

External Evaluation of the Selected National Partnership
on Literacy and Numeracy NSW Programs

Evaluation of Focus on Reading 3-6

FINAL REPORT

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URBIS STAFF RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS REPORT WERE:

Project Director	Alison Wallace
Project Manager	Benita Power
Associate Director	Lee Holloway
Senior Consultant	Chloe Harkness
Job Code	SSP242D10
Report Number	Final Report



Urbis Social Policy team has received ISO 20252 Certification for the provision of social policy research and evaluation, social planning, community consultation, market research and communications research.

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Glossary

ACRONYM	DESCRIPTION
AECGs	Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups
BST	Basic Skills Test
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
DASA	Data Analysis Skills Assessment
EMSAD	Educational Measurement and School Accountability Directorate
ESL	English as a Second Language
FOR	Focus on Reading
ILPs	Individual Learning Plans
K-2	Kindergarten to Year 2
KLA	Key Learning Area
LBOTE	Language Background Other Than English
MULTILIT	Making Up Lost Time in Literacy Reading Tutor Program
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
NPLN	National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy
NP Low SES	National Partnership Agreement on Low Socio-Economic Status School Communities
NSW DEC	NSW Department of Education and Communities
SES	Socio-Economic Status
Y3-Y6	Years 3 to 6

Executive Summary

1. THIS PROJECT

In November 2010, Urbis was contracted by the then NSW Department of Education and Training (now the NSW Department of Education and Communities – NSW DEC) to conduct an evaluation of Focus on Reading 3-6 - an approach designed to improve reading comprehension skills. Focus on Reading 3-6 is one of several initiatives being funded under the National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy (NPLN).

Specifically, the Terms of Reference for the evaluation of Focus on Reading 3-6 involved:

- An assessment of the effectiveness of the program
- An assessment of the extent to which the program achieves its goals in an efficient manner, and where applicable, addresses the mandatory reform elements of the National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy, which are:
 - effective and evidence-based teaching of literacy
 - strong school leadership and whole school engagement with literacy
 - monitoring student and school literacy performance to identify where support is needed
- An assessment of the extent to which the program has improved the educational outcomes of Aboriginal students
- An investigation of the most effective ways for schools to be supported to participate in the evaluation and for the reforms to be incorporated into school practice.

2. FOCUS ON READING 3-6

Focus on Reading 3-6 aims to provide professional learning support to classroom teachers by targeting teachers of Years 3 – 6 in a school or community of schools, with the goal of increasing teacher knowledge about how to develop fluent readers and developing comprehension and vocabulary skills based on effective evidence-based practice. The program involves explicit teaching of critical aspects of reading. Students' reading progress is monitored against the K-6 Literacy Continuum/English K-6 syllabus (DET, 2009a: 28).

The core aspects of Focus on Reading 3-6 included engagement of model teachers in the research evidence about effective literacy teaching practice; intensive, purpose-driven learning; between-session tasks designed to translate new learning into classroom action over time; and ongoing, systematic reflection on classroom practices and student progress. Classroom teachers were released from class for up to 16 days' of program training and planning, assisted by a group of Certified Trainers.

Phase 1 of the program focused on teaching for *Comprehension*, Phase 2 *Vocabulary knowledge* and *Fluent text reading* practices, while Phase 3 focused on consolidating and embedding new teaching and learning practices into school and classroom structures.

A total of 36 schools participated in Focus on Reading 3-6.

3. METHODOLOGY

The evaluation methodology comprised the following components:

- Knowledge review – a review of program documentation relating to Focus on Reading 3-6

- Scoping of data and data sets, to identify data analysis that would be achievable – including feedback from workshops and conferences
- Development of a Project Plan, setting out the finalised methodology, risk management strategy and timeframe
- Visits to eight schools that had used Focus on Reading 3-6 to interview the school Executive, Certified Trainers, teachers, parents and students
- An online survey of staff in all NSW NPLN schools that selected Focus on Reading 3-6 as the whole school intervention component of the NPLN: responses were received from 178 staff across 32 schools
- Stakeholder interviews (eg program personnel, Regional Facilitators)
- Analysis of National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and NPLN assessment data.

The methodology for the evaluation was developed in close consultation with NSW DEC, in particular the Student Engagement and Program Evaluation Bureau. The final project plan containing the methodology was submitted to NSW DEC in November 2010, and approved by the NPLN NSW Programs Program Evaluation Reference Group, which oversaw this evaluation.

4. IMPLEMENTATION OF FOCUS ON READING 3-6

The program was implemented over three school semesters: Semester 2, 2009; and Semesters 1 and 2, 2010. The most intensive periods of professional learning occurred in the first two semesters in which the program was operating. The Focus on Reading 3–6 professional learning sessions were delivered by Certified Trainers, who could be regional or school-based personnel. In turn, these trainers received formal training before they could be appointed as Certified Trainers.

Schools used the bulk of their National Partnership funding for Year 3-6 teachers to participate in training (including the cost of relief teaching) and to purchase recommended resources to implement Focus on Reading 3–6.

5. KEY FINDINGS

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF FOCUS ON READING 3-6

The qualitative and quantitative research clearly demonstrates that Focus on Reading 3-6 has delivered positive outcomes to teachers and schools, and benefits to students in the 36 schools participating in the program.

Certified Trainers expressed a high level of satisfaction with the quality, content and usefulness of the training they received under the program. Similarly, teachers and other school staff expressed a high level of satisfaction in relation to the content and quality of the training provided to them by the Certified Trainers, and the accompanying program resources. Most school staff reported receiving strong leadership support for Focus on Reading 3-6 in their school, as well as good support and guidance in how to implement the program. Support for Focus on Reading 3-6 within the schools reportedly grew over time as its benefits became more apparent.

Where school leadership was not evident, the program was implemented with far less enthusiasm and consistency.

The specific outcomes Focus on Reading 3-6 delivered to teachers, students and the school as a whole are detailed below.

OUTCOMES FOR TEACHERS

School staff reported that the main impact of Focus on Reading 3-6 was the dramatic change in pedagogy and increased understanding of how to teach reading.

School staff consistently reported positive outcomes following from their participation in Focus on Reading 3-6. The great majority reported that the program had had a positive impact on their knowledge, attitudes and skills. Schools and teachers reported that Focus on Reading 3-6 had had an impact (to a major or moderate extent) in the following areas:

- a deepened understanding of comprehension strategies and the links to comprehension, vocabulary knowledge and text reading
- a deepened understanding of effective teaching of reading
- increased belief in teachers' ability to improve literacy outcomes of all students
- increased belief in teachers' ability to improve the literacy outcomes of low achieving/disadvantaged students
- deepened understanding of the nature and needs of literacy learners in Years 3-6
- increased willingness to participate in shared reflection and discussion of teaching of reading with other staff
- increased ability to translate literacy theory into practice.

Key changes to teaching practice identified by teachers as a result of the program included: explicit teaching according to needs/ use of differentiation to target students; use of the 'super six' strategies; and use of more comprehension strategies. In addition, many teachers reported using the Focus on Reading 3-6 strategies across all Key Learning Areas (KLAs) including English, Religious Education, Science, Human Society and the Environment, and Maths.

OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS

In both data sets (NAPLAN and NPLN assessments), gains in mean reading scores were observed for all student cohorts at Focus on Reading 3-6 schools. However, the extent of these gains varied compared to those observed for all NPLN literacy focus schools, and for all State schools (for NAPLAN data only). In both NAPLAN cohorts (students in Year 3 in 2008 and 2009), students at Focus on Reading 3-6 schools achieved slightly higher reading score gains than for students across the State as a whole. In all cohorts, the reading growth observed for students at Focus on Reading 3-6 schools was generally in line with the gains achieved across all NPLN literacy focus schools. A range of limitations on the reliability and validity of results observed in these data sets have been outlined in this report; these should be considered when drawing conclusions from the results discussed.

Teaching staff, Executive staff and Certified Trainers were all extremely positive about the impact of Focus on Reading 3-6 on student outcomes, with the great majority rating the program as effective in this regard. They reported various improvements in areas relating to students' engagement with and capability in literacy. More than four out of five school staff surveyed reported observed improvements in:

- the volume, variety and complexity of texts read by students
- students' ability to read for meaning
- students' confidence in, and enthusiasm for, reading
- students' understanding of what is expected of them when they read
- students' willingness to discuss what they have read
- students' use of effective strategies to assist them read and understand text.

In discussions students and, in some cases parents too, were able to articulate such improvements.

OUTCOMES FOR ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

School staff and Aboriginal parents and students responded positively to the program. Overall, there was no evidence of any notable differences in Aboriginal students' experiences and outcomes in comparison with non-Aboriginal students in the qualitative consultations and the online survey. However, an analysis of the NAPLAN/NPLN data showed some differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

On the one hand, almost all those teachers and staff consulted during the qualitative consultations and through the online survey said that Focus on Reading 3-6 was as effective for Aboriginal students as for their non-Aboriginal counterparts. The main reason given for this in the qualitative consultations was that the program is seen to cater to the needs of all students.

NAPLAN data indicates that gain scores for Aboriginal students involved in Focus on Reading 3-6 were higher than those for non-Aboriginal students in both cohorts. NPLN assessment data also indicates that the gain scores for Aboriginal students were marginally higher than those for non-Aboriginal students across all three cohorts. Although these signs are positive, the small sample size (less than 90 Aboriginal students) needs to be taken into account when considering these results.

IMPACT ON SCHOOL

Focus on Reading 3-6 is regarded by the great majority of staff to have had a positive impact on their school. The key impacts identified were greater clarity about their school's goals and expectations re reading outcomes; greater transparency and consistency in the way literacy is taught in the school; more explicit and focussed teaching of reading; and that most teachers in the school are now using the teaching strategies in their everyday teaching across the KLAs. A high proportion of surveyed respondents (92%) indicated they would recommend the use of Focus on Reading 3-6 in other schools.

Some schools and staff were also very positive about taking a *whole-of-school approach*, and involving K-2 teachers and teaching support staff in the program. This has resulted in standard reading teaching practices across the entire school.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

A range of success factors were identified as contributing to the program's impact. These included:

- strong school leadership
- the availability of funding to allow adequate staff release from classroom to attend training
- taking sufficient time to implement the program to enable staff to absorb and apply new learnings
- staff being open to new teaching approaches
- the quality and consistency of support provided by Certified Trainer and Program Facilitators
- the volume, quality and targeted nature of the professional development based on evidence-based practice
- the shift within the program towards students discussing and questioning text
- the regular monitoring of student progress
- the applicability of the program to students of all abilities
- the ability to purchase new reading texts and resources.

6. STRENGTHENING THE IMPACT OF FOCUS ON READING 3-6

Participation in Focus on Reading 3-6 required classroom teachers to spend up to 16 days in training and program-related planning and activities. Although relief teachers were funded to replace these teachers, some schools were of the view that these absences were at times unsettling for students, and several reported receiving complaints from parents as a result. In future, consideration could be given to implementing strategies that would minimise disruption to classes.

The Focus on Reading 3-6 program training modules were deemed too long and 'bulky' by some teachers. It was frequently suggested that the modules could be condensed or streamlined.

There was a strong view amongst school staff that having an internal school-based Certified Trainer was more effective than an external trainer.

Focus on Reading 3-6, as its name implies, focuses on Years 3-6. However, many schools commented that they would like to see the program extended to K-6. Indeed some schools trained all their teachers in the program (not only those teaching Years 3-6) and saw this as highly desirable and beneficial.

Few parents were aware that their child's school was participating in Focus on Reading 3-6. Most reported there had been little or no communication from the school about the program or the reading strategies and activities their child would be using (although it is clear some schools had done this). A number of parents commented that they would like to have been more informed about the program, and that they may have been able to play a role in supporting their child's reading at home. The one or two schools that did communicate well with parents about the program found this to be advantageous.

School Executive staff, teachers and Certified Trainers made a number of specific suggestions relating to the strengthening of Focus on Reading 3-6, principally relating to:

- practical classroom programming, observation and support
- program design and delivery
- program training content
- future program funding and sustainable and ongoing delivery.

SUSTAINABILITY

Three critical factors were identified as being critical to the sustainability of Focus on Reading 3-6 beyond the funding period were:

- ongoing commitment and support from the school leadership team
- embedding the program in literacy teaching at the school
- devising a training strategy for new staff.

Schools and school staff were relatively confident many of the gains from Focus on Reading 3-6 would be sustained beyond the funding period, and a number of schools were able to articulate plans for doing this.

The primary challenge of maintaining the program concerns training and supporting new teachers who join the school.

1 Introduction

In November 2010, Urbis was contracted by the then NSW Department of Education and Training, now NSW Department of Education and Communities (NSW DEC) to conduct an evaluation of Focus on Reading 3-6 - an approach designed to improve reading comprehension skills. Focus on Reading 3-6 is one of several initiatives being funded under the National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy (NPLN) agreed to by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) on 28 November 2008.

1.1 POLICY CONTEXT

The NPLN was the centrepiece of the *National Action Plan for Literacy and Numeracy* (Action Plan), a 2008-09 Federal budget initiative, and was allocated \$540 million in funding. Operating for four years from 2009, the NPLN is designed to facilitate and reward literacy and numeracy models or approaches that clearly demonstrate evidence for accelerating improvement in student results. The NPLN focuses on strong school leadership and whole-of-school engagement with literacy and numeracy, and the monitoring of student and school literacy and numeracy performance to identify where support is needed (DEEWR, 2008). The idea is that effective practice will be disseminated to support system-wide improvements in educational attainment (COAG, 2008).

A total of 147 schools in NSW are participating in a range of programs funded under the NPLN. Some of these programs have been developed internally by NSW DEC, others by the Catholic Education Commission, and others by external developers. The programs target literacy or numeracy at either the individual student levels and/or a whole-of-class level.

Over the first two years of the NPLN, \$41 million was allocated to NSW as 'facilitation payments', with the final two years recognised as 'reward payments'. Reward payments were triggered by the attainment of specific performance targets, including four mandated NAPLAN measures and three local measures specific to NSW – the National Partnership Literacy Numeracy assessment for students, the Data Analysis Skills Assessment (DASA) for teachers, and an analytical framework to support school improvement in literacy and numeracy which articulates 25 statements of best practice in literacy and numeracy.

Eight programs funded under the NPLN have been selected for evaluation. Four of these programs are being evaluated by NSW DEC. The remaining four programs are being evaluated by Urbis, including Focus on Reading 3-6.

1.2 FOCUS ON READING 3-6

Focus on Reading 3-6 is an intensive professional learning program. The program emphasises the teaching of high level, meta-cognitive comprehension strategies along with the importance of vocabulary knowledge and fluent text reading as advocated in best practice research. A total of 36 schools were involved in implementing Focus on Reading 3-6.

The program aims to provide professional learning support to classroom teachers by targeting all teachers of Years 3 – 6 in a school or community of schools, with the goal of increasing teacher knowledge about how to develop fluent readers and developing comprehension and vocabulary skills based on effective, evidence-based practice. There is an explicit teaching of critical aspects of reading. Students' reading progress is monitored against the K-6 Literacy Continuum/English K-6 syllabus (DET, 2009a: 28).

The Focus on Reading 3-6 program is a registered program with the NSW Institute of Teachers. It is recognised by the University of Western Sydney for accreditation towards its coursework for Master of Education programs or 1/8 of a completed Masters degree (in Education Leadership, Special Education or Social Ecology). Accreditation at several other universities is pending.

Focus on Reading 3-6 is based on a Professional Learning Model. The model engages teachers in:

- the research evidence

- intensive, purpose-driven learning
- between-session tasks designed to translate new learning into classroom action over time
- ongoing, systematic reflection on classroom practices and student progress.

The Professional Learning Model is delivered in three phases:

- Phase 1 focuses on teaching for comprehension
- Phase 2 includes vocabulary knowledge and fluent text reading practices.
- Phase 3 focuses on consolidating and embedding new teaching and learning practices into school and classroom structures.

Schools participating in Focus on Reading 3-6 are required to commit to allowing their Year 3-6 staff to undertake 16 days of professional development. This involved ten days of face-to-face workshops over 3-4 semesters and six additional days per teacher over the 3-4 semesters for team-teaching, stage/team meetings, school visits and the like. Some schools decided to involve their entire K-6 teaching staff as well as teaching support staff in the program.

Key characteristics of the Focus on Reading 3 - 6 program include:

- evidence-based professional learning over two years
- onsite delivery by a Certified Trainer, who is trained by NSW DEC (this role can be school-based or external personnel, but they are required to have a strong literacy background among other skills)
- the Certified Trainer (also referred to as Program Facilitator) acting as a mentor and coach, providing ongoing support to teachers
- between-session tasks and reflection processes built into each teacher session which provide opportunities for teachers to practise new learning in their own classrooms with their own students, and to promote dialogue and teacher reflection about teaching practices and student achievement
- a focus on defining terminology and using a consistent language to describe teaching and learning strategies
- the development of common school-wide pedagogical teaching practices (such as modelled, guided and independent teaching)
- a specifically designed-in emphasis on ongoing assessing and planning for explicit teaching
- support for teachers in use of the Comprehension, Vocabulary and Text Reading Learning Sequences from the Literacy Continuum K-6, to assess and monitor student progress and plan each phase of teaching
- support for the development of learning goals for students and a teaching sequence for teachers.

1.3 TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE EVALUATION

This evaluation is to assess the efficacy and value of Focus on Reading 3-6 in relation to the priority areas of reform mandated by the National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy. In particular, the Terms of Reference for the evaluation of Focus on Reading 3-6 involve:

- an assessment of the effectiveness of Focus on Reading 3-6
- an assessment of the extent to which Focus on Reading 3-6 achieves its goals in an efficient manner, and where applicable, addresses the mandatory reform elements of the National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy which are:

- effective and evidence-based teaching of literacy
- strong school leadership and whole school engagement with literacy
- monitoring student and school literacy performance to identify where support is needed
- an assessment of the extent to which Focus on Reading 3-6 has improved the educational outcomes of Aboriginal students
- an investigation of the most effective ways for schools to be supported to participate in the evaluation and for the reforms to be incorporated into school practice.

This evaluation was overseen by the NPLN NSW Programs Program Evaluation Reference Group, and managed by the Student Engagement and Program Evaluation Bureau, within NSW DEC.

For the purposes of this evaluation, we interpreted 'literacy' as meaning 'reading'. Focus on Reading 3-6 is designed to build reading comprehension, vocabulary development and fluency skills. We note that reading is only one aspect of literacy and the program was not intended to build skills in other aspects eg writing. However, where Focus on Reading 3-6 has potentially impacted on other areas of students' literacy, these impacts have been noted.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

1.4.1 OVERVIEW

This evaluation comprised both qualitative and quantitative components. The qualitative components included consultations with NSW DEC (program developers and Regional Coordinators), eight of the 36 Focus on Reading 3-6 schools and Professor Peter Freebody from Sydney University, who was engaged by the Department as a critical friend. The quantitative component comprised an online survey of school staff implementing Focus on Reading 3-6 and an analysis of NAPLAN and NPLN assessment data provided by NSW DEC.

The methodology for the evaluation was developed in close consultation with NSW DEC. The final project plan containing the final methodology was submitted to NSW DEC in November 2010, and was approved by the NPLN NSW Programs Program Evaluation Reference Group.

All research instruments, including interview guides (See Appendix A) and the online survey (see Appendix B), were designed following a review of Focus on Reading 3-6 documentation and key literature on evaluation of literacy programs, as well consultation with the NSW DEC.

The qualitative and quantitative methodologies are described in detail in this section.

1.4.2 QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

MEETINGS WITH KERRY MCINNES AND LORRAINE ROWLES FROM NSW DEC

Urbis met with Kerry McInnes and Lorraine Rowles from NSW DEC at the start of this evaluation and again with Ms Rowles at the conclusion of the evaluation activity (Ms McInnes no longer works for the Department). These officers were responsible for developing and overseeing the implementation of Focus on Reading 3-6. Their main focus was on training the Certified Trainers, as the program was largely implemented at a Regional level.

At the first meeting, Ms McInnes and Ms Rowles provided the Urbis team with an overview of the Focus on Reading 3-6 Professional Learning Model, and details on how this reading program was being delivered in NP schools. At the second meeting, Ms Rowles reflected on her experience with the program, its delivery, successes and challenges, as well as future program directions.

SCHOOL VISITS

The following eight schools funded to deliver Focus on Reading 3-6 under the NPLN were visited:

- Holy Spirit Kurri Kurri (Catholic)
- St. Francis of Assisi Primary School, Warrawong (Catholic)
- St Joseph's Primary School, Walgett (Catholic)
- William Bayldon Public School, Sawtell (Government)
- Mount Warrigal Public School (Government)
- Athelstane Public School, Sydney (Government)
- Alma Public School, Broken Hill (Government)
- King St Public School, Central Coast (Government).

Schools were selected to provide a range in terms of school size, geographical location (including urban, regional and rural localities), teaching staff, the proportion of Aboriginal and Language Background Other Than English (LBOTE) students, and in the type of Individual Student Intervention used (ie LEXIA, Individual Readers, Reading Tutors and MULTILIT).

A member of the Urbis study team visited each school for a day, and met with key stakeholder groups, including the school leadership team/Executive staff, external and school-based Certified Trainers/Program Facilitators, school staff (classroom teachers and other teaching support staff), parents and students.

Most meetings took the form of focus groups or small group discussions. The school leadership teams and school staff were very generous with their time and willingness to assist with planning the visit. We are very grateful for their contribution and willingness to contribute to this evaluation.

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS WITH REGIONAL COORDINATORS

Telephone interviews were conducted with three of the NSW DEC Regional Coordinators. We spoke with Kim Reid (Sydney), Julie Hurford (Mid-North Coast) and Ivan Barker (Western Sydney).

INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR PETER FREEBODY, SYDNEY UNIVERSITY

Professor Peter Freebody (Professional Research Fellow, Faculty of Education and Social Work, University of Sydney) was engaged by NSW DEC to act as a critical friend in the development of Focus on Reading 3-6.

CONFERENCE FEEDBACK FROM SCHOOL STAFF

The evaluation has reviewed and incorporated feedback gathered at the *Smarter Schools National Partnership for Literacy and Numeracy: Celebrating Success, Embedding Change- 19 & 20 May 2011* (referred to in this report as the May SSNPLN conference).

1.4.3 QUANTITATIVE METHODOLOGY

ONLINE SURVEY OF SCHOOL STAFF

All staff participating in Focus on Reading 3-6 under NPLN funding were invited to complete an online survey. The survey was designed to capture the views and experiences of school staff. It was targeted at classroom teachers as well as Executive staff (eg Principals, Assistant Principals) and staff who provide assistance with teaching literacy (eg teacher assistants and literacy coordinators). The full results of the online survey are attached at Appendix C.

A total of 178 school staff completed the survey. Respondents were from 32 of the 36 schools implementing Focus on Reading 3-6.

ANALYSIS OF NAPLAN AND NPLN ASSESSMENT DATA

Urbis had a number of meetings and discussions with NSW DEC and the Educational Measurement and School Accountability Directorate (EMSAD) to scope the relevant data sets for the literacy and numeracy program evaluations.

Under the NPLN, a number of national and local data sets are being collected to measure the performance of the National Partnership against the priority areas for reform, which are:

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

(COAG 2008, *National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy*)

In NSW, these data sets include the following:

TABLE 1 – DATA SETS FOR PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT OF NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP ON LITERACY AND NUMERACY OUTCOMES

TYPE	DATA SET	DESCRIPTION
National	NAPLAN results	National standardised assessment in literacy and numeracy
Local	National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy (NPLN) Assessments	Baseline assessment in literacy and numeracy for NPLN schools based on an abbreviated Basic Skills Test (BST)
	Data Analysis Skills Assessment (DASA)	Teacher and school executive skill in interpretation of data
	Analytical Framework for Effective Leadership and School Improvement in Literacy and Numeracy	Assessment of school against 25 statements of best practice in literacy and numeracy
	School Plans and Annual Reports	School strategic and improvement planning and reporting. Note that this is a requirement rather than a specific reward measure.

(NSW DET 2010, *National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy: Data Collection and Analysis Plan*)

The evaluation of the NPLN-funded literacy and numeracy programs specifically addresses the extent to which each program contributes to priority reform element (a), that is, *effective and evidence-based teaching of literacy and numeracy*. The evaluation therefore draws on the specific data sets that are relevant to this reform element, and that are directly influenced by the delivery of the literacy and numeracy interventions.

As agreed with NSW DEC, the relevant data sets for the program evaluation are:

- NAPLAN results
- NPLN assessment results.

The other data sets included in Table 1 (DASA, Analytical Framework and School Plans/Reports) have not been used to assess the efficacy and value of the specific literacy and numeracy interventions.

The timeline for NAPLAN and NPLN assessment data included in the evaluation, and the student cohorts tracked in each data set are outlined in Table 2.

TABLE 2 – DATA COLLECTION TIMING AND COHORTS

DATA SET	COLLECTION TIMING	COHORTS	
NAPLAN	Tests undertaken by Year 3 and Year 5 students in May each year (all NSW)	1	Year 3 2008, Year 5 2010
		2	Year 3 2009, Year 5 2011
NPLN Assessments	Tests undertaken in April 2009, August 2010 and August 2011 (NPLN schools only)	1	Year 2 2009, Year 3 2010, Year 4 2011
		2	Year 3 2009, Year 4 2010, Year 5 2011
		3	Year 4 2009, Year 5 2010, Year 6 2011

For each cohort and year, EMSAD has provided the following aggregate data sets:

TABLE 3 – DATA SPECIFICATIONS

DATA SET	DATA	PROGRAM COMPARISON GROUPS	STUDENT COMPARISON GROUPS
NAPLAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sample size (N) Mean scale score (reading/numeracy) and standard deviation Performance bands: % below national minimum standard; % at national minimum standard; % above national minimum standard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program schools (aggregated data for all NPLN schools implementing a given literacy or numeracy program) All NPLN schools (literacy/numeracy) All NSW 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All students Boys Girls Aboriginal Non-Aboriginal Non-LBOTE LBOTE
NPLN Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mean scale score (literacy/numeracy) and standard deviation Performance bands: % band 1 (lowest); % above band 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program schools (aggregated data for all NPLN schools implementing a given literacy or numeracy program) All NPLN schools (literacy/numeracy) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All students Boys Girls Aboriginal Non-Aboriginal Non-LBOTE LBOTE

1.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE METHODOLOGY

1.5.1 LIMITATIONS OF THE DATA

The research design sought to be as rigorous as possible, however it was limited by the extent to which the critical NAPLAN and NPLN data could be analysed to identify impacts at the school and student levels. During consultations with schools, some schools were able to provide good quality tracking data on students on the program, while others could provide no such data.

Caution needs to be exercised in the interpretation of data collected from NAPLAN and NPLN assessments. EMSAD has advised that there are a number of limitations which impact the validity of findings from the analysis including: the variation in the focus of tests each year; the different timeline of pre- and post-intervention measures for NAPLAN cohorts; considerable student mobility in schools; small sample sizes for some comparison groups; the impact of other literacy and numeracy initiatives operating in NPLN schools; the use of these same programs in other NSW schools (not funded under the NPLN); and the lack of a comparable control group against which to benchmark results for NPLN schools.

1.5.2 ATTRIBUTION

It is important to understand the context in which Focus on Reading 3-6 was used, particularly that the program was one amongst many programs and strategies targeting literacy that have been implemented in NSW schools over the past few years. In the context of intense broad activity in the area of literacy, it is difficult to establish attribution for any individual program.

1.5.3 LIMITED CONSULTATION WITH ABORIGINAL STUDENTS AND PARENTS IN FOCUS ON READING 3-6 SCHOOLS

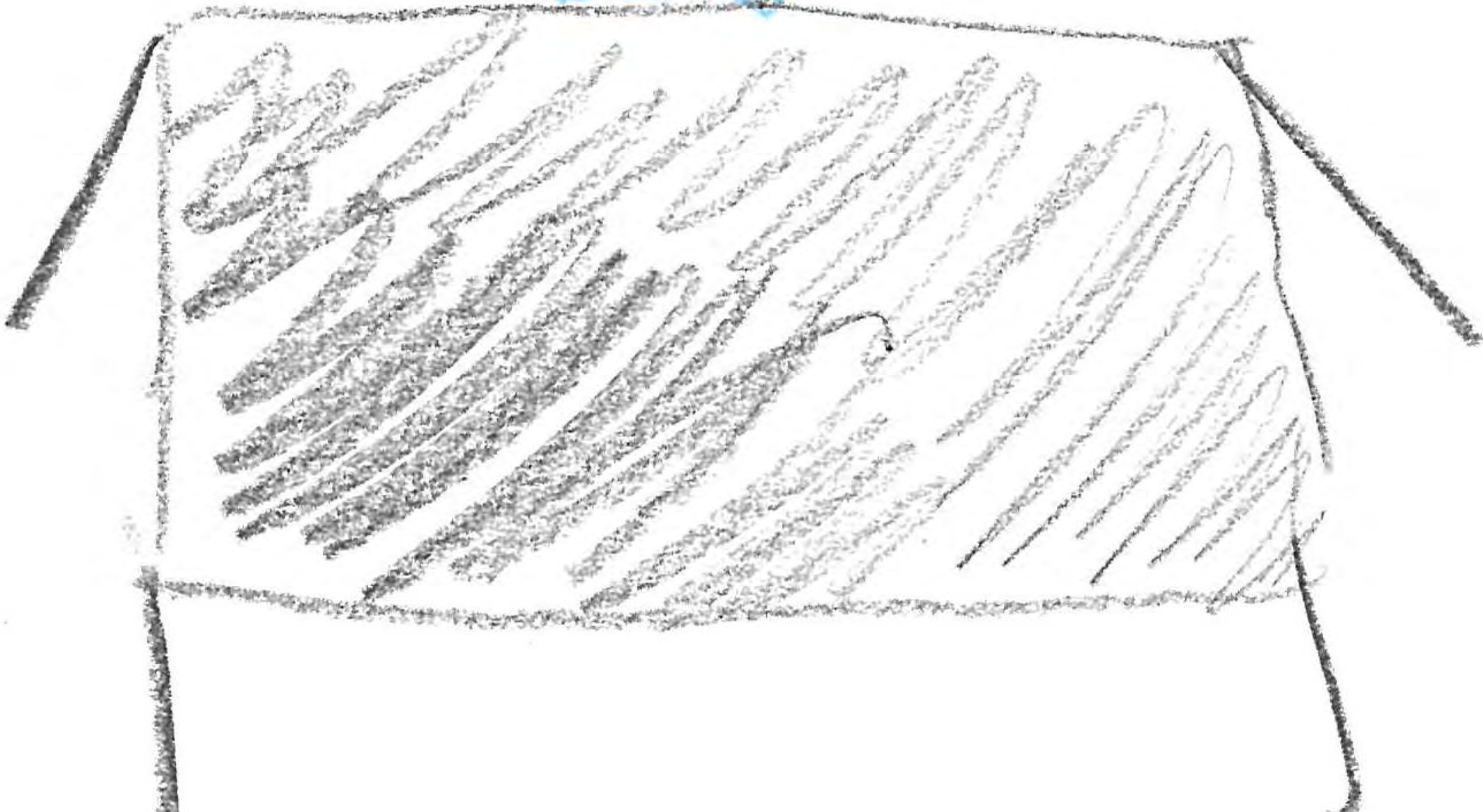
One of the Terms of Reference for this evaluation was to examine the impact that Focus on Reading 3-6 on the educational outcomes of Aboriginal students. Urbis selected three schools that had a high proportion of Aboriginal students (25-53%) for consultations and sought to conduct focus groups with Aboriginal parents and students. Despite Urbis and the school's best efforts to arrange these, only one discussion group with Aboriginal parents took place. However Aboriginal students in each school were consulted (with the Aboriginal Education Officer present).

All teachers with Aboriginal students were asked if they noted any specific outcomes for these students and the online survey also asked about outcomes for Aboriginal students.

1.6 STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT

This report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 outlines the evidence base for Focus on Reading 3-6
- Section 3 addresses the implementation of Focus on Reading 3-6
- Section 4 examines outcomes for teachers
- Section 5 examines outcomes for students
- Section 6 examines outcomes at the school-level and sustainability issues
- Section 7 examines areas for strengthening the impact of Focus on Reading 3-6
- Section 8 presents a summary and conclusions.



2 Evidence base for Focus on Reading 3-6

2.1 OVERVIEW OF EVIDENCE BASE FOR FOCUS ON READING 3-6

Focus on Reading 3-6 was first developed and implemented within the context of the NPLN, which aimed to give participating schools the opportunity to lift student reading or numeracy performance for students in Stages 2 and 3 (Y3-Y6) (McIntyre et al., 2011). Focus on Reading 3-6 is an intensive professional learning program for teachers to support the explicit teaching of the key aspects of reading in the middle and upper primary years: namely comprehension, vocabulary and reading text fluency. According to McIntyre et al. (2011):

In NSW, the program, Focus on Reading 3-6, took up the challenge to start a revolution about the teaching of reading in upper primary classrooms.

The program draws from a sound research base that justifies the need for these key reading aspects to be at the forefront of literacy teaching and learning in the middle years.

McIntyre et al (2011) report that the program's foundation is built on the premise that reading comprehension can be improved through research-validated reading instruction. This program was designed to address the needs of learners, the demands of learning, and the strategies for teaching reading in the middle years. Ultimately, the program seeks to support teachers to 'understand and deliberately teach reading strategies that will enable their students to automatically, competently and confidently use the strategies to read the range of texts they are required to comprehend in the middle years of schools' (McIntyre et al., 2011).

The comprehension, vocabulary knowledge and text reading fluency bibliographies included in the professional development program boast over 30 key pieces of literacy research. In summary:

- *Comprehension* is defined as responding to, interpreting, analysing and evaluating texts. It takes the learner to a new level of active understanding and insight, and it enhances language and vocabulary knowledge (Cassidy, Dee, Garrett and Barrera, 2006; Pressley, 2002; and Graham and Bellert 2004 cited in McIntyre et al., 2011).
- *Vocabulary knowledge* is defined as understanding the meaning of spoken and written words and using words to create and understand texts. It contributes to comprehension, fluency, reading achievement and effective oral and written communication with others (Cassidy, Dee, Garrett and Barrera, 2006; and Vacca et al.cited in McIntyre et al., 2011).
- *Text reading fluency* is defined as recognising worked automatically, reading in a phrased and fluent way and navigating texts to create meaning. Research suggests there is a 'close and complementary relationship' between comprehension and reading text fluency (Pikulski and Chard, 2005; Shinn et al., 1992; Tan and Nicholson1997; Stecker, Roser and Martinez, 1998; and Adams 1990 cited in McIntyre et al., 2011).

Focus on Reading 3-6 emphasises the importance and use of:

- rich texts, particularly subject-based texts, multi-modal texts and the types of texts that interest and motivate learners in the middle years
- rich talk of the kind that encourages learners to 'show their thinking' through talk
- 'deliberate' teaching that begins with insightful assessment; involves planning for explicit instruction based on students' needs; supports and scaffolds students through modelled, guided and independent teaching; provides clear and purposeful feedback and constant opportunities for student reflection.

2.1.1 THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING MODEL

The Professional Learning Model for Focus on Reading 3-6 engages teachers in the research evidence; intensive, purpose-driven learning; between-session tasks designed to translate new learning into classroom action over time; and ongoing, systematic reflection on classroom practices and student progress.

As illustrated in the Figure 1, the three phases of the Focus on Reading 3-6 Professional Learning Model gradually build on and complement each other.

Phase 1 focuses on teaching for *Comprehension*, Phase 2 includes *Vocabulary knowledge* and *Fluent text reading* practices, while Phase 3 focuses on consolidating and embedding new teaching and learning practices into school and classroom structures.

Sessions within each Phase centre around three key strands:

- **Learning:** understanding the nature of the Year 3-6 learner and text and task requirements
- **Teaching:** understanding research-based strategies for teaching and learning
- **Teaching and learning:** bringing the learning and teaching strands together to assess, plan and provide explicit instruction.

Between-session tasks have been specifically designed to support teachers to immediately translate their new learning into their classroom practice.

2.2 STAKEHOLDER VIEWS ON THE EVIDENCE BASE FOR FOCUS ON READING 3-6

Generally, school staff were satisfied that as a professional learning program, Focus on Reading 3-6 provided sufficient information and reading materials on relevant literature and research. It was evident to all staff that the strategies used were devised in line with evidence-based practice.

Overall, stakeholders and schools were satisfied with the program structure and the majority of teachers were appreciative of the strong evidence-base. Several senior executive staff were so impressed with the evidence-based strategies and program content that they reported 'it should be taught in Universities'. Below is a comment made by a classroom teacher, describing their initial reaction to the program and its evidence base:

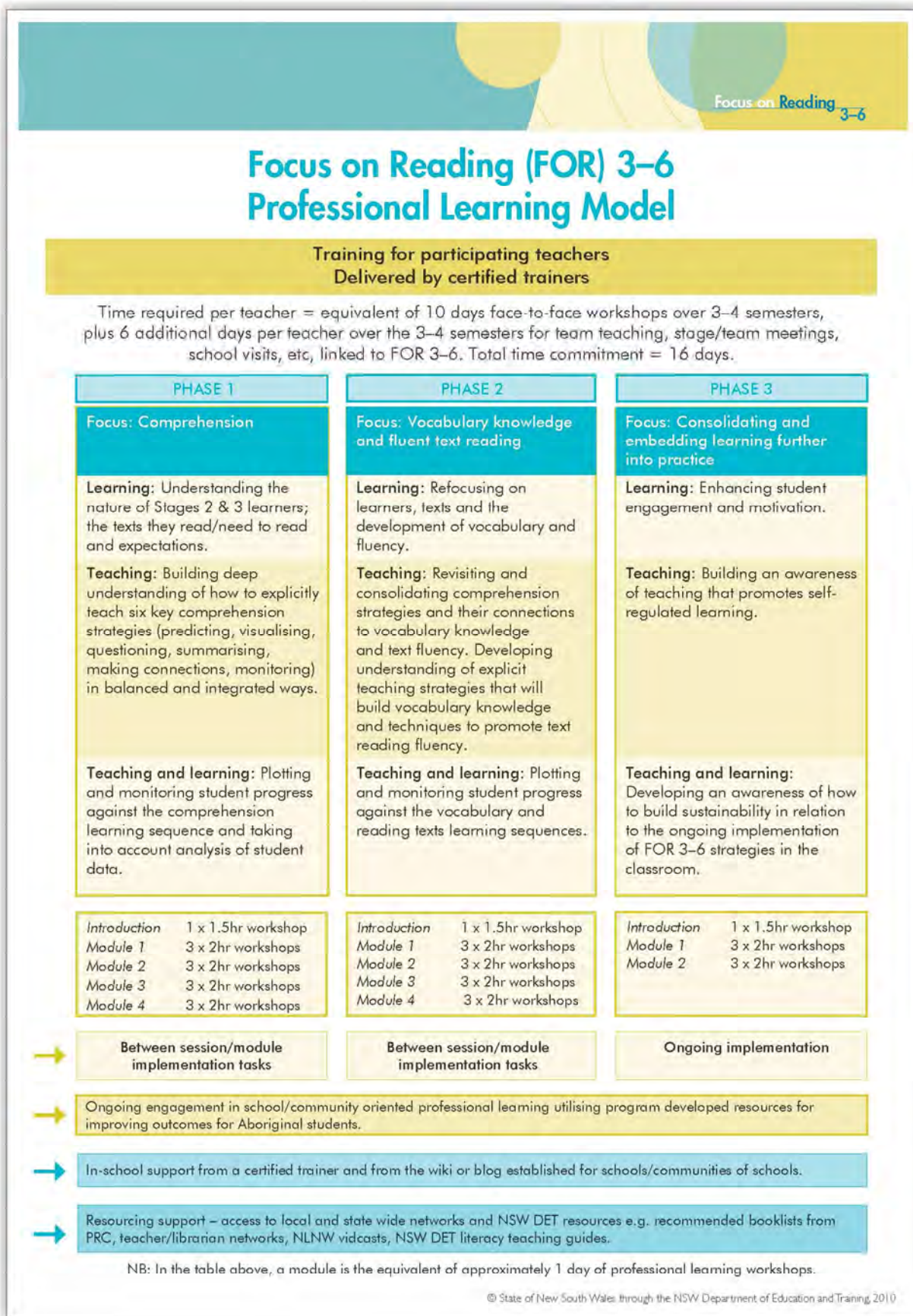
My response was oh my goodness, this has just educated them. They talked about the evidence base... it is a massive eye-opener.

The overwhelming feedback from school staff, especially more experienced teachers, was that this program required them to critically reflect on their teaching practice, in particular how they have been teaching comprehension. For teachers with 20-30 years' experience, the program presented initial challenges as it asked them to embark on a new way of teaching students to read. However, most teachers either responded with enthusiasm or soon lost any initial hesitation, in part because of the program's strong evidence-base and proof that these strategies did work.

Younger teachers were also impressed with the program content. However as discussed in the next section on program implementation, the language and volume of detailed information and research could at times be experienced as overwhelming.

Two main criticisms were made about the evidence-base. Firstly, it was noted by several schools that teachers were keen to see more Australian-based research and examples. One teacher commented that the program had an 'American feel'. Secondly, some staff criticised the volume of information provided saying it was too time-consuming and that the content could be reduced.

FIGURE 1 – FOCUS ON READING (FOR) 3-6 PROFESSIONAL LEARNING MODEL



3 Implementation of Focus on Reading 3-6

The program was implemented over three school semesters: Semester 2, 2009; and Semesters 1 and 2, 2010. The most intensive periods of professional learning occurred in the first two semesters in which the program was operating. To maximise the impact of Focus on Reading 3-6 on a student's reading outcomes, it was suggested that wherever possible, participating teachers move into 2010 with the student cohort they had in 2009.

The majority of schools reported that they received funding to participate in the NPLN due to their poor performance in literacy and numeracy results. Many schools had the option of participating in either a literacy or numeracy program, but selected to go with the literacy program, as poor student comprehension was also impacting on student numeracy outcomes.

3.1 ARRANGEMENTS FOR SCHOOLS TO PARTICIPATE IN FOCUS ON READING 3-6

The Focus on Reading 3–6 professional learning sessions were delivered by Certified Trainers, who could be regional or school-based personnel. Certified Trainers were nominated and selected for this role based on their:

- sound knowledge and understanding of teaching reading in Years 3-6 classrooms
- willingness to take on new learnings which are specific to the teaching of reading in Years 3-6 and reflect on, refine and refocus pedagogy based on current research, reports and reviews
- proven capacity to
 - lead the delivery of school-based professional learning to school teams and support
 - encourage and motivate teachers to implement new learning in classrooms
 - mentor, coach and support teachers to develop and implement exemplary teaching and learning programs that enhance literacy learning outcomes for all students
- commitment to monitor and report school progress to the school/classroom Program Facilitator.

During the final consultation with NSW DEC, the importance of the Certified Trainer having a strong background in literacy was emphasised in order to cope with the depth of information included in the professional learning program.

3.2 OVERVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION

Schools participating in Focus on Reading, funded by the NP on Literacy and Numeracy, commenced the program in October/November 2009. The Phase One training for Focus on Reading 3-6 Certified Trainers ran for three days from 21-23 October 2009. Following this, schools negotiated and planned their schedule of professional learning sessions with their Certified Trainer.

NSW DEC agreed with many of the schools that this was not necessarily the optimal time to embark on a new program. In spite of this, the Department observed that schools were still willing to engage in, and fully commit to, this intensive program.

NSW DEC communicated with all potential Focus on Reading 3-6 schools that this was an intense program with demanding timeframes, requiring commitment and leadership support from schools. The Department wanted schools to be free of other activities and focus on the implementation of this program. They also strongly discouraged schools from undertaking both literacy and numeracy programs.

3.3 IMPLEMENTATION IN THE SCHOOL

3.3.1 USE OF FUNDING

Schools funded their Years 3-6 teachers to participate in training and to purchase recommended resources to implement Focus on Reading 3–6.

Schools reported that the bulk of their funding (and some low Socio-Economic Status NP funding) went towards relief teaching, which allowed their staff to participate in training – Years 3-6 teachers (some schools trained all staff) were required to participate in the equivalent of *ten professional learning days* over at least two semesters. In addition, schools were advised that each Years 3-6 teacher could need approximately *six additional relief days* to engage in team teaching, team/stage meetings, school visits, etc directly linked to the implementation of Focus on Reading 3–6.

The recommended resources included the student comprehension bookmarks; key texts to support *Focus on Reading 3–6: Revisit, Reflect, Retell; Guided Comprehension in Grades 3–8* and *An introduction to quality literacy teaching*; and mini video recorders (Mino) and Levision pocket tripods to be used by teachers to collect visible evidence of student progress.

There were mixed reports from schools on the use of funds to purchase new texts. Some schools bought magazine subscriptions and books for students to read. Others reported that they could not use funding for these purchases.

3.3.2 STAFF ENGAGEMENT

Focus on Reading program documentation outlined that:

There is an expectation that all Y3-Y6 teachers in a school or community of schools engage in the program as a learning community, intent on examining, reflecting on and refining current practices and taking on new understandings and practices in relation to the teaching of reading.

The majority of schools visited reported notifying their staff about program selection and commencement at their staff meetings.

In all schools, the justification given for their involvement in the program was that their school needed to improve their literacy results. Some schools were lagging in both literacy and numeracy, however they chose Focus on Reading 3-6 as the school Executive felt literacy was a better starting point and would also have benefits for teaching numeracy and other Key Learning Areas.

Many staff commented that they understood NSW DEC and their school were ‘serious’ about addressing the literacy skill deficit based on the amount of funding and investment in staff professional development – many staff had never before experienced training at this level of intensity.

Both Executive staff and Regional Coordinators emphasised the critical importance of exercising sensitivity and caution when introducing the program. Essentially, staff were asked to continually reflect on their current teaching practice – some may have use the same methods of teaching reading for 20 years or more. Focus on Reading 3-6 required them to embrace an entirely new approach.

One school principal described their approach to engaging staff and explaining their choice of literacy program:

This had to be delivered sensitively as the majority of staff are experienced and mature teachers. We took that line that we are a great school and will become greater through this program as we already have a platform to build on and this program will add value.

Some schools involved all Years 3-6 staff in the training, as well as other classroom teachers (eg K-2). This meant that it truly was a ‘whole-of-school program’ and would allow the entire staff to be familiar with the program’s content and language.

3.4 TRAINING

3.4.1 QUALIFYING AS A CERTIFIED TRAINER FOR FOCUS ON READING 3-6

To fully qualify as a certified trainer for the Focus on Reading 3–6 program, trainers needed to demonstrate evidence of:

- participation in training of Parts 1 and 2 for Focus on Reading 3–6 Certified Trainers (seven days in total)
- delivery of all Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3 workshops in a participating Focus on Reading 3–6 school. (Phase 1 x 13 workshops (plus 1 additional workshop, as applicable); Phase 2 x 13 workshops; Phase 3 x 7 workshops – that is 34 workshops in total)
- engaging participating schools in specified professional learning activities to support Aboriginal students
- workshop delivery in a participating school during an in-school/onsite monitoring visit
- maintaining and furnishing program records as required, including:
 - records in relation to participating early career teachers.
 - other program participation records for teachers and schools.

Full certification was granted after Certified Trainers had the opportunity to demonstrate all of the above evidence.

3.4.2 SATISFACTION WITH THE TRAINING OF CERTIFIED TRAINERS

The online survey asked respondents if they had attended the training for Focus on Reading 3-6 Certified Trainers. A total of 32 respondents (18%) indicated they had attended this training. Not surprisingly, all 14 Certified Trainers attended, as did nine teachers (K-6) and five members from Executive staff. These respondents were then asked a short series of questions regarding their satisfaction with the training workshop content, quality and the accompanying resources.

Respondents' satisfaction (*very satisfied* and *satisfied* responses) was very high for the relevance/usefulness of accompanying resources (94%) and the content of the training workshops (91%). Four out of five respondents indicated they were satisfied with the quality of the training (81%). Certified Trainers and Executive staff tended to be more satisfied with the training and support than teachers (K-6).

3.4.3 SATISFACTION WITH THE SCHOOL-BASED TRAINING BY CERTIFIED TRAINERS

In the online survey, all respondents, with the exception of Certified Trainers, were asked a short series of questions regarding their satisfaction with the training and support provided by their school's Focus on Reading 3-6 Certified Trainer.

Generally, respondents indicated high levels of satisfaction (*very satisfied* and *satisfied* responses) with all three aspects of the training. Respondents were most satisfied with the relevance and usefulness of the accompanying resources (90%), followed by the content of the training (89%) and its quality (88%).

3.4.4 OTHER FEEDBACK ON IMPLEMENTATION AND TRAINING

INITIAL STAFF CONCERNS

Many of the schools visited reported initial reservations and concerns about their involvement in the program. The following comments illustrate some of the key concerns:

We were shocked. They were talking about accountability and we would have tests and people coming to see us.... We were told that what we're doing was not working but we were sceptical about what else we could do.

My initial thought was I am scared I have to consume this. We did work on the weekend as it was overwhelming.

Oh no! This is just another program...it was new to learn and was overwhelming... but as staff, we were keen and motivated to have a go and ended up as a group of people working on a project.

Generally, school staff reported overcoming these initial concerns and went on to see the program's value and be convinced of its merit.

A LEARNING CONTINUUM

Many schools recognised that staff engagement is an ongoing process. Some teachers were reportedly able to quickly 'get on board' and absorb the program content, whereas it was a slower process for other teachers who needed to digest the material and information available and be convinced of its merit.

A Certified Trainer from one school emphasised the need to allow teachers to work at their own pace citing the response after doing the first module:

We had done one module and teachers were almost freaking out as this was so new. Teachers had to place students on a class learning plan and they didn't know how to judge... the language at the beginning was brand new... teachers were reluctant until they knew what to do, they just couldn't see it.

Based on this initial experience, the Certified Trainer recognised the importance of demonstrating lessons so the teacher could see what to do and include the strategies in their lesson plans. Additionally, at the completion of each model, time was given to debrief on the session and allow for classroom planning.

TIMELY PROVISION OF INFORMATION

A common opinion expressed by school staff was that an overall picture of the Focus on Reading 3-6 program was not forthcoming in the early stages and many staff did not gain a true understanding of the program until they had commenced the Phase One work.

Many teachers reported that it seemed as though their Certified Trainer was only 'a step ahead' of them or 'our trainer was still learning' as their training workshops were very close to the school-based workshops. School staff feedback included:

I don't think we were given all the information up-front... teachers were learning as we were going.

We realised this would be different. It was a different outlook on teaching but we were still thinking how will this work? We trusted that it would work.

SNAPSHOT ON SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT OF STAFF

A key success factor in engaging staff in the Focus on Reading 3-6 program was sharing of information, ideas and examples of what worked well. This created positive reinforcement for teaching staff. The leadership team emphasised the importance of staff sharing information:

Once the program started, there was a lot of conversation among staff and open dialogue. It helps if staff were willing and united to change. There was a lot of sharing. Teachers would show others if something worked.

This open discussion helped in areas where teachers doubted the program's relevance to their classroom. For example, program resources included videos from the United States that showed teachers demonstrating reading activities. Staff were sceptical about modelling what they saw in their classrooms. The school encouraged their teachers 'not to underestimate what kids will do'. The school's leadership team recognised that engaging staff takes time and so they rolled out the program slowly, taking the time to acknowledge when something worked well and building self-esteem along the way.

A lack of unity within the school Executive team at one school was a key barrier to effective

implementation. The school used NPLN funding to employ an assistant principal to implement the program in the school. The new assistant principal was very enthusiastic about Focus on Reading 3-6, and its potential to deliver substantive benefits to teachers and students. However, her efforts to implement the program were hampered by a member of the school Executive who was 'not on board'. This member of the school Executive, who was also a teacher, argued that the school had been implementing Focus on Reading 3-6 strategies for years, and that the program did not really provide anything new. The new assistant principal said because this cynicism came from 'the top' it 'permeated' through the school, and resulted in teachers thinking that if a member of the executive team could 'opt-out' of the program then they could too. Consequently, some teachers failed to engage effectively with the program.

3.5 SOURCES OF IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT

3.5.1 SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAMS

A critical factor in the successful implementation of the program was having a supportive and committed school leadership team. In schools visited, this tended to be comprised of the school principal, assistant principal(s), the Program Facilitator and in some cases, experienced and senior classroom teachers.

When the entire leadership team was on board with the program, the school's implementation experience appeared smooth. In schools where staff had reservations about or were potentially hostile towards Focus on Reading 3-6, the school's Program Facilitator had a much more difficult time in engaging teachers, building program support and team morale. The role of school leadership teams is explored in greater detail in Section 7. Where school leadership support was lacking, implementation was far less successful.

3.5.2 NSW DEC STAFF

Focus on Reading 3-6 was developed at a State level and delivered at a regional level. NSW DEC staff were involved in the training of Certified Trainers and organisation of the May SSNPLN Conference. Regional Coordinators provided ongoing support to schools, in particular to the school-based Certified Trainers and Program Facilitators.

One Regional Coordinator reported that her role was largely to provide support and motivation. She attended the training delivery sessions and helped get staff involved in the program. She was mindful that the school-based trainer/Program Facilitator was keen to build relationships with his teacher, particularly those showing reluctance to engage. From a regional perspective, she also saw the Regional Coordinator's role as responsible for quality control, but in addition to this, she was keen to understand and experience the program as other Low-SES schools in the region were wanting to do Focus on Reading 3-6: *'We were looking to get good results from our school and to get evidence as good practice'*.

Another Regional Coordinator reported that the four NPLN schools participating in Focus on Reading 3-6 in her area, implemented and delivered the program as a 'community'. This meant that all four schools completed the professional development together. This allowed for greater sharing of classroom experiences, lesson plans, ideas on what works well and any implementation challenges. This meant that the Regional Coordinator was extremely involved in the implementation and delivery and available to provide support and encouragement to the four schools.

Readers

Theaters



4 Outcomes for teachers

KEY FINDINGS

- Focus on Reading has impacted on teaching and other school staff in various ways. School staff reported that the main impact has been a dramatic change in pedagogy and increased understanding of how to teach reading.
- The vast majority of teachers and staff reported that Focus on Reading 3-6 has had a positive impact (to a major or moderate extent) on their knowledge, attitudes and/or skills in teaching reading. The greatest impact was evident in relation to a deepened understanding of comprehension strategies and the links to comprehension; vocabulary knowledge and text reading with about two-thirds (64%) of respondents surveyed reporting this had impacted on them to a *major extent*.
- The key changes to teaching practice identified that have occurred since implementing Focus on Reading 3-6, are: explicit teaching according to needs/ use of differentiation to target students; use of the 'super six' strategies; use of more comprehension strategies.
- These impacts were commonly attributed to the Focus on Reading 3-6 Certified Trainer/Program Facilitator; funding to allow adequate staff release; and the provision of intensive professional development. Other key ingredients for success included strong school leadership; classroom modelling of strategies; adequate time for implementation; and staff being open to new ways of teaching Year 3-6 students to read.

4.1 RESPONSE OF TEACHERS TO FOCUS ON READING 3-6

The main impact expressed during the school visits was the dramatic change in pedagogy – Focus on Reading 3-6 has introduced a new way for teachers to teach students how to read. Many experienced teachers were reportedly in a 'routine of teaching' and this program assisted them to critically review and assess how they taught students to read. Once teachers engaged in the program, they were generally positive about this change in pedagogy.

Through Focus on Reading 3-6, teachers are learning and using a range of strategies, based on best practice research on how students learn to read. As previously noted, this professional development program focussed on the three key elements of teaching reading:

- *Comprehension*: introducing research-based comprehension strategies: predicting, questioning, summarising, monitoring, making connections, visualising; and using a comprehension learning sequence to describe goals, plan for explicit instruction and monitor comprehension progress
- *Vocabulary development*– understanding and using explicit teaching strategies that will build vocabulary knowledge
- *Fluency* – understanding and teaching techniques that promote text reading fluency.

For the vast majority of school staff, these strategies meant implementing a new and different teaching approach, which involved significantly more modelling in the classroom, more verbal communication and a shift away from written work. Additionally, Focus on Reading 3-6 placed a greater emphasis on monitoring and accountability.

The following comments illustrate some of the perceived benefits:

The exposure to new strategies to engage students at a higher level... also an increased knowledge of how reading and comprehension works and how students learn. This program allows teachers to put this theory to practical use in the classroom.

Staff appear to have confidence and focus. They have tools in their kit bag.

I look forward to teaching reading. With the students' enthusiasm, even the lower readers find success.

It gave teachers a purpose and encouraged them to develop quality resources for their students to use in the classroom.

Through using the continuum, I have a better idea of where my students sit.

I felt like I was actually teaching children how to read ie useful strategies and not just fumbling along and hope for the best. [I was] working hard and long to set up reading groups that were not really addressing the children's most important area of need – it wasn't working. Using the program made a big difference.

The teachers have strengthened their own teaching skills, therefore we will be able to sustain the program in our school. Teachers feel confident with the teaching of the 'Super Six' strategies and with using the reading continuum as an assessment tool. Teachers will need to keep visiting the literacy resources gathered from the program.

4.2 OUTCOMES FOR TEACHERS

4.2.1 IMPACT OF FOR 3-6 ON TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE, AWARENESS, CONFIDENCE AND SKILLS

The online survey asked school staff about the program's impact on their knowledge, skills and attitudes. Participants in the online survey were presented with a series of outcome statements and asked to indicate the extent of this impact, with responses ranging from *major extent* through to *not at all*. As shown in Table 4, the vast majority of respondents reported that Focus on Reading 3-6 had an impact (major or moderate extent) on their knowledge, attitudes and/or skills.

The greatest impact was evident in relation to a deepened understanding of comprehension strategies and the links to comprehension, vocabulary knowledge and text reading with about two-thirds (63.5%) of respondents reporting this had impacted on them to a *major extent*.

TABLE 4 – IMPACT ON TEACHERS’ KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND SKILLS (PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS)

IMPACT	TOTAL IMPACT	MAJOR EXTENT	MODERATE EXTENT	MINOR EXTENT	NOT AT ALL	HARD TO SAY
Deepened your understanding of comprehension strategies and the links to comprehension, vocabulary knowledge and text reading	93.8	63.5	30.3	3.9	-	2.2
Deepened your understanding of effective teaching of reading	91.6	55.1	36.5	6.7	-	1.7
Increased your belief in teachers’ ability to improve literacy outcomes of all students	91.6	48.3	43.3	4.5	2.2	1.7
Increased your belief in teachers’ ability to improve literacy outcomes of low achieving/disadvantaged students	91.5	49.4	42.1	3.9	2.8	1.7
Deepened your understanding of the nature and needs of literacy learners in Years 3-6	91.0	48.9	42.1	6.7	0.6	1.7
Increased your willingness to participate in shared reflection and discussion of your teaching of reading with other staff	90.4	50.0	40.4	4.5	2.2	2.8
Increased your ability to translate literacy theory into practice	90.4	41.0	49.4	7.3	0.6	1.7
Increased your knowledge about the latest evidence on best practice in relation to teaching reading in the classroom	89.3	51.7	37.6	9.0	-	1.7
Increased your knowledge about how students learn to read in the 3-6 years of schooling	87.1	44.4	42.7	10.1	0.6	2.2
Increased your skills in using classroom assessment information (eg the comprehension, vocabulary and text reading learning sequences) to assess students’ literacy learning needs	84.3	38.2	46.1	11.8	0.6	3.4
Increased your skills in using other data eg NAPLAN to assess students’ literacy learning needs	82.0	30.9	51.1	12.9	2.2	2.8

The program’s reported impact varied depending on the respondents’ years of teaching experience. Respondents with less than five years’ experience or more than 20 years were most likely to report a greater degree of positive impact on attitudes, knowledge and skills, where as teachers with 6-10 years were less likely to report a positive impact (see Appendix C for full survey results).

4.2.2 IMPACT ON KEY ELEMENTS OF LITERACY TEACHING PRACTICE

Survey participants were asked if they have a role in *teaching* literacy in the classroom on a regular basis. The majority of respondents (80%) indicate they did have this role. These respondents were then asked a number of questions relating to the *impact* of Focus on Reading 3-6 on their literacy teaching practice.

Teachers were provided with a series of outcome statements relating to the impact of Focus on Reading 3-6 on elements of their classroom teaching practice, and were asked to indicate the extent to which Focus on Reading 3-6 had an impact on each. These responses are presented in Table 5, which includes a calculation of *total impact*, which comprises the combined set of *major extent* and *moderate extent* responses. Overall, the large majority of respondents indicated an impact for each outcome statement (ranging from 83-94%). The areas with the highest proportion of respondents indicating impact (ie either a major or moderate impact) were:

- *Improved ability to teach comprehension effectively in the classroom (94%)*
- *Improved ability to use strategies that build vocabulary, knowledge and fluent text reading (92%)*
- *Improved ability to teach comprehension effectively to individual students (92%)*
- *Improved ability to question students in a way that demonstrates deep understanding of texts (90%).*

The greatest impact was evident in relation to improved ability to teach comprehension effectively in classroom and effectively to individual students, with 55.2% and 52.4% reporting this had improved to a *major extent*.

For each outcome statement, only a small minority of teachers reported *no impact* or that it was *hard to say* if there was an impact on their teaching practice, as a result of implementing Focus on Reading 3-6.

TABLE 5 – IMPACT ON CLASSROOM TEACHING PRACTICE (PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS*)

IMPACT	TOTAL IMPACT	MAJOR EXTENT	MODERATE EXTENT	MINOR EXTENT	NOT AT ALL	HARD TO SAY
Improved your ability to teach comprehension effectively in the classroom	94.4	55.2	39.2	3.5	1.4	0.7
Improved your ability to use strategies that build vocabulary, knowledge and fluent text reading	92.4	49.0	43.4	6.3	0.7	0.7
Improved your ability to teach comprehension effectively to individual students	91.6	52.4	39.2	7.0	0.7	0.7
Improved your ability to question students in a way that demonstrates deep understanding of texts	90.2	51.0	39.2	7.0	0.7	2.1
Increased your knowledge of how to cater to all literacy learning needs in the classroom	88.8	38.5	50.3	9.1	0.7	1.4
Enhanced your ability to reflect on and critique your teaching of reading	88.8	36.4	52.4	8.4	2.1	0.7
Increased your confidence in teaching reading	88.2	49.7	38.5	7.0	3.5	1.4
Increased your willingness to seek feedback on your teaching of reading from your colleagues (eg through teacher observation)	82.5	30.1	52.4	13.3	2.8	1.4

* Note this question was answered only by respondents with a regular classroom teaching role

4.2.3 IMPACT ON OVERALL LITERACY TEACHING PRACTICE

The online survey asked teachers with a regular classroom teaching role to select from a list of statements to describe the *overall impact* of Focus on Reading 3-6 on their literacy teaching practice. The responses are summarised in Table 6 below, including an analysis by main role in implementing the program. Again, this includes a calculation of *total positive impact*, which comprises the combined set of *major extent* and *moderate extent* responses.

The total positive impact was high across all teaching roles, ranging from 93% to 100%. With the exception of specialist and support staff, over two-thirds of all respondents indicated that Focus on Reading 3-6 had had a *significant positive* impact on their literacy teaching practice.

TABLE 6 – OVERALL IMPACT OF FOCUS ON READING 3-6 ON LITERACY TEACHING PRACTICE BY ROLE (PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS*)

STATEMENT	TOTAL	EXECUTIVE	CERTIFIED TRAINER [^]	TEACHER K-2	TEACHER STAGE 2	TEACHER STAGE 3	SPECIALIST/AIDE/OTHER SUPPORT [^]
Focus on Reading 3-6 has had a <i>significant positive</i> impact on my literacy teaching practice	70.6	66.7	90.9	77.1	76.7	66.7	37.5
Focus on Reading 3-6 has had <i>some positive</i> impact on my literacy teaching practice	25.9	26.7	9.1	22.9	16.7	33.3	62.5
Focus on Reading 3-6 has had <i>little if any positive</i> impact on my literacy teaching practice	2.8	-	-	-	6.7	-	-
Focus on Reading 3-6 has had a <i>negative</i> impact on my literacy teaching practice	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hard to say	0.7	6.7	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Total positive**</i>	96.5	93.4	100	100	93.4	100	100

* Note this question was answered only by respondents with a regular classroom teaching role

** Combined *significant positive impact* and *some positive impact* responses

[^]NB Small sample size

In line with earlier findings on the impact of Focus on Reading 3-6 on key elements of literacy teaching, respondents in the early stages of their teaching careers (five years or less experience) were more likely to report a greater degree of positive impact on their teaching practice resulting from the program than those respondents in the middle to later stages of their career.

REASONS FOR IMPACT ON LITERACY TEACHING PRACTICE

Respondents were asked to specify why they felt the Focus on Reading 3-6 program had this impact on their literacy teaching practice. The most common responses provided by those respondents reporting a *significant positive impact* or *some positive impact* on their literacy teaching practice included the following:

- The introduction to new and/or greater range of strategies to teach comprehension:

This program has given me some extra teaching and learning activities that are new and exciting for my students.

The program has given me extra strategies for teaching comprehension skills for students to understand texts better.

The program has given me a wider range of 'tools' and strategies to use to increase student engagement and understanding in literacy.

- The explicit and focused nature of the program encourages staff to be more explicit in their teaching:

Gives me improved confidence to be explicit in teaching comprehension strategies.

I can see the children are much more motivated because they are given explicit instruction...my explicit instruction techniques are also being utilised in other KLAs.

- Better understanding of comprehension and reading:

I now teach comprehension not simply assess it!

I now understand how to actually teach students to comprehend, to really break things down and get a deep understanding.

- Greater understanding of students' needs and how to address those in teaching literacy:

Focus on Reading has helped me to better understand the nature of the learners in my classroom and also the interests of my learners.

I have a deeper understanding of student requirements and greater knowledge of how to address student requirements.

- Expanding students' vocabulary and ability to talk about their reading and providing students with strategies to enhance their comprehension skills:

Students are more engaged and using the language the comprehension. They are more equipped to use a variety of strategies to gain a deeper understanding of the text and are now able to discuss their understanding more adeptly.

In the language that my students use to describe/summarise/analyse text...The improved comprehension results in my students...Their improved vocabulary skills...Greater in depth, sustained discussion about texts - whole class and in literacy circles.

KEY CHANGES TO TEACHING PRACTICE

Respondents who experienced either a *significant positive* or *some positive* impact on the way they teach were also asked to list the *three key changes to their teaching practice* that have occurred since implementing Focus on Reading 3-6.

The most commonly mentioned change to teaching practice was:

- explicit teaching according to needs/ use of differentiation to target students
- use of the 'super six' strategies
- use of more comprehension strategies for teachers
- better understanding of comprehension
- positive impact on students' learning.

4.3 SUCCESS FACTORS

4.3.1 CRITICAL FACTORS IN IMPROVING LITERACY TEACHING

Survey respondents with a regular classroom teaching role were presented with a set of the different elements of the Focus on Reading 3-6 program and were asked to rate how *important* each of the elements had been in improving their teaching of reading. The responses are presented in Table 7 below, including a calculation of *total importance*, which comprises the combined set of *very important* and *important* responses. The factors deemed important in improving reading teaching by the highest proportion of teachers were (in terms of *total importance*):

- *The amount of time given to participate in professional development workshops and activities (92%)*
- *Ability to reflect on and critique literacy teaching practice (92%)*
- *In-school support from the Focus on Reading 3-6 Certified Trainer (90%)*
- *Access to useful professional development resources (eg recommended articles, literacy teaching guides for reading comprehension, networks etc) (90%)*
- *The module workshops (90%).*

The greatest importance was attached to the amount of time given to participate in professional development workshops and activities and in-school support from the Focus on Reading Trainer with 60.1% and 55.9% of respondents respectively rating these as *very important*.

The element *least* nominated as an important factor in improving reading teaching was having *access to online forums/blogs etc (34%)*. Only a very small percentage of respondents reported that these critical factors were *not at all important* or *had no improvement in their teaching of reading*.

TABLE 7 – CRITICAL FACTORS IN IMPROVING LITERACY TEACHING (PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS*)

FACTOR	TOTAL IMPORTANCE	VERY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	NOT VERY IMPORTANT	NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT	NO IMPROVEMENT IN MY TEACHING OF READING	NOT APPLICABLE/ HARD TO SAY
The amount of time you were given to participate in professional development workshops and activities	91.6	60.1	31.5	4.9	-	0.7	2.8
Ability to reflect on and critique your literacy teaching practice	91.6	47.6	44.1	3.5	2.1	-	2.8
In-school support from the Focus on Reading 3-6 Certified Trainer	89.5	55.9	33.6	4.9	2.8	0.7	2.1
Access to useful professional development resources (eg recommended articles, literacy teaching guides for reading comprehension, networks etc)	89.5	41.3	48.3	7.0	1.4	0.7	1.4
The module workshops	89.5	44.1	45.5	6.3	0.7	1.4	2.1
Observing other teachers modelling lessons or strategies	87.4	49.7	37.8	5.6	2.8	-	4.2
Ability to obtain feedback on your literacy teaching practice through teacher observation	81.1	29.4	51.7	7.7	3.5	1.4	6.3
Between-session/ module implementation tasks	67.8	18.2	49.7	18.9	4.9	4.9	3.5
Access to online forums/blogs etc	33.6	6.3	27.3	34.3	16.1	6.3	9.8

* Note this question was answered only by respondents with a regular classroom teaching role

During the school visits, school staff volunteered a range of other factors which they thought contributed to the program’s impact on teaching outcomes. These factors, (detailed below) were in line with the critical factors identified in the on-line survey.

THE FOCUS ON READING 3-6 CERTIFIED TRAINER AND PROGRAM FACILITATOR

The Certified Trainers/Program Facilitators were responsible for conducting the school based training for Y3-Y6 teachers and providing ongoing support and encouragement. This role was undertaken by school-based or external personnel. The school visits revealed that Certified Trainer/Program Facilitator role involved:

- providing ongoing support to teachers
- showing commitment to the training and the program delivery
- observing lessons in the classroom and providing constructive feedback
- demonstrating lessons/modelling strategies, as required
- liaising with the school Executive/leadership team on any program-related matters
- maintaining staff interest and enthusiasm for the program
- researching or making teacher resources.

Most teachers interviewed were positive about the role that their Certified Trainer/Program Facilitator had played in implementing and delivery the program. Comments included:

We were engaged by [our Certified Trainer]. She was a positive and enthusiastic leader.

She was brilliant.... would go out of her way and even make resources.

School-based trainers had the advantage of already having an existing relationship with staff and were selected because of their credibility with staff:

Having a trainer on site and the existing relationship [with the trainer] was the most important factor in delivering the program.

STRONG SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

An integral part of this program was the school Executive or leadership team's commitment to implementing and delivering Focus on Reading 3-6. It was imperative that the school committed to providing teachers with sufficient time away from their class to participate both in the workshops and the necessary debriefing and planning time. As this was a whole-of-school program, it was important that school leadership team/Executive facilitated and encouraged dialogue about the program so that all staff were talking the 'same language'. As previously mentioned some teachers were reluctant, and in some cases extremely adverse, to implementing the program. It was important that the leadership team addressed this negativity and reinforced the benefits of implementing Focus on Reading 3-6 in the school. Even when teachers did not agree with the program, it was important to ensure they were implementing it in their classroom.

FUNDING TO ALLOW ADEQUATE STAFF RELEASE

Provision of sufficient relief teaching was a critical success factor – if teachers did not have sufficient time out of the classroom, they could not participate fully in Focus on Reading 3-6. All schools visited used the bulk of their funding to provide relief teaching while staff were at the professional development workshops and when doing their debrief and planning sessions. One school principal reported that:

The money has allowed us to do more professional development so the program is 'home grown'. In low SES areas, home life can be dysfunctional and if their regular teacher is not there, it can be disruptive. We have a pool of casual teachers so there are the same faces in the classroom.

THE BENEFIT OF INTENSIVE AND EXTENSIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The volume, quality and targeted training under the program was seen by many as the key to its success. Focus on Reading 3-6 specifically addressed schools' literacy results by equipping teachers with the knowledge and resources to teach students to read, focussing on comprehension, vocabulary development and fluency.

Many school staff commented that they had never before received this volume of professional development. Some were impressed that this was an academic-style program: rather than being given an 'off-the shelf' resource, they were taught a new pedagogy.

MODELLING IN THE CLASSROOM

One of the key strategies teachers valued was the classroom modelling of exercises and activities. Regional Facilitators and school staff stressed the importance of demonstrating the strategies teachers needed to use - this practical learning and guidance was valued by the vast majority of teachers:

The FOR program has allowed teacher to explicitly model the practices.

TAKING TIME TO IMPLEMENT THE PROGRAM

A common criticism among schools was the 'rushed' implementation and delivery timeframe. Many schools acknowledged that the prescribed, ambitious timeframe was not in the best interest of their staff. Some decided 'slow down' the pace of the program and allowed more time for teachers to absorb the new information and plan ahead.

OPENESS OF STAFF TO NEW TEACHING APPROACHES

Some school staff described Focus on Reading 3-6 as 'life changing' saying that it equipped them to better teach students reading skills. Teachers saw how engaged students were in reading. Improvement in reading ability was evident from the beginning to the end of the school year though the ongoing tracking of students' performance – namely through the continuum.

5 Outcomes for students

KEY FINDINGS

- In both data sets (NAPLAN and NPLN assessments), gains in mean reading scores were observed for all student cohorts at Focus on Reading 3-6 schools. However, the extent of these gains varied compared to those observed for all NPLN literacy focus schools, and for all State schools (for NAPLAN data only). In both NAPLAN cohorts (students in Year 3 in 2008 and 2009), students at Focus on Reading 3-6 schools achieved slightly higher reading score gains than for students across the State as a whole. In all cohorts, the reading growth observed for students at Focus on Reading 3-6 schools was generally in line with the gains achieved across all NPLN literacy focus schools.
- Schools and teachers were very positive about the effectiveness of Focus on Reading 3-6 in improving literacy outcomes for students. A high proportion of Certified Trainers (100%), Executive staff (94%) and Stage One Teachers (92%) rated the program as effective. Specialist and Support staff were slightly less likely to report that it was very effective or effective (77%). Teachers in the earlier stages of their career (less than five years experience) were more likely than more experienced teachers to report finding the program effective.
- Schools and teachers reported observed improvements in areas relating to students' engagement with and capability in literacy, in particular students' willingness to discuss what they have read and their effective use of strategies to assist them understand and read text.
- In many schools, the strategies implemented under Focus on Reading 3-6 are being used across all Key Learning Areas, including English, Religious Education, Science, HOSIE and Maths.
- Several key success factors for student outcomes were identified including: the variety of different strategies/activities; introducing fun and enjoyment into reading; increased verbal communication and discussion in the classroom; more listening and questioning about texts; and the monitoring of student progress.
- In some, but not all cases, parents identified improvements in their child's enthusiasm for reading and/or their reading ability. Many students interviewed were able to describe changes in their reading habits and abilities.
- Aboriginal parents and students responded positively to the program. However there was no evidence of any notable difference in Aboriginal students' program experience and impact in comparison with that of non-Aboriginal students.
- Most of the teachers who were able to comment in both the qualitative consultations and online survey were of the view that Focus on Reading 3-6 is as effective with Aboriginal as with non-Aboriginal students. The main reason given for this was that the program's strategies are seen to cater to the needs of all students.
- NAPLAN data indicates that gain scores for Aboriginal students involved in Focus on Reading 3-6 were higher than those for non-Aboriginal students in both cohorts. NAPLN data also revealed that gain scores for Aboriginal students were marginally higher than those for non-Aboriginal students across all three cohorts. Although these signs are positive, the small sample size (less than 90 Aboriginal students) needs to be taken into account when considering these results.

5.1 NAPLAN AND NPLN ASSESSMENT DATA

5.1.1 DATA SETS AND LIMITATIONS

NAPLAN

The NAPLAN tests are conducted in May each year for all students across Australia in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. All students in the same year level are assessed on the same test items in the assessment domains of Reading, Writing, Language Conventions (Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation) and Numeracy.

Each year, over one million students nationally sit the NAPLAN tests, providing students, parents, teachers, schools, and school systems with important information about the literacy and numeracy results of students. NAPLAN tests have been conducted since 2008. Data includes reading and numeracy capability broken down to specific areas to determine overall assessment of literacy and numeracy.

EMSAD has noted a number of limitations to using this data for evaluation of the NPLN literacy and numeracy programs, including Focus on Reading 3-6:

- The first NAPLAN in 2008 was criticised for its lack of visual literacy and student engagement may have been much lower than it was for subsequent tests when the quality of the reading tests was improved.
- NAPLAN is a bi-annual test so growth in NAPLAN scores can only be assessed across one out of the two cohorts in any one year, that is, at Year 5 in 2010 and 2011.
- Assessing growth for the first cohort from Year 3 2008 to Year 5 2010 includes data for one year before the intervention commenced, and an end-point only mid-way through the NPLN period; the second cohort, from Year 3 2009 to Year 5 2011, has a different start and end-point with respect to involvement with the NPLN programs and therefore different results would be expected.
- The youngest cohort did not do a NAPLAN test until they were in Year 3 in 2010 and so growth in NAPLAN scores will not be able to be assessed until they are in Year 5 in 2012.
- As NAPLAN and the NPLN tests are on different scales, the results of these two assessments cannot be compared.
- Data comparing the proportion of students in a given performance band (relative to the National Minimum Standard - NMS) is of limited value for the evaluation of the program's impact at this point in time. Given the relatively high proportion of students below the NMS at schools participating in the NPLN, the meaningfulness of a small shift for a specific cohort over the specified testing period is not certain (particularly given other limiting factors such as student mobility over the period and uncertainty of the band measure). Further sequential testing over an extended timeframe will be required to monitor the longer term trend in results; consequently this data has not been analysed for the program evaluations.

NPLN ASSESSMENTS

The NPLN baseline assessment is developed from the BST (Basic Skills Test) and was first administered at the beginning of FOR (pre-test 2009 – Years 2, 3 and 4), administered again in August 2010 (midway test - Years 3, 4 and 5), and a final test was administered in August 2011 (end - Years 4, 5 and 6). EMSAD has noted a number of limitations to using this data for evaluation of the literacy and numeracy programs, including Focus on Reading 3-6:

- The NPLN tests are adequate for whole cohort assessment but are too brief to use for diagnostic assessment of individual students.
- As the NPLN tests are half the length of the BST, they cannot be used to compare with State-wide performance on the former BSTs.
- There was a lot of student mobility in the schools and students were not matched when mean scores and percentages in bands were calculated so the cohorts will not contain the same students.

OTHER LIMITATIONS AND COMMENTS

Advice from EMSAD suggests that ESL and LBOTE comparisons are not appropriate for the program evaluation (and therefore these variables have been excluded from the analysis).

- ESL information is not reported in NAPLAN and no jurisdictions provide any ESL information to the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority. Although ESL data in NSW is collected separately, accurate figures have only been collected in all schools in 2011; therefore it is not possible to conduct a year on year comparison of results for ESL students.
- ESL levels were not collected in the data for the short local measure NPLN assessments of reading and numeracy. Language background other than English (LBOTE) was recorded but that only indicates that someone in the immediate family speaks a language other than English. That information has serious limitations as it does not reflect the students' proficiency in English language usage which is often high but could be low.

Comparisons across different groupings of schools (ie Focus on Reading 3-6 schools, NPLN literacy focus schools, all State schools) should be interpreted with caution due to limitations with attribution and consistency. For NPLN schools implementing a particular literacy intervention, the literacy outcomes will be influenced by how well different schools implement the program, and whether the school has concurrently implemented other programs targeting literacy. For example, NPLN schools implementing Focus on Reading 3-6 as a whole school literacy intervention will also have been providing additional literacy support for target students through an individual intervention (such as MULTILIT).

Likewise, whilst comparison with the State as a whole (for NAPLAN data) provides a reference point for interpretation of NPLN program results, the State is not a valid control group due to the broad range of literacy programs used across the State (including in some cases, the same programs as those funded through the NPLN).

Given these limitations, EMSAD has advised that considerable caution should be taken in the analysis and interpretation of these data sets. Based on this advice, Urbis has included the key data aggregations provided by EMSAD, and provided only descriptive commentary on the student outcomes observed.

5.1.2 NAPLAN RESULTS

NAPLAN mean reading scores are presented for the two different NAPLAN cohorts in the tables below. The standard deviation in reading scores is also included to indicate the magnitude of spread in the scores. The gain score is calculated as the change in the mean reading score over the two year period.

TABLE 8 – NAPLAN COHORT 1 READING SCORES

COMPARISON GROUP	YEAR 3 2008		YEAR 5 2010		GAIN SCORE
	MEAN	STD DEV	MEAN	STD DEV	
Focus on Reading 3-6 schools	374.1	82.5	459.2	77.1	85.2
NPLN literacy focus schools*	372.5	82.7	461.3	79.2	88.8
All State schools	412.1	84.8	496.9	82.9	84.7

*NPLN schools implementing whole school and individual literacy interventions (includes MLMT, Focus on Reading, MULTILIT, Accelerated Literacy, Individual Learning Plans, Reading 2 Learn)

TABLE 9 – NAPLAN COHORT 2 READING SCORES

COMPARISON GROUP	YEAR 3 2009		YEAR 5 2011		GAIN SCORE
	MEAN	STD DEV	MEAN	STD DEV	
Focus on Reading 3-6 schools	385.3	84.8	462.5	75.8	77.2
NPLN literacy focus schools	384.0	84.4	459.9	79.3	75.9
All State schools	423.7	91.3	496.1	82.8	72.4

*NPLN schools implementing whole school and individual literacy interventions (includes MLMT, Focus on Reading, MULTILIT, Accelerated Literacy, Individual Learning Plans, Reading 2 Learn)

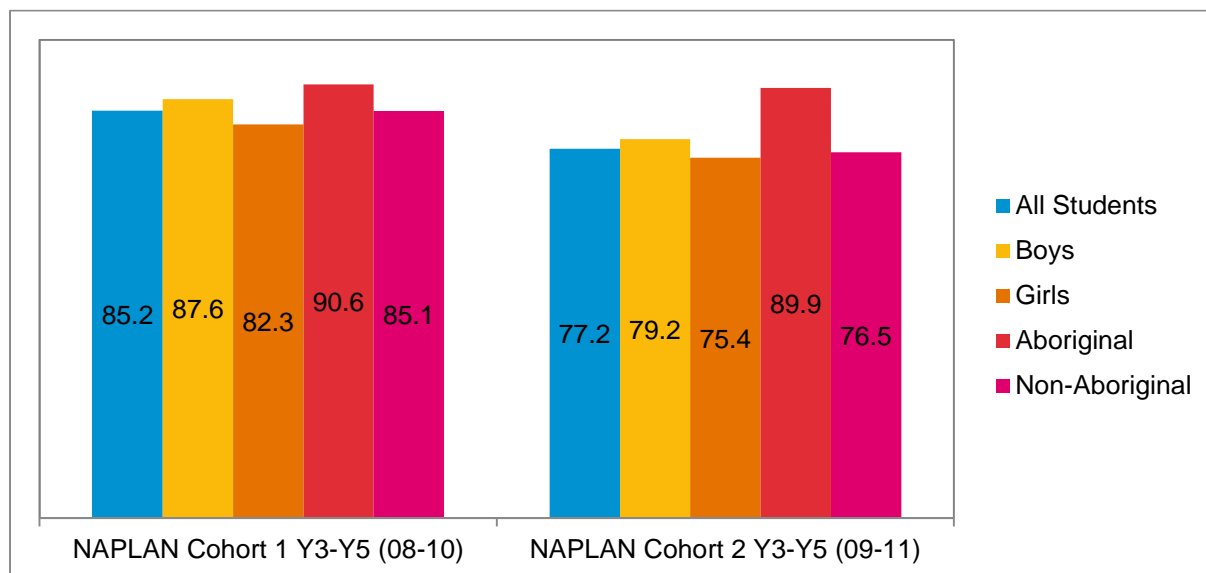
This data shows that NPLN schools participating in Focus on Reading 3-6 have achieved gains in the NAPLAN mean reading score for both student cohorts; however, the extent of this gain varied between the two cohorts.

In the first NAPLAN cohort (students in Year 3 in 2008), the gain score for students at Focus on Reading 3-6 schools (85.2) was several points lower than that for all NPLN literacy focus schools (88.8). Conversely, in the second NAPLAN cohort (students in Year 3 in 2009), the gain score for students at Focus on Reading 3-6 schools (77.2) slightly exceeded that for all NPLN literacy focus schools (75.9). However, mean and gain scores for the two cohorts cannot be reliably compared due to the different testing years and timeline of data collection with respect to students' participation in the Focus on Reading 3-6 program.

In both NAPLAN cohorts, the gain score for students at Focus on Reading 3-6 schools was slightly higher than that for all State schools. However, the mean reading score at Focus on Reading 3-6 schools over the NPLN period was still notably lower than the State average.

The NAPLAN reading gain scores for Focus on Reading 3-6 schools were also compared for key student comparison groups (gender and Aboriginality). This data is presented in Figure 2 below.

FIGURE 2 – FOCUS ON READING 3-6 NAPLAN READING GAIN SCORES BY STUDENT COMPARISON GROUPS



The comparison of gain scores shows no notable variance in reading growth according to gender, with growth for male students slightly exceeding that for female students in both cohorts. The gain scores for Aboriginal students were higher than those for non-Aboriginal students in both cohorts; however, the sample size of Aboriginal students completing the NAPLAN tests in Focus on Reading 3-6 schools was small (≤ 90 students) and therefore the ability to draw any reliable conclusions from this data is limited.

5.1.3 NPLN ASSESSMENT RESULTS

NPLN assessment mean reading scores are presented for the three different NPLN cohorts in the tables below. The standard deviation in reading scores is also included to indicate the magnitude of spread in the scores. The gain score is calculated as the change in the mean reading score over the two year testing period.

TABLE 10 – NPLN COHORT 1 READING SCORES

COMPARISON GROUP	YEAR 2 2009		YEAR 3 2010		YEAR 4 2011		GAIN SCORE
	MEAN	STD DEV	MEAN	STD DEV	MEAN	STD DEV	
Focus on Reading 3-6 schools	41.7	8.0	51.0	7.4	53.5	8.0	11.8
NPLN literacy focus schools*	43.7	7.4	50.5	7.6	53.3	8.0	11.5

*NPLN schools implementing whole school and individual literacy interventions (includes MLMT, Focus on Reading, MULTILIT, Accelerated Literacy, Individual Learning Plans, Reading 2 Learn)

TABLE 11 – NPLN COHORT 2 READING SCORES

COMPARISON GROUP	YEAR 3 2009		YEAR 4 2010		YEAR 5 2011		GAIN SCORE
	MEAN	STD DEV	MEAN	STD DEV	MEAN	STD DEV	
Focus on Reading 3-6 schools	47.8	7.8	54.4	8.3	55.4	8.0	7.5
NPLN literacy focus schools*	47.9	8.2	53.9	8.2	55.6	8.1	7.7

*NPLN schools implementing whole school and individual literacy interventions (includes MLMT, Focus on Reading, MULTILIT, Accelerated Literacy, Individual Learning Plans, Reading 2 Learn)

TABLE 12 – NPLN COHORT 3 READING SCORES

COMPARISON GROUP	YEAR 4 2009		YEAR 5 2010		YEAR 6 2011		GAIN SCORE
	MEAN	STD DEV	MEAN	STD DEV	MEAN	STD DEV	
Focus on Reading 3-6 schools	51.9	50.6	55.6	8.0	58.5	8.3	6.6
NPLN literacy focus schools*	51.6	8.2	55.5	8.2	58.7	8.5	7.0

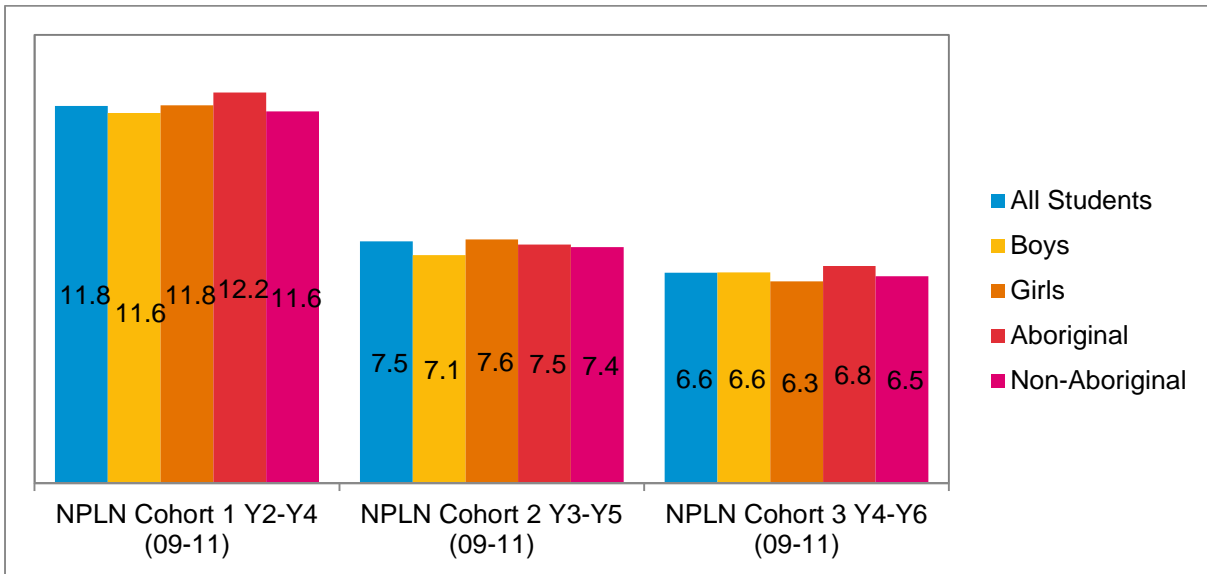
*NPLN schools implementing whole school and individual literacy interventions (includes MLMT, Focus on Reading 3-6, MULTILIT, Accelerated Literacy, Individual Learning Plans, Reading 2 Learn)

This data shows that Focus on Reading 3-6 schools have achieved gains in the NPLN assessment mean reading score for all three student cohorts; however, the extent of this gain again varied across the cohorts. The largest magnitude of change over testing period was observed in the youngest cohort (students in Year 2 in 2009), whilst gains for the two older cohorts were similar.

In all three cohorts, the gain scores for students from Focus on Reading 3-6 schools were in line with the gains for all NPLN literacy focus schools; the relative gain was slightly higher for the youngest cohort, and slightly lower for the two older cohorts.

The NPLN assessment reading gain scores for Focus on Reading 3-6 schools were also compared for key student comparison groups (gender and Aboriginality). This data is presented in Figure 3.

FIGURE 3 – FOCUS ON READING 3-6 NPLN ASSESSMENT READING GAIN SCORES BY STUDENT COMPARISON GROUPS



The comparison of gain scores shows no notable variance in reading growth according to gender; in two cohorts, female students achieved slightly higher reading growth over the testing period than that achieved by male students. However, given the noted limitations of the data (and therefore the potential scope of measurement error), this difference cannot be described as meaningful.

In all three cohorts, the gain scores for Aboriginal students were marginally higher than those for non-Aboriginal students. Again, the validity of this result is limited due to the small sample size of Aboriginal students completing the NPLN assessments at Focus on Reading 3-6 schools (≤ 90 students).

5.2 QUANTITATIVE DATA ON STUDENT OUTCOMES

5.2.1 OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

The online survey questionnaire sought all respondents' views on the impact of Focus on Reading 3-6 on students at their school. Respondents were asked to rate the *overall effectiveness* of Focus on Reading 3-6 in improving literacy outcomes for students. Responses are summarised in Table 13 below, including an analysis of these results by school role.

TABLE 13 – OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF FOCUS ON READING 3-6 IN IMPROVING LITERACY OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS BY ROLE (PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS*)

EFFECTIVENESS	TOTAL	FOR CERTIFIED TRAINER*	EXECUTIVE	TEACHER K-2	TEACHER STAGE 2	TEACHER STAGE 3	SPECIALIST/AIDE/OTHER SUPPORT*
Very effective	40.4	50.0	46.9	33.3	36.7	50.0	38.5
Effective	48.9	50.0	46.9	58.3	53.3	39.3	38.5
Neither effective nor ineffective	3.4	-	-	5.6	-	3.6	15.4
Not very effective	1.1	-	3.1	-	3.3	-	-
Not at all effective	0.6	-	-	-	3.3	-	-
Too soon to say	3.9	-	3.1	2.8	3.3	3.6	7.7
Hard to say	1.7	-	-	-	-	3.6	-
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Total effective**</i>	<i>89.3</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>93.8</i>	<i>91.7</i>	<i>90.0</i>	<i>89.3</i>	<i>76.9</i>

* Note small sample size
 **Combined effective and very effective responses

Overall, respondents in all roles were positive about the effect that Focus on Reading 3-6 has had on improving literacy outcomes for students. As shown in Table 13, all or most Certified Trainers (100%), Executive staff (94%) and Stage One Teachers (92%) rated the program as effective or very effective. Specialist and Support staff were somewhat less likely to report that the program was effective (77%).

Respondents in the earlier stages of their career (two years or less and three to five years experience) were more likely than others to report finding the program effective (92% and 100% total effectiveness respectively) as were teachers from schools in metropolitan areas and those working in large schools.

5.2.2 OBSERVED IMPACTS

Teachers were asked to indicate the extent of *improvement* observed in areas relating to students’ engagement with and capability in literacy since the introduction of Focus on Reading 3-6. The responses are presented in Table 14 below, including a calculation of *total improvement* which comprises the combined set of *significant improvement* and *some improvement* responses.

At least four out of five respondents reported that Focus on Reading 3-6 had been *effective* or *very effective* for all but one of the engagement and capability statements. Respondents were most likely to agree that there had been improvement in *students’ willingness to discuss what they have read* and *students’ use of effective strategies to assist them understand and read text* (both 93%). Slightly fewer but nevertheless still a majority (75%) observed improvement in *students’ enthusiasm for their other schoolwork (beyond literacy)* since the program’s introduction.

There was little variation by role. However, Certified Trainers were the *most* likely to report improvement, and specialist and support staff the *least* likely to report observed improvement for each of the engagement and capability statements.

TABLE 14– TOTAL IMPROVEMENT OR CHANGE OBSERVED IN STUDENTS SINCE THE INTRODUCTION OF FOCUS ON READING 3-6 (PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS)

	TOTAL IMPROVEMENT	CERTIFIED TRAINER*	EXECUTIVE	TEACHER K-2	TEACHER STAGE 2	TEACHER STAGE	SPECIALIST/ AIDE/ OTHER SUPPORT*
Students' willingness to discuss what they have read	92.7	100.0	93.8	94.4	93.3	100.0	61.5
Students' use of effective strategies to assist them understand and read text	92.7	100.0	93.8	94.4	93.3	96.4	69.2
The variety of texts read	89.3	100.0	96.9	86.1	90.0	89.3	76.9
Students' ability to read for meaning	89.3	100.0	93.8	88.9	90.0	89.3	69.2
Students' confidence in reading	89.9	100.0	90.6	97.2	86.7	89.3	69.2
Students' understanding of what is expected of them when they read	89.9	100.0	96.9	91.7	90.0	89.3	76.9
Students' enthusiasm for reading	88.8	100.0	93.8	94.4	86.7	82.1	76.9
Students' reading skills	87.6	92.9	93.8	88.9	86.7	89.3	69.2
The complexity of texts read	86.0	100.0	90.6	83.3	90.0	85.7	61.5
The volume of reading undertaken	86.0	100.0	87.5	91.7	90.0	78.6	69.2
Students' literacy levels more broadly	80.3	92.9	87.5	86.1	83.3	71.4	61.5
Students' enthusiasm for their other schoolwork (beyond literacy)	75.3	78.6	81.3	83.3	73.3	78.6	46.2

* Note small sample size

5.2.3 EFFECTIVENESS FOR DIFFERENT STUDENT GROUPS

Teachers were asked to rate the effectiveness of Focus on Reading 3-6 in improving the educational outcomes for a number of different student groups. These responses are presented in Table 15 below, including a calculation of *total effective* responses, which comprises the combined set of *very effective* and *somewhat effective* responses.

TABLE 15 – EFFECTIVENESS OF FOCUS ON READING 3-6 FOR DIFFERENT STUDENT GROUPS (PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS)

STUDENT GROUP	TOTAL EFFECTIVE	VERY EFFECTIVE	SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE	NOT VERY EFFECTIVE	NOT AT ALL EFFECTIVE	NOT APPLICABLE/ HARD TO SAY
All students	93.8	51.1	42.7	1.1	-	5.1
Students <u>below</u> NAPLAN benchmarks	81.5	43.8	37.6	2.8	0.6	15.2
Students <u>above</u> NAPLAN benchmarks	80.9	39.9	41.0	2.8	1.1	15.2
Students with a learning disability	70.2	19.7	50.6	10.1	1.7	18.0
ESL/LBOTE students	64.0	27.0	37.1	2.8	0.6	32.6
Aboriginal students	51.1	19.7	31.5	1.1	0.6	47.2

As seen in Table 15:

- Nine out of ten respondents indicated that the program had been *very effective* or *somewhat effective* for *all students* (94%).
- A high proportion of respondents also indicated that Focus on Reading 3-6 was effective for *students below NAPLAN benchmarks* (82%) and *students above NAPLAN benchmarks* (81%).
- Most (70%) of respondents reported the program was effective for students with a learning disability. However 10% were of the view that Focus on Reading 3-6 was *not very effective* for this student group.
- Fewer reported that the program was very or somewhat effective for ESL/LBOTE students (64%) and for Aboriginal students (51%). However, this was largely a function of the large proportion of teachers who said it was difficult to say. (See Section 6 for more discussion on Aboriginal student outcomes.)

5.3 QUALITATIVE DATA ON STUDENT OUTCOMES

Overall, all schools visited were highly positive about the program’s impact on students’ reading outcomes, which were consistent with the quantitative findings. Schools were able to provide examples of how the program had improved students’ reading ability. This was further supported by the generally positive feedback received from both parents and students.

5.3.1 CONFIDENCE IN AND ENTHUSIASM FOR READING

It was apparent from many student interviews that they had a high degree of enthusiasm for reading. This confidence and enthusiasm was echoed by some parents who reported that their children were keenly interested in reading.

One teacher reported that this was newfound enthusiasm, as previously students were not interested in reading. She commented that before ‘*Most weren’t strong at reading. They didn’t see it as pleasurable. Now they can find pleasure in reading*’. Other examples provided by school staff and stakeholders, which indicate positive student outcomes include:

Students are now borrowing more books from the library.

Students are enjoying reading, are engaged in the text and willingly and enthusiastically participate in discussions about what they have read.

Students are more focused and engaged for longer periods of time...reading is fun and enjoyable for the students.

It has given kids a purpose to their reading... they enjoy what they're reading.

The change in kids is phenomenal. For example, a little boy picked up 'Harry Potter' and is doing the strategies. He is doing the activities with it.

Students absolutely love it! They see reading, certainly comprehension, as different from before.

Some parents too reported greater enthusiasm for reading at home:

My son has more confidence and more understanding of what he is reading. He is able to sound out words and talk about the story.

Children are all reading on the bus more ... they get upset if they don't have books.

She reads all the time and has to be yelled out to turn the lights out.

Meanwhile some students agreed:

I used to hate it [reading] but now I like it.

I didn't read many books last year. I'm more interested this year.

When I read out loud last year I was nervous, but I'm not anymore.

5.3.2 READING MORE AND MORE DIFFICULT TEXTS

Students reported reading a wider variety of texts such as books and magazines, as well as instruction manuals, recipes, newspapers (the sports section), subtitles on DVDs, weather reports etc. Many students reported that they had advanced to harder books and were keen to try more difficult books. Some reported with pride that they had recently moved to books that '*had more interesting words and so many words on one page with smaller print*'.

Teachers as well as some parents and students reported that students were reading a wider variety of and more difficult texts:

My daughter is looking at different mediums. She looks for the local paper and if it is there she will read it. My son who struggled with reading is sounding out things much better and using the internet.

(Parent)

Last year, I was reading smaller books, but this year I read more difficult things

(Student)

5.3.3 UNDERSTANDING OF COMPREHENSION, FLUENCY AND VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES AND HOW TO USE THESE STRATEGIES TO READ FOR MEANING

Students interviewed eagerly described the reading activities undertaken in the classroom including the following:

- reciprocal teaching in groups with students in the roles of questioner, predictor, monitor and summariser

- reading partners
- silent reading
- DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) time
- picking books from the 'book tubs'
- one-on-one reading with the teacher
- using the (Super Six) reading bookmarks
- tag reading – reading as much of a page in a book and then tagging some to read
- fact or fib
- report to read
- knee to knee
- VIPs – Very Important Points
- Weave a Web
- Sketch to Stretch.

Teachers too reported that students were effectively using the comprehension, fluency and vocabulary development strategies, although there was greater emphasis on comprehension. An example of this is a student explaining what to do when having difficulty understanding: *'I chunk up the word; and look for clues on the page to work out the meaning'*. They elaborated that this might involve other words or picture on the page or reading the text back and forth. Another student reported that if they don't understand a word they will *'sound it out, break up bits and then look in a dictionary'*.

5.3.4 IMPROVED READING SKILLS AND COMPREHENSION

Overall, it was felt that reading levels had improved for all students. However schools acknowledged that this would need to be confirmed by NPLN and NAPLAN data.

Most teachers agreed that the program worked for students with various reading abilities, including those who were below national benchmarks. Teachers reported that:

Everyone has had growth, even those that struggle – it is just as beneficial for them. They can now all read a page.

The greatest impact on kids is their ability to understand what they are reading. Back then, we were doing silent reading, but with no purpose. Now, they love having to do buddy reading and actively listening. They then tell the class what has happened.

Another teacher provided evidence of improved reading ability by giving the example of how her students now 'look for meaning' when they read. She explained that if there is something they don't understand, students will go through the text and find meaning. Parents and students too provided examples of this:

We do tests now to show we understand

(Student)

My daughter is starting to teach her siblings comprehension. If they don't know the word 'tomato' she will tell them to look at the picture.

(Parent)

I have a child that I thought was a good reader, but she did a comprehension test and was put in a lower reading group. This year she now reads every night and wants to tell you what is happening in the book.

(Parent)

They are reading with meaning.

(Teacher)

5.3.5 USE OF FOCUS ON READING 3-6 STRATEGIES ACROSS KLAs

The strategies implemented under Focus on Reading 3-6 are reportedly often being used across all KLAs. Many teachers reported using the Focus on Reading strategies across all key learning areas such as English, Religious Education, Science, Human Society and its Environment, and Maths.

Using strategies and teaching skills developed through Focus on Reading 3-6 rather than reading the whole text, teachers will use strategies with students such as 'I remember' or looking at the key points. This allows students to go through the text and work out what they do and do not understand. Students are reportedly talking more when other subjects are being taught and teachers often reported improved comprehension across all KLAs. Students also reportedly display greater confidence, tolerance and understanding of non-fiction text which is especially helpful in Human Society and its Environment and Science.

5.4 OUTCOMES FOR ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

5.4.1 QUALITATIVE FINDINGS ON ABORIGINAL STUDENT OUTCOMES

School staff generally reported that Aboriginal students responded well to Focus on Reading 3-6 and were more engaged in reading because of Focus on Reading 3-6. However, most were of the view that the engagement of Aboriginal students with Focus on Reading 3-6 was no different to that of non-Aboriginal students. Schools said they had seen growth in the reading comprehension of all students, with no noticeable variation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

One school was of the view Aboriginal students are more visual and hands-on, and noted that many of the strategies under Focus on Reading 3-6 such as Weave a Web and Sketch to Stretch were visual and therefore well-suited to Aboriginal students. This view was not shared by all schools with another school arguing that Aboriginal students should not be labelled as visual learners, because the way they learn depends on a number of contextual factors. Yet another school suggested Aboriginal students respond well to high order learning, and therefore responded well to Focus on Reading 3-6 for that reason.

Although only a few were interviewed, Aboriginal parents typically said they did not know anything about Focus on Reading 3-6 and would have liked to know more so they could reinforce the various comprehension strategies being taught in the classroom at home. An AECG representative raised the same issue, and said schools should have explained Focus on Reading 3-6 in simple language, so details of Focus on Reading 3-6 could be passed on to Aboriginal parents.

5.4.2 QUANTITATIVE DATA ON ABORIGINAL STUDENT OUTCOMES

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

The online survey asked participants to report their view on the relative effectiveness of Focus on Reading 3-6 in improving literacy outcomes for *Aboriginal students*. These responses are presented in Table 16. Forty-three per cent of respondents indicated that they were *not sure* or it was *hard to say*. A further 17% reported that this question was *not applicable as there are no Aboriginal students participating in Focus on Reading 3-6 at my school*.

Of the 41 % of respondents who were able to report on the program's effectiveness for Aboriginal students compared to non-Aboriginal students most said it was as effective as for non-Aboriginal students.

TABLE 16 – EFFECTIVENESS OF FOCUS ON READING 3-6 FOR ABORIGINAL STUDENTS COMPARED TO NON-ABORIGINAL STUDENTS (PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS)

EFFECTIVENESS	TOTAL
More effective than for non-Aboriginal students	1.7
As effective as for non-Aboriginal students (ie no difference)	38.8
Less effective than for non-Aboriginal students	0.6
Not sure/ hard to say	42.7
Not applicable as there are no Aboriginal students participating in Focus on Reading 3-6 at my school	16.9
TOTAL	100.0

Teachers were asked to specify the reason for their response. The most common reasons noted by respondents included:

- Focus on Reading strategies cater for the needs of all students/ there is a similar profile of results for both groups (54 mentions):

I believe that the program reaches all students because of its diversity of approaches.

Focus on Reading is a broad, non-culturally specific approach to teaching. The range of skills and strategies it encompasses will engage all learning styles.

I believe the variety of strategies that can be used have allowed me to effectively differentiate for the needs of all students.

Both groups of students have improved and increased their comprehension of texts with no obvious difference between the groups.

Each student has reacted positively to the Focus on Reading strategy. All students, whether they are of Aboriginal descent or not, have been engaged and have had some improvement in their reading and comprehension.

- Small cohort of high-performing Aboriginal students (10 mentions):

The Aboriginal student I have in my classroom is in the top reading group that consist of students one grade level above him.

- Positive response to interactive learning approach/ class discussion (7 mentions):

It involves students discussing and valuing their opinions. The format reinforces informal learning approaches which Aboriginal students respond positively to.

All students are encouraged to be involved in discussions and talking to partners gives reluctant students ideas to participate in discussion. More discussion which gives students a greater general knowledge and respect of all cultures and ideas.

- Range of new reading strategies available to students (7 mentions):

They have been encouraged to read with new strategies which they did not have before. With the new strategies they are more willing to answer questions relating to what they read or what there partner shared with them.

It has given Aboriginal students more belief in their reading ability... they are using the learning strategies and their reading has improved.

- Use of culturally relevant texts (3 mentions):

I ensure that their culture is incorporated into the texts that we access so all children benefit.

- Positive response to modelled/ explicit teaching (2 mentions):

Modelled teaching is a key focus of the implementation and that explicit instruction supports equally.

- Small cohort of Aboriginal students – unable to comment on relative effectiveness (62 mentions).
- Not sure/ data not available to compare results (25 mentions).

OTHER IMPACTS/ OUTCOMES FOR ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

The survey questionnaire then asked these respondents if there were other impacts or outcomes (either positive or negative) that they have observed in Aboriginal students participating in Focus on Reading 3-6. *Note –question not asked for the 29 respondents who selected 'Not applicable' in Q24a.*

Of the remaining 149 respondents, only 42 provided a specific answer to this question. The most common responses provided included:

- Increased engagement/enthusiasm for reading (19 mentions):

A desire to read for pleasure, particularly with the more competent students. One of my poorer readers is very keen and we are always searching out suitable, age-appropriate readers.

They are, along with the majority of my class, excited at the prospect of Reading Groups and are disappointed on the occasions that Reading Groups become interrupted.

They have shown a greater interest in wanting to be able to read better. They can see it as an achievable goal.

- Increased student confidence/self-esteem (10 mentions):

They are becoming more confident because of the modelling activities being relevant to learning.

A positive attitude to reading and more self confidence in general has been noticed.

- Increased participation in group discussions (7 mentions):

The strategies of FOR do provide scaffolds for the development of rich conversation which is great for the Aboriginal students who are quiet and don't always want to participate in discussions.

Their willingness to answer questions and respond to the book in a group setting.

- Selection of broader range of texts based on interest (5 mentions):

More eager to engage in reading as it is based on their needs and what they are interested in.

The use of multi-modal, diverse text sets works well with Indigenous kids.

- Impact of home factors – parental support/attendance (3 mentions):

Expectations of parents had a significant effect on student learning.

I have found that in class my one student works well and has a lot of ability with reading. However there is a limit to the books that are sent home as they are rarely returned so there is limited reading for pleasure outside of school.

5.5 SUCCESS FACTORS

Several key success factors for student outcomes were identified, which include:

- the variety of different strategies/activities, in particular introducing fun and enjoyment into reading
- increased verbal communication in the classroom, thereby encouraging students to discuss texts, listen to other students and ask questions –this has boosted student confidence
- greater monitoring of student outcomes.

THE VARIETY OF DIFFERENT READING DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES/ACTIVITIES

Many schools commented that this program and new way of teaching literacy is now embedded within the school. Students appear to have embraced the strategies and found them to be fun and enjoyable. It also means reading for meaning.

Students noted that their reading had improved and with this came greater confidence and enthusiasm to try more challenging texts.

Student comments on their newfound enjoyment of reading and the strategies included:

You can get pictures in your mind if the book doesn't have any.

If you get bored, or had nothing to do, you can always read.

It is fun to read. It's more fun now... more fun than sitting and reading one book. Now there's more choices.

INCREASED DISCUSSION IN THE CLASSROOM

Since the introduction of Focus on Reading 3-6, there has been a strong shift towards more verbal communication and less written work in class. Students are given the opportunity to work on reading-related activities in pairs and small groups. Students also spend more time discussing and questioning the texts they read. Both teachers and student reported that this verbal communication brought an increased element of fun and enjoyment into reading time.

INCREASED STUDENT MONITORING

Several of the schools spoke very favourably about the use of the learning continuums. Some had initial reservations, primarily because they were unsure about how to plot students. One Certified Trainer commented that *'It initially took time to get your ahead around them'*. However, overall, teachers were appreciative of how the continuum allowed them to track students needs, growth and performance over a period of time and some said that this had now become a regular subject of discussion in staff meetings.

Fantastic Mr
Fox



by
Roald
Dahl

6 Impact on schools and sustainability

KEY FINDINGS

- Most school staff report Focus on Reading 3-6 has had positive impacts at a school level. The great majority report there is more clarity about their school's goals and expectations re reading outcomes (93%); greater transparency and consistency in the way literacy is taught in their school (92%); teaching of reading is now more explicit and focussed (90%); and that most teachers in their school are using the teaching strategies in their everyday teaching across the KLAs (89%).
- Most staff reported receiving strong leadership for Focus on Reading 3-6 in their school (90%) receiving good support and guidance on how to implement Focus on Reading 3-6 (86%) and believe that support for Focus on Reading 3-6 program at their school has grown over time (82%). A very high proportion of teachers and school staff would recommend the use of Focus on Reading 3-6 in other schools.
- The factors leading to successful school impacts and outcomes include: strong and supportive school leadership; a good working environment with open dialogue and constructive feedback; inclusion of all staff in training; the program's capacity to cater for students of all abilities; and the purchase of new resources.
- There are mixed views about the sustainability of Focus on Reading 3-6 in the longer term. Although some schools and school staff are relatively optimistic about the program's sustainability and have already embedded, or started to embed, the program into school structures and processes, there is an identified need for continual training and support. There are particular concerns about the training of new staff.

6.1 QUANTITATIVE DATA ON SCHOOL IMPACT

In the online survey, teachers were presented with a series of statements relating to the impact of Focus on Reading 3-6 on school literacy practices, the level of support and guidance for implementing Focus on Reading 3-6 in the school, and the sustainability of the program beyond the funding period. These results are presented in Table 17. Respondents were asked to express how strongly they *agreed* or *disagreed* with each statement.

SCHOOL LITERACY PRACTICE

Around nine out of ten respondents indicated that they *strongly agreed* or *agreed* with the four statements related to school practice. Over half the respondents indicated *strong agreement* with the following impact statements:

- *Through participating in Focus on Reading 3-6, teaching of reading in my school is now more explicit and focussed (54%).*
- *Most teachers in my school are using the teaching strategies they learned through Focus on Reading 3-6 in their everyday teaching across the KLAs (53%).*

Respondents working at schools in metropolitan areas were more likely to agree with all four statements than those from regional or rural/remote schools, the greatest difference being for the impact statement that *since the introduction of Focus on Reading 3-6, there is now more clarity about my school's goals and expectations re reading outcome (97% in metropolitan schools cf 86% in rural/remote schools).*

These views correlate with the feedback received during the school visits. The vast majority of school staff reported that the greatest impact on the school was that the entire teaching body is now using *explicit teaching strategies* when teaching students to read, and in fact also used when teaching other KLAs.

TABLE 17 – AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS ABOUT IMPACT OF FOCUS ON READING 3-6 ON THE SCHOOL BY SCHOOL LOCATION AND SIZE (PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS)

STATEMENT	TOTAL AGREEMENT	SCHOOL LOCATION			SCHOOL SIZE (NO. STUDENTS)		
		METRO	REGIONAL CITY OR TOWN	RURAL/ REMOTE	LESS THAN 200	200 – 399	400 OR MORE
SCHOOL PRACTICES							
Since the introduction of Focus on Reading 3-6, there is now more clarity about my school's goals and expectations re reading outcomes	92.7	96.7	91.3	85.7	92.6	92.9	92.6
Focus on Reading 3-6 has resulted in greater transparency and consistency in the way literacy is taught in my school	91.6	93.3	91.3	88.1	92.6	91.4	90.7
Through participating in Focus on Reading 3-6, teaching of reading in my school is now more explicit and focussed	89.9	91.1	89.1	88.1	94.4	88.6	87.0
Most teachers in my school are using the teaching strategies they learned through Focus On Reading 3-6 in their everyday teaching across the KLAs	88.2	88.9	87.0	88.1	90.7	92.9	79.6
SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE							
There is strong leadership support for Focus on Reading 3-6 in my school	89.9	95.6	87.0	81.0	88.9	88.6	92.6
I received good support and guidance on how to implement Focus on Reading 3-6 in my class/school	86.0	87.8	84.8	83.3	87.0	82.9	88.9
Support for Focus on Reading 3-6 at my school has grown over time	81.5	83.3	78.3	81.0	81.5	85.7	75.9
NSW DEC's training for Focus on Reading 3-6 Certified Trainers was well planned and implemented by the Department	63.5	61.1	69.6	61.9	70.4	64.3	55.6
SUSTAINABILITY							
I would recommend the use of Focus on Reading 3-6 in other schools	92.1	95.6	89.1	88.1	92.6	90.0	94.4
There is a clear pathway for sustaining Focus on Reading 3-6 improvements/approach in the school beyond the funding period	76.4	80.0	67.4	78.6	77.8	68.6	85.2

SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

In terms of impact on support and guidance, a high proportion of respondents indicated agreement with the statements that *There is strong leadership for Focus on Reading 3-6 in my school (90%), I received*

good support and guidance on how to implement Focus on Reading 3-6 (86%) and that Support for Focus on Reading 3-6 program at my school has grown over time (82%).

Respondents were less likely to indicate agreement with the statement that *NSW DEC's training for Focus on Reading 3-6 Certified Trainers was well planned and implemented by the Department*. Only two-thirds of respondents (64%) agreed with this statement. However, it should be noted that 15% of respondents reported that it was hard to say and 14% indicated they neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement.

Respondents from metropolitan schools were more likely to agree that *There is strong leadership support for Focus on Reading 3-6 in my school (96%)* than respondents from regional schools (87%) and rural remote schools (81%).

Respondents in regional schools were more likely to agree that *NSW DEC's training for Focus on Reading 3-6 Certified Trainers was well planned and implemented by the Department (70%)* than those teaching in rural remote schools (62%) or metropolitan schools (61%).

The school visits and stakeholders visits also revealed that strong and supportive school leadership is vital in sustaining the programs momentum and commitment to proper delivery. School Executive also need to deal with adverse teacher reaction.

SUSTAINABILITY AND VALUE

A high proportion of respondents (92%) agreed that they would *recommend the use of Focus on Reading 3-6 in other schools*: 62% of respondents *strongly agreed* with this statement.

Respondents were slightly less optimistic about the sustainability of the program. Nonetheless, three-quarters of respondents indicated that *There is a clear pathway for sustaining Focus on Reading 3-6 improvements/approach in the school beyond the funding period (76%)*.

Respondents from regional schools were most likely to recommend the use of Focus on Reading 3-6 in other schools (96%) and also most likely to agree that *There is a clear pathway for sustaining Focus on Reading 3-6 improvements/approach in the school beyond the funding period (80%)*. The issue of program sustainability is explored in more depth in Chapter 9.

6.2 QUALITATIVE DATA ON SCHOOL IMPACT

The vast majority of schools were positive about taking a *whole-of-school approach*, including K-2 teachers and teaching support staff, in the program. It meant that there was common practice in teaching reading across the entire school and all staff were using the same language in the classroom. This allowed for greater consistency in teaching methods, which is important when students advance to the next year level.

Feedback received from school staff during the school visits and at the May SSNPLN Conference included the following:

The most significant change was the common practices across the school in a literacy session. Professional dialogue was increased and more relevant to the needs of the students in relation to the data. As a result, the children's growth was greatly improved.

Our school has designated reading time... during the Monday and Tuesday morning session, the entire school is involved in reading activities.

The most significant change within our small school has been the facilitation of a whole-school literacy focus. Prior to the Focus on Reading program, each class teacher was doing their own teaching of reading without working collaboratively with each other. Now all classes are using the 'Super 6' comprehension strategies, focusing on each one at the same time.

GREATER MONITORING AND USE OF DATA

Several schools complimented the program on its focus on student monitoring and data collection. Teachers are using the continuum and mindful of how students are tracking – this has become a common conversation topic in some staff rooms.

6.3 SUCCESS FACTORS

Success factors relating to teacher and student outcomes have already been outlined in this report. This section describes what school staff identifies as critical to achieving the overall *school* outcomes.

STRONG LEADERSHIP

It is essential that the school leadership team is fully dedicated to implementing Focus on Reading. One stakeholder said that at initial program implementation there needs to be a ‘leadership push’ to engage staff and also parents in the program so that the entire community is aware of Focus on Reading and what it means.

Strong leadership is critical when dealing with staff cynicism or resistance. Integral to the program’s success is having all Y3-Y6 teachers ‘on board’, talking the same language, using the strategies and teaching students to read based on this evidence-based approach. If teachers are initially reluctant to come on board, the Program Facilitator, with the backing of the leadership team, can encourage and motivate them, and ensure the program is being properly implemented in the classroom.

A GOOD-WORKING ENVIRONMENT WITH OPEN AND DIALOGUE AND CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

A supportive and collegiate environment, fostered by the leadership team and Program Facilitator is essential. Part of their role is to encourage staff to share what works well and facilitate discussion in ‘non-Focus on Reading’ time such as at regular staff meetings. The classroom modelling and demonstration leads to greater knowledge and information-sharing. A supportive environment means that staff are more open to discussing their achievements, as well as their challenges and areas for improvement.

INCLUSION OF ALL STAFF IN TRAINING

Some schools included all their staff, including part-time and support teachers in the Focus on Reading 3-6 professional development. One school reported that this meant ‘we had all bases covered’:

Focus on Reading has become part of our school program. Staff K-6 have been trained ensuring that movement of staff across the grades will enable the program to continue. To continue the program effectively, teachers will need to ensure they continue professional dialogue and professional development.

In a similar experience, a Regional Coordinator thought it was a ‘superb decision’ by the school principal to include support staff in the program and they could target students with learning difficulties, almost before the classroom teacher briefed them.

CATERING FOR STUDENTS OF ALL ABILITIES

Focus on Reading is considered to be suitable for all students, even those that are performing below expectations. The program allows students’ with learning difficulties to still be exposed to the whole-of-class activities and actively participate, even if they may need a little extra support.

Several schools reported that they still used other reading programs, such as MULTILIT, for students requiring additional assistance. In line with previous points, support staff assisting students with poor literacy were aware of this ‘whole-of-class’ program and better able to support students so that they too could participate with the rest of the class.

ABILITY TO PURCHASE RESOURCES

Some school used NPLN funding to purchase much needed new texts and reading resources for students which were used during guided reading sessions.

6.4 SUSTAINABILITY

Three key factors were identified as critically important for the sustainability of Focus on Reading 3-6 in schools. These are:

- ongoing commitment and support from the school leadership team
- embedding the program in literacy teaching at the school
- devising a training strategy for new staff.

6.4.1 COMMITMENT BY THE LEADERSHIP TEAM AND SCHOOL STAFF

The leadership team's commitment to Focus on Reading 3-6 will be one of the critical factors in sustaining this program in schools. Many of the Executive and leadership staff recognised the importance of maintaining their teachers' focus on the program and ensuring continuing open communication, knowledge-sharing and peer support.

The end of the NPLN funding will mean that the Program Facilitator role will cease in most schools and subsequently, so will the provision of ongoing support to school staff. School leadership teams will need to ensure Focus on Reading 3-6 stays on the school's agenda and continues to be used in classrooms.

School staff commented on leadership in a number of ways:

Leadership will be massive – we will need someone active and passionate about improving literacy. There will be no dollars to release teachers to plan or teacher educator to help plan and enforce that we're doing it properly. Leadership will have to ensure everyone is doing the Focus on Reading strategies .

We are focussed on having our teachers as program leaders and providing peer support.

There needs to be someone who is active and passionate about improving literacy.

It is written in our policy and programs... we will keep the profile up.

6.4.2 EMBEDDING FOCUS ON READING 3-6 IN LITERACY TEACHING AT THE SCHOOL

Focus on Reading 3-6 has reportedly been 'embedded' in many of the schools, with the majority of staff committed to this new way of teaching literacy. The ongoing sustainability of the program is partially reliant on teachers continued commitment to practice Focus on Reading 3-6 in their classrooms and ongoing open dialogue both about students' reading and their teaching practices.

Several schools reported that the program was embedded in their literacy teaching at the school. School-based Certified Trainers will have an ongoing role in providing support and encouragement for staff, even after the training has been completed. The Department reported that the program 'is creating school based experts' with the idea that they will continue to practice what has been learnt in Focus on Reading.

School staff reported the following in relation to embedding Focus on Reading 3-6 to ensure sustainability:

We are evaluating our risks of continuing the program like teacher burnout, being out of the class, finding quality resources – we are planning so we don't double up. It will be a challenge to sustain but it is embedded. Our staff have been willing to change and try something new.

Data collection, two weekly planning, explicit teaching can be maintained as part of school culture and expectations, and school policy.

While the funding has provided extra planning time for staff, they should now be able to implement and continue FOR Strategies as part of their normal program. The processes will require review and reflection. FOR is an approach or ideology to teaching – not a set of

resources. While extra funding has enabled us to implement this process in the school, we can continue with the program without it.

6.4.3 A TRAINING STRATEGY FOR NEW STAFF

The primary barrier identified to sustaining Focus on Reading 3-6 is the provision of training for new teachers. When funding expires, schools will need to find other means of training new staff and providing them with the necessary relief teaching. Schools identified two main pathways for providing training to new teachers. Firstly, they could find money from other funding sources, such as the Low SES NP, to cover the cost of professional development and the required relief teaching. NSW DEC staff reported that there are many schools not funded under NPLN that intended to implement Focus on Reading 3-6 in 2012. Secondly, some schools were already considering how to run an abridged form of the program training. One school was looking to combine this with 'hubs' or staff workshops where new and already-trained staff could share their knowledge and learnings.

Written comments from school staff included the following:

Sustainability proved to be the greatest challenge faced by our schools. Enormous staff movement has made sustaining changes in teaching and programming practices difficult. What we need is LONG TERM regional support to train new staff region-wide to ensure a core mass of staff have the FOR skills. The pedagogy of Focus on Reading 3-6 could be continued without funding - so long as there is support in training new staff.

Changeover of staff leads to continual training of new staff. For quality implementation, this can't be rushed. Funding for teacher release and in-school support is essential.

We need additional funding to provide time for collaboration, mentoring and coaching, planning analysis and evaluation, training of new teachers (critical), development of policy and management practices, develop and implementation of IEPs.

Unless all staff can be properly train and retrained as the need arises, the integrity of the program can become compromised. We are developing a sustainability program to ensure that quality practice becomes embedded but that requires ongoing funds.

7 Strengthening the impact of Focus on Reading 3-6

7.1 FACTORS THAT MAY LIMIT SUCCESS

The following areas were identified as factors that may limit success or barriers to the effective implementation of Focus on Reading 3-6:

- the amount of time required outside the classroom to undertake training and planning
- the focus on Y3-Y6, rather than being a whole school program ie K-6.
- lack of engagement with parents
- availability of the Certified Trainer
- length and complexity of the training modules.

TIME REQUIRED FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

A common criticism was the amount of time teachers were required to spend out of the classroom. While it was clearly stipulated at the outset of the program that teachers would spend up to 16 days in training and program-related planning and activities, it appears that this did have an impact on some schools.

Some schools commented that it was disruptive and unsettling for students not to have their teacher in class. All schools allowed their teachers to take this time for professional development and viewed it as a significant investment. Some schools had a 'bank of casuals' they were able to draw on to cover classes. This meant that students had a familiar replacement teacher. However, it was noted by some schools that a number of parents were critical of their children having so much time with casual/substitute teachers. Providing parents with more information on the program and making them aware of why their child's teacher was absent from the classroom may have helped prevent some of this criticism.

FOCUS ON YEARS 3-6

Many schools commented that they would like to see the program extended to K-6, and that they had in fact trained all their teachers to ensure that all school staff was trained. This was seen as critical due to staff movement year to year. A K-6 approach would also mean the entire staffing was 'talking the same language' and equipped with the same skills to teach reading.

ENGAGEMENT WITH PARENTS

The majority of parents interviewed were not aware that their child's school was participating in Focus on Reading 3-6. They reported that there had been no communication from the school about the program or any information received on the reading strategies and activities their child would be using. A number of parents commented that they would like to have been better informed so they could use these strategies when reading with their child at home.

Schools reported distributing information in school newsletters and bulletins. One school had organised an open day for parents to observe what was happening in the classroom and another displayed posters promoting Focus on Reading 3-6, which parents reported seeing but did not fully understand.

Despite this apparent need for more tailored information, parents were generally positive about the improvements in their child's reading ability. Some parents noted a marked increase in enthusiasm for reading at home. Others were able to provide details of the new strategies their child was using when reading.

LIMITED AVAILABILITY OF NON-SCHOOL BASED CERTIFIED TRAINER

Schools with an external Certified Trainer commented that the limited time they spent at the school was a challenge. It meant only having contact with teachers on their designated days at the school. In schools with this external arrangement, it was extremely important to have the leadership team committed to the program.

LENGTH AND COMPLEXITY OF MODULES

A common criticism of the training modules was their length and density. As one teacher reported that *'Some of the modules are long and arduous at times. They could be shortened'*.

A younger teacher with limited teaching experience reported that she was one of three young teachers who initially struggled with the language. They needed more time than was available to digest the language and programming. The online survey provided several suggested changes and improvements to the training modules, which is detailed in the following section.

7.2 AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The survey questionnaire asked respondents how Focus on Reading 3-6, or its implementation, could be improved. Thirty-eight respondents commented on how they thought the program could be improved. In summary, these comments and suggestions related to:

- Practical classroom programming, observation and support (11 comments):

More time given for teachers to observe one another teaching and to mentor one another.

More ideas have to be given for what it looks like in the classroom, we kind of got to the end of the training and everyone was still unsure about where to next or what was the expectation.

The teaching of the modules was very bland and confusing. The hands-on teaching and learning activities were fantastic.

More time given for teachers to observe successful lessons and activities and strategies implemented in different classrooms. Also more time given for stage/grade teams to plan and assess together to ensure/share a range of engaging activities that cater to individual students and ways for them to be assessed using consistent teacher judgement.

Compiled lesson resources and ideas for teachers. List of good texts on comprehension for teachers. Scrap the in-between tasks.

The facilitator who can demonstrate a range of strategies and routines for colleagues has a greater chance of sustaining commitment beyond the initial training period. If teachers see the facilitators showing how something operates in the classroom environment they align more with its principles as they see it operating in 'real' learning spaces with students. Away from the conference room, the classroom reality impresses most of what is taught is seen in action.

- Suggested improvements and developments to the program (9 comments):

I would like to see a greater focus on writing incorporated into the course.

Focus on Reading K-2 and related to students with special needs

A K to 2 Focus on Reading could be implemented and married with the Best Start Program. Also a Focus on Reading Program could be devised for students with special needs.

Continued support to all the teachers and providing more workshops and resources.

Continued training and revision and recommendation of quality resources.

Broader access for more people to be involved in training and contact with other schools implementing it.

- Revision to the training modules and tasks (9 comments):

The modules and workshops could be organised more efficiently, with learning activities focussing more on practical teaching and programming ideas.

Some 'tweaking' with the modules and incorporating Phase 3 into Phase 1 and 2. Sharing some programming ideas as to what it might look like in classrooms.

Review the number of between-session tasks.

Modify some of the slides in some modules for staff depending on their levels of professional competence.

Review the online reading extracts for clarity and professional presentation.

Cut down the vast amount of content, particularly the professional reading, to only the KEY articles as teachers struggled to cope with these extra demands. The resource folders are very rarely used by teachers as they do not contain many 'usable' resources. They have been 'left on the shelf' after completion of the program.

Modules be more Australian-based. They had a distinctly U.S.A. look about them.

- Training related feedback and suggestions (7 comments):

The trainer needs to be more than one step ahead of staff so that questions can be clarified by them more effectively.

Catch-up sessions for teachers who have missed some key elements of the training so that 3/4 of their training is not disregarded because they didn't get to all sessions!

Two trainers should have been trained - it was a huge burden for one person to carry, especially through the tough initial stages which challenged teachers.

Teachers who have been through the process and have seen the improvements should be the new wave of trainers, as they have been through all the ups and downs of implementation.

Can be implemented at a slower pace and be given to all staff not just those teaching 3-6. If you are to achieve whole school focus then the whole school must at least be offered training so that everyone can have a common language.

- Future program funding and sustainable, ongoing delivery (3 comments):

Keep the funding running so new staff members are trained up and to allow professional sharing and time off for planning with stage buddies can continue.

Have a quick guide to introduce new teachers to the main concepts of FOR and a plan of how to get started while waiting for training.

Time must be made available for teachers to plan together - it would be impossible without this time. Catch up sessions or an overview of sessions that pick out the most important parts should be available for new teachers to FoR schools.

- Other comments re program delivery (3 comments):

New teachers to the school that started half way through the program got no training but still expected to teach it.

Too many changes expected to be implemented too quickly.

It was extremely rushed and there seemed to be a drive to push the Focus on Reading 3-6 through in a hurry which in retrospect caused much anxiety amongst staff who were already working extremely hard. I believe that it was somewhat like pushing through mindsets and obstacles that naturally prevent staff from jumping on board wholeheartedly. If it had not been for support from my stage team and being able to approach one of the trainers with my concerns, this Focus on Reading 3-6 time would be viewed as a hideous assignment forced on us by the leadership above us. I struggled to get my head around all the assigned tasks and changes at the same time as programming and assessing and reporting.

8 Summary and conclusion

8.1 AN ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FOCUS ON READING 3-6

This section draws together the findings from the qualitative and quantitative research to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of Focus on Reading 3-6 in line with the Terms of Reference for this evaluation.

Focus on Reading 3-6 is an intensive and explicit professional learning program. This two year program targets Years 3-6 teachers and emphasises the teaching of high level, meta-cognitive *comprehension* strategies along with the importance of *vocabulary knowledge* and *fluent text reading* as advocated in contemporary research.

Under the program, teachers were provided with some 16 days of professional development, and with the ongoing support and mentoring from a Certified Trainer/Program Facilitator. Through this, the program sought to engage participants in:

- the research evidence about effective teaching of reading
- intensive, purpose-driven learning
- between-session tasks designed to translate new learning into classroom action over time
- ongoing, systematic reflection on classroom practices and student progress.

The qualitative and quantitative research clearly demonstrates that Focus on Reading 3-6 has delivered positive outcomes to teachers and schools, and benefits to students in the 36 schools participating in the program.

8.1.1 EFFECTIVENESS OF FOCUS ON READING 3-6 FOR TEACHERS

When asked about program impact and outcomes, school staff reported that the main impact was the dramatic change in pedagogy and an increased understanding of how to teach reading.

In both the quantitative and qualitative research, the great majority of teachers and school staff reported increased knowledge and skills in teaching reading as a result of participating in Focus on Reading 3-6. This included:

- a deepened understanding of comprehension strategies and the links to comprehension, vocabulary knowledge and text reading
- a deepened understanding of effective teaching of reading
- increased belief in teachers' ability to improve literacy outcomes of all students
- increased belief in teachers' ability to improve literacy outcomes of low achieving/disadvantaged students
- deepened understanding of the nature and needs of literacy learners in Years 3-6
- increased willingness to participate in shared reflection and discussion of teaching of reading with other staff
- increased ability to translate literacy theory into practice.

The majority of teachers said this had impacted on classroom teaching practice, in particular in relation to how they:

- teach comprehension effectively in the classroom
- use strategies that build vocabulary, knowledge and fluent text reading
- teach comprehension effectively to individual students
- question students in a way that demonstrates deep understanding of texts.

8.1.2 EFFECTIVENESS OF FOCUS ON READING 3-6 FOR STUDENTS

This evaluation analysed the effectiveness of Focus on Reading 3-6 for students by looking at three data sources, include NAPLAN and NPLN assessment data supplied by NSW DEC, online survey data and qualitative data collected during school visits.

NAPLAN AND NPLN DATA

Aggregate student data collected from NAPLAN and NPLN assessments was analysed to review the change in student literacy outcomes over the NPLN period for each student cohort. A range of limitations on the reliability and validity of results observed in these data sets have been outlined in the report; these should be considered when drawing conclusions from the results discussed.

In both data sets (NAPLAN and NPLN assessments), gains in mean reading scores were observed for all student cohorts at Focus on Reading 3-6 schools. However, the extent of these gains varied compared to those observed for all NPLN literacy focus schools, and for all State schools (for NAPLAN data only). In both NAPLAN cohorts (students in Year 3 in 2008 and 2009), students at Focus on Reading 3-6 schools achieved slightly higher reading score gains than for students across the State as a whole. In all cohorts, the reading growth observed for students at Focus on Reading 3-6 schools was generally in line with the gains achieved across all NPLN literacy focus schools.

ONLINE SURVEY DATA AND QUALITATIVE DATA

The online survey data and qualitative feedback collected during school visits also indicate school staff believe Focus on Reading 3-6 has been effective in improving the reading levels of students. During the school visits, teachers and parents reported that:

- Students exhibit a high degree of enthusiasm for, and interest in reading, with increased levels of confidence.
- Students are reading more and a wider variety of texts, and many have advanced to more difficult text.
- Reading ability has improved for many students, in particular regarding comprehension.

While survey respondents in all roles were positive about the effect that Focus on Reading 3-6 had on improving literacy outcomes for students, teachers in the earlier stages of their career (less than five years experience) were more likely than more experienced teachers to report finding the program effective.

More than four out of five school staff surveyed reported observed improvements in:

- the volume, variety and complexity of texts read
- students' ability to read for meaning
- students' confidence in, and enthusiasm for, reading
- students' understanding of what is expected of them when they read
- students' willingness to discuss what they have read
- students' use of effective strategies to assist them read and understand text.

8.2 AN ASSESSMENT OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH FOCUS ON READING 3-6 ACHIEVES ITS GOALS IN AN EFFICIENT MANNER

8.2.1 EFFECTIVE AND EVIDENCE-BASED TEACHING OF LITERACY

The program draws from a sound research base that justifies the need for key reading aspects to be at the forefront of literacy teaching and learning in the middle years. It was designed to address the needs of learners, the demands of learning, and the strategies for teaching reading in the middle years. Ultimately, the program seeks to support teachers to ‘understand and deliberately teach reading strategies that will enable their students to automatically, competently and confidently use the strategies to read the range of texts they are required to comprehend in the middle years of school’ (McIntyre et al., 2011).

Focus on Reading 3-6 emphasises the importance and use of:

- rich texts, particularly subject-based texts, multi-modal texts and the types of texts that interest and motivate learners in the middle years
- rich talk of the kind that encourages them to ‘show their thinking’ through talk
- ‘deliberate’ teaching that begins with insightful assessment; involves planning for explicit instruction based on students’ needs; supports and scaffolds students through modelled, guided and independent teaching; provides clear and purposeful feedback and constant opportunities for student reflection.

Generally, schools were satisfied that as a professional learning program, Focus on Reading 3-6 provided sufficient information and reading materials on relevant literature and research. It was evident to all staff that the strategies used were devised in line with evidence-based practice. The overwhelming feedback from school staff, especially more experienced teachers, was that the program had enabled them to reflect critically on their teaching practice, in particular how they teach comprehension.

8.2.2 STRONG SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND WHOLE-OF-SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT WITH LITERACY

The vast majority of schools identified that a critical factor in the successful implementation of the program was having a supportive and committed school leadership team. In schools visited, this tended to be comprised of the school principal, assistant principal(s), the Program Facilitator and in some cases, experienced and senior classroom teachers.

The school visits and stakeholders consultations also revealed that strong and supportive school leadership is vital in sustaining the program’s momentum and commitment to future delivery. School executive also need to deal with adverse teacher reaction.

In most cases, Focus on Reading 3-6 school staff appear to have been supported by strong school leadership leading to major advances in the adaption of a whole-of-school approach to teaching reading.

8.2.3 MONITORING STUDENT AND SCHOOL LITERACY PERFORMANCE TO IDENTIFY WHERE SUPPORT IS NEEDED

One of the key features of Focus on Reading 3-6 is that an emphasis on ongoing assessment and planning for explicit teaching. There is support for teachers in terms of the Comprehension, Vocabulary and Text Reading Sequences from the Literacy Continuum K-6, to assess and monitor student progress and plan each phase of teaching.

Schools generally spoke very favourably about the use of the ‘learning continuums’. Teachers were appreciative of how the continuum allowed them to track students’ growth and performance over a period of time. The majority of those consulted viewed use of data, and tacking and monitoring of needs and progress, as a critical component of the success of the program and most said their schools were doing this.

8.3 AN ASSESSMENT OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH FOCUS ON READING 3-6 HAS IMPROVED THE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES OF ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

No demonstrable variation in results was observed in the key student comparison groups (gender and Aboriginality). Whilst the reading gains for Aboriginal students slightly exceeded those for non-Aboriginal students (in both NAPLAN and NPLAN measures), the small sample size of test data for Aboriginal students in Focus on Reading 3-6 schools means that the validity and reliability of this result is somewhat limited.

The key finding from the qualitative and quantitative research was that there appears to be little if any notable difference in Aboriginal students' program experience and related impact, compared with that of their non-Aboriginal peers.

8.4 AN INVESTIGATION OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAYS FOR SCHOOLS TO BE SUPPORTED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE EVALUATION AND FOR THE REFORMS TO BE INCORPORATED INTO SCHOOL PRACTICE

PARTICIPATION IN THIS EVALUATION

Urbis consulted widely for this evaluation, which involved both qualitative and quantitative components.

The qualitative components included:

- stakeholder interviews (eg with program personnel, Regional Facilitators)
- visits to eight schools that had used Focus on Reading 3-6 to interview the School executive, Certified Trainers, teachers, parents and students.

With respect to school visits, Urbis worked with schools to identify a schedule of meetings that best fit with the school's other commitments. Most meetings took the form of focus groups or small group discussions with each of the stakeholder groups.

The quantitative components of this evaluation included:

- an online survey of staff in all NSW NPLN schools that selected Focus on Reading 3-6 as the whole school intervention component of the NPLN; responses were received from 178 staff across 32 schools
- an analysis of NAPLAN and NPLN assessment data provided by NSW DEC.

Urbis worked collaboratively with NSW DEC and stakeholders within schools to ensure schools were given every opportunity to participate in this evaluation. Schools were very generous with their time, often staying back after school hours to speak with the Urbis team. Given schools were at the forefront of implementing Focus on Reading 3-6, their input was critical to this evaluation.

INCORPORATING REFORMS INTO SCHOOL PRACTICE

The research suggests the three key factors that are critically important for the sustainability of Focus on Reading 3-6 in schools. These are:

- ongoing commitment and support from the school leadership team
- embedding the program in literacy teaching at the school
- devising a training strategy for new staff.

Appendix A

Discussion Guides

Focus on Reading 3-6 (FoR) Parents Discussion Guide

Today we are going to have a brief discussion about your children's reading ability, and whether the literacy program called Focus on Reading 3-6 (FoR) has had any impact on this. We are conducting an evaluation of some new reading programs, including FoR, that have been introduced into certain NSW schools over the last year or so and your school is one of these.

You may not be aware of or heard of these programs – that is OK. We just want to have a general discussion about how you think your child's reading ability is progressing.

Can I just start by asking each of you – what is your first name, how many children you have attending this school and what years they are in?

We are going to be talking about your children in Years 3 to 6 today.

1. Do your children like reading? Why/ why not? What sorts of things do they do (or not do) that tell you this?
2. How would you describe your child's progress in reading? Are they doing reasonably well? Are they struggling a bit? Or is it a bit hard to say?
3. If you think they are doing quite well – how do you know this? Is this from your own observations or what the school has told you? If they are struggling a bit – again how do you know this? What sorts of things are they having difficulty with and how do you know this?
4. Have you ever discussed your child's reading with the school? How often does that happen? What sorts of things are discussed in these meetings? Is that helpful to you as a parent? Why/why not? Have you been aware of any new reading programs being introduced to the school?
5. Do you know anything about the Focus on Reading program? Has the teacher or school communicated anything about this program to you and the fact that your child is involved in it? Do you think that you have been told enough about the program?
6. In the last year or so, have you noticed any change in your child's attitude to school? What sorts of things if any have changed? If so, what has changed? Can you give examples?
7. In the last year or so, have you noticed any changes in your children's reading skills? Their reading habits? Their overall enjoyment of reading? If so, what has changed? Can you give examples?
8. What sorts of things are your children reading? Are they reading *more* things than they did last year? Are they reading *different* things to what they read before? Are they reading *more difficult* things than they did last year? If so, what has changed? Can you give examples?

9. Have there been any other changes in their general attitude to say doing homework, or tests at school, or their confidence in approaching their schoolwork?

10. Have your children talked about any strategies or things they do when reading to assist their comprehension, vocabulary or fluency skills?

11. Do your children talk any more about what goes on in class now than they did last year?

12. If there have been any improvements – is this just what you would expect given that your child is now a year older? Or has there been a more dramatic change? Is there anything you can point to that you think has had an impact eg something the school or teacher has done, something you have done as a parent?

13. If there has been no significant improvement, why do you think that is the case?

14. Do you think the Focus on Reading program has made a difference to your child's reading? If so, in what ways?

[for Aboriginal parents] are you able to comment on whether or not the teaching of literacy and the Focus on Reading Program are suitable for Aboriginal children? Does literacy need to be better supported or enhanced to better meet the needs of Aboriginal students?

Thank you

Focus on Reading 3-6 (FoR) School Staff Discussion Guide

Engagement

1. What has been the response of teachers and other school staff to the program? Has it been generally well-received? Why/why not?
2. What about any others who have been involved in the program eg trainers, caseworkers etc?
3. What about the students – are you able to comment on how they have responded to the program? What evidence or examples can you provide?
4. What about Aboriginal students – has their engagement been any different to non-Aboriginal students? If so, why is that the case?

Implementation

5. Was the school/were you provided with enough information and sufficient support and guidance to effectively implement the program?
6. Is there any additional support or assistance that you would have liked but didn't get?

Impact on teachers and schools

7. What impact, if any, has the FOR program had on you? For instance, has it impacted on your knowledge, beliefs or confidence in teaching literacy? How has FOR impacted on teaching literacy in your class?
8. Are you using new teaching strategies? What difference have these made?
9. How does this program compare to other literacy programs you have been involved in? Why is that?
10. What would you say has been the greatest impact on you through your involvement in the program?
11. Has the program's effectiveness been enhanced or hindered by any other literacy initiatives operating in the school?
12. Has the program had any impacts at a broader school level? What evidence/examples can you provide of this? What factors have facilitated or hindered this?
13. What if anything might be done to enhance the effectiveness of this program?

Impact on students and their educational outcomes

We will be analysing data on educational outcomes as part of this evaluation. However, we are interested in any data or observations that you may have on this issue also.

14. In your view, has this program led to any improvements in students' literacy skills? What evidence do you have for this? How does this compare to any other literacy programs that you have been involved in?
15. Are there any other benefits that have flowed to students since the introduction of the program?
16. To what extent is this occurring across the board? Are particular students or groups of students benefitting more than others (eg younger students, CALD students , students with particular learning problems etc)? If so why might this be the case?
17. What about Aboriginal students – are you able to comment on the extent to which they have benefitted from the program? How does this compare with the educational outcomes for non-Aboriginal students? Is this program appropriate for/ work well with Aboriginal students? Why/why not? What if anything has been done/might be done to improve the effectiveness of the program with Aboriginal students?

Final comments

18. Would you support its continued use in this school – why/why not?
19. Would you recommend it to others – on what basis?
20. What advice would you give to other schools thinking about implementing FOR?

Thankyou very much for your time

Focus on Reading 3-6 (FoR) Students Discussion Guide

Hello, my name is Benita/Lee/Alison and I am going to talk to you about some things you do at school.

Can I just start by getting your name and what class you are in.

Thankyou, now let's start with a little game.

I have some pens and paper here – what I'd like you to do is to draw something for me.

I'd like you to think about what you like most about coming to school. And then draw a picture of that. OK let's talk a bit about what you have drawn.

Now I'd like you to think about something that you don't enjoy so much about school – can you draw a picture of that? OK so let's see what some of your pictures are and you tell me about them.

1. Do you like reading? Why/why not? Have you always liked reading? If not, when did you start to like reading?
2. Thinking about when you are not at school – do you read much at home? Books, magazines, on the computer? What sorts of things do you like to read and why? Are you reading more at home now than you did in year X? If you don't read so much at home – why is that?
3. Do you do a lot of reading at school? What sorts of things do you read? Do you do this altogether in class? Or in small groups? Or on your own with a teacher or tutor?
4. Is your teacher doing any new reading activities in class? What sorts of reading activities do you enjoy doing in class? What sort of reading activities do you not enjoy?
5. What sorts of things are you reading? I want you to think back to year X, are you reading *more* things than you did in year X? Are you reading *different* things to what you read in year X? Are you reading *more difficult* things that you did in year X?
6. Do you usually find reading easy or hard? What sorts of things are easy to read? What sorts of things are hard to read? Are there things you avoid reading?
7. Do you think you are better at reading now than when you were in year X? What sorts of things are easier to read now? Why do you think that is easier now than before? What sorts of things have helped you to read better?
8. Has the teacher been working with you on the specific things you find most difficult about reading? Did your teacher do this with you on your own, in a small group or as part of a class discussion? Is there anything that you think of that could help you even more with your reading?
9. Have you ever drawn up a list or plan with your teacher on how you could improve your reading? If so, do you think you can now read better because of this list or plan? Why or why not?

10. If things are easy to read – how does that help with your school work? The kinds of things you can do outside of school?

Thank you

Appendix B

On line Survey

Focus on Reading 3-6 School Survey

This survey is to be completed by all staff that have been or are currently involved in managing, coordinating or implementing Focus on Reading 3-6 in only Years 3-6. This survey will take around 15 - 20 minutes to complete, and will ask you about your experiences in being involved in Focus on Reading 3-6, and your views about any impacts or benefits.

All relevant staff should complete the survey, including those that have already participated in an interview or focus group as part of the evaluation of Focus on Reading 3-6.

All responses will remain confidential.

About your school

1. What school do you work at (please specify)?

.....

2. What *educational jurisdiction* is your school based in?

- ₁ Government
₂ Catholic
₃ Independent

3. In what *location* is your school based?

- ₁ Metropolitan (Sydney)
₂ Regional city (say a city of over 100,000 people)
₃ Regional town (say a town of over 30,000 people)
₄ A smaller rural/remote area

4. How many students attend your school?

- ₁ Less than 100
₂ 100 – 199
₃ 200 – 299
₄ 300 – 399
₅ 400 or more

About you

5. What is your gender?

- ₁ Male
₂ Female

6. What age group are you in?

- ₁ Under 25 years
₂ 25 – 29
₃ 30 – 39
₄ 40 – 49
₅ 50 – 59
₆ 60 – 64
₇ 65 years or over

7. For how many years have you been teaching or working in primary schools? (Exclude extensive time off eg parental leave)

- ₁ Less than a year
₂ 1 – 2 years
₃ 3 – 5 years
₄ 6 – 10 years
₅ 11 – 20 years
₆ 21 – 30 years
₇ Over 30 years

8. For how many years have you been teaching or working in your *current* school?

- ₁ Less than a year
₂ 1 – 2 years
₃ 3 – 5 years
₄ 6 – 10 years
₅ 11 – 20 years
₆ 21 – 30 years
₇ Over 30 years

9. Were you at your *current* school at the start of the implementation of Focus on Reading 3-6?

- ₁ Yes
₂ No
₃ Not sure

10. Are you of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent?

- ₁ No
- ₂ Yes, Aboriginal
- ₃ Yes, Torres Strait Islander
- ₄ Yes, both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

11. Which of the following best describes your employment?

- ₁ Permanent – full-time
- ₂ Permanent – part-time
- ₃ Fixed term/contract – full-time
- ₄ Fixed term/contract – part-time
- ₅ Casual/relief
- ₆ Other (please specify

12. Which one of the following best describes your *main* role in implementing Focus on Reading 3-6 in your school?

- ₁ Focus on Reading 3-6 Certified Trainer
- ₂ Principal
- ₃ Assistant/Deputy Principal
- ₄ Teacher – K to 2
- ₅ Teacher – Year 3
- ₆ Teacher –Year 4
- ₇ Teacher – Year 5
- ₈ Teacher – Year 6
- ₉ Special Education/Needs Teacher
- ₁₀ School Learning Support Officer/Teacher's Aide
- ₁₁ Aboriginal Education Officer
- ₁₂ Literacy Specialist Teacher
- ₁₃ ESL Specialist
- ₁₄ Other (please specify

13. Are you or were you a member of the Focus on Reading 3-6 Leadership Team in your school?

- ₁ Yes
- ₂ No

Content and quality of Focus on Reading 3-6 training

14. Did you attend the training for Focus on Reading 3-6 Certified Trainers?

₁ Yes (Go to Q15)

₂ No (Go to Q16)

15. Overall, how satisfied have you been with the following aspects of the training for the Focus on Reading 3-6 Certified Trainers?

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
a) The <i>content</i> of the Focus on Reading 3-6 training workshops?	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
b) The <i>quality</i> of the Focus on Reading 3-6 training workshops?	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
c) The <i>relevance/usefulness</i> of the accompanying resources?	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅

(If answered 1 to Q12 skip Q16 and go to Q17 – FoR Coordinators/Leaders not to complete Q16)

16. Overall, how satisfied have you been with the training and support provided by your school's Focus on Reading 3-6 Certified Trainer?

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
a) The <i>content</i> of the training?	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
b) The <i>quality</i> of the training?	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
c) The <i>relevance/usefulness</i> of accompanying resources?	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅

Knowledge, attitudes and skills

17. To what extent has Focus on Reading 3-6 impacted on each of the following:

	Major extent	Moderate extent	Minor extent	Not at all	Can't say/ Hard to say
a) Increased your knowledge about how students learn to read in the 3-6 years of schooling	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
b) Increased your skills in using classroom assessment information (eg the comprehension, vocabulary and text reading learning sequences) to assess students' literacy learning needs	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
c) Increased your skills in using other data eg NAPLAN to assess students' literacy learning needs	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
d) Deepened your understanding of comprehension strategies and the links to comprehension, vocabulary knowledge and text reading	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
e) Deepened your understanding of effective teaching of reading	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
f) Deepened your understanding of the nature and needs of literacy learners in Years 3-6	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
g) Increased your knowledge about the latest evidence on best practice in relation to teaching reading in the classroom	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
h) Increased your belief in teachers' ability to improve literacy outcomes of low achieving/disadvantaged students	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
i) Increased your belief in teachers' ability to improve literacy outcomes of all students	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
j) Increased your willingness to participate in shared reflection and discussion of your teaching of reading with other staff	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
k) Increased your ability to translate literacy theory into practice	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅

18. Do you have a role in *teaching* literacy in the classroom on a regular basis?

- ₁ Yes (Go to Q19)
₂ No (Go to Q23)

19. To what extent has Focus on Reading 3-6 impacted on each of the following?

	Major extent	Moderate extent	Minor extent	Not at all	Can't say/ Hard to say
a) Increased your confidence in teaching reading	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
b) Improved your ability to teach comprehension effectively in the classroom	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
c) Improved your ability to teach comprehension effectively to individual students	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
d) Improved your ability to use strategies that build vocabulary, knowledge and fluent text reading	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
e) Enhanced your ability to reflect on and critique your teaching of reading	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
f) Improved your ability to question students in a way that demonstrates deep understanding of texts	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
g) Increased your willingness to seek feedback on your teaching of reading from your colleagues (eg through teacher observation)	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
h) Increased your knowledge of how to cater to all literacy learning needs in the classroom	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅

Teaching practice

20. a) Which of the following statements best describes how Focus on Reading 3-6 has impacted on your literacy *teaching practice*?

- ₁ Focus on Reading 3-6 has had a *significant positive* impact on the way I teach reading in my classroom (Go to Q20(b))
- ₂ Focus on Reading 3-6 has had *some positive* impact on the way I teach reading in my classroom (Go to Q20(b))
- ₃ Focus on Reading 3-6 has had *little if any positive* impact on the way I teach reading in my classroom (Go to Q20(b))
- ₄ Focus on Reading 3-6 has had a *negative* impact on the way I teach reading in my classroom? (Go to Q20(b))
- ₅ Hard to say (Go to Q22)

b) Why do you feel Focus on Reading 3-6 has had this impact on the way you teach reading in your classroom'?

Please specify.....

(For those who answered 1 or 2 to Q20(a), go to Q21. For those who answered 3 or 4 to Q20(a) go to Q22)

21. Please list the three key changes to your teaching practice that have occurred since implementing Focus on Reading 3-6.

1.
2.
3.

Critical factors

22. Thinking of the different components of Focus on Reading 3-6, how important were each of the following in improving your teaching of reading?

	Very important	Important	Not very important	Not at all important	No improvement in my teaching of reading	Not applicable /Hard to say
a) The module workshops	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
b) Between-session/ module implementation tasks	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
c) Ability to reflect on and critique your literacy teaching practice	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
d) Ability to obtain feedback on your literacy teaching practice through teacher observation	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
e) In-school support from the Focus on Reading 3-6 Certified Trainer	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
f) Observing other teachers modelling lessons or strategies	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
g) Access to online forums/blogs etc	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆

	Very important	Important	Not very important	Not at all important	No improvement in my teaching of reading	Not applicable /Hard to say
h) Access to useful professional development resources (eg recommended articles, literacy teaching guides for reading comprehension, networks etc)	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
i) The amount of time you were given to participate in professional development workshops and activities	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆

Student outcomes

23. Since the introduction of Focus on Reading 3-6 what, if any, improvements or changes have you observed in students?

	Significant improvement	Some improvement	A little improvement	No improvement	Hard to say
a) Students' enthusiasm for reading	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
b) The <i>volume</i> of reading undertaken	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
c) The <i>complexity</i> of texts read	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
d) The <i>variety</i> of texts read	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
e) Students' confidence in reading	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
f) Students' ability to read for meaning	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
g) Students' willingness to discuss what they have read	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
h) Students' understanding of what is expected of them when they read	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
i) Students' use of effective strategies to assist them understand and read text	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅

	Significant improvement	Some improvement	A little improvement	No improvement	Hard to say
j) Students' reading skills	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
k) Students' enthusiasm for their other schoolwork (beyond literacy)	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
l) Student's literacy levels more broadly	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅

24.a) Compared to non-Aboriginal students, how effective do you think Focus on Reading 3-6 has been in improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal students?

- ₁ More effective than for non-Aboriginal students (Go to Q24b)
- ₂ As effective as for non-Aboriginal students (ie no difference) (Go to Q24b)
- ₃ Less effective than for non-Aboriginal students (Go to Q24b)
- ₄ Not sure/hard to say (Go to Q24b)
- ₅ Not applicable as there are no Aboriginal students participating in FoR 3-6 at my school (Go to Q26)

b) Why is this (please specify)?

.....

.....

.....

25. Are there other impacts or outcomes (either positive or negative) that you have observed in Aboriginal students participating in Focus on Reading 3-6 (please specify)?

.....

26. How effective is Focus on Reading 3-6 in improving the reading outcomes of the following student groups?

	Very effective	Somewhat effective	Not very effective	Not at all effective	Not applicable / Hard to say
a) All students	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
b) Students above NAPLAN benchmarks	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
c) Students below NAPLAN benchmarks	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅

	Very effective	Somewhat effective	Not very effective	Not at all effective	Not applicable / Hard to say
d) Aboriginal students	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
e) ESL/LBOTE students	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
f) Student with a learning disability	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅

27. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Hard to say
a) Since the introduction of Focus on Reading 3-6, there is now more clarity about my school's goals and expectations re reading outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
b) Most teachers in my school are using the teaching strategies they learned through Focus On Reading 3-6 in their everyday teaching across the KLAs	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
c) Through participating in Focus on Reading 3-6, teaching of reading in my school is now more explicit and focussed	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
d) There is strong leadership support for Focus on Reading 3-6 in my school	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
e) NSW DEC's training for Focus on Reading 3-6 Certified Trainers was well planned and implemented by the Department	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
f) I received good support and guidance on how to implement Focus on Reading 3-6 in my class/school	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
g) There is a clear pathway for sustaining Focus on Reading 3-6 improvements/approach in the school beyond the funding period	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Hard to say
h) Focus on Reading 3-6 has resulted in greater transparency and consistency in the way literacy is taught in my school	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
i) I would recommend the use of Focus on Reading 3-6 in other schools	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
j) Support for Focus on Reading 3-6 at my school has grown over time	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆

28. Overall, how effective do you think Focus on Reading 3-6 has been in improving the reading outcomes for students?

- ₁ Very effective
- ₂ Effective
- ₃ Neither effective nor ineffective
- ₄ Not very effective
- ₅ Not at all effective
- ₆ Too soon to say
- ₇ Hard to say

29. a) Can you think of any way that Focus on Reading 3-6 (or its implementation) could be improved?

- ₁ Yes (Go to Q29b)
- ₂ No (Finish survey)

b) What suggestions do you have about how Focus on Reading 3-6 or its implementation could be improved?

.....

.....

.....

Thank you for completing this survey

Appendix C

Full Findings of the Survey



$$5 + 6 = 11$$



External Evaluation of the Selected National Partnership
on Literacy and Numeracy NSW Programs

Evaluation of Focus on Reading 3-6

ONLINE SURVEY REPORT

Prepared for NSW Department of Education and Communities
2011

urbis

URBIS STAFF RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS REPORT WERE:

Project Director	Alison Wallace
Project Manager - Senior Consultant	Benita Power
Senior Consultant	Chloe Harkness
Consultant	Amanda McAtamney
Job Code	SSP242D10

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Key findings

The Focus on Reading 3-6 survey captured the views and experiences of staff who have been involved in this reading program. The survey was targeted at classroom teachers, as well as executive staff (eg Principals, Assistant Principals) and staff who provide assistance with teaching literacy (eg specialist teachers, aides and other support staff).

The survey questionnaire was administered through an online survey method. All 36 schools receiving funding for Focus on Reading 3-6 under the National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy were sent an electronic invitation to participate. The total number of respondents comprised 178 school staff from 32 of the 36 schools receiving funding.

SATISFACTION WITH THE TRAINING PROVIDED FOR CERTIFIED TRAINERS AND SCHOOL STAFF

Thirty-two respondents (18%) indicated they had attended the training for Certified Trainers, including all 14 Certified Trainers participating in the survey, as well as 9 teachers (K-6) and 5 members from Executive staff. Respondents' total satisfaction was very high for the relevance/usefulness of accompanying resources (94%) and the content of the training workshops (91%). Four out of five respondents indicated they were satisfied with the quality of the training (81%).

All respondents, with the exception of Certified Trainers, were asked a short series of questions regarding their satisfaction with the training and support provided by their school's Focus on Reading 3-6 Certified Trainer. Generally, respondents indicated high levels of satisfaction - respondents were most satisfied with the relevance and usefulness of the accompanying resources (90%), followed by the content of the training (89%) and its quality (88%).

PROGRAM IMPACT ON TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND SKILLS

Overall, the majority of respondents reported that Focus on Reading 3-6 has had an impact on their knowledge, attitudes and/or skills. At least nine out of ten respondents reported impact in the following areas:

- *Deepened your understanding of comprehension strategies and the links to comprehension, vocabulary knowledge and text reading (94%)*
- *Deepened your understanding of effective teaching of reading (92%)*
- *Increased your belief in teachers' ability to improve literacy outcomes of all students (92%)*
- *Increased your belief in teachers' ability to improve literacy outcomes of low achieving/disadvantaged students (92%)*
- *Deepened your understanding of the nature and needs of literacy learners in Years 3-6 (91%)*
- *Increased your willingness to participate in shared reflection and discussion of your teaching of reading with other staff (90%)*
- *Increased your ability to translate literacy theory into practice (90%).*

Respondents with three to five years' experience were most likely to report a greater degree of positive impact on attitudes, knowledge and skills. Respondents at the beginning of their career (less than two years) and with the most experience (over 20 years) were also likely to report a positive impact. Teachers with 6-10 years were less likely to report a positive impact.

IMPACT ON CLASSROOM TEACHING PRACTICE

Overall, the large majority of respondents who teach literacy in the classroom on a regular basis indicated an impact for each of the outcome statements included in the questionnaire. The areas with the highest proportion of respondents indicating impact (ie either a major or moderate impact) were:

- *Improved ability to teach comprehension effectively in the classroom (94%)*
- *Improved ability to use strategies that build vocabulary, knowledge and fluent text reading (92%)*
- *Improved ability to teach comprehension effectively to individual students (92%)*
- *Improved ability to question students in a way that demonstrates deep understanding of texts (90%).*

The most common reasons given for this positive impact on their literacy teaching practice included:

- the introduction to new and/or greater range of strategies to teach comprehension (42 mentions)
- the explicit and focused nature of the program encourages staff to be more explicit in their teaching (31 mentions)
- better understanding of comprehension and reading (25 mentions)
- greater understanding of students' needs and how to address those in teaching literacy (23 mentions)
- expanding students' vocabulary and ability to talk about their reading and providing students with strategies to enhance their comprehension skills (17 mentions).

The most commonly mentioned changes to teaching practice reported were:

- explicit teaching according to needs/ use of differentiation to target students (70 mentions, 17%)
- use of the 'super six' strategies (65 mentions, 16%)
- use of more comprehension strategies for teachers (43 mentions, 10%)
- better understanding of comprehension (42 mentions, 5%)
- positive impact on students' learning (40 mentions, 4%).

CRITICAL FACTORS

The factors deemed critical in improving reading teaching by the highest proportion of teachers were (in terms of *total importance*):

- *The amount of time you were given to participate in professional development workshops and activities (92%)*
- *Ability to reflect on and critique your literacy teaching practice (92%)*
- *In-school support from the Focus on Reading 3-6 Certified Trainer (90%)*
- *Access to useful professional development resources (eg recommended articles, literacy teaching guides for reading comprehension, networks etc) (90%)*
- *The module workshops (90%).*

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Overall, respondents in all school roles were positive about the effect that Focus on Reading 3-6 has had on improving literacy outcomes for students. A high proportion of Certified Trainers, Executive staff and Stage One Teachers rated the program as effective. Specialist and support staff were somewhat less likely than other roles to report that the program was very effective or effective in improving students' literacy outcomes (77%).

Respondents in the earlier stages of their career (two years or less and three to five years' experience) were most likely to rate the program effective (92% and 100% total effectiveness respectively).

Respondents from schools in metropolitan areas were more likely to report finding Focus on Reading 3-6 effective in improving student literacy outcomes (92%) than respondents in regional (87%) or rural schools (86%). A higher proportion of respondents working in large schools (93%) reported that Focus on Reading 3-6 had been effective for students compared to teachers in medium size (87%) and small schools (89%).

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

Respondents were asked to report their view on the relative effectiveness of Focus on Reading 3-6 in improving literacy outcomes for *Aboriginal students*. Only 41 % of respondents were able to report on this (43% indicated that they were *not sure* or it was *hard to say* and 17% reported that this question was *not applicable as there are no Aboriginal students participating in Focus on Reading 3-6 at my school*).

Of the 41 % of respondents who did report on the program's effectiveness for Aboriginal students compared to non-Aboriginal students, 39% said it was as effective as for non-Aboriginal students (ie no difference). Only 2% said it was more effective and 1% indicated it was less effective. Teachers were asked to specify a reason for this response, with the most common responses being that Focus on Reading 3-6 strategies cater for the needs of all students and there is a similar profile of results for both groups.

OBSERVED IMPACTS

Overall, respondents were positive about the extent of improvement they had observed in areas relating to students' engagement with and capability in literacy since the program's introduction. At least four out of five respondents reported that Focus on Reading 3-6 had been *effective* or *very effective* for all but one of the engagement and capability statements. Respondents were most likely to agree that there had been effectiveness for different student groups.

Teachers were asked to rate the effectiveness of Focus on Reading 3-6 in improving the educational outcomes for a number of different student groups:

- Nine out of ten respondents indicated that the program had been *very effective* or *somewhat effective* for *all students* (94%).
- A high proportion of respondents indicated that Focus on Reading 3-6 was effective for *students below NAPLAN benchmarks* (82%) and *students above NAPLAN benchmarks* (81%).
- 70% of respondents reported effectiveness for students with a learning disability, however 10% of respondents indicated that Focus on Reading was *not very effective* for this student group and 18% said it was *not applicable or hard to say*.
- Respondents were less likely to report that the program was effective (very or somewhat) ESL/LBOTE students (64%) and for Aboriginal students (51%). It is important to note the high proportion of respondents indicating this question was *not applicable* or it was *hard to say*.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Respondents were asked to provide their views on future program direction and to comment on their experience of participating in the program. Respondents provided feedback regarding:

- practical classroom programming, observation and support
- suggested improvements and developments to the program design and delivery
- training related feedback and suggestions
- future program funding and sustainable and ongoing delivery.

1 Design and conduct of the survey

1.1 SURVEY DESIGN

The Focus on Reading 3-6 survey was designed to capture the views and experiences of staff who have been involved in the Focus on Reading 3-6 program. The survey was targeted at class room teachers, as well as executive staff (eg Principals, Assistant Principals) and staff who provide assistance with teaching literacy (eg specialist teachers, aides and other support staff).

The key topics addressed in the design of the survey were the content and quality of Focus on Reading 3-6 training, teaching practice, critical program factors and student outcomes

The survey questionnaire is attached at Appendix A of this report.

1.2 SURVEY ADMINISTRATION

The survey questionnaire was administered through an online survey method. All 36 schools receiving funding for Focus on Reading 3-6 under the National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy were sent an electronic invitation to participate. The total number of respondents comprised 178 school staff from 32 of the 36 schools receiving funding.

2 Respondents

2.1 SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

A total of 178 school staff completed the survey, of which 174 identified the school at which they worked. These respondents represented 32 of the 36 NSW schools (89%) that implemented Focus on Reading 3-6 under the National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy. The 32 schools identified by respondents included 26 Government schools and six Catholic schools.

As shown in Table 1 below, the survey respondents represented Focus on Reading 3-6 schools across metropolitan, regional and rural/remote NSW. Half the respondents (51%) worked at schools in a metropolitan area (ie Sydney), followed by schools in smaller rural/remote areas (24%), schools in a regional town (16%) and in a regional city (10%).

TABLE 1 – SCHOOL LOCATION (PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS)

LOCATION	TOTAL
Metropolitan (Sydney)	50.6
Regional city (100,000+ people)	9.6
Regional town (30,000+ people)	16.3
Smaller rural/remote area	23.6
TOTAL	100

Table 2 shows that the size of school at which the respondents worked varied by location. Overall, slightly more respondents worked in medium sized schools (39%) than in small and large schools (both 30%). In regional cities and towns, more respondents worked in medium sized schools (65% & 52%) and in remote areas, 43% worked in smaller schools.

TABLE 2 – SCHOOL SIZE BY LOCATION (PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS)

SCHOOL SIZE	TOTAL	METROPOLITAN	REGIONALCITY	REGIONALTOWN	RURAL/ REMOTE
Less than 200 students	30.3	27.7	23.5	24.1	42.9
200-400 students	39.3	36.6	64.7	51.7	26.1
More than 400 students	30.3	35.6	11.8	24.1	31.0
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100

2.2 PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Of the 178 teachers who completed the survey, 79% were female and 21% were male. As shown in Table 3 below, over a third of respondents were aged 50 years and over (35%), while 26% were aged 30-39 years and 20% were aged 40-49 years.

TABLE 3 – AGE BY GENDER (PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS)

AGE	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE
Under 25 years	3.9	2.6	4.3
25-29 years	14.0	18.8	13.6
30 – 39 years	25.8	23.7	26.4
40 – 49 years	20.2	23.7	19.3
50 – 59 years	30.3	34.2	29.3
60 years and over	4.5	-	7.1
TOTAL	100	100	100

A small number of respondents identified themselves as Aboriginal (3%, 5 individuals).

2.3 RESPONDENT ROLE AND EXPERIENCE

2.3.1 EXPERIENCE

Respondents had fairly high levels of experience teaching in primary schools. As shown in Table 4 below, the large majority of respondents (63%) had been working in primary schools for over 10 years and over a third (36%) of all respondents had been a primary school teacher for over 20 years. The survey showed little difference in years of experience by gender.

TABLE 4 – YEARS TEACHING/WORKING IN PRIMARY SCHOOL BY GENDER (PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS)

YEARS	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE
2 years or less	7.3	7.9	7.1
3 – 5 years	11.2	10.5	11.4
6 – 10 years	18.5	18.4	18.6
11 – 20 years	27.0	23.7	27.9
21 – 30 years	20.2	23.7	19.3
Over 30 years	15.7	15.8	15.7
TOTAL	100	100	100

Respondents were also asked to specify how long they had been working at their current school. As can be seen in Table 5, more than half the respondents (56%) had been working at their current school for over five years. However, over a quarter of respondents had been working at their current school for two years or less (26%).

TABLE 5 – YEARS TEACHING/WORKING AT CURRENTSCHOOL (PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS)

YEARS	TOTAL
Less than a year	10.7
1 – 2 years	15.7
3 – 5 years	18.0
6 – 10 years	28.1
11 – 20 years	17.4
Over 20 years	10.1
TOTAL	100

Most schools commenced the Focus on Reading 3-6 program in late 2009. Eighty per cent of respondents indicated that they were at their current school at the start of the implementation of the Focus on Reading 3-6 program.

The vast majority of respondents (84%) were employed at their school on a full time basis (66% permanent, 18% fixed term/contract). Fourteen per cent of respondents worked part time (10% permanent, 4% fixed term/contract) and only 1% worked at their school on a casual or relief basis.

2.3.2 ROLE IMPLEMENTING FOCUS ON READING 3-6

Respondents were asked to indicate their *main* role in implementing Focus on Reading 3-6 in their school. The results in Table 6 below show that 8% of respondents identified as Focus on Reading 3-6 Certified Trainers (14 respondents). There was an even spread of respondents in other roles including the Executive (18%), K-2 teachers (20%), Stage 2 teachers (17%) and Stage 3 teachers (16%). There was also a small group of specialist teachers/aides/other teaching support staff.

Although the program was targeted specifically at Years 3 to 6, many schools trained all staff, including those in support roles. Many teachers may have taught a 3-6 class at some stage since the program's implementation, remembering that teachers often change classes at the end of each year.

Female respondents were more likely to work as a K-2 teacher (21%), a Stage 2 teacher (17%) or the FoR 3-6 Certified Trainer, (9%), while male respondents were more likely to work as either a member of the Executive (29%), or a Stage 3 teacher (21%).

TABLE 6 – MAIN ROLE IMPLEMENTING FOR 3-6 IN THE SCHOOL BY GENDER (PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS)

ROLE	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE
Executive (Principal/ Deputy Principal)	18.0	29.0	15.0
FoR 3-6 Certified Trainer*	7.9	2.6	9.3
Teacher K-2	20.2	15.8	21.4
Teacher Stage 2 (3/4)	16.8	15.8	17.1
Teacher Stage 3 (5/6)	15.7	21	14.3
Specialist teacher/ aide/ other support^*	7.3	5.2	7.9
TOTAL	100	100	100

*Note small sample size ^Includes: School Learning Support Officer/Teacher's Aide, Literacy Specialist Teacher, Special Education/ Needs Teacher, and ESL Specialist

Respondents were also asked whether they were, or had been, a member of the Focus on Reading 3-6 leadership team in their school. In total, 32% of respondents reported involvement in the program leadership team.

3 Satisfaction with Focus on Reading 3-6 Training

3.1 TRAINING OF CERTIFIED TRAINERS

Respondents were asked if they had attended the training for Focus on Reading 3-6 Certified Trainers. A total of 32 respondents (18%) indicated they had attended this training. Not surprisingly, all 14 Certified Trainers attended, as did 9 teachers (K-6) and five members from Executive Staff.

These respondents were then asked a short series of questions regarding their satisfaction with the training workshops content, quality and the accompanying resources. Table 7 below shows the respondents' level of satisfaction with these training elements. Satisfaction is presented as *total satisfied* which comprises *very satisfied* and *satisfied* responses.

Respondents' total satisfaction was very high for the relevance/usefulness of accompanying resources (94%) and the content of the training workshops (91%). Four out of five respondents indicated they were satisfied with the quality of the training (81%). Certified Trainers and Executive staff were more satisfied with the training and support than teachers (K-6).

TABLE 7 –SATISFACTION WITH THE TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR THE CERTIFIED TRAINERS (PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS)

	TOTAL SATISFACTION	CERTIFIED TRAINERS (N=14)	EXECUTIVE (N=15)	TEACHERS (K-6) (N=9)
The <i>content</i> of the Focus on Reading 3-6 training workshops	91.0	100	100	67.7
The <i>quality</i> of the Focus on Reading 3-6 training workshops	81.0	100	80	55.6
The <i>relevance/usefulness</i> of accompanying resources	93.8	100	100	88.9

3.2 SCHOOL-BASED TRAINING BY CERTIFIED TRAINERS

All respondents, with the exception of Certified Trainers, were asked a short series of questions regarding their satisfaction with the training and support provided by their school's Focus on Reading 3-6 Certified Trainer. Table 8 below shows the respondents' level of satisfaction with these elements of the training workshop. Satisfaction is presented as *total satisfied* which comprises *very satisfied* and *satisfied* responses.

Generally, respondents indicated high levels of satisfaction with all three aspects of the training. Respondents were most satisfied with the relevance and usefulness of the accompanying resources (90%), followed by the content of the training (89%) and its quality (88%). Executive Staff and K-2 teachers were more likely to be satisfied with the training than the 3-6 Teachers.

TABLE 8 –SATISFACTION WITH THE TRAINING AND SUPPORT PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL'S FOCUS ON READING 3-6 CERTIFIED TRAINER BY ROLE (PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS)

	TOTAL SATISFACTION	EXECUTIVE	K-2 TEACHERS	3-6 TEACHERS
The <i>relevance/usefulness</i> of accompanying resources	90.2	96.9	97.2	86.2
The <i>content</i> of the training	89.0	93.8	100	81.0
The <i>quality</i> of the training	87.8	100	91.7	79.3

4 Outcomes for Teachers

4.1 IMPACT ON KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND SKILLS

All respondents were presented with a series of outcome statements relating to the impact Focus on Reading 3-6 on their knowledge, skills and attitudes. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent of this impact, with responses ranging from *major extent* through to *not at all*. These responses are presented in

Table 9, including a calculation of total impact, which comprises the combined set of *major extent* and *moderate extent* responses.

Overall, the majority of respondents reported that Focus on Reading 3-6 had an impact on their knowledge, attitudes and/or skills. Nine out of ten respondents reported impact in the following areas:

- *Deepened your understanding of comprehension strategies and the links to comprehension, vocabulary knowledge and text reading (94%)*
- *Deepened your understanding of effective teaching of reading (92%)*
- *Increased your belief in teachers' ability to improve literacy outcomes of all students (92%)*
- *Increased your belief in teachers' ability to improve literacy outcomes of low achieving/disadvantaged students (92%)*
- *Deepened your understanding of the nature and needs of literacy learners in Years 3-6 (91%)*
- *Increased your willingness to participate in shared reflection and discussion of your teaching of reading with other staff (90%)*
- *Increased your ability to translate literacy theory into practice (90%).*

The greatest impact was evident in relation to a deepened understanding of comprehension strategies and the links to comprehension, vocabulary knowledge and text reading with about two-thirds (63.5%) of respondents reporting this had impacted on them to a *major extent*.

For each outcome statement, there was only a small minority of teachers who indicated no impact at all from Focus on Reading 3-6 on their skills, attitudes and/or knowledge, and only a small proportion reported that it was *hard to say* if there had been an impact.

TABLE 9 – IMPACT ON TEACHERS’ KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND SKILLS (PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS)

IMPACT	TOTAL IMPACT	MAJOR EXTENT	MODERATE EXTENT	MINOR EXTENT	NOT AT ALL	HARD TO SAY
Deepened your understanding of comprehension strategies and the links to comprehension, vocabulary knowledge and text reading	93.8	63.5	30.3	3.9	-	2.2
Deepened your understanding of effective teaching of reading	91.6	55.1	36.5	6.7	-	1.7
Increased your belief in teachers’ ability to improve literacy outcomes of all students	91.6	48.3	43.3	4.5	2.2	1.7
Increased your belief in teachers’ ability to improve literacy outcomes of low achieving/disadvantaged students	91.5	49.4	42.1	3.9	2.8	1.7
Deepened your understanding of the nature and needs of literacy learners in Years 3-6	91.0	48.9	42.1	6.7	0.6	1.7
Increased your willingness to participate in shared reflection and discussion of your teaching of reading with other staff	90.4	50.0	40.4	4.5	2.2	2.8
Increased your ability to translate literacy theory into practice	90.4	41.0	49.4	7.3	0.6	1.7
Increased your knowledge about the latest evidence on best practice in relation to teaching reading in the classroom	89.3	51.7	37.6	9.0	-	1.7
Increased your knowledge about how students learn to read in the 3-6 years of schooling	87.1	44.4	42.7	10.1	0.6	2.2
Increased your skills in using classroom assessment information (eg the comprehension, vocabulary and text reading learning sequences) to assess students’ literacy learning needs	84.3	38.2	46.1	11.8	0.6	3.4
Increased your skills in using other data eg NAPLAN to assess students’ literacy learning needs	82.0	30.9	51.1	12.9	2.2	2.8

As shown in Table 10, the program’s reported impact varied depending on the respondents’ years of teaching experience. Respondents with three to five years’ experience were most likely to report a greater degree of positive impact on attitudes, knowledge and skills. Respondents at the beginning of their career (less than two years) and with the most experience (over 20 years) were also more likely to report a positive impact. Teachers with 6-10 years were less likely than others to report a positive impact.

TABLE 10 – IMPACT ON TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND SKILLS BY YEARS TEACHING EXPERIENCE
(PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS)

IMPACT	TOTAL IMPACT	2 YEARS OR LESS	3 – 5 YEARS	6 – 10 YEARS	11 – 20 YEARS	OVER 20 YEARS
Deepened your understanding of comprehension strategies and the links to comprehension, vocabulary knowledge and text reading	93.8	92.3	100.0	93.9	93.7	92.2
Deepened your understanding of effective teaching of reading	91.6	92.3	100.0	84.9	91.7	92.2
Increased your belief in teachers' ability to improve literacy outcomes of all students	91.6	92.3	95.0	84.9	93.7	92.2
Increased your belief in teachers' ability to improve literacy outcomes of low achieving/disadvantaged students	91.5	84.6	100.0	87.9	95.8	89.0
Deepened your understanding of the nature and needs of literacy learners in Years 3-6	91.0	92.3	90.0	87.9	91.7	92.2
Increased your ability to translate literacy theory into practice	90.4	92.3	100.0	81.8	89.6	92.2
Increased your willingness to participate in shared reflection and discussion of your teaching of reading with other staff	90.4	92.3	95.0	84.9	89.6	92.2
Increased your knowledge about the latest evidence on best practice in relation to teaching reading in the classroom	89.3	92.3	95.0	78.8	87.5	93.8
Increased your knowledge about how students learn to read in the 3-6 years of schooling	87.1	92.3	90.0	78.8	89.6	87.5
Increased your skills in using classroom assessment information (eg the comprehension, vocabulary and text reading learning sequences) to assess students' literacy learning needs	84.3	92.3	95.0	81.8	77.1	85.9
Increased your skills in using other data eg NAPLAN to assess students' literacy learning needs	82.0	76.9	75.0	75.8	79.2	90.7

The extent of reported impact was also found to vary somewhat by role, as shown in Table 11, Certified Trainers reported the highest degree of positive impact, followed by Executive Staff and Stage One teachers.

TABLE 11 – IMPACT ON TEACHERS’ KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND SKILLS BY ROLE (PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS)

IMPACT	TOTAL IMPACT	EXECUTIVE	CERTIFIED TRAINER*	STAGE ONE TEACHER (K-2)	STAGE TWO TEACHER (3-4)	STAGE THREE TEACHER (5-6)	SPECIALIST/ AIDE/ SUPPORT*
Deepened your understanding of comprehension strategies and the links to comprehension, vocabulary knowledge and text reading	93.8	96.9	100.0	97.2	93.4	92.8	84.7
Deepened your understanding of effective teaching of reading	91.6	93.8	100.0	94.5	86.7	89.3	92.4
Increased your belief in teachers’ ability to improve literacy outcomes of all students	91.6	100.0	100.0	97.2	93.3	82.2	84.6
Increased your belief in teachers’ ability to improve literacy outcomes of low achieving/disadvantaged students	91.5	96.9	100.0	94.5	96.6	89.3	84.6
Deepened your understanding of the nature and needs of literacy learners in Years 3-6	91.0	93.7	100.0	94.5	90.0	89.3	84.7
Increased your willingness to participate in shared reflection and discussion of your teaching of reading with other staff	90.4	96.9	100.0	94.5	93.3	78.6	92.3
Increased your ability to translate literacy theory into practice	90.4	96.9	100.0	91.7	90.0	89.3	77.0
Increased your knowledge about the latest evidence on best practice in relation to teaching reading in the classroom	89.3	96.9	100.0	94.4	76.7	89.3	84.7
Increased your knowledge about how students learn to read in the 3-6 years of schooling	87.1	90.7	100.0	94.4	80.0	78.6	92.4
Increased your skills in using classroom assessment information (eg the comprehension, vocabulary and text reading learning sequences)to assess students’ literacy learning needs	84.3	87.6	92.9	88.9	86.7	78.6	69.3
Increased your skills in using other data eg NAPLAN to assess students’ literacy learning needs	82.0	81.3	100.0	83.3	80.0	82.2	76.9

*NB small sample size

4.2 IMPACT ON CLASSROOM TEACHING PRACTICE

4.2.1 IMPACT ON KEY ELEMENTS OF LITERACY TEACHING PRACTICE

Respondents were asked if they have a role in *teaching* literacy in the classroom on a regular basis. The majority of respondents (80%) indicate they did have this role. These respondents were then asked a number of questions relating to the *impact* of Focus on Reading 3-6 on their literacy teaching practice.

Teachers were provided with a series of outcome statements relating to the impact of Focus on Reading 3-6 on elements of their classroom teaching practice, and were asked to indicate the extent to which Focus on Reading 3-6 had an impact on each. These responses are presented in Table 12, which

includes a calculation of *total impact*, which comprises the combined set of *major extent* and *moderate extent* responses. Overall, the large majority of respondents indicated an impact for each outcome statement (ranging from 83-94%). The areas with the highest proportion of respondents indicating impact (ie either a major or moderate impact) were:

- *Improved your ability to teach comprehension effectively in the classroom (94%)*
- *Improved your ability to use strategies that build vocabulary, knowledge and fluent text reading (92%)*
- *Improved your ability to teach comprehension effectively to individual students (92%)*
- *Improved your ability to question students in a way that demonstrates deep understanding of texts (90%).*

The greatest impact was evident in relation to improved ability to teach comprehension effectively in classroom and effectively to individual students with 55.2% and 52.4% reported this had improved to a *major extent*.

For each outcome statement, only a small minority of teachers reported *no impact* or that it was *hard to say* if there was an impact on their teaching practice, as a result of implementing Focus on Reading 3-6.

TABLE 12 – IMPACT ON CLASSROOM TEACHING PRACTICE (PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS*)

IMPACT	TOTAL IMPACT	MAJOR EXTENT	MODERATE EXTENT	MINOR EXTENT	NOT AT ALL	HARD TO SAY
Improved your ability to teach comprehension effectively in the classroom	94.4	55.2	39.2	3.5	1.4	0.7
Improved your ability to use strategies that build vocabulary, knowledge and fluent text reading	92.4	49.0	43.4	6.3	0.7	0.7
Improved your ability to teach comprehension effectively to individual students	91.6	52.4	39.2	7.0	0.7	0.7
Improved your ability to question students in a way that demonstrates deep understanding of texts	90.2	51.0	39.2	7.0	0.7	2.1
Increased your knowledge of how to cater to all literacy learning needs in the classroom	88.8	38.5	50.3	9.1	0.7	1.4
Enhanced your ability to reflect on and critique your teaching of reading	88.8	36.4	52.4	8.4	2.1	0.7
Increased your confidence in teaching reading	88.2	49.7	38.5	7.0	3.5	1.4
Increased your willingness to seek feedback on your teaching of reading from your colleagues (eg through teacher observation)	82.5	30.1	52.4	13.3	2.8	1.4

* Note this question was answered only by respondents with a regular classroom teaching role

Table 13 shows the responses according to the teachers’ level of experience. However, there is no notable variation in the extent of the reported impact on classroom teaching practices according to years’ of experience. Respondents at an early stage in their teaching practice (five years or less) were slightly more likely to report a greater degree of positive program impact on their teaching practices.

TABLE 13 – IMPACT ON CLASSROOM TEACHING PRACTICE BY YEARS TEACHING EXPERIENCE (PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS*)

IMPACT	TOTAL IMPACT	5 YEARS OR LESS	6 – 10 YEARS	11 – 20 YEARS	OVER 20 YEARS
Improved your ability to teach comprehension effectively in the classroom	94.4	95.8	90.0	97.2	93.3
Improved your ability to use strategies that build vocabulary, knowledge and fluent text reading	92.4	95.8	93.3	94.4	86.7
Improved your ability to teach comprehension effectively to individual students	91.6	91.7	86.7	97.3	88.8
Improved your ability to question students in a way that demonstrates deep understanding of texts	90.2	93.4	86.7	94.4	86.7
Increased your knowledge of how to cater to all literacy learning needs in the classroom	88.8	93.3	90.0	88.9	84.5
Enhanced your ability to reflect on and critique your teaching of reading	88.8	89.2	83.3	94.4	86.7
Increased your confidence in teaching reading	88.2	95.9	83.3	94.4	80.0
Increased your willingness to seek feedback on your teaching of reading from your colleagues (eg through teacher observation)	82.5	89.2	80.0	80.6	80.0

* Note this question was answered only by respondents with a regular classroom teaching role

4.3 IMPACT ON OVERALL LITERACY TEACHING PRACTICE

The survey questionnaire asked teachers with a regular classroom teaching role to select from a list of statements to describe the *overall impact* of Focus on Reading 3-6 on their literacy teaching practice. The responses are summarised in

Table 14 below, including an analysis by main role in implementing the program. Again, this includes a calculation of *total positive impact*, which comprises the combined set of *major extent* and *moderate extent* responses.

The total positive impact was high across all teaching roles, ranging from 93% to 100%. With the exception of specialist and support staff, over two-thirds of all respondents indicated that Focus on Reading 3-6 had had a *significant positive* impact on their literacy teaching practice.

TABLE 14 – OVERALL IMPACT OF FOCUS ON READING 3-6 ON LITERACY TEACHING PRACTICE BY ROLE (PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS*)

STATEMENT	TOTAL	EXECUTIVE	CERTIFIED TRAINER [^]	TEACHER K-2	TEACHER STAGE 2	TEACHER STAGE 3	SPECIALIST/AIDE/ OTHER SUPPORT [^]
Focus on Reading 3-6 has had a <i>significant positive</i> impact on my literacy teaching practice	70.6	66.7	90.9	77.1	76.7	66.7	37.5
Focus on Reading 3-6 has had <i>some positive</i> impact on my literacy teaching practice	25.9	26.7	9.1	22.9	16.7	33.3	62.5
Focus on Reading 3-6 has had <i>little if any positive</i> impact on my literacy teaching practice	2.8	-	-	-	6.7	-	-
Focus on Reading 3-6 has had a <i>negative</i> impact on my literacy teaching practice	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hard to say	0.7	6.7	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Total positive**</i>	96.5	93.4	100	100	93.4	100	100

* Note this question was answered only by respondents with a regular classroom teaching role

** Combined *significant positive impact* and *some positive impact* responses

[^]NB Small sample size

In line with earlier findings on the impact of Focus on Reading 3-6 on key elements of literacy teaching, respondents in the early stages of their teaching careers (five years or less experience) were more likely to report a greater degree of positive impact on their teaching practice resulting from the program than those respondents in the middle to later stages of their career (see Table 15).

TABLE 15 – OVERALL IMPACT OF FOCUS ON READING 3-6 ON LITERACY TEACHING PRACTICE BY YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE (PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS*)

STATEMENT	TOTAL	5 YEARS OR LESS	6 – 10 YEARS	11 – 20 YEARS	OVER 20 YEARS
Focus on Reading 3-6 has had a <i>significant positive</i> impact on my literacy teaching practice	70.6	79.2	66.7	69.4	68.9
Focus on Reading 3-6 has had <i>some positive</i> impact on my literacy teaching practice	25.9	20.9	23.3	27.8	28.9
Focus on Reading 3-6 has had <i>little if any positive</i> impact on my literacy teaching practice	2.8	-	10.0	2.8	0
Focus on Reading 3-6 has had a <i>negative</i> impact on my literacy teaching practice	-	-	-	-	-
Hard to say	0.7	-	-	-	2.2
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Total positive**</i>	87.0	90.9	68.8	84.9	93.3

* Note this question was answered only by respondents with a regular classroom teaching role

** Combined *significant positive impact* and *some positive impact* responses

4.3.1 REASONS FOR IMPACT ON LITERACY TEACHING PRACTICE

Respondents were asked to specify why they felt the Focus on Reading 3-6 program had this impact on their literacy teaching practice. The most common responses provided by those respondents reporting a *significant positive impact* or *some positive impact* on their literacy teaching practice included the following:

- The introduction to new and/or greater range of strategies to teach comprehension (42 mentions):

This program has given me some extra teaching and learning activities that are new and exciting for my students.

The program has given me extra strategies for teaching comprehension skills for students to understand texts better.

It has taught me new strategies to teaching reading and different ways of teaching students reading effectively.

The program has given me a wider range of 'tools' and strategies to use to increase student engagement and understanding in literacy.

- The explicit and focused nature of the program encourages staff to be more explicit in their teaching (31 mentions):

Gives me improved confidence to be explicit in teaching comprehension strategies.

An explicit and systematic way of teaching.

My teaching is more explicit...

I can see the children are much more motivated because they are given explicit instruction...my explicit instruction techniques are also being utilised in other KLAS.

The program has demonstrated the importance of explicit instruction when teaching.

- Better understanding of comprehension and reading (25 mentions):

I now teach comprehension not simply assess it!

I now understand how to actually teach students to comprehend, to really break things down and get a deep understanding.

- Greater understanding of students' needs and how to address those in teaching literacy (23 mentions):

Focus on Reading has helped me to better understand the nature of the learners in my classroom and also the interests of my learners.

It has made me more aware of what I am teaching and the various ways that students learn.

Broadened my understanding of different ways to teach reading and to focus on the needs of individual students.

I have a deeper understanding of student requirements and greater knowledge of how to address student requirements.

- Expanding students vocabulary and ability to talk about their reading and providing students with strategies to enhance their comprehension skills (17 mentions):

Students are more engaged and using the language the comprehension. They are more equipped to use a variety of strategies to gain a deeper understanding of the text and are now able to discuss their understanding more adeptly.

In the language that my students use to describe/summarise/analyse text...The improved comprehension results in my students...Their improved vocabulary skills...Greater in depth, sustained discussion about texts - whole class and in literacy circles.

Other reasons included:

- greater discussion and sharing among teachers (15 mentions)
- evidence-based strategies and research (12 mentions)
- changes to planning and programming and the use of the literacy block (8 mentions)
- use of data, undertaking more analysis and assessment (5 mentions)
- professional development for teachers (5 mentions)
- increased confidence for teachers (5 mentions)
- other - students more engaged, more reflective practice among teachers, questioning techniques, modelling strategies, increased resources (35 mentions).

4.3.2 KEY CHANGES TO TEACHING PRACTICE

Respondents who experienced either a *significant positive* or *some positive* impact on the way they teach were also asked to list the *three key changes to their teaching practice* that have occurred since implementing Focus on Reading 3-6.

The most commonly mentioned change to teaching practice was:

- explicit teaching according to needs/ use of differentiation to target students (70 mentions, 17%)
- use of the 'super six' strategies (65 mentions, 16%)
- use of more comprehension strategies for teachers (43 mentions, 10%)
- better understanding of comprehension (42 mentions, 5%)
- positive impact on students learning (40 mentions, 4%).

TABLE 16 – KEY CHANGES TO TEACHING PRACTICE

CHANGE	TOTAL MENTIONS	% OF TOTAL MENTIONS
Explicit teaching according to needs/ use of differentiation to target students	70	16.9
Use of the 'super six' strategies	65	15.7
Use of more comprehension strategies for teachers	43	10.4
Better understanding of comprehension	42	10.1
Positive impact on students learning	40	9.7
Specific strategies eg guided reading,	30	7.2
Planning/programming/lesson structure	25	6.0
Greater discussion among teachers	22	5.3
Linking comprehension strategies across all KLA's	21	5.1
Data analysis & assessment	18	4.3
Implementation of reading groups	14	3.4
Focusing on fluency/reading	10	2.4
Professional development	10	2.4
Using visual displays/creating walls that teach	10	2.4
Questioning techniques	8	1.9
Modelling	7	1.7
Resources and use of technology in the classroom	5	1.2
Goal setting with students	4	1.0
Other	13	3.1
Total	414	100%

4.4 CRITICAL FACTORS

Respondents with a regular classroom teaching role were presented with a set of the different elements of the Focus on Reading 3-6 program and were asked to rate how *important* each of the elements had been in improving their teaching of reading. These responses are presented in Table 17 below, including a calculation of *total importance*, which comprises the combined set of *very important* and *important* responses. The factors deemed important in improving reading teaching by the highest proportion of teachers were (in terms of *total importance*):

- *The amount of time you were given to participate in professional development workshops and activities (92%)*
- *Ability to reflect on and critique your literacy teaching practice (92%)*
- *In-school support from the Focus on Reading 3-6 Certified Trainer (90%)*
- *Access to useful professional development resources (eg recommended articles, literacy teaching guides for reading comprehension, networks etc) (90%)*
- *The module workshops (90%).*

The greatest importance was attached to the amount of time given to participate in professional development workshops and activities and in-school support from the Focus on Reading Trainer with 60.1% and 55.9% of respondents respectively rating this as *very important*.

The element *least* nominated as an important factor in improving reading teaching was having *access to online forums/blogs etc (34%)*. Only a very small percentage of respondents reported that these critical factors were *not at all important or had no improvement in their teaching of reading*.

TABLE 17 – CRITICAL FACTORS IN IMPROVING LITERACY TEACHING (PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS*)

FACTOR	TOTAL IMPORTANCE	VERY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	NOT VERY IMPORTANT	NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT	NO IMPROVEMENT IN MY TEACHING OF READING	NOT APPLICABLE/ HARD TO SAY
The amount of time you were given to participate in professional development workshops and activities	91.6	60.1	31.5	4.9	-	0.7	2.8
Ability to reflect on and critique your literacy teaching practice	91.6	47.6	44.1	3.5	2.1	-	2.8
In-school support from the Focus on Reading 3-6 Certified Trainer	89.5	55.9	33.6	4.9	2.8	0.7	2.1
Access to useful professional development resources (eg recommended articles, literacy teaching guides for reading comprehension, networks etc)	89.5	41.3	48.3	7.0	1.4	0.7	1.4
The module workshops	89.5	44.1	45.5	6.3	0.7	1.4	2.1
Observing other teachers modelling lessons or strategies	87.4	49.7	37.8	5.6	2.8	-	4.2
Ability to obtain feedback on your literacy teaching practice through teacher observation	81.1	29.4	51.7	7.7	3.5	1.4	6.3
Between-session/ module implementation tasks	67.8	18.2	49.7	18.9	4.9	4.9	3.5
Access to online forums/blogs etc	33.6	6.3	27.3	34.3	16.1	6.3	9.8

* Note this question was answered only by respondents with a regular classroom teaching role

5 Student outcomes

5.1 OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

The questionnaire sought all respondents' views on the impact of Focus on Reading on students at their school. Respondents were asked to rate the *overall effectiveness* of Focus on Reading in improving literacy outcomes for students. Responses are summarised in Table 18 below, including an analysis of these results by school role.

TABLE 18 – OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF FOCUS ON READING 3-6 IN IMPROVING LITERACY OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS BY ROLE (PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS*)

EFFECTIVENESS	TOTAL	FOR CERTIFIED TRAINER*	EXECUTIVE	TEACHER K-2	TEACHER STAGE 2	TEACHER STAGE 3	SPECIALIST/AIDE/OTHER SUPPORT*
Very effective	40.4	50.0	46.9	33.3	36.7	50.0	38.5
Effective	48.9	50.0	46.9	58.3	53.3	39.3	38.5
Neither effective nor ineffective	3.4	-	-	5.6	-	3.6	15.4
Not very effective	1.1	-	3.1	-	3.3	-	-
Not at all effective	0.6	-	-	-	3.3	-	-
Too soon to say	3.9	-	3.1	2.8	3.3	3.6	7.7
Hard to say	1.7	-	-	-	-	3.6	-
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Total effective**</i>	<i>89.3</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>93.8</i>	<i>91.7</i>	<i>90.0</i>	<i>89.3</i>	<i>76.9</i>

* Note small sample size

**Combined *effective* and *very effective* responses

Overall, respondents in all roles were positive about the effect that Focus on Reading 3-6 had on improving literacy outcomes for students. As shown in Table 18, Certified Trainers (100%), Executive Staff (94%) and Stage One Teachers (92%) all rated the program as effective. This reduced ever so slightly for Teachers of Stage Two (90%), and Stage Three (89%). Specialist and Support staff were the least likely to report that it was very effective or effective (77%).

Table 19 presents an analysis of these results by number of years teaching experience. Respondents in the earlier stages of their career (two years or less and three to five years' experience) were more likely to report finding the program effective (92% and 100% total effectiveness respectively).

TABLE 19 – OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF FOCUS ON READING IN IMPROVING LITERACY OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS BY YEARS' TEACHING EXPERIENCE (PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS*)

EFFECTIVENESS	TOTAL	2 YEARS OR LESS**	3 - 5 YEARS	6 – 10 YEARS	11 – 20 YEARS	OVER 20 YEARS
Very effective	40.4	53.8	35.0	39.4	31.3	46.9
Effective	48.9	38.5	65.0	48.5	54.2	42.2
Neither effective nor ineffective	3.4	7.7	-	6.1	-	4.7
Not very effective	1.1	-	-	3.0	-	1.6
Not at all effective	0.6	-	-	-	2.1	-
Too soon to say	3.9	-	-	-	8.3	4.7
Hard to say	1.7	-	-	3.0	4.2	-
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>Total effective*</i>	89.3	92.3	100	87.9	85.4	89.1

* Combined effective and very effective responses

**Note small sample size

Table 20 presents results according to the location and size of the school at which respondents worked. Respondents from schools in metropolitan areas were more likely to report finding Focus on Reading 3-6 effective in improving student literacy outcomes (92%) than respondents in regional (87%) or rural schools (86%). A higher proportion of respondents working in large schools (93%) reported that Focus on Reading 3-6 had been effective for students compared to teachers in medium size (87%) and small school (89%).

TABLE 20 – OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF FOCUS ON READING IN IMPROVING LITERACY OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS BY SCHOOL SIZE AND LOCATION (PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS*)

EFFECTIVENESS	TOTAL	SCHOOL LOCATION			SCHOOL SIZE (NO. STUDENTS)		
		METRO	REGIONAL CITY OR TOWN	RURAL/ REMOTE	LESS THAN 200	200 – 399	400 OR MORE
Very effective	40.4	36.7	41.3	47.6	44.4	40.0	37.0
Effective	48.9	55.6	45.7	38.1	44.4	47.1	55.6
Neither effective nor ineffective	3.4	1.1	4.3	7.1	3.7	4.3	1.9
Not very effective	1.1	-	4.3	-	1.9	-	1.9
Not at all effective	0.6	1.1	-	-	-	-	1.9
Too soon to say	3.9	3.3	4.3	4.8	5.6	4.3	1.9
Hard to say	1.7	2.2	-	2.4	-	4.3	-
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Total effective*</i>	89.3	92.2	87.0	85.7	88.9	87.1	92.6

* Combined effective and very effective responses

5.2 OBSERVED IMPACTS

Teachers were asked to indicate the extent of *improvement* observed in areas relating to students' engagement with and capability in literacy since the introduction of Focus on Reading 3-6. These responses are presented in Table 22 below, including a calculation of *total improvement* which comprises the combined set of *significant improvement* and *some improvement* responses.

Overall, respondents were positive about their observed improvement. At least four out of five respondents reported that Focus on Reading 3-6 had been *effective* or *very effective* for all but one of the engagement and capability statements. Respondents were most likely to agree that there had been improvement in *students' willingness to discuss what they have read* and *students' use of effective strategies to assist them understand and read text* (both 93%). Respondents were least likely to agree that they had observed improvement in *students' enthusiasm for their other schoolwork (beyond literacy)* since the program's introduction (75%).

There was little variation by role, as reported for other survey questions. Certified Trainers were the most likely to report improvement, whereas specialist and support staff were the least likely to report observed improvement for each of the engagement and capability statements.

TABLE 21– TOTAL IMPROVEMENT OR CHANGE OBSERVED IN STUDENTS SINCE THE INTRODUCTION OF FOCUS ON READING 3-6 (PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS)

	TOTAL IMPROVEMENT	CERTIFIED TRAINER*	EXECUTIVE	TEACHER K-2	TEACHER STAGE 2	TEACHER STAGE	SPECIALIST/AIDE/ OTHER SUPPORT*
Students' willingness to discuss what they have read	92.7	100.0	93.8	94.4	93.3	100.0	61.5
Students' use of effective strategies to assist them understand and read text	92.7	100.0	93.8	94.4	93.3	96.4	69.2
The variety of texts read	89.3	100.0	96.9	86.1	90.0	89.3	76.9
Students' ability to read for meaning	89.3	100.0	93.8	88.9	90.0	89.3	69.2
Students' confidence in reading	89.9	100.0	90.6	97.2	86.7	89.3	69.2
Students' understanding of what is expected of them when they read	89.9	100.0	96.9	91.7	90.0	89.3	76.9
Students' enthusiasm for reading	88.8	100.0	93.8	94.4	86.7	82.1	76.9
Students' reading skills	87.6	92.9	93.8	88.9	86.7	89.3	69.2
The complexity of texts read	86.0	100.0	90.6	83.3	90.0	85.7	61.5
The volume of reading undertaken	86.0	100.0	87.5	91.7	90.0	78.6	69.2
Student's literacy levels more broadly	80.3	92.9	87.5	86.1	83.3	71.4	61.5
Students' enthusiasm for their other schoolwork (beyond literacy)	75.3	78.6	81.3	83.3	73.3	78.6	46.2

* Note small sample size

5.3 STUDENT GROUPS

5.3.1 EFFECTIVENESS FOR DIFFERENT STUDENT GROUPS

Teachers were asked to rate the effectiveness of Focus on Reading 3-6 in improving the educational outcomes for a number of different student groups. These responses are presented in Table 22 below, including a calculation of *total effective* responses, which comprises the combined set of *very effective* and *somewhat effective* responses.

TABLE 22 – EFFECTIVENESS OF FOCUS ON READING 3-6 FOR DIFFERENT STUDENT GROUPS (PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS)

STUDENT GROUP	TOTAL EFFECTIVE	VERY EFFECTIVE	SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE	NOT VERY EFFECTIVE	NOT AT ALL EFFECTIVE	NOT APPLICABLE/HARD TO SAY
All students	93.8	51.1	42.7	1.1	-	5.1
Students <u>below</u> NAPLAN benchmarks	81.5	43.8	37.6	2.8	0.6	15.2
Students <u>above</u> NAPLAN benchmarks	80.9	39.9	41.0	2.8	1.1	15.2
Students with a learning disability	70.2	19.7	50.6	10.1	1.7	18.0
ESL/LBOTE students	64.0	27.0	37.1	2.8	0.6	32.6
Aboriginal students	51.1	19.7	31.5	1.1	0.6	47.2

As seen in Table 22:

- Nine out of ten respondents indicated that the program had been *very effective* or *somewhat effective* for *all students* (94%).
- A high proportion of respondents also indicated that Focus on Reading 3-6 was effective for *students below NAPLAN benchmarks* (82%) and *students above NAPLAN benchmarks* (81%).
- 70% of respondents reported effectiveness for students with a learning disability, however 10% of respondents indicated that Focus on Reading 3-6 was *not very effective* for this student group and 18% said it was *not applicable* or *hard to say*.
- Respondents were least likely to report that the program was very effective or somewhat effective for ESL/LBOTE students (64%) and for Aboriginal students (51%). It is important to note the high proportion of respondents indicating this question was *not applicable* or it was *hard to say*.

5.3.2 EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

Respondents were asked to report their view on the relative effectiveness of Focus on Reading 3-6 in improving literacy outcomes for *Aboriginal students*. These responses are presented in Table 23. Forty-three per cent of respondents indicated that they were *not sure* or it was *hard to say*. A further 17% reported that this question was *not applicable as there are no Aboriginal students participating in Focus on Reading 3-6 at my school*.

Of the 41 % of respondents which did report on the program's effectiveness for Aboriginal students compared to non-Aboriginal students:

- 39% said it was as effective as for non-Aboriginal students (ie no difference)

- only 2% said it was more effective
- 1% indicated it was less effective.

TABLE 23 – EFFECTIVENESS OF FOCUS ON READING 3-6 FOR ABORIGINAL STUDENTS COMPARED TO NON-ABORIGINAL STUDENTS (PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS)

EFFECTIVENESS	TOTAL
More effective than for non-Aboriginal students	1.7
As effective as for non-Aboriginal students (ie no difference)	38.8
Less effective than for non-Aboriginal students	0.6
Not sure/ hard to say	42.7
Not applicable as there are no Aboriginal students participating in Focus on Reading 3-6 at my school	16.9
TOTAL	100.0

Teachers were asked to specify the reason for their response. (*Note – open-ended question not asked of the 29 respondents who selected ‘Not applicable’ in Q24a*). The most common reasons noted by respondents included:

- Focus on Reading strategies cater for the needs of all students/ there is a similar profile of results for both groups (54 mentions):

I believe that the program reaches all students because of its diversity of approaches.

Focus on Reading is a broad, non-culturally specific approach to teaching. The range of skills and strategies it encompasses will engage all learning styles.

I believe the variety of strategies that can be used have allowed me to effectively differentiate for the needs of all students.

Both groups of students have improved and increased their comprehension of texts with no obvious difference between the groups.

Each student has reacted positively to the Focus on Reading strategy. All students, whether they are of Aboriginal descent or not, have been engaged and have had some improvement in their reading and comprehension.

- Small cohort of high-performing Aboriginal students (10 mentions):

The Aboriginal student I have in my classroom is in the top reading group that consist of students one grade level above him.

- Positive response to interactive learning approach/ class discussion (7 mentions):

It involves students discussing and valuing their opinions. The format reinforces informal learning approaches which Aboriginal students respond positively to.

All students are encouraged to be involved in discussions and talking to partners gives reluctant students ideas to participate in discussion. More discussion which gives students a greater general knowledge and respect of all cultures and ideas.

- Range of new reading strategies available to students (7 mentions):

They have been encouraged to read with new strategies which they did not have before. With the new strategies they are more willing to answer questions relating to what they read or what their partner shared with them.

It has given Aboriginal students more belief in their reading ability... they are using the learning strategies and their reading has improved.

- Use of culturally relevant texts (3 mentions):

I ensure that their culture is incorporated into the texts that we access so all children benefit.

- Positive response to modelled/ explicit teaching (2 mentions):

Modelled teaching is a key focus of the implementation and that explicit instruction supports equally.

- Small cohort of Aboriginal students – unable to comment on relative effectiveness (62 mentions).
- Not sure/ data not available to compare results (25 mentions).

5.3.3 OTHER IMPACTS/ OUTCOMES FOR ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

The survey questionnaire then asked these respondents if there were other impacts or outcomes (either positive or negative) that they have observed in Aboriginal students participating in Focus on Reading 3-6. *Note –question not asked for the 29 respondents who selected 'Not applicable' in Q24a.*

Of the remaining 149 respondents, only 42 provided a specific answer to this question. The most common responses provided included:

- Increased engagement/enthusiasm for reading (19 mentions):

A desire to read for pleasure, particularly with the more competent students. One of my poorer readers is very keen and we are always searching out suitable, age-appropriate readers.

They are, along with the majority of my class, excited at the prospect of Reading Groups and are disappointed on the occasions that Reading Groups become interrupted.

They have shown a greater interest in wanting to be able to read better. They can see it as an achievable goal.

- Increased student confidence/self-esteem (10 mentions):

They are becoming more confident because of the modelling activities being relevant to learning.

A positive attitude to reading and more self confidence in general has been noticed.

- Increased participation in group discussions (7 mentions):

The strategies of FOR do provide scaffolds for the development of rich conversation which is great for the Aboriginal students who are quiet and don't always want to participate in discussions.

Their willingness to answer questions and respond to the book in a group setting.

- Selection of broader range of texts based on interest (5 mentions):

More eager to engage in reading as it is based on their needs and what they are interested in.

The use of multi-modal, diverse text sets works well with Indigenous kids.

- Impact of home factors – parental support/attendance (3 mentions):

Expectations of parents had a significant effect on student learning.

I have found that in class my one student works well and has a lot of ability with reading. However there is a limit to the books that are sent home as they are rarely returned so there is limited reading for pleasure outside of school.

6 Impact on the school

Teachers were presented with a series of statements relating to the impact of Focus on Reading 3-6 on school literacy practices, the level of support and guidance for implementing Focus on Reading 3-6 in the school, and the sustainability of the program beyond the funding period.

Respondents were asked to express how strongly they *agreed* or *disagreed* with each statement. The responses are presented in Table 24 and responses are analysed by the school location and size in Table 25.

SCHOOL PRACTICE

Around nine out of ten respondents indicated that they *strongly agree* or *agree* with the four statements related to school practice. Over half the respondents indicated *strong agreement* with the following impact statements:

- *Through participating in Focus on Reading 3-6, teaching of reading in my school is now more explicit and focussed (54%).*
- *Most teachers in my school are using the teaching strategies they learned through Focus on Reading 3-6 in their everyday teaching across the KLAs(53%).*

Respondents working at schools in metropolitan areas were more likely to agree with all four statements than those from regional or rural/remote schools, the greatest difference being for the impact statement that *since the introduction of Focus on Reading 3-6, there is now more clarity about my school's goals and expectations re reading outcome (97% in metropolitan schools cf 86% in rural/remote schools).*

SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

In terms of impact on support and guidance, a high proportion of respondents indicated agreement with statements on *leadership (90%), support and guidance on how to implement Focus on Reading 3-6(86%)* and that support for the program at their school has grown over time.

Respondents were less like to indicate agreement with the statement regarding NSW DEC's training for Focus on Reading 3-6 Certified Trainers. Only two-thirds of respondents (64%) agreed this was well planned and implemented by the Department. However, it should be noted that 15% of respondents reported that it was hard to say and 14% indicated they neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement.

Respondents from metropolitan schools were more likely to agree that *there is strong leadership support for Focus on Reading 3-6 in my school(96%)* than respondents from regional schools (87%) and rural remote schools (81%).

Respondents in regional schools were more likely to agree that *NSW DEC's training for Focus on Reading 3-6 Certified Trainers was well planned and implemented by the Department(70%)* than those teaching in rural remote schools (62%) or metropolitan schools (61%).

SUSTAINABILITY AND VALUE

A high proportion of respondents (92%) agreed that they would *recommend the use of Focus on Reading 3-6 in other schools: 62% of respondents strongly agreed* with this statement.

Respondents were less optimistic about the sustainability of the program. Nonetheless, three-quarters of respondents indicated that *there is a clear pathway for sustaining Focus on Reading 3-6 improvements/approach in the school beyond the funding period(76%).*

Respondents from regional schools were most likely to *recommend the use of Focus on Reading 3-6 in other schools (96%)* and also more likely to agree that *there is a clear pathway for sustaining Focus on Reading 3-6 improvements/approach in the school beyond the funding period(80%).*

TABLE 24 – AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS ABOUT IMPACT OF FOCUS ON READING 3-6 ON THE SCHOOL
(PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS)

STATEMENT	TOTAL AGREEMENT*	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	HARD TO SAY
School practices							
Since the introduction of Focus on Reading 3-6, there is now more clarity about my school's goals and expectations re reading outcomes	92.7	47.8	44.9	6.2	0.6	-	0.6
Focus on Reading 3-6 has resulted in greater transparency and consistency in the way literacy is taught in my school	91.6	47.2	44.4	5.1	0.6	-	2.8
Through participating in Focus on Reading 3-6, teaching of reading in my school is now more explicit and focussed	89.9	53.9	36.0	6.7	0.6	-	2.8
Most teachers in my school are using the teaching strategies they learned through Focus On Reading 3-6 in their everyday teaching across the KLAs	88.2	53.4	34.8	6.2	1.1	-	4.5
Support and guidance							
There is strong leadership support for Focus on Reading 3-6 in my school	89.9	56.7	33.1	5.1	3.4	0.6	1.1
I received good support and guidance on how to implement Focus on Reading 3-6 in my class/school	86.0	48.3	37.6	5.1	4.5	1.7	2.8
Support for Focus on Reading 3-6 at my school has grown over time	81.5	42.7	38.8	14.0	2.2	0.6	1.7
NSW DEC's training for Focus on Reading 3-6 Certified Trainers was well planned and implemented by the Department	63.5	23.6	39.9	13.5	5.1	2.8	15.2
Sustainability and value							
I would recommend the use of Focus on Reading 3-6 in other schools	92.1	61.2	30.6	3.9	1.1	1.1	1.7
There is a clear pathway for sustaining Focus on Reading 3-6 improvements/approach in the school beyond the funding period	76.4	34.8	41.6	12.4	6.2	1.1	3.9

* Total Agreement' comprises *strongly agree* and *agree* responses

TABLE 25 – AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS ABOUT IMPACT OF FOCUS ON READING 3-6 ON THE SCHOOL BY SCHOOL LOCATION AND SIZE (PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS)

STATEMENT	TOTAL AGREEMENT	SCHOOL LOCATION			SCHOOL SIZE (NO. STUDENTS)		
		METRO	REGIONAL CITY OR TOWN	RURAL/ REMOTE	LESS THAN 200	200 – 399	400 OR MORE
School practices							
Since the introduction of Focus on Reading 3-6, there is now more clarity about my school's goals and expectations re reading outcomes	92.7	96.7	91.3	85.7	92.6	92.9	92.6
Focus on Reading 3-6 has resulted in greater transparency and consistency in the way literacy is taught in my school	91.6	93.3	91.3	88.1	92.6	91.4	90.7
Through participating in Focus on Reading 3-6, teaching of reading in my school is now more explicit and focussed	89.9	91.1	89.1	88.1	94.4	88.6	87.0
Most teachers in my school are using the teaching strategies they learned through Focus On Reading 3-6 in their everyday teaching across the KLAs	88.2	88.9	87.0	88.1	90.7	92.9	79.6
Support and guidance							
There is strong leadership support for Focus on Reading 3-6 in my school	89.9	95.6	87.0	81.0	88.9	88.6	92.6
I received good support and guidance on how to implement Focus on Reading 3-6 in my class/school	86.0	87.8	84.8	83.3	87.0	82.9	88.9
Support for Focus on Reading 3-6 at my school has grown over time	81.5	83.3	78.3	81.0	81.5	85.7	75.9
NSW DEC's training for Focus on Reading 3-6 Certified Trainers was well planned and implemented by the Department	63.5	61.1	69.6	61.9	70.4	64.3	55.6
Sustainability							
I would recommend the use of Focus on Reading 3-6 in other schools	92.1	95.6	89.1	88.1	92.6	90.0	94.4
There is a clear pathway for sustaining Focus on Reading 3-6 improvements/approach in the school beyond the funding period	76.4	80.0	67.4	78.6	77.8	68.6	85.2

7 Future improvements to Focus on Reading 3-6

The final section of the survey questionnaire asked respondents if they could think of anyway that Focus on Reading 3-6, or its implementation, could be improved. Thirty-eight respondents commented on how they thought the program could be improved. In summary, these comments and suggestions related to:

- Practical classroom programming, observation and support (11 comments):

More time given for teachers to observe one another teaching and to mentor one another.

More ideas have to be given for what it looks like in the classroom, we kind of got to the end of the training and everyone was still unsure about where to next or what was the expectation.

The teaching of the modules was very bland and confusing. The hands-on teaching and learning activities were fantastic.

More time given for teachers to observe successful lessons and activities and strategies implemented in different classrooms. Also more time given for stage/grade teams to plan and assess together to ensure/share a range of engaging activities that cater to individual students and ways for them to be assessed using consistent teacher judgement.

Compiled lesson resources and ideas for teachers. List of good texts on comprehension for teachers. Scrap the in-between tasks.

The facilitator who can demonstrate a range of strategies and routines for colleagues has a greater chance of sustaining commitment beyond the initial training period. If teachers see the facilitators showing how something operates in the classroom environment they align more with its principles as they see it operating in 'real' learning spaces with students. Away from the conference room, the classroom reality impresses most of what is taught is seen in action.

- Suggested improvements and developments to the program (9 comments):

I would like to see a greater focus on writing incorporated into the course.

Focus on reading K-2 and related to students with special needs

A K to 2 Focus on Reading could be implemented and married with the Best Start Program. Also a Focus on Reading Program could be devised for students with special needs.

Continued support to all the teachers and providing more workshops and resources.

Continued training and revision and recommendation of quality resources.

Broader access for more people to be involved in training and contact with other schools implementing it.

- Revision to the training modules and tasks (9 comments)

The modules and workshops could be organised more efficiently, with learning activities focussing more on practical teaching and programming ideas.

Some 'tweaking' with the modules and incorporating Phase 3 into Phase 1 and 2. Sharing some programming ideas as to what it might look like in classrooms.

Review the number of between-session tasks.

Modify some of the slides in some modules for staff depending on their levels of professional competence.

Review the online reading extracts for clarity and professional presentation.

Cut down the vast amount of content, particularly the professional reading, to only the KEY articles as teachers struggled to cope with these extra demands. The resource folders are very rarely used by teachers as they do not contain many 'usable' resources. They have been 'left on the shelf' after completion of the program.

Modules be more Australian-based. They had a distinctly U.S.A. look about them.

- Training related feedback and suggestions (7 comments):

The trainer needs to be more than one step ahead of staff so that questions can be clarified by them more effectively.

Catch-up sessions for teachers who have missed some key elements of the training so that 3/4 of their training is not disregarded because they didn't get to all sessions!

Two trainers should have been trained - it was a huge burden for one person to carry, especially through the tough initial stages which challenged teachers.

Teachers who have been through the process and have seen the improvements should be the new wave of trainers, as they have been through all the ups and downs of implementation.

Can be implemented at a slower pace and be given to all staff not just those teaching 3-6. If you are to achieve whole school focus then the whole school must at least be offered training so that everyone can have a common language.

- Future program funding and sustainable, ongoing delivery (three comments):

Keep the funding running so new staff members are trained up and to allow professional sharing and time off for planning with stage buddies can continue.

Have a quick guide to introduce new teachers to the main concepts of FOR and a plan of how to get started while waiting for training.

Time must be made available for teachers to plan together - it would be impossible without this time. Catch up sessions or an overview of sessions that pick out the most important parts should be available for new teachers to FoR schools.

- Other comments re program delivery (three comments):

New teachers to the school that started half way through the program got no training but still expected to teach it.

Too many changes expected to be implemented too quickly.

It was extremely rushed and there seemed to be a drive to push the FOR through in a hurry which in retrospect caused much anxiety amongst staff who were already working extremely hard. I believe that it was somewhat like pushing through mindsets and obstacles that naturally prevent staff from jumping on board wholeheartedly. If it had not been for support from my stage team and being able to approach one of the trainers with my concerns, this FOR time would be viewed as a hideous assignment forced on us by the leadership above us. I struggled to get my head around all the assigned tasks and changes at the same time as programming and assessing and reporting.

Sydney

Level 21, 321 Kent Street
Sydney, NSW 2000
Tel: +612 8233 9900
Fax: +612 8233 9966

Brisbane

Level 12, 120 Edward Street
Brisbane, QLD 4000
Tel: +617 3007 3800
Fax: +617 3007 3811

Melbourne

Level 12, 120 Collins Street
Melbourne, VIC 3000
Tel: +613 8663 4888
Fax: +613 8663 4999

Perth

Level 1, 55 St Georges Terrace
Perth WA 6000
Tel: +618 9346 0500
Fax: +618 9221 1779

Australia • Asia • Middle East
www.urbis.com.au
info@urbis.com.au