

An Evaluation of an Intermediate School Reading Programme

What are the effects on student achievement outcomes?

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Executive Summary

1. Purpose:

To evaluate our school specific 'Reading for Comprehension' programme created by the author in 2009.

This programme was based on the Ministry of Education (MOE) 'Effective Literacy Practice Years 5-8,' and writings by Dr. Alison Davis and Sheena Cameron.

Pressley 2006 states: *"there are researchers and policymakers who are willing to catapult reading practices that are not as well grounded in research as they could be... (we need) to do more research before foisting your perspective on the nation."*

This project therefore includes a collection and analysis of student achievement information as well as teacher and student feedback. It discusses what the data is telling us, and indicates the direction any changes to the programme and teaching should take.

2. Background

- ❖ This project was based on the need to raise literacy achievement levels over two years in our intermediate school. The latest National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) Report (Cooks, Smith & Flaxton, 2009) indicates little or no improvement statistically in reading achievement, (in Years 4 & 8) despite extensive funding of professional development during the last four years in many schools. This situation also applied at Nelson Intermediate.
- ❖ Literacy planning, teaching and use of achievement information was judged to be variable.
- ❖ There was no consistency in the delivery of reading across the school.
- ❖ Teachers were at the same time implementing the Numeracy Project and appreciated it's structure.
- ❖ After a seminar with Dr. Alison Davis, some teachers requested a reading programme similar to that implemented for Numeracy.
- ❖ As Literacy leader, the author then took all the available research and resources and created the "**Nelson Intermediate Reading for Comprehension Programme.**"
- ❖ Some teachers trialed this programme in Term 4 2009. All other teachers began planning and teaching the programme at the beginning of 2010.

3. Methodology

Pressley (page 9, 2006) says *“Many children are experiencing years of instruction (of programmes)... and we need to make a priority of evaluating these programmes well to determine what they teach and whether students experiencing such programmes become more literate or differently literate, than children who experience other forms of instruction”.*

The N.I.S. Reading Programme involved school-wide professional development, individual coaching with a focus on teacher inquiry and formative assessment by the author as a Teacher Coach. Teachers plan according to the overall programme, using student achievement information. Within this programme teachers model comprehension strategies (think alouds), explain, scaffold practice, teach decoding and vocabulary and provide sustained silent reading or buddy reading for fluency.

To test the effectiveness of this programme we collected data from several sources. This included:-

Evidence-based information from STAR (Supplementary Tests of Achievement in Reading Years 4-9) written by Warwick Elley, published by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research Wellington, 2001.

Those students scoring Stanine 1-3 on the STAR are further tested on the Diagnostic Reading Assessment (DRA) and provided with tutoring from the Auckland University Tutoring Programme. This study focused on STAR Test 3, paragraph comprehension.

The paragraph subtest was chosen as it uses the ‘cloze procedure’ to assess students’ reading comprehension by requiring them to replace words which have been deleted from the text. Students use the context of the surrounding text as clues to meaning. If students can comprehend the text, they find it easier to replace the missing words. ‘The results of such cloze tests have been shown to be valid measures of reading comprehension.’(page 7, STAR Teachers Manual)

This project also collected and analysed student and teacher voice. The participants were asked questions on reading strategy understandings. As well, all students undertook the NEMP (National Education Monitoring Project) 2008 student survey. Year 8 results were compared with NEMP information. A Nelson Intermediate School (N.I.S.) survey questionnaire was constructed that related to strategy teaching at N.I.S.

4. Our Major Findings in Summary

Table 1 Year 8 End of Year 2010 Reading Comprehension: Star Test

		Maori Girls %	Maori Boys %	Pasifika %	All Girls %	All Boys %	Total %	2009 Yr 7s %
<i>Mean</i>	Feb	13.72	12.93	9.50	14.44	14.31	14.38	Same cohort
	Nov	15.11	13.83	14.00	15.10	15.33	15.21	
Less than 9% Critical	Feb	17	13	25	8	10	9	17
	Nov	0	11	0	6	4	5	16
9-15% National Mean	Feb	39	60	75	43	46	44	57
	Nov	47	45	60	33	39	36	48
16-20% High Achievers	Feb	44	27	0	49	44	47	25
	Nov	53	44	40	61	57	59	36
	n=	18	15	4	88	81	169	

By rigorously applying our 'Reading for Comprehension' programme over part of 2009 and all of 2010 our students reading ability and comprehension significantly improved.

This was evidenced:

- By a reduction of 'critical' students from 17% (in Year 7) to 5% of the student body at the end of Year 8. (November)
- An increase of high achievers from 25% (Year 7) to 59% (Year 8)
- In Maori as a whole improving their reading comprehension ability. The percentage in the critical category reduced from 30% (Year 7) to 5% (Year 8) and increased in the high achievers category 3% (Year 7) to 48% (Year 8)

[However, whilst improvement was seen across the board, Maori boys did not improve to the same level as other students. Indeed 11% of Maori boys remained within the critical category at the end of the two year programme.]

- By having no Pasifika students in the critical zone at the end of Year 8.

- Over a two year period we found our rate of improvement accelerated in the second year of our programme.
- There was a major buy in by both students and staff into the programme.

5. Action To Be Taken From Our Findings:

Based on our findings the team at N.I.S. plan to:

- Continue our programme using student achievement information, team conversations and individual coaching.
- Plan our incoming students programme over a two year period. (rather than on a one year basis)
- Instigate greater effort with Maori, especially Maori boys through Whanau involvement.
- Explicitly share student achievement data with students.
- Continue surveying students to provide teachers with information on student perceptions of the reading programme and to generate next steps for teacher planning.
- Further involve students in buying plans, literacy and library activities to develop their love of reading.

A Findings in Detail

A-1 Test Results

Our incoming Year 7 students in 2009 completed the standard STAR test. The results of which are laid out in Table 2 and which indicated that:-

- Overall only a quarter of the Year 7 intake scored 16 and above (high achievers).
- Both Pasifika and Maori girls and boys had low means.
- Pasifika and Maori boys were over represented in the critical zone.
- Few Maori and Pasifika students achieved above the national mean range.

Table 2

Year 7 2009 Test Results

	Maori Girls	Maori Boys	Pasifika Girls	Pasifika Boys	Girls	Boys	Total
Mean	10.05	10.21	9	9	12.02	12.95	12.5
Less than Critical	25%	36%	0	34%	19%	16%	17%
9-15 National Mean	75%	57%	100%	66%	58%	57%	57%
16-20 High Achievers	0	7%	0	0	23%	27%	25%
n=	20	14	1	3	90	77	167

The following table summarizes the effect of our programme comparing the benchmark results at the beginning of 2009 and at the end of 2010.

Table 3

	Maori Girls		Maori Boys		Pasifika Girls & Boys		All Girls		All Boys		Total	
	2009 Start Yr 7	2010 End Yr 8	2009 Start Yr 7	2010 End Yr 8	2009 Start Yr 7	2010 End Yr 8	2009 Start Yr 7	2010 End Yr 8	2009 Start Yr 7	2010 End Yr 8	2009 Start Yr 7	2010 End Yr 8
Mean	10.05	15.11	10.21	13.83	9	14	12.02	15.10	12.95	15.33	12.5	15.21
Less than Critical	24%	0	36%	11%	17%	0	19%	6%	16%	4%	17%	5%
9-15 National Mean	75%	47%	57%	45%	83%	60%	58%	33%	57%	39%	57%	36%
16-20 High Achievers	0	53%	7%	44%	0	40%	23%	61%	27%	57%	25%	59%

Overall we can conclude that our N.I.S. Programme for Reading Comprehension for this student group (2009 Year 7, 2010 Year 8) has been proven to be empirically successful.

We have reduced those that were in the critical group as defined by STAR [definition: Below 9 in Test 3 Paragraph Comprehension] from 17% to 5%, over their two year period at intermediate, (The testing was conducted in February 2009 and finally November 2010).

This reduction of those termed to be critical from 17% to 5% helped produce an improvement of 19% at the end of Year 7 and in 2010 a plus of 54% for Year 8s. A net gain of 35% over two years for the same age group.

This improvement has been evident for both boys and girls.

There has been a gender difference in response to the programme. Girls have had a greater reduction in the critical level by moving from 19% (2009 Year 7) to 6% in (2010 Year 8). Boys moved from 16% in the critical zone in 2009 to 4% in 2010.

We also looked at our high achievers in STAR [definition: 16 and above in Test 3 Paragraph Comprehension]. Boys moved from 27% in February 2009 to 57% in November 2010. Girls have moved from 23% in February 2009 to 61% in November 2010.

All the students who moved into the high achievers came from the mid zone, with the exception of one boy who moved from the critical zone to the high achieving group.

Girls have contributed more greatly to this increase – 38% for girls versus 30% for boys.

The conclusion is that broadly our N.I.S. Reading Programme has worked positively for both genders and across the levels of reading ability evident at entry in 2009.

A-2 Maori Student Achievement

Critically this programme has also assisted Maori students. In February 2009 the critical percentage of Maori students was 30%. This improved to 5% as at the end of Year 8, bringing the critical level to the same percentage as the whole student body.

- In the critical category Maori boys fell from 36% in February 2009 to 11% in November 2010. This was an improvement of 25%.
- For Maori girls the fall was from 24% to 0%, an improvement of 24%.
- Similarly, improvement has been noted at the other end of our measurement for Maori. In February 2009 Maori high achievers were only 3%, in November 2010, 46%. This is a significant increase and only slightly below the student body average of 54%.
- In the high achieving category, Maori boys increased from 7% to 44% an improvement of 37%.
- For Maori girls the movement from 0% to 53%, an improvement of 53%. The Maori girls achieved a greater movement than the boys in the high achieving zone.

Conclusion:

- We can conclude that the programme as it stands is operating more effectively for moving Maori reading standards upwards from the national mean (9-15)
- It has been slightly more effective for Maori girls than for boys – although our sample numbers are small.
- Overall, the programme has shown an improvement at both ends of the measurement scale.

A-3 Timing

We find that

- Two years is necessary to see a significant effect. In Year 7 2009, 17% of our students were critical, this decreased to 16% in November and 5% at the end of Year 8.
- Anecdotal feedback about student behaviour was solicited in discussions with teachers. Staff said that general student behaviour standards have increased positively.
- Students are more focused in class, can talk freely about their learning, and are calmer around our school.

B Other Survey Results

In addition to our STAR MEASURES we surveyed our students in 2010 on their thoughts on reading. We have taken this Year 8 data and compared it to the National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) Reading survey results.

B1 Attitudes to Reading at School

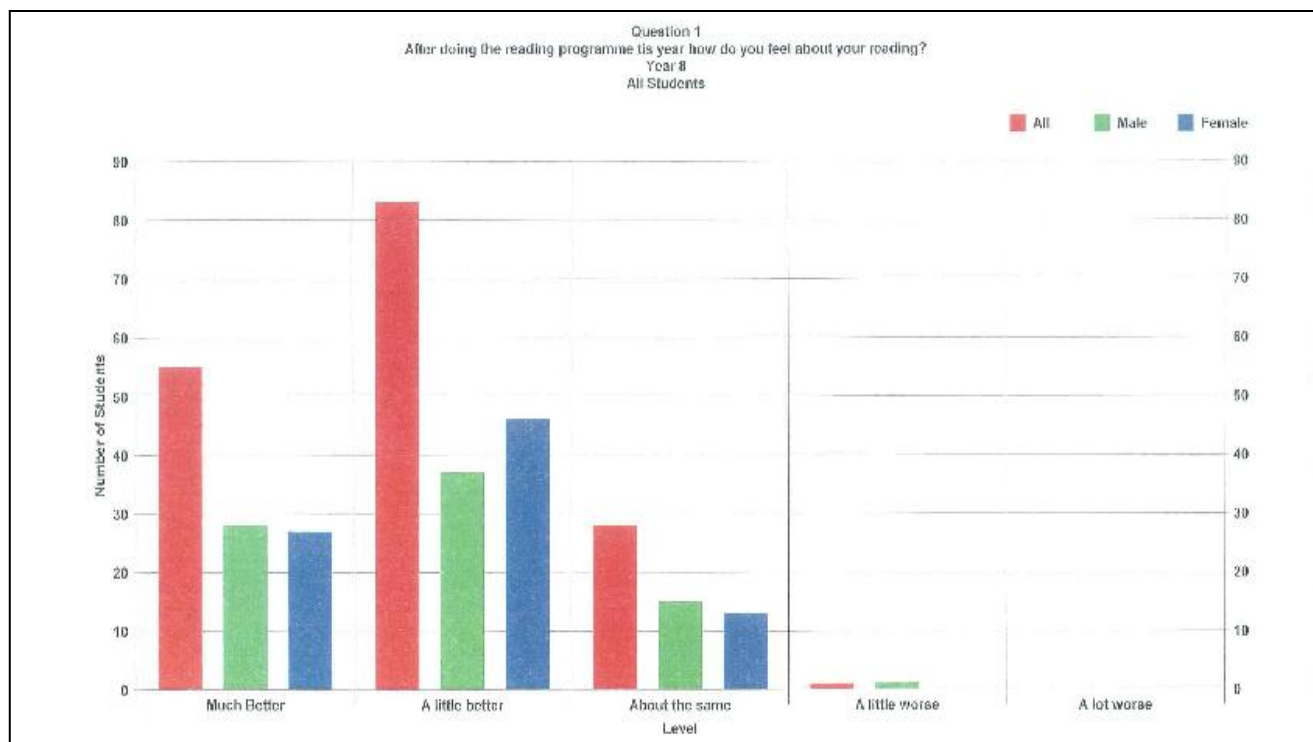
On the question: “**How much do you like reading at school?**” Results indicate that our students (87%) are marginally more positive (always / most of the time) than the figures indicated by NEMP (79%).

	NEMP 2008 %	NIS 2010 %	NIS BOYS %	NIS GIRLS %	N.I.S. MAORI %
Always / Most of the time	79	87	83	91	81
Sometimes	16	11	12	9	19
Never	5	2	5	0	0
Sample Size	NA	167	81	86	32

There are still however a significant minority of Maori who are less than positive (19%) which is in line with NEMP results.

(Whole school seminars, research and writings such as the Hikario Rationale by Professor Angus Macfarlane are currently being used as a basis to further develop our classroom and school culture that will benefit all students, but in particular our Maori students.)

We asked a number of direct questions. **“After doing the reading programme this year, how do you feel about your reading?”**



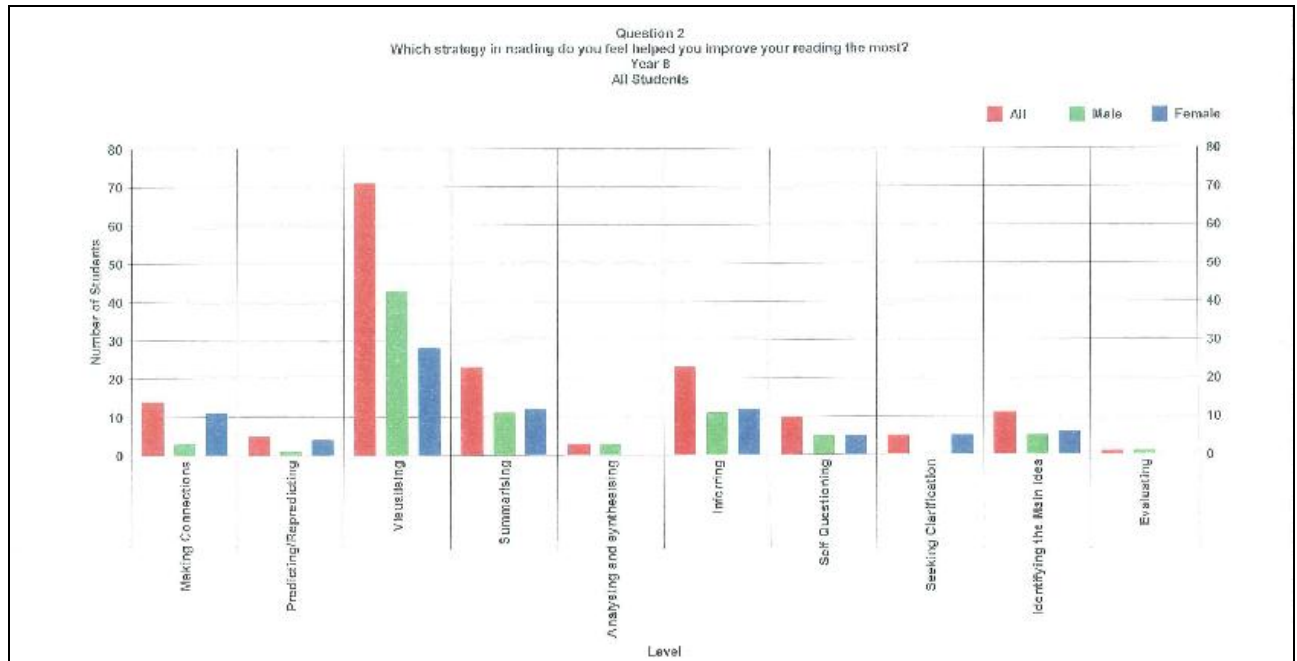
Again the response indicates that the great majority felt more positive about their reading.

This 'positiveness' was experienced by both student classes (Year 7 & 8) after completing the programme. This was also experienced by both genders and for Maori / Pasifika.

The intermediate system was started in response to the particular needs of this age group: emerging adolescents. Intermediate schooling is at a time of massive emotional, physical and intellectual growth for students. Many changes are occurring simultaneously eg. entering a new school, puberty, new friendships. Year 7 is a turbulent time with many adjustments being made. By Year 8 students have a better idea of who they are and seem to settle into their learning more smoothly. This is reflected in that we found that while 'positiveness' towards reading was experienced by both year groups (Year 7 and 8) improvement is greater in the second year of involvement. This early positive element seems to be a precursor to improvement in the second year of the programme.

B2 Perceptions of Strategies

Question 2: “Which strategy in reading do you feel helped you improve your reading the most?”



It would seem that visualisation was selected the most by the majority of Year 8 students as an improvement tool. This was followed by summarising and inferring. These three being ranked well ahead of the other tools available.

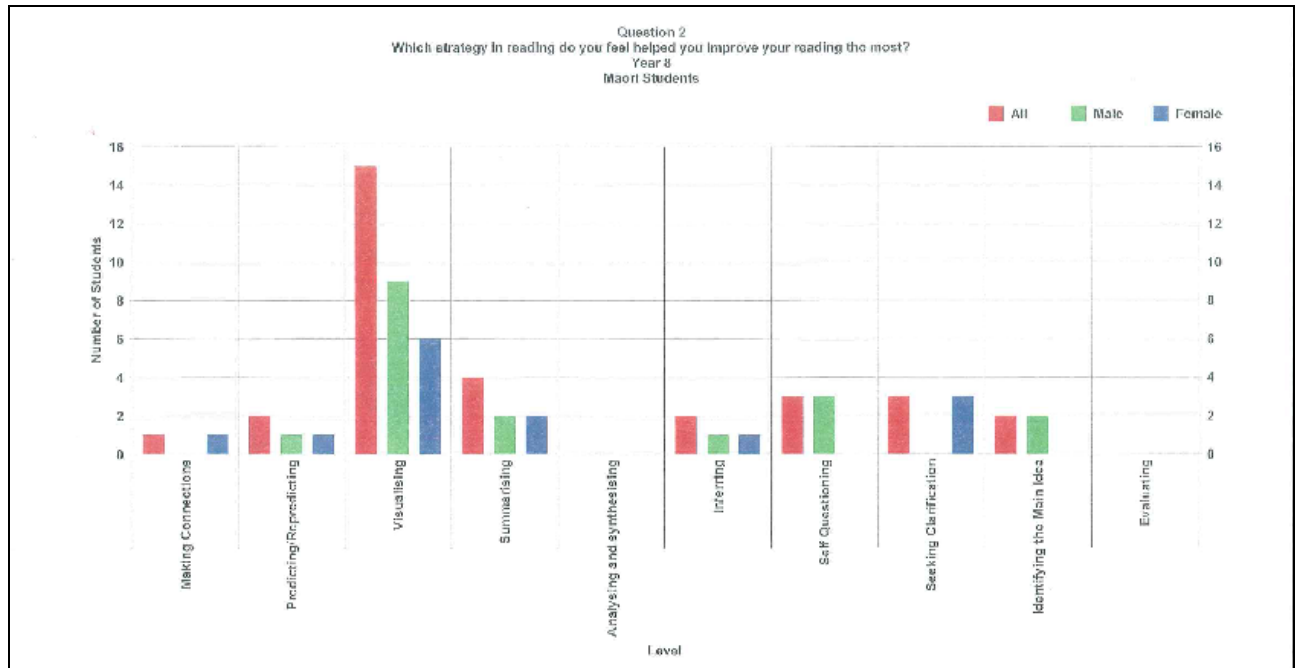
Year 8 Strategies:

	Selected top most helpful %	Ranked in the two most helpful %	Top two most helpful overall
Visualising	43	56	1
Summarising	14	37	2
Inferring	14	30	3
Identifying the main idea	6	17	4
Making connections	8	15	5
Self questioning	6	14	6
Predicting	3	12	7
Clarification	3	8	8
Analysing	2	6	9
Evaluating	1	4	10

Students who moved from low to the mid zone also picked visualising, summarising and third equal was connecting and identifying the main idea.

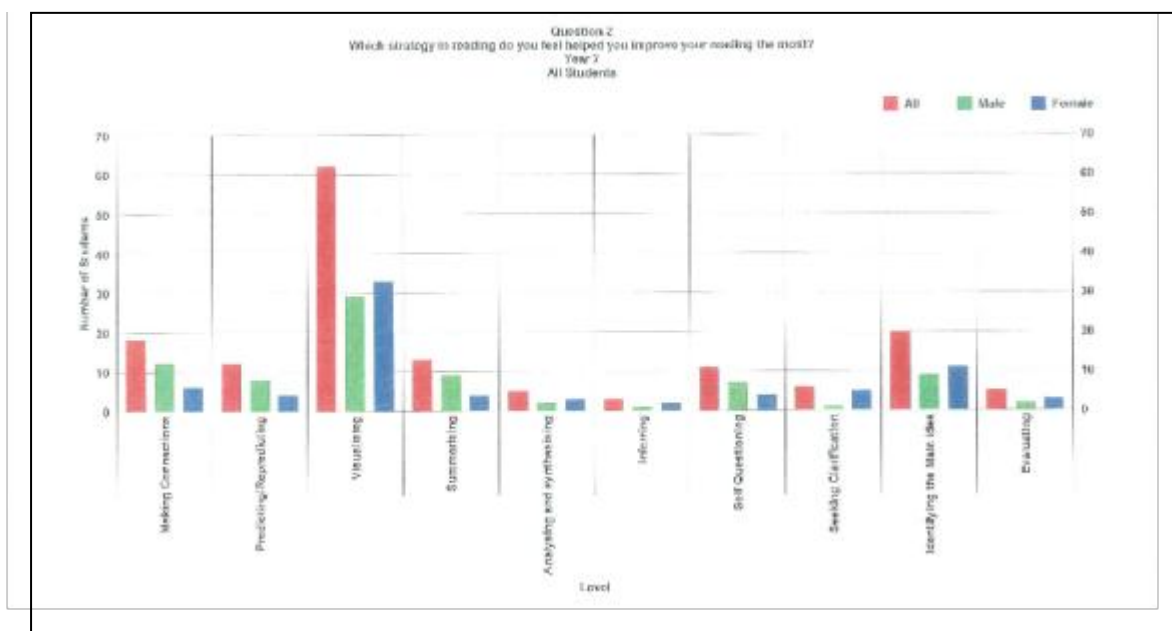
Students who moved from the mid to the high achieving zone also chose visualising, summarising and inferring - the same as the table above.

As inferring assists the reader to make more achievement gains, it could be a deeper focus for teaching and therefore assist in moving on low achieving students.



Maori students believed visualising and summarising are the strategies most helpful to them.

Year 7 Strategies:



The following table presents the results of the questions:

“What strategy in reading do you feel helped you improve your reading the most?”

“What was the second most helpful strategy?” and rates the results.

Year 7	Selected top most helpful %	Ranked the two most helpful %	Rank order
Visualising	40	66	1
Identifying the main idea	13	33	2
Making connections	12	28	3
Summarising	8	21	
Self questioning	7	15	
Clarification	4	11	
Predicting	8	13	
Analysing	3	6	
Evaluating	3	6	
Inferring	2	5	

Year 7 students rated the top three as being:

Visualising

Identifying the main idea

Making connections.

A distinctly different combination than those strategies selected by the students when at Year 8.

We may ask “Is the difference between the two years due to student intellectual development or has an emphasis been made by teachers?” so we are undertaking the survey again in September 2011 to get further information.

All teachers in this study were provided with tables and graphs of their class responses for teacher inquiry. These were used in coaching conversations.

Teachers reflected on students perceptions of their teaching and made goals for future teaching. Comments by teachers included:

“Yes, I am not surprised that students didn’t find evaluating useful as I didn’t find it easy to teach, so I skipped over that strategy. I will make it a focus in my teaching this year.”

B3 Positive and Negative Self Perceptions

The NEMP student survey on reading provided us with questions and data on our student perceptions that allow comparisons with New Zealand student information.

Question 1: “How do you feel about how well you read?”

	NEMP %		All students %		Boys %		Girls %		All Maori students %		Maori Boys %		Maori Girls %		Pasifika Students %	
Very Good	36	85	38	83	37	86	39	80	28	75	33	83	21	64	50	100
Good	49		45		49		41		47		50		43		50	
Not so good	12		15		12		18		22		11		36		-	
Dislike	3		2		2		2		3		6		-		-	
Sample Size (No.)			169		84		85		32		18		14		4	

Whilst we have the great majority of students feeling positive about how well they read and in line with NEMP results we still have a significant group of Maori girls (36%) lacking confidence in their ability to do so.

We believe teacher development in the Hikairo Rationale will assist in Maori student confidence as it develops sensitivities to the cultural background of students. As Angus Macfarlane (2007) states, “Teachers who are sensitive to cultural dynamics will be able to understand and respond better to the development of students with learning and behavior difficulties.”

B4 Positive and Negative Self Perceptions

Question 2: “How good do you think you are at reading?”

In a 2010 survey undertaken in the school by a graduate student (Lovell) the majority of N.I.S. students in her survey (four classes) self-reported their own above average reading ability.

	NEMP %		All NIS students %		Boys %		Girls %		All Maori students %		Maori Boys %		Maori Girls %		Pasifika Students %	
Very Good	29	85	35	82	36	79	34	85	25	75	33	72	14	78	50	75
Good	56		47		43		51		50		39		64		25	
Not so good	13	15	17	18	19	21	15	15	22	25	22	28	22	22	25	25
Dislike	2		1		2		-		3		6		-		-	
Sample Size (No.)			170		84		86		32		18		14		4	

Again we have a positive disposition to reading (82%), placing N.I.S. at a similar level to the NEMP results. However we have a significant minority with a negative disposition (18%) within which Maori are overly represented.

We found that of students who moved up a zone, twice as many thought they were good rather than very good. (The one boy who moved from below the National Mean to the high achieving zone aptly thought he was a great reader!

“How good do you think you are at reading?” This table shows the movement of Year 8 students from baseline to other zones.

	Low to high	Low to mid range	Mid- to high range	Stayed the same (low)
Very Good	1	5	10	1
Good		9	22	2
Not so Good		2	5	
Dislike		0	0	

B5 Perceptions of Teacher Reinforcement

Question 3: “Does your teacher tell you what you are good at in reading?”

	NEMP		All students		Boys		Girls		All Maori students		Maori Boys		Maori Girls		Pasifika Students	
	%		%		%		%		%		%		%		%	
Heaps	5		3		2.5		4		-		-		-		-	
Quite a lot	17	22	17	20	20.5	23	14	18	6	6	11	11	-		-	
Some-times	60		70		66		74		88		83		93		-	
Never	18		10		11		8		6		6		7		100	
Sample Size (No.)			167		83		85		32		18		14		4	

These figures indicate that our student body perceives a lack of positive feedback about their reading abilities (justified and unjustified).

N.I.S. teachers need to address this and nationally, N.Z. educators must resolve this issue.

On viewing the above data from the groups that moved zones, it is of note how the two main moving groups (as shown in the table below) had similar proportions as the above data.

“Does your teacher tell you what you are good at in reading?” This table shows the movement of Year 8 students who go up a zone.

	Low to mid	Mid to high	Low - high	Stayed same
heaps				
quite a lot	3	14		2
sometimes	13	24	1	1
never				
n=	16	38	1	3

Conclusion/Action to be taken

Teachers in 2011 have received 2010 class data and graphs on this result. They have had conversations with the Teacher Coach and have taken on board the need to share more information with students throughout the year and provide more positive feedback during reading lessons. Many teachers commented positively on the visual nature of the information shared and how important it was to have feedback from students.

B6 Perceptions of Teachers Views on Learning

Year 8 students were asked about the perception their teachers had of their reading ability.

Question 4: "How good does your teacher think you are at reading?"

	NEMP		All students		Boys		Girls		All Maori students		Maori Boys		Maori Girls		Pasifika students	
	%		%		%		%		%		%		%		%	
Very Good	24	63	12	42	13	44	12	40	6	44	6	39	7	50	-	
Good	39		30		31		28		38		33		43		25	
Not so good	8		8		7		9		6		-		14		-	
Poor	4		2		2		1		3		6		-		-	
Don't know	25		48		47		50		47		55		36		75	
Sample Size (No.)			170		84		86		32		18		14		4	

The most important result from this data is the high proportion of N.I.S. students that have no clear feedback from their teacher as to whether they are reading well or indifferently. Just under half were unaware of any feedback (48%) which is much greater than the NEMP result 25%. This is an area for development for teachers.

Movement of Year 8 Students

However the teachers opinion does not seem to significantly effect the progress of the student who moves from low to high range but may effect those moving from low to mid range.

	low-high	low-mid range	mid-high range	Stayed same (low)
Very Good		0	5	1
Good		5	13	
Not so Good		5	1	1
Poor		0	0	
Don't Know	1	5	19	1
n=	1	15	38	3

This needs to be discussed in conjunction with the previous question “Does your teacher tell you what you are good at in reading?” i.e. teacher conversations between student/teacher are essential.

Obviously it is timely to think about having more 1:1 conversations with students about the data we are collecting during assessments.

B7 Perceptions of Teacher Interaction and Involvement

The following table further investigates the level of communication between student and teacher.

Question 5: “Does your teacher tell you what you need to improve at in reading?”

	NEMP		All students		Boys		Girls		All Maori students		Maori Boys		Maori Girls		Pasifika students	
	%		%		%		%		%		%		%		%	
Heaps	6		9		8		9		16		11		22		25	
Quite a lot	23	29	31	40	32	40	30	39	22	38	22	33	21	43	75	100
Some-times	54		57		57		57		56		56		57		-	
Never	17		3		3		4		6		11		-		-	

Whilst many N.I.S. students are unsure of how the teacher perceives their reading ability, teachers are telling them they need to improve and advise on what to improve on (at least in comparison in the NEMP results). (More carrot less stick perhaps?)

Movement of students

The following table looks at these results relative to the student moving from one range to another.

Question: “Does your teacher tell you what you need to improve at in reading?”

	low-mid range	mid-high range	stayed the same (low)
heaps	3	2	
quite a lot	3	13	1
sometimes	9	23	2
never	1	0	0
n=	16	38	3

Specific instructions on a how to improve on a 'sometime (or occasional) basis' rather than more often seems to be more effective.

B8 Opinion as to Material used in the Programme

The perceived quality of the material used in conjunction with the programme was also measured from the students stand point.

Question 6: "How do you feel about the stories/books you read as part of your reading programme at school?"

	NEMP		All students		Boys		Girls		All Maori students		Maori Boys		Maori Girls		Pasifika students	
	%		%		%		%		%		%		%		%	
Very Good	19	64	19	58	19	45	19	70	3	35	6	17	-	62	50	100
Good	45		39		26		51		32		11		62		50	
Not so good	27		32		43		22		55		72		31		-	
Dislike	9		10		12		8		10		11		7		-	
Sample Size (No.)			168		84		84		31		18		13		4	

The style or type of stories being offered in the programme are not universally approved of by N.I.S. students. Boys and Maori boys are the least appreciative of the stories utilised with the reading programme (55% and 83% respectively).

Steps need to be taken to adjust the level of appeal for these groups.

Lovell's 2010 study of N.I.S. student reading perceptions found that when students were asked what the best thing about reading at school was; the major theme was found in the range of books we had "that you get to read all kinds of different books" was a common response. We must note that students from two classes of the four in Lovell's study were extension students, whereas the present study encompassed all N.I.S. students.

Student themes (Lovell's Study) on the worst thing about reading was lack of choice the student could assert both with the range of books and the ability to choose reading materials themselves. This is an area for our teachers to address.

B9 Disposition to Story Reading

Reaction to 'reading out aloud' or story telling was also measured.

Question 7: "How do you feel when your teacher reads a story out aloud?"

	NEMP		All students		Boys		Girls		All Maori students		Maori Boys		Maori Girls		Pasifika students	
	%		%		%		%		%		%		%		%	
Very Good	35	75	34	82	36	79	32	84	23	71	28	67	15	77	50	100
Good	40		48		43		52		48		39		62		50	
Not so good	19		15		16		15		26		28		23		-	
Dislike	6		3		5		1		3		5		-		-	
Sample Size (No.)			168		84		85		31		18		13		4	

'Reading out aloud' at N.I.S. is appreciated even more than measured at the national level (NEMP). But again we have a significantly higher proportion of Maori boys (33%) and Maori girls 23% that have a negative perception of this activity. Why is this?

B10 Attitudes to Books

Feeling as to receiving a book as a gift was also measured.

Question 8: “How do you feel about getting a book for a present?”

	NEMP		All students		Boys		Girls		All Maori students		Maori Boys		Maori Girls		Pasifika students	
	%		%		%		%		%		%		%		%	
Very Good	26	65	21	57	15	45	26	68	6	37	5	22	7	57	25	75
Good	39		36		30		42		31		17		50		50	
Not so good	24	35	28	43	37	55	20	32	38	63	50	78	22	43	25	25
Dislike	11		15		18		12		25		28		21		-	
Sample Size (No.)			169		84		85		32		18		14		4	

The love of reading does not always extend to the love of receiving a book as a present – at least for a significant proportion of our student body (43%) and definitely for our Maori students (63%). (Maybe we could have more Book Fairs and motivational speakers on books).

Does reading and the perceived ability to do so lack mana? How can we provide more mana, as in oratory?

We could:

- have conversations about this at a planned hui and parent/student/teacher conference
- bring in whanau as reading tutors to build reading mileage
- further develop home/school partnerships
- use books as prizes at assembly, annual prize giving, competitions...?

B11 Reading Involvement

Reading as an out of school unsupervised activity was also investigated.

Question 9: “How do you like reading in your own time (not at school)?”

	NEMP		All students		Boys		Girls		All Maori students		Maori Boys		Maori Girls		Pasifika students	
	%		%		%		%		%		%		%		%	
Heaps	31		1		2		-		3		6		-		-	
Quite a lot	28	59	5	6	5	7	5	5	3		6		-	0	50	50
Some-times	25		52		48		56		50		33		71		-	
Not at all	16		42		45		39		47		61		29		50	
Sample Size (No.)			169		83		86		32		18		14		4	

The lack of reading “love” is also reflected in the results of this question. N.I.S. does very poorly versus the NEMP results.

Questions that we as educators should therefore be asking ourselves

Are we doing well in our programme to achieve results but neglecting to provide the motivation to adopt reading as a pleasure?

Do we model a love of reading in sustained Reading Times and during class Library periods?

Lovell’s (2010) study of N.I.S. student perceptions found that any negative comments focused on reading as being boring especially when there are more exciting activities on offer. (The price of living in an outdoor focused regional city with high sunshine hours!)

B12 Parental Positively / Negativity

Student perception of their parents view of their reading ability was also measured.

Question 10: How good does your Mum or Dad think you are at reading?

	NEMP		All students		Boys		Girls		All Maori students		Maori Boys		Maori Girls		Pasifika students	
	%		%		%		%		%		%		%		%	
Very Good	38	76	36	71	35	69	38	74	29	61	33	55	23	69	25	75
Good	38		35		34		36		32		22		46		50	
Not so good	6		4		4		5		-		-		-		-	
Poor	3		2		2		1		-		-		-		-	
Don't know	15		23		25		20		39		45		31		25	
Sample Size (No.)			167		83		84		31		18		13		4	

Positive reinforcement from N.I.S. parents runs slightly below the national (NEMP) level, also more N.I.S. students (23%) are ignorant of their parents thinking (good or bad) when compared to the NEMP results. This peaks for Maori boys at 45%. This indicates a very poor level of perceived involvement of parents with students. (Time for more structured three way conferences?)

B13 Library Involvement

The attractiveness of the library was also measured.

Question 11: “How do you feel about going to a library?”

	NEMP		All students		Boys		Girls		All Maori students		Maori Boys		Maori Girls		Pasifika students	
	%		%		%		%		%		%		%		%	
Very Good	39		31		29		33		16		17		14		75	
Good	37	76	38	69	33	62	42	75	38	54	28	45	50	64	25	100
Not so good	19		22		21		23		34		33		36		-	
Dislike	5		9		17		2		12		22		-		-	
Sample Size (No.)			170		84		65		32		18		14		4	

N.I.S. results as to how students view ‘libraries’ is similar to that indicated in the NEMP results. And again like the NEMP results we have significant proportions that are negatively disposed to visiting a library. Again Maori are overly represented in this negative category.

Lovell’s 2010 study noted a student suggested that we should revisit our library collection.

“The Library has first and last books in a story series but not the middle ones.”

A focus on positive library usage both in the community and within the school is timely!

We perhaps could consider:

- a reward system for the below average students visiting the library.
- teacher inquiry- to focus on achievement data and student perceptions.
- teachers modelling a love of reading.
- our reading resource selection process.

C QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK FROM STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

C1 Students

The programme is generating a positive feeling of achievement and confidence

What do students say about the N.I.S. Reading Comprehension Programme?

"I liked visualising in my mind so I could see what was going on in the book."

"When I predicted I found it helped me get engaged with the story."

"Inferring gives a story more background than what it says."

*"When I tried reading between the lines it got easier to read the story."
(Pasifika student)*

"When I skim and scanned (for information for my biography) instead of reading everything I could pick up key information without reading the whole paragraph."

*"When I summarised what I read I could remember what I read better."
(English Language Learner)*

"Summarising will help me when I go to college. It will help me when I'm an actress, I will have to summarise the script." (Low achieving student)

"When I pictured in my mind words in the text, I then remembered them and used them in my writing."

Our success- a thumb nail sketch:

Our one student who moved from the low to high range zone preferred technology, PE, and music at school. The reading activities he liked doing most at school were looking and browsing through books, listening to the teacher read and silent reading. He believed he was a very good reader. He thought three important things a person had to do to be a good reader were to listen to the teacher, learn hard words and choose the right book. He stated he didn't like reading in his own time at home. When he did read, he read magazines, junk mail and comics. His favourite things to do outside school were to play sport and be with friends. He believed his parents thought he was good at reading but he didn't like going to the library. Making connections and visualising were the strategies that helped him improve his reading the most. He wanted more time in the class spent on inferring and summarising.

What N.I.S. has established is an underlying love of reading that will manifest itself later in his life.

C2 Teachers

What do teachers say about the N.I.S. Reading Comprehension Programme?

Comments by teachers:

"I like the great variety of activities for each strategy."

"Professional Development with Sheena Cameron was inspiring."

"It is worthwhile having a teacher coach for support."

"My students are able to recognise and identify which strategy they have used."

"I was very pleased how my low level, at risk students have improved during the year (STAR results)"

"My teaching practices are now a lot more effective."

"I found resources and planning formats are easily linked to all reading experiences."

"My lesson structure, learning intentions and support networks allow for descriptive reading programmes that target the diagnostic needs of students."

"We need to share successful experiences with others and add 'good' ideas to the programme."

"The most effective strategies have been visualising, summarising and making connections as the students related to these well and they generated quality discussion."

"Evaluating was a little challenging for my lower group."

"Most students increased in paragraph comprehension in the end of year STAR Test."

"I like teaching all the strategies to the class at first. It was an excellent way of getting me and the class to come to grips with the strategies. Students were able to learn off each other and ask questions to clarify understanding."

"Students grew in confidence and understanding."

"Students showed reasonable improvement. However I believe that they have been given a good base of the strategies from which to improve on, if the following years teaching of reading reinforce the strategies." (Year 7 teacher)

"I need to focus on more vocabulary development with my class."

"Students are able to recognise and verbalise which strategy they used."

Interestingly, students in a 'master teacher's' class all made gains in their reading and they also thought the programme was 'very helpful' (69%) and all strategies were mentioned by them in the question, 'Which strategy in reading did you find the most helpful?' **Classes where the teachers did not cover all strategies in depth, mentioned only the strategies teachers covered explicitly.** Results indicating evidence of what was taught! (and teachers agreed!)

D Conclusions

A number of conclusions and signposts for the future development of our programme suggest themselves these being to ...

- Continue using the N.I.S. 'Reading Comprehension' Programme and using student achievement information and perceptions.
- Continue learning conversations with the coach.
- Involve students in knowing what their teachers think about their reading.
- Involve parents/whanau in the reading programme so that the love of reading develops for life-long learners.
- Continue collecting student data over time.
- Make links with literacy teachers at contributing schools and have conversations with them regarding their student's reading achievement (in particular Maori and Pasifika).
- Follow up the 2010 Year 8 students to secondary schools and see the progress in reading at the end of Year 9. (if possible)
- Continue to build the capacity of teachers to deliver the student outcomes needed to ensure all students have success in reading by teacher coaching.
- Embed the process of teacher inquiry of planning, using student achievement data to adjust planning and teaching. Reflecting, drawing conclusions, considering new possibilities and taking appropriate action.
- Continue using student surveys and the use of individual class data for learning conversations.
- Connect students with the Nelson Library and encourage parents/caregivers to sign up for student library card access and do class visits each year.
- Encourage teachers to develop library lessons and displays and get buy-in from teachers to use the library as a place to instill a 'love' of reading.
- Instigate a reward system for low achievers to use the school library more frequently- tokens?
- Involve students in selecting reading materials for class lessons and in school buying plans.
- Ensure all books in a series are available to students.
- Continue developing classroom reading sets with a variety of books selected from the National Library Service using information from the Lovell's study. (e.g. nonfiction, fiction, comics and magazines.)
- Use text messages, computer/internet in class reading programmes.
- Ensure we do make a difference by using evidence to evaluate programmes.
- Develop a set sharing time for strategy, vocabulary, decoding and teaching ideas at team and staff meetings.

- Consider ways to improve our parent knowledge of their child's achievements. (e.g. more structured three-way conferences.)
- Widen our Home School Pasifika partnership to include Maori parents so we can share literacy ideas in a more structured way.
- Provide books as prizes in school competitions.
- Re-instigate student book reviews in newsletters, on TV News and bring these into assemblies.
- Give students opportunities to do art work in the Art Room connected to the books they are reading.
- Step up the sharing between teacher and student of student's success in reading. We have the data – use it!
- Introduce school wide, Professor Angus Macfarlane's Hikairo Rationale, to ensure we are meeting the needs of Maori students with its guiding values coming from a Maori world view. The focus being cooperation, understanding, reciprocity and warmth in teaching and learning situations.
- Encourage student book buying through Book Fairs.
- Invite motivational speakers on books to assemblies.

What is evident in effective classrooms at N.I.S. (Pressley 2006 page 4) includes:

- Time-tabled instruction of reading.
- Assessment data informs differentiated programmes.
- High quality reading curriculum, including decoding and vocabulary hot spots.
- Students being taught to use comprehension strategies.
- Reading instruction, complemented by writing instruction (plan, draft, revise).
- Reading being connected strongly to integrated unit themes (e.g. summarising for biographies).
- Reading and writing allowing many opportunities to practise oral communication skills e.g. discussions.
- Positive learning environments.
- Students receiving supportive instruction in class from Reading Support tutors.
- In school library specialist who puts together many activities to stimulate student interest in reading e.g. weekly read alouds related to integrated units; new book displays, Book Fair.

The N.I.S. Reading Comprehension Programme is successful and has improved student reading comprehension.

This confirms the New Zealand Project by Greenwood, Fletcher, Parkill, Bridges & Grimley, 2009 that states "in schools where there is strong leadership in literacy, a continuing programme of instructional reading, and ongoing professional development on a whole-school basis, there is continuing improvement in reading progress for all students."

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APPENDIX

Nelson Intermediate Reading for Comprehension Programme – *Attachment 1*

Teaching Vocabulary – *Attachment 2*

Decoding Strategies – *Attachment 3*

Strategy Survey – *Attachment 4*

