



Accelerated Literacy

National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy

A total of 147 schools in NSW participated in a range of literacy and numeracy programs offered under the National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy (NPLN). *Accelerated Literacy* is one of the programs evaluated by the Student Engagement and Program Evaluation Bureau.

Accelerated Literacy

Accelerated Literacy is a research-based Kindergarten to Year 12 literacy teaching methodology designed to be implemented with whole-class groups. *Accelerated Literacy* leads learners through intensive exploration of age-appropriate texts using an explicit and systematic sequence of teaching strategies. The approach has application across the curriculum and across all achievement levels in a class.

Twenty-eight National Partnership schools implemented *Accelerated Literacy* as their whole-class intervention. Many of these schools have a high proportion of Aboriginal students.

Key findings of the evaluation

Implementation and training

Implementation and models of training varied across NSW.

- Principals highlighted the importance of being able to choose the program to be implemented within the school, rather than having the choice made for them.
- Training for staff was generally offered in blocks of two days with a number of weeks between each block, usually over a term.
- Training by regional trained tutors was seen to be efficient and cost effective, as opposed to the high cost of training by private providers.
- Training as a group was effective in promoting collegial support.
- Training all staff (executive, teachers and support staff) in the school led to greater consistency in literacy teaching, embedding effective practice and improved outcomes for students.
- Implementation across the whole school was far more effective than using *Accelerated Literacy* only with particular classes or stages.
- Teachers trained as *Accelerated Literacy* tutors and mentors within schools to provide professional development and support for staff provided the most effective ongoing support.

Effects for students

Principals, school leaders, teachers, students and parents were all positive about the impact of *Accelerated Literacy* on student reading outcomes.

Effects for students continued

- Gains in reading scores were observed for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in both NAPLAN and National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy assessments.
- Teachers concluded that *Accelerated Literacy* is effective for students regardless of ability, gender, or cultural background.
- Students believed that their reading skills had improved through *Accelerated Literacy*.
- Parents commented that their children's text selection was now more thoughtful and age-appropriate, and enjoyment had increased.

Teacher perspectives

Overall, teachers commented on the effectiveness and benefits of incorporating the *Accelerated Literacy* approach into their teaching practice, across the curriculum.

- In schools where all staff were trained in *Accelerated Literacy* there was a common feeling of being able to share, support, collaborate and plan towards the same goals.
- Teachers report an increased theoretical understanding of the interrelationship of all aspects of literacy, especially reading and writing.
- Teachers reported increased knowledge and confidence in identifying student needs through data analysis.
- Teachers reported increased confidence in their capacity to teach reading at the same stage level to the whole class.
- Teachers indicated that increased professional dialogue occurred across the school. Sharing of ideas and resources has increased.
- Teachers reported renewed enthusiasm for teaching in general, and their capacity to use newly-learned *Accelerated Literacy* strategies in other subject areas.
- Teachers concluded that reading improvement may be attributed to background knowledge scaffolding, text selection, examination of author purpose and scaffolded questioning techniques.

Impacts in schools

The introduction of *Accelerated Literacy* is reported to have had an effect on school culture.

- Principals reported increased leadership capacity throughout the school.
- School literacy leaders identified increased consistency of literacy practices across all classes.

- Teachers reported they are more willing and able to contribute to whole-school literacy planning and to participate in whole-school monitoring of student performance through the use of data.
- *Accelerated Literacy* has produced notable changes in school culture. Most importantly, teachers indicated increased commitment and enthusiasm to teaching, and collegial trust has increased in all schools.

Sustainability

Four factors are identified as being critical to the sustainability of *Accelerated Literacy* in schools, beyond the funding period:

- ongoing commitment and support from the school principal and leadership team
- embedding changes in practice for teachers, with support for ongoing collaboration, planning, unit development and lesson study
- a whole-school (K-6) approach leading to ease of transition from year to year for students, and consistency for teachers
- ensuring a strategy for ongoing professional learning and training of new teachers.

The majority of teachers stated that the strategies of *Accelerated Literacy* were well incorporated in their practice and they would continue to use the approach.

The majority of school staff were confident that *Accelerated Literacy* could be sustained beyond the funding period, and a number of schools were able to articulate plans for doing so.

Further Information

Dr Susan Harriman
Manager, Evaluation Practice
02 92445199
susan.harriman@det.nsw.edu.au

Meg Dione-Rodgers
Senior Evaluation officer
02 92445168
meg.dione@det.nsw.edu.au