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Principals as Literacy Leaders with Indigenous Communities: Leadership for learning to read - 'Both ways'

Greer Johnson
Griffith University

Neil Dempster
Griffith University

Lynanne Mckenzie
Griffith University

Helen Klieve
Griffith University

Bev Fluckiger
Griffith University

See next page for additional authors

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Principals as Literacy Leaders with Indigenous Communities: Leadership for learning to read - 'Both ways'

Abstract

The Principals as Literacy Leaders with Indigenous Communities (PALLIC) project was funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) under Closing the Gap: Expansion of Intensive Literacy and Numeracy Programs for Underachieving Indigenous Students. Forty-eight (48) schools in three government jurisdictions, South Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory, took part. This Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) initiative was, first and foremost, a research-informed leadership development project. Leadership development, in this instance, focussed on improving Indigenous children's reading while enhancing local leadership capacity to continue with this task after the project's completion. A collaborative research program between Griffith University, the principals and their school communities was an essential mechanism in investigating the impact of the project on leadership capacity and in turn, on improvements in children's reading. The findings from the research program confirm improvements in Indigenous children's ability to learn to read. The findings report significant signs and hopeful first steps towards sustaining reading improvement as an ongoing leadership task through principals' teamwork with Indigenous leadership partners in their school communities. Both of these general conclusions are elaborated in the summary, which follows, as are some of the difficulties which the research uncovered. The findings are drawn from a triangulation analysis of data: -Principals' self-reported evaluation reports of Reading Action Plans; -Survey responses from principals, Indigenous leadership partners, teachers and literacy leadership mentors; and -Seven case study school visits.

Keywords

communities, literacy, leaders, indigenous, principals, leadership, ways, learning, read, both

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Authors

Greer Johnson, Neil Dempster, Lynanne Mckenzie, Helen Klieve, Bev Fluckiger, Susan Lovett, Tasha Riley, and Amanda A. Webster

PRINCIPALS AS LITERACY LEADERS WITH INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Leadership for Learning to Read - 'Both Ways'

Research findings from the Principals as Literacy Leaders with Indigenous Communities (PALLIC) Project

*Greer Johnson, Neil Dempster, Lynanne McKenzie, Helen Klieve,
Bev Flückiger, Susan Lovett, Tasha Riley, Amanda Webster*
Griffith Institute for Educational Research (GIER), Griffith University

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Principals as Literacy Leaders Pilot Project 2010-2011

Involving schools in Queensland, the Northern Territory and South Australia

AUSTRALIAN PRIMARY PRINCIPALS ASSOCIATION
PO Box 4578, Kingston ACT 2604
Email: natoffice@appa.asn.au
Web: www.appa.asn.au

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Other Authors / Contributors:

Dempster, Neil, author
McKenzie, Lynanne, author
Klieve, Helen, author
Flückiger, Bev, author
Lovett, Susan, author
Riley, Tasha, author
Webster, Amanda, author

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Foreword

The Principals as Literacy Leaders with Indigenous Communities (PALLIC) project was initiated in 2011 by the Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA).

This project was funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations as part of *Closing the Gap: Expansion of Intensive Literacy and Numeracy Programs for Underachieving Indigenous Students*. APPA, in turn, through the Queensland Department of Education, Training and Employment, commissioned a research team from Griffith University to develop a program to support principals and Indigenous leadership partners to lead learning (reading) in their school communities.

Congratulations must go to Griffith University for the quality of the work developed and also to the education systems in the Northern Territory, South Australia and Queensland for enthusiastically encouraging their schools to be part of the project. The principals and Indigenous leaders of those schools were key contributors to the project. The uniqueness of the overall team involved in PALLIC should not be underestimated nor overlooked.

This report provides a systematic way of evaluating the effectiveness of the program.

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

The report is significant and deserves attention from all levels of government.

PALLIC was, first and foremost, a research-informed leadership development project. Leadership development, in this instance, focussed on improving Indigenous children's reading while enhancing local leadership capacity to continue with this task after the project's completion.

The findings from the research program confirm improvements in Indigenous children's ability to learn to read.

APPA is proud to recommend this research to you.



Norm Hart

President

Australian Primary Principals Association

Acknowledgements

The Griffith University research team members whose work is reported here are particularly appreciative of the role played by the Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) in initiating and managing the Principals as Literacy Leaders with Indigenous Communities (PALLIC) project.

Special thanks are extended to Leonie Trimper, Immediate Past President of APPA, for her advocacy and leadership of the project from inception to completion.

To John Binks-Williams, Project Manager, we also offer special thanks for his untiring commitment to coordinating the project across three education systems.

Christine Perri and Ann Williams added their tried and tested administrative abilities to the project's operational needs, particularly related to travel, accommodation, materials preparation and workshop presentation.

The groundwork and on-site support of six literacy leadership mentors were essential to the application of professional learning by principals in their schools. We say *many thanks* to Lyn Hollow, Chris Deslandes, Martyn Burne, Stan Sheppard, Louise Wilkinson and Grant Webb, especially for their assistance in accompanying our research team to schools located in very remote areas of Australia.

Finally, our thanks are extended to all participants in the project and especially to the seven school principals, their Indigenous leadership partners and teachers who willingly facilitated our collaborative research with their schools. We also acknowledge the participation of several members of Indigenous communities who generously gave of their time to yarn with us. We continue to enjoy learning 'both ways'.



Greer Johnson

For the Research Team

Executive Summary

The Principals as Literacy Leaders with Indigenous Communities (PALLIC) project was funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) under *Closing the Gap: Expansion of Intensive Literacy and Numeracy Programs for Underachieving Indigenous Students*. Forty-eight (48) schools in three government jurisdictions, South Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory, took part. This Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) initiative was, first and foremost, a research-informed leadership development project. Leadership development, in this instance, focussed on improving Indigenous children's reading while enhancing local leadership capacity to continue with this task after the project's completion. A collaborative research program between Griffith University, the principals and their school communities was an essential mechanism in investigating the impact of the project on leadership capacity and in turn, on improvements in children's reading.

The findings from the research program confirm improvements in Indigenous children's ability to learn to read. The findings report significant signs and hopeful first steps towards sustaining reading improvement as an ongoing leadership task through principals' teamwork with Indigenous leadership partners in their school communities. Both of these general conclusions are elaborated in the summary, which follows, as are some of the difficulties which the research uncovered. The findings are drawn from a triangulation analysis of data:

- Principals' self-reported evaluation reports of Reading Action Plans;
- Survey responses from principals, Indigenous leadership partners, teachers and literacy leadership mentors; and
- Seven case study school visits.

Improvements in children's reading achievement

Principals from 46 of the 48 PALLIC schools provided evaluation reports describing the effects of school-specific Reading Action Plans designed

and implemented during the PALLIC project. An analysis of these reports shows that despite difficulties related to remoteness, socio-economic disadvantage, children's poor attendance, staff transience and English as a second or third language for many children and their families, all evaluation reports recorded improvements in children's reading achievement.

School-based assessment methods charting children's progress during the year constituted most of the evidence provided. Changes in children's reading levels assessed through benchmark testing were manifest, for example: in small, though encouraging, reductions in the number of children needing specialised assistance; in the use of programs in phonics resulting in significant improvements in children's letter-sound knowledge; and in oral language assessments recording achievements such as children's added skills in the identification of rhyming words, the use of pronouns and past and present tenses.

Each school's evaluation report contained recommendations for future work, covering matters such as an ongoing commitment to improving attendance, continuing to strengthen literacy block strategies (i.e. dedicated teaching time) emphasising the Big Six of reading and persisting in the use of 'Waves' of intervention or assistance for children underachieving (Waves of assistance are directed to whole-class needs, the specific needs of particular groups of children or the special needs of individuals). Reports further refined student diagnostic assessment processes. Indeed, attention to explicit teaching related to the reading Big Six, namely, *rich oral language experience, phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension*, became commonplace in the project schools. All of these actions were informed by the data collected during the Reading Action Plan evaluation process.

Overall, five conclusions are highlighted from the analysis of the data:

1. The PALLIC process has been well accepted by schools and has changed leadership focus to involve Indigenous leadership partners in the majority of schools.

2. The PALLIC process has built confidence in the way principals, teachers, teacher assistants, parents and the community work with children on reading and improving reading achievement.
3. Reading Action Plans were designed by principals and staff in each school based on sound evidence of the reading problems encountered by children in that community.
4. Substantial ongoing professional learning has been organised by principals for teachers (and themselves), to address the literacy related problems identified.
5. Evaluation outcomes in most schools provided compelling reasons for continuing to implement reading improvement recommendations onwards into 2013 and beyond.

The first finding (above) holds promise for the sustainability of leadership action on reading improvement. This concerns the fact, confirmed by survey results, that in almost all schools, specific acknowledgement was made of the value of the support provided by Indigenous leadership partners to principals, teachers, parents and children as they collaborated between schools and communities to improve children's engagement, enjoyment and achievement in reading. More is said on this finding later, though with some caveats.

In the case studies, principals reported that the role of the Indigenous leadership partners had a positive impact in encouraging them to lead teachers to enact the Leadership for Learning Blueprint and to design evaluations of the effects of their school Reading Action Plans. The Leadership for Learning Blueprint refers to a research-based framework defining eight dimensions of leadership activity known to connect the work of leaders and teachers with student learning. The seven case studies also provided evidence of the complexities faced by the participating schools as they implemented their Reading Action Plans. However, the cases also recorded small increases in the numbers of Indigenous family members coming into each school. From interview and discussion group data, it is clear that the increased engagement of Indigenous families with the school is due, in large part, to the combined efforts of principals and Indigenous leadership partners. Both agree that it is an ongoing challenge to attract more community members to become engaged in work on reading inside classrooms, and it is an even

greater challenge to engage parents in the support of literacy at home.

The seven case studies and survey data also confirmed the prominence given by principals and teachers during the project to the use of the Big Six (the generic skills of reading mentioned above) as a focus for further teacher professional development, the prioritising, selection and use of resources and for the injection of explicit teaching strategies into Reading Action Plans. It is in ongoing professional development that the hoped for goal of sustainability will be realised.

Improvements in leadership capability

Analysis of the survey data collected from principals, Indigenous leadership partners, teachers and their supporting literacy leadership mentors has yielded findings on the development of leadership capacity that have serious implications for the future. Most apparent was the fact that despite national and international research on the necessity for parent and family contributions to reading, in-school actions dominated the attention of principals, somewhat at the expense of actions to connect this work with support from others outside the schools. Nested within these circumstances, however, there are positive signs of enhanced leadership capability amongst principals and Indigenous leadership partners which hold promise for ongoing work on school, family and community connections. Across the four groups, participants' responses and rankings show that there was strong agreement on the kinds of in-school action taken in three critical matters:

- Building a good working relationship with Indigenous leadership partners;
- Expecting accountability for reading achievement from teachers; and
- Using data on teaching and learning of the Big Six in reading to inform school planning.

The division between *in-* and *out-of-school* leadership actions is highlighted in the following findings. *Participating in professional development on reading with Indigenous parents and community members* was reported as being infrequently implemented. In contrast, within-school professional development provided by principals to teachers and teacher assistants was rated highly. Principals and teachers placed their top emphasis on *Keeping the focus on the school's commitment to improving learning to*

read for Indigenous children, but at the same time, both placed their lowest priority on *Engaging others from the community as active leaders of reading*. Indeed, this action was not rated as a priority by either principals or teachers. Softening this finding, though, is the view of principals and teachers that some progress was being made on increasing the number of *Indigenous Leaders of Reading actively supporting children learning to read at home*. While this was highest in priority for principals, teachers and literacy leadership mentors, they also held the contrary view that least implemented was *Seeking out reports on reading from Indigenous people*.

This selection of findings points to the continuing emphasis placed on *in-school reading support* in Indigenous communities which, it must be said, is the easier leadership action to take. However, this kind of leadership action is not nearly as profitable as it should be if family and community leadership capacity for sustainable reading support is to be enhanced, in the face of transient principals and teachers. While principals and teachers admit to taking leadership action to engage others from the community in reading support *infrequently*, they acknowledge its potential effectiveness were it to be achieved. The ambivalence encountered in this partitioning of attitudes and practices is somewhat countered when it is known that 11 remote Indigenous schools produced the beginnings of a Home Reading Practices Guide by undertaking a local community literacy audit with the assistance of their Indigenous leadership partners and school support, including the literacy leadership mentors. This initiative is encouraging and is not to be dismissed lightly, as these materials provide the basis for further actions in homes.

The last words in this executive summary should be given to two of the central figures in the PALLIC project, the principals and Indigenous leadership partners, around whom a new approach to school leadership ‘both ways’ has begun. They worked collaboratively within the schools to enrich their personal and professional partnerships and the effects they might have on children learning to read. That this occurred is visible across the research findings: Indigenous leadership partners were highly respected by their principals, their teachers and their Indigenous communities, while they themselves valued the opportunities presented by the role to build stronger partnerships, not only with the

schools but also with the children, their families and community members.

Implications

Consistent with the findings summarised above, there are at least three implications that arise for those moving into, or continuing their involvement with, the PALLIC project schools.

1. The data are unequivocal about growth in the capabilities of principals and their Indigenous leadership partners to lead improvement in literacy learning *inside* their schools. Commitment to this endeavour needs to continue irrespective of principal and staff turnover or tenure. This is a matter for those managing and administering school systems so that the emerging promise heralded in the value placed on local Indigenous leadership partners (who *do* have ‘tenure’) is recognised by system leaders, and is taken forward in powerful new partnerships, both within and beyond the schools.
2. Complementing the first implication is the admission that the PALLIC project fell short in furthering the knowledge and understanding of how Indigenous leadership partners might contribute more directly to the leadership of reading. Much more work needs to be done on this front so that Indigenous leadership partners are better prepared to move outside the school grounds, confident that they have useful knowledge and practices gained from further professional development, to share with parents and family members about learning to read.
3. The third implication is closely linked to the second. The research findings on the lack of attention to outside-school connections by school leadership teams suggest the need to identify, explain and apply strategies which offer helpful practical home and community support for Indigenous children learning to read. This work will need to include Indigenous parents and family members working with teachers and mentors from schools and communities as essential sources of information ‘both ways’ on what is possible in the realities of everyday life. The involvement of Indigenous families and communities in professional learning related to reading is a start in this direction.

Concluding comments

Finally, the research findings presented in the full report record what occurred in an 18-month research and development project. There is no doubt that there was some success in establishing a new 'both ways' approach to leading literacy learning inside PALLIC schools. However, the pathway towards the engagement of Indigenous family and community members to provide them with the necessary knowledge and skills to contribute to leadership in reading remained elusive. Such a situation should act as a further challenge for those interested in 'closing the gap' in reading achievement for our first Australians.

Project purpose and background

This report presents research findings resulting from a suite of data-gathering activities which accompanied the *Principals as Literacy Leaders with Indigenous¹ Communities* (PALLIC) project during 2011 and 2012.

The PALLIC project is an initiative of the Australian Government's commitment to 'Closing the Gap' strategies. In June 2010, the Queensland Department of Education and Training (DET) sought funding from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) under *Closing the Gap: Expansion of Intensive Literacy and Numeracy Programs for Underachieving Indigenous Students*. The PALLIC project adapted and expanded the successful Commonwealth-funded Principals as Literacy Leaders (PALL) Pilot Project in low-SES school communities completed in 2011 (Dempster, Konza, Robson, Gaffney, Lock, & McKennarney, 2012), to focus directly on leading improvement in Indigenous children's reading. Funding was made available to the PALLIC program in the first half of 2011, allowing the project to commence in July of that year.

PALLIC, a cross-jurisdictional research project, was hosted by Queensland on behalf of the South Australian Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) and the Northern Territory Department of Education and Training (DET). The delivery of the PALLIC program was subcontracted to the Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA). APPA, in turn, subcontracted Griffith University to design and implement five leadership for learning modules and an accompanying research program.

The need to work with Indigenous community schools and schools with significant proportions of Indigenous children is motivated by persistent differences in Indigenous children's literacy achievement. More than 80% of Indigenous children, mostly in metropolitan New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory, achieve minimum national standards in literacy. Yet there is a growing number of Indigenous children who are not meeting the minimum standard for literacy

(OECD, 2008). The National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2012) confirms yet again that Indigenous children from remote and very remote areas of Australia's Northern Territory are the lowest-scoring group in reading. In 2012, 27.4% of Indigenous Year 5 children were at or above the minimum national standard in reading. In the same year, only 29.1% of Indigenous Year 9 children met the national average benchmark in reading.

The Australian Government has invested heavily in its literacy and numeracy 'Closing the Gap' initiative, with little evidence of sustainable change for Indigenous children in general, and for remote Indigenous children in particular. Over the 4 years since NAPLAN tests began in 2008 (ABS, 2012), the literacy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children has widened. Poor literacy at school exit negatively skews young people's employment opportunities and their capacity to meet life's challenges as they face their future.

Many attempts to improve children's literacy have sought change through interventions regarding:

- quality school leadership (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2010);
- quality teaching (Hattie, 2003); and
- consistent support at home (Harris & Goodall, 2007).

However, harsh contextual realities for Indigenous families in regional and remote areas of Australia include inequality and in-built disadvantage that starts early in life and exacerbates with age if disregarded. Disproportionately high levels of principal and teacher turnover compound the situation (Santoro, Reid, Crawford, & Simpson, 2011).

The research program reported here describes 18 months' intensive activity with school leaders, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to assist them in learning to direct their efforts with teachers, parents and others to improving literacy, with a specific focus on reading. The report is structured in three parts.

¹ We acknowledge that 'Indigenous' is a homogenous term that does not take into account the diversity within the Australian First Nation population. 'Indigenous' as used in this report is taken to include First Nation children and community members.

Part 1: Positions, modules and tasks, literacy leadership mentors' roles and research

Part 1 explains the research-informed design of the PALLIC project as it was implemented through the work of 48 principals and over 90 Indigenous community members in 48 Australian schools. The approach taken in researching the impact and effects of the project is also explained.

Part 2: Research findings

In Part 2, the research findings are presented and discussed to show what has been learned about:

1. improving Indigenous children's reading achievement and how they learn to read; and
2. enhancing literacy leadership capability and sustainability in the project schools and their communities.

Part 3: Conclusions, matters for consideration and implications

In Part 3, the findings and major messages from the PALLIC project are compiled into a set of conclusions and matters for consideration which are followed with a series of implications for policy makers, school system authorities and school leadership teams.

Part 1 Positions, modules and tasks, literacy leadership mentors' roles and research

The PALLIC project evolved from the earlier PALL Pilot Project, building on its materials, processes and outcomes (Dempster et al., 2012), to develop the capabilities of primary school principals as 'effective literacy leaders'. From the PALL Pilot platform, the PALLIC project sought the deliberate inclusion of Indigenous community members nominated by the local school community as integral partners in school leadership teams. With a leadership for learning focus, the PALLIC project used action research processes drawing on compelling findings from school and culturally specific leadership research, as well as research on learning to read, to engage in leadership capability development for the teaching and learning of reading. In other words, PALLIC was designed to enhance the leadership capabilities of principals and their Indigenous leadership partners to work with teachers, in collaboration with parents and families, to improve reading in schools in Indigenous communities and schools comprising significant proportions of Indigenous children.

The design of the PALLIC project was predicated on the assumption that at least some of the resources to support Indigenous community literacy in English exist within Indigenous communities. It was known that in many of the communities served by the PALLIC schools there are Indigenous adults who have the knowledge, ability and motivation to help improve their children's literacy. Many of these community members are already role models; they are working in schools with children and are keen to work more within their communities to assist families. So, from the start, the Indigenous leadership partners' role of working alongside principals was seen as pivotal to the enhancement of leadership capabilities in literacy improvement inside and outside the schools.

It was hoped that by concentrating on principals and their Indigenous leadership partners, the project would carry sustainability benefits for Indigenous schools dealing with staff mobility and children's transience. To put these intentions into practice, during late 2011 and 2012, a series of leadership learning modules was implemented, followed by between-module tasks asked of leadership teams so that they could apply learning to their local school contexts as productively as possible. The in-school and

community work was supported by literacy leadership mentors who were experienced principals acting as coaches or 'critical friends' to each school's leadership team.

The positions, purpose and structure of each of the leadership learning modules, their links with follow-up tasks and the significance of the role of literacy leadership mentors, are now explained.

PALLIC project positions

The PALLIC position on leadership

Compelling research evidence shows that quality leadership makes a difference to children's learning and achievement, particularly in challenging school environments (Bishop, 2011; Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009; MacBeath & Dempster, 2009; Masters, 2009; OECD, 2008; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006; Day, Hanson, Maltby, Proctor, & Wood, 2010; Hallinger, 2011). Added to this is the need for open 'intercultural space' (Taylor, 2003) in which leadership 'both ways' (Western and Indigenous) is accepted and valued in Indigenous schools and communities (Ober & Bat, 2007; Priest, King, Nagala, Nungurrayi Brown, & Nangala, 2008).

The PALLIC position on reading

National and international research confirms that learning to read requires teachers' and parents' explicit attention to the Big Six of reading: oral language experiences, phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Konza, 2011; DEST, 2005; Loudon et al., 2005; Rowe & National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (Australia), 2005).

The PALLIC position on reading interventions

Interventions in reading should be based on sound qualitative and quantitative evidence to link improvement actions to children's needs across the school, and implementation should be accompanied by the monitoring and evaluation of effects on learning and achievement (Dempster et al., 2012; Jacobson, 2011).

The PALLIC position on shared leadership

Making improvements in learning and achievement requires ‘both ways’ partnerships inside and outside the school to share the leading of reading (Ober & Bat, 2007; Priest et al., 2008; Bishop, Berryman, Wearmouth, & Peter, 2011; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; McNaughton & Lai, 2009; DEEWR, 2009; PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2010).

The PALLIC position on support for leaders’ learning on-the-job

Leadership learning is maximised when leaders are supported in their schools in implementing reading interventions by valued mentors (Huber, 2011; Dempster, Lovett, & Flückiger, 2011; Dimmock & Walker, 2000).

Modules and tasks

What now follows is a description of the leadership learning modules that embedded the project positions in content, processes, materials and follow-up activities which were then employed as the stimulus for in-school and community action on reading.

Module 1: Leadership for Literacy Learning and follow-up tasks

Module 1 focused on the development and use of a Leadership for Learning Framework, or Blueprint, and its application to literacy locally. Figure 1 illustrates the blueprint which depicts the distillation of research findings drawn from recent meta-analytical research reviews (Leithwood et al., 2006; OECD, 2008; Masters, 2009; MacBeath & Dempster, 2009; Robinson, 2007; Robinson et al., 2009).

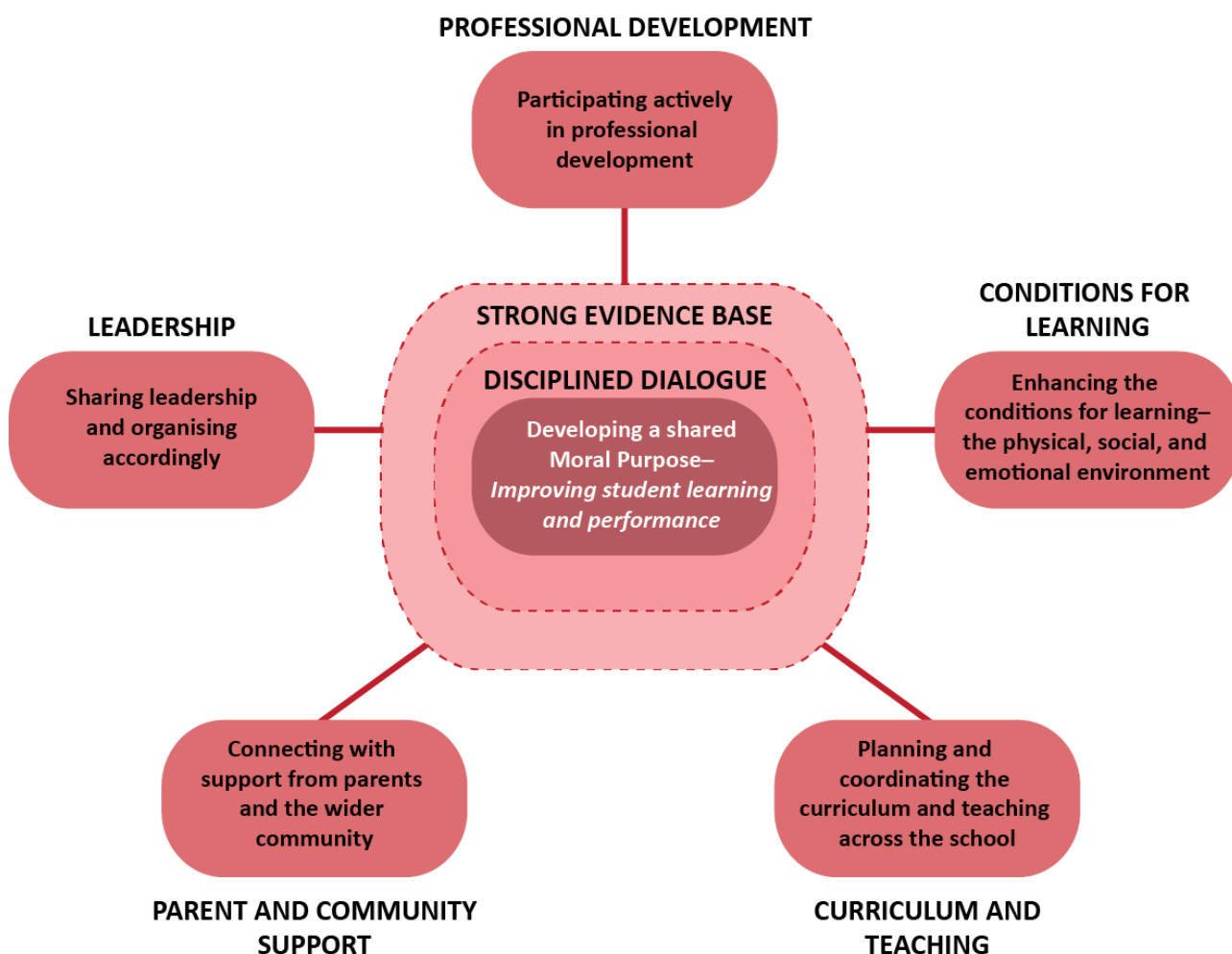


Figure 1 A Leadership for Learning Framework or Blueprint.

Using the dimensions of the blueprint above as the foundation for the project's approach to leadership, Module 1 emphasised:

- the school's moral purpose of improving literacy and the need for reference to a strong evidence base coupled with disciplined dialogue or professional conversations about improved practice;
- the actions principals and leadership teams need to take to better connect their work with literacy learning;
- the fostering of an active leadership partnership between the principal and Indigenous leadership partners supported by a literacy leadership mentor;
- making authentic 'both ways' leadership connections with parents and community members about reading improvement;
- identifying and enabling Indigenous 'Leaders of Reading' to support literacy at home, at school and in the community; and
- working with parents and families inside and outside the school on evidence-informed reading improvement action.

Figure 2 illustrates the planned relationship between the principal, Indigenous leadership partners and literacy leadership mentors central to the project's design.

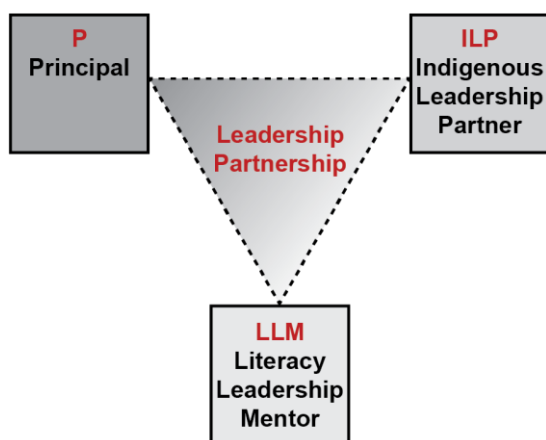


Figure 2 The relationship between principal, Indigenous leadership partners and literacy leadership mentors in the PALLIC project.

The research findings underpinning the project on leadership drove the establishment of a partnership between principals and Indigenous leadership partners in open intercultural space. This partnership served as a precursor to the development of wider partnerships between teachers, parents, family and members of the local community so that there might be a collective focus on reading improvement. Leadership 'both ways' was the aspiration (Ober & Bat, 2007; Priest et al., 2008).

Follow-up tasks for Module 1

Task 1

Gaining an understanding of the school context by completing a school profile co-operatively (principal and Indigenous leadership partners with literacy leadership mentors).

Task 2

Discussing the strength of leadership for literacy learning dimensions illustrated in the Leadership for Learning Blueprint in the school (principal, Indigenous leadership partners and staff members).

Task 3

Principals discussing Personal Leadership Profiles with literacy leadership mentors.

Module 2: Learning to read and follow-up tasks

The purpose of Module 2 was to open up and explore the evidence base about the Big Six and about Indigenous children learning to read in Standard Australian English. It also engaged principals and their Indigenous leadership partners in:

- research on ways of working and learning with Indigenous children;
- the first of the Big Six – the significance of oral language, story-telling and historical and current literacy practices in Indigenous communities;

- the development of understanding about the other five of the Big Six (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension); and
- exploring possible literacy practices (for reading) in school, family and community contexts.

Follow-up tasks for Module 2

Task 1

The first task asked principals and Indigenous leadership partners to develop with teachers a local version of the Literacy Practices Guide for use in their schools.

Task 2

The second task asked principals and Indigenous leadership partners to work together to discuss with teachers and parents the relationship between home and school. Open discussions were encouraged and the goal was to engage a small group of parents and family members as potential Leaders of Reading to meet with families.

Module 3: Analysing data using ‘Disciplined Dialogue’ and follow-up tasks

The third module concentrated on learning how to lead the gathering and use of qualitative and quantitative data about learning to read, assessing children’s reading achievement and identifying important influences on improvement using the dimensions of the Leadership for Learning Blueprint as reference points (see Figure 1).

Follow-up tasks for Module 3

Task 1

Principals and Indigenous leadership partners were asked to work with teachers to identify areas of strength and weakness in children’s progress and achievement in aspects of the Big Six in reading.

Task 2

Principals and Indigenous leadership partners were asked to develop a ‘Home Reading Practices Guide’ co-operatively with Leaders of Reading, that is, other parents and community members.

Module 4: Planning for reading improvement action and follow-up tasks

The aim of Module 4 was to learn about the factors that are important for teachers in planning evidence-informed strategies for reading improvement with Indigenous children and their families. Research findings have shown that long-term improvement in literacy occurs when schools undertake a system through which they can intervene to assist children in need. The use of three ‘Waves’ of assistance directed to meeting whole-class needs, the specific needs of particular groups of children or the special needs of individuals, constitutes such a system. Principals and Indigenous leadership partners engaged with the planning processes necessary to produce evidence-based Reading Action Plans for particular aspects of the Big Six with specific individuals, or groups of children, in mind. The influence of aspects of the Leadership for Learning Blueprint on teachers’ pedagogy, children’s learning and parent support were also matters brought into the planning agenda.

Follow-up task for Module 4

Task 1

This task asked leadership teams to work co-operatively with teachers at the schools to develop Reading Action Plans using a sample planning format, including, where possible, supporting roles for Leaders of Reading (parents and community members outside the school).

Module 5: Evaluating Reading Action Plans and follow-up tasks

The last of the modules focused principals’ and Indigenous leadership partners’ learning on how to plan for the evaluation of Reading Action Plans. Two evaluation purposes were coupled as the centrepiece of an evaluation-planning template through which leadership teams worked. These two purposes acknowledged that the PALLIC project was not only about improvement in children’s reading achievement, but also about the fact that improvement in achievement can be accomplished only through changes or improvements in teaching and learning, and the conditions contributing to the quality of children’s learning experiences. In short, the

two purposes leadership teams were asked to keep clearly in mind when designing the evaluation of their Reading Action Plans were:

- to ascertain whether there were any changes being seen in children's achievement; and
- to ascertain the value of actions considered important in contributing to improvements in reading (using the dimensions from the Leadership for Learning Blueprint as the source - see Figure 1).

Follow-up tasks for Module 5

Task 1

Principals, Indigenous leadership partners and staff members were asked to co-operatively plan for and conduct an evaluation into the effects of Reading Action Plans in their schools, including the contribution of Leaders of Reading, parents and families to improving children's reading. The written evaluation report was produced primarily for school purposes but also as a point of reference in the overall research program.

Task 2

Leadership teams were also asked to use the evaluation findings for ongoing planning for reading improvement in the forthcoming year (2013).

The five PALLIC modules were delivered in Cairns, Far North Queensland by Griffith University presenters. The core participants were principals, their Indigenous leadership partners and the six literacy leadership mentors, representing the three jurisdictions, South Australia, Queensland, and the Northern Territory. The project managers, the Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA), arranged travel and accommodation in Cairns for all participants. It is important to note that for many Indigenous leadership partners travel to a city was not usual practice, especially so when it involves several modes of transport from very remote areas.

Between the first and second visits the number of Indigenous leadership partners attending the modules in Cairns increased by

63%. Some principals took up the option to increase the number of Indigenous leadership partners attending and participating in the modules. The time together was used to build trusting relationships between schools, such that interactions before, during and after the presentations were enhanced. A total of 125 people attended the final module, including 57 principals, 62 Indigenous leadership partners and 6 literacy leadership mentors. The gender distribution for Indigenous leadership partner attendees is worth noting. The number of female Indigenous leadership partners outnumbered males in attendance at all modules.

The role of literacy leadership mentors

As mentioned above, experienced principals (off-line) who could act in support roles with school leadership teams were considered essential to progress the in-school application of the professional learning encountered by those teams during the project. These people were called literacy leadership mentors, and were principals who had knowledge and practical involvement over many years with the types of schools and communities engaged in the project. Being an expert in literacy or reading was not a requirement for the mentoring role. An essential requirement was the capacity to act as a critic and to be a confidant, as principals and their Indigenous leadership partners tried to implement new content, knowledge, skills and processes in diverse school contexts. The main responsibility of the literacy leadership mentors, therefore, was to facilitate the completion of the between-module tasks (outlined earlier) and to advise and assist leadership teams in the processes involved. Being able to help schools in the adaptation or modification of the tasks according to their varying contexts was also a key expectation of the role, and as such ensured a degree of sustainability in the school site.

Having explained the overall intent and operational design of the PALLIC project, the next section focuses on the main purpose of the report, namely the research program, its aims, data-gathering tasks and limitations. This is followed by the presentation, analysis and discussion of the data produced.

Research program

This section details the study aim, research questions and the data-gathering tasks undertaken during the research phase of the project.

Research aim

The general aim of the research program was to document the impact and effects of the PALLIC project's leadership learning modules, follow-up tasks and actions taken by leadership teams to improve children's reading.

Research took place in the 48 participating schools across Queensland, South Australia and the Northern Territory. The schools were identified by each system authority and selected on the basis of Indigenous children's enrolments, with a significant number of children performing below National Minimum Standards for reading in Years 3, 5 and 7. The 48 schools were classified as regional/urban and remote Indigenous community schools. Twenty-two were from Queensland, 13 from South Australia and 13 from the Northern Territory.

Research questions

Three questions guided the choice of research methods.

1. What are the necessary leadership capabilities and practices required to link the work of leadership teams to Indigenous student literacy learning and achievement? What works and why?
2. What actions regarding the teaching of reading do principals and leadership teams need to take to form productive partnerships with Indigenous school community leaders, parents and families? What works and why?
3. What are the overall effects of the actions of leadership teams, parents and family partnerships on Indigenous children's learning and achievement in reading?

Data-gathering tasks

Seven research tasks were developed to gather data to address the three questions. The data-gathering tasks, the purpose of each task and the data sources are presented as a matrix in Table 1 below.

The mixed-method design portrayed in Table 1 produced both qualitative and quantitative data describing the impact and effects of the PALLIC project from the points of view of the key people involved. Research Task Numbers 1 to 6 uncovered data related to the first two research questions, while Task Number 7, the Reading Action Plan Analysis, focused attention on Research Question Number 3.

Limitations

The limitations of the PALLIC project research must be noted. Written English language limitations made it difficult for some Indigenous participants to return written responses to surveys. Similarly, the use of online instruments restricted return rates, and the timing of some of the data-gathering processes in November and December placed survey completion in competition with other end-of-year priorities. Nevertheless, the responses received and the active participation of principals, Indigenous leadership partners, teachers and parents in the seven case study schools allow for indicative descriptions of the project's impact and effect across a range of issues known to affect the leadership and improvement of reading.

Table 1 Research tasks, purposes and data sources

Data Task	Purpose	Data Source
1. Principals' Personal Leadership Profile (PLP)	To obtain principals' self-reflective views about the use of leadership capabilities connecting their work with learning. <i>[This task preceded the principals' survey and is not discussed in this report]</i>	15 principals completed the PLP on two occasions from a possible cohort of 48. 40 principals completed the first PLP
2. Principals' Survey	To understand the leadership actions of principals, their experiences of the project and views on what leadership teams do to support partnerships inside and outside the school	22 principals completed the survey
3. Teachers' Survey	To seek teachers' views about leadership actions, their experiences of the project and views on the extent and effectiveness of efforts to support partnerships inside and outside the school, and the overall impact on children's learning to read	32 teachers completed a survey similar to that completed by principals
4. Literacy leadership mentors' Survey and interviews	To understand literacy leadership mentors' views on their roles in supporting principals and principals' actions to establish partnerships with Indigenous leadership partners and with teachers and community members outside the school	All 6 literacy leadership mentors were interviewed, each completed a survey similar to that completed by principals and teachers (2 SA, 1 NT, 3 Qld)
5. Principals and Indigenous leadership partners' Survey	To gather principals' and Indigenous leadership partners' views on the progress of the project, particularly related to its major positions	All principals and 40 Indigenous leadership partners completed the survey
6. Case Studies involving focus group interviews with leadership teams (principals and Indigenous leadership partners), Indigenous leadership partners and teacher assistants, and teachers. Interviews with principals on school profile actions and forward planning	To obtain a detailed understanding of the school contexts in which principals and Indigenous leadership partners worked; To describe the work of leadership teams on actions to improve children's literacy achievement; To document the outcome of actions to form productive partnerships within the school and community on reading improvement	7 case study schools visits by teams of two researchers (2 NT, 2 SA, 3 Qld). In all cases the researchers were accompanied on the visits by a literacy leadership mentor.
7. Reading Action Plan Report Analysis	To provide an analysis of reports on the evaluation of the effects of Reading Action Plans in PALLIC schools using the following template headings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the school context; the focus of the Reading Action Plan; the purposes and intent of the evaluation; its data collection methods and results; and commendations and recommendations for future planning action. 	46 Reading Action Plan evaluation reports were received (15 NT, 21 Qld, 10 SA)

Part 2 Research findings

This part of the report is organised into two major sections describing what has been learned about:

1. improving Indigenous children's reading achievement and how they learn to read; and
2. enhancing literacy leadership capability and sustainability in the project schools and their communities.

The overall findings of the project are based on a triangulation of self-reported data from the principals' evaluation reports of their schools' Reading Action Plans, case studies of seven schools conducted by the university research team, the survey of principals, Indigenous leadership partners and teachers, as well as the survey and interviews of the literacy leadership mentors.

To set the scene, a brief description of results from the National Assessment Program in Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) in the project schools prior to the commencement of the project is provided.

The NAPLAN landscape

2010-2012 prior to implementation of Reading Action Plans in PALLIC project schools

Results from NAPLAN tests across the period 2010 to 2012 showed that 12 of the 48 project schools were performing above the average achievement of children in statistically similar schools. Nine of these schools were located in regional or urban areas in Queensland. In South Australia, some improvement had occurred in Years 3, 5 and 7 across the three testing periods since the start of NAPLAN. However, there were only small numbers of Indigenous children from this state who sat the tests. In Queensland, Year 3 children showed improvement, while Year 5 children's results were substantially static. In the Northern Territory, there were some small improvements in Years 3 and 5 children's results.

NAPLAN data were not reported for 21 of the 48 schools, indicating that they were below the reporting threshold of fewer than five Indigenous children eligible for testing across the three periods. This rule is applied for statistical reliability and to protect student privacy. All but one of the South Australian schools, seven

Northern Territory schools, and one Queensland school fell into this category.

Principals were well aware of the NAPLAN performance of their schools and as a consequence of their participation in the PALLIC project, they implemented Reading Action Plans to address specific issues identified as impeding student improvement in reading. It is worth noting, however, that a short implementation timeline means that evidence of change in reading achievement in relation to NAPLAN is unlikely to become evident until testing in 2013. That said, it should be understood that the extent of improvement in children's reading achievement is more likely to be seen in the outcomes of 2014 and 2015 NAPLAN testing.

Having described in general the NAPLAN performance of the PALLIC project schools, an analysis of school-level evaluations follows to examine the effects of Reading Action Plans on children's reading achievement, and how improvement is occurring according to the principals involved in the project.

Improving Indigenous children's reading achievement and how they learn to read

This section of the report refers particularly to the analysis of Reading Action Plan evaluation reports produced by principals and their teachers after an implementation period of approximately six months. The section also draws from the seven case studies and a cross-case analysis of the data gathered from them.

Analysis of Reading Action Plan evaluation reports

In total, 48 schools were originally involved in the project. This number increased to 53 through the movement of principals to other schools during the 18-month period in which the project was being implemented. Some of the principals who relocated chose to take their PALLIC experience with them, and to introduce the PALLIC positions into their new sites.

Principals from 46 schools submitted evaluation reports using a common Reading Action Plan reporting template. Reports were received from 15 schools in the Northern Territory, 21 in

Queensland and 10 in South Australia. The template called for information on the school's context, a description of the reading problem and the purposes of the school's evaluation plan, the presentation and discussion of data gathered, and a statement of commendations and recommendations for future action. A summary of the outcomes of the analysis against each of these headings follows.

School contexts

Of the 15 Northern Territory schools, 5 were remote and 10 were very remote, while in Queensland, almost all 21 schools were located either close to the coastline, or in or near large towns. The 10 South Australian schools submitting reports were classified as very remote.

The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) showed that most Queensland schools clustered around 850 to 950 on the Index, much higher in economic status than the Northern Territory schools which lay in the band 550 to 750. The South Australian evaluation reports did not include Index figures, though their remoteness suggests very low socio-economic circumstances, at least equivalent to those of the Northern Territory schools.

Variation in student attendance was documented in many reports. For example, figures for 14 of the Northern Territory schools (for 2012) were: 60%; 83%; 64%; 81%; 82%; 80%; 89%; 65%; 61%; 68%; 68%; 60%; 38% and 70%. Overall, more than half of the 46 reports contained comments about varied levels of student attendance, with most of these coming from remote or very remote locations. For example, student attendance in the South Australian schools drew frequent comments. A significant factor for these schools has been the mobility of the population as children attended for periods of days or weeks between travelling to other communities. Schools often had children who were away for 6 months. At least three of the South Australian schools related achievement data to attendance, a matter revisited later.

There were differences in state and territory jurisdictions in relation to the proportions of Indigenous and non-Indigenous children attending project schools. In the South Australian and Northern Territory schools, almost all children were Indigenous. In Queensland, children were non-Indigenous for the most part, with proportions of Indigenous children ranging from 13% to 30% across the schools.

Examination of the languages used by children again showed variation. In the Northern Territory, in six schools, 100% of the children spoke their Indigenous language at home, while in the others, the figures ranged from 86% to 97%. In the South Australian schools, most children did not speak Standard Australian English (SAE) as their first language. The community language naturally dominated in homes and communities. By contrast, English was the spoken language in the Queensland schools and at most children's homes.

School staff turnover and short tenure were documented in many evaluation reports. The following examples illustrate the difficulty: one school indicated that it had lost its assistant principal and literacy coach suddenly during the PALLIC project timeframe. Another school had its principal removed in Term 4, 2012, and the acting principal had not been made aware of commitments given to the PALLIC project, so there had been little follow up. A third school had several changes in principals over the 18 months of the project. A fourth had three principals during 2011 and 2012. A fifth indicated that it had frequent turnover in school leadership and staff. A sixth stated that it had significant staff turnover during the time and that the principal had to cover classes.

Almost all of the South Australian schools reported principal or staff turnover. One school closed in Term 3 and staff moved to a nearby school for the remaining part of the year. Other evaluation reports spoke of low teacher retention. The pool of replacement teachers in many locations was described as very limited and often meant that new staff members came to Indigenous community schools with very little experience or knowledge of Indigenous culture or language. In one notable case, a school had a complete staff changeover, including the principal. By way of contrast, very few reports from Queensland included comments on staff and principal turnover, suggesting greater staff stability in these regional and urban environments.

Descriptions of the reading problem and evaluation purposes

In their evaluation reports, most schools included a reading problem statement, sometimes with background information added. For example, one remote Indigenous community school principal wrote:

What occurs at school directly reflects what is happening in the community. Over the past 12

to 18 months there have been significant events outside the control of the school which have impacted on the participation of children in the school program. The school has had to concentrate on the well-being of its children, looking to increase attendance, provide a safe and healthy environment for learning, and support families to provide a community environment conducive to learning.

A second principal said:

The first exposure of most children to Standard Australian English occurs in preschool at ages 3 to 4 years. As preschool is not compulsory, most children do not attend on a regular basis. Children then commence Transition (the first year of schooling) with very few of the basic building blocks of Standard Australian English. Although the data demonstrate that quite a few of the children make excellent progress through their schooling to achieve solid results in the NAPLAN assessment process by Year 3, most are still 'Below Benchmark' at this stage and then struggle to 'catch up' throughout the remainder of their schooling.

A third reported the problem this way:

PALLIC identified the importance of explicit, synthetic phonics teaching; and research identifying the 'Big Six' which wasn't happening in the school. A lack of consistency in literacy teaching across classes was evident with no consistent whole school approach.

With reading problems as the focus, school evaluation reports addressed two purposes:

1. the documentation of changes to the teaching and learning experiences in which children were engaging; and
2. the recording of progress in children's achievement.

For example, 19 regional/urban schools focused the purpose of their evaluations on differences in student reading outcomes, while 15 remote Indigenous community schools sought to record changes in the teaching and learning experiences to which children were exposed during the implementation of their Reading Action Plans. Eleven of these included purposes seeking evidence of the effects of staff professional development, changes in the conditions for learning and changes to coordinating and monitoring the literacy curriculum, teaching and learning.

Data collection methods and presentation of data

The methods used by school staff to gather data varied depending on the purposes set for the evaluation. Both qualitative and quantitative processes were used. Some of the methods employed in remote Indigenous community schools included the recording of oral responses to questioning and accounts of reading in both English and the local language. Teachers used, for example, evidence from recordings of oral responses in both languages, comprehension questions on texts studied, annotated checklists and 'running records', observations of sight word recognition, samples of children's writing, anecdotal records and phonemic awareness assessment instruments, as well as published tests, to gain achievement and diagnostic data.

To understand the effects of particular approaches to learning, schools used teacher surveys, classroom observations, teacher feedback about the ways the Big Six were being taught and teacher feedback (before and after) on elements of the Literacy Practices Guide related to teaching for oral language development, phonological awareness and letter sound knowledge. Evident also was the examination of data from School Opinion Surveys, school attendance records and classroom observations. For example, one regional/urban school evaluation report indicated that across all year levels, children in Wave 2 (those receiving specialised group assistance) who attended regularly, made better than expected improvement. This report also included the results of a parent survey, which highlighted the increased engagement of respondents with their own children in reading. Another regional/urban school reported that, based on its teacher survey, 100% of its staff members had confidence in their understanding of the concepts of fluency; 97% of comprehension; 94% of vocabulary, oral language and phonics; and 91% of phonological awareness. A third regional/urban school evaluation report concluded:

The greatest improvement has occurred in teachers' pedagogical practices. All teachers in the school know how to deconstruct a text and focus on the salient features within any set text, no matter what the LA [Learning Area], so that children are engaging with reading through their school day.

Many schools produced explicit data on children's achievement. For example, a regional/urban school summarised what it had done this way:

The baseline data we used to inform our teaching initially in Year 6 and 7 classes included PM Benchmarks, PROBE, PAT-R and classroom observations. Now the use of ESL Band-scaling has been taken up and all Indigenous children P-7 have been Band-scaled. The improvement that is seen in the NAPLAN reading results for our current Year 7s 2012 NAPLAN Performance Measures indicate that 90.5% of children are performing at or above National Minimum Standards.

In general, remote Indigenous community school evaluation reports from the Northern Territory included few comments on specific data about children's reading improvement. Nine of the schools presented no achievement data. However, most evaluation reports made reference to the speaking and listening results of children in the early years, oral language assessment across the years and PM Benchmarking results, pointing to small gains in children's reading performance. Very few data, either on children's reading achievement or on learning, were presented in nine of the South Australian remote Indigenous community schools' evaluation reports. Five reports, however, examined children's reading improvement data in the light of their attendance over the PALLIC project's 18-month timeframe. Prominent in the reports from all of the remote South Australian schools were changes in the way in which teachers were teaching and children were learning. These changes included the use of the Literacy Practices Guide and the use of 'disciplined dialogue' amongst staff members to assess evidence on children's progress and to forward plan.

Evaluation report commendations

The commendations recorded in evaluation reports were uniformly positive about the effectiveness of school Reading Action Plans and the effects of the PALLIC project overall. While it is acknowledged that the focus of the project was on the development of principals' capabilities to lead improvements in literacy in partnership with Indigenous people, principals spoke frequently about improvement in children's reading achievement and about changes that had occurred in their schools over the 18 months of the project. A selection of commendations taken from the reports suggests a degree of satisfaction

with what they had been seeing occur in five fields of leadership endeavour:

- Professional development,
- Teachers' classroom work,
- Reading assessment,
- Indigenous partnerships and family connections, and
- Children's reading achievement.

Professional Development

After involvement in professional development related to the Big Six, our staff are more confident about teaching these skills as part of their literacy programs.

Teachers now have a common language around the components of a reading program.

Staff members are now committed to establishing whole school agreements around classroom literacy blocks.

We have made use of tools such as the Literacy Practices Guide to engage teachers in the self-evaluation of their classroom practice.

We have created a culture for literacy improvement within the staff and this has led to them having higher expectations for children's learning achievement.

The effect of professional training has provided staff with a deeper understanding of the teaching of literacy and student learning.

All teaching staff have had numerous professional development opportunities this year with the focus on oral language in the Big Six of reading.

Teachers' Classroom Work

Teachers are confident in using guided reading strategies across P-3.

There is now more focused teaching and planning across all teaching staff.

Teachers are indicating an increase in confidence in the teaching of reading and in teacher efficacy, and belief in higher expectations about their own skill set has improved.

This has been a whole school literacy program and it has brought staff together in their literacy teaching and knowledge and created a culture within the school where teachers are now growing and learning together.

We have made use of the Literacy Practices Guide as a self-reflective and discussion tool in performance management meetings and, as a result, are seeing more literacy rich classrooms.

Teachers are engaging in disciplined dialogue – What does the data tell us? Why are we seeing this? What, if anything, do we need to do about it?

Whole school timetabling has resulted in a daily English block for two hours, four times a week.

Teachers' programs incorporating the Big Six pointers in their classroom practice have benefitted student learning.

Despite changes in staff and unanticipated absences, teachers have been committed to providing additional literacy support to improve the skills of Wave 2 and 3 children.

Reading Assessment

We now have a system where there are lists of assessments which can be used for the Big Six.

The data collected and recorded showed the need for phonemic awareness which is now taught daily in all learning levels.

Our data collection materials and methods have been reviewed and modified to better inform intervention programs. Pre- and post-data are giving us an indication of the distance travelled by the children involved.

Indigenous Partnerships and Family Connections

A PALLIC highlight has been the inclusion of two Indigenous literacy leaders in the training.

Working with our Indigenous leadership partners has been a new concept and I am proud to be able to work with these three strong leaders.

The confidence and involvement of Indigenous leadership partners has increased.

The skills of our teacher assistants are growing. They are now supporting sight word learning and reading in phrases in small groups or with individual children.

PALLIC professional development has created awareness and has raised the profile of Indigenous staff at the school and increased their confidence in their work.

We have sent more literacy resources to families, some of whom are now more engaged with their children's literacy development through home reading and take home literacy activities.

Newsletters are being sent home on a regular basis (weekly) to ensure that there is print in homes and in the community. These newsletters include some 'general knowledge' facts aimed at improving understanding of written text.

Reading Achievement

In the six months from December 2011 to June 2012, our assessment shows that we have 8 more children in Wave 1 [children requiring least assistance with reading], 5% more of the cohort in Wave 2, 6% fewer in Wave 3 and 4% fewer in Wave 4.

Children in Year 1 have gained improvement in their phonological knowledge, with 68% of children being able to identify rhyming words at the beginning of the year compared with 91% at the end of the year. At the beginning of the year, 40% of the children were able to use pronouns correctly, and by the end of the year, this had increased to 91% being able to do so. There is also a notable improvement in the number of children using both present and past tense.

The achievements of our Indigenous children matched those of their non-Indigenous peers. Indigenous student fluency, vocabulary and comprehension levels have and are continuing to improve significantly from Prep to Year 1 and from Year 1 to Year 2.

At the time of testing, 68 of the children across the school did not know all the sounds of the alphabet. After classroom programs and an intensive withdrawal program, 29 children have successfully learnt all of their letter sounds. Of the remaining 39 children, many only need additional work on 2 or 3 sounds.

Our work on focus phonemes and high frequency words, word building activities to develop understanding of the skill of reading by analogy, practising blending and segmenting, expanding vocabulary and the meaning of words as well as the regular reading of levelled texts, has led to overall improvement in many of the skills required for reading, with the exception of blending and segmenting four sounds. Given that our children speak English as a second, third or fourth language, this is not surprising.

Evaluation report recommendations

Evaluation reports from principals also contained recommendations derived from the analysis of school data. Again, these were generally positive in their outlook and were focused on the school's actions in reading for the following year (2013). A postscript to this report shows the extent to which this positivity has been practised during the 10 months following the end of the PALLIC project. This is described later in more detail. A selection of seven extracts follows, describing the principals' intentions to use the outcomes of Reading Action Plan evaluations as the foundation for ongoing work and sustainability.

What is evident is that the PALLIC project has value added to the professional development of all staff including support staff. The expertise of the literacy coach, as well as the systems and processes developed, has resulted in the creation of quality intervention based on the latest educational theory. There is compelling evidence that differentiated teaching and learning programs are in place, and that collective teacher competency has improved across our school. With the targeted use of resources, we are confident that the new systems will be sustainable into the future. The sharpening and narrowing of our reading focus has been worthwhile. It requires this degree of commitment and resourcing to learn new ways of being. [Our school] will sustain what has been normalised in terms of literacy teaching and learning.

For me, a most positive outcome of PALLIC has been the establishment of the first Indigenous parent group. It has met on several occasions during Semester 2 and they have set goals for 2013 which will support parents and children, and help them come together and support student learning in nurturing a love of reading and how it can help in life today, and in the future.

We will continue to develop strategies that encourage school attendance and engagement in learning. Improving children's attendance is the critical factor, and maximising opportunities for student learning must be a whole of school commitment.

In our literacy program we will continue to teach the Big Six reading sub-skills – oral language, phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension.

We will work on the development of whole school scope and sequence programs to

ensure that there is consistent teaching of the Big Six across all year levels. As a staff, we must continue with teacher skill developmental processes (particularly in the first five years of teaching) so that explicit teaching processes can be adopted to help children become competent readers and writers.

Being at [named school] for six months has provided me with an insight into the limited use and informal practice of Standard Australian English (SAE) at school and within the community. The limited use of SAE in the community and during school hours has presented a great barrier for us to sustain momentum with this initiative. In working with the teaching staff, we have decided to take a more engaging approach to teaching English by using ICT resources and, in particular, a program called 'Reading Eggs'.

As a principal, I feel very fortunate to have been in the 'right place at the right time' and have had the opportunity to undertake the PALLIC program. I will take things I have learned with me to any other school I go to.

Major messages from the evaluation reports

A number of major messages have been derived from the summary of school Reading Action Plan evaluation reports presented above. Five are listed here because principals felt that they were important outcomes from the implementation of their Reading Action Plans and the PALLIC project overall. These major messages are further supported by quotations selected from the data generated in the seven case studies.

The PALLIC project was very well accepted by the principals and schools involved. There is strong evidence that the project has changed the way principals are leading literacy and the way children are learning to read. Children's reading achievement has also improved. The PALLIC processes have built confidence in the way that principals, teachers, support staff and some parents and other community members have worked with children on their reading. The following comment by two teachers from case study schools is indicative of teacher responses in relation to the impact of the program:

...going by the testing, we've seen growth across the board in reading... I've had a few boys who I've had for the two years who couldn't read the frequently used words... 'but' or 'and'... so they weren't reading at all. They're the ones you notice that now are

actually able to read a book. It may not be the book everyone else is reading but they can read. I think there definitely has been a big growth in confidence in terms of picking up other books...

The teacher assistants are here and we split off into the levelled groups. And then guided reading, where I've got kids at very different levels.... Still trying to keep the kids at the top moving forward in terms of expression and comprehension and things like that... With the other groups; letter recognition, sound and things like that...which worked quite well with independent reading. Finally, they are able to sound words out on their own, and if they don't know it, they ask a buddy.

Reading Action Plans were designed and submitted by the principals and staff in 46 of the 48 schools. Staff in each school considered the specific reading problems and context within which the school was operating to inform the Reading Action Plan. The following teacher comment is indicative of staff planning in case study schools:

We had to sit down with our planning [team] and think about things that we're doing in the classroom and what area of the Big Six that's being focused on, and to make sure that we're having a holistic approach to teaching reading, not just focusing on one area. So I guess that was a bit of an eye-opener when you sat down and looked at that.

Substantial ongoing professional learning occurred in each PALLIC project school. Teachers in case study schools expressed appreciation for the structure PALLIC strategies brought to their teaching and the impact it had on children's reading:

Before we had PALLIC every teacher was doing something different, some teachers had a huge reading focus and other teachers had the bare minimum. Now that we've got the whole PALLIC and the Big Six and the expectations and the principal checks the planning, you know, it needs to be in our planning. It's expected of us. I think that's probably the best thing that's happened for this school is that now we're all on the same page.

In almost all schools, the teaming of Indigenous leadership partners with principals proved to be a valued initiative. Case study teachers advised that conversations with Indigenous learners had become richer as a result of their interactions with Indigenous leadership partners, noting that

Indigenous leadership partners provided them with a stronger understanding and appreciation of the cultural differences existing between Western and Indigenous cultures, as well as within Indigenous groups. This is illustrated by the following teachers' reflections which generally represent the views across case study schools:

For me, I guess I've had someone to go to. I've got quite a few Indigenous kids in my class with a range of abilities and I'll just go to [Indigenous leadership partner's name], 'I've got this student, how would I do this?' or 'can you help me out?' and [Indigenous leadership partner] had always given me really good advice.

[The Indigenous leadership partners] took us to [museum name] and I think it was where it hit me the most – just understanding their [Indigenous] cultural background and things that happened that were never taught to me – I guess I live in my own bubble to some degree and it was a real eye-opener. It really has opened my eyes and given me more of an understanding.

There was evidence of the PALLIC project's sustainability in most of the schools with many continuing to plan to implement reading improvement recommendations from their evaluation reports into 2013. The following comments drawn from case study school visits demonstrate intentions to incorporate PALLIC plans into the following academic year. The first is from a principal in relation to comprehension, and the second is from a teacher focused on vocabulary skills:

Vocabulary is up and going...there's this competition on at the moment, bit like Boggle where the kids have to make as many words as they can, and can start with 'at' and get 'cat' and 'pat,' and all the things that we've been wanting to do, the blending. And they're doing it through this competition and we're running fourth in the [state], and we've got three of our kids into the grand final. So, that's a remarkable achievement. So, vocabulary is pretty well on and going and will always be because of Accelerated Literacy. So our biggie for next year is to work on reading comprehension.

We're planning to improve peer benchmarking by at least one level next year...we have a set goal for sight words the kids have learnt at each stage...we're trying to model reading more within the community and in the

classroom.... So change the culture so the kids don't see reading as an intrusion. It's just something we do to develop our general skills, our English and communication skills.... We're working on material that we can put out there, into the community, on a regular basis as something that is valued.... The plan sets minimum targets to support learning.

The next section turns to the primary purpose of the PALLIC project, the development of literacy leadership capabilities.

Enhancing literacy leadership capability and sustainability

(in the project schools and their communities)

To address the question of what has been learned about enhancing literacy leadership capability and sustainability in the PALLIC project schools, a selection of data sets is taken from the research program overall. This illustrates a picture of emerging strengths in a number of important leadership dimensions and continuing weaknesses in others. The data sets are:

- the results from the survey of principals – included because of the project's clear focus on the leadership work of principals;
- the triangulation of data from the three surveys comparing the views of teachers and literacy leadership mentors with those of principals – included because this provides verification or otherwise of the claims made by principals;
- the rankings of all three survey groups on the range of leadership actions taken frequently in project schools matched with judgments of their effectiveness – included because this highlights not only where opinions coincide but also when views about leadership differ; and
- the results from the survey of principals and Indigenous leadership partners – selected because they present responses on the research informed positions underpinning the PALLIC project.

Reference will also be made to findings from the case studies with respect to the leadership capabilities and practices required to link the work of leadership teams to Indigenous student literacy learning and achievement.

Results from the survey of principals

The online survey instrument for principals was completed by 22 of the 48 principals who participated in the PALLIC project. The instrument included two discrete sections.

First section of the principals' survey

The first section contained 17 items derived from the leadership for learning research positions upon which the project had been predicated, covering both in-school and out-of-school leadership actions such as:

- keeping a focus on making improvements in reading;
- providing a framework for the teaching of reading (e.g., the Big Six);
- using data on the Big Six in reading to inform school planning;
- modelling leadership 'both ways' – from the school to the community and from the community to the school;
- talking frequently with Indigenous parents about children's reading development; and
- engaging others from the community as active leaders of reading.

The full list of items is reproduced in Appendix 1 in the Teachers' Survey because it contains the same questions as those asked of principals.

It was argued that items such as these recorded the types of leadership actions considered important and helpful in Indigenous school communities; and that knowledge of how often they were employed would be a necessary precondition to being able to gather data on the extent to which particularly effective actions were being implemented. In completing this first part of the questionnaire, principals were asked to indicate the frequency with which they carried out each of the nominated actions using a 5-point scale from 1: *rarely* to 5: *always* with the midpoint of 3: *undecided*.

Findings

The principals' data are presented pictorially in Figure 3 with a mean score close to 1 signalling actions implemented *rarely*, while items with a mean of 5 were those implemented *always*. In discussing the findings, it is necessary to note that the 17 items have been shortened to facilitate the composition of the graph as a summary of all responses. The raw data are presented in tabular form in Appendix 2, with full item statements, and it is these numeric data that are used in the following discussion.

The responses from principals regarding these 17 items provide evidence of their views on the frequency of implementation of the listed activities in their schools.

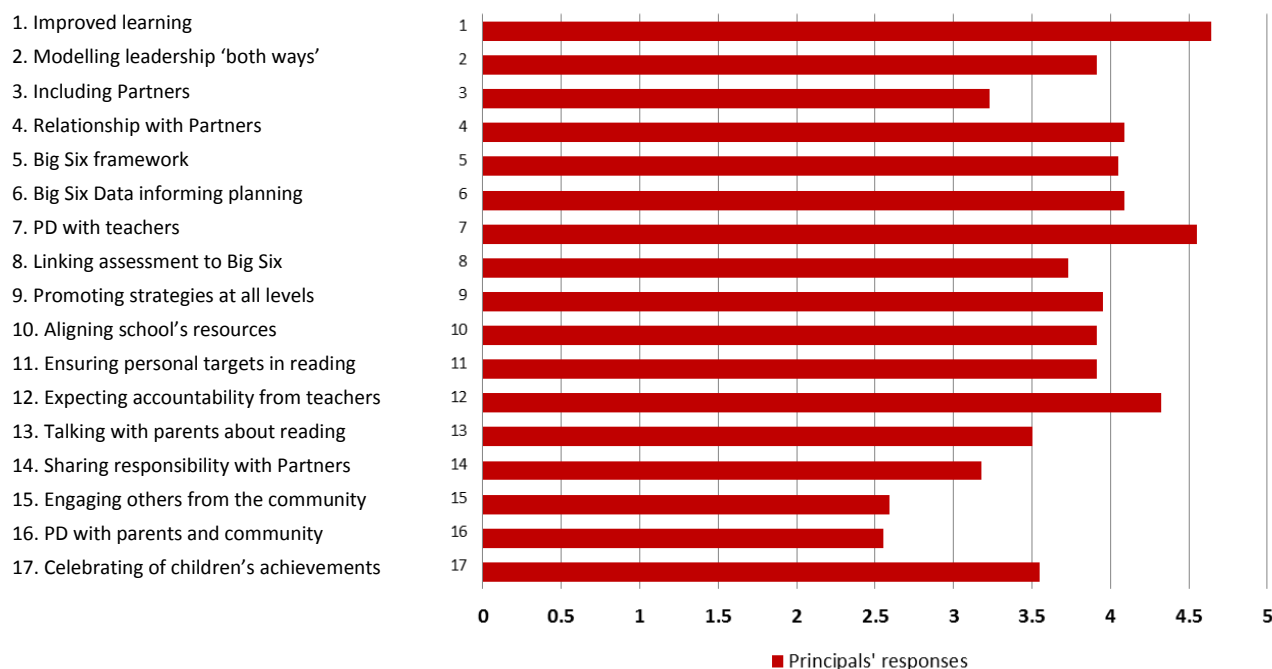


Figure 3 Principals' responses on the frequency of particular leadership actions.

Note. Frequency of implementation on 5 point scale: 1 *rarely*–5 *always*

First, it is apparent that all actions were considered to have been implemented with some degree of frequency (i.e., with average scores above 3, or midway on the scale). Only two items are rated below 3 – Item 15 (mean = 2.59) and Item 16 (mean = 2.55), both items that relate to direct activities with parents and the community.

It is clear that principals in their responses differentiated between items. To illustrate this, items with the three highest means, then those with the three lowest, are identified and discussed.

The three activities seen as most frequently implemented describe core literacy responsibilities. Item 1, *Keeping the focus on the school's commitment to improving learning to read for Indigenous children* is rated as the most frequently implemented action (mean = 4.64), closely followed by Item 7, *Participating in professional development on reading with teachers* (mean = 4.55) and Item 12, *Expecting accountability for reading achievement with teachers* (mean = 4.32).

Regarding Item 1, *Keeping the focus on the school's commitment to improving learning to read for Indigenous children*, no principal rated this less than *frequently*, with the majority of principals (63.6% of the 22 respondents) rating it as *always* implemented. The response patterns

for Item 7, *Participating in professional development on reading with teachers* and Item 12, *Expecting accountability for reading achievement from my teachers* are similar, but with fewer respondents rating these as *always* implemented (54.5% and 40.9%).

At the other extreme, the three items judged lowest in frequency are Items 14, 15 and 16 (see Table 2).

For Item 16, *Participating in professional development on reading with Indigenous parents and community members*, no principal indicated that this action was undertaken *frequently* – almost a quarter (22.7%) indicated it was undertaken *rarely*. Similar responses were recorded for Items 15 and 14 respectively, with Item 15 also gathering no responses of *frequent* while three (13.6%) principals indicated that they saw the action in Item 14 occurring *always*.

Table 2 Items lowest in frequency

Item	Mean
14 Sharing responsibility for reading with Indigenous leadership partners	3.18
15 Engaging others from the community as active Leaders of Reading	2.59
16 Participating in professional development on reading with Indigenous parents and community members	2.55

Ten of the items in Figure 3 refer to leadership actions principals undertake mainly inside the school. These are Items 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 17. It is important to note that the three actions considered to have greatest frequency are found in this group (i.e., Items 1, 7 and 12), with the lowest means recorded for the actions in Items 8 and 17 (3.73 and 3.55 respectively).

The remaining seven items in Figure 3 (2, 3, 4, 13, 14, 15 and 16) refer to leadership actions, which require principals to make connections with Indigenous people both inside and outside the school. The two items with the lowest means are in this group (Items 15 and 16) while the highest mean is for Item 4, *Building a good working relationship with my Indigenous leadership partners*.

Of these seven items, the first three refer to actions which require interactions between principals and Indigenous leadership partners, three others (Items 13, 15 and 16) refer to actions with parents and/or members of the community and one (Item 14) recognises a formal sharing of leadership responsibility with Indigenous partners.

In summary, the data from principals accord the highest frequency to activities that clearly and directly link their key responsibilities for the outputs of the school with their responsibilities in leading and managing the performance of teachers. A very important and high frequency action is that depicted by Item 7, which refers to principals participating in professional development with their teachers – providing evidence that they are taking a hands-on leadership role with their staff. The lowest items, all from the second group, refer to activities outside core school responsibilities, that is, to actions with parents and other community members.

Major messages from the first section of the principals' survey

There is little doubt from the data provided by the small sample of principals that they were more actively engaged in school-based actions over which they had direct control than the out-of-school actions over which they had less control. Leadership actions, which required principals to work with their Indigenous leadership partners and teachers on reading-related issues within the school, were reported as more frequent than actions requiring work with people outside the school.

The following case study comments from teachers, teacher assistants and a principal illustrate productive outcomes from in-school actions as they supported children's learning across reading levels.

Teachers' comments:

I went to [Indigenous leadership partner] at the beginning of the year because I had a new girl from a community – I don't know whereabouts, and I was having trouble – because this is my first year out of Uni so I kind of was a bit thrown in and I said to [Indigenous leadership partner], 'this little girl, she doesn't speak much, and every time I ask her a question she won't look at me, she won't talk to me, she won't reply at all' and [Indigenous leadership partner] could explain to me then that in her culture it's rude to ask questions and because she had come from a community she hadn't seen many white people and [Indigenous leadership partner] could explain it all to me. It gave me such a good understanding and now she'll just talk non-stop to me – from then until now.

She [Indigenous leadership partner] is good at supervising and behaviour management. She hears things I don't hear, she will sit down with the kids writing and she'll correct it, mark work... and she has that literacy level herself, so she feels very confident in helping the children.

I have two teacher assistants... It might be a spelling game or it might be using the phonics cards and working with kids one on one. So often I'll model a new game to him and then he will teach the children...so trying to get them to be the leader of that group. I've also got M who works with games and he works with special-needs children in our class. He uses his initiative and comes up with new activities. I'll sort of keep him doing the same thing and every now and then introduce something else, 'why don't you try this with S' just so I'm not overwhelming him.

Further to this, a principal and a teacher assistant commented on the use of Indigenous languages at school to model reading in the early stages of learning to read:

So, that's something that, it doesn't have to be in English. Do it in the first language too so that the kids get past one-word things. So we're doing lots of modelling. But it's only short sessions with parents of the younger kids because they're more interested in working with their children and listening.

Sometimes I read books, sometimes I read in language, then in English...traditional stories, like the stories of the mermaid and dreaming, you know?... They're just little, but they can speak both languages, they're doing very well.

Despite these positive accounts, speculation on the reasons for the in-school leadership emphasis seen in the findings, brings forward the following possibilities:

1. an 18-month project may not have allowed sufficient time for confidence in the relationship between principals and Indigenous leadership partners to enable them to carry their work out into families and the wider community to seek support and input on strategies to improve children's reading; and
2. although just two of the principals were Indigenous, all involved were growing their knowledge about Indigenous language and culture through the relationship with their Indigenous leadership partners. This knowledge growth should be beneficial to all principals in extending the project.

Second section of the principals' survey

The second section of the principals' questionnaire asked for responses to a set of 14 items derived from the PALLIC positions already explained in Part 1 of this report. They were designed to draw judgements from principals about the kinds of actions known, through research and in theory, to lead to helpful partnerships for literacy learning, principally for learning to read with Indigenous children. In short, the questionnaire items presented actions pivotal to the concept of leadership 'both ways'. Central to these actions were effective relationships with Indigenous leadership partners at school and relationships engaging Indigenous Leaders of Reading from local families and the wider community.

The two-part question asked of principals:

*To **what extent** do you implement the following actions and **how effective** are they?*

The 14 actions listed in the questionnaire covered partnership relationships inside and outside the school considered essential if the work of school leadership teams was to materialise in support of children learning to read. The full suite of items is included in Appendix 1.

Findings

The findings are presented in Figure 4 showing two bars for each item:

1. extent of implementation: the black bar, with scores recorded on a 5-point scale ranging from *not at all* to *fully*, indicating the extent to which principals reported each action had been implemented; and
2. effectiveness of implementation: the red bar, recording responses, again on a 5-point scale, this time ranging from *very ineffective* to *very effective*.

In discussing the information presented in the figure, reference is made to the raw data reproduced in tabular form in Appendix 3 where the third and fourth columns contain principals' responses.

First, it is clear from the principals' responses to the 14 items represented in Figure 4 that all of the actions listed had been implemented to some extent, with scores ranging mostly between 2 and nearly 3 on the 5-point scale. In comparison, principals rated the effectiveness (of the implementation of the same actions) a little higher, closer to 3 on the scale. When the responses to extent and effectiveness are compared, principals' responses differentiated between items.

Given the early stage of this project, it is not surprising that the perceptions of the **extent** of implementation are lower than those for **effectiveness**—suggesting that principals have felt that the implementation of the nominated strategies has only modestly progressed; but that they see value in many, justifying their attaching higher ratings to them.

To facilitate further discussion, the findings on **extent** and **effectiveness**, presented in Figure 4, have been clustered into three themes (see Table 3):

- Working in the school together
- Capacity building through information and training
- Respecting and engaging Indigenous knowledge.

Each of these clusters is now discussed in turn.

Cluster 1

Working in the school together – participation (Items 20, 26, 31) and partnerships (Item 27)

Only limited implementation action is seen with regard to Item 27, *A Classroom Reading Practices Guide has been developed in partnership between teachers and Indigenous parents and community members*. The scores for effectiveness are similarly low, placing this as the least positive item within this group, but also as one of the least positive in all 14 items being discussed. With a mean for implementation extent of only 1.98 out of 5, this suggests a very low level of implementation. In fact, for this item only one principal (4.5%) rated this as *fully implemented*, whilst 45.5% rated its implementation *not at all*. With regard to effectiveness, the item received a mean rating of 2.86, with 22.7% of principals rating it as either *effective* or *highly effective*. While this rating is just above midway on the scale, this is well below the other items in this

group with ratings between 3.23 and 3.45, placing the item just above Item 22, *Indigenous people undertake training on how to support aspects of The Big Six in reading at home* as the second least effective of all 14 items.

In summary, while the level of implementation has means hovering around 2.5 to 3 for the three items (20, 26 and 31) relating to the participation of Indigenous parents and leaders in school activities, the responses to the implementation of partnership activities (as in Item 27) drew lower means for *extent* and lower means for *effectiveness* than for participation.

Although the survey findings indicate principals are conservative in their views about the progress made in working with Indigenous partners in the school, this view is moderated by a more positive view by principals in their evaluation reports and by teachers and school personnel in the case studies.

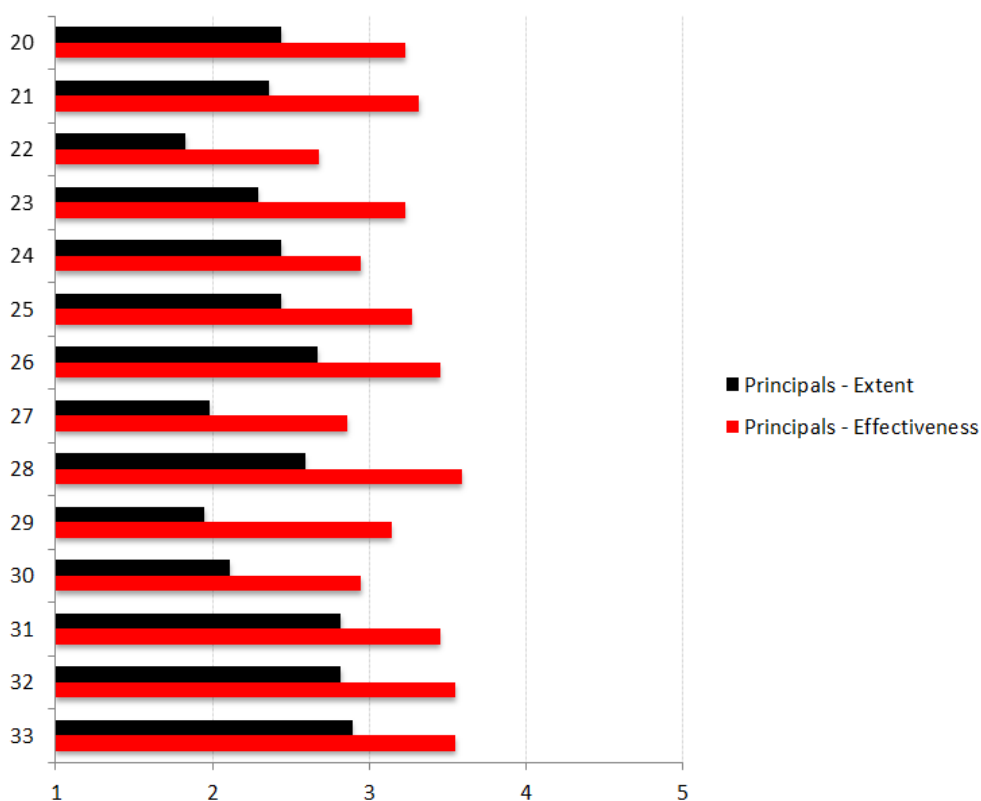


Figure 4 Principals' responses regarding the extent and effectiveness of actions concentrating on leadership partnerships with Indigenous people

Note. Average Score: Extent 1 *not at all*–5 *fully*, Effectiveness 1 *very ineffective*–5 *very effective*

20. Partners participate in design, planning and preparation

21. Parents/community participate in info sessions

22. Training of Indigenous community on Big Six in reading at home

23. All make judgments on children's performance together

24. Home Practices Guide jointly developed

25. Parents/ community discuss literacy needs

26. Indigenous leaders of reading support reading at school

27. Reading Practices Guide jointly developed

28. Reading strategies value Indigenous languages

29. Training sessions on reading are 'two-way'

30. Seek reports on reading from Indigenous people

31. Indigenous people support Reading Action Plans

32. We seek reading solutions in conversations with Indigenous people

33. Indigenous leaders of reading actively support home learning

Table 3 Cluster themes

Cluster	Item	Extent Mean	Effectiveness Mean
1	20 Our Indigenous partners participate in the design, planning and preparation of our school reading practices	2.44	3.23
	26 Indigenous leaders of reading actively support reading at school	2.67	3.45
	27 A Classroom Reading Practices Guide has been developed in partnership between teachers and Indigenous parents and community members	1.98	2.86
	31 Indigenous people support the school's Reading Action Plans	2.83	3.45
2	21 Indigenous parents and community members participate in information sessions on learning to read	2.36	3.32
	22 Indigenous people undertake training on how to support aspects of The Big Six in reading at home	1.83	2.68
	29 Our training sessions on reading are 'two-way' with Indigenous and non-Indigenous people being teachers for each other	1.95	3.14
3	23 Indigenous and non-Indigenous people together make judgements on children's performance in reading	2.29	3.23
	24 Our Home Reading Practices Guide has been developed with Indigenous parents and community members	2.44	2.95
	25 Indigenous parents and community members discuss their children's literacy needs and speak for themselves about their concerns	2.44	3.27
	28 Our reading improvement strategies place a heavy value on the importance of Indigenous languages	2.59	3.59
	30 We seek out reports on reading from Indigenous people	2.11	2.95
	32 My teachers and I seek reading improvement solutions in conversations with Indigenous people	2.82	3.55
Single Item	33 Indigenous leaders of reading actively support home learning	2.89	3.55

Cluster 2

Capacity building through information (Item 21) and training (Items 22, 29)

The three items in this grouping concern training and information provision arranged by principals for Indigenous community members. As Figure 4 shows and the means attached to each item confirm, these actions have attracted limited implementation attention, with data on the *extent* of implementation low, with two of these items recording means less than 2.0 (Item 22, mean: 1.83 and Item 29, mean: 1.95), ranking these as the lowest items overall with regard to the *extent* of implementation.

With such low means for all three items in Cluster 2, the message is clear: capacity building through training for Indigenous people has seen limited implementation. Moreover, principals are undecided about the *effectiveness* of such sessions, with this view being made very clear in the low mean for Item 22, *Indigenous people undertake training on how to support aspects of The Big Six in reading at home*.

Cluster 3

Respecting and engaging Indigenous knowledge

The largest group of items clusters around the theme of respecting and engaging Indigenous knowledge in support of children learning to read, with this including items accessing both fairly formal involvement (e.g., Item 24), participatory activities (e.g., Items 23 and 32) and general judgements of the value of Indigenous language in learning to read (e.g., Item 28). As Figure 4 shows, the items in this group all had low to moderate implementation means, with the lowest being for Item 30, this item having a mean of 2.11, with only 9.5% of principals rating this strategy as fully implemented.

When the effectiveness ratings are considered, the data showed that all items were ranked near to, or above, a mean of 3 (Items 24 and 30 both were ranked at 2.95 for effectiveness). The items rated as most *effective* in this group are Item 28 and Item 32. Both these items are focused specifically on reading improvement and both are targeting Indigenous perspectives – from the use

of Indigenous language to the identification of strategies through conversations with Indigenous people. Both were seen as *effective* by principals with around 59% rating each as *effective*. This is in contrast to the results for the two items rated as *least effective* in this group – Items 22 and 27 where for both, only 22.7% of principals said that they were *effective*.

Individual item

The one remaining leadership action, Item 33, *Indigenous leaders of reading actively support home learning* describes the involvement of Indigenous leaders of reading working on their own with children outside the school. This item was rated highest with regard to the *extent* of implementation and also was near the highest with regard to its perceived *effectiveness* (rated 3.55 where the highest mean for effectiveness was 3.59 for Item 28).

Major messages from the second section of the principals' survey

Several related conclusions can be inferred from the results portrayed in this section of the principals' questionnaire. There is no leadership partnership action which stands out as one that all principals have implemented *fully*. Most appear to have been implemented to some extent, with some not being implemented at all in some schools. It is clear, however, that the scale descriptor, *fully*, was not used by any respondent to the instrument. This sense of qualification has pulled respondents' views towards the scale descriptors *undecided* and *not at all*. When the responses to the question of the *effectiveness* of each of the actions listed are considered, it is evident that no action was considered by principals to be *very effective* – this seems reasonable given the early stages of implementation. The action which comes closest to an effective practice in the view of principals is Item 28, which refers to strategies which *place a heavy value on the importance of Indigenous languages*. A powerful message about language difference was the view of a case study school principal that it was the teachers who had a language deficit, not the children:

we don't have the language to bring children's knowledge out... we always talk about what kids bring to school but when we don't have the language, it's really hard to acknowledge what they bring to school and it just gets lost ...so unfortunate.

Lastly, the data on information and training are especially germane to the PALLIC project because they signal a need for much more to be attempted and implemented in school communities if sustainability and self-reliance in reading support are to be achieved. That is, it is clear from this section of analysis that if the Indigenous community is to 'lead reading' inside and outside schools, a culturally appropriate form of training needs to be implemented, most probably in the local community setting, involving Indigenous and Western methodologies and pedagogies.

The presentation in this section of the report has so far focused on the views presented by principals – to the initial 17-item questionnaire on the frequency of adoption of key leadership actions, then on their responses to 14 school-based actions regarding the extent of application and effectiveness of these actions. The discussion now turns to a triangulation of data gathered on these two sets of items from principals, teachers and literacy leadership mentors. This process puts the perceptions of principals under greater scrutiny through comparison.

The triangulation of results from principals', teachers' and literacy leadership mentors' survey responses

This discussion refers to Figure 5 which compares the responses drawn from principals, teachers and literacy leadership mentors to the same 17 items completed by principals themselves to research question 1 (RQ1):

What are the necessary leadership capabilities and practices required to link the work of leadership teams to Indigenous student literacy learning and achievement? What works and why?

Questions such a comparison raises include:

- Are teachers and literacy leadership mentors presenting the same general picture of the strategies – thus confirming the views of principals?
- Do any differences in the data from teachers and literacy leadership mentors add to our understanding of the implementation of particular literacy leadership strategies in schools and communities?
- How does this consideration impact on earlier conclusions?

As in Figure 4, the responses in Figure 5 are represented on a 1 to 5 scale, indicating responses on the frequency of implementation from *1 rarely* to *5 always*.

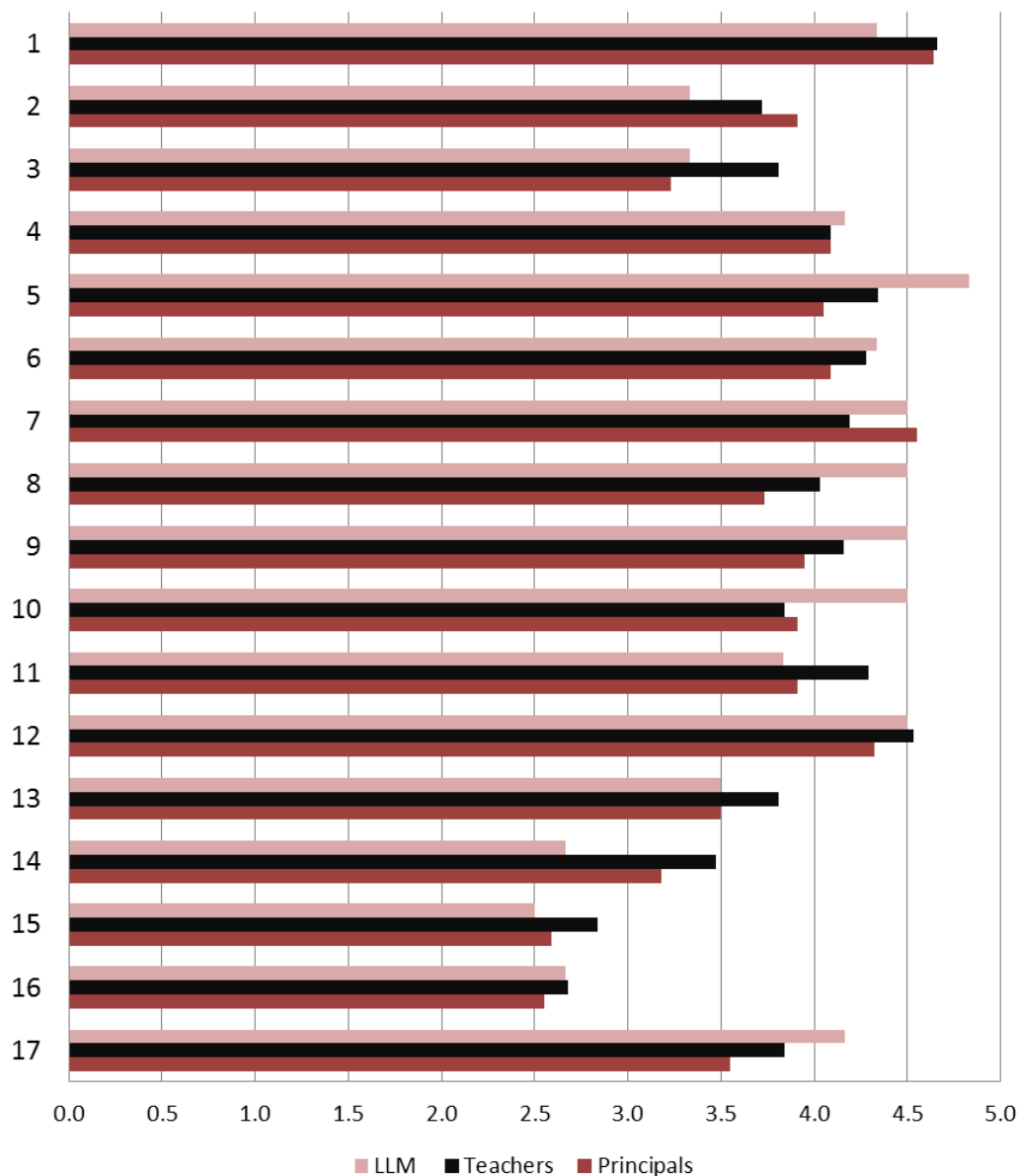


Figure 5 The triangulation of responses to Items 1-17 made by principals, teachers and literacy leadership mentors

Note. Frequency of implementation on a 5 point scale 1 *rarely* –5 *always*

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| 1. Improved learning | 10. Aligning school's resources |
| 2. Modelling Leadership 'both ways' | 11. Ensuring personal targets in reading |
| 3. Including Partners | 12. Expecting accountability from teachers |
| 4. Relationship with Partners | 13. Talking with parents about reading |
| 5. Big Six framework | 14. Sharing responsibility with Partners |
| 6. Big Six Data informing planning | 15. Engaging others from the community |
| 7. PD with teachers | 16. PD with parents and community |
| 8. Linking assessment to Big Six | 17. Celebrating of children's achievements |
| 9. Promoting strategies at all levels | |

Overall, the three lines in Figure 5 show similar response patterns across the three cohorts (principals, teachers, literacy leadership mentors), in most cases with the same relativity between questions. That is, the questions accorded highest frequency by principals were

those given highest frequency by teachers and literacy leadership mentors. When items have been rated as occurring *rarely* by principals, they are reported similarly by teachers and literacy leadership mentors. However, there are a number of actions for which this is not the case.

For example, the results for Items 5 and 16 highlight differences of view. For Item 5, *Providing the Big Six as a framework for the teaching of reading*, the average scores indicate that all three groups see the frequency with which this action was taken as being high, with all mean scores above 4 (literacy leadership mentors: mean = 4.83; teachers: mean = 4.34; and principals: mean = 4.05). For Item 16, *Participating in professional development on reading with Indigenous parents and community members*, again there is a tendency to agreement amongst the three groups that implementation occurred less frequently, with means ranging from 2.55 to 2.67 (literacy leadership mentors: mean = 2.67, teachers: mean = 2.68 and principals: mean = 2.55).

While there are many items where the triangulated results are numerically close, such as in Item 16 discussed above, there are a number of others where the differences are marked. For example, while there are no markedly high assessments by principals, there are three items where there is a noticeably lower assessment than that provided by either teachers or literacy leadership mentors – Items 5, 8 and 9. These items refer to three strategies that relate to the implementation of the Big Six, suggesting that principals might have a more constrained view of what is happening across the schools than teachers and literacy leadership mentors.

For teachers, the extremes in their responses are found in a number of items. For example, high frequency activities are seen in Items 3, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 – all relating to operational aspects of the school, thus areas for which teachers would have some responsibility. For literacy leadership mentors there are a number of items where their responses are higher and lower than those of principals. This is illustrated in the results for their highest frequency items, namely Items 5, 8, 9 and 10. The actions literacy leadership mentors reported with lower frequency implementation than that recorded by principals and teachers were for Items 2 and 14 – both related to interactions within the local school community.

As Figure 5 shows, literacy leadership mentors tended to view other items more positively. They reported that in their view, only three items occurred less frequently than did either principals or teachers – Item 1, *Keeping the focus on the school's commitment to improving learning to read for Indigenous children*; Item 2, *Modelling leadership 'both ways' – from the school to the community and from the community to the school*; and Item 14, *Sharing responsibility for reading with Indigenous leadership partners*. All

three items reflect a strong commitment to Indigenous learning and partnerships outside the school, matters about which the literacy leadership mentors may have held more hopeful or aspirational views than their in-school counterparts.

Overall, the triangulated data support the initial conclusions highlighting the impact of the PALLIC project in schools. The results also suggest that it is likely that principals had a broader view of the level of implementation of the Big Six as they had the opportunity to see activity across the school, a view not necessarily available to teachers and literacy leadership mentors.

The report now turns to an examination of the triangulation of the second set of data from the 14 items common to the principals', teachers' and literacy leadership mentors' surveys. These items described leadership partnership actions for the teaching of reading. The responses for the three groups are presented in Figure 6, with the data for Extent and Effectiveness both ranging from 1 to 5.

Table 4 Range of responses

	1	2	3	4	5
Extent	Not at All				Fully
Effectiveness	Very Ineffective			Very Effective	

From the results illustrated in Figure 6, it is apparent that the three groups have made similar judgments about the *extent* to which particular actions have been implemented and their perceived *effectiveness*. It can also be seen that generally, judgments about the *effectiveness* of the actions attract higher means than those for the *extent* to which these actions are being implemented. In other words, the three lines recording the scores for *effectiveness* have higher average scores (i.e., closer to a rating of *highly effective*) than those for *extent*. These patterns are consistent with those described for principals earlier, thus reinforcing the overall earlier discussion and conclusions.

As with the discussion of the triangulation of responses on the first 17 survey items, this discussion focuses on two questions:

- Are teachers and literacy leadership mentors presenting the same general picture of the *Extent* and *Effectiveness* of the strategies – thus confirming the results obtained from principals?
- Do any differences in the results from teachers and literacy leadership mentors add to our understanding of the implementation of the listed leadership actions in schools and communities?

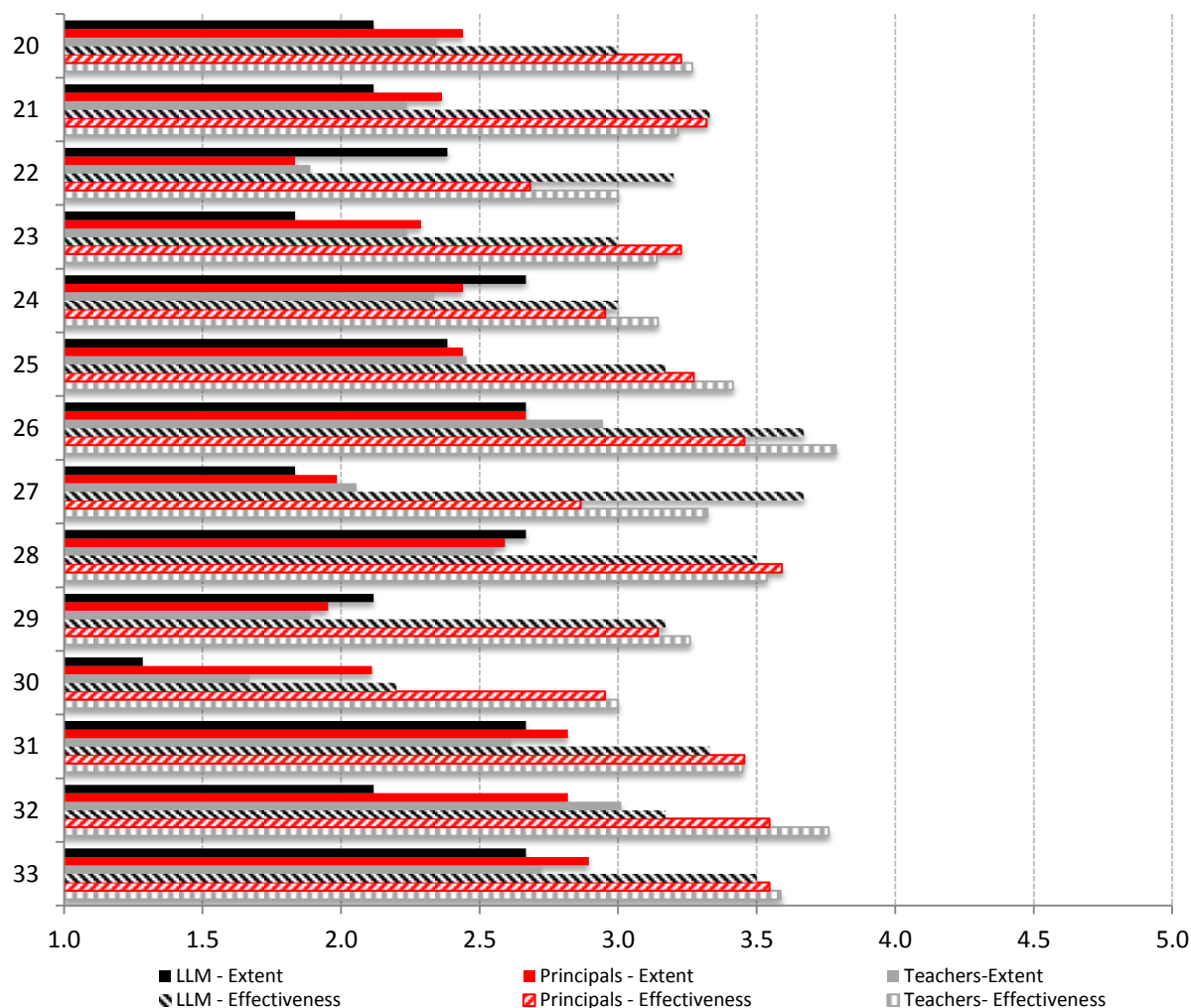


Figure 6 The triangulation of data on 14 leadership partnership actions by principals, teachers and literacy leadership mentors

Note. Average Score: Extent 1 not at all–5 fully, Effectiveness 1 very ineffective–5 very effective

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 20. Partners participate in design, planning and preparation | 27. Reading Practices Guide jointly developed |
| 21. Parents/community participate in info sessions | 28. Reading strategies value Indigenous languages |
| 22. Training of Indigenous community on Big Six in reading at home | 29. Training sessions on reading are 'two-way' |
| 23. All make judgements on children's performance together | 30. Seek reports on reading from Indigenous people |
| 24. Home Practices Guide jointly developed | 31. Indigenous people support Reading Action Plans |
| 25. Parents/community discuss literacy needs | 32. We seek reading solutions in conversations with Indigenous people |
| 26. Indigenous leaders of reading support reading at school | 33. Indigenous leaders of reading actively support home learning |

Item 28, *Reading strategies value Indigenous languages*, is an item with comparatively high ratings for which there is a close consensus amongst the three groups, with a very narrow range of means from 2.55 to 2.67 for *extent* and 3.50 to 3.59 for *effectiveness*. In contrast on Item 30, *We seek out reports on reading from Indigenous people*, there is a divergence of views with the results for *extent* ranging from 1.20 to 2.11 and for *effectiveness* 2.20 to 3.00. This item is non-exceptional for principals and teachers (i.e., neither higher nor lower than the majority

of items). However, literacy leadership mentors view this activity as having the lowest implementation *extent* and *effectiveness* (means: 1.28, 2.20).

Item 30, therefore, is particularly noteworthy because one of the aims of the PALLIC project was to engage more members of the Indigenous community in the teaching and learning of reading with their children. While principals are far more positive about the *extent* of implementation than either teachers or literacy

leadership mentors, the results for *effectiveness* highlight a difference between teachers, principals and literacy leadership mentors, with lower means for the latter, suggesting that in literacy leadership mentors' minds, partnerships with the Indigenous community were not working well.

Other items where notable differences can be observed are identified below:

Item 27, *A Classroom Reading Practices Guide has been developed in partnership between teachers and Indigenous parents and community members*. For this item the results on the *extent* of implementation are consistently towards the lower end of the scale. However, in turning to the results for *effectiveness*, differences between the three groups are apparent, with the rankings varying from a mean of 2.86 for principals to the higher 3.67 for literacy leadership mentors, with teachers returning a mean between these two of 3.32. This result suggests that while all three groups agree on the *extent* of the action on implementing a partnership for a Reading Practices Guide, they clearly differ on the *effectiveness* of the strategy, with the highest mean from literacy leadership mentors. This points to literacy leadership mentors seeing greater value in Indigenous partnerships to develop reading practices in classrooms than principals or teachers.

The pattern of difference for Item 32, *My teachers and I seek reading improvement solutions in conversations with Indigenous people* is similar to that for Item 30, *We seek out reports on reading from Indigenous people* discussed above. Both items refer to using input from the Indigenous community, and in both cases the results for both *extent* and *effectiveness* are lower from the literacy leadership mentors than from either teachers or principals.

Similarities also appear in the means for Item 22 and Item 27, also discussed above. In these cases, the reference is to situations where Indigenous community members work with the school (in training or in developing reading guides). For both activities literacy leadership mentors' means for *effectiveness* were higher than those for principals.

The differences in judgements of the *extent* to which particular actions have been implemented and their potential or perceived *effectiveness* can be explained partly by the fact that a lack of implementation leaves judgements of *effectiveness* as 'best estimates'. These findings suggest that the actions that the items described are in the early stages of implementation, with no respondent group identifying actions that are *fully* implemented. Most strategies have low to moderate implementation, and there are a number of strategies where minimal implementation has taken place.

One further question, Item 18, *Which 3 of the practices above are most important to you*, was put only to principals and teachers. They were asked to identify their top three leadership actions from the 17 listed in the first section of the questionnaire. A weighted average of these responses provided a 0-3 score for each item (with an average score where 0 indicates no respondents identified the action as a priority and 3 indicating that every respondent identified it as a priority). These ratings are presented in Figure 7 to show what each group considers most important.

As Figure 7 shows, both teachers and principals place their top emphasis on Item 1, *Keeping the focus on the school's commitment to improving learning to read for Indigenous children*, (principals an average of 1.23 and 1.19 for teachers).

Both principals and teachers place their lowest priority on Item 15, *Engaging others from the community as active Leaders of Reading* (i.e., this action is not rated as a priority by either teachers or principals). This result exposes an ongoing challenge for school leaders, teachers and Indigenous community members on how they can collaborate and engage in children's reading improvement.

The most marked difference between the priorities reported by principals and teachers is for Item 13, *Talking with parents about student reading development*, assigned a low ranking (0.05) by principals and a higher ranking (0.53) by teachers, those who would be the ones undertaking such conversations, for the most part.

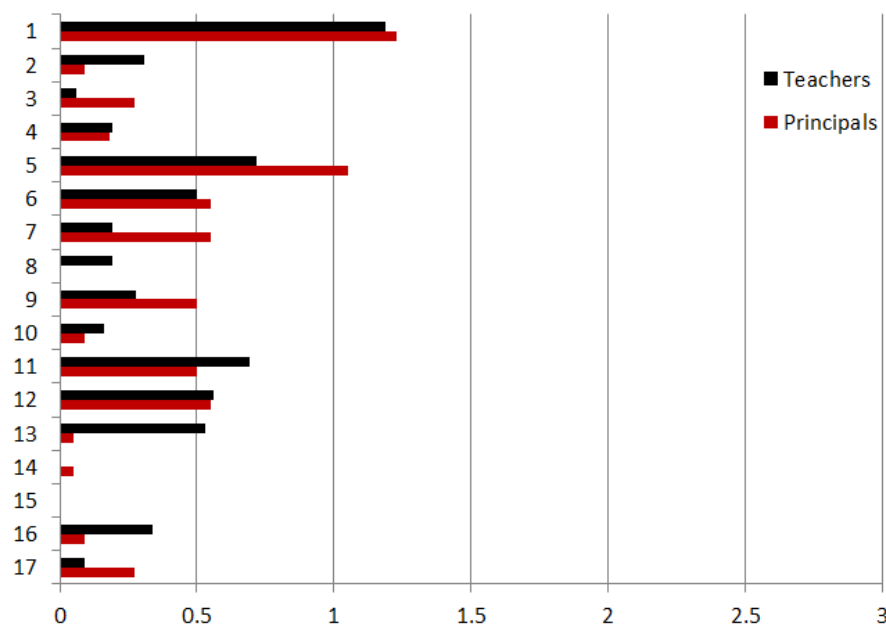


Figure 7 Principals' and teachers' top leadership action priorities (on a 0-3 scale)

Note. 0 indicates no respondents identified the action as a priority, 3 indicates every respondent identified it as a priority

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Keeping the focus on the school's commitment to improving learning to read for Indigenous children | 9. Promoting teaching strategies on the Big Six at school, classroom and individual levels |
| 2. Modelling leadership 'both ways' – from the school to the community and from the community to the school | 10. Aligning the school's resources to support the Big Six framework |
| 3. Including Indigenous leadership partners in the school leadership team | 11. Ensuring that all children have personal targets in reading |
| 4. Building a good working relationship with my Indigenous leadership partners | 12. Expecting accountability for reading achievement from my teachers |
| 5. Providing the Big Six as a framework for the teaching of reading | 13. Talking with parents about student reading development |
| 6. Using data on the Big Six in reading to inform school planning | 14. Sharing responsibility for reading with Indigenous leadership partners |
| 7. Participating in professional development on reading with teachers | 15. Engaging others from the community as active leaders of reading |
| 8. Linking assessment practices to the Big Six | 16. Participating in professional development on reading with Indigenous partners and community members |
| | 17. Leading the celebration of children's achievements in reading with parents |

Major messages from the triangulated data provided by principals, teachers and literacy leadership mentors

The triangulation of the perceptions of the three groups demonstrates strong overall similarity in judgement about the actions principals and leadership teams need to take to form productive partnership with Indigenous school community leaders, parents and families.

While the findings from the triangulated data provided by principals, teachers and literacy leadership mentors emphasise a focus on direct strategies to enhance reading at school, there is evidence that, during this relatively brief PALLIC project by principals and teachers, there exists a lesser commitment to the adoption of strategies that might lead to greater engagement and involvement with Indigenous parents and

community members in supporting children learning to read.

This view is explained further in a case study conversation in which one principal recounted her encouragement for teachers in her school to be much more visible in the community as a way of building relationships. This principal said that when inducting new staff into the school:

[I]f you are going to come out here you might as well get to know everyone. Don't hide in your house. You don't just have to hang out with white fellas. Get out there. Get known, be part of the community, learn the language, interact with people, learn how to communicate with them. Make it the best experience you possibly can because you've left your family somewhere else and the community will take you on.

The importance of building cross-cultural relationships was explained further by another principal, who pointed out that building relationships and partnerships with the community involves establishing trust and developing mutual respect, whereby parents and community members feel ready to come into school to know what their children are learning:

And you can't build it from inside this building. You've got to really put yourself out there and be here after hours doing something for the community. It doesn't matter how great a teacher you are inside because they won't come in. You know, we run 'night school' and they'll come in for that. But when is it? It's after school hours. During school hours you're very hard-pressed to get the parents to come in. Now, some of that's because some of them ... work. I mean it's just, obviously it's respect, it's you know, with Indigenous people, you need to have a really good relationship with people because they won't learn without that. And because I've been teaching now mainly in Indigenous places for like 30 years...

Yet another principal spoke of her plans to build relationships:

...to teach adults in the community so that they can be the upfront teachers...and build kids' phonemic awareness skills and then moving into English.

One newly appointed teacher discussed her experiences when first arriving into the community with no experience of Indigenous ways of learning or traditional ways of understanding emotions. The following extract from the case study data highlights a new graduate's lack of understanding about the expectations of both cultures:

[I was] pretty much very naïve coming from the city straight up here, my kids didn't really know what affection was or what, you know, love, or acceptance [is]. Like, they just didn't know how to take me at first because they've never had anything like that. And one day we had a bad day. I said 'You're driving me nuts. I don't like the behaviour right now but I still love you.' And the kids were like, 'What does love mean, Miss?' And that shook me to the core until I spoke to another colleague.

A principal extended this view by highlighting the part language knowledge can play in building trust and relationships between non-Indigenous speaking white teachers and Indigenous language speakers:

We don't have the language to bring children's knowledge out...we always talk about what kids bring to school but when we don't have the language, it's really hard to acknowledge what they bring to school and it just gets lost... so unfortunate.

Having examined the views of principals, teachers and literacy leadership mentors, the next section discusses the last data set selected for this report. It contains the results of a survey administered to principals and their Indigenous leadership partners in the latter stages of the PALLIC project.

Results from the principals' and Indigenous leadership partners' survey

Principals and Indigenous leadership partners were surveyed during the delivery of Module 5, seeking their responses to an 11-item questionnaire. The items were designed to gain an understanding of the strength of agreement the respondents had to the frameworks and processes forming the nucleus of the PALLIC project. These frameworks and processes included the Leadership for Learning Blueprint, the Reading Big Six as well as the importance of 'disciplined dialogue' based on evidence, the role of Indigenous leadership partners in creating a leadership partnership 'both ways' and connections between home and school over reading. Figure 8 presents the data displaying mean scores for each item to enable a comparison of views to be made.

Findings

From Figure 8, it is clear that there was strong agreement (above a mean of 4 on the 5-point scale) with the importance of Item 2, *the reading Big Six*, to principals (4.2) and Indigenous leadership partners (4.25), showing that both groups reported the value of this framework for their schools. There was strong agreement on the use being made of the *Leadership for Learning Blueprint* (Item 1) by both groups (principals 4.10, Indigenous leadership partners 3.75) and *the use of assessment methods*, Item 8 (principals: 4.5, Indigenous leadership partners: 4.1). Item 6, *Our partnership between principals and Indigenous leadership partners is well established*, drew strong agreement from all respondents (principals 3.75, Indigenous leadership partners 4.25). Ratings at or above a mean of 3.5 were recorded for both groups on Items 4, 9 and 10: the use of *the School Literacy Practices Guide*, the conduct of '*Disciplined Dialogue*' based on evidence and the impact of the school *Reading Action Plan*.

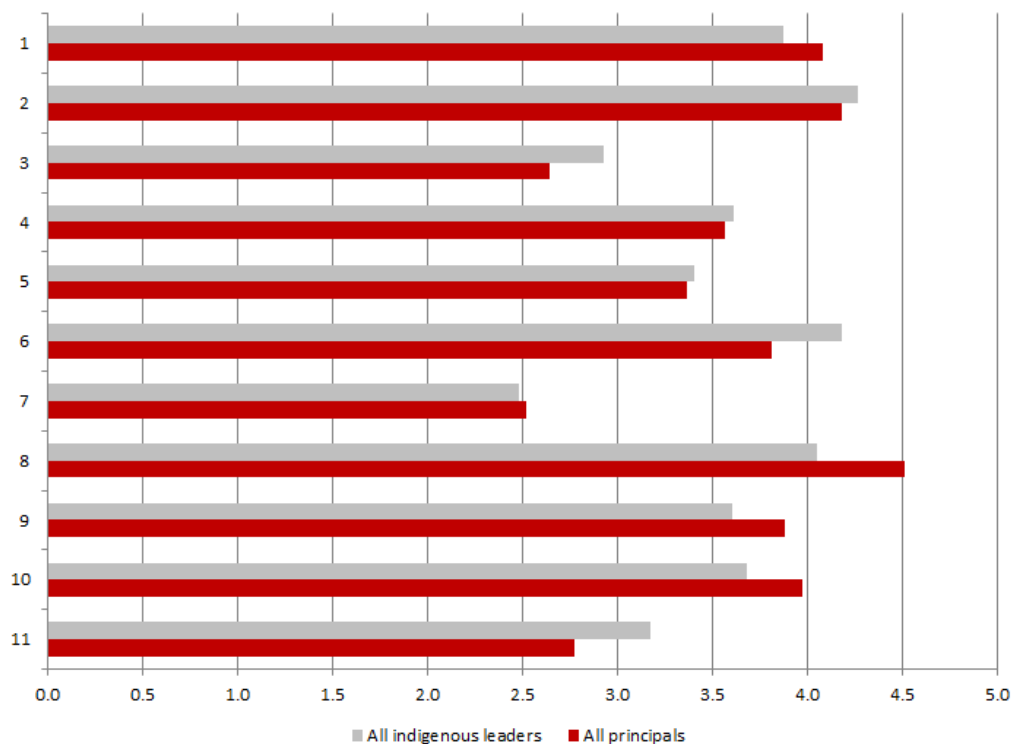


Figure 8 Principals' and Indigenous leadership partners' views on PALIC frameworks and processes

1. The Leadership for Learning Blueprint has been a useful framework to guide our actions.
2. Teachers are engaging with the Big Six in teaching students to read.
3. Parents and family members are learning about the Big Six in the teaching of reading.
4. There has been good use of the Literacy Practices Guide in our school.
5. We are making progress on our Home Reading Practices Guide.
6. Our partnership between principals and Indigenous leadership partners is well established.
7. We had success in finding leaders of reading from the community.
8. We are using a range of assessment methods to assess student learning and achievement.
9. We are using Discipline Dialogue to interrogate our data.
10. Our Reading Action Project is having an impact across the school.
11. Our Reading Action Project is creating interest amongst our parents and community members.

Items 3, 5, 7 and 11 attracted lesser agreement. Three of these (3, 5 and 7) are concerned with connections to families, that is, connections beyond the school. Attracting least agreement was the success principals (2.50) and Indigenous leadership partners (2.48) had had in *engaging Leaders of Reading from the community* (Item 7). Slightly stronger agreement was recorded on Item 3, *family members' learning about the Big Six in reading* (principals 2.60, Indigenous leadership partners 2.80), while the highest agreement in this trio was for Item 5, *progress on the development of a Home Reading Practices Guide* (principals 3.36, Indigenous leadership partners 3.41). Finally, Indigenous leadership partners (3.25) agreed more strongly than

principals (2.75) that there was interest in the community in the school's Reading Action Project (Item 11).

It must be said that it is possible that the term 'Leaders of Reading' was unfamiliar to survey respondents. Several who took up this role were Indigenous teacher assistants trained to some extent in teaching reading, of whom some were also parents who supported children's reading (refer to Item 33, *Indigenous Leaders of Reading actively support children learning to read at home* in Figure 6). A positive in the data is evident in the results for Item 6 where there is agreement that a partnership has been established between principals and their Indigenous leadership

partners (with a higher mean for Indigenous leadership partners than principals). This is a helpful finding and a necessary condition if an increase in the number of Leaders of Reading is to be achieved over the longer term.

Major messages from the survey of principals and Indigenous leadership partners

From the data presented in Figure 8 several major messages appear justified, messages that are further illustrated in extracts from the case study data.

The strong agreement with the frameworks and processes for learning to lead the teaching of reading with in-school personnel (Items 1, 2, 6, 8, 9 and 10) suggests that they were being acted upon at the time of the survey and with some observable impact. Case study findings confirm the impact of focused frameworks and processes indicated by the following comments from teachers:

We are moving towards a whole-school approach [to literacy].

It [the Big Six] reminds us to focus on these particular aspects [of reading] and constitutes a well-rounded literacy program. It includes such things as oral language that in the past has not been a focus.

We're doing a literacy profile on each child so that, as the kids progress through the school, records will be added to, and available to, the next year's teacher.

The frameworks and processes requiring out-of-school support (Items 3, 5, 7 and 11) were proving more difficult to implement. The following comments from two case study principals are indicative of case schools' plans to build support so that parents and community members out of school can become more engaged in supporting children to learn to read:

...to teach adults in the community so that they can be the upfront teachers...and build kids' phonemic awareness skills and then moving into English.

...our first parent teacher interview at about half way through term one has become a goal setting interview...here is what we are doing at school and here is how you can help at home.

There was encouraging evidence from the responses to Item 6, that principals and Indigenous leadership partners were making

influential inroads on the key PALLIC position of 'Leadership Both Ways'. The extension of this initial in-school progress outward to involve other Indigenous family and community members beyond the school gates in leadership partnerships was still presenting a challenge, which the data from the research program overall suggest remains. The following comments from a case study principal reflect the importance of the Indigenous leadership partner's role within and outside the school, to encourage parents to support their children's reading:

... She's the Indigenous version of me. She line manages all the teacher assistants in our school, runs meetings between parents and teachers, listens to what parents are saying and lets the teacher know.

(to get their child ready for Prep)... but the challenge is to give each parent, as an individual, the skills that they can work from... teaching parents that they can code switch [between local language and English].

Part 3 Conclusions, matters for consideration and implications

The report is drawn to a close by returning to the major messages derived from the data sets examined in each section, to put forward a series of justifiable conclusions leading to a number of implications for those concerned with the long-term leadership of reading improvement for Indigenous children.

Conclusions from the analysis of Reading Action Plan evaluation reports

There is no doubt that the implementation of Reading Action Plans by principals and staff was accepted as one of the obligations of the PALLIC project. Forty-six of the 48 schools did so using school-based evidence of the reading problems faced by their children. There is also ample evidence in the 46 Reading Action Plan evaluation reports that substantial ongoing professional learning occurred in each PALLIC project school, despite difficulties associated with transience and absenteeism. Comments about the value of Indigenous leadership partners in better supporting reading at school were highlights of the evaluation reports, with comments on the effectiveness of these people verified in the data from the seven case studies and in the cross-case analysis.

Other results from the cross-case analysis support the generally encouraging picture presented in the Reading Action Plan evaluation reports produced by principals. Interview and discussion group data from the seven school community (case study) visits show a small, though important, increase in the engagement of Indigenous families with the school. The shared leadership model of the principal, working with Indigenous leadership partners and teachers, was described as central to this change. That said, the case study data exposed the reality that many Indigenous families were not yet engaging with their children consistently and intensively as they were learning to read. Importantly, the notion of Leaders of Reading was seen to be enacted mainly by Indigenous teacher assistants who were parents of children at the schools in which they worked and therefore the most likely to be engaging already in literacy activities inside and outside school. Given the positive progress within

the school and the difficulties outside its gates, both principals and Indigenous leadership partners agree that it is an ongoing challenge to attract more community members to work on reading inside classrooms, and an even greater challenge to engage parents in the support of literacy at home. On a positive note, and most important for sustainability purposes, were the claims by principals that they now had the foundation and motivation for reading improvement documented in their evaluation report recommendations. This claim is the subject of postscript research undertaken late in 2013, the findings of which appear as an addendum to this report.

Conclusions from surveys

(of principals, teachers, literacy leadership mentors and Indigenous leadership partners)

Three conclusions stand out from our quantitative data analysis.

Conclusion 1

Leadership actions, which required principals to work with their Indigenous leadership partners and teachers on reading-related issues within the school, were reported as more frequent than actions requiring work with people outside the school. Moreover, the data gathered from principals showed that they were not effusive about the frequency with which they implemented almost all leadership actions. Indeed, the results show that no action of the 17 listed items (see Appendix 2), was implemented *fully*, nor were most considered to be *effective* at the time data were gathered. Reasons for this have been offered in the body of the report, but the limited time available to implement the project was mentioned as a constraint often during case study visits.

Conclusion 2

The triangulation of perceptions of leadership recorded by principals, teachers and literacy leadership mentors showed consistent similarities, adding confidence to the analysis of the principals' self-report data. The findings emphasise the frequency of direct pedagogical action, in-school partnerships and professional

development strategies to enhance reading at school. There is compelling evidence that at the time this research was conducted, there existed a lesser appreciation of, and commitment to, the adoption of strategies that lead to greater engagement and involvement of Indigenous parents and community members in actions designed to support children learning to read at home. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the fact that both principals' and teachers' lowest leadership action priority was *Engaging Indigenous people from the community as Leaders of Reading*. It appears that schools continued to focus more on the engagement of Leaders of Reading in classrooms than in homes.

Conclusion 3

There was encouraging evidence from the survey of principals and Indigenous leadership partners that they were making progress while at school on one of the key PALLIC positions – 'Leadership Both Ways'. The extension of this initial in-school progress outward to involve other Indigenous family and community members beyond the school gates in leadership partnerships remains a challenge, which the data from the research program confirms overall.

While some of the conclusions may appear negative, it must be acknowledged that the project was carried out in the 48 schools over a brief 18-month period. Most of the leadership actions, and certainly the leadership partnership actions, described as items in questionnaires depend upon the development of positive supportive relationships and the building of trust between school, home and community. Such actions are known to take considerable time to develop, and it is indicated in the case study data that there is every intention by principals to sustain the gains made thus far.

Matters for further consideration

The PALLIC project has highlighted three key areas for further consideration by those responsible for schools with significant proportions of Indigenous children and schools in remote Indigenous community settings.

Further development of the role of Indigenous leadership partners

Ultimately, it is Indigenous leadership partners who live in Indigenous communities and whose children and grandchildren attend nearby schools who will sustain the changes and initiatives documented in the PALLIC project. It is they who need to have the will and skill to sustain newly formed partnerships with principals and teachers.

Furthermore, they represent a significant link between outgoing and incoming principals. In cases where there has been Indigenous leadership partner and principal stability in schools, the benefits for improving Indigenous children's learning to read are documented as occurring. The emerging strength of this leadership partnership seen during the PALLIC project suggests that there is a need for further evidence of the effectiveness of the position and role of Indigenous leadership partners and leaders of reading.

Further partnership actions between the school and the community

Survey and case study findings show that Indigenous leadership partners have begun to partner with only a few leaders of reading in the community. It appears from the evidence presented that this action is at a very early stage and is most prominent in regional/urban school communities, more so than in remote communities. In regional/urban communities, leaders of reading were mostly readers themselves, some of whom were trained as educators or in other professions. In remote Indigenous communities some leaders of reading were Indigenous people with reading skills and some training, while others were local Indigenous community elders who took on the role of providing support and training in cultural specific skills and ways of behaving. The findings underscore the fact that principals will need to lead this action unrelentingly in partnership with their Indigenous leadership partners if they are to add to the small gains we have recorded during the PALLIC research program.

Reconsideration of the role of the literacy leadership mentors

The PALLIC project afforded schools a mechanism for support through the work of the literacy leadership mentors during and following the delivery of a suite of professional development modules, over an extended period. Their mentoring role was not only to administer general support to principals and Indigenous leadership partners, but also to broker change at the school level through this partnership work – work which at times extended to support for teachers in classrooms as the school grappled with the use of the reading Big Six in pedagogical terms and in the preparation and implementation of Reading Action Plans. We believe that the further development of this role, in a cost-effective way, will be central to assisting school leadership teams to share leadership for learning

in authentic partnerships designed to maintain improvement with children learning to read.

Implications

Consistent with the conclusions and matters for further consideration mentioned above, there are three telling implications justified by the data and findings presented in this report. These three implications ask much of system leaders, the principals and local Indigenous people currently engaged in PALLIC project schools or those who will move into these and similar schools in the future.

Implication 1

The data are unequivocal about growth in the capabilities of principals and their Indigenous leadership partners to lead improvement in literacy learning inside their schools. Commitment to this endeavour needs to continue, irrespective of principal and staff turnover or tenure, if change for the better is to occur. This is a matter for those managing and administering school systems so that the emerging promise heralded in the value placed on local Indigenous leadership partners (who do have 'tenure') is recognised by system leaders and is taken forward in powerful new partnerships, both within and beyond the school.

Implication 2

Complementing the first implication is the admission that the PALLIC project fell short in furthering the knowledge and understanding of how Indigenous leadership partners might contribute more directly to sharing the leadership of reading. Much more work needs to be done on this front so that Indigenous leadership partners are better trained and prepared to support the teaching of reading and to move outside the school grounds, confident that they have useful knowledge and practices to share about learning to read with parents and family members.

Implication 3

The third implication is closely linked to the second. The research findings on the lack of attention to outside-school connections by school leadership teams suggest the need to identify, explain and apply strategies which offer helpful practical home and community support for Indigenous children learning to read. This work will need to include Indigenous parents and family members working with teachers as essential sources of information 'both ways' on what is possible in the realities of everyday life. Involving Indigenous families and communities in

professional learning related to reading is a start in this direction. The design of professional learning will need careful thought, based on evidence of what has worked in similar situations locally and internationally.

Concluding comments

Overall, this research report has shown that PALLIC was an ambitious and innovative initiative to try to close the gap that exists in reading between Indigenous children and their non-Indigenous peers. However, the effects of the project were considerably restricted by its 18-month timeframe. In concluding, one final comment is offered. The challenge to improve literacy for Indigenous children and their families requires a new, more creative leadership approach: one that recognises, enhances and appreciates the great potential of 'both ways' leadership for learning to read, specific capabilities that often remain untapped within Indigenous communities inside and outside the school. Until Australian education systems enable Indigenous schools and their communities to contribute seriously to building a sustainable 'both ways' approach to leadership and learning, little will change for Indigenous children. These children need the benefits of reading in Standard Australian English to experience inter-generational life-long enhancement.

Glossary of terms

The Big Six	Refers to the reading 'Big Six', defined as: rich oral language experience; phonological awareness; phonemic awareness; vocabulary; fluency; comprehension
Both ways	A philosophy of education that combines traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and ways of learning with Western educational traditions
Disciplined dialogue	Discussions between principals and teachers based on evidence drawn from the review of student literacy learning, assessment and achievement
Indigenous leadership partner	An Indigenous person who has self-nominated or been nominated by members of the community or invited by a principal to undertake the role of Indigenous leadership partner in the PALLIC project
Indigenous leaders of reading	Indigenous parents and community members invited to support children's literacy learning at home, at school and in the community
Leadership partnership	Involves partnership between the principal, literacy leadership mentor and Indigenous leadership partner
Leadership for Learning Framework or Blueprint	Depicts the dimensions required to develop a shared moral purpose based on disciplined dialogue and a strong evidence base encompassing professional development, leadership, parent and community support, curriculum and teaching, and the conditions of learning
Literacy leadership mentors	Experienced principals, seconded to act as coaches or 'critical friends' to each school leadership team
Reading Action Plan	Evidence-based reading plans developed to address aspects of the Big Six specifically designed to support identified needs of individual children or groups of children
Teacher assistants	In this context, teacher assistants are usually Indigenous people

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Addendum

Executive Summary

In late 2013, 12 months on from the Principals as Literacy Leaders with Indigenous Communities (PALLIC) project's completion (2011-2012), the Griffith research team conducted a follow-up survey interview with 48 principals in PALLIC schools. The purpose of the interview was to investigate subsequent leadership actions inside the school that continue to support the teaching of reading and the reading achievement of Indigenous children; and also to examine outside school initiatives that support children learning to read and to inquire into the further development of relationships with parents and community members facilitated through the support of Indigenous leadership partners.

The follow-up research has confirmed both the positive and negative aspects of the body of the main report. There is strong evidence that there is continuing activity by principals leading in partnership with their Indigenous leadership partners. Together they are leading reading improvement by employing the PALLIC positions, particularly the Leadership for Learning Blueprint and the Big Six framework. This reinforces the finding that in schools, actions on literacy have been enhanced in most situations. That said, the variability that has occurred subsequent to the PALLIC project in forging constructive connections with Indigenous people making contributions to supporting reading, confirms the negative finding of the original report. There is evidence that principals, Indigenous leadership partners and members of Indigenous communities are keen to know and do more about supporting their children to read.

Inside the schools there is evidence that principals are continuing to lead staff to implement the PALLIC positions (see the PALLIC Project Report pp. 7-8) that emphasise: (i) the importance of research-validated leadership actions which enhance learning, and (ii) the Big Six reading framework of essential pedagogical practices for children learning to read. The challenge still stands however, for school leaders to find ways to actualise the shared leadership structures and processes that will involve parents and community members in authentic partnership roles.

The key message from this latest investigation is that there is limited evidence from the principals'

perspectives that members of Indigenous communities (parents and families) are engaged in the support of reading, inside or outside school. The indications are that Indigenous families and community members want to know and do more to support their children's literacy but it appears that they lack the knowledge and resources to do so. There is also the consideration that schools are not doing enough to learn from Indigenous families about the most helpful ways to make Indigenous children's English literacy learning more culturally relevant. Professional learning 'both ways' is not common practice, yet prior research has emphasised its salience. Somewhat paradoxically in the light of 'closing the gap' concerns in Australia's most isolated settings, the analysis shows that remote principals are more mindful of this factor than their regional/urban counterparts.

In Australia, the report by Emerson, Fear, Fox and Sanders (2012), *Parental engagement in learning and schooling: Lessons from the research*, for the Australian Research Alliance for Children & Youth, concludes that positive parental engagement in learning improves academic achievement, wellbeing and productivity. It further concludes that resourcing and effectively progressing parental engagement initiatives is warranted for, if not essential to, education reform and the future of Australia. Subsequent to that report, the Australian government announced its intention to 'explore policy options to further embed parental engagement within the education reform agenda' (p. 3). The PALLIC research has reinforced yet again how policy reform might assist principals in Indigenous schools to form sustainable partnerships on literacy learning with Indigenous families and community members to improve literacy.

Research Program

This addendum to the PALLIC project report completed in 2012 presents findings from research in 2013 designed to ask the 48 PALLIC principals for their views on the question:

What has happened in 2013 in leading and supporting the teaching of reading inside and outside your school and what are the enablers and constraints?

The findings from the original PALLIC project indicated that most schools involved in PALLIC

were keen to continue to incorporate PALLIC positions on and practices in the teaching of reading, beyond the project's 18-month timeframe. The follow-up research program was designed to explore from the principals' perspective the ongoing impact and effects of the PALLIC project on the capabilities of school leadership teams to lead the improvement of literacy learning inside and outside the school gate. Outside-school initiatives investigated included support for literacy learning through further development of relationships with parents and community members accomplished by Indigenous leadership partners.

Participation in the research was voluntary. The data collection method involved the administration of a half-hour telephone interview with a survey instrument comprising 16 closed items and 4 open questions (see Addendum Appendix 1). The interview and associated questions were developed and categorised according to the research findings reported in the original research report. They covered four focus areas:

- linking work as principal with inside school personnel;
- sharing leadership decisions;
- managing conditions for learning; and
- incorporating community involvement in the teaching and learning of reading.

The data were collected between October and November 2013. Principals' responses to the closed questions and their comments were noted at the time of the interview by the interviewers. Griffith University Human Research Ethics Clearance was obtained for the Research Program (EDN/15/12/HREC). In addition, approval to conduct research in schools with these participants formed part of the APPA agreement to undertake the PALLIC project in the Northern Territory, Queensland, and South Australia.

Principals at 45 out of a possible 48 schools across the Northern Territory, Queensland and South Australia participated in the follow-up study. Table 5 shows the breakdown of the schools in the project, the number of principals participating, the number of original PALLIC principals and those whose appointment to the role of principal occurred post-PALLIC. Fourteen out of 15 Northern Territory school principals participated with 1 principal withdrawing due to workload pressures; in South Australia all 12 school principals participated (with 1 principal who was transferred completing responses on behalf of two schools); in Queensland 19 principals were involved, with 2 choosing not to participate.

Table 5 Post-project school participation

Jurisdiction	Participants	Possible participants	New principal	Original PALLIC principal
Northern Territory	14	15	8	7
South Australia	12	12	5	7
Queensland	19	21	12	9
Totals	45	48	25	23

Data Analysis and Findings

Interview items were clustered into three categories to tighten the analysis (see Table 6).

Table 6 Cluster categories

Category	Description
1	In school sharing, building and supporting relationships with Indigenous leadership partners
2	In school support for the teaching of reading
3	Reaching out to build relationships and learning from others

Principals and Indigenous leadership partners in school

(sharing, building and supporting relationships)

Figure 9 depicts the principals' data for inside school leadership actions such as:

- involving Indigenous leadership partners in school leadership decisions regarding reading;
- developing a sustained working relationship with Indigenous leadership partners; and
- providing professional learning for Indigenous leadership partners and teacher assistants to take leadership roles in classroom learning to read.

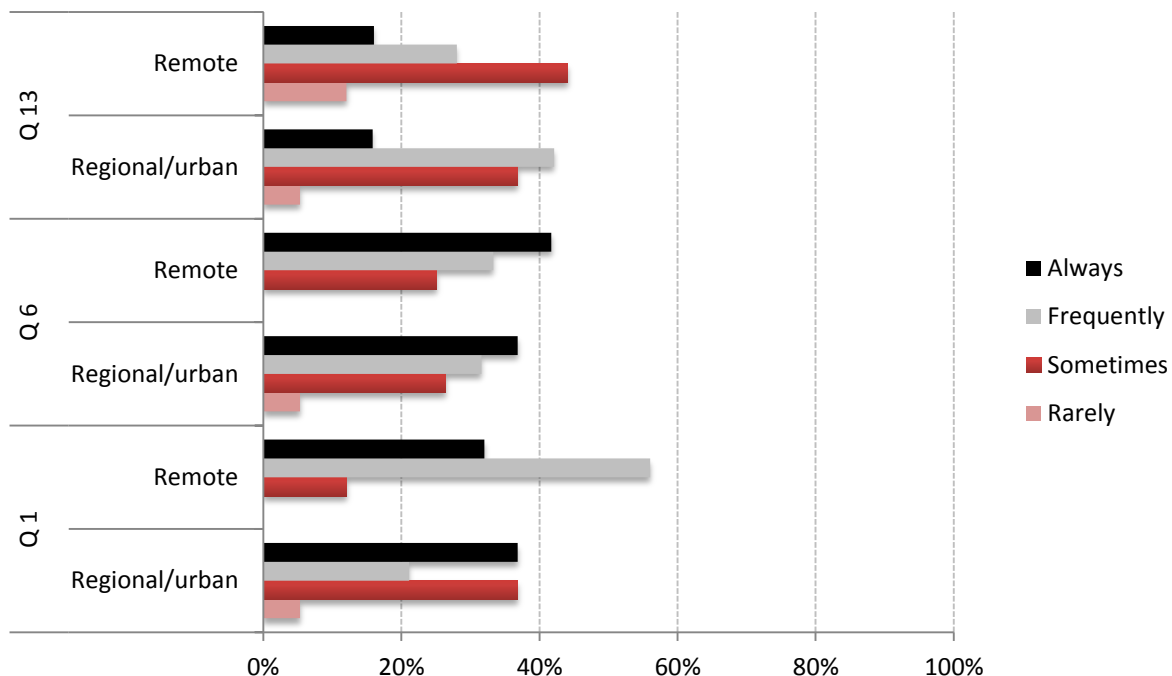


Figure 9 Category 1 – In school sharing, building and supporting relationships with Indigenous leadership partners

Q1 Involve indigenous partnerships in school leadership decisions regarding reading

Q6 Develop a sustained working relationship with my Indigenous leadership partners

Q13 Provide professional learning for Indigenous leadership partners and teacher assistants to take leadership roles in classroom learning of reading

These items profile the leadership actions considered in the research literature to be important in building sustainable and equitable relationships with Indigenous school communities, by maintaining supported learning through the involvement of respected Indigenous community members and Indigenous teacher assistants in school leadership roles and decisions about reading.

Principals were asked to indicate the extent to which they carried out each of the nominated actions on the questionnaire scales *always*; *frequently*; *sometimes*; *rarely*; or *not applicable*. The three categories are discussed separately below with the inclusion of selected comments from principals. As in the main body of the PALLIC project report, schools were separated into two groups: regional/urban schools and remote Indigenous community schools. Northern Territory and South Australian Schools were classified as remote Indigenous community schools with the Queensland schools classified as regional/urban schools. The figures indicate responses from principals in remote = remote Indigenous community schools and regional/urban = regional/urban schools. The text for each survey item is reproduced under each of the three figures for each category.

Figure 9 shows that principals implemented all three actions, contained in Q1, Q6 and Q13, with degrees of frequency varying from *sometimes* to *always* across remote and regional/urban schools.

In response to Item 1, principals in remote Indigenous community schools said that they involved Indigenous leadership partners in school leadership decisions about reading most of the time

- always 32%
- frequently 56%
- sometimes 12%

while the responses to the same question from regional/urban principals indicate this action occurred less frequently

- always 36.8%
- frequently 21%
- sometimes 36.8%
- rarely 5.3%.

Turning to the qualitative data for an added understanding of these views, the following comments from remote Indigenous community school principals give some sense of the scope of Indigenous leadership partners and/or teacher assistant involvement in school decisions:

Energised after the PALLIC Module 1, the teacher assistants implemented a reading program aimed to get books into homes. They approached the store to advertise and put information up on boards – wait for things to happen.

The Anangu coordinator holds joint leadership of the school. We discuss building partnerships with the community, talk about lots of issues in the school, go on home visits, involved in decision-making body around the APY land schools. Coordinator's involvement in decision-making is at a low level but it is part of the process. Teacher assistants in classrooms are always involved in building relationships with teachers and students.

The challenges some regional/urban principals had encountered in engaging, involving and maintaining Indigenous leadership partners in school activities and decisions more generally, are evident in the following comments:

It's very difficult to engage the Indigenous leadership partner. For example, we've had a bit of turnover with people trying to take on those roles. Often it's related to family or personal issues. We encourage it [Indigenous

leadership participation], but sometimes, to me, we get a lot of speed bumps – we get something started then have to start again.

We have changed what we did with our Indigenous leadership partner and employed two people (now one – the other left) – to have two Indigenous support officers who have a focus on supporting Indigenous students on outcomes, attendance, engagement, and encouraging families to be involved and linking them with external agencies particularly health agencies. So we're still working on it, but have not been successful getting Indigenous volunteers to work in school... It's about trying to find the right person.

These responses show that principals are building relationships between schools and their communities to establish mutual trust and respect followed by strategies to build the knowledge base of Indigenous leadership partners and teacher assistants necessary to impact the reading capabilities of children, as shown in their responses to Item 1 and in the following comment:

At this stage, we're re-establishing relationships with the community. The school has been through turbulent times over the past year. Starting slowly not necessarily focusing on leading but on development of relationships and have families feel comfortable to come into the school. We have just found some resources and are making a DVD to go out to families and will be focused on this next year.

In response to Item 6, again both groups (remote and regional/urban school principals) indicate their commitment to developing a sustained relationship with their Indigenous leadership partners with remote principals indicating a greater commitment to this item than their counterparts

- always 41.7%
- frequently 33.3%
- sometimes 25%

and regional/urban

- always 36.8%
- frequently 31.6%
- sometimes 26.3%.

Contemporary literature underscores the importance of creating and maintaining opportunities to ensure cultural exchanges 'both ways' are achieved through established

partnerships with Indigenous leadership partners and teacher assistants. Garcia and Jensen (2007), for example, argue:

Children whose teachers recognize and take full advantage of home resources (including a child's home language and cultural practices) and parental supports tend to experience more optimal outcomes. (p. 82)

Moreover, as trust and sharing are established and partnerships continue to develop, the transfer of learning and intercultural understanding can then be connected to the teaching of reading, as Mutch and Collins (2012, p. 183) report. To illustrate this point, one remote principal commented on the respect gained through a commitment to develop ongoing relationships with Indigenous community members:

We have four Indigenous language groups represented in school. Tribal groups can cause conflict and so it is important to have the different groups represented at the school, through the teacher assistants. A government scheme during the 1940s brought three groups to the area to mix with the existing community causing lots of tension. Over time there has been a blending of the cultures but still problems from time to time. The teacher assistants and administrative staff are well respected community members and as a result carry a lot of community credence.

The following comment from a regional/urban principal demonstrates that building sustainable relationships takes time and attention to power relations between schools and their Indigenous communities.

The Indigenous leadership partner is on the leadership team and has equal rights and power within the school leadership team. We have a flat school leadership team (structure), so we're all part of the leadership team making the executive decisions on behalf of the school...

It's just [going] slowly and steadily. It's going to take a very long time ... to build the level of reliable partnerships [and that's] reliability on both sides.

The school's role beyond academic matters is demonstrated by a comment from the principal of a remote Indigenous community school:

The school is the hub of the community and people come often to ask questions, even non-

parents – responding to community needs. It is very much about community and community needs. The chair of the community visits the school 4 out of 5 days. Maybe unrelated to school, about a kid etc. many different roles, like counselling 'mayor' like duties. Part of the community, it's our place. Teachers are part of the community. The downside is, [the school is] often requested to do things not related to school. We need to build strong partnerships, kids, parents, community to establish relationships and trust.

In response to Item 13 in Category 1, inquiring into the principals' provision of professional learning activities, regional/urban principals reported they were more inclined to provide learning activities for their Indigenous leadership partners and Indigenous teacher assistants to take leadership roles in the classroom

- always 15.8%
- frequently 42%
- sometimes 36.8%

than were remote principals

- always 16%
- frequently 28%
- sometimes 44%.

The following comments from two regional/urban principals support this finding:

One of the things we've invested in heavily has been to have an Indigenous Perspectives Coordinator. Their primary goal was to develop some proactive relationships with families who had irregular attendance and to work with all Indigenous students and develop Personal Learning Plans. Our goal was 75% and we've hit about 93% with Personal Learning Plans. We've had the Indigenous coordinator, teachers, parents and students involved. The one thing I'm pleasantly surprised about is that we've had probably 90% attendance at meetings. The Indigenous Perspectives Coordinator works with the family services officer, a senior experienced teacher with demonstrated positive relationships with community. It's been helpful to have the family services officer as a trusted person in the community and helps with access.... It's not based on willingness but getting the right person into the role.

The teachers and teacher aides are trained on all those things – the teaching of reading, assessment of reading, small group management, all those aspects, so when we're

using them as paraprofessionals, we've got high quality.

Despite providing professional learning less frequently, these comments from remote principals highlight the importance they place on the contribution professional learning has on the transfer and modelling of knowledge to children:

The challenge was reading in the home. The Indigenous leadership partner led the program and worked with parents who are a very supportive group, however they believe teaching reading is our role and they don't want to interfere. The Indigenous leadership partner connected with the parents, prepared a DVD modelling reading and all kids took it home to families. We have received positive feedback from families. We intend building on this through the volunteer reading program to practise reading in 2014.

The literacy teacher assistants are excellent role models for students. We had 5 of our teacher assistants graduate from their Batchelor Institute studies - Certificate 3 in education support and they are now working towards Certificate 4 – after which that counts for the first year of a teaching degree.

The following comment from another remote school principal illustrates the challenges encountered in providing professional learning activities for Indigenous staff and highlights the need for Indigenous speakers to be trained in strategies to teach reading so that they might enact 'both ways' literacy learning:

The teacher assistants enhance the program, however it is difficult to retain them. They come to work for a few days and then are absent – it is difficult to deliver curriculum that is reliant on their involvement and input.... the children are second language learners and if they don't have a teacher assistant to support them it is very difficult for them as the young kids have little or no English.

Principals' support for the teaching of reading in school

Figure 10 illustrates the principals' views for the nine items clustered in Category 2 (in school support for the teaching of reading). These items were selected to explore the leadership actions taken inside school, such as: *being guided by the PALLIC Reading Action Plans; providing training, resources and working with teaching staff to*

implement the PALLIC Big Six; and strategies to support reading including monitoring progress.

Figure 10 confirms that regional/urban principals were more inclined (or perhaps were more able) than their remote school colleagues to deliver professional learning activities, resources and ongoing support to ensure all teaching staff implemented the recommendations of the PALLIC Reading Action Plans and that their teaching was focused on the reading Big Six. Particularly noteworthy is the high percentage of principals (regional/urban)

- always 84%
- frequently 15.8%

who indicated that evidence of student progress was used to appropriately plan and support students at all levels of reading achievement (Item 10). In comparison, remote Indigenous community school principals report lesser frequencies for this item

- always 44%
- frequently 40%
- sometimes 16%.

Selected comments from regional/urban principals go some way to explaining the difference:

Learning Support staff do quite a lot of professional development with the teacher aides and the teacher aides do a lot of work with the Learning Support teachers.

There is very little gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and sometimes a reverse gap. Our Indigenous kids here do really well. There are no teacher attitudes which would have a negative impact upon Indigenous kids at this school – I would back that to the hilt.

[Regarding Indigenous expertise in the classroom] It's certainly an area where we could do better. We have one Indigenous leadership partner who is a teacher at this school running a Wave 3 program and we're seeing some good goals and outcomes from that. She's a key resource on that, focusing on our bottom 10-20% of students, our tail, but she adds community input into that. She helps explain and communicate that with parents as well.

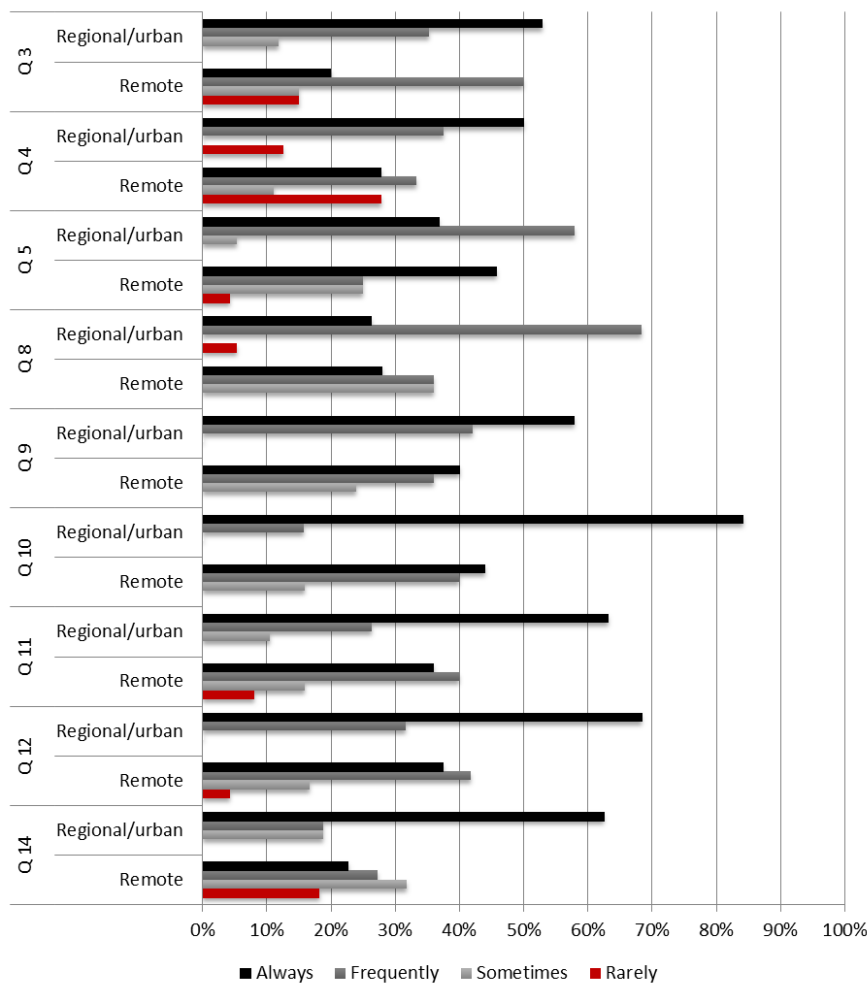


Figure 10 Category 2 – In school support for the teaching of reading

Q3	Implement recommendations from 2012 PALLIC Reading Action Plans	Q9	Monitor student progress in consultation with teaching staff and Indigenous leadership partners
Q4	Provide opportunities to revise PALLIC Reading Action Plans for 2013	Q10	Use evidence to ensure students are supported at all levels of reading achievement
Q5	Work with teaching staff to ensure the Big Six are taught in classrooms	Q11	Establish a shared vision with staff and Indigenous leadership partners about reading goals
Q8	Involve teachers and Indigenous leadership partners in strategies to improve reading achievement	Q12	Provide resources and staff to teach the reading Big Six
		Q14	Ensure new teachers are trained on PALLIC leadership for learning principles and the Big Six

Principals reaching out to build relationships and learning from others

Figure 11 depicts the principals' views for the four items clustered in Category 3. These items were selected to explore the leadership actions taken outside school to build relationships with community members and being open to learn from others to support the learning of reading.

Both groups (remote and regional/urban) expressed a high degree of willingness to learn from others (Item 16). Principals in remote schools indicated a zero response to the rarely frequency category.

The following comments by remote school principals explicate how they learn from others:

There is a clinic, store and the school – the school is the hub of the community. Have developed relationships with community and continue to learn from them. I give and you give 'ngapartji-ngapartji' also a bit like karma and depends on context. In my case, I would fix someone's USB or computer and at some future time my car would be fixed or tyre changed. We learn from Anangu and they learn from us. This principle is incorporated into the teaching in the school – we do this in our learning.

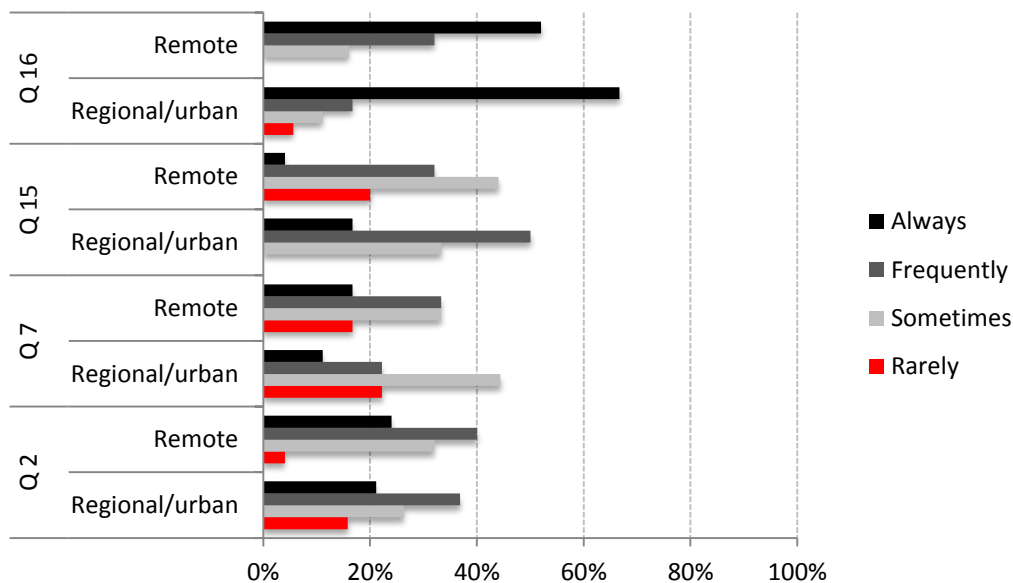


Figure 11 Category 3 – Reaching out to build relationships and learning from others

- Q2 Involving other people as Indigenous leaders of reading in classroom reading activities with children
 Q7 Building ongoing relationships with Indigenous leaders of reading from the community to work with teachers in the classroom
 Q15 Establishing opportunities that involve parent and community participation in school activities with a reading focus (e.g. classroom reading session, after school reading groups)
 Q16 Being open to learning from others (i.e. ILPs, community elders, experienced teachers, and students)

The vision is 'walking in two worlds', know your own culture and others. Students need to learn how to cope with the mainstream Western education.

As a teacher one needs to teach both cultures, need to have knowledge of both cultures. We continue to learn from the community.

One of my messages that I push is very much around language. Because they don't speak our language it is not a disability. Teachers are very conscious that kids can learn and it can be a bonus that they have a second language. Teacher assistants provide translation to give the teachers the links for students. Staff are very good at that and I don't believe any think kids can't learn to read because they don't have English as a first language. If you go to classrooms you find Pitjantjatjara words sitting alongside English words and teachers use these resources and speak about the phonics of their first language. English words are broken up just as the Pitjantjatjara words are.

Some regional/urban principals commented about learning from others with similar enthusiasm:

There's a bush garden and medicine garden. They want to create a plywood plaque with

the written scientific name and bush name from either side of the border which is a lot of language and reading, but it's a lot of non-English white law and we're trying to combine the two and being proud and successful as you are walking both sides of the track and being your best.

We have community partnerships with three communities. Partnerships are where the school sits with communities to hear their expectations and discuss what the school can do to meet those.

One of the things we had done was to put in a submission for a Reading Café and that's successful. It's early days but we have a nominated person bringing together a number of Indigenous community members to see what that will look like. We also have Indigenous teacher assistants on staff. We have engaged local Indigenous community members in units of work they've been doing around reading practices and embedding the cultural perspectives in the unit.

Concluding comments on the findings

Overall, the analysis of the survey interview data supports the case that all principals have continued to develop their own and staff capabilities to implement PALLIC positions to

improve children's reading, while leading and managing in difficult circumstances, including high staff turnover. About half of the principals were new to PALLIC schools in 2013 and had not participated in the PALLIC professional development modules or the development of Reading Action Plans. Some were not given full briefings on the project when they came to the school. Many had changes in the person taking the role of Indigenous leadership partner. Circumstances aside however, all principals recognised the value of the PALLIC leadership strategies for improving Indigenous children's reading. They agree that PALLIC provides principals with a mandate for leading and enacting an evidence informed reading program and for planning and resourcing the professional development of all staff. They agree it has the potential for engaging families and community members in partnerships focused on children learning to read. For many principals, such a systematic approach to leading the teaching and learning of reading in partnership with Indigenous leadership partners was a new concept.

It is clear from the quantitative data and responses offered to the open-ended interview survey questions that principals' actions inside and outside schools are mediated by local contextual factors. For example, geographical location, community needs and demands, Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff recruitment and retention, staff and community knowledge and professional development related to leading the teaching of reading were mentioned frequently.

Both groups of principals indicate their commitment to further developing a sustained relationship with their Indigenous leadership partners. The remote principals reported that they involved Indigenous leadership partners in school leadership decisions about reading most of the time. Principals from regional/urban schools reported that although they involved Indigenous leadership partners in school leadership decisions about reading, they did so less frequently than did remote principals. There is a need to investigate the reasons for this difference further.

Regional/urban principals reported more inclination to provide professional learning activities, resources and ongoing support to ensure all teaching staff implemented the recommendations of the PALLIC Reading Action Plans and that their teaching was focused on the reading Big Six. Particularly noteworthy is the high percentage of regional/urban principals who

indicated that evidence of student progress was used to support students at all levels of reading achievement.

Principals from remote schools emphasised the importance they place on the contribution professional learning has on the transfer and modelling of knowledge to children. However, they recognise that contextual factors constrain the provision of professional learning activities that would ensure that Indigenous teaching staff were more prepared to implement the PALLIC Reading Action Plans and to teach using the Big Six of reading. Most schools located in remote Indigenous communities are the 'hub of the community' with the principal expected to play special and demanding roles in relationship to community needs that extend beyond the teaching and learning responsibilities expected inside the school gate. The challenges of balancing these responsibilities inside and outside school were expressed by principals in remote schools as intense.

There is strong evidence that principals, Indigenous leadership partners, teacher assistants and families in remote and regional/urban schools are keen to know more and do more about helping their children with reading. Many of the principals are aware of the need to plan and provide professional development based on cultural exchanges of Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge of learning and this view is supported in prior international research:

Despite empirical studies indicating its importance (Allen & Labbo, 2001; Hunsberger, 2007; Potter, 2007), schools have been shown to ignore or deprecate the literacy knowledge of poor or working class families and those who speak a minority language (Gee, 1996; Valencia & Black, 2002). Such attitudes or dispositions characterize a "deficit ideology" (Sleeter, 2004) that devalues the capacities of minority parents and their communities. Both marginalizing and disempowering, deficit ideologies posit that poor minority parents lack the ability or the desire to engage in activities that support the academic achievement of their children.

(Smith & Riojas-Cortez, 2010, p. 126)

Most of the principals in both groups (remote and regional/urban) expressed a willingness to learn from others (members of the community outside the school who are not designated Indigenous leadership partners). At this point in time, there is limited evidence that members of

Indigenous communities (parents and families) are engaged with schools in the support of reading; and what engagement there was, was occurring predominantly in Prep and Year 1 classrooms and was reported more frequently by principals in remote Indigenous schools. The challenge is for principals to find culturally relevant and accessible ways to lead and engage more parents and families in supporting reading at home and at school.

In response to this difficulty, Huang (2013) draws attention to the challenges that Chinese parents' experience in creating a supportive home environment for their children's English literacy learning:

...many parents foster a home environment that supports their children's reading development (Dever & Burts, 2002; Opitz et al., 2011), but that they lack high-quality reading materials and knowledge of the reading process, and thus are unable to provide effective strategies to support their children's reading development (Brock & Dodd, 1994).

(Huang, 2013, p. 252)

The limited research on school leadership and families suggests that while 'many administrators "talk the talk" of engaging parents as partners in education, they typically manage parent involvement in conventional ways that support the school agenda and contain parent participation, acting as a buffer rather than a bridge to the community' (Auerbach, 2009, p. 10). In response, Ishimaru (2013) emphasises that principals need to move beyond merely being visible and accessible to parents to play an active role in building capacity and relationships with parents, not delegating these activities to others in the school (p. 41).

The analysis of the data for this Addendum confirms the findings of the PALLIC report and the need to identify and implement practical suggestions for preparing leaders to work with culturally diverse Indigenous communities.

Principals are very keen to continue to implement the PALLIC leadership and literacy positions with their Indigenous leadership partners and members of Indigenous communities. They are aware that more work must be done to engage with Indigenous leadership partners and teacher assistants to support children's literacy inside schools. This research highlights a unique opportunity for leadership learning for

Indigenous members of the local educational community.

Equally pressing is the need for a systematic approach to supporting families and communities inside and outside schools to improve Indigenous children's reading. The analysis shows that a 'one size fits all' approach is not the best solution. Different geographic and cultural contexts demand close scrutiny.

It is evident that across all contexts there is a need for all stakeholders to learn more about how Indigenous children learn to read. Blackmore (2010) recognises the need for professional learning to recognise the cultural resources that students and parents can bring and which teachers can mobilise through inclusive pedagogies (p. 648). She adds that 'recognizing such cultural resources is most likely to lead to greater student and parent engagement, particularly if framed by processes of deliberative decision-making' (p. 485).

A professional development program that engages principals, Indigenous leadership partners, Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers and family members in 'both ways' learning pods would go a long way towards developing more sustainable human and material resources to assist Indigenous children to read. The findings reported here suggest that projects like PALLIC, driven by a theory of shared leadership, are necessary to ensure relevant distribution of power and knowledge across all of the parties involved.

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Addendum Appendix 1

Principal Interview Survey

Principals as literacy leaders with Indigenous communities (PALLIC)

Follow up research questions for PALLIC school principals since PALLIC

Just as a reminder. The Principals as Literacy Leaders with Indigenous Communities project (PALLIC) was designed to enhance the leadership capabilities of primary school principals as effective literacy leaders through the inclusion of Indigenous leadership partners (ILPs) drawn from the local Indigenous community as integral partners in school leadership teams. It was hoped that these leadership teams would work with teachers and collaborate with parents and families to improve reading in schools in Indigenous communities and schools with a significant proportion of Indigenous children.

Following delivery of professional learning modules, the research explored the leadership capabilities required to link leadership teams to Indigenous children's literacy learning, the actions required to establish productive partnerships with Indigenous leaders and families and the collective impact on Indigenous children's learning and reading achievement.

Our research findings so far, indicate improvement in children's reading achievement evident particularly in the school evaluation reports about the effects of their Reading Action Plans (RAP). The implementation and evaluation of each school's RAP was an expectation of the PALLIC project and one successfully completed by 46 schools. In these evaluation reports, principals recorded progress in student achievement as well as commitment to ongoing professional learning for teachers to address the reading problems identified. The reports also contained recommendations for ongoing work on reading improvement beyond the project into 2013.

In relation to improved leadership capability, our research to date indicates that there was strong agreement across the schools on action taken on:

- Building a good working relationship with Indigenous leadership partners.
- Expecting accountability for reading achievement from teachers.
- Using data on the Big Six in reading to inform school planning.

Our research indicates that most schools involved in PALLIC were keen to continue to incorporate PALLIC practices in the teaching of reading.

So, in this brief introduction you can see the reasons why we are interested in following up on any progress you have observed resulting from the PALLIC Project now we are well into 2013.

I understand you already have a copy of the interview questions so, we should now move to recording your responses. I'll ask each question and note your response on the questionnaire, just as you have it.

SURVEY QUESTIONS FOR PALLIC SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Can you tell me a bit about your daily activities as a principal: do you teach, talk to your students' parents, talk with teachers?

		Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Not applicable
I am continuing to link my work as Principal to Indigenous students' literacy learning by						
1	Involving Indigenous leadership partner/s (ILPs) in school leadership decisions and activities regarding reading.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Involving other people as Indigenous leaders of reading in classroom reading activities with children.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	The ongoing implementation of the recommendations from the school's 2012 PALLIC Reading Action Plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Ensuring there are opportunities to revise the school's PALLIC Reading Action Plan (RAP) for 2013.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Working with teaching staff to ensure that the Big Six are taught in classrooms (i.e. oral language experiences, phonemic awareness, phonological awareness, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I share leadership decisions and responsibilities by:						
6	Developing a sustained working relationship with my Indigenous leadership partner/s (ILPs).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Building ongoing relationships with Indigenous leaders of reading from the community to work with teachers in the classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Involving teachers and ILPs in decisions concerning strategies to improve children's reading achievement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Monitoring student progress and reading achievement in consultation with teaching staff and ILPs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Using evidence to ensure that students are adequately supported at all levels of reading achievement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	Establishing a shared vision with staff and ILPs in relation to reading goals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I manage conditions for learning by:						
12	Providing appropriate resources and suitably qualified staff to teach the reading Big Six.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13	Providing professional learning for ILPs and Indigenous teacher assistants to take leadership roles in the learning of reading in classrooms.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	Ensuring new teachers are appropriately trained to focus on PALLIC Leadership for Learning principles and on the teaching of reading using the Big Six.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I incorporate Indigenous community involvement in the teaching and learning of reading by:						
15	Establishing opportunities that involve parent and community participation in school activities with a reading focus (e.g. classroom reading sessions, after school reading groups).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16	Being open to learning from others (i.e. ILPs, community elders, experienced teachers, and students).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17	Please tell us how your school is working with the community to open up support for the learning of reading					
18	In what ways is the PALLIC project continuing to contribute to the improvement of reading for the Indigenous children in your school?					
19	Do teacher attitudes to Indigenous children's capabilities impact on your leading the teaching of reading?					

Appendix 1

You are filling this survey out on:

Teacher's Survey

Introduction:

Your school is participating in the principals as Literacy Leaders with Indigenous Communities (PALLIC) project being conducted by the Australian Primary Principals Association, in partnership with Griffith University.

We would like to invite you now to participate in the research component of the project. The Ethics Committee of Griffith University together with those from each of the State and Territory jurisdictions have reviewed the project and given approval to go ahead. The emphasis of the project is on leadership for literacy both in the school and community and has called for involvement of the principals, literacy leadership mentors, Indigenous leadership partners, Indigenous leaders of reading and teachers.

As a participant in the PALLIC Project, we invite you to complete this questionnaire. The data from the survey will be used to produce an aggregated analysis across the project. In doing so, we will not use anyone's real names or the names of the school or community. This report will be sent to your school by APPA for your reference locally.

Participation in the research project is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. Should you choose to withdraw, any materials collected will be destroyed. A de-identified copy of these data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded.

For further information, please consult the University's Privacy Plan at <http://www.griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan> or telephone (07) 3735 5585.

Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the research project please contact Professor Greer Johnson (07 3735 5683 or g.johnson@griffith.edu.au) or the Senior Manager, Research Ethics and Integrity on 07 3735 5586 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au.

In this survey we ask for your view about three research questions relevant to the PALLIC Project; but before doing so, we seek some background information from you.

1. In which Australian state or Territory is your school located?
2. How long have you been teaching?
3. Please state your gender
4. Do you identify as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

This part of the questionnaire seeks information from you about the research question below:

Research Question No. 1.

What are the necessary leadership capabilities and practices to link the work of leadership teams to Indigenous student literacy learning and achievement? What works and why?

<i>In our work together (principals, Indigenous leadership partners and teachers) we address literacy learning by:</i>	Always	Frequently	Undecided	Sometimes	Rarely
1. Keeping the focus on the school's commitment to improving learning to read for Indigenous children	A	F	U	S	R
2. Modelling leadership 'both ways' – from the school to the community and from the community to the school	A	F	U	S	R
3. Including Indigenous leadership partners in the school leadership team	A	F	U	S	R
4. Building a good working relationship with Indigenous leadership partners	A	F	U	S	R
5. Providing the Big Six as a framework for the teaching of reading	A	F	U	S	R
6. Using data on the Big Six in reading to inform school planning	A	F	U	S	R
7. Participating in professional development on reading with teachers	A	F	U	S	R
8. Linking assessment practices to the Big Six	A	F	U	S	R
9. Promoting teaching strategies on the Big Six at school, classroom and individual levels	A	F	U	S	R
10. Aligning the school's resources to support the Big Six framework	A	F	U	S	R
11. Ensuring that all children have personal targets in reading	A	F	U	S	R
12. Being accountable for reading achievement in my classroom	A	F	U	S	R
13. Talking with parents about student reading development	A	F	U	S	R
14. Sharing responsibility for reading with Indigenous leadership partners	A	F	U	S	R
15. Recommending others from the community as active leaders of reading	A	F	U	S	R
16. Participating in professional development on reading with Indigenous parents and community members	A	F	U	S	R
17. Leading the celebration of children's achievements in reading with parents	A	F	U	S	R
18. Which three (3) of the practices above are most important to you – list the three here in order of priority?	Number 1				
	Number 2				
	Number 3				
19. Do you employ other leadership practices that you know are particularly effective in leading reading in your school? If so, please describe one or more briefly here:					

The next section of the questionnaire addresses the two research questions below asking you to respond in two ways – the extent of the partnership action you have taken and the extent to which the action has been effective

Research Question No. 2.

What actions do principals and leadership teams need to take to form productive partnerships with Indigenous School Community leaders, parents and families over the teaching of reading?

Research Question No. 3.

What are the overall effects of the actions of leadership teams, parents and family partnerships on Indigenous children's learning and achievement in reading?

Action Statement	Extent				How effective			
	Fully	Somewhat	Not at all	Very effective	effective	Undecided	ineffective	Very ineffective
<i>To what extent do you implement the following actions and how effective are they?</i>								
20. Our Indigenous partners participate in the design, planning and preparation of our school reading practices	F	S	N	VE	E	U	I	VI
21. Indigenous parents and community members participate in information sessions on learning to read	F	S	N	VE	E	U	I	VI
22. Indigenous people undertake training on how to support aspects of The Big Six in reading at home	F	S	N	VE	E	U	I	VI
23. Indigenous and non-Indigenous people together make judgments on children's performance in reading	F	S	N	VE	E	U	I	VI
24. Our Home Reading Practices Guide has been developed with Indigenous parents and community members	F	S	N	VE	E	U	I	VI
25. Indigenous parents and community members discuss their children's literacy needs and speak for themselves about their concerns	F	S	N	VE	E	U	I	VI
26. Indigenous Leaders of Reading actively support reading at school	F	S	N	VE	E	U	I	VI
27. A Classroom Reading Practices Guide has been developed in partnership between teachers and Indigenous parents and community members	F	S	N	VE	E	U	I	VI
28. Our reading improvement strategies place a heavy value on the importance of Indigenous languages	F	S	N	VE	E	U	I	VI
29. Our training sessions on reading are 'two- way' with Indigenous and non-Indigenous people being teachers for each other	F	S	N	VE	E	U	I	VI
30. We seek out reports on reading from Indigenous people	F	S	N	VE	E	U	I	VI
31. Indigenous people support the school's Reading Action Plans	F	S	N	VE	E	U	I	VI
32. We seek reading improvement solutions in conversations with Indigenous people	F	S	N	VE	E	U	I	VI
33. Indigenous Leaders of Reading actively support children learning to read at home	F	S	N	VE	E	U	I	VI
34. Are there other actions you have taken in partnership with Indigenous parents or community members which are proving effective in helping improve reading practices at home and/or at school? Please describe								

Appendix 2

The triangulation of responses to items 1-17 made by principals, teachers and literacy leadership mentors

Table 7 Triangulation of responses

		Principals RQ1	Teachers RQ1	Literacy Leadership Mentors RQ1
1	Keeping the focus on the school's commitment to improving learning to read for Indigenous children	4.64	4.66	4.33
2	Modelling leadership 'both ways' – from the school to the community and from the community to the school	3.91	3.72	3.33
3	Including Indigenous leadership partners in the school leadership team	3.23	3.81	3.33
4	Building a good working relationship with my Indigenous leadership partners	4.09	4.09	4.17
5	Providing the Big Six as a framework for the teaching of reading	4.05	4.34	4.83
6	Using data on the Big Six in reading to inform school planning	4.09	4.28	4.33
7	Participating in professional development on reading with teachers	4.55	4.19	4.50
8	Linking assessment practices to the Big Six	3.73	4.03	4.50
9	Promoting teaching strategies on the Big Six at school, classroom and individual levels	3.95	4.16	4.50
10	Aligning the school's resources to support the Big Six framework	3.91	3.84	4.50
11	Ensuring that all children have personal targets in reading	3.91	4.29	3.83
12	Expecting accountability for reading achievement from my teachers	4.32	4.53	4.50
13	Talking with parents about student reading development	3.50	3.81	3.50
14	Sharing responsibility for reading with Indigenous leadership partners	3.18	3.47	2.67
15	Engaging others from the community as active leaders of reading	2.59	2.84	2.50
16	Participating in professional development on reading with Indigenous partners and community members	2.55	2.68	2.67
17	Leading the celebration of children's achievements in reading with parents	3.55	3.84	4.17

Appendix 3

Principals', teachers' and literacy leadership mentors' (LLM) responses to questions on the extent to which they implemented leadership actions and their perceived effectiveness (Extent rescaled to Extent 1 *not at all*–5 *fully*, Effectiveness 1 *very ineffective*–5 *very effective*)

Strategies		Teachers Extent	Teachers Effectiveness	Principals Extent	Principals Effectiveness	LLM Extent	LLM Effectiveness
Q20:	Our Indigenous partners participate in the design, planning and preparation of our school reading practices	2.34	3.27	2.44	3.23	2.12	3.00
Q21:	Indigenous parents and community members participate in information sessions on learning to read	2.24	3.21	2.36	3.32	2.12	3.33
Q22:	Indigenous people undertake training on how to support aspects of The Big Six in reading at home	1.89	3.00	1.83	2.68	2.38	3.20
Q23:	Indigenous and non-Indigenous people together make judgments on children's performance in reading	2.24	3.14	2.29	3.23	1.83	3.00
Q24:	Our Home Reading Practices Guide has been developed with Indigenous parents and community members	2.33	3.14	2.44	2.95	2.67	3.00
Q25:	Indigenous parents and community members discuss their children's literacy needs and speak for themselves about their concerns	2.45	3.41	2.44	3.27	2.38	3.17
Q26:	Indigenous Leaders of Reading actively support reading at school	2.94	3.79	2.67	3.45	2.67	3.67
Q27:	A Classroom Reading Practices Guide has been developed in partnership between teachers and Indigenous parents and community members	2.06	3.32	1.98	2.86	1.83	3.67
Q28:	Our reading improvement strategies place a heavy value on the importance of Indigenous languages	2.55	3.54	2.59	3.59	2.67	3.50
Q29:	Our training sessions on reading are 'two-way' with Indigenous and non-Indigenous people being teachers for each other	1.89	3.26	1.95	3.14	2.12	3.17
Q30:	We seek out reports on reading from Indigenous people	1.67	3.00	2.11	2.95	1.28	2.20
Q31:	Indigenous people support the school's Reading Action Plans	2.61	3.45	2.82	3.45	2.67	3.33
Q32:	My teachers and I seek reading improvement solutions in conversations with Indigenous people	3.01	3.76	2.82	3.55	2.12	3.17
Q33:	Indigenous Leaders of Reading actively support children learning to read at home	2.72	3.59	2.89	3.55	2.67	3.50