

National Leaders

PfS: Accelerating Learning in Literacy



Iti rearea teitei kahikatea ka taea.

One strength of PfS:ALL is the way we can build knowledge together so we can benefit and learn from it. 'This means that ALL is a cyclical process of using knowledge generated by the educational community, and in turn contributing to further development of it'. (page 41 Theory of Action).

Below is a synthesis School Impact and Refocus reports 2016.

We provide below a summary of Strategies and Learning Conditions identified in schools' Impact and Refocus reports as making a difference for groups of ALL students. We are all working to understand those strategies and conditions that are having a positive impact on learning when providing additional teaching for small groups of students Well-below and Below the National Standards. School systems rely on the actions and strategies of leaders, teachers and students as levers for change, and for ensuring optimal learning conditions are in place for all.

Strategies:

For the purposes of this report we define a strategy as a purposefully conceived and determined plan of action, including patterns of teaching and leadership acts that serve to accelerate learning in literacy.

Leadership strategies - The leadership team is:

- Ensuring the Teaching as Inquiry focus for each teacher is robust and worthwhile inquiring into, and providing support when teachers have identified what it is they need to be better at their craft
- Involved in the team leading ALL (which may be a new team or an already existing team) and they will give the ALL team the status and authority to lead the teachers involved
- Giving status to the Literacy Leader or leadership team to work alongside teachers supporting them as they work with their groups of students
- Setting up school systems that support implementation of ALL principles with a long term view of 'this is the way we do things around here' and sustainable practices e.g. tracking students who have had interventions
- Utilising the ALL funding in ways that supports teachers to focus on their ALL students (e.g. use of teacher/teacher aides in classrooms while teachers taught focus students)
- Building collaboration at the heart of their teachers working together so supporting Professional Learning Groups within the school
- Setting up a school learning culture where everyone is a learner and accessing professional readings that meet their staff needs
- Supporting staff to build their coaching and mentoring skills to be the on-site mentors

Teacher strategies – The teacher is:

- Building their own capacity to understand how they can support students who are not meeting curriculum expectation
- Meeting the needs of learners by engaging them in meaningful, purposeful, rich and real life opportunities for reading and writing and therefore closely aligning their learning to the learning areas of the curriculum

- Deliberate in their acts of teaching – scaffolding, modelling, building vocabulary, providing oral language opportunities, shared, guided and independent learning opportunities, providing models of expected work, rich texts, choice
- Urgent in their approach to the group, creating fast paced lessons, recognizing what students already know, having high expectations they will achieve their goals
- Involving their family/whānau in their child’s learning and learning more about the child as a result of this
- Explicitly teaching to what the child needs at the time and at their cognitive level to enable them to access the curriculum (Principles of acceleration are being applied)
- Front loading their ALL group to allow them to learn ahead of others in the class which provides them the opportunity to lead the rest of the class
- Knowledgeable about progressions of literacy learning and therefore able to support students with their next learning steps, provide appropriate feedback, and ensure students lead their own learning using a visible pathway of progress
- Holding data-driven discussions and understanding the importance in knowing what needs are to be addressed for each student

Student strategies – The student is:

- Aware of their own pathway of progress, know what they learning, why they need to learn it and when they will know that they have learnt it and contributes to their pathway of progress
- Engaged in their learning so that reading and writing is no longer a mystery to them
- Applying their new learning in different situations and other learning areas and having a lot of opportunities to do this in different ways (multiple opportunities to learn)
- Experiencing success as a result of being taught in an accelerative way and leading the learning of others
- Increasing their vocabulary as a result of the new words they are meeting and using
- Able to have input into what they do within the classroom and what is worthwhile learning
- Feeling they have a voice as their teacher engages them in conversations about learning, what they find difficult, how they can be supported, understanding learning requires hard work
- Bringing their family into the school or taking work home so that family/whānau are sharing their learning journey
- Getting to use a lot of supports to make writing in particular easier to actually ‘do’ e.g. technology where they can send a picture of their work home and get feedback from parents/caregivers

Learning Conditions

There are certain conditions which are favourable to learning. These conditions can be both internal (eg. motivation and engagement) and external (teachers providing multiple opportunities to learn) to the child. If the environmental internal and external learning conditions are in place, it will enable the child to learn more successfully.

Collaborative school cultures

- Professional learning groups are established and operate successfully where readings and discussions about learning are valued

- Regular meetings are held at team, full staff level to discuss progress of students where people share how their inquiries are going, where help can be sought, what they are learning about themselves as professionals
- Coaching and mentoring occur for teachers within the school by both outside expertise but also inside literacy leaders
- That teaching staff analyse and discuss their data looking for ways to meet the needs of students from what the data and evidence suggests

Structure and organisation

- That students experience routines, structure to their lessons and lessons are developed that will engage them and that can contribute to them becoming independent
- That they are in-class and opportunities arise where new ideas that have been introduced can be reinforced and transferred to other learning
- That class sessions are well organized and can move at a pace that keeps students interested but also meets what has been specifically planned
- Students experience success and can build on that success
- The teacher is able to give the group focused teacher time without distractions
- That the time is 'in addition to' and 'doing something differently'

Accelerative approach to learning

- Students have a pathway of progress that looks ahead to what they will need next rather than back to what they haven't learnt
- Front loading students in preparation for what will occur in the class programme during the week so that they will be able to lead others in the class
- Vocabulary teaching is explicit and focusses on building the academic vocabulary of students
- Classroom cultures that support students, encourage them to be independent, but also are realistic about the difficulty of the task and do not shield students from this reality
- 'just in time' teaching is an important concept for teachers to acknowledge as this allows them to address the student at their cognitive level and at the time of need for strategy teaching

Relationships

- Importance of the teacher 'knowing the child' and although this is often claimed to be the case for all students and their teacher, in reality many ALL teachers state they are surprised how much more they know both professionally and personally about the child after they have been involved in the ALL group
- The importance of the family/whānau relationship for each child and schools are investing time and energy into building better relationship with many of their parents/caregivers
- How knowledge of a child can increase the likelihood of engaging them with learning if they feel that what they know is valued and also is part of their world
- The collegial relationship of the teachers and leaders in the school who are working together to lift the outcomes of their students

Enabling access to technology

- The use of technology to support students particularly in writing to actually write and speed the writing process up
- The use of apps/digital media that have appeal to students to motivate and engage them e.g. The literacy shed
- The capturing of student efforts digitally as a means of sharing with others especially family/whānau – see saw is one of these successful apps

Motivation and engagement

Motivation and engagement are important to encourage students who have been unsuccessful in aspects of literacy for some time. Motivation is largely linked to what students think the value of a task is and the confidence they feel about themselves in doing and completing the task. For students who have found reading and writing difficult their motivation and engagement is likely to be low and therefore it is important there is a focus on motivating and engaging students in literacy learning.

This is being done by:-

- Teachers working with small ALL groups in class where their teaching is fast paced, urgent, positive, and encouraging of student success
- ALL teachers are aware of students' personal interests and use these as authentic opportunities for learning
- Connections are being made to students' prior knowledge as a basis for new learning
- Students in the ALL group interviewed and student voice giving clear direction for future teaching
- Working in pairs and with groups appeals to students
- Monitoring their own pathway of progress and building self-efficacy as a result
- Front loading students so they could lead others learning