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# Literacy Leadership in New Zealand Secondary Schools

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# Abstract

While much has been published about the topic of leading literacy (most of this from the USA), little has been produced that links literacy leadership practices to improved outcomes for learners. This thesis addressed the gap in the evidence about what works, and adds to what is known about literacy leadership in New Zealand schools.

It explored the processes literacy leaders used to support teaching and learning in secondary schools with different patterns of English achievement in the New Zealand qualification National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA). If we know what effective literacy leadership practices look like we can concentrate on building these amongst our school leaders as part of the priority of raising achievement in New Zealand.

The hypothesis explored in this research is that effective leaders of literacy make use of a set of core practices to support teachers to implement high quality literacy teaching practices. These teaching practices, in turn, impact positively on the literacy engagement and achievement of learners.

In this research, literacy leadership was explored through a case study approach. Through a process of analysing NCEA achievement, three schools were chosen that had high NCEA English achievement. A further three schools with low NCEA English achievement were also chosen. Data about literacy leadership practices were gathered through interviews with six literacy leaders, and twelve teachers (two in each school) with whom these literacy leaders had worked. Interview data were allocated to coding categories using NVivo 10 software. These categories, named the Practices of Effective Literacy Leadership (PELL), had been identified from a set of 43 studies about literacy leadership. Results show that literacy leaders in high achieving schools were more likely to use a greater range of the PELL compared to low achieving schools. These included: building teachers content knowledge about what to teach, when and how; helping teachers to understand literacy learning across curriculum; challenging teachers to think of different ways of doing things; acquiring resources that align to students' needs; building the trust and engagement of teachers and other leaders; constructing a vision for literacy learning in the school; engaging in curriculum evaluation; planning a school literacy curriculum; solving school problems related to teaching and learning; advising teachers about resources for students in their classes; guiding teachers in the use of smart tools; drawing on their experience as a leader; and drawing on their expertise as a leader

Further analyses showed that these differences could be grouped into three broad categories of practice. These three categories are - focusing on improving students' attainment and improving the engagement of learners; fostering organisational coherence; and creating a culture for improvement. They are critical for building teachers' capabilities in secondary schools, and for reducing current inequities in students' attainment in New Zealand secondary schools.

This research found that shifting curriculum priorities and senior leadership changes in low achieving schools impacted on the opportunities literacy leaders had to work with teachers. Literacy leaders in

high achieving schools faced fewer organisational barriers to working with teachers and with other leaders.

The ability to answer the research question has been potentially impacted by two limitations. Neither of these limitations could be dealt with in the context of a time-bound doctoral thesis, or where participants volunteer to take part in the research. The first limitation relates to sampling design. It was not possible to control for teacher or literacy leader background variables such as prior participation in professional learning and development, and this may have impacted on the results obtained. Secondly, teachers who took part in the research were only partially responsible for the school-based NCEA results used in sampling. Other teachers, in the English department and other departments, may have also contributed to outcomes.

This thesis identifies further possibilities for research on literacy leadership. These include more case study research that examines literacy leadership in a range of schooling contexts (for instance larger and smaller secondary schools with different infrastructure); longitudinal studies that examine the changes that schools make, including improvement rates in students' literacy, as a result of literacy leadership practices; studies that look in detail at the ways literacy leaders (and other curriculum leaders) work with principals and senior leaders to bring about change and improvement in literacy achievement.

New Zealand does not have a standalone programme for building literacy leaders' capability. Whether it is practical or desirable to have such a programme is debatable. It would be beneficial to consider, however, how literacy leaders and other curriculum leaders can be supported in their important roles of guiding other teachers.

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# Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>List of Figures</b> .....	<b>ix</b>
<b>List of Tables</b> .....	<b>ix</b>
<b>Chapter One: Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter Two: Literature Review</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Introduction.....	5
The thesis proposition .....	5
Literature review methodology.....	6
Leadership for learning .....	7
Best evidence syntheses findings .....	7
Insights on expertise .....	9
What is literacy? .....	11
Literacy leaders in New Zealand.....	12
Who are they? .....	12
Literacy leaders' responsibilities .....	13
Previous New Zealand studies on leadership .....	14
Leadership studies linked to outcomes for learners.....	14
Other New Zealand leadership studies .....	15
Past professional development for New Zealand literacy leaders .....	15
Literacy Leadership Initiative.....	16
Secondary School Leadership Initiative .....	16
The Literacy Professional Development Project .....	17
Pasifika Literacy Professional Development project .....	18
The Secondary Literacy Project .....	19
The lessons from PLD projects in relation to literacy leadership .....	20
Other support for New Zealand professional development .....	21
Literacy leaders in other countries .....	22
Research on coaching .....	22
Literacy coach training and roles .....	23
Coaching standards and professional learning.....	23
Literacy leaders' practices in contexts with positive outcomes for teachers and/or learners .....	24
Core and supplementary studies .....	24
About the studies .....	25
Theme One: Leadership capabilities that make a difference.....	34
Background to the theme .....	34
Leadership content knowledge .....	34
Problem-solving.....	34



Relational trust .....	35
What the core study found .....	35
What the supplementary studies found.....	36
Theme Two: Building teachers' knowledge .....	37
Background .....	37
What the core studies found .....	39
What the supplementary studies found.....	40
Theme Three: Structuring learning for teachers using a core set of practices .....	40
Background .....	40
What the analyses of the core studies showed.....	43
What the supplementary studies found.....	44
What we know about literacy leadership in less successful contexts .....	47
Theme One: Issues of role confusion and engagement .....	47
Theme Two: Lack of capability.....	48
Evidence for disconfirming the proposition .....	49
Conclusion.....	49
The limitations of this literature review .....	49
The development of an analysis tool (PELL) from the core and supplementary studies .....	50
<b>Chapter Three: Methodology .....</b>	<b>55</b>
Introduction.....	55
The thesis hypothesis .....	55
Background information on NCEA .....	55
The approach to exploring the research question .....	56
Case study research strategy .....	56
What is a case study research strategy? .....	56
Context matters.....	57
The unit of analyses .....	59
Managing the case study research .....	59
Principle One: Bound the study.....	59
Principle Two: Data collection and analyses should systematically lead to answering the research question.....	60
Principle Three: Compare data to build theory about the phenomenon under study. ....	60
Principle Four: Manage the threats to the validity of the research.....	61
Sampling .....	63
Decile banding.....	64
Sampling frame .....	65
Excluded schools .....	67
The sampling analyses process.....	67
Phase One: Calculating, using a formula, the pass rate ratio for the schools in the sample .....	68
Phase Two: Sorting the schools by pass rate ratios into top and bottom school categories.....	68

Phase Three: Analysing the frequency with which schools were categorised as top or bottom schools on the ranking lists .....	69
Phase Four: Retaining or eliminating schools according to their rankings .....	69
Phase Five: Finding the top and bottom schools from the Level two and Level three retained schools lists .....	69
Phase Six: Procedure for substituting schools in the sample .....	70
Management of the ethical considerations for the research .....	70
Approaching the schools .....	70
Gaining participants' informed consent .....	70
Minimisation of risk .....	71
Participant verification .....	71
Anonymity .....	71
Collecting data .....	71
The processes of transcribing, coding, analysing, synthesising data and reporting findings .....	72
Step A: Transcribing data .....	74
Step B: Coding in NVivo .....	74
Step C: Analyses One .....	74
Step D: Analysis Two .....	74
Part One .....	74
Part Two .....	74
Part Three .....	74
Step E: Analysis Three .....	75
Content analyses .....	76
Step F: Reporting .....	76
<b>Chapter Four: Research Findings .....</b>	<b>77</b>
The results of the analyses and synthesis .....	77
Finding One: Supporting and contributing to organisational coherence .....	80
Subtheme: Building and maintaining a vision for improvement .....	80
Subtheme summary: Building and maintaining a vision for improvement .....	83
Subtheme: Developing and maintaining an improvement agenda .....	83
Strategies are aligned to achieve the improvement agenda .....	84
Maintaining a focus on what matters .....	84
Routines that support coherence .....	85
Artefacts that support coherence .....	87
Subtheme summary: Developing and maintaining an improvement agenda .....	88
Finding Two: Purposefully building teacher capability .....	88
Subtheme: Processes for building teacher capability .....	89
Subtheme summary: Processes for building teacher capability .....	90
Subtheme: The content and pedagogy literacy leaders focused on .....	91
Analysis using GEALI .....	91
Engaging students .....	92

Subtheme summary: The content and pedagogy literacy leaders focused on .....	94
Subtheme: Improving weak practice .....	94
Subtheme summary: Improving weak practice .....	95
Finding Three: Creating and maintaining a culture of improvement .....	95
Summary .....	96
Summary of the overall findings.....	97
The literacy leadership findings.....	97
The school factors that impacted on literacy leaders' work .....	97
The negative factors.....	97
The positive factors .....	98
<b>Chapter Five: Discussion .....</b>	<b>99</b>
The key findings revisited.....	99
Organisational coherence .....	99
Building teacher capability .....	100
Maintaining a culture of improvement .....	101
Adding to the thesis proposition .....	103
The major contribution of the research .....	104
The limitations of the research.....	105
Future research possibilities .....	106
Implications of the research for policy and practice .....	107
<b>Appendix One: NCEA achievement standards used in the sampling .....</b>	<b>109</b>
<b>Appendix Two: Information form for participants .....</b>	<b>111</b>
<b>Appendix Three: Consent form for participants .....</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>Appendix Four: Interview Questions .....</b>	<b>117</b>
<b>Appendix Five: Analyses and synthesis of PELL.....</b>	<b>118</b>
<b>Appendix Six: Guidelines for Effective Adolescent Literacy Instruction.....</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>135</b>

## List of Figures

Figure 1: The thesis hypothesis .....	6
Figure 2: How literacy leaders promote teacher learning .....	41
Figure 3: The process of transcribing, coding, analyses, syntheses and reporting .....	73
Figure 4: Revised hypothesis diagram.....	104

## List of Tables

Table 1: The types of studies included in this literature review .....	24
Table 2: Selected characteristics of core and supplementary studies.....	26
Table 3: Enrolment levels.....	46
Table 4: Embeddedness levels .....	47
Table 5: Building teachers' content knowledge.....	50
Table 6: Encouraging new and innovative practice .....	51
Table 7: Planning, sharing and implementing school literacy priorities .....	51
Table 8: Providing practical guidance to individual teachers about using best pedagogical practice ..	52
Table 9: Additional PELL added during analyses .....	53
Table 10: Alternative explanations to the hypothesis .....	62
Table 11: Sampling details.....	65
Table 12: The Difference Rule criteria .....	75
Table 13: Example of how the Difference Rule was applied .....	75
Table 14: Consolidate themes and PELL .....	76
Table 15: PELL differences.....	77
Table 16: School codes and descriptions .....	80
Table 17: Analysis of literacy leaders' and teachers' practices with reference to GEALI .....	91
Table 18: NCEA level two achievement standards used in the Wellington region sampling .....	109
Table 19: NCEA level three achievement standards used in the Wellington region sampling .....	109
Table 20: NCEA level two achievement standards used in the Auckland region sampling .....	110
Table 21: NCEA level three achievement standards used in the Auckland region sampling .....	110
Table 22: Analyses and synthesis of PELL.....	118



# Chapter One: Introduction

National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA)<sup>1</sup>, National Standards<sup>2</sup>, and Programme for International Student Assessment<sup>3</sup>, achievement measures indicate that New Zealand faces a significant and challenging task in closing the gaps between our highest and lowest performing students. Many of the lowest performing students leave school with low attainment, including in literacy which is a critical aspects of their education. Attending to deficits in students' education once they have left school can be expensive. Furthermore, there are challenges in implementing adult literacy programmes in the workplace that must be overcome in order to improve the literacy skills of those learners who have left school without adequate attainment (Tertiary Education Commission, 2015). Without basic literacy skills, students will encounter significant barriers to their progress in employment or training, and diminished enjoyment of the social and economic benefits of society (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation, 2006).

Through their influence on teachers, and subsequently on learners, literacy leaders have a significant role in supporting students to experience success during their schooling, and long term, to experience more equitable outcomes as citizens. They also have a role in working with other school leaders to create and enact the conditions for teachers' and students' learning.

This thesis explored the fine-grained practices literacy leaders use as they work with teachers to bring about improvements in teaching and learning. The research question that I answer in this thesis is:

*What are the processes leaders use to support teaching and learning in secondary schools with different patterns of NCEA English achievement, and why do they do what they do?*

The hypothesis that I explore in this thesis is that better outcomes for students come about where literacy leaders (or leaders of English) focus effectively on helping teachers to acquire a core set of literacy teaching practices that build their capacity to respond to a diverse range of students. This proposition recognizes that leaders do not necessarily have a direct link to learners – their influence is through teachers by enhancing their capability, and impacts on learners through teachers' better practice. The proposition also recognizes that literacy leaders work within a school context that may be enabling or constraining of their work. The support, by way of "structure" - decisions, policies, and school culture created by literacy leaders and other school leaders (such as deputy principals, associate principals and principals) - is a factor in the success of their work. Literacy leaders also play a part in creating and reinforcing the structure.

Where literacy leadership is not so well focused on helping teachers in this manner, and that support is not available, outcomes for students are likely to be much less positive. A supportive structure can enable the work of literacy leaders, and the absence of this support can constrain their practice.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/indicators/main/education-and-learning-outcomes/1781>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/schooling/national-standards/National\\_Standards](http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/schooling/national-standards/National_Standards)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/PISA/pisa-2012/pisa-2012-top-line-results-for-new-zealand>

This study relates to, and builds on, previous research on leadership. We already know from the *School Leadership and Student Outcomes Identifying What Works and Why Best Evidence Synthesis* (Leadership BES) (Robinson, Hohepa & Lloyd, 2009) about the relative impact of five broad types of leadership practice on student achievement. These practices (named leadership dimensions in the Leadership BES) were identified through detailed analyses of practices leaders used that were linked to positive outcomes for learners. Effect sizes<sup>4</sup> were calculated for each of the dimensions identified. In order of highest to lowest effect size, the leadership practices are as follows: promoting and participating in teacher learning and development (0.84); planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum (0.42); establishing goals and expectations (0.42); resourcing strategically (0.31); ensuring and orderly and supportive environment (0.27). When these effective practices are used, they are linked to high levels of student achievement.

Similarly, Timperley (2011) identifies a range of leadership practices that principals used in schools where student achievement gains were three times the expected rate of progress. These practices include: having and building pedagogical content knowledge, building strong reciprocal learning relationships with teachers; and having high expectations of teachers to respond to students' learning needs.

Neither of these pieces of research, however, specifically addresses secondary schools or the leadership of literacy practised in them. The evaluations of the Secondary Literacy Project (SLP) initiative in schools have provided insights into the work that literacy leaders have carried out in schools (McNaughton, Wilson, Jesson, & Lai, 2013), however, to date, findings have not been available that link improved student outcomes to a set of effective literacy leadership practices.

Nor can we rely on much of the research generated in the USA. While the body of literature on literacy coaching is vast, very few studies make the necessary link between literacy coaching practices and improved student outcomes, or high achievement and the literacy coaching activities that contributed to these results. Even less research focuses on what happens in secondary schools.

The research for this thesis specifically sets out to address this gap, and to do it in a manner that focuses on identifying specific literacy leadership practices and skills that make a difference. Six purposively sampled secondary schools, where there were patterns (over a three year period), of differences in English achievement in New Zealand's National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) were included in this research. Sampling included three secondary schools where there were patterns of high student achievement in NCEA English, and a further three schools where student achievement patterns in English were not as positive.

Data were collected through interviews with a literacy leader and two teachers in each of the participating secondary schools. Data were analysed using a tool – The Practices of Effective Literacy Leadership (PELL) developed through an extensive review of literature on literacy leadership and

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<sup>4</sup> An effect size "is a standardised measure of the strength of the relationship between two variables" (Robinson et al, 2009, p. 38). In this case leadership practices and outcomes for students. In the Leadership BES, the authors used Hattie's (2009) measures to define low, medium and large effect sizes. The measures are 0.2, 0.4, and 0.6 respectively.

literacy coaching. Interview material was coded to these PELL dimensions using NVivo 10 software. Through analyses and inferences from data I was able to compare the literacy leadership practices in the high and low achieving schools, and theorize about what works in terms of literacy that promotes the learning of teachers and of students. The contextual factors that enable and constrain effective literacy leadership were also considered.

Results of the analyses show that there were differences in practice between high and low achieving schools in 15 PELL dimensions. These 15 PELL were found in high achieving schools but not in low achieving schools, or not to the same extent.

This thesis is structured as follows:

**Chapter Two** is a review of the literature comprising sections that introduce the key themes of literacy, literacy teaching and leading literacy. These sections are followed by a discussion about the literacy leadership practices that are linked to evidence of positive achievement, and the practices that appear to be less effective for teachers and learners. The chapter concludes with a brief introduction to PELL.

**Chapter Three** describes the methodology used for the research including subsections that outline case study methods, sampling using NCEA English achievement data, data collection methods, ethical considerations, and a description of analyses and synthesis processes using the PELL framework.

In **Chapter Four** the findings are discussed in relation to analyses of the PELL in high and low achieving schools, and three key topics that emerge from a synthesis of PELL findings. The chapter concludes with a summary of the overarching themes that emerge from the findings.

The thesis concludes with **Chapter Five**, comprising a discussion of the findings, and subsections on the contributions of the research, research limitations and gaps, future research possibilities and the implications of the findings for policy and practice.





# Chapter Two: Literature Review

## Introduction

This study sought to extend what is known about leadership in general by studying how literacy leadership practices may differ in secondary schools with different outcomes for students. The questions I answered in this review are:

- Which literacy leader practices are described in the literature as being effective in building teacher understanding and teaching practice, and in bringing about improved outcomes for students?
- How do these practices differ in schools in which teachers have not built their literacy teaching knowledge and skills, and where student achievement is lower?

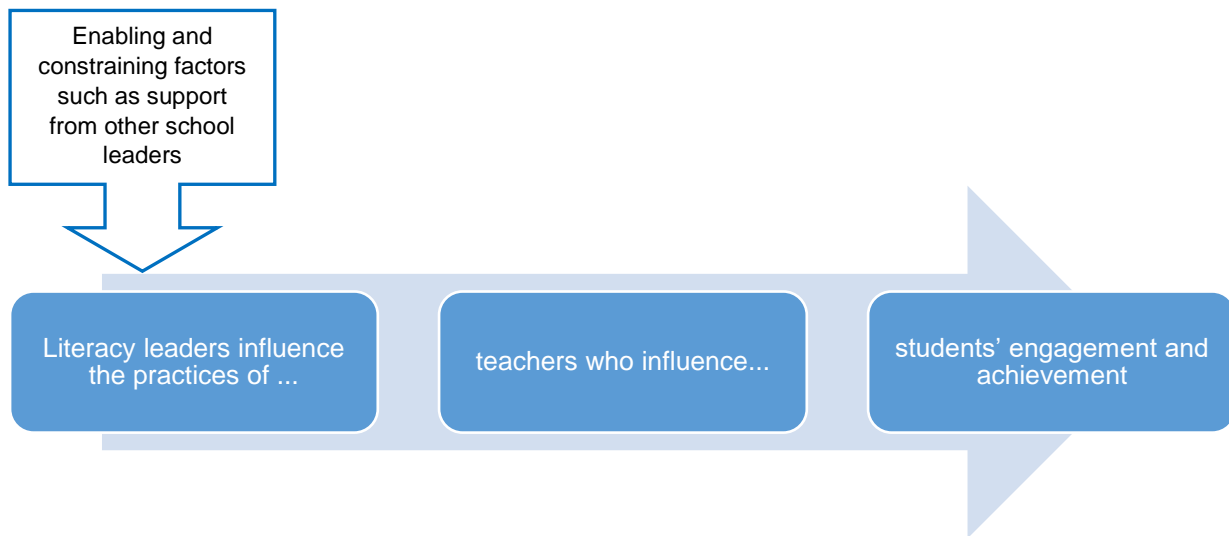
Before these questions are answered, I present background material about: literacy; leadership in general; and literacy leadership in New Zealand and in other countries. The chapter provides a brief assessment of the limitations to the literature review, and a description of the literature review methodology, including the basis on which literature was to be included or excluded.

The chapter concludes with a discussion on how the insights about effective literacy leadership led to the development of a tool - The Practices of Effective Literacy Leadership (PELL) - that was used to analyse data collected from participants in the research. Further detail about the application of the PELL in the analyses of data is described in the methodology chapter of this thesis.

## The thesis proposition

The hypothesis I am exploring in this thesis is that better outcomes for students come about where literacy leaders (or leaders of English) focus on helping teachers to acquire *a core set of teaching practices* that build their capacity to respond to a diverse range of students.

The proposition also recognizes that literacy leaders work within a school context that may support or constrain their work. A supportive structure can enable literacy leaders to focus on helping teachers. The absence of this support can constrain their practice. Key structural elements include decisions, school processes, policies, and school culture which literacy leaders can play a part in creating and reinforcing. Where literacy leadership is not so well focused on helping teachers, or support is not available, outcomes for students are likely to be much less positive. The following diagram provides a summary of the hypothesis.



**Figure 1: The thesis hypothesis**

With respect to the enabling and constraining factors, evidence suggests that it may be the opportunities (or the lack of them) for literacy leaders to work with teachers that is a factor in how successful they are in lifting students' achievement (Biancarosa, Bryk & Dexter, 2010; Carlisle & Berebitsky, 2011; L'Allier & Elish-Piper, 2012). Additionally, the support literacy leaders receive from other leaders in the school is also important in providing the conditions under which literacy leaders can exercise their influence in the school (Higuel, Marsh & Farrell, 2014). While these are important factors, the main focus of the thesis is to explore whether the presence, absence, and/or the quality of certain literacy leadership practices impact on outcomes for students.

By identifying these practices it might be possible to encourage literacy leaders in secondary schools to use them more frequently. If we know more about the particular leadership practices that build effective teaching practice, and result in better student achievement outcomes, literacy leaders and senior leaders in schools can invest in these practices to make improvements for student learning. Similarly, professional development providers can pay attention to these practices in the programmes they offer the schools, and the Ministry of Education can assist by making resources available that help literacy leaders to carry out their work using practices that have a strong evidential basis. With respect to the enabling and constraining factors, knowledge about what these are may support senior leaders to ensure that literacy leaders are able to carry out their important work with teachers.

## **Literature review methodology**

The literature used in this thesis was sourced from ERIC, Proquest, Education Research Complete, EBSCOhost Academic Search Premier, Gale Cengage Academic, Wiley Online, and Google Scholar Databases. Peer reviewed journals and published books were the two key sources for the review. A search of the reference lists of many articles and books also yielded studies that were not included in the computerised search process. Included in the literature reviewed were studies from early childhood through to secondary schooling, studies that related to English in general, and a small number of leadership studies from other curriculum areas, such as mathematics and science.

The key terms used in the searches included: literacy leaders, literacy coaches, English coaches, teacher leaders, curriculum leaders and middle leaders. I continued to search these databases until this thesis was completed.

A challenge I faced was locating, within the literature, specific literacy leadership practices that were linked to student outcomes. Much of the current research is described broadly rather than in the specific actions of leaders and the impact of their practice. Several researchers noted this lack of a clear evidence-base for effective literacy leaders (Biancarosa et al, 2010; Elish Piper & L'Allier, 2010), and the absence of this type of research has been a prime motivation for this research.

## **Leadership for learning**

### **Best evidence syntheses findings**

The quality dimensions of leadership in general have been explored in New Zealand through two complementary seminal pieces of research – the Teaching and Professional Learning and Development Best Evidence Syntheses Iteration (TPLD BES) (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar & Fung, 2007), and the School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying What Works and Why Best Evidence Syntheses (Leadership BES) (Robinson et al, 2009). Both of these publications are of relevance to literacy leaders because they describe the broad dimensions of leadership that have been linked to positive achievement outcomes for learners. They present the “what works” evidence that should guide all leaders in their work, regardless of context.

Applying the Leadership BES quality dimensions to a literacy leadership context, literacy leaders:

- Establish goals and expectations for learners and for teachers in literacy.
- Resource the literacy program in the school so that it addresses strategically teachers' and students' learning needs.
- Plan, coordinate, and evaluate the quality of literacy teaching in the school and the relevance of the English curriculum for learners. Provide appropriate input to content-area curricula so that it promotes students' literacy and language learning.
- Promote and participate in teacher professional learning and development to enhance the quality of literacy teaching and learning across the school.
- Ensure that systems are in place for teachers and students to experience an orderly, coherent, and supportive environment for learning and teaching in literacy.
- Creating educationally powerful connections
- Engaging in constructive problem talk
- Selecting, developing, and using smart tools.

The Leadership BES also describes the leadership knowledge, skills and dispositions that are linked to the dimensions above. These include four key aspects that have relevance to literacy leaders' work with teachers and other senior leaders in the school. Firstly, literacy leaders need to have knowledge about effective pedagogy in literacy when they make administrative decisions about literacy in the school. For instance, a literacy leader's knowledge of effective pedagogy will underpin decisions about:

literacy assessment systems and processes in the school; the placement of students in literacy interventions to raise their achievement; and the processes for monitoring students' progress in these interventions.

Secondly, literacy leaders need to have the skills to analyse and solve complex educationally-related problems associated with literacy teaching and learning. Robinson et al (2009, p.179) state that problem solving is "central to all leadership dimensions," and at the heart of the problem solving process is identifying the constraints that need to be addressed in coming up with the solutions. For instance, in the coaching literature from the USA, a problem for some literacy coaches was time to work with teachers when they were diverted to non-literacy coaching tasks (Dean, Dyal, Wright, Carpenter & Austin, 2012; Ippolito & Lieberman, 2012; Lynch & Ferguson, 2010; Matsumura, Sartoris, Bickel & Garnier, 2009). An expert literacy coach could solve this problem with the principal by: seeking clarification of his/her role; providing a clearly stated view of the problem, and working with the principal to plan a way to meet teachers' and the principals' needs. None of the studies reviewed in the literature discussed the ways literacy coaches addressed this dilemma.

The third aspect pertains to building relational trust amongst a range of stakeholders within and beyond the school. In the Leadership BES (Robinson et al, 2009), the fundamental components of a school that functions in a culture of trust are: interpersonal respect, personal regard for others, competence in carrying out the leadership role, and personal integrity. Where these qualities are present, teachers and leaders have a greater inclination to be innovative and to take calculated risks; engage in a more meaningful manner with parents and families; experience feelings of greater commitment to their work in schools; feel more connected professionally to their colleagues. In terms of leadership qualities, trust grows where teachers feel their leaders are capable, they can count on them for support and guidance, and the leaders deliver what they promise.

The importance of trust cannot be understated. Not only for the positive outcomes mentioned above, but also because there is a strong correlation between trust and outcomes for learners (Bryk and Schneider, 2002, 2003).

The fourth aspect of leadership practice that is linked to the Leadership BES quality dimensions is, engaging in open-to-learning conversations that support teachers to improve their teaching practice. Open-to-learning conversations are characterised by honest, respectful, and open expression of views and reasoning; clarification of perceptions, assumptions and inferences; and collaborative decision-making about how to solve the issue. The end goal is for participants to learn how to operate more effectively. Open-to-learning conversations help to build relational trust and vice versa.

It is reasonable to expect that literacy leaders' actions will focus on at least some of the above aspects. This research will describe in which ways these dimensions, knowledge, skills and dispositions are enacted by literacy leaders.

A key role undertaken by literacy leaders is to manage and participate in teacher professional learning and development that relates to literacy teaching and learning. The TPLD BES identifies broad,

sequenced and iterative leadership actions that support teachers' increased capacity to respond to learners. Expressed in terms of literacy leaders' actions, these are as follows:

- analyse the professional learning needs of teachers within the school, referenced to what needs to be done specifically to raise students' achievement in literacy
- respond to teachers' learning needs through appropriate, timely and expert advice and guidance about the most effective, evidence based literacy teaching practices
- establish systems and processes that support teachers' learning and ongoing improvement of literacy practice
- review and monitor the outcomes of the support given to teachers in terms of impact – improved teacher professional practice, and learners' achievement and progress in literacy.

The hypothesis is that literacy leaders in schools with high NCEA achievement in English undertake these activities in qualitatively different ways from leaders in schools with lower student achievement. In this research, interviews with teachers explored the extent to which the actions literacy leaders took have impacted on their (teachers') capacity to teach and on their engagement as professional learners. The Leadership BES and TPLD findings help to frame this investigation.

## **Insights on expertise**

While there is no existing collated body of knowledge about what expertise looks like in relation to literacy leadership in New Zealand, there is literature on expert teachers that provides insights into how expert literacy leaders might work.

Because of their important role in influencing, guiding and advising others, curriculum leaders (including literacy leaders) must possess knowledge and skills at an expert level. They must be able to immediately and appropriately draw on this expertise to respond to teachers' needs – teachers' requests for assistance, and gaps in teachers' knowledge and skills that become apparent to the leader. Their credibility as leaders and, therefore, the trust and engagement they gain from teachers, will be influenced by the extent to which they can perform as experts (Bryk & Schneider, 2003).

In 2004, Berliner published research that indicated the type of knowledge and capabilities expert teachers have. While the features relate to teachers in general, we might reasonably expect leaders also to possess this knowledge and these capabilities, which they in turn use to improve the practice of teachers.

Using student achievement outcomes to sample schools, and a set of hypothesised prototypical characteristics of expertise as a research tool, Berliner (2004, p. 209) identified the distinct practices and capabilities of experts. His findings showed that compared to novices, experts demonstrated:

- extensive knowledge, including deep representations of subject matter knowledge
- instantaneous recall and judgement about which knowledge is required in a particular context
- better problem-solving strategies and decision-making

- better adaptation and modification of goals for diverse learners, and better skills for improvisation
- better perception of classroom events
- better ability to read cues from teachers and students
- greater sensitivity to the conditions of context
- better monitoring of learning (teacher's and student's)
- more frequent testing of hypotheses about what might work.

Case study research by Tsui (2009) found that the critical difference between expert English as second language teachers, and teachers who were not expert focused on three key indicators: the way expert teachers were able to integrate various aspects of knowledge (knowledge of learners and knowledge of effective teaching practice) into their teaching actions; the extent to which expert teachers took account of, and responded to, teaching and learning contexts, such as the engagement levels of students; and their capabilities to engage in reflection and “conscious deliberation” (p.424). The researcher noted that teachers develop into experts because of their disposition and skill in looking for greater teaching challenges, and exploiting situated possibilities for improving teaching and learning. Having time and opportunity to reflect on the current and future states are two key enablers to developing expertise.

Expert secondary teacher practices have been identified by researchers at the University of Virginia, Curry School of Education. Halen, Hamre, Allen, Bell, Gitomer and Pianta (2015) conducted empirical research on the key teaching actions that have been linked to higher achievement scores and improved social and engagement outcomes for secondary students. This research confirmed that positive classroom interactions between secondary students and their teachers impacted positively on students' achievement. Halen et al's study has informed the development of Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) tools, at elementary and secondary school levels that are being used to evaluate teacher performance in some schools in Virginia.

The dimensions identified by Halen et al (2015, p.671) include: creating a classroom climate characterised by support for effective peer relationships and a programme that challenges and extends students' thinking; teachers who are sensitive to the developmental and learning needs of adolescents; maintaining an orderly classroom environment in which learning can happen; implementing practices and procedures that maximize time for learning while allowing students opportunities to be active and participatory learners; having clearly defined learning objectives and targets, and supporting learning through examples and high quality feedback; helping students to make links across a range of content areas from a strong basis of content knowledge, and from prior learning; encouraging students to apply knowledge and skills to new contexts, and to reflect on the content and the processes they have used in learning.

Effective leaders in this research are likely to be discussing these important aspects as they work with teachers on ways to engage adolescent learners.

## What is literacy?

The New Zealand Ministry of Education (2003, p.19) defines literacy as “the ability to understand, respond to, and use those forms of written language that are required by society and valued by individuals and communities”. For students, becoming literate is a complex process of “developing a knowledge base, a repertoire of strategies, and an awareness of how to put their knowledge and strategies together”. There is general consensus that any definition of literacy in an education setting refers to the acts of reading, writing, listening and speaking. These acts are typically carried out in a range of social, cultural, historical and institutional contexts using “different symbol systems” that have meaning for, and are constructed by, actors within their contexts (Moje & Sutherland, 2003, p150).

The notion of what it is to be literate has changed over time to reflect the increasingly more complex knowledge that society expects students to acquire. The book, pen and paper age is being replaced, to some extent, by an age where students learn and express themselves through a range of digital technologies. These technologies support students’ learning, and help them create and express themselves across multiple modalities. Digital literacy, according to Chase and Laufenberg (2011, p.535) is “a genre, a format and tool to be found within the domain of standard literacy”. Importantly digital technology works in the service of the curriculum rather than standing alone.

Being literate is fundamental to successful participation in society – in the workplace and in general life as a functioning citizen (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 2006). While students are at school, it is essential that they have a level of literacy that will allow them to access *The New Zealand Curriculum for English-medium teaching and learning in years 1-13* (The New Zealand Curriculum) (Ministry of Education, 2007), and NCEA, and to use language and literacy knowledge and skills in all subject areas of the curriculum. For instance, literacy knowledge allows students to read, and respond through writing and visual language to ideas in history, science, social sciences and the arts, using the distinctive symbol systems and practices associated with these disciplines (Moje, 2003). Secondly, it is important that students attain literacy and language knowledge and skills so they can achieve qualifications in the National Certificate of Educational Achievement, and undertake further learning, training and/or employment when they leave school.

As students move through schooling they must use an increasingly complex range of skills and knowledge to receive and respond to information in their learning environment (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012). Specifically these literacy skills involve reading increasingly large amounts of text, learning increasingly more specialized and technical vocabulary related to a range of subject areas and disciplines, mastering knowledge of a range of text structures utilized in subject material, and making meaning from the texts their teachers present to them as part of their daily instruction in a range of subject areas (McDonald & Thornley, 2006).

This increasing demand for literacy has implications for teachers who work with students on a daily basis. They must ensure that as each student transitions through school s/he has the skills and knowledge to be successful, and that they can access these skills confidently and independently. The



Literacy on Line website<sup>5</sup> developed for New Zealand secondary teachers states that “*Teachers need to ... prepare [students] to cope when their teacher is no longer there to assist. The ultimate aim of literacy instruction is to develop students’ own literacy skills and strategies.*”

An effective literacy programme will produce students who, amongst other capabilities, know how to engage with a wide variety of texts that have been selected to reflect their interest, strengths and learning needs and know about language and language use. (McNaughton et al, 2013). They will also have critical awareness of the assumptions that knowledge-producers use to construct and convey their messages (Alvermann, 2002).

This responsibility for helping students to develop their literacy capabilities lies not just with the English teachers, but with all teachers from the learning areas/disciplines in schools, who work with students. A guidebook produced by the Ministry of Education (2004, p.5), reinforces the idea that all secondary teachers have a responsibility for literacy:

*For all students in all subject areas, literacy and language are central to thinking, learning and achievement. Students need to learn how to use effective literacy and thinking strategies in order to be successful in our secondary schooling system and to become lifelong learners. Therefore, it is essential that all our teachers are effective teachers of literacy.*

All subject teachers need good knowledge of the literacy demands in their particular subject/discipline, as well as the ways that subject specific language and literacy can be taught most effectively.

In addition to this leaders (most likely literacy leaders, by virtue of their knowledge in this area) must work with teachers to build their capability to respond to the diverse learners in their classrooms. This diversity will include achievement levels, such as students who are achieving at or above expectations for their year level, and those whose progress is below expectations. It will also include catering for students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Where this is done well, teachers can make a significant difference to student achievement in literacy (Ministry of Education, 2008).

## **Literacy leaders in New Zealand**

### **Who are they?**

Literacy leaders differ from other leaders in the school in so far as their role is fundamentally about drawing on their own literacy content and pedagogical content knowledge expertise, and skills in adult learning, to influence teachers’ practices in specific ways. In New Zealand those who lead in this way may be a designated literacy leader, Head of the English department or other leader such as a Deputy Principal or Assistant Principal. They may also be other teachers, permanently or temporarily allocated to the role to support the literacy leader. In the SLP, the literacy leader was someone who was knowledgeable about literacy, could provide support to other teachers, and had strong involvement with

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<sup>5</sup> <http://literacyonline.tki.org.nz/Literacy-Online/Teacher-needs/Professional-support/Leading-Professional-Learning-about-Adolescent-Literacy3/Guidelines/References>

the senior leadership team. In the SLP, a core group of leaders shared the task of promoting literacy, with the literacy leader assuming the lead for the work, including liaising with an external literacy expert (a facilitator), and leading teacher learning through a structured approach (McNaughton et al, 2013).

In New Zealand, if the literacy leader is also the Head of English, a key task s/he will generally undertake is to lead the development of a strategy or literacy approach for the school. *The Effective Literacy Strategies in Years 9 to 13: A guide for the Literacy Team* (Ministry of Education, 2004, p.17) states that the task of developing a literacy approach in a school does not just rest with one person but is a responsibility shared by “a strategic group of teachers who understand the need for a literacy initiative in the school”. Ideally, the group comprises effective teachers from each department in the school so that there is shared responsibility across the school for raising achievement in literacy. As well as participating in, or leading this work, a literacy leader also works with members of the senior leadership team to ensure the sustainability of the strategy through the establishment of school systems.

### **Literacy leaders’ responsibilities**

Ministry guidelines (Ministry of Education, 2004, p.17) describe, at a theoretical level, the responsibilities literacy leaders take up, often with other school leaders to promote students’ learning. At a broad level these responsibilities include:

- committing to raising student literacy achievement [through careful analyses of data about students’ achievement, and targeting students who need more help]
- advocating for, and leading literacy initiatives [that target the gaps in students’ learning]
- maintaining the momentum of initiatives [in order to achieve the desired goals/outcomes for learners]
- providing organisational and administrative support [that assists the school to function effectively]
- guiding and supporting teachers throughout any change [including strategically addressing gaps in their knowledge so they can support students to learn].

Literacy leaders also play an important role in helping teachers to become familiar with the content of The New Zealand Curriculum (especially at Years 9 and 10); assessment tools relevant to the year levels taught, processes and procedures to measure students’ achievement and progress; NCEA standards; the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (New Zealand Qualifications Authority),<sup>6</sup> and any changes to it; assessment practices associated with NCEA, and a range of resources that support students’ learning across secondary schooling. Teachers in Years 9 and 10 must ensure that students acquire the foundation literacy knowledge to be successful in attaining qualifications in senior secondary schooling (Years 11-13). Secondary teachers often teach literacy to multiple year levels as part of their workload. This means teachers potentially need to know about many of the areas described above.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/studying-in-new-zealand/understand-nz-quals/nzqf/>

## **Previous New Zealand studies on leadership**

### **Leadership studies linked to outcomes for learners**

The attributes and practices of instructional leaders have been extensively studied. For instance, Timperley (2004; 2005; 2006) researched what leaders did when they worked with teachers to encourage them to make use of assessment data in their classrooms. This thesis, however, aims to investigate a previously little-explored area of leadership. Specifically, it aims to investigate how, with whom, why and with what effect literacy leaders work with teachers in secondary settings. A distinctive feature of the thesis is the focus on researching literacy leadership in relation to differing outcomes for learners.

Other research that has involved exploring leadership where there were different patterns of achievement include Bendikson's (2012) study of secondary principals' direct and indirect instructional leadership. Direct instructional leadership is characterised by a focus on improving the quality of teaching, while indirect leadership is focused on creating the conditions for good quality teaching to happen.

In Bendikson's work, NCEA data were used to classify the schools as higher performing, mid performing or low performing. Survey data about principals' practices, were subsequently collected from 651 teachers in 29 schools. The survey comprised more than 60 items with about one third specifically probing the frequency of the principal's instructional leadership.

An analysis framework, based on the dimensions of instructional leadership developed by Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe (2008), allowed Bendikson to classify the leadership practices reported by teachers as being focused on indirect or direct behaviour. Robinson et al's (2008) framework was based on identification of the broad leadership practices (the dimensions) where there had been links to positive achievement outcomes for students.

The dimensions Bendikson included were: ensuring an orderly environment, establishing goals and expectations, planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and curriculum, promoting and participating in professional development, strategically resourcing the school, establishing a sense of collective responsibility, resolving the issues of staff and students (Bendikson, 2011, p.107).

A further study of leadership was carried out by Highfield (2012) who explored the in-school variation in students' academic outcomes in large secondary schools, and the relationship between these outcomes and middle leaders' practices in different school departments (English, science and mathematics). Highfield also drew her sample of schools from NCEA data, and used a questionnaire to explore middle leadership in ten schools, identifying the five key aspects of their leadership that impacted the most. These were having: a collegial working environment, goals and expectations, a focus on student academic results, management of resources, and a positive learning environment for students and teachers.

## **Other New Zealand leadership studies**

The focus on the link between identified effective leadership and student outcomes contrasts with a study carried out by Fletcher (2011). Fletcher's research looked at the wider systemic conditions that support reading for 11-13 year old students. She looked at the work teachers and leaders undertook, and the roles, responsibilities and contributions of parents, the local community, and external agencies including the Ministry of Education. Fletcher employed a case study approach to explore the behaviours, beliefs and special characteristics of principals, and the attitudes, relationships, aspirations and leadership styles of leaders in more successful schools.

The researcher rejected the use of achievement outcomes as a proxy for effectiveness claiming such measures were likely to be questionable and narrow. Instead, schools were included in the study on the basis of implementing "effective teaching" of reading, which was determined subjectively by an external advisory group. The criteria for effectiveness included leaders' use of a range of pedagogical practices such as their ability to assess students, and provide rich and inclusive learning experiences. Possible schools were then "filtered" by the researcher so the final five case study schools represented a range of differing demographics (socio-economic, location and school type).

## **Past professional development for New Zealand literacy leaders**

In the 1970's, New Zealand experienced spectacular results in literacy – achieving a ranking of first for the reading achievement of nine to fourteen year olds in the International Education Achievement survey. By the mid 1990's New Zealand's standing in these stakes had slipped considerably, and while New Zealand had high achievement relative to most other participating countries, it had the greatest differences between the highest and lowest achieving students (Limbrick, 1999).

In 1998, the government responded to this by establishing a Literacy Taskforce comprising representatives from the education sector, advised by a Literacy Experts Group. Professional development that focused on effective teaching, and improved assessment and monitoring approaches for teachers, were two recommendations to come from the Taskforce. Multiple professional development opportunities were made available over the next decade and a half to raise achievement, and to address the equity gap. These included:<sup>7</sup>

- Literacy Leadership Initiative for primary schools (2000-2002)
- Secondary Schools' Literacy Initiative (2003-2005)
- Literacy Professional Development Project for primary schools (2004-2009)
- Pasifika Literacy Professional Development Project for primary schools (2010-2011)
- Secondary Literacy Project (2009-2011).

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<sup>7</sup> Evaluations reports of these professional learning and development programmes are available at the New Zealand Ministry of Education's website *Education Counts* <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications>

## **Literacy Leadership Initiative**

The establishment of the Literacy Leadership Initiative (LLI) was one of the recommendations that came from the Literacy Taskforce. Implemented in 2000, the LLI professional development comprised workshops and school visits from an external expert aimed at principals and lead teachers of literacy in primary schools. The principal and the lead teacher were required to evaluate the school's literacy programmes, select and plan initiatives to raise literacy achievement, and support staff to create sustainable communities. These communities were characterised by a focus on high quality literacy teaching practice, underpinned by the use of evidence to inform this practice, and leaders who provided feedback that shifted teachers' practice. The premise that underpinned the model was that teachers already possessed the capacity to benefit from the initiative.

In 2002, the LLI was evaluated by Timperley, Parr and Higginson who looked at evidence of impact on student achievement in literacy, and the establishment of school conditions for improved teacher and literacy learner success. Their report (Timperley, Parr & Higginson, 2003) concluded that it was not possible to find evidence of improved student achievement as a result of the LLI, and that teachers generally lacked the knowledge and skills to gather, analyse and make use of data in classroom programmes. Findings from this evaluation informed the model used in the Literacy Professional Development Project.

## **Secondary School Leadership Initiative**

About the same time, literacy professional development was being implemented in secondary schools through the Secondary School Leadership Initiative (SSLI). This initiative focused on developing secondary literacy across subject areas within schools, specifically ensuring that teachers in all subject areas infused literacy instruction into their programmes. The initiative sought to develop practice that was sustainably embedded in the culture of the school. Clusters of five secondary schools were established across selected New Zealand regions. Regional experts (Regional Facilitators) supported literacy leaders and learning coordinators in each school, and across the cluster, with their work.

SSLI was evaluated by Wright, May, Whitehead and Smyth of the University of Waikato, New Zealand during the implementation stage. In their 2005 report, the evaluators noted, amongst other things, that pedagogical change, such as that sought through SSLI, takes time and should be managed through deliberate and ongoing leadership action that supports this change, and the clear communication of a vision and goals that provides direction and motivation to teachers. The evaluators noted that schools were at different phases in their journey towards developing sustainable practice.

Phase 1 schools were in the early stages of being ready for SSLI characterised by access to limited literacy achievement data, assessment practices that did not yield useful information, and a lack of awareness of the use of evidence to inform teaching and learning. While Phase 1 schools could identify students' learning needs, they were not able to match these needs with the appropriate teaching and learning response due to a lack of pedagogical content knowledge.

Phase 2 schools had begun to spread practice across the school and to develop systems that enabled practice to become embedded. There were staff and facilitators who had good levels of pedagogical

content knowledge that they could draw on to respond to learners' needs. There were also signs that some teachers were experimenting with infusing literacy into their subject areas. Compared to Phase 1 schools, assessment information from a range of appropriate sources was more readily used to inform classroom planning.

Phase 3 schools were very well prepared to sustain and embed their learning from SSLI. These schools had depth amongst key staff in terms of developing staff capability, and in establishing the systems that allowed staff to successfully integrate literacy into their programmes. Through later research in two Phase 3 schools, Whitehead (2010) identified characteristics that contributed to these schools' capacity to sustain the achievement gains made in SSLI. Chief amongst these were the capabilities of key change agents –principals, senior managers, and literacy leaders.

Principals in Phase 3 schools provided the shared vision for the school that ensured staff had a clear idea of where they were heading in terms of students' and teachers' learning. They made certain that all staff bought into, and acted on, this vision even if this meant engaging in straight talk with some resistant staff members. At the same time they fostered a school culture that was inclusive and respectful of teachers. In terms of teacher learning, they supported the literacy leaders to do their work by providing release time and funding.

Senior managers fulfilled a range of functions that supported sustainability including: actively designing and participating in professional learning and development; providing opportunities for teachers to talk about the practicalities of integrating literacy into their subject areas; and ensuring that school systems and process reflected the new approach to literacy teaching.

Literacy leaders were particularly crucial to success in a number of ways. They implemented PLD that was carefully designed to support teachers' understanding of literacy and extend their theoretical and practical knowledge of effective practice. This PLD was often supported by communications with staff such as memos and readings that sustained their interest, and the provision of physical resources designed to focus teachers on learning, reflection, and theory development as well as on the practicalities of using literacy in their subject areas. Literacy leaders also created opportunities for cross-faculty professional learning where teachers could learn from each other about successful literacy strategies and engage in inquiry that focused on particular problems of practice and how to address these.

### **The Literacy Professional Development Project**

The Literacy Professional Development Project (LPDP) aimed to improve the reading or writing achievement of students in New Entrants to Year 8 classes by building the capability of teachers to engage in evidence-based inquiry. LPDP was delivered on contract to the Ministry of Education by Learning Media Ltd to approximately 300 schools between 2004 and 2009. There was a strong focus on supporting schools to make sustainable change. This focus was during the two years of their involvement in the project and afterwards through: the provision of content that built leaders' capabilities; deep content and pedagogical knowledge; and processes that challenged teachers to work in more evidence-informed ways. The outcomes the project sought to achieve were evidence of:

improved student learning and achievement; improved teacher content knowledge; transfer of understanding of literacy pedagogy to practice; effectively led professional learning communities; and effective facilitator practice.

Schools involved in the project progress through three phases. Phase 1 was an inquiry into learning involving the development of an informed knowledge, evidence and professional learning base. Phase 2 focused on building knowledge and implementing change through active learning, and Phase 3 involved evaluating and sustaining change. In schools, the projects were implemented by literacy leaders and principals. They were supported by external facilitators who were in turn supported by the Leadership and Effectiveness Team comprising project directors, regional team leaders, and project researchers from the University of Auckland.

LPDP was evaluated in 2007 by McDowall, Cameron, Dingle, Gilmore and MacGibbon, a group from the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) and the University of Canterbury, New Zealand. As part of this, evaluators looked at the project outcomes. There were significant gains for students in both reading and writing. While average effect size gains in reading were 0.26, and in writing were 0.20, students in the first cohort achieved 0.87 in reading and 1.28 in writing, both of which are very high gains in student achievement. Evaluators noted the variance in attainment between schools (regardless of decile or school size) which they attributed to: variations in school leadership; the capability of literacy leaders; the quality of professional development processes; and school culture.

There was a positive impact on teachers in terms of their capacity to use assessment tools and interpret data, and shifts in their content and pedagogical content knowledge. Literacy leaders reported that LPDP had a strong impact on their practice, including their capacity to challenge teachers about their assumptions and beliefs, work with resistant teachers, and operate in a deliberate and explicit manner when working with teachers.

Issues that were perceived by teachers and literacy leaders as impacting on schools' ability to sustain change included: lack of teachers' and leaders' knowledge; lack of commitment by senior leaders; high staff turnover especially in small schools; teacher resistance; and professional learning communities that were not sufficiently well established.

The benefits were perceived to be: the school-wide model for professional learning that allowed teachers to work together; the focus on improvement; the fact that the PLD was tailored to each school; and the attainment of key skills such as interpreting student achievement data.

### **Pasifika Literacy Professional Development project**

The LPDP was particularly successful for students in the literacy tail and this included Pasifika students. In 2009, five schools with rolls between 33% and 80% of Pasifika students, were selected for further support in their second year, as part of the Pasifika Literacy Professional Development project. Five more schools with high Pasifika rolls were also recruited for the project. These schools had not participated in the LPDP.

The focus of the PLD was on finding evidence of what works for Pasifika learners. The research questions that were investigated as part of the LPLD were: What classroom practices promoted through the LPDP led to positive educational experiences for Pasifika students and were reflected in their achievement? And what professional development experiences were needed for teachers to understand and utilise such practices consistently across a school so that their students improve their achievement?

Researchers from the Faculty of Education at Auckland University, and a researcher from Learning Media Limited also sought to identify the specific practices leaders used that promoted teachers' changed practice, and students improved achievement. A very comprehensive list of practices, and examples of these practices were reported by the researchers (Si'ilata, Dreaver, Parr, Timperley & Meissel) in 2012.

Amongst these practices were many that have relevance for my research. These are: leaders developing assessment systems; setting a clear vision and expectations for students' achievement and teachers' practices; supporting inquiry-based professional learning; taking responsibility for the design and implementation of professional learning in the school; and having challenging conversations with teachers that surfaced their assumptions about their practice.

### **The Secondary Literacy Project**

The Secondary Literacy Project (SLP) was a professional development initiative funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Education with the aim of supporting secondary teachers to develop capability in using reading and writing across the curriculum. SLP was mainly targeted to schools with high numbers of low-achieving Māori and Pasifika students. The SLP was intended to give effect to two key Ministry of Education policies – Ka Hikitia Managing for Success (2009a) the plan for raising Māori achievement, and the Pasifika Education Plan (2009b), the plan for raising Pasifika achievement.

As part of the SLP, each of 60 New Zealand secondary schools (two cohorts of 30 schools) received support from external facilitators over a two year period to establish the infrastructure that improved their curriculum provision for year 9 and 10 students. There were four aims for SLP that included: raising student achievement in the target years; increasing teachers' and leaders' knowledge and skills in evidence-based practice; enhancing leaders' and teachers' knowledge of effective practice; and developing professional learning communities that promoted inquiry into the effectiveness of literacy teaching and learning, professional learning, collaborative problem solving, and reflective practice.

Literacy facilitation teams from six Schooling Support Service organisations, contracted by Ministry of Education, supported the literacy leader to develop capabilities. This was achieved by the facilitator working, on a regular basis, in the schools with the literacy leader. The literacy leaders and facilitators also kept in touch by phone, email and through regional workshops that were attended by all of the literacy leaders involved in SLP schools. An important feature was the work literacy facilitators, literacy leaders and school leaders undertook in analysing school-data and planning for schoolwide improvement such as PLD. In order to build capability amongst literacy leaders, literacy facilitators modelled processes of effective professional learning for literacy leaders. This built sustainable practice



in the school. A questionnaire helped facilitators to understand the nature of literacy leaders' work and the issues they faced in carrying out their roles as change agents. A literacy leader's role was to acquire the skills to lead, and to embed key practices amongst teachers during the initiative and after the PLD providers (usually attached to one of New Zealand's universities) had finished their contract. Literacy leaders attended to important priorities in their work with teachers - teachers needed to develop expertise in teaching literacy regardless of which faculty/department they worked on; and effective instruction should be founded on quality evidence of what works for learners. Knowledge building was a key function of literacy leaders in SLP schools and helping literacy leaders was the Guidelines for Effective Adolescent Literacy Instruction (GEALI) (Wilson, 2009) that described what effective literacy teaching looked like. GEALI are discussed later in this thesis.

A research study on the implementation of SLP was carried out by McNaughton, Wilson, Jesson & Lai in 2013. They noted that literacy leaders became more confident in their knowledge in the second year of the project, however expected changes in the extent to which literacy leaders created coherence between SLP and other PLD was not achieved. In order to build capacity, teachers must be able to make connections to prior learning, and integrate the knowledge into their teaching practice. Leaders support in making these connections is important. The level of intensity of implementation was also not at the level facilitators would have expected.

### **The lessons from PLD projects in relation to literacy leadership**

Sustaining the gains made through PLD was a goal of all of the initiatives described above. However, achieving this in reality was contingent on a number of factors including: the retention of a critical mass of teachers within the school to support change; the prior knowledge of teachers and leaders; the quality of the infrastructure (policies and processes) established by school leaders; the availability of funding and resources; and the achievement challenges schools faced. Threats to sustainability include high teacher turnover and shifting teaching and learning priorities that do not allow the initiatives to gain traction, and for leaders to progress their work in developing systems to embed change (O'Connell, 2010).

The descriptions of the PLD initiatives and projects shows that as far back as the early 2000's there was a focus on evidence informed practice to guide the work of teachers in their literacy programmes. Over time, evaluations of projects and initiatives have told us more about what key players within schools must do in order to improve students' learning, and to create the within-school conditions that sustain the gains made by students and teachers. In the literature review, I focused on the part that literacy leaders played in sustaining gains made in the initiatives above, and the particular practices they used with teachers to maximize their professional learning.

There are two aspects to sustainable practice that have implications for school leaders beyond the implementation stage of PLD projects and initiatives. These are: the establishment and maintenance of ongoing systems for investigating the link between schools' emerging achievement challenges, and the teaching actions that may have contributed towards them. (Timperley et al, 2007); and, the establishment of the conditions for creating coherence within the school.

Both of these aspects were the focus of a doctoral thesis by O'Connell (2010) who looked at the sustainability of professional learning and development in LPDP. O'Connell argued that inquiry processes that were an embedded (normalised) part of school practice fostered ongoing improvement. She also argued that the presence of clearly developed frameworks for thinking about improvement and for linking past and present professional learning, led to deeper understanding and more sustainable practice over time. Literacy leaders helped to create the opportunities for teachers to inquire into literacy attainment and literacy teaching. They also helped teachers to make links between: the vision and goals of the school and their literacy teaching practice; literacy theory and teaching practice; the insights from literacy and non-literacy PLD; and their subject specialisations and literacy theory and practice.

In the SLP, literacy leadership practices that were particularly beneficial to schools included: ongoing communication of literacy-related goals and what was expected of teachers; implementing processes to induct new teachers into school-wide literacy practices (including helping them to understand the inquiry processes and what was expected of them as they participated in professional learning communities); and ensuring that literacy practices were consistent with other instructional programmes.

A framework developed by Welton and Robinson (2015) describes the organisational conditions that are required to ensure an improvement agenda is successfully implemented and the improvement practices are sustained. Coherence, is the central idea that underpins the framework, and it is defined by the authors as the quality of being able to "integrate improvement strategies into [school] routines, systems, interactions and tools" (p.3). The key aspects of coherence are defined as: aligning strategies to achieve goals; establishing the conditions for learning and improvement; promoting teacher and leader learning and improvement; and building caregiver and student engagement. These dimensions have application in this research.

Welton and Robinson's framework can be interpreted in a literacy leadership context. In terms of alignment, a literacy leader's role involves connecting literacy initiatives with other past and present professional learning (in literacy or in other curriculum areas or disciplines). Establishing the conditions for teacher learning to happen is critical. This includes removing obstacles that prevent teachers and literacy leaders from engaging with each other in learning. These obstacles can include lack of time, lack of school or department level structures that support teachers to learn, and lack of support from other leaders. Literacy leaders should also actively manage a planned and inclusive programme of professional learning that progressively builds teachers' capabilities.

## **Other support for New Zealand professional development**

In addition to the extensive PLD provided to teachers, funding was made available for schools to work in clusters on schooling improvement initiatives such as the Papakura Achievement Initiative, Manurewa Literacy Cluster, and Achieving @ Waitakere. In these clusters, teachers, supported by school leaders, worked in groups within and across schools, to address complex problems of underachievement. Many of these focused on raising the achievement of students in literacy. Clusters were often supported by facilitators contracted by the Ministry of Education, and by university research

staff. There was a focus on building leaders' capability, the use of common assessment tools, innovative and evidence-informed teaching practices, and the ongoing analyses and monitoring of students achievement and progress. Very little information is available about the nature and outcomes of these schooling improvement initiatives.<sup>8</sup>

As well as PLD, a number of specialist resource people, such as Resource Teachers of Literacy, were made available by the Ministry of Education to support teachers and students. Professional development on a national scale was offered to teachers in implementing aspects of the New Zealand Qualifications Framework, especially NCEA (2002) in secondary schools at years 11-13; and National Standards (2010) in primary schools for students in years 1-8. Coupled with this, a number of book resources were produced including: *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4* (Ministry of Education, 2003); *Effective Literacy Strategies in Years 9 to 13* (Ministry of Education, 2004); and *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5 to 8* (Ministry of Education, 2006). These book resources have not been updated at this point in time.

## Literacy leaders in other countries

### Research on coaching

Significantly more research on leading literacy has been generated in the USA than in New Zealand. Of the 43 studies selected for closer review for this research, 35 were sourced from the United States. Interest in literacy leadership in the latter context has been spurred by the *No Child Left Behind Policy (NCLB)* (Bush, 2001), which is aimed at raising achievement and reducing the number of students not meeting expectations. Through NCLB, large numbers of literacy/reading coaches (hereafter referred to as literacy coaches) were appointed in many low socio-economic urban school districts in the States. These include New York, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Diego, as well as entire states such as Florida (Atteberry & Bryk, 2011).

Despite the establishment of the literacy coaching role there has been very little research carried out in the USA that focuses on the impact of literacy leaders' actions on outcomes for learners. At the time of writing this thesis there were just 9 studies. There are even fewer that examine secondary settings.

A significant amount of the research generated from the USA on literacy coaches provides detail about the model that literacy coaches use as they work with teachers, and the teething issues they face as they negotiate with senior administrators (principals and deputy principals) the space needed to work in a school. In part, these issues stem from the fact that literacy coaches are frequently external appointments, and they must build the trust and engagement of staff. In part, the issues relate to the fact that administrators are still coming to terms with how to use the literacy coaches as an instructionally-focused resource to leverage change in schools. Further discussion of the issues is detailed later in this chapter.

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<sup>8</sup> I was able to locate a small amount of information about participant schools and their projects by undertaking a web search based on professional knowledge about some schooling improvement initiatives.

## **Literacy coach training and roles**

Training for literacy coaches varies, however in the Literacy Collaborative (which operates in over 500 schools in 26 states in the USA), the literacy coach undertakes training for a year through a combination of on-line and face-to-face teaching while still fulfilling his/her teaching duties. The course is administered by the Ohio State University. The Literacy Collaborative training course focuses on: literacy theory and content, how to implement literacy instructional practices, and how to support teachers in acquiring key content, including how to engage them in inquiry related to their practice. After the training, the literacy coach begins to carry out the coaching role with teachers. At the same time s/he teaches half time. There is an expectation that the literacy coach will coordinate and implement the professional learning programme for all of the teachers in the school (Attebury & Bryk, 2011).

The role that literacy coaches play in secondary schools in the USA is similar to that described in SLP. They provide group or one-to-one training for teachers in topics varying from assessment, curriculum, research-based practice, to literacy strategies. They also model best practice, observe teachers, provide feedback to them, and use data to support teachers with planning. In their interactions with senior staff (referred to as administrators), coaches make recommendations about assessments and priorities for the school (Blamey, Meyer & Walpole, 2009). Most studies from the USA show that the one-to-one interaction with a coach is the preferred mode of teacher learning.

The premise of literacy coaching is that “local, site-specific, instructionally-focused, ongoing [personalised] professional development generally works better [for teachers] than the traditional pull-out models focused on school-wide or district-wide issues” (Snow, Ippolito & Schwartz, 2006, p. 36). In support of a model that focuses on particular teacher’s needs, Biancarosa et al (2010, p. 10) note, that formal professional development programmes alone “afford little guidance in what to do about particular problems of practice emerging in an individual teacher’s classroom”. Professional development should support teachers to know how to respond to particular problems of practice in their schools.

## **Coaching standards and professional learning**

In 2006, the International Reading Association (IRA) collaborated with a range of education associations and councils to create standards for middle and high school literacy coaches. The standards identified roles for coaches. They are to be: collaborators; job-embedded coaches; evaluators of [students] literacy needs, and instructional strategists in the English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. To be a literacy coach at the secondary level, one must have a master’s degree with a major in reading or a reading certification endorsement. The latter generally entails teaching experience, graduate work, and the completion of a state assessment. In Blamey et al’s (2009, p.313) survey of 147 secondary literacy coaches, 48% had a reading specialist certification, and 40% had a master’s degree in literacy. Interestingly, Elish-Piper and L’Allier (2010; 2011) studies found that coaching qualifications were not a significant predictor of students’ achievement gains in reading.

The IRA standards stipulate that literacy coaches must participate in one of seven professional knowledge-building activities in order to practise. These range from professional development programmes to working with a mentor. In Blamey et al’s survey participants reported that the most

beneficial of the professional development programmes were: graduate level course work (41%); professional reading (32%); district-level professional development (26%), and national conferences (24%). The least valued methods of coaching preparation were: study groups (13%), and working with a mentor (17%) (Blamey et al, 2009, p.317) .

Further, some of the activities they spent the least amount of time on were also the high value actions one associates with effective curriculum leadership as outlined in the TPLD and Leadership BES iterations – facilitating reflective dialogue, linking teachers to evidence-based research, undertaking curriculum evaluations, developing [literacy] teams, and helping teachers to analyse trends in content-area achievement. Literacy coaches self-identified areas of need included: the provision of ongoing support to teachers; developing amongst teachers a repertoire of effective reading strategies; examining student work with teachers; and responding through planning and strategy to student needs. It would have been useful to explore some of the practices used, and the challenges literacy coaches faced in greater detail, however, the research did not provide significant information about the survey items.

## **Literacy leaders’ practices in contexts with positive outcomes for teachers and/or learners**

### **Core and supplementary studies**

In this section, I draw on two types of study to discuss literacy leadership where there have been positive outcomes (achievement and progress) for learners, and/or effective professional learning for teachers, and/or positive professional learning for coaches. Positive outcomes for learners include improved achievement in the skills and knowledge of literacy as measured by standardised tests, and accelerated learning relative to other student cohorts in the same or other schools. Improved teacher outcomes include: deeper knowledge and skills in teaching literacy, more effective use of pedagogical practices that support learning, and improved capacity to respond to diverse learner needs including an understanding of their prior knowledge and diverse backgrounds. Positive outcomes for literacy coaches generally include increased capability to communicate key knowledge to teachers, problem solve, and build trust amongst teachers and leaders.

The two types of studies are classified as core, and supplementary studies. Core studies have greater status because there are links between the leadership practices and improved student outcomes. Supplementary studies are included because they often provide additional contextual detail about how literacy coaching is enacted. Details of these classifications are described in the table below.

**Table 1: The types of studies included in this literature review**

Type of study	Rule for classification
Core studies	Studies were classified as core where the practices literacy leaders used were effective in bringing about gains in students’ academic achievement in literacy (reading and writing generally). Such studies employ quantitative and qualitative analyses of student achievement data. Some of the core studies also identified improvements in teacher practice, generally reported as changes in capability, using survey methods. The requirement to improve student achievement as described by effect size analyses, or

	<p>other methods of showing added value (such as pre and post test scores) was the key indicator that a study was core.</p> <p>Studies were also classified as core where there was evidence that outcomes were not positive for students.</p>
Supplementary studies	<p>Studies classified as supplementary studies were included in the literature review by virtue of their alignment to key aspects/themes noted in the core studies. While supplementary studies generally did not include quantitative analyses of students' achievement, to be included as a supplementary study they needed to provide rich descriptions of changes in teacher, and/or leaders' capability over time.</p>

It should be noted that while supplementary studies were not quite as compelling in terms of their evidence, they were nonetheless very useful. Most were qualitative case studies and generally characterised by descriptions of the activities that literacy leaders engage in as they work with teachers. Many studies were reviewed but rejected because they did not have sufficient detail to describe the phenomenon of literacy leadership.

### **About the studies**

Forty-three studies were selected and reviewed in detail for the section of this literature review. All but two of the studies were directly related to literacy leadership, literacy coaching or reading coaching. Two additional studies (evaluation reports) were included because they brought a New Zealand perspective, although they were not specifically about literacy leadership per se. They did, however, describe literacy leaders' work in the broader context of teacher professional learning and development.

There were 12 core studies and 31 supplementary studies. Of the core studies, nine came from the USA, and three from New Zealand. Seven of the studies were carried out in elementary schools (primary schooling in New Zealand), three of them were carried out in secondary schools, one in the combined settings of early childhood and elementary schools, and one in elementary and secondary schools. The majority of the supplementary studies (26) came from the USA, two were from New Zealand, two from Australia, and one from Canada. Nineteen supplementary studies were carried out in elementary schools, 11 in secondary schools, and one in an elementary and secondary school setting. The characteristics of the core and studies are presented in the table below.

**Table 2: Selected characteristics of core and supplementary studies**

Author(s) <sup>9</sup> Country	Focus of the study/ research question(s)	Early childhood (EC) Elementary (E) Secondary (S)	Type of study	Qualitative, Quantitative or Theoretical	Focus is on these aspects		
					Improved Leadership practices	Improved teacher practices	Student outcomes
Attebury & Bryk (2011) USA	Research objectives were to: 1.document the scope, frequency and distribution of coaching activities 2.investigate why more coaching occurred for some teachers	E	Supp	Qualitative & Quantitative		√	
Biancarosa, Bryk & Dexter (2010) USA	A longitudinal study in K to Grade 1 schools that examined the value-added effects of the Literacy Collaborative (LC) using an accelerated, multi-cohort, quasi experimental design.	E	Core	Qualitative & Quantitative	√	√	√
Blamey, Meyer & Walpole (2009) USA	Sought to find out whether literacy coaches: 1. were prepared/equipped to fulfil activities described in the Literacy Coaching standards. 2. felt qualified to coach teachers in multiple content areas	S	Supp	Qualitative	√		
Calo (2012) USA	Explored, through surveys and interviews, the roles and responsibilities of middle school literacy coaches across USA.	S	Supp	Qualitative	√		
Carlisle & Berebitsky (2011) USA	Research questions were: 1. Did teachers in PD Literacy Coach (PDLC) and No Coach (PD) conditions differ in their evaluation of their professional development and the school climate 2. To what extent did the two groups differ in teaching practices? 3. To what extent did their views of PD and school climate account for variance in their observed instruction?	E	Core	Qualitative & Quantitative	√	√	√
Coburn & Woulfin (2012) USA	Research question was: What is the role of reading coaches in the relationship between policy and teachers' classroom practice?	E	Supp	Qualitative			

<sup>9</sup> Refer to the reference list for the names of these publications

Author(s) <sup>9</sup> Country	Focus of the study/ research question(s)	Early childhood (EC) Elementary (E) Secondary (S)	Type of study	Qualitative, Quantitative or Theoretical	Focus is on these aspects		
					Improved Leadership practices	Improved teacher practices	Student outcomes
Cosner (2011) USA	Examined the role that literacy coordinators played in strengthening evidence-based collaboration amongst teachers in 3 elementary schools.	E	Supp	Qualitative		√	
Dean, Wright, Carpenter & Austin (2012) USA	Research questions were: 1. To what extent do principals perceive reading coaches to be effective at carrying out duties set forth by IRA? 2. Do principals perceive reading coaches as being a necessary part of their school's faculty?	E	Supp	Qualitative	√		
DiMeglio & Mangin (2010) USA	Follows Karen, a literacy coach, through her day working in a Middle school and includes some tasks for the reader. Aimed at LC in training rather than an academic audience. Sheds some light on the complexity and intensity of the role.	S	Supp	Theoretical	Not applicable		
Elish-Piper & L'Allier (2010) USA	Research questions were: 1. In what activities do literacy coaches primarily engage and on what aspects of literacy instruction do they primarily focus? 2. What is the relationship between literacy coaching and student reading achievement in grades K-1?	E	Core	Qualitative & Quantitative	√	√	√
Elish-Piper & L'Allier (2011) USA	Research questions were: 1. Does literacy coaching certification predict student reading gains in the classrooms where they coach? 2. Does the amount of time the literacy coach spends working directly with teachers predict student reading gains? 3. Do specific literacy coaching activities and the specific content of literacy coaching predict student reading gains?	E	Core	Qualitative & Quantitative	√		√
Gill, Kostow & Stone (2010) Australia	Discusses broad outcomes of an evaluation of <i>Coaching Teachers in Effective Instruction</i> launched in Victoria, Australia	E	Supp	Theoretical	Not applicable		



Author(s) <sup>9</sup> Country	Focus of the study/ research question(s)	Early childhood (EC) Elementary (E) Secondary (S)	Type of study	Qualitative, Quantitative or Theoretical	Focus is on these aspects		
					Improved Leadership practices	Improved teacher practices	Student outcomes
Helmer, Bartlett, Wolgemuth & Lea (2011) Australia	Research questions were: 1. Were the teachers who were most open to coaching the most effective? 2. Were overall student gains better for teachers who had a more positive attitude about coaching?	E	Supp	Qualitative		√	
Huguet, Marsh & Farrell (2014) USA	Research question was: How do coaches work with teachers to build capacity to use data to guide instruction, and what conditions support this process?	S	Supp	Qualitative	√		
Ippolito & Lieberman (2012) USA	Discusses: 1. The relationship between the literacy coach and school principal 2. The need to build sustainable systems of self-management 3. Differentiating for teachers in terms of time allocation 4. Working across content areas	S	Supp	Theoretical	Not applicable		
Lai, Wilson, McNaughton & Hsiao (2014) New Zealand	Research questions were: 1. Can a literacy intervention aimed at improving schoolwide teaching practices be designed to not only improve reading comprehension, but also more generally affect content area literacy such that the success in secondary qualifications is impacted? 2. Can this intervention be implemented by teachers in their regular classroom settings?	S	Core	Qualitative & Quantitative			√
L'Allier & Elish -Piper (2012)USA	Theoretical paper talking about the authors' previous research (2007)	E	Supp	Theoretical	Not applicable		
L'Allier, Piper & Bean (2010)USA	Presents a concise review of research carried out on literacy leadership expressed as a set of principles	E	Supp	Theoretical	Not applicable		
Lockwood, McCombs & Marsh (2010) USA	Research question was: Is having a reading coach in a middle school associated with school-level improvements in average annual achievement growth in reading and mathematics?	S	Core	Qualitative & Quantitative	√		√

Author(s) <sup>9</sup> Country	Focus of the study/ research question(s)	Early childhood (EC) Elementary (E) Secondary (S)	Type of study	Qualitative, Quantitative or Theoretical	Focus is on these aspects		
					Improved Leadership practices	Improved teacher practices	Student outcomes
Lynch & Ferguson (2010) Canada	Research objectives were to: 1. Gain insight into literacy coaches' perceptions of their role 2. Determine the issues related to their role	E	Supp	Qualitative	√		
Marsh & Farrell (2015) USA	Research questions were: 1. How do [the] key dimensions of capacity-building activities - unit of interaction, core practices and artefacts – unfold in the capacity building process in schools? 2. What are the challenges to its enactment? 3. What contextual factors mediate this process?	E	Supp	Qualitative		√	
Marsh, Sloan, McCombs & Martorell (2012) USA	Research questions were: 1. What are the characteristics and quality of coaches in Florida middle schools 2. What policies and practices do districts and schools use to support high quality coaches? 3. To what extent are indicators of coach quality related to teacher and student outcomes?	S	Core	Qualitative & Quantitative		√	√
Matsumura, Garnier & Spybrook (2013) USA	Research questions were: 1. Does classroom text discussion quality mediate the effect of content-focused-coaching (CFC) on students' reading achievement? 2. Is the effect of CFC on reading achievement moderated by students' language status	E	Core	Qualitative & Quantitative		√	√
Matsumura, Sartoris, Di Prima Bickel & Garnier (2009) USA	Investigated the role that principal leadership plays in implementation of a new literacy coaching programme	E	Supp	Qualitative	√		
Matsumura & Wang (2014) USA	Investigated how principal sensemaking contributes to the implementation of a literacy-coaching programme (Content-Focused Coaching)	E	Supp	Qualitative	√		

Author(s) <sup>9</sup> Country	Focus of the study/ research question(s)	Early childhood (EC) Elementary (E) Secondary (S)	Type of study	Qualitative, Quantitative or Theoretical	Focus is on these aspects		
					Improved Leadership practices	Improved teacher practices	Student outcomes
McCollum, Hemmeter, & Hsieh (2011) USA	Research question were: 1. Does coaching result in changes in teachers' use of targeted literacy teaching skills? 2. Does coaching on specific literacy teaching skills result in changes in emergent lit teaching environments?	E	Supp	Qualitative & Quantitative		√	√
McDowall (2007) New Zealand	Evaluation of New Zealand's Literacy Professional Development Project with some focus on the activities of leaders	E	Supp	Qualitative	√		
Mc Naughton, Wilson, Jesson & Lai (2013) New Zealand	Research questions were: 1. What is the theory of the generic model as intended? 2. What are the variations to the model as implemented at Facilitator and school levels? 3. What explains the variations at different levels (beliefs, knowledge; attributes of inquiry at each level; properties of schools including leadership and management? 4. What are the relationships between the Secondary Leadership Project model as implemented in schools and achievement results across schools for underachieving students?	S	Supp	Qualitative & Quantitative		√	
Overturf & Bronge (no pub date) USA	This study provides information about the content adolescent literacy learners need, and the pedagogical approaches most appropriate for these students	S	Supp	Theoretical	Not applicable		
Powell, Steed & Diamond (2010) USA	Sought to describe the elements of coaching across classrooms with regard to content coverage, pedagogical emphasis, and progress in plans for improving literacy instruction.	E	Supp	Qualitative	√		
Rush (2013) USA	Research questions were: 1. What are the roles and responsibilities of Instructional Facilitators (IF) at secondary level who focus on literacy instruction in Wyoming? 2. What contextual factors play a role in the work of these IFs? What is the impact of these on their work?	S	Supp	Qualitative		√	

Author(s) <sup>9</sup> Country	Focus of the study/ research question(s)	Early childhood (EC) Elementary (E) Secondary (S)	Type of study	Qualitative, Quantitative or Theoretical	Focus is on these aspects		
					Improved Leadership practices	Improved teacher practices	Student outcomes
Sailors & Price (2014) USA	Research questions were: 1. What are the associated effects of the <i>Support for the Improvement of Practices through Intensive Coaching (SIPIC)</i> model on the instructional practices of participating teachers? 2. What are the associated effects of the SIPIC model on the reading achievement within participating classrooms? 3. How often, and in what ways do coaches support teachers when using the SIPIC model? 4. What aspects of the SIPIC model can be attributed to the improved instruction of participating teachers?	ES	Core	Qualitative & Quantitative	√	√	√
Scott, Cortina & Carlisle (2012) USA	Research questions were: 1, What was the background and training of the Reading First coaches? 2. How knowledgeable were they? 3. What was the relationship between this and teacher performance on measures of knowledge? 4. What was the structure and substance of coach/teacher interactions as reported in logs? 5. How did teachers view the support they received from their literacy coaches? 6. What conditions facilitated successful literacy coach and teacher interactions?	E	Supp	Qualitative		√	
Shidler (2009) USA	Research question was: Does more time spent by coaches with teachers in classrooms magnify the results of building teacher efficacy reflected in student achievement?	EC	Core	Qualitative & Quantitative	√		√

Author(s) Country	Focus of the study/ research question(s)	Early childhood (EC) Elementary (E) Secondary (S)	Type of study	Qualitative, Quantitative or Theoretical	Focus is on these aspects		
					Improved Leadership practices	Improved teacher practices	Student outcomes
Si'ilata, Dreaver, Parr, Timperley & Meissel (2012) New Zealand	A research project exploring the classroom and school-related factors linked to higher than expected rates of Pasifika students' achievement and progress in reading and writing as a result of schools' involvement in the Literacy Professional Development Project (LPDP) Research questions were 1. What classroom practices promoted through the LPDP led to positive educational experiences for Pasifika students and were reflected in their achievement? 2. What professional development experiences were needed for teachers to understand and utilise such practices consistently across a school so that their students improve their achievement? 3. What school leadership practices promoted through the LPDP prompted changes in classroom practices that led to improved achievement of Pasifika students? 4. What professional development experiences are needed for school leaders to understand and use such practices?	E	Core	Qualitative	√	√	√
Snow, Ippolito & Schwartz (2006) USA	Research objectives were to: 1. define literacy coaching 2. unpack their requisite responsibilities and qualifications.	S	Supp	Theoretical	Not applicable		
Steckel (2009) USA	The research question was: What do successful literacy coaches do to help teachers improve reading and writing instruction and to promote a culture of adult learning?	E	Supp	Qualitative		√	
Stover, Kissel, Haag & Hinniker (2011) USA	Theoretical paper involving Literacy Coaches discussing preferred approaches to helping teachers reflect.	E	Supp	Theoretical	Not applicable		

Author(s) <sup>9</sup> Country	Focus of the study/ research question(s)	Early childhood (EC) Elementary (E) Secondary (S)	Type of study	Qualitative, Quantitative or Theoretical	Focus is on these aspects		
					Improved Leadership practices	Improved teacher practices	Student outcomes
Strahan, Geitner Lodico (2010) USA	Research questions were: 1. How did Literacy Coaches collaborate with individual participants to apply literacy strategies in their content areas? 2. How did the Literacy Coaches encourage the development of learning communities? 3. How did the dynamics of collaboration with individuals relate to the dynamics of collaboration in groups?	S	Supp	Qualitative		√	
Sturtevant & Linek (2007) USA	A professional development project implemented by American literacy coaches for Macedonian secondary teachers. Describes the impact of the coaching on a range of teaching practices.	S	Supp	Qualitative		√	
Taylor & Gunter (2009) USA	Theoretical paper that identifies 4 trends from a range of research about Literacy Leadership practices	E & S	Supp	Theoretical	Not applicable		
Timperley (2011) New Zealand	An empirical study of the practices five instructionally-focused primary school principals used to support teachers' learning about literacy instruction. The research question was: What leadership capabilities were demonstrated by principals in schools with accelerated student achievement when enacting their role as leaders of learning?	E	Core	Qualitative	√		√
Vanderburg & Stephens (2010) USA	Investigated 1. The actions that Literacy Coaches carry out that teachers consider helpful 2. What specific coach-initiated changes teachers make in their beliefs and practices about teaching reading and writing	E	Supp	Qualitative		√	

The following is a discussion of three key themes from the literature.. Each section begins with a discussion about what is known from the theoretical literature about effective practice (for example the Leadership BES). This then leads into a discussion about the findings from the core and supplementary studies.

## **Theme One: Leadership capabilities that make a difference**

### ***Background to the theme***

Effective leaders possess the capability to undertake instructional leadership in ways that engage teachers, parents and whānau<sup>10</sup>, and build their trust. Leadership capability involves the “seamless and dynamic integration of knowledge, skills, and personal qualities” (Robinson, 2010, p.3) in the enactment of the process of leading others. In other words, it is not sufficient for leaders to know the “what” of their work, they also need to know the “how.” From Robinson’s (2010) review of the literature on leadership capability, three interlinked capabilities were identified as indirectly contributing towards better outcomes for learners, and/or schooling. That is, leaders’ capabilities indirectly impacted on the actions of teachers or other leaders. These capabilities are: leadership content knowledge, problem-solving practices, and relational trust.

### ***Leadership content knowledge***

This relates to the leader’s ability to impart knowledge of teaching and learning through leadership practices and actions. The inherent qualities are the ability to communicate clearly; the ability to engage with teachers in focused, instructionally-oriented discussions; and the disposition to be reflective and evaluative about the efficacy of one’s leadership practices (Nelson & Sassi, 2000; Stein & Nelson, 2003). An example of this capability is a leader observing teaching and providing feedback to science or history teachers that draws on the evidence about effective literacy practice across the curriculum. The leader then reflects on the efficacy of the action taken.

### ***Problem-solving***

This relates to a leader’s expert ability and disposition to draw on deep knowledge of aspects of teaching and learning, and apply these successfully to the solution of problems within the organisational environment. Leithwood & Steinbach’s (1995) study, compared typical principals with expert principals. Expert principals were found to: more carefully plan a process of problem solving (such as planning a meeting to resolve issues), consider how the process could involve others, share their own views while also encouraging other to share theirs, manage the resolution process in a way that supported others to gain meaning (for example, summarising and synthesising participants’ perspectives, and keeping his/her emotions in check).An example of this is a literacy leader tackling the problem of science teachers’ resistance to including literacy in their subject area. An expert literacy leader would plan how s/he will tackle the problem. For instance, by helping teachers to surface any concerns they may have

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<sup>10</sup> Whānau is a Māori-language word for extended family, now increasingly entering New Zealand English, particularly in official publications. Source: Wikipedia

about how to practically integrate literacy in the science programme, identifying with them the barriers that prevented integration from happening, and seeking their ideas for moving forward.

### ***Relational trust***

Relational trust in a schooling setting is characterised by all parties having a clear understanding of their roles and obligations, and consistently delivering on the expectations of the role. Bryk & Schneider (2002) identified four dimensions of relational trust that apply to leaders as they work with teachers. These are: respect for each other's work, including recognition of the significance of the work that teachers and leaders each do in supporting learners; personal regard characterised by a culture of caring for each other professionally and personally that leads to teachers and leaders feeling that they are part of a team and can rely on others to back them; competence in undertaking the leadership role so that teachers feel that the advice they are given is well founded and trustworthy; and integrity characterised by leaders delivering what they say they will deliver. An example of these dimensions in a literacy leadership context is a leader providing regular opportunities for teachers to come together to share their teaching practice, coupled with collaborative inquiry about problems of literacy teaching that build teachers sense of professional self-efficacy.

As a result of building strong relational trust, groups of teachers and leaders are more professionally connected, open to sharing ideas, and clear about what they are seeking to achieve (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). They are: committed to supporting each other; willing to be risk-takers and engage in innovation; collaborate to bring about improvement; and have a collective focus on student learning.

The leader is a key player in building trust by ensuring that there is coherence between the school vision and the actions and behaviour that supports the vision to be realised. Importantly, they demonstrate competence in problem solving, and model through their own behaviour, the four dimensions listed above (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). The degree to which leaders possess these capabilities may go some way to explaining why leaders respond in certain ways in particular contexts, and the differences in the quality of their leadership that results in varying outcomes for students (Robinson, 2010).

### ***What the core study found***

There was one core study that provided sufficient detail about the personal qualities and practices of leaders that was linked to positive impacts on learners. This study was carried out by Timperley in 2011 and looked at the practices of principals in five New Zealand primary schools. Timperley explored what these leaders did that may have contributed towards their schools' having, on average, greater than three times the expected rates of progress in literacy compared to other schools.

In Timperley's study, each principal was invited to select a situation where s/he had exercised leadership and the researcher interviewed the principal and some teachers about these situations. Data from the interviews were mapped to the five leadership dimensions from the Leadership BES (Robinson et al, 2009). The findings indicate that, overall, teachers were very affirming of the practices that their leaders demonstrated. Eighty-two percent of teachers rated principals as a six (the highest rating) on a



six-point scale for the five leadership dimensions. Situations principals chose were often related to Dimension Four (promoting and participating in teacher learning and development). Timperley's analyses, however, showed that principals not only promoted and participated in learning and development, they also led it. This visible backing of professional development was motivating for teachers.

Capable leadership of professional learning is partially contingent on leaders having the pedagogical content knowledge from which to guide teachers' practices, and the capability to transfer knowledge to other adults. In Timperley's study, principals attended professional development with the teachers, and led staff meetings on aspects of teaching. They were knowledgeable about the research that underpinned literacy teaching, and stimulated conversations about the link between research and teaching practice. They provided high quality feedback to teachers about their practice based on actual observations of teachers in action in classes. This gave credibility to their conversations with teachers.

Principals were successful in helping teachers to improve their practices because they created a culture of trust in their schools. This culture was characterised by principal's respect for the work that teachers were doing, reciprocal learning (teacher to principal and vice versa), and teachers challenged to operate in a more evaluative manner, particularly in relation to how well students were achieving.

### ***What the supplementary studies found***

A study carried out in 113 Florida middle schools by Marsh, Sloan McCombs and Martorell (2012) sought to find out about the characteristics and qualities of coaches, and the extent to which these aspects linked to teacher and student outcomes. Quality indicators were sourced from the requisite qualifications in the *Standards for Middle and High School Literacy Coaches* (IRA, 2006). Specifically, these standards state that quality coaches should be:

- experienced classroom teachers
- knowledgeable about scientific-based reading research
- experts in reading instruction and in infusing reading strategies into content area instruction
- skilled in data management
- capable of working with adult learners
- competent in communication, presentation, interpersonal and time management skills (p.5).

In Marsh et al's study, data about literacy leaders were collected through surveys, case study visits, and interviews with state administrators and other school leaders. Student achievement data were analysed, and it was found that there were no statistically significant links between literacy leaders' practices and student achievement outcomes. Further detail about this study is reported in the section on disconfirming evidence later in this chapter.

The teacher survey findings, however, showed that teachers and school leaders (senior administrators) thought that literacy coaches met the quality indicators with respect to experience and knowledge. They were well respected for their experience, and the extent of their content and skills. Approximately 40%

of teachers reported that their literacy coach had influenced them to a moderate or great extent to make changes in their practice, including planning more effectively for their students, and making better use of assessment data. Literacy leaders played a role in increasing communication amongst teachers about literacy teaching.

Steckel (2009) interviewed two coaches who had successfully sustained positive changes in instructional practices and the culture within their schools. Findings from this study indicate that the culture these leaders created was characterised by greater openness from teachers to learning through peer coaching, and more inquiry into the link between teaching and students' outcomes and implications for future teaching. There was also evidence that PLD was driven by teacher-initiated interest in a topic, and occasions where teachers came together to plan, talk about students, analyse data, and discuss future teaching steps. Support from administrators helped to sustain the improvement over time. Specifically, time was set aside for teachers' learning, administrators created the flexibility for teachers to set the direction of their professional learning, and opportunities were created for teachers to learn from each other.

Actions such as these build a culture of trust amongst teachers and literacy coaches, and between literacy coaches and senior leaders who can see the benefits for teachers. In Matsumura, Sartoris, Bickel & Garnier's 2009 study, literacy coaches talked with principals about their work and principals attended at least some of the activities literacy leaders had planned. While Matsumura et al's study describes a little about the interactions between coaches and principals, there is a need for more information about the specific actions principals take that builds leaders' trust and respect of them (Wahlstrom & Seahore Louis, 2008).

## **Theme Two: Building teachers' knowledge**

### ***Background***

Literacy leaders need to have expert knowledge. Firstly, they need to have content knowledge (CK) which is the specific body of knowledge needed in order to teach others about literacy. It is critical that literacy leaders have a strong literacy knowledge base in order to build foundational knowledge in teachers (McNaughton & Lai, 2009). Literacy leaders must do this.

In New Zealand secondary teachers have access to The Guidelines for Effective Adolescent Literacy Instruction (GEALI) (Wilson, 2009) to guide them in knowing about important content and pedagogical content knowledge. GEALI are the research-based best-practice principles for effective teaching of adolescent literacy learners. It was developed by Wilson to support the implementation of SLP and is available on the New Zealand Ministry of Education website to support leaders' ongoing work in literacy teaching and learning. Analyses of survey data from literacy leaders in the SLP indicate that they focused on the following areas of content when they worked with teachers: the content and pedagogical content knowledge articulated in the GEALI; the specific areas of school need, such as gaps in students' capabilities; and, finally, on aspects of practice identified by teachers, such as how to integrate, into their planning, findings from achievement analyses.

There is an expectation internationally that secondary school subject teachers will foster the literacy and language knowledge that pertains to their particular subject or discipline area. For example, science teachers should support students to express scientific ideas using subject-specific language, and language conventions, of scientific communication. Moje (2007, p. 99) states that for students to access the curriculum, and operate effectively within the curriculum learning areas, they must learn “the different knowledge and, ways of knowing, doing, believing, and communicating that are privileged to those areas.” These are the “norms of practice for producing and communicating knowledge in the disciplines” that students must master to be successful (Moje, 2007, p. 100). For instance in science, students need to know the correct subject specific vocabulary of science, and how to record science ideas using the appropriate conventions expected of scientists.

All teachers “need to understand the basic processes and skills that undergird literate practice, as well as the domain specific literacy skills and practices of their disciplines ... and a great deal of knowledge of how texts work in their discipline” (Moje, 2015, p. 270). This will mean that literacy leaders need to work with teachers across a range of subject areas in a secondary school to help them understand the importance of subject specific language and literacy, and the practicalities of how to teach information and skills to students through their courses.

Secondly, teachers need pedagogical knowledge (PK) – knowledge of the most effective processes for students’ learning. In the case of secondary schools, this knowledge includes how to engage adolescent learners, and how to cater for students with a diverse range of learning needs, such as students who have English as a second language, and students whose progress is slower/faster than that of their peers.

Thirdly, they need to have strong pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) which is a combination of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge that is used to structure literacy learning for students (Ministry of Education, 2008). A significant amount has been written about PCK and the necessity for teachers to have this knowledge in order to make subject matter comprehensible to learners (Cochran, DeRuiter, & King, 1993; Deng, 2007; Jones & Straker, 2006; Loewenberg Ball, Hoover, Thames, & Phelps, 2008; Shulman, 1986). A good deal of the effect of PCK on learning is in knowing when to make use of strategic practices, for example when and how to introduce subject or discipline specific language to students to ensure that they understand it. This includes how to respond to students’ from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (McNaughton et al, 2009).

Fourth, teachers need to have knowledge of individual learners, including: their prior knowledge; literacy learning strengths, interests and need; and their sense of themselves as competent literacy learners. This knowledge helps teachers and literacy leaders design and provide a curriculum that promotes students’ achievement and engagement.

Aligned to this is the fifth knowledge area - knowledge of context. Context includes people within the school and in the community; their actions, decisions, and beliefs, and the systems that are created by the school and the broader education community that promote student learning. Literacy leaders have

a strong role in making sense of this context, and in creating the local conditions through which effective learning and teaching can happen. An example of this is school leaders working with parents and whānau to understand their particular knowledge needs in relation to the National Certificate of Educational Achievement.

### ***What the core studies found***

Two empirical studies (Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010; 2011), set in an elementary school context, provide insight into the specific content literacy coaches attended to in building teachers' content and pedagogical content knowledge that resulted in positive outcomes for learners. The sources of data that provide these insights were literacy coaches' weekly coaching logs completed as part of the requirements of the Reading First initiative in the USA. In Elish-Piper and L'Allier's 2010 study, literacy coaches participated in a variety of activities with a range of school personnel. Examples of these include: holding a conversation with teachers about instruction for bilingual students; co-planning with teachers which materials could be used in a comprehension lesson; providing professional development on how to teach phonics; and team teaching that involved mentoring teachers about how to differentiate the curriculum.

Data reported in Elish-Piper and L'Allier's (2010) research came from students in K-Grade 1, which showed that literacy coaches spent 2.97% of their time with K-Grade 1 teachers modelling effective literacy practice, 7.08% of their time observing teachers (a practice found to be a significant predictor of student reading gains), and 11.95% of their time conferencing with teachers around particular problems of practice (p.167). In terms of content, coaches helped teachers with understanding how to teach: phonemic awareness; phonics; fluency; vocabulary; and comprehension – the content areas research indicates is expected of a literacy coach (National Centre for Literacy Education, 2014; Rowe, 2005).

The Illinois Snapshot of Early Literacy (ISEL) comprising eight subtests was used to measure the gains made by the students who were in the K- Grade 1 classes. The results of this test showed that overall these students made statistically significant gains in ISEL. Further analyses, using Hierarchical Linear Modelling, showed that there were substantial differences (33.68% variance) in students' gains due to teacher differences. A partial explanation for this, put forward by the researchers, was that literacy coaches spent a considerable amount of their time working with weaker and new teachers rather than spreading their support around all teachers. Approximately 47% of their time literacy coaches were not interacting with teachers at any level in the school. This time was spent on administrative tasks such as planning for meetings and PD workshops, entering assessment data into the district databases and organising materials. The researchers recommended that literacy coaches need to find ways to maximise time with teachers rather than engaging in administrative activities.

In the 2010 and 2011 Elish-Piper and 'Allier studies, the amount of time coaches spent with teachers was a predictor of achievement. While the 2010 study did not establish the link between the amount of time and the specific nature and quality of the support and guidance literacy coaches provided, the

2011 study included this detail to some extent. Assessment discussions, modelling effective literacy practice, observing and feeding back to teachers, and focusing on comprehension were all activities that were significant predictors of achievement at one or more grade levels.

Missing from both studies was information about the finer grained detail of literacy coaches' actions, discussions, and the advice they gave teachers. It is this detail that we need in order to know what to say and do with teachers to lift their practice. For example, what were the specific aspects literacy coaches discussed when they talked with teachers about assessment?

The impact of Content-Focused Coaching (CFC) professional development on outcomes for low-income, language-minority learners was the focus of Matsumura, Garnier and Spybrook's (2013) research. CFC is an interactive text-discussion technique to improve students' comprehension. It was implemented in some states in the USA in 2003. Literacy coaches involved in CFC received training to implement the programme with teachers. Their work with teachers included: implementing grade-level meetings in which the theory about CFC was discussed; in-class support for individual teachers involving modelling lessons; helping teachers with lesson-planning; and teaching the lessons and modelling learner-centred reflections on instruction. The study showed that after two years, students in the CFC schools made significantly higher reading gains than students in comparison schools. Once again, however, the study lacked the finer detail that informs our understanding of the specific actions leaders take that made a difference to teachers and students.

### ***What the supplementary studies found***

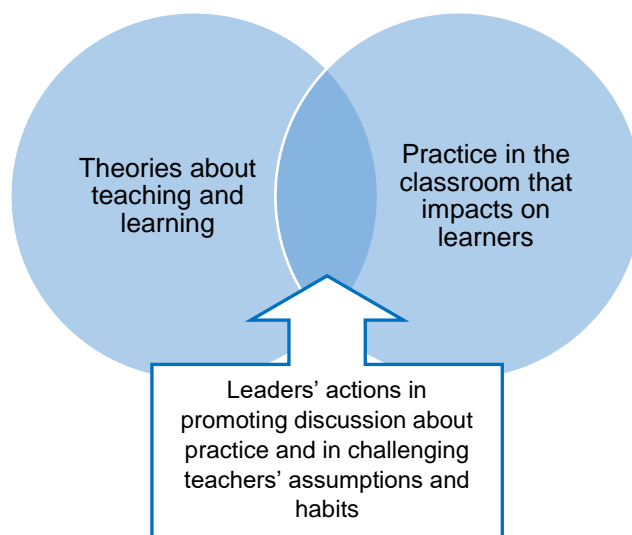
In addition to the content and pedagogy mentioned in the core studies, other researchers have highlighted the importance of helping teachers to know about activities that better engage students (Sturtevant & Linek, 2007); integrate technology into classroom instruction (Rush, 2013); and understand the characteristics and needs of adolescent learners. In Rush's (2013) study, Instructional Facilitators (IF) worked with content area (subject) teachers to increase their capability in aspects of literacy, including how to teach comprehension, writing and vocabulary-building strategies as part of the science programme. Physical education teachers were supported to learn about writing and essay structure, reading strategies, and assessment so that students could fulfil the literacy aspects of their learning. The extent to which they were successful in improving teachers' practices, or outcomes for learners was not discussed.

## **Theme Three: Structuring learning for teachers using a core set of practices**

### ***Background***

The Leadership BES (Robinson et al, 2009) states that one of the most effective ways to influence teachers, and bring about improved outcomes for learners, is to promote and participate in teacher PLD. Timperley (2008) outlines 10 principles that provide a useful guide to those whose role is to design effective PLD. Adapted slightly to reflect a literacy leadership context, the principles are as follows.

*Principle One:* Literacy leaders need to focus on achieving valued outcomes for all students, by making links between the teaching that is being practised, and the effect it is having on desired outcomes for learners. Literacy leaders have an important role in supporting teachers’ knowledge production. Knowledge production occurs as a result of critical examination of practice (and the assumptions and habits that are part of practice), and engagement with evidence-based theories about effective teaching. Expressed diagrammatically the process of knowledge production looks like this:



**Figure 2: How literacy leaders promote teacher learning**

*Principle Two:* Literacy leaders need to use information to ensure that improvement efforts are targeted to particular teacher learning needs. They also need to help teachers to consistently use student achievement information to target learner needs. The TPLD and Leadership BES iterations indicate that a core feature of effective leadership practice relates to supporting teachers to acquire a self-sustaining system of inquiry for responding to a range of learner contexts. The system is self-sustaining because once teachers know how to use it, they can activate it as they work in their classrooms, independently of leaders’ support. Self-sustaining systems are characterised by inquiry.

The Literacy on Line website,<sup>11</sup> developed for New Zealand secondary teachers, refers to the disposition and the skill required to work in an inquiry mode as “adaptive expertise”. The “test” of a literacy leader’s effectiveness at supporting teachers to be adaptive experts is the extent to which teachers make adept in-the-moment decisions in their classrooms that result in students’ improved or accelerated learning.

In New Zealand, a framework for operating as an adaptive expert is the teacher inquiry and knowledge-building cycle described in the TPLD BES (Timperley et al, 2007). The purpose of teacher and leader inquiry is to raise students’ achievement through more effective teaching. Teacher [and leader] inquiry

<sup>11</sup> <http://literacyonline.tki.org.nz/Literacy-Online/Teacher-needs/Professional-support/Leading-Professional-Learning-about-Adolescent-Literacy3/Guidelines/References>

involves teachers and leaders (sometimes together, and sometimes in their individual work) investigating the effect of their practices on outcomes for learners guided by these questions:

1. What knowledge and skills do our students need to be successful?  
therefore...
2. What knowledge and skills do we, as teachers, need to have for this to happen?  
therefore...
3. What knowledge and skills do I, as a literacy leader, need to build amongst these teachers?  
therefore...
4. What is the most effective vehicle, or process for this to happen?  
(leading to the implementation of strategies to: build teacher capability (by leaders), and, to improve students' learning (by teachers).
5. What has been the impact of our changed actions on learners and on our own learning as professionals? (The implications of which stimulate future action including modification of existing strategies).

Teacher inquiry was a distinct design feature of the SLP. In this PLD, schools developed evidence-based professional learning communities (PLC) that focused on the acquisition of knowledge to inform teaching practices. SLP inquiry was used to help teachers to focus on "specific evidence to do with learning and achievement, and specifically for the underachievement of Māori and Pasifika students" (McNaughton et al, p. 5). Importantly, literacy leaders encouraged teachers to interrogate the link between students' achievement and their teaching practices. The extent to which this inquiry practice is fostered with teachers, and enacted by literacy leaders, will form part of the focus of this research.

As part of SLP, literacy leaders participated in meetings with regional professional development providers, and received one-to-one support within their schools that built their capabilities to lead literacy. The critical role literacy leaders played was in ensuring that information about students' needs (at a cohort level) was transferred into a targeted plan to build capability for teachers. For instance, where data indicated that students' vocabulary knowledge was low, a programme of professional learning would focus on the ways teachers could build their capability to teach vocabulary more effectively.

*Principle Three:* Literacy leaders need to ensure that teachers have good opportunities to learn, including working with other teachers, and to apply new knowledge to their teaching. Research indicates (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Meirink, Meijer, Verloop & Bergen, 2009), that professional learning is most effective where it involves: experiential learning, practical tasks such as observing; participation in processes that elicit discussion; inquiry and solving problems of practice with colleagues and leaders; sharing ideas, insights and experiences based on practice; and modelling and coaching (with leaders, or with colleagues).

*Principle Four:* At least some of the time, literacy leaders should draw on the expertise of others, including subject teaching experts and other leaders in the school who can bring specific knowledge to

the task of improving teachers' practice. External expertise can bring new knowledge that does not reside in the school, and the opportunity for these critical friends to challenge taken-for-granted practices that may be contributing to poor outcomes for learners (Timperley et al, 2007).

*Principle Five:* Literacy leaders have an active role in creating the cultural practices and the school infrastructure that supports coherent (connected and aligned) practice within the school. Welton and Robinson (2015) describe the leadership and organisational practices in a coherence framework. The key elements of coherent organisations according to these researchers are: aligning strategies to achieve goals; establishing the conditions for learning and improvement; building caregiver and student engagement; and promoting teacher and leader learning and improvement. For instance, literacy leaders can play a pivotal role in ensuring that valuable insights from past literacy professional development are integrated into new professional development for teachers, thereby building bridges between prior and current learning.

### ***What the analyses of the core studies showed***

The literature on the how (process) of leading teachers in literacy, is much more expansive than the literature on the what (content) of this leadership. Carlisle and Berebitsky's (2011) research looked at the benefits that literacy coaches provided for teachers. They compared the effects of professional development on two groups of first-grade teachers who received different types of professional development - those with a literacy coach (Literacy Coach), and those without a literacy coach (No Literacy Coach). Both groups received the same core professional development programme, however the Literacy Coach group had the advantage of a professional (a reading specialist) who could provide additional collective and individual support.

Support for Literacy Coach group took the form of: meeting one-to-one with teachers to discuss aspects of their individual learning needs; modelling literacy lessons and providing advice and ideas about how to teach more effectively; helping teachers to access, use and modify materials and methods to teach reading more effectively to students; ensuring that reading materials for individual students aligned to their learning needs; and discussing with teachers assessment processes, student assessment results, and how to link assessment information to make teaching and learning more effective. There was a focus on prioritising teachers in the early years (K to Grade 3) so that students got off to a good start in their education.

The researchers looked at a variety of data including teachers' attitudes towards the professional development and student outcomes measured using the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). The DIBELS series of short tests measures phonemic awareness, alphabet knowledge, accuracy and fluency, vocabulary and comprehension.

They also measured what teachers learned and used in their teaching. Results showed no difference in the content acquired by the two teacher groups. Teacher surveys, however, showed that a higher number of teachers with the literacy coach reported making changes to their practices as a result of the professional development. Importantly, as a result of the support they received through the processes



above, they were more likely to shift at-risk students towards lower risk of poor achievement than their non-coached peers, and students' achievement in elements of the DIBELS was higher. It is likely that the individualised and differentiated support offered by the literacy coaches helped teachers to activate the knowledge they had to meet the learning needs of their students.

A longitudinal study by Biancarosa et al (2010), followed cohorts of learners over a three year period, comparing their achievement (over six data collection points) to a non-treatment period during which their literacy coaches were in training. Data indicate a cumulative effect on students' achievement. Average rates of student learning increased by 16% in year one, 28% in the second year, and 32% in year three (Biancarosa et al, 2010, p.27). A positive outcome for teachers was an increase in their professional communication that saw them engaging in wider cross-grade networking. Networking, however, may not lead to improvements in teachers' practices. The opportunity to work together may enhance social connectedness, but may have no effect on the quality of instruction used by teachers (Tschannen-Moran, 2001). While the professional development coaches received was intense and included learning a range of unspecified instructional strategies, we do not know how these strategies, or other content, was conveyed to teachers, or the type of support coaches provided to teachers that shifted their practices. This detail would be beneficial in order to know which specific coaching practices were associated with positive shifts in students' learning.

One study provided a little more detail about the content and pedagogical content conveyed. Matsumara et al (2013) describe how literacy coaches worked with individual teachers using a content-focussing protocol (tool) to help teachers discover what skills and knowledge students had learned, and what they might need to learn next in order to improve. The tool was used as part of an inquiry process that brought structure to assessing and responding to students' learning needs. The use of well-designed tools that help teachers to achieve purposeful learning is supported in the literature (Robinson et al, 2010).

### ***What the supplementary studies found***

The scarcity of literature that frames the quality of leadership activities and the impact it has on teachers and learners, makes it difficult to differentiate good literacy leadership from literacy leadership that is less effective. Bean (2004) attempted to address the quality of leadership aspect by suggesting that literacy coaching could be classified using three theoretical levels. Level one practice is intermittent, casual or informal and comprises leaders having conversations (undefined in her research) with teachers and accessing resources for them. Level two is more formal and active. It involves professional development in literacy, co-planning and team meetings with teachers. Level three is higher quality practice that involves formal coaching, modelling lessons, leading discussions amongst teachers, and observing and feeding back to teachers about specific aspects of literacy practice.

The assumptions that sit behind Bean's model are that opportunity to work with teachers (contact time), and more active, hands on leadership (involvement), are the factors that impact on professional learning. The findings about time spent on coaching tell us that there is considerable variation in how

coaches generally spend time, and that some coaches simply cannot help teachers because administrators use them for a range of tasks that are not connected to teachers (Blamey et al, 2009). What we do *not* know is what an optimal amount of time is for working with teachers, and importantly what that time should be used for. This leads us to a second point. There is no evidence to suggest that the leadership of activities such as modelling, observing and leading discussions, have any greater effect on teachers than a range of other practices leaders may choose to use. No study has systematically investigated the relative merits of specific coaching practices on outcomes for teachers or learners.

Assumptions aside, the model lacks necessary detail in two respects. Firstly, it does not provide sufficient information about the content and pedagogical content knowledge conveyed at each level that would allow us to gain insight into whether quality practices have been used. Secondly, the model does not tell us about the effect that leadership practices have on teachers, and ultimately on learners. For instance, a literacy leader might provide formal coaching sessions (as described in level 3 above), but if the content of this coaching is irrelevant to teachers, or not effective practice, then it will not help teachers to raise achievement.

Perhaps it might be useful to consider a model that explores the extent to which literacy leaders create coherence for teachers' professional learning, and positively engage teachers in the improvement effort. A framework developed by Rush (2013) looked at how literacy leaders enrolled teachers in learning, and how embedded this learning was in the school environment. Enrolment is defined as "teachers' permission [willingness] to work with [the coach]", and embeddedness refers to the "degree to which their [literacy coaching] work is embedded in the professional development structure of their school or district" (p.282). Both of these ideas speak to the notion of literacy leaders in the USA coming into the school as outsiders who need to negotiate space in which to carry out their work – to engage reluctant teachers, and to help them make sense of new content in light of prior literacy learning.

The tables below, adapted from Rush's model (2013), and integrating the insights from Bryk and Schneider's (2002) work on relational trust, illustrate the features of enrolment and embeddedness in a New Zealand context. The New Zealand context is one in which literacy leaders are somewhat more integrated into the culture of the school than their American counterparts because they are generally part of the teaching staff.

**Table 3: Enrolment levels**

Levels of enrolment (from lowest to highest)	The literacy leader	The teachers
Coercive enrolment	The literacy leader is “master”. There is an element of coercion to ensure teachers deliver on deadlines (such as entering their literacy data into the Student Management System) set by the literacy leader. The literacy leader sets the learning agenda which is often remote from what teachers need in order to bring about improvements for learners.	Teachers are compliant. Trust has yet to be established.
Willing enrolment	Teachers engage willingly with the literacy leader, following processes s/he has established for teaching and learning and sometimes helping to establish these processes. The literacy leader may co-construct the learning agenda with teachers. This agenda is somewhat connected to what teachers need to learn in order to bring about improvements for learners.	Teachers are partners in the enterprise There is mutual trust.
Deep and instructionally-focused enrolment	While the literacy leader has an important role in overseeing the professional learning programme, there is an established partnership with teachers that is focused on deep investigation of authentic issues associated with teaching and learning.	There is deep mutual trust and respect for each other’s work and teachers are motivated and empowered by working together.

There are links between Rush’s work and the findings from the evaluation of the Secondary Schools Literacy Initiative (SSLI) discussed earlier in the chapter. The evaluators found that SSLI schools were at three phases in developing sustainable practice. Practice in phase one schools was not embedded across the school due to a lack of pedagogical content knowledge at most levels. Phase two schools had begun to spread practice across the schools, and to develop systems that enabled practice to become embedded across subject areas. Phase three schools had depth amongst key staff in terms of developing staff capability and in establishing the systems that allowed staff to successfully integrate literacy into their programmes. In these schools, literacy leaders not only provided rich opportunities for teacher learning, they communicated well with staff, provided useful physical resources and fostered cross faculty inquiry. Embeddedness levels, using Rush’s work would look like this:

**Table 4: Embeddedness levels**

<b>Levels (from lowest to highest)</b>	<b>Descriptor</b>
Independent	The work the literacy leader carries out is not linked to other professional learning and development in the school. The literacy leader has no formal connection to senior leaders. There is no structure for collaboration with teachers and the literacy leader's work is ad hoc and largely at an individual teacher level.
Lightly embedded	There is limited structure to the literacy leader's work. There are intermittent opportunities to work with staff but without a strategic literacy focus. The literacy leader may have some connection to formal leaders but has no influence over the professional learning and development programme to ensure that it builds the appropriate teacher capability.
Embedded	The literacy leader has some say over professional development programmes. There is an effort to ensure professional learning is structured and coherent through the literacy leader's work with the senior leaders. Professional learning led by the literacy leader is regular and focused on building capability.
Deeply embedded	The literacy leader is fully involved with school leaders in planning and implementing literacy initiatives. There are many regular, ongoing, opportunities for professional learning with staff that significantly align to what is known about teachers' and students' gaps in learning.

Coaching can have no appreciable gains, as Shidler (2009), and Elish-Piper (2010) found when investigating the work of literacy coaches in early literacy classes, even where this coaching was focused on improving instructional practice. Both quantity, and quality (defined in terms of the expert PCK and CK practices described by Berliner) play a significant role in building teacher capability.

## **What we know about literacy leadership in less successful contexts**

A handful of studies relate to literacy leaders' work in schools in which teachers have not built their literacy teaching knowledge and skills, and where student achievement has not improved. Not surprisingly, the aspects of leadership practice that contribute to positive outcomes for learners, are often absent or poorly enacted in less successful contexts.

### **Theme One: Issues of role confusion and engagement**

Robinson et al (2009) found that the direct involvement of leaders in professional development was associated with higher student achievement outcomes. Of all the key leadership practices Robinson et al studied in their synthesis, this dimension had the greatest positive effect on student outcomes. The literacy leader is in charge of making things happen in the school around literacy. The principal and other senior leaders: contribute the vision; resource the initiative; endorse the importance of the work; protect it from other competing priorities; and demand accountability around implementation and outcomes for learners (McNaughton et al, 2013). Importantly, they help to create commitment amongst staff and community that fosters the success of the work (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Reihl, 2000; Sebring & Bryk, 2000).

Not all principal, literacy leader and teacher collaborations, however, operate as positively as this. Studies from the USA (Blamey et al, 2009; L'Allier, Elish-Piper & Bean 2010; Lynch & Ferguson, 2010; Snow et al, 2006) have looked at the relationship between literacy coaches and school administrators, and found a number of issues impacting on coaches' ability to carry out the role of supporting, guiding and positively influencing practice as articulated in the Literacy Coaching Standards (2006). One of the biggest issues was lack of role clarity.

In Blamey's study (2009), 74% of surveyed literacy coaches reported that the role of coach was undefined (p.318). Literacy coaches were not sure what they were supposed to be doing because administrators had not clarified with them how their role was to be carried out. As a consequence, there were often limited or infrequent opportunities for coaches to work with teachers on key coaching activities. On average, literacy coaches reported that only 46% of the literacy coaching activities they considered to be most important were able to be undertaken. In addition, some of the coaches were asked to undertake work that was not related to their roles (Smith, 2009).

Finding time to work with teachers was a problem for literacy coaches in secondary contexts due to organisational factors such as timetabling and the large number of teachers a coach might need to work with (Blamey et al, 2008; L'Allier et al, 2010; Marsh, 2008).

In terms of influencing teachers' practices, some literacy coaches were hampered in their endeavours to improve teaching and learning by teacher's resentment that an outsider had come into the school to tell them what to do. Others felt they did not need to change their literacy practices, were uncomfortable being observed by others, or were concerned that information from class observations would be shared with administrators (Helmer, Bartlett, Wolgemuth & Lea, 2011).

Some teachers did not see the need for a literacy coach in their subject area. According to Snow et al (2006), the practice of encouraging across-subject literacy knowledge presents a particular challenge for literacy leaders in secondary schools. This was especially the case where teachers did not see literacy as the primary business of their subject, and focused instead on conveying content knowledge that related to the discipline or field in which they taught. Subject teachers are also not necessarily experts in literacy learning, and therefore may be resistant to suggestions that they should acquire a new set of knowledge and skills.

## **Theme Two: Lack of capability**

With respect to overall literacy leader knowledge, perhaps there are gaps in literacy leaders' training that lead to gaps in their knowledge. Transfer of new learning into practice is a critical condition of change, however Powell, Steed and Diamond's (2010) study showed that literacy leaders did not do this. While their coaching training focused on content and pedagogy, literacy leaders' logs that were meant to detail improvement plans for individual teachers, showed that they paid more attention to other less important tasks. These included organising instructional materials (resources), and paying attention to the contexts in which literacy was taught (administrative decisions), rather than on what was taught (content).

Important gaps in coaches' knowledge were found in Sloan, McCombs and Martorell's (2012) study. These gaps may go some way to explaining why they found no statistically significant results on the impact of literacy coaching on learners. Analysis of teachers' survey responses, collected in 113 Florida middle schools, indicated that teachers scored coaches scored low on two very important aspects of their practice: adult teaching and their understanding of the school context, including the organisational systems and practices. Coaches' self-assessment of their skills in this area confirmed that both of these aspects were an area of need. The surveys also showed that coaches did not have a strong understanding of teachers' and students' needs. Twenty-one percent of teachers reported their coaches lacked understanding of their particular content area, and 25% of teachers felt coaches lacked understanding of the specific needs of certain students. These are significant areas of leadership capability that need to be addressed if leaders are to make a difference to teaching and learning.

## **Evidence for disconfirming the proposition**

The proposition that better outcomes for students come about where literacy leaders (or leaders of English) focus on helping teachers to acquire a core set of teaching practices, is open to challenge. It is possible that teachers alone are responsible for bringing about improved achievement.

There was one study in which this was the case. In Elish-Piper and L'Allier's 2010 study, statistically significant gains were made by kindergarten and first grade students as measured by DIBELS. The researchers carried out hierarchical linear modelling analyses that concluded "coaching did not account for a significant portion of the variance in students' gain on the tests" (p.169), and that the effect was largely produced by the teachers.

Marsh, Sloan McCombs and Martorell (2012) found very few statistically significant results linking coaching quality indicators and students' achievement. There was, however, one indicator, that had a small negative relationship to students' achievement. This negative indicator was the number of years a coach had previously taught reading. The longer a coach taught, the less likely he/she was to improve students' learning. Their research did not offer a possible explanation for this finding.

## **Conclusion**

This review has shown that while we know quite a lot about the mechanisms literacy leaders use to work with teachers, our knowledge of *what* leaders focus on is limited to the insights from a few studies. Further, what is known about the quality of literacy coaching activities that is linked to improved outcomes for learners, and what is known about this in secondary settings, is even more limited.

## **The limitations of this literature review**

There are a number of limitations to this literature review. Firstly, the findings are drawn from a small number of empirical studies based on outcomes for students and for teachers. Very few of these studies have been conducted in New Zealand. I must, therefore, be tentative in making the claims about the practices associated with effective literacy leadership. This research project will help to confirm and add

more detail to what has been discovered in the literature review. It will also extend what we know about how literacy leaders exert their influence.

Secondly, the way literacy leadership has been presented through the current literature does not reflect the richness of the contexts in which literacy leadership is exercised - with whom, why they act as they do, how they exert their influence, and with what effect for teachers and students. It is this kind of study that I wish to undertake.

## The development of an analysis tool (PELL) from the core and supplementary studies

The 43 studies have been extensively analysed to locate a set of core literacy leadership practices which I have called the Practices of Effective Literacy Leadership (PELL). There are 27 PELL practices. Twenty-two were identified from reading the studies in the literature review. Five more were added during analyses as it became apparent that they were part of the repertoire of the literacy leaders in my study. These additional practices are supported by research. The following tables describe the PELL, and provides brief details of the studies from which they were drawn.

**Table 5: Building teachers' content knowledge**

PELL Number	PELL	Explanation	Studies linked to this PELL practice
A1	Building teachers' content knowledge about what to teach, when and how	Building knowledge about literacy learning and teaching in general	Cosner, Overturf & Bronger, no date; 2011; Powell, 2010; Shidler, 2009; Si'ilata et al, 2012
A2	Helping teachers to address gaps in their practice to respond better to learners	Building teachers' knowledge about catering for students with learning needs (specific to certain students)	McNaughton et al, 2013; Si'ilata et al, 2012
A3	Helping teachers to understand literacy learning across the curriculum and the implications for their learning area	Helping teachers in other faculties to understand how literacy and language may be used in their learning area or discipline	McNaughton et al, 2013; Powell, 2010; Snow, Ippolito & Schwartz, 2006; Strahan et al, 2010
A4	Leading groups of teachers in exploring research-based instructional strategies	Helping teachers to unpack/understand research in the context of their teaching and learning	Matsumara et al, 2013; Si'ilata et al, 2012; Taylor et al, 2009; Vanderburg et al, 2010

**Table 6: Encouraging new and innovative practice**

PELL Number	PELL	Explanation	Studies linked to this PELL practice
B1	Challenging teachers to think of different ways of doing things to raise student achievement	Promoting alternatives to current practice/ways of doing things/ideas	McNaughton et al, 2013; Si'ilata et al, 2012
B2	Encouraging teachers to be reflective about their practice in order to improve it	Involves creating opportunities for teachers to think about teaching and learning in their classes	Elish-Piper & L'Allier 2010; McNaughton et al, 2013; Si'ilata et al, 2012; Steckel, 2009; Stover et al, 2011
B3	Encouraging teachers to share ideas with each other about effective literacy practice	Opportunities for teachers to learn from each other	Carlisle & Berebitsky, 2011; Cosner, 2011; Si'ilata et al, 2012; Steckel, 2009; Strahan et al, 2010
B4	Implementing opportunities to learn from peers e.g. peer observation, feedback and teaching	As above but the context is peer to peer and focused on individual improvement	Cosner, 2011; Si'ilata et al, 2012; Steckel, 2009

**Table 7: Planning, sharing and implementing school literacy priorities**

PELL Number	PELL	Explanation	Studies linked to this PELL practice
C1	Acquiring resources that align to students' needs	Actions that involve a leader acquiring material and human resources that improve learning and teaching	Attebury and Bryk, 2011; Carlisle & Berebitsky, 2011; McNaughton et al, 2013; Overturf & Bronger, no date; Steckel, 2009; Strahan et al, 2010
C2	Building the trust and engagement of teachers and leaders	A broad category that focuses on motivating teachers and developing reciprocal feelings of respect and trust	Attebury & Bryk, 2011; Helmer et al, 2011; L'Allier et al, 2010; Marsh et al, 2012; Si'ilata et al, 2012; Stover et al, 2011; Strahan et al, 2010
C3	Considering the results of school-wide and cluster-wide measures over time and sharing these with teachers	The use of aggregated data to illuminate current practice	McNaughton et al, 2013; Si'ilata et al, 2012; Stover et al, 2011
C4	Constructing a vision for literacy learning in the school	Thinking about how literacy could/should happen at the school	Ippolito & Lieberman, 2012; McNaughton et al, 2013; Si'ilata et al, 2012
C5	See Table 9		
C6	Improving parents and whanau actions and plans to improve their child's learning	Engaging parents in learning – focused partnerships	Overturf & Bronger, no date
C7	Planning a school literacy curriculum	Planning a curriculum that applies to all year levels and connects to a range of learning areas	Scott, 2012; Snow, Ippolito & Schwartz, 2006
C8	Solving school level problems related to teaching and learning in literacy	Addressing at school system – level challenges in teaching and learning that have a	McNaughton et al, 2013; Si'ilata et al, 2012; Snow, Ippolito & Schwartz, 2006



		particular focus on literacy and learning	
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**Table 8: Providing practical guidance to individual teachers about using best pedagogical practice**

PELL Number	PELL	Explanation	Studies linked to this PELL practice
D1	Advising teachers about resources for students in their classes	Self-explanatory	McNaughton et al, 2013
D2	Demonstrating what best literacy teaching looks like	Literacy Leader models/demonstrates the practice	Attebury & Bryk, 2011; Blamey et al, 2009; Carlisle & Berebitsky, 2011; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010; Elish-Piper et al, 2011; L'Allier et al, 2010; Lockwood et al, 2010; Matsumara et al, 2013; Overturf & Bronger, no date; Scott et al, 2012; Snow et al, 2006; Shidler 2009; Si'ilata et al, 2012; Steckel, 2009; Stover et al, 2011; Strahan et al, 2010; Taylor et al, 2009
D3	Encouraging teachers to closely examine data for every students	Self-explanatory	Cosner, 2011; Lockwood et al, 2010; McNaughton et al, 2013; Overturf and Bronger, no date; Si'ilata et al, 2012
D4	Guiding teachers how to interpret data to plan their teaching	Self-explanatory	Blamey et al, 2009; Overturf & Bronger, no date; Si'ilata et al, 2012; Vanderburg et al, 2010
D5	Guiding teachers in the use of smart tools in the context of literacy teaching	Self-explanatory	Cosner, 2011; Si'ilata et al, 2012; Taylor et al, 2009
D6	Helping teachers to create a curriculum programme (long term) that is student centred	Self-explanatory	Blamey et al, 2009; Carlisle & Berebitsky, 2011; Si'ilata et al, 2012; Strahan et al, 2010; Taylor et al, 2009; Vanderburg et al, 2010
D7	Watching individual teachers and providing them with specific feedback about how to improve their literacy teaching practice	Self-explanatory	Attebury & Bryk, 2011; Cosner, 2011; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010; Elish-Piper et al, 2011; Lockwood et al, 2010; Powell, 2010; Scott, 2012; Shidler, 2009; Si'ilata et al, 2012; Snow et al, 2006; Stover et al, 2011; Taylor et al, 2009; Vanderburg et al, 2010

**Table 9: Additional PELL added during analyses**

<b>PELL Number</b>	<b>PELL</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Studies linked to this PELL practice</b>
C5	Engage in curriculum evaluation	Engaging in evidence-informed evaluation of the suitability of the curriculum in promoting students' achievement and progress	McNaughton et al, 2013; Si'ilata et al, 2012
E1	Show a disposition to lead	Relates to how available and willing a literacy leader is to help	Tsui, 2009
E2	Draw on experience	Relates to literacy leader experience in any sort of leadership role	Berliner, 2004; Tsui, 2009
E3	Draw on expertise	Relates to literacy leader's using what he/she knows about content and pedagogical knowledge to guide teachers	Berliner, 2004; Tsui, 2009
E4	Engage in sense-making, negotiation	Relates to the work literacy leaders do in understanding the demands made by senior leaders and deciding whether to support their priorities or protect teachers from their demands	Coburn & Woulfin, 2012 (USA)

PELL has been used in the analyses of the qualitative data collected during the research. Further detail about PELL is included in the methodology section of this thesis.



# Chapter Three: Methodology

## Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to discuss: the approach used to explore the research question; how I undertook the processes of sampling the schools for the research; management of the ethical considerations for carrying out the research; and the processes used to collect, analyse, and report data from participants. The chapter begins with restating the hypothesis, and a brief background statement about NCEA.

## The thesis hypothesis

This is an empirical study of literacy leadership in which I explored the question: what are the processes literacy leaders use to support teaching in secondary schools with different patterns of achievement in NCEA English. The hypothesis for the study is that literacy leadership is likely to be better in schools where there are high achievement patterns in NCEA English. High quality literacy leadership, characterised by the use of a range of core practices, supports high quality teaching, which in turn leads to high achievement. The converse also applies – where there is low NCEA English achievement, there is likely to be less effective literacy leadership guiding teachers. The focus of this research is about ascertaining whether the hypothesis holds up in the light of the analysis of the data collected from participants. The PELL is a tool that helps to define what the core practices are.

## Background information on NCEA

NCEA was introduced in New Zealand in 2002. It is the foremost qualification for secondary school students in New Zealand and most secondary schools provide NCEA for their students. A few schools offer alternative qualifications such as the Cambridge Examinations (CE) or the International Baccalaureate (IB). Some schools offer a combination of NCEA and CE or IB.

In NCEA, qualifications can be obtained in Levels one, two and three during a student's senior secondary education, generally in years 11, 12 and 13, respectively. NCEA has a number of achievement standards (sub components of a subject) at each level in each subject. The standards measure the skills and knowledge of students in these subjects. There are a range of internally assessed and externally assessed achievement standards in each subject. Students choose a course that fits with their plans for further education, employment or training. English (or Te Reo Māori,<sup>12</sup> and mathematics or Pangarau) are compulsory in most schools at year 11. This provides students with a strong foundation on which to build their learning across a range of subjects.

In English in 2012, there were 10 standards at Level 2 of which seven were internally assessed by teachers, and three were externally assessed during examinations or student portfolios. For each standard, students gain a number of credits (usually between 2 and 6 credits). Students must attain a

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<sup>12</sup> Te Reo Māori is the language of Māori.

certain number of credits to gain an NCEA certificate at level one, level two and level three. Each credit is awarded with a grade ranging from “achieved” (A) for meeting the criteria of the standard, “merit” (M) for very good performance, or “excellence” (E) for outstanding performance. If a student does not meet the standard, he/she receives a grade of “not achieved” (NA).

To gain a Level 2 qualification in NCEA a student must earn at least 60 credits at Level 2 or above, and a further 20 credits at any other level (such as at Level 1). In 2013, a student was also required to meet NCEA level 1 literacy and numeracy requirements. These could be achieved in a range of subjects, not just English and mathematics. To gain a Level 3 qualification in NCEA a student must earn at least 60 credits at Level 3 or above, and another 20 credits at Level 2 or higher.

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) manage NCEA. They also manage other qualifications on a framework comprising many qualifications, some of which are more vocationally-focused. NZQA ensure that internally assessed standards are assessed in a consistent manner. Samples of students’ internally assessed work are checked by NZQA moderators.

## **The approach to exploring the research question**

Answering the research question was best explored through a case study research strategy. Case studies allowed me to look very closely at the practices in each school setting and to understand the practices in the context of that setting. I carefully selected the six schools on the basis of student achievement outcomes, and later the literacy leaders and teachers who worked in these schools. The choice of the six schools allowed me to examine differences in literacy leadership practice.

### **Case study research strategy**

#### ***What is a case study research strategy?***

A case study "is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon [in this case literacy leadership in secondary schools] within its real life context" (Yin, 2003, p.13). Case studies allow one to explore the rich, and sometimes subtle, nuances of a particular setting, and to compare practice in these settings. In this research, the particular setting is the secondary school and the actors in this setting of particular interest are the literacy leaders, and two teachers with whom they work. Qualitative research is exploratory and descriptive, and generally focuses on the researcher understanding people’s experience in their own settings (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Therefore, attention was also paid to the context in which these teachers and leaders worked.

Information for the case studies reported in this thesis was gathered through interviews with literacy leaders and the two teachers. The reason for choosing interviews over survey methods, as Highfield (2012) and Bendikson (2012) had done, was to gain deep insight into the world of teachers and leaders, and their practices and interactions with each other. Survey methods would not yield the level of data that I required.

I hypothesised that good literacy leadership involves providing substantial support and direction for teachers, which has a beneficial effect on teachers' practices and, subsequently, on outcomes for students. I am aware that this is a somewhat simplistic conceptualization of the effect of leadership, and that it does not take full account of the complex context of school life, specifically that a range of factors enable teachers to learn, and students to progress and achieve. A case study approach allowed me to explore the range of contextual factors that encompassed literacy leaders' work, and the influences that applied to their practice.

### ***Context matters***

Literacy leadership is comprehensible by understanding the context of people, decisions, policies and systems that operate within and beyond each school. This leadership happens in the nested context of a school and its community, and is influenced by a broader education policy environment such as the national curriculum (The New Zealand Curriculum), assessment regimes, such as NCEA, and centrally-funded professional development and resourcing.

In 1989, New Zealand moved from central control of schooling by education boards, to a system where schools were self-managing. Under this system the Ministry of Education provides funding to schools and requires some accountability for student achievement outcomes. A set of guidelines (The National Administration Guidelines<sup>13</sup>), set out the administrative requirements for the community-elected boards of trustees who govern schools. In New Zealand's devolved system of school management and governance, policy from the Ministry of Education is somewhat less directive to schools than that of other jurisdictions and countries (Timperley & Parr, 2009). The assumption that underpins self-managing schools is that stakeholders in the schooling system have the capability to manage themselves. At a school leadership level, this includes: designing and implementing an appropriate locally-based curriculum that meets the needs of their learners, choosing the standards they will offer students in NCEA, and self-selecting participation in professional development.

For instance, the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) allows considerable discretion as to what content is taught to students (particularly in years 1-10). It is expected, however, that schools will give consideration to the relationship between the New Zealand Curriculum and the locally-based curriculum, and that they will underpin their decisions about curriculum design by adhering to ten principles. These principles are:

- High expectations for all learners "regardless of their circumstances" (Ministry of Education, 2007, p.9)
- Acknowledgement of the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, and the bicultural foundations of New Zealand, and provision of opportunities for all learners to acquire te reo Māori me ōna tikanga (Māori language and knowledge of the customs and ways of Māori

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<sup>13</sup> The guidelines can be found at <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/National-Standards/Key-information/Fact-sheets/NAGs-fact-sheet>

- Ensuring the curriculum reflects the values, histories and traditions of its diverse population
- Developing a curriculum that is inclusive of all learners – that is non-sexist, non-racist, and non-discriminatory, including making sure that learners’ “identities, languages, abilities, and talents are recognized and affirmed, and that learning needs are met” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p.9)
- Encouraging all learners to be active participants in their own learning through reflection and learning how to learn
- Connecting with, and engaging the support of, families, whānau, and communities
- Ensuring the curriculum that learners experience is connected across learning areas, prior learning, and supports transitions and “pathways to further learning” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p.9)
- Encouraging students to be future-focused, and oriented towards citizenship, enterprise and globalisation.

The following example of educational discourse is pertinent to this research because it shows the relationship between key players in the education system. The example relates to the promotion of literacy and language in subject areas/disciplines, sometimes referred to as literacy across the curriculum (LAC). The key actors are: the Ministry of Education, literacy leaders and departmental leaders, and teachers.

Proficiency in literacy, and capability in using the subject-specific language and literacy practices associated with a discipline are seen as critical competencies for successful learning and participation in society. The Ministry of Education, however does not mandate how secondary schools approach the task of helping students acquire these competencies. They provide schools with the opportunity to participate in professional development (for example the Secondary Schools’ Literacy Initiative and the Secondary Literacy Project). Schools are not required to participate, although regional Ministry of Education staff might encourage them to do so. Teachers’ and leaders’ practice is also supported through a number of online resources on the Ministry of Education’s websites.<sup>14</sup>

Literacy leaders have played an important role in making sense of policy messages that relate to LAC to ensure they are transferred into professional practice. They have interpreted what the LAC message is from Ministry discourses, and developed policy at their own school level (Timperley and Parr, 2009). For instance, evidence from the Secondary Schools’ Literacy Initiative, and the Secondary Literacy Project indicate that literacy leaders have organised opportunities for cross-disciplinary teams of teachers to learn about LAC.

This research examined what literacy leaders did when they worked within schools to interpret and implement the school and broader policy environment for teachers and students. It probed the specific

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<sup>14</sup> For example on <http://literacyonline.tki.org.nz/Literacy-Online>

actions literacy leader took in helping teachers to improve their practice/and or respond to students' learning needs.

### ***The unit of analyses***

The unit of analysis for this research was the literacy leader and the teachers with whom he/she worked rather than the school itself (Yin, 2009). In case study research, units of analyses are defined so that researchers can contain the case to the particular phenomenon at the heart of their research question. In doing so they can more successfully identify what data they will collect and analyse. Because my research question centred on literacy leaders' practices, data were collected from them. Teachers are a mediating factor in achievement, therefore, my interest was also in the teachers who work with students. I wanted to know how literacy leaders influenced their teaching practices.

In this research study, the cases were six literacy leaders and the two teachers with whom they had worked on aspects of literacy practice. Teachers were included because literacy leadership is, in part, a process of influencing others - generally teachers, but sometimes other leaders in the school. The actions of the leaders, and enabling or constraining factors, some of which have been identified in the literature review, can impact on teachers and on students' learning.

### ***Managing the case study research***

Disciplined practice is exemplified by sampling, data collection and analyses that support the process of answering the research question, and leads to warrantable claims at the conclusion of the research. There were four principles, sourced from literature on qualitative research, which guided my practice in carrying out the case studies.

#### ***Principle One: Bound the study***

Placing boundaries around what will be studied ensures that the research can be managed, that the analyses adequately answer the research questions posed, and that a means for interpreting the case can be established (Thomas, 2011). Case studies can be bounded by people, settings, events and processes (Miles & Huberman, 1984), or by time, place, context or definition (Yin, 2003). All of these categories apply to this research.

Sampling was the key mechanism for bounding the study. Sampling addressed: the number of schools, teachers and literacy leaders who would participate in the research, the year levels of the achievement data that would be used to select the schools, the years that this achievement data applied to, and the particular achievement standards that would be used. Decisions were largely dictated by what constitutes good research design for a comparative study. If a study is about making comparisons about practice on the basis of achievement, then analysing the achievement data to select those schools is important. The achievement data was bounded by analysing only selected internal and external achievement standards. This was important so that comparisons could be made across schools with common standards. The number of years for which data were analysed was bounded to three year periods on the assumption that this time period provided a relatively stable picture of a school's



achievement (2009, 2010 and 2011 data were used for Wellington schools, and 2011, 2012 and 2013 data were used for Auckland schools). There needed to be enough people included in cases to draw warrantable conclusions from the data about differences in literacy leaders' practices. Six literacy leaders and twelve teachers were chosen for the case studies. In part decisions about numbers of teachers and literacy leaders interviewed were also based on the pragmatics of what could be achieved in the time allocated for sampling, data collection, analyses and reporting the findings.

*Principle Two: Data collection and analyses should systematically lead to answering the research question.*

Three processes were used in attending to this principle. Firstly, data were collected in a sequential manner - initially from literacy leaders in each school, and then from the two teachers in the school. Each person laid down further detail about how literacy leadership played out in that setting. Secondly, the content of the questions for literacy leaders and for the teachers were similar so that I could explore with teachers the practices literacy leaders used, and the impact these practices had on them. Finally, analyses involved taking carefully planned steps towards answering the research question, drawing on existing theory, and developing new explanatory theory. These steps are outlined in the data analysis section of this chapter.

*Principle Three: Compare data to build theory about the phenomenon under study.*

There were three ways that data were compared in order to build theory: They were compared:

(a) *to what the literature says about literacy leadership*

The practices that literacy leaders and teachers were talking about were compared to what is known about evidence of effective literacy leadership practice from previous research (the PELL). Through these analyses, I was able to determine whether the practices resonated with what has been written about in the past, and identify new literacy leadership practices that are more or less effective. Further information about this is found in the data analyses section.

(b) *within cases*

Comparison was used within a single case to make connections between different fragments of interviews. For instance, comparisons were made between participants (one teacher compared to another teacher, and between teachers and the literacy leader) within a single school.

(c) *across cases*

Understanding about a case was enhanced through comparison to other cases – similar, by decile banding (refer to the section on sampling for further detail), or contrasting in attributes such as achievement outcomes (high and low achieving schools) (Boeje, 2002; Stake, 1994). Cross case analyses helped to progressively construct theory about literacy leadership. Examples of cross case analyses were: comparing the practices of literacy leaders in the three schools with high student achievement, comparing the practices of literacy leaders in three schools with low student achievement,

and comparing the practices of both of the above. A more comprehensive explanation of the analyses processes used is provided later in this chapter.

#### *Principle Four: Manage the threats to the validity of the research*

The best way to deal with threats to the validity of the research is to “anticipate the likely criticisms of inferences from experiments” (Shadish, Cook & Campbell, 2002, p. 40). There were two key threats that needed to be managed –limiting bias during analyses, and plausible rival explanations for the findings of analyses.

##### *(a) Limiting bias in the analyses through the use of PELL*

Two processes were used to limit bias in the analyses. The first was to have a framework about what constituted good practice that could be applied to the analyses of all participants. The second was to get a critical friend to check the accuracy of my coding and the inferences drawn in analysis.

Deciding whether a literacy leader’s practice is “effective” can be highly subjective without a clearly defined set of criteria for doing so. The PELL was developed to provide a benchmark for literacy leaders’ practices. The PELL framework is included in the Literature Review of this thesis. PELL were identified through analyses of the core and supplementary studies from the literature review. These studies were read closely to identify the practices that were linked to better student achievement outcomes, improved practices by teachers, or improved practices by literacy leaders. The PELL were grouped according to five key themes:

- Building teachers’ content knowledge
- Encouraging new and innovative practice
- Planning, sharing and implementing school literacy priorities
- Providing practical guidance to individual teachers about using best pedagogical practice
- Leader disposition and skills.

The PELL formed the framework by which I could code responses from leaders and teachers. Coding was undertaken using NVivo 10 software. A coding category (node) was set up for each of the PELL practices and excerpts of interview data were coded into each node.

It should be noted that PELL might not be a comprehensive description of what effective New Zealand literacy leaders do (having been largely sourced from international studies). These descriptions, however, were a useful reference point from which to analyse leadership within the school contexts studied. Similarly, good teaching could be identified if teachers enacted the practices that are described in PELL.

With respect to the accuracy of coding, I asked a critical friend (in this case a friend who had completed doctoral studies in the field of leadership) to check the accuracy with which data were coded and the inferences drawn from a range of analyses. Care was taken in terms of overweighting or underrepresenting some participants’ data (Miles & Huberman, 1984). The colleague checked twenty

percent of the coding and concurred with approximately ninety percent of the coding decisions I had made. Where there were discrepancies, data were either recoded as per the critical friend's suggestions, or, after discussion and agreement, the original coding decision was retained.

(b) *Plausible rival explanations*

Robust research entails paying attention to the plausible alternative or rival explanations to the hypothesis (Yin, 2013). To ignore these different explanations is to call into question the validity of the research. My hypotheses that effective literacy leadership brings about good outcomes for students mediated through the actions of teachers can be entirely or partially incorrect because there may be different explanations for the cause of student outcomes. In the case of this research, rival hypotheses relate to *within school explanations (teaching and leadership practices)* and *student socio economic background explanations*. The table below presents these alternative explanations.

**Table 10: Alternative explanations to the hypothesis**

High achievement <i>Hypothesis is:</i>	Alternative explanations for student achievement pattern	Source of the threat
Effective literacy leadership brings about good outcomes for students mediated through the effective actions of teachers	students are advantaged by virtue of their high socio economic backgrounds	<i>Student socio economic background</i>
	students are advantaged because of good teaching regardless of quality of literacy leadership	<i>Alternative Within-school explanations</i>
Low achievement <i>Hypothesis is:</i> Less effective literacy leadership brings about poorer outcomes for students mediated through the effective actions of teachers	students are disadvantaged by virtue of their low socio economic backgrounds	<i>Student socio economic background</i>
	students are disadvantaged because of poor teaching regardless of quality of literacy leadership	<i>Alternative Within-school explanations</i>
	Students are disadvantaged because of poor teaching and poor literacy leadership	

To enable warrantable inferences to be made from the data, processes were built into the research design that addressed these rival hypotheses.

(i) *Socio economic background*

In the case of students' socio economic background, the key mechanism was the deliberate banding of like-decile schools so that valid comparisons could be made. (Refer to the section on sampling for further explanation of how socio economic background was treated).

## (ii) *Within-school explanations*

The fact that teachers use varying practices when working with students may account for differences in the student outcomes in schools. This cannot be controlled for through the sampling design because teachers volunteered to be part of the research. However, at least some of the practices teachers used were a result of the influence and support of their literacy leaders. Furthermore, school structures, such as guidelines, professional learning opportunities and planning systems, as well as school culture, are often the responsibility of literacy leaders. As McGuigan and Hoy (2006, p. 213) argue, school structures “may serve as a proxy for aspects of capable leadership”. School structures, which literacy leaders may help to create, can be an enabling, especially where they involve establishing the norms and procedures that facilitate teachers to learn individually and as part of a community of learners. These structures are likely to focus on implementation of the curriculum and assessment, accountability requirements, and professional learning processes.

Because teachers and literacy leaders volunteered to be part of the research, it was not possible to control for the amount of time teachers had worked with their literacy leader, or the amount of time literacy leaders had been in their role as literacy leaders. To minimize variability, teachers involved in the study needed to have worked with their literacy leader for at least one year during the period the NCEA data were collected, and literacy leaders needed to have been in their role during the period the NCEA achievement data were collected. Intuitively, it would seem that the longer the period together as a team, the greater the likelihood that literacy leaders would impact on teachers. Findings from the literature review indicated that there was mixed evidence about the amount of time a literacy coach spent with teachers, and that the salient factor was the quality of literacy leaders’ work with teachers that made a difference.

Yin (2013) asserts that researchers must decide what the benchmark is for knowing whether a rival explanation is acceptable, weak or strong. In this research, a rival explanation was accepted where there was compelling evidence that there were anomalies. Specifically:

- the practices of the literacy leader in a high achieving school did not match a significant number of the dimensions of the PELL *and* other significant findings about practice from all other cases in the category (that have not been included in PELL)
- the practices of the literacy leader in a low achieving school matched the dimensions of the PELL but did not match significant findings about practice from all other cases in the category.

In this research, therefore, attention was paid to looking for anomalies and disconfirming evidence.

## **Sampling**

The strength of the project in terms of theorizing about the key elements of literacy leadership that make a positive difference for students rested on the careful selection of schools. The research question focuses on schools with different patterns of NCEA English achievement and the leaders who work within these schools (for a description of NCEA please refer to the literature review section of this

thesis). By "different" I mean schools with high achievement, and schools with low achievement, across a range of decile bands.

### **Decile banding**

With respect to decile banding, there is a substantial body of research to indicate that family background has an effect on outcomes for students (Hattie, 2002; Marks, Cresswell & Ainley, 2006; OECD, 2012). For instance, it is argued that a lack of access to material resources (e.g. books and computers), social resources (beneficial connections that create ongoing learning and employment opportunities), and cultural resources (the arts and intellectual activity), impacts on student achievement and educational outcomes (Marks, Cresswell & Ainley, 2006). Schools can mitigate the effect of low socio-economic backgrounds through high quality teaching and learning, and systems that provide for teachers continuous professional improvement, the involvement of parents in their children's learning, and increased funding (Marks, Cresswell & Ainley, 2006). Literacy leaders can make a considerable contribution through their work with teachers and other leaders.

Currently, socio-economic status (SES) is a mechanism for government funding that allows the Ministry of Education to target resources to schools. This includes interventions for underachieving student groups such as those addressed in the Secondary Literacy Project. Socio-economic indexed funding was implemented in 1997 providing targeted funding to those schools and their communities where there is the greatest economic need. Information to determine deciles is gathered from the national census. The socio-economic index comprises ten units (deciles) which are calculated from data in a defined catchment using information such as parental occupations, parental education qualifications, household income, number of parents receiving welfare benefits, and number of people living in a house. Decile one is the lowest and ten is the highest decile. Theoretically ten percent of the population falls within each of the deciles. An unintended consequence from the decile system is the public perception that the higher the decile, the better the school (Hattie, 2002).

Banding schools into "like" deciles on the assumption that the characteristics of the schools are fairly similar is carried out to make analyses easier to manage. For instance, the Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning make use of banding to describe groups of schools that are low decile (decile 1-3), medium decile (4-7), and high decile (8-10) (Hattie, 2002). The Ministry of Education, through the Education Counts Website<sup>15</sup> also reports on a range of indicators (including truancy, retention and achievement), using deciles or quintiles (decile 1-2, decile 3-4, decile 5-6, decile 7-8, and decile 9-10).

To manage student background as a possible threat to the validity of the research, comparisons were undertaken during data collection and analysis between schools in the same decile band. That is, comparisons were made between schools within decile band 1-3 or within band 4-7, or within band 8-

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<sup>15</sup> [www.educationcounts.govt.nz](http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz)

10, but not across these decile bands except to note how the contexts differ. Further details about this are provided in the section on sampling.

A study by Bendikson, Hattie and Robinson (2011) provides insight into how school-level NCEA data can be analysed systematically to arrive at a judgement about school performance (high and low performance of students by year levels), school improvement over time, and the relative achievement of schools within decile bands. The mechanisms employed by the researchers were: benchmarking against a cut-off point (in this case set at the minimum level achieved by decile 6-10 schools); and the application during analyses of a set of combination, inclusion and exclusion rules.

Of particular interest to me was the process used to arrive at relative performance. In Bendikson et al's study, this was calculated by comparing a school's NCEA achievement score to the average score of the schools in the same decile, and carried out over a number of measures. Schools were then ranked by each measure and analyses carried out to see which schools consistently appeared in the top (high achievement) and bottom (low achievement) of the rankings.

A similar relative school performance approach was used in undertaking the sampling for my research. The difference was that no analyses were undertaken to determine previous rates of progress and whether a schools was improving over time or not. This decision was made because improvement, per se, requires a much greater contribution than that of a literacy leader, and is therefore not a reliable or accurate indicator for literacy leadership.

### Sampling frame

The sampling for this research involved comparison using NCEA achievement data. Within the sample there were schools in which students were clearly achieving very well, and schools in which outcomes for students were not as positive. Six schools were required for this research project, two in each of the decile bands (1-3, 4-7, 8-10) that Hattie (2002) had identified. In each decile band, I was looking for a school with high student achievement relative to the other schools in its decile band, and a school with low student achievement relative to the other schools in its decile band. The schools selected were given an identifier. The table below illustrates the sampling.

**Table 11: Sampling details**

Decile Band	Achievement profile	Code for school
Decile 1-3	a school with high NCEA English achievement at level 2 and level 3	School C
	a school with low NCEA English achievement at level 2 and level 3	School F
Decile 4-7	a school with high NCEA English achievement at level 2 and level 3	School B
	a school with low NCEA English achievement at level 2 and level 3	School E
Decile 8-10	a school with high NCEA English achievement at level 2 and level 3	School A
	a school with low NCEA English achievement at level 2 and level 3	School D

Sampling happened in two stages. In 2011, NCEA data were obtained for achievement results between 2009 and 2011 for forty-nine secondary schools in the greater Wellington area and as far north as Wanganui and Palmerston North. They were accessed using the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) website. I was looking for the largest number of schools from which to undertake the sampling analyses. Having a large number of school results made it easier to differentiate between the top and the bottom performing schools, and this was a critical component of my study.

In 2013, on the basis of detailed analyses of these data (described later in this chapter) I interviewed three literacy leaders and six teachers. Towards the end of 2013 it became clear that more recent data were required for interviewing the remaining three literacy leaders and six teachers. Some literacy leaders were no longer in the schools selected from the Wellington region, and/or the teachers with whom they worked had moved on. I decided to resample using NCEA data spanning 2011-2013. These data were from fifty-five Auckland schools in the defined geographic locations of South, West and North Auckland.

In 2012, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) website listed the Level one, two and three NCEA results for the internal and external achievement standards for all schools involved in NCEA assessments. In 2012, this information was publicly available and could therefore be accessed for the research. In 2014, data were not made public, but I was able to access this by contacting NZQA and requesting it at the school level (i.e. aggregated data). For both the Wellington and Auckland sampling, information accessed included:

- internally and externally assessed English achievement standards at Level 2 and 3 of National Certificate of Educational Achievement that were matched across schools
- data for 2009, 2010, and 2011; and data for 2011, 2012, and 2013
- results for not achieved, achieved, merit, and excellence for all candidates in the school who participated in the English achievement standards.

The rationale for using three years of data was to gain a relatively stable picture of student achievement over time. Three years provided enough data to yield a picture of sustainable achievement or a lack of it. Decisions about inclusion of a school were based on students' achievement in both internally and externally assessed achievement standards in NCEA. Analysis was undertaken to ensure that schools covered the same internal and external achievement standards. This was to ensure that I was comparing like with like in the event that standards varied in level of difficulty. The standards used in the sampling are included in Appendix Two.

The rationale for using externally assessed and internally assessed achievement standards was to gain a comprehensive picture of achievement within and across schools. To include just the external standards at any one year level meant there were a limited number of results from which to gain information, whereas including the internals yielded more results. There were also risks that the schools would have widely varying numbers of standards by decile band. Analysis undertaken with a statistician familiar with NCEA showed that lower decile schools tended to make more frequent use of internally

assessed NCEA achievement standards in comparison to higher decile schools. To exclude either internally assessed or externally assessed standards would have skewed the data on which the sampling was based.

Preference was given to English standards because it is a foundation subject and, therefore, likely to have a larger number of results compared to science, for example.

### **Excluded schools**

There were several rules applied in excluding schools. Overall, 22 schools were excluded from a total pool of 60 schools in the Wellington sampling, and 32 exclusions for the Auckland results from a pool of 86 schools. Schools that participated in Cambridge, and International Baccalaureate examinations were excluded from the sample as there is a tendency for these schools to use NCEA as the option for less able students. To include data from these schools was likely to skew the results for the school when it was compared to other schools within that decile band. Information about these schools was accessed from The Association of Cambridge Schools in New Zealand website<sup>16</sup> and from International Baccalaureate schools in New Zealand<sup>17</sup>

Kura Kaupapa Māori schools were not included in the sample because at least some of students' time is spent speaking Te Reo Māori rather than English. These schools also tend to have small numbers of students at years 11 - 13. Schools with fewer than 100 students (at all levels), Special Schools (for students with behavioural or learning difficulties), Junior High schools (for students in years 7-10), and schools with fewer than 50 results in any one standard were all excluded.

### **The sampling analyses process**

There were six key phases to the analyses of the NCEA achievement data used in selecting the six schools. These phases involved multiple processes for comparing schools' achievement, and for identifying the top achieving (high) and bottom achieving (low) schools in NCEA English at both NCEA level 2 and 3. For the purposes of the following discussion I have used the terms top and bottom to refer to the process of selecting the schools through a process of ranking. In the remainder of the thesis I refer to these schools as high and low achieving schools. The following is an overview of the sampling analyses processes.

In the following phases, I established rules for inclusion and exclusion of schools in the sample. The use of rules such as these were a feature of Bendikson's (2012) research. They helped to achieve the discipline I was striving for in this research.

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.acsnz.org.nz/acsnzschoools.cfm>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.ibschools.org.nz/schools.html>



### **Phase One: Calculating, using a formula, the pass rate ratio for the schools in the sample**

In order to compare schools for selection as either a top school or a bottom school, it was necessary to have a comparative measure. In this case, the measure was a pass rate ratio which related to the number of achievement standards results a school had gained in NCEA English relative to the number of achievement standards students had been entered for in the NCEA examinations process. The pass rate ratio was calculated for each school by adding up the number of English results in which candidates gained grades of achieved (A), merit (M) and excellence (E), and dividing this by the total number of results for students. The total number of results for students included the results for not achieved (NA), achieved, merit, and excellence. The formula used to calculate the pass rate ratios for both the Wellington and the Auckland schools was:

$$\frac{A + M + E}{N + A + M + E}$$

For example, at Kowhai High School (fictitious name), in 2009, there were 82 results for the internally assessed Level 2 English standards. Twenty seven of these results were not achieved, 45 achieved, 10 merit and 0 excellence. The pass rate ratio for this school in 2009, for the internally assessed standards at Level 2 were as follows:

$$45 + 10 + 0 = 55$$

$$\text{Divided by the sum of } 27 + 45 + 10 + 0 = 82$$

$$\text{Therefore the pass rate ratio was } 0.67$$

This procedure was undertaken for the forty-nine schools in Wellington, (for 2009, 2010, and 2011) and for fifty-five schools in Auckland (for 2011, 2012 and 2013), for the Level two results, for the Level three results, for the internally assessed results at both of these levels, and for the externally assessed results at the same levels. In total, for each school, twelve sets of pass rate ratios were calculated. Data and the pass rate ratios for all of the schools were recorded in Excel spreadsheets, which for convenience sake, were organized according to decile bands.

### **Phase Two: Sorting the schools by pass rate ratios into top and bottom school categories**

The purpose of this phase was to undertake an initial sorting of schools to find the top three and bottom three schools in each decile band. To do this all schools were ranked by their pass rate ratios from the highest pass rate ratio to the lowest pass rate ratio on the internal achievement standards, and again on the external achievement standards for each year (Wellington schools were 2009, 2010, 2011 and Auckland schools were 2011, 2012, 2013). A rule was applied in allocating the schools to a top or a bottom list.

*Rule One: To be selected for either a top or bottom category there could be no achievement anomalies. A school could not feature on a top list, and a bottom list at any particular year level, and be selected. It could, however, be in the list of top schools for internal results, and in the bottom for external results (or vice versa). It was also possible for a school to be in a top list for Level two, and a bottom list for Level three achievement results (or vice versa). For example, at Kowhai High School in 2009, the Level two students achieved particularly well relative to other schools in their decile band in their external English examinations, but the Level three students achieved particularly poorly in their external English examinations. Kowhai High School could be included in the analyses.*

### **Phase Three: Analysing the frequency with which schools were categorised as top or bottom schools on the ranking lists**

The purpose of this phase was to see which schools most frequently appeared on the top and bottom lists, thereby making it more likely that they would be included in the sample. Analysis was undertaken of the number of times each school appeared on a top or a bottom list. By analysing across all of the lists, it was possible to identify which schools appeared multiple times. The more times a school appeared on a top or bottom list, the more they were likely to be part of the sample.

### **Phase Four: Retaining or eliminating schools according to their rankings**

As a result of this analysis, there were frequently still too many schools included. Only two schools (a top and a bottom) were required at each NCEA level for any particular year. In this phase I began to apply further inclusion and exclusion criteria. To do this the schools were ranked again, and only the top two in each decile were retained.

### **Phase Five: Finding the top and bottom schools from the Level two and Level three retained schools lists.**

Analysis was undertaken to find the top and bottom schools overall (Level two and Level three) by decile. The separate Level two and Level three lists of retained schools were aggregated to arrive at a decision about these schools. The following rule was applied in doing this:

*Rule Two: A school stays on the list (top or bottom) if it appears at both Level 2 and Level 3 within its decile.*

For the 2009-2011 results there were no schools with aggregated top pass rate ratios in the decile band 4-7. To resolve this situation, I applied the following rule:

*Rule Three: Where there are insufficient schools within a decile group, the list will be supplemented by calculating the school's highest aggregated (L2 and L3) pass ratio (in the case of top schools), or the lowest aggregated (L2 and L3) pass ratio (in the case of bottom schools) within that decile band. The pass rate ratios for the external standards will be used because these are more likely to be assessed reliably than internally assessed standards which are arrived at by more subjective means. (Evidence for this decision come from the finding that there were often large discrepancies between students' attainment in internal and external standards).*

The aggregated pass rate ratios were calculated using the following formula: the mean of the Level two pass rate ratios for 2009, 2010 and 2011 plus the mean of the Level three pass rate ratios for 2009, 2010 and 2011 (or 2011, 2012 and 2013 in the case of the Auckland sampling) divided by 2.

### **Phase Six: Procedure for substituting schools in the sample**

Where a school declined to be part of the research, or was unable to carry on with the research, a substitute school was selected. There were four schools approached that declined to be part of the research in Wellington. No schools declined in Auckland. No schools from Wellington or Auckland withdrew from the research once data collection began. The rule for substitution where schools declined to be part of the research was as follows:

*Rule Four: Repeat the process for Phases two to five described above. Should there be no clear contenders for the analysis at Phase four (e.g. because there are no/a limited number of schools that rank at either of the top/bottom of the external or internal pass rate ratios), Rule Three applies (see Phase Five).*

At the conclusion of these phases I had six schools available to participate in the research.

## **Management of the ethical considerations for the research**

Permission (Approval 7902) to carry out the research was gained from the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on 13 August 2013.

### **Approaching the schools**

After the sampling had been completed I approached these schools. I first made contact with the principal and informed him/her about the project. Invariably I was then referred on to the literacy leader to whom the same explanation was made. If the literacy leader indicated that she/he was interested, the discussion was followed up by emailing the participant information sheets and a request for a further phone call. Follow up phone calls confirmed who wished to be part of the research.

### **Gaining participants' informed consent**

The material for participants included information and consent forms for teachers, literacy leaders and principals. Information for each of these groups included:

- a description of the study
- how schools were selected
- how teachers would be selected
- participants' rights with respect to participation and withdrawal from the research
- what would happen to the results
- benefits from participation
- acknowledgement of contribution to the research.

The sheet providing information to participants, and consent forms are included in Appendix Three and Four respectively.

### **Minimisation of risk**

Attention was paid to minimising any potential harm that might occur in selecting teachers or leaders for the research. At the time I began collecting data I was working in National Office in the Education Review Office (ERO) as an Evaluator in Evaluation Services which is a business arm of ERO in Wellington. Evaluation Services staff use data that are gathered by Review Officers in the context of school reviews, to generate reports on topics of national interest. The core business of my work involved using data gathered by others rather than participation in fieldwork in schools. I was aware that potential research participants might perceive that there was a risk in being involved in the research due to the possibility that their information might be used for other purposes. The information sheet provided to principals, leaders and teachers assured them that this would not be the case.

At the beginning of 2013 I began working for the Ministry of Education and, while my workplace had changed, I assured participants with whom I was working that I would not divulge any data gathered, or information about participants to anyone in the Ministry.

### **Participant verification**

All digital recordings were transcribed. Transcribed scripts were sent to the participants so they had an opportunity to make clearer their meaning by editing their script, including adding or deleting text.

### **Anonymity**

In reporting the findings, the identity of all participating schools and teachers has not been divulged. All schools, and the literacy leaders and teachers in them have been referred to in this thesis, using pseudonyms. For example, Literacy leader, School A. Given the relatively small size of New Zealand and the possibility that schools could be identified, no information has been provided about the school type (e.g., state school, coeducational school, single sex school), or its location.

### **Collecting data**

Data were collected through semi structured interviews with individual literacy leaders and individual teachers. These interviews generally lasted about one hour. All interviews were taped using a digital voice recorder. Each participant was provided with a broad overview of the questions to be asked prior to the interview taking place. This allowed participants to be oriented to the interview (but without rehearsing a particular response to a question), decide what, if any, artefacts to bring to the interview, and to feel relaxed about talking with me. Often the interviews happened in teachers' or leaders' workspaces, and from time to time throughout the interview they referred to, and showed me various resources they used.

The questions asked in the interview can be found in Appendix Five. Questions were reviewed by two experienced secondary English teachers and leaders, and trialled in a non-participating school prior to

using in the participating schools. Insights from the trial informed the questions asked. For instance, the trial highlighted the need to spend at least some of the interview time discussing the school context, including how the school management is structured and previous PLD. If a teacher or literacy leader did not mention these details during discussions, then at some stage in the interview I asked them about them.

## **The processes of transcribing, coding, analysing, synthesising data and reporting findings**

For the remainder of this chapter please refer to the figure below (Figure 3). This figure describes the 7 step process used in: transcribing interviews (Step A); coding data (Step B); carrying out within-school analysis (Step C); analysing data to discriminate whether there were differences between individual PELL in high and low achieving schools (Steps D and E), synthesising the analyses findings into broad themes (Step F), and the approach to reporting the findings (Step G).

## The Process of Transcribing, Coding, Analyses, Syntheses and Reporting

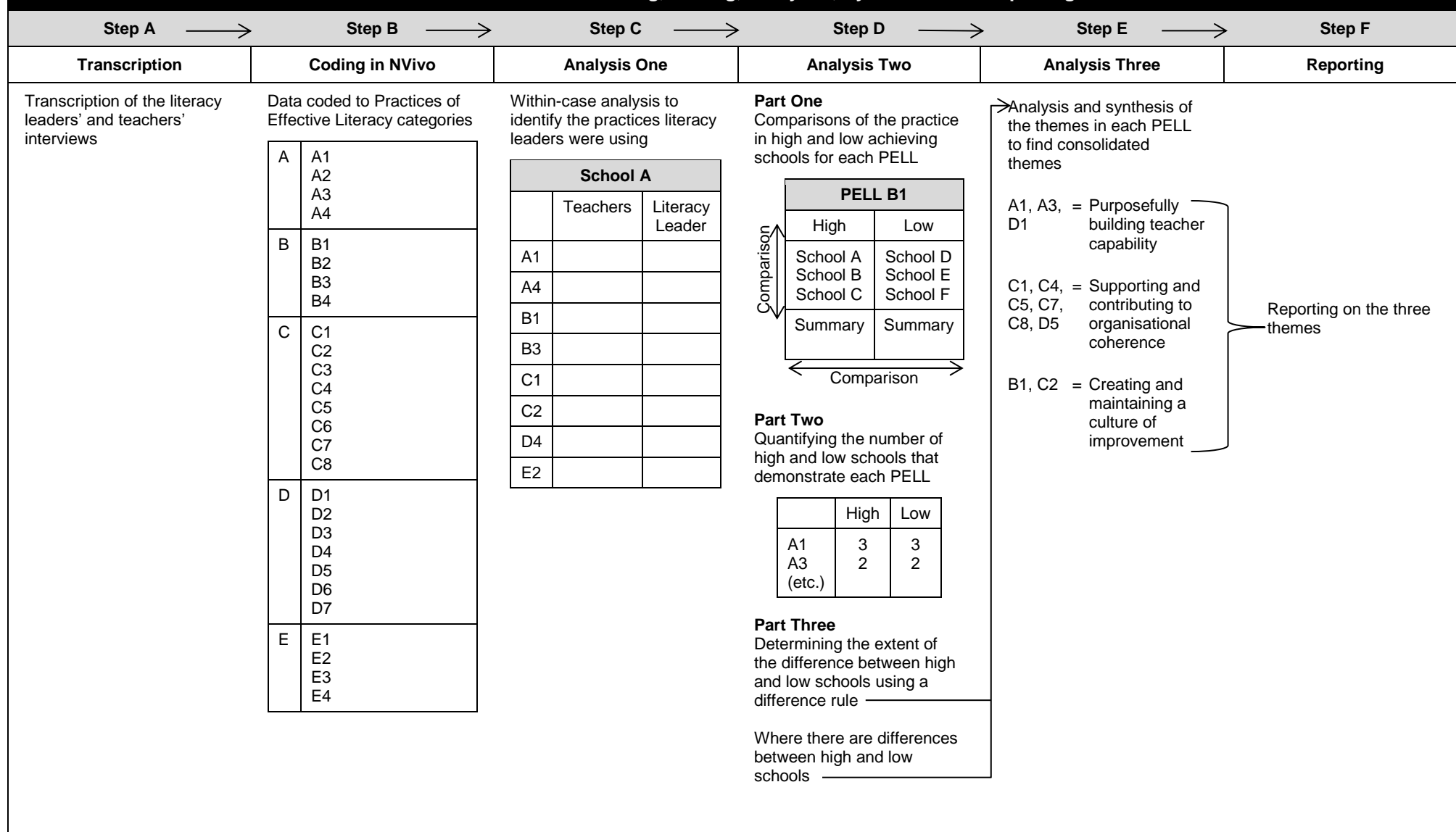


Figure 3: The process of transcribing, coding, analyses, syntheses and reporting

### **Step A: Transcribing data**

In this step, the digitally recorded interview data from teachers and leaders were transcribed into text.

### **Step B: Coding in NVivo**

Interview data were allocated to coding categories (which I called PELL) using NVivo 10 software. Twenty seven PELL categories (NVivo nodes) were set up initially using NVivo software. Eight extra nodes were established to code instances where participants talked about practices carried out by other people in the school (such as other teacher leaders or curriculum leaders), or about practices not listed in the original 27 PELL. In total 35 PELL categories were set up for coding from transcripts of the interviews. Data from teachers and leaders were coded to the same PELL node to allow me to triangulate the claims made by teachers and leaders.

### **Step C: Analyses One**

This step involved within-case (school) analyses. A small number of key ideas were recorded in case summaries about each of the 35 PELL for teachers and for leaders.

### **Step D: Analysis Two**

#### ***Part One***

This aspect of the analyses involved comparison of the 35 PELL case summaries across all three schools with high achievement, and the development of a school-type summary (e.g. A high achieving school summary) that noted practices in common and instances where a school differed in that practice (a disconfirming case). This process was repeated for the low achieving schools.

The school-type summaries from the high and low achieving schools were then compared and further summary notes made that drew thematic similarities and differences between high and low achieving schools. The objective was to identify patterns of similarity and difference across cases that confirmed and/or disconfirmed the hypothesis that leadership would differ in the two groups of schools.

#### ***Part Two***

This step involved quantifying the number of high and low achieving schools that had evidence for a particular PELL. As a result of the process, some PELL were eliminated from further analyses because there were not enough information that could be used to discriminate practice between high and low achieving schools. For example, if there was only one high and one low school identified for the PELL. Similarly if a PELL was identified in three high achieving schools, but not in any low achieving schools, there was no need for any further analysis.

#### ***Part Three***

Some PELL had equal numbers of high and low achieving schools coded to it. Where this was the case, a rule (The Difference Rule) was used to discriminate practice. This rule is as follows:

*High and low achieving schools are considered to be qualitatively different in terms of each PELL practice where two or more of the criteria in the following table apply:*

**Table 12: The Difference Rule criteria**

Criteria A	The PELL is more / less <u>prevalent</u> in high or low achieving schools, e.g. all three schools with high achievement compared to two schools with low achievement.
Criteria B	The PELL is more/less <u>widespread</u> across staff members (i.e. a literacy leaders' influence is reaching a larger/smaller number of staff members)
Criteria C:	The PELL is more/less deeply <u>enduring</u> in the practice of teachers and leaders (i.e. been happening for a while compared to just happening now, or not happening at all)

Criteria B and C reflect the notions of embeddedness discussed in the literature review section of the thesis. Specifically, that effective literacy leaders ensure important literacy practices become embedded in schools by influencing a wide range of people in the school (for example senior leaders and teachers across faculties), and by sustaining the effort over time.

The following example shows how The Difference Rule was applied in discriminating practice for PELL D1. Analysis showed that all of the high and low achieving schools had evidence of this PELL (six schools). When the data from the summaries (Step C) were analysed however, it became apparent that practice was qualitatively different in high achieving schools. Literacy leaders in high achieving schools provided advice about resources to a wider range of staff members (Criteria B), and they had been doing this over an extended period of time (Criteria C). The following table summarizes this analysis.

**Table 13: Example of how the Difference Rule was applied**

PELL	Key phrase	Number of schools demonstrating this PELL		Analyses	Criteria met
		High Ach	Low Ach		
D1	Advising teachers about resources for students in their classes	3	3	Qualitatively different practice in high achieving schools	B and C

### **Step E: Analysis Three**

In this step, I went back into the summarized data from Steps C and D to explore further leadership practices. I did this only for the PELL where there were differences between high and lower achieving schools. The aim was to identify from all of these cases a small number of consolidated themes about literacy leadership practice that would form the basis of the thesis argument presented in the Findings section of this thesis. When these key leadership practices were consolidated, they fell into three clear themes (consolidated themes): Purposefully building teacher capability, Supporting and contributing to organisational coherence, Creating and maintaining a culture of improvement. Note that E2 and E3 PELL are generic. They relate to leaders drawing on their experience (E2), and drawing on their expertise as a leader (E3). They were, therefore, not included in a particular consolidated theme. Also



note that the analyses from this Step are presented in Appendix Six to provide the reader with more detail about the process and the findings. The following table presents the PELL and the consolidated themes.

**Table 14: Consolidate themes and PELL**

Consolidated theme	PELL associated with this theme	PELL associated with all Consolidated themes
Supporting and contributing to organisational coherence	C1, C4, C5, C7, C8, D5, E2	E2 and E3
Purposefully building teacher capability	A1, A3, D1	
Creating and maintaining a culture of improvement	B1, C2	

### **Content analyses**

One PELL in particular (A1) warranted deeper analyses. This PELL relates to building teachers' content knowledge, including building their pedagogical content knowledge. The rationale was that the material studied in the literature review (Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010 and 2011; Matsumura et al, 2013) did not provide sufficient level of detail about what content literacy leaders focused on when they guided teachers in their work. Furthermore, there was no information on secondary settings. Analysis was carried out of the interview scripts to see what, and how much, literacy content and pedagogical content knowledge literacy leaders focused on as they built teachers' capability, and whether teachers reported using the content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge in their teaching. The aim was to be able to discriminate whether there were differences for high and low achieving schools.

In order to do this, text from literacy leaders' and teachers' interviews was systematically mapped to the elements of the Guidelines for Effective Adolescent Literacy Instruction (GEALI) (Wilson, 2009) (Refer to Appendix Seven for information about GEALI). These guidelines relate to effective literacy pedagogy and literacy content that are likely to be the core business of literacy leaders in the English departments of the six secondary schools, and therefore, I would expect to see this reflected in schools' interview data.

### **Step F: Reporting**

In preparation for the reporting stage, I went back into the full texts of the leaders' and teachers' interviews (in NVivo and the summary data). It had been some time since I had reviewed data for Step One of the analysis process, and I wanted to immerse myself back in the data in order to examine information about specific PELL. Once I had done this I began reporting the data using the three consolidated themes.

## Chapter Four: Research Findings

In this chapter I briefly present the results of the analyses, then discuss the three key consolidated themes. The chapter concludes with an overall summary of the findings.

### The results of the analyses and synthesis

The results of the analyses show that there were differences in practice between high and low achieving schools in 13 PELL dimensions. These PELL were found in high achieving schools but not in low achieving schools, or not to the same extent. There were no clear differences in practice in 15 PELL dimensions, and a further 4 PELL dimensions could not be analysed for difference because there was insufficient information to do so. Note that the count above does not include situations where someone other than the literacy leader carries out the practice (A5 and D8), or where practice varies across schools (A6).

The following table presents the number of PELL where there were differences (marked in green), and what types of schools (high achieving or low achieving) the differences applied to. The table also indicates where there was insufficient data, and no clear differences between high and low achieving schools.

**Table 15: PELL differences**

PELL		Analyses
<b>Building teachers' content knowledge</b>		
A1	Building teachers content knowledge about what to teach, when and how	Qualitatively different practice in high achieving schools
A2	Helping teachers to address gaps in their practice to respond better to learners	No clear difference
A3	Helping teachers to understand literacy learning across curriculum	Qualitatively different practice in high achieving schools
A4	Leading groups of teachers in exploring research-based strategies	No clear difference
A5	Another person is building teachers' content knowledge	Qualitatively different practice in high achieving schools <b>but not counted because it was not the literacy leader</b>
A6	Another practice (not mentioned above) is being used to build teachers' content knowledge	This PELL is <b>not counted because practice varies across schools</b>

PELL		Analyses
<b>Encouraging new and innovative practice</b>		
B1	Challenging teachers to think of different ways of doing things	Qualitatively different practice in high achieving schools
B2	Encouraging teachers to be reflective about their practice	No clear difference
B3	Encouraging teachers to share ideas with each other	No clear difference
B4	Implementing opportunities to learn from peers	No clear difference
B5	Another person is encouraging new and innovative practice	Insufficient data
B6	Another practice (not mentioned above) is being used to encourage new and innovative practice	No clear difference
<b>Planning, sharing and implementing school literacy priorities</b>		
C1	Acquiring resources that align to students' needs	Qualitatively different practice in high achieving schools
C2	Building the trust and engagement of teachers and leaders	Qualitatively different practice in high achieving schools
C3	Considering the results of school-wide and cluster-wide measures	No clear difference
C4	Constructing a vision for literacy learning in the school	Qualitatively different practice in high achieving schools
C5	Engaging in curriculum evaluation	Qualitatively different practice in high achieving schools
C6	Improving parents and whānau actions and plans to improve their child's learning	No clear difference
C7	Planning a school literacy curriculum	Qualitatively different practice in high achieving schools
C8	Solving school problems related to teaching and learning	Qualitatively different practice in high achieving schools
C9	Another person is planning, sharing and implementing school literacy priorities	No clear difference
C10	Another practice (not mentioned above) is being used to plan, share and implement school literacy priorities	No clear difference
<b>Providing practical guidance to individual teachers about using best pedagogical practice</b>		
D1	Advising teachers about resources for students in their classes	Qualitatively different practice in high achieving schools

PELL		Analyses
D2	Demonstrating what best literacy teaching looks like	No clear difference
D3 <sup>18</sup>	Encouraging teachers to closely examine the data for every child	No clear difference
D4	Guiding teachers in how to interpret data to plan their teaching	No clear difference
D5	Guiding teachers in the use of smart tools	Qualitatively different practice in high achieving schools
D6	Helping teachers to create a curriculum programme that is student centred	Insufficient data
D7	Watching individual teachers and providing feedback	Insufficient data
D8	Another person is providing practical guidance to individual teachers	Qualitatively different practice in high achieving schools <b>but not counted because it was not the literacy leader</b>
D9	Another practice (not mentioned above) is being used to plan, share and implement school literacy priorities	No clear difference
<b>Leader disposition and skills</b>		
E1	Show a disposition to lead	No clear difference
E2	Draw on experience as a leader	Qualitatively different practice in high achieving schools
E3	Draw on expertise as a leader	Qualitatively different practice in high achieving schools
E4	Engage in sense-making, negotiation	Insufficient data

It should be noted that, in contrast to the one-to-one support characterised by literacy coaches in the USA much of the work that literacy leaders undertook with teachers was in the context of PLC or with groups of teachers. This may explain why there were no differences or insufficient data for some PELL related to working with individual teachers (for example, watching individual teachers and providing feedback).

In the remainder of this chapter I discuss the findings under the three consolidated themes - supporting and contributing to organisational coherence, purposefully building teacher capability, and creating and

<sup>18</sup> Note that D3 and D4 were combined in analyses as the data overlapped considerably.

maintaining a culture of improvement. To support the reader, the following information is provided about the participating schools.

**Table 16: School codes and descriptions**

School A	is a high decile school with high student achievement
School B	is a mid decile school with high student achievement
School C	is a low decile school with high student achievement
School D	is a high decile school with lower student achievement
School E	is a mid decile school with lower student achievement
School F	is a low decile school with lower student achievement

## **Finding One: Supporting and contributing to organisational coherence**

Two subthemes are explored in this chapter – Building and maintaining a vision for improvement, and developing and maintaining an improvement agenda. Each subtheme concludes with a summary.

In the context of this research, coherence is defined as the state of being consistent (with other initiatives, priorities and school policies) (O’Connell, 2010), systematic, and linked (Welton & Robinson, 2015). Leaders, including literacy leaders in their role as curriculum leaders and developers of teacher capability, are pivotal to the establishment of coherence in a school. It is the leaders who create the systems to achieve coherence by: building and maintaining a vision for improvement; developing and maintaining an improvement agenda; and purposefully building teacher capability.

### **Subtheme: Building and maintaining a vision for improvement**

Leaders help to create visions that guide and motivate teachers to achieve worthwhile goals (Murphy & Torre, 2015). Literacy leaders do this in the context of creating a vision for literacy in the school. The term vision encompasses the notions of mission (the broad moral purpose that inspires teachers and leaders to act). For example, the mission in a school might be to reduce inequity in literacy achievement. Vision also encompasses goals (the specific outcomes that are sought), and expectations (the concrete expression of the standards and performance that is to be achieved). Core aspects of mission in schools that are effective at raising student achievement include: a sense of optimism and hope about teachers and learners; a commitment to organisational improvement and shared responsibility for improving teachers’ and students’ outcomes; a belief that all learners can achieve; and a focus on better instructional practice (Murphy & Torre, 2015).

If we want to differentiate more or less effective schools, it is useful to examine the more concrete aspects of enacted vision – the goals that are articulated, and how expectations are expressed and met within the school. The following detail about four schools shows the differences in the enacted vision.

The vision at School A was that every student succeeded. Of all the schools in this research, School A did the most to enact its mission, and to spread the endeavour amongst teachers. The mission was led

strongly by the principal who held a student-centric view on where the school was heading. At School A there was a solid focus on raising the attainment of the students at risk – particularly dyslexic students. The view of teachers and leaders was that through raising the achievement of at-risk learners, the achievement of the whole school would be lifted. Two teachers commented on the principal's strong sense of direction, commitment to students, and expectations for teachers:

*He has a unique vision for the school. It's sort of always evolving. He wants the students to achieve but not on a pathway where this is the only way you will achieve. He believes that you can succeed within yourself and he's great at identifying students to target.*

*He has an unbelievable memory for the kids around the school and he knows them...That's true leadership I reckon - to get to know the kids. And then by the time they've reached Year 10, we know which kids need a little bit of extra work. (Teacher 2, School A)*

*He deliberately follows them quite closely [through the school management system] to see where they're at, and you never know when you've got a targeted student in your class ... And it's only 'til the year is up that he goes, "Actually, I was watching that student." I'm like, "Well, what did you do to support me?" He goes, "You didn't need it." But if he feels you did need it he would pull you in and say, "What sort of things are you offering the student? How can we help the student more?" and he actually does more contact one-to-one with the student than with the actual staff. (Teacher 1, School A)*

At School A, the literacy leader's focus on meeting the needs of dyslexic students gave effect to the school's vision that all students experience success. A specialist teacher, who had been appointed by the principal, worked closely with the literacy leader and they actively advocated for these learners. The specialist teacher normalised dyslexia by promoting the notion that these students are 'differently able'. The literacy leader and the specialist teacher provided significant practical support for teachers, usually around teaching practices and resources, so they could cater in class for these and other special needs students. The result of this concerted focus was a collective responsibility for at-risk learners, and accountability for their improved outcomes.

The literacy leader at School C had a clear idea about where the curriculum needed to develop – it needed to engage previously disengaged learners, bring together the fragmented practice that had been happening in teaching, and re-engage the parents and community. Prior to the literacy leader coming to the school, it had been under statutory management, with an external expert appointed to work with the trustees on aspects of the board's governance role. There was poor staff morale and the resignation of the principal had flow on effects in terms of teaching quality and student outcomes, and community perception of the school.

As a member of the leadership team, the literacy leader set about raising student achievement and engagement through more effective teaching practices. There were two particular areas she focused on: fostering greater connections between teachers previously working at cross-purposes, and building relationships between teachers and students. Her skills in creating a sense of direction were recognised by the staff:

*She knows exactly where the school should be going and what literacy things should be in place and should continue and not be dropped off. She had that knowledge and she knew how to apply it. I think that was where her strengths are. (Teacher A, School C)*

An example of this literacy leader's work was the establishment of a Homework Centre that restored relationships between some of the student population and teachers, and began to harness the engagement of the students' parents and whānau. The literacy leader described the process:

*There was a lot of trial and error [in getting the Homework Centre going], just getting the relationship going and the rules sorted out, but it's an institution of the school now. The Centre broke down those dysfunctional relationships. What happened was a minister or parent would come in and they'd share food and then they'd get on with their homework and teachers would help them. The visionary model was emulating a home at night where the kids get out their homework on the kitchen table and parents would help them. For [named school], it was never just a Homework Centre, it was a circuit breaker – a way of attending to the dysfunctional relationships [that had existed before between teachers and students]. It was a way of showing students that teachers did like them, and of showing teachers that the students liked them too. The Homework Centre was another thing that lifted achievement. (Literacy leader, School C)*

The challenge for this literacy leader, however, was to manage the new principal who was similarly driven to implement improvement, but whose focus was of a more general nature. While his agenda might not have been in competition with her vision, she was mindful of the need to protect staff from the effects of too much change in too short a time frame:

*I remember him saying to me we've got to do this and I said "the teachers are tired, they just want you to slow down," and he said we haven't got time to slow down. If we don't do it now we'll lose our chance, so we didn't slow down. The teachers worked really hard. (Literacy leader, School C)*

In contrast, the literacy leader at School E faced considerable barriers to progressing her mission of raising the quality of teaching in literacy. While she worked hard to achieve a lift in student outcomes, the senior leaders were working in another direction on broader curriculum priorities that worked against a more targeted approach. An earlier focus on literacy had been superseded by a focus on promoting the Key Competencies of The New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007). When a new principal was appointed, the focus shifted to the Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) initiative. While both of these new foci were considered important by the literacy leader, her regret was that important gains made in literacy professional learning had not been sustained.

Combined with the challenges of significant staff loss, it was difficult for the literacy leader to gain much traction in improving literacy teaching and learning. From a previous position of having regular contact with teachers, she was now much less able to exercise literacy leadership, and had lost track of the practices teachers were using to promote literacy at the school:

*We did [some curriculum planning for literacy] over two years, we did the whole lot... but then we went through a lull where we plateaued - our principal left, our head of*

*English left, two of our DPs left, the roll dropped - so we had some significant changes. The new senior management kept changing the focus a little bit and literacy went off the radar for maybe three years while we did values and key competencies and all of that other stuff. We're coming back into [focusing on literacy] now because our results are not that good... I know there are some strategies that are happening but I'm not sure what the purpose is of them. I don't know and that's the thing. (Literacy leader, School E)*

Consensus building and buy in are critical to progressing visions, (Murphy & Torre, 2015). At School F, the literacy leader took a unilateral approach to achieving the priorities of the senior leaders. There were limited options for the literacy leader and the teachers to set the direction for their work. As these excerpts indicate, the literacy leader needed to work hard to ensure the teachers bought into the senior leaders' expectations:

*I have to be a driver of things completely. No matter how competent people are they tend to be individuals. So I have to say this is the plan, this is the vision, this is why we are doing it, it's not going to be perfect, and I don't have all the answers. I have to sell it - "We're doing this because..." (Literacy leader, School F)*

### **Subtheme summary: Building and maintaining a vision for improvement**

There are clear differences between the higher and lower achieving schools in terms of how vision was created and enacted. Two high achieving schools benefited from a clear vision of where the school needed to go. In school A, this came from the principal and was conveyed with clarity to teachers, and expected to be actioned by teachers. The teachers were supported in making the vision happen through strong support from the literacy leader and other senior leaders. The literacy leader at School C had a clear vision of how the school should serve learners and their families, and committed to bringing about major changes for them. The fact that teachers supported the Homework Centre indicated their commitment to the leader and to the students and their families.

In the lower achieving schools, the division between literacy leaders and senior leaders was apparent, and the lack of a clear commitment to a vision impacted on the literacy leaders' abilities to move forward. In School F, the constantly shifting priorities set by the senior leaders, meant that options for improving teachers' literacy practices were minimal. In School E, the literacy leader lacked agency to implement a shared programme of learning for teachers, and was reduced to anticipating the demands of the senior leaders.

### **Subtheme: Developing and maintaining an improvement agenda**

A feature of schools with higher achievement was the greater presence of systems that supported the development and maintenance of an improvement agenda. Aspects of a Coherence Framework (Welton & Robinson, 2015), have been used in the following sections to discuss literacy leadership found in the case study schools. This framework was discussed in the literature review section of the thesis. It has relevance for this study because it outlines the key organisational and leadership practices found in schools that take a coherent approach to addressing improvement. The practices included in



this section are: strategies are aligned to achieve the improvement agenda, maintaining a focus on what matters, routines that support coherence, and artefacts that support coherence.

### ***Strategies are aligned to achieve the improvement agenda***

Literacy leaders in schools with higher achievement aligned the work they did with the improvement agenda they had planned for teachers and students. Their efforts focused on linking previous learning, policy or projects to new learning, and reducing the “clutter” associated with too many initiatives. Many of the schools had been involved in PLD programmes including: the Secondary Literacy Project (2009-2011), Te Kotahitanga (2004-2012), Starpath (2004 to present day), Schooling Improvement projects (various), e-Learning Professional development (various), and Positive Behaviour for Learning (2009 to present day). Some schools, by virtue that PLD was targeted towards the lowest decile schools, participated in a fairly intense period of the initiatives above over an extended period of time.

Where there were insights from previous PLD that were considered to be valuable by leaders, literacy leaders took them forward into their new programmes, seeking to build on practice that was familiar, and valued by teachers. For instance at School A, earlier PLD with the Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour framed the expectations and practices of staff in initiating provision for dyslexic learners.

The literacy leader at School C was particularly adept at aligning the agenda. The school had established a programme to support teachers to use more culturally responsive pedagogical practices in their teaching. The literacy leader’s contribution to this programme helped to create links between the principles of the programme and aspects of literacy:

*I was able to present literacy sessions to the staff suggesting that writing is about relationships too. All the writer has to do is prepare the relationship (the powhiri), say something meaningful (ako) and say goodbye or conclude (poroporoaki). It fitted in with the principles of our programme and people liked that and started to do it. When we started to think outside the square it got easier. (Literacy leader at School C)*

For School E, however, creating this coherence was a significant challenge. There had been years of successive teacher professional development from external providers with little opportunity in between to create links between the PLD and the broader vision for the school, or to embed the learning through school systems. The literacy leader had recently been appointed to a role as a professional development leader, and in this new role he was hopeful of being able to achieve greater coherence across the school. For instance, he had recently turned his attention to how *Ka Hikitia – Accelerating Success 2013-2017* (Ministry of Education, 2013) could be realised through other professional development work being carried out in the school.

### ***Maintaining a focus on what matters***

Literacy leaders create coherence by exercising strategic choice about what they expect from staff in their departments. The literacy leader at School B was inclined to push back on certain issues if she felt they were not in the interests of staff or students. For example, the senior leadership team had introduced a range of thinking frameworks for students (Habits of Mind, Thinking Hats, and Bloom’s

taxonomy) that they expected teachers to integrate into their programmes. Curriculum leaders were expected to promote the frameworks through the department work programme. This expectation did not fit the literacy leader's vision for the department, or for students' learning. While not openly resisting the idea of the thinking frameworks, the literacy leader looked for ways to ensure the department stayed focused on what was important – the learning needs of the students:

*I just thought, "No I can't do habits of mind at this point"... I think as a department we will select certain ones to target [but] ....for me philosophically my problem is that there are so many of these things....you [could] just drown. You have to go back to what are effective for our students. (Literacy leader, School B)*

School B was moving towards implementing digital technologies. While the literacy leader could see the benefits in terms of curriculum opportunities, she had reservations about the impact of yet more change on teachers' and students' learning and sought to protect staff in the faculty:

*I'm quite keen on filtering out. I think it's just unrealistic really [to implement digital technologies in classes] and I'm not going to ask my department to do that. I'll do some of it, and I would sooner say, "Failed the goal, didn't do it," than lie and pretend that we're trying to do it because ... I think that [implementing] digital technologies ... will overload [the teachers]. You've just got to filter. (Literacy leader, School B)*

In contrast, the literacy leader at School F felt he could not resist the pressure from senior leaders, and persuaded teachers to follow the leaders' expectations:

*There's different ways of selling it. You can sell it by just saying this is a really good idea. Often what I say is, "Look [the] Senior Leadership Team is going to ask us to do this later in the year or down the track, all of us hate change so let's get in beforehand. Okay, we're probably going to have to [select students for] the Teaching as Inquiry process in term three, so let's set it up on term one when we are not busy". So that's also part of being a little bit ahead of the game and sharing with your department what you think will happen. (Literacy leader, School F)*

These two responses are the only instances of how literacy leaders responded to the expectations of leaders. They have been included to show the way literacy leaders absorbed or buffered pressure from senior leaders. It is not possible, however, to generalise the extent to which the practices differ in high and lower achieving contexts.

### ***Routines that support coherence***

Routines help to create coherence in schools. Routines are "a set of possible patterns from which organisational members enact particular performance" (Feldman, 2000, p.613). Schools with better student achievement engaged in routines that provided good opportunities for literacy leaders and teachers to gain a clear and shared understanding of practice, issues and processes. These included: regular planned meetings to discuss students' achievement and progress, and curriculum planning that focused on meeting students' learning needs (Schools A and B); and meetings whereby teachers moderated students' work in order to gain an accurate picture of attainment relative to a standard (School B). The following excerpt is illustrative of a routine that promotes teachers' learning:

*We have English meetings once a month; a timetabled formal English meeting and [the literacy leader] will always present some PLD at that and it will always have a literacy focus. I don't know how actually in the English department you could present any PLD without a literacy focus. Very often, because there could be up to 15 or 16 people in our department, there will be tasks and we will break into groups of either choice of topic, level groups or social groups. There will be a task for us and then there will be some way of implementing this in our teaching (Teacher 1, School B).*

By contrast, lower achieving schools' approach was considerably more ad hoc, and/or administrative. Typically, these schools' practices included processes for entering data into the student management system, informal mentoring from another teacher, and intermittent one-on-one support for teachers (generally about accessing resources).

One of the most common routines in several schools (B, C, D, and E) was teaching as inquiry, commonly referred to by teachers and leaders as "inquiry". The inquiry model played out slightly differently in each school but elements in common included the selection of students as targets for more intense teaching and monitoring in class. Generally the teacher was accountable for the improved achievement of these target students and reported to a senior teacher or the literacy leader. This inquiry was often linked to the appraisal process, and related to at-risk gender or ethnic cohorts in the school. While schools B, C, D and E all engaged in some form of inquiry, aspects of the inquiry approach used in the high achieving schools set their practice apart from lower achieving schools.

School B had a strong emphasis on using a range of evidence to focus teaching on the attainment of improved achievement. Such an approach is supported by the literature (Timperley et al, 2007).

*We certainly know where there's a tail and we're always looking at all of [the students] to see where the shifts can be made... I said, "Right, these are all the people who have failed. What are we all going to do as strategies for lifting achievement amongst these kids within our classrooms?" So we shared differentiation processes and resources. (Literacy leader, School B)*

The strength of this school was the very robust review of how well the curriculum was serving students' achievement and engagement:

*At the end of the year we do a review... We look at all the factors; what interfered with our programme... We look at what the data is doing, what skills we've actually taught and whether the skills had any bearing on what we actually got as assessment, whether the actual assessment measured what we were assessing because sometimes it's a great assessment but it's not measuring what we set out to measure but the kids love it and we like it and you stick with it. You're looking at that reflective practice all the time. Sometimes we ditch a whole unit and say, "We've just got to change this." We don't throw out everything because over time they work. (Literacy leader, School B).*

School C focused on tackling specific problems of practice, and had a clear process to support teachers to solve them:

*Some of the PD was presented as whole staff, but where it really “bit” was where we had tutorial sessions once a week and where staff elected to go. I used the problem based methodology (PBM) process where they brought in an issue... and we explored how teachers could respond to the literacy needs of students in that particular subject. They went away and implemented it. Different teachers took away different things. No one ever took away what I thought they would. Some teachers realized they needed to teach vocabulary in different ways and you’d see vocab banks go up on their walls. (Literacy leader, School C)*

At School D, inquiry took the form of classroom action learning which was then shared with others. This application of inquiry did not cover all the essential steps in the teaching as inquiry model and lacked the necessary interrogation of outcomes and deliberate strategising of next teaching steps. School E had target students whose achievement was closely tracked using Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning (asTTle) (Hattie et al, 2003), however inquiry as an embedded part of teacher learning was not well developed. Schools B and C, however, implemented processes that most closely aligned to the spirit and intent of inquiry as articulated in the New Zealand Curriculum.

### ***Artefacts that support coherence***

Artefacts are “conceptual tools, practical tools, and processes for enhancing collective responsibility” (Marsh & Farrell, 2015, p.275), and systems or tools (Welton & Robinson, 2015). They include resources and organisational structures. Artefacts can bring focus and discipline to the work of teachers in a faculty by making it clear how things will be done, guiding the way they are carried out (Marsh & Farrell, 2015), and helping to produce knowledge (D’Aderio, 2011). Artefacts are also imbued with values about what ought to be done, and what is valued in terms of teaching and learning. These values are often less visible, and only sometimes articulated (Maslowski, 2006). Literacy leaders foster coherence by developing and making use of artefacts at a departmental level. They sometimes also make them available to other leaders and teachers.

Artefacts were most extensively used and embedded as part of the culture of the three schools where achievement was higher. They included:

- processes for identifying and promoting the learning of students with dyslexia and other students’ learning challenges (School A)
- course outline planning that framed the curriculum at various student year levels, and successively built on students’ previous learning through a spiral approach (School B)
- writing exemplars at different levels of the curriculum so that students knew how well they were achieving, and teachers had a benchmark for student performance (School B)
- clearly articulated quality teaching actions in relation to certain NCEA achievement standards or aspects of English and literacy (Schools B and C)
- processes for collaboratively analysing the achievement of learners and subgroups of learners (for example Māori or Pasifika), and producing reports to senior managers or the board of trustees so that programmes could be well resourced for these learners (Schools A and B)

- systems of analyses to monitor closely the achievement of all students and to identify quickly and accurately students whose learning was not at the expected level (Schools A, B and C)
- processes for acquiring resources that matched the learning needs of students (Schools A, B and C)

From teachers' perspectives, these artefacts were a valued and essential part of how things were done. Artefacts made it clear how teachers would carry out their role in the school.

In Schools D, E and F, typically, there were fewer opportunities to create artefacts because routines were not in place for teachers' learning. Confounding the issue were events and actions at the school level, such as the appointment of a new senior leadership team or a change in curriculum focus that overtook the literacy leaders' work. The range of artefacts was fewer, their use was less embedded in the culture of the department, and was, therefore, less likely to be sustained over time. Further, artefacts were more inclined to be basic or routine rather than processes that engaged the intellect, or challenged teachers. They were also more likely to be imposed by the literacy leader (or other designated leader) rather than co constructed with teaching peers.

### ***Subtheme summary: Developing and maintaining an improvement agenda***

The difference between higher and lower achieving schools was the extent to which the literacy leader could proceed with creating and maintaining an improvement agenda. Distractions, the lack of a coherent overarching vision for the school from senior leaders, and the subsequent lack of infrastructure, such as routines and processes, did not help them carry out their work.

In higher achieving schools, the strategies the literacy leader chose were better aligned to the overall mission, goals and expectations the senior leaders had set. Further, literacy leaders in higher achieving schools could maintain a focus on what mattered without the distraction of peripheral action in the school. We can say tentatively that these leaders were also more likely to push back on what did not matter at that point in time. They were clearly more able to ensure that routines were in place to support important work that focused on improving teaching and learning.

## **Finding Two: Purposefully building teacher capability**

Three subthemes are explored in this section – The processes for building teachers' capability, the content and pedagogy literacy leaders focused on, and improving weak practice. Each subtheme concludes with a summary.

Teachers need to have strong content and pedagogical content knowledge in order to help students to learn. They also need to develop the capacity to "act as adaptive experts" – responding in a dynamic way to evidence about learners' strengths, interests and needs, by adjusting the curriculum (McNaughton et al, 2009). Literacy leaders play a particularly important role in supporting teachers to acquire and enhance capability. They establish processes for building teacher capability, focus on building their content and pedagogical content knowledge, and improve weak practice.

### **Subtheme: Processes for building teacher capability**

The processes for building teacher capability were different in the two groups of schools in this study. Typically, in high achieving schools, the processes were informal such as peer to peer sharing, but there were also many opportunities for formalised and regular learning such as through faculty meetings or professional learning groups. In these contexts the learning was framed by a particular focus or issue with which teachers were grappling. For instance, Schools A and B were dealing with how digital learning could be integrated into the English curriculum. Aspects of the teaching as inquiry framework were used. Inquiry was a distinct feature of this professional learning. By comparison, literacy leaders in low achieving schools struggled to find opportunities to work with teachers because senior leaders were focused on other things.

Participation within professional learning groups, however, is not sufficient to change practice that is ineffective. The Teacher Professional Learning and Development Best Evidence Synthesis (2007, p.xxvii) states that a key role for effective leaders includes “providing alternative visions and targets for student outcomes and [monitoring] whether they were met.”

Two of the literacy leaders in the high performing schools had strong processes for shifting thinking towards the achievement of better student outcomes. At School C, the literacy leader promoted teacher learning on a relatively wide scale, and with valued outcomes for learners. She did this by distributing the leadership to staff who served as literacy champions. The champions had content knowledge in their own discipline, and were equipped with skills to work well with other teachers:

*What literacy champions had to do was keep an eye on students with special needs like ESOL students with reading difficulties and bring those students to the attention of teachers in their subject areas. There were far too many ESOL students in mainstream without support. So the literacy champion keeps an eye on asTTle scores and the reports, they let teachers know “this student has a really low score and when he is in your science class just remember to try out some scaffolding and here’s some scaffolding ideas.” They learned the ideas through PD.*

The literacy champions helped the literacy leader to exercised influence across a much wider range of people within the school than would be possible to achieve on her own. The literacy leader had significant previous experience working as an adult tutor and brought this knowledge to the professional learning context at the school.

*The literacy champion had to do things like look at the various handouts [resources] that the MoE and other various people gave us, like Effective Literacy Practice and other stuff from “Down the Back of the Chair”. We looked at these in PD and then they took them back to the department meetings [and talked about them]. We talked about how you cannot just give a book to teachers when they need help. You have to show them a page and help them apply what they have learned to their own practice. (Literacy leader, School C)*

In School B, the approach to teacher learning was twofold: there were sessions where the literacy leader deliberately targeted known gaps in teachers’ knowledge and pedagogy:

*[In] the review process we often write, "Next year let's get some PLD on x," [because] we need some training in writing...Often that's in a department meeting. If it's really [widespread] we try and take it to a wider staff meeting. In principle everybody is a teacher of reading and writing across the whole school; practical application sometimes everybody needs to be reminded of that. (Literacy leader, School B)*

And there were the less formal occasions where the learning was more responsive to emerging topics of relevance:

*About three meetings back we were supposed to do review and I said, "Right just flag review." I set people up in groups and said, "I want you to take one of those units [you have developed] [and adapt it to focus on] both digital collaborative learning. You work it out, I don't care what you do, free reign." Each group redesigned one unit to be a digital collaborative one. We couldn't have done it this year because we wouldn't have been able to do the collaborative or the digital; so the idea that we're trying to start the future focussing now. (Literacy leader, School B)*

Establishing these ways of building professional practice were more challenging for Schools E and F. School E had experienced significant staff turnover, including a new principal, and the disestablishment of a cluster of schools to which School E had belonged. The school cluster had previously provided leaders with a useful focus on literacy, assessment and students' progression across early childhood, primary and secondary schooling

*[The cluster used] to be very strong. ... We got some funding that allowed the Head of Faculty to have the literacy leaders' meeting ... with all the schools, so we had representatives from all the schools, and that lasted maybe five, six years.... [We talked about] standardised testing really, whether we've moved on the aTTie and whether we've moved on the STAR and what the kids are coming in at, and, of course, depending on where you're at in that educational continuum... And then it was [happening] once a term and we don't have it at all now. (Literacy leader, School E)*

Professional learning had moved away from literacy to other priorities, leaving the literacy leader with few opportunities to influence and support other teachers:

*The focus [on providing support to teachers] has changed a little bit again, cos we're really into the values and the PB4L stuff... So that's been the focus this term, so any PD that I've taken has been taken when others can't do their slot, so "here can you do something". And I pretty much take it whenever I can. (Literacy leader, School E)*

For School F, there had been a long period of involvement in externally-delivered professional learning and development. The SLP had provided good framing for teachers' learning, but there was a sense that teachers needed time and the support of leaders to embed the principles and practices into staff behaviour.

### **Subtheme summary: Processes for building teacher capability**

Robust processes were in place to support teachers' learning in the high achieving schools. These processes align with what we know about what works in terms of building teachers' practices from the

TPLD BES (Timperley et al, 2007). Specifically, there were extended opportunities for teachers to learn and for leaders to lead the professional learning. Literacy leaders created a professional community in which teachers could develop new understandings and examine some of the beliefs and practices associated with their work. Literacy leaders worked alongside teachers, and sometimes delegated the leading to other teachers in order to extend the opportunities for meaningful learning.

By contrast, literacy leaders in schools with lower achievement struggled with lack of opportunities to work with teachers or needed more time to establish an effective environment and processes to engage in meaningful and coherent professional learning.

### **Subtheme: The content and pedagogy literacy leaders focused on**

#### ***Analysis using GEALI***

Analysis was undertaken on one PELL in particular (A1). This PELL relates to building teachers' content knowledge, including building their pedagogical content knowledge. The aim of the analysis was to investigate whether there were quantifiable differences in leaders' and teachers' practices across high and low achieving schools. The availability of the GEALI framework (Wilson, 2009) helped in the analysis process.

Analysis involved reading all of the teachers' and leaders' transcripts again. I marked in the transcripts instances where the participants mentioned a GEALI practice, including teachers reporting using the practices, and leaders promoting the practices (see Table 17 below for the practices). When all of the coding was finished, I undertook a count of the number of times teachers and leaders reported each effectiveness practice.

The following are the findings for each GEALI practice.

**Table 17: Analysis of literacy leaders' and teachers' practices with reference to GEALI**

<b>Effectiveness practices</b>	<b>Pedagogical focus (PF) Content focus (CF)</b>	<b>More apparent in higher achieving schools</b>	<b>More apparent in lower achieving schools</b>	<b>No difference between higher and lower achieving schools</b>	<b>Not apparent in any schools</b>
Teaching decisions based on quality evidence and ongoing inquiry	PF	✓			
Opportunity to engage with text	PF		✓		
Linking written, oral and visual language	CF	✓			
Creating appropriate challenge	PF				✓
Students have a clear understanding of the purpose of learning	PF		✓		



Effectiveness practices	Pedagogical focus (PF) Content focus (CF)	More apparent in higher achieving schools	More apparent in lower achieving schools	No difference between higher and lower achieving schools	Not apparent in any schools
Creating a supportive learning environment	PF	✓			
Providing students with specific feedback	PF			✓	
Developing students' skills to make links to prior knowledge	CF			✓	
Knowing how different texts are organised	CF		✓		
Developing skills in receptive and productive language use	CF	✓			
Developing vocabulary and vocabulary solving skills	CF	✓			
Developing students' skills to employ key comprehension and writing strategies	CF		✓		
Developing students' skills to engage with text beyond a literal/factual level	CF			✓	

This analysis shows that overall there were no clear differences in the extent to which literacy leaders in high and low achieving schools paid attention to effective practices as outlined GEALI. There are three areas where there were no clear differences between either groups of schools, and there was one practice that neither high nor low achieving schools attended to – creating appropriate challenge.

### ***Engaging students***

There was one aspect of pedagogical content not mentioned in the list above that separated the quality of the practice between the high and low achieving schools – the attention leaders and teachers paid to selecting material for students that was engaging for them. Compared to low achieving schools, Schools A, B and C paid much greater attention to making learning enjoyable for students, and ensuring that students were successful regardless of their ability. They did this through the careful choice of interesting and relevant texts, and teaching practices that responded to students' interests and needs.

At School A, where there is a solid focus on dyslexic learners, considerable effort is made to select materials and assessment processes that ensure these students' successful participation in classroom programmes:

*Well one of the things that I think with books is that kids should have a choice of what they're reading, rather than being told what novel. The other thing is, how do you make that novel accessible?... For me, I read it aloud. Now that takes the choice away, but I will always have another novel for the better readers to go on and do as well, so they get some choice there. The other thing is looking at [whether everything needs to be] done in a novel? ... We can still learn critical thinking through looking at a film and saying, 'what is the message coming through from this?' 'How relevant is it to my life?' and that sort of thing. (Literacy leader, School A)*

School B has a very useful process of curriculum review that ensures that the texts students encounter are supporting their learning:

*We are always trying to differentiate the resources we choose for the different abilities so that any single child in any single class has got something that they can read really easily versus something that is really challenging. We hope there's always something for the kid who already reads 40 novels can read yet another one and it's more challenging. If we get to a class and this kid has read everything we are quite happy to go out and buy something else or get something else. So that's resourcing in terms of reading, but you could run that across all levels, so everything is spiral in terms of those resources. We are pretty quick to gather resources. (Literacy leader School B)*

Early in her tenure, the literacy leader at School C had recognized the need to address the poor engagement of learners that impacted on their achievement and progress.

*The English department was full of texts like *The Winslow Boy*, and *Under Milkwood* which is a beautiful piece of work but it wasn't relevant to the students at that time, although I would consider using it now. There were huge issues [with engagement]. I used to walk down the corridor and the graffiti was everywhere. And so I used to come in at the weekend and make huge copies of poetry and pin them up on the walls. They'd last a couple of weeks and the kids would tear them down and I'd do it again. There was low literacy, very poor engagement, extremely poor attendance and very little commitment in terms of NCEA. The kids said we don't care about the school because the teachers don't. (Literacy leader, School C)*

The establishment of a vibrant library that engaged learners helped to turn this situation around, however, according to the literacy leader, improved teaching in classes was the most significant factor impacting on achievement. As this excerpt shows, the support the literacy leader provided shifted teaching practice:

*The PE department was interesting. They said sometimes we don't get the kids to write in PE and then when they do NCEA they can't do it [write] and that's not the English department's fault, that's our fault. So they now do reflective journals and I've observed classes where, before they do a PE game or sports game, they'll read a wee bit of story, so there's a wee bit of reading and writing that wasn't there before... That [practice] wasn't there before. That was the response from PE. They started to say, yes they could do it. We gave them a way or some strategies they could apply to their subject areas.*

*Leading literacy in this schools has been like waiting for the opportune moment and seizing it. I used to hear teachers say “they come into my class and they don’t even know how to write an essay. What does the English department do?” No one says that now. They say, “How can I help my students write better in my subject?” So there’s been a real shift in thinking that literacy is everyone’s business. (Literacy leader, School C)*

This change in attitude shows the impact a skilled literacy leaders can make in terms of improving teachers’ practices, especially practices that involve increasing the capability of all teachers in a school to promote literacy through their subject areas.

### ***Subtheme summary: The content and pedagogy literacy leaders focused on***

There was little noticeable difference between the content and pedagogical content knowledge that literacy leaders focus on in high and low achieving schools. Analysis did show, however, that literacy leaders in high achieving schools focus more on how to engage students in learning through the use of resources that align to their interests and their learning needs.

### **Subtheme: Improving weak practice**

There were small differences in how literacy leaders supported teachers to improve weaknesses in their literacy teaching. In School B, a range of approaches were used depending on the extent of the help that was required, and the willingness of the teacher in question to respond to the support offered. The literacy leader carefully analysed issues teachers were experiencing, and provided them with tiered support. Teachers in the faculty had been together as a team for some time, and the literacy leader had good knowledge of their strengths, and who she could call on to support those in need of some help. There was a shared ethos of improvement characterised by:

- support from an able “buddy teacher’ working at the same year level
- opportunities to engage in peer observation of expert teachers
- the literacy leader, and sometimes the Specialist Classroom Teacher, visiting teachers’ classes to observe and provide feedback on specific aspects of teaching and learning.

Where a teacher still did not respond, the literacy leader became “much more dictatorial”:

*If that person has been worked with, and been told and told again then [the support is] much more like “You have to do this and I’m going to come and observe it and then you’re going to report back to me how that went because you need to shift”. It depends on what it is [that needs to be addressed]. There has been the odd occasion where that has happened, other occasions it’s just about content or about how to go about teaching a particular skill. (Literacy leader, School B)*

Weaker teachers at lower achieving schools also got help from their literacy leaders but compared to high achieving schools, the help came more directly from the literacy leader. At School F, the literacy leader was working with staff who were generally less experienced than those in Schools A, B and C. The option of teachers receiving help from a buddy teacher, or peer observation, was not used. To shift

practice, he had established a new teacher appraisal system that helped him to identify who needed support. The literacy leader then followed up with teachers personally in order to build capability:

*I picked up through the first meeting [with the teacher] that there were some general issues about getting through the programme and even understanding the requirements of a certain achievement standard, and what you can and can't submit. I just said, "What we'll do is we'll start meeting once a week for a period and actually we'll just go through where are the students up to with their assessments." So that was our starting point. So it's just investment of time. The teacher ended up getting really great results at the end of the year. I find that far more effective than anything else; it's just a sit down and we're going to meet. (Literacy leader School F)*

At School D, the literacy leader recognized the need to provide practical support to one of her novice teachers in order to develop her content knowledge:

*When X came she hadn't had a lot of experience with unfamiliar texts and because that's the big driving thing with me... she wanted to know more about it. I was her mentor, I talked about how you can integrate that into your everyday lessons... With any kind of change it's like chipping away at a piece of stone until it becomes a pebble and it's so smooth and round. That's kind of what it's been like with X... Not necessarily how do we do it but how we approach it, and what do I need to do was my strategy. (Literacy leader, School D)*

### **Subtheme summary: Improving weak practice**

In summary, weaker teachers were dealt with in different ways, but these ways are consistent with the literature on effective support for teachers as articulated in the TPLD BES. Literacy leaders in the lower achieving schools were more likely to step in to provide one to one support for teachers whose practice was weak. Literacy leaders in schools with higher achievement generally had more depth of experience or expertise amongst their teachers. This meant that support for struggling teachers could come from capable peers who worked alongside them to shift their practice.

## **Finding Three: Creating and maintaining a culture of improvement**

One theme is explored in this section. The discussion concludes with a summary.

Leaders in high achieving schools were more effective at creating and maintaining a culture that was conducive to teachers' improvement and to improving outcomes for learners. Culture in the context of this research is defined as a set of basic assumptions (beliefs, habits, thoughts and feelings) about teaching and learning; values (strategies, goals and philosophies) about how to engage in teaching and learning, and artefacts (described in an earlier section).

The culture was created by a literacy leader with the group of teachers in his/her faculty as they carried out their business of educating students and solving problems of practice related to students' education. The culture is valued and practiced by the group, and sometimes spread to other parts of the school as the "correct" way to think, feel and act in relation to achieving valued outcomes for learners (Schein, 1988)

Leaders in the three high achieving schools were more likely than the other leaders to refer to teachers in their faculties and departments as able and confident, independent and innovative:

*Professional inquiry was in place, and all over the place people were saying “I want to research how to teach literacy to Maori students, or I want to research information literacy or I want to develop a website that meets the needs of Pasifika students. What you got was all these different fields [of PLD] overlapping. That was the exciting place the school was in at the end of last year when we got presentations from different teachers on what they’d done in their PD.*

*There were 2 women – one Maori and another Pasifika who looked at the needs of year 10 Maori girls – those with identified low achievement- and they looked at the possible course that could be offered in NCEA. They went away and developed a proposal for a new course called Pacific Studies. It’s a cross curricular course that arose out of them thinking about a need and taking it right through to a course proposal and implementation stage.... Teachers are not thinking in silos anymore. (Literacy leader, School C)*

They were also more likely to promote opportunities for teachers to collaborate with each other, to share their expertise with others, and to lead others in the group as a teacher leader:

*I suppose everybody in my department I see as a literacy leader. We devolve the power quite significantly because we respect each other as professionals so a lot of us have a lot of input on everything. While I suppose I make the ultimate decisions everything is collaborative within our departments across year levels. (Literacy leader, School B)*

In the higher achieving schools, teachers and literacy leaders made many more references to students reaching high standards and being successful compared to their counterparts in lower achieving schools. This excerpt from a literacy leader shows the focus on high expectations at her school:

*High expectations are ingrained in everything we do. I think that word “high” often links to excellence but we don’t see it like that; we see it as let’s get her higher than she was and I think that’s what our high expectations are - that she is in my Year 11 and she can’t read and she can’t write and how can I get her a bit higher? Even the excellence kids, why don’t we make them think harder about this or that? So the high expectations are really ingrained ... we expect quite a lot and we keep building it as the kids go through to year 13. (Literacy leader, School B)*

## **Summary**

Overall, in higher achieving schools, literacy leaders’ values were more evident in their interview data, and the culture of the school was manifest more clearly in routines and a range of artefacts leaders developed to support teaching and learning. The culture in these schools was typically collaborative, and there was a focus on having high expectations of learners.

## **Summary of the overall findings**

### **The literacy leadership findings**

In this research study, interview scripts were coded to 35 categories and analysed to see whether there were differences in the practices that literacy leaders in high achieving and lower achieving schools used to exercise influence in their schools. The results show that literacy leaders in high achieving schools were more likely to use a greater range of the PELL (14 practices) compared to low achieving schools. There were 15 practices in which there were no differences between high and low achieving schools. There was insufficient data to discriminate practice in 4 PELL. Analysis of the content and pedagogical content of the GEALI effectiveness practices (Wilson 2009) showed that there were no clear differences in the extent to which leaders focused on these aspects. There were differences, however, in the extent to which schools focused on designing and implementing a curriculum that engaged learners. High achieving schools did this more effectively than low achieving schools.

In addition to the analyses about the extent to which PELL were evident, further analyses showed that there were differences in the quality of the leadership in three broad categories of practice. These three categories are - focusing on improving students' attainment and improving the engagement of learners; fostering organisational coherence; and creating a culture for improvement. Literacy leaders in high achieving schools indicated that they did these things more frequently than their peers in lower achieving schools..

### **The school factors that impacted on literacy leaders' work**

Literacy leadership is understandable by considering the context in which it happens. The context includes people in school, and in the wider school and educational community. Context also includes the decisions made within the school setting such as who gets to make decisions, and what curriculum priorities have been chosen as a school focus. Some of the decisions will be influenced by a broader education policy environment such as NCEA curricula and assessment. Some will be heavily influenced by the need to address local issues such as how to support students at risk of poor achievement.

The findings from this research suggest that some organisational factors might impact on literacy leaders' abilities to carry out their roles effectively. Identifying the possible school factors impacting on literacy leaders is somewhat more speculative than identifying the literacy practices because school factors were not the main focus of the research.

### ***The negative factors***

Literacy leaders in lower achieving schools generally faced more challenges than those in higher achieving schools in carrying out their work. There were two key areas of challenge – new leadership, and shifting priorities. On their own, neither of these factors is likely to pose a risk to a literacy leader's work. Evidence from this research suggests, however, that a change of leadership combined with a change of direction in priorities for teacher professional learning might impact more deeply.

The literacy leader at School E faced significant barriers to exercising literacy leadership with teachers. The new principal, through his decision to change priorities at the school (from literacy to PB4L), effectively removed most of the past opportunities available to her for working with teachers in the school and in the wider school community. The opportunity for leaders to work with teachers has been linked to student achievement outcomes in the coaching literature, and it is possible that the lack of opportunity may have impacted on achievement at the school. This contrasts with the situation at School C where the literacy leader had been able to work with the new principal to effect a considerable turn-around at the school in terms of student engagement and teacher capability.

### ***The positive factors***

In many ways the positive factors supporting the work of literacy leaders were the opposite of, or absence of, the negative factors expressed above. Literacy leaders in high achieving schools worked in an environment characterised by clear priorities and goals that were shared across the school. While high achieving schools were not immune to change, literacy leaders were able to cope with change in a more resilient manner, and were able to harness the engagement of teachers and the senior leadership team in bringing about improvements for learners.

# Chapter Five: Discussion

In this chapter I briefly revisit the key findings in relation to the thesis proposition. In addition, sections of this chapter address the contribution that this research has made to the field of leadership, the limitations of the research, and the implications of the research for future study.

## The key findings revisited

In this research I set out to investigate the specific leadership practices that literacy leaders use to influence and guide teachers in schools with different patterns of NCEA achievement in English. I argued that more effective literacy leaders (those working in schools with high student achievement) use a core set of leadership practices in helping teachers, and that the practices are qualitatively different from those used in schools with lower achievement.

The proposition also recognized that literacy leaders work within a school context that may support or constrain their work. Key structural elements in this context include decisions, school processes, policies, and school culture which literacy leaders can play a part in creating and reinforcing. Where literacy leadership is not so well focused on helping teachers, or support is not available, outcomes for students are likely to be much less positive.

Three broad themes were discussed in the Findings section that set high and low achieving schools apart in terms of the quality of literacy leaders' practice. These themes are: supporting and contributing to organisational coherence, purposefully building teacher capability, and creating and maintaining a culture of improvement. In the following sub sections I revisit those three broad themes referenced to relevant findings from the literature review chapter.

### Organisational coherence

Organisational coherence includes the notion of teachers, leaders and senior leaders having a clear vision about the end-point goals for learners in the school. Timperley (2008) claims that a key feature of successful schools is their ability to stay focused on valued outcomes for learners, and to use the vision of attaining valued outcomes as a touchstone for evaluating the progress that the school is making. The ability to stay focused on the vision of better attainment was a distinct feature of successful schools in the Pasifika Literacy Professional Development discussed in the literature review, and of the high achieving schools in my research. Literacy leaders played a pivotal role in supporting and enacting the school's vision, particularly where this vision related to improving students' attainment in literacy. As a result of literacy leaders' input, teachers had a clear idea about where they were going and the expectations all leaders had of them. Schools with high achievement in my research had a clear and well communicated focus on learners. At School A, this focus was on ensuring that *all* learners achieved regardless of their abilities or disabilities. At School C, the focus was on providing curricular experiences that met *all* learners' interests and learning needs. There was good backing from senior leaders at the three high achieving schools.



This research has shown that context *does* matter. In order for literacy leaders to work successfully with teachers they need an environment that is coherent, orderly and supportive, and they need the opportunity to contribute towards making the school better in these respects. In the Leadership BES, these features had a small effect size (0.23) on outcomes for learners. This research showed that these features were the necessary preconditions for literacy leaders to carry out their work of guiding and supporting teachers. The backing of senior leaders was a critical contextual factor in how successfully literacy leaders could work with teachers. Stability, in terms of the direction of the school, was a key determining feature of the high achieving schools.

In this research, while literacy leaders in higher achieving schools could maintain a focus on what mattered, their peers in schools with lower achievement had to contend with a number of distractions that constrained their practice. Three of the biggest challenges for these schools included; constantly changing curriculum priorities or interventions for students; year after year of new professional development initiatives with little time in between to embed the key learning that would sustain the professional development focus; and changes of principal or senior leaders that disrupted the continuity of teachers' and leaders' practice and focus. These challenges impacted on literacy leaders' capacity to change teachers' practices, and in some cases lessened the opportunities literacy leaders had to work with teachers. O'Connell (2010) argues that these challenges can be dealt with by having clearly developed frameworks for managing school improvement. Strategically planning professional development in schools, and making links between the lessons learned from past PLD and present PLD should help teachers and leaders to achieve greater coherence in their improvement plans and actions.

Lack of a strong backing from senior leaders was one of the key reasons the Secondary School Leadership Initiative was not as successful as it could have been in integrating literacy across the curriculum. To a certain extent, lack of leadership also impacted on outcomes from the Literacy Professional Development Project. Lack of opportunity to work with teachers was a strong theme from the USA literacy coaching literature. Coaches either chose to spend their time on administrative tasks instead of working with teachers (Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010), or principals diverted them to other administrative activities, instead of working with teachers (Blamey et al, 2009). This was seen as a major issue in a literacy coach gaining traction in the school with respect to professional learning.

There are lessons to be learned from these findings. Specifically, that professional learning within a school is a collective endeavour that requires a concerted effort by all parties. Senior leaders should ensure that the decisions and actions that they take are supporting the efforts of other leaders in the school. This is particularly important in the crucial area of literacy.

### **Building teacher capability**

A central purpose of literacy leaders' work is to build capability in instructional content – content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986). In this research, analyses were carried out on the extent to which literacy leaders focused on aspects of content and pedagogical knowledge. The GEALI (Wilson 2009), developed to support the Secondary Literacy Project, was used

to map the practices literacy leaders and teachers used. Findings show that there was little difference between high and lower achieving schools in the *number* of GEALI leaders and teachers reported that they practised/used. This finding is supported by Carlisle and Berebitsky's (2011) research on literacy coaching which compared two groups of teachers – those who had a coach, and those who did not have a coach. This study found that there were no differences between the two groups in teachers' knowledge of reading and language concepts, suggesting that it is not the amount of knowledge that a teacher has, but how knowledge is used by teachers to respond to learners.

High quality literacy teaching practice is supported by robust processes of inquiry that operate at the classroom and the departmental level (Timperley et al, 2007). Findings show that, in the high achieving schools, there were well-established processes in place to support teachers' learning. At the heart of this learning was an inquiry approach that stimulated teachers to look closely at students' achievement and to couple this scrutiny with an examination of teaching practices used in classrooms. Inquiry, as a valued professional practice, is well supported by a very large literature base mainly from New Zealand. Several examples of this were discussed in the literature review section of this thesis including the Secondary Literacy Project, the Literacy Professional Development Project, and the Pasifika Literacy Professional Development Project.

As O'Connell found in her 2010 doctoral work, and I have found in this research, literacy leaders play a particularly important role in fostering inquiry as normalised (embedded) practice. Where this happens, teachers use inquiry in their everyday practice as a means to respond dynamically to the needs of their students. Embedded inquiry happened in the high achieving schools – through regular interrogation of student achievement data and the links between data and teaching practice in the English department; and through processes of sharing and discussing particular problems of practice. In high achieving schools, literacy leaders were focused on developing teachers' adaptive expertise – their ability to operate in an inquiry frame of mind that supported their ongoing professional improvement. Literacy leaders had been deliberate in establishing processes for inquiry to happen, that supported teachers to acquire the adaptive expertise needed to operate as reflective and responsive teachers. In contrast, literacy leaders in schools with lower achievement struggled with lack of opportunities to work with teachers on inquiry, or needed more time to establish an effective environment and processes to engage in meaningful and coherent professional learning.

There were some minor differences in how literacy leaders supported teachers to improve performance in their literacy teaching in high and low achieving schools. Literacy leaders in the low achieving schools were more likely to provide practical support to individual teachers whose practice was weak. Literacy leaders in schools with higher achievement generally had more options. These included drawing on the expertise of teachers to provide support for struggling peers. Overall, in higher achieving schools, the values of collaboration, sharing and mutual support were more evident.

### **Maintaining a culture of improvement**

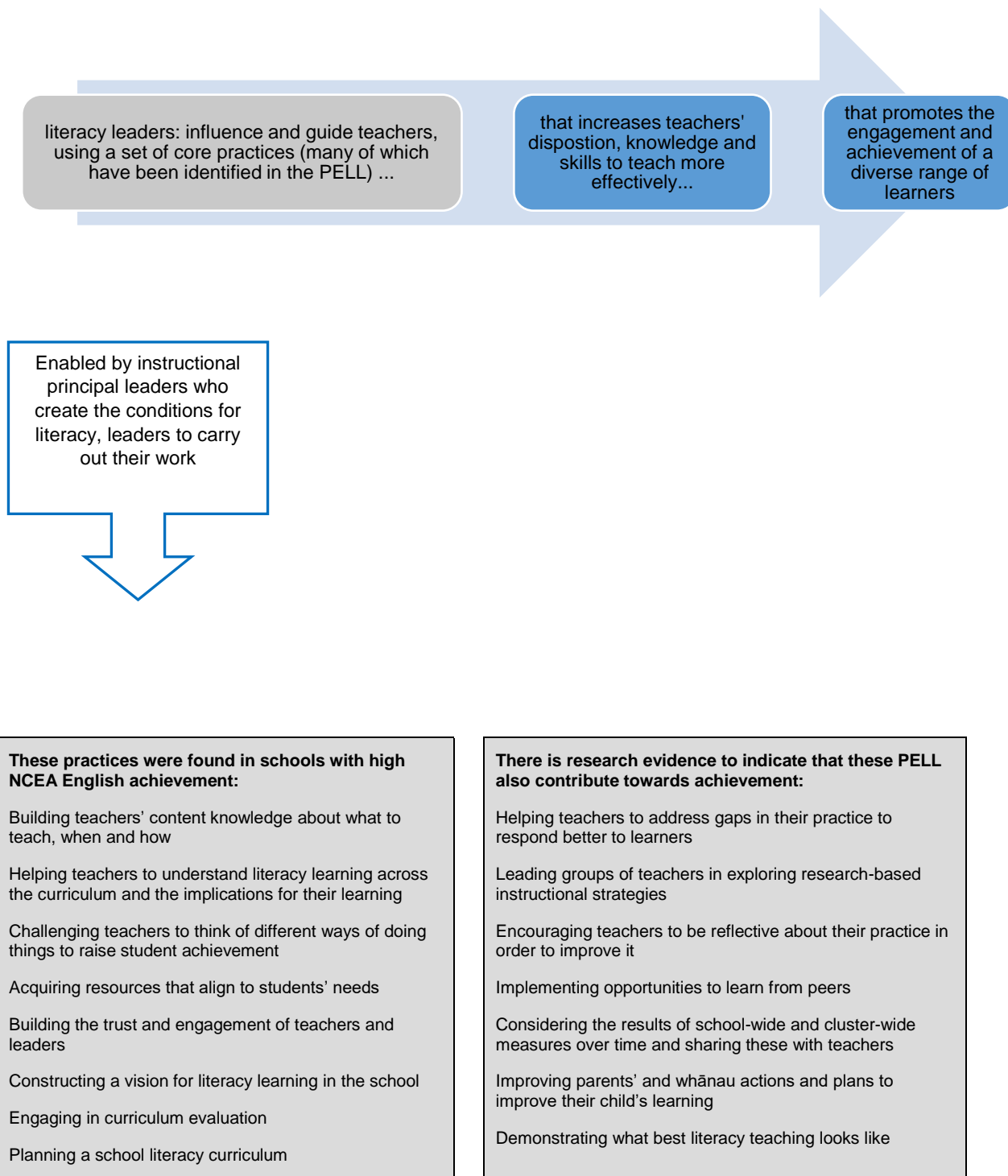
The importance of a positive school culture cannot be over emphasised. Bryk and Schneider's (2003) work describes the necessary elements of trust (respect, personal regard, competence in core

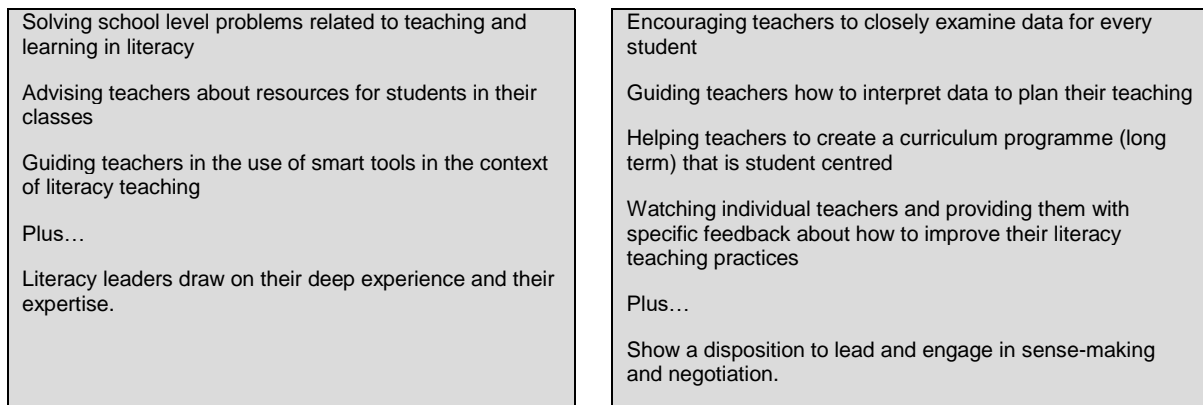
responsibilities, personal integrity) as key components in a positive schooling culture. Trust is especially important where teachers work together to solve school problems through professional learning communities or inquiry groups. When individual teachers share their practice and share their students' achievement data in NCEA, they are trusting other teachers to show respect as they critique practice. They are trusting literacy leaders to bring their deep content and pedagogical knowledge to the discussion to support their improved practice.

In this research, culture was defined in the way teachers and literacy leaders: engaged in inquiry; supported each other's learning; set high standards for themselves and for students' achievement; and in the respect and regard they had for each other as professionals. Typically, relationships were open and supportive. These practices and qualities were more prevalent in high achieving schools. Teachers in these schools were more likely to describe literacy leaders as having deep knowledge of literacy and learning, and to voice their respect for him/her. Interviews with literacy leaders showed that they were more inclined to draw on previous experience as a leader, or in literacy, to help teachers.

## Adding to the thesis proposition

As a result of this research it is possible to add some detail to the hypothesis diagram presented in the literature review section of this thesis. This diagram now looks like this:





**Figure 4: Revised hypothesis diagram**

## The major contribution of the research

This research was undertaken to find out what literacy leaders do to support teachers. Given the important role literacy leaders and other curriculum leaders play in building teacher capability and establishing the conditions for teaching and learning, this is an important question to answer.

The literature review showed that there were gaps in the literature in relation to what is known about literacy leadership. This research adds to the body of literature on literacy leadership in three ways. It extends:

- what is known about literacy leadership in New Zealand
- the range of sampling and methodological approaches used to investigate the phenomenon of leadership
- the current international literature on how literacy coaches/leaders influence teachers.

Over two decades of New Zealand research on literacy leadership have reinforced the fact that literacy leaders play a critical part in schooling. What this research adds is another layer of findings about their work by revealing the specific actions that literacy leaders undertake that, arguably, make a difference to the achievement of secondary students. Through the six case studies, I have described the conditions that enable teachers to do their important work with learners. The findings are pertinent to professional development providers, principals, and literacy leaders. The aim of this research was to explore whether these actions and conditions were qualitatively different in settings with high and lower NCEA English achievement. The research has shown that there are differences, and the differences are important.

Building on the approaches employed by Bendikson (2012) and Highgrove (2012) who have also explored leadership, this study has used a rigorous process to select schools with patterns of three years of high or lower NCEA English achievement, and then to recruit the participants for the research. Comparison between schools was important for building theory about what works in raising student achievement in secondary schools. The focus on varying outcomes, and explication of the specific actions literacy leaders take to influence teachers, has not been explored in New Zealand to date.

This research adds to USA-relevant knowledge by bringing together, and critiquing a number of literacy coaching studies from a range of literacy coaching contexts. The discussion has been structured around

practices that are linked to research about what is effective. While the construct of literacy leadership is somewhat different between the USA and New Zealand, the underlying political imperative of each country is the same - to reduce inequity amongst the student population by building teacher capability.

Like the USA, New Zealand research on literacy leadership that is grounded in the achievement of students is rare, and even scarcer in a secondary context. At the time of writing this thesis, there were just twelve studies that describe literacy coaching where there were clear links to student achievement. Three of these studies related to secondary schooling. Three were from New Zealand.

## **The limitations of the research**

The ability to answer the research question has been potentially impacted by two limitations related to the research design. Neither of these limitations could be dealt with in the design of this doctoral thesis.

The first limitation concerns sampling. While it was possible to control for student socio economic background, and to ensure that student outcome data were consistent (for example, the same achievement standards were used for the analyses of the NCEA data), other limitations of the design were not able to be managed. One of these challenges was controlling for teachers' and leaders' backgrounds. In this study, the background factors that may have impacted on outcomes for learners are the varying skills and knowledge teachers and leaders bring to their work through experience and learning opportunities. Typically these include prior participation in professional learning and development (both school-based and that delivered through external contracts such as SLP); length of teaching service; the quality of preservice training; and qualifications gained. It should be noted however, that a skilful literacy leader can certainly mitigate gaps in teachers' knowledge. In addition, literacy leaders' background factors may also impact on outcomes for teachers and students. Literacy leaders who had participated in the Secondary Literacy Project, had been a literacy leader for a long period of time, had experience in teaching adults, and held certain qualifications in literacy, may well have been advantaged by these background factors.

Teacher and leader background could not be controlled for due to the fact that participants volunteered to be part of the project. While stipulations were placed on participation (for instance, leaders must have been in their role for the period of time that the achievement data were collected, and teachers could only participate if they had worked with the literacy leader for a minimum of one year), overall controlling for background was not done in this project. I sampled schools, not literacy leaders.

It is probable that the degree of skill and knowledge teachers possessed impacted at two levels – their own learning, and the learning of their students, through the quality of the practices teachers used. Prior professional learning supports the assimilation of new learning. The more existing knowledge we have as a foundation, the greater our ability to understand and respond to knowledge that is introduced. Teachers with low levels of knowledge and skills have a much steeper learning curve to assimilate and act on the advice of their literacy leaders compared to those who have deep knowledge. Expertise is contingent on a history of successful integration and the attainment of adaptive expertise.

The second limitation relates to contribution. Teachers who participated in this research only partially contributed to their school's NCEA achievement "score" because this was calculated as an average of the scores across a number of English standards at NCEA level two and three. Not all teachers who taught the standards were included in the sample. Once again, the confounding factor in managing this limitation was the fact that teachers volunteered to participate, and it was therefore not possible to control for the extent of teachers' contribution to the achievement data.

## **Future research possibilities**

Limitations can also raise possibilities for future research, and stimulate discussion about how to undertake research differently in the future. There are many gaps in the field in relation to literacy leadership, curriculum leadership, and the link between these two fields and principal leadership. There would be merit in more case study research that unpacks the salient features of curriculum leadership in a range of schooling contexts. For instance, further work could be carried out on how literacy leaders build the capability of beginning teachers, as well as teachers working in subject areas other than English where there is a strong literacy component to these subjects. There would be significant merit in exploring how teachers become expert teachers of literacy (as measured by accelerated student learning) guided by their literacy leaders, particularly where the research design captured the improvements teachers and students made over time.

There are benefits in exploring the improvements schools make longitudinally, as Biancarosa et al (2010) did in their assessment of the value-added effects of literacy coaching on students' achievement over three years of literacy implementation. Longitudinal views provide insight into how literacy, and other leaders, respond to the challenges that schools inevitably faced over time. Some of these challenges have been described in the findings chapter of this thesis. For instance, there is a need for studies that probe how low performing schools lift their performance through deliberate acts of high quality literacy leadership.

Perhaps the greatest unmet leadership research challenge is how to reduce variability in teacher practice and student outcomes within schools. Curriculum leaders, by their proximity to teachers and learners have a critical part to play in reducing this variability. Specifically, there is a need to investigate how literacy and other senior leaders create and maintain the systems that ensure high quality teaching is the norm within their schools, and how low-performing teachers are supported to improve their practice. Studies such as these have the potential to close significantly the gaps between our highest and lowest achieving students because they focus on unpacking the content, the pedagogy and the leadership pedagogy that makes a difference. In this context, leadership pedagogy relates to the strategic practice of leading others using a core set of practices.

Aligned to this work is the need to explore further the conditions that enable and constrain curriculum leaders in carrying out their work, including how they upwardly influence other leaders in the school. Information such as this is needed to ensure that curriculum leaders have the best possible opportunity to enact their school's vision, and support teachers to improve their practice. This research has identified some of these conditions, but it has not explored in any depth the strategies literacy leaders

have used to stay resilient, and to maintain the improvement agenda in the face of organisational challenges. Given the potentially powerful role curriculum leaders can play, this piece of work is an important field to explore.

Finally, studies of curriculum leadership should complement the established body of research about the effects of high quality principal and school - wide leadership, by articulating the roles that curriculum leaders, together with senior leaders, can play in bringing about positive outcomes for learners. For instance, it would be useful to describe the links between the five key leadership dimensions outlined in the *Student Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying What Works and Why Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration* (Robinson et al, 2009) and what curriculum leaders do as they operationalise these dimensions through their work, especially in contexts where students are achieving highly. Similarly, it would be useful to take what is known about high quality curriculum leadership and describe in greater detail the specific actions principal and other senior leaders could take to ensure that improvement efforts are coherent across all leaders.

## **Implications of the research for policy and practice**

In this research literacy leaders in lower achieving schools were not as capable in some aspects of leadership as their colleagues in higher achieving schools. These aspects included focusing on improving students' attainment; improving the engagement of learners; fostering organisational coherence, and creating a culture for improvement. These are critical capabilities for reducing inequity in New Zealand, and it is important that literacy leaders have opportunities to increase their capabilities in these areas.

It is timely that professional development programmes target more closely the learning needs of curriculum leaders in schools so that they have the proficiency to support teachers within their faculties. The Literacy Professional Development Project, The Pasifika Literacy Professional Development Project, and the Secondary Literacy Project have made a good start. It is necessary to accelerate the effort, however, and make learning available on a wider scale, and with the necessary in-school supports to ensure that gains are sustained. Whether we should follow the USA's lead and implement a stand-alone literacy leadership professional development programme, and standards to measure the effectiveness of literacy leaders, is a matter for debate with the profession. If the profession does want to go down this track, then the programme would need to be co-constructed between the sector and the professional development providers to ensure that the design and content meet the learning needs of literacy leaders, and thereby supports their engagement.

It would be well worth schools exploring the scope for enhancing the capabilities of curriculum leaders through the Communities of Learner (COL) clusters associated with New Zealand's Investing in Educational Success initiative (2014). Literacy leaders and teachers talked very little about how they engaged with parents and whānau. COL presents a very useful opportunity for schools to think about how they can be more inclusive of parents, whānau and the wider school community. Self-managing clusters may be able to create dynamic and purposeful learning opportunities for leaders, especially where data are collected that provide feedback loops to inform their further development.



This study has described the differences between literacy leadership actions in schools with varying student achievement outcomes in English. These findings provide a platform for further discussion about the important role that curriculum leaders can, and should, play in improving outcomes for teachers and students in New Zealand schools.

## Appendix One: NCEA achievement standards used in the sampling

**Table 18: NCEA level two achievement standards used in the Wellington region sampling**

Year	Internal standards	Descriptor	External standards	Descriptor
2009	90374	Deliver a presentation using oral and visual language techniques	90377	Analyse extended written texts
	90375	Produce crafted and developed creative writing	90378	Analyse short written texts
2010	90374	Deliver a presentation using oral and visual language techniques	90377	Analyse extended written texts
	90375	Produce crafted and developed creative writing	90378	Analyse short written texts
2011	90376	Produce crafted and developed formal transactional writing	90377	Analyse extended written texts
	12905	Read an inclusive variety of written texts and record the reading experience	90379	Analyse a visual or oral text

**Table 19: NCEA level three achievement standards used in the Wellington region sampling**

Year	Internal standards	Descriptor	External standards	Descriptor
2009	90720	Produce an extended piece of writing in a selected style	90722	Respond critically to Shakespearean drama studied
	90726	Complete independent research on a language or literature topic and present findings in written form	90723	Respond critically to oral or visual text studied
2010	90720	Produce an extended piece of writing in a selected style	90723	Respond critically to oral or visual text studied
	90725	Construct and deliver an oral presentation	90722	Respond critically to Shakespearean drama studied
2011	90720	Produce an extended piece of writing in a selected style	90723	Respond critically to oral or visual text studied
	90726	Complete independent research on a language or literature topic and present findings in written form	90721	Respond critically to written text(s) studied

**Table 20: NCEA level two achievement standards used in the Auckland region sampling**

Year	Internal standards	Descriptor	External standards	Descriptor
2011	90376	Produce crafted and developed formal transactional writing	90377	Analyse extended written texts
	12905	Read an inclusive variety of written texts and record the reading experience	90379	Analyse a visual or oral text
2012	91101	Produce a selection of crafted and controlled writing	91098	Analyse specified aspect(s) of studied written text(s), supported by evidence
	91104	Analyse significant connections across texts, supported by evidence	91099	Analyse specified aspect(s) of studied visual or oral text(s), supported by evidence
2013	91101	Produce a selection of crafted and controlled writing	91098	Analyse specified aspect(s) of studied written text(s), supported by evidence
	91104	Analyse significant connections across texts, supported by evidence	91099	Analyse specified aspect(s) of studied visual or oral text(s), supported by evidence

**Table 21: NCEA level three achievement standards used in the Auckland region sampling**

Year	Internal standards	Descriptor	External standards	Descriptor
2011	90720	Produce an extended piece of writing in a selected style	90723	Respond critically to oral or visual text studied
	90726	Complete independent research on a language or literature topic and present findings in written form	90721	Respond critically to written text(s) studied
2012	90720	Produce an extended piece of writing in a selected style	90721	Respond critically to written text(s) studied
	90726	Complete independent research on a language or literature topic and present findings in written form	90723	Respond critically to oral or visual text studied
101	91475	Produce a selection of fluent and coherent writing which develops, sustains, and structures ideas	91473	Respond critically to specified aspect(s) of studied visual or oral text(s), supported by evidence
	91476	Create and deliver a fluent and coherent oral text which develops, sustains, and structures ideas	91472	Respond critically to specified aspect(s) of studied written text(s), supported by evidence

# Appendix Two: Information form for participants

School of Learning, Development & Professional Practice  
Te Kura Whakatairanga i te Ako Ngaio me te Whanaketanga



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Auckland 1035, New Zealand

## Participant Information Sheet for Teachers and Literacy Leaders

### *The Processes Leaders Use to Support Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools with Different Patterns of NCEA English Achievement.*

**Researcher:** Robyn Gibbs (Ed. D student) at School of Teaching, Learning and Development, University of Auckland, New Zealand.

#### **Invitation:**

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study about The Processes Leaders Use to Support Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools with Different Patterns of NCEA English Achievement. Before you decide about being involved in this study I would like you to understand why the research is being done, what it would involve for you and your rights as a participant. Please take time to read the following information and ask questions if anything you read is not clear or you would like more information. My contact details are at the end of this information sheet.

#### **Transparency statement:**

This is the third year of my study for a Doctor of Education (Ed. D) at the University Of Auckland. The research is separate from my paid employment which is in Evaluation Services in the Education Review Office (ERO) in Corporate Office, Wellington. The information gathered in the course of my research will not be used by Evaluation Services or any other unit within the Education Review Office.

#### **About the study:**

The research study explores the nature of literacy leadership in a sample of secondary schools where student NCEA English achievement outcomes vary. In each school, I will talk with a literacy leader and two teachers who have been working with that leader on aspects of literacy.

#### **What is the purpose of the study?**

The purpose of this study is to learn more about what literacy leaders do in secondary schools that makes a difference in terms of fostering student achievement.

### **How have schools been selected?**

All schools have been selected using the results for the Level two and three NCEA internally and externally assessed English achievement standards. This information was gathered from the publicly accessed NZQA website and not from any information that ERO holds about schools.

### **How have teachers been selected?**

In each school, two teachers will take part in the project. An advertisement will be circulated, and/or displayed in the school inviting teachers who are interested in participating to contact the researcher, in confidence, to gather more information about their involvement, or to indicate that they wish to be involved. If more than two teachers wish to be involved, the two teachers who have been working with the literacy leader for the greatest amount of time will be selected. It is important that the teacher participants are those who can talk about the work that they have been focussing on over a reasonably long period of time (at least one year), and the discernible impact that leadership practices have had on their work in the classroom. Similarly, it is important that the leaders have been in the school for at least twelve months. Teachers and leaders will be compensated with a \$25.00 voucher of their choice at the conclusion of the last interview for their time.

### **Do I have to take part?**

Participation is voluntary and there will be no repercussions for you if you do not wish to take part, or if you wish to withdraw from the study at any stage. If a literacy leader does not wish to take part, or teachers do not wish to take part, then the research will not proceed in the school, because the study involves teachers **and** leaders. Your involvement in the research will have no bearing on future ERO education reviews in your school because participation by schools is kept confidential.

### **What will happen if I do take part?**

Information will be collected through interviews with individual teachers and literacy leaders. The time commitment for each teacher is 1 hours. The time commitment for the literacy leader is one hour.

Interviews will be recorded using a digital recorder. Participants can ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interviews. I will transcribe all the recordings so that the scripts can be analysed. Participants are welcome to a copy of their recorded interviews. They will be given the opportunity to edit the transcripts of the interviews to ensure that they clearly reflect their views.

### **When will the research happen?**

Dates will be negotiated with teachers and leaders to fit around school and teachers' commitments. For instance, the first interviews are likely to happen between Term Three, 2012 and the end of April, 2013.

### **Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential or anonymous?**

Interviews with teachers can take place away from school premises, and out of school time. No information that has been gathered during teachers' or leaders' interviews will be revealed to another party in the school. A broad final summary of findings across all participating schools will be shared with school leaders and teachers at the conclusion of the research.

No third party, including personnel in ERO, will know which schools, teachers and leaders are participating in this study. Nor will these parties have access to the data, consent forms or any material related to the project. This information will be stored in a locked cabinet in my home, and on a password protected computer at the same location. The findings about teachers and leaders will be written up in case studies that will be referred to anonymously using pseudonyms. The data collected for the project will be destroyed after six years.

### **What will happen if I don't carry on with the study?**

It is your right to withdraw from the study at any point without providing a reason or without repercussions. If the study is underway, it is likely that another teacher in the school will be recruited so

that the study can be completed. You have the right to withdraw your data from the research up until December 2012.

### **What will happen to the results of the research study?**

The results from all six schools will be written up in the thesis as separate anonymous case studies. It is possible that aspects of the thesis will be used in future as the basis for conference presentations and academic papers.

### **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

One anticipated benefit of taking part in the study is that participants will have the opportunity to reflect on their practice (in the interviews) and to learn in general terms about successful practices. In the spirit of reciprocity, I would like to share with teachers and leaders information about the general findings (thematic findings from across all case studies) of the research at the conclusion of the analysis phase. Your permission will be sought for this to happen. This session is likely to be for the research participants, but if participants all agree, it could involve a department or whole staff. Should schools wish to do this, the format for this dissemination will be discussed with teachers and leaders towards the end of the data collection phase. Care will be taken to preserve the confidentiality of the participating teachers in each school.

### **Acknowledgement of your contribution to the study**

In recognition of the contribution that teachers and leaders are making to this study, each participant will receive a \$25.00 voucher of their choice (petrol, book or retail voucher). The voucher will be given after the final interview. Participants who choose to withdraw from the study at any point in time will also receive a voucher.

### **Whom can you contact about this study?**

The following people can be contacted should you have any questions or concerns about the research:

1. The researcher, Robyn Gibbs  
[rgib034@aucklanduni.ac.nz](mailto:rgib034@aucklanduni.ac.nz) or by phoning 0275538760
2. The supervisor who is overseeing this project, Professor Viviane Robinson  
[vmj.robinson@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:vmj.robinson@auckland.ac.nz) or by phoning 09 6238899 ext 87372
3. Head of the School of Teaching, Learning & Development, Christine Rubie-Davies  
[c.rubie@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:c.rubie@auckland.ac.nz) or by phoning 09 6238899 ext 8297

For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact:

Chair,

The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee

The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor,

Private Bag 92019

Auckland 1142

Telephone: (09) 373 7599 ext 83711

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE  
ON 13 August, 2012 for (3) years, Reference number 7902



# Appendix Three: Consent form for participants

School of Learning, Development & Professional Practice  
Te Kura Whakatairanga i te Ako Ngaio me te Whanaketanga



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The University of Auckland  
Private Bag 92601, Symonds Street  
Auckland 1035, New Zealand

## Consent Form for Teacher and Literacy Leader Participants THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF 6 YEARS

**Project:** The Processes Leaders Use to Support Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools with Different Patterns of NCEA English Achievement.

**Researcher:** Robyn Gibbs (Ed. D student) at School of Teaching, Learning and Development, University of Auckland, New Zealand.

I have read and understand the Participant Information Sheet for the project named above. I understand the nature of the research and why I have been selected. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and had them answered to my satisfaction.

- I agree to take part in this research
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, and to withdraw any information collected from me, up until April 2013
- I understand that my principal assures that there will be no repercussions in terms of my future employment should I decide to participate/not participate in this project
- I understand that all personal information will remain confidential and that all efforts will be made to ensure that I cannot be identified in the thesis
- I agree that my interview can be recorded by the researcher
- I understand that I will be able to ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time
- I understand that I will be given the opportunity to edit the transcripts of my interviews to ensure that they clearly reflect my views
- I wish/ do not wish to have my tapes returned to me
- I wish/do not wish to review the transcript of my recorded interview
- I understand that data gathered in this study will be kept for six years after which it will be destroyed
- I understand that data from this research may be used for publications subsequent to this project.



**Participant's**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Participant's signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Role (delete whichever is not applicable):** **Teacher**

**Literacy Leader**

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE  
ON 13 August, 2012 for (3) years, Reference number 7902

# Appendix Four: Interview Questions

## Questions for Literacy Leaders

1. What does/did your role as a literacy leader entail? (prompt for who he/she works with and with what purpose)
2. In what ways do/did you try to bring about change at this school? (prompt for particular practices)
3. Why do you do it that way? (prompt for school values, particular views about how learning and teaching should happen)
4. What are the particular strategies you use/used as you work with teachers?
5. Are there any instances where you have worked with a teacher to build his/her capacity in literacy teaching? Tell me about these.
6. What were the key messages and or key skills you were trying to get across when you worked with this teacher? (Omit question if not relevant)
7. How successful have you been in shifting this teachers' practices?
8. How do you know? (Omit question if not relevant)

## Questions for Teachers

1. What words would you use to describe the way your literacy leader has worked with you in this school on aspects of literacy practices?
2. Can you describe any specific instances where the literacy leader has either worked with you individually or worked with you as part of a group of teachers where there has been a literacy focus?
3. To what extent did the literacy leader influence your literacy practice in these contexts? (Omit question if not relevant)
4. Apart from your literacy leader (amend if not relevant), who else at this school has been particularly useful in building your literacy practice?
5. What was valuable about this help? (Omit question if not relevant)
6. What school-wide/department-wide practices, policies and procedures have been most useful to you in your literacy teaching? (prompt for professional learning groups and performance management systems)

## Appendix Five: Analyses and synthesis of PELL

**Table 22: Analyses and synthesis of PELL**

PELL	Description	Example (italicised text is verbatim comments)	Analyses			Synthesis
			Differences between high and lower	Key findings	Key phrases	Consolidated themes
<b>A1</b> Building teachers' content knowledge about <i>what to teach, when and how</i>	Building knowledge about literacy learning and teaching in general.	<i>I had thought about how we had taught unfamiliar text here and I thought we don't do it well. So it's been a goal of mine over the past four years to really improve the pedagogy around unfamiliar texts because I believe that it's the core of what we do as English teachers.</i>	Yes	<p>In both high and lower achieving schools, literacy leaders are clear about what needs to happen to build capability in terms of content knowledge.</p> <p>The difference is that lower achieving schools are likely to have more issues around inexperienced teachers, turnover of staff, multiple attempts at re-engaging teachers in previous learning.</p> <p>They also generally build capability using other teachers in the school (as opposed to also sometimes accessing external expertise) (supports findings in B4)</p>	Absence or presence of organisational challenges	<p>Contextual</p> <p>Purposefully building teacher capability</p>
<b>A2</b> Helping teachers to address gaps in their practice to <i>respond better to learners</i>	Building teachers' knowledge about catering for students with learning needs (specific to certain students)	<i>She's done professional development with the staff including other staff from primary schools have come in and she had her literacy class stand up and talk about what is dyslexia. How does it affect them? How do they learn? So a lot of other teachers who wouldn't normally think about it have been able to pick up on it.</i>	No	No further analyses		

PELL	Description	Example (italicised text is verbatim comments)	Analyses			Synthesis
			Differences between high and lower	Key findings	Key phrases	Consolidated themes
<b>A3</b> Helping teachers to understand <b>literacy learning across the curriculum</b> and the implications for their learning area	Helping teachers in other faculties to understand how literacy and language may be used in their learning area or discipline	<i>Yes we have always done this in the English department and we introduced it across the school, or perhaps it was last year, that all departments in all course booklets in all topics will have a vocabulary focus and here's an example of it in English. Each department has worked on creating that vocab list</i>	Yes	Implementation of LAC is further advanced in higher achieving schools  Greater sustainability is evident in the establishment of systems to spread practice across the school such as a through documented course expectations and cross faculty champions to monitor the achievement of students across a range of subject areas	Implementation is advanced  Sustainable systems for developing understanding, and implementing LAC	Supporting and contributing to organisational coherence
<b>A4</b> Leading groups of teachers in exploring <b>research-based instructional strategies</b>	Helping teachers to unpack/ understand research in the context of their teaching and learning	<i>Sometimes we would have readings, so particularly at the beginning of the year as we establish. Our sort of year wide focus this year was about growth mind set, so at the start of the year we had quite a few sessions where there were readings and discussions and unpacking of the readings.</i>	No	No further analyses		
<b>A5</b> <b>Other person</b>	Another person is building teachers' content knowledge	Various including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External PLD provider</li> <li>• Other staff (outside of the literacy teachers e.g. ESOL)</li> <li>• Staff working in the area of literacy/English</li> <li>• The principal or other senior leader</li> <li>• RT:LB</li> </ul>	Yes	In higher achieving schools there is greater access to external expertise to build teacher capability. There is sustainable growth for teachers by having specialist teachers within the school able to help teachers to understand the needs of students in literacy (links to A1)	Accessing external expertise  Internal expertise is in place	Purposefully building teacher capability

PELL	Description	Example (italicised text is verbatim comments)	Analyses			Synthesis
			Differences between high and lower	Key findings	Key phrases	Consolidated themes
<b>A6</b> <i>Other practice</i>	Practice that does not fit into the categories above	<p>Various including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linking literacy to PLD and strategy (e.g. Ka Hikitia)</li> <li>• Building assessment capability (e.g. Moderating students' work in teams and building a store of exemplars, providing opportunities for teachers to access external PLD to build content or pedagogical content knowledge, building knowledge about NCEA or National Standards processes)</li> <li>• Encouraging teachers to use resources about teaching and learning</li> <li>• Providing opportunities for teachers to change years levels (moving out of the comfort zone)</li> <li>• Building teachers' and leaders knowledge in the wider sector (e.g. at conferences)</li> <li>• Teachers engaged in their own inquiry-based research projects</li> <li>• Staff member presenting a resource and encouraging teachers to think about its application in the classroom</li> </ul>	Yes	<p>In higher achieving schools, capability building happens through a wide range of practices that have been established by leaders. Such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Literacy leaders encouraging teachers to engage in their own research to build capability</li> <li>• Leaders looking for opportunities to incorporate literacy into other PLD.</li> <li>• School organisation - Teachers changing year levels to build a deeper understanding of learner progression.</li> </ul>	Opportunities to grow capability are more evident, and more distributed	Purposefully building teacher capability
<b>B1</b> Challenging teachers to think of <i>different ways of doing things</i> to raise student achievement	Promoting alternatives to current practice/ways of doing things/ideas	<i>But I finally get a lot of input in what we want to do in terms of curriculum and what we want to discuss. I think it was last year I really wanted to talk about using Netbooks and I-pads and stuff like that in the classroom so I ran part of that department meeting talking about digital technology; because we have some older members of staff who are a bit resistant.</i>	Yes	In higher achieving schools, literacy leaders are more likely to explain to teachers the rationale for school-wide initiatives, invite their participation in these, and to appeal to teachers' sense of professionalism (moral purpose) in implementing the initiative.	Rationale is clear  Moral purpose	Creating and maintaining a culture of improvement

PELL	Description	Example (italicised text is verbatim comments)	Analyses			Synthesis
			Differences between high and lower	Key findings	Key phrases	Consolidated themes
<b>B2</b> Encouraging teachers to be <b>reflective</b> about their practice in order to improve it	Involves creating opportunities for teachers to think about teaching and learning in their classes	<i>I did a lot of journaling which is a really good way to reflect, so I just did it in my planner and reflected each week. Some weeks, like at the beginning of the year I was like, "Oh my gosh I've forgotten how to teach Year 10," and Year 10 became my focus because it was several weeks that went "I don't know how to teach Year 10," and then, "I thought Year 10 would get through all of this, this week, and actually they got through like this much.</i>	No	No further analyses		
<b>B3</b> Encouraging teachers to <b>share ideas with each other</b> about effective literacy practice	Opportunities for teachers to learn from each other	<i>Well often, the people using them modelled them. We modelled them as in what we use for particular subjects or what we found was useful for particular ethnic groups or particular kinds of ESOL and other areas like SNU or whatever we had in our classes.</i>	No	No further analyses		
<b>B4</b> Implementing opportunities to <b>learn from peers</b> , e.g. peer observation, feedback and teaching	As above but the context is peer to peer and focused on individual improvement	<i>Again my understanding, having not done it, is just that they're still in the second year of their registration programme so it's about observing them organising them to observe others, meeting with them and talking about what they've seen and how they can better improve their practice.</i>	No	No further analyses		
<b>B5</b> <b>Other person</b>	Another person is encouraging innovation	Various including looking at examples of other teacher's work and accessing an external PLD facilitator	N/A	Insufficient data to comment		
<b>B6</b> <b>Other practice</b>	Practice that does not fit into the categories above	Various including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waiting for the right time</li> <li>• Resisting a school-wide initiative</li> <li>• "selling" the idea of innovation</li> </ul>	No	No further analyses		

PELL	Description	Example (italicised text is verbatim comments)	Analyses			Synthesis
			Differences between high and lower	Key findings	Key phrases	Consolidated themes
<b>C1</b> <b>Acquiring resources</b> that align to students' needs	Actions that involve a leader acquiring material and human resources that improve learning and teaching	<i>Yep and people resourcing as well. We used to have what was called team teaching so we targeted particular class - so we created the classes and then targeted those classes with two teachers, so one literacy specialist, one subject specialist and I feel it had impact....It was very difficult to measure but I...And then when I did get it to a stage where I think we could measure it really well, they abandoned team teaching so I couldn't work out whether my measurements were accurate or not.</i>	Yes	Leaders in higher achieving schools are strongly focused on acquiring resources to meet students learning needs based on evidence about what students' need.	There is alignment between learners' needs and resources	Supporting and contributing to organisational coherence
<b>C2</b> <b>Building the trust and engagement</b> of teachers and leaders	A broad category that focuses on motivating teachers and developing reciprocal feelings of respect and trust	<i>Just in the English department this is what we are doing and not I'm telling you to do this or you have to do this. It's like we are all doing this together and then people keep each other accountable. "Have you done that yet?" "Yeah I've done that." But you've got to sell it first. If you can't sell it then it makes it a lot hard because people will be sceptical. Generally staff in our department aren't sceptical; they might be lazy and forget to do it but generally there's pretty good buy-in and I think that's from that collective thing.</i>	Yes	Clear evidence that higher achieving schools create environments in which teachers are involved, trusted, respected and backed. This is not as evident in lower achieving schools where the culture is less well developed – more compliance- oriented or less distributed	Autonomy, agency, choice, and involvement exist for teachers	Creating and maintaining a culture of improvement

PELL	Description	Example (italicised text is verbatim comments)	Analyses			Synthesis
			Differences between high and lower	Key findings	Key phrases	Consolidated themes
<b>C3</b> Considering <i>the results of school-wide and cluster-wide measures</i> over time and sharing these with teachers	The use of aggregated data to illuminate current practice	<i>Every week we would have the literacy leaders meeting ... with all the schools... that lasted maybe five, six years well...then it was once a term ... So that communication is not as strong as it was. We still have our shared staff meeting once a year ... and we share data and those sorts of things and the principals meet every Thursday but not nearly as often.</i>	No	No further analyses		
<b>C4</b> Constructing a <i>vision for literacy</i> learning in the school	Thinking about how literacy could/should happen at the school	<i>He has a unique vision for the school. It's sort of always evolving. He wants the students to achieve but not on a pathway where this is the only way you will achieve. He believes that you can succeed within yourself and he's great at identifying students to target.</i>	Yes	Practice in higher achieving schools indicate a commitment by someone (LL and principal and/or SLT) to drive towards a clearly defined and conveyed vision.	The vision is important	Supporting and contributing to organisational coherence



PELL	Description	Example (italicised text is verbatim comments)	Analyses			Synthesis
			Differences between high and lower	Key findings	Key phrases	Consolidated themes
<b>C5</b> <i>Engaging in curriculum evaluation</i>	Engaging in evidence-informed evaluation of the suitability of the curriculum in promoting students' achievement and progress	<i>At the end of the year we do a review... we all get in a room and ...look at the whole programme for the year. We look at all the factors; what interfered with our programme in terms of there was a camp that happened right when we thought it was crucial that they didn't have a camp. We look at what the data is doing, what skills we've actually taught and whether the skills had any bearing on what we actually got as assessment, whether the actual assessment measured what we were assessing because sometimes it's a great assessment but you think actually it's not measuring what we set out to measure but the kids love it and we like it and you stick with it. You're looking at that reflective practice all the time and so we do that at the end of the year and rewrite the programme there. Sometimes we ditch a whole unit and say, "We've just got to change this." We don't throw out everything because over time they work.</i>	Yes	Curriculum evaluation happens more frequently and more effectively in the higher achieving schools.	Evaluation (knowing how well the curriculum is serving curriculum is serving learners)	Supporting and contributing to organisational coherence
<b>C6</b> Improving <b>parents and whānau</b> actions and plans to improve their child's learning	Engaging parents in learning –focused partnerships (continuum of practice)	<i>I keep informing the parents of how they're going and how they're going across their subjects and what they need to do over the holidays so that the summer effect doesn't kick in. It's maybe upped our game a bit with more literacy strategies like that, not just in the classroom but being aware of students per se.</i>	No	No further analyses		

PELL	Description	Example (italicised text is verbatim comments)	Analyses			Synthesis
			Differences between high and lower	Key findings	Key phrases	Consolidated themes
<b>C7</b> Planning a <b>school literacy curriculum</b>	Planning a curriculum that applies to all year levels and connects to a range of learning areas	<i>But we did start integrated learning in year nine, which is English, Maths, Science and Social Studies and we plan together and we do shared things and shared skills and we're still in the baby stage. We trialled it for two years with two year nines. We rolled it out last year to the whole year nine, and we're in our second year of that.</i>	Yes	Literacy leaders are more likely to include teachers in curriculum design in higher achieving schools.  The curriculum is more likely to respond to a range of learners in higher achieving schools.	Autonomy, agency, choice, and involvement exist for teachers	Supporting and contributing to organisational coherence
<b>C8</b> Solving <b>school level problems</b> related to teaching and learning in literacy	Addressing at school system –level challenges in teaching and learning that have a particular focus on literacy and learning	<i>...well the literacy faculty was in three different areas, so that was part of the reason why people couldn't find anything, was because they didn't actually know where to go. So I've pulled it into here.</i>	Yes	The repertoire of responses to issues is deeper and broader in higher achieving schools.		Supporting and contributing to organisational coherence
<b>C9</b> <b>Other person</b>	Another person is planning /sharing /implementing school literacy priorities	Various including Principal and Senior Management Team	No	No further analyses		
<b>C10</b> <b>Other practice</b>	Practice that does not fit into the categories above	Various including identifying and working with students with learning needs and responding to the information needs of the Senior Management team	No	No further analyses		

PELL	Description	Example (italicised text is verbatim comments)	Analyses			Synthesis
			Differences between high and lower	Key findings	Key phrases	Consolidated themes
<b>D1</b> Advising teachers about <b>resources</b> for students in their classes	Advice about resources that will meet students' needs	<i>K and I both teach Year 8 so she is constantly sending me resources, sort of backwards and forwards and that sort of thing, about stuff that she's done that worked really well for her kids or things that she tried and didn't work well.</i>	Yes	The differences relate to the extent to which leaders encourage and support teachers' professional decision-making, and their reflective practice in choosing and using resources. Literacy leaders in higher achieving schools tend to focus on assisting individual teachers with special requests for resources to support learners <i>and</i> through working with groups of teachers and leaders across the school – a mixed influence approach. Literacy leaders in lower achieving schools tend to focus more on individual teachers.	Professional capability building  Sustainable practice (practice that can be maintained independently of a literacy leader's input e.g. mixed influence approach)	Purposefully building teacher capability
<b>D2</b> <b>Demonstrating</b> what best literacy teaching looks like	Literacy leader models/demonstrates the practice	<i>Often at department meetings she will start off with like a starter activity that she might do for unpacking an unfamiliar text.</i>	No	No further analyses		
<b>D3 and D4</b> Encouraging teachers to <b>closely examine the data</b> for every student Guiding <b>teachers how to interpret data</b> to plan their teaching	Self explanatory	<i>I have got some of my Year 8 who really struggle so I bring their assessments [to the meeting] and then we look at them versus the other kids who might be below standard.</i>	No	No further analyses		

PELL	Description	Example (italicised text is verbatim comments)	Analyses			Synthesis
			Differences between high and lower	Key findings	Key phrases	Consolidated themes
<b>D5</b> Guiding teachers in the use of <b>smart tools</b> in the context of literacy teaching	Self explanatory	<p><i>It's quite a complex process but it's not because we're doing it all the time. We have a course booklet for each year level which we stick to; they're quite general, the principle being that the assessment is the same for every class and your sort of beginning point is the same but how the journey happens can be entirely the teachers. While we chat to each other we aim to sort of do that, so we all get to the same assessment point, but in between all different classes go on different journeys.</i></p> <p><i>So on that booklet all through the year we have meetings before a unit, during a unit and at the end and often that's where this unit was just too squeezed or it didn't work or the kids came back and said, "We hated this, we didn't want to do this."</i></p>	Yes	<p>Literacy leaders foster coherence by developing and making use of artefacts at a departmental level. They sometimes also make them available to other leaders and teachers.</p> <p>There were typically, fewer opportunities to create artefacts in low achieving because routines were not in place for teachers' learning.</p>		Supporting and contributing to organisational coherence
<b>D6</b> Helping teachers <b>to create a curriculum programme</b> (long term) that is student centred	Self explanatory	<p><i>We looked at Gwen Gawith and other researchers into Information Literacy. We identified the steps and shoved them up (i.e. displayed them in classrooms and the library) around the place so when we talked with students they didn't have to make a mental leap when they moved from one subject to the next. We developed a common language and presented to the staff at the end of the term.</i></p>	N/A	Insufficient data to comment		

PELL	Description	Example (italicised text is verbatim comments)	Analyses			Synthesis
			Differences between high and lower	Key findings	Key phrases	Consolidated themes
<b>D7</b> <b>Watching individual teachers</b> and providing them with specific feedback about how to improve their literacy teaching practice	Self explanatory	<i>And I think that previously teachers could be quite didactic and worried about getting notes for students. It used to be the way that teachers would write things on the board and students would learn them - write them down, copy them and learn them. It's trying to change the teachers' attitudes that you don't have to get somebody to memorise something to get them to learn it. I still have issues with students rote learning essays</i>	N/A	Insufficient data to comment		
<b>D8</b> <b>Other person</b>	Another person is providing practical guidance to individual teachers	<i>...sometimes it's much more dictatorial. If that person has been worked with and been told and been told then it's much more, "You have to do this and I'm going to come and observe it and then you're going to report back to me how that went because you need to shift," depending on what it is.</i>	Yes	Support for the implementation of the programme is more widely spread across a range of people in higher achieving schools.	mixed influence approach	Supporting and contributing to organisational coherence
<b>D9</b> <b>Other practice</b>	Practice that does not fit into the categories above		No	No further analyses		
<b>E1</b> Showing a disposition to lead	Relates to how available and willing a LL is to help	<i>K and I both teach Year 8 so she is constantly sending me resources, sort of backwards and forwards and that sort of thing, about stuff that she's done that worked really well for her kids or things that she tried and didn't work well.</i>	No	No further analyses		

PELL	Description	Example (italicised text is verbatim comments)	Analyses			Synthesis
			Differences between high and lower	Key findings	Key phrases	Consolidated themes
<b>E2</b> Drawing on experience and as a leader	Relates to LL experience in any sort of leadership role	<i>I'd had previous experience as Head of Language Across the Curriculum at x College and I'd done some research myself in [another country] on writing pedagogy, so I'd come from an ESOL/literacy/Language across the curriculum background.</i>	Yes	Curriculum evaluation is happening more frequently and more effectively in the higher achieving schools.	Evaluation (knowing how well the curriculum is serving curriculum is serving learners)	Supporting and contributing to organisational coherence
<b>E3</b> Drawing on expertise as a leader	Relates to LL using what he/she knows about content and pedagogical knowledge to guide teachers	<i>Everything you say, even if it's just like an off-hand comment of, "I don't get why..." then she will immediately have an anecdote or she will have a story. Very rarely I ask her about something that she won't be able to help or she won't be able to tell me. She's such a teacher; she does that whole questioning thing on staff as well which sounds patronising but it's actually really, really helpful.</i>	Yes	Teachers in higher achieving schools are more likely to comment about their leader having deep knowledge compared to lower achieving schools	Deep knowledge	Deep knowledge
<b>E4</b> Engaging in sense-making and negotiation	Relates to the work LL do in understanding the demands made by senior leaders and deciding whether to support their priorities or protect teachers from their demands	<i>I think the implications for next year is that I have said I think as a department we will select certain ones to target because we can't do 16; I think that is mad because then all you are doing is tick boxing. I'm not resistant at all but for me philosophically my problem is that there is so many of these things now.</i>	N/A	Insufficient data to comment		

# Appendix Six: Guidelines for Effective Adolescent Literacy Instruction

Guideline One: Teaching decisions need to be based on quality evidence and ongoing inquiry

What Literacy Learning on Line says:

*"Since any teaching strategy works differently in different contexts for different students, effective pedagogy requires that teachers inquire into the impact of their teaching on their students" (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 35).*

*Inquiry is vital as it help teachers to:*

- *identify students' most pressing literacy needs*
- *match the most-likely-to-be-effective teaching approaches to the most important student needs*
- *evaluate whether the teaching approaches were effective plan next teaching steps.*

Guideline One: Knowledge of students

What Literacy Learning on Line says:

*"It is important that teachers have knowledge of their learners, including knowledge of students":*

- *Content and literacy needs*
- *Cultural identity*
- *Linguistic background, for example languages spoken at home, how long in NZ*
- *Beliefs, interests, attitudes.*

Guideline Two: Extensive opportunities to engage with text

What Literacy Learning on Line says:

*"Students learn most effectively when they have time and opportunity to engage with, practise, and transfer new learning. This means they need to encounter new learning a number of times and in a variety of different tasks or contexts. It also means that when curriculum coverage and student understanding are in competition, the teacher may decide to cover less but cover it in greater depth" (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 34).*

*In the context of adolescent literacy, it is important that students get extensive opportunities to:*

- *engage with a wide range of texts*
- *read, write, speak, and listen*
- *learn, practice, and reflect on new knowledge and strategies.*

A major problem in some secondary schools is that students simply do not get enough opportunities to read and write. Tatum describes African-American students in some inner-city schools as experiencing an 'in-school literacy underload' (Tatum, 2008). Facilitators in the Secondary Literacy Project have observed a similar literacy underload in some New Zealand classrooms.

## Guideline Two: Linking written, oral, and visual language

What Literacy Learning on Line says:

*Effective instruction will ... develop students' skills to flexibly use and integrate written, oral, and visual modes.*

*Making links between the written, oral, and visual strands are a powerful way of engaging students with text. Walqui (2006) uses the term 're-presenting text' to describe tasks in which students transform their reading from one genre into another. Examples of re-presenting text include summarising written text in a visual form (such as a diagram) or oral form (such as discussion).*

## Guideline Three: Appropriate challenge

What Literacy Learning on Line says:

*Students have different levels of expertise in reading and writing. Unless instruction is differentiated, a variety of less than optimal conditions occurs. Pitching instruction to the middle, for example, may result in students with more expertise becoming bored and disengaged, and students with less expertise becoming frustrated and disengaged.*

*Effective differentiation is only possible with good assessment knowledge.*

## Guideline Four: Clear and purposeful learning

What Literacy Learning on Line says:

*"Students learn most effectively when they understand what they are learning, why they are learning it, and how they will be able to use their new learning" (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 34)*

*"Students need to understand the purpose for all reading and writing tasks because without this their interactions with text may be 'unfocused and haphazard'" (Ministry of Education, 2004, p. 63)*

*Sometimes teachers will be explicit about content-based learning intentions and success criteria - but not about literacy-based learning intentions and success criteria.*

*Three important ways to make sure learning is clear and purposeful for students are through using:*

- *Literacy learning intentions*
- *Literacy success criteria*
- *Literacy exemplars*



#### Guideline Five: Creating a supportive learning environment

What Literacy Learning on Line says:

*“Learning is inseparable from its social and cultural context. Students learn best when they feel accepted, enjoy positive relationships with their fellow students and teachers, and when they are active, visible members of the learning community” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 34).*

*A supportive learning environment may be particularly important in regard to literacy, as language is, by definition, communicative and social.*

*Classroom environments that support literacy learning are language-rich, vibrant, interactive, fun, purposeful, safe, supportive, and challenging. Such environments value the diverse knowledge and experiences students bring with them.*

*“Culture counts – knowing, respecting and valuing who students are, where they come from, and building on what they bring with them makes a difference to both teaching and learning” (Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 20).*

#### Guideline Six: Specific feedback for students

What Literacy Learning on Line says:

*Feedback is a very significant component of effective instruction. Feedback is effective when it helps your students answer three questions:*

- *Where am I going?*
- *How am I going?*
- *Where to next?*

*(Hattie & Timperley, 2007).*

*Sometimes teachers will give good feedback about the subject content of a task (for example, the science ideas) but neglect the literacy aspects (for example, the paragraph structure or language choices).*

#### Guideline Seven: Developing students' skills to make links to prior knowledge

What Literacy Learning on Line says:

*Students' ability to understand a written text is affected by how much prior knowledge they have about that subject. One of the simplest ways to help your students comprehend a more challenging text is by activating their prior knowledge.*

*As well as using prior knowledge activities routinely when introducing a next text or writing task, it is important that teachers:*

- *identify gaps in students' knowledge, build necessary background knowledge, and correct misunderstandings*
- *help students develop independent strategies for activating and using their own prior knowledge, for example, students could learn to:*
  - *survey organisational features to 'get the gist' then reflect on what they know about that topic and type of text*
  - *check the adequacy of their prior knowledge as they read.*

## Guideline Eight: Effective instruction

What Literacy Learning on Line says:

*Knowing how different texts are organised is very important for reading and writing. Organisational features of texts include:*

- *headings*
- *sub-headings*
- *topic sentences*
- *visuals*
- *captions*
- *words in bold*
- *labels*
- *introductions and conclusions.*

*Surveying these features before reading helps students gain a general overview of the key ideas of the text, and an understanding of where key information is located. This helps activate a student's schema and helps them form hypotheses about texts. It is particularly important at secondary school because many texts are not organised sequentially.*

*Use Important text forms including:*

- *Arguments*
- *Descriptions*
- *Explanations*
- *Instructions*
- *Narrative*
- *Recounts*
- *Reports*

Research in writing by Wray and Lewis (1997) shows that when students understand the structure of texts they have to write, they are more able to generate ideas and to organise those ideas coherently and logically (Ministry of Education, 2004, p. 131).

## Guideline Nine: Developing skills in both receptive and productive language use

What Literacy Learning on Line says:

*'Receptive' refers to students' understanding of language they receive (that is, through reading, listening, viewing). 'Productive' refers to students skills in producing language (that is, writing, speaking, presenting). Vocabulary instruction, for example, is often oriented more toward receptive than toward productive vocabulary. This might mean, for example, that students who can understand mathematical vocabulary such as 'subtract' when they read or hear it, may use non-mathematical vocabulary such as 'take away' when they write or speak.*

*Reading and writing are reciprocal processes and reading can be enhanced through writing instruction and vice versa. "To communicate in written language successfully, learners need to read like writers and to write like readers... teachers need to plan to make students aware of these links" (Ministry of Education, 2004, p. 73).*

## Guideline Ten: Developing vocabulary and vocabulary solving skills

What Literacy Learning on Line says:

*The significance of acquiring domain specific vocabulary and understanding the way lexical items are used is very important. In general the more vocabulary a student has, the more vocabulary they are able to learn and the more they are able to cope and learn from complex academic tasks (Hiebert & Kamil, 2005).*

*Much vocabulary instruction in secondary content area classrooms appears to be focused on understanding new terms (that is, receptive vocabulary) but students also need extensive instruction and practice in using new vocabulary in speaking and writing (that is, productive vocabulary).*

## Guideline Eleven: Developing students' skills to employ key comprehension and writing strategies

What Literacy Learning on Line says:

*Key comprehension strategies used by effective readers include:*

- *Making connections between prior knowledge and texts*
- *Forming and testing hypotheses about texts*
- *Asking questions*
- *Creating mental images or visualising*
- *Inferring*
- *Identifying the authors' purpose and point of view*
- *Identifying and summarising main ideas*
  - *Identifying the main idea*
  - *Summarising*
- *Analysing, synthesising and evaluating ideas and information*
  - *Analysing and synthesising ideas*
  - *Evaluating ideas and information*

## Guideline Twelve: Developing students' skills to engage with text beyond a literal/factual level

What Literacy Learning on Line says:

*"Readers need to understand texts at more than a surface level. Reading can be thought of as a continuum extending from surface meaning to a level where the reader can interpret the author's implied meanings and then continues to the deeper levels of critical reading, where the reader evaluates the content, responds to the author's ideas, and integrates those ideas with their own existing knowledge"*  
*Ministry of Education, 2004, p. 73.*

- *Analysing and synthesising ideas*
- *Evaluating ideas and information*
- *Three-Level Reading Guides*

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