assessment’ page).

These views are supported by the 2022 CESE Teacher Survey results, in which 48% of teachers, when thinking about the resources they found useful, believed that the resources contributed a lot or a great deal to their ability to apply reading and/or numeracy pedagogical knowledge into practice. Less than 2% felt that the resources had not contributed at all.

Indications of embeddedness

There are indications that practices encouraged by the R&N Program are becoming embedded in some schools.

While there is no direct measure of the extent to which practices promoted by the R&N Program are being adopted and becoming routine in schools, the evaluation found evidence consistent with many of these practices becoming embedded. In other words, we have multiple sources of evidence that practices appear to be increasingly adopted and are becoming entrenched within schools, but we have no measure of the scale.

From the evidence gathered for this evaluation, there are indications that practices promoted by the R&N Program (as well as other related initiatives, it must be acknowledged) are starting to become common and a part of ‘business as usual’ in many schools (Table 12). This is reinforced by teachers who continue to embrace professional learning opportunities in reading and numeracy. Anecdotal reports from school leaders suggest these initiatives are having a positive impact on teacher confidence and practice in addressing reading and numeracy needs in their students. However, as was pointed out many times during the interviews, these practices need more time to embed before definitive impacts might be seen for students. This sentiment was further underlined by a lead specialist in the SSS program who said:

“15 weeks isn’t long enough, especially when you factor in the first and last weeks aren’t spent in the school or implementing the program ... I do not think it gives us enough time to have a real impact on the schools. To fit 3 learn/do/reflect cycles into that time means schools are not implementing evidence-based practices authentically.” (Lead specialist, SSS, Tranche 3, SSS R&N process evaluation)

The SSS team have responded to this feedback by increasing the implementation period of 15 weeks to 20 weeks for Tranche 4.

Table 12

Indications that practices encouraged by the R&N Program may be embedding in schools

Inference	Supporting evidence	Data source
Principals are aligning their everyday practice in keeping with R&N approach	Schools are accessing PL and collaborating with DELS for school improvement.	CESE Principal Survey 2021
	More than half of principals said their schools incorporated R&N supports into their everyday school practices. Schools, including those without direct R&N support, are integrating the recommended practices into business as usual.	CESE Principal Survey 2022
Teachers are aware of their schools' reading/ numeracy focus	61% of teachers were aware that their school had both a reading and numeracy focus in 2022. 24% were aware of either a reading or a numeracy focus.	CESE Teacher Survey 2022
URH resources are being used in school-based professional learning, but only in some schools	36% of teachers reported using R&N resources on the URH. Of these, 33% said that resources were discussed or shared during meetings, and 37% said they were brought up in internal staff development activities. Only 15% of teachers stated that resources were the main focus of a professional development session. At the same time, just over one-third of respondents (37%) indicated that their schools did not utilise URH resources in professional development.	CESE Teacher Survey 2022
A substantial group of teachers confirmed their regular engagement with the teaching and learning cycle	About two-thirds of teachers somewhat or strongly agreed that they regularly engage in data analysis and use of appropriate reading (68%) and numeracy resources (63%). A similar proportion indicated they regularly adjust planning and pedagogical approaches to reading (67%) and numeracy (61%) needs.	CESE Teacher Survey 2022
DELs report that Guided Support schools are embedding practices to improve reading and numeracy outcomes	66% of DELs said that their GS schools have fully embedded teaching practices to improve reading and numeracy outcomes.	School Needs and Supports Survey
Teachers tend to use URH R&N resources in multiple ways, including using them in their own practice and sharing with others	URH users reported multiple uses for the URH resources they accessed, including developing their own knowledge, teaching from them, sharing with others and creating new resources using them as a base.	URH User Pop-up Survey

Inference	Supporting evidence	Data source
URH users reported that their regular use of URH resources had led to improvements in their practice	89% of respondents indicated that the R&N resources had improved their practice (47% reported significant improvement, 30% reported some improvement, and 12% reported slight improvement). Only a small percentage (3%) did not believe the resources had improved their practice.	URH User Pop-up Survey
DELs report effective collaboration with school leaders, embedded teaching practices in schools	Most respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they worked with school leaders to adjust R&N resources to meet needs (75%), and that schools have fully embedded teaching practices to improve R&N outcomes (66%).	School Needs and Supports Survey
The majority of SSS schools have improved perceived outcomes around teachers' knowledge, abilities and practice; whole-school practice; and student impact	93% of Tranche 1 schools achieved some or all of their short-term outcomes, while 42% attained their medium-term objectives. More than 70% of Tranche 1 stakeholders involved in the partnership said that the partnership had 'improved a little' or 'improved a lot' in the in the 5 outcome areas (identified in 'inference' statement, left).	SSS interim report
Collaboration remained consistently high during SSS Tranche 2 and 3	Collaboration between DELs, PSLs, PEOs, specialists and school staff remained consistently high in Tranches 2 and 3. 82% of respondents from Tranche 2, and 86% of respondents from Tranche 3 reported they 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with the statement 'I am satisfied with the collaboration that has occurred with DELs, PSLs, PEOs, support specialists and school staff during the Deliver phase.	SSS process evaluation slides
SSS participants felt the intervention addressed their priority improvements needs	The majority of participating schools agreed in SSS surveys that the improvement strategies they had engaged in through SSS addressed their focus areas for improvement (around 98% in both Tranches 1 and 2 agreed). Tranche 2 respondents reported higher levels of agreement about the accurate targeting of improvement strategies; this may be related to the greater input of literacy and numeracy specialists for Tranche 2.	SSS process evaluation slides
The majority of SSS schools were confident that the positive changes that had been made could be sustained	81% of Tranche 1 stakeholders involved in the partnership had medium (7–8) or high (9–10) confidence that the positive changes that have been made can be sustained. 85% of Tranche 2 stakeholders involved in the partnership had medium (7–8) or high (9–10) confidence that the positive changes that have been made can be sustained.	SSS Partnership Surveys

Overall, we have found that teachers are exhibiting shared understanding of improved comprehension of reading pedagogy and effective techniques and employing data-driven approaches to enhance their teaching practice. While schools are adopting more reliable and evidence-backed R&N resources, such as the URH, to strengthen their preparation and planning.

Conclusion

The evaluation revealed a compelling pattern of the R&N Program's practices gaining traction within school settings. Multiple indicators point to a growing adoption and integration of these practices, although a precise quantification remains elusive. It is encouraging to observe the increasing prevalence of these approaches, suggesting a positive trend towards their widespread implementation. As is the trend throughout this report, these changes are more prevalent in primary than in secondary, recognising that secondary have a further way to come. While the absence of a direct measure of scale poses a challenge, the evidence strongly suggests a substantial and ongoing uptake of practices in schools.

What we can say is that schools are increasingly prioritising a reading and numeracy focus and seeking additional support in these areas, with a collaborative plan that aims to promote a shared language and discourse around effective teacher practices. The data shows a notable shift in schools towards emphasising reading and numeracy, resulting in a growing demand for support and the emergence of combined R&N initiatives. It would be misleading to claim that the R&N Program has achieved this alone, rather it is more likely that this has been the result of the combined and sustained efforts being made by a range of related departmental initiatives focusing on reading and numeracy.

Teachers especially claim a deeper understanding of reading and numeracy and effective practices, while schools note that they are shifting towards evidence-based resources like those reading and numeracy resources found on the URH to establish a reliable foundation for their practices. Responses from the CESE Teacher Survey indicated that teachers generally agreed there was a comprehensive school-wide plan to improve reading and numeracy outcomes. Teachers were aware of both reading and numeracy focuses in their schools in 2022, while a notable portion were aware of a specific focus area.

The findings also revealed that teachers expressed agreement in collaboratively creating a shared understanding of effective R&N practices. Additionally, leaders and teachers utilised student data to identify R&N needs. Furthermore, a majority of principals reported incorporating R&N supports into their everyday practices, even in schools without direct R&N support, showcasing the integration of recommended practices into business as usual. Many schools in SSS are reporting that they expect the outcomes achieved from SSS will be sustained, with some also reporting being able to apply learnings from SSS to other areas of focus.

Schools have embraced reliable and evidence-based resources like the URH to enhance their R&N practices. The collective efforts of various R&N initiatives have fostered a common language for discussing and advancing reading and numeracy improvement. Some teachers have shown improved comprehension of reading pedagogy and effective practices.

Teachers have enthusiastically embraced professional development opportunities within the reading and numeracy field. As a result, many teachers have become proficient in utilising data to inform their teaching practice, leading to more informed decision-making. Schools are prioritising trustworthy resources to ensure improved student outcomes.

To this end, school leaders and DELs have observed shifts in practice over the past 2 years, although perceptions about the pace and magnitude of these changes have varied. Some individuals perceived the changes to have occurred gradually, while others believed them to be more rapid. Additionally, opinions regarding the nature of the changes ranged from subtle adjustments to substantial transformations. In line with these observations, teachers acknowledged their own adaptation to the evolving practices within the same 2-year period.

Chapter 5:

What lessons have we learned about the SSDF in the R&N Program?

Chapter 5 presents the findings to Evaluation Question C: What lessons have we learned about the SSDF in the context of the R&N Program? What could be improved?

The School Support Delivery Framework as part of the School Success Model is represented by 3 types of support – Universal, Guided and Strategic.

In addressing this question and drawing upon valuable insights gained, we present 13 lessons learned that reflect both the strengths and the weaknesses of the program. We also provide actionable takeaways which serve as the foundation for our primary recommendations aimed at enhancing further R&N Program development and in other programs.

Box 7

Summary points for ‘What lessons have we learned about the SSDF in the R&N Program? What could be improved?’

The 3 types of support in the context of the R&N Program

The progress made by the R&N Program within 2 years is impressive, especially given the strict COVID-19 restrictions imposed by the department. These restrictions limited the ability of delivery partners such as DELs to visit schools, yet the program was still able to facilitate strong relationships and provide essential capability development to guide schools and encourage classroom teachers. That was during a time when many networks were recovering from the devastating impacts of floods and dealing with staffing difficulties.

Lessons learned about program design

Lesson 1

A tiered support model was well accepted, but the department needs to make certain the model is built around broad expectations of equity. This will ensure vulnerable groups are not left behind and assist with stakeholder buy-in.

Lesson 2

As far as possible, care should be taken to design a program that is system-dependent rather than role-dependent. This will minimise the risk of program infidelity and success resting on the shoulders of one person or role.

Lesson 3

An initiative targeting K to 12 student outcomes needs to be designed with strong attention given to the key differences between literacy and numeracy skill acquisition at a primary and at a secondary level. Strategies and resources should be created so they are appropriate in both a primary and a secondary setting, with more tailored approaches addressing the priority needs of each. Secondary strategies should not merely be ‘bolted on’ to primary ones.

Lesson 4

Rather than relying on NAPLAN as the only measure of progress, future evaluations of literacy and numeracy programs could involve the use of literacy and numeracy assessments that are more sensitive to changes in a short timeframe.

Lessons learned about program implementation

Lesson 5

Ensuring that people in a key program role are sufficiently briefed, guided and supported is vitally important. It should not be assumed that all people in that role are equally well equipped to deliver support in a range of contexts.

Lesson 6

It is becoming increasingly important for programs operating in complex and rapidly changing contexts to respond to emerging challenges. Preparation of alternative activities and modes of delivery as well as use of adapted evaluation activities will minimise the effect of unexpected and largely unavoidable external factors. This requires being flexible and adaptable.

Lesson 7

A program that evolves throughout implementation must take care to effectively communicate changes as they are made, to minimise the risk of change fatigue for schools and other key stakeholders.

Lesson 8

A broad view of usability is required when developing a universal, self-access database (like the URH). This view will ensure accessibility and navigability as well as enable consideration of other supports that may also be needed by the spectrum of potential users.

Lesson 9

Early discussions with targeted schools should include clear information and be supported by data to give schools time to understand why they have been selected. This will assist them to see their selection as an opportunity, accept the support being offered and promote buy-in thereby avoiding a perception of stigma.

Lesson 10

Clear and detailed communication about the URH's intended audience, purpose, and benefits could improve its effectiveness and help achieve its goals.

Lessons learned about program expectations and outcomes

Lesson 11

When designing an initiative targeting change to teacher practice, realistic timeframes should be set for measuring improvement in student outcomes. Change to teacher practice will take time to embed and therefore improvement in student results will take longer still. Schools should be provided with sufficient time to observe and measure long-term changes in outcomes before significant course change is actioned.

Lesson 12

In a complex policy space, where there are multiple related parallel initiatives, identifying the causal effect of a single program is difficult, if not impossible. Consider oversight and long-term planning of concurrent initiatives with similar goals to avoid overloading schools and to determine the effect of individual programs and where cumulative program effects can produce greater gains.

Lesson 13

When other priority content areas were introduced also using the SSDF, it became harder for leaders to prioritise and implement strategies. The burden of supporting departmental improvement initiatives needs to be recognised and better rationalised.

Introduction

The R&N Program adopted the SSDF as a cohesive model of support to schools and comprised of 3 layers or tiers of support. This final evaluation question sought to explore the lessons learned from the R&N Program in the broader context for the SSDF, with the aim of informing future initiatives based on this support model.

The evaluation of the R&N Program provided valuable insights into its strengths and challenges. Based on the findings, the evaluators identified several lessons learned from the evaluation that can help guide the program's future development and the development of similar programs, especially those who use the SSDF as their vehicle for support.

Program design

Lessons learned about program design

Lesson 1

A tiered support model was well accepted, but the department needs to make certain the model is built around broad expectations of equity. This will ensure vulnerable groups are not left behind and assist with stakeholder buy-in.

The tiered model of support proposed by the R&N Program was generally very much welcomed by schools and system leaders. However, while the model appeared to provide more support for those who needed it most, the reality was that some schools most in need received no more than those who were doing considerably better.

In principle, US and SSS were generally well provisioned and therefore accepted, however GS was less well provisioned by those who had primary responsibility for implementing it – the DELs. This was largely because the selection process used to determine the GS schools (schools with the greatest number of students that might shift into the top 2 NAPLAN bands for reading and numeracy) did not sit right with many DELs and was seen as inequitable. Objecting to this selection approach, some DELs did not implement the GS approach as intended, choosing instead to deliver what they believed their schools needed. For some this meant delivering a little to every school in their network, for others this meant focusing on the schools with the greatest evident needs. And whilst this may underscore the importance of the DEL in being able to make discretionary decisions based on the best interests of their schools, it has not enabled the support model as a whole to be tested.

Moreover, **in practice**, the R&N Program supports were vulnerable to criticism about who they supported, and who they didn't support well. For example, the value of the initiative was questionable for secondary schools, small schools and schools with significant needs but who were not included in the SSS cohort.

Lesson 2

As far as possible, care should be taken to design a program that is system-dependent rather than role-dependent. This will minimise the risk of program infidelity and success resting on the shoulders of one person or role.

GS was designed to be implemented solely by each DEL, across their principal network. Thus, success of the GS component very much depended on the capacity, experience, knowledge and drive of each individual DEL. This became particularly challenging due to the interruptions caused by COVID-19 and the resulting loss of focus and oversight of the GS initiative. DELs had to redirect their focus towards urgent queries and concerns, such as wellbeing, attendance, and staff shortages, where it was needed the most.

By contrast, US and SSS were designed to operate irrespective of who was steering the ship: the US team established systems for identifying, reviewing and uploading R&N resources to the URH, while the team delivering SSS designed a clear workflow with identified milestones to be applied to each school, backed by an agreement between each school and the Strategic Delivery Team. Implementation of these components depended on the established system operating effectively, and not on the work of one person or role.

Lesson 3

An initiative targeting K to 12 student outcomes needs to be designed with strong attention given to the key differences between literacy and numeracy skill acquisition at a primary and at a secondary level. Strategies and resources should be created so they are appropriate in both a primary and a secondary setting, with more tailored approaches addressing the priority needs of each. Secondary strategies should not merely be ‘bolted on’ to primary ones.

The evaluation found that secondary schools were not well catered for in the overall R&N Program. For instance, the URH did not include a balance of primary and secondary R&N resources, and resources for Years 11 and 12 were not available. We should note that many of the resources on the URH were repurposed existing resources and the bulk of these were primary resources. New secondary resources needed to be created. This issue was less evident in SSS, as lead specialists were assigned as primary or secondary specialists and targeted strategies to apply to each school’s individual context. However, the overall strategies proposed by the R&N Program appeared to be more oriented towards primary schools, where all classroom teachers take on responsibility for reading and numeracy. Whereas secondary schools tend to operate as a collection of silos based on each faculty, and responsibility for reading and numeracy tends to be delegated to English and maths staff rather than a coordinated whole school approach. There was little in the way of resources and strategies in the URH for other secondary KLAs to teach reading and numeracy, for example, resources for science teachers to focus on reading strategies, or PDHPE teachers to focus on numeracy skills.

Lesson 4

Rather than relying on NAPLAN as the only measure of progress, future evaluations of literacy and numeracy programs could involve the use of literacy and numeracy assessments that are more sensitive to changes in a short timeframe.

The evaluation found there was an overemphasis on the end-system targets (defined by the Premier's Priority to increase the number of students in the top 2 NAPLAN bands in reading and numeracy) and insufficient focus on the main intent of the intervention – that is, improving teacher practice. The emphasis on NAPLAN targets sometimes resulted in concerns around stigmatisation of those schools identified for targeted support (GS or SSS). Concerns about diverting attention away from the improvement of teacher practice were raised by both school leaders and DELs. Findings indicate that this has led to a decrease in school engagement and has overshadowed the drive for gradual changes in teaching practices.

Programs should be clear about what they intend to achieve, the intended beneficiaries, and the realistic timeframe for achieving these goals. If a program's primary objective is to improve teacher practice, the targets and measures should reflect this focus, rather than improvement in student achievement in NAPLAN.

Recommendations for program design

1. The department should consider developing a team approach to GS rather than placing the responsibility on individual educators or DELs.
2. When designing a tiered support strategy, the department should build in mechanisms to ensure that the initiative:
 - a. promotes equity (that is, ensuring that schools with similar levels of need are offered similar levels of support), and
 - b. provides support to both primary and secondary schools, recognising the different organisation and unique needs of each.
3. Focusing a program on improving teacher practice and student outcomes is more effective for engaging schools in what they consider to be a worthwhile purpose and might ensure steady improvement is achieved and established. Achievement-based targets may diminish school buy-in and genuine gains.

Program implementation

Lessons learned about program implementation

Lesson 5

Ensuring that people in a key program role are sufficiently briefed, guided and supported is vitally important. It should not be assumed that all people in that role are equally well equipped to deliver support in a range of contexts.

The evaluation found that DELs varied in terms of their preparedness to deliver GS. DELs were provided with limited guidance about GS delivery and were largely left to deliver support in the way they thought was best. More direct instruction and information was needed for DELs to assume the responsibilities given to them. There was some variation found between the DELs regarding their a) knowledge and understanding about literacy and/or numeracy skill acquisition, b) relative experience in the DEL role, c) views about how to deliver support, d) views about what is best for schools, and e) workload. These factors influenced DELs' engagement with their schools.

Lesson 6

It is becoming increasingly important for programs operating in complex and rapidly changing contexts to respond to emerging challenges. Preparation of alternative activities and modes of delivery as well as use of adapted evaluation activities will minimise the effect of unexpected and largely unavoidable external factors. This requires being flexible and adaptable.

If the experience of the past 2 years of the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything, it is the importance of safeguarding initiatives from abandonment through the embedment of mechanisms to promote resilience. A significant achievement of the R&N Program was the fact that (with the exception of GS) it continued to be implemented despite the considerable disruptions caused by COVID-19 restrictions and natural disasters, for example, fires and floods.

Program owners were adaptable, and strategies were pivoted to be delivered online wherever possible, or through remotely provided support. Our analysis of interrelated challenging situations revealed a collective effort by the program stakeholders to manage program setbacks.

If programs are expected to be adaptable to minimise the effect of unexpected external factors, then evaluation approaches also need to be responsive and flexible. For instance, NAPLAN data was not administered in 2020 and thus the program required alternative data collection activities that considered schools' changing priorities and would measure enablers and barriers to participation and improvement.

Lesson 7

A program that evolves throughout implementation must take care to effectively communicate changes as they are made, to minimise the risk of change fatigue for schools and other key stakeholders.

Carefully managed communication, clarity, risk management, and contingency planning are all critical to ensure key stakeholders are well informed and avoid change fatigue and potential disengagement. Not all programs can follow perfectly thought-out design from the start, and to a large extent the R&N Program was testing out some novel ideas about how to provide support. The R&N Program developed and evolved over time, in response to an increased understanding of school needs and COVID-19 considerations, and the third support type – Guided – was added to the program at least 6 months after the first support type started.

The changing nature of the program, when combined with the shifting demands of other initiatives (such as IPM development) was said to have placed stress on schools. As one DEL put it, the department needs to ‘stop building a plane in the air’ and allow schools to choose a direction, thus highlighting the importance of clear communication and change management to minimise change fatigue.

Lesson 8

A broad view of usability is required when developing a universal, self-access database (like the URH). This view will ensure accessibility and navigability as well as enable consideration of other supports that may also be needed by the spectrum of potential users.

While it was not envisaged at the outset, the URH and the professional learning suite emerged as the heart of the R&N Program; the components upon which the other elements depended or were closely linked. The evaluation found that the URH, in particular, was highly valued by school leaders and many teachers. However, it also found that a number of teachers found the database overwhelming, challenging to navigate and were under-equipped to make best use of it. The findings suggest that due to the design and navigation features of the URH, teachers require a considerable amount of experience, sufficient time and a clear understanding of what they are looking for, in order to maximise value from the URH. It appears that a certain level of knowledge and understanding about reading and numeracy pedagogy is required to effectively search for and utilise the required materials, which might put teachers with less experience in these areas at a disadvantage.

When introducing something like the URH or professional learning suite, sufficient support is needed to ensure teachers are not overwhelmed by the enormity of it, and not overburdened by what they are required to do. The sheer volume of resources and opportunities also made efficient navigation challenging. In other words, the broad view of usability is about ensuring the resource is navigable and searchable yet also facilitates appropriate resource selection and use.

Lesson 9

Early discussions with targeted schools should include clear information and be supported by data to give schools time to understand why they have been selected. This will assist them to see their selection as an opportunity, accept the support being offered and promote buy-in thereby avoiding a perception of stigma.

When planning to provide targeted support to a subset of schools, it is easy for schools to feel singled-out for poor performance if they are not provided with sufficient information and preparation, and if the groundwork has not fostered a partnership approach. This was the early experience of the team delivering SSS, where a couple of school principals responded defensively after learning they had been identified for support. Although some improvements have been made to the processes, this is an ongoing issue requiring further strengthening to ensure the right schools are accessing the support.

Nonetheless, the use of Scout data packages as an objective measure of reading and numeracy school needs has been instrumental in building trust and transparency between program owners and schools. Data packages made it easier for school leaders to see the value and benefits of the program.

Lesson 10

Clear and detailed communication about the URH's intended audience, purpose, and benefits could improve its effectiveness and help achieve its goals.

Information available on the department's website regarding the URH objective and targeted audience is lacking in clarity. Although the website mentions that the URH is intended for 'all NSW public schools', it does not specify who it is meant to serve. As a result, it is unclear whether the URH is intended for teachers to access independently for their own use, or for the school leaders to filter and select what resources the school should use.

Recommendations for program implementation

4. Communications with participating schools should include:
 - a. clear messaging regarding their selection for targeted supports such as Guided and Strategic, and procedures to facilitate school readiness to engage in targeted support
 - b. conversations about the key resources – who they are for, how they can be used and what the benefits might be, and
 - c. an explanation of any changes that have needed to be made and why.
5. The structure of briefings, support documents and the availability of guidance should be differentiated to meet the needs of key personnel who vary in expertise and experience. Thorough preparation of the personnel who are to take on key roles is vital especially when the role they are fulfilling is pivotal in a program and involves various aspects that require specific expertise.
6. The inclusion of self-serve resources available in a range of modes enabled the R&N Program to continue support for schools (even if reduced), when most other programs were either paused by the department or ignored by schools. In fact, the URH and online professional learning maintained a substantial presence in many schools and, whether by accident or design, has demonstrated that inclusion of self-serve features can be highly advantageous in program design. Future programs should be designed to include similar features to protect against unexpected and damaging events.
7. The accessibility of central and significant R&N resources such as the resources found on the URH and professional learning which have been made available for every school, leader and teacher is an important component of this program's success. Ensuring that all participants can easily navigate the range and volume of resources and can access expert guidance at a local level is critical to making informed choices about what is the most appropriate and relevant for the user's needs.

Program expectations and outcomes

Lessons learned about program expectations and outcomes

Lesson 11

When designing an initiative targeting change to teacher practice, realistic timeframes should be set for measuring improvement in student outcomes. Change to teacher practice will take time to embed and therefore improvement in student results will take longer still. Schools should be provided with sufficient time to observe and measure long-term changes in outcomes before significant course change is actioned.

Although the R&N Program was conceived to meet the Premier's targets for reading and numeracy through change in teacher practice, the reality is that change to both teacher practice and student outcomes will take time. Several schools identified anecdotal changes occurring in teacher knowledge, understanding and practices and these appear to be setting schools on the right track. However, time is required before judgements can be made about the success of these efforts and the extent to which student results are showing sustained improvement. For this reason, the 2-year timeframe to lift student NAPLAN results in reading and numeracy was overly ambitious. Interview data with school leaders revealed concerns that sufficient time should be given to embed changes and they expressed the hope that the department will stay the course with the R&N Program model and avoid changing to other models too early.

Lesson 12

In a complex policy space, where there are multiple related parallel initiatives, identifying the causal effect of a single program is difficult, if not impossible. Consider oversight and long-term planning of concurrent initiatives with similar goals to avoid overloading schools and to determine the effect of individual programs and where cumulative program effects can produce greater gains.

Causal attribution of any effects (either positive or negative) to the R&N Program is simply not possible given the range and volume of other projects also being implemented in similar curriculum and skill areas. At the time of the R&N Program's implementation, a focus on COVID ILSP, the Literacy and Numeracy Five Priorities, the NSW Maths Strategy and Curriculum Reform were also being implemented across NSW government schools. The effect of such decisions can have both positive and negative consequences.

It can be helpful if several programs are targeting a range of approaches to improve student outcomes in specific subject areas. However, it can also be confusing for schools when strategies, advice, focuses and supports differ between projects despite having a similar overall goal. There is also the overload on schools and teachers to be considered. Further to this, if there is an intention to evaluate which programs are providing the greatest gain then isolating the effect of a single program is practically impossible.

Lesson 13

When other priority content areas were introduced also using the SSDF, it became harder for leaders to prioritise and implement strategies. The burden of supporting departmental improvement initiatives needs to be recognised and better rationalised.

The use of data packages and discussions with DELs helped schools identify specific reading and numeracy areas. Through the support of the Scout data packages and, where achieved, DEL and school principal discussions, schools were enabled to clearly identify reading and numeracy areas in need of improvement. However, as other priority areas such as attendance, wellbeing, Aboriginal attainment goals, HSC results, and post-school pathways were formally introduced to the URH, professional learning and to other school processes, it became increasingly difficult for principals to prioritise and strategise. Without a streamlined focus it is harder to focus on specific areas for improvement. Concentrating on only a few specific areas allows individual schools to be more focused and strategic in their efforts.

Recommendations for program expectations and outcomes

8. Program owners should plan and prioritise work programs for the long-term ensuring decisions are based on a comprehensive needs assessment. A forward-thinking approach not only avoids decision-making based on premature results, but it also minimises change fatigue and the burden on schools. With outcomes not expected to be achieved in the short-term, schools can work with their teachers and students slowly and steadily building capability. Necessary changes should be in response to unavoidable circumstances to ensure continuity of the program. Implementing over long timeframes facilitates time for evaluative activities to observe and track what is not shifting, the barriers to engagement, the changes that have been adopted, if changes are embedded, and measure changes in student outcomes. Without a long-term view, evaluations will not be able to accurately capture the desired outcomes of the program.

Conclusion

Overall, the R&N Program has demonstrated the potential of promoting sustainable teaching practices to advance regular processes and the likelihood of improved student outcomes. By taking into account the lessons learned from the evaluation, we can better address the challenges at hand. Additionally, the program's evolving nature in response to unexpected events, while at times challenging for some, has enabled the program owners to proactively tackle issues that have arisen.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The R&N Program got quite a few things right. However, some factors limited its capacity for changing teacher practice and improving students' results. These factors included, but are not limited to, COVID-19, natural disasters, and design aspects that called into question equity and compromised the value of universality.

This short conclusion explores the overall findings from the R&N Program evaluation through the lenses of universality and equity, before identifying the gains that have started to emerge in many primary and some secondary schools. We conclude with an acknowledgement of some of the improvements already adopted by the program owners in response to feedback over the past 2 years.

Universality – something for everyone

The R&N Program evaluation found that universal support, both as a concept and as an initiative, has worked well and is a good idea. Its 'universal' accessibility through a range of resources, professional learning and assessment tools that have been modified, created and quality assured by the department has been a very sound investment of time and effort. This is especially true because the department has been able to set reading and numeracy expectations across all schools through the universal component of the program.

While the universality of the R&N resources on the URH is a strength, consideration is needed regarding the diversity and volume of resources found there. It can be overwhelming for users. Clear organisation of resources and a process enabling users to select several filters at once would enhance. Consideration also needs to be given to how early career teachers or teachers with less experience can be supported to make appropriate and relevant selections from the professional learning suite and the URH resources. Not all teachers are able to navigate and wisely choose what they need.

Furthermore, the concept of 3 tiers of support (the SSDF) has also worked well in principle as it provides access to differentiated guidance and help for schools who have a range of needs and strengths in diverse locations. In practice, implementation of the support model resting on the 3 support types was set back by circumstances beyond the program owners' control (for example, COVID-19, floods, staffing shortages) as well as a few missteps (for example, selection methodology for GS schools, insufficient focus on secondary schools), which ultimately limited some schools' access to the help they needed.

Keeping the focus on equity

Regarding equity, the range of resources and tools available in US and in particular, their availability online, has enabled rural, regional and remote schools to access without substantial travel and cost what has not been possible before. Prior to the R&N Program, a teacher shortage like the one we are currently experiencing, would typically have restricted rural, regional and remote schools from accessing traditionally offered face-to-face professional learning, resulting in far fewer opportunities for teachers from these areas to engage with department-preferred reading and numeracy practices. The unexpected opportunities of COVID-19, in addition to the strategies planned by the R&N Program owners, has meant that for the first time, rural, regional and remote schools have had equal access to professional learning and resources as experienced by metropolitan schools, at no extra cost and at times of the day or week that work for them. This has been a very positive outcome.

Nonetheless, there are still some school types whose unique needs require greater attention and who do not believe they are receiving equal attention and support to other schools. The school selection process for GS and SSS certainly led to inequities. Some schools missed out on both supports due to the size of their enrolment yet were the schools who most needed a focused support beyond the US offering. The selection of small schools for both GS and SSS was hampered by the unreliability and volatility of system data inherent in small groups. Further, it was considered unlikely that small schools in GS would substantially lift the percentage of students in the top 2 bands of NAPLAN Reading and Numeracy.

A further imbalance was experienced by secondary schools and schools for specific purposes as mainstream primary schools were, by and large, offered more support. The lack of focus on these 2 types of schools created frustration amongst school leaders and staff. US, if it is indeed intended to be universal, should provide something for everyone and redress inequities; preferably offering the same volume of resources and professional learning to every group.

Last, GS schools experienced unevenness of DEL support because DEL knowledge, capacity, capability and willingness varied. The impact of the variation is felt more keenly because GS is dependent on the DEL role and is not compensated or balanced out by other leaders or roles with requisite capabilities. The result is that GS is subject to greater variation with pockets of ineffectiveness that has the potential to weaken equity outcomes.

Change is happening, especially in primary schools

Despite the program's challenges and regardless of the lack of precise quantification of changes occurring in teacher practice, there are multiple indicators that point to a growing adoption and integration of reading and numeracy practices. These indicators have largely been drawn from CESE's data sources listed in Chapter 1. The increase in uptake suggests a positive trend towards their widespread implementation, albeit largely in primary schools. Examples of school level change in primary schools are:

- increased use of the URH R&N resources and professional learning practices as a foundation for preparation and teaching. Schools are prioritising trustworthy resources to ensure improved student outcomes
- shared agreement about effective reading and numeracy practice as a result of engaging with at least one of the Supports
- acknowledgement that reading and numeracy student outcomes in some areas require improvement and an increased awareness of where the focus needs to be
- incorporation of R&N supports into everyday practice, even in schools without direct R&N support, showcasing the integration of recommended practices into business as usual
- observation of improved comprehension of reading pedagogy and effective practices in teachers.

Examples of school-level change across both primary and secondary schools are:

- 98% of the respondents in the SSS Embed and Sustain Survey agreed that the improvement strategies were implemented and had addressed the focus for improvement suggesting that change was happening for both primary and secondary schools (Figure 14)
- increased prioritisation of a specific reading and numeracy focus which is included in a school plan accompanied by clear objectives
- a growing demand for reading and numeracy support and a recognition for the type of supports needed to improve
- the development of a common meta-language for discussing reading and numeracy practices and advancing improvement.

The final dot point was most likely achieved as a result of the combined and sustained efforts from a range of related departmental initiatives focusing on literacy and numeracy. It would be misleading to claim that the R&N Program has achieved some of these changes alone. An increase in using data proficiently to inform teaching practice is another shift in practice that has been slowly gaining momentum and breadth over the last decade or more.

Nonetheless, the observed shifts in practice over the past 2 years have occurred in most schools despite variations in pace and magnitude, recognising that there are still some schools who are unable to identify any substantial change and who are still not readily accepting the need for change.

The initiatives are constantly evolving

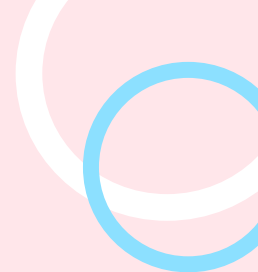
The R&N Program owners have aimed to respond to challenges and to modify the program where needed. This has already been noted as a key strength. It would be remiss at this stage to fail to mention some of the improvements made in recent months in response to feedback:

1. The selection method for GS is no longer prioritised by the meeting of targets associated with increasing the number of students into the top 2 NAPLAN bands in reading and numeracy.
2. Transformation co-developed the 'Engaging in the Right Support' process to support DELs and principals to assess the readiness of schools to engage in SSS and make informed decisions about which support to prioritise. As a result of the findings from a responsive evaluation methodology, a more nuanced approach to schools during the Identification step has been adopted for SSS R&N. Capability, Implementation and School Excellence (CISE) has reconfigured timelines and process for identification of schools and completion of 'Engaging in the Right Support' (communicated early Term 4) to allow time to introduce the SSS process and support DELs and principals to assess the readiness of schools to engage in SSS and make informed decisions about which support to prioritise. Support included: 'Engaging in the Right Support' guide and DEL drop in sessions in Term 4, 2022. Principals were also included earlier to contribute to school readiness assessment. This requires further refinement and strengthening for future cohorts.
3. Teaching Quality and Impact recognised quite early on that the 12-week engagement strategy in SSS was not long enough to yield anticipated outcomes. The number of weeks was increased to an 18-week strategy. Following 2022 evaluation findings the 2023 iteration of the R&N SSS timeline has been extended. The Plan stage has been extended from 5 weeks to 8 weeks to allow for relational trust to be established and an authentic co-diagnosis of the identified areas of need; the Implementation stage from 15 weeks to 20 weeks to allow for increased application and reflection of learning; and the Embed and Sustain stage from 3 weeks to 5 weeks to allow for authentic gradual release from specialist support.
4. Tranche 1 SSS R&N evaluation indicated greater clarity around the role of the PSL was needed. Strategic Delivery worked closely with the PSL team to clarify their role at each step of the process supported by:
 - facilitated focus groups with PSLs to refine their roles and responsibilities – 'What good looks like'
 - delivery of drop-in session for PSLs to strengthen understanding of the process
 - updated SSS guide to reflect clarification of key activities and roles in each step of the process.

5. Lead specialists were identified a strength of the SSS process. As a result, they are now involved earlier in the process, to aide with focus area identification and planning. This also strengthened the opportunity for them to understand the individual school context they are supporting.
6. Initially, it was intended that once SSS schools completed their period of intense support, they would join the rest of the schools in US. However, relatively early into the R&N Program implementation it was recognised that transitioning from intense support to the self-serve approach of US was too large a gap to jump and instead SSS schools were moved into GS the following year. In 2023, schools who receive SSS support the previous year are identified as 'Embedding and Sustaining' improvement practices.
7. In response to feedback indicating variation in preparedness among DELs to deliver GS, program owners developed capability building sessions. DELs, who had received limited guidance on GS delivery and were mostly left to determine their own approach, were provided with more direct instruction and necessary information to enhance their effectiveness.
8. Network level support provided by lead specialists on the request of DELs to all schools, regardless of the type of support. This development addresses the challenge of limited accessibility to specialists. While schools participating in the SSS partnership typically benefit from assigned lead specialists, the extension of support to schools outside the partnership demonstrates an inclusive approach to ensuring access to valuable expertise. Further flexible and responsive support is available to schools in unique settings, such as small schools, through CSUS. This support leverages off the supports available under US and GS.
9. Despite the period within which the R&N Program was implemented, one filled with enormous challenges, the program has, in many aspects, demonstrated resilience. It has also shown that the SSDF has the potential to be effective provided the identification of schools requiring supports is driven less by targets and more by clearly defined school needs.

Appendices:

CESE data sources and analysis



Appendix A – CESE Teacher Survey R&N questions

Survey question	Response options
<p>1. To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements about reading in your school/faculty?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. There is a whole-school plan for improving reading b. Leaders use student data to identify reading needs c. We collaboratively create a shared understanding of effective reading pedagogy d. We regularly engage in data analysis and use of appropriate reading resources e. We regularly adjust planning and pedagogical approaches to address reading needs f. There are adequate supports in place that assist me to improve the reading outcomes of students 	<p>Please select one response for each statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly disagree • Somewhat disagree • Not sure • Somewhat agree • Strongly agree
<p>2. To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements about numeracy in your school/faculty?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. There is a whole-school plan for improving numeracy b. Leaders use student data to identify numeracy needs c. We collaboratively create a shared understanding of effective numeracy pedagogy d. We regularly engage in data analysis and use of appropriate numeracy resources e. We regularly adjust planning and pedagogical approaches to address numeracy needs f. There are adequate supports in place that assist me to improve the numeracy outcomes of students 	<p>Please select one response for each statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly disagree • Somewhat disagree • Not sure • Somewhat agree • Strongly agree

Survey question	Response options
<p>3. Compared with this time last year, would you say that in reading you have a better understanding of ...</p> <p>a. the evidence base for improving reading outcomes</p> <p>b. how to monitor student improvement in reading</p> <p>c. using data to adjust my teaching of reading to meet student needs</p> <p>d. how to implement effective strategies for improving reading</p>	<p>Please select one response for each statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly disagree • Somewhat disagree • Not sure • Somewhat agree • Strongly agree
<p>4. Compared to this time last year, would you say that in numeracy you have a better understanding of ...</p> <p>a. the evidence base for improving numeracy outcomes</p> <p>b. how to monitor student improvement in numeracy</p> <p>c. using data to adjust my teaching of numeracy to meet student needs</p> <p>d. how to implement effective strategies for improving numeracy</p>	<p>Please select one response for each statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly disagree • Somewhat disagree • Not sure • Somewhat agree • Strongly agree
<p>5. To the best of your knowledge, which of the following statements is most applicable?</p>	<p>Please select one option only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My school has both a reading and a numeracy focus in 2022 • My school has a reading focus in 2022 • My school has a numeracy focus in 2022 • I am not aware of any reading and/or numeracy focus areas in my school • My school has neither a reading or a numeracy focus area for 2022

Survey question	Response options
6. What is your school's reading and/or numeracy focus area/s this year?	<p>Please select all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additive thinking • Audience & purpose • Character • Comprehension • Connecting ideas • Evaluating sources • Fractions and proportional reasoning • Language features • Measurement and geometrical reasoning • Multiplicative thinking • Number sense and place value • Probability and statistical reasoning • Text structure and features • Vocabulary • Not sure • Other (please specify) [text box]
7. How familiar are you with the reading and numeracy resources on the Universal Resources Hub? (previously the Digital Learning Resource Hub).	<p>Please select one option only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have not heard of the Hub before • I have heard of the Hub, but I haven't looked at it • I have looked at the resources on the Hub, but I haven't used any • I have explored the Hub and have used some resources • I have explored the Hub and used many resources
8. I typically use the reading or numeracy resources from the Universal Resources Hub to ...	<p>Please select all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teach a lesson/s from it • develop my knowledge or skills • create a new teaching resource • share with colleagues • use it for assessment • use it as a source of ideas • guide my teaching & learning program • use in professional learning opportunities • Other (please specify) [text box]

Survey question	Response options
<p>9. To what extent did you find the following Hub resources useful?</p> <p>Reading resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Effective reading K–2 b. Improving reading comprehension Years 3 to 8 c. Teacher guides for specific topics in reading d. Reading assessments e. Classroom resources for reading <p>Numeracy resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Numeracy guide K–2 b. Numeracy guide Years 3 to 8 c. Teacher guides for specific topics in numeracy d. Numeracy assessments e. Classroom resources for numeracy 	<p>Please select one response for each statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not at all • Very little • Somewhat • Quite a lot • A great deal • Didn't use
<p>10. Thinking about the resources you found useful, to what extent did they contribute to ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. increasing your knowledge of the evidence base for reading and/or numeracy improvement b. improving your understanding of reading and/or numeracy pedagogy c. your ability to apply reading and/or numeracy pedagogical knowledge into practice 	<p>Please select one response for each statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not at all • Very little • Somewhat • Quite a lot • A great deal • Not sure
<p>11. For any internal staff development activities where reading and/or numeracy resources from the Hub were used, which statement/s is true for you?</p>	<p>Please select all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources were the focus of professional development session/s • Resources were discussed and/or shared at a meeting • Resources were brought to my attention • My school does not use Hub resources in professional development • My school uses the Hub resources in other ways such as ... (please specify) [text box]

Appendix B – 2022 CESE Teacher Survey analysis summary

How was the 2022 CESE Teacher Survey administered?

The 2022 CESE Teacher Survey was administered by the Evaluation and Effectiveness unit in CESE in Term 3 2022. All NSW Government school teachers, including middle leaders and specialist teachers, were invited to participate. The survey was hosted online, and teachers were emailed a direct link to the survey inviting them to take part. The invitation noted that all survey responses would be aggregated so that individual responses would not be identifiable in reporting.

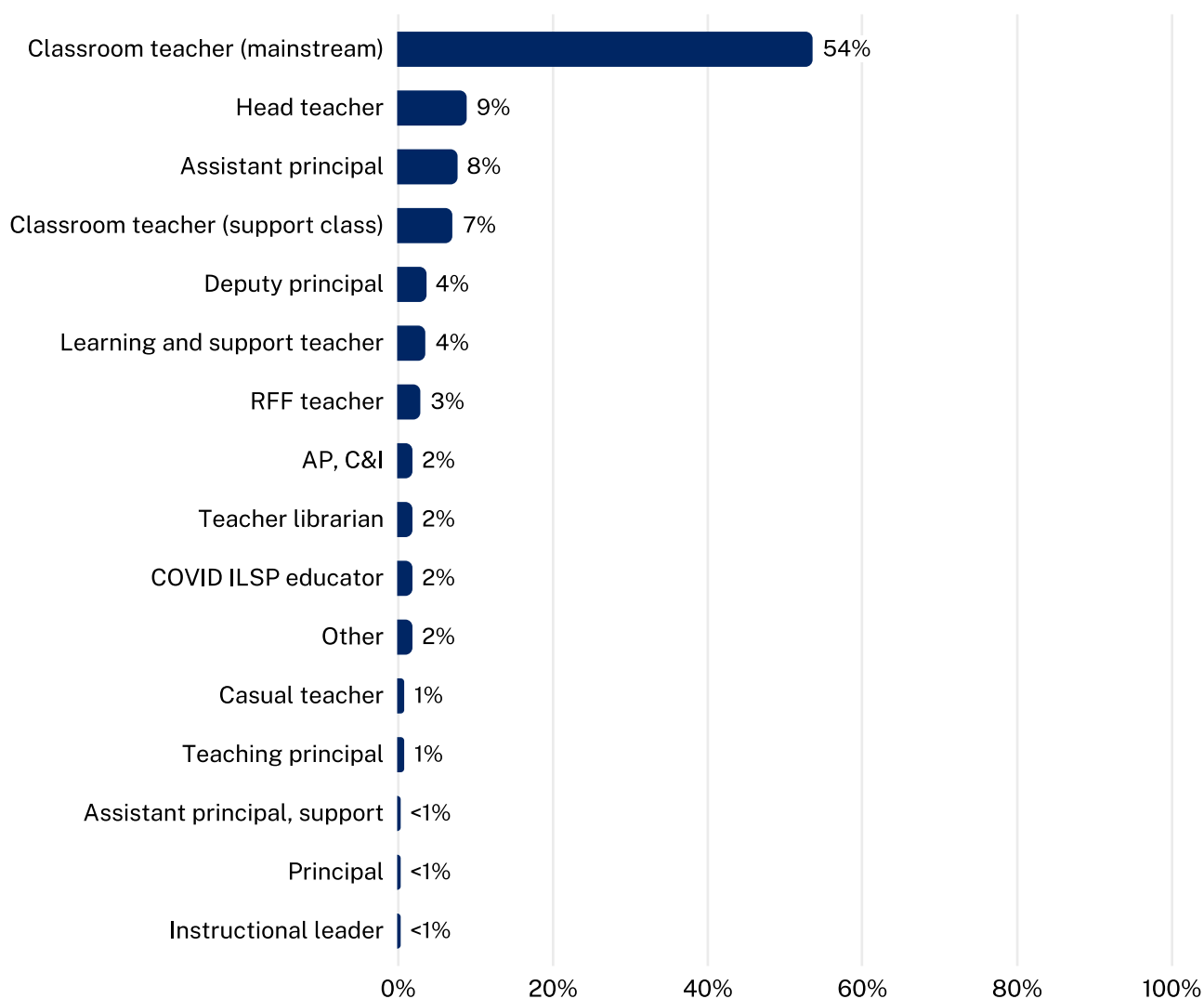
The survey included questions about a range of initiatives, including some questions specific to the R&N Program (refer to Appendix A for CESE Teacher Survey questions).

Who participated in the 2022 CESE Teacher Survey?

The de-identified data reported here is based on findings from the 7,703 responses to questions relating to the R&N Program giving an overall response rate of 8%. Of these responses, 74.7% were from teachers – the majority mainstream classroom teachers (54.1%). The remaining 25.3% were identified as holding teaching support, executive and other roles. Figure 22 illustrates a detailed breakdown of respondents by role.

Figure 22

Proportion of respondents by role



Respondents were slightly more concentrated among infants/primary school teachers (50.2%) compared to secondary (43.9%). A small proportion of respondents taught across both primary and secondary classes (2.7%), and 3.2% indicated they did not teach any grade.

The majority of respondents worked an average of 4 to 5 days per week at their nominated school (86.5%). A small proportion worked between 2 and 3.5 days (11.7%), and 1.6% worked 1.5 days or less. Less than 1% did not respond to this question (0.2%).

The majority of respondents were from schools participating in Universal Support (59.3%). Around one-third were from Guided Support (36.3%), and a small proportion were from Strategic Support (4.5%).

Of note, there is always a margin of error associated with survey findings when data is extrapolated to a total population.

To what extent, and in what ways, are schools engaging in a focus on reading?

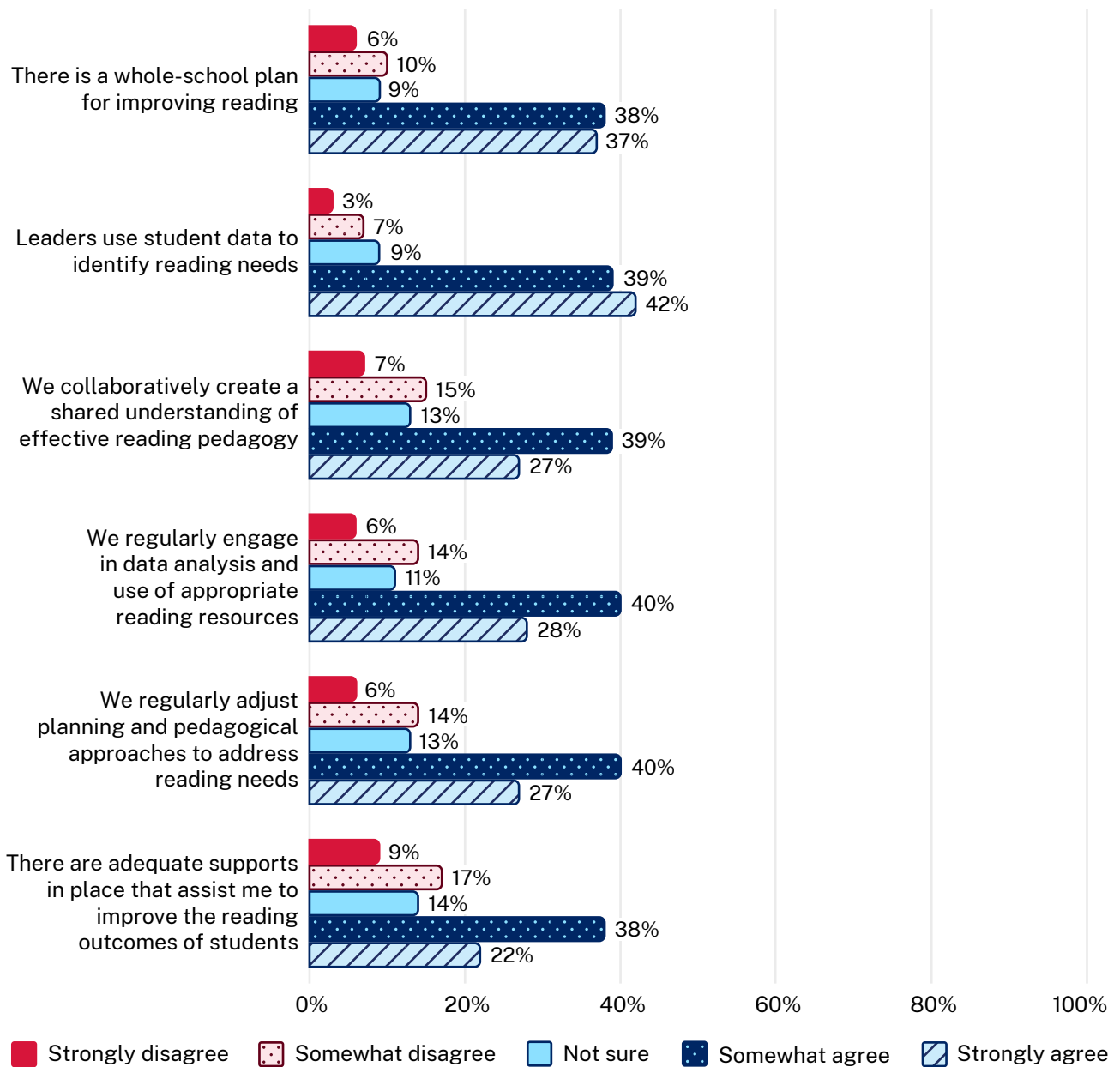
Most teachers agreed or strongly agreed that their leaders use student data to identify reading needs (81%), and that their school had a whole-school plan for improving reading (75%).

Around two-thirds of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their school staff collaboratively create a shared understanding of effective reading pedagogy; regularly engage in data analysis and use of appropriate reading resources; regularly adjust planning and pedagogical approaches to address reading needs; and that there are adequate supports in place to assist them to improve student reading outcomes. Only around a quarter of respondents strongly agreed to these statements, and at least 20% somewhat or strongly disagreed. Refer to Figure 23 for a more detailed breakdown of extent of these results.

When comparing responses of primary and secondary teachers, a focus on reading was consistently stronger among primary teachers. The proportion of primary teachers who somewhat or strongly agreed to the statements around a school focus on reading was at least 15% greater than the proportion of secondary teachers. The difference was greatest in relation to collaboratively creating a shared understanding of effective reading pedagogy, and in relation to having adequate supports in place to assist them improve reading outcomes of students (both around 16 to 17% higher among primary teachers).

Figure 23

Teachers' perceptions of how their school engages in a focus on reading



To what extent, and in what ways, are schools engaging in a focus on numeracy?

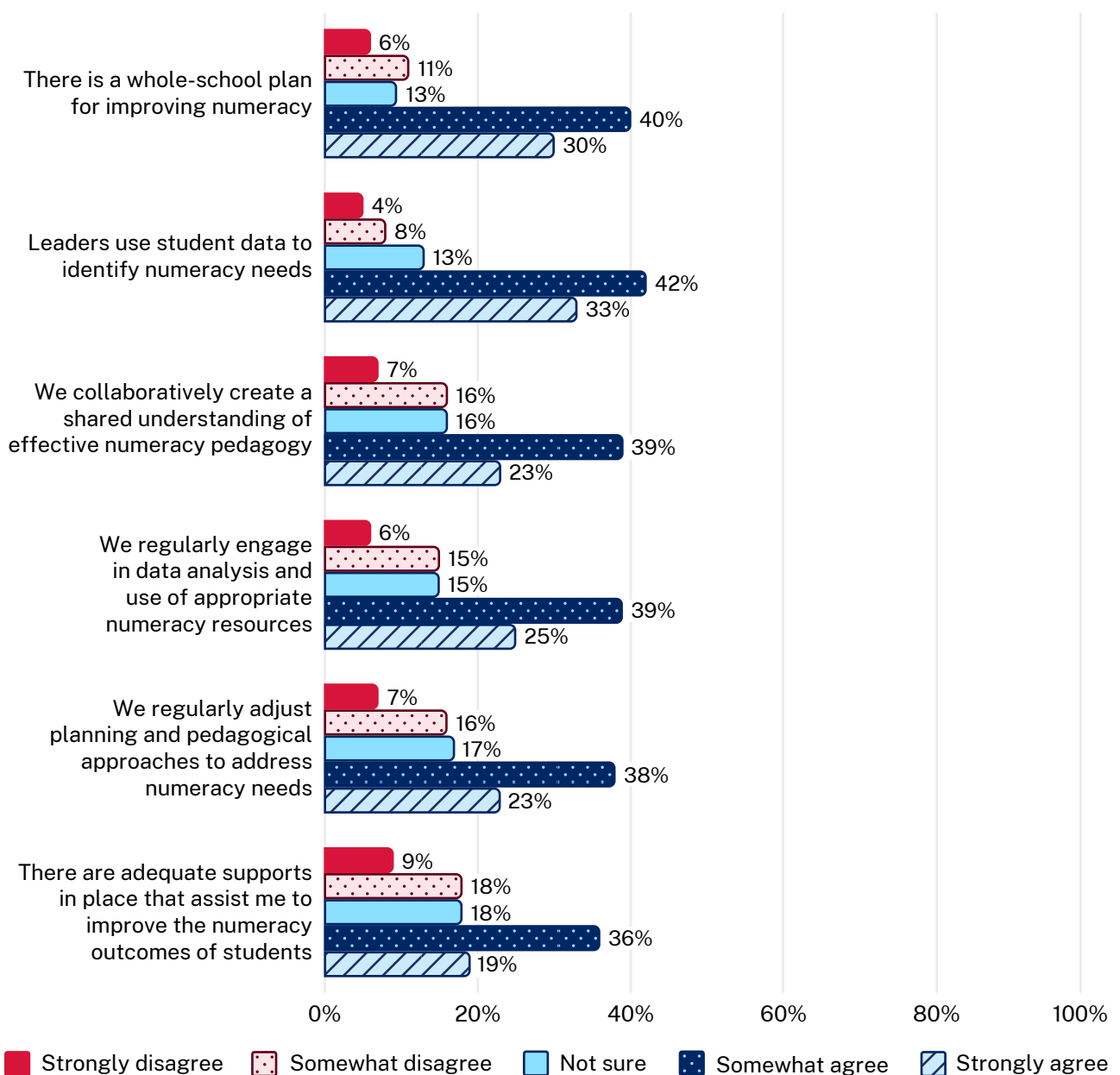
Teacher’s responses around their school’s focus on numeracy followed a similar pattern to their focus on reading – but the proportion of respondents who somewhat or strongly agreed with the statements was consistently 5% lower.

The majority of respondents reported that leaders use student data to identify numeracy needs (75%), and that there is a whole school plan for improving numeracy (70%).

Around 60% of respondents somewhat or strongly agreed that their school staff collaboratively created a shared understanding of effective numeracy pedagogy; regularly engaged in data analysis and use of appropriate numeracy resources; and regularly adjusted planning and pedagogical approaches to address numeracy needs. The lowest response related to support – just over half respondents somewhat or strongly agreed that there are adequate supports in place that assist them to improve the numeracy outcomes of students (55%), and over a quarter somewhat or strongly disagreed. Refer to Figure 24 for a more detailed breakdown of responses.

Figure 24

Teachers’ perceptions of how their school engages in a focus on numeracy



Focus on numeracy was consistently stronger among primary teachers compared to secondary teachers – however the difference in the proportion of respondents who agreed with the focus statements was more variable, and generally greater, than for reading. The difference was greatest in relation to collaboratively creating a shared understanding of effective numeracy pedagogy (around 23% difference) and regularly adjusting planning and pedagogical approaches to address numeracy needs (21%). The difference was smallest in relation to having a whole school plan for improving numeracy (14%), and leaders using student data to identify numeracy needs (13%).

To what extent has teachers’ understanding of teaching reading and numeracy improved compared to this time last year?

Respondents consistently agreed that their understanding had improved compared to this time last year in reading (around 60%) and numeracy (around 58%).

Around 21 to 24% strongly agreed their understanding improved in reading, and slightly less (around 16 to 19%) in numeracy. This pattern was consistent across the 4 areas of understanding; evidence base for improving reading outcomes; how to monitor student improvement in reading; using data to adjust teaching of reading to meet student needs; and how to implement effective strategies for improving reading.

Around 16 to 18% of respondents were not sure whether their understanding had improved in reading, and around 20% were not sure if their understanding had improved in numeracy. Around 20% disagreed that their understanding had improved.

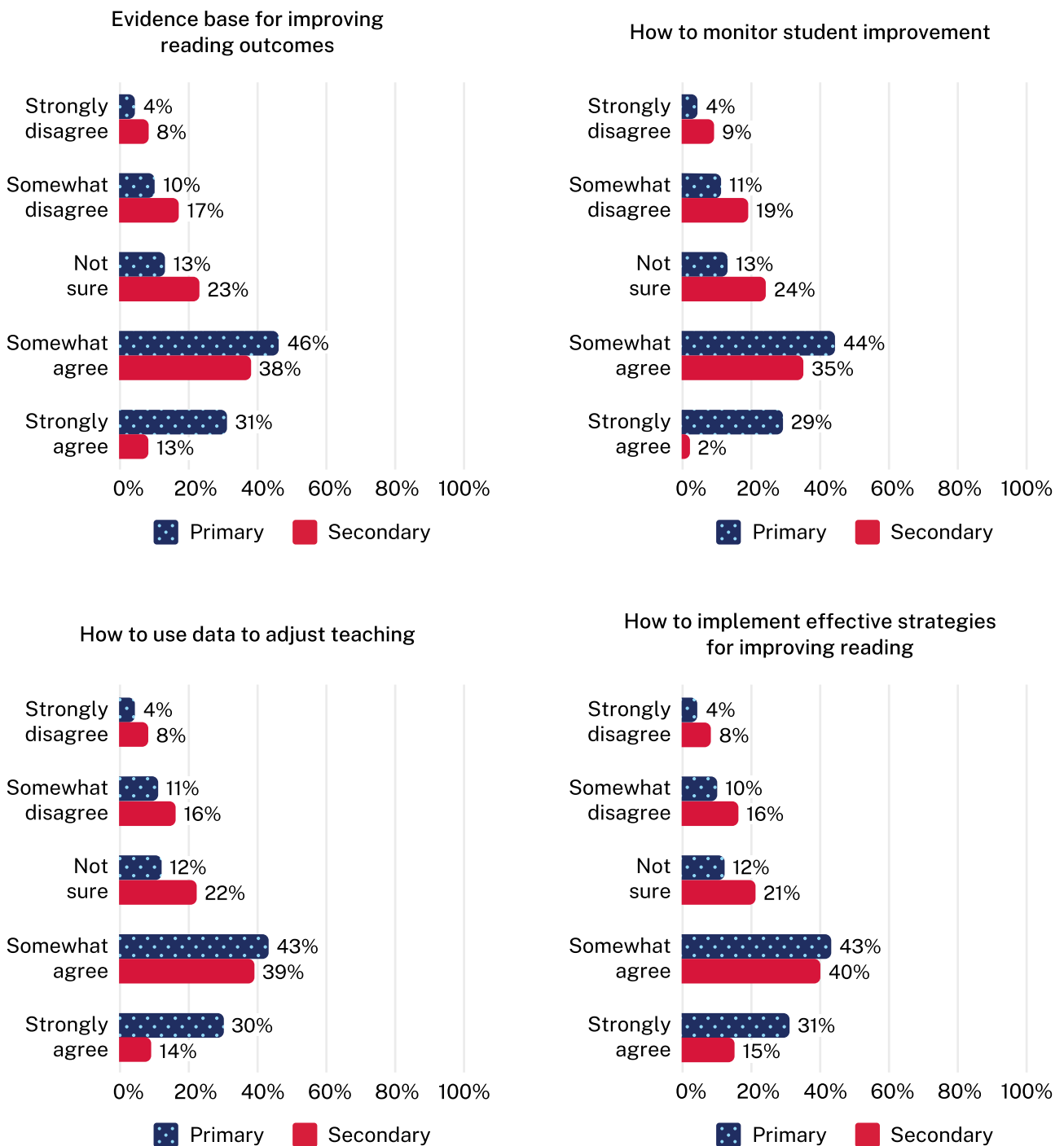
Are there differences in how primary and secondary teachers’ understanding of reading has changed over the past year?

Secondary school teachers were consistently less likely to agree that their understanding of reading had improved since last year. Figure 25 shows how responses followed a consistent pattern across the 4 areas of understanding: evidence base for improving reading outcomes; how to monitor student improvement in reading; using data to adjust teaching of reading to meet student needs; and how to implement effective strategies for improving reading. In each case, around three-quarters of primary school teachers somewhat or strongly agreed their understanding had improved (72 to 76%), compared to only around half of secondary school teachers who somewhat or strongly agreed (47 to 55%).

Conversely, a larger proportion of secondary teachers somewhat or strongly disagreed their understanding had improved compared to primary school teachers (at least 25% secondary teachers, compared to around 14% primary teachers).

Figure 25

Comparison of the extent to which primary and secondary teachers' understanding of teaching reading has changed over the past year



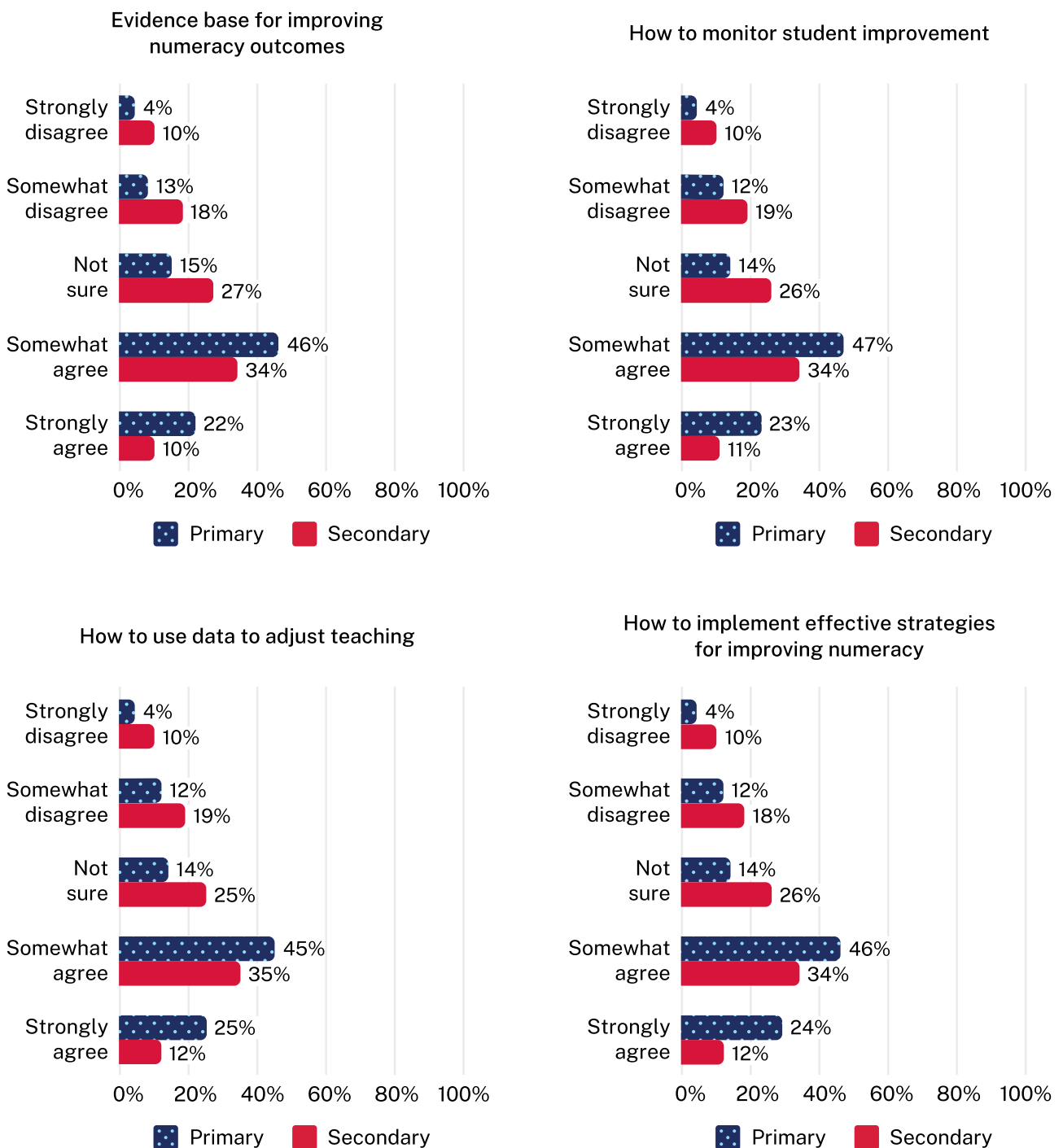
Are there differences in how primary and secondary teachers' understanding of numeracy has changed over the past year?

Secondary school teachers were also consistently less likely to agree that their understanding of numeracy had improved since last year. Figure 26 shows a consistent pattern across each of the 4 areas of understanding: evidence base for improving numeracy outcomes; how to monitor student improvement in numeracy; using data to adjust teaching of numeracy to meet student needs; and how to

implement effective strategies for improving numeracy. In each case, around 70% primary school teachers somewhat or strongly agreed their understanding had improved, while less than half (44 to 47%) of secondary teachers somewhat or strongly agreed. Conversely, a larger proportion of secondary teachers somewhat or strongly disagreed compared to primary school teachers their understanding had improved (around 28% secondary teachers, compared to around 15% primary teachers).

Figure 26

Comparison of the extent to which primary and secondary teachers’ understanding of teaching numeracy has changed over the past year



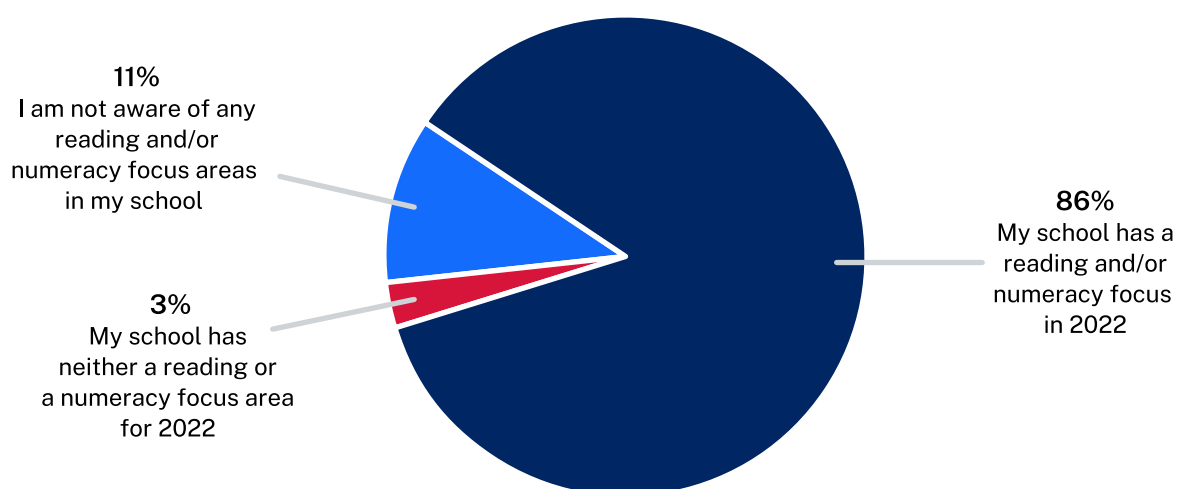
Were teachers aware of their school having a reading and/or numeracy focus in 2022?

The vast majority of respondents indicated their school had a reading and/or numeracy focus in 2022 (86%), as illustrated in Figure 27. More than 60% indicated both a reading and numeracy focus. Of those who selected just one focus, reading was more common than numeracy (17% reading, 7% numeracy).

More than 10% respondents were not aware of a reading or numeracy focus (11%), and 3% explicitly indicated their school did not have a reading or numeracy focus.

Figure 27

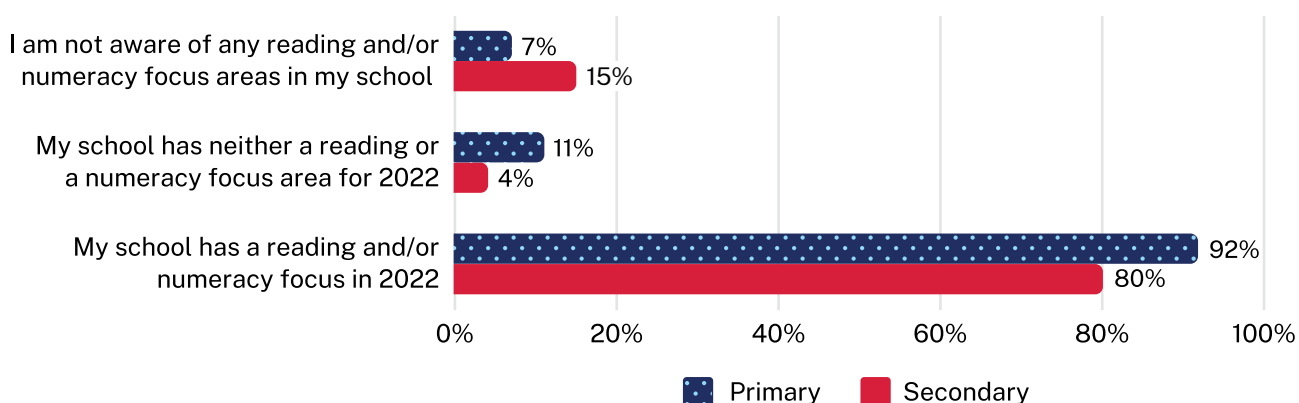
Teachers' awareness of their school reading and/or numeracy focus areas in 2022



Awareness of a school reading and/or numeracy focus was stronger among primary teachers compared to secondary teachers – while nearly 92% of primary teachers reported that their school had a reading and/or numeracy focus in 2022, the same was reported by only 80% of secondary teachers (Figure 28). Conversely, 4% of secondary teachers reported their school did not have a reading or numeracy focus (compared to 11% primary teachers), and 15% of secondary teachers were not aware of a reading and/or numeracy focus (compared to 7% primary teachers).

Figure 28

Comparison of primary and secondary teachers' awareness of their school reading and/or numeracy focus areas in 2022



What were the most common reading and numeracy focus areas?

The 2 most common focus areas in 2022 were based in reading. The most common focus area was 'comprehension', reported by around half the respondents. This proportion was similar across primary and secondary teachers, though slightly lower in secondary (52% primary, 46% secondary).

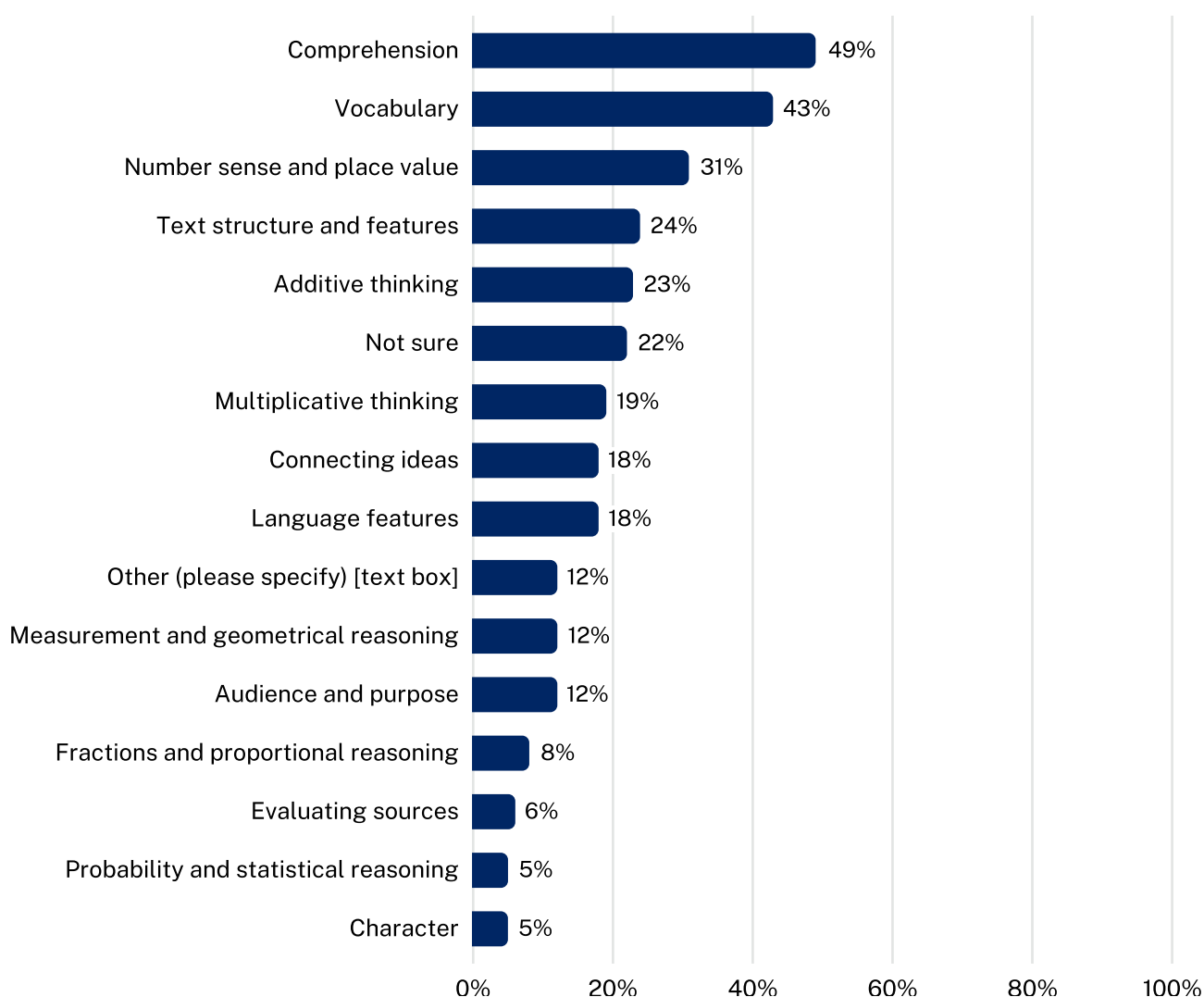
The next most common focus area was 'vocabulary', reported by 43% respondents. Again, the proportion was similar across primary and secondary, though slightly lower in secondary (45% primary, 40% secondary).

The third most common focus area was based in numeracy, with around a third of respondents reporting a focus on 'number sense' and 'place value'. This was much higher among primary teachers (42%) compared to secondary teachers (14%).

A more detailed breakdown of the most common focus areas is illustrated in Figure 29.

Figure 29

Frequency of school reading and/or numeracy focus areas



The remaining focus areas attracted a response from less than a quarter of teachers. When analysed by primary or secondary status, however, there were a few more standouts. Around 31% of secondary teachers reported a focus on ‘text structure and features’ (compared to 19% of primary); 34% of primary teachers reported a focus on ‘additive thinking’ (compared to 7% of secondary); and around 32% of secondary teachers weren’t sure (compared to just 14% of primary).

Universal Resources Hub

To what extent were teachers familiar with the Universal Resources Hub?

Most respondents had at least looked at resources on the Hub (60%). Of those who had not looked at any resources, 19% had heard of the Hub, but 21% had not heard of it before. Just over a third of respondents had used some resources from the Hub (36%).

The pattern of URH familiarity and use differs when comparing primary to secondary teachers, with primary teachers more likely to have heard of the URH and to have used resources. Nearly a third of secondary teachers had not heard of the Hub compared to 13% of primary teachers; less than half (46%) of secondary teachers had looked at the Hub compared to 72% of primary teachers; and only 20% of secondary teachers had actually used resources compared to 50% of primary teachers.

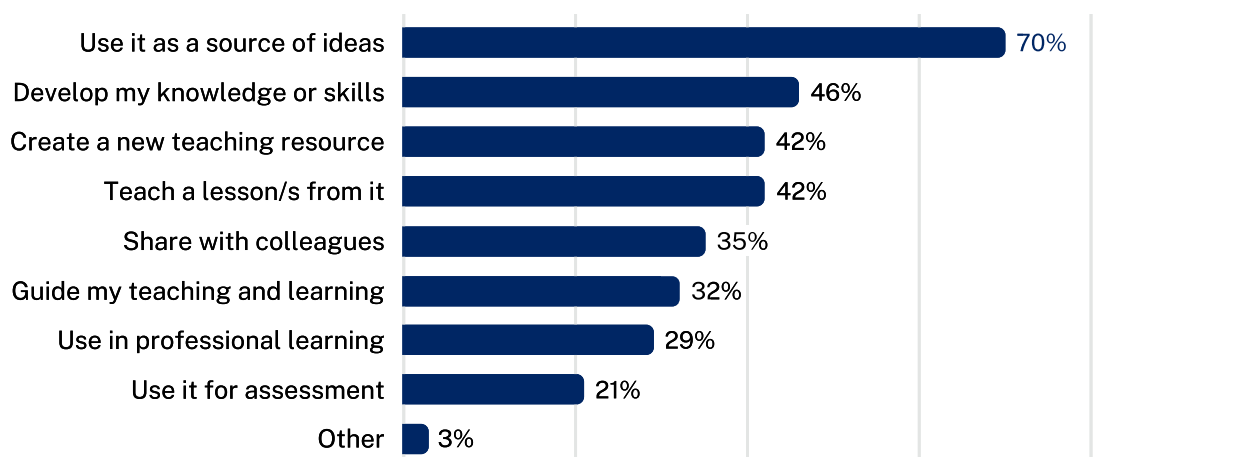
How do teachers use URH resources?

The most common use for the URH was as a source of ideas, reported by nearly three-quarters of respondents (70%). This was consistent across primary and secondary teachers (71% and 66% respectively).

The next most common uses for the URH were reported by less than half of respondents, and there was some variability across primary and secondary. Nearly half the respondents (46%) use it to develop knowledge and skills – slightly more primary (48%) compared to secondary (40%). Slightly less respondents (42%) use the URH to create new teaching resources – slightly more common among secondary (50%) compared to primary (40%). And 42% teach lessons from it (much more common among primary at 47%, compared to secondary at 27%). Figure 30 demonstrates the pattern of use across all teachers.

Figure 30

How teachers typically use the R&N resources from the Universal Resources Hub



How useful are the different types of URH resources for teachers?

The guides, assessments and classroom resources were generally reported to be at least somewhat useful by more than half of respondents. Generally, around a quarter of respondents found the guides, assessments and classroom resources somewhat useful; around 20% found them quite useful; and around 15% found them a great deal useful. Typically, secondary teachers were more likely to find the resources somewhat useful, and much less likely to find them quite or a great deal useful.

Of the different types of resources, classroom resources were especially useful – reported by 70% respondents – though perceived usefulness was greater among primary than secondary teachers. Classroom resources for reading were at least somewhat useful for 72% primary and 62% secondary teachers, and classroom resources for numeracy were at least somewhat useful for 77% primary and 51% secondary teachers.

To what extent have the URH resources contributed to improving teachers' R&N teaching practice?

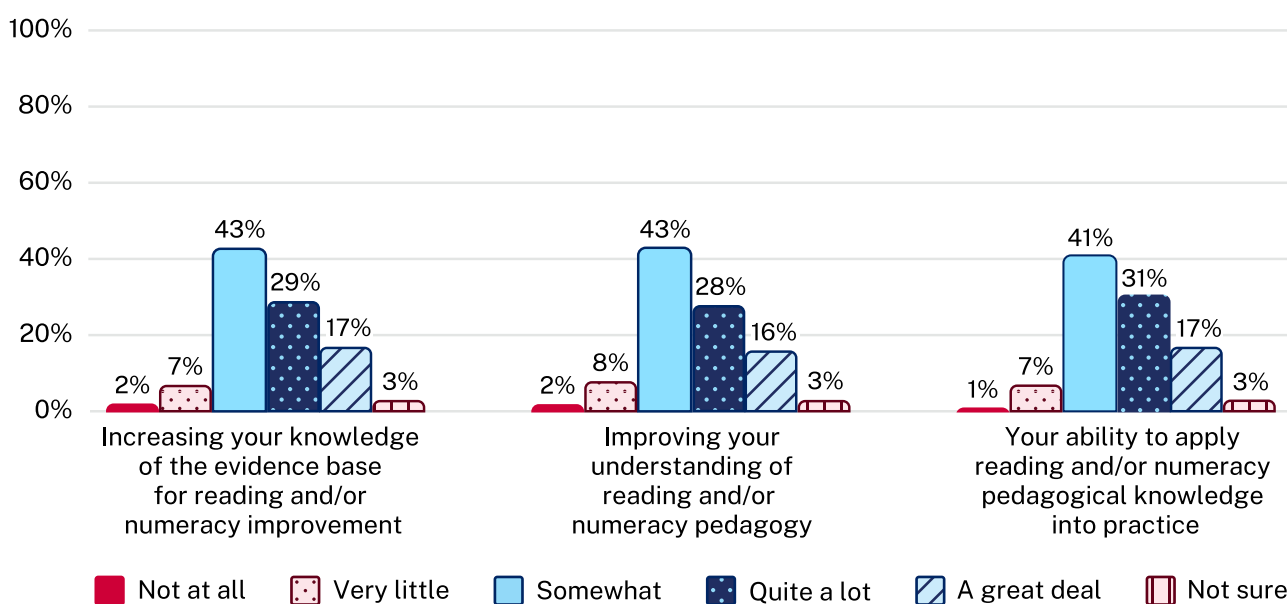
Most respondents found the resources somewhat useful in:

- increasing their knowledge of the evidence base for reading and/or numeracy improvement
- improving their understanding of reading and/or numeracy pedagogy
- contributing to their ability to apply reading and/or numeracy pedagogical knowledge into practice (around 41 to 43%).

Figure 31 shows that around a third of teachers found the URH contributed quite a lot, and around 17% found the URH contributed a great deal. Less than 10% of respondents reported that the resources made little or no contribution to improving their teaching practice.

Figure 31

Extent to which resources contributed to teachers' knowledge



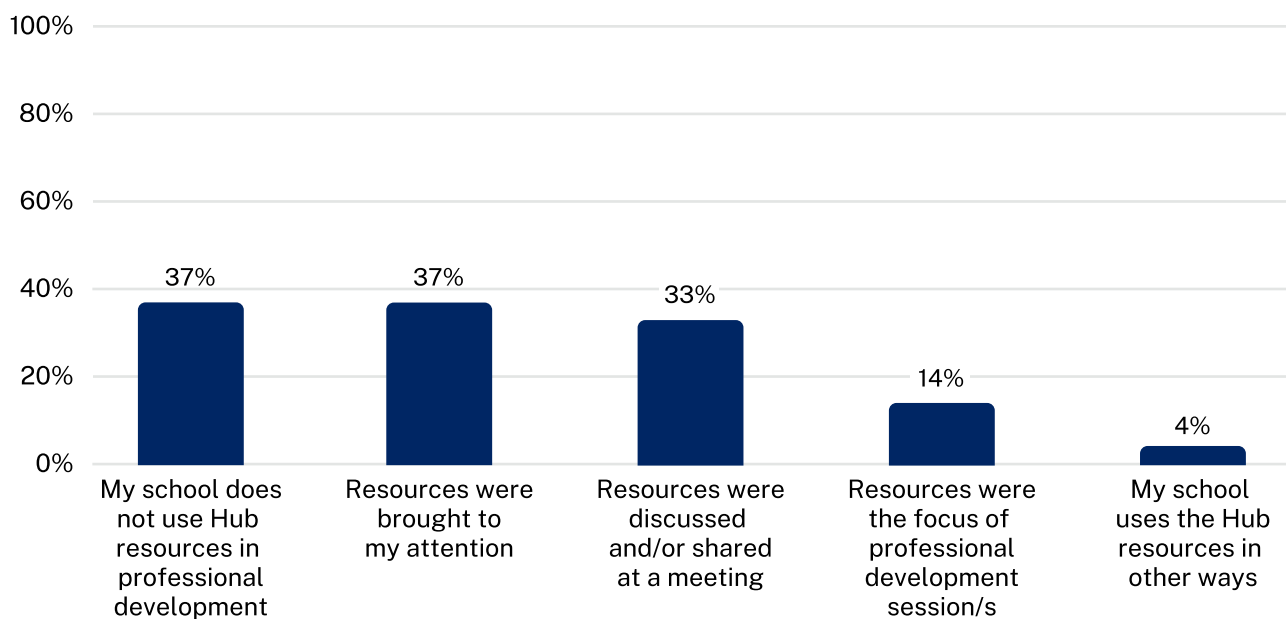
When comparing primary to secondary respondents, the pattern is very different – in general, the resources seemed to make less of a contribution for secondary compared to primary teachers. Secondary teachers were more likely to report that the resources made somewhat of a contribution (around 50% secondary compared to 40% primary); however, they were less likely to report that the resources contributed quite a lot (around 22-26% compared to 30% primary); and less likely to report they contributed a great deal (around 10% secondary, compared to 20% primary).

To what extent have the URH resources contributed to internal staff development activities?

For internal staff development activities incorporating URH resources, the 2 most common uses were to bring them to attention, or to discuss/share at a meeting – both reported by around a third of respondents. Only around 15% indicated that resources were the focus of the PD session. As illustrated in Figure 32, more than a third of respondents (37%) indicated that URH resources were not used in professional development by their school.

Figure 32

How resources were used in internal staff development activities



Appendix C – CESE Principal Survey R&N questions

Survey question	Response options
<p>1. In the last 12 months, how well supported were you by the department to improve student outcomes in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Reading b. Numeracy c. Attendance d. Student wellbeing e. Support for Aboriginal students f. HSC results g. Post-school pathways h. EAL/D students i. Students with a disability 	<p>Please select one response for each statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not at all supported • Somewhat supported • Well supported • Very well supported • Unsure • Not applicable
<p>2. In which areas would you like additional support from the department to improve student outcomes?</p>	<p>Select all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading • Numeracy • Attendance • Student wellbeing • Support for Aboriginal students (if applicable) • HSC results (if applicable) • Post-school pathways (if applicable) • EAL/D students • Students with a disability • Unsure • I do not require additional support • Other (please specify)
<p>3. How would you rate the effectiveness of the support provided by the following department website resources?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Reading and Numeracy Hub b. Attendance Matters website c. Student Wellbeing website d. Aboriginal Education and Communities website 	<p>Please select one response for each statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not at all effective • Somewhat effective • Effective • Very effective • Unsure • I have not accessed this resource.

Survey question	Response options
<p>4. The next question is about the engaging in the Right Support process.</p> <p>Throughout Term 4 2021, DELs led conversations with principals to collaboratively determine what support areas they would like to engage in. This process has been called the “Engaging in the Right Support” process.</p> <p>In Term 4 2021, was there a discussion held with your DEL about which support areas your school may engage in for 2022?</p>	<p>Please select one option only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • Unsure
<p>5. How effective was the collaborative process in identifying the supports you need for your school?</p>	<p>Please select one option only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very effective • Somewhat effective • Slightly effective • Not effective at all
<p>6. The next section is about school supports. In this context, support(s) provided by the department, for example, resources developed by corporate staff as well as support programs, such as Safeguarding Kids Together and Strategic support, which are (or have been) deployed in schools.</p> <p>a. To what extent has the system support that you have received matched your school’s needs?</p> <p>b. To what extent has your school implemented these supports into your everyday school practices?</p> <p>c. To what extent has your school received sufficient and appropriate guidance to implement system supports?</p>	<p>Please select one response for each statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To a large extent • To a certain extent • To a minimal extent • Not at all • N/A

Appendix D – CESE Principal Survey analysis summary

2021 Principal Survey

How was the 2021 Principal Survey administered and collated?

The 2021 CESE Principal Survey was available for completion from Week 1 to Week 7 of Term 2 2021. The de-identified data reported here is based on survey findings from the 1,203 NSW government school principals who responded to our survey. Of note, there is always a margin of error associated with survey findings when data is extrapolated to a total population. We present estimated proportions here to account for this uncertainty.

When principals were invited to take part in this survey, they were informed that all responses would be aggregated so that individual responses would not be identifiable when reporting.

Who participated in the 2021 Principal Survey?

Of the 2,219 government school principals in NSW, 1,203 principals responded to the survey, resulting in an overall response rate of 54.2%. Representativeness checks indicate that the principals who responded to the survey have similar characteristics to the principals who did not respond to the survey. Therefore, data has not been weighted and survey findings are generalisable to the population of all NSW Government school principals.

Metropolitan principals accounted for 58% of the sample, regional principals 40% and remote principals 2%. Most principals (75%) who responded to the survey were from infants/primary schools and 16% were from secondary schools. Smaller proportions of respondents were from Schools for Specific Purposes (5%), central/community schools (3%), or other school types (1%).

Principal tenure varied amongst respondents. Of the 1,203 respondents 19% of principals had a total tenure of 2 years or less, 25% had a 3 to 5 year tenure, while most (30%) had a total principal tenure of 6 to 10 years. 20% of the sample had a tenure of 11 to 19 years, with only 6% having twenty or more years tenure.

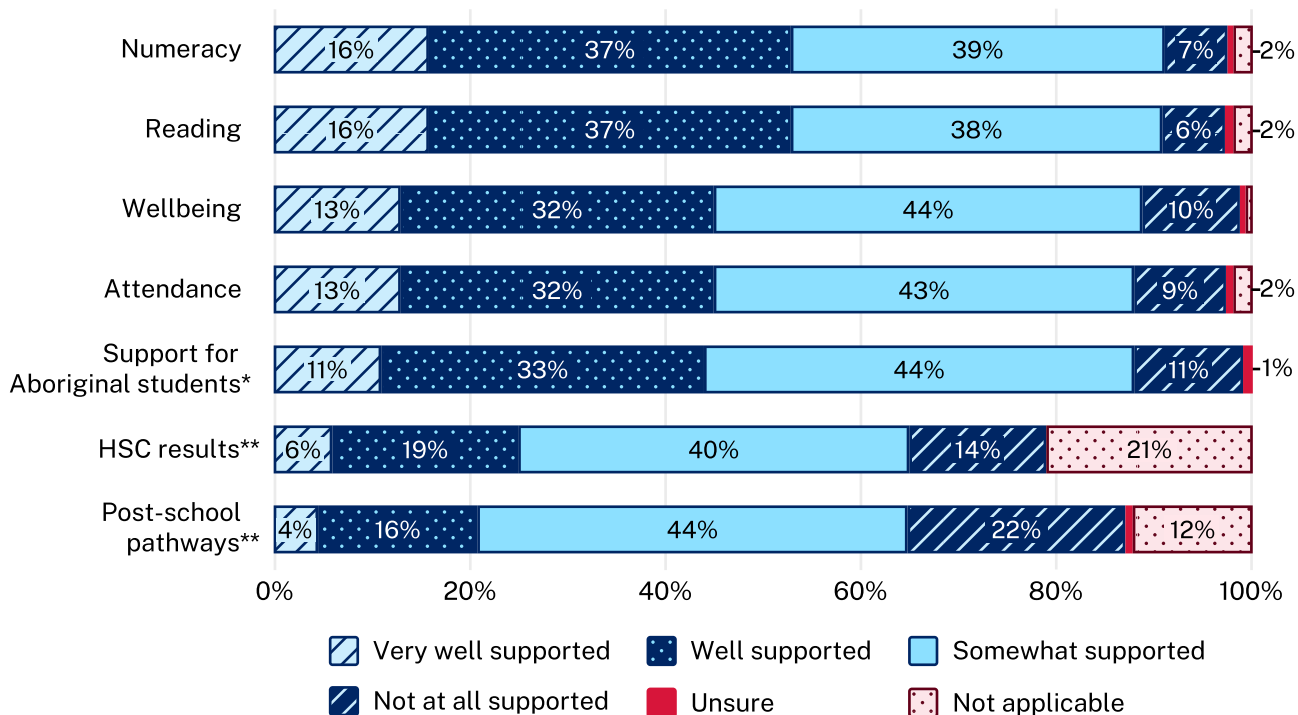
The majority of respondents (79%) indicated their school was receiving Universal Support. Smaller proportions of principals were from schools receiving Guided (19%) or Strategic (3%) Support.

How effective have principals found departmental support for improving reading and numeracy?

Principal survey respondents indicated that departmental support for improving student outcomes in reading and numeracy could be improved. In reading, only 54% of principals reported being well supported (37% indicated they were well supported, and 16% very well supported) (Figure 33). Responses were similar in numeracy, as 53% of principals indicated they at least felt well supported by the department (37% well supported; 16% very well supported). Over a third of principals indicated they were somewhat supported by the department to improve student reading (38%) and numeracy (39%) outcomes.

Figure 33

Perceived effectiveness of department support



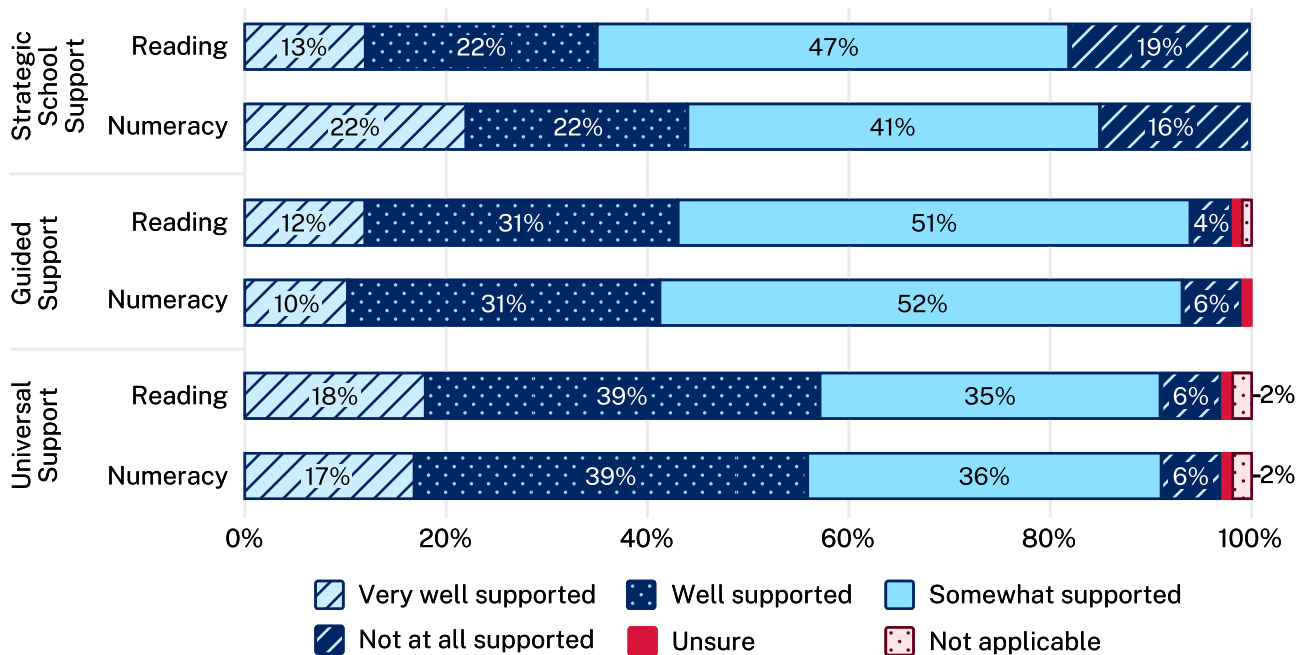
*Results re-based to exclude 'not applicable'.

**Results include only schools with secondary enrolments.

Note: Segments representing less than 1% of the total are not labelled. Due to rounding, the sum of the categories may not add up to 100%.

Effectiveness of support based on support type

Schools selected for Strategic and Guided Support appear to have the greatest need for support. Of the 220 principals who responded from Guided schools, 43% indicated they felt well supported in reading (12% very well supported; 31% well supported) and 41% indicated they were well supported in numeracy (10% very well supported; 31% well supported) (Figure 34). Similar results are evident for the 32 principals who responded from Strategic schools, as 34% indicated they felt well supported in reading (13% very well supported; 22% well supported) and 44% indicated they were well supported in numeracy (22% very well supported; 22% well supported). This is compared to respondents from schools with Universal Support, where 57% of respondents indicated they felt well supported in reading (18% very well supported; 39% well supported) and 55% indicated they were well supported in numeracy (17% very well supported; 39% well supported). Notably for respondents in schools receiving Strategic Support, 19% of respondents indicated they did not feel supported in reading and 16% did not feel supported in numeracy.

Figure 34**Perceived effectiveness of department support by support classification**

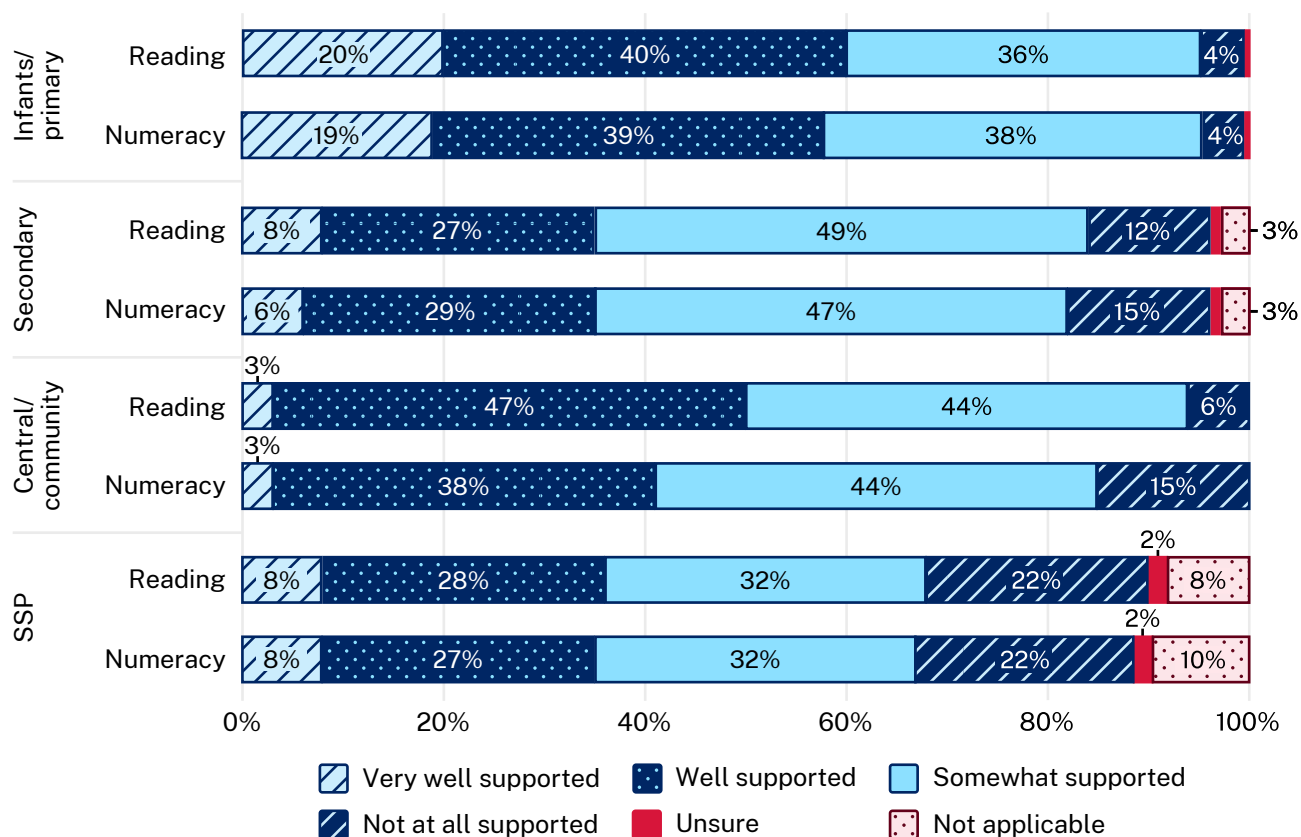
Note: Segments representing less than 1% of the total are not labelled. Due to rounding, the sum of the categories may not add up to 100%.

Effectiveness of support based on school type

When considering school type, infants/primary school principals report feeling the most supported in reading and numeracy. Of the 899 respondents from infants/primary schools, 60% felt well supported in reading (20% very well supported; 40% well supported) and 58% felt well supported in numeracy (19% very well supported; 39% well supported) (Figure 35). This is compared to 35% of the 193 respondents from secondary schools who indicated they were well supported in reading and numeracy. Principals from SSPs appear to feel the least supported, with 22% indicating they did not feel at all supported in reading and numeracy. Central/community school respondents appear to feel less supported in numeracy (15% not at all supported) than reading (6% not at all supported).

Figure 35

Perceived effectiveness of department support by school type



Note: Segments representing less than 1% of the total are not labelled. Due to rounding, the sum of the categories may not add up to 100%.

Effectiveness of support based on geographic location

Principals from metro schools report feeling somewhat less supported than their regional and remote counterparts. 51% of metro principals reported feeling very well or well supported in reading and 50% reported feeling very well or well supported in numeracy. While 58% of respondents from regional and remote schools indicated they felt very well or well supported in reading. Similarly, 56% of respondents from regional schools indicated they felt very well or well supported in numeracy and 58% of respondents from remote schools indicated they felt very well or well supported in numeracy.

Effectiveness of support based on principal tenure

More experienced principals appear to feel less supported in both reading and numeracy. Of the 310 principals with 11 or more years’ experience, 44% indicated they felt well or very well supported in reading and numeracy. While principals with less than 6 years, or between 6- and 10-years’ experience had similar more positive perceptions regarding support for reading and numeracy. In reading, 56% of principals with less than 6 years’ experience and 55% of principals with between 6- and 10-years’ experience felt well or very well supported. Similarly in numeracy, 54% of principals with less than 6 years’ experience and 55% of principals with between 6- and 10-years’ experience felt well or very well supported.

Effectiveness of support based on FOEI classification

Higher need schools report feeling more supported than their lower need counterparts. In reading, 58% of principals from higher need schools in the top FOEI quartile indicated they felt well or very well supported, compared to 50% of principals from schools in the bottom quartile. Perceptions were similar in numeracy, as 57% of principals from higher need schools indicated they felt well or very well supported, compared to 48% of principals from schools in the bottom quartile.

Effectiveness of support based on school size

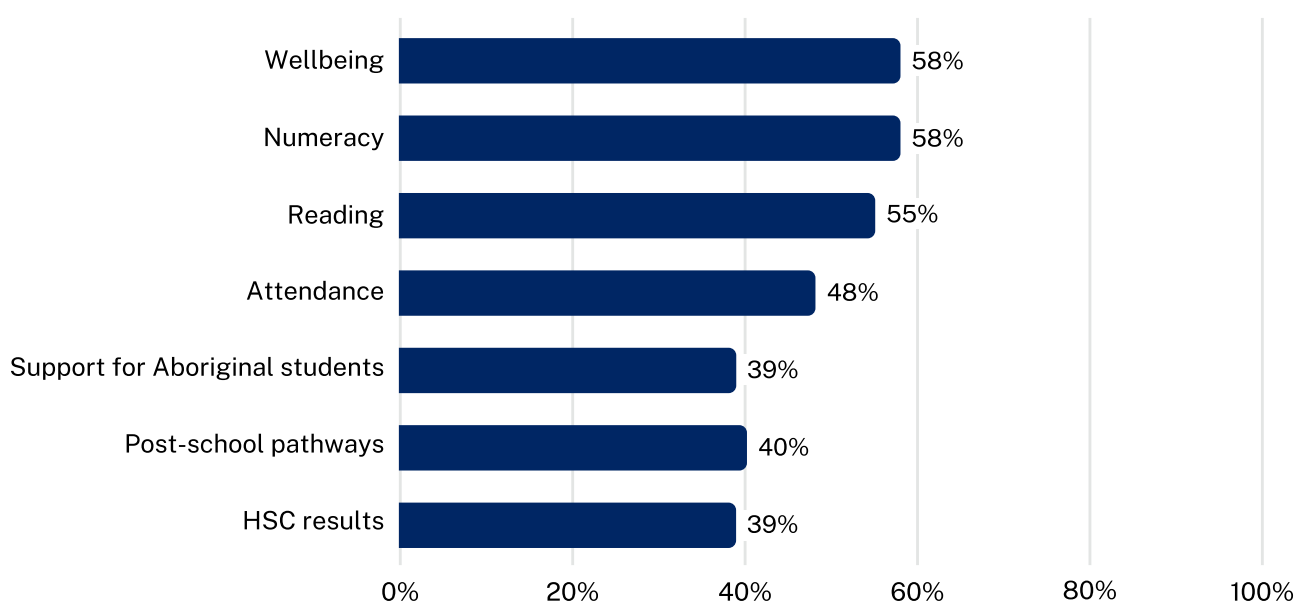
When considering school size, larger schools report less satisfaction with support in reading and numeracy than smaller schools. 45% of respondents from the top size quartile indicated they felt very well or well supported in reading and 44% felt very well or well supported in numeracy. This is compared to 56% of respondents from the bottom size quartile who indicated they felt very well or well supported in reading and 54% felt very well or well supported in numeracy. There were minimal differences in the proportions of respondents who did not feel supported at all in reading or numeracy across school sizes.

In what areas would principals like additional departmental support?

Reading and numeracy appear in the top 3 areas where principals would like additional support from the department. 58% of respondents indicated they would like further support in numeracy and 55% would like further support in reading, as shown in Figure 36.

Figure 36

Areas of requested additional department support to improve student outcomes



Schools allocated to Guided Support requested more departmental support in numeracy compared to other support classifications. 63% of respondents from Guided Support schools indicated they would like further support in numeracy, compared to 57% allocated to Universal Support and 47% in Strategic Support. There were minimal differences across support classifications regarding requests for further support in reading.

Infants/primary schools selected reading and numeracy as an area needing additional support more than other school types. Support for reading was identified by 65% of infants/primary principals, while numeracy support was identified by 68% of infants/primary school principals. In contrast, secondary schools reported needing support in attendance at a higher proportion than reading and numeracy.

Higher need schools reported less desire for support in reading and numeracy than other schools. 55% of schools with higher need indicated they would like extra support in reading and 59% requested additional support in numeracy. A larger proportion of respondents from higher need schools indicated they would like additional support in areas such as wellbeing (67%) and attendance (61%).

Both smaller and larger schools reported needing more support in reading and numeracy than middle sized schools. About two-thirds of principals in smaller and larger schools indicated they would like additional support in reading (66% in smaller schools and 67% in larger schools) and numeracy (69% in smaller schools and 70% in larger schools). Respondents from middle sized schools indicated a greater desire for further support in wellbeing (65%) than reading (59%) and numeracy (62%).

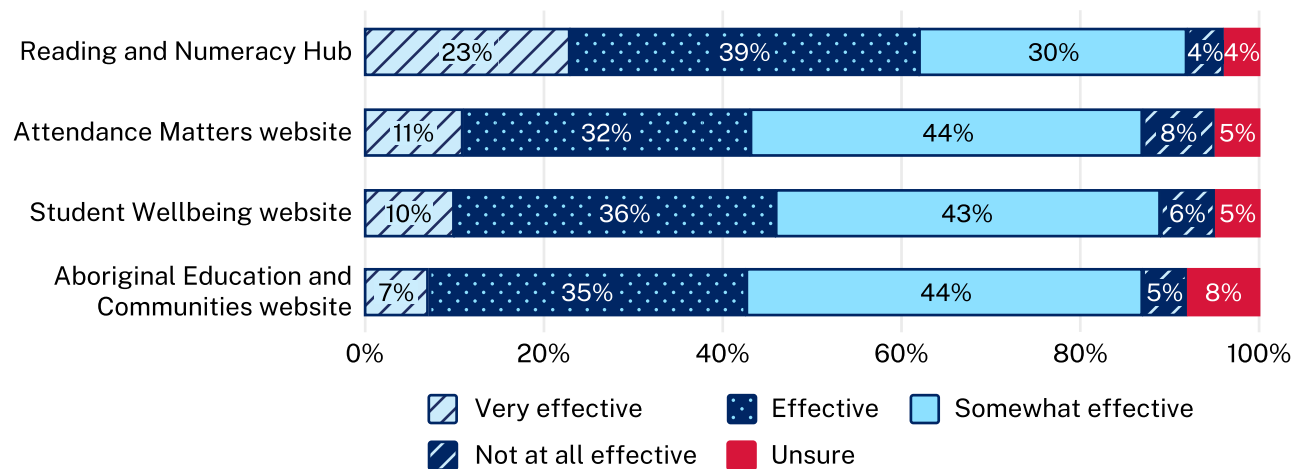
School location and principal tenure did not make a substantial difference to whether the principal selected reading or numeracy as an area that they would like additional support.

How effective have principals found the Reading and Numeracy Hub?

The Reading and Numeracy Hub (now known as the Universal Resources Hub) was perceived to be the most effective resource in providing support, with 92% of principals reporting it was at least somewhat effective, as displayed in Figure 37. 62% of principals reported it was effective or very effective. The overall perceived effectiveness of the Hub was similar across all support classifications, as over 90% of respondents across Strategic, Guided, and Universal Support schools considered the Hub at least somewhat effective. The Hub was rated most effective by Universal Support schools, as 25% rated the Hub as very effective, compared to 19% of Guided school respondents and 10% of respondents from Strategic schools. Respondents from Strategic schools were most unsure (14%) about the effectiveness of the Hub, compared to the other support classifications.

Figure 37

Perceived effectiveness of department resources

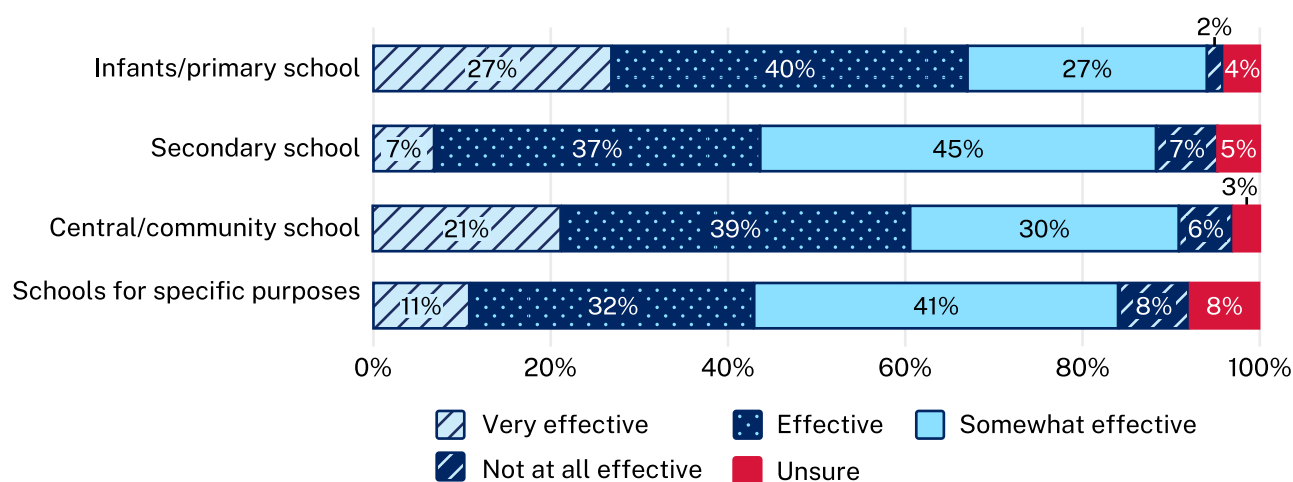


Note: Due to rounding, the sum of the categories may not add up to 100%.

The Hub was rated more effective by infants/primary and central/community school principals when compared with principals of secondary schools and schools for specific purposes. 96% of infants/primary and 97% of central/community school principals indicated the R&N Hub was effective, while only 86% of secondary school principals and 63% of principals from schools for specific purposes reported this (Figure 38). 12% of secondary school principals did not find the R&N Hub effective or were unsure about its effectiveness.

Figure 38

Perceived effectiveness of the Reading and Numeracy Hub by school type



Note: Due to rounding, the sum of the categories may not add up to 100%.

Less experienced principals perceived the Hub to be slightly more effective than more experienced principals. 43% of principals with less than 6 years' tenure rated the Hub to be very effective, compared to a third of principals with 11 or more years' experience.

The perceived effectiveness of the R&N Hub was relatively consistent between school locations, level of school need, and school size.

In what areas did principals request additional support?

In the 12 months preceding the survey, the most requested support by principals was for assistance with the development of the SIP (92%) and setting milestones/monitoring programs against the SIP (51%). Support in these areas was most commonly provided by the DEL or PSL.

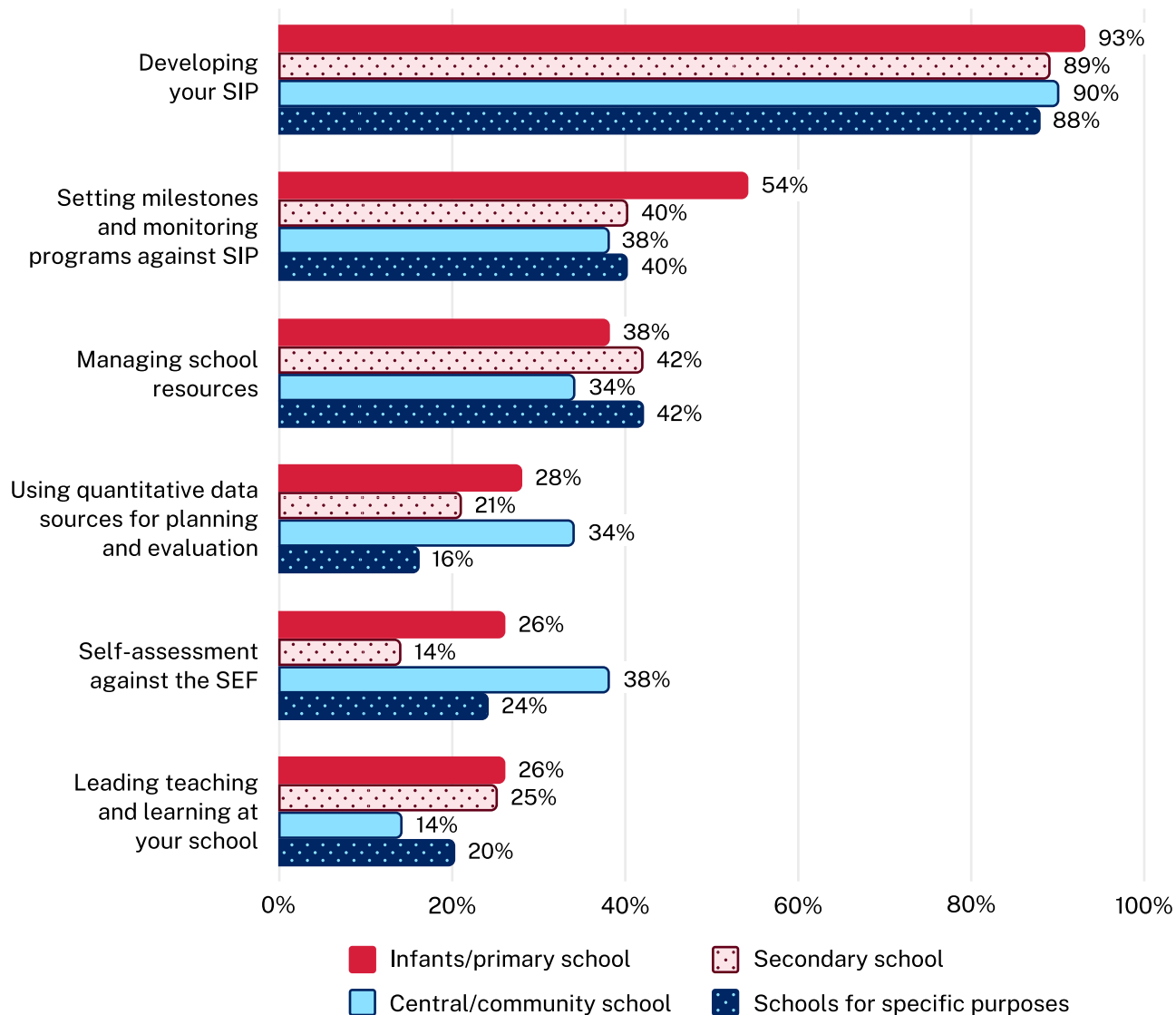
Across all areas of requested support, the majority of principals indicated they were very satisfied or satisfied with the support provided. 86% of principals who requested support with the development of the SIP, and 84% who requested assistance setting milestones and monitoring programs against the SIP indicated they were very satisfied or satisfied with the support. This satisfaction with support was consistent across the areas of requested support, support classification, and across infants/primary and secondary schools.

Overall, the areas in which schools sought support were reasonably consistent across support classification. Though Guided schools were less likely to seek support for setting milestones and monitoring programs against the SIP than other support classifications (39% Guided, compared to 58% Strategic and 53% Universal).

While assistance in developing the SIP was consistently the most requested area of support across all school types, there were some differences in other areas of requested support (Figure 39). Infants/primary schools were more likely to seek support for setting/monitoring milestones against the SIP (54%) compared to other school types (38 to 40%). Support for using quantitative data was less likely to be requested from SSPs (16%) compared to other school types (21 to 34%). Only 14% of secondary schools requested support for self-assessment against the SEF compared to at least a quarter of respondents from other school types.

Figure 39

Areas in which principals requested additional support by school type



Requested support was reasonably consistent across school locations. There were some slight differences in requested support for setting/monitoring milestones against the SIP, with metro (46%) schools less likely to seek assistance in this area compared to regional (58%) and remote schools (50%). Only 9% of remote schools sought assistance using quantitative data compared to over a quarter of regional (28%) and metro (26%) schools.

Across principal tenure, the requested areas of support were reasonably consistent. The management of school resources was one area of discrepancy, where less experienced principals (50%) were more likely to have sought assistance, compared to 36% of principals with 6 to 10 years' experience, and 23% of principals with over 11 years' experience.

There were some differences in requested support by school size. Smaller schools were more likely to seek support for setting/monitoring milestones against the SIP (60%) and leading teaching and learning (33%) compared to their larger school counterparts. While middle sized schools were less likely to request assistance with self-assessment against the SEF (19%) compared to smaller (29%) and larger (31%) schools.

Areas of requested support were reasonably consistent across levels of school need.

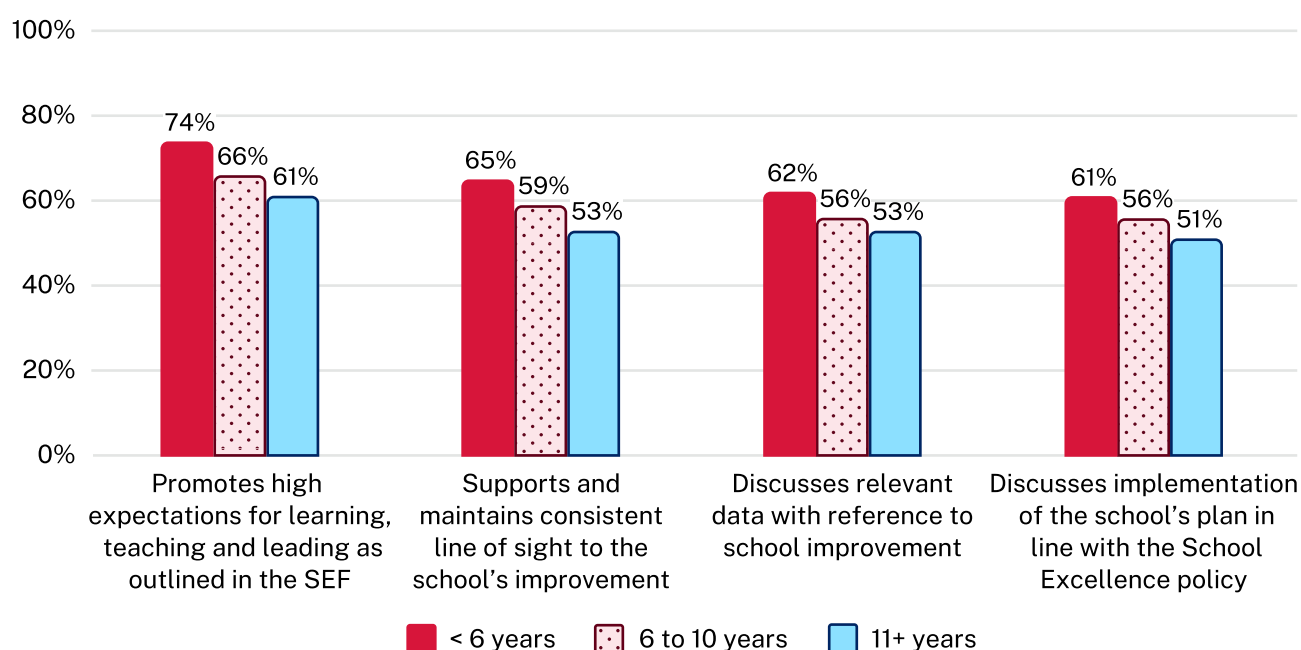
How effective have principals found DEL and system support?

Principals provided strong agreement to statements they were presented regarding the effects and content of DEL support. 94% agreed the DEL support promotes high expectations for learning, teaching and leading as outlined in the SEF; 90% agreed the DEL supports and maintains a consistent line of sight to the school's improvement; 91% indicated their DEL discusses relevant data with reference to school improvement; and 89% agreed their DEL discusses implementation of the school's plan in line with the School Excellence policy.

Across all areas of DEL support, principal agreement decreased with principal tenure, as displayed in Figure 40. Lower needs schools also indicated lower levels of satisfaction compared to higher needs schools, especially regarding the discussion of data with reference to school improvement, and the implementation of the school plan in line with the SEF. Smaller and larger sized schools also displayed lower agreement regarding DEL support compared to middle-sized schools.

Figure 40

Satisfaction with DEL support by principal tenure



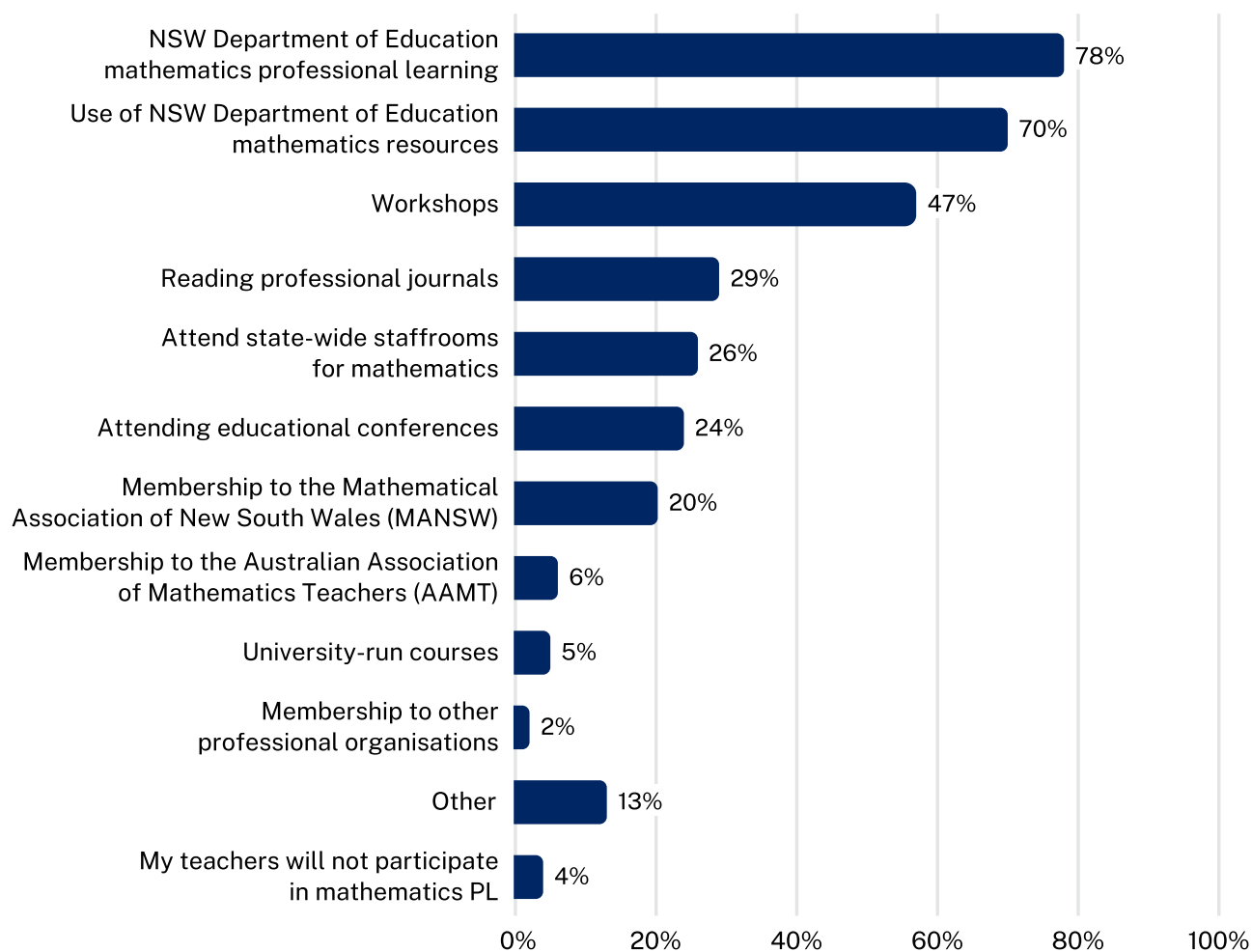
The evaluation of DEL support was relatively consistent across school support type, school type, and location.

What mathematics professional learning will teachers access and engage in?

The majority of principals indicated their teachers would access mathematics professional learning (PL) in 2021. The NSW Department of Education mathematics PL was rated as the top resource (78%) followed by use of NSW Department of Education mathematics resources (70%) (Figure 41).

Figure 41

Mathematics professional learning teachers will access in 2021



The use of NSW Department of Education mathematics PL was fairly consistent across most school types. Though secondary school teachers (55%) were less likely to access department mathematics resources than infants/primary (76%) and central/community (77%) schools. SSPs were least likely to use department mathematics PL and resources and were substantially less likely to engage in any mathematics PL. Over a third of teachers from SSPs were indicated to not participate in mathematics PL, compared to 2% from infants/primary, 1% from secondary, and 0% from central/community schools.

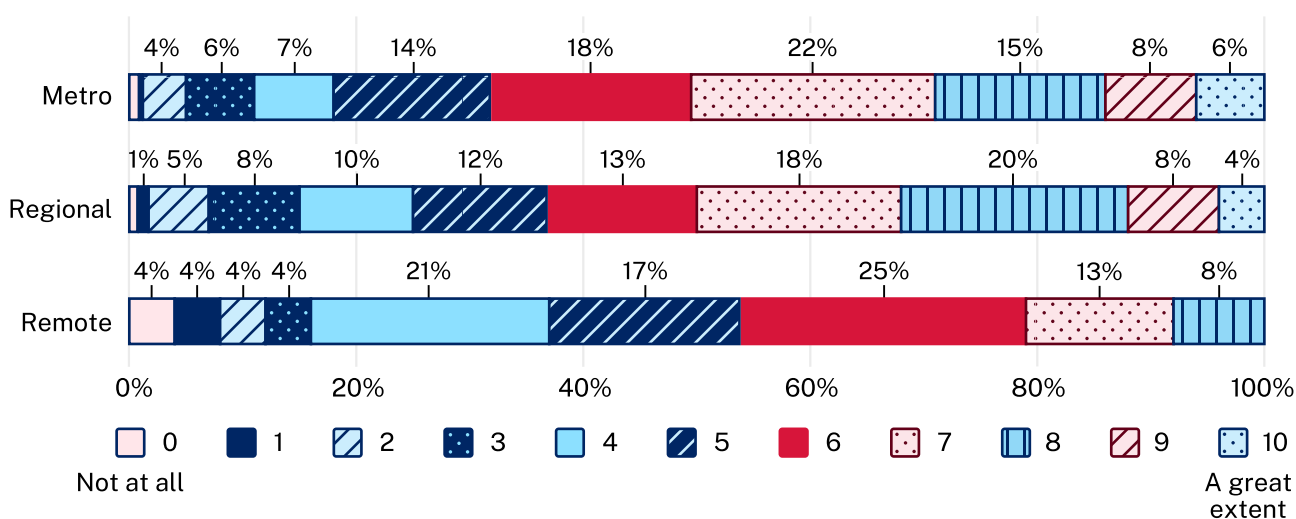
Access to department mathematics PL was relatively consistent across support classifications, location, principal tenure, level of school need, and school size.

Principals indicated a moderate number of teachers engage with ongoing mathematics PL, with ongoing engagement rated slightly higher in primary schools (31%) compared to secondary/central schools (26%).

Teachers in remote schools are rated least likely to engage with ongoing mathematics PL. Only 8% of teachers in remote schools are considered to engage to in ongoing mathematics PL to a great extent, compared to 32% from regional schools and 29% from metro schools (Figure 42).

Figure 42

Engagement of mathematics teachers with ongoing mathematics professional learning by school location



Note: Segments representing less than 1% of the total are not labelled. Due to rounding, the sum of the categories may not add up to 100%.

Principals with longer tenure, over 11 years, are more likely to indicate that their teachers engage with ongoing mathematics PL than principals with shorter tenure.

Ongoing teacher engagement with mathematics PL is relatively consistent by support classification, school need, and school size.

2022 Principal Survey

How was the 2022 Principal Survey administered and collated?

The 2022 CESE Principal Survey was available for completion from Week 2 to Week 7 of Term 3 2022. Representativeness checks indicate that the 1,178 principals who responded have similar characteristics to the principals who did not respond to the survey. Therefore, data has not been weighted and survey findings are generalisable to the population of all NSW government school principals.

When principals were invited to take part in this survey, they were informed that all responses would be aggregated so that individual responses would not be identifiable when reporting.

Who participated in the 2022 Principal Survey?

Of the 2,210 government school principals in NSW, 1,178 principals responded to the survey, resulting in an overall response rate of 53.3%.

Substantive principals comprised 84% of the 1,178 respondents, while 16% were acting or relieving at the time of survey completion. Metropolitan principals accounted for 57% of the sample, regional principals 41% and remote principals 2%. Most principals who completed the survey were from infants/primary schools, 17% were from secondary schools, 5% from Schools for Specific Purposes (SSPs), and 3% from central/community schools.

Most of the survey respondents were from Universal Support schools (77%), while the fewest were from Strategic Support schools (<5%). The remaining 214 responses belonged to principals at Guided Support schools, comprising 18% of the survey sample. These proportions are consistent with the division of Universal, Guided and Strategic Support across the total government school population.

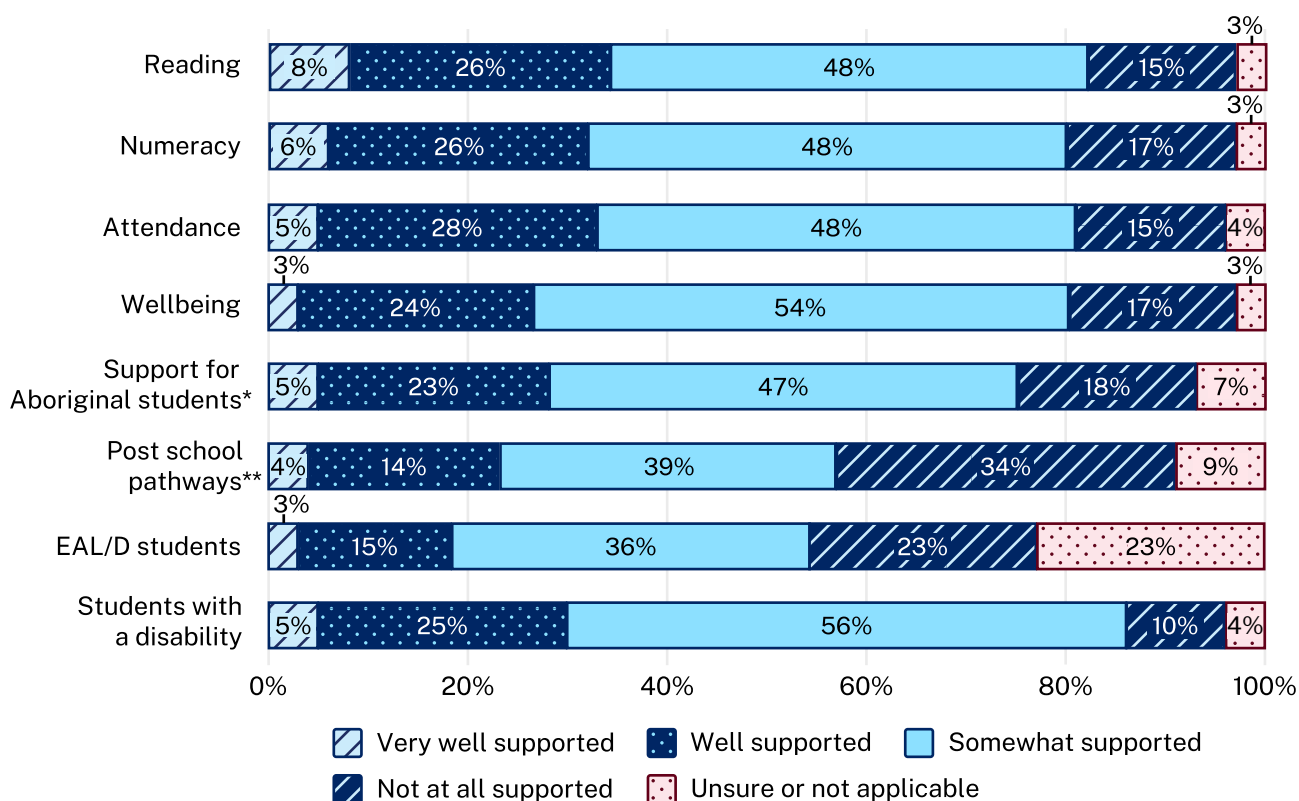
Principal tenure varied amongst respondents. One quarter of the 1,178 had a total tenure of 2 years or less, 23% had a 3 to 5 year tenure while most (28%) had a total principal tenure of 6 to 10 years. Principals with 11 to 19 years of tenure made up 19% of the sample, with only 5% having twenty or more years' tenure.

How effective have principals found departmental support for improving reading and numeracy?

Principal survey respondents indicated that departmental support for improving student outcomes in reading and numeracy could be improved. This is shown in Figure 43 in which only 34% of principals reported being well supported (26%) or very well supported (8%) in reading, and 32% reported being well supported (26%) or very well supported (6%) in numeracy. Most principals (48%) indicated they were somewhat supported by the department to improve student reading and numeracy outcomes.

Figure 43

Perceived effectiveness of departmental support



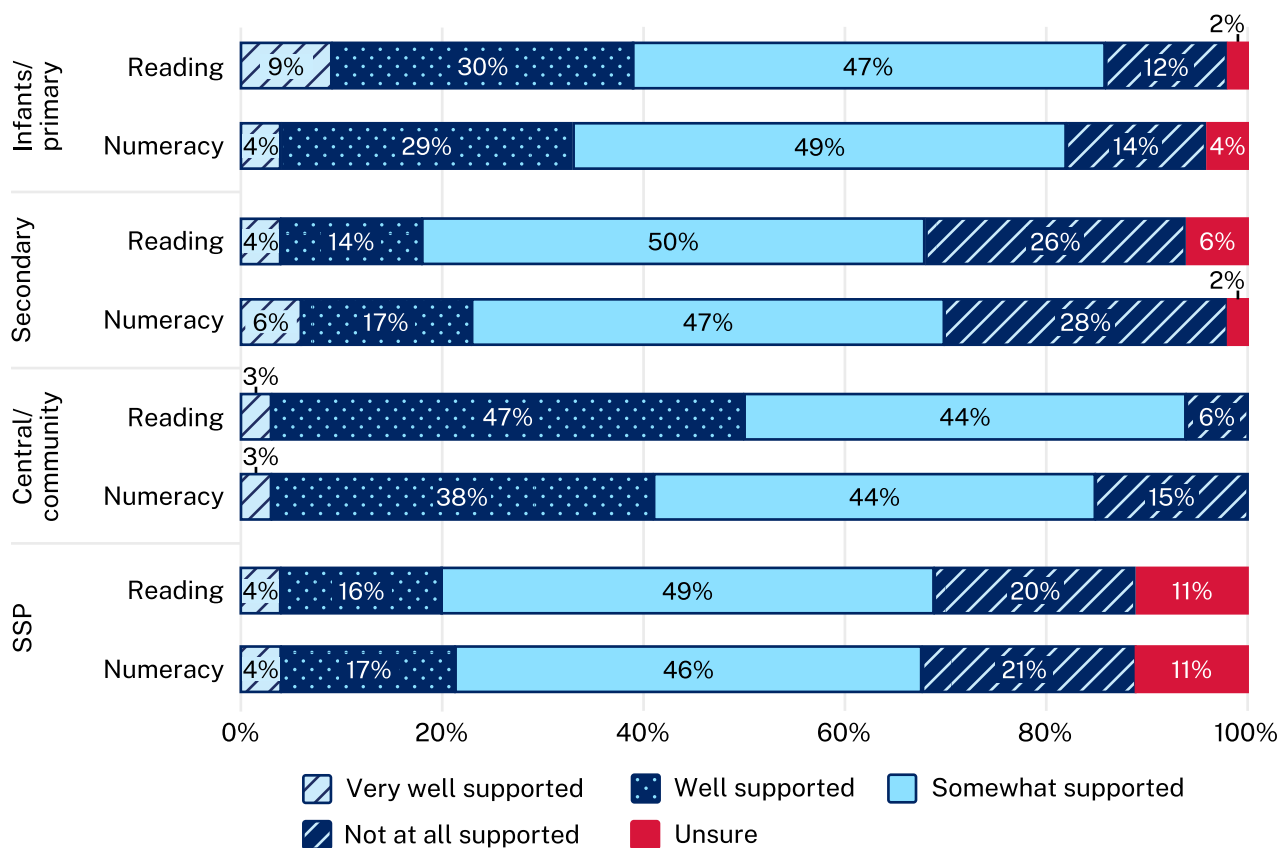
*Results re-based to exclude 'not applicable'

**Results include only schools with secondary enrolments

Note: Due to rounding, the sum of the categories may not add up to 100%.

Effectiveness of support based on school type

Central/community school principals – who comprised 3% of the survey respondent sample – reported feeling the most supported in reading and numeracy with 50% feeling well or very well supported in reading and 41% feeling well or very well supported in numeracy. In contrast, more than 25% of secondary school principals reported feeling not at all supported in reading (26%) and numeracy (28%). While this represents the largest proportion of respondents feeling not supported at all when the data is analysed by school type, it is important to note that around half of secondary school principals reported feeling somewhat supported in reading (50%) and numeracy (47%). The reported effectiveness of support based on school type is shown in Figure 44.

Figure 44**Perceived effectiveness of departmental support by school type**

Note: Due to rounding, the sum of the categories may not add up to 100%.

Effectiveness of support based on geographic location

Schools in metropolitan and regional areas reported similarly in feeling well supported or very well supported in improving student reading and numeracy outcomes. Remote school principals report feeling more supported than those in metro and regional schools, with almost half of respondents feeling well or very well supported in reading (46%) and half feeling well or very well supported in numeracy (50%).

Effectiveness of support based on principal tenure

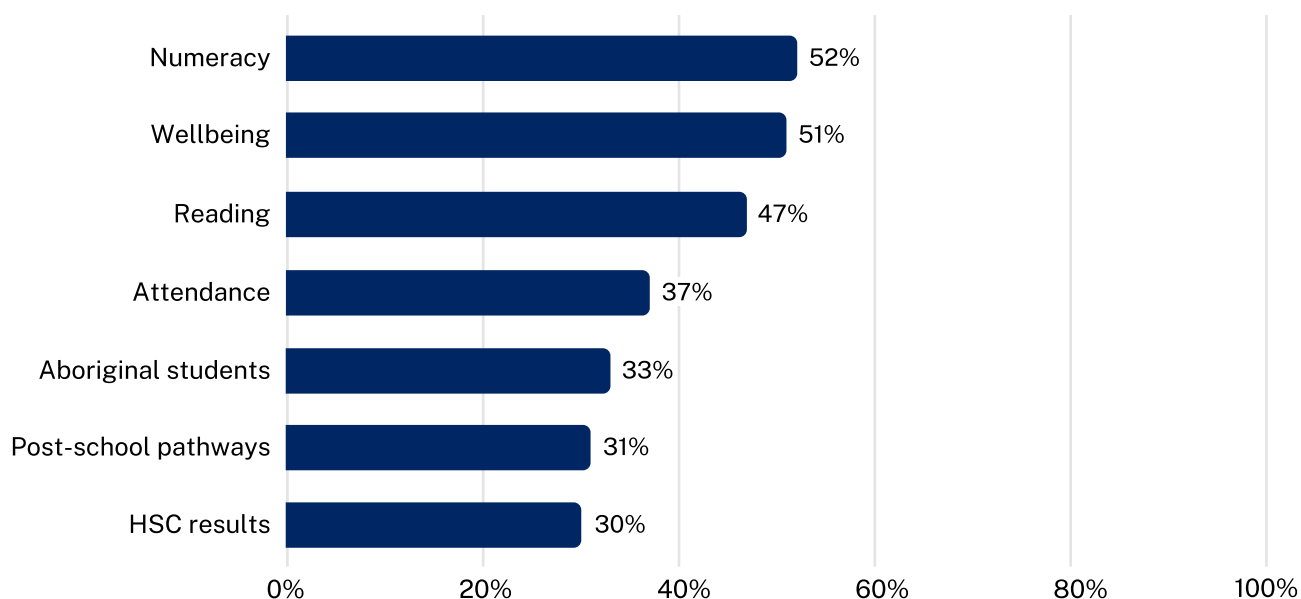
There was no substantial difference in reported level of support between principals of different tenure. Approximately one third of respondents, with experience of less than 2 years through to more than 11 years, felt well or very well supported by the department to improve reading and numeracy. Fewer than 20% of respondents across all levels of tenure reported feeling not supported at all, though principals with 2 or less years or more than 11 years of experience (marginally) had the highest proportion of responses in that category.

In what areas would principals like additional departmental support?

In the 2022 Principal Survey, numeracy was the top area in which principals would like additional departmental support, as shown in Figure 45. Reading was the second highest priority in the 2021 principal survey but fell to third, behind wellbeing, in 2022. In 2022, reading was still selected by 47% of respondents.

Figure 45

Areas of requested additional department support



Infants/primary and central/community schools selected reading and numeracy as an area needing additional support more than secondary schools and SSPs. Support for reading was identified by 50% of infants/primary principals and 45% of central/community school principals, while numeracy support was identified by 55% of both infants/primary and central/community school principals. In contrast, secondary schools reported needing support in wellbeing and attendance at a higher proportion than reading and numeracy.

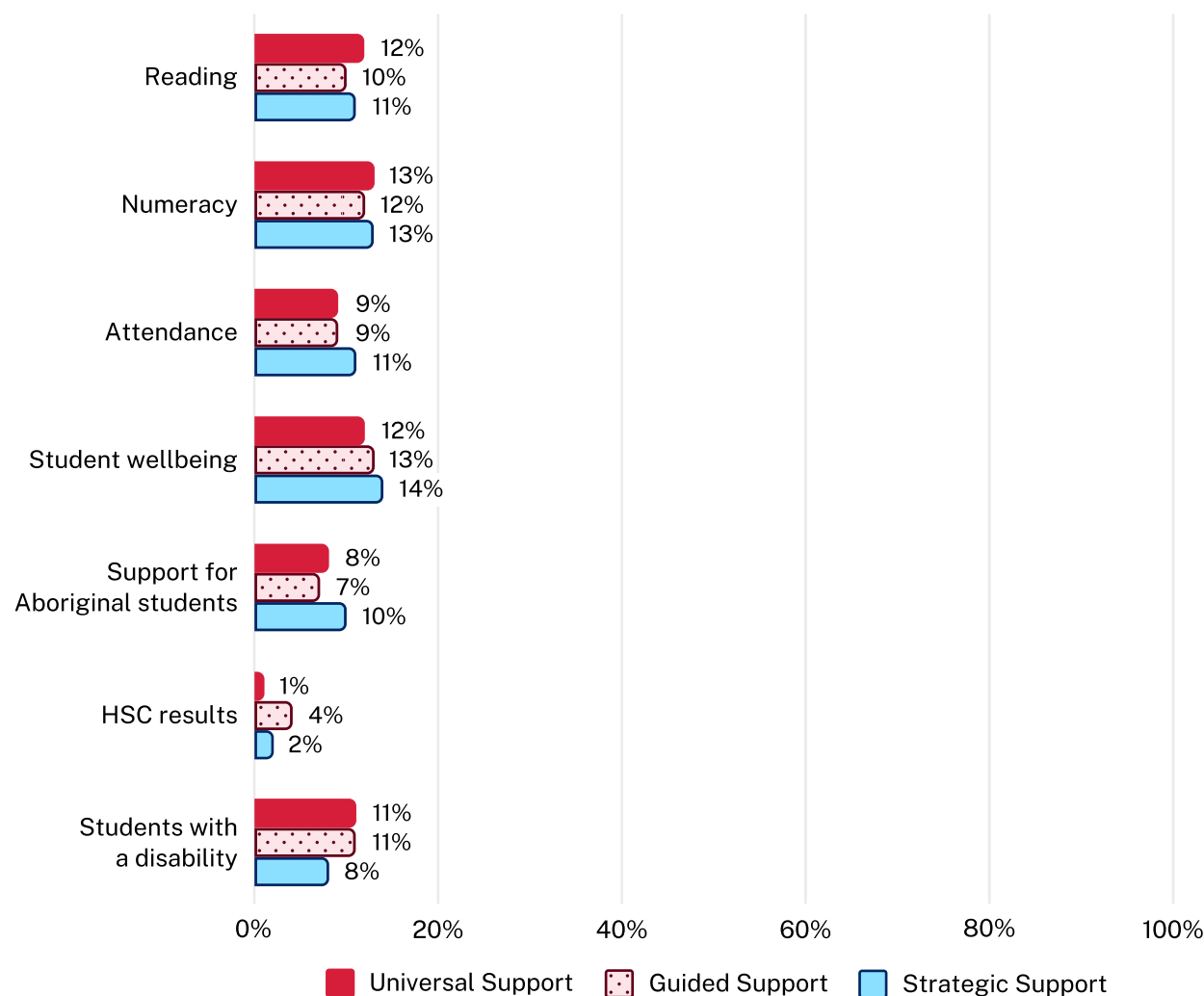
Fewer metropolitan school principals reported preferencing additional departmental support for reading and numeracy than schools in regional and remote areas. Most principals in all school types indicated a need for support to improve student numeracy outcomes. This need was highest amongst principals of remote schools, 65% of whom identified numeracy as an area for additional support.

Principals with shorter tenure length at the time of the survey indicated a greater desire for reading and numeracy support in comparison to their more experienced colleagues. Just over half of principals with less than 6 years of experience selected reading (52%) or numeracy (55%) as an area they would like extra support from the department, while only 43% of principals with 11 or more years of experience selected these areas for extra support.

Figure 46 shows that school support type did not make a substantial difference to whether the principal selected reading or numeracy as an area that they would like additional support.

Figure 46

Areas of requested additional department support by support type



How effective have principals found the Reading and Numeracy Hub?

The Reading and Numeracy Hub was perceived to be the most effective resource in providing support, with 88% of principals reporting it was at least somewhat effective and 55% of those indicating it was effective or very effective. Around half of both Strategic and Universal Support schools indicated the R&N Hub was effective or very effective, while only 36% of Guided Support schools reported this.

The Hub was rated more effective by infants/primary and central/community school principals when compared with principals of secondary schools and SSPs. While 93% of infants/primary and 85% of central/community school principals indicated the R&N Hub was effective, only 75% of secondary school principals and 66% of SSP principals reported this. One fifth of secondary school principals did not find the R&N Hub effective or were unsure about its effectiveness.

The perceived effectiveness of the R&N Hub was relatively consistent between metropolitan, regional and remote schools. Remote school principals reported the Hub to be slightly more effective than regional and metro principals.

How effective have principals found DEL and system support?

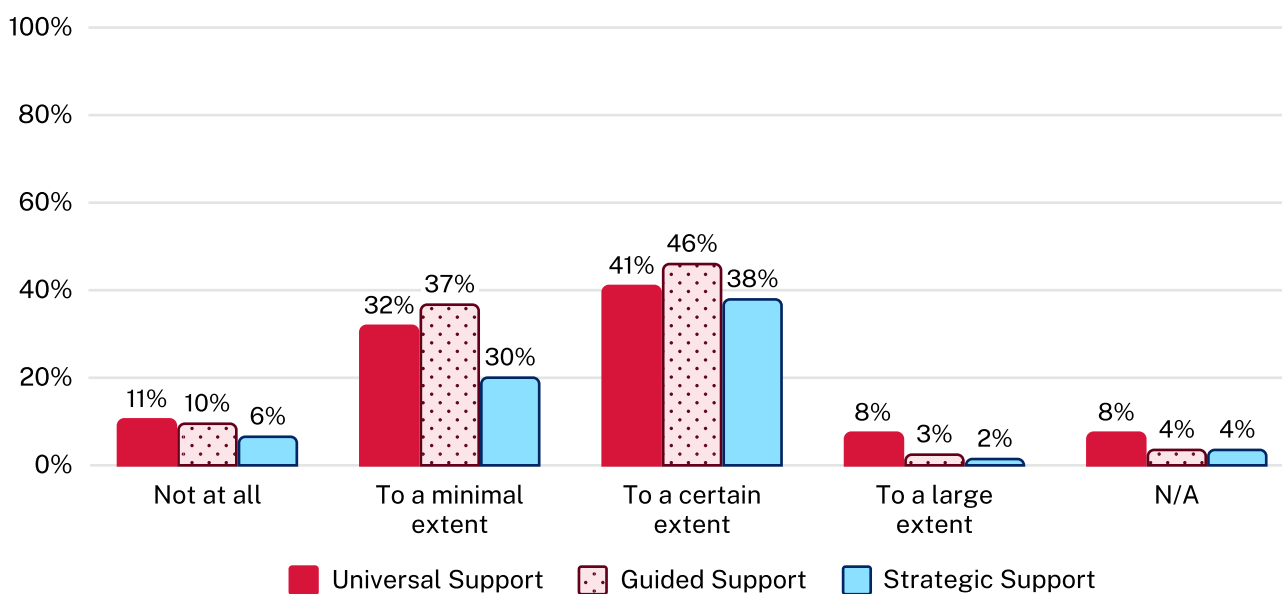
Most respondents (55%) stated that they had a discussion with their DEL in Term 4 2021 about which support areas their school may engage in for 2022. Only 13% indicated that they had not had a discussion, however, 32% were unsure. Of the 55% of principals who indicated that they did have a discussion with their DEL, most found this process either somewhat effective (48%) or very effective (40%).

Half of principals indicated that the system support they received matched the needs of their school to a certain or large extent, while one third reported the support matched their needs to a minimal extent. Just over half (54%) of schools reported having implemented these supports into everyday school practices, but only 45% reported receiving sufficient and appropriate guidance to implement the system supports.

The extent to which system support matched school needs was fairly consistent across support types, as shown in Figure 47.

Figure 47

The extent to which system support matched school needs by support type



School type, support type, location, and length of principal tenure did not have a substantial reported impact on whether the supports were implemented into everyday school practices.

Less than half of principals considered the guidance sufficient and appropriate to implement system supports. This was not substantially different between principals in metropolitan, inner regional or outer regional locations. Slightly more secondary school principals (49%) considered the guidance sufficient and appropriate than primary (45%) and SSP (43%) principals.

Principals reported similarly regardless of support type, with 47% of Guided and 46% of other support schools indicating the guidance was sufficient and appropriate to a certain or large extent.

Appendix E – School Needs and Supports Survey questions

The 2021 survey

Survey question	Response options
<p>1. Which of the following statements best reflects your experience to date across the suite of supports made available by the department (that is, Universal, Guided and Strategic supports) in the following areas?</p> <p>a. Reading</p> <p>b. Numeracy</p> <p>c. Attendance</p> <p>d. Aboriginal student HSC attainment</p>	<p>Please select one response for each statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully meets the needs of relevant schools in my network • Somewhat meets the needs of relevant schools in my network • Slightly meets the needs of relevant schools in my network • Does not meet the needs of relevant schools in my network • Have not used these supports • Not aware of these supports
<p>2. To what extent have you discussed with the leadership in your schools the following resources?</p> <p>a. Classroom resources found on the Reading and Numeracy Resource Hub</p> <p>b. Reading Guides</p> <p>c. Numeracy Guides</p> <p>d. Literacy and numeracy professional learning</p> <p>e. Reading and numeracy assessments</p> <p>f. The Collaboration School Improvement (CSI) toolkit</p> <p>g. Attendance Matters website/hub</p> <p>h. Aboriginal student HSC attainment</p> <p>i. Student Wellbeing website</p>	<p>Please select one response for each statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed with most/all schools • Discussed with some schools • Discussed with very few schools • Not discussed at all • Not aware of these resources
<p>3. How would you rate these aspects of the reading and numeracy resources on the department's digital hub?</p> <p>a. All resources clearly indicate that they are quality assured</p> <p>b. All resources are easy to find</p> <p>c. All resources are relevant to schools</p>	<p>Please select one response for each statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly agree • Agree • Neither agree nor disagree • Disagree • Strongly disagree
<p>4. To what extent do you feel that you understand how to lead the Guided Support process?</p>	<p>Please select one option only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To a large extent • To some extent • To a minimal extent • Not at all • Not sure

Survey question	Response options
<p>5. Of those schools you have directly supported through the Guided Support process, to what extent did you guide them to:</p> <p>a. use the R&N data package to identify reading and/or numeracy focus areas for improvement?</p> <p>b. access & match universal resources to address R&N focus areas?</p> <p>c. develop IPMs that address school R&N focus areas, and include matched resources?</p> <p>d. implement universal resources according to their identified R&N needs?</p>	<p>Please select one response for each statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To a large extent • To some extent • To a minimal extent • Not at all • Not sure
<p>6. How effective do you think the ‘Engaging in the right support’ process will be in ensuring system supports meet the individual needs of schools?</p>	<p>Please select one option only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very effective • Somewhat effective • Slightly effective • Not effective at all • NA (Not applicable)
<p>7. In your experience, to what extent has system support which was offered to schools prior to 2021 matched their individual needs?</p>	<p>Please select one option only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To a large extent • To some extent • To a minimal extent • Not at all • Not sure
<p>8. In your experience, to what extent are schools able to implement system supports and integrate into their practices?</p>	<p>Please select one option only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To a large extent • To some extent • To a minimal extent • Not at all • Not sure
<p>9. In your experience, to what extent have schools previously been provided with sufficient and appropriate guidance to implement system supports?</p>	<p>Please select one option only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To a large extent • To some extent • To a minimal extent • Not at all • Not sure

The 2022 survey

Survey question	Response options
<p>1. Which of the following statements best reflects your overall experience in 2022 across the suite of supports (Universal, Guided and Strategic) made available by the department in the following areas?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Reading Numeracy Attendance Aboriginal student HSC attainment Behaviour Financial management 	<p>Please select one response for each statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully meets the needs of relevant schools in my network Somewhat meets the needs of relevant schools in my network Slightly meets the needs of relevant schools in my network Does not meet the needs of relevant schools in my network Have not used these supports Not aware of these supports
<p>2. To what extent have you and the leadership in your schools used resources in the Universal Resources Hub in 2022, for the following areas?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Reading Numeracy Attendance Aboriginal student HSC attainment Behaviour Financial management 	<p>Please select one response for each statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussed with most/all schools Discussed with some schools Discussed with very few schools Not discussed at all Not aware of these resources
<p>3. To what extent do you agree with these statements about all resources on the Universal Resources Hub?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Resources clearly indicate that they are quality assured Resources are easy to find Resources are relevant to schools 	<p>Please select one response for each statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree NA (Not applicable)
<p>4. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I work with school leaders to adjust the R&N resources to meet the unique needs of my schools When I provide schools with support for R&N, I treat Guided schools and Universal schools in the same way I am able to deliver R&N support to schools without the need for additional specialists such as L&N lead specialists Schools in my network have fully embedded evidence-based teaching practices to improve R&N outcomes 	<p>Please select one response for each statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree NA (Not applicable)

Survey question	Response options
<p>5. To what extent do you feel that you understand how to lead the Guided Support process?</p>	<p>Please select one option only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To a large extent • To some extent • To a minimal extent • Not at all • Not sure
<p>6. Of those schools you have directly supported in R&N through the Guided Support process in 2022, to what extent have you guided them to:</p> <p>a. use the R&N data package to identify reading and/or numeracy focus areas for improvement?</p> <p>b. access & match universal resources to address R&N focus areas?</p> <p>c. develop IPMs that address school R&N focus areas, and include matched resources?</p> <p>d. implement universal resources according to their identified R&N needs?</p>	<p>Please select one response for each statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To a large extent • To some extent • To a minimal extent • Not at all • Not sure • I have not had an R&N Guided Support school in 2022
<p>7. How effective do you think the ‘Engaging in the right support’ process is in ensuring equitable and consistent provision of system supports to meet the individual needs of schools?</p>	<p>Please select one option only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very effective • Somewhat effective • Slightly effective • Not effective at all • NA (Not applicable)
<p>8. To what extent has the Guided and Strategic Support offered to schools in 2022 matched their system- and school-identified data and individual needs?</p>	<p>Please select one option only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To a large extent • To some extent • To a minimal extent • Not at all • Not sure
<p>9. In your experience, to what extent are schools able to implement Guided and Strategic Supports and integrate improvements into their school leadership and teaching practices?</p>	<p>Please select one option only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To a large extent • To some extent • To a minimal extent • Not at all • Not sure
<p>10. In your experience, in 2022, to what extent have schools been provided with sufficient and appropriate support to implement Guided and Strategic Supports?</p>	<p>Please select one option only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To a large extent • To some extent • To a minimal extent • Not at all • Not sure

Appendix F – School Needs and Supports Survey analysis summary

2021–22 School Needs and Supports Survey

Who participated in the School Needs and Supports Survey?

The School Needs and Supports Survey was completed by 115 respondents in 2021 (93 DELs, 22 PSLs) and 102 respondents in 2022 (79 DELs, 23 PSLs). Although it was completed by fewer respondents in 2022, the proportion of DELs to PSLs was roughly similar (around 80% DELs, 20% PSLs).

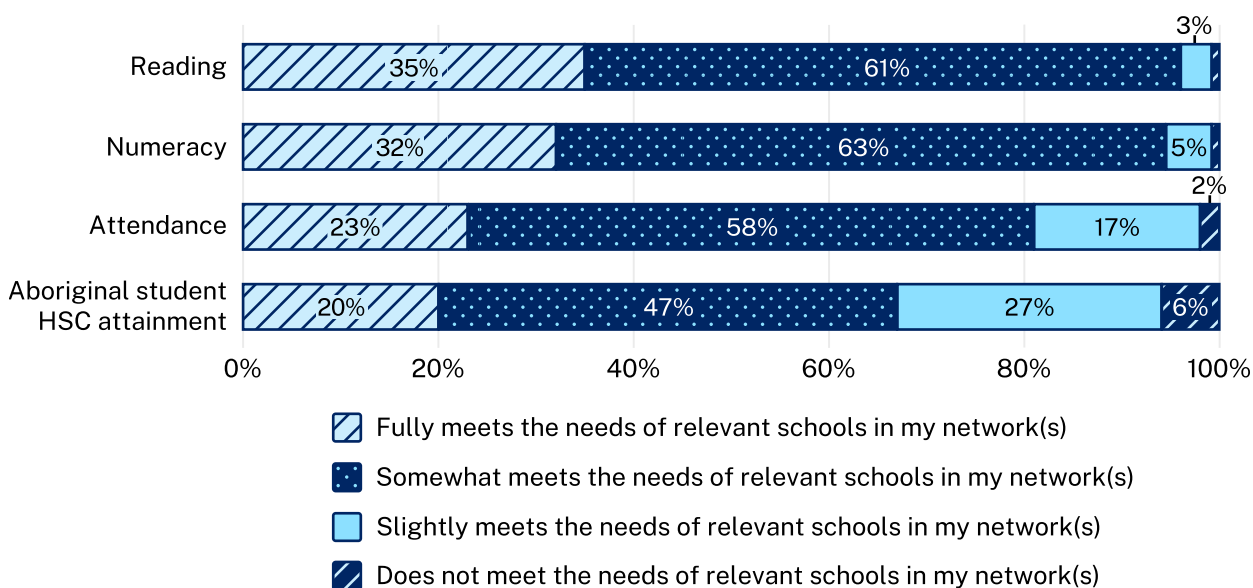
Do DELs feel that the department’s R&N support meets their needs?

The vast majority of respondents felt the department’s R&N support somewhat or fully met the needs of relevant schools in their networks. However, as Figure 48 shows, the proportion dropped from around 95% in 2021 (96% reading, 95% numeracy) to around 85% in 2022 (86% reading, 84% numeracy).

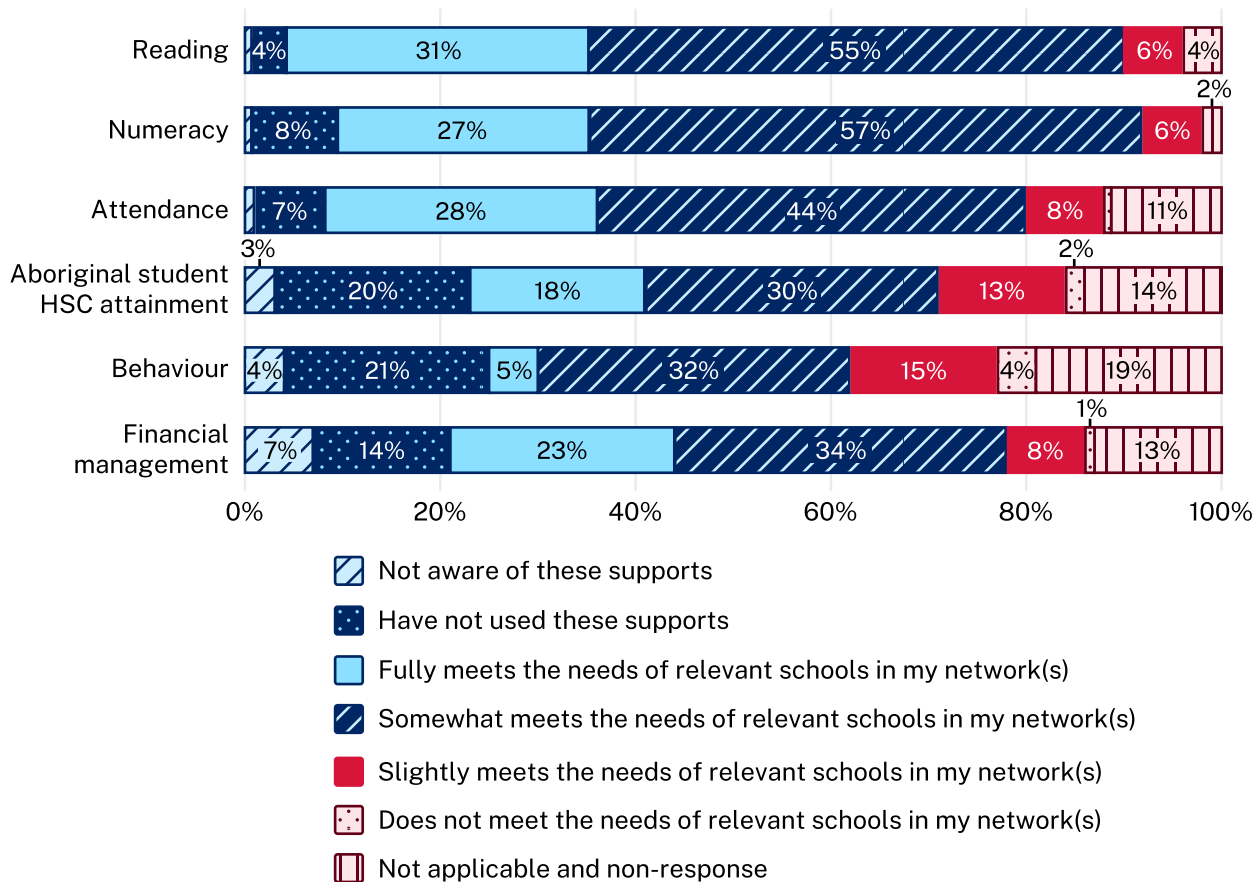
Figure 48

Extent to which departmental support meets the needs of schools in DELs’ networks, 2021–22

2021



2022



Note: Segments representing less than 1% of the total are not labelled. Due to rounding, the sum of the categories may not add up to 100%.

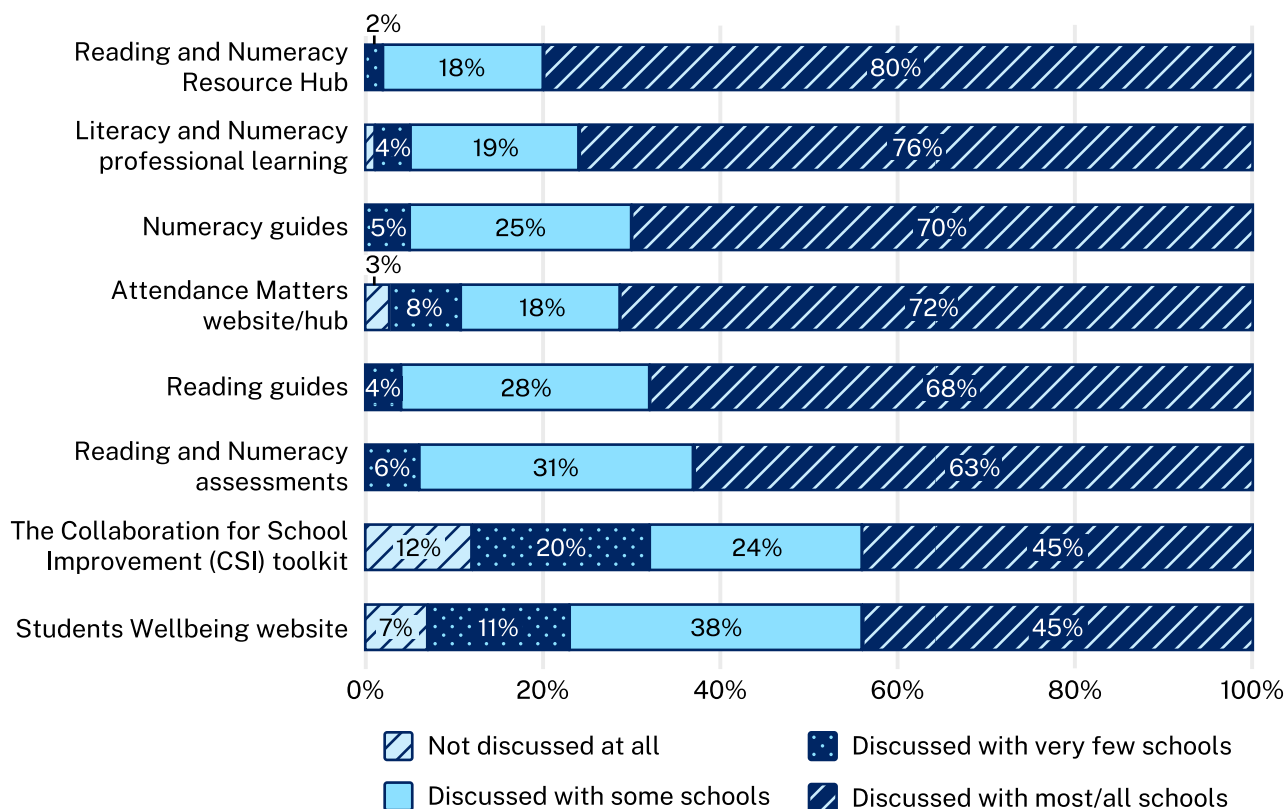
To what extent do DELs discuss R&N Hub resources with school leadership?

Most respondents discussed the R&N Resource Hub and guides with most or all of the leadership in their schools (over 60%). However, the proportion of respondents who did so dropped from 2021 to 2022, as shown in Figure 49. In 2021, 80% of respondents discussed the Hub with most schools, 70% discussed the numeracy guides, 68% discussed the reading guides, 76% discussed R&N PL, and 63% discussed R&N assessments. In 2022, 73% respondents discussed Reading Hub resources, and 66% discussed Numeracy Hub resources (discussion around guides, PL and assessments was not reported separately).

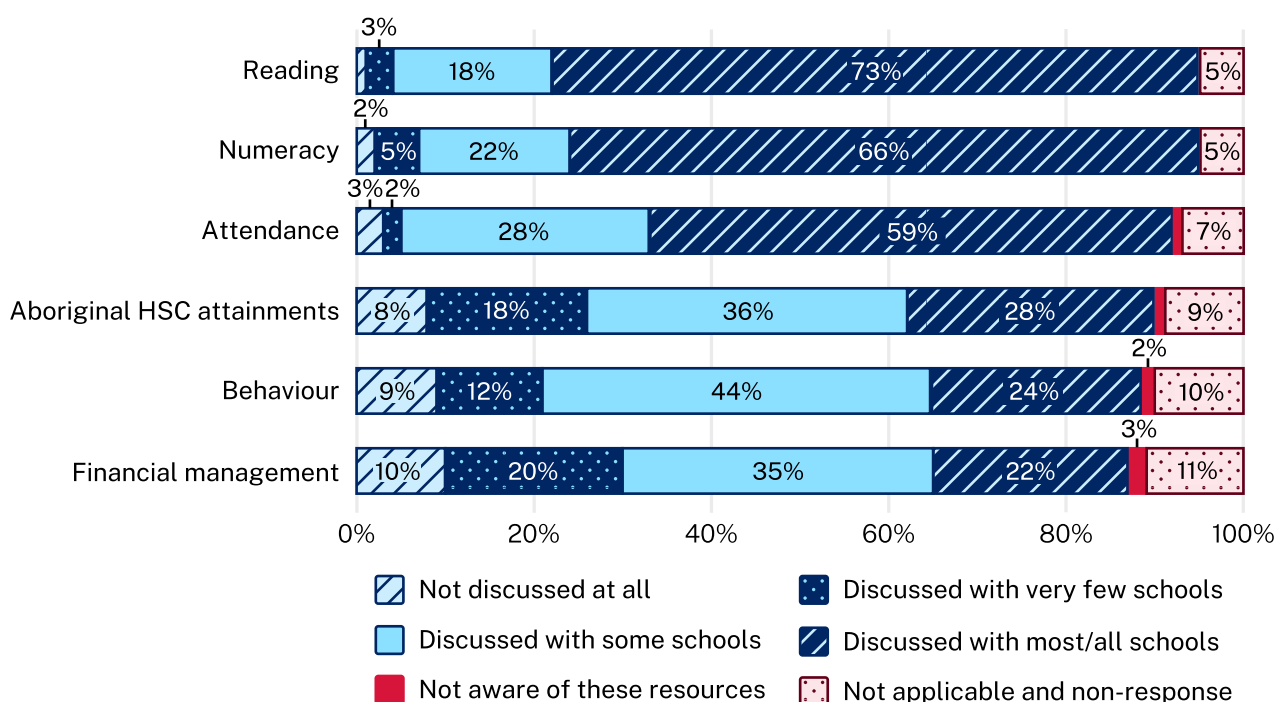
Figure 49

Extent to which DELs discussed Hub resources with leaders, 2021–22

2021



2022



Note: Segments representing less than 1% of the total are not labelled. Due to rounding, the sum of the categories may not add up to 100%.

Do DELs feel that Hub resources are quality assured, relevant and easy to find?

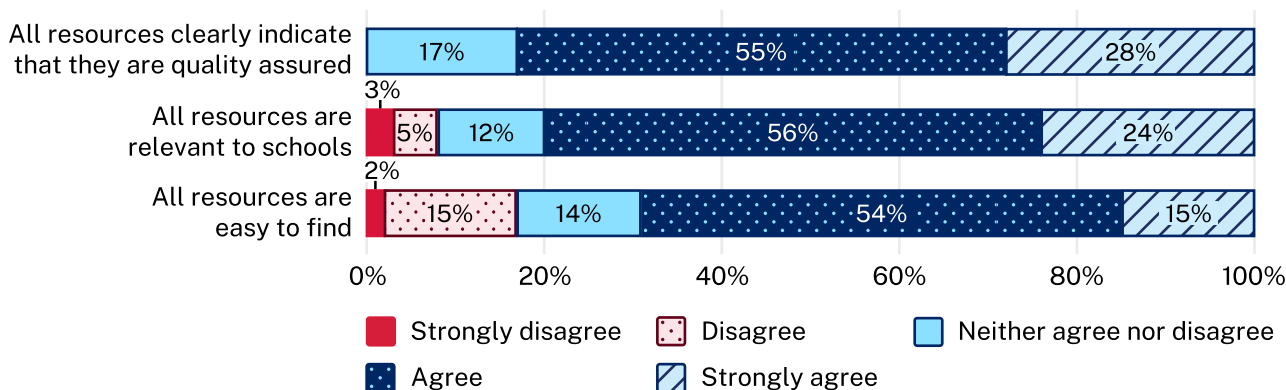
Most respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Hub resources were clearly quality assured, and this remained consistent from 2021 to 2022 (83% in 2021, 84% in 2022).

Most respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Hub resources are relevant to schools. This proportion increased from 2021 to 2022 (80% in 2021, 93% in 2022).

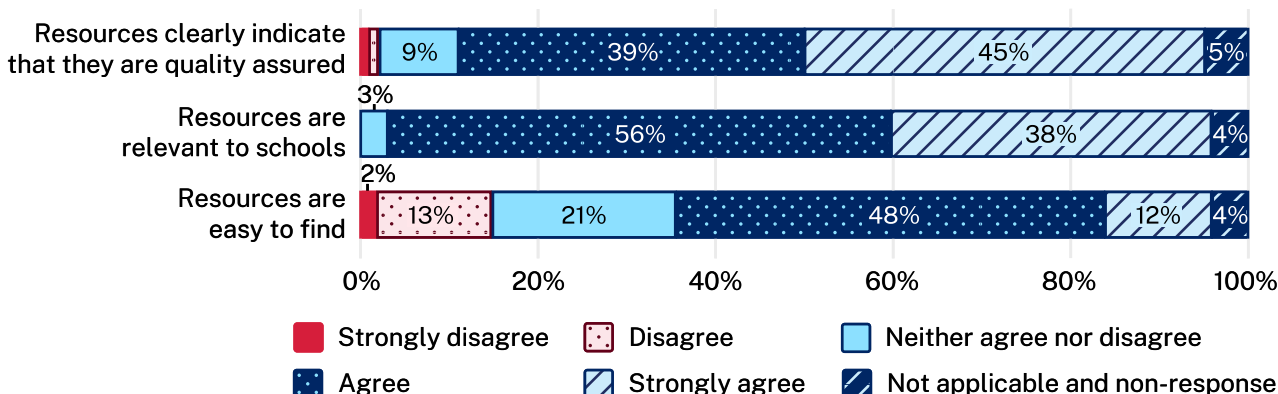
Ease of finding resources was relatively less widely agreed. The proportion of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that they were easy to find dropped from 69% in 2021 to 60% in 2022 (notably, in 2022 13% respondents disagreed that resources were easy to find). These results are demonstrated in Figure 50.

Figure 50
Hub resource quality, relevance and ease to find, 2021–22

2021



2022



Note: Segments representing less than 1% of the total are not labelled. Due to rounding, the sum of the categories may not add up to 100%.

Do DELs understand how to lead the R&N Guided Support process?

Almost all respondents understood how to lead the R&N Guided Support process to at least some extent, and this remained consistent from 2021 to 2022. Understanding to at least some extent was reported by 41% respondents in 2021, and 44% in 2022. Understanding to a large extent was reported by 53% respondents in 2021, and 50% in 2022.

What support is provided to Guided schools?

The most common form of support provided to Guided schools was guiding them to use the R&N data package to identify R&N focus areas. The majority of respondents did this to at least some extent – however, the proportion dropped substantially from 92% in 2021 to 74% in 2022. More specifically, there was a large drop in the proportion who used it to a large extent, from 55% in 2021 to 29% in 2022 – however, there was a slight increase in the proportion who used it to some extent from 37% in 2021 to 45% in 2022.

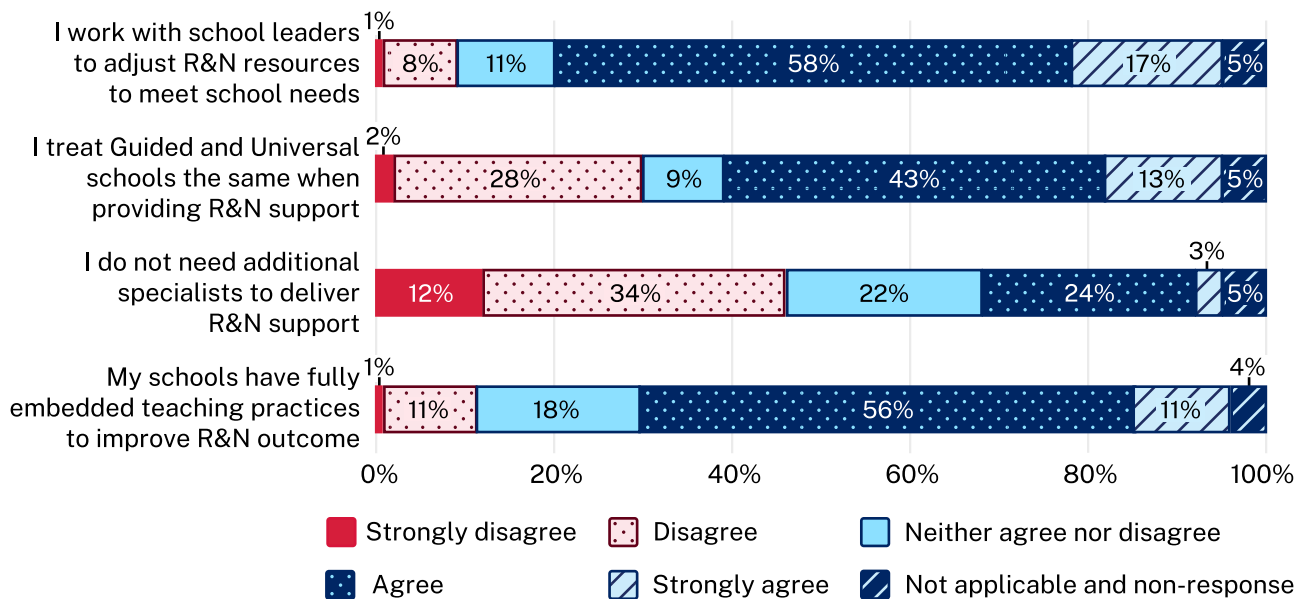
The majority of respondents also indicated that to at least some extent they had guided schools to access and match resources to address R&N focus areas; develop IPMs to address focus areas including matched resources; and implement universal resources according to identified R&N needs. The proportion of those who did so to a large extent dropped quite a bit from 38 to 43% in 2021 to 19 to 25% in 2022. The proportion who did so to some extent also dropped, from 45 to 50% in 2021 to 40 to 46% in 2022. Notably, around 30% of respondents felt they guided schools to access and match universal resources to R&N focus areas to a minimal extent.

In what ways did DELs work with leaders to meet R&N needs in 2022?

This question was only asked of respondents to the 2022 School Needs and Supports Survey (Figure 51). Most respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they worked with school leaders to adjust R&N resources to meet needs (75%), and that schools have fully embedded teaching practices to improve R&N outcomes (66%). More than half of the respondents indicated they treat Universal and Guided schools the same when providing R&N support (56%), and only one quarter believe they don't need additional specialists to delivery R&N support (27%).

Figure 51

Extent to which DELs work with school leaders to meet R&N needs



Note: Due to rounding, the sum of the categories may not add up to 100%.

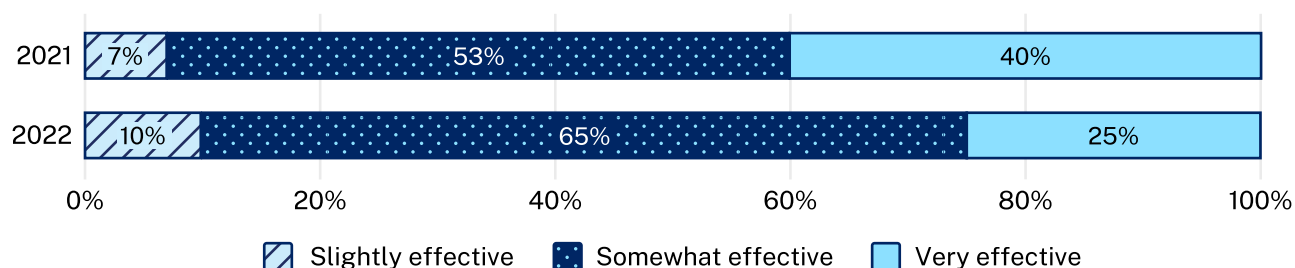
Workstream 4 metrics

Engaging in the right support

Most respondents thought the ‘Engaging in the right support’ process was at least somewhat effective in ensuring system supports meet the individual needs of schools (around 90% – Figure 52). However, the process seemed to decrease in perceived effectiveness from 2021 to 2022. The proportion of respondents who thought it was very effective dropped from 40% in 2021 to 25% in 2022, whereas the proportion who thought it was somewhat effective increased from 53% in 2021 to 65% in 2022.

Figure 52

Effectiveness of ‘Engaging in the right support’, 2021–22

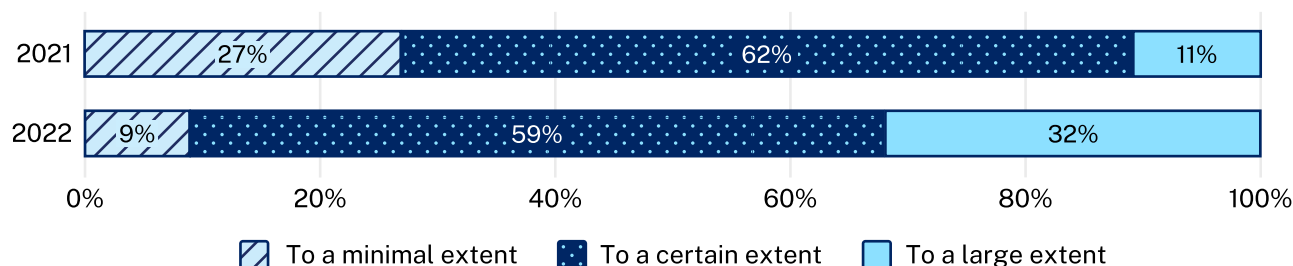


System support matched to needs

Most respondents felt that system support offered to schools matched their needs, and this seemed to improve substantially from 2021 to 2022 (Figure 53). The proportion who felt needs were met to a certain extent remained similar from 2021 (62%) to 2022 (59%). However, the proportion who felt needs were met to a great extent increased substantially from 11% in 2021 to 32% in 2022. Conversely, the proportion who felt needs were met to minimal extent decreased from 27% in 2021 to 9% in 2022.

Figure 53

Extent to which system support matched school needs, 2021–22

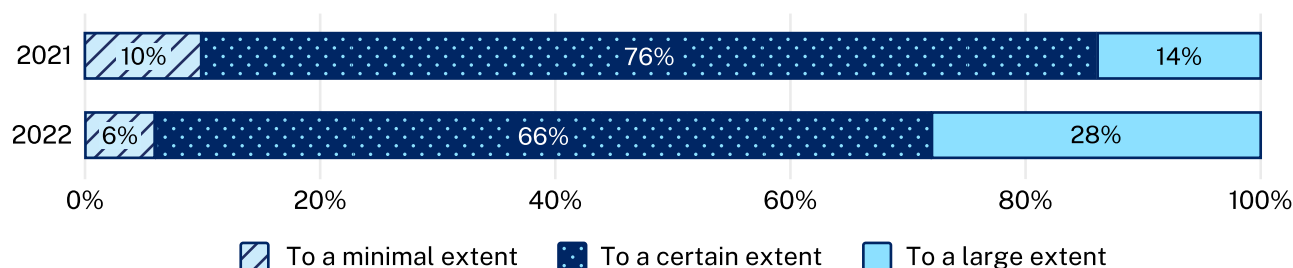


School ability to implement system supports and integrate into practice

Most respondents felt that schools are able to implement system supports and integrate them into their practice, and this remained the case from 2021 to 2022 (over 90 – Figure 54). Most respondents felt this was the case to a certain extent, however this proportion decreased slightly from 76% in 2021 to 66% in 2022 while the proportion who felt this was the case to a great extent increased from 14% in 2021 to 28% in 2022. The proportion who reported this to a minimal extent dropped from 10% in 2021 to 6% in 2022.

Figure 54

Extent to which schools are able to implement system supports and integrate into practice, 2021–22

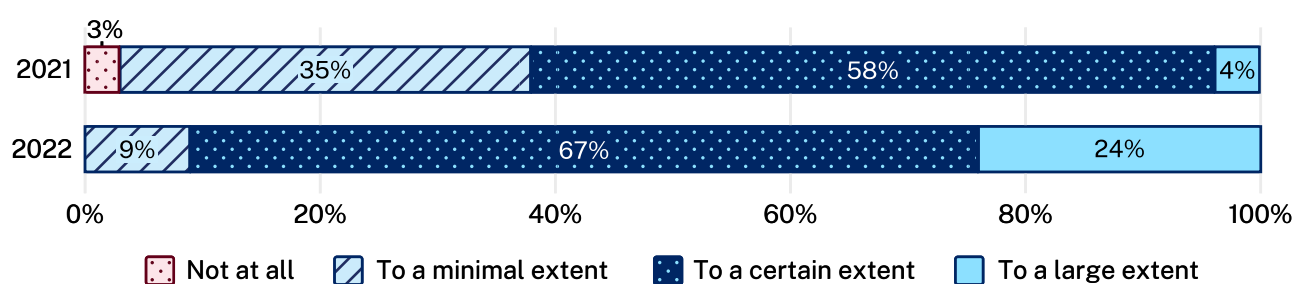


Guidance for schools to implement system supports

Most respondents felt that schools have previously been provided with sufficient and appropriate guidance to implement system supports to at least a certain extent (Figure 55). This increased substantially from 2021 (62%) to 2022 (91%). More specifically, the proportion who felt this was the case to a certain extent increased from 58% in 2021 to 67%. The proportion who indicated this to a large extent increased from 4% in 2021 to 24% in 2022. Conversely, the proportion who felt this was the case to a minimal extent decreased from 35% in 2021 to 9% in 2022.

Figure 55

Extent to which schools have been provided with sufficient and appropriate guidance to implement system supports, 2021–22



Appendix G – URH User Pop-Up Survey questions

Survey question	Response options
1. Did the Hub have what you needed today?	<p>Please select one option only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I found exactly what I needed. • I couldn't find what I needed but found something else. • I did not find what I needed. I was looking for... (please answer in the text box)
2. How did you link to the site today?	<p>Please select one option only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Noticeboard • Staff Portal • Email • Web search • Other (please specify)
3. How might you use this resource?	<p>Please select all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would share with colleagues. • As ideas for teaching • I wouldn't, there is not much that is useful to me. • Other [text]
4. What does this guide offer you?	<p>Please select all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An opportunity to learn more • Something to share with colleagues • Ideas for teaching strategies • Not much that is useful to me • Other [text]
5. What is your main reason for visiting the Hub?	<p>Please select one option only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am generally looking at the reading/numeracy resources. • I am looking for a specific reading/numeracy resource. • I am just browsing. • Other (please specify)
6. Do you think the resources you have seen will help you to address the needs of your students?	<p>Please select one option only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definitely • To some extent • Unsure • Not really • Not at all

Appendix H – URH User Pop-up Survey analysis summary

How was the URH User Pop-up Survey administered and collated?

During Term 1 and 2 2022 users of the Universal Resources Hub (URH) were asked a range of survey questions to understand user perceptions and experiences of the URH. A total of 6 questions were asked throughout the question deployment period to understand users' purpose for visiting the URH, intended use of resources, satisfaction with the resources, and perceived value of the resources for students. Single questions were presented to users in a pop-up box on a visited page and appeared only once per user. The dates of deployment varied between questions. Analysis of responses was conducted in June 2022.

Who participated in the URH User Pop-up Survey?

Users of the URH were asked survey questions throughout the survey deployment period. No specific information was collected regarding user characteristics. Response rates are not available as the total number of users who were asked each question was not collected. The total number of responses collected for each of the 6 survey questions varies and is displayed in Table 13.

Table 13

Summary of URH pop up question deployment and response numbers

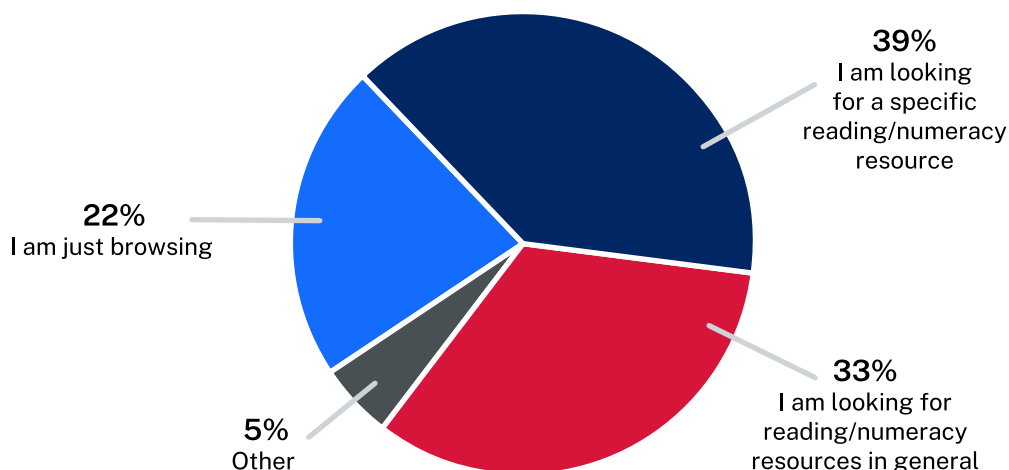
Question	Number of responses	Dates of deployment in 2022	URH page deployed on
1. What is your main reason for visiting the Hub?	251	25/01 to 20/02	Home
2. Did the Hub have what you were looking for?	91	21/02 to 13/03	Home
3. Select the statement/s that reflects your experience with the reading and numeracy guide. The guides ...	28	28/03 to 30/06	The R&N guides
4. How well do you think this resource will support development of reading and/or numeracy knowledge and skills in students?	1,075	05/05 to 22/06	Top 50 visited resources
5. How might you use this resource? I would ... (select all that apply)	880	14/03 to 05/05	Top 50 visited resources
6. Has regular use of the reading and/or numeracy resources on the Hub improved your teaching practice?	665	24/05 to 30/06	Top 50 visited resources

What were users' main purpose for visiting the URH?

Almost three-quarters (72%) of users had a defined purpose for visiting the URH, with 39% looking for specific reading and numeracy (R&N) resources and 33% looking for R&N resources in general. Less than a quarter of users were just browsing (23%) or visiting the URH for other reasons (5%) (Figure 56).

Figure 56

Main purpose for URH users visiting the URH



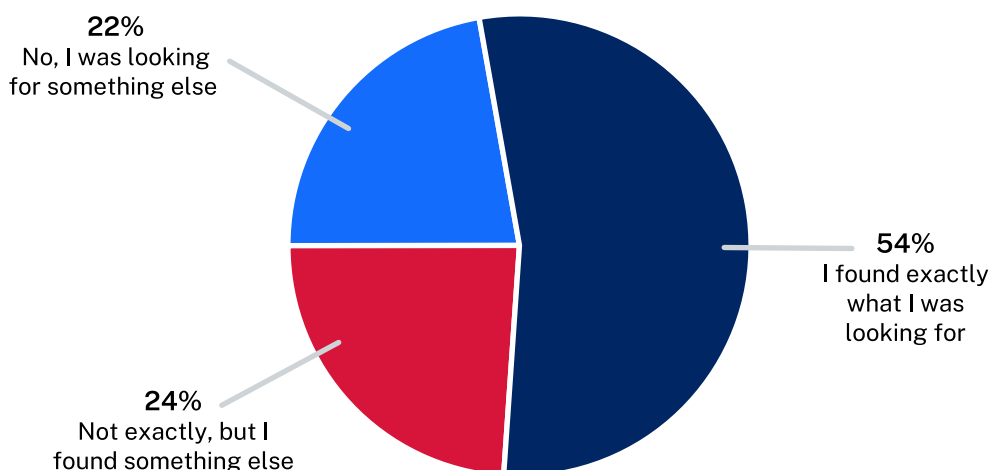
Note: Due to rounding, the sum of the categories may not add up to 100%.

Were users able to find suitable resources on the URH?

Most respondents found suitable resources, with 54% finding exactly what they were looking for, and 24% finding something else (Figure 57). Just under a quarter of respondents (22%) indicated the URH did not have what they were looking for. Some respondents provided suggestions of the resources they were looking for but were unable to find; these suggestions included writing resources, specific maths resources (for example, space, place value, expanded notation, fractions), Australian geography resources, and assessments.

Figure 57

Availability of suitable resources on the URH



What were users' experiences of the reading and numeracy guides?

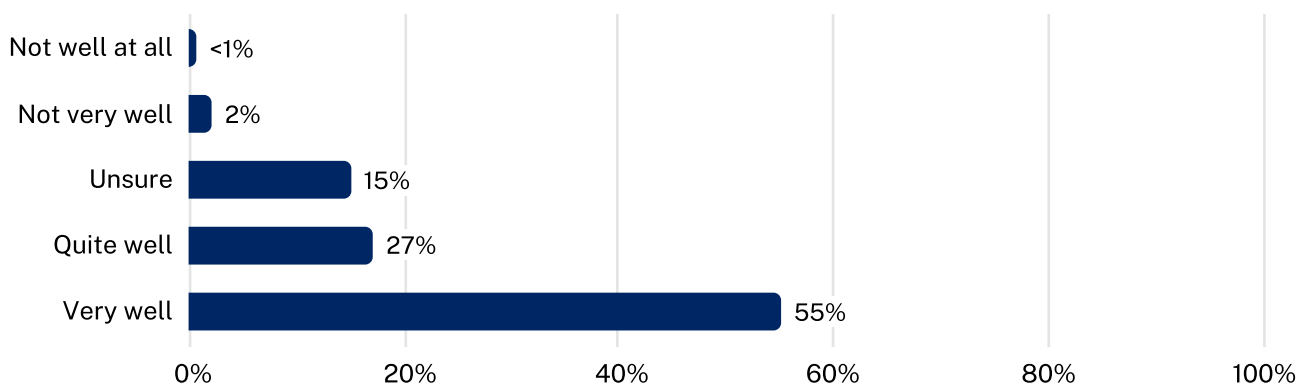
Users who visited one of the URH pages on the R&N guides were asked about their experience of the guides, by providing an indication of the impact on their knowledge, understanding, and practice. Due to low response numbers (n=28) no analysis was able to be performed.

How effective do users believe the resources will be in supporting the development of student reading and numeracy knowledge and skills?

Most respondents (82%) indicated that the specific resources they were asked about supported student R&N knowledge and skills either very well (55%) or quite well (27%) (Figure 58). A small proportion of respondents (3%) indicated the specific resources did not support student R&N knowledge and skills.

Figure 58

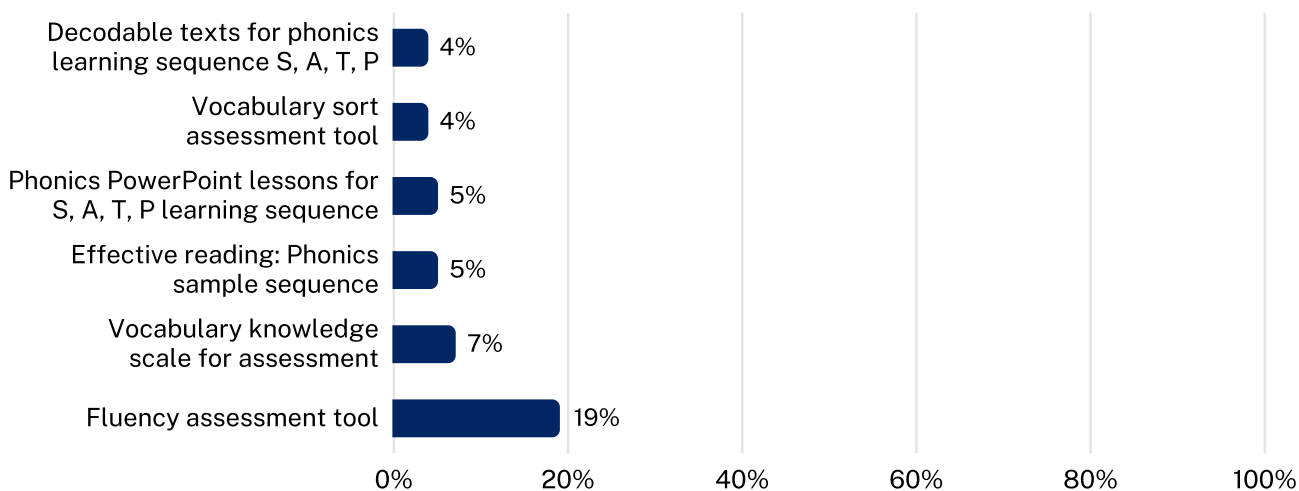
URH user perceptions on effectiveness of URH resources to support the development of student reading and numeracy knowledge and skills



Users were asked this question specific to the URH resource page they visited, with deployment of questions based on the top resources. The fluency assessment tool page captured most individual responses (19%), followed by the vocabulary knowledge scale for assessment (7%) (Figure 59).

Figure 59

Top resources capturing responses regarding effectiveness of URH resources for student R&N knowledge and skills



How do URH users intend to use the resources?

A high proportion of responses indicated there were multiple uses for the resources on the URH. The identified use was dependent on the specific resource but indicate that users are most likely to teach from the R&N resource (80%) or share with colleagues (61%) (Figure 60). Over half of the respondents also indicated they would use the resources to create a new teaching resource (58%) or to develop knowledge/skills (56%). A small proportion (2%) of respondents indicated other uses for the resources including assessment, adjusting the resource to suit their class, and professional learning. Again, users were asked this question specific to the URH resource page they visited, with deployment of questions based on the top resources. The fluency assessment tool page captured most individual responses (15%), followed by the vocabulary recognition tool for assessment (6%), decodable texts for phonics learning sequences S, A, T, P (5%), word awareness activities (5%), and vocabulary knowledge scale for assessment (4%). The intended use of the resources varied somewhat across resources, as displayed in Figure 61.

Figure 60

Intended use of URH resources

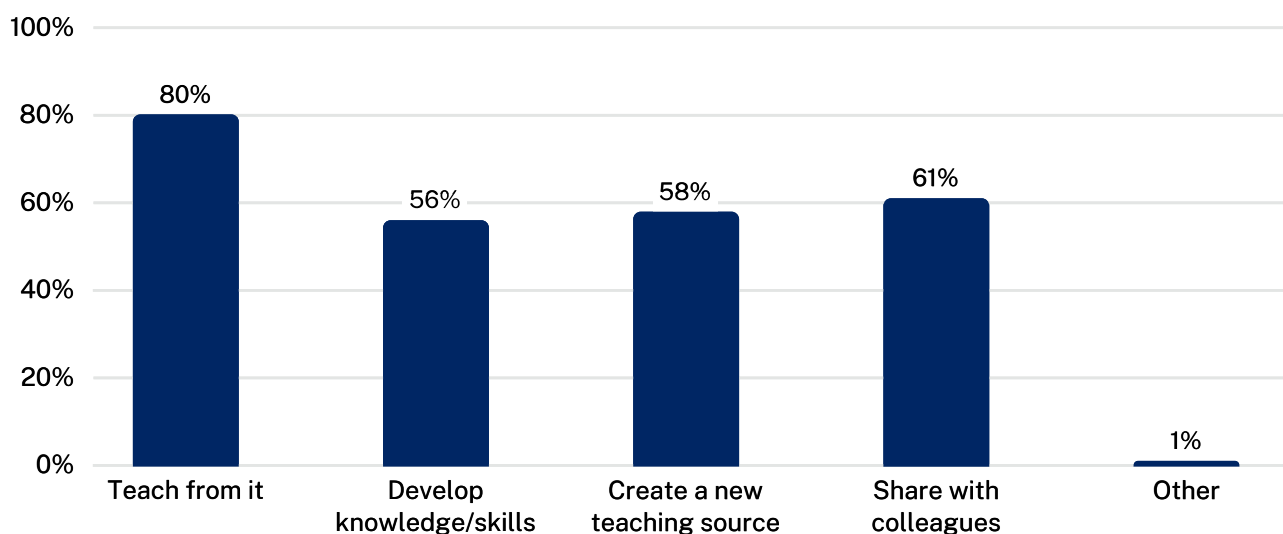
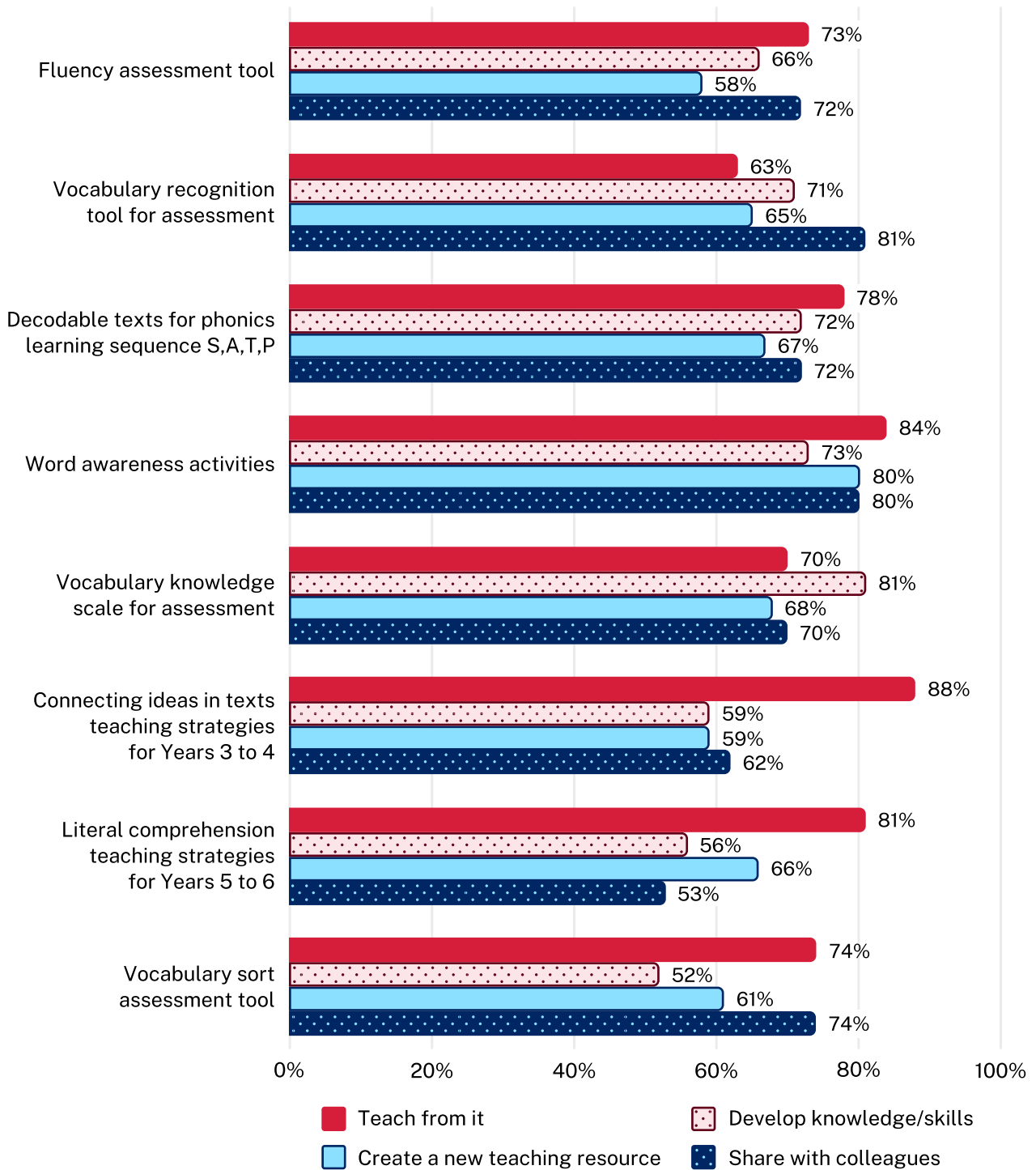


Figure 61

Intended use of URH resource by top 5 resources



Has regular use of the URH resources led to perceived improvements in teacher practice?

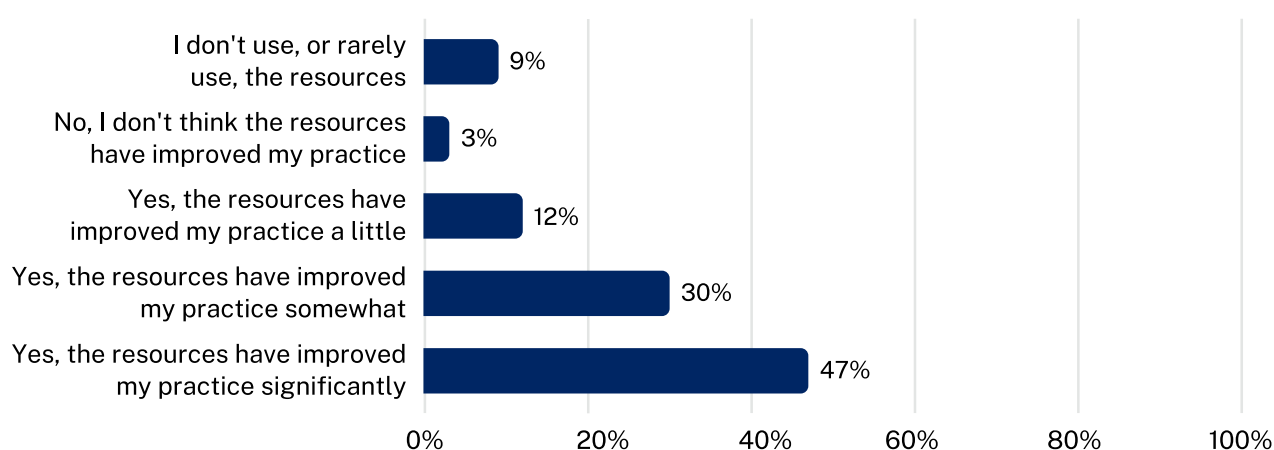
The majority of respondents (89%) indicated that resources had improved teacher practice either significantly (47%), somewhat (30%), or a little (12%), as displayed in Figure 62.

A small proportion of respondents (3%) don't believe the resources have improved their practice; while 9% indicated they don't use, or rarely use the resources.

While this question was asked of users while on a specific resource page, the question asked about use of R&N resources on the URH in general. Most responses were captured on the vocabulary recognition tool for assessment page (21%).

Figure 62

Perceived improvements in teacher practice from regular use of URH resources



Appendix I – School leader interview guide

1. By way of background, I'd like to know a bit about you and your role at this school.
2. So what we'd like to focus on today is reading and numeracy. Would you say that reading and/or numeracy are focus areas at this school?
3. Could you tell me about some of the specific strategies the school is using to address reading and/or numeracy?
4. Over the past 12 months or so, has the school worked with the DEL specifically on reading and/or numeracy? Could you tell me about that – like how was that arranged, what did you do, how did it go?
5. Are you aware of the reading and numeracy resources on the department's Universal Resources Hub? I'd like to know a bit about how you've used these resources at this school.
6. Are you aware of the online professional learning suite for reading and/or numeracy? I'd like to talk a bit about these and your experience of them.
7. What else (other than the Hub, DEL support and online PL) have you found useful for addressing reading and numeracy needs at the school?
8. What other supports do you feel staff would find useful for addressing reading and numeracy issues?
9. Something we're interested in is the cyclical process of using data to identify reading and numeracy needs, matching to suitable resources and approaches, extending teacher knowledge and pedagogy (supported by professional learning), and regular monitoring and adjustment of planning. The aim is for this cycle to become business as usual in schools. Do you think this happens in this school?
10. Can you see the recent support for reading and numeracy (like the Hub, DEL support, PL) making a difference at this school? What makes you say that?
11. Is there any other kind of support for reading and/or numeracy that would be helpful to you and/or the staff?
12. Is there anything else you'd like to add before we finish up?

Appendix J – DEL interview guide

1. By way of background, could I ask about you and your role – for example how long have you been in this role?
2. Tell us some more about the schools in your network.

In answering the questions from here on, we would like to ask you to focus on how the R&N Program was implemented.

3. We understand that there are supports in place that guide your delivery of support to schools to reach R&N NAPLAN targets and that some of your schools may require explicit support to do this. Would that be your sense?
4. Can you tell us about the guidance and support offered to you to deliver the R&N Program? (How did you feel about it?)
5. What level of support do your schools require in reading and numeracy?
6. How was the R&N Program prioritised in your workload?
7. What is your opinion of the program and this model of support?

If DEL briefly mentions COVID-19 as a challenge, find out more.

If DEL discusses COVID-19 as a challenge, then also ask:

8. Apart from the complexity of delivering in COVID, what else is challenging about supporting schools to improve reading and numeracy?

If DEL doesn't mention COVID-19, ask:

9. Did COVID-19 make any difference?

Appendix K – Program owner interview guide

Round 1 questions – December 2021

1. Thinking about how the program has gone this year, what stands out as a key success or achievement? Did anything go better than expected?
2. What do you feel could have gone better? What impact have these issues had on the initiative? Were you able to mitigate these issues in some way?
3. What would you say you've learned along the way? So, if you were to advise colleagues who were about to take on a similar thing, what advice would you give them about setting up and managing the program?
4. Have you found anything else particularly challenging (that we haven't already talked about)?
5. What do you see as your priorities over the next 6 months for delivering on program outcomes?

Round 2 questions – mid-2022

1. Last time we did this interview, we asked whether there was anything that stood out as a key success or achievement. What would you say now, 6 months or so down the track?
2. Last time you noted that [xxxx] could have gone better. Have any of these issues had an impact or been resolved in the last 6 months?
3. [Possible question/s reflecting on outcome indicators, for example, NAPLAN]
4. Have there been any barriers to successfully implementing the program? What kinds of barriers or obstacles? In hindsight, what could have been done to avoid or resolve these issues?
5. What factors have helped with implementing the program?
6. How would you do things differently if you had your time over again?
7. Thinking of the overall Universal/Guided/Strategic tiered support model, do you think there are any lessons to be learned?
8. Do you think the Universal/Guided/Strategic tiered support model works as a support structure? Do you have any evidence to support your view?
9. Where do you see this program going from here? Is there still a need for this approach? What changes do you think are warranted?

Appendix L – Professional learning available under the R&N Program

Table 14

List of reading and numeracy professional learning courses

Identifier	Course title
Improving reading and numeracy professional learning suite	
NR31653	Improving reading & numeracy: Multiplicative thinking (K–8)
NR31670	Improving reading & numeracy: Additive thinking (K–8)
NR31671	Improving reading & numeracy: Number and place value (primary)
NR31672	Improving reading & numeracy: Statistics and probability
NR31673	Improving reading & numeracy: Measurement and geometric reasoning
NR31675	Improving reading & numeracy: Number and place value (secondary)
NR31680	Improving reading & numeracy: Fractions and proportional reasoning (primary)
NR31681	Improving reading & numeracy: Fractions and proportional reasoning (secondary)
NR31690	Improving reading & numeracy: Understanding character (primary)
NR31691	Improving reading & numeracy: Understanding character (secondary)
NR50210	Improving reading & numeracy: Comprehension (primary)
NR50211	Improving reading & numeracy: Comprehension (secondary)
NR50212	Improving reading & numeracy: Connecting ideas (primary)
NR50213	Improving reading & numeracy: Connecting ideas (secondary)
NR50214	Improving reading & numeracy: Audience and purpose (primary)
NR50215	Improving reading & numeracy: Audience and purpose (secondary)
NR32150	Improving reading & numeracy: Evaluating sources (primary)
NR32151	Improving reading & numeracy: Evaluating sources (secondary)
NR32152	Improving reading & numeracy: Language features (primary)
NR32153	Improving reading & numeracy: Language features (secondary)
NR32154	Improving reading & numeracy: Text structure and features (primary)
NR32155	Improving reading & numeracy: Text structure and features (secondary)
NR32156	Improving reading & numeracy: Vocabulary (primary)
NR32157	Improving reading & numeracy: Vocabulary (secondary)

Identifier	Course title
Blended PL	
NR30312	Additive Strategies 2021
NR33544	Additive Strategies
RG14295 AC00022	Fluency on Teams Blended Learning
NR29199	Focus on vocabulary –Blended learning (Focus on creating texts: Module 4, Focus on Understanding texts: Vocabulary, Effective reading: Vocabulary)
RG14358 AC00025	Focus on Understanding texts: The components of reading -Blended learning
RG14113 AC00027	Multiplicative strategies: Blended learning
eLearning	
NRG05320 AC00065	Applying decimals across the curriculum
NR28906	Broadening Knowledge of Mathematics Literacy and Language
RG04902 AC00020	Effective Reading: Phonics
RG11571 AC00021	Effective Reading: Phonological awareness eLearning
NRG05174 AC00070	mbb4n course 1: Effective mathematics teaching for numeracy development
NRG05175 AC00071	mbb4n course 2: Learning progressions as a tool to support student numeracy development
NRG05176 AC00072	mbb4n course 3: Principles of effective assessment
NRG05177 AC00074	mbb4n course 4: Planning for differentiated learning
NRG13969	Understanding units of measurement
RG03806 AC00026	Introduction to the Literacy and Numeracy Progressions Online
NR33689	Leading literacy and numeracy professional learning in my school

Identifier	Course title
eLearning from the Maths strategy	
NR29611	Becoming mathematicians: Exploring patterns
NR28548	Becoming mathematicians: How numbers and fractions work
NR29516	Becoming mathematicians: Quantifying collections
eLearning component of the Additive Strategies blended PL	
NR30368	A focus on tasks, tools and talk for additive strategies
NR30366	Number talks for additive strategies

Appendix M – MyPL course data analysis

How was the MyPL course data collected and collated?

The number of enrolments in and completions of Reading and Numeracy (R&N) professional learning (PL) between 1 January 2018 to 23 September 2022 has been quantitatively analysed. Course information is extracted from the R&N course catalogue. This data period enabled the evaluation team to report on course uptake trends. Comparisons between the school type and support type were drawn from the trend data.

The number of staff, the schools and networks they represent, and the type of PL undertaken were provided to and analysed by the evaluation team in both 2021 and 2022.

Enrolled courses are reported in 3 status categories:

- **Completed:** Includes school staff who completed a PL in any time across the given time period. This includes the PLs that have been completed but the expiry date has lapsed.
- **Incomplete:** Includes school staff enrolled in the PL and started the PL but not yet completed. This includes those that enrolled but the due date for completing this course has lapsed.
- **Not attempted:** Includes school staff enrolled in the PL but not started the course. This includes those that have cancelled their enrolment in the course.

What R&N courses were available for staff between 2018 and 2022?

Courses available on MyPL are displayed in Appendix L.

Who enrolled in or completed Literacy and Numeracy PL between 2018 and 2022?

In the reported data period, there were 194,334 teaching staff enrolments in Literacy and Numeracy MyPL courses, representing 86.7% of MyPL enrolments. Of these enrolments, 86% of courses were completely or partially completed, and 14% were not attempted.

MyPL does not record a school code for casual staff unless they ask to be assigned to a school. Casual teacher enrolments in MyPL courses in 2022 represented 9.5% of the group with proportions of attempted and not attempted courses comparable to other teaching staff enrolments.

Of 215,000 L&N MyPL enrolment records in 2022, 79.9% of these were from infants/primary schools, while only 14.7% were secondary schools. This is consistent with the MyPL enrolments between 2018 and 2021 of which 13.3% were from secondary schools.

How have MyPL enrolments in R&N courses changed between 2018 and 2022?

In 2020 there was a total of 21,543 enrolments in R&N courses through MyPL and in 2021, the number of enrolments increased to 60,150. R&N project categories were also introduced in 2021. In 2022 the number of enrolments in R&N courses through MyPL was 24,376.

In the period 2018 to 2022, there was a total of 122,951 enrolments in R&N courses through MyPL. Of these enrolments, 57.2% were completed, 26.5% were incomplete and 16.3% were not attempted. This is shown in Table 15. In contrast, 70.3% of MyPL enrolments in the period 2018 to 2021 were completed (of 97,250 total enrolments), and 13.4% were not attempted.

Table 15

Enrolment records for R&N courses 2018–2022 by completion status, school type, support type, and course type

2018–2022 MyPL records for R&N courses		Frequency	% of total
PL completion	Completed	70,330	57.2%
	Incomplete	32,630	26.5%
	Not attempted	19,991	16.3%
School type	Infants/primary school	89,435	72.7%
	Secondary school	15,740	12.8%
	Other	6,285	5.1%
	Casual teachers	11,491	9.4%
R&N 2022 projects	Guided Support schools (432)	27,518	22.4%
	Strategic Support schools (82)	4,794	3.9%
	Universal Support schools (1,697)	79,148	64.4%
	Casual teachers	11,491	9.4%
R&N PL course groups	Blended PL	10,075	8.2%
	eLearning	70,550	57.4%
	Improving reading and numeracy suite	31,584	25.7%
	eLearning from the Maths strategy	10,742	8.7%
Total		122,951	

Individual enrolments in R&N courses were primarily from staff in Universal schools (26,594), representing 67.1% of R&N course enrolments. However, Universal schools represent nearly 80% of schools in NSW. While R&N course enrolments from Strategic Support schools represents 4.4% of total enrolments, Strategic Support schools are only 2.4% of the NSW school population. Table 16 shows a breakdown of the number and percentage of individual R&N course enrolments by support type.

Table 16

Individual R&N course enrolments by support type

2018–2022 MyPL records for R&N courses		Frequency	% of total
R&N 2022 projects	Guided Support schools (397)	11,292	28.5%
	Strategic Support schools (54)	1,721	4.4%
	Universal Support schools (1,763)	26,594	67.1%

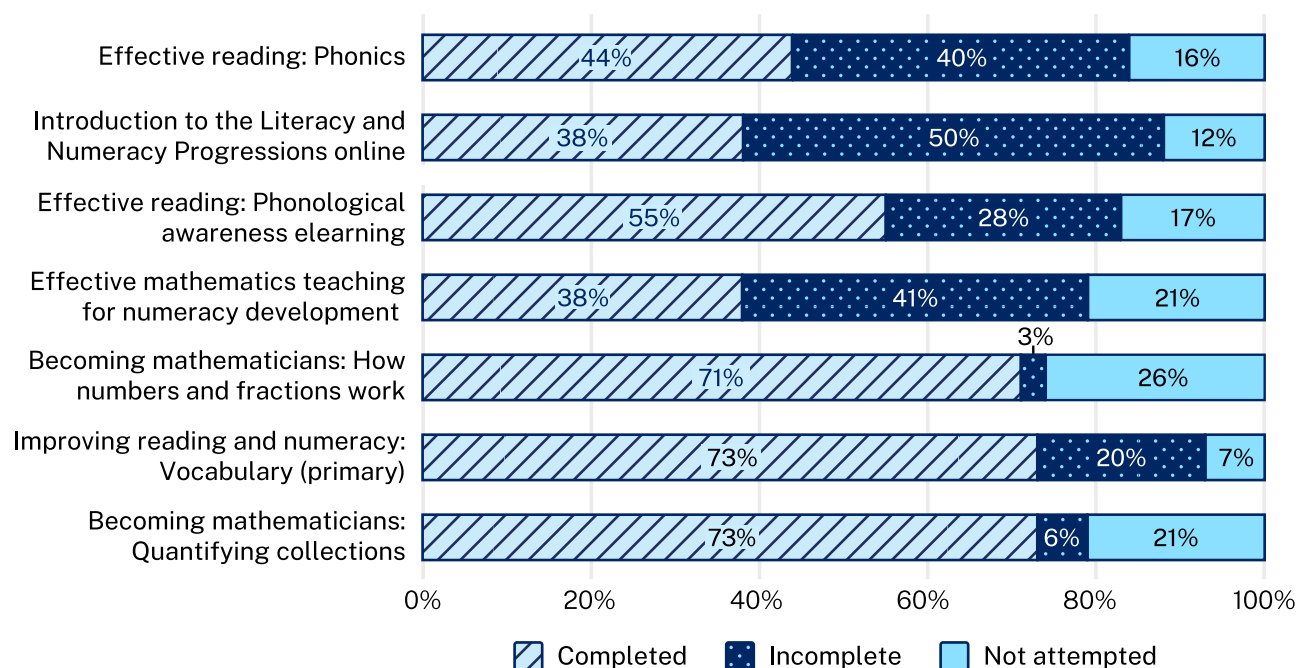
What were the most popular reading and numeracy courses in 2021 and 2022?

The top 5 R&N courses in 2021 and 2022 were the same, though in 2022 the courses ‘Improving reading & numeracy: Vocabulary (primary)’ and ‘Becoming mathematicians: Quantifying collections’ passed ‘Focus on understanding texts: The components of reading’ and ‘Learning progression as a tool to support student numeracy development’ as the sixth and seventh most popular courses.

The number of enrolments that were complete, incomplete and not attempted in the top 5 courses remained relatively consistent between 2021 and 2022 despite an additional 8,700 enrolments in these specific courses in 2022 from 2021. The completion rate for the top 7 most popular R&N courses in 2022 is shown in Figure 63.

Figure 63

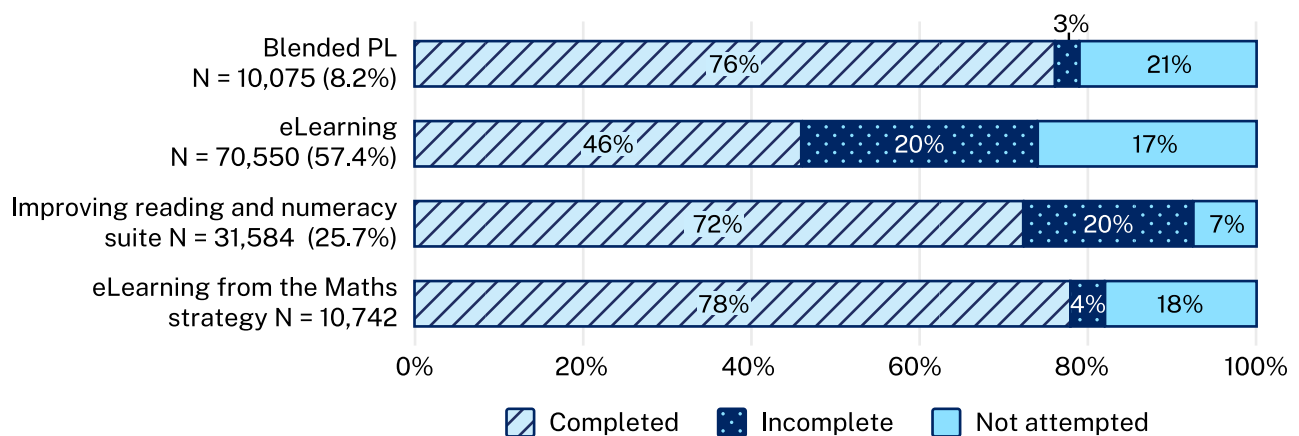
Completion status for the top 7 most popular R&N courses in 2022



The completion rate for R&N PL course groups in 2021 show that 79% of blended PL were completely or partially completed, while 83% of eLearning, 92% of Improving reading & numeracy suite PL, and 82% of eLearning from the Maths strategy were completely or partially completed. The completion rate for R&N PL course groups in 2022 are shown in Figure 64. Infants/primary schools’ teachers comprised the greatest proportion of enrolments in all course groups in both 2021 and 2022. In 2022, the Improving reading & numeracy suite PL had the greatest proportion of secondary school enrolments with 19% of the 70,550 total enrolments.

Figure 64

Completion status for R&N PL course groups in 2022



Note: Due to rounding, the sum of the categories may not add up to 100%.

Appendix N – Optional diagnostic assessments data

A range of optional diagnostic assessments are available to schools. Schools can use the assessments as a means for identifying reading and numeracy focus areas in need of improvement and for monitoring student progress. Schools may choose to use these assessments in response to direct recommendations from within the R&N Program, or because other related initiatives direct schools to use them, or for other reasons.

The following data in relation to a selection of optional diagnostic assessments were made available to the evaluation team:

- assessment resource/tool
- lodgements by calendar year, scholastic year and school
- number of individual students who lodged by calendar year, scholastic year and school
- total school enrolments by calendar year, scholastic year and school.

It was hoped that analysis of these data might indicate any change in uptake for the optional assessments over the course of the R&N Program. However, the data cannot be considered particularly reliable for a few reasons:

- Data relating to assessments are not a reliable reflection of use. Although they can be completed online, they can also be completed by downloading. But downloading does not guarantee that they were used.
- Further, individuals may download then share the assessments both within and across schools/networks – again, the number of downloads then does not necessarily reflect use.
- For the 5 assessments examined, data was limited to one or 2 years. Only one, the Phonological Awareness Diagnostic Assessment (PHAW), had data for 3 years (2020 to 22). It would not be wise to draw conclusions on the basis of just 2 years' worth of data.

Table 17 lists each assessment by the number of lodgements, number of individual students who lodged, average number of lodgements per student, and the percentage of all students in NSW who lodged the assessment. It is worth noting that only phonological awareness has data available from 2020, while the other assessments were introduced in 2021 or 2022.

Table 17

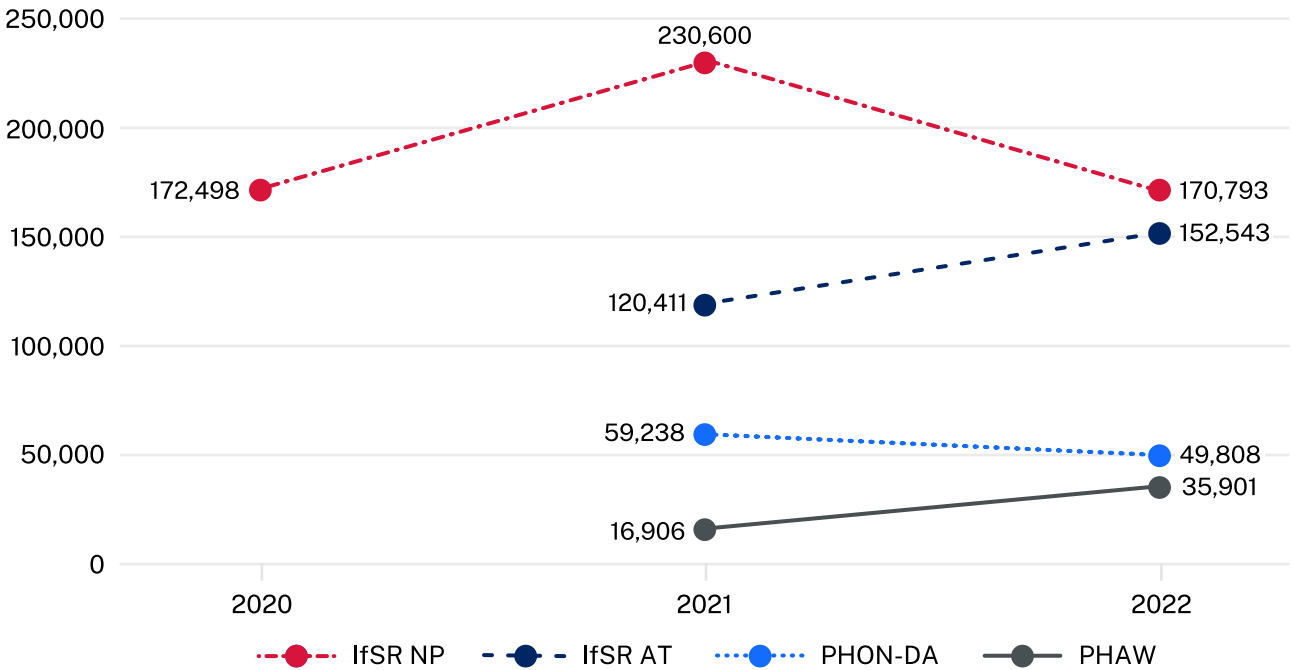
A list of optional assessments by the number of lodgements, students who completed them as well as the average number of lodgements per student

Assessment	Year	Total lodgements	Total students	Average no. lodgements per student	% of all students in NSW
The Interview for student reasoning – Number and place value (IfSR-NP)	2021	59,238	47,288	1.25	5.93%
	2022	49,808	39,082	1.27	4.97%
Interview for student reasoning – Additive thinking (IfSR-AT)	2021	16,906	13,544	1.25	1.70%
	2022	35,901	27,459	1.31	3.49%
The Interview for Student Reasoning – Multiplicative thinking (IfSR-MT)	2022	2,600	2,132	1.22	0.27%
Phonics diagnostic assessment (PHON-DA)	2021	120,411	44,061	2.73	5.53%
	2022	152,453	48,775	3.13	6.20%
Phonological awareness diagnostic (PHAW)	2020	172,498	43,282	3.99	5.37%
	2021	230,600	54,934	4.20	6.89%
	2022	170,793	42,441	4.02	5.40%

Figure 65 shows the number of lodgements over time for each assessment.

Figure 65

The number of lodgements over time for each assessment

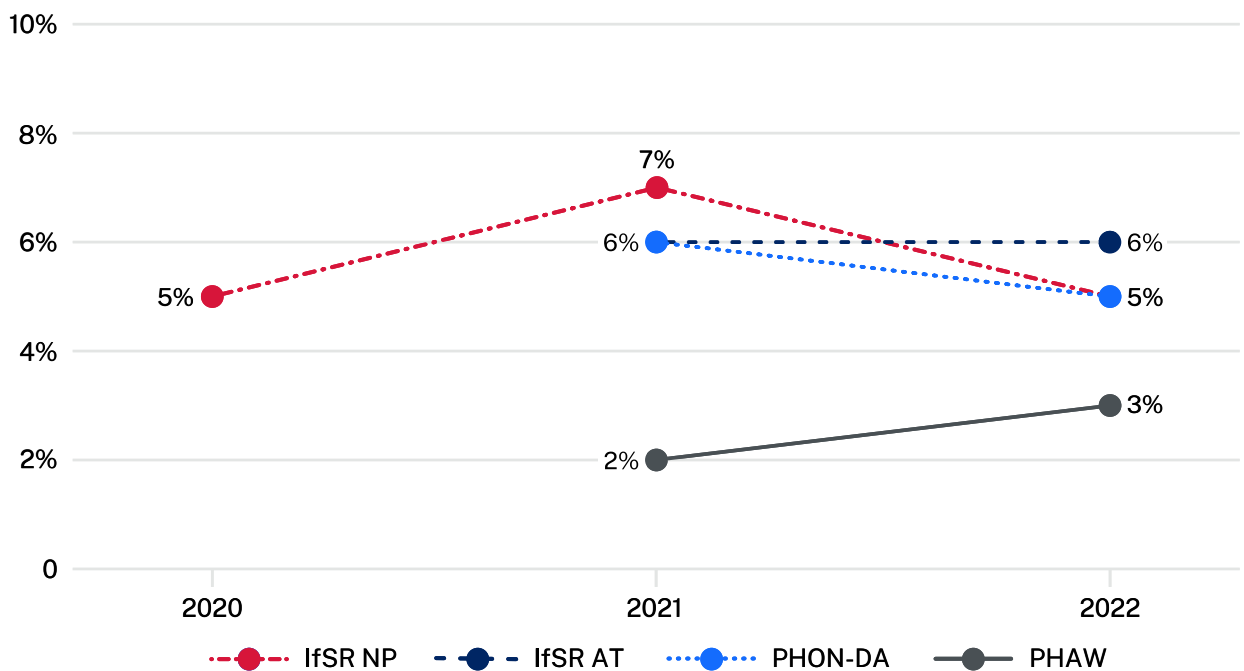


Note: Only the Phonological Awareness Diagnostic Assessment has data available for 2020 to 2022.

Figure 66 shows the percentage of all students enrolled in NSW schools who lodged an assessment.

Figure 66

The percentage of enrolled students who lodged an assessment



Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation
GPO Box 33, Sydney NSW 2001, Australia

✉ info@cese.nsw.gov.au

🌐 education.nsw.gov.au/cese

🗨️ yammer.com/det.nsw.edu.au

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