School Language: Literacy in English

Project L1

Sector: mostly secondary but some primary

Topic: Advancing Indigenous literacy through intervention for hearing disabilities

Location: five urban sites, many with some students from remote areas; 1 remote site

Number of students involved: 1032

Summary of intentions and activity

Intentions

The project set out to provide the intervention required to reverse or remediate the consequences of ear disease and hearing loss among the target group of Indigenous students and improve their literacy. More specifically, it was intended to demonstrate the link between otitis media with effusion (OME), conductive hearing loss (CHL: a preventable type of hearing loss caused by ear disease) and levels of English literacy.

Research has established that Indigenous Australians have a very high prevalence of respiratory problems and related diseases, including OME. During the critical years for speech and language development, as well as for growth and elaboration of the nerve pathways between the inner ear and the temporal cortex of the brain, the great majority of Indigenous children are experiencing fluctuating hearing loss. Such sensory deprivation during the developmental period subsequently makes it much more difficult for these children to learn English as a school language.

Note: OME in advantaged populations around the world is approximately 5% in childhood, falling to <1% after age 12. The prevalence of OME among Indigenous Australian children living in remote communities has been found to range from 40–70%, with younger children experiencing more frequent infectious episodes. Eardrum ruptures typically begin within the first three months of life. With repeated ruptures, healing, and re-ruptures, the eardrums become scarred and thickened. In many cases the ruptures become too large to heal and require reconstructive surgery to repair. In rare cases, reconstructive surgery is not possible, but bone-conduction hearing aids can be provided with excellent speech perception results. The middle ear disease that causes CHL is medically treatable, and in appropriately managed cases there should be no persisting hearing loss.

Activity

A two-day workshop was held at each school, for teachers and assistant teachers, community liaison officers and other staff. This covered topics such as: ear disease, auditory deprivation and language development; implications...
for schools and support services for students with hearing disabilities; phonological awareness (PA) intervention program for Indigenous language-users who are speakers of English as a foreign language; classroom acoustics, and FM classroom hearing aids and speaker systems; structuring learning environments to promote inclusion of students with hearing disabilities. The in-service program concluded with a negotiated plan for how each school would be involved.

FM sound field amplification systems were provided to all schools, except one which already had the equipment and one which had design issues likely to make the equipment of doubtful benefit.

Ear examination and hearing testing was provided for all 1032 students, although the initial expectation was for only 700. (This situation arose because of student mobility.) Those students found to have active ear disease were provided with medical treatment, in cooperation with families, schools and community clinics.

In summary, 79% of this group of Indigenous students were found to have an educationally-significant hearing disability. Findings in more detail were as follows.

- Forty per cent would conventionally require physician services to treat active middle ear disease and/or provide reconstructive ear surgery — 16% had persistent and significant conductive hearing loss in both ears; 24% had conductive hearing impairment that would cause major difficulties for students learning English as a foreign language.
- Less than 1% had sensorineural hearing loss due to abnormality of the inner ear or ascending auditory pathways in the brain.
- In addition to those above, 38% had indication of a Central Auditory Processing Disorder (CAP-D) displayed by poor speech discrimination scores and intolerance of background noise. These students have a genuinely ‘hidden’ disability, since they can hear, yet not completely understand running speech against a background of noise and competing messages. They appear to hear different words to those actually spoken (mis-perceive), miss out on parts of what is said, fail to keep pace with rapid speech and shifts in topics, and suffer fatigue and ‘tune out’. They are unaware that they have CAP-D, so don’t know when they should ask for repetition, clarification or a reduction in background noise. Students with CAP-D attempt to compensate by looking around and following the actions of other students, calling out ‘What?’ repeatedly, giving up and/or acting out. ‘We believe that adolescent male students with CAP-D are especially at risk of being expelled from school and are later over-represented in prison populations.’

Students’ literacy and phonological awareness levels were tested at the beginning and end of the project to measure the impact of the school-based intervention program.
Project performance
Performance targets and results

Note: The scores reported are those of students who attended at least 75% of school days in 1998 and were available for both pre- and post-testing. Across all six schools, 21% of students (n= 212) met these criteria, but none of the students in the Primary (5-11 year-olds) category did. Thus, this became an analysis of the literacy progress of secondary-aged students. Ear disease and hearing loss are much more prevalent in younger children and can be associated with their generally poor health and poor school attendance.

Of the students tested:
— 36% had middle ear abnormalities;
— 15% met referral criteria for ENT and AH services; and
— 8%, in addition to those above, had symptoms of CAP-D.

Spelling Age Scores (years):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-test:</th>
<th>Post-test:</th>
<th>Progress: 0.95 yr. (11 mos.)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mean: 8.33</td>
<td>Mean: 9.28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Range: 5.67–10.75</td>
<td>Range: 6.67–11.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>S.D.: 1.04</td>
<td>S.D.: 1.06</td>
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Reading Age Scores (years):

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<th>Pre-test:</th>
<th>Post-test:</th>
<th>Progress: 0.99 yr. (12 mos.)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean: 8.67</td>
<td>Mean: 9.65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range: 6.08–10.67</td>
<td>Range: 6.67–11.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>S.D.: 1.07</td>
<td>S.D.: 1.29</td>
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Phonological Awareness Scores (percent):

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<th>Post-test:</th>
<th>Progress: 17% (18 mos.)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mean: 65%</td>
<td>Mean: 82%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Range: 0%–97%</td>
<td>Range: 10%–100%</td>
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<td>S.D.: 19%</td>
<td>S.D.: 15%</td>
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Data also exist for the six schools separately. These indicate that the cohort of students in the school with predominantly older Indigenous students (who are therefore more likely to have stayed in school longer) is more likely to achieve above Intensive English Level. This is evidence that students’ persistence in returning to school from year to year, in addition to their daily attendance during each year, is related to their ear health, hearing status, achievement level and literacy progress.

Measures used to establish baselines and improvement

The Waddington Diagnostic Reading and Spelling mean age scores (converted into decimal scores from year-month scores), ranges, and standard deviations.
Phonological awareness with an instrument and process designed for students of English as a foreign language: mean percentage scores, ranges, and standard deviations.

**Analysis of project performance**

Factors in success

After proximity to kin, the next most important factor in student achievement may be consistency of teachers, support staff, classmates, scheduling, and living arrangements. Indigenous students, especially those coming from remote, traditional communities, may have difficulty learning the ‘culture of the classroom’; that is, the expectations, behaviour modification strategies, classroom discourse characteristics and interaction tactics of each teacher in response to each unique configuration of students. New students are also coping with new school (and residence) rules, loss of their emotional support system, and generally experiencing the culture shock inherent in such a major change in life circumstances.

It appears that integrated settings may offer Indigenous students the opportunity to communicate and otherwise interact with majority culture students. This may give them choices about how and how much they wish to be influenced by majority culture thinking.

Less successful factors

The teachers varied greatly in their responsiveness to the teacher-delivered phonological awareness program. In general, they apparently do not feel well-prepared to integrate a systematic phonics program into the curriculum they are delivering to their Indigenous students. Several of the teachers of adult-aged Indigenous students (15 years and older) believed the students would feel patronised even by having the alphabet displayed in the classroom.

Findings

The Indigenous students in this project had a very high prevalence of ear disease and persistent hearing disability compared to non-Indigenous children. Hearing support services at school are especially important for Indigenous students learning English as a foreign language.

High-attending Indigenous students are those who
- have less ear disease;
- are less likely to have hearing loss;
- are more likely to stay in school until they are older; and
- are more likely to achieve above Intensive English.

A phonological awareness program (or other adequate and consistent phonics-based program) can provide the framework for criterion-referenced assessment.
of student achievement, as well as contribute to EFL program evaluation. This is more culturally sensitive than using standardised reading and spelling tests that were not developed or normed for Indigenous students and compares them with younger non-Indigenous children. An added benefit of the PA-EFL program is that it enables Indigenous speakers to ‘code switch’ better. They learn to hear and speak mainstream Australian English more accurately and can sound more like majority culture members when they wish to.

Classroom acoustics vary, but are generally very poor listening environments for students with hearing disability and/or are learning English as a foreign language. The next logical step is to establish standards for classroom acoustics for students with hearing disabilities and for all Indigenous students learning EFL.

There is little advantage in attempting to ability-group or ‘stream’ students until they have reached a Year 4 equivalent literacy level (‘reading to learn’ vs. ‘learning to read’). Prior to that, it is more likely that Indigenous students would be most available for learning in the least stressful social environment for them.

Seating arrangements within classrooms have to be informed by cultural considerations as well as students’ visual and hearing needs. It would be instructive to learn from Indigenous male and female students how best to orchestrate their learning environments, including use of physical spaces, as well as non-verbal (signs and gestures) and non-linguistic (eye contact, proxemics, pausing, ‘body language’, etc.) communication.

In remote communities, deafness is not necessarily a handicapping condition. Reticence is socially acceptable. Speech patterns are often loud and repetitive. There are many different non-verbal and non-linguistic communication strategies. Sound systems of Indigenous languages incorporate fewer phonemes, no voicing differences for phonemic discrimination, almost all open syllables, and few consonant blends.

It was observed that Indigenous people in remote communities could be described as ‘obligatory visual attenders’. The authors of the report state: ‘They seem remarkably visually vigilant, and are not available for auditory (spoken) language processing while their attention was focused on incoming visual information. If you bring a group of traditional Indigenous students into a stimulus-rich classroom, and later ask them to describe what was there, they would be able to report on the visual materials in remarkable detail and even draw a sketch of the room’s layout. A comparison group of non-Indigenous students would not recall such visual detail. They would be far more aware of spoken information or instructions.’

‘There is reason to believe that non-Indigenous Australian students have more dominant left-hemisphere, sequential, spoken language-mediated information
processing. Indigenous students, on the other hand, may have far more dominant right-hemisphere, visually-mediated simultaneous processing. Learning environments and teaching strategies may well be informed by investigation of these possible differences in learner characteristics.”

**Project L2**

**Sector:** Primary/secondary

**Topic:** Literacy through libraries in non-urban schools

**Location:** remote, 18 sites

**Summary of intentions and activity**

**Intentions**

The project was devoted to upgrading library resources in schools in remote settings because of the absence of teachers with requisite training and experience and the need for adequate resources to support literacy learning.

**Activity**

Eighteen schools in need of assistance were identified by project coordinators in consultation with regional supervisors and other advisers.

Books, shelving, computer and barcode scanning supplies were purchased. Field trips were conducted to assess resources, layout, shelving and computer access. Collections were weeded, improved layout devised, and shelving ordered as necessary. New layouts were installed, and staff trained to use and manage the central data base and resources to support educational programs effectively.

**Project performance**

**Performance targets and results**

Targeted schools have:

— libraries with sufficient, appropriate resources to strongly support the school’s literacy programs and suitably shelved to increase usage.

**Result:** fully achieved in 15 schools, partly achieved in 3. (Two schools have small libraries; one school lost all its resources in a flood.)

— appropriate technology in libraries giving easy access to resources and staff trained to effectively exploit the technology and resources

**Result:** fully achieved in 18 schools.

— increased use of libraries and resources towards improved literacy levels

**Result:** fully achieved in 17 schools, partly achieved in 1.
Measures used to establish baselines and improvement
National school library benchmarks, and responses from school personnel.

Analysis of project performance
Typical comments from the schools’ evaluations:
Since our library was created, the children have made constant use of it. The children’s interest in books has increased dramatically.
Renewed vigour in our reading program. ... A marked change in the attitudes to books and reading.
The overall literacy levels of the children who attend regularly are improving.
The library with its enhanced and attractive appearance provides a stimulating environment which is encouraging the children to choose books and read.

Sustainability
Material and procedures are in place. Training will need to be renewed to accommodate staff turnover.

Project L3
Sector: Upper primary and secondary to Year 8
Topic: As I Remember

Summary of intentions and activity
Intentions
The project set out to develop and publish curriculum materials of relevance to Aboriginal students in Years 5–8: a collection of audio recordings of interviews with eleven Tasmanian Aboriginal people, capturing their lived experiences, in order to support improved literacy among Aboriginal students.

‘The impetus was the suggestion in Bringing Them Home that there are important stories about Indigenous people that have not been told and could soon be lost. In the historical context of Tasmania, it has seemed particularly important that Aboriginal students have culturally relevant learning materials that affirm their identity, respect their past and verify the lineage of their people. Furthermore, the assumptions and prejudices of some non-Aboriginal people need to be challenged and refuted.’

Activity
A reference group was established, with representatives of the Department of Education, the Office of Aboriginal Affairs, the Elders’ Association and the Tasmanian Aboriginal Education Association Inc.
Interviewees were selected, representing the main family groups in Tasmania. An interviewer, a researcher (both Aboriginal people) and a photographer were employed to conduct the interviews. Several common themes emerged from these: educational opportunities, schooling, family life and work. The Reference Group agreed that some issues-based recordings would also be of value to teachers and students and the final package includes edited interviews and thematic presentations.

Three schools with comparatively high populations of Indigenous students trialed the package in early 1999. It is due for publication in late 1999.

**Project performance**

Performance targets and results

— Proportion of Year 7 Indigenous students in target schools who write at an appropriate level for their age at the end of the project compared with their level at its beginning.

— Proportion of Year 7 Indigenous students in target schools whose speaking skills are at an appropriate level for their age at the end of the project compared with their level at its beginning.

**Results:** there was an upward move by all Year 5–8 students involved in the trialing in both speaking and writing. In speaking there was a shift mainly from Level 3 and Level 3/4 to Level 4 and above. Similar shifts occurred in writing. Indigenous students tended to perform better in ‘content’ (quality of thought and sense of context and purpose) than in ‘language’ (control of the elements of language).

The DART English testing program (listening skills) and the Year 5 Statewide Literacy Monitoring Program (writing skills) provided baseline data.

**Analysis of project performance**

Careful, time-consuming negotiation is necessary if community trust and acceptance are to be achieved.

As a result of their participation, some students have been encouraged to identify their Aboriginality and many have taken more pride in their heritage.

**Factors in success**

- The multiplicity of ways teachers have found to use the materials.
- The generalisability of the human experiences captured.
- Recognition and accreditation of cultural knowledge and experience has a powerful effect on the sense of identity and self-esteem of Indigenous students, as well as their school performance.
Less successful factors
The breakdown of communication with one school, leading to delay of the trial and some data being unavailable.

Sustainability
The impact of the project is likely to be sustained for these reasons.
• It complements the Visiting Speakers Program conducted throughout the Aboriginal Education Unit of the Department of Education.
• Aboriginal Studies in Tasmanian schools has, until recently, been under-resourced. As a result, many teachers felt unable confidently to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives in the curriculum. The addition of As I Remember to those resources will enhance teacher confidence. Every government school and college in Tasmania will have a copy of the package.
• Curriculum Officers from the Aboriginal Education Unit are assisting teachers in using As I Remember.

Project L4
Sector: early childhood and primary
Topic: Kimberley Literacy Project
Location: over the project period, nine remote sites

Summary of intentions and activity
Intentions
The project set out ‘to provide a solid foundation for school learning for young Aboriginal children’ in a remote region of Australia. To do this it aimed to give extra support to young students in two areas:
• by documenting the learning experiences that these students bring from their own homes and to use these as a scaffolding for the commencement of school literacy and numeracy; and
• by improving the Standard Australian English (SAE) of young children who speak Indigenous Australian languages, including Kriol.

‘Teachers’ role in young children’s learning is complex. They need an understanding of what the children “know” in order to facilitate further learning. In cross-cultural classrooms the role of the teacher is even more complex. The complexity lies in the recognition of prior knowledge in a culture that is mostly unfamiliar non-Indigenous teachers.’

The project emphasised the need for teachers to find, value and make explicit the links between home literacy, in its broadest sense, and school literacy. ‘Teachers, generally, uphold the need to construct classroom learning that
allows students to work from the known to the unknown. Recognising what young Kukatja, Jaru or Kija children already “know”, and how they learnt it, is however, a difficult task. They must be wary of stereotypes about the other culture and be careful observers of modern community lifestyles.

Activity

The program provided extra support at each site in the form of an additional experienced teacher for one term. The seconded teachers’ experience was in the area of early childhood and in some cases, English as a second language. This teacher became part of a three-person team with the classroom teacher and an Aboriginal Teaching Assistant (ATA). The three members of this teaching team were asked to work together to allocate tasks and share responsibilities and all undertook the professional development which commenced and finished the project.

Before the teachers arrived in the school community, two consultants from the Catholic Education Office in the Kimberley region visited the communities to explain the aims of the project and seek support for the placement of the extra teacher. Placing and selecting the seconded teachers was also dependent on practical issues such as availability of accommodation, teacher qualifications and numbers of students.

The teaching teams were given two sets of professional development: a three-day workshop dealing with the topics such as: Aboriginal communities and lifestyles in the region, team teaching, literacy, outcomes-based education, pidgin and creole languages, teaching English as a second language, assessment and program planning; and a one- or two-day session primarily devoted to feedback from the teaching teams.

The outcomes sought related initially to the use of oral language in familiar settings, and subsequently had an emphasis on questions, simple requests and directions. The students learnt the conventions of SAE use in the classroom through such activities as practising greetings, news-telling procedures and roll-call.

The ATAs collected examples of home learning experiences and knowledge. The teachers and teaching assistants also made observations of behaviours that reflected home learning experiences. The teaching teams used this information to set up classroom environments and plan learning activities that were relevant to, and built on, the students’ previous experiences. All teachers emphasised the need for students to use their first language to interpret new concepts introduced in the classroom.

Some adjustments were made in the second year of the project (which was supported from two sources allowing a longer period of operation). One of these was in the area of community consultation to assist parents and other community members to understand the intentions of the project. In 1999...
two Aboriginal people were asked to visit the towns and communities to speak with school boards, community councils and parents. Notes from these visits give a clear indication of the Aboriginal parents’ keen interest in their children’s education and in the desire for them to learn SAE.

All schools will contribute to and receive copies of a resource book for early childhood classrooms produced as a result of the project.

**Project performance**

**Performance targets and results**

— Improve the Standard Australian English (SAE) of young children who speak an Indigenous Australian language, including Kriol, and thus increase the students’ participation in the classroom

**Results:** final results not yet available.

All teams reported that the students made significant progress in two areas.

• Increased confidence. The extra teacher in the classroom meant that the students received more individual attention. Many of the students became increasingly eager to join in group activities, to answer questions at math periods and to participate in drama.

• Skills in SAE in the following areas:
  — classroom routines such as greetings, answers to roll call, requests to go to the toilet, simple instructions;
  — joining in repetitive language from favourite books, repetitive parts in drama activities, simple chants and songs;
  — playing structured games and using the correct SAE sentence such as ‘Who’s got this one?’ and answering ‘I’ve got that one’;
  — traditional language-speaking students began to use simple SAE sentences rather than gestures or single words; and
  — using more descriptive words in games. For example, ‘Who’s got the blue ball?’; ‘I’ve got the blue ball.’

**Measures used to establish baselines and improvement**

ESL Scales and/or the First Steps Literacy Net. The teachers generally found the Literacy Net more practical and easier to use than the ESL Scales. Use of both tools was time-consuming in classrooms where attendance was erratic.

Observation and monitoring processes, such as: observations, running records and anecdotal records, team meeting discussions, checklists and student work samples. These were found to be the most practical and efficient strategies and, therefore, were most widely used. Some teachers also used photographs, tape recordings and videos.
What works?

Analysis of project performance

Many of these students speak Kriol as their first language. The difference between this language and English is not readily apparent to many adults and even less so to many children. Young Kriol-speaking students have several steps to take to acquire SAE. Firstly they must realise that the language of the school is different from their own. Secondly, they must have the desire to use that language. (In some communities of this region there is no social or economic need for young children to use SAE.) Thirdly, they must learn the structures of the new language.

Standard Australian English is the means of instruction in almost all Kimberley classrooms. This means that the students are learning in Standard Australian English at the same time as they are learning to speak it. One teacher commented: “I think it is very important to remember that we are teaching children of a very young age who are still experimenting with their first language. The children at this school are in fact learning three languages—Kriol, Standard Australian English and Jaru. This is a formidable challenge and they appear to be embracing it.”

There is no doubt that most parents in this region want their children to be able to read and write SAE. This project has increased the amount of SAE spoken by young Aboriginal students in the Kimberley. It has helped them to begin learning a second language in enjoyable, yet meaningful ways. However, only a small minority of Aboriginal people in this region use SAE as their main form of communication in their everyday lives. All the important issues of their lives are discussed in one or more of their Indigenous languages. The project has not only raised teachers’ awareness of how young Kimberley students learn SAE but also their awareness of the students’ need to learn in their first language.

The question of how teachers make sound observations when working in another culture remains perplexing and unanswered. It may be that teachers without long years of experience in another culture have difficulty really “knowing” their students, or it may be that some teachers are much more perceptive than others. The project may have had more specific results if one or two specialist teachers had been employed to make the observations and then teachers had adapted the information for their classrooms.”

Factors in success

Two procedures that seem apparently straightforward contributed most to the teachers’ knowledge of their students and community.

- A successful teaching team consisting of an Aboriginal teaching assistant and a non-Aboriginal teacher, with equal contribution of their respective knowledge is probably the most valuable asset in classrooms in this region. Ongoing discussion with, and support from, ATAs was highly valued by
the teachers. When the ATAs were regular members of the teaching team, the teacher constantly sought their knowledge and advice. This is not a new concept in Aboriginal education but it is reiterated here for emphasis. Unfortunately, this was not available at all of the schools.

- ‘Bush trips enabled non-Aboriginal teachers, ATAs, Aboriginal parents and students to learn about each other in a relaxed environment. In this environment the teachers were able to observe most clearly the extent of students’ knowledge and the language they used to express it. In this environment, also, the teachers were more obviously learners themselves. The value of these excursions as an important educational resource needs to be more widely promoted.’

The most successful factors in developing skills in SAE appear to have been the following.

- ‘The teachers emphasised that the most valuable learning took place incidentally when the students actually used Standard Australian English to communicate their needs in the classroom. The students were encouraged to use SAE to ask for items of equipment, to greet the teachers, to ask to take turns in games and to request drinks and fruit for morning tea and so on.

- ‘The students’ learning of the new language was based on existing knowledge as far as possible. The teachers were asked to become involved in local communities, to observe student behaviour and to use the ATAs’ knowledge to set up situations that were familiar to students. Class books were a valuable way of using SAE in familiar contexts. During second term a circus visited many communities in the region and this provided a familiar and interesting topic for literacy. Class books were also made about bush trips, excursions to local enterprises and family activities. In the more remote communities the teachers were able to involve community adults in classroom activities.

‘The high value of bush trips has been mentioned. These experiences were used in various classroom activities, for example, art and craft activities with materials collected on the trip, production of class books, adaptation of favourite stories to include some local foods or animals and composition of class songs.’

- ‘The project schools set up learning centres that reflected aspects of the local community, for example, a cafe, a community office and a community store. Students were able to use their first language to build on their previous knowledge and interpret new concepts such as multiple number, categorisation and the use of technology for communication, information recording and storage. At the same time they were alerted to the need to use SAE in situations such as ordering goods from the city, speaking to the waiter in a cafe or speaking to a government official in a community office.'
‘The students modelled being speakers of SAE, such as shopkeepers, waiters in a cafe, nurses and office workers and were supported in their attempts to speak SAE and encouraged to experiment even if mistakes were made.

• ‘The teachers and Aboriginal teaching assistants planned numerous activities for students to listen to SAE.T he model of two speakers of SAE interacting in the classroom was greatly valued by the teachers. Some classrooms had listening posts at which the students listened to songs and stories in SAE.

• ‘The teachers supplemented the students’ learning of SAE with activities that focused on particular aspects of SAE grammar or discourse. These activities were particularly important for the Kriol-speaking students where the distinction between SAE and their first language is not clearly apparent to them. Teachers observed certain aspects of Kriol grammar that differed markedly from SAE and planned group activities that focused on the SAE forms. The forms that were consistently observed were third person singular pronouns, descriptive words, prepositions and question structures.’

Less successful factors

• ‘The project design stressed the need for equal input from teachers, and ATAs. However there was a wide difference in how this was carried out in practice. This broke down at some schools and during the professional development process. In some schools there was continuous input from community adults as well as ATAs. In other schools the teaching assistant rarely attended. Obviously the aim for this project is to have high input in all schools. Attempts are being made to achieve greater consultation and participation by Aboriginal consultants and teaching assistants.

• ‘The success of the project was greatly affected by erratic student attendance in several schools. This is a constant and real problem in schools in this region. The students in most need of improvement in literacy and numeracy are the lowest attenders. The low student attendance at schools is an issue that must be taken up with parents and the Aboriginal community as a whole.

• ‘The extent to which teachers observed and used the students’ home experiences also varied greatly. The Resource Book will make this a priority and examples from experienced teachers will perhaps clarify the notion and motivate others.’

Sustainability

The work of the project will continue, if not in this specific form.

An aspect of the project that has had and will continue to have impact is the collation and dissemination of the Resource Book. Two aspects of the booklet have been important.
The ATAs’ collection of early childhood experiences has generated much discussion about what young children already know. It has also meant that ATAs in some schools have had a great deal of input into the project.

The teaching ideas suggested by the teachers and Aboriginal teaching assistants will be trialed and modified on a continuing basis. The emphasis in this document will be on the use of students’ home experiences as a basis for school learning.

Project L5
Sector: Primary (Years 3–5)
Topic: Intensive literacy project
Location: 11 sites in rural towns
Number of students involved: 142

Summary of intentions and activity

Intentions
The project set out to address the literacy needs of two groups of Indigenous students in Years 3–5 so that students were better prepared for transition to secondary school (and for later life). One group had missed learning necessary decoding skills and the other group had decoding skills but low levels of reading comprehension.

Activity
The project used the principles and practices of Reading Recovery in a series of one-to-one lessons of 45 minutes every day for ten weeks for the lowest achieving Indigenous students. Components included: familiar reading; re-reading of previous day’s material; shared reading to model use of meaning, structure and visual information; guided reading of new books at instructional level; reciprocal questioning, summarising or retelling; writing short texts with word analysis.

The other group had low comprehension skills and were taught in groups of five using Reciprocal Teaching and other strategies. Two groups of students were targeted each term and received a 25-minute Reciprocal Teaching session each day.

Project performance
Performance targets and results

Accelerate the reading skills of 60 Indigenous students identified as poor ‘code breakers’ in Years 3–5 and 300 Indigenous students identified as poor ‘text analysts’ in the same years.
Results:
First group: Of 37 targeted students, 34 of these obtained proficient levels of decoding skills. Some made as much as 12 months progress in word knowledge. Improvement ranged from two to 13 Reading Recovery Levels, with the average being five Levels.

Second group: 64% of 105 targeted participants were accelerated in their reading comprehension compared with 53% in the control group. Almost all students improved their scores on the Metacomprehension Strategy Index.

Measures used to establish baselines and improvement
— Poor ‘code breakers’ were assessed by a trained Reading Recovery teacher using the following components of the Reading Recovery Observation Survey: letter identification test; Burt Word Test; concepts about print; writing vocabulary; hearing sounds in words; running records; analysis of writing.
— Poor ‘text analysts’ were assessed by classroom teachers using the Progressive Achievement Test of Reading Comprehension, the TORCH Test of Reading Comprehension; Schmitt’s Metacomprehension Skills Index and placement of students using the Benchmark Kit.

Analysis of project performance
Results for those participating were satisfactory but the total number of participants was disappointing. Factors accounting for the lower than expected rate of participation included the fact that seven of the 11 schools were staffed by a majority of teachers in their first two years of teaching. This situation required a high level of support which was difficult to provide, especially when:
• the region was experiencing a period of record rainfall and consequent flooding;
• six of the schools had difficulty staffing the extra components due to a lack of available casuals;
• staff turnover took place in all but one of the schools and led to some lack of consistency; and
• change in project facilitators halfway through the project resulted in a six-week delay.

Factors in success
• Having a trained Reading Recovery teacher led to the greatest gains for poor ‘code breakers’.
• Reciprocal Teaching provided a defined focus for students, promoted ownership and bolstered the confidence of reluctant learners.
• Cooperative learning structures and strategies can improve the learning outcomes of Indigenous students.
• Extra staffing allowed for intensive assistance, leading to success and improved self image.
• Intensive training for staff had a positive influence on teacher expectations and performance.
• The project raised awareness in schools of the importance of close student monitoring.
• Schools have identified the need for good planning, resourcing and continued professional development to secure a balanced and effective approach to literacy.

Less successful factors
• Poor attendance of some students proved detrimental to their success.
• PAT and TORCH tests had questionable validity for the targeted group and are time-consuming to administer. The Metacomprehension Strategic Index and analysis of miscues from running records would provide sufficient data to drive good teaching practice.

Sustainability
In schools where classroom teachers have taken on the methodology used the program will be maintained. (Staff turnover is always likely to be a problem.)

Some project schools have suggested they might adapt the individual teaching strategies to allow greater numbers of students access to the program.

Project L6
Sector: secondary
Topic: Intensive English language tuition
Location: urban with students from remote areas
Number of students involved: 43

Summary of intentions and activity
Intentions
The project set out to provide intensive English literacy support for NESB students from remote areas.

This College enrols approximately 40 Indigenous students aged 12–18 who have limited experience of English. Typically the students come from remote communities, speak the language of their country and have little experience of school. Our priority for these students has been to teach English — reading, writing and speaking. Our ability to do this well has been minimal due to the following problems:
What works?

- ‘normal’ class sizes (1 teacher to 25-30 students);
- teachers who did not have formal qualifications in teaching English as a Second Language;
- limited ESL teaching resources for this age group;
- limited orientation programs to support transition from community life to mainstream residential schooling;
- poor retention;
- lack of appropriate curriculum; and
- limited assessment tools which appropriately assess English literacy/numeracy.

Activity

Two Intensive English Centres (classes) were created. Each class had 18 students as its maximum size and was taught by an ESL-trained specialist. The classes catered for two identified groups: younger and older, a grouping based on past experience. The younger students (aged 12-14) are considered ‘children’. The older students (aged 15-18) include the initiated and are considered adult.

The teachers’ tasks were to:
- orient the students to the ‘culture’ of schooling;
- improve the level of English literacy and numeracy;
- support the students culturally and pastorally;
- actively maintain retention through ongoing dialogue with students’ families;
- explore appropriate curriculum;
- explore appropriate resources; and
- assess, record, and report on literacy/numeracy development.

Younger class: At the beginning of the year the original student literacy levels ranged from Consolidating Beginning Level 1 to Achieving Beginning Level 3 on the ESL Outcomes Profile. At this level of literacy students have very limited literacy skills which would assist them in reading and writing independently in English.

Two Intensive English Modules were used throughout Term 1 and the beginning of Term 2. In addition to the Modules, a reading and writing program based on improving grapho-phonics, reading for meaning and spelling skills was introduced. By mid-Term 2 it became obvious that the Intensive English Modules were not challenging enough for the majority of the students whose literacy levels had advanced.

Older class: Four different modules were trialed. The Certificate One in Preliminary Education was by far the most appropriate. Following a regular two-hour period of intensive literacy instruction, one-on-one work occurred
with each student, during various times in a day. The smaller class helped because of the possibility of building relationships with each individual student. That provided a better developed understanding of their cultural and school backgrounds. One example of a very successful strategy has been to make explicit the sounds of letters in their own language compared with the sounds in the English language.

**Project performance**

**Performance targets and results**

— 50% of the students would progress at least 1 Level of the NT ESL Outcomes Profile

**Results:** Younger class

During the year, 23 students were placed in this class. Of the original 16 students, 13 completed. Of the seven students enrolled during the year, six are still enrolled. Of those 13 students who have been enrolled for the whole year: six students have progressed at least two Levels of the NT ESL Outcomes Profile, four students, three Levels; and three students have progressed at least four Levels. All ‘original’ students completed two units of Foundation Studies Maths, two units of English, one unit of Social Education and one unit in Science.

**Results:** Older class

During the year, 20 students were placed in this class. Of the original students, 10 remain enrolled. Of the 10 who have been enrolled for the whole year:

- five students have progressed at least one Level of the NT ESL Outcomes Profile; three students, two Levels; two students at least three Levels.

**Measures used to establish baselines and improvement**

Students were assessed using the Lost Test and placed according to their initial score (10 or lower). The NT ESL Outcomes Profile was used as the reference point for pre-and post-testing.

**Analysis of project performance**

**Factors in success**

Aspects of the project that had the most impact were:

- smaller class size which encourages individualised programs for students both in orientation to the College and in development of appropriate academic programs;
- guaranteed funding allowed the maintenance of classes for the whole year regardless of student movement;
What works?

- ESL/Aboriginal teachers who have developed skills and understandings about effective teaching/learning with Indigenous ESL students with high teacher expectations of students’ ability to achieve;
- specific teaching/learning targets for project teachers which give clear outcomes objectives;
- clearly established pathways with requirements explained and understood; and
- appropriate curriculum which is relevant (in terms of literacy/numeracy development) to these students.

Other factors included:
- a consistent timetable and routine: including a daily grapho-phonetic program beginning with consonants, short and long vowels, blends and word endings; explicit teaching of the metalanguage of reading and writing (consonants, vowels, sentences, titles, headings, paragraphs etc.); and the use of individual reading logs; and
- choosing current affairs topics as discussion starters for oral English exercises and later as reading and writing exercises.

Less successful factors

'The younger class of students were the most difficult to orient to life at the College. We needed to put more support into specific orientation into learning and living at the College. What tended to happen were ad hoc responses to inappropriate behaviour as opposed to planned, informed and collaborative orientation. To improve this in the future we need to involve the students’ parents (eg, in an orientation program for parents and students at the beginning of the year and a follow-up range of sessions to build a partnership). We also need to focus additional resources into teaching/learning how to live and learn within this kind of environment.

'We did not ‘buy’ the appropriate time for setting up the program within established structures, for exploring resources, for monitoring progress and supporting the teachers who were employed in the program.

'This project only focused on our two least literate/numerate groups. We have 10 other Indigenous classes that could equally benefit from the kind of focus and resourcing this project allowed us to provide.’ (This is particularly relevant with relation to maintaining classes/programs throughout the year.)

Sustainability

'The school has agreed to sustain two small classes for our least English-literate students for 1999. The sustainability of these two classes and all IESIP programs are based on retention of predicted enrolments throughout the year.'
Project L7
Sector: primary/secondary
Topic: Scaffolding Reading and Writing for Indigenous Students in School
Location: urban and remote, 2 sites
Number of students involved: 110

Summary of intentions and activity

Intentions
The project set out to accelerate literacy learning for students involved in the project by training a cohort of teachers, Aboriginal Education Workers and tutors to deliver and promote the strategies and by producing a series of teaching resource packages that can be applied in Indigenous school programs across Australia. It occurred at the request of the two communities involved.

Activity
At each site students’ reading and writing development was assessed.

Workshops, modelled lessons and continuing advice and support about effective classroom programming were provided for teachers at each site. This work focused on issues such as:

• curriculum sequencing to reach literacy goals over the term and the year;
• programming to enable sufficient time each week for literacy work;
• how to pick up the groups of weaker students in each class;
• class organisation and teachers’ roles to work effectively with all students in the class; and
• how to balance the demands of effective teaching and behaviour management.

Teaching resources were produced. To date these have included:

• general teachers’ notes on book selection, book orientation, transformation of written text, scaffolding transitional spellers, scaffolded writing, prompting strategies for use when listening to oral reading;
• illustrated teachers’ notes on stages in the scaffolding sequence;
• teaching notes for specific texts for early literacy, English, Science and Society and the Environment; and
• colour transparencies and audio tapes of reading books.

The production of papers and a video to introduce Scaffolding methodology to teachers and others is in train at the time of writing.
Project performance

Performance targets and results

— Progress targeted students one or more Levels of the National English Profile within project timeline.

Results: (to date) Overall average improvement has been from 1.5 to more than 2 Profile Levels over two-three school terms.

Measures used to establish baselines and improvement

Pre-testing of reading and writing Levels using the National English Profile and running records. Continuous monitoring of student progress.

Analysis of project performance

Some of the central issues in the design and execution of the project were as follows.

‘Low expectations: at the start of the project expectations of students expressed through teaching programs, and by individual teachers and the students themselves were very low. We believe these to be self-fulfilling, since they resulted in low levels of academic activity in the classroom.

‘Behaviour management: a focus on this issue was frequently the determining factor in school activities. The most common solution has been to lower the challenge to a level students can cope with without support. This results in most class time being taken up with low level busy work. The project has shown that it is not necessary to lower the level of educational activities, that behavioural issues arising from challenging work settle down once students become familiar with scaffolding routines and are able to participate actively, and that a certain level of activity in the classroom is a sign of active learning taking place rather than a behavioural problem.

‘Common mainstream teaching practices: reproduction of standard practices of mainstream schooling has been an issue. These include literacy activities which assume culturally-embedded literacy understandings and do not adequately support Indigenous students to become effective readers and writers. On the one hand, individual reading programs are used whereby students chose books and read to themselves. Most students chose basal picture readers from remedial programs that do not advance their literacy skills significantly, if at all. These have now been dropped from all classrooms in which the project has worked. On the other hand, individual writing tasks were given which did not give students adequate support to use literate language in their writing. Instead, students recycled simple recounts of personal experiences week after week. These individual activities have now been replaced by the explicit modelling and joint negotiation of writing activities.

‘Varying “ability” levels: the problem of varying ability levels in each class has been another cause of low level educational activities in Indigenous classrooms.
as teachers try to include weaker students in activities. Since scaffolding enables all students to participate at some level in activities around an age appropriate text, and all students are becoming literate enough to read, this problem is being overcome. In addition the project has given teachers the skills necessary to work intensively in groups and with weaker students individually to bring their skills up to the class average.

‘Irregular attendance: the problem of irregular attendance by some Indigenous students is widely attributed as a cause for low literacy achievement. It is another reason for the low level of educational activities in Indigenous classrooms, as teachers find it difficult to plan a consistent teaching sequence. Teachers involved in the project report that:

— it is now much easier to include these students in classroom activities as they know the scaffolding literacy routines well enough to participate, even if they have missed work on the particular text; and

— students are now attending more regularly since they realised that they could now achieve something in class as a result of their improved literacy skills.

‘Dependence on one-to-one support: dependence of students on continuous one-to-one support from teachers for difficult learning activities is a problem in all classes. This was a particular problem at one site, where classroom support teachers and homework tutors were forced to work with each of their students in this way in order for them to complete class and homework activities without being able to read the textbooks or follow their class teacher. Teachers in the project report that students have become much more independent learners and are willing to take risks.

‘Students’ perceptions of school learning: Many Indigenous students perceive reading, writing and other educational activities as ‘ritual’ school practices. At the start of the project it was apparent that no students were reading for pleasure or meaning. Most were reading meaningless remedial readers. Those who could read harder texts were doing so with little comprehension, simply skipping words in every sentence they didn’t know, making the texts meaningless. All students are now showing an interest in the texts they are reading, and are encouraged by their increasing powers to read more widely. Teachers report that students’ attitude to learning is changing, towards a positive and critical perception of school learning.’

Sustainability

The project is currently established at three key sites which are firmly committed to continuing and expanding the work. These key sites have formed a base for movement into four more secondary sites during 1999. There is potential for considerably wider dissemination in the future. Development of teaching and training materials for this purpose has commenced.
Project L8
Sector: primary
Topic: Deadly Writin’, Readin’ and Talkin’
Location: urban
Number of students involved: 65

Summary of intentions and activity

Intentions
This project set out to improve the oracy and literacy outcomes of targeted Aboriginal students from Reception to Year 7 through an action research project focusing on changed teaching and learning practices.

Literacy levels among Aboriginal students are significantly lower than the general population on all measures. There is little classroom-based research on effective literacy pedagogy, particularly in urban schools, nor on how urban Aboriginal children take up the curriculum offered.

Activity
Volunteers for the project were recruited from within existing staff. It operated in four classes: Reception/1, 2/3, 4/5 and a 5/6/7.

‘An intensive and on-going process of in-service education was instituted, focused on a wide range of issues, but including the role of literacy in Indigenous students’ lives, the social and cultural nature of literacy, and the idea of Scaffolded Literacy and how it might work in each research classroom. Further theoretical input has occurred each term and there has been a regular process of reflection on our practice.

‘Project staff have been involved with the school’s regular co-planning sessions (involving School Service Officers, Aboriginal Education Workers, Special Education Teachers as well as teachers). In addition, many hours have been committed to detailed planning of classroom practice. Because Scaffolded Literacy is so new, there has been a strong need to look at the curriculum in great detail, particularly developing teachers’ understandings of functional grammar. Because the talk and questioning used in Scaffolded Literacy is new and different, we have also spent a significant amount of time rehearsing and recording exactly what to say in the classroom in order to successfully scaffold students’ literacy learning.

‘Each project class had a 50-minute Scaffolded Literacy lesson for four days a week. In addition, the functional grammar teacher gave a focused grammar lesson on Fridays to the three older classes. The Scaffolded Literacy lessons were team taught in various ways. There were always at least two teachers in each classroom, sometimes more, depending on the level of support available.
Teacher collaboration took a range of forms: withdrawal and subsequent integration; the project teacher and the classroom teacher working together with the whole class; demonstration lessons; and small group work in the classroom.

Functional grammar has been implicitly and explicitly taught as a way of understanding text.

A Reading Support Program staffed by Aboriginal Parent Literacy Workers was introduced in order to establish ways that Aboriginal parents could have a recognised and valued role in the school, at the same time supporting their children’s literacy learning. The Reading Support Program evolved from a series of workshops for parents on language issues, particularly dialect and register. A training program was developed to teach parents a useful way of listening to children read. Parents attended a series of five workshops, and two follow-up sessions after they had been working for a time. Two parents, who work for a total of four days per week, are currently employed to support the reading of all Aboriginal children R-3. Each child has a 25-minute session twice per week.

Case studies were conducted of children deemed to be most at risk in the research classrooms. (See pp. 71–76.) Data was collected in the form of notes following lessons, work samples, test results, tape recording of reading, and an interview.

Project performance
Performance target and results
— The spread of English Profile Levels of Aboriginal students in this sample would reflect the spread of Profile Levels for the non-Aboriginal school population (later adjusted to comparison with overall national results).

Because of the need to show distance travelled, the results of children not present for both data collection periods were excluded.

Reception: After six months, both children are within the average or above average range for letter identification and concepts of print. Both are still ‘at risk’ in their writing vocabulary, but one child has moved from ‘at risk’ in the dictation test to ‘average’.

Year 1: All Year 1 students have moved up at least 0.3 of a Profile Level in reading, some making sense of text for the first time. Two have made major jumps. In terms of writing, dictation and writing vocabulary they have improved to average or above average.

Year 2: All students have moved at least 0.6 of a Profile Level in reading. The fact that two students are reading at Profile Level 3.3 in Year 2 is extremely encouraging. The expansiveness and complexity of written vocabulary has increased markedly.

Year 3: Significant improvement has been recorded in concepts of print, letter identification and sight word vocabulary over the six months. There has been
a remarkable improvement in the level at which children are able to read independently. Four of the five children are able to hear all sounds in a sentence. The scores in writing vocabulary again fail to reveal the richness of many of the Year 3 students' writing.

‘Year 4: As Year 3 students, achievement in viewing was spread from Profile Level 1 to Level 4, with the median above the national median. As Year 4 students, the median has actually dropped slightly. However, the tail of ‘at risk’ students has diminished. In reading, the median has moved upwards, about level with the national Year 3 median, and the tail has shortened. The ‘at risk’ student is catching up. Under test conditions, the writing skills of this group do not seem to have changed to any great extent. The median has risen, but not a great deal, and it is still below the national Year 3 results to a worrying degree. Only one of the four children is working at Profile Level 3 and the tail is still the same distance below the middle 50% of students. Three of the four students are considered to be still at risk.

‘Year 5: In viewing skills, the median has also moved from well below the national Year 5 median to slightly above it. In reading, the most highly skilled student is in solid Level 5, and the ‘at risk’ tail has caught up to solid Level 2, almost beginning Level 3. Unfortunately, the median has fallen slightly, and is still below the national Year 3 median. In writing, the median has moved upwards about half a Profile Level in six months. It is still well below the national Year 5 scores. The most ‘at risk’ students have moved from Profile Level 1 to Level 2.

‘Year 6: In viewing, the student who performed best in the test is at Profile Level 5, the median has moved to Level 4, and although there is a tail, that student is not far behind the others, and has still improved almost a whole Profile Level in six months. As Year 5’s, the median of this cohort was well below the national Year 3 median, with a tail of ‘at risk’ students well below that again. This year the student who scored the highest is almost at beginning Profile Level 5, and the tail has moved from low Level 2 to solid Level 3. Most encouragingly, the median has moved to become level with the national Year 5 median. As Year 5’s, all students in this group were below the national Year 5 median in writing. As Year 6’s, their median has moved to level with that national Year 5 median, with one student at beginning Profile Level 4.

‘Year 7: In viewing the whole group has all moved at least half a Profile Level. In reading, their median has moved to above the Year 5 median, and all students have improved. In writing, the group has jumped a whole Profile Level in six months.’

Measures used to establish baselines and improvement

The DART program, Clay’s An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement, and running records. All Aboriginal students in the school were reassessed using the same measurement tools after 18 weeks.
In addition to the formal tests at the beginning and end of the project, improvement has been measured through the ongoing collection of data in each classroom via audio- and video-tapes of literacy lessons, collection of student work samples and teacher journals and audio-tapes of teacher planning and evaluation sessions.

Analysis of project performance
Factors in success

‘The use of the Scaffolded Literacy process, while still to be tested over time, has provided an important medium for success. The sense of being a community of learners, of joint engagement, teachers and students in discussing language and text has been rewarding. Student transfer of linguistic patterns and spelling knowledge into their own writing has been widely noted. From a teacher: “the constant repetitiveness of the use of the texts has meant that students who would normally feel inadequate have had an opportunity to feel successful in literacy.” Another teacher said: “It (the project) gave both the children and myself a sense of power and strength when dealing with text that I am sure many of us did not have before.” We have noticed a change in the power relations between student and teacher. Despite the apparently didactic nature of Scaffolded Literacy, students do challenge and question more, and not always in the context of the text. They learn to take control.

‘The employment of Aboriginal Parent Literacy Workers has had a positive impact in two ways.

• It has enabled Aboriginal parents to be employed in the school as skilled workers with status. There is now a place for Aboriginal parents to work with their children, and the program has strengthened the trust between school and the Aboriginal community.

• The Reading Support Program is not just a new way of enabling parents to have a valid and productive role in the school. It has, in many cases, significantly improved the reading abilities of the Aboriginal Reception to Year 3 students. Preliminary testing suggests that although many students still have a problem with decoding new words, they are reading for meaning, rather than stabbing at print. When they read in a way that doesn’t make sense, they are now stopping to re-examine the word, rather than continuing on regardless.

‘If we want parents to be involved, we have to take into account other concerns which affect their attendance from time to time. We balance our need for regular attendance with the flexibility needed for the rest of their lives. We try to negotiate and accommodate parents’ needs.

‘One of the overwhelmingly positive responses from teachers has been the enthusiasm for the collaborative teaching. The classroom teachers have worked extremely hard in learning about functional grammar and changing their
What works?

teaching practice in ways which will survive the project. As one teacher said, “You can’t go back.”

‘The willingness of project staff to teach, model and trial Scaffolded Literacy in classrooms alongside classroom teachers created a climate of enquiry, and learning together and willingness to take risks. Sufficient, focused, and ongoing training and development, at the beginning of the project, and throughout was fundamental to success.

‘The commitment and support of the Principal was crucial.’

Less successful factors

‘The following aspects are not ‘less successful’, but issues we have identified as providing direction for further research.

‘We are committed to the notion that understanding literacy as a social tool is crucial to the teaching of Aboriginal students. In order to use the literacies they learn at school effectively, they need to recognise and practice their uses in the real contexts of their lives. While Scaffolded Literacy has been successful in raising student awareness of the linguistic structures and features of written text, it does not necessarily make explicit the social nature and purposes of literacy. At this stage in the project, our team is only just beginning to work out how to transfer the knowledge about written narrative texts to the study of transactional texts, written or spoken, that students need to operate successfully in their communities. This remains a nagging concern and one we feel the need to follow up.

‘One of the underlying tenets of the school is that small group work with an informed adult is a very valuable context for students’ learning. Consequently our school resources are organised so that each class has one lesson per day with two or three adults in attendance. However, teaching literacy through scaffolding is highly skilled, and requires a substantial theoretical base. The School Service Officers and Parent Literacy Workers who had previously played important roles in literacy lessons were sometimes left bewildered and unsure of their roles. If this program is to be maintained, attention must be paid to their training and development.

‘Organisational issues still need to be resolved. Parts of the scaffolding process can be done successfully as a whole class, while other aspects are best achieved in small groups. The process does not cycle neatly over a five day timetable.

‘We are still grappling with the issue of how to deal with heterogenous groups of widely differing abilities: sometimes Scaffolded Literacy works well, sometimes the advanced students are bored or the strugglers are left behind.

‘We still have a great deal to learn about what makes a text useful to study, and at this stage rely considerably on the advice of the Scaffolded Literacy team in our text choices. We are almost always reliant at this moment on text notes
supplied by the Scaffolded Literacy team, although we have done some ourselves. 
As materials are developed this will change, but currently resources are scant.

'The question of cultural inclusivity is a challenging one. Our school works 
hard at helping Aboriginal students belong and feel safe in the school. It is a 
place where their home talk and experiences have an important place. 
However, Scaffolded Literacy, at this moment, is not focusing on cultural 
inclusivity. Currently none of the texts we have chosen is directly related to 
children's home experiences. The most important criterion for choice of texts 
in Scaffolded Literacy is their capacity to give students access to powerful 
language in mainstream culture. Nonetheless, for a skilled teacher with a 
critical orientation, Scaffolded Literacy provides rich opportunities for making 
links between literary texts and children's own worlds, for transforming 
children's home experiences into well-structured, written texts. It provides a 
language with which we can begin to study language choices of all sorts of 
people in different contexts, but it also takes a great amount of time. We need 
more time to see where this can go.

'The employment, supervision and support of parent workers is time-
consuming, and could be accomplished part-time by a skilled parent.

'Our data poses issues about attendance, at least in the short term. We have 
collected attendance and lateness statistics from the past three terms. Some of 
our students have improved a great deal, despite their days away and lateness. 
But some students who are absolutely regular attenders did not show much 
growth at all. Our hunch is that the relationship between participation, success, 
curriculum content, pedagogy and attendance is complex and needs closer 
inspection.

'We have yet to find a pace for change which is sustainable in the long term.'

Sustainability

'We have built up an Aboriginal Education team in the school of high quality. 
We have an assessment process established that should not be difficult to 
maintain and a recording system for data already established. We have strong 
Aboriginal community support.

'We have learnt how to scaffold literacy so that Aboriginal students, at least in 
the short term, are successful learners. We have been able to highlight the very 
real strengths of Scaffolded Literacy. At the same time, we view with caution 
the rapidly increasing enthusiasm for Scaffolded Literacy as the next “quick 
fix”. If the potential of this process is to be reached, we must ensure that we 
know what we are doing, and make sure that those who do work with it know 
what they are doing.

'We are determined to continue investigating Scaffolded Literacy next year. 
We hope that the State and Federal education personnel involved in the 
Strategic Results Project will support us in this regard.'
Project L9

Sector: primary
Topic: Support a Reader/Support a Writer program for Indigenous students in Cape and Gulf areas
Location: five remote sites
Number of students involved: not available

Summary of intentions and activity

Intentions
This project was designed to increase the level of assistance in literacy intervention for Indigenous students in remote communities. A key focus was the training of Indigenous Teacher Aides in the Support a Reader/Support a Writer program.

Activity
The Support a Reader/Support a Writer program provides for daily observation and coaching of young students in ‘reading then writing’ with ongoing mentoring.

Each of the schools involved was responsible for developing their own way of instituting the training program, mainly with existing Teacher Aides. Similarly they were encouraged to develop the project in ways which were most appropriate for their settings. Thus a range of strategies besides Support a Reader/Support a Writer were used.

Project performance

Performance targets
- Number and proportion of Indigenous students (in Years P–3) in target schools with reading and writing skills in terms of Year 2 Diagnostic Net and National Year 3 Literacy Benchmark at the end of the project compared with their levels at the beginning of the project

Results: not available in consolidated form. Some good but uneven results reported from two sites.

Analysis of project performance

Besides improvements in literacy performance, other reported outcomes included more reflective teaching practice, closer monitoring of student performance, up-skilling of Teacher Aides and community members and greater awareness of literacy issues.
All sites noted the impact of poor attendance on the level of skill development. Several sites have begun to develop community-driven attendance programs to support their literacy program.

Factors in success
A clear focus on the development of literacy in SAE as the highest school priority, with leadership and support provided on this issue.

Less successful factors
Finding and keeping appropriate personnel to maintain the programs in more remote locations is a matter of continuing concern.

Sustainability
The activities of the project will not be sustainable without additional funding. Investigation of possible sources is proceeding.

**Project L10**
**Sector:** early primary

**Topic:** Development and implementation of assessment and intervention strategies to support Indigenous students (Years P–2) identified as ‘at risk’ in literacy (SAE) learning

**Location:** 11 urban, rural and remote sites

**Number of students involved:** 501

**Summary of intentions and activity**

**Intentions**
The project was designed to:

- improve Years P–2 Indigenous students learning outcomes in literacy in SAE;
- determine, through school-based action research, the appropriateness of the Literacy Net as a monitoring and assessment tool for students in the target age groups;
- develop intervention processes for those Indigenous students identified as at risk of not achieving satisfactory outcomes in literacy learning;
- provide relevant professional development and resources for teachers and AIEWs in participating schools;
- disseminate information on the Literacy Net and literacy intervention processes to teachers of K–2 Indigenous students; and
- strengthen home/school relationships as a strategy to support literacy development and promote greater involvement of Indigenous parents/caregivers in the early years of schooling.
What works?

Activity

The project operated with the following key components:

- a centrally-based coordinator;
- school-based coordinators;
- time allowances at each site to facilitate collaborative planning, provide in-class support monitor project activities, collate assessment information and report to the project’s school coordinator;
- ongoing professional development for the school-based coordinator, participating teachers and AIEWs;
- teacher relief time for collaborative planning; and
- a literacy-related contingency grant.

A whole-school approach was seen as necessary to provide continuity to those students requiring ongoing support. Key project activities were included in the school development plan and opportunities have been provided for P–2 teachers and AIEWs to plan and work collaboratively to support students.

The P–3 Literacy Net was used to identify and support those Aboriginal students who require additional assistance to achieve minimum literacy standards. Assessment techniques are embedded in familiar classroom experiences across the curriculum. Teachers and Aboriginal and Islander Education Workers (AIEWs) planned together to support identified students within the mainstream classroom. This approach reversed a common practice of withdrawing weaker Aboriginal students for ‘skill and drill’ literacy activities that have little relationship to a broader view of literacy.

Each coordinating teacher and AIEW attended project workshops together. The initiative promoted a shared view of literacy development, literacy assessment and strategies to assist Aboriginal students requiring additional assistance. The teacher and AIEW then assumed a train-the-trainer role at their school, providing ongoing professional development and support to other P–2 teachers. Additional collegial support was provided through collaborative planning meetings and district-based network meetings.

Feedback to the project highlights the strength of teacher and AIEW partnerships in contributing to successful project outcomes. A typical comment: ‘In the classes the partnerships have evolved from AIEW support to now being involved in planning — still a way to go, but now closer to a truly collaborative model.’

Schools were encouraged to value the role of parents and the home in a child’s learning. Effective home-school communication strategies were developed to reflect the profile of the community and feedback from parents. Strategies included AIEW/teacher home visits, ‘good news’ stories about literacy learning, working cooperatively with parents to assist students having
difficulties, designing literacy activities that can be introduced at home, and reporting to parents in locations other than the school.

**Project performance**

Performance targets and results

— Proportion of Indigenous students who satisfy education providers’ literacy expectations for entry into primary school compared to non-Indigenous students

— Proportion of Indigenous students with literacy skills comparable to non-Indigenous students on completing the early childhood years of schooling

**Target:** achieve a 50% improvement in the performance of Indigenous students

**Results:**

A third and final measurement will be made in October 1999, but an idea of the impact of the project can be drawn from the following two measurements.

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Mode</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speaking and Listening</td>
<td>Reading</td>
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<th>Proportion of Aboriginal students achieving the checkpoints</th>
<th>Proportion of non-Aboriginal students achieving the checkpoints</th>
<th>Proportion of Aboriginal students achieving the checkpoints</th>
<th>Proportion of non-Aboriginal students achieving the checkpoints</th>
<th>Proportion of Aboriginal students achieving the checkpoints</th>
<th>Proportion of non-Aboriginal students achieving the checkpoints</th>
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<td>66% (667/1006)</td>
<td>49% (241/487)</td>
<td>72% (725/1006)</td>
<td>48% (232/487)</td>
<td>69% (699/1006)</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 62% (309/501)</td>
<td>84% (897/1066)</td>
<td>63% (316/501)</td>
<td>90% (927/1066)</td>
<td>62% (312/501)</td>
<td>88% (938/1066)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Measures used to establish baselines and improvement

The Education Department’s P–3 Literacy Net, which provides evidence of literacy achievement at designated times and identifies those children who are having difficulties in comparison to other children in the same year level.

**Analysis of project performance**

Factors in success

- ‘The Literacy Net identified children’s strengths as a foundation for learning. What students can do provides the starting point for individual literacy plans and determines how teachers and AIEWs work together to support each child. Viewing the child as a learner, rather than a member of a remedial group, has raised teacher expectations, enhanced the quality of literacy programs and improved literacy outcomes for P–2 Aboriginal students.’
What works?

• ‘The project promoted an effective collaboration of AIEWs and teachers. Schools have been encouraged to review the AIEW role and promote the AIEW as a cultural expert and invaluable resource in the classroom program. This approach has helped schools to design curriculum that is relevant and meaningful to Aboriginal children.’

• ‘The Literacy Net assists teachers and AIEWs to identify individual children who require additional assistance in literacy learning. By using the Literacy Net to analyse the identified children’s strengths and the behaviours that they require in order to make further literacy progress, plans can be designed and implemented that support the children within regular classroom experiences. A teacher provided this typical reaction: “The Net makes the learning behaviours a student needs to develop and gives us a process for making small, yet achievable steps with children and this shows progression. It makes teaching rewarding!”’

• ‘The project has provided professional development and central office support to raise teacher awareness of Aboriginal culture, Aboriginal languages and Aboriginal English dialects. The workshops have helped schools implement a curriculum that is responsive to Aboriginal children’s cultural experiences and language backgrounds. AIEWs are integral to this process and are encouraged to take a proactive role by working collaboratively with teachers to design appropriate learning programs for targeted students. A typical comment: “The professional development raising awareness of Aboriginal English has given me more clues in knowing how to say things and enabled me to review Aboriginal children’s literacy development in a fairer way by recognising their dialect.”’

Sustainability

The project was designed to introduce practices that would be sustained beyond the life of the project. Key components that are now part of established school practice are: professional collaboration between the AIEWs and teachers; the use of the Literacy Net; literacy assessment tasks embedded in regular classroom programs; and home-school communication strategies that reflect the context of each community.

‘Change is gradual and the project’s one-year timeline has placed constraints on the model’s design and delivery. All schools have enthusiastically embraced project activities and see the initial year as a strategy to instigate long-term change. Given the nature of the schools, there is a strong demand to provide ongoing support beyond 1999, to continue the professional networks that have been established across schools and to expand project activities to other schools with high enrolments of Aboriginal students.

‘Professional development has also been provided that enables teachers and AIEWs to review the project and build key components into school
development plans for 2000. Districts will also be informed of project activities and will provide ongoing support in 2000.

‘In many rural and remote schools, the AIEW is often the most enduring staff member. It is hoped that the project’s professional development component will enable many of these AIEWs to assume a more proactive role in sustaining the style and continuity of literacy support that many students need.’