Leadership with a Purpose: Nine Case Studies of Schools in Tasmania and Victoria Where the Principal Had Undertaken the Principals as Literacy Leaders (PALL) Program

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Abstract

This Australian research project involved case study research during 2014 in five Tasmanian and four Victorian schools where their principals had completed the five leadership professional development modules of the Principals as Literacy Leaders (PALL) program during 2013. The purpose of the case study research was to gather data about the effects of the PALL program on principals' leadership and the impact of interventions in reading on teaching, student learning and achievement during 2014. Commencing in Term 1, site visits, each of half a day, were conducted at either three (Victoria) or four (Tasmania) points over the year. The data gathering at these visits involved interviews with the principal and/or members of the leadership team, a focus group discussion with teachers (and parents in some schools), a student learning experience survey, and collection of student reading progress data. The findings of the two studies indicated that the PALL program had impacted positively on principals and that the organising mechanism for improving reading skills (The BIG 6) provided a very helpful framework for principals to lead their teachers in ways that improved teacher practice, student engagement and student learning. Although it was too early to collect specific standardised test data that would indicate the extent of improvements in reading achievement, early collections of school-based data showed that teachers were becoming more skilled in data collection, analysis and decision-making and that students were more engaged, had developed new strategies that would assist them in improving their reading and that these efforts had actually made a difference in student achievement.

Background

Data from national and international surveys of student achievement in literacy pointed to a recurring problem in Australian schools (National Assessment Program -- Literacy and Numeracy [NAPLAN], 2008, 2009, 2010; Thomson, De Bortoli, Nicholas, Hillman, & Buckley, 2011). The overall outcome of these surveys was positive: the majority of Australian students achieved high standards, but a significant minority did not. Moreover, evidence from these sources and from a series of national reports and inquiries into our literacy learning shortcomings (Louden et al., 2005; Rowe, 2005) indicated that children who fall behind in the early years of schooling tend to fall further behind over the course of their school careers. Over the past 20 years, both in Australia and elsewhere, attention has been focused on ways in which student attainment might be increased in general, with a special focus on ensuring that the gap between those who do well and not so well is lessened, if not fully removed. This focus resulted in calls for improving the quality of teachers, the quality of teaching and the quality of the relationships between teachers and learners, which has been well documented and continues to be identified as a critical component in improving student achievement. Hattie's (2009) meta-analysis of a substantial body of research argued that around 50% of the variation in student achievement can be tracked back to the student and around 30% of the variation comes from what teachers do in classrooms, which provides an impetus for this focus on teaching and learning. Much of Robert Marzano's (2007) work focuses on establishing proven practices that teachers can use to improve student learning.

The Hattie research also suggests that only about 5-10% of student variation in achievement can be attributed to what school leaders do. So why was there an interest in a program that focused on principals? Perhaps one significant reason is that in countries such as the UK,

Hong Kong, Canada, New Zealand and Australia, there have been strong movements towards more autonomous schools with the added factor that such movements changed the roles, powers and responsibilities of principals. Studies of the impact that principals could have on student achievement started to emerge (e.g., Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006; Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). There was a growing body of research evidence (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Hattie, 2003) that specific factors such as the quality of instruction (Hattie, 2009); the quality of school leadership (particularly distributed leadership) (Leithwood et al., 2006; Robinson, 2007; Seashore-Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010) and the impact of well-designed professional development (PD) and support programs (Hord, 1997; Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009) lead to the conviction that improving the quality of student learning and achievement, in a sustainable way, is feasible.

But Author et al. (forthcoming) also suggest the research has identified several shifts in the way leadership is applied in schools: from an understanding of leadership as position to one of leadership as activity; from one of leadership being a sole responsibility to one of collectives with shared responsibility; and from one of leadership as generic skills to one of leadership being context and purpose specific. This changed the relationship between principals and teachers. Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008), for instance, in their meta-analysis of 27 published studies, identified five leadership practices that supported student learning: establishing goals and expectations; resourcing strategically; planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum; promoting and participating in teacher learning and development; and ensuring an orderly and supportive environment, with school leaders promoting and participating in teacher learning having the most impact. This was supported by the work of the Carpe Vitam project from Cambridge University that theorised Leadership for Learning, with its five underlying principles of a focus on learning; establishing conditions for learning; dialogue; sharing leadership; and sharing accountability (MacBeath & Author, 20109 pp. 9–10). Added to this was the work of Stein and Nelson (2003) who had applied Shulman's (1986) concept of pedagogical content knowledge to the work of principals. They identified leadership content knowledge, defined as "that knowledge of subjects and how students learn them that is used by administrators when they function as instructional leaders" (p. 445) and concluded that leaders need to have mastery of at least one subject and to develop understandings of how other subjects are learned and how they are taught. An acceptance of these principles suggests that to improve reading performance in schools, principals need to have not only leadership knowledge and skills but also an understanding of how students learn to read and knowledge of ways in which teachers might be supported to do this.

The PALL program was an evidence driven attempt to bring the leadership research into focus when designing a program to support school principals to improve reading in their schools. Five major leadership studies -- The National College of School Leadership studies by Leithwood et al. (2006) and its follow-up study Day et al. (2010); Pont, Nuche, and Moorman (2008); Masters (2009); Robinson, Hohepa, and Lloyd (2009;) and MacBeath (2010) -- were used as the basis for arguing the need for principals to have good content knowledge about literacy (and more specifically reading) if they were to lead it well, together with a distributed leadership approach to encourage wide ownership of the activity. A short description of the PALL professional learning program follows.

The Principals as Literacy Leaders Program (PALL)
As identified in the Pilot Study report the PALL program was designed on a foundation of five research-informed positions.

1. **The PALL position on the moral purpose of leadership**
2. **The PALL position on learning to read**
3. **The PALL position on reading interventions**
4. **The PALL position on shared leadership**
5. **The PALL position on support for leaders' learning on-the-job**

Five PD modules were designed to stimulate the learning of the participating principals. The modules had to:
- show explicitly the research sources on which they were based;
- provide critical sources as readings;
- engage principals directly in "hands-on" learning sessions to reach nominated outcomes; and
- provide between-module activities.

<div align="right">(Author et al., 2012, p. 6)</div>

The PD Modules (from Author et al., 2012, pp. 6-8) were:
Module 1: A Leadership for Literacy Learning Blueprint
Module 2: What leaders need to know about learning to read
Module 3: Leading literacy data gathering and analysis
Module 4: Designing, implementing and monitoring literacy interventions
Module 5: Intervention evaluation and future planning

The Leadership for Literacy Learning Blueprint
Figure 1 shows eight leadership dimensions bringing together the common concepts and actions seen consistently in the literature examined above.

Figure 1 about here

The following details the underlying connections between each of the elements listed in the Blueprint:

> At the centre of school leaders' work is their dedication to the <u>moral purpose</u> of improving the lives of children and young people through learning. To do so rests on a commitment to focussed professional conversations or "<u>disciplined dialogue</u>" always stimulated by <u>strong evidence</u> of what students can or cannot do so that where they need to go next to improve is well grounded. Surrounding this central core is a commitment to <u>active professional learning</u> by school leaders and members of staff, an understanding that <u>shared leadership</u> is essential in schools and that structures and processes should be organized accordingly. When this is undertaken, a clear commitment to <u>a well-planned curriculum with teaching and learning carefully coordinated and monitored</u> is essential, as is a concentration on creating helpful and <u>supportive conditions</u> for students' learning, through developing the physical, cultural, social and emotional learning environment. The last of the dimensions in Figure 1 refers to the importance of making <u>connections beyond the school</u> out into families, their communities and to other agencies which may make different but necessary contributions to improvements in learning. All of these dimensions combine to make up a complex agenda for positional leaders and teachers who want to make a difference to the lives of learners in the contexts in which they work. (Author et al, forthcoming)

What Do Principals Need To Know?

It has been suggested there is a research-to-practice gap in reading education with content and instructional practices not reflecting what is widely known about the effective teaching of reading (Buckingham, Wheldall, & Beaman-Wheldall, 2013). As credible instructional leaders, principals need to know about evidence-based research and authoritative commentary as it provides direction about what teachers need to teach and students need to learn. If pedagogy is not informed by research it may be that teachers "teach nothing in particular" (Cohen, 2010/2011). Duke and Martin (2011, p. 10) make the point that experience alone may not be the best guide as "sometimes we do not know what we do not know" which is why being abreast of the research is so important for professional practice. While most principals do not have direct classroom teaching roles, their capacity to professionally engage with classes and support teachers is strengthened when they can talk informatively about reading research and instruction. Routman (2014, p. 1) makes the point that "teachers must be leaders, and principals must know literacy [because] without a synergy between literacy and leadership and a committed, joint effort by teachers and principals, fragile achievement gains do not hold." In support of this stance, Schmoker (2011, p. 20) refers to the need for "simplicity, clarity, and priority" whereby principals and teachers are well-informed about what should be taught. It is essential for educators to engage in discussions about the "why" of what they do before they move onto "how" it will be done.

What Reading Strategies Should Principals Understand and Teachers Teach?
There has been a convergence of evidence-based research about the essential components to be taught and learned if students are to become independent and successful readers. The *National Reading Panel* (National Reading Panel, 2000), the *National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy* (Rowe, 2005) and the *Rose Review* (Rose, 2006) agreed that secure knowledge and skills in the five components of phonological awareness, letter-sound knowledge (alphabet and phonics), vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency are pivotal for reading acquisition. While the significance and importance of oral language is implicit in these reports, it is the Australian Primary Principals' Association (APPA) project, *Principals as Literacy Leaders* (PALL) that has added oral language to the five components and identified these as *The Big 6 of Reading*. Teachers' deep content knowledge about these six components is essential, but it is how they design and structure their reading programs that can have significant impact and long-term effect. Further support for teaching the Big 6 of Reading is found in the position statement, *Making a Difference Means Making it Different. Honoring Children's Rights to Excellent Reading Instruction,* from the International Reading Association (2000), which outlines the 10 principles for "evaluating current policy and classroom practice" (p. 2). The PALL program is underpinned by the understanding that principals need to have, if not complete knowledge about how to teach each of the six elements that make up the Big 6, at least sufficient knowledge to be able to understand how each of the six relates to each of the others and what principals can do to support the development of each. This knowledge and understanding is described in more detail in Author et al. (forthcoming)

Advisedly, teachers would allocate ample instructional time to teach the Big 6 components of reading explicitly and to ensure that students have many opportunities to contextualise and apply what they have learned as well as to understand how these components meaningfully support them to become independent and successful readers (Routman, 2014). The role of the principal is to ensure that each component is given adequate time, attention and resources to enable students to learn well, and that both time and focus are provided for teachers to enable each to be discussed, developed, implemented and assessed in ways that assist teachers to know how well their students are succeeding.

Research on PALL

In all, there have been six different studies associated with PALL (see Author et al., 2012; APPA, 2013; Author, Author, & Author, 2014; Author et al., 2014; Author et al., 2015a; Author, Wilkinson, & Author, 2015b). The current paper considers the last two of these research activities, looking at case study research in both Tasmania and Victoria, aimed at considering some of the deeper issues of leadership.

Case Study Research

The study we report was two action research projects that collectively used a similar methodology with a group of nine case study schools (five in Tasmania and four in Victoria) led by principals who had participated in the PALL program of professional learning in 2013. The action research involved a focused research agenda aimed at documenting and developing a fine-grained understanding of the leadership practices which facilitate the implementation of effective teaching and learning strategies in reading for nine primary or district schools in two Australian states.

Research Questions

There are two central research questions that guided the case study research:
Research Question 1: Has the PALL project impacted on the leadership of principals when it comes to supporting a focus on literacy in schools?
Research Question 2: Has the focus on literacy guided by the school leaders had any impact on student attitudes towards reading and student achievement?

Data Collection

School visits were conducted to gather data on leadership activity, classroom teaching, student learning and achievement at agreed points in the year (four in Tasmania and three in Victoria). The purpose of these visits was to gather data on what actually happened in the light of reading improvement interventions. The research questions were addressed by collecting data using the following questions:

- What were the effects of the school's planned leadership actions on teachers and their teaching?
- What were the effects of the school's planned leadership actions on students and their learning?
- What were the effects of the school's planned leadership actions on student achievement?

Consistent with the improvement imperative of action research, the researchers undertook to process and analyse the data gathered from each school after each school visit. The data-gathering methods in each school site were as follows:

- Interviews with principals from the case study schools;
- Focus group discussions with selected teachers involved in reading interventions (4-5 participants in each);
- Gathering of lesson plans to supplement focus group discussions of successful reading interventions;
- Gathering of student work samples for later analysis;
- Student learning experience survey regarding their reading improvement experiences; and
- Access to baseline student data used by the school to monitor reading progress and achievement. (Author et al., forthcoming)

The Case Study Schools
Of the nine case study schools involved in the research project, Schools 1 (enrolment 326) and 2 (enrolment 485) are district schools (Years K-10) in regional cities of Tasmania, School 3 (enrolment 307) is a primary school in a regional city, School 4 (enrolment 45) is a small primary school in a rural area and School 5 (enrolment 143) is a primary school in a metropolitan area. Victorian Schools 6 (enrolment 529) and 7 (enrolment 223) are primary schools in the eastern suburbs of the state capital and Schools 8 (enrolment 177) and 9 (enrolment 252) are primary schools in rural areas to the east of the state.

In Australian schools, family disadvantage is measured by the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) index, where the average score for Australia is 1000 and typically the quartiles are identified as bottom quarter, middle quarters and top quarter. All but one of the Tasmanian case study schools had more than 80% of the school population in the lower half of the ICSEA index, with Schools 1, 2, 3 and 5 having 61%, 74%, 57% and 67% respectively in the bottom quarter. In addition, Tasmanian schools have significant Indigenous populations, with Schools 1 and 5 having 8% Indigenous students, School 2 having 12% and School 3 having 10%. School 4, a small rural school in a farming area, had 4% Indigenous population, and also had only 26% of its families in the bottom quarter of the ICSEA index. However, only School 2 had a significant number of students (6%) where languages other than English (LOTE) were spoken at home. In Victoria, Schools 6 and 7 had more than 80% of families in the top half of the ICSEA index but School 8 had 44% in the bottom quartile. There was no significant Indigenous population in any of the Victorian schools; however, School 6 had 52% and School 7 had 59% of LOTE students, while School 8 had 3% and School 9 had 5%. Overall, Tasmanian schools were in poorer areas and had a significant Indigenous population, while Victorian schools were mostly in more advantaged communities but three had significant numbers of students where English was their second language. In both schools with more than 50% LOTE, the dominant group was families from Asian countries.

Case Study Schools
Each of the case study schools developed a unique intervention based on their own identified needs and individual circumstances. The uniqueness of each school and how they used PALL is identified in Table 1A (Tasmania) and Table 1B (Victoria) below.

Table 1A and 1B: About here

Tables 1A and 1B show that each school had a different approach to how PALL was used and the impact that it had on the schools involved. In the Tasmanian case study schools the professional learning program was only available to the school principal but in Victoria, a number of school leaders from the schools were involved. Table 1A shows that two of the principals in the case study schools were secondary trained and that in these schools, PALL has had the least impact. In one school, the PALL materials were "filtered down" through the middle level leaders and in the other school, they were not shared at all. However, each of the primary principals used the PALL resources extensively and the program had a significant impact on how the school went about teaching reading, in ways that will be described further in later sections.

In all seven of the primary schools, the principal took an active role in promoting PALL resources and the BIG 6 processes and this was taken even further in Victoria where in three of the schools, more than one of the school leaders had undertaken the PALL program. The fact that the Tasmanian principals were obliged to attend the PALL program while the

Victorian principals opted to do so, and were also able to bring a colleague, also seems to have affected the level of influence that PALL had on the school.

Case Study Results
Research Question 1:
To respond to Research Question 1: Has the PALL project impacted on the leadership of principals when it comes to supporting a focus on literacy in schools? we now turn to the five positions upon which the PALL program was based, and we will use them as headings to describe how they are being implemented by principals and teachers in the nine case study schools.

The Moral Purpose of Leadership
The PALL position on leadership reminds principals and teachers that they need to be clear about the school's moral purpose, namely, to focus on improving the lives of all children through learning and in this particular case, doing so through attention to improving literacy. Table 2A provides comments typical of each of the schools in Tasmania as it relates to considerations of the Moral Purpose of the Leadership of Reading; Table 2B provides comments typical of the case study schools in Victoria.

Table 2 A and 2B About here

Each of the case study principals articulated a clear moral purpose based on a shared literacy objective which the schools had identified as a result of their involvement in the PALL program. For a number of principals this included a sense of affirmation that they were "on the right track" when it came to their literacy focus. For others, it was a major shift, with leaders discussing it as one of the best professional development programs they had undertaken.

Principals talked confidently about the shared goals and objectives developed for each of the schools and these were picked up by the teachers who also were clearly able to identify the shared literacy vision of the school. One principal identified the importance of collegially building a clear vision commencing with "conversations as a whole staff" about the PALL program and what the school leaders had "got out of it". This stimulated interest in, and commenced a dialogue about, the teaching and learning of literacy at a whole-school level. For one small school, building a shared vision was an incremental process that included "going off as a *whole school*" (emphasis added) to investigate why students were struggling with their reading and writing. It was this kind of joint investigation in which the principal was actively involved, which led to shared discussions and "staff buy-in from … the start".

In other case study schools, there is no doubt that this leadership focus is understood and taken seriously by principals and teachers alike. Evidence for this claim is to be found in other statements from principals and teachers such as:
- The whole school (including the senior school) has been involved in the literacy effort to support teachers in learning how to support students who are not strong in literacy. (Principal, School 2)
- Teachers are the "interveners", "the leader of every child". Teachers are aware that they need to understand their children, where they are at, and know where they are aiming to take them. The reading intervention plan was very important in indicating specific courses of action for students requiring different levels of intervention. (Principal, School 1)

- The whole school improvement plan is focusing on reading in general…. The reading intervention plan is now "an integral part of our school improvement plan". (Teacher, School 9)

The significance of reading as a foundation for the multi-literacies students need to engage in and master in this day and age, warrants the leadership attention it is being given in the case study schools. Though having school-wide commitment to every child's progress should be automatic, it is something that principals and teachers need to continue to put before themselves as an ongoing professional moral obligation in the face of competing policy and practical demands.

Learning to Read
Principals reported that the PALL program had assisted them in developing and honing their skills in more effectively supporting and guiding teachers in regard to orchestrating curriculum development and monitoring learning and teaching practice. This approach was not focussed only on teachers as individuals located in solitary classrooms but rather encompassed a whole-school approach to curriculum development and teaching practice. Table 3A provides comments typical of each of the schools in Tasmania as it relates to considerations of the dimension of Learning to Read and Table 3B provides comments typical of the case study schools in Victoria.

Table 3A and 3B about here

A consistent approach to teaching particular aspects of literacy was reported as a major improvement over previous teaching strategies. One indicator of this consistency was the development of a "shared language" around literacy that was emerging in "term planners and feeding into weekly plans". In one Victorian school, the principal noted that the shared language of the school meant that opportunities for professional teacher dialogue were opened up, which focussed on enhancing teachers' methods rather than "blaming individual teachers". As a result of the PALL program, the principal in School 8 had developed a holistic intervention plan for the school's oral language focus, with different tiers of intervention within the plan. This had led to the introduction of a daily, whole-school "talking time" in which students were appropriately grouped (after having been assessed in their oral language capacity as high, middle or low) and all staff (including support staff, principal, specialist teachers and general classroom teachers) led a group. Targeted intervention for extension students was a crucial part of this approach with anecdotal observations of a "flow-on from this activity into … writing" with children using "interesting words … speaking them and … using them in their writing". Indeed, one of the most striking trends from this particular case study was the principal's awareness that enhancing learning and teaching practice was not only the job of teachers and school leaders, but also the job of teacher aides and support staff.

It is indisputable now, following many inquiries into the teaching and learning of reading, that there are six broad research-validated areas of practice about which principals and teachers must have considerable professional knowledge (as listed in the PALL position on learning to read above). Evidence related to this necessary pedagogical knowledge in the case study schools is typified in the following comments from principals and teachers:
- The PALL [Big 6] has "brought it all together very succinctly. [We have] noted an increased ability across the staff to observe classrooms and know what we're looking for. It is also assisting in providing a shared vocabulary with which to have conversations with staff about whole school approaches. (Principal, School 3)

- PALL has provided a deeper understanding of the reading process and something to underpin literacy learning and where there are questions, research, strategies and activities to help. (Principal, School 5)
- Teachers are experienced, but the Big 6 has "really consolidated things". There is now a greater focus on oral language, vocabulary and fluency. (Principal, School 4)

In addition, it is important that the principal establish an environment where all involved focus on learning. A range of changed conditions for learning were identified by the case study principals. Most typically, these included changes to material conditions in order to support teachers' learning: changes to timetabling so that teachers from the same year or stage could meet to plan, assess and evaluate, as well as dedicating staff meetings and whole-school development days to professional learning around the Big 6. Another change was encouragement for teachers to try new PALL practices, with school leaders letting teachers know that "we don't care if you fail, but try" (Principal, School 9). In School 6, teachers were identified as more willing to share successes at a staff meeting about what had worked and what was not working. For children in School 4, it included greater encouragement and support for students who had shown the most growth being recognised through awards at assembly.

There were a number of anecdotal observations about changes to the classroom environment. In School 2, the principal noted that "classroom environments had become more vocabulary rich as they now had word walls." The principal of School 8 remarked that children had become more confident, as a result of the focus on oral language and a targeted grouping of students based on their oral language capabilities, in which there was a new culture of expectation that all children in their small oral groups were expected to speak. No longer could children be "invisible … sit back and not participate", but equally importantly, every child was gaining "positive feedback from the adults in charge and the other children". As a result, the "children love coming to the groups … are never late to them … it's a very warm environment where they sit, they are listened to … and they are grouped with like children … so you don't have someone dominating … there are no right or wrong answers".

Limited finances were a consistent refrain across all schools. Taking students on excursions was seen as an excellent stimulus for students' oral language development in School 5 but the associated costs were reported as prohibitive for many families in a number of schools. This is where alternative strategies, such as walking excursions to local areas (even within the school grounds) with an explicit oral focus, or the use of videoconferences for students to "meet" and talk with students from other schools in Australia (or even overseas) or guests' visits (such as a children's author) are means by which rich conditions to stimulate oral language proficiency can be fostered, as shown in School 8.

For two schools, high turnover of students was also an ongoing concern. One strategy which had been adopted in School 8 since the inception of PALL was a focussed process of enrolment so that children's needs could be identified prior to their classroom entry. For School 4, with up to 25% changeover of students per term, PALL was a great help in identifying the different "waves"[1] of children in need of intervention strategies and the tracking of their progress.

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[1] There are normally three Waves (or Tiers) of students when it comes to reading. Wave 1 (about 80% of a typical grade) are those that perform at expectations given appropriate teaching; Wave 2 (about 15%) that may need additional attention to keep up with wave 1; and Wave 3 (about 5%) that need specific intervention and/or specialised teaching to support their reading achievement.

Reading Interventions

The case study schools have taken to heart the PALL position on interventions, and they show a commitment to the use of evidence about children's performance as the basis for determining improvement action. The monitoring of progress is also highlighted so that professional conversations about strategies to take particular children forward are identified and shared. Table 4A provides comments typical of each of the schools in Tasmania as it relates to considerations of the reading interventions and Table 4B provides comments typical of the case study schools in Victoria.

Table 4A and 4B about here

Tables 4A and 4B show that the PALL approach to identifying interventions based on student data has been followed in almost all schools. The following additional comments support these emerging practices.

- Grade 4 NAPLAN data showed difficulties in literal and inferential reading so there is a big focus on inferential reading. Literacy support in the junior area is very much driven by data and teachers talk about what areas they need to work on and what sorts of things they need to do to help students get to the next level. (Principal, School 3)
- Early in the year, the Speech Pathologist ran a "No Pens Day" – she did a presentation and a reception class oral language screening. She found that 69% of the kids had mild to severe language problems. This was striking. The intervention is seen as a project focused on oral language for Prep and Year 1. (Principal, School 5)
- The cohort for the case study intervention is the Year 3s moving into 4s and the aim is to track their progress. (Principal, School 1)
- There is a "gradual increase in responsibility" intervention model used, rather than doing "whole-small-whole" every time. This involves introducing a strategy, modelling it, doing it together and then having group, then individual practice, then checking and improving it. (Principal, School 6)

The use of a strong evidence base was also a critical factor in building staff awareness and buy-in. For School 2, such evidence forced them to "look much more closely about what was happening in classrooms" and stopped them "assuming that things were happening". For the principal in School 6, "school-based data are used as the starting point. A couple of the leaders have undertaken professional development on data analysis and lead the conversations about the data". This evidence base is employed as a "starting point" for reflective conversations about the other dimensions of the LfLB, rather than as a weapon, that is, using data to shame or punish individual practitioners or teams of teachers, thus leading to a closing-down of spaces for dialogue. School 7 noted that as a result of this more supportive use of data, there was a "comfort level" in the school team where teachers felt able to give reflective feedback about their own practice and learning needs, "knowing that when the leadership team meets, how staff can be supported will be put on the agenda". Use of data had built confidence and skills amongst teachers. "People have got their head around the data, how to use it, how to show growth, they have got the tools to show growth in their students". In School 3, feedback was modelled at classroom level, with feedback stations where children noted questions they wanted answered. This formed the agenda for classroom meetings.

A lesson which School 8 had noted, was the need to actively involve all teachers in assessing their students on a regular basis. This school had trained two teachers to test all children on their oral language learning in order to ensure consistency across the school. However, this

led to some teacher disengagement for as one teacher aptly commented, "other people assess … and the teachers just get told the results … when others assess the kids … there is not much in it for the teacher".

Some schools were still ascertaining what might be the most reliable means of gaining data to assess improvements to specific aspects of literacy learning. Some tests were noted as not being wholly reliable when it came to whole-school consistency and teachers were concerned about the "consistency of test implementation". However, the fact that schools – leaders and teachers – were engaging in substantive dialogue about what forms of evidence were most reliable when it came to measuring students' achievements, where previously this dialogue had not occurred, is a measure of how far schools had advanced in this area.

Shared Leadership
For a number of schools, one element in the success of the PALL program was the growth in shared leadership amongst teachers. A range of strategies were noted, including the focus on more collaborative planning where teachers were timetabled for team planning every week or fortnight. Table 5A provides comments typical of each of the schools in Tasmania as it relates to considerations of the Shared Leadership and Table 5B provides comments typical of the case study schools in Victoria.

Table 5A and 5B

In School 8, a leader of the junior team requested the team investigate a different research-based phonics program and report on what they'd found. A follow-up to this initiative was developing a small team of teachers to utilise an action research approach in order to research best practice and develop a reading scope and sequence chart. As teachers developed greater confidence in the focus area, one of the leadership team remarked that they were developing genuine leadership, such as initiating their own teaching activities for discussion at school meetings.

In School 6 the principal noted that as a result of the increases to teachers' teamwork and joint, explicit planning, they were becoming far more comfortable with de-privatising their classroom practice, including delivering explicit teaching and giving each other feedback on their practice. This was triggered by the introduction of a Japanese approach to lesson planning at the school, whereby teams isolated an element of literacy practice that needed improvement, worked on enhancing it and then trialled the new approach in each of the teachers' classrooms, with the remainder of the team of teachers observing, providing feedback, then implementing this feedback into their own teaching as the team observed and provided further feedback. This action research spiral culminated in the production of the 'bestest lesson' (better than any single person's best) which was then documented for all to use. The principal noted this approach deepened classroom walkthroughs (which the principal participated in), feedback and reflection on each other's practice. It also built a greater sense of collegiality and enhanced trust and risk-taking amongst teachers. The principal in School 7 remarked that they encouraged teachers who were interested in curriculum development and innovation to nominate for leadership teams in these areas, and in this way, teachers felt engaged and involved with key decisions, processes and outcomes.

It was well understood by principals that leadership is not characterised by position but rather by shared activity. The PALL position on leading learning is that teacher leadership is central to school-wide action. While the PALL Pilot Study found that "teachers were modest

about their role as leaders," there is ample evidence of a shared approach to the leadership or literacy in the selection of statements below.

- The Grade 2, 3, and 5 [composite class] teacher led teacher development owing to her personal expertise in statistics. Her expertise and her confidence in looking at [data] and [knowing] what to look for was great and that gave everyone else the confidence to identify what was going on. (Principal, School 4)
- We look after each other in that [shared leadership] respect. You can't be experts across all fields ... so it's a matter of asking questions and then [finding] who has that expertise and if it isn't within [the school] looking at our network outside as well. (Teacher, School 4)
- One teacher indicated that there were various levels of leadership within the school and others agreed. "The village raises the child" is one of the principal's common statements so teachers are given permission and support …. and it is made clear that they are expected to show leadership. (Teacher, School 3)

Support for Leaders' and Staff Learning
A number of principals commented on the leadership framework to which they had been exposed during the PALL program and how they had used it in discussions with members of staff. Table 6A provides comments typical of each of the schools in Tasmania as it relates to considerations related to Supporting Teachers' and Leaders' Learning and Table 6B provides comments typical of the case study schools in Victoria.

Table 6A and 6B About here

Principals were further stimulated to involve members of staff in successive conversations about their reading improvement efforts by the action research reports provided in follow-up visits by university researchers. These visits were a planned part of the PALL program for which the case study schools had volunteered. The reports referred to were based on data from interviews with principals and teachers and they included comments and questions raised following an analysis of the data gathered. Questions such as the following about the PALL positions were evident in these reports. An example of several from one such report to School 5 shows the intent to encourage further in-school leadership of intervention planning and action.

- When will oral language screening be re-scheduled?
- What will be done with the data to inform future work on oral language in the school beyond Year 1?
- What sort of immediate feedback is given to children, teachers, and parents so that the value of the oral language excursions is reinforced?
- How might you encourage more interaction over the oral language project itself with parents? Could the concept of special personal invitations help?
- How is the shared leadership of the oral language program structured – time, opportunity for planning, and evaluation? Is there a need to address this in a structured way if the impetus for oral language experiences across the school is to materialise?
- If an oral language focus is considered important across the years, what sort of long-term planning is being undertaken for this? How and by whom?

External support for principals and teachers is useful when considering how to translate research findings into the particular context of the school. An external adviser allows the opportunity to discuss possible solutions to problems in a way that that balances what other know with what "we" know. When teachers and principals work together from the same report on their actions to a particular point in time, they see the results of their investment

in the outcomes of those actions and an incentive to move further in their students' interests.

For principals, the use of data had their skills for leading conversations about teaching practice. Using the "disciplined dialogue" approach gave them confidence to open conversations and the data being discussed addressed real issues in the school. The principal in School 8 noted that their classroom observations were much better as PALL and the Big 6 had provided them with a "framework and a shared language to use". In particular, the "research base" had allowed school leaders to challenge long-term teaching practices and to invite teachers who disagreed with this challenge to produce research that justified their current teaching practices.

The way in which principals supported their teachers to learn more about teaching reading was also evident in the case study schools. One common need was for principals to determine the knowledge and expertise about the Big 6 in staff and then to follow that assessment with opportunities for further professional learning. Table 7A provides comments typical of each of the schools in Tasmania as they relate to Professional Development and Table 7B provides comments typical of the case study schools in Victoria.

Table 7A and 7B About here

Professional Learning on the Reading BIG 6 was a significant area of activity for all.
- There has been a lot more discussion this year. Each week there are two meeting nights and one of those is allocated to learning teams or collaborative planning. They have been doing a lot more on reading discussions in sector meetings, on the students' learning and what teachers are doing and what they need to do. (Principal, School 7)
- There is a culture across the school to build rich oral language which translates into understanding its links with reading and writing that might not otherwise happen. (Principal, School 3)
- Disciplined dialogue around data and assessment has built on the foundations already present and allowed teachers to drill down so "you're never without that evidence-base". (Principal, School 9)

Ensuring that knowledge and understanding of the reading Big 6 are present in their schools is, first and foremost, a principal's responsibility. If they are in any doubt about staff expertise to teach reading, then there is an onus on principals to arrange staff development sessions and professional exchanges so that strategies are enriched and practice is enhanced. Teacher professional development on the Big 6 was critical in gaining staff "buy-in" and honing skills. This skill development was supported as well by students. Students at each of the case study schools were given a short survey to establish their attitude towards reading, the extent to which they read for pleasure, either in free time at home or at school, how they felt when they were reading or involved in reading activities and whether their parents helped them in their reading at home. In all, a total of 1055 surveys were returned. Seven of the questions were common to all students and schools were invited to add three questions of their own. Questions were scored for 1 = *never*; 2 = *sometimes* and 3 = *always*. The scoring was kept simple as some of the students were very young, so any detailed analysis of the results is tentative at best. (see Table 8A and 8B).

Table 8A and 8B About here

The impact that changed teaching practices had on the students is verified in Tables 8A and 8B where high proportions of students indicated that their teacher talks to them about how to improve their reading and teaches them in interesting ways about reading.

In School 6, a whole-school professional development day for leaders, teachers and support staff on the Big 6 literacy strategies was an important starting point, with teachers now "understanding the connections between the Big 6" and being more willing to commence "sharing of practice" and at a whole-school level. There was also more "focussed" planning based on each of the six literacy elements. In School 8, the reported "panic" which ensued amongst teachers when they realised that their teaching patterns needed to change was allayed by the "clear" and "realistic" framework which PALL provided. This framework was a key factor in helping teachers and school leaders plan a cohesive approach to literacy improvement for teachers, to understand how the literacy elements fitted together and to be much clearer about what they wanted children to learn, both in their individual classrooms and at the whole-school level.

One means reported by five of the case study principals to lead this more focussed planning was the embedding of the Big 6 elements not only in revised curriculum documents but also in most teachers' term planners and weekly work programs. In turn, this formed the basis for principals to discuss how the teachers were planning to use these elements in their teaching, and potentially, how they were assessing the effects of these approaches to teaching and/or the children's learning experiences as a result of encounters with these approaches. For one principal (School 8), the mid-cycle review afforded an opportunity to discuss with some teachers why this language was not being employed in planning documents. In terms of the transfer of professional learning into changed practices, one principal's (School 3) anecdotal observations were that teachers were now more "explicit" in their teaching of vocabulary (e.g., looking for word roots and telling children why they were doing it this way). For the children, this represented a major improvement as they had begun to understand what was happening in the classroom and why it was happening in particular ways.

The impact of this focus on teacher learning is evident when changes in teacher practices are considered in the case study schools. Table 9A provides comments typical of each of the schools in Tasmania as it relates to Changed Teacher Practices and Table 9B provides comments typical of the case study schools in Victoria.

Table 9A and 9B About here

Table 9A and Table 9B suggest a number of changes to teaching practices, including making the classroom more student focused, making teaching more explicit and making it more public on the one hand and by improvement in the use of data, to recognise difficulties and to make data-driven decisions about future activity, on the other. Both of these changes might be considered as a precursor to improving student engagement and achievement, to which we turn our attention in the section following.

Finding 1:
The first finding of the study is that the PALL project has quite substantially impacted on the leadership of principals when it comes to supporting a focus on literacy in their schools. The evidence from eight of the nine case study schools, and from all of the primary schools, is that the learning undertaken by principals during the PALL professional learning has provided them with:

- the knowledge and skill to focus the school's efforts on the underlying moral purpose, namely to provide every student with the best opportunity to learn to read well (supporting previous research by Leithwood et al., 2006; Masters, 2009; and Robinson, 2007);
- new materials and processes to share with staff in ways that will improve the teaching and learning of reading (supporting previous research by Konza, 2011; Louden et al., 2005; and Rowe, 2005);
- a strategy for identifying the need, based on school data, and then developing and implementing a plan for specific interventions designed to improve reading (supporting previous research by Konza, 2012; and Jacobsen, 2012);
- the encouragement to trust teachers to take leadership responsibility for supporting student reading improvements and to use teachers as partners in this process (supporting previous research by Hallinger & Heck, 2011; Bishop et al., 2011; and McNaughton & Lai, 2009);
- support for their own learning as leaders and developing their teachers as leaders using action research into their interventions during the case studies (supporting previous research by Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Hallinger & Huber, 2012; and Author et al., 2011); and
- the encouragement to play an active role in the development of literacy learning strategies in partnership with their teachers (supporting previous research by Robinson, 2007 and MacBeath & Author, 2009).

Research Question 2
In response to Research Question 2: Has the focus on literacy guided by the school leaders had any impact on student attitudes towards reading and student achievement? we must identify a few caveats. First, the typical way government measures student improvement is through standardised testing. In Australia, as mentioned in the first sentence of this paper, the official testing is NAPLAN. At the time of writing this article, the 2015 NAPLAN reports, with the testing done in May 2015, were just being delivered to schools, meaning there are little hard data to indicate that the new focus on the BIG 6 has helped to increase student achievement. It must be remembered that the principals in these case studies were only involved from 2013, and their implementation of PALL interventions coincided with the research being done in 2014, so less than a school year had run since the principals introduced the program's intent to their teachers in 2014. In addition, as Tables 1A and 1B indicate, many of the efforts were aimed at the junior school. Since the first NAPLAN test occurs for Grade 3 students, many of those involved in the interventions would not have been tested at all. However, the interviews with teachers indicated that the terminology of the BIG 6 is now understood and used by students and that the foundation has been created for increased achievement as students move through the school. When we consider changes in student learning, there are two areas on which we might comment -- student engagement and student achievement -- and it is possible to identify some movement in both. Table 10A provides comments typical of each of the schools in Tasmania related to improved Student Engagement and Table 10B provides comments typical of the case study schools in Victoria.

Table 10A and 10B About here

It is evident that in many cases reported above, student enjoyment and engagement in reading seems to have improved, perhaps especially for those who previously had not done well in reading. In many cases the schools' own datasets were used to identify improvements not only in engagement but also in achievement in reading. In some cases even NAPLAN data were showing positive signs. Table 11A provides comments typical of

each of the schools in Tasmania that suggest that Student Achievement had improved and Table 11B provides comments typical of the case study schools in Victoria.

Table 11A and 11B About here

The evidence provided in Tables 11A and 11B was further supported by student surveys conducted at the case study schools (see Tables 8A and 8B). The survey scores from both Tasmanian and Victorian schools are fairly well aligned, with only minor differences between the two states and indeed between schools within the states. With most scores being in excess of 2.0 for almost all of the schools, it seems that students enjoy reading, are only marginally less confident that they are good readers and have teachers who focus on improving reading and teach reading in interesting ways. However, the figures do indicate that the least supported statements relate to those associated with students reading in their free time and being supported by their family to read. This mirrors the schools' responses about the difficulty of engaging parents in supporting the reading enterprise and also confirms the need for additional resources to encourage free reading by allowing students to read within their areas of interest at both school and home. A consideration of how schools on the one hand try to establish parent involvement, and on the other, find this difficult to do, is considered below.

Parent and Community Support
Similar to previous research findings, parent and community support was the area in which principals reported they most struggled (Author et al., 2012; Author, Author et al., 2014. However, all schools were attempting to provide opportunities for parents to become more involved in supporting their children's reading. But underlying these positive statements, some difficulties are identified. Table 12A provides comments typical of each of the schools in Tasmania as it relates to Parent and Community Support and Table 12B provides comments typical of the case study schools in Victoria.

Table 12 A and 12B About here

Most principals noted that parents were not involved to a large degree in programs, as increasingly both parents were working, and the same small number of parents attended special evenings. Where there was parental involvement in School 9, it tended to be in junior years and limited to reading and sometimes, the BIG 6. Encouraging parental involvement in senior years, even in primary school, was problematic. This is where thinking about strategies to encourage parental and community involvement at school level that may feel less threatening (such as suggesting parents ask children what they enjoyed at school and what they, as parents, enjoyed that day; or a family barbeque at the school) is crucial.

Despite reporting a lack of parental engagement at school level, School 8 did report on a highly successful, free preschool program which modelled oral language, listening and speaking activities for parents and children. The response of parents was "great": they "loved it" and gave "fantastic feedback". One of the flow-on effects of the program was that some parents had now started to volunteer at the school and word of mouth had spread about why other parents should do the program with their children. The principal observed that anecdotally, the program had made a discernible difference to children's confidence and preparation when they commenced school, with children ready to start formal learning "from day one". For this low-SES school, with patchy preschool attendance due to parents financially struggling to transport their children to preschool, this kind of readiness for the school program signalled progress in a crucial aspect of literacy preparation.

Teachers in School 1 agreed that they had the power in the school setting and the idea of a neutral space would be beneficial, such as in the kindergarten building, where parents "seemed to start to make those relationships over coffee because it's less structured." But it was harder in later years because children travel on buses and also because those foundations had not been made. Without having developed networks, the parents "haven't got that safety net … [they] don't have the confidence" (School 7).

A successful example of parent involvement in School 1 was the Mothers' Day event where "the class was just packed like sardines … we just had an afternoon tea and the kids just got up and shared something special they loved about their mum and they just played and the grandmothers talked and it was really, really, really successful." This was followed up by an equally successful Fathers' Day breakfast barbeque where more than 50 fathers came to the school and started a level of interaction not previously experienced. There was also discussion about a "kids' day" where parents might come along and say something nice about their child.

Teachers agreed the greatest challenge was parent involvement. In the early childhood sector, parents are there "because they drop the little ones off and the big ones just run off themselves to the classroom" (School 7), whereas the older children do not seem to want parents there. One teacher had two or three grandparents drop children off. There is a plan at School 3 for a grandparent who runs an animal shelter, to bring a dog in once a week for a couple of weeks to do some pet care with the possibility of the class doing some fundraising for the shelter.

However, it is quite clear that in every case study school, parental involvement in children's reading was an issue that would need further work. This occurred for various reasons: language issues, parents being employed, parents not feeling comfortable and in some cases teachers preferring it that way. But the case study schools are making strong efforts to reach out to parents in various ways. In one case, regular updates about the BIG 6 were reported in the school's newsletter, and there was a consistent flow of information going home to parents about the importance of reading for their children and the importance of parents supporting their child in reading.

Finding 2:
The second finding of the study is that the focus on literacy guided by the school leaders has had a positive impact on student attitudes towards reading: there is school-based evidence that these attitudes have improved for those students involved in the intervention, with the indication that student achievement on national standardised tests will improve in the future. This final statement needs to be moderated by the knowledge that there are many factors outside the school's influence that can impact on standardised test results, as well as whether or not these tests are a valid and accurate indication of a student's level of achievement, given that they are simply a snapshot of what a student can do on the day of the test and do not take into account anything that might negatively impact the student's performance on that day.

Conclusions
The decision to delve more deeply into the impact of the PALL methodology and professional learning on improving student literacy underlies the cases examined for this article. Each case adds to the overall PALL program findings (since 2012) by showing more nuanced ways that principals and their teams contextualise their professional learning

through actions in their schools. Finally, we draw together new knowledge and understandings associated with the findings identified above.

It is clear that the PALL program has had a positive influence on eight of the nine principals involved in the case studies. It was also clear that the organising mechanism, The BIG 6 framework, was new to most principals when they undertook the PALL Program and to many teachers when principals used it in their schools. Many used the individual elements that make up the BIG 6, but none had used the holistic framework previously. All the people interviewed, both the leaders and the teachers, found the framework a helpful one in developing reading skills for students. Each of the schools used the framework in a different way, or focused on some elements more than others, but all 9 schools were using it on a daily basis.

Principals who have gone through the PALL professional development program have been proactive in changing teacher practice when it comes to reading. Professional conversations about reading are more focused and consistent and the use of data to improve teaching and learning is now something that happens on a daily basis. When asked what the impact of PALL had been on the school, the principal of School 1 responded, "It has inspired us to inspire teachers".

A level of enthusiasm shown by both leaders and teachers was encouraging and the leaders expressed thanks for being involved in the action research that framed the case studies. In addition to a change in the level of enthusiasm shown by teachers, there was also a substantial increase in their knowledge and confidence to teach reading well. School 8 used a self-assessment process for its teachers where they considered their current level of understanding for each of the BIG 6. The options available were:
- Unconsciously unskilled – we don't know that we don't have this skill, or that we have to learn it.
- Consciously unskilled – we know that we don't have this skill.
- Consciously skilled – we know that we have this skill.
- Unconsciously skilled – we don't think about having this skill (it just seems easy).

After admitting that at the start of 2014, when the BIG 6 terminology was first introduced, they had all been unconsciously unskilled, the movement since then has been substantial with more than 70% for each area now judging themselves to be either consciously skilled or unconsciously skilled. Clearly being involved in PALL with its focus on the BIG 6 had made an impact on the way school leaders worked with their staff and this in turn had made an impact on the way teachers taught and interacted with each other.

The research also found that students were more engaged with reading after being involved in the interventions that schools had planned and, in many cases, were starting to show signs of improvement, if not in actual reading performance on a standardised test, then by having a greater range of skills to support their own learning. It is also clear, from both the interviews at schools and from the student survey, that there is still much to do. There are many students who are choosing to do other activities than read in their free time, both at home and at school, and there is an indication that the involvement of parents in supporting their children's reading still has some way to go, despite many varied efforts by schools: Ready-Set-Go programs for children not yet in schools; Facebook sites where parents are kept informed of what is happening; information on the BIG 6 going home in newsletters; cultural events; mothers' and fathers' special events to attract people to the school. The interviews identified how difficult it is in today's rapidly changing, fast-paced world for some parents to find the time to spend with their children. Other parents spend a great deal of

effort taking their children to organised learning, music programs, sports programs and the like, which means that someone else is spending time with their children. Parents who have both the time and the inclination to spend quality time talking to their children, reading to their children, listening to their children are constantly under pressure from competing demands.

In the end, having all students becoming confident readers is a team activity. What the research shows is that when the school team, students, teachers and principals, start to move in the one direction, the movement becomes focused and successful. If other members of the team, parents and carers, can be encouraged to get more involved, the movement will become unstoppable.

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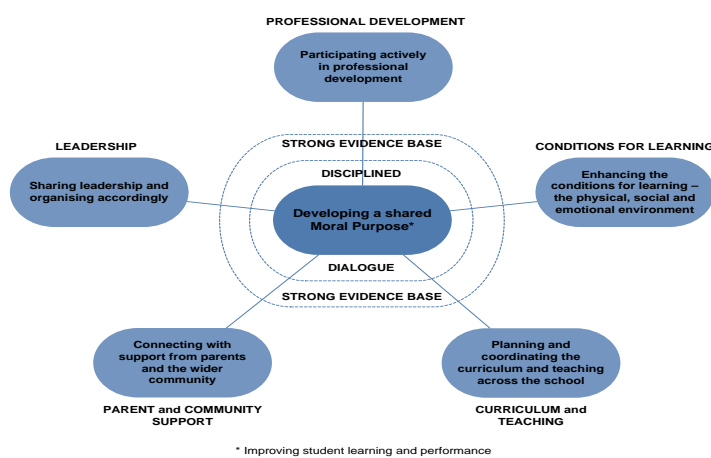
Tables and Figures

Leading Learning – A Framework

* Improving student learning and performance

Figure 1. The eight leadership dimensions of the Leadership for Learning Framework or Blueprint (LfLB).

School	1	2	3	4	5
Principal background	Secondary English	Secondary Science	Primary	Primary	Primary
Person/s trained in PALL	Principal	Principal	Principal	Principal	Principal
Identified Intervention focus	Comprehension	Comprehension	Oral Language	Oral language/ Comprehension	Oral language
Location of the intervention	Years 3 and 4	Across school	Across school	School wide/ Years 5 and 6	Early years
Impact of PALL on school program	Limited	Negligible	Significant	Significant	Significant
Use of PALL Resources	Principal shared the PALL materials "slowly and gradually" with the leadership team and then let the leadership team "filter it down"	"We haven't seen it."	"For new teachers coming in, they get a PALL folder, we talk about practices and expectations. We have non-negotiables."	"He actually gave us all a folder with copies of all the important bits in it (from PALL) and he referred to it regularly with us."	PALL resources used for staff discussions

Table 1A: PALL focus and impact on Tasmanian Schools

School	6	7	8	9
Principal background	Primary	Primary	Primary	Primary
Person trained in PALL	Principal and Assistant Principals	Principal and Assistant Principal	Principal	Principal and Assistant Principal
Identified Intervention focus	Phonological Awareness	Oral Language	Oral Language	Wave 1 (Quality teaching for all students)
Location of the intervention	Year 1	Foundation/ Year 1	Across school	School wide
Impact of PALL on school program	Significant	Significant	Significant	Significant
Use of PALL Resources	All school leaders trained so that teachers had more than one resource person to work with them	School leadership team worked with staff after each module to develop a common approach	Whole school PD on BIG 6, development of PLTs. All staff have their own resource folder	BIG 6 introduced to all staff on first day of new year. Teachers visited other BIG 6 schools.

Table 1B: PALL focus and impact on Victoria Schools

School	1	2	3	4	5
The Moral Purpose of PALL	[There is] greater awareness about the elements, making sure that all the elements are there, seeing the elements in the planning, making sure there's resources for all of the BIG 6.	The first time we saw it was in the survey that we had to do, and we were all asking each other "What is the BIG 6?" I think we asked [the AP], and she said it's comprehension strategies, so I was assuming that there were six, like it was just talking about six comprehension strategies.	Every week, in regular conversations, everybody would be having a conversation about something that is in the BIG 6.	What we have learned is the importance of teaching strategies, strategies of how to predict and how to teach a class to visualise and all that sort of thing. All those strategies rather than reading and asking questions. And it's about making those connections that really make a difference.	…an oral language screening test was conducted of all Kinder students. The results showed "that 69% of the children had mild to severe language problems… We recognised that the planning for learning by Prep/1 teachers was significant in terms of the thinking behind the planning."

Table 2A Comments related to the Moral Purpose of Schools typical of Tasmanian Schools

School	6	7	8	9

| The Moral Purpose of PALL | "there is a real focus on reading" with "kids always knowing what they're doing and what the purpose is, and how that reading focus will help their learning." | "So I could hear the penny drop with those teachers. They thought, "Well, you can't just do comprehension in isolation. You've got to be having vocab and fluency running alongside with that." So that's a much deeper level of understanding, I thought, that they didn't have back in June or May." | "Planning for each of the six things is now focused and none of the areas are allowed to slide. The BIG 6 are in the curriculum documents which have just been revised at the end of last year, but are also in the term planners and the weekly work programs." | The curriculum needs to be made right "for the 80% before real interventions could happen for the 20%...teachers are now saying that I know the things you are asking me to do are important to the school and the things I didn't know, I now know where to get things from." |

Table 2B Comments related to the Moral Purpose of Schools typical of Victorian Schools

School	2	4	
1		3	5

Learning to Read	the school's nominated focus was comprehension in Grades 3 and 4, attention was also given to strengthening oral language, vocabulary and fluency, and the planning associated with improving these elements.	The literacy block was sacrosanct in the junior school but now there is a literacy block right across the school that only came in last year. There is now a dedicated literacy block which is not interrupted from K–10 with high focus and where a number of literacy strategies are being used.	The shift with the vocab has been that teachers are so much more aware of vocabulary. You hear it and see it, on charts and in rooms, and that's been massive, as we've got better at knowing what to do and how to do it, our knowledge and skill has lifted, and the confidence that if kids have a headful of all the language they need, they're going to be able to read, write, talk.	We will now be teaching reading very much as strategies rather than just allowing kids to read. There are some kids who need help with word attack skills and I think that's where the BIG 6 will come in for us.	The decision to include oral language development in the school's long-term school-wide planning was an outcome stimulated by the value the teachers and the leadership team placed on their success, particularly with at-risk children.

Table 3A Comments related to Learning to Read typical of Tasmanian Schools

School	6	7	8	9
Learning to Read	"Now we can look at all of this and say, 'What does that mean for us? Where do we put our resources and how do we make this happen?'"	"I think overall confidence in our approach to teaching, which in different ways, that's been a big improvement for all of us. I know a lot of people sometimes are, well I'm better at teaching literacy or I'm better at teaching numeracy, but I think collectively I think we are all a lot more confident in the ways that we teach."	"Teachers are now teaching vocabulary more explicitly looking for word roots and then telling children why they are doing it that way… Teachers are now much more aware of what they are saying and how they are explaining things to children."	"Everybody, including the specialist teachers, has the BIG 6 in their planners. Even the science teachers have been teaching science vocabulary and pretesting four vocab words at the beginning of a unit for each year level and assessing them again at the end of the unit."

Table 3B Comments related to the Learning to Read typical of Victorian Schools

School	1	2	3	4	5
Reading Interventions	The reading intervention plan was very important in indicating specific courses of action for students requiring different levels of intervention. Responses included what should happen, who should do it, goals, resources, and assessment and an assurance that teachers	The school is identified for Wave 3 intervention. [We were] previously a Raising the Bar school and the PALL project helped to focus the school's attention.	Kindergarten data indicates one out of two children entering school is not at the required levels. It was recognised that the richness of oral language was important.. The need for rich language in texts was a previous focus but was ramped up after the	From the testing that we've done, it's become obvious that vocab development and being able to infer from the text are huge issues for us as a school.	The Principal, together with his early years teachers and his Assistant Principal…took a decision to extend students' oral language experiences by initiating a series of outside school excursions to different parts of the city and regional environment.

	know what achievement for that tier will "look like."		PALL workshops.		

Table 4A Comments related to Reading Interventions typical of Tasmanian Schools

School	6	7	8	9
Reading Interventions	"I think because we're working so closely with our consultants, it clarified that we're on the right track. We were doing a lot of things well. But what it did for us, it is really focusing on phonological events."	"So I could hear the penny drop with those teachers. They thought, "Well, you can't just do comprehension in isolation. You've got to be having vocab and fluency running alongside with that." So that's a much deeper level of understanding, I thought, that they didn't have back in June or May"	Talking time is run twice a week with two sessions where children are broken up into Preps to Grade 2 and Grades 3-6 in groups of 6-8 children. All of the teachers including the specialists, the aides and the school leaders take a group and the children have been tested on their oral language, are grouped accordingly, and then there is a special focus for that group.	The school is looking at all the BIG 6 simultaneously because the base of the reading pyramid was flawed and needed to be addressed. Specific interventions were not appropriate when the fundamental teaching was not being done as well as would be liked.

Table 4B Comments related to Reading Interventions typical of Victorian Schools

School	1	2	3	4	5
Shared Leadership	…it's now a consistent approach, where before I think we had some whole school strategies in place, but they weren't as consistent as they are now that we have PALL	I think you'll find more recognition of what's the BIG 6 with the leadership team and some of those people have been on the Literacy Committee.	I think that's because we're in such a mindset of stretch, stretch, stretch now and everybody claims responsibility, we all know this is every teacher's	One teacher's "expertise and her confidence in looking at [data] and [knowing] what to look for was great and that gave everyone else the confidence to have a look at it and	The decision to include oral language development in the school's long-term school-wide planning was a further outcome stimulated by the value

				responsibilit y.	identify what was going on."	the teachers and the leadership team placed on their success, particularly with at-risk children.

Table 5A Comments related to Shared Leadership typical of Tasmanian Schools

School	6	7	8	9
Shared Leadership	Team meetings, which consisted of teachers, a school leader, a teaching aide and the speech pathologist, focussed very specifically on lesson structures, pedagogical techniques, assessment of children and grouping.	There's a lot more mindfulness around collaboration and identifying strategies that are going to work on students that I have right now … and sharing strategies …	I think we've built a culture of whole-school approaches here, and it's very trusting that if we've made a decision this is the way we're going and there's an expectation that everybody will get involved.	Planning is more collaborative. In the past teachers planned more on their own; now it is a team effort. There are term planners for the junior years and senior years and these split off into Grades 5 and 6 for weekly planners.

Table 5B Comments related to Shared Leadership typical of Victorian Schools

School	1	2	3	4	5
Support for Leader and Staff Learning	the PALL materials were shared "slowly and gradually" with the leadership team and then let the leadership team "filter it down".	We've helped teachers to become more aware of what others in the school are doing; who's good at what; facilitating teachers to sit in on another team's planning.	All teachers must now have a Professional Developmen t Plan and we've emphasised that everything they do must be concerned with literacy, rather than trying to	We've used a lot of the PALL stuff, but we've used our type of language in our context so they can relate to it…it's a working document, and there's lots of contributions from the PALL	Teachers are taking this project very seriously. After each excursion they use a take-home book for targeted students where the children write in it with their parents, writing

			cover a bit in a lot of areas.	folder, the word lists and some of the strategies.	about what they saw on their excursion then bringing it back for the next student to take home.

Table 6A Comments related to Support for Leader and Staff Learning typical of Tasmanian Schools

School	6	7	8	9
Support for Leader and Staff Learning	"And that's the best professional learning, when you're sitting with your colleagues, someone's delivering it, you're observing that, and then you know you're going to have to, you know, deliver it as well based on the recommendations of the group. It's really powerful, powerful learning."	"And there was a comment at the staff meeting we had. The question I asked was, "Look, did you find that useful and beneficial about observing?" And [the teacher's] comment was, "I find that really useful, it hasn't been done enough the whole time I've been here."	"I think [PALL impacted on] my increased knowledge of literacy and also affirming the path that we're on, the oral language is certainly a key component to the success of all literacy areas."	There is a shared language "…that is starting to appear in term planners, and is now feeding into weekly plans, and when the mid-cycle review occurs the principal will ask why the language is not being used in the weekly plans… We don't care if you fail, but try"

Table 6B Comments related to Support for Leader and Staff Learning typical of Victorian Schools

School	1	2	3	4	5
Professional Development	So we get together in grade groups, and have a focus student or focus group of students who are probably struggling with the same issue, or problem, and then we come	Have done quite a bit of PL in literacy where we've had access to the Lead Teachers as well; they've done observations in classes, model teaching, working in the	The sharing of knowledge across the school, e.g., from teachers attending workshops and how could this be transferred to new staff, there might	What we have learned is the importance of teaching strategies, strategies of how to predict and how to teach a class to visualise and all that sort of thing. All those strategies	Teachers had taken deliberate steps to improve the collection and analysis of data. This more formal monitoring process

	out together as a group with a bit of a focus	planning process to build teacher capacity.	be some ways to do that better.	rather than reading and asking questions. And it's about making those connections that really make a difference.	enabled the teachers to record baseline data and, as the year progressed, to revisit the rubric in order to map students' progress along the continuum.

Table 7A Comments related to Professional Development typical of Tasmanian Schools

School	6	7	8	9
Professional Development	"We actually share too, and it's really again powerful when the whole staff are together when a Level 2 teacher talks about how they did a particular reading lesson. And the Level 4, 5 teachers go, you know, that's great. And there's no reason why I can't take parts of what you've done and vice versa."	"I think until we felt comfortable with the BIG 6, we didn't want to talk to it. But once everyone in that team got their head around exactly what all the changes meant they were using it. Now [the BIG 6 and its language is] in all of our planning and that will be the next step I think, to start using it properly."	"We've built a folder of resources and the … PLTs will take that as professional reading in there and they can read and discuss those things as well, so we're sort of building that into our ongoing professional development, and staff are really interested in that."	Staff realised that they were unconsciously unskilled and needed to change their teaching patterns; they displayed a level of panic. The BIG 6 provided a framework that helped teachers to overcome this panic.

Table 7B Comments related to Professional Development typical of Victorian Schools

	Tasmania 1 N = 38	Tasmania 2 N = 42	Tasmania 3 N = 48	Tasmania 4 N = 31	Tasmania 5 =100	All Tasmania schools N= 259	All case study schools N=1055
Do you enjoy reading?	2.47	2.62	2.52	2.52	2.52	2.53	2.59
Are you good at reading?	2.32	2.38	2.48	1.74	1.74	2.43	2.50
Do you read in	2.18	2.19	2.10	2.10	2.10	2.14	2.19

free time at home?							
Do you read in free time at school?	2.16	2.31	2.15	1.84	1.84	2.15	2.21
Does your teacher talk about how to improve your reading?	2.45	2.69	2.56	2.29	2.29	2.52	2.44
Does your teacher teach you in interesting ways about reading?	2.22	2.71	2.48	2.13	2.13	2.41	2.44
Does your family help you with your reading at home?	2.38	2.26	2.35	2.29	2.29	2.32	2.25

Table 8A: Student survey results from Tasmania

	Victoria 1 N = 508	Victoria 2 N = 56	Victoria 3 N =	Victoria 4 N = 232	All Victorian schools N=796	All schools N=1055
Do you enjoy reading?	2.61	2.61	2.16	2.50	2.58	2.59
Are you good at reading?	2.53	2.46	2.36	2.50	2.52	2.50
Do you read in free time at home?	2.24	2.11	1.96	2.01	2.16	2.19
Do you read in free time at school?	2.30	2.13	1.77	2.03	2.21	2.21
Does your teacher talk about how to improve your reading?	2.36	2.38	2.35	2.43	2.38	2.44
Does your teacher teach you in interesting ways about reading?	2.40	2.30	2.27	2.43	2.40	2.44
Does your family help you with your reading at home?	2.03	2.36	1.93	2.25	2.21	2.25

Table 8B: Student survey results from State B

School	1	2	3	4	5
Changes in Teaching Practice	My level of questioning's probably different. I suppose part of our professional conversation we had to have goals and things, I said that I probably wanted to get more levels of questioning in my practice. And I think I've done a bit of that.	Teaching is much more transparent and there are now teachers visiting other classrooms to observe peers. Reciprocal teaching has been implemented in the senior school. Teachers are now building a toolbox of strategies for their use.	Previously classrooms were places where the teachers did most of the talking. Now there is more articulation of what teachers are doing and why, together with a deliberate and intentional activity to build oral language.	The interrogation of data, making sure we're data driven, and that was a big one for me, making sure we're driven by data in what we've come from, where we're at and where we've got to go.	The students now drive the interaction where it used to be teacher driven. We have seen movement from speaking to writing and sharing with others. It has had a massive effect. It has given children something to write about and purpose.

Table 9A Comments related to Changes in Teaching Practice typical of Tasmanian Schools

School	6	7	8	9
Changes in Teaching Practice	There was now "clear talk amongst teachers about a consistent approach regarding teaching reading... no child is forgotten."	They are using the data to look at the numbers of students at different Waves 3, 2 and 1, and then that's informing the next lot of groupings when they're making their changeovers, definitely.	There are peer observations where teachers will go and see each other teach and provide feedback and the leadership team provides incidental feedback on oral language teaching. There is a lot of incidental feedback as well as discussions in	Teacher reviews are now more enjoyable, both for the teacher and the reviewer, whereas this was previously a bit of a negative space. Teachers are now much more able to use and discuss data … if these are your top two and bottom two kids, prove it to me … show me the data

				staff meetings.	

Table 9B Comments related to Changes in Teaching Practice typical of Victorian Schools

School	1	2	3	4	5
Changes in Student Engagement	There's a couple of children that we've seen coming through who do have that enthusiasm for reading … they just jump at you.	The children are now more engaged in talking and comprehension is improving. Children are becoming more skilled and confident about their own reading levels	…the children are now more engaged in talking and comprehension is improving. Children are becoming more skilled and confident about their own reading levels… In the Grade 5/6 class, so many students are now hooked on books.	[One boy was filling out a survey and said, 'I don't like reading.'] And there was another boy on the other side of the room who did like to read who heard that, and said, 'I used to be like that.' And I thought that's great…	Last week we had *No Pens Day* with students very excited. We had a spot assembly to share the types of speaking and listening activities used and saw evidence of much creativity.

Table 10A Comments related to Changes in Student Engagement typical of Tasmanian Schools

School	6	7	8	9
Changes in Student Engagement	…the reward for children who read more at school is they get sent to the Principal and are praised. Children now "get very excited about going up on running records, or borrowing books from a higher level."	…you might look at the group of kids and think they're engaged because they're nice kids and they're well behaving kids, but really, are they engaged? You know, what is "being engaged"? What does that mean to them?	The kids love coming to the groups which are held straight after recess and straight after lunch and they are never late to them, so that is a good indicator that they like it because it's a very warm environment where they sit, they are listened to they know they will get a chance to	The most obvious impact on engagement is at Grade 5 and 6 which students are now talking about the books they have read. There is a lot more discussion about their reading.

			speak and can get involved and they are grouped with like children about the same ability so you don't have someone dominating or who has all the answers.	

Table 10B Comments related to Changes in Student Engagement typical of Victorian Schools

School	1	2	3	4	5
Changes in Student Achievement	We are seeing improvement, particularly in reading comprehension, documented through school testing, data, running records – multiple ways.	Students are now using strategies, summarising, taking the roles for deepening the understanding of a text, text-to-text, text-to-self, text-to-world is right through the students' language	NAPLAN results for Year 3 and 5 are showing more and more students are on the way up,.. Compared to similar schools we're pretty happy – we're better in almost every aspect than like schools in Tasmania and Australia.	So in the last 6-8 weeks we've done PAT-R, revisited the single word spelling test and also NAPLAN data's come in well plus classroom data. And that's been really pleasing that triangulation of data. In general terms it's showing that the teaching strategies and the interventions are working	We are seeing evidence of students using more sophisticated vocabulary in their speaking and writing. Students are having a go at sounding out these words. Their illustrations are more detailed.

Table 11A Comments related to Changes in Student Achievement typical of Tasmanian Schools

School	6	7	8	9
Changes in Student Achievement	There "hadn't been big jumps in reading levels" but "steady progress" with reading comprehension	Clearly that's a better set of numbers than we had last year … that's not to say last year's wasn't good, but it's	The Grade 3s, which is our first lot of students that went through the Ready, Set,	PAC data show 2013 to 2014 reading comprehension school growth in Grade 1 is 18.88 when expected

| | and ability to decode. | better than it was. | Go, are above state average. Feeling really comfortable about where the kids are, the Grade 3, excellent results. | growth is 11.44, Grade 2 our growth is 14.58 when expected growth is 9.68, Grade 3 our growth is 13.55 when expected growth is 7.61; Grade 4 our growth is 10.36 when expected growth is 5.5; Grade 5 our growth is 12.58 when expected growth is 4.18; even our kids below and kids above has moved substantially. |

Table 11B Comments related to Changes in Student Achievement typical of Victorian Schools

School	1	2	3	4	5
Parent and Community Support	What we've continued mostly to do is just to put that lens about parental involvement on absolutely everything we do, and I do mean everything. "How can we involve parents?' 'How can we be parent-friendly?"	Many parents come into the junior school but this drops off in middle and senior school... We're not very good at the documenting and reporting to parents. We just don't do it.	Parents are consistently told of the importance of oral language. Parents hear the message that the most important thing is not only to be able to write your name, but that being able to speak and being a talker is a precursor to being a good writer.	We've had one family come through who have radically changed their ideals for their child, and that's been amazing – it's allowed him to have a broader outlook, open up his horizons, and it's been such a positive thing for that child. One success among so many "tearing your hair out" failures.	We have made a take-home book for our focus students [students with severe language difficulties] to get them talking at home. The book goes home with a different student each night. It is shared each morning and it is discussed. There is evidence of parent connection with them talking about it too. Some children have been taking their families back to where they went on excursion.

Table 12A Comments related to Parent and Community Support typical of Tasmanian Schools

School	6	7	8	9
Parent and Community Support	Traditionally it's been really, really difficult. And I think once again, it's the confidence level with the language. A lot of the grandparents … cannot read in English, and they lack the confidence. It doesn't mean they can't help or be a part of it, but they may not have that confidence to do that.	Parental involvement's very low and a cause for real concern for student progress when it came to home reading and for in-class support…We ran a reading competition and it was, you know, reading fast and the most reading time, and for that week they certainly gave it a nudge.	…you can see just geographically why for us it's so hard. We are in the middle of nowhere. We're not part of a township… They don't come here, the kids come on the bus.	In the 3/4s I have a lot of parents in my room, before school, after school, looking to be involved, but next door, hardly anyone. We do nothing different, but it is just the parents and the dynamics. Some parents are more needy, more anxious or with only children in my grade compared to the other two.

Table 12B Comments related to Parent and Community Support typical of Victorian Schools