
Evaluation of the University of Canberra
Programme for Advanced Literacy Development
Scaffolding Literacy Programme with Indigenous
Children in School

Prepared for

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by

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This evaluation was created from the records of interviews with the principals and teachers and others involved in the Scaffolding Literacy Programme and is, therefore, a summary document of all the data collected by the three researchers at ACER and the sub-contractor in Western Australia, with an interpretation of the observations in terms of the guidelines set out in the contract.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the conclusion of the Evaluation, the research team at ACER have concluded that:

1. the Scaffolding Literacy Programme for Indigenous Students is an effective means of improving the literacy skills of those students;
2. the students involved in the programme achieve at a much higher level than if they had followed the normal course of events in pursuing literacy skills;
3. the professional development provided by the programme team to the teachers involved is detailed, supportive, and has brought about positive changes to their practices, which they believe has brought improvements to their students;
4. the programme's directors and staff have total commitment to the programme;
5. the programme centre at the University of Canberra maintains detailed records, in the form of test data, student work and video which trace each student's progress;
6. the programme contributes positively to the achievement of goals in the National Indigenous Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, namely
 - *Achieving attendance*: success in literacy brings a more positive attitude to school.
 - *Overcoming hearing, health and nutritional problems*: increased literacy can lessen the effect of hearing problems, through better written communication.
 - *Giving the children pre-school experiences*: the programme has been used successfully in a number of schools at pre-school level.
 - *Getting good teachers*: teachers are attracted to the success of the programme.
 - *Using the best teaching methods*: Scaffolding is best practice in this situation.
 - *Measuring success, achieving accountability*: detailed data and records are maintained.

INTRODUCTION

ACER was contracted to carry out an evaluation of the University of Canberra Programme for Advanced Literacy Development – Scaffolding Literacy Programme with Indigenous Children in School.

It has been recognised that an important step in addressing educational disadvantage amongst Indigenous children has been to focus on improving their literacy levels.

The approach known as ‘scaffolding’ has been undertaken to achieve this in a number of schools throughout Australia (Rose, Gray & Cowey, 1999). This methodology has been developed in response to low levels of literacy that have been observed in testing programmes (ACER, 1997). The scaffolding approach was first used in Australia for Indigenous students at a primary school in Alice Springs (Gray, 1990). The approach aims to work with students at a level approximately equivalent to the full expected potential for their year level. This means that some students will be close to that standard of work, but others may not be – the aim of the scaffolding process is to provide sufficient support to allow the students to work at this higher level. The process builds up a common ground for discussion with the students to encourage and enable them to work at a higher level of literacy.

The process requires consistent application within a curriculum framework that is properly sequenced and paced to enable students to make rapid but realistic progress.

(Rose, Gray and Cowey, 1999)

The methodology contributes positively to elements of the National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (NIELNS).

EVALUATION PLAN

An interview schedule (see Appendix 3) was designed following a literature review undertaken by staff at ACER. The schedule covered the essential features of the Scaffolding Literacy Programme implementation in the schools and focused on determining whether the literacy levels of the students were elevated as a result of the programme. The questions also looked at the running of the programme in the school and the ingredients needed for success.

The evaluation of the scaffolding literacy programme has taken place using three main methods of investigation:

School visits: Ten school visits have been carried. This represents over half the school campuses directly involved in the programme. This necessitated the construction of a complex, detailed itinerary for two researchers from ACER and one contractor from Western Australia to visit the schools.

Telephone interviews: Telephone interviews have been conducted with the remaining schools. The same interview schedule was used for telephone interviews and school visits. This approach helped to maintain comparability of observations across all schools.

Interviews at the University of Canberra: Interviews were conducted at the Programme Centre at the University of Canberra. The purpose of these interviews was to:

- provide further exposure to the theory underpinning the programme;
- inspect the management of data collected from the schools; and
- observe data which had been collected in the form of test results, examples of videos of individual students collected over a longer time span.

Schools

There were 17 schools that formed the achieved sample from the original 22 schools. These schools were mostly from Western Australia, but there was also a small number of schools from South Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

Length of schools' involvement in the programme

One school started in 1998, another in late in 1999, with an initial in-service: others began in 2000. Some schools started only in 2001, but already their results are proving the effectiveness of the programme. One school began partially and unofficially in 2000, and achieved full implementation in 2001. Another school has had partial involvement (some students only) for the past three years.

Staffing and ratios of Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers and AEWs

Both numbers and ratios varied between schools. Class sizes varied likewise. In one school there were 5 non-Indigenous teachers assisted by 10 Aboriginal AEWs, for a population of 140 students in 2002 (a rise of about 20 over the 2001 population). At another schools seven teachers administer the programme to up to 80 students, across the whole age range from Kindergarten to Year 10.

Staffing arrangements were in general found to be satisfactory where staffing remains stable, though one principal entered a warning:

Some new teachers need to be convinced before they start - they need to see it in action. You have to convince the doubters that it's worth a try.

Principal

In 2003, only one teacher [of six currently employed] and I will still be here, plus the AEWs who are really taking an interest. We've put Scaffolding into our hiring policy - it's a key criterion. I'll model first and then we'll do PD by lesson observation and feedback for the newcomers. We could really do with more access to consultants.

Principal

Two important points concerning staffing emerged from the contacts, which will be dealt with later. One is that the impact of the programme in schools appears to be strongly related to the quality of school leadership and in particular the principal's commitment to the programme. The second point is that the high turnover of staff in some schools easily jeopardises the programme, even when the community is very supportive of its continuation.

My Scaffolding coordinator is leaving, but I am going to have to bring her back for four weeks next year, at a cost including super and everything of maybe \$10 000, to teach new staff and keep the programme going.

Principal

Funding levels

These levels vary between schools. Most received the inception grant of \$10 000. In a single campus school this sufficed to provide equipment and texts. Two schools did not receive the grant. One school funds its extensive Scaffolding programme from its global budget. One school received an additional \$10 000, which allowed them to put in place coordination procedures for Scaffolding programmes in the school's three far-flung campuses, between one-and-a-half and four hours drive time apart. This coordination played a crucial role in administering PD to new staff for the three schools, given the omission of Scaffolding from any initial teacher training undertaken by newcomers.

And resources are cheap - there's no paraphernalia to this programme.

Teacher

Commitment to scaffolding is not dependent on funding, but it may diminish without it.

Parental and community consent and involvement

Community rules generally mean that prior consent for instituting the programme, achieved either through a council or community elders, was mandatory. No school reported any trouble or concern at its introduction.

The school board approved it - it represents all nine of the outstation communities, but this community dominates. We use ATSIC funding as a channel to equalise disbursement.

Teaching principal

We presented it to the community at a concert, really promoted Scaffolding.

Teacher

At one school the fieldwork included attendance at a meeting with the (fully Indigenous) School Council, held weekly. The chairperson, who also works as an AEW, commented:

The difference in their learning and behaviour makes me so excited. It just isn't boring anymore.
AEW

Other comments supporting the programme were:

There is no question that in terms of staff solidarity and retention, it's [Scaffolding] worked.
Secondary principal

Scaffolding gives them confidence in public speaking as well - a Year 7 boy, who couldn't read when he started the year, stood up and voluntarily addressed the final Primary Assembly - made a super speech in honour of a prize winner.
Primary teacher

Scaffolding has undoubtedly changed the culture academically and we think attendance rates have improved since the census. What I think happens is that parents see them working, send them along more regularly, and then come along themselves to see what the kids are actually doing - they certainly ask at parent-teacher nights what's going on: much more than they used to. We hold workshops for the PTA on Scaffolding - give them a taste - and they ended up writing a lobbying letter in support of our application for continued funding.
Secondary principal

There's been a big rise in teacher self-esteem. The primary staff are more focussed, not just selecting bits of other programs in a rag-bag approach. The downside is that it is not taught across the curriculum in secondary - yet!
Secondary principal

A Primary teacher finishing her third year at the school, and acting as a Scaffolding co-ordinator for training and record-keeping, commented:

I had no idea where to start with literacy when I arrived. I hardly believed the theory: I thought ten minutes would be all they could manage. Now I'm finding I can run a literacy lesson for two hours, which constantly amazes me. It's a big ask on a teacher I know, but then it is big ask on kids too, but they just work away.
Primary teacher

One of the Primary teacher's comments made an interesting shift in the concept of "literacy", almost amounting to a subject re-definition encompassing English and various other language activities:

It needs more status. Just about every other subject has its money allotment and timetable demands - why not Literacy?
Primary teacher A

They're not uniformly developing of course but they are all developing. One little girl I used to have to kid along - "Come and play with me", I'd say, but now the penny has dropped and she works along with the rest. And they are so proud. They don't say: "have I done this right?" any more. They say: "I've done this."
Primary teacher A

I'm not a believer in sight word recognition, so I get them to do sounding out by chunking unfamiliar words. And they pick that up, along with the literature. They find chunks they've learned and come out to me: "look, PL- again, miss."
Primary teacher A

At one school there is a double effect:

The council were set up to understand it by a session with a Brian Gray video maybe four years ago, and they've regularly attended PDs ever since. Now no-one teaching here this year will be on the staff next year. But the community will push for its maintenance, both the chair and all the members, AEWs. It's in the selection criteria for new staff, and there's a reasonable chance we might get one who's experienced. We already use support networks from other places. Anyway we'll get interschool support for 2003, and it could run.
Principal

Parental reactions to the programme

No negative reactions to the programme or any part of it were voiced at any school. Where the issue was raised in questioning, the reverse was always true:

They can see the success: "my son can read!"
Teaching principal

TEACHERS AND TEACHING

Length of teaching service in the school

At one school, the principal (who also teaches) had been there for a number of years. In other schools, staff may have been in the programme for six months or less.

Teacher mobility

This is one of the most important issues concerning the sustainability of Scaffolding programmes in these schools. For various stated reasons (remoteness; family calls; decisions to quit teaching altogether, etc.) these staffs are intensely mobile. For example, in 2003, there will be a totally new staff at one school, hired by the current principal according to her set of criteria. Previous experience with Scaffolding is high on this list, but there is no guarantee that any applicant will have been involved earlier.

Professional development support

All schools declared satisfaction with the nature and amount of professional support received from the key players in the University of Canberra programme who have become revered figures for just about all participants in their PD programmes. In 2001, in one school for example, they've had two week-long meetings in Port Hedland, with another in 2002, along with two days in Broome, and two visits to the school. (The pattern was similar in other areas and for other schools.) In addition, the principal of one school has conducted internal workshops for staff across three campuses:

Everyone knew the bits - you could read them. Now they know the process holistically and this is very important for improving the Scaffolding process and making it really work.
Teaching principal

Support from AISWA was also praised. One teacher also commented:

The professional development is ongoing, yes, although the main person involved seems to be spread thinly across the state.
Teacher

Phone, fax, e-mail and snail mail were all used. Particular praise was offered for the willingness of various support personnel and groups "to just pick us the phone and talk to us about our problems." One teacher only demurred: when videotapes of lessons were sent to Canberra for comment and support, the "reaction time is very slow - we understand they have a lot to do, but maybe we never see them again".

In most schools, internal professional development centred around discussions and private reflection (for example, on hearing their own and others' taped lessons). Several principals in the Kimberleys made the comment that a strong local area network of community schools which had flourished in the early 1990s, then declined somewhat, had been revived and revitalised, particularly between the schools which embraced Scaffolding Literacy and shared their expertise.

Non-Indigenous staff involvement in Scaffolding activities

At one school all five non-Indigenous staff are involved, across all primary levels and in the ungraded secondary class. In answer to the question asked about volunteering, all schools reported that involvement was mandatory for all teachers.

Of the many persons interviewed, only one reported any personal resistance to the programme, finding it not inclusive enough when a diversity of ability and interest amongst her students was considered. The principal of that school further commented that, according to background and experience, individual responses varied:

Teachers here find it difficult not to pull kids back into the lesson, instead of waiting for them. Maybe they don't believe it will happen.
Principal

By contrast, principals and staff in most other schools claimed that inclusiveness was one of the great strengths of the programme.

Another school reported:

It is very difficult finding teachers. Most who come are either very young or don't want to take on a new thing like scaffolding - it's easier to do what they did in teacher preparation.
Principal

Indigenous staff involvement in Scaffolding activities

For Indigenous teachers, the language load is heavy, but the work is worth it. They get committed to the programme through the students' enthusiasm.
Teaching principal

The principal of one school produced a clear example of such commitment:

For the recent Perth conference we sent down two AEWs, including the one you met. Round the community we can rarely get them to talk in meetings, they're so shy - they just lack the confidence. I can hardly get her to speak at all, even in the community. What happened? They stood up in front of the whole conference and read aloud the work samples from our kids that they'd taken!
Principal

The principal then added a particularly significant comment to which this report will return below:

The community elders here have taken it to their hearts, and they're beginning to say "teach us as well as our kids". There's a thing going on in a community near Fitzroy Crossing where scaffolding in adult education is using Land Rights Acts and similar sorts of things with the people.
Principal

Other schools produced comments of a similar kind.

Does the programme involve extra work for teachers?

I was not comfortable at the start - took a while to find my way. But now I love it - it's my favourite session of the day
Teacher

It takes time but is worth every ounce of effort.
Teaching principal

It's extra equipment rather than more work.
Principal

One teacher disagreed:

The lessons are very intense and there seems to be more preparation. ... Apart from the professional development there is a fair bit of preparation, cutting up cards, etcetera.
Teacher

The programme in the hands of untrained or inexperienced teachers

Given the difficulties of staffing many of these remote schools, it will happen, as it had to in one school, that untrained or inexperienced teachers will of necessity be hired for regular classroom duties.

In one of the most remarkable segments of the whole study for one researcher, a classroom observation was undertaken of one long lesson (almost one and half hours) taken by a teacher who was both untrained and relatively inexperienced (9 months service). An AEW (who was both teacher and parent) was in the room to assist with unobtrusive but firm classroom management when one of the five boys present offended the minor protocols of attentiveness. This was hardly necessary, and occurred only three times in the session. (The four girls in the class were attending a sex education clinic elsewhere.) The youngest boy was 8, the oldest 14.

The book was Tim Winton's *Blueback*, and the passage was that where the boy notices the grouper for the first time. She began by retelling the story, with discussion; a word recognition game was played; there was dialogue repetition using the slotted line board; discussion on various syntactical markers and grammatical points followed. To conclude, a word replacement exercise took place, based on observing and retaining Winton's good style, and improving on earlier student attempts to replicate that style in their writing in new story development.

After the lesson, teacher and researcher discussed the lesson. The researcher's assumption that she was at least two-year trained and may have had up to four year's of experience was confounded by her revealing the facts above. By all the precepts of Scaffolding, published in Rose, Gray and Cowie (1999) and elsewhere, it was a classic lesson. She had been involved in three professional development processes during her three terms, and reported strongly supportive interactions with other teachers in the locality, not just her class AEW and others in her own school.

She had a lot to say about the programme:

- "Scaffolding is very good for multilevel enjoyment of appropriate material; it is really good at giving the kids meaning. We start with joint learning, but they very quickly want to become independent learners;
- I know it's a "recipe", but it gives them a structure. It gave me a structure too, when I was starting out, and I was very quickly comfortable with it, like them.
- their end product - their writing - gives them pleasure, from an experience they thoroughly enjoyed;
- they even do well with reading difficult, low intensive words;
- you can see them using their enhanced vocabulary in their private writing all the time;
- previously non-readers pick up Jennings or *Blueback* with confidence;
- the two really advanced boys enjoy the lessons, but they both get so excited by private reading: and at home - one boy's father can't read at all and they are all so proud;
- the girls are generally better than the boys - they got the Scaffolding "recipe" earlier, then after we get half-way, they just take off independently;
- when they read aloud, did you hear them being careful about pronouncing the verb endings? And the "her" - "hear" difference? They just want to get it right.
- I don't think there's enough writing in Scaffolding - I do more at other times: diary writing; ideas for a biography, stuff like that. Descriptive writing often just comes out of the stories we read, or from life, like "The First Rain" we did last week as part of our water theme. I'm hoping their writing will speed up too;
- it's not a lot of work for me - certainly not compared with numeracy."

THE PROGRAMME

Implementing and fine-tuning the programme

Scaffolding hit the ground running in these parts. At first it seemed like we were taking on too much. We had inadequate funding and a mixed assortment of staff. PD was a problem, but now Brendan makes it more practical - and economic for us. There should be more writing, but we realise the programme is still developing, being fine-tuned, so we look forward to that. Administration from Canberra has been unsatisfactory; we need greater control and support. What I'd like to see is an independent support unit for each area, which could administer PD based on local knowledge and conditions.

Principal

He then followed this by offering a written summary of how he thinks Scaffolding has made a real difference in terms of achieving better outcomes for Indigenous students:

- [It's a] prescribed formula that works;
- [It] ensures all staff are doing continuous assessment;
- [They] can effectively teach multi-ability classes;
- Students get more feedback and results through the Scaffolding methodology;
- [They] experience success.

Principal

Another classroom teacher (a secondary maths/science specialist who found himself teaching using Scaffolding processes) offered a slightly different set:

Its main benefits in my view are that I see increasing confidence, and it reduces stress. Though it's difficult for some of my colleagues to adapt to the process, it seems to me to give a great chance for good, inclusive teaching. And fighting to be allowed to read aloud is a big culture change for these kids, and a very positive one.

Teacher

Alternatives to the programme

No teacher interviewed in five schools suggested any they considered better. Two teachers suggested that other programmes (a more phonics-based approach for early years, and a broader range of genres at secondary levels) might be useful additions, if not replacements, to a Scaffolding classroom. In the same school, elements of *First Steps* are still used for assessment, alongside Literacy materials from the Internet.

I miss direct teaching of alphabet recognition in my [pre-school] classroom. Some of these kids don't know the difference between a letter and a word. A has to be A.

Teacher

Another teacher in the same school commented:

{One teacher's} view of inclusiveness is not shared by us all. There are differences in learning styles, learning needs, text types and multiple intelligences which are not fully catered for. Those who stay here learn, sure, but the repetitive load is too strong.

Teacher

These teachers made some minor additional points. One teacher felt Scaffolding was "monotonous for some teachers" and that access to "information texts" was an "essential". Another teacher pointed to the "limited range of texts currently available at the lower end of the school" and a "limited range of strategies". Teachers in other schools were very ready to point out that such additions and variations are within the choice of anyone teaching in a Scaffolding classroom.

Two teachers at one school remain distinguished by being virtually the only teachers in the whole study who offered such reservations about the use of Scaffolding in Indigenous classrooms. So a reflective, able practitioner may in fact feel professionally de-cultured and at the mercy of school policy, but it has to be said again that these two are a very small minority indeed, given otherwise overwhelming approval and support in schools elsewhere. Indeed, at this same school, the principal and other teachers remain firm proponents of the efficacy of the programme, and it remains compulsory for classes at all levels.

Another primary teacher at another school repeated one comment:

You need to have a phonics programme running in parallel.

Teacher

Selection of reading materials and texts

In general, schools followed suggestions made by UC staff, since the accompanying notes and lesson plans were found to be extremely professional and valuable, and saved teachers a lot of preparation time.

The fact that the texts for which notes are available are age-appropriate works, and much enjoyed by the students, was point in favour of the programme made by just about all schools.

I have a Year 4. I still did A for Apple a bit, and I started the process on sentences other than narrative. But once I got comfortable, we really got going. I think the stories are well-selected - they just love re-telling of Henny Penny.

Teacher

It's changed their view of language in ordinary, everyday life. They are walking around with books. And we develop thematic treatments out of the literature - they love *Matilda*, and we've used that.

Principal

In some schools, students helped choose texts, in others teachers choose by reviewing the available scripts.

Pacing the programme in the classroom

With regard to pacing, at one school the principal voiced a reservation:

An hour and a half is very long. I know that some teachers do make a break in the middle, to keep kids on task.

Principal

Others had no problem. In fact, three of the classroom sessions (one lower primary and two secondary) observed by one of the research team went for the full duration without strain or problems manifesting themselves for the children involved.

With regard to pace, another teacher, asked how long it was before a change in students attitudes toward literacy was noticed, once they had started the programme, said:

It's hard to say. The first four weeks are very intensive with a lot of teacher-centred work, before the students show any reaction.

Teacher

Texts used

Paul Jennings and Roald Dahl were particular favourites, as being age-appropriate, entertaining and likely to engender private reading and re-reading. Other texts observed in action during class lessons included Ted Hughes's *The Iron Man*, James Moloney's *The Bridge to Wiseman's Cove*, and *Dougie*. One principal said:

They like John Marsden, but maybe he's too hard.

Teaching principal

They love Pat Hutchens's *Rosie's Walk*. They love Pamela Allen: *Can You Keep a Secret?* And they really love Eric Carle. They go to the library and look for him: "Hey, I've got an Eric Carle book", they'll shout.

Primary teacher B

In one school, where Marsden's *Tomorrow When the War Began*, had been tried, the teacher agreed:

It's beyond them: very dense, and you have to do too much orientation. But they're so into *Dougie*. They love the frankness. They love to read it aloud.

Teacher

In this connection an interesting point of view developed elsewhere about specifically Indigenous materials - several teachers claimed (to quote one) "we are selling the kids short by focussing on Indigenous issues, social settings which they already knew". The claim was made that esoteric materials (fantasies and imagined worlds, or texts dealing with societies far from these students' experience) were actually more intrinsically interesting to outback children. One principal was adamant:

Keep the texts away from local experience.

Principal

One school, however, had success at secondary level with Sally Morgan's *My Place*.

In some schools UC materials were supplemented by local and school-produced books. At one school the point was made that though some students may well pick up somewhat easier texts for their silent reading, very often they do return to the class text during these sessions, even if only to read a paragraph or two.

Writing in the sequence

One school reported that initially (2000, 2001) they just implemented some early components of the Scaffolding sequence, and have moved to writing only in 2002.

It is certainly having an impact on their writing as well as their speech. They use more complex sentences, and their work now includes feelings, whereas before it was just "and then we did this and then we did that" - you know the sort of stuff. The story lines have changed too - it's not just about fighting anymore! We'll get around to the really imaginative styles later, when they've consolidated, but even now there's a big change.

Teacher

In other places, the development has occurred already:

They actually use metaphor: it's not just all action anymore.

Principal

Applications in subject areas across the curriculum

A comment occasionally made, especially by teachers not wholly committed to Scaffolding, is that there is too much emphasis on narrative. Would it work elsewhere? One principal has no doubt:

It works just as well for transactional sorts of writing, say, reading instructions on how to assemble something. I can see it working in science or cooking. Given the emphasis on problem solving - word-based - in modern numeracy, it's going to work there as well.

Teacher

We expect word and problem-solving processes will improve everywhere, and they'll gain from their new skills and confidence. Already I use it in science.

Secondary teacher

We're doing *Blueback*, and I've developed a theme for Science and Social Environment on water and fish, and it fits right in.

Teacher

We did a Low Order Orientation exercise in preparation for a recent museum visit.

Principal

Applications with other student groups in other schools

It would certainly work for underachieving non-Indigenous kids - mainstream schools could really benefit in all sorts of ways.

Secondary teacher

Why don't we do this everywhere? Compared with the way I was taught - John and Betty stuff - this is brilliant.

Teacher

STUDENTS AND THEIR LEARNING

Age-related texts

In almost all teachers' opinions, one of the great advantages of the Scaffolding programme and its texts, is that the latter are clearly and appropriately age-related, and above all confidence building.

They are off the "little kids' book merry-go-round". No more 130 basal readers, all the same and not worth a cent. And the sky's the limit.

Teaching principal

Self-directed learning

They are wanting to read. They want to choose their books. They want to take books home.

Teaching principal

In a particularly illuminating and important anecdote, one principal recounted the following:

We had a message from the local librarian. She wanted us to know that our kids turn up there at weekends. They're in there now, reading, not hanging around the local shopping mall for the aircon. Once they'd would have been intimidated, ashamed. Now they feel they have a right to be there. They're just a different bunch of kids - such confidence and pride.

Teaching principal

They really accelerate when they reach Years 6 and 7.

Principal

They love copying pages from their book in free time. It sounds pointless, but they do it because language has become so hugely exciting for them

Teacher

Developing a meta-language

In THRASS, you have to learn the rules first, and they flounder. Here the rules emerge, and they are clearer and more certain about them

Teacher

Attention spans and class involvement

In almost all schools, Scaffolding lessons started the day. In several schools, these sessions, even for quite young students, lasted an hour and a half. Schools varied in the intensity of the programme - some do it every day, others for a lesser number of periods, particularly at secondary level - "there's such a lot to do".

It's better fun, they are more engaged
Principal

We were sceptical about whether if they tuned out, they'd come back. It was very hard to break the traditional view that they wouldn't come back if we lost them. We just didn't believe at first. But they do. There are no behaviour management issues left in a Scaffolding class. They can be naughty children outside - they're kids after all - but not in their literacy class.
Teaching principal

They love new story development. Did you notice that everyone came back in for that? Showing what they can do is much less boring for them than just retelling. And didn't James just love reading his aloud - finished first and couldn't wait.
Teacher

Some remain slightly sceptical of the view that when attention wavers, students will of their own accord "come back" to class involvement. Observation of scaffolding lessons during the feedback provided many examples of this happening, but it may not be automatic:

It depends. Transient kids, in a class for a few days, can run amok and really disrupt things and that means they revert to old habits, but overall, I'd say, the smaller the group the more likely.
Principal

I started the year with a Year 3 text: *Androcles and the Lion*. This taught me the stages. Then *The Strap-Box Flyer*. So it was a personal path. The students really rejected both: "It's too easy, little kids' stuff." One boy was really objectionable - started the year by resisting, throwing stuff around. But I won. I told them: "This is a Scaffolding classroom. We are studying how writers write: the choices they make, and why one choice is better than another for its effect. What they write doesn't have to be of any particular standard. I'm using these not because your English is low. It isn't. But easy books will teach you more quickly just how they write, and your writing will improve too." That shut them up, and I've had no complaints since. And they have learned well. Now we are doing age appropriate texts, their writing is, in the main, excellent. Even the boy who threw things has come round. Now he actually encourages the others: he says to them: "OK, it's hard, but you've just got to try." Quite a turnaround

Self-esteem, confidence and positive self-concept

Many other contexts for quotation and comment in this report will include views reported by teachers relating to this issue. Here are some of the salient ones;

Students' attitudes to school have changed since starting the Scaffolding Literacy programme. ... [They have] increased confidence to read aloud in class, participation in class discussion about a book the class might be reading. Parents show increased interest in what their child is reading and writing.
Teacher

Because there are no wrong answers, success is constant.
Teacher

They experience success by being asked the same question three days in a row. That sets them up, gives them the positive taste - then they thrive on it.
Principal

Other teachers elaborated on these points:

One thing that really hit home for me was that Scaffolding eradicates what I call question stress. You know, someone fires a question, and you immediately feel tense, even if you work out the answer very quickly. Well, with Scaffolding that goes.
Teacher

Students are more willing to talk about a book and participate in reading aloud.
Teacher

There is nothing uncomfortable about it for them. It's easy, engaging, interactive and fun. They know there's heaps to learn, and they want to. They get cued into the system and they're anxious to perform. Already they've learned to read, and you can take them to a higher level so quickly. They are always improving - I just get blown away every time I see the work they're producing - it's just amazing. I'm amazed by every single one and what they do with it.
Teacher

The point was often made that the reading experience often added vocabulary to their regular repertoire, with a consequent raising of self-esteem and feelings of maturity. An associated point was made at one school:

They are so chuffed to be reading "chapter books" not just little kids' story books. And really reading them.
Teacher

One anecdote famous in the Kimberleys (the first line was quoted by staff at several schools as an example of vocabulary extension into ordinary speech) occurred when a principal, leading a group on a bush walk, discovered they had lost themselves. As they searched for a way out, one boy remarked: "Scott, we're penetrating our way through the bush!" A second said: "No, no, Scott we're bolting up the bank." A third tried a different tack: "No, no, we're edging our way a little more quickly towards the car."

During one visit, two occurrences provided contrasting but powerful experiences to prove that, given that a scaffolding programme is in place, self-esteem is high, and traditional notions of Indigenous students' negative reactions to education can be obliterated in favour of a high measure of positive self-concept. The first was when a four-year old boy carefully and clearly wrote his name on a computer screen using drawing software. The second was when three adolescent girls expressed a desire to read their stories aloud to the visitor, and without shyness, asked permission. They did this task with grace, in fine style and willingly professed great pride in their achievements.

Scaffolding and Indigenous language learning

One teacher reported an interesting development in schools in her local area where a programme was put together which sensitises children (and their non-Indigenous teachers) to the similarities between English and Kriol language patterns. While it maybe cannot be used very widely, since Kriol appears to be a very localised dialect, nevertheless it points to an interesting conjunction: in the teacher's words:

Making the Jump dovetails with Scaffolding. We do it for half an hour every day, and it is now an integral part of the programme in several local schools.
Teacher

In other places, student mobility and the geographical site of some communities work against this:

We are very close to the bitumen - only 5 ks. This increases mobility in and out, and lessens the time kids actually spend in Scaffolding situations. Lots of transients - they move between State, Catholic and this school, so they miss out. And there's no Kriol - this is a pastoral station. Basically this is an English-speaking community. We had a language teacher for them but she retired in March and there's no new one available. So parents teach the local languages at home if they can and want to.
Principal

Another school has a different solution:

It's not forgotten but I have trouble getting language specialists, and the AEWs can't speak them all. So I take them all away on week-long language blocks, out in the bush.
Principal

SCAFFOLDING AND THE SIX KEY ELEMENTS OF THE NIELNS

1 Achieving better attendance rates

The principal of one school believes that Scaffolding is likely to have contributed to an improvement, though she would not estimate to what degree - the school also has in place an award system for regular attendance.

Indirectly and over time, attendance will improve given literacy improvement.

Principal

He added:

Better engagement could have meant less absenteeism but I have no figures to support this.

Principal

The school has done a lot of work on improving attendance rates, school has an overall attendance rate of 69 per cent this has risen to 78 per cent in term 4. At the primary level attendance is 80+ percent and at the secondary level 57 per cent in term 3. The school has also given the local store a photograph of all students attending the school and the shop keeper is not to serve anyone who is a student during school hours.

Principal

Attendance has improved and stabilised. Students come to school because they can read.

Principal

2 Overcoming hearing, health and nutritional problems

It was partly the old deficit model. Judging what kids could do by the things we thought they couldn't do. We were trapped into that way of thinking. You could make 101 excuses as to why achievement wasn't happening, and *otitis media* was one. Now we don't have that negative model. *Otitis* is still a problem, of course; the fluctuation has to be emphasised and there needs to be many visits to check that - more than we get. And we need to train up the teachers. But alongside that we've halved the number of non-readers in 18 months.

Teaching principal

Other resourcefulness might also come into play. At one school every teacher wore a microphone pack throughout their lessons, and each room was wired for transmission through a set of loudspeakers. Scaffolding is not a problematic strategy for *otitis media* sufferers in such circumstances. At the same school, a part-time teacher also withdraws conductive hearing loss pupils for one-on-one teaching using Scaffolding: their regular classroom teacher remarked:

There's been heaps of change in them. Every kid comes back with success on their faces.

Teacher

3 Giving the children pre-school experience

Scaffolding, in suitably modified administration, is deemed to be valuable at this level, and is administered in several schools.

4 Getting good teachers

The scaffolding method is an attractive option to teachers as it brings success for the students in a relatively short time. This is a definite attraction for attracting and maintaining good teachers.

5 Using the best teaching methods

This is the best literacy programme ever - better than *First Steps*, and the gains we are seeing, in all sorts of ways, are now enormous.

Teaching principal

It's the best we've come across.

Principal

6 Measuring success and achieving accountability

The easiest way we've ever had - Scaffolding's on-going evaluation is much more satisfactory than the "tick a box" syndrome.

Teaching principal

We've signed an IESIP agreement, and they just ask for results in bulk. But I send them information about improvement class by class. That's what they ought to be interested in - the detail.

Principal

We collect data, using Running Records. There has also been an improvement in some students' results on state-wide testing.

Teacher

Scaffolding programs strongest success is in its ability to measure students level of improvement which leads to accountability.

Teacher

EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS IN INDIVIDUAL SCHOOLS

During the case-work visits in the Kimberley area, the testing for 2002 which will indicate the rate and scale of change in the schools had been conducted too recently to be immediately available. It is hoped that in succeeding versions of this draft, such data will be available for inclusion.

In one school, there were 15 non-readers amongst primary students at the start of 2000: by the end of the year there were only 3, and of the successful ones, one was at Year 5 level. In the secondary group, non-readers went from 5 to zero, with the highest one having reached Year 4. In 2002, the gains were more significant for the senior students, because all had managed to "capture phonics" and develop a more integrated capacity for literacy development.

Other schools reported similar changes: at one school, in March 2001, no-one was reading above Level 7, and 60% were not reading at all. When they were tested in September, non-readers had halved, and 50% of the students were at Level 7 or above. This change took six teaching months.

One teacher offered a strong and we think important rebuttal to a reservation or objection commonly voiced by teachers who know of, but do not teach in, Scaffolding programmes:

We all know that just because they can read 90 percent of a Year 7 text we've been through thoroughly doesn't necessarily mean they can all read a totally unseen Year 5 text. But that's a bit beside the point. The fact that they can read anything at all, whereas they couldn't read a thing a few months ago - that's the big point.

Teacher

One teacher has noticed that her students' self-esteem and confidence has really grown. All students want to learn and will have a go, they all want to try their hardest, they all want to learn to write.

Principal

Others came it from perspectives which will be recognised from comments filed under headings earlier: here is one such summary:

Deficit thinking has gone from this school. Reading and writing resistance has gone - they are no longer learning that people expect them to be failures. I realise that it is an evolving programme, but even as it is they get immediate and positive inputs to their learning to start them off. They rapidly become self-directed learners, and they do revisit their texts. It's a powerful and an ethical system - there's been a power shift to the kids, which in my view is as it should be.

Principal

Another, more unobtrusive benefit of the system appeared in the Kimberleys:

Our kids don't have much control on attendance. There are a lot of transients call in here, and transience is rife in the area. But if they come from somewhere that uses scaffolding, they fit right in. The rules are the same and they know them, and they can carry straight on.

Teacher

SALIENT FEATURES OF SUCCESSFUL *SCAFFOLDING LITERACY*

Administration

- Commitment and expertise by school leaders;
- Funding for coordination and management of Scaffolding within a school;
- Low staff turnover;
- Introductory video, demonstration lessons and professional development for new staff;
- Strong inter-school networking for sharing experience and expertise.
- Professional development support readily and constantly available, by visits as well as electronic means.

Community contacts

- Fostering and maintaining strong community support and constant interaction;
- The presence of AEWs in classrooms during Scaffolding lessons;
- Making connections where possible with speech and other language patterns in local Indigenous languages;
- Encouraging take-home activities (book borrowing; reading to parents).

Classroom management

- Group sizes as small as administratively feasible;
- One-on-one withdrawal and support for the hearing-impaired;
- Participation by students in text selection to ensure engagement and age-appropriateness;
- Developing thematic treatments involving other areas of the curriculum, based on or embracing Scaffolding text material and themes;
- Favouring texts which extend students' knowledge of the world, rather than revisiting known contexts and societies.

Programme management

- Teachers following the prescribed formulaic sequence of instruction;
- Teachers respecting students' need for constant praise, and ignoring wrong answers;
- Continuous assessment of student levels of achievement;
- Celebration of student success, by publication and performances;
- Allowing children maximum opportunity for reading aloud in class;
- Establishing connections with computer learning where facilities are available.

THE WAY FORWARD

A place for Scaffolding in initial teacher training programmes

Encouragement might be offered to teacher training institutions nation-wide to include base training, or at least familiarisation, with Scaffolding techniques in their courses.

Possibilities for Scaffolding procedures to be "translated" into other contexts

Four such application immediately suggest themselves:

- literacy remediation for mainstream underachievers;
- literacy experience for at-risk youth in mainstream and special schools;
- adult education, especially young unemployed people and Indigenous adults;
- prisoner education;

Perceptions of possible improvements to the programme

There were, as there inevitably are in implementations of programmes with this complexity, minor grouches: some have been recorded above. The most common suggestion is summarised by this principal:

In general, I'd say 'leave it alone'. But there is room for an instructional module or video or something, which we could use both to introduce prospective staff when we are having hiring interviews, and for on-site PD.
Teaching principal

Another principal expanded this idea somewhat:

I'd like a video. An introduction for parents when Scaffolding is being introduced on a new site, and for teachers, especially the inexperienced ones. Showing children "before" and "after" - both the students and their work.

Something that displays and shows the teaching methodology in simple terms, with definitions and video examples of classrooms. The explicitness of the system is both a comfort and a resource for teachers. Show it.
Principal

There were some areas of concern that could be addressed, as one researcher found with one visit. These observations were isolated and cannot be generalised to other schools:

- ♦ *Lessons appear in the main to be highly teacher directed with the teacher in control of most processes of the lesson. For most of the teacher directed segment of the lesson, most students appear to be passive participants.*
- ♦ *Lessons appear to be based on the premise that repetition and familiarity of stories are key components for the encouragement of students' interest and success in reading.*
- ♦ *Lessons appear to have a focus on the teaching of Standard Australian English as the requirement of literacy for academic study.*
- ♦ *Lessons appear to be based on the premise that the main interest of students in terms of literature is stories that have an animal or fantasy orientation of focus. For instance, a fantasy orientation relates to animals depicted as humans and assuming human behaviours. This is not in keeping with Aboriginal legends and stories of the "Dreaming" in which animals are depicted as animals and assume animal behaviours, and only assume human behaviours when they become humans. The stories appear based on the premise that students can relate as humans to the experiences and behaviours of animals depicted as humans, and make sense of these animal experiences and behaviours.*
- ♦ *Emphasis of lessons appears to be on listening and reading skills. There is some focus on speaking in terms of responding to specific questions asked by the teacher, and comprehension skills in terms of giving meanings of words and phrases of the text, and completing cloze questions relating to the text.*
- ♦ *Emphasis of lessons in the primary and lower secondary years appears to be on the linking of the spoken word to print and the understanding of SAE including such aspects as the nuances of the language.*

As noted earlier, localised and personalised administration of professional support and development was also raised by several teachers, particularly in the Kimberleys.

Closer alignment of Scaffolding activities with IT skill training and development

Many schools had students re-drafting, or preparing their manuscripts for publication, using word-processing programmes. Expanding opportunities for this, where facilities exist in schools, might be vigorously promoted.

VISIT TO UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA (PROGRAMME CENTRE)

History of Programme

In the 1980s the programme was initially undertaken at the Treager Park school with much success. It ran there for five years and also at Yupalunga.

The programme ran from the Northern Territory University. In 1992 they transferred to the University of Canberra and began a programme there with Non-Indigenous students who were experiencing great difficulty with school. They designed a programme in conjunction with the ACT Department of Education and Community Services. This was an intensive programme and involved detailed analysis of lessons. It was found that 85 per cent of the students were 'turned around' by this intervention programme which involved 120 families for two hours per week for eight weeks.

Strategy

It is not just help – it is a specific programme which has a different approach and is quite narrow in its direct goals. Although the indirect benefits for the students are enormous. It is a pedagogy to get them to grade level very quickly.

The scaffolding process is a rigorous one. Two of the more popular strategies adopted by people assisting Indigenous students were:

- demanding strict adherence to a set of rules and regulations designed for Non-Indigenous students. Results for Indigenous students were not good under these circumstances;
- becoming close to the students, spending much time on the students' home background, and not putting any pressure on the students to succeed.

Scaffolding is neither of these. It is a set of sequenced events and strategies designed to engage the students in a literate manner.

A set of markers is put into place to measure the students' success.

1. Assessment – students should have a 90 per cent accuracy level. They need to be working independently and to have deep comprehension of the material. The student becomes a member of the literary discourse.
2. Individual benchmarking texts. Students are monitored to observe their authentic decoding skills. The main focus is the TORCH test. At one school the average for a Year 8 class on the test went from 38 to 57 in a period of 6 months.

Data

1. Perhaps the most powerful form of data was in the form of regular videos which are used to monitor student performance on a regular basis. In one such case observed by the evaluation team a student who was in Year 7 was videoed as she tried, unsuccessfully, to read of Year 1 text. The video of the same student, some eight months later, reading fluently and understanding the material, was astounding. The same student's writing also showed a great degree of progress to a genuine level of competence and confidence that would have been unthinkable just half a school year before.
2. Observational Reading Records keep a track of students' progress on classroom texts and unseen texts.
3. Individual teacher testing: the teachers are constantly monitoring the progress of the students through questioning and conversation.
4. Baseline unseen text tests – these are used to gain an unbiased view of the progress of the students during their involvement with the Scaffolding Literacy programme
5. TORCH tests – these are standard tests and can be used to compare students work with established normative levels.

The University of Canberra maintains individual records for all students and can demonstrate that, under the influence of the Scaffolding Literacy programme, the students are making progress above and beyond that which would normally be expected.

Conclusion

The centre managing the programme provides excellent direction to the schools involved in the programme. They provide face to face professional development, both in the form of demonstrating the techniques of the Scaffolding Literacy programme and in providing constructive assistance to teachers taking lessons.

In addition to the directors, there are other people involved in the professional development of the teachers in the programme. The visits to the schools by this group are very much looked forward to by the teachers. This dedicated group travels to all the schools, including those in the most remote areas.

They also provide a detailed set of notes to the teachers, with directions for the use of recommended texts, strategies that teachers could use. This backup is extremely important for teachers undertaking the programme for the first time and for teachers experienced in Scaffolding who are using a new text. The notes give excellent hints for success based on the programme directors' own experience in the field and their observations of other teachers using the programme.

CONCLUSION

A teacher in one of the case-study schools typified Indigenous students' reaction to school education and classroom life in the following way:

Remember all those old coping mechanisms? Sit quietly. Copy. Try to avoid having to answer anything. Fiddle. Doodle or draw. Or look busy and produce - generally rubbish. Sit at the back. Avoid eye contact. Never initiate a conversation, or ask a question.

Teacher B

If we were to infer from this behaviour other personality characteristics and psychological traits in the children and young adults, such as shyness, fear, boredom, inability to concentrate, lack of motivation or commitment to learning, we would not be too far away from an accurate picture of many classrooms and their Indigenous inhabitants a decade or so ago. Or it may be - almost certainly is - that the behaviours listed by the teacher above are still the circumstances of many Indigenous students and their learning in classrooms today. But not this teacher's classroom, with the introduction of the Scaffolding Literacy programme:

None of these [coping mechanisms] are used any more. We can't get them to shut up sometimes. And all this change takes two weeks with the newcomers. Not a term. Two weeks. They're participating, reading out loud, attempting a new word, spelling new words out loud - like "seminar". They say to me: "sir, don't read to us - we want to work!" And 'work' is spelling and above all writing.

Teacher

Several of the key questions underlying this evaluation might now be introduced. Is the change noted by teacher above generalisable? Will Scaffolding Literacy procedures work for teachers anywhere, as they work so dramatically for above teacher? Can a powerful and effective and sustainable difference be made to the lives and learning of Indigenous students by these means?

Overall, it has to be said in answer that the results of the introduction of Scaffolding procedures observed in the schools in this study are little short of sensational. This is the unanimous opinion of the ACER research team who conducted interviews with and visits to the schools which have implemented the programme. As Gray (2002) points out, many years have passed and millions of dollars have been spent in trying to find efficacious and powerful ways of making the basic change - narrowing the gap between the observed literacy achievements and performance of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. We have no doubt that this is just such an efficacious and powerful way. Scaffolding can be done anywhere. As demonstrated by an untrained and relatively inexperienced teacher whose lesson-technique was observed in her classroom, it can be done by just about anyone, given basic training in method, professional commitment and development, and on-going support from colleagues. It is not resource-intensive on site. It is inclusive of individual differences, even within a single classroom. It can be done at any level from pre-school to upper secondary. Moreover, it has the full participation and support of the Indigenous communities represented by the schools and their administrations.

And it works, in terms of observable results garnered by normal processes of pre- and post-testing. The changes in achievement levels are not uniform - the populations of these schools are too diverse socially and geographically for such to be the case, and the circumstances of the students and their schools vary widely as well. But the changes are always solid, always upward and often spectacular. No testing was done as part of this research, save gathering evidence from classroom contexts, in talking with teachers, reading students' work and hearing them read and talk about their work. But the statistical evidence collected by schools, by the progenitors of the programme, and by other groups who work to support the programme is indisputable. Much of this evidence collected for this study is of necessity anecdotal, but given the overwhelming agreement by teachers that Scaffolding is working, and in identical ways across schools regardless of the site of the school or the nature of the population, we believe it has significant reliability and validity. It will often be that the children in these classrooms will perform at lower levels when given other reading tasks or tests outside their Scaffolding programme. This does not negate the improvements noted within the Scaffolding classroom, for there are significant other benefits as well.

As well as statistically recordable change, in terms of improved reading levels attained and the quality of written work, there is ample evidence that Scaffolding 'works' also with regard to the students' personal development - behavioural, attitudinal and motivational. In classroom after classroom it could be observed that students do not any longer exhibit the stereotypical behaviours and attributes sketched by teacher in paragraph one of this summary. Teachers do not find it difficult to explain why, and their accounts are reliably similar. The refusal to accept a deficit view of the children's possible progress; the constant praise and support (and challenges); ridding the classroom of opportunities for students to perceive themselves as failures; the choice of age-appropriate and interesting text material - all were mentioned on just about every site, along with other aspects of the programme. These are detailed, generally in teachers' own words, in the body of the report.

The research team realises that this is a developing programme, capable of further refinement, and additional support as more schools become involved and require assistance. But it is a developing programme in another sense. In most schools, it has only been under way for two years, and already the gains in achievement and improvements in participation and interest are substantial. It would be interesting to track these students for another year or so. How are these already successful students going to develop further as they rise through their schools? How long are the Scaffolding processes going to satisfy them as they continue to develop, and what extras are they going to need to support and enhance their interest in learning, not just of language but in other spheres? What else is going to work for them as sophistication develops and maturation proceeds? These will become big questions for teachers, and for the sponsors of the programme.

Another large question suggests itself: where else might Scaffolding, in its current state, be efficacious and powerful? Several teachers asked why it was not a regular feature of mainstream education for non-Indigenous and Indigenous students alike, in scope and scale far beyond its current implementation in outback areas and distant communities. How might it then be supported, if such became the case? In the report we have made some suggestions about its applicability translated into other settings, and about the need for teacher training institutions to include treatment of the principles (and maybe experience in practice) in regular initial teacher training. However, professional development support - constant, direct, warmly personal and communicative, as teachers find it in these schools - seems a vital element not only on initial implementation but also to support teachers further as their expertise and commitment grow.

At the conclusion of this report, we have listed what have emerged as the most salient features of Scaffolding Literacy and its successful implementation, together with some suggestions as to the way forward after these initial trial years. Chief amongst these we would rate the need for clear and potent publicity, to encourage its extension beyond the community schools which have embraced it and found it worked, and the need for funding to support this extension. By chance, this report is being written just as the first-ever *National Report on Indigenous Education* is to be tabled and discussed in Parliament (late November 2002). We would strongly suggest that the programme is of such significance that an account of what it is, its implementation, and its results become a component of the next such Report

One researcher summed up the programme from responses by the principal and teachers to the interview questions as follows:

- ◆ *Staff perceive that the Scaffolding Literacy Programme is worthwhile for students in terms of:*
 - ◆ *Students' regular attendance at school.*
 - ◆ *Students' development of reading in Standard Australian English*
 - ◆ *Students' development of confidence in and enthusiasm for reading*
 - ◆ *Students' achievement of success in school learning through literacy.*
 - ◆ *Students' positive behaviour at school and in class.*
 - ◆ *Students' positive attitudes towards learning in class*
 - ◆ *Students' aspirations for academic studies*

- ◆ *Staff perceive that the scaffolding literacy programme is worthwhile for teachers in terms of:*
 - ◆ *Teachers' thinking about the teaching of literacy for Aboriginal students.*
 - ◆ *Teacher's understanding of more appropriate strategies for teaching literacy to Aboriginal students*
 - ◆ *Teachers' professional development and support systems for the teaching of literacy.*
 - ◆ *Teachers' assessment of students' literacy development*
 - ◆ *Teachers' confidence in teaching literacy to Aboriginal students*
 - ◆ *Teachers' attitudes towards Aboriginal students as successful learners*

From all of the observations made during the evaluation it appears that:

- the Scaffolding Literacy Programme for Indigenous Students is an effective means of improving the literacy skills of those students;
- the students involved in the programme achieve at a much higher level than if they had followed the normal course of events in pursuing literacy skills;
- the professional development provided by the programme team to the teachers involved is detailed, supportive, and has brought about positive changes to their practices, which they believe has brought improvements to their students;
- the programme's directors and staff have total commitment to the programme;
- the programme centre at the University of Canberra maintains detailed records, in the form of test data, student work and video which trace each student's progress;
- the programme contributes positively to the achievement of goals in the National Indigenous Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, namely:
 1. *Achieving attendance*: success in literacy brings a more positive attitude to school.
 2. *Overcoming hearing, health and nutritional problems*: increased literacy can lessen the effect of hearing problems, through better written communication.
 3. *Giving the children pre-school experiences*: the programme has been used successfully in a number of schools at pre-school level.
 4. *Getting good teachers*: teachers are attracted to the success of the programme.
 5. *Using the best teaching methods*: Scaffolding is best practice in this situation.
 6. *Measuring success, achieving accountability*: detailed data and records are maintained.

The success so far is something about which its originators, funding agencies, participant communities, teachers and students have every reason to feel immensely proud. It has worked, it can continue to do so, and it ought to be promoted vigorously.

REFERENCE

Rose, D., Gray, B. & Cowey, W. (1999). 'Scaffolding Reading and Writing for Indigenous Children in School'. In P. Wignell (ed), *Double Power: English Literacy and Indigenous Education*. Melbourne: Language Australia.

Note: The large number of texts used in the Scaffolding Programme and mentioned in the evaluation are not listed as references.

APPENDIX 1 - HOW ONE TEACHER DOES IT

At one school, a teacher described how the Scaffolding Literacy sequence occurs in her multi-level primary grade. Much of her description is fairly standard in terms of the operating procedures promoted in the literature, though there are some variations for local administration.

Book selection:

Older children are shown or books, read first few pages, give basic overview of the story, look at pictures (if any) and then students vote on the book they would like to work on.

Low Order Book Orientation:

Introduce book, read story using pictures, talk about inferred concepts, what is depicted in pictures but not specifically in the text. Art activities, look at other books by the same author.

Scaffolded Conversation:

After a lot of information has been shared, ask children questions about pictures and text. Obviously simplified in the junior primary classes. With older students discuss issues in the text, language choice, writing style and structure.

High Order Book Orientation:

Ask children a lot of questions about the text in order to become very familiar with the text, then look at a small section of the text, underlining key words, phrases etc, where appropriate and focusing on this.

Fluent Scaffolded reading:

Read story to children, where appropriate children read along with the teacher. Children also read texts to the teacher.

Transformations:

Small section of text is written on strips of card board. Usually related to high order book orientation. Children cut chunks of text and or individual words out and ask questions about words, why did they cut this particular word out, why is it important in the text etc. Text can then be manipulated and games played with words. Sections removed to see change of meaning. Grammar is also discussed at this stage.

Scaffolded spelling:

Words are chunked into sound groups / blends and small words. Children use white boards to practice spelling words. Words from the same sound groups can be made. Words are displayed in the classroom.

Scaffolded writing, reconstructed and patterned:

Easy spelling – copying a section of text writing familiar words from memory. Scaffolded writing – simple writing activities using the same style strategy used by an author they have been studying.

Independent reading and writing at this level:

Extended writing using familiar themes or structure to the original text. Often this involves incorporating writing practiced in smaller writing activities.

Begin Scaffolding at a new level:

This occurs when the majority of children are reading at 80 per cent or more and have a good understanding of the text.

Teacher

APPENDIX 2 - CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

As a component of the case study for the Evaluation of the Scaffolding Literacy Programme, the researcher carried out observations of scaffolding lessons conducted by the class teachers. These are briefly described as follows:

Pre-School Class

The number of students present for the lesson was six and the lesson was of about 25 minutes duration. The focus of the lesson was the book *The Little Red Hen*. The sequence of the lesson was as follows:

- Teacher introduced the story and gave description of the book in terms of title, author, pictures and number of pages.
- Teacher read the story focusing the students' attention on the pictures of the book. Recall questions, such as "Who were the friends of the Little Red Hen?" and "What sound does the pig make?" were asked by the teacher to which the students responded.
- Teacher introduced an activity based on the story. A photocopied drawing of the Little Red Hen was shown to the students and placed on a whiteboard. Some pictures of things in the story were drawn on the sheet by the teacher who reinforced what they were. The teacher asked the students what things from the story they could draw. The students were then given a drawing of the Little Red Hen and asked to draw other things in the story.

Most of the students listened attentively to the story while the teacher read it and a few students responded enthusiastically to her questions. A few of the children attempted to say the words of the story as the teacher read the words. Most of the students attempted to draw pictures of things in the story on the activity sheet.

Years 1-3

The number of students present for the lesson was 14 and the lesson was of about 60 minutes duration. The focus of the lesson was the book *The Bear's Lunch* by Pamela Allan. The sequence of the lesson was as follows:

- Teacher gave an explanation of the story in terms of its content.
- Teacher read the story focusing the students' attention on the pictures of the book.
- The teacher asked recall questions to which students responded. Students who gave responses were acknowledged and praised. When the students offered no responses, the teacher would provide information or explanation for the students.
- Teacher explained the focus of the author and the role of the illustrations in the book.
- Teacher focused on the story illustrations and details, for example, a mouse running out of an uprooted tree which the bear is examining.

This sequence of the lesson took 60 minutes and was followed by an activity, which was not observed by the researcher due to the observation of a lesson in another class. During the sequence of the lesson observed in the Years 1-3 class, a range of mishaps occurred. These included the constant collapse of the pages of the story book being read by the teacher. The book was spiral bound and placed on a blackboard for better viewing by the students. This caused some concern for the teacher and a major distraction for the students who began to lose interest in the story and the lesson, and demonstrated this through their behaviour.

Although there was attentive listening and enthusiasm in responding demonstrated by some of the students, this was not the case for other students who exhibited disinterest in the lesson and a lack of response or reluctance to respond to the questions asked by the teacher. During the lesson, an Aboriginal Assistant who was largely responsible for managing the behaviour of the students assisted the teacher.

The focus of the follow up activity was evident from what was written on the blackboard.

| |
|---|
| Wendy Picnic Hungry Woods Eat bear |
|---|

| | |
|------------------|--|
| The Bear's Lunch | |
| 1. | The story is set in the _____ |
| 2. | There was a big black _____ |
| 3. | The children's names were Oliver and _____ |
| 4. | The bear wanted something to _____ |
| 5. | He was very _____ |
| 6. | Oliver and Wendy were having a _____ |

Years 4-6

The number of students present for the lesson was 17 and the lesson was of about 40 minutes duration. The focus of the lesson was *Good Tips for Ghosts* (refer attachments) from the book *Uncanny* by Paul Jenkins. The sequence of the lesson was as follows:

- Teacher put story on overhead projector and encouraged all the students to read selected passages from the story with the teacher.
- Teacher gave explanations of story passages read.
- Teacher asked students for meaning of the words in the story which were written on the whiteboard when the student gave a meaning.
- Teacher asked students to read selected passages of the story and gave explanation of the passage after it was read, and occasionally asked questions to get the students to think about what is happening in the story.
- When the story passages are read, teacher underlined words beginning with “s” such as “scrambling”, “screaming”, and “scrabbling”, and asked students to give their classification eg adjectives.
- Teacher gives examples of words, which are not used by the author.

This segment of the lesson was followed by an activity, which comprised the following:

- All students read the selected passage again.
- Written passage is given to all students.
- Teachers gave an explanation of the author’s intent for the passage.
- Teacher asked questions about the passage to which students responded.
- Teacher asked individual students to underline selected phases of the passage on the overhead, and other students are asked to underline these phases on their copy of the written passage, such as
 - “A little way off”
 - “Behind some old rusting car bodies”
 - “I thought I heard”
 - “Looking in the same direction”
 - “Too terrified”
- Teacher asked student to read the next passage to confirm the phase “too terrified” such as “I wanted to run”, “My legs just wouldn’t work”, and “Mouth to scream”.
- Teacher asked student what was the consequence of the phase “too terrified” such as “Nothing came out”.
- Teacher asked students to look at the way the author has written the story.
- Teacher asked students to read parts of the story written on strips of paper, such as:
 1. “A little way off behind some”
 2. “old rusting car bodies. I”
 3. “thought I heard a noise.”
 4. “Peter was looking in the same”
 5. “direction. I was too terrified”
 6. “to move. I wanted to run”
 7. “but my legs just wouldn’t work>”
 8. “I opened my mouth to”
 9. “scream but nothing came”
 10. “out. Peter stood as”
 11. “if he was bolted to the ground”
- Teacher asked the students to read the strips again with questions such as “Why wouldn’t his legs work?” and “What words are linked together?”

In this lesson, most, but not all, of the students listened attentively and responded with some enthusiasm to the questions asked by the teacher.

♦ *Staff perceive that the Scaffolding Literacy Programme should continue and that improvements could include:*

- ♦ More culturally appropriate Aboriginal stories and texts and more that are appropriate to Nyungar groups.
- ♦ Greater choice of Aboriginal related texts and use of texts by Aboriginal authors.
- ♦ Flexibility to adapt the programme to students’ needs, circumstances and environment.
- ♦ More interest and participation by Aboriginal parents in the programme

The observations of the scaffolding literacy programme lessons and the staff interviews raise issues, which include:

◆ *Real impact on students' attendance at school*

The perception by staff that the programme has a positive impact on the attendance of students at school was not evident on the day of the visit by the researcher. According to the principal 109 students are enrolled in Pre-school to Year 10, and the core attendance is 70-80 students, due to mobility of students and families. According to the class teachers, the total number of enrolled students is 91. On the day of the class observations, the total number of students attending class was 52. This figure is well below the core attendance figure of 70-80 students. No student attendance records were submitted by the staff to substantiate their perceptions that the scaffolding literacy programme has a positive impact on students' regular attendance at school.

◆ *Standards of students' achievement*

The scaffolding literacy programme provides specific assessment tools to measure student achievement in literacy in relation to the processes incorporated in the programme. In terms of comparability of student performance and standards, the assessment of students' achievement in English and other learning areas may also be required according to the relevant education curriculum framework and student outcomes.

◆ *Impact of Cause and Effect*

The scaffolding literacy programme requires intensive professional development and extensive support and assistance for teachers to implement the programme for their students. These strategies generally increase the interest and confidence of teachers who are likely to feel professionally supported in their role in the teaching/learning environment. In turn, the confidence levels of teachers are likely to assist the development of more positive attitudes towards and higher expectations of their students as learners. This is generally the situation when teachers do not feel they have the knowledge and experience to deal with more complex education environments and students such as in Indigenous education. The more confidence and positive attitudes teachers have towards the learning environment and students, the more likely there will be positive responses of Indigenous students to learning which lead to their improved educational outcomes and success. This raises the issue of the real cause of the improved performance of Indigenous students in literacy learning. For instance, is the real cause the scaffolding literacy programme itself or the increased interest and confidence of teachers through professional development and support, and their positive attitudes and higher expectations of the Indigenous students as learners?

APPENDIX 3 – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Australian Council for Educational Research

EVALUATION OF SCAFFOLDING LITERACY PROGRAMME NOVEMBER 2002

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND AREAS OF INTEREST

SECTION 1 - PRINCIPAL

1. *When did the programme start in the school?*
2. *How many students are involved?*
3. *How did you find out about it?*
4. *How long have you been at the school?*
5. *How long have you been involved with the scaffolding programme?*
6. *What sort of professional development did you have?*
7. *Did you receive funding to establish the programme?*
8. *What evidence have you that the programme is a success?*
9. *Have the staffing arrangements been satisfactory?*
10. *How do you choose staff to be involved?*
11. *Does it mean that there is extra work for teachers?*
12. *If there is, how do you overcome this?*
13. *How did you inform the parents that the programme was going to take place in the school?*
14. *Did the introduction of the programme had to be ratified by the school's council?*
15. *The six key elements of the National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy are listed below. If at all, how has the Scaffolding Literacy Programme contributed to each of the elements:*
 - *Achieving attendance.*
 - *Overcoming hearing, health and nutritional problems.*
 - *Giving the children pre-school experiences.*
 - *Getting good teachers.*
 - *Using the best teaching methods.*
 - *Measuring success, achieving accountability.*
16. *What improvements would you suggest for the programme?*
17. *Do you think that the programme should continue? Why?*
18. *What are the alternatives to this programme?*
19. *What difference has scaffolding made in terms of achieving better outcomes in literacy for Indigenous students, over and above those outcomes that would have been achieved through the usual curriculum and teaching methods? That is - What is the added value of Scaffolding?*

SECTION 2 - PARTICIPATING TEACHERS

1. *How many students are in the programme?*
2. *What assistance do you have running the programme?*
3. *Did you volunteer for the programme?*
4. *How long have you been at the school?*
5. *How long have you been involved with the scaffolding programme?*
6. *What sort of professional development did you have?*
7. *Is the professional development ongoing?*
8. *Explain how it works?*
9. *Is there sufficient support (phone, fax, face-to-face, email, internet)?*
10. *Do you find that there is a lot of extra work?*
11. *Is it worth it?*
12. *Look at individual students results, data. Use literacy benchmarking data, data collected by teachers etc.*
13. *What evidence have you that the programme is a success?*
14. *Do parents become involved in the process?*
15. *How were parents informed about the programme?*
16. *Which Year levels are involved?*
17. *What is the age of the students?*
18. *How does a student become involved in the programme?*
19. *Is it compulsory for all students to participate?*
20. *If NO, how are students selected to participate?*
21. *Have you noticed a difference in students' attitudes to literacy since students started the programme?*
22. *How long is it before you notice a change in students attitudes toward literacy once they start the programme?*
23. *How long is it before you notice a change in students literacy development once they start the programme?*
24. *Provide examples of how students attitudes to school have changed since starting the Scaffolding Literacy programme? i.e increased confidence to read aloud in class, participation in class discussion about a book class might be reading. Parents show increased interest in what their child is reading and writing.*
25. *How do you choose texts for the students?*

26. *Do the students suggest texts to use?*
27. *Is it difficult to get students to suggest texts?*
28. *Have they been happy with the choice of texts?*
29. *What are some of the texts that you have had success with?*
30. *Give examples of how the following scaffolding sequence works with particular students:*
 - *Book selection*
 - *Low Order Book Orientation*
 - *Scaffolded Conversation*
 - *High Order Book Orientation*
 - *Fluent Scaffolded reading*
 - *Transformations*
 - *Scaffolded spelling*
 - *Scaffolded writing, reconstructed and patterned*
 - *Independent reading and writing at this level*
 - *Begin scaffolding at a new level*
31. *How do you know the children understand what they are to doing?*
32. *How do you know the children's attention is focused on what the teacher wants them to learn?*
33. *Do the children feel in control? (partially or completely)*
34. *Are the children are enthusiastic and keep working?*
35. *Do you think that the children are proud of the outcomes achieved? The six key elements of the National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy are listed below. If at all, how has the Scaffolding Literacy Programme contributed to each of the elements:*
 - *Achieving attendance.*
 - *Overcoming hearing, health and nutritional problems.*
 - *Giving the children pre-school experiences.*
 - *Getting good teachers.*
 - *Using the best teaching methods.*
 - *Measuring success, achieving accountability.*
37. *What improvements would you suggest for the programme?*
38. *Do you think that the programme should continue? Why?*
39. *What are the alternatives to this programme?*
40. *What difference has scaffolding made in terms of achieving better outcomes in literacy for Indigenous students, over and above those outcomes that would have been achieved through the usual curriculum and teaching methods? That is - What is the added value of Scaffolding?*