

**An Evaluation of the
Getting it Right: Literacy and Numeracy Strategy in Western
Australian Schools**

Final Report

Volume 2

***Getting it Right* in Context**

School case studies

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About this report

This evaluation report is presented in two volumes.

Volume 1, *Evaluation of the Getting it Right-Literacy and Numeracy Strategy* is focused mainly on the survey component of the evaluation. The complete data set from the surveys undertaken in 2003 and 2004 is analysed, and conclusions drawn from these analyses. The concluding sections draw on the survey data, some research literature and the illustrative case studies to report on the effectiveness of the *Getting it Right-Literacy and Numeracy Strategy* as a strategy for professional development, and as a strategy for change.

Volume 2, *Getting it Right in Context*, presents the findings from the illustrative case studies. Twenty schools from across Western Australia were selected for the case studies, in consultation with the Department of Education. *Getting it Right* literacy Specialist Teachers had been appointed to ten of these schools, and *Getting it Right* numeracy Specialist Teachers had been appointed to another ten of the selected schools. Researchers visited these schools on three occasions over the two years. The reports of the school case studies provide detailed accounts of the implementation of *Getting it Right* in the school context.

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INTRODUCTION: THE *GETTING IT RIGHT* LITERACY AND NUMERACY STRATEGY IN SCHOOLS

The first volume of the report of the ACER evaluation of the *Getting it Right*-Literacy and Numeracy Strategy focused mainly on findings from the surveys of principals, Specialist Teachers and classroom teachers undertaken in 2003 and 2004. The second volume of the evaluation report provides more finely grained accounts of *Getting it Right* derived from case studies undertaken in twenty schools.

The case studies provided opportunities for the evaluation team to gather first-hand data about changes in teaching practices in literacy and numeracy in the context of the schools in which the Specialist Teachers were working. While the data collected from interviews and observations related to all of the evaluation questions, the case studies specifically addressed the first four evaluation questions, all of which concern the impact of the *Getting it Right*-Literacy and Numeracy Strategy on teaching and assessment practices:

1. What impact has *Getting it Right* had upon understandings, confidence and teaching skills of Specialist Teachers and their colleagues?
2. What impact has *Getting it Right* had upon understandings among Specialist Teachers and their school colleagues of *Curriculum Framework* outcomes, especially those set out in the mathematics and English learning areas?
3. What impact has *Getting it Right* had upon the capacity of teachers to select, apply and develop diagnostic, formative and summative student assessment strategies and instruments?
4. To what extent has student performance data relating to literacy and numeracy been used to inform planning for improvements at individual, classroom and whole school levels?

Gathering data about changes in practice

A key requirement of the project specification was the inclusion in the evaluation of illustrative case studies that represented the range of contexts, experiences and impact of the GiR-LNS Specialist Teachers on the pedagogy of teacher colleagues in participating schools.

Meeting this requirement involved the collection of first hand data about changes in practice, particularly for Specialist Teachers and the colleagues with whom they worked. The evaluation plan involved the selection of a sample of Specialist Teachers and their colleagues in order to track the impact of the program on their understandings, confidence and teaching skills over two years. Roughly equal numbers of teachers from each of the 2002/3 and 2003/4 cohorts were selected. Tracking was conducted by means of in-depth interviewing in schools and structured observations of classrooms on three occasions over 2003 and 2004.

The GiR-LNS strategy was intended to produce a diversity of outcomes in schools. The purpose of the illustrative case studies was to gather data about impact at the wider school and community level. These school case studies were able to draw on data gathered by means of structured interviews, observations and surveys. The evaluation plan negotiated with the GiR-

LNS management team included provision for observations and interviews in twenty schools, gathering data over the 2003 to 2004 period, and between ten and twelve case studies of schools. Four experienced fieldworkers conducted the case studies.

Twenty case studies

At the commencement of the evaluation process, twenty schools were selected for the case studies, in consultation with the *Getting it Right* management team. Ten schools were selected from the first cohort (those schools that commenced *Getting it Right* in 2003) and ten schools from the second cohort (those schools that commenced *Getting it Right* in 2004). Five schools in each cohort had literacy Specialist Teachers, and five had numeracy Specialist Teachers. Urban and rural schools and two remote schools were included in the sample. The evaluation plan included provision for the evaluation team to make three visits to each school during 2003-2004. Two members of the evaluation team took responsibility for visiting the schools with literacy Specialist Teachers, and two for the numeracy Specialist Teachers.

In August 2003, the evaluation team wrote to these schools, informing them about what would be involved in the case studies. A copy of a letter from the Director of Curriculum, Department of Education and Training, granting permission for ACER to conduct research in Western Australian schools for the purposes of the evaluation, was sent to each school. All schools in the *Getting it Right* Strategy had already been contacted by the *Getting it Right* team from the Department of Education and Training regarding the evaluation, and ACER's role in this evaluation.

School visits

Schools were contacted prior to each visit, and were asked to indicate dates that were convenient for members of the evaluation team to visit, taking account of factors such as the timetables of part-time Specialist Teachers, the availability of key personnel for interviews, and other school activities. The first round of visits took place between September and November, 2003. The evaluators visited the schools again in June 2004, and the third and final visits were made in November 2004. In order to maintain continuity the same member of the evaluation team visited specific schools each time.

Two of the twenty schools involved were not visited in November 2004. One school that had commenced with *Getting it Right* in 2003 had been unable to appoint a replacement numeracy Specialist Teacher for 2004. The other school had completed two years work with a literacy Specialist Teacher, but in 2004 had appointed a numeracy Specialist Teacher. Both of these schools were visited in the second round of visits, and the reasons for and implications of the changes were discussed.

Interviews

During each visit, the major focus of discussions with the Specialist Teachers, and other school personnel was on changes in literacy and numeracy teaching and learning in the school that had occurred as a result of the work of the *Getting it Right* Specialist Teacher with classroom colleagues. The interviews probed the ways in which *Getting it Right* had enhanced learning opportunities for students, and improved student achievement in literacy and numeracy.

A schedule of focused interview questions was developed for the interviews with principals, Specialist Teachers, and the classroom teachers who had worked collaboratively with the Specialist Teacher. (These interview schedules can be seen at Appendix 1.) These schedules were used by all members of the evaluation team, to ensure consistency of the focus in all interviews.

The interview schedules were designed to gather information relevant to the key evaluation questions, taking account of the particular perspective of the interviewee. For example, the principal was a key informant on target setting, and school plans for sustaining the work of *Getting it Right* into the future, while the classroom teachers and Specialist Teachers were best able to provide information on teaching practices, and the ways in which they engaged in collaborative planning. The interviews with Specialist Teachers provided an opportunity for them to reflect on their work, to show the records collected over time, and to provide insights into changes in their colleagues' practice over time, and into her own interactions with these teachers.

Many practical issues were raised in the interviews: finding time for collaborative planning; the amount of time available for the Specialist Teacher to work in classrooms; approaches to collaborative planning; meeting the needs of students; the relationship between the *Getting it Right* program and school policies; building teachers' professional knowledge; working with reluctant teachers or teachers who did not fully understand the nature of the *Getting it Right* role. The interviews often explored the ways in which *Getting it Right* was influencing teachers' content knowledge of literacy and numeracy, and their pedagogical content knowledge about effective ways of teaching literacy and numeracy.

At the time of the third round of visits the 2004 WALNA results had just arrived in schools, and a number of principals talked about these results in relation to the impact of *Getting it Right*. The interviews with principals also focused on the interactions between the Specialist Teachers and the classroom teachers with whom they worked. In a number of cases, the work of the *Getting it Right* Specialist Teacher had made an impact on the whole staff, and plans were being made to extend the concept of an expert teacher working in classrooms with colleagues to the upper grades. The interviews with principals also focused on the extent to which *Getting it Right* had become integrated with school policy.

Classroom observations

During the one-day visits, where possible, the researcher observed one or two classes where the Specialist Teacher and the classroom teacher had worked together to plan the activities, and jointly taught the lesson. Where the lessons were taught only by the classroom teacher, they had been planned collaboratively. Relevant documentation, such as lesson plans and student work samples were made available. Schools were asked to pre-arrange an agenda for the interviews and observations, in order to maximise the use of the available time.

Observations of classes where the Specialist Teacher worked in collaboration with the classroom teacher were a most valuable aspect of the visits. In some cases the evaluators were taken on a 'tour' of classrooms from Pre-Primary to Year 3 and this helped to establish an understanding of the physical layout of classrooms, resources, and general approaches to literacy or numeracy teaching in the school. A brief discussion took place with the Specialist Teacher and classroom teacher before the observed lesson, and a longer discussion after the lesson. In these discussions the classroom teacher described how the lesson had been

developed in collaboration with the Specialist Teacher, how the teaching strategies had been selected to meet particular needs, and the extent to which the teaching and learning activities in the lesson represented a considerable change in the teacher's practice.

The visits to schools provided a strong set of qualitative data for the evaluation. The extensive body of notes and tape recordings collected provided the basis for a set of detailed and comprehensive case studies. The evaluation team was very appreciative of the cooperation and support of the schools.

Section 1 of this volume presents a detailed account of the cross-case analyses of the numeracy case studies. In Section 2, six literacy case studies are presented in the form of extended narratives, highlighting the considerable variation of the implementation of the *Getting it Right* initiative in schools, and the impact of different school contexts. Section 3 presents an analysis of *Getting it Right* as a strategy for improving literacy and numeracy learning, and offers some conclusions drawn from the case studies.

SECTION 1

GETTING IT RIGHT NUMERACY CASE STUDIES

CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

GETTING IT RIGHT NUMERACY CASE STUDIES CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

This part of the report focuses on the numeracy schools selected as case studies for the evaluation. There are three sections. The first section looks at the ways in which the *Getting it Right* strategy was implemented in schools – what it looked like in practice. The second section then describes the impact of the strategy on the teachers, the Specialist Teachers, the students and the schools. Importantly it attempts to answer two key questions. Has there been any change to teacher practice? If so, what has changed? In the third section we identify some factors that seemed to explain why *Getting it Right* was implemented in most schools in ways that made a difference to teachers’ practice. We also go on to discuss some factors that may have moderated the impact of the strategy in some schools.

1.0 Patterns and variations in approach to *Getting it Right*

Although the *Getting it Right* numeracy strategy included a clear set of components, variations were apparent in its implementation. This is a common finding in the research on educational reform programs - implementation is a very active process. Local school contexts often modify reforms as much, if not more, than the reforms modify schools. This was certainly true once more in the case of *Getting it Right*.

1.1 Types of school

Ten ‘numeracy’ schools were involved in the case study component of the evaluation. Eight of the schools had three separate one-day school visits by the ACER evaluation team spanning an eighteen-month period. One school had two school visits and one school only one.

The case study schools varied according to location (city, regional, rural and remote areas) and school population size. All were included in the *Getting it Right* strategy because of data about student achievement in numeracy and all were located in lower socio-economic communities.

1.2 The *Getting it Right* numeracy strategy in schools

There was a typical pattern of operation in *Getting it Right* numeracy schools where Specialist Teachers worked shoulder to shoulder with colleagues. The Specialist Teacher and the teacher would have a planning session once a week (from 30 – 60 minutes). This planning session often began with an analysis of student work gathered from the previous week’s activities. This analysis would identify future learning needs and lead to a selection of suitable classroom activities to promote that learning. The Specialist Teacher and the classroom teacher would then teach together the lesson they had planned (usually about 50 minutes). The Specialist Teacher would do this each week with a number of early childhood teachers in the school. In most schools they taught together twice a week. All schools used this model though there were small variations in the model both within and between schools.

1.2.1 Between schools

There was variation in the fraction of a Specialist Teacher allocated to a school. This impacted on the number of teachers the Specialist Teacher could work with in any one week. Some schools tried to maximize this number by reducing the collaborative planning and teaching time to a minimum, some by encouraging the Specialist Teacher to work with groups

of teachers who already collaborated in some way around their year groupings or location and yet others used a roster of some sort.

There was some variation in how the Specialist Teacher worked in schools. For example, a Specialist Teacher was shared between two schools. They each had the Specialist Teacher for one day per week for five weeks of each term. Another school of similar size in another district was allocated a half-time Specialist Teacher for the entire two years.

Another difference between schools was whether the school resourced the planning time using other school funds, or whether planning was held during a teacher's own Duties Other than Teaching Time (DOTT).

1.2.2 Over time (within and across schools)

Schools varied in the way they implemented the *Getting it Right* strategy over time. Some explicitly sought extra resources in order to fund more Specialist Teacher time. For example, MSPS ended up with three full time Specialist Teachers - one paid by the school and two allocated by the district. They had one full-time Specialist Teacher for the first two years of the program.

Schools varied in their intent to get all teachers in the school involved. For example, one school used a semester rotation in order that all teachers in the school were involved in any one year. Others kept their focus on the early years.

Some moved to collaborative planning sessions where there were teachers working with 'same year' groups. Even within schools this varied, for example, in another school, where some teachers still chose to work individually with the Specialist Teacher in planning.

1.3 The Role of the Specialist Teacher

Perceptions of the role of the Specialist Teacher held by those in the central office responsible for creating *Getting it Right*, the Specialist Teachers themselves and the teachers who worked with them were aligned. It was apparent in every school that the Specialist Teacher's key purpose was to teach teachers and that this was to be achieved by working with the teachers to help them plan, diagnose student learning and to work with them in the classroom.

Specialist Teachers were consistently clear in their minds that they were trying to help teachers learn the mathematics, learn the key mathematical understandings that students need to learn, learn more about how students learn mathematics, learn more about how to find out what students know and have trouble with, and to use this diagnostic information to select activities to use with the students and to expand the strategies teachers could use with students in the classroom, including strategies for assessment for learning.

More specifically Specialist Teachers described their role as involving:

- Familiarizing teachers with the First Steps in Mathematics (First Steps) materials
- Working with the teachers to diagnose student learning in relation to the key understandings
- Providing diagnostic tasks for this purpose and working with the teachers (or sometimes for the teachers) in analysing and categorizing how students went
- Planning with the teachers to select appropriate activities to help move all students 'along'

- Teaching with the teachers in their classrooms.
- Finding, creating and providing resources for the teachers to use in the classroom.

Teachers also described what Specialist Teachers did with them in similar terms. They often described the Specialist Teachers as providing professional development that was ongoing and persistent. ‘This is like having PD week in and week out all year’. They saw the Specialist Teachers as co-workers in the classroom, in planning, in assessment and reporting. They also described the Specialist Teachers as information brokers, ‘excellent at keeping me informed’, resource providers and as leaders in mathematics/numeracy in the school.

The Specialist Teachers in our case study schools often had other leadership roles in the school. Three were given the role of Deputy Principal in an acting capacity when it became available. Some were given authority and responsibility for numeracy/mathematics in the school. This included numeracy development planning, assessment policy and moderation strategies, whole staff numeracy professional development, data collection and data analysis. Most teachers saw this as a means of providing the Specialist Teacher with greater authority and credibility in the school. Formal leadership roles, however, could also cut into the time and energy Specialist Teachers had available to work with teachers. One Specialist Teacher refused the position of Deputy Principal while he was working as the Specialist Teacher. The schools that asked the Specialist Teacher to take on other leadership roles did not use the *Getting it Right* budget for that work.

1.4 Support for the role of the *Getting it Right* Specialist Teacher within the school

Every Specialist Teacher described the support they got from their school as sufficient. All the Specialist Teachers were supported to the extent that they were given a great deal of independence and authority to make decisions related to their work. They were all given an appropriate space to work and sufficient resources to do the work.

Many Specialist Teachers were given extra leadership roles and ‘whole school’ responsibilities related to school numeracy. This was often done as a ‘common sense’ act. That is, the person who knew the most about the area would best manage these tasks. But they were also given these responsibilities as a way of acknowledging the importance of numeracy, the significance of the Specialist Teacher role and a way of building the credibility and importance of the position. This involved tasks like coordinating the development of the school numeracy plan, the school numeracy moderation tasks, and the school’s participation in the system wide professional development in mathematics. In three cases the Specialist Teacher was given the DP position when it became available on acting basis.

In some schools, the administration supported the Specialist Teachers in their second and third years by increasing Specialist Teacher time (out of school funds), finding another role to complement their Specialist Teacher role and in some cases making the position full time. For example, at two schools the Specialist Teacher was working at two sites. Both schools acted to ensure that the Specialist Teacher in the second year worked solely at their school.

Principals in some schools developed a plan for the Specialist Teacher to work with more of the teachers in the school. In one they set up a process where the Specialist Teacher worked semester about with the junior years and the middle and upper years. It was felt that working

with all teachers would add to the Specialist Teacher’s credibility. Everyone acknowledged that this would compromise the benefits of working ‘in depth’ with fewer teachers over time.

In some cases the school also built the (funded) time for the planning sessions between the Specialist Teacher and the teachers into the school day. It was not taken out of the teachers’ DOTT time. For example, they used Commonwealth Literacy and Numeracy Program money. The teachers said this helped their attitude to the work.

1.5 Planning

Each teacher involved in the *Getting it Right* program had a weekly 30 to 45 minute planning session with the Specialist Teacher. This time was used for a range of connected and overlapping tasks. One Specialist Teacher developed a Learning, Teaching and Assessment Cycle that she used with the teachers to guide their planning sessions. Each cycle started with a Diagnostic Task, based on the key understandings from the area of mathematics to be taught. Student work on the task would be sorted on the evidence of understanding they showed. This would often involve the teacher and the Specialist Teacher in further discussion about the meaning of the key understandings, the phases of development, and the student outcomes in mathematics. The teacher and the Specialist Teacher would then discuss possible ways of dealing with the student responses. This led to them planning a focus for the next lesson (or series of lessons), the focus questions they would use to draw out student understanding, a series of learning activities along with how they would work together during those lessons, identifying the resources they would need and how they would monitor student learning along the way. At the conclusion of the series of activities the teachers would assess student progress, review their own strategies to judge what worked and what had not, and together decide to move on or what else they needed to do to support the student learning.

Most used (or modified and developed) a planning sheet for their lessons (based on a framework supplied by the *Getting it Right* central team) which used the following headings: Key understandings, Mathematical focus, Activities, Focus questions, and Class Structure.

XPS Planning Session

This is a description of a typical planning session between a Year 2 teacher and the Specialist Teacher (0.5), who is also DP in the school (0.5). It is an old style ‘corridor’ school and they are meeting in one of the vacant classrooms that has become a storage room.

There is a pile of students’ work from the present session between them. The students had been doing story problems and (Specialist Teacher) places the teacher in the position of comparing each student’s work with a rubric from the Numeracy Net. “It’s not easy to relate the students’ work to these statements – most seem to be at the early partitioning phase, or the pre-partitioning phase¹”. The teacher obviously knows each student very well. She points out, “You can tell when they have sat together and copied each other’s work.” After sorting students’ into several levels the Specialist Teacher says, “I think we need this group to do more work on and you can take that group on The students can work on their own number stories, e.g. multiplication stories – 9 cats catch 6 mice each”. The plan for the next lesson falls into place quickly.

¹ Known as the Quantifying Phase in the First Steps Materials.

These are the types of activities that the teachers and the Specialist Teacher would inevitably typically be involved in during their planning sessions. Much of the planning was week to week. As a consequence, much of the planning time was also spent exploring and using the First Steps materials and booklets.

Over time, the teachers became more familiar with the process, the approach and the materials and hence they became more confident in this planning process and assumed more of the initiative. Given the links that are made to the outcome statements within the First Steps materials, the teachers reported that the planning sessions helped their understanding of the mathematics outcome statements levels significantly.

1.6 Working in the classroom

In addition to the weekly planning session, the Specialist Teacher would typically work side by side with the teacher in the classroom twice a week. The ‘shoulder to shoulder’ concept manifested itself in a variety of forms. Where the teacher was new to the school and/or the *Getting it Right* approach, the Specialist Teacher would take the lead role in the classroom, often modelling the lesson. The class teacher would observe both what the Specialist Teacher was doing and the students.

The teachers who the Specialist Teacher had worked with over the three years were much more independent and worked with the Specialist Teacher in a more collaborative way.

We have grouped the students this year – I take one and the Specialist Teacher takes the other. We do the same focus; we often do the same activity but tailor it to the group. We do get together after school with a how are you going, we always start the session together and often finish together. And occasionally we do an activity together, we also move around a lot during the lesson, talk to each other, for example, ‘come and see this’.

Coming into the room there is a whole class group on the floor. The Specialist Teacher goes first and reads a story book on the “Centipede with 100 Feet”. She reads the story with the group, the story is about the centipede having a sore foot and needing new shoes. As she reads, the Specialist Teacher asks questions: “Fifty left feet, how many right?” She talks about the meaning of Centipede (and others) as she goes through the story. Over the group the Specialist Teacher talks to the teacher, “I will leave the book with you there is some good stuff in there to keep working on.”

Now the class makes three groups to talk about 100. Each group has a different activity. One group has bundles of pop sticks that they use to make 100 by throwing two dice, adding the numbers, and gathering that number of pop sticks. They keep going until they have 100. The group, then look at the different number sentences that they have created to make up 100. Group 2 is working with the Specialist Teacher on a 100 number square, counting by 10 using calculators, working with partners and looking for number patterns. Group 3 works with a teacher aide and plays a card game.

It was noticeable during our visits to schools that, as *Getting it Right* lessons began, there was evidence of:

- A heightened sense of interest, focus and activity in the room
- A range of activities often practical in nature (often supported by a teacher aide)

- Considerable interaction between teacher and students...a lot of talking by everyone.
- Many questions from teachers seeking what the students were thinking and getting them to say what was ‘in their brain’.
- A lot of walking around and monitoring of student learning (observational grids)
- Debriefing key points of the lesson.
- Students working in smaller groups using teacher, Specialist Teacher and other teaching aides where available often using a rotation of activities.
- Frequent use of activities that were taken from or derivatives of the suggested activities in the First Steps materials.

The teachers and the Specialist Teacher would talk a lot in their weekly planning sessions about the lessons they taught together – what worked, what the students were learning and how well the students engaged with the tasks. Much of this appeared to be ‘incidental’. There was no evidence of a more formal approach to giving and getting explicit feedback on each other’s teaching. Teachers typically (not all) felt uncomfortable at first having someone else in their room teaching with them but all reported to valuing it a lot in the end.

One Principal, while committed and impressed with the process, was also conscious of how much teaching was being done by the Specialist Teacher in the classroom. ‘There is a risk that the Specialist Teacher could take over. I have asked her to monitor how much she does and how much her teacher does.’ We saw a wide range of ways in which Specialist Teachers and teachers worked ‘shoulder to shoulder’ with teachers in classrooms. At one extreme, classroom teachers can allow Specialist Teachers to take over, and be willing accomplices in this process, as they are happy to step into the background when it comes to maths. At another extreme, Specialist Teachers can be held at bay by teachers unused to opening up their practice. They may even split the class and teach in separate spaces. These extremes were rare, but they serve to remind us that it can be a delicate relationship. The *Getting it Right* strategy represented a fundamental break in the traditional ways teachers related to each other, but it was an innovation that most teachers accepted or coped with readily.

The beginning of the lesson is conducted by a student teacher with other student teachers along the wall.

Children are on the mat, teacher calls the roll while children use a furry pointer, pointing to the names of the students as they are called out. The teacher then asks a student to count the number of students in the class. The boy counts the class, tapping each kid on the head with the pointer, as they count they get to 16 which is the whole class number. Another boy goes around and taps the boys and asks them to lie down as he taps them and counts them aloud. Then a girl goes around and does the same thing. Then the teacher says close your eyes listen to me clap, and tell me how many times I clap. She does this in varying ways over a number of times.

Specialist Teacher takes over with a story on the mat, called “Bang”. First of all she asks questions about last time she read the story, discussing with them what was happening, and that it was a “taking away” story. She points to the balloon drawings on the pin up board. How many? Who wants to tell me how many? How will you do it? Count. How many are there? 10. If you start somewhere else how many are there? Um, 10. Read the story. One balloon gets burst in the story; someone takes the balloon off the board. How many left? 9. So on the whiteboard the teacher writes 10 → 9. Who wants to check, they count the 9.

Someone started somewhere else, how many would there be? 9. Still 9. The class teacher is sitting writing anecdotal notes while the Specialist Teacher is working. The kids who take the balloon off the pin up board also get to write the number on the board. And they keep going. Each time there is a balloon burst in the story, a child gets up and takes a balloon off the board and goes and writes down how many are left. How many balloons did we start with? 10. How many left? 1. How many did we lose? 9. How did you know that? One girl 'cos in my head I put 10 balloons and I rubbed one out and then there was 9'. The number sentence $10 - 1 = 9$ is written on the board. Can someone think of another one? No they couldn't.

The children are then put in groups. One group is with a teacher aide counting to 100's chart. The students are writing over the number, they cut it out and paste it on another chart.

One student teacher is with a group of kids playing the rocket game. Shuffling cards and counting, kids go up or down, depending if it is add 4 or take 2. As they turn over a card that says +4 they go up the rocket by 4, if they turn over a card that says -2 they go down the rocket by 2.

Group 3 is also with a student playing a rocket game and there is a 4th group with the Specialist Teacher. They are using calculators and have various containers with quite a few items, lots of beans in one box, lots of coloured sticks in another box, lots of little bears in another box and they have to use skip counting, writing on number scroll, kids working in pairs to count how many there are in the box.

While this group activity is going on the class teacher is doing one-to-one work with her students with a diagnostic task.

1.7 Assessment and target setting

1.7.1 Assessment in class

In all *Getting it Right* schools, Specialist Teachers and teachers used diagnostic tasks prior to a unit of work to help understand what students might already know, what they did not understand and why they did not understand it. These tasks were not used often, but generally given at the beginning of a new section of work. This information was used to inform planning for teaching the Key Understanding(s). Later, some Specialist Teachers used the diagnostic task again to make observations about student improvement. Many were using these as work samples in student portfolios for reporting to parents.

Student in-class work – whether written, in action or oral – was used more frequently than diagnostic tasks and looked at closely to provide the teachers with evidence of student learning. This information was also used more often to inform teacher planning of 'what next'. In a number of schools, observation grids have been developed by the Specialist Teacher around the key understandings and outcome statements to assist the teachers do this work.

'(I'm) probably more aware of children who are working with the whole group, kids talking a lot more, more explanations. One thing has changed - children explain what they are doing orally. Can be time consuming but sometimes they don't have the language to explain.' (Teacher)

Teachers talked about how they paid more attention in the creation of the assessment tasks to ensure they were assessing what they wanted to assess. They were paying more attention to learning of individual students, as well as the class-as-a-whole.

The Numeracy Net was used in some schools as a way of recording student achievement and student progress. The Numeracy Net is a summarized description of the key numeracy checkpoints for each strand of the mathematics curriculum. Alongside each checkpoint is a description of the behaviours and understandings a student may demonstrate if they know or understand the mathematics it describes. Another column outlines the diagnostic and planning links to other curriculum documents provided by the Department of Education and Training and that are contained in the First Steps materials. Student achievement can be recorded in detail on the basis of one child per strand or in summary form as a class profile. The Net was a new tool to the teachers and not all teachers were initially comfortable with using it. However, a number commented on its usefulness both in recording student achievement and in helping them come to grips with the levels and outcomes in mathematics. Teachers also constructed their own level checklists based on the Outcomes and Standards Framework as their way of recording student achievement of the outcomes.

Some Specialist Teachers and teachers also used the Diagnostic Map provided in the First Steps materials. The Diagnostic Map describes characteristic phases in the development of students thinking about the major mathematical concepts of each set of outcomes. The diagnostic map was often visible in planning meetings between Specialist Teachers and teachers. A number of Specialist Teachers were much slower to both introduce this to the teachers and use it. A few replicated versions of it as charts on their wall to map student progress.

1.7.2 School Assessment

Some schools used their completed Numeracy Nets² for each class as a tool for the whole school to monitor and review student achievement in mathematics. In these schools, the Specialist Teacher worked with each teacher to help them use the Numeracy Net and then kept them as a record of student progress across the school.

In all schools, teacher collaborative planning time (in addition to the *Getting it Right* program) frequently focused on the development, application and assessment of moderated tasks in mathematics across the school. Teachers agreed to give the same assessment task, student samples were then compared to develop shared understandings of the levels of student achievement and student results were recorded to provide a snapshot of student achievement across the school, a phase of learning or a year group. In 2004, the Year 3 teachers of all schools were involved in system wide moderation activities.

1.7.3 Setting targets

At the first workshop that Principals and Specialist Teachers attend, they are told that *Getting it Right* is a data-driven initiative and that they will be required to make systematic use of data in their own schools and classes to inform decisions. They are required to set a challenging yet realistic school improvement target for numeracy and to track and report progress towards that target. Principals are required to gain endorsement of the target from his/her District

² More recently the Outcomes and Standards Framework has become the basis of school monitoring and assessment.

Director. Progress towards school improvement targets is then reported through normal quality assurance processes to the District Directors. The idea of setting targets for improvement of numeracy outcomes for students was new to everyone at all the case study schools. While acknowledged as something they would need to do, many initially postponed setting targets while they became more familiar with *Getting it Right*. The central team provided support for those in schools setting targets and this included allowing people time to collect data and consider how best to quantify the improvement they were seeking.

Initially teachers (as distinct from Principals and Specialist Teachers) did not know how to respond when asked about ‘setting targets’ in interviews. However there was some acknowledgement by teachers mid-way through the following year that setting targets was an activity being discussed in the school.

Some got clearer about their targets over time (where the Specialist Teacher remained at the location), but where there were changes to the Specialist Teacher they kept re-visiting the targets issues. This was also the case in schools with new Principals. Even where targets were tentatively put in place they were changed as the Specialist Teacher and staff developed a stronger sense of what was a high but achievable expectation, as they became more familiar with the outcomes and ways of judging and recording what constitutes achievement at different levels and as they developed more comprehensive records of student achievement.

In some schools, the transience of students made target setting a vexed issue.

Example School

For example, in the second year of this evaluation over 50% of the Year 1 students were new to the school. In the Year 2 group only 3 out of the 14 students were in the Year 1 group for all of the previous year. In Year 3 there were 6 new students and 5 had left.

All schools were very interested in their Year 3 WALNA results in 2004. Some of the students in Year 3 had been in a *Getting it Right* class for three years so the school leaders felt it would give them some useful feedback on progress. During our third visit to schools the WALNA results had just been released. At that stage only the Specialist Teachers, and Principals had begun to analyse this data but initial responses by them were very positive. For them the results showed improvement on previous Year 3 WALNA results. They were attributing these stronger results to the *Getting it Right* program.

2.0 Overall impact of the *Getting it Right* strategy

2.1 Some general comments about implementation of the *Getting it Right* strategy

All the case study schools had put in place the key aspects of the *Getting it Right* strategy. The targeted teachers in the school met weekly with the Specialist Teacher for at least 30 minutes. These meetings typically included: the Specialist Teacher showing and explaining the First Steps materials and processes; choosing a key understanding to focus on, looking through the student work from a Diagnostic Task and making judgements about student learning related to the key understanding (s), planning teaching strategies mostly selecting them from First Steps materials, discussing with each other the impact and effectiveness of previous lesson(s) and, as a consequence, deciding together what might need to be taught next. The Specialist Teacher would likely be leading such discussions.

Student achievement and progress was monitored over time. For most this meant learning to use assessment tools such as the Numeracy Net or the Mathematics Outcome level statements. This information was then also used to make decisions about the mathematics program for students.

The targeted teachers also taught with the Specialist Teacher at least twice per week for around 45 minutes each time. In the classroom we expected to see, and did see, two teachers operating in the class (physical space) at the same time. Sometimes with the Specialist Teacher working with whole class and the teacher supporting, sometimes the teacher working with whole class and the Specialist Teacher supporting, sometimes just working together while the students worked, sometimes with the class working in small groups and each taking responsibility for a group (along with any teacher aides also working in the room).

We saw teachers using a range of teaching strategies with the following key elements. It was common, for example, where the teacher was in their first year of the *Getting it Right* strategy, to see the Specialist Teacher demonstrating these methods more confidently and more often than the teacher. Students would often be asked by their teachers to explain their thinking (e.g. tell me how you did that, tell me why you did that, tell me what is in your brain) rather than be told they were right or wrong. Students would be often asked or required to demonstrate their learning in different contexts and using a range of different representations (e.g. using drawing, using symbols, using materials and verbally). Teachers would use students' own experiences to find examples of what they were talking about (e.g. find numbers in everyday life). Students would be asked to demonstrate new understandings a number of times over time and in different ways.

Clearly the strategy also had an impact on the Specialist Teacher. It was common for the Specialist Teacher to spend time thinking about how they would pass on their new knowledge picked up from their own training and how they would implement the teaching strategies in the classroom. They all had processes in place to ensure the planning and teaching with teachers took place week in and week out. Many spent a good deal of time looking for ways to record and monitor student performance data.

Notes from a Specialist Teacher

Changes in the way I organize my time have been happening throughout the year as I saw better ways of meeting needs, or as needs changed; for example, the way that I worked changed every term as the needs and maths awareness of teacher changed.

...

I have discovered during the collaborative time in Term 4 that before meetings with teachers it is a good idea to go through the Key understandings that we will discuss and make notes so that what I am trying to pass on is really clear in my head.

...

After collaborating I write a brief summary of what we discussed so that I can refresh my memory before our next session. ...I give the teacher a copy of the record of the meeting. This ensures that each meeting is focused and time is not wasted and that things get followed up on and not forgotten.

...

While teachers have used most of the diagnostic tasks, they haven't taken ownership of them and used them independently of me. It would be good to see them do this next year.

2.1.1 Initial impact on all...

In our first visits to schools, teachers indicated that their first experience with the *Getting it Right* process, ideas and materials had had a memorable impact. They learned quite quickly that there was much more to the teaching and learning of mathematics than they had previously understood. In the words of one teacher ‘I have been a bit superficial in the past in maths. I get at the thinking behind it now.’ And another ‘If you had asked me (before I started) I would have said I thought that I knew (about how to teach mathematics), but this has opened me up to subtleties and nuances about students’ understanding in mathematics’. Some talked about how changing their practice was difficult at first. ‘Letting go of what I’ve done in the past. (I have) always done maths in a certain way’.

‘New this year (to *Getting it Right*), a bit of a learning curve for me as I’m set in my ways, go with what you know. Made me re-assess the way I teach as well, it hasn’t been easy...it is almost like being in college again learning something different. I am still learning and re-learning...it has given me another angle and different strategies to tap into kids in different ways but there is a lot to go for me.’

These comments are typical of the teachers we talked to even those who were hesitant, suspicious or just unknowing of why they were involved in this process. ‘Initially (I thought) why have I been picked? I am over that now’.

Many teachers talked of their long history of a ‘hatred’ of mathematics, a sense of failure in mathematics, ‘I was hopeless’, and a lack of confidence in doing and teaching mathematics. ‘It was a difficult change to make - admitting flaws in what I was previously doing. I’m now going to have a closer look’. Many talked like this. Another said it was, ‘an awakening for me...a huge learning curve.’ Some noted the areas they had started to change ‘I find it difficult. It’s not the way we have done maths in the past. But it is a lot more purposeful, it has a lot more meaning. It is not just about a sum. Kids have to think, and they have to think about their thinking’.

Some teachers acknowledged that it was an ongoing struggle, and this applied to the Specialist Teachers as well. As one Specialist Teacher said, ‘In the first year (of *Getting it Right*) we were still learning. We were grappling too. Our skills and understandings were still developing.’

2.1.2 Deep impact for some...

As target teachers became more immersed in the work and entered into their second and third year in the program we expected to see, and did see, them take increasing responsibility for planning and teaching in their classroom even when the Specialist Teacher was working with them. Changes were noticeable. Specialist Teachers who had been in the school working with these people also noticed the changes. ‘Change is hard to see day to day. It’s when you go to visit other schools that aren’t in the *Getting it Right* program that you realize the changes that have taken place. And that the change has actually been quite significant in how they teach maths.’

We were looking to see, and did see, teachers who were choosing, adapting and developing new diagnostic tasks, assessing the student work and making judgements in relation to the phases of student understanding, deciding on teaching strategies, selecting and adapting them from the First Steps materials and sometimes developing their own preferred approaches

tailored to their particular context. They were using First Steps ideas and strategies in other aspects of their mathematics program even when the Specialist Teacher was not working with them. Many were contributing equally with the Specialist Teacher during planning sessions, showing an increased confidence and skill in monitoring student progress in mathematics over time using frameworks like the Numeracy Net and the Outcomes and Standards Framework. This included using this information to create targets, monitor progress against the targets and adapting their work in response to student progress.

We expected to see, and did see, teachers continuing to work with each other in the classroom in ways similar to that described in the previous section. Where previously there was some tentativeness around using some strategies, in some cases ‘following the script’, now we saw teachers confidently using some of the strategies and ideas from First Steps. Through their actions, teachers were demonstrating that all students could learn what they are being asked to learn in mathematics. There was less conversation about ‘less able’ students and more conversation involving description of ‘where students were at’ and how the teacher was intending to help all the students learn.

Teachers who had been in the program for over a year consistently referred to their sense of learning and how much they had learned, ‘It has been a growing experience’, and, ‘We are quite proud of where we have come from... from last year...to this year. I feel better able to meet students learning needs’. During our third visit to the schools all the Year 3 teachers talked about the confidence they had gained from attending system wide professional development meetings for Year 3 teachers on Making Consistent Judgements (MCJ) in Mathematics. At these meetings, teachers from a range of schools (including the *Getting it Right* teachers) were required to share assessment tasks and student work in order to talk about their understandings in relation to the outcomes and standards framework. They said things like:

‘...we are so proud of what we do here. My samples were used and shared (at the MCJ PD). We shared what the kids could do. We showed other teachers. We were way ahead. The way we talked about it, our kids work, our tasks it was very empowering. It showed how much we have learned.’

Another teacher described her growing confidence in the following way: ‘Even after a year I couldn’t fill out the (ACER) survey, but now I can. I know stuff now. I can talk about student work. I am much more specific now. And next year I am moving into measurement.’

A number of teachers were keen to describe themselves as ‘pretty good’ at teaching mathematics even before their exposure to *Getting it Right*, but then still talked about the impact that *Getting it Right* had had on their teaching. They described their teaching as more focused, that it contained more ‘teaching moments’, and that they had introduced focus questions to mathematics teaching. Further, it had changed their perspective on mathematics, on what kids already knew and what they didn’t understand, and on how they learned mathematics. In some cases, the Specialist Teacher and the teacher spoke of how the teacher was ‘taking over’ the planning and the teaching in the class. ‘She (the teacher) is guiding the work now’.

‘So from 2002 to now I have changed my practice. I am much more focused now on the important things. There is more content, there is more depth. And I have more ways than just putting sums on the blackboard. There is more depth

to what we ask the kids to do. We extend them, its great. My knowledge has more depth, the numeracy net has helped. Seeing the minimum of what children have to do has helped. Being clear in what expectations we have for the children has helped.'

Conversation with teacher who was in her second year of the program

I have to say I was never one for teaching maths. Maths was never my thing and when we started I thought, "Here we go - here is another one of those programs they start". But I can see such a benefit for the kids because they went back and they actually understood what number was all about and then they took that (understanding) and whatever they were doing they could apply that.

... we were presuming that the children had that knowledge where as most of them didn't. They could do the sums on the board but they really had no understanding of what they were doing. And when they related it to a real life situation they had no idea. You couldn't give them a word problem and say can you make up a number story to go with it? They had no idea, whereas my kids are proficient in that now because we took them that step back. ...

...when we used to come in the morning we talked language type stuff, now we talk maths, we sit down and we'll talk the language of maths. (Before) I really didn't have that knowledge, I didn't have enough of that knowledge to share with the kids. But now I feel like I do. ... this is where we are moving onto. And I'm thinking, I can help my kids with this...

...and I think that starts with us actually using the language and focusing more on maths rather than making it one-off, rather than make it, oh well its maths time now, we are going to do sums, instead, you are trying to relate it to whatever theme they are actually doing. And I do a lot of cooking with the kids, so their knowledge of fractions and things is amazing. I just see much more benefit in that, than giving them a worksheet that really doesn't really mean a lot at all. You might say, yeah that child got it right but did they understand that, did they understand what they were doing, or could they relate it to an everyday problem? Or, if you gave them the same problem, but in a word problem, could they do it? Whereas these kids are now very good at word problems.

What I have found with the *Getting it Right* is that, if you give the children the opportunity to show their talents, they will. But if you keep them at that level you think maybe Year 3's should be at, well, they are not going to strive to show their potential basically. And where I would expect, you know, when the kids are coming up with a word problem, where I would expect this child to come up with something quite simple, this child would come up with something more difficult with maybe two different operations in it. Well that's ok for this child and that's ok for this child. But they are all basically doing the same activity, but you are expecting different things from different children."

We had examples of teachers we observed in the classroom in their first year who struggled with following the lesson plan devised with the Specialist Teacher and had difficulties with classroom management (which, of course, may have been exacerbated by the fact they were being observed). However, significant improvement in these teachers was noticeable in the following year – in the confidence with which they talked about mathematics, student learning of mathematics, teaching mathematics and in the way they worked in the classroom.

Students were involved in silent reading immediately after lunch. They were quietly sitting at desks when we arrived in the room. Once silent reading finished the students were divided into two groups with the Specialist Teacher taking one group and the class teacher the other. The students were asked to sit on the floor in front of a flip chart board. The students mostly clustered together with three students sitting further away from the group and each other. The teacher began her lesson immediately. A story was written on the chart within a 'think-board framework'. The problem was written in the stories section. Other sections of the think-board were headed: Numerals and Signs; Pictures; and Real Things.

The word problem: Peter has 7 *Goosebump* books. He wants the whole set of 20 books. How many more does he need?

The students had access to cubes to represent the problem with 'real things' and to support drawing pictures. The teacher tried a whole class interaction as a way of representing the problem in the three different ways. Students were asked to do the problem on the floor with their materials as they went. A few students knew the answer and just completed the framework anyway. Other students were very restless. Crawling around the floor. Annoying each other. Not focusing on the work. Playing with the cubes. One girl was sorting the blocks into their different colours. A number of students were talking. One boy in particular was very restless. There was a lot of noise in the room. It was hard to focus. The teacher seemed hesitant and harried. Her instructions to the students increasingly focused on behaviour rather than the mathematics problem. She often referred to her lesson notes. Once the problem was completed on the board the students worked through another word story given to them on a large worksheet. After that the quicker students were given four more story problems where they were asked to do a picture and a number sentence along with the answer. Two students didn't complete any work. While this was happening the Specialist Teacher took the group at the front of the classroom and did not interact with the teacher or her group. Afterwards the teacher looked a bit embarrassed and was apologetic about what had happened.

Same teacher 2004 now with Year 1 class

In the second year of *Getting it Right* I have worked with another teacher and the Specialist Teacher in a round table. This has been a forum for discussion and produces many more ideas (than last year). We have done much more sharing, and been much more together in the teaching role this year (with the Specialist Teacher). The Specialist Teacher has watched me teach and given me feedback. We keep a track together building on one lesson to another. I'm not using anywhere near as much photocopying. There is a lot more 'hands on'. We are using the diagnostic tasks getting to understand what underpins kids' knowledge. My confidence is much stronger now. I am more comfortable in the classroom (than last year).

I didn't see a full lesson of this teacher in the second year but when I passed through her class she was working confidently, moving around the room, talking directly to the students about the mathematics, asking them what they were thinking rather than telling them what to do. The students were all working on the task. In separate interviews with the Principal and the Specialist Teacher both mentioned (unprompted) the development in confidence and competence they had noticed in this teacher in her teaching of mathematics.

2.1.3 But not everyone...

Not every teacher was willing to take on *Getting it Right* wholeheartedly. A couple of teachers expressed doubts about some of the language they were being encouraged to use with the students. Others were unsure about how to cover the curriculum as *Getting it Right* seems to slow down 'getting through' the work. One Specialist Teacher described a teacher as 'not really adopting it. She has taken some stuff on but really just talks the language rather than doing it'. This seemed more evident for teachers when they are first involved with the program or only involved for one year. Overcoming the resistance sometimes takes some time, information and practice. Sometimes the teacher had changed their attitude and approach more quickly and substantially than had been perceived by the Specialist Teacher and the school administration as was the case in the following example.

Teacher at end of first year in the program and first year in the school

I found out about *Getting it Right* this year when (Specialist Teacher) walked into my room. I had no idea what to expect. So Term 1 was a learning experience for me. There were so many different ways of saying things. Planning sessions were very steep. I had to be careful as the Specialist Teacher had an agenda. I had no prior knowledge of the program and what was expected of me. Thinking back I was confused. I was reduced to incompetence. Everything I had been doing for 'umpteens' years was not valued any longer and I was being treated as if back at college.

I shared my feelings with the Specialist Teacher and she talked me through it all in Term 2. It contributed to more understanding between us. Before that I think she was feeling put out because I wasn't as cooperative.

Since then it has been better. My feelings about the program are more positive. In fact a parent challenged me yesterday about the program and I defended it strongly. She wanted more 'sums'. I was saying children coming through from P-2 that have had (the *Getting it Right* program) are going to be so much better off. They will have a better understanding of number and why things work. *Getting it Right* deals with those understandings very solidly. Focus in the past has not been clear enough. *Getting it Right* is going to slow some of the bigger stuff down a bit and put focus where it needs to be. It is a move from width. The *Getting it Right* emphasis on Number and Operations leads to depth. The parent was challenging why her daughter hadn't been doing sums. I explained nothing wrong with that but children do it without knowing and when the problem becomes different they don't understand what to do. *Getting it Right* is developing stronger understanding of it. She was sceptical.

So term 4 has been very productive. I am very satisfied where it has ended up. If I had a Year 2/3 again I would be better. The kids have bloomed and things have fallen into place.

2.2 Changes to teacher knowledge and practice

The previous sections have illustrated that changes to teacher knowledge and practice have taken place in the *Getting it Right* strategy. The following section looks at these changes using a number of categories.

2.2.1 Teacher attitudes to mathematics and teaching mathematics

The Principals, the Specialist Teachers and the teachers all talked about the improvement in teacher confidence with mathematics and mathematics teaching. This was significant given

that a number talked of their long-standing dislike and feelings of inadequacy related to their own learning of mathematics. 'I have never been comfortable with maths; I hated it at school and never thought that I was any good'.

Others talked of their fear of mathematics and teaching mathematics '...I was a bit scared of maths, my teaching was incidental, a bit of counting and a bit of numbers. Now maths is in all areas of learning...' and 'I was terrified in the first year...' But they then went on to talk about new feelings of empowerment.

...like I said I'm empowered now. I've got the background now. I know how to do the planning. I've gained more knowledge and how to do things differently. I'm not set in the routine of years ago. (Before) you teach the number 1 to 10 and then you go into more detail and then you go on to addition and subtraction. It was all set out like a routine. Now it's more like - when the children are ready - we get on to it.

Aligned with this new found confidence, teachers seemed to be increasingly receptive to different ways of learning mathematics and new information about teaching mathematics. As one Principal put it, 'People are much more confident in their maths teaching and people are willing to discuss maths and their maths program with (the Specialist Teacher) and with each other in the staff room'.

2.2.2 Knowledge of mathematics

Some teachers reported that they had also learned some mathematics. Some of the key understandings necessary for students had been missing in their own mathematical knowledge. 'I'm seeing numbers differently myself. I don't see them as columns anymore. I see 55 as 40 plus 15 and things like that.' And another, 'I feel I've grown - mentally, mathematically (laughs) you know.' Specialist Teachers noticed this:

'Understanding the mathematics is a real problem for some teachers. Because they are so busy, they tend to teach what they know, rather than new things that they don't fully understand. It's important that I make sure that teachers are very familiar with the mathematics otherwise I fear that certain important activities won't happen.'

'I am using new terminology that I have never used. My confidence is growing with the use of the key understandings'. These improved understandings of the key understandings in the First Steps led teachers to much better understandings of the Mathematics learning area in the Curriculum Framework and the Student Outcomes and Standards Framework.

2.2.3 Planning for mathematics teaching

Teachers identified the planning sessions and the focus on planning as key areas of change for them in relation to teaching mathematics. They acknowledged that their planning had become much more in-depth, more time was spent identifying where the student is at, more time looking for the best activities to best meet the learning needs of the students, and more time identifying the resources they would need to do these activities.

"Assessment first" was a common response to what has changed most in their planning and some mentioned 'it has given purpose to my program...much more focus'. For many teachers, the planning time enabled them to develop a coherent approach with clearer links

between one activity and the next. "... (it is) much more logical now. Before, I was just guessing. I used to be all over the place. No connections between the ideas, just jumping from one to another. Now we make links. We create activities."

Many mentioned how planning collaboratively with the Specialist Teacher, and with other teachers in some cases, had been invaluable. "It helps to plan with someone else. Hear other people's observations, other peoples ideas...I love the collaboration - so great to check and compare notes."

Diagnostic testing

It's our third visit to West Coast School. Deborah the Specialist Teacher takes us to the Year 3 Cluster area in the school. Unlike teachers in the Year 1 and 2 clusters, the Year 3 teachers have warmed slowly to *Getting it Right*. This is the first time the Year 3 teachers have been observed and interviewed.

Under the principal's guidance, the Specialist Teacher has developed a way of working with groups of teachers in each cluster area, where their classrooms are now relatively open to each other. Whereas most Specialist Teachers work with teachers individually, she meets each week with the three teachers in each Year 3 Cluster. She works as part of the team and each member takes in turn the task of planning the mathematical teaching and learning activities for the next week.

The Year 3 cluster team is about to begin working on Measurement and they have decided to use the diagnostic test "Table through the door – will the teacher's desk fit through the classroom doorway?" Deborah says, "We are doing this to find out what the children already know because we are going to do a lot of measurement this term. "

In each of the three classrooms, children are purposefully engaged in the activity, using straws, blackboard rulers, blocks and anything else that comes to mind to measure the teacher's table. Mrs B is having many conversations that go something like this:

What unit did you decide to use?

What did you measure? How did you do it? (" I used a streamer!" "I used my ruler!")

What did you do next?

What was the result of your measuring?

A student teacher in the room makes a passing remark, "It's amazing what you find out."

One girl measures the teacher's desk with straws. It is four and a bit straws wide – she bends the last straw, cuts the end off, and goes to the classroom door. "It will fit!" But the teacher has to ask if she has taken the door jam into account, and she reconsiders.

Another teacher is concentrating on one boy. He has lined up a series of blocks to measure the width and the length. The teacher uses a lot of "you" type questions in repeated conversations with the children that include, for example:

What did you do to decide whether the table would fit?

What did you measure first?

Show me how you measured it?

What did you do in your head when you were measuring?

Tell me again in your own words

You got it! - Would it be easy or hard to get it through?"

The three classrooms are busy for nearly an hour and the teachers continue their mathematical conversations and gather their data.

2.2.4 Diagnosis of student learning

The planning work with the Specialist Teacher involved teachers in making judgements about student learning; in particular, using evidence from student work samples from diagnostic tasks and observation of students at work in the classroom. Over time, the teachers became more confident with their own observations and their own judgements. As already outlined they reported feeling good after participating in system-wide professional development with teachers from other schools.

‘I don’t set limits to my expectations, or their expectations, for what they can learn any more . . . because I know they can get there. Because of the diagnostic tools, I’m listening much more to their thought processes, to how they work it out. I’m getting them to reflect more, orally, to find out what thought processes they are using. So I can tell much better whether they really understand or not – pen and paper tests don’t tell you that.’

It was common to listen to teachers saying things like, “before moving on with the work we’re now looking at - Do they know? How do they know it?”

The case study evidence does not allow us to say how accurate their diagnoses of student learning were, but we can report that they focussed on it more and that their confidence in relation to it grew over time.

The approach to assessment in mathematics had changed markedly at all schools. Assessment was now ‘for learning’ as well as ‘of learning’. The number and type of assessments had expanded. The use of the Diagnostic Task before students started on a new aspect of numeracy was a fundamental part of the First Steps approach and as previously outlined made a big impact on how teachers approached their work.

2.2.5 How students learn mathematics

It was common to hear a teacher say as a result of participation in *Getting it Right*, ‘I don’t use worksheets anymore’. There was a shared understanding amongst teachers that just doing ‘hundreds of sums’ was not how students learned mathematics.

Many of the teachers could give illustrations of how a student might be able to do something (for example, count the number of people in the room) but not understand it fully. For example, students might be able to count the number of people in the classroom but not understand that their final number represented the number of people in the room nor choose to use that number to get a skipping rope for each person from the sports shed. They talked about students needing to explain their thinking more, to represent problems in multiple ways (using materials, pictures, numbers, etc), to look at the mathematics embedded in story, in the world, and across the curriculum.

2.2.6 In the classroom

The confidence noted above was evident in the classrooms. The teachers talked about being more comfortable with mathematics and numeracy. This was evident in the increase in references to numeracy incidentally throughout the day as it happened. The teachers noticed more, and made explicit connections to the mathematics more often. Some teachers began to create, display and use more mathematically related wall charts, games, and other resources in their room. “The Pre-Primary room was now ‘mathly’ rich - much more than it used to be.”

Many of the teachers talked about a significant increase in their use of questions in the mathematics lesson: questions to prompt student thinking; questions to require student explanations; questions to start lessons; focus questions during the lesson to keep the teacher and the students exploring the learning; questions to debrief learning.

Teachers also reported a strong increase in the use of ‘hands on’ materials in mathematics lessons. They talked about creating and buying a lot more. “...we have started to build lots of hands-on things hopefully school budget will be able to buy more.”

Getting kids to talk more and using concrete materials for activities were seen as important by some not only in their own right but because in their view some students had weak writing skills and alternative ways of allowing them to learn and demonstrate their learning had to be developed.

Teachers talked about being a lot more observant in classrooms and to making notes more frequently about what students were doing, saying and learning. “I use a lot of Post-It notes. I’m always writing down what they are saying.”

Finally Specialist Teachers and teachers were enjoying teaching mathematics more than they ever had before – many for the first time ever. “I think they (the teachers) now enjoy teaching maths now...enjoying planning and teaching maths with other staff members more.”

2.3 Impact on Specialist Teachers

All the Specialist Teachers we spoke with had a focus on teacher change and change that would be brought about through genuinely joint work ‘with’ teachers rather than superimposing something ‘on’ teachers. All Specialist Teachers were involved in planning and teaching with each target teacher and in making sure that it happened. Between lessons the Specialist Teachers would be thinking about how to best diagnose students’ mathematical learning in the focus areas and what strategies might be best employed to help students learn. In some cases they spent time reflecting on how to best work with a particular target teacher. Specialist Teachers also grappled with methods to record student progress across the school and in collaboration with the Principal looked at the best way to set targets. All took on some responsibility across the school for the improvement of mathematics and numeracy teaching generally.

As they became familiar in the role it was evident that Specialist Teachers developed their ‘working with’ teacher skills further. This was evident when their way of working with teachers across the school varied according to the target teacher’s needs. As one Specialist Teacher said: ‘About three teachers next year may need a different approach as, for different reasons, they haven’t engaged with the materials to a large extent’. Specialist Teachers were also involved in the development of:

- new diagnostic tasks and adapting strategies and activities from the First Steps materials;
- ways of helping teachers become familiar with students' phases of learning using the Diagnostic Maps;
- more comprehensive records of student achievement;
- more robust target setting processes; and
- new strategies to cater for students and teacher learning.

Specialist Teachers became more able to articulate their thinking about teacher change and what they were trying to do with the teachers. Their thinking about teacher change took into account teachers' content knowledge in mathematics, teachers' pedagogical content knowledge, teachers' capacity to analyse student understanding and identify their phase of learning in the relevant area, teachers' capacity to select appropriate activities for the students to learn the necessary mathematics, and teachers' capacity to develop activities. Where the Specialist Teachers and the teachers continued to work with each other over 2 and 3 years they became more comfortable with giving and getting feedback on teaching practice.

It was noticeable that the Specialist Teachers in all schools had developed a strong reflective practice. The central office *Getting it Right* team encouraged them to keep journals and write annual reviews and to keep on thinking about their work in relation to their teacher-change role and the way teachers were adopting and using the ideas, the approaches and the materials. This reflection was evident in what Specialist Teachers said and wrote about their work.

An example of a Specialist Teacher annual reflective review

General Comments

I have enjoyed my role as a Specialist Teacher.

I have learnt so much more about how children learn and think about maths. We have observed real and measurable progress in the children. The children are much more confident in working mathematically and are really improving in explaining how they worked it out. They can access a range of problem solving strategies and methodology that links to their own personal learning styles.

The teachers have really learnt and appreciated the way the diagnostic tasks have helped them plan and implement their curriculum. Also they have a deeper understanding of maths. A special moment for the Year 3 teachers was the time they realized how much they actually knew as they filled in evidence sheets at the (department) professional development workshops on *Making Consistent Judgments*. There was a genuine realization that the First Steps strategies not only promote and offer meaningful, rich tasks but that the teachers really focus on the mathematical understanding to be taught. The kindy children, pre and ones have many special moments. We have enjoyed watching and listening to them as they find maths in their world and they just have to tell you all about it.

Next year

It's likely that I will be working with the same teachers focusing on measurement. If I work with new teachers I will have to assess their knowledge of First Steps and will more than likely be focusing on the number strand. The time and content covered will be allocated according to teachers' specific needs, with some teachers getting more than others. I imagine I

will be working with people in much the same way as this year, although I would like to include more reflective teaching practice - and I would like to use the progress maps in planning for outcomes more efficiently. We will continue using literature as context for maths concepts. Also in 2005 we would like to incorporate more technology, calculator and appropriate computer programs to integrate maths into other areas. We intend to win another achievement award in the numeracy and literacy week awards.

Targets

The school has used the Numeracy Net together with other data and set targets. Next year we will continue to use it although the MCJ workshops were very useful and we will incorporate that knowledge of levelling and achievement targets into our planning and data collection processes.

Teachers

Attached to this report was a summary of the Specialist Teachers evaluation of how well the group of teachers they worked with had understood each of the following:

Key Understandings

Sample learning activities

Diagnostic Map

Outcome levels

Numeracy Net

Planning process

Using focus questions

The list and rating scale was provided by the central office team.

Specialist teachers can face sensitive situations in working as informal leaders of other teachers. One situation is where it becomes apparent that teachers differ significantly, not only in their confidence, but in their effectiveness. Here are some reflections from a Specialist Teacher who found herself dealing with a teacher who was not responsive to the opportunity to work jointly.

It is very clear from this year's data that one of our classrooms has an abnormal number of below benchmark students in mathematics. The same classroom has been reluctant in taking on new D.E.T. initiatives in the past and *Getting it Right* strategies in particular. It is a delicate situation to resolve as there are many issues and so we decided to withdraw from that room and put time in where it was more appreciated and reinforced.

I reflect now and feel that this was a poor strategy to merely avoid the situation given the result we now have. In a nutshell over 80% of children who are below the benchmark exist in that room. The other two classes in the same year level have 10% below the benchmark in each.

In comparison, another classroom of very challenging students in the same year level have recorded excellent results beyond targets and expectations identifying that the follow up provided by the classroom teachers has been very effective, and thus, the WALNA data in this instance, identifies teachers performing at a higher level with students learning and retaining more.

Clearly we have all had the same treatment but the controversial issue of teacher performance, which is often avoided, plays a critical role in the effective implementation of any new initiative like *Getting it Right*.

I think we have to be critical in the analysis of our performance as teachers and facilitators. Easy for me as this is the way in which I perform, but to others it is foreign to try to challenge oneself to lift the bar. Over many years and in different teaching and facilitation contexts you do identify good practitioners. I am placing more emphasis on evidence this year and WALNA does it for me. There is much that can be teased from results and compared to other key areas of the curriculum. I can also see clear evidence of areas within *Getting it Right* that I have to perform better in. I like this as 'goals and aims' make sense when dealing with our most important investment. I'll be writing these into my performance management agreement for 2005 and will expect a decent reflective 'grilling' toward the later part of the 2005 to ensure that I'm on my game.

We now have some powerful data to present to the staff to ponder. If we make this blatantly clear that we can identify classes not performing I think we'll get a shift and a critical reflective workforce. Can we dare to go this far?

2.4 Impact on student learning

Investigating the impact of *Getting it Right* on student learning was not the focus for this evaluation. However, all the schools were observing improvement in student achievement and this result needs to be noted.

Teachers and administrators in most case study schools talked about a shift in WALNA results for the Year 3 cohort in 2004. For example in one school there had been a shift in WALNA results to the point that Numeracy results were stronger than all aspects of Literacy. Previous data showed that numeracy had been the weakest learning area in the school. These results were supported by their own data. Every student in Year 3 had improved in the school moderated assessment. In Year 4 the students had improved in the one moderated task. Schools have begun to record summary data about numeracy performance. See page 17 for one school's example. The percentages show the number of children who have achieved all of the Numeracy net checkpoints for the outcomes of Understand Number, Understand Operations and Calculate. Each year group can be tracked over time by colour. Each cohort can be compared to the last. The left hand column for each class represents the first time data has been collected for that year group. Note the school has large numbers of students so using percentages does not distort.

Teachers had noticed improvements in the students in the classroom. They had 'focused children on how they do things in maths, how they have done it, working mathematically, and better understanding instead of rote. They think a lot more, explain a lot more'.

'But we have done a lot of oral reflection. They have much more confidence in being able to say what they are thinking. Much more confident to make mistakes and learn. They are much more confident to say something.

Kids say they like maths and there is no laughing when they say this. One aboriginal girl who didn't talk at the end of last term is now talking, explaining and confident (in mathematics).'

One Specialist Teacher commented that

‘We haven’t got it right yet but we are on the right path and the children have really taken to it. They are much more confident. They are showing teachers what they are learning. The kids are enjoying maths and don’t see it as scary. I can even walk in with an MSE test and off they go. Their confidence and motivation is there and so it is for the teachers.’

Transience was an issue in some of the schools. ‘The kids in our room desperately need support; we have a lot of transients. We have an itinerant population, they come they go, they come back again.’ This would necessarily have an impact on student learning and overall student achievement in numeracy in the school. It complicates the interpretation of student results over time.

Progressive Numeracy Net Data

Year Level	2002		2003		2004			2005		
	UN	UO	UN	UO	UN	UO	C	UN	UO	C
K	86%	69%	89%	87%	62%	80%				
P	88%	82%	94%	90%	82%	84%				
1	82%	68%	87%	94%	91%	88%				
2			72%	75%	74%	66%	57%			
3			80%	59%	84%	52%	52%			
4					26%	11%	16%			
5					6%	5%	0%			
6					4%	17%	13%			
7					8%	6%	1%			

2.5 Impact on the school

Everyone we talked to was convinced that *Getting it Right* had a positive impact on the school. They talked mostly about the collaboration it had generated. Conversations among teachers about teaching were more frequent. In the words of one Principal:

‘There are a lot of people spending time together and explaining things, exploring different ways of teaching (mathematics), not sure of the cross over into other areas of teaching yet. Staff meeting about *Getting it Right* is very successful – we need it in literacy too.’

One Specialist Teacher noted the improvement in the engagement and depth insights of teachers over time.

‘They like to talk about what the children are doing. (They are) sharing their teaching... they want to know (from each other). We have done three moderation tasks. Each time we go through the process it gets more interesting. The teachers put much more in.’

The improvements in student numeracy results that Principals, Specialist Teachers and teachers were noticing had a positive impact on their perceptions of the *Getting it Right* approach and they were using this as evidence to keep persisting with it as a strategy for improving student learning in numeracy.

3.0 Key factors influencing uptake and change in teacher practice

The case study schools in this evaluation have provided a clear indication that the *Getting it Right* strategy was adopted readily by schools and implemented relatively faithfully in most schools, although there was some variation from school to school and teacher to teacher. In the history of research on the implementation of educational reform strategies, it is a common finding that schools change reforms as much, if not more than the reforms change the schools. This phenomenon is known as “mutual adaptation”. However, in the case of the *Getting it Right* strategy we found a high level of fidelity between the intentions of the strategy, and the practice. In this section we identify some factors that seemed to explain why *Getting it Right* was implemented in most schools in ways that made a difference to teachers’ practice. We also go on to discuss some factors that may have moderated the impact of the strategy.

3.1 Key factors supporting uptake at the school

3.1.1 Shared agreement on numeracy as a priority focus

The goals of the government’s numeracy strategic initiative, the priorities in the case study schools and teacher action in the classroom were strongly aligned. Each of the stakeholders perceived numeracy as a key priority. Resources for the Strategy matched the ambition of improving knowledge about mathematics and changing practice in significant ways. There was no resistance from the teachers towards the priority itself. It was accepted and endorsed. Time was not wasted trying to convince

teachers that numeracy was important, nor that there was room for improvement in the way it was taught.

3.1.2 *The school context*

The school context, created in part by school leaders and teachers, was a key factor in how the *Getting it Right* strategy was taken up in the school. This was evident in the following ways.

Most schools actively sought to connect the work of the Specialist Teacher and the *Getting it Right* program to other school activities related to numeracy. As previously noted, numeracy was, or became, a school priority, based on credible data about the current level student achievement. This was evident in the School Development plans of each case study school.

Most case study schools created time for weekly collaborative staff meetings. It was common for this time to be used to share ideas, plan assessment tasks, and conduct moderation exercises and further professional development in numeracy. The system wide professional development strategy on *Making Consistent Judgements* was linked directly to the work of the teachers in *Getting it Right* in the school.

All school administrators provided supplementary resources to support the *Getting it Right* strategy in their school. Some funded the Specialist Teacher and teacher planning time additional to teacher DOTT time; others funded extra collaborative time as noted above and one school funded an extra Specialist Teacher with money from other sources.

Some schools planned for sustainability in more systematic ways. Most Principals were of the opinion that the selection of a credible Specialist Teacher was the key to the success of *Getting it Right* in the school. They sought someone who was respected by the other teachers, had good rapport with colleagues, was a good classroom teacher, and interested in taking on the role.

Most Principals then sought to build on the strength of the Specialist Teacher and further enhance his or her role and impact; for example, by confining the Specialist Teacher to working in one school (theirs), and creating a full time position at the school to enable this to happen. Some expanded the leadership role of the Specialist Teacher. This was done in three ways. First, by appointing the Specialist Teacher as an acting Deputy Principal. Second, expanding the leadership role in numeracy; for example, coordinating the numeracy priority or the numeracy cost-centre for the whole school. Third, by extending her 1-1 work with teachers to include more teachers across all year groups.

Principals we talked to acknowledged that the business of changing teacher practice was a ‘journey’ that would take at least 3 years (some were more optimistic but alas...!). In itself this acknowledgement was supportive of a sustainable approach and supportive of the work of the Specialist Teacher.

Finally school leaders often took the opportunity to ‘talk up’ the *Getting it Right* program up with their community through newsletters, information nights and school reports.

Snippets from one school report

The school is fortunate to have the services of a *Getting it Right* numeracy specialist for half the week. This is a state-wide program designed to assist teachers to develop quality mathematical programs. Our Specialist Teacher works with students and teachers on a rotational basis throughout the year. Teachers also meet weekly to explore and share best practice and refine their teaching and learning programs.

Our WALNA results indicate that mathematics has become a comparative strength across the school. It is pleasing to report that the results were generally better than average. We think our improvement is an indication of the success of the *Getting it Right* program.

3.1.3 The *Getting it Right* process in schools

As outlined previously, there was a common approach to implementing *Getting it Right* at the school level. The Specialist Teacher worked with teachers to plan and teach together. The time span was brief between planning, teaching together, then meeting again to examine student work and review the learning activities. This led to tight connections each week between diagnosis about student understanding, planning, application and feedback. In schools where these cycles happened week in and week out, there were significant opportunities for the best kind of professional development. Teachers identified this persistence as crucial to the success of the *Getting it Right* strategy. Practice itself was the site for professional learning, consistent with research findings about the essential characteristics of effective professional learning.

The *Getting it Right* process, as it was enacted in schools (and at the Specialist Teacher training), emphasized diagnosis of student learning by examining student work as the starting point for planning rather than assessment as something that happens at the end of a teaching unit. When asked what aspects of *Getting it Right* had influenced them most, teachers often said ‘assessment first’. All teachers were to some extent taken aback about how much they had learned from their regular involvement in diagnostic tasks. ‘Some of the diagnostic tasks have been quite revealing. A really good tool to teach’ and another ‘...the diagnostic tasks have been very informative. Surprised me to see kids struggling with things that I thought they could do’.

Some teachers were also surprised to see how much some students could already do before they had attempted to teach them formally. ‘They could already count to a hundred. Previously I only covered counting to twenty!’

3.1.4 The Specialist Teacher

The Specialist Teacher was the linchpin of the *Getting it Right* strategy. The strategy depended on the capacity of each Specialist Teacher to offer something of value to teachers and to work effectively with each teacher individually. The extensive training of twenty-one days over two years in all the components of First Steps made sure they had something of value to offer. That most Specialist Teachers were already effective teachers in the school enhanced their credibility and capacity to provide

leadership. Their success also depended on their ability to carry out the sensitive role of developing, expanding and changing another teachers' practice. Some teachers put up the shutters and passively resisted in the early stages, but two years at least gave the Specialist Teacher's time to demonstrate the beneficial outcomes with students of other teachers. Nothing works as well in promoting change as seeing greater enjoyment among students in other teachers' classrooms.

While there was some variation in how the Specialist Teacher carried out their role across the case study schools, in every single one the role itself was greatly valued by the teachers and the school administration. This was true even though the teachers knew that the Specialist Teacher was in the school 'to change the way we teach maths'.

The Specialist Teacher role was demanding. It required considerable expertise, as well as tact and sensitivity. Specialist Teachers had to develop their own knowledge about the mathematics, how students learn the mathematics, how to diagnose student learning, as well as the pedagogical content knowledge necessary to implement a range of strategies for developing student learning. While sustaining their own learning about these things, they had to work with colleagues to help them learn these things as well. Their role also involved contracting the work with their peers, finding ways to work with different colleagues using new knowledge for them, working with colleagues in classrooms, giving and getting feedback on teaching, being able to model good teaching, working through staff conflicts, and conducting whole school staff professional development workshops on mathematics.

'I've had some hard conversations. Difficult. Some teachers take a lot longer. With one I did everything – 100% - until the end of term 3. In term 4 I handed it over. By the end of the year she just about understood it' (Specialist Teacher).'

Understanding their role was crucial to the success of the Specialist Teacher and hence the *Getting it Right* strategy.

This year I've been making a conscious effort to get teachers to take responsibility. I'm moving responsibility to them. We have to get to a point where they've got it. I've got to do myself out of a job. I've had to be quite firm about this in the last 6 months.

Getting the right person for the job was crucial. Typically the schools chose a teacher from within their school. A key factor in their selection was their existing credibility with staff. Their colleagues already knew them well. They were seen as 'good' teachers. Many began with a good deal of trust and personal support from the teachers. In a number of cases the Specialist Teacher was the only person in the school who had put their name forward.

A number of teachers seemed to like the idea that the Specialist Teacher was also learning about the new ideas and the use of the new materials; 'she's like us really'. Specialist Teacher training in each topic often only occurred a term ahead of the time when Specialist Teachers were to cover it with their teachers. However, the teachers expressed great confidence that the Specialist Teacher was getting access to excellent

training. In this way, the Specialist Teacher acted as a bridge between research, curriculum development and practice.

3.1.5 Training and support for Specialist Teachers

The strength of the *Getting it Right* process, the model for teaching, the quality of the work of the Specialist Teacher and their confidence in the materials came from the quantity and quality of training and support the Specialist Teachers received from the central office numeracy team.

The approach to training paralleled and modelled the work of the Specialist Teacher with the teachers. They practised doing what they did with the teachers together. They looked at diagnostic tasks, brought back samples of student work to review, made judgements together about the phases of learning that the work demonstrated, and made decisions about the kinds of activities a teacher could use to teach students at different stages, thereby learning how to differentiate the curriculum, and shared strategies that they had tried in classrooms. In addition, they were provided with the findings from the First Steps research and other related research and ideas for teaching and learning.

Here are some titles of sessions at a typical 3 day training meetings for Specialist Teachers:

- Teaching Aboriginal Students Mathematics (talk by university researchers)
- Reviewing the Calculate Diagnostic Tasks and planning for further learning
- The mathematics, and how children learn the mathematics, of fractions
- The mathematics of number pattern and how children learn them
- Calculators in the classroom (visiting academic)
- Sharing session

In the session on *Fractions*, members of the *Getting it Right* staff review how fraction symbols can be used to represent a wide range of real world situations (e.g. a fraction can be a quantity, a number, a ratio or relationship or a division. Fractions are more complex than you think!)

Groups of Specialist Teachers are provided with several samples of student responses to the fractions diagnostic tasks such as *Chocolate Bars*. Members of the *Getting it Right* staff go over research they have done about children's learning of fractions and, in particular, the types of responses that children make to this task and their level of thinking about fractions. Specialist Teachers review the Diagnostic Map and decide which phase of thinking each group of children is in. They then evaluate how useful the Diagnostic Task is in providing evidence about the level students are at.

The Central Office *Getting it Right* support team also played a key role in supporting the work of the Specialist Teachers in schools. Each school was allocated one of the central office team who generally visited the Specialist Teacher once per term and made themselves available to respond to phone and email contact as well. The visit was used variously to work through, talk about, and cover all aspects of the Specialist

Teacher role. Specialist Teachers continually praised these people for their continuing support and expertise.

The central office team member was very generous in making herself available on the chat line each Tuesday night. I found this an invaluable time to ask questions and to learn from the others. The school visits from X were useful as a time to discuss specific difficulties, reflect and share successes. The *Getting it Right* team was always very approachable and I felt that I could phone with any questions. On the few occasions that I did phone everyone was very accommodating.

The members of the central office support team were highly skilled, knowledgeable in First Steps and experienced in providing professional development for teachers. They had all been key people in the First Steps research project team at Murdoch University, in the development of the First Steps support materials and in development of the *Getting it Right* process for schools. This expertise was undoubtedly significant in the provision of quality support and development activities for the Specialist Teachers.

3.2 Key factors supporting uptake by teachers

3.2.1 Professionalising teacher knowledge: New information about numeracy and teaching numeracy

The teachers acknowledged that improving their knowledge in mathematics, in how students learn mathematics, in diagnosing student misconceptions in mathematics and strategies to help students learn mathematics were all important and necessary. Many stated how they lacked confidence in mathematics and teaching mathematics so anything that helped them learn more was perceived as useful.

The teachers were confident that the Specialist Teacher, through their training, had access to the best research and ideas available for teaching numeracy. They trusted that the materials were created from recent research on student learning of mathematics. Teachers took comfort and confidence from this.

Equally important, through their training, Specialist Teachers were acquiring some of the skills and techniques that researchers used to study student learning of mathematics, and passing these on to teachers. In particular, they found the diagnostic tasks surprisingly useful in revealing the range and creativity of student mathematical thinking. Analysis of student responses to diagnostic tasks also revealed more clearly the phases and levels of thinking in students' development of mathematical concepts.

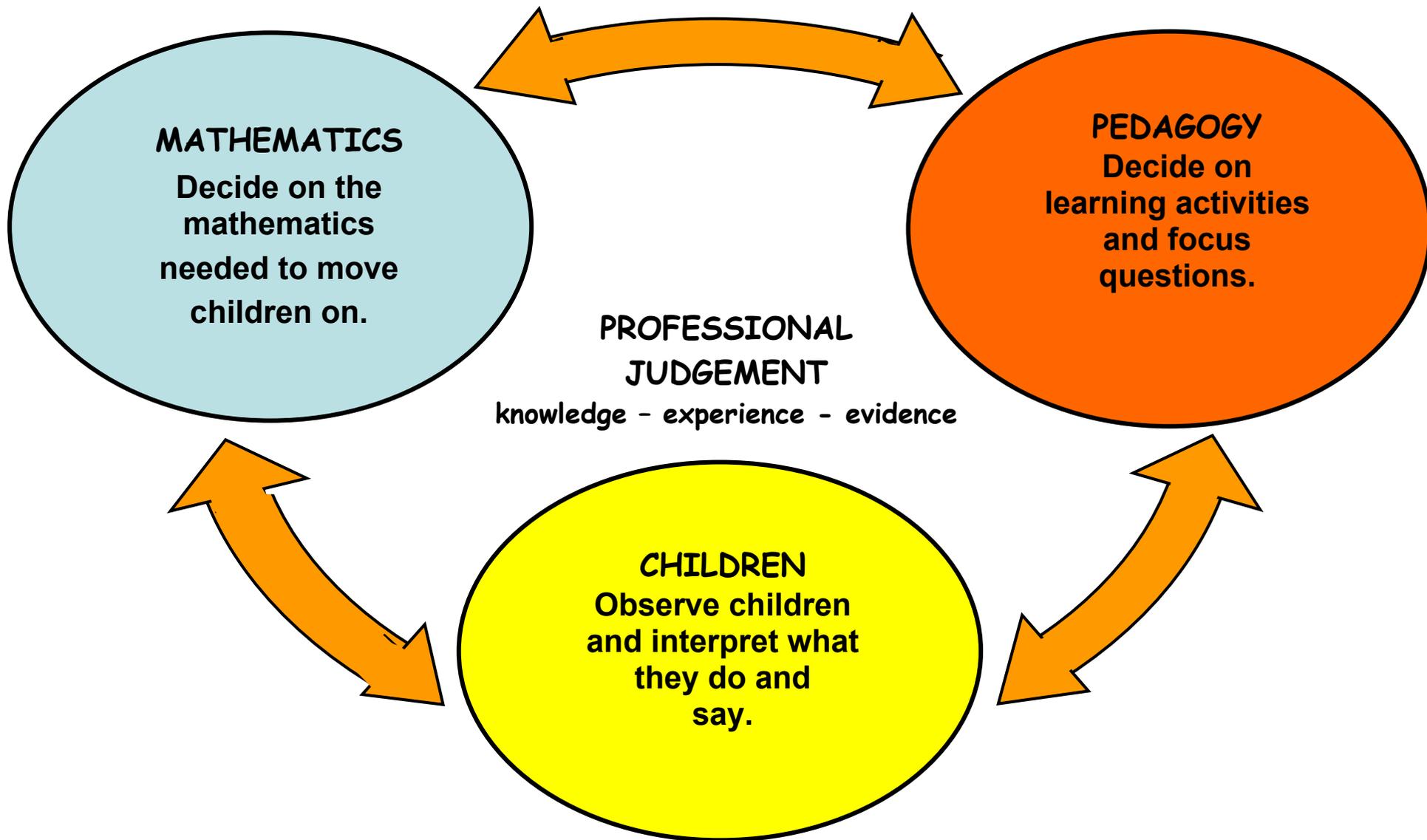
In these respects, the *Getting it Right Strategy* was enhancing core areas of teachers' professional knowledge and skill. The research on professional learning for teachers indicates that the most effective strategies, in terms of improving student achievement, focus primarily on deepening teachers' knowledge of the content they teach and how students learn that content. The Specialist Teacher training and the regular weekly sessions between Specialist Teachers and their colleagues provided sustained opportunities to enhance understanding about what was being taught, how

to provide a variety of activities to promote learning of key concepts and how to use assessment better to cater for individual student needs.

3.2.2 *Model for teaching*

Unlike many innovations that come and go, the *Getting it Right* approach (which encompasses the First Steps in Mathematics Professional Development) to teaching mathematics was grounded in the fundamental architecture of effective teaching– not a particular *style* of teaching. They set out to enhance teachers’ ability to make informed professional judgements about what students know and what they need to know through teachers deeply understanding what it means to learn mathematics. That is, the professional development sets out to help teachers understand the ‘why’ in children’s mathematical thinking which in turn helps teachers to make appropriate choices from a range of effective learning activities and strategies. This is in contrast to advocating a fixed style or sequence of learning which discourages teacher choice and professional judgement making. The approach led to less reliance on textbooks, worksheets and other props - but more teacher confidence in that they could find mathematical potential in the everyday materials and resources around them.

The First Steps model of teaching required teachers first to diagnose student understanding of the key understanding being taught, make judgements about student work and student understanding and then select appropriate activities based on this knowledge and from a pool of strategies known from the research to work. While trying these strategies, they were to observe students at work and then reassess their learning. Later, with the Specialist Teacher, they evaluated the strategies and reflected on their own practice. This represents a rational and time-honoured approach to teaching well. It was not a ‘fad’. Teachers needed no convincing that these were the essential components of effective teaching, nor that they were consistent with research on accomplished teaching.



3.2.3 *The First Steps materials*

Another key factor supporting the teachers in changing and improving their practice in teaching mathematics was the set of materials they were given to use in their planning and teaching. The materials were:

- Comprehensive – consisting of key understandings, links to the existing curriculum framework, ideas for assessment, a map of the phases of learning and activities for using in classroom with detailed explanations.
- Rigorous– the material had been informed by powerful research knowledge.
- Practical – the materials contained detailed advice applicable for teacher planning and activities to choose for using in the classroom.
- Supported by additional materials – Diagnostic tasks, Diagnostic Map, Numeracy Net, planning sheets, etc.
- Consistent with the model of teaching outlined above. The materials made it easier to follow this process.
- The materials were consistent with the First Steps emphasis on the enhancement of teacher professional judgement. Different features of the material support teachers to understand the mathematics, find out what students know and still need to learn about that mathematics and to plan activities to help them learn. The structure of the resource around the Key Understandings for the mathematics outcomes supported teachers to make ‘good’ judgements about mathematics, teaching and learning.

The First Steps materials provided invaluable support for the teachers. They provided teachers with appropriate activities to use with students to help them learn what was required. The teachers took confidence from the knowledge that they had been developed through research. The activity descriptions in the materials provided enough of a script to follow for the teachers to try out the new strategies. The materials helped the teachers to shift their planning from ‘exercises for kids to do’ to ‘activities for teachers to give to the students’. They provided the teachers with the psychological space to explore new work, knowing that they had the materials as a back up. Over time, as teachers grew more confident, they began to use the First Steps materials without difficulty and some began to adapt the activities, and make up their own, to suit their particular context.

3.3 *Some issues limiting take-up*

3.3.1 *Amount of time Specialist Teacher spends working with a teacher*

Some Specialist Teachers were asked to work with many teachers across the whole school. In some cases this meant rostering teachers ‘on’ for one semester then ‘off’ for the next. In one school, this was seen as a desirable way to give every teacher a taste of the approach and to assist the Specialist Teacher in working across the school. While appreciating the intent of this approach, teachers’ spoke of the limitations this had on their development.

Some schools were allocated a part-time Specialist Teacher by the district and the Specialist Teacher was shared with another school. In one of those schools, the Specialist Teacher worked for one day a week for five weeks in one school and then did the same in the other school for the next five weeks. No one perceived this

stop/start approach as satisfactory³. Another Specialist Teacher who worked across two schools, and was allocated sufficient time to work in both every week, was still not happy with her dual locations. She preferred to work in one school and consequently did. By doing this, she said she could hold many more informal conversations with staff, get more ‘between meeting’ planning done, have some unplanned teaching ‘moments’, create and manage more teaching resources, and support the school with whole school planning better by being located in the one school. And all this without being allocated any more time for the role of Specialist Teacher.

In a number of the case study schools, the Specialist Teacher moved on after the first year of the evaluation. The impact of such discontinuity was difficult to estimate, and the replacement Specialist Teacher may have been more effective than the one they replaced.

However, the break in continuity of service of the Specialist Teacher to a school could result in a hiatus in service delivery and outcomes. The movement of the Specialist Teacher into other roles in the school system might enhance the capacity of leaders in the system, but the impact on the achievement of the outcomes of the *Getting it Right* strategy also needed to be considered. We suspect that Specialist Teachers who were also deputy principals may have been more effective. But this depended on their priorities. One Specialist Teacher took the opportunity offered by his deputy principal role to devote most of his time to Specialist Teacher work. Another gave priority to managerial aspects of the DP role and reduced the time she could have spent with teachers.

3.3.2 *Teacher (and Principal) induction to the program*

Some teachers talked about some initial reluctance to the *Getting it Right* approach. Many put this down to a lack of information. For example, some teachers said the first time they ‘knew’ anything about the *Getting it Right* process was when the Specialist Teacher was in their classroom talking to them. This was more often the case for teachers who were new to the school. A number of teachers in this situation would have liked more information and some mentioned that an induction process would have helped – not least to diminish their anxiety about what was happening and why they were involved.

The central office team ran an induction day for Principals each year. However, some of the schools involved in the evaluation had a number of different Principals within the two-year period. Some of these people missed the net and were left trying to catch up with what they needed to know. In one case study school, the outcomes of *Getting it Right* were significantly dispersed because the Specialist Teacher was moved to the district office, a new principal came in with little knowledge or interest in *Getting it Right* and several of the *Getting it Right* teachers were moved to teach higher grade levels.

³ This practice was not continued as it clearly did not work. No one perceived this stop/start approach as satisfactory and it has subsequently been discontinued in the *Getting it Right* strategy.

3.3.3 Student continuity

Achieving sustainable improvement to student learning was compromised in schools when there was a lot of transience among students. Transience reduced a teacher's experience of 'improvement' over time with individual students. For example, in one school in the second year of this evaluation, over 50% of the Year 1 students were new to the school. In the Year 2 group, only 3 out of the 14 students were in the Year 1 group for all of the previous year. In Year 3, there were 6 new students and 5 had left.

3.3.4 Teacher continuity

Given this is a teacher development strategy, the amount and period of time a teacher spends working shoulder to shoulder with a Specialist Teacher in the program is crucial to supporting changing and embedding new teaching practices. In addition to changing the practice of individual teachers, the schools in *Getting it Right* were aiming for whole school change in teacher practice in teaching numeracy.

However few schools documented which teachers had been in *Getting it Right*, for how long they had been in the program, what classes they taught while in the program (for example, had they honed their skills working with the same year group over time or had they moved up with the class they started with?) and analysed the implications for teacher change and whole school change.

From a whole of system perspective it would be useful to have aggregated records of this information together with who had transferred to another school, where they had gone, and what impact that had on the school they had left and their new school.

3.3.5 Time and resources

Related to this, there was a tension between providing too much time and resources for the work between a Specialist Teacher and a teacher and too little. Too much planning time together could lead to an overload on staff time. While too much time teaching together in the classroom could lead to an increasing dependency on having another teacher in the room. Too few resources for staff planning could lead to staff resistance to the program because of the loss of their 'free' time while if Specialist Teacher time with a teacher was too brief then sustainable changes to practice would be unlikely. Most felt that the basic formula of the *Getting it Right* approach was 'about right' but where it was 'less' it was not as effective.

3.3.6 Working with teachers

Building and sustaining a productive working relationship

There was overwhelming affirmation for the positive nature of the working relationships that Specialist Teachers had created with teachers in the case study schools. We were surprised how little resentment we found among teachers toward colleagues who had been asked, in effect, to be change agents – of them. Teaching as a profession has been noted for the "persistence of privacy" in professional relationships and a nervousness about observation of practice, a legacy, perhaps, of inspection in the collective professional consciousness.

It was not unexpected, human nature being what it is, that some relationships would be 'polite' rather than positive and others more 'guarded' rather than open – and that

this would limit the effectiveness of the *Getting it Right* Strategy. In some schools, it took time for us to locate all the teachers officially involved in the *Getting it Right* program and to gain invitations to visit their classrooms and interview them.

As teacher change was a central purpose of the *Getting it Right* strategy, Specialist Teachers needed to work in non-judgemental ways with colleagues. The *Getting it Right* strategy and the resources offered by the Specialist Teacher facilitated this as they got down to working “shoulder to shoulder”. However, as indicated above, Specialist Teachers occasionally found themselves reaching the limits of tolerance with teachers whose students were not benefiting as much as those of other *Getting it Right* teachers in the school.

Specialist Teachers had to develop their capacity to not personalize with teachers who were having trouble understanding the new ideas, struggling with the strategies in the classroom or not quite getting what the purpose of the process. ‘I have learned to be more business like. I have tried to be consistent. They often off-load to me and it is hard to get them back ‘on track’. I listen and then redirect’.

In the future Specialist Teacher training might need to include a larger focus on things like: contracting work with teachers (peers), inducting teachers into the *Getting it Right* ‘way’, building and sustaining a working relationship, working through difficult relationships with colleagues and understanding key issues of teacher change and school change.

Enhancing the learning from working together in the classroom

Teaching together in the classroom was the key activity in the *Getting it Right* process. Lessons were modelled by the Specialist Teacher, the Specialist Teacher and the teacher worked ‘shoulder to shoulder’ with the group. Sometimes the teacher would teach and the Specialist Teacher would observe. This meant that giving and getting feedback on each other’s teaching could be a frequent activity and a means of professional development. Feedback has been shown to be important in learning how to implement new teaching strategies, especially those such as *Getting it Right* that require the capacity to promote and maintain quality conversations with students about concepts and ideas.

We were left wondering, however, how frequently feedback about practice actually happened when Specialist Teachers and teachers worked together. It did not appear as if the Specialist Teachers were provided with any particular approaches to providing feedback and developing this aspect of their work. We did find that the Specialist Teacher and the teachers talked a lot to each other both formally and informally about their impressions of success, or not, of the strategies they had used, whether or not certain students were understanding what they need to understand and what they might do as a consequence. However, how more difficult issues of teacher practice were dealt with or ignored was not clear.

Description of part of a lesson by a Year 1 teacher. Specialist Teacher is working with her.

Teacher is seated working with a pin-up board in front of students sitting on the mat. At this stage the Specialist Teacher is observing though part of the group. Different students have counted up how many pupils are in the room today.

The teacher writes different sums on the board like $22 - \quad = 18$ and asks students to fill in the missing number. One student comes forward and writes 224. “NO”, says the teacher, “Who can do it?” She looks to other students for a response. This work is repeated for five minutes moving on to different number sentences. The teacher response is also repeated to other students during the lesson when they respond with an answer the teacher is not expecting.

Commentary

The discussion between the Specialist Teacher and the teacher after the lesson is lively but focuses on what has worked and what didn't in terms of the later activity they moved onto. It does not focus on any of the above, yet there are at least two key issues related to the approach to teaching embedded in the *Getting it Right* strategy and the First Steps model of teaching.

Firstly, there was no exploration by the teacher with the student about what he was thinking when he wrote 224 (did he know the missing number was indeed 4?). Secondly, the teacher by responding loudly with NO and then asking others for the right answer directly put the child down. The impact of that on his confidence and competence if repeated over time is worthy of exploration.

We are left asking ‘what processes and protocols need to be established to allow for this sort of interaction to be noticed, described, analysed and discussed by the teacher and the Specialist Teacher? How do ‘tough’ issues related to teacher practice get ‘to the table’?

Monitoring and developing new roles along the way

It was an important part of the *Getting it Right* strategy that the teacher did not become dependent on the Specialist Teacher teaching the class. ‘The Specialist Teacher comes in twice a week. What you saw today was typical. We work with three groups, I take one, the assistant takes one and the Specialist Teacher takes one.’ The danger was that this could become the normal pattern, limiting a teacher's opportunity to develop her capacity to use the strategies she is learning independently.

The Specialist Teacher needs the capacity to ‘sit back’ and observe a teacher's development, and to notice when it is time to give over more control and responsibility for the planning and the teaching to the teacher. There were some instances where teachers willingly took a back seat and encouraged conscientious Specialist Teachers to take most of the responsibility for the *Getting it Right* teaching, contrary to the intention to ensure that Specialist Teachers were not forced into the traditional role expectations that teachers had for Specialist Teachers. It sometimes took some strength to resist being cast into this role by classroom teachers who were reluctant to move beyond their comfort zone.

Some school Principals were very conscious of this and encouraged their Specialist Teachers to reflect on this issue. Specialist Teachers also had ongoing opportunities to talk about these things with a member of the central office *Getting it Right* team. Specialist Teachers also had the chance to discuss these things with their colleagues especially at the central training days and sometimes in local network meetings. One Specialist Teacher said ‘I could have done with some more PD on ‘how to work with

teachers who are different ‘types’; e.g. what helps a teacher ‘get it’ best?’ Another said, ‘there is one aspect we could do more professional development on and that is working with resistant teachers and dealing with our own un-sureness.’ This seems to suggest a stronger focus on work ‘like this’ is required in the Specialist Teacher professional development⁴.

3.3.7 Employing Specialist Teachers for remote communities

One case study school was in a remote community. In the second year of the evaluation, the school did not have a Specialist Teacher as their original Specialist Teacher transferred back to the city. The district committee deemed the sole teacher applicant from the school was not suitable but then failed to attract any other applicants from within the school, the district, or the system. This was a major impediment to the ongoing development of teachers at the school who had been involved in *Getting it Right* the previous year. The other teachers in the school said they would have been happy to have worked with the teacher deemed not suitable as in their view they were now missing out. It was only one case⁵. The problem is not unique to *Getting it Right*.

⁴ The professional development for Specialist Teachers does have sessions to this end – an up front session in the first PD focused on what it means to work ‘shoulder to shoulder’ and the possible effects of their change in role and the need to build positive relationships, followed by a session in the second PD called Being a Collaborative Colleague, and then a later session focused on using reflective questions and “working with” colleagues.

⁵ While this school suspended the program for 2004, it received funding for another two years and has had a Specialist Teacher throughout 2005 who will continue in 2006.

SECTION 2

GETTING IT RIGHT LITERACY CASE STUDIES

NARRATIVES

***Getting it Right* Literacy Case Studies**

Although the *Getting it Right* Specialist Teachers shared common goals and a common role description, their work varied in different schools. Various factors influenced that ways in which they worked: the size of the school, the needs of the targeted students, the flexibility of the timetable, the experience and interests of their colleagues, and the nature of school literacy and English policies.

The ten schools selected for the literacy qualitative studies, in consultation with the *GiR* management team, were all different: small and large; urban, rural and remote; stable or going through a cycle of change in enrolment patterns. The Specialist Teachers had a wide variety of experience as literacy educators; several were appointed from within the school, and were known to their colleagues when they commenced in the role; others were new appointments to the schools in which they worked. These variations provided an extremely interesting context in which to explore the actualities of the *GiR LNS* in schools and classrooms.

In the evaluation plan, agreed between the *GiR* management team and the evaluators, the intention was to visit all ten schools at least three times, and to develop six illustrative case studies. In the event, the observations and interviews in all ten schools yielded rich insights. The seven narratives that follow present vivid accounts of *Getting it Right* in action. Each narrative presents a slightly different perspective on the initiative, reflecting the ways in which the initiative had been taken up in the school involved. The narratives have been presented anonymously, with school names and teacher names omitted.

Whole school approaches were clearly evident in all schools, and the first two narratives focus on how these approaches were managed. In School 1, a high priority for the two years was implementing whole school change, through the development and implementation of a school-wide English policy. In School 2, there was a strong emphasis on continuity and coherence in a whole school approach.

The role of the Specialist Teacher, and the ways in which Specialist Teachers worked shoulder to shoulder with colleagues in planning, and in classrooms, was of interest in all case studies. Over three years, two Specialist Teachers had worked in School 3, and it was possible to explore the ways in which their different responses to the school context, and how the different experiences they brought to the role enabled them to meet the challenges of improving literacy achievement at the school. In School 4, defining and establishing the role of the Specialist Teacher was process that evolved over time.

The interviews and observations in School 5 made it possible to track the collaborative development and management of a Literacy Plan. School 6 was located in a remote area of the state, so that the impact of *Getting it Right* in a remote setting could be explored. School 7 had a strong focus on collaboration and planning.

There was considerable overlap in all the case studies, and they all illustrate the complexity and effectiveness of the strategy. The themes that emerge from these case studies reflect the findings of the surveys, but provide far more detail.

The degree of continuity in the Specialist Teacher appointments varied across the literacy ten case study schools, possibly reflecting similar variation in all schools involved in the strategy. By 2004, out of the five schools that had first become involved in the *Getting it Right*-Literacy and Numeracy Strategy in 2002, two had the same Specialist teacher, two had a new Specialist Teacher, and one was no longer involved in the strategy, having switched to numeracy⁶. Four of the five schools in cohort 2 had the same Specialist Teacher; the other school had the same Specialist Teacher, but her appointment was now full time, and not shared with another school, as had been the case in 2003.

2.1 Implementing whole school change

School 1

Context

School 1 is a large, busy school with 44 teachers and almost 700 students. Set in pleasant grounds, the school consists of a central administration block, and separate classroom blocks for different year levels. Sixty per cent of the teachers are part-time and work in job-share arrangements.

This school was selected in the second group of schools to participate in the *Getting it Right*-Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. In 2003, the Specialist Teacher was allocated a 0.5 time fraction to work at School 1, and a 0.4 time fraction at another school. The Specialist Teacher had not previously taught at School 1.

In 2004, the appointment was renegotiated as a full-time position for School 1. The allocation from *Getting it Right* was 0.9, and the school contributed the funding for an additional 0.1 to create a full-time position.

The school draws students from a disadvantaged socio-economic area. When first developed, most residents of the area were owner-occupiers, but more recently houses have been bought up as rental properties, providing cheap housing. Four per cent of students are Aboriginal, and there are a few students for whom English is a second language. There is a waiting list for student support services. As a group, boys have been identified as not performing well.

The number of part-time teachers made whole school processes such as moderation of the assessment of students' work difficult, and contributed to a lack of coherence in the curriculum.

The evaluators visited School 1 three times, and spent a whole day at the school on each visit. The schedule for each visit was planned by the school prior to the visits and each time included interviews with the Specialist Teacher, the principal and classroom teachers, and classroom observations.

Over the course of the three visits there were opportunities to see evidence of changing teaching practices. Several teachers were interviewed and number of

⁶ This was unusual, and not consistent with the overall planning of the strategy.

different classes observed. A Year 3 teacher was interviewed during the first and second visits, and whole lessons in her classroom were observed on the first and third visits. On the second visit, a lesson was observed in another Year 3 classroom. The same Year 1 classroom was visited in June and November 2004. During the third visit, a 'Kindie' lesson was observed, and three Pre-primary teachers were interviewed. All teachers interviewed and observed had worked with the *Getting it Right* Specialist Teacher.

The Specialist Teacher's perspective

First visit: 'That's what is powerful, having someone to show teachers how it's done'

In 2003 the Specialist Teacher worked with five teachers, mostly teaching Year 2. Year 2 had been identified as the cohort most at risk. Some of these teachers were new to teaching, and a Year 3 teacher had previously taught music, and so was new to generalist classroom teaching. The Specialist Teacher spent most of her mornings in classrooms, working with each teacher for 2.5 hours. Afternoons were spent on preparation and meetings with teachers. Finding time for collaborative planning was difficult in the first year, partly because of the large number of tandem teachers, and partly because teachers' Duties Other Than Teaching (DOTT) time did not coincide with the days when the Specialist teacher was working at School 1.

In response to the school leadership's recognition of the need for school level change, the Specialist Teacher conducted after school professional development sessions, maintained a literacy display in the staffroom, and collected relevant information to place in teachers' pigeon holes. In the first interview in October 2003, she acknowledged that she had strong support from the principal, and that she was seen as part of the school leadership team.

Many curriculum changes were introduced in 2003. The Literacy Net, not previously used at School 1, was taken up across the school. The Literacy Net was presented in two professional development sessions, and the staff agreed to use it in years K-7.

A major focus during 2003 was the development of a school English policy. An English committee representative of all learning areas was established, and facilitated by the Specialist Teacher. The committee developed an English policy, based closely on the English Curriculum Framework. The policy shifted the focus from conventions to the Process and Strategies strand. The introduction of approaches such as the author cycle overview was supported by professional development sessions, and the Specialist Teacher modelled strategies in classrooms. Resources such as a genre overview, structured by year levels, were provided to all teachers. Some professional development sessions were provided for teachers in the upper primary school, for example, on the links between the strands of the Curriculum Framework. 'I keep coming back to the four strands of the Framework, and I've made a guide for teachers to use for levelling, based on First Steps. The genre overview also links to the Framework, and teachers are now seeing spelling as part of writing, and how cooperative reading has links to all strands'. The Specialist Teacher invited a member of the *Getting it Right* central team to present a professional development session to the whole staff on an outcomes approach.

Initially the WALNA data was considered in relation to target setting, but this is only available from Year 3. The Literacy Net met the need for data relevant to earlier years, and broadened teachers' knowledge of what to look for in literacy development. Targets were set by the Specialist Teacher and the principal, discussed with the district director, and then reset to focus on improvement.

During the year, changes in assessment practices were introduced. Professional development sessions focused on the use of portfolios. The Literacy Net checkpoints were used in conjunction with portfolios. The principal endorsed the use of the writing Checkpoints from Years K-7. A picture chart was provided for younger children. Self assessment and peer assessments were introduced. Alison provided teachers with a range of proformas to support assessment processes. Rubrics for writing assessment were developed. Overall, a more diagnostic approach was introduced. When working in class with teachers, she has drawn their attention to the Net: 'If you watch this, you'll see this checkpoint'.

By the end of her first year as a Specialist Teacher, she described how she worked in the classroom when introducing new strategies. "I work in the classroom, and model the whole process across a couple of weeks. I think that's what is powerful, having someone to show teachers how it's done. I review it with them, we always talk, and I encourage talk between teachers.' She found that some teachers were not as interested in modelling, and wanted help with the large number of students at educational risk in their classes. In these cases, she recognized that fewer changes could be introduced, and concentrated on particular aspects, such as further developing the use of spelling journals. She saw all teachers she worked with as being involved in a change process.

Asked about her experience of the professional development provided for *Getting it Right* Specialist Teachers, the Specialist Teacher said that it was mostly good, although quite theoretical. 'I've enjoyed the PD ... we haven't been talked down to, and can make links. It's important to do more reading. It's mostly confirmed what I'd believed in, given my previous experience in a progressive school. *Getting it Right* is based on the Curriculum Framework, and critical literacy has been brought to the fore. I now understand the four roles of the reader a lot better, and know how to use the model in different ways. The sessions on running records were good ... Productive Pedagogies has been very useful, although I haven't introduced it here. ... The Aboriginal component, presented by Patsy Konigsberg was particularly good The session on school research was inspirational.'

She spoke of the value of Barrie Bennett's session for working with colleagues, and would have liked more of that. The Specialist Teacher said that initially the role of the *Getting it Right* Specialist Teacher was not really clear, and that at the other school she worked at they wanted her to work as a support teacher.

In the Specialist Teacher's view, the *Getting it Right* professional development has provided a big picture of what works well for all students, and has focused on ways of providing support for students, emphasising first wave teaching strategies instead of a deficit model.

At the end of the first interview, the Specialist Teacher said that number of critical factors had supported her work as *Getting it Right* Specialist Teacher at School 1:

- the support of the principal
- the recognition of the *Getting it Right* role as a leadership role in the school
- the encouragement to provide professional development for the staff
- the provision of funding for additional professional development for staff
- the keenness of the staff, and their willingness to take on change.

She commented on some of the hindering factors, including a shortage of time; the difficulty of shifting set pedagogical practices; the established practices at the school of withdrawal and direct instruction.

Overall, the Specialist Teacher concluded that whole school cultural changes were needed, and welcomed the principal's recognition that the *Getting it Right* role should be a full time position in 2004.

Second visit: 'It's important to maintain my collegiate status'

This visit took place towards the end of Semester 1, and the Specialist Teacher had been full-time at the school since the beginning of the year. The *Getting it Right* time allocation was 0.9, and the school provided an additional 0.1 for work in years 4-7. In Semester 1 she focused on Year 3, the group of students that had been identified as being at risk when they were in Year 2. She planned to give more time to the Pre-primary and Kindergarten teachers in the second semester. Her timetable was flexible, and although it remained difficult to use DOTT for collaborative planning, a considerable amount of informal planning took place in class and at lunchtimes. She commented on the high profile that the principal gave her role as the *Getting it Right* Specialist Teacher in the school.

The Specialist Teacher reported that there was now much more whole school activity. The English policy, referred to as 'your bible' by the principal, was set in place, and had been the focus of professional development days and staff meetings. Twice a term half of the staff meeting was devoted to English, providing, for example, a session on spelling journals.

The focus on writing continued, but some teachers wanted more help with reading strategies, such as explicit teaching of decoding, and monitoring comprehension. In the classroom, the Specialist Teacher worked in a variety of ways: modelling, or providing an extra pair of hands, or rotating around learning groups. She found that she worked slightly differently with each teacher.

Different levels of change were evident in teachers' classroom practice. Signs of change included:

- more integrated approaches
- fewer work sheets
- move away from heavy emphasis on conventions towards explicit teaching of processes and strategies
- willingness to make connections with the Curriculum Framework
- adoption of the author cycle.

One of the older teachers, three years from retirement, was happy with new approaches, and with confirmation of her own approaches. One of the more traditional teachers was gradually taking up new ideas, and *Getting it Right* seemed to be making a difference to her teaching. The former music teacher turned generalist teacher with whom the Specialist Teacher worked last year had made ‘huge changes’.

Moderation was now more widely practised, with teachers working in year-level clusters. CLNP funds were being used to provide time for moderation. Sample work from three students was provided, and teachers used the protocols (from the Australian National Schools Network) used in the Standards trial. Professional development on the Standards for English and Mathematics would be available to all teachers.

The Specialist Teacher had contributed to the state-wide Curriculum Improvement Program 2 (CIP2) and found the whole school planning, the quality professional development and sharing of best practice very confirming.

In this second year as a Specialist Teacher, she noted that the role is much easier: ‘the school is so good’. The flexibility of her planning time, and the constant accessibility and presence in the school contributed to this. The support from the school leadership was a significant: ‘I’m treated almost like a third deputy ... but it’s important to maintain my collegiate status and be seen to be friendly and open.’

More work had been done on target setting. Baseline data was now available from the Literacy Net (established in 2003), and while teachers were not very interested in targets, or using WALNA data, they saw the value of the Literacy Net. Improvement was evident in the numbers of students achieving Literacy Net checkpoints, and, with the District Director, a target that 85% of students would achieve the Year 3 checkpoints by the end of Year 3 had been set. The Literacy Net is embedded in the English policy for Years K-7. The first moderation meeting was mainly about the Literacy Net, and became an audit of teaching practices.

Some teachers had become involved in the work the Specialist Teacher had been asked to do beyond the school, including membership of the expert group on Standards, the nationally consistent outcomes for English, presentation of a poster at the state conference of ALEA (Australian Literacy Educators’ Association). ‘Even the blockers are coming round ... seeing the impact the *Getting it Right* work has made ... the practicalities.’

Many strategies introduced by the Specialist Teacher were being used across the school. ‘Buddy Bump’ reading, from the draft second edition of *First Steps*, had been popular with students. The cooperative reading roles of picture maker, codebreaker, connector and questioner were used. From being dependent on sounding out, children had been introduced to a wider repertoire of reading strategies: look for chunks of sound, read on, read back. For writing, work had continued with the genre overview and the author cycle, and the explicit teaching of editing. Students were using common editing strategies, and were ‘writing more and better’. Spelling Strategies charts were in every classroom. A *Getting it Right* resource file had been established, and a literacy pamphlet produced for parents. Parent meetings, attended by 50-60 people, had been conducted.

The *Getting it Right* professional development for Specialist Teachers had been useful, as had the advice and support of the *Getting it Right* team. The Specialist Teacher indicated that her professional learning derived from many sources, including ALEA, books, the expert Focus Group. She was aware that her credibility in the school is based on the currency of her knowledge.

A broadening repertoire for literacy teaching: one teacher's experience.

A Year 3 lesson: Code breakers, picture makers and questioners

G. had previously worked as a music teacher, but had taken up a generalist teaching role with a Year 3 class at School 1. During the first visit in 2003, the evaluators observed a Year 3 class session taught by G. and the Specialist Teacher. There were sixteen children in the class.

The Specialist Teacher began the lesson by explaining the task to the whole group. The children were to work in cooperative learning groups, taking on roles as code breakers, picture makers and questioners. Students moved to their work tables, and read the text provided for discussion, a short account of Buzz Aldrin's landing on the moon. Interest levels were high, and the students read independently, then worked quietly on individual writing activities. The Specialist Teacher and G. sometimes worked with one student, and at other times moved to small groups to ask challenging questions.

After about half an hour, the Specialist Teacher called the children to attention, and asked them to move to small groups on the floor to work 'knee-to-knee' on the task of developing 'a fat question'. Cards were provided for each role: code-breaker, questioner, and picture maker. The children were reminded that there should only be 'business talk' in the classroom. The discussions became animated, until, at the end of the hour, the Specialist Teacher ended the lesson, and the children went to recess. The students demonstrated that they had a meta-language for talking about literacy: 'texts', the 'roles of the reader', 'fat questions' were used in the small groups. During the hour, the transitions from one activity to another were managed smoothly in minimum time.

Interview: First visit. 'It has become more of a team thing'

After the lesson, the evaluators talked with G. about the lesson, and her work with the Specialist Teacher. The Specialist Teacher worked with G. for 2.5 hours a week, but G. noted that it would be better to have constant access to the Specialist Teacher, and was very positive about the continuity that would be available in 2004, when the Specialist Teacher would be working full time at the school. G. was informed about the *Getting it Right* targets, and the Literacy Net, and had been involved with the English policy group.

According to G., ideas introduced by the Specialist Teacher have spread across the school, as teachers 'talk/share/show'. Initially, she worked with her by demonstrating literacy activities and strategies, but as time went by, it 'has become more of a team thing'. The Specialist Teacher often provided teaching resources, including the Buzz Aldrin text, and supported teachers in text selection, identifying texts at an appropriate level for the class.

The students in G.'s class had previously worked in cooperative reading groups with narrative texts, but the lesson observed was the first time they had used cooperative reading with an informative text. In planning the lesson, G. and the Specialist Teacher had discussed how the questioning role would be different with informative texts in comparison with narrative texts, so decided to focus on one 'fat question'.

The Specialist Teacher's work with individual students and small groups was typical of the way she worked in G.'s class. G. said *Getting it Right* had confirmed her belief that reading ability groups were not necessary. Initially, students identified as being at educational risk worked alongside a partner, with either G. or the Specialist Teacher providing support. In the case of J., an ESL student, visualizing was one useful strategy. It was important for this student to feel part of the whole class, rather than being withdrawn from the class for support, thus losing continuity with class activities.

G. commented that her university course had provided few strategies for teaching reading, and that she had found the cooperative reading strategies introduced by the Specialist Teacher very useful. She had gained confidence, and could now modify some of the approaches, for example, using code breaker role cards at different levels. She had expanded what she described as a narrow view of teaching writing, and recognized the ways in which cooperative reading linked to writing activities.

She described how she had been using the Literacy Net for assessment and reporting: 'The class profile was not detailed enough, so I made an A3 copy of the individual profile and use it as an observation checklist ...I need to come to grips with the pointers ... it's like an audit of my teaching ... I can see where I need to give the kids opportunities to do things and learn. It helps in valuing what you observe. The Net has helped me to know what to look for. My understanding of how to use the Net has deepened, but I still find it a bit cumbersome.'

With the Specialist Teacher's help, G. had been using portfolios, selecting writing samples and developing a writing checklist for parents. She had introduced self assessment strategies, such as the PMI (positives, minuses and ideas for improvement) and peer assessment strategies.

G. spoke of her involvement in moderation activities, and how she had marked the WALNA writing task. This had made her confident about levelling a piece of writing. She and the other Year 3 teachers do as much moderation as they can, but this has been limited as G. is the only full time teacher in the group. She shared her WALNA marking experience with the whole staff.

In summing up, G. spoke of the value of the *Getting it Right* in-class support, and of having an experienced person to jointly review teaching activities. 'It's one thing to read about a strategy, but having the Specialist Teacher in the class is a wonderful resource. She gives me feedback, mainly generally, and we jointly review lessons. For example, when I started using the small group meetings with this class, some kids didn't cope, so we talked to them, and did a goldfish bowl group meeting.'

Interview Second visit: 'Both of us bounce off each other'

'My belief in the *Getting it Right* approaches has been strengthened' was G.'s opening comment when interviewed during the second visit. 'This year's Year 3 class is a harder class, a more needy class – I can do the same things, but need to provide more scaffolding. I'm more comfortable with the author cycle, and the Literacy Net. There's huge variation in reading abilities in this class, and I've asked the Specialist Teacher for help with reading strategies. It's reassuring to be able to follow the same philosophy for reading, and work with the whole class, not ability groups. The students are learning that if they're stuck on sounding out a strange word they can use other strategies, such as picture it in your head, read on/read back.'

G. spoke enthusiastically about the Buddy Bump reading activities, and how the students' enjoyed it. She organised the pairs in various ways, not always pairing stronger and weaker readers, but sometimes providing more challenging texts for the strong readers.

She reported seeing differences in students' learning. One boy, a weak reader, had difficulty understanding predictability, but the Specialist Teacher had helped to identify a problem with visual memory. The Literacy Net had helped her to audit what the student could do: what words does he know? Does he use the charts around the room? 'He is making small advances, and can do oral language and sharing activities'.

She commented on how the reading strategies were working, using the example of reading the word 'house'. She asks students about the phoneme they hear, how the sound 'ou' can be represented. The students were now verbalising the strategies they use: 'I'll read on'. Their attitudes have changed and reading is making meaning for them. On encountering the word 'historian' in a book on Egypt, the students guessed it from context, describing it as 'a person connected with history'.

In writing, she reported that the students are taking more responsibility for their own work, and whether it makes sense. Nearly all students can do peer editing, and they all know that they have to re-read their work to check that it makes sense. They use their 'have-a-go' pads. G. talked about how important sharing writing was, creating opportunities for students to hear better and weaker examples.

The Specialist Teacher works with her in the classroom for three sessions each week, and 'both of us bounce off each other'. G. valued the Specialist Teacher's feedback: it's handy to have her saying what you're doing is great, and reassuring that what I'm doing for this student I can do in class.'

Year 3: Reading with purpose

During the third visit to School 1, the evaluator was able to observe a second lesson in G.'s class. The Specialist Teacher was not present for this class. The lesson took up the one and half hour block of time between recess and lunchtime, and was another reading lesson, using a 'facts and fibs' strategy. At the beginning, G. explained the work to be done to the whole group. She modelled how to turn a fact into a fib, and reminded the students about features of information texts, such as glossaries, and strategies such as skim reading, and flicking. Different children referred to the need to use the index, the contents, and to skim read.

Students moved from the mat to the tables, where an information book was ready for each child. Students worked individually to read their own book, and then wrote six facts and one fib. The task provided them with a clear purpose for reading, and their partner was a specific audience for the questions they wrote. They then worked with a partner, swapping books, and looking for the partner's facts and fibs.

The books constituted a high quality classroom resource, were varied in levels of difficulty, and had clearly been selected to engage Year 3 students. Topics included: spiders, volcanoes, lizards, crabs, mountain gorillas, hospitals, hand tools. Many of the texts had a repetitive structure, making them accessible to students at this level.

While the children were reading, G. moved around the room, monitoring students' progress, and occasionally reminding them about classroom rules: 'If you're not listening, turn off your voices.' She, and the aide, helped individual students, working one-to-one.

When G. asked 'If you don't know a word, give me a strategy', students offered a number of strategies:

- leave out and read on
- read to end of the sentence or more
- re-read
- chunk the word
- stop and think
- slow down
- ask a question to yourself.

The pace of the lesson was determined as children finished reading and writing their questions, and then worked with their partner. At no point were students left with nothing to do, and early finishers were encouraged to find more facts and fibs, and so had the opportunity for more practice.

Overall, the lesson provided strong evidence of these students' deep knowledge of reading strategies, clearly linked to the Curriculum Framework. G. was confident in managing the lesson, and the students showed confidence in tackling the task.

Interviews and observations: Kindergarten to Year 3

During the three visits, the evaluators interviewed several teachers at School 1, and observed a number of lessons. These interviews and observations provided multiple perspectives on the impact of *Getting it Right* in this school, from Pre-primary to Year 3.

Interview with Pre-primary teachers: 'We know what to pick up'

There were three Pre-primary classes at School 1. Children, some of whom have attended at Kindie, could attend for five full days, but attendance was not compulsory. The Pre-primary teachers interviewed during the third visit were involved in curriculum changes that involve focusing differently on literacy learning, but they were cautious about moving to a more formal program. The group had a joint planning meeting every Wednesday.

They had begun to use the Literacy Net, and were becoming accustomed to it, recognizing how the Pre-primary checklist could be used to capture informal gains. For the first time, information from the Literacy Net would be passed on to the Year 1 teachers. They reported that they had shifted their focus from art and craft activities to more language based activities. While they had previously used Big Books, they were now using them in a more focused way, drawing the children's attention to sounds, spaces between words and so on. There was more 'environmental print' in their classrooms. They used a range of literacy activities and resources: story map activities, alphabet books, and toy catalogues.

They valued the opportunity to work with the Specialist Teacher: 'There are still things I want her to help me with.... Seeing some one else do the lesson ... someone else doing things you've done for years ... it has brought my enthusiasm back.'

A Kindie reading lesson: Listening, discussing, sequencing and retelling

In November 2004, the evaluator observed a session with E.'s Kindergarten group of 14 children. These children were aged between 4 and 5, attending Kindie for four half days per week. It was the first session for the day, and the children counted around the circle to see 'who was missing.' E. reminded the group of the 'You're such a good listener certificate.' This lesson centred on the shared reading of a picture story book, but many opportunities for literacy learning were taken up.

E. showed the group the picture story book, *Arthur*, and asked if they remembered that [the Specialist Teacher] had read this story about a dog to them a while ago. She turned through the pictures, and then asked 'Where am I going to read?' A student replied, 'On the words', pointing to the start of the text. E. pointed to the illustrations at the start of the book, and asked 'are these words', eliciting a firm 'no'. Gently, students were reminded about some concepts of print.

Connections with the children's own experience were made when they were asked 'how would you feel if you were left behind?' and many children responded to this question. Reminding the children that 'we need to listen and take turns', E. posed a number of questions prompting the children to make predictions about the narrative: 'Where do you think Arthur might have gone?' 'Where do you think he might be?' In responding, the children were able to build on each other's responses.

Following the reading, E. distributed photocopied illustrations from the story amongst the group, and asked them to stand in a line holding the illustrations in the order that events occurred in the story. Finally, the group retold the story, using the illustrations as prompts, beginning, 'Once upon a time ...'. The children then moved on to different group activities.

This whole episode, appropriate for these young children, had all the elements of a focused reading activity, involving discussion, predicting, sequencing, and retelling. E. talked about how she had planned it with the Specialist Teacher, and how the teaching sequence was a development from her previous practice. She referred to other literacy activities she had introduced, such as the word wall, and alphabet boxes. She noted that placed more emphasis on writing than she had done previously.

A Year 2 teacher's viewpoint: 'It's great to have an expert'

During the visit in June 2004, the evaluators interviewed J., one of the Year 2 teachers. She had returned to teaching after family leave, and worked two days a week, teaching a Year 2 class with a tandem partner. The Specialist Teacher worked in her classroom for two hours a week.

The Specialist Teacher usually takes the class, and 'has heaps of ideas'. She has given J., who had previously taught in the middle years of primary school, confidence that her university training was the 'way to go' with Year 2, and has also introduced specific strategies and activities to support the Student Outcome Statements. The teacher had been using the Outcome Statements since they first came out, but valued having access to appropriate activities.

The teacher described how the Specialist Teacher had modelled the author cycle process in her class. Students work in learning groups, read to a partner, edit each other's work, use 'have a go' books, and then go to the teacher. The Specialist Teacher used Y charts, think/pair/share strategies, and set clear classroom rules, such as the importance of 'business talk' and 'social talk'. 'It's really good way to learn, watching someone else, when teachers are usually isolated.'

The teacher noted the success of the 'School 1 Walk', and the professional development activities where the Specialist Teacher had introduced strategies such as the Word Wall, the 'mop bucket', and Buddy Bump reading. During the interview, the teacher described how she had learned to set up learning centres using rotating activities ('it took ages'). She listed a wide range of strategies that she had learnt from the Specialist Teacher including running records, guided reading, using boxes of books for partner reading, different ways of pairing, read and retell.

Planning was mainly informal, and 'it would be nice if there was more planning time, but there's only DOTT time and before and after school'.

The teacher knew of the Literacy Net, and was now using it. She valued the professional development related to the use of the Net as part of a collaborative problem solving team. She planned to use the Net pointers in parent teacher interviews. She now uses the Net in planning. An example was when she looked at the use of full stop and capital letters and saw that students did not make much use of them. She worked with the Specialist Teacher on teaching about full stops and capital letters, and when she observed the students again, could see growth. She spoke of keeping four children on the mat to build their understanding, of how 'their faces lit up' when they understood.

J. commented that the practices included in the English policy have become embedded, such as the author cycle and spelling journals.

My teaching has changed ... I previously used First Steps outlines, students wrote rough copies and good copies, and I assumed that they know how we write and why we write. ... Now I take one text type, and work on it in depth for a couple of months ... I know how to teach the author cycle, and definitely teach more explicitly. ... The strategies and the writing process have been critical for me ... and I'm confident that it's the right way.

At the conclusion of the interview, this teacher said, ‘it’s great to have an expert! I have told the principal how much I’m getting from the process ... and can provide better learning opportunities. My enjoyment of teaching has increased, and I have more up to date ideas.’

‘Buddy Bump’ reading in Year 3

In June 2004, the evaluators observed M.’s Year 3 class engaged in a lesson based on Buddy Bump reading. For the first fifteen minutes, the class sat together on the mat and listened to a review of the Buddy Bump process, where they take turns to read to a partner, gently bumping the partner when it’s time to swap roles. They were reminded of what code breakers and connectors do, how questioners create teacher-type ‘fat questions’, and how picture makers look for words ‘that make pictures in your head’. They also talked about doing a ‘picture flick’ before starting to read. Students then made the transition from whole group to pair work, lining up with their partners, each pair collecting two copies of the same book, and the coloured role cards, and finding a spot to read.

The principal’s view

The first interview

The principal had been at School 1 for four years, during a period of change at the school. In general, there was little commonality in teaching approaches in the twenty-four classrooms at the school, and the *Getting it Right* initiative offered an opportunity to ‘pull it all together’. The school has a principal and two deputy principals, but no Level 3 teachers. Curriculum leadership had been limited, and the *Getting it Right* Specialist Teacher had the time and expertise to provide leadership. The Specialist Teacher was appointed to School 1 from the central pool, and at the beginning of the year needed time to get to know the school.

He described how, as a means of setting consistent curriculum directions for the whole school, it was decided to develop an English policy. Two full days were set aside for a committee of teachers, chaired by the Specialist Teacher, to work on this policy, which was to be linked to the Curriculum Framework. The whole staff ratified the policy at a professional development day, and ongoing professional development has supported its implementation. The policy was being introduced strand by strand, and the current focus was on the writing strand. The place of phonics and withdrawal arose as issues in developing the policy.

The principal reported positive responses to *Getting it Right*. Teachers’ confidence is ‘going through the roof’, and the value of having a Specialist Teacher had been mentioned during performance management reviews. The Specialist Teacher’s skills and knowledge, the practicality of her advice and her ‘street credibility’ had impacted on the school. The Specialist Teacher’s role of providing in-class support is non-negotiable in the school. However, the Education Support teacher continued to withdraw students. Finding time for collaborative planning has been difficult, particularly because of the number of teachers working in tandem pairs.

The principal commented on the work that had been done on assessment and reporting. The Specialist Teacher had introduced the Literacy Net, had run workshops

on the Net, and there was a lot of interest. Staff spent a day on levelling and moderation, and the use of evidence of student achievement to plan teaching programs was increasing. The use of portfolios in the school had been reviewed.

The 0.5 allocation for the Specialist Teacher was 'ludicrous' according to the principal, and the 0.9 for 2004 will be better. In summary, the principal described the change in his own view of *Getting it Right*: 'When it was first announced, I thought it was pie in the sky, and when we were offered a Specialist Teacher, I said, yes, OK. Now that I can see it in action, I know the real benefits.' He described the biggest achievements to date as the introduction of the Literacy Net, the English policy, and the use of portfolios.

Eight months later: the second interview

During this interview the principal described the consolidation of the strategies initiated in connection with *Getting it Right* in the previous year.

The English policy is giving direction to the whole school ... Getting it Right is focusing on writing as a starting point ... the Literacy Net is being taken up ... We're not trying to cover too much ... without Getting it Right we wouldn't have been able to implement the policy ... the Specialist Teacher works in class, providing ongoing, accessible support.

Further work had been done on moderation, supported by professional development, and linked to the work on the Literacy Net. The next professional development would be 'full on moderation.' While it is still 'early days' the Literacy Net is providing a common language, and will be used in parent teacher interviews in Term 3.

The principal noted the strong sense of learning teams in the school, and the development of informal, collegiate groups. Team leaders have been meeting before staff meetings before staff meetings, in order to be able to inform discussion at the staff meeting. Half of each staff meeting is devoted to professional development, and teachers share best practice. The K-7 focus of the policy means that teachers at School 1 see the whole range.

In reference to target setting, he noted that further professional development was needed and further clarification of the question: "What is a reasonable target?" The Literacy Net will demonstrate any improvement, but there is no base line data for the school. The Data Club gives rough indications for WALNA results, and School 1 matches like schools in literacy and maths. Writing matches the state average, but this cannot be attributed solely to *Getting it Right*.

Third visit: interview with the principal and the Specialist Teacher

Changes evident in the school after two years' involvement in *Getting it Right* were seen to be the establishment of a common direction in teaching, and the use of a common language by teachers. Teachers were more interested in WALNA results, and wanted to see how the school was progressing.

The Literacy Net was used to provide baseline data for the whole school, and teachers were more aware of how students were achieving relative to one another. Moderation sessions organized by the Specialist Teacher had contributed to teachers' understandings of the Curriculum Framework. Teacher relief was used to provide a

half day for each class each term for moderation and leveling in year level teams and in the phases of schooling.

The Year 3 WALNA results were better than expected, with around 70% of students achieving above the benchmark, which was the *Getting it Right* target. Results provided by the Data Club showed that the school results matched like schools.

The principal identified three critical factors in the success of *Getting it Right* at the school:

- the calibre of the Specialist Teacher
- the shoulder-to-shoulder work in classrooms, providing demonstrations of good practice.
- the preparedness of staff to engage with the Specialist Teacher.

He also noted that that had been clear advantages in having a Specialist Teacher who had not been a member of the school staff. He described the Specialist Teacher as ‘the practical face of the system.’

The Specialist Teacher position had been rolled over for 2005-6, and 0.1 FTE would be provided by the school to introduce the initiative to years 4-7.

Getting it Right had been implemented as a whole school improvement at School 1, and as a result of this performance management had improved, as it was linked to the English policy. There was increased accountability, as teachers were expected to support the English policy. The whole school approach provided a common direction, enabling the school to maximize the benefits of the *Getting it Right* Literacy and Numeracy Strategy.

Conclusion

On each visit, all the interviews and observations contributed to a scenario demonstrating the implementation of a coherent policy and the building of teachers’ repertoires of literacy teaching practices. The strategies and approaches defined in the school English policy were embedded in a strong theoretical framework, and explicitly linked to the Curriculum Framework.

Note: During 2005 the principal at School 1 created a similar position to the literacy Specialist Teacher, through school funding, to address concerns with student achievement in Maths. A specialist teacher worked with a number of staff, including the Year 3 teachers. This school’s initiative is evidence of recognition of the significance and value of a Specialist Teacher working shoulder to shoulder with staff.

2.2 Continuity and coherence in a whole school approach

School 2

Context

School 2, a District High School, is located in a semi-rural area close to Perth. The primary grades occupy a self-contained building on the other side of the school oval from the secondary building. The school community is diverse, comprising primary producers (orchardists and pastoralists), small business operators, the town

community, a small Aboriginal community (less than 2% of the population), ever-decreasing RAAF personnel, and an increasing number of people who commute to the Perth CBD.

The total school enrolment at the beginning of 2003 totalled 764, representing a 5% increase since 2002. The increasing student enrolment had necessitated the establishment of a new class in 2004. Space was at a premium, and a new building was planned. Large-scale local land development was contributing to the growth of the school. The area is relatively isolated, with limited public transport to Perth. The availability of cheap housing in the area added to the proportion of a lower socio-economic cohort. Transience of students was an issue for the school, with new students enrolling (up to 17 in one term), others leaving, and there were some students who leave and return.

Expectations of *Getting it Right*

The primary principal, interviewed towards the end of the school's first year with a *Getting it Right* literacy Specialist Teacher, outlined several key changes that he expected to result from the strategy. He predicted an increase in teachers' understanding of students' needs, and of effective strategies for working with individuals, groups and whole classes to address those needs. He expected collaboration to become embedded in the ways teachers worked, overcoming some of the effects of relative isolation in a rural school. Improved data collection would lead to improved student learning, and improvements in literacy levels would increase achievement in all key learning areas. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the English curriculum framework would increase. He also expected that close monitoring of student achievement, using data from the Literacy Net and state-wide assessments would become embedded in school practices.

The *Getting it Right*-Literacy and Numeracy Strategy Specialist Teacher

The Specialist Teacher at School 2 brought considerable experience to the role. She had previously been the school literacy coordinator, was well-known by staff, and respected for her work across the school, including with secondary colleagues. She therefore already had a credible working relationship with teachers prior to taking on the Specialist Teacher role, and the principal emphasised that this was the most critical factor in the successful operation of the *Getting it Right* at this school. She was a Level 3 teacher, was undertaking university studies in literacy at masters' level, and had extensive experience in *First Steps*, including state-wide work as a *First Steps* Collaborative Teacher. The *Getting it Right* appointment added another dimension to her work, which included the coordination of the school literacy plan, co-chairing (with a secondary colleague) the literacy committee, and coordinating literacy professional development.

It was decided at the commencement of the two-year appointment that the Specialist Teacher would work with seven staff members, with Pre-primary to Year 2 teachers in 2003 and Year 1 to Year 3 teachers in 2004. This work thus provided support for the teachers of a particular cohort of students over two years, with a clear and agreed focus on writing.

Collaborative planning time

The school was allocated 1.0 FTE for *Getting it Right*. The Specialist Teacher was allocated 0.8 FTE, and the remaining 0.2 FTE was allocated to a relief teacher who attended each Thursday to provide release time for teachers' collaborative planning with the Specialist Teacher. This arrangement is indicative of the value the school placed on collaborative planning, and how this planning had become a regular component of the work of all teachers involved in the *Getting it Right*. It was expected that in these meetings the Specialist Teacher and the classroom teachers would review what had happened and plan for the following week. The principal identified these arrangements as a key factor in the success of the *Getting it Right* at the school.

Whole school planning

Coherent and systematic planning for the *Getting it Right* work was clearly evident at this school. The focus was on identifying priority areas for improvement, establishing common literacy practices across the school, directed towards achieving the targets set in the *Getting it Right*, and introducing a number of practical monitoring and planning processes.

At the commencement of the two year appointment a *Getting it Right* literacy plan for the two years was developed. This provided continuity with the school's established commitment to improving literacy learning. The plan included the targets, the decision to set writing as the school's priority for *Getting it Right* literacy work for the ensuing two years, and the year levels at which the Specialist Teacher would work in each year.

Setting targets

A review of WALNA results and other data from previous years provided the basis for setting targets to increase the percentage of students achieving above benchmark levels in writing and spelling. The following data was reviewed to evaluate literacy achievement in the primary grades:

- WALNA results for years 3, 5 and 7: writing and reading
- Standardised assessments for Years 2-6 in reading and spelling
- Writing levels using the School 2 Writing Monitoring Tool devised in 2001 based on the Writing Student Outcome Statements and used in 2001 and 2002.
- Literacy Net checkpoints collated to track students of concern from PP-Year 3 from 2002 data
- Affirmation of the need to target speaking and listening from the Teacher Assessing Communication Test (TAC) conducted in Terms 1 and 2 in 2003 for all kindergarten students.

As a result of the analysis of the data specific targets were agreed. The targets were referred to the Literacy Committee and staff, and included in both the Literacy School Development Plan and the *Getting it Right* Literacy Plan. Specific targets were set for each year level, and included all the sub-strands the English Curriculum Framework, a list of relevant teaching strategies, and data collection processes, as shown in the following example. It is interesting to note the inclusion of teaching strategies aligned with the targets, indicating the attention to planning.

Year 2 Targets, for writing, Semesters 1 and 2, 2003

Year 2 students to be working towards level 2 Writing Outcomes by the end of 2003.

Year 2 students to be in level 2 for the Writing Student Outcomes by the end of 2004.

Sub-strand	Sub-strand focus area	Teaching Strategies	Data What	Data When	Data Who	Base-line data
Use of Text	<i>Effectively produces a small range of oral and written texts across learning areas</i>	Narratives, procedures, reports and recounts Modelled, shared and independent writing Language experience Text innovation Walk and talk hoops – narrative framework Stage 1, moving to Stage 2 Sequencing pictures used to tell a story	Literacy Net Class and individual profiles	Sem 1 & 2	Class teacher	WALNA Year 3 results and targets

The Literacy Net had already been used in the school for five years, and the Specialist Teacher had focused on making more strategic use of it as a tool for teaching, and making more effective use of the data. The Literacy Net data was used in tracking progress towards the targets, and referred to explicitly in planning time. Considerable work had been done in developing teachers’ understandings of the English Curriculum Framework outcomes, and in clarifying what each outcome statement means, and what teaching strategies would be appropriate.

The Specialist Teacher had developed, in 2001, with the teachers, a ‘Writing Monitoring Tool’ based on the Curriculum Framework, and this was used for monitoring and moderation across the school. Over the course of the visits made to this school in 2003 and 2004, it was clear that this monitoring tool had been used consistently in connection with *Getting it Right*. The Tool focused on the four genres of narrative, procedure, report and recount, and provided teachers with clear criteria for assessing what students knew and could do. For example, for the conventions sub-strand in level 2, the following criteria were identified:

- Writes in complete sentences, usually in correct word order
- Uses familiar words and phrases
- Uses action verbs
- Use cause and effect conjunctions (e.g., *so, because, but, if*) and linking words related to time
- Uses some adjectives and adverbs to clarify meaning
- Awareness of sound/symbol relationship when spelling. Topic and common sight words and spelling patterns used.
- Accurately uses capitals and full stop. Overgeneralises other punctuation
- Forms letters of the alphabet and attempts to write clearly.

In-class support

The Specialist Teacher used a variety of approaches in the classroom: modelling, teaching collaboratively with the class teacher, sometimes observing and giving feedback. The approaches varied for different teachers: with two teachers time was mostly spent in supporting group work and whole class sharing; with another teacher the focus was on establishing literacy centres; and with a third teacher there was mix of modelling and helping with group activities. One lesson observed by the evaluator involved a whole class sharing time jointly led by the Specialist Teacher and the class teacher, a period when students worked in groups, during which both teachers monitored and interacted with the groups, and a final plenary session, again jointly led by the two teachers. It was observed that the lesson followed a well-planned sequence, and that detailed preparation had been involved, including the selection of a range of resources.

It was decided that the focus area for the *Getting it Right* work would be writing, explicitly connected with speaking and listening. The pre-primary teachers focused on speaking and listening. This made links with the Luke and Freebody Four Roles model. Funding from the AGQTP⁷ had been used to develop teachers' knowledge and understanding of oral language development, and a speech pathologist had been contracted to work with the Pre-primary and Year 1 teachers, identifying more explicit teaching strategies and resources. This professional development work provided effective links with the *Getting it Right* focus on writing.

The Specialist Teacher followed a regular timetable in her work with teachers, with all planning sessions scheduled for Thursdays, and across a term, hour-long periods of in-class support at the same time each week for the teachers. A copy of this timetable was given to all teachers at the beginning of the term. The copy for Term 4 2003 included the following simple flowchart to demonstrate ways in which Specialist Teacher could work in the classroom, including modelling and demonstrating, team teaching, observing:

<i>I do</i>	<i>I do</i>	<i>You do</i>	<i>You do</i>
<i>You watch</i>	<i>You help</i>	<i>I help</i>	<i>I watch</i>

In the first interview at school 2, the Specialist Teacher listed some factors that were critical in facilitating her work:

- rapport with the teachers
- being at the school at which she was teaching prior to the *Getting it Right* appointment
- continuity with roles previously held, for example, literacy coordinator
- collaborative planning sessions
- the support of staff
- the support of the school administration
- the high profile given to the *Getting it Right* Specialist Teacher role in the school
- literacy already being part of the school development plan
- the training provided for Specialist Teachers by the *Getting it Right*
- an email network of other Specialist Teachers
- connections with the QTP project.

⁷ Australian Government Quality Teaching Programme

The teachers' perspectives

One of the classroom teachers interviewed during the first visit referred to the collaborative planning time, and how it was used to review the strengths and weaknesses of lessons, to identify where the students 'were at', to plan, and to develop new ideas. This teacher detailed some of the ways in which she was teaching differently as result of her work with *Getting it Right*, including using new strategies such as spelling journals, being more explicit in planning, catering more effectively for students at educational risk, and being better able to identify what the students know and can do. She reported that she was more informed about the importance of oral language development, and had increased understanding of the English Curriculum Framework.

This teacher valued the support of Specialist Teacher ... 'she is practical ... having her on site is important ... she sees the children and understands the difficulties ... she is flexible and we have good working relationships'. Another teacher commented on the inclusion of all teachers in the development of the targets ... 'everybody was involved ... this gives us ownership'.

One of the Pre-primary teachers commented on how the planning sessions with the Specialist Teachers have come to be focused on looking at the students' needs and how she has become more aware of phonological approaches to letters, words and sentences.

The Specialist Teacher encouraged teachers to reflect on the impact of their work with the Specialist Teacher on their own teaching. A proforma was provided to assist with the reflection. Over the course of 2003, one teacher recorded these reflections on strategies she had introduced, the changes she had made to assist students' literacy learning, and the ways in which she and the Specialist Teacher had worked together:

Reading through these reflective comments provides insights into the development of the collaborative partnership between the Specialist Teacher and the classroom teacher. Over the year and half period during which these reflections were written, changes in this teacher's thinking are evident, and they are congruent with the overall goals of *Getting it Right*. Initially, she has commented on the ways the planning sessions have prompted her to think more specifically about the needs of students, and the differences in their knowledge and skills. In the later comments she identifies the development of a partnership, which was recognised by the students. On each occasion when this teacher commented on changes in her teaching, she was able to identify a particular change, such as focusing constantly on individual children.

Date	Strategies introduced	Changes in practice to assist students' literacy learning	Ways of working with the Specialist Teacher
Term 1 2003	1, <i>Barrier games, group work, modelling, games re sounds and words, clear/short instructions.</i>	<i>More focused / clear intent; take on board children's differences; earlier interviews; more thoughtful processing of Literacy Net; more individual programmes;</i>	<i>Planning with clear intentions made me reflect more when taking into consideration my students and their differences, stage of development and needs.</i>
Term 2 2003	2 <i>The three hoops as part of a language experience, including anything from craft to news. We always end in writing.</i>	<i>I am more focussed on sound strategies such as plasticine and games. Te hoops structure speech. They make children think about what they are doing.</i>	<i>The support and ideas have made me think about what I am doing. Two working with the children is really good.</i>
Term 3 2003	3 <i>Mind mapping as an extension from Y-charts. Language experiences to use in writing groups – word study/ patterns. Focussing on clapping, counting etc in modelled writing.</i>	<i>Some of the strategies such as Y-charts and language experience help focus on spoken language, meanings of words and other words we could use. I see this as useful.</i>	<i>I appreciate the way D. began as a mentor and guide, and then started encouraging me to think about what we do together.</i>
Term 4 2003	4 <i>The three hoops, flip books for sounds, circle games for sounds, magnetic letters, exploring a topic through Y/T charts and brainstorming.</i>	<i>I use my modelled writing more in exploring sounds and words, punctuation, counting words and parts of words.</i>	<i>The planning sessions have been great as I feel ready and the children benefit. Having another teacher makes what we do more versatile.</i>
Term 1 2004	<i>The literacy centres have become a focus for me because of the advantages of working together and independently.</i>	<i>More aware of support in making resources more available to help children write.</i>	<i>The children go to both of us and are comfortable with having two teachers. I see this as good for progress.</i>
Term 2 2004	2 <i>Goals – the 3 goals overall writing. Works well, but have included punctuation and spaces. Looking for a 'space difference' in 4 weeks.</i>	<i>Each child is one by one in my head/ written down so I can help where necessary and push where appropriate. Gives me a minute when working with child to push my goal for them.</i>	<i>I feel that I have become more a partner than accept whatever you say. I am happier in this role.</i>

Generally, teachers receive little feedback on their teaching, although there is strong evidence that feedback from an informed source provides valuable professional learning for teachers. A Year 2 teacher at School 2 commented on the value of the feedback on her teaching that had become a feature of her interaction with the Specialist Teacher:

‘Another factor that I liked was the fact that [the Specialist Teacher] was always there giving lots of encouragement making me realize that I am on track. We have nothing to compare our teaching with and it is so reassuring when someone can turn around and say ‘that was a good idea’, ‘I liked the way you did that’, or ‘hasn't Y improved a lot this year’.’

Two examples of lessons taught shoulder to shoulder by the Specialist Teacher and a classroom teacher, and observed by the evaluator, indicate the explicit and focused teaching that was being developed at the school through *Getting it Right*. The first lesson was observed during the first visit to this school, towards the end of 2003, and the second lesson was observed during the third visit, at the end of 2004. Both lessons aligned closely with the school's literacy plan, and the targets set for *Getting it Right*. Both also showed evidence of the planning process. The two lessons illustrated two different ways in which this Specialist Teacher provided in-class support in colleagues' classrooms.

Year 2: Sequence in narrative writing

This lesson had been planned by the Specialist Teacher and the classroom teacher to contribute to the further development of narrative writing in a Year 2 class. The class had engaged with the 'walking through the hoops' activity, which provided a framework for oral story telling. The next step involved moving from oral to written story telling, and this lesson was designed to prepare the students to take that step. The focus of the observed lesson was consistent with the writing targets set for *Getting it Right*, and the monitoring of students' knowledge and skills, which had revealed a need for explicit teaching about sequence in narrative.

At the beginning of the lesson, all the children gathered on the mat to listen to the Specialist Teacher explain how they were going to work in groups, and use sets of cards to make up a story. She reminded them about how stories have a beginning, a middle, and an end. They were very interested in the cards, and attentive to her explanation. The first of a series of well-managed transitions in this lesson then took place, as the children switched their attention to the class teacher, who reminded them about how they had been learning to use capitals and full stops, and why they were important.

Next, the class teacher organised the class into two groups, and these groups moved calmly to two spaces in the classroom – one group with the Specialist Teacher, and the other with the class teacher. Once they were settled in these groups, all children were given a set of cards, with a picture and one sentence on each card, asked to put them in order, and then to read the story they had constructed to a partner. Again, they were prompted to notice capital letters and full stops, and to remember about the beginning, middle and end of their stories. As they worked, the teachers monitored what the students were doing, and commented on their work – '...interesting beginnings...''.

The next transition involved returning to the whole group, to review and reflect on what they had been doing. The class teacher led this activity. One student read from the cards he had arranged to make a story about a pumpkin. The plan had been that after this activity the students would write individual stories, but at this point in the lesson the two teachers conferred quickly about their observations that the students were not yet ready to attempt this. In the final ten minutes of the lesson the students sat with a partner, and took turns to orally tell each other the start of their story.

Year 1: writing an informational text

This lesson in a Year 1 class commenced with a teacher-led whole class discussion reviewing what the students knew about ‘information’ and ‘teaching stories’. A pair activity followed this. All students collected a short informational text, appropriate to the grade level, and took turns to read it to their partner. This provided an opportunity for everyone to practise reading, and to gain some familiarity with an informational text. During the pair reading, the Specialist Teacher and the class teacher moved around the classroom, monitoring the reading, and supporting different pairs. Some children used the strategy of following the text with their finger

The lesson continued with the class gathering on the mat. The teacher asked ‘How does the water get in the bath?’, introducing the topic of the water cycle. The teacher drew out the children’s knowledge, and after taking about ‘interesting sentences’, wrote up on the easel a set of sentences, provided by the children, about the water cycle, in sequence.

A period of individual student work followed, during which the students constructed a collage flow chart about the water cycle. Several children, when asked, volunteered to go the front and to speak to their flow chart to the whole class. All students were silent and attentive, all eyes to the front.

The teacher then introduced the next step, the labelling of the flow charts. A discussion about ‘labelling’ took place, with some demonstrations by the teacher. The notion of sequence was raised during this discussion. In the last part of the lesson the children worked individually on labelling their flow charts, using a key words grid, ‘to help you find the words you need’.

The classroom teacher took the lead in managing this lesson, and both she and the Specialist Teacher monitored the students throughout the lesson, providing support as needed. This lesson was closely aligned to the school’s *Getting it Right* literacy plan, and to the targets. It focussed on a specific text type, on the importance of sequence in information texts. Students had opportunities to practise reading, to read an informational text, to prepare a sequenced visual text (the flow chart), and to talk about their flow chart. They also had access to key words on a specific topic, and, in the labelling exercise, the opportunity to write these words. Overall, this tightly planned, language-based lesson provided opportunities for students to compose and respond to written, visual and verbal texts. The range of activities allowed ample time for both teachers to work as needed with individual students.

The principal noted that the 2004 WALNA results showed considerable improvement. For Year 3 Writing, 90% of students had achieved above the benchmark level, a result well above the target and for Year 3 reading, 95% were above the benchmark. For Spelling at Year 3, 70% were above the benchmark, slightly below the target of 73%.

The support of the Specialist Teacher has reminded me about, and honed some of my skills and reinforced that my expectations are realistic Realisation of children’s lack of common vocabulary Confidence in teaching literacy There is no right/wrong way and monitoring progress of children is the basis of direction. Keeping up with their development ... [the Specialist Teacher] sees what is going on and offers an idea to suit the context.

At the end of two years in *Getting it Right*, the Specialist Teacher identified key changes in the school resulting from her work with classroom colleagues. She reported that the target setting process had been clarified, and made easier using the Literacy Net, Writing levels, and WALNA data. The targets provided clear directions and goals for teaching teams to work towards, and the planning frameworks now include information about successes and changes. The use of the Literacy Net for tracking targets in our planning frameworks adds to the sense of making a difference when we plan and work together.

2.3 Two Specialist Teachers

School 3

Context

School 3 is a small school in an inner suburban area of Perth, with an enrolment of approximately 170 students, 50% of whom are Aboriginal. The changing demographics of the area have had an impact on the enrolment, causing a significant decline. Families new to the area tend not to enrol their children at this school, and the school has a high proportion of students at educational risk. The school occupies a spacious site in the middle of a residential area. There is a kindergarten on site, separate from the main school buildings. Because of the declining enrolment, classes are small, and teaching spaces are generous.

The principal described a number of issues for the school: the falling enrolment; attendance, student mobility and transience, with some students only attending for short periods; the concentration of low socio-economic families in a redeveloping area; lack of cross-agency support; and low student achievement against the benchmarks. The principal and teachers reported serious concerns relating to issues of behaviour management.

The school had three Aboriginal and Islander Education Workers (AIEWs), appointed as part of the Education Department's commitment to government schools with significant numbers of Indigenous students. The AIEWs provided support for both teachers and students, assisted with class work, advised students, and acted as a link with homes.

The Specialist Teachers

This case study provided an interesting perspective for the evaluation, as two Specialist Teachers were involved over the course of the evaluation period. The school was included in the first *Getting it Right* cohort, and a Specialist Teacher selected from within the school staff was appointed for 0.4 FTE in 2002, and 0.5 FTE in 2003. This teacher, who also worked in an education support role in the school, went on leave in 2004, and so a new Specialist Teacher was appointed for 0.6 FTE when the position was rolled over for a further two years for 2004-2005. She was selected from the central pool, with advice from the central *Getting it Right* team. The same group of teachers worked with both Specialist Teachers in 2003 and 2004, the period of the evaluation.

Both Specialist Teachers had strong backgrounds in literacy. One had done post-graduate study at Edith Cowan University; the other had worked as a literacy officer in the Education Department, and had been involved in the initial development of the Literacy Net. The principal noted that the first Specialist Teacher had developed her role along the lines of a group leader, while the second Specialist Teacher played more of a role as a trainer and consultant.

The principal's view

The principal was new to the school in 2003, the first year of the evaluation. She was very supportive of the work of the *Getting it Right* Specialist Teacher, but did not drive the program. *Getting it Right* was not included in a school literacy policy. She hoped that *Getting it Right* would provide teachers with a broader repertoire of practices, and greater confidence in teaching literacy. She noted, for example, that one teacher had introduced student self-assessment, and cooperative learning activities. Time for collaborative planning for the group of teachers who worked with *Getting it Right* was provided on one afternoon per week by using the Deputy Principal and other staff to take classes. This arrangement was the result of extensive negotiation within the school.

Setting targets and monitoring students' progress

Targets had not been formalised with the District Office, but WALNA data and data relating to attendance and participation had been reviewed. The WALNA data was not seen to be a good indicator because of the high levels of transience in the student population. Cooperative learning was a whole school priority, and was aimed at embedding social skills in the curriculum. The Specialist Teacher was stretched to cover all needs in the 0.5 FTE.

The classroom teachers had contributed to the setting of targets in reading and writing, and attendance. A document: *Junior literacy targets for semester 2 2003* had been produced by the Specialist Teacher in collaboration with the team of teachers. This document described 'expected student outcomes', teaching strategies, ways of assessing students' progress, and possible resources for Level 1 and 2 Student Outcome Statements outcomes in Reading, Writing, Speaking & Listening, and Viewing. There was a focus on developing oral language, building students' interest in writing, and on developing strategies, such as word attack skills. A variety of assessment tools and information was used, including collections of writing sample, WALNA data, the Curriculum Framework, the South Australian Spelling Test, First Steps, PIPS and running records.

The targets for 2003 focused on writing, and the sub-strands of Conventions and Processes and Strategies. The Literacy Net was the main tool used for monitoring progress, and writing samples were linked to the Net. Professional development in the use of the Net had been provided by a member of the central office team, and the team reviewed the data collected from the Net every term. The use of the Literacy Net as a diagnostic tool had increased.

Literacy Net assessments were made about once each term on an individual and whole class basis. This was a collaborative process, with all teachers involved with the children contributing to the assessment of each child. Every child in the junior cluster had at least two teachers involved in their literacy development. The assessments

involved collaborative discussion of student work samples, teachers' observations, test results and other relevant evidence.

Literacy groups

The Specialist Teacher coordinated a program of literacy groups, which were planned to introduce varied and exciting activities, and the principal had observed the students' enthusiasm for these groups. The groups were an important feature in the literacy program at the school. Students in Years 1-4 worked, for three one and a half hour sessions each week in vertical-age groups according to their identified literacy needs. Students were monitored closely, and moved up and down in these groups as appropriate. The teacher remained with the same group, but children moved between groups. A lot of the planning time among the *Getting it Right* team of teachers was spent discussing their work with these groups. All teachers and the principal reported that the groups were very popular with the children. Apart from gains in literacy levels, this was significant, because of issues of student disengagement and poor attendance.

Working as a team of teachers

The team approach adopted by the 2003 Specialist Teacher was clearly evident in a lesson observed by the evaluator, a Year 2/3 lesson jointly taught by the Specialist Teacher and one of her classroom colleagues. The two teachers worked in partnership throughout the lesson, and made extensive use of small group activities.

In a pre observation interview the class teacher and the Specialist Teacher explained the goals of the lesson. They said that this was quite a difficult group of children who found it hard to listen respectfully to each other. They explained that they, the teachers, would be working as a team, and that the groups in which children would be working, after completion of the initial whole group activities, had been structured as mixed ability groups.

The lesson began with an explanation of the activities, and an explicit reference to the 'academic and social' goals for the lesson. There was a 'social' goal – to listen respectfully to the children in their group, and an 'academic' goal – to communicate ideas to other students and to listen and make meaning from what other students said.

The teachers briefly modelled and discussed each of the activities the groups would engage in during the lesson, beginning with the 'what is it?' activity. Next they modelled the 'barrier game', sitting back to back, with the children clustered around, whispering suggestions, giving advice to the teachers about following the instructions given, and watching with great interest the 'show and check' that ended the activity. The students became very engaged in this activity.

The two teachers sat back to back in the middle of the whole group of children, and listened to and carried out each others' instructions in relation to a picture they both had on their laps:

T1: Mrs R., are you ready? Can you see the penguin?

T2: Yes, Mrs S., I can see the penguin.

T1: Can you please colour the penguin's white parts in green?

The teacher carried out the instruction, and the children clustered round her, looking at her picture to see that she was doing what the other teacher had asked.

T2: OK Mrs. S., my turn. Now, Mrs. S., with your red pen, can you please draw a seal behind the polar bear.

T1 I don't know if I've done this right. I wasn't listening very well.

The children offered comments, and the modelling continued.

The third activity, a Lego environment game, was also modelled. The students were organised into three groups, and the rotation process explained. The Specialist Teacher and classroom teacher worked with the 'what is it?' and barrier game activities, and the Lego group worked independently. A bell indicated when the groups should change activities.

The activities provided opportunities for practising and developing key language skills, for example, speaking clearly and giving precise instructions in the barrier game. 'He's asking a question to get more information.... I want you to colour the cow yellow. ... At the bottom of the tree. ... How many?' The activities provided contexts in which the students needed to use language purposefully. The lesson ended with the whole class gathered on the mat for a think-pair-share activity reflecting on what they had done during the lesson.

Collaborative planning

The Specialist Teacher, because of the negotiated timetabling arrangements, met with the group of classroom teachers weekly for collaborative DOTT time for planning. The formal planning hour had achieved (with some administrative difficulty) by freeing teachers at the same time, using the school's resources, (e.g. the Deputy Principal takes a class). They had also worked together in school holidays to plan activities for the coming term. The evaluator's meeting with the group as a whole, rather than with individuals, was at the behest of the group, and reflected the strength of the team.

Teachers said that planning time was spent mainly in such activities as sharing action learning strategies, designing projects, (such as a newspaper to which all literacy groups made contributions), discussing *First Steps*, discussing models from other schools, and looking at samples of students' work. The Specialist Teacher contributed ideas to the planning meetings from the *Getting it Right* training program, and also from Graduate Certificate classes she attended at Edith Cowan University. The focus was on planning for co-operative learning among the students. The teachers noted that their planning time was more focused and they were less likely to 'go off on tangents.'

All teachers emphasised the value of collaborative planning and the input from the Specialist Teacher. One outcome of working together like this, in a small school, was that all teachers knew all the children. Over time, one teacher noted that the Specialist Teacher had 'loosened the reins' in the collaborative planning sessions. The Specialist Teacher found the collaborative planning beneficial. 'I usually have an agenda, but sometimes we need just to sit and talk. In planning sessions we have moderated writing samples, discussed students' needs, done forward planning.'

The Specialist Teacher worked in classes in a variety of ways, team teaching as in the lesson described above, modelling and working with groups of students. Over the two years, the teachers noted that the Specialist Teacher had tended to teach alongside them more than model key strategies.

Changes in teaching practices

The classroom teachers identified a number of changes in their teaching practices that they attributed to *Getting it Right*. They felt more confident, valued the team support, shared ideas and practices, and discussed successes and failures. There was much more commonality in the use of resources and strategies across the school, and all teachers agreed that the Specialist Teacher had brought ‘lots of new ideas’. Their teaching was more explicit, and they had used the Four Roles of the Reader model for more explicit planning. One teacher noted that she was now much better at ‘problem solving’ in relation to planning to meet students’ needs, and used ‘heaps more strategies’. The group reported changes for students, who were ‘happier’, were being challenged, and were receiving instruction that matched their needs. Students were more confident to ‘have a go’. From the literacy groups, students were developing skills in peer tutoring.

We all get to know all the children. We problem solve. We all help each other ... we know (the children's) learning strengths and weaknesses.

Teachers agreed that their teaching had become ‘more explicit. They said that they now explained the goals of the lessons to students and encouraged them to develop a ‘metalanguage’ to describe their learning. They also encouraged students to reflect on what they have learnt.

The team members reported that the Specialist Teacher had ‘brought us together and made us feel valued’. The Specialist Teacher’s perceptions of the changes that had taken place matched those of the teachers.

She listed increased confidence, clearer expectations, more explicit teaching, more reflection on teaching practice, more attention to the ‘intellectual quality’ of what was being taught, and the development of teachers’ skills in observing and assessing their students. Initially, she said, ‘the teachers asked me to do the assessments, now they prefer to do it themselves – they’ve taken full ownership’. One major change was the redevelopment of portfolios into ‘learning journeys’. The portfolios had become collections of worksheets, and the learning journey initiative resulted from discussion at *Getting it Right* collaborative planning meetings. They were used in interviews with parents. On designated afternoons or evenings students’ work was displayed around the school in ways that showed each child’s development. Parents were able to walk around the displays and speak to the teachers as they chose. The Specialist Teacher said that parents found this ‘less confronting’ than formal parent teacher interviews, and that more parents tended to show up.

Collaboration and leadership

The Specialist Teacher had been invited to give a presentation to the second cohort of *Getting it Right* Specialist Teachers in their initial training meeting. She noted that

this had prompted her to reflect on ‘how fortunate we’ve been with our collaboration ... the relationships within the team ... the collaborative planning time’.

The Principal said that she believed the most powerful aspect of the *Getting it Right* strategy, in terms of its contribution to teachers’ professional learning, was the leadership provided by the Specialist Teacher:

Having someone to lead the team. Otherwise collaboration on and focus on teaching strategies all wouldn’t happen and the collaborative time wouldn’t necessarily focus on literacy. Teachers would go off on tangents to talk about things like student behaviour.

2.4 Defining and establishing the role of Specialist Teacher

School 4

School Context

In 2003, School 4 was a very small school situated in the eastern section of a suburb of Fremantle. Opened in 1967 as a much larger school, it now had only four classes, Pre Primary/1; 2/3; 4/5; 6/7; and fewer than eighty students. In 2003/4 it was thought that the school would amalgamate with another school in 2006, but in fact, due to a further decrease in enrolments, School 4 was closed at the end of 2004.

The neighbourhood has a blend of private home ownership and Homeswest rental accommodation. In 2003 a five year government program was aiming to refurbish the area by reducing the number of Homeswest rental properties to a ratio of 1: 8 by the end of 2005. The student population included students of Aboriginal cultural backgrounds as well as Portuguese, Indonesian, Papua New Guinean and Australian. The principal said that the school ‘struggled; to obtain parent involvement.’

The principal and teachers felt that, in some ways, the fact of low student and teacher numbers helped to make teaching programs more effective. Classes were very small, there were generous amounts of space and easy access to resources, all of which the teachers appreciated. Communication was also much easier than in large schools. However, on the downside they said that staff often felt the lack of a ‘critical mass’ sufficient to move programs forward and allow for effective input and sharing of ideas.

The evaluators visited this school on four occasions in 2003 and 2004.

At the first and second visits, the principal, the *Getting it Right* Specialist Teacher and a teacher were interviewed. This teacher’s class was observed when she was working with the Specialist Teacher. On the third visit, another teacher’s class was observed. On the fourth and final visit, both of these classes were observed. The second teacher was interviewed during the two 2004 visits. Informal discussions were held with other teachers in the school staffroom at morning tea and lunchtimes.

Documents collected from the school included copies of:

- The School Development Plan 2004

- Curriculum planning documents, including the Curriculum Improvement Plan
- The Students At Educational Risk (SAER) policy and timeline
- The Learning Technologies plan
- Target setting documents
- The School 4 Performance Management Agreement
- The School 4 *Getting it Right*-Literacy and Numeracy Strategy Plan
- Literacy Net Class Profiles
- Teachers' *Getting it Right* Literacy Action Plans

The role of the Specialist Teacher

In 2003, the Specialist Teacher worked mainly with the Grade 2/3 teacher, with whom she shared the class. This teacher worked part-time, 0.5. The Specialist Teacher's *Getting it Right* FTE was 0.5. This time was spent in the classroom and in planning with her colleague, and in assisting the other teachers in the school with their planning. At the start, the Pre-Primary/Grade 1 teacher, who was in her second year of teaching, did not wish to be involved in *Getting it Right*, as she believed she did not need the help. She was not required to be part of the program. In 2004 the situation changed as the *Getting it Right* Specialist Teacher role became better understood and accepted among the teachers. The Specialist Teacher began working in another colleague's classroom and also spent time with the Grade 6 teacher, in his classroom and in planning sessions. She also led the staff in curriculum planning and decision making in a regular slot of time at the fortnightly staff meeting.

The Specialist Teacher said that at first she had felt very unsure about her role:

The role was not clearly delineated. I felt that I would have to define my own role and I was unsure of how to go about this. There was stunned silence when (the Getting it Right role) was announced at a staff meeting. The Getting it Right training sessions were a great help. It helped to talk to all the other Specialist Teachers and hear about the experiences they were having and how they were overcoming obstacles.

Initially, a couple of teachers thought that the Specialist Teacher's role was to take the weaker students out of the classroom for 'remedial' work. Not all teachers were supportive of her role. The Specialist Teacher said that these perceptions started to change after a couple of months.

The principal said that the Specialist Teacher's work influenced the whole school. She was available to assist all teachers and was acknowledged to be the curriculum leader in the school. She said that she had arranged that part of weekly staff meeting time to be set aside for curriculum planning, led by the Specialist Teacher. Teachers developed the whole school literacy plan during this planning time, in which the Specialist Teacher role was pivotal. The Specialist Teacher noted that a major part of her role was to co-ordinate the school's literacy program: 'Keeping the literacy program on track'.

The Specialist Teacher did not see herself as an 'expert' but viewed her *Getting it Right* and curriculum leadership roles in terms of being an extra resource in the school 'to help with planning, come up with ideas and be an extra adult in the classroom.'

I had to define my role within the parameters as explained (at the Getting it Right PD sessions). It took a while to get established and I still feel insecure sometimes. The teachers seemed to be – not resentful exactly – but they didn't understand what the (Getting it Right) role was supposed to be about. There were varying degrees of acceptance. The principal is very supportive and that makes my role much easier.

It was clear, however, from conversations with teachers over the four visits, that this Specialist Teacher was greatly respected by other staff members. She was regarded as a person with advanced knowledge of literacy and curriculum, to whom others looked for advice and guidance. Her status as a leader as well as a resource person was observed to be growing from visit to visit.

Yet the teachers seemed wary of the 'specialist' status. This wariness went hand in hand with an apparent sense of their own professionalism. They were willing to recognise and reap the fruits of the Specialist Teacher's superior knowledge but refused to see her as some kind of expert who was there to tell them how to do their job. The Year2/3 teacher, who in classroom observations showed herself to be a talented teacher, said that she regarded the Specialist Teacher more as a highly knowledgeable colleague and a source of ideas than as a specialist mentor.

'At the start I thought that she would work only with the special needs children. But we realised quickly that this would not work and so we developed our present team teaching approach. I now see her primarily as a co-teacher who brings specialist knowledge and training to the partnership. I also see her as the curriculum leader in the school. She's the one that moulds us all together. She keeps us on task and up to date.'

The Specialist Teacher believed that the most critical factors that enabled her to work effectively were:

- the support from the principal, in terms of:
 - encouragement, both personal and (e.g.) to be a WALNA marker and member of the Data Club
 - timetabling – collaborative DOTT time for planning
 - generous provision of resources, especially computers; and
- support from other teachers
- small student numbers (Although she had reservations about very small student numbers)
- generous classroom spaces

Support for the role of the Getting it Right Specialist Teacher

Both the Specialist Teacher and the teachers said that they were very well supported by the principal. Support included excellent access to generous resources, including new computers, personal encouragement from the principal and the provision of scheduled time for *Getting it Right* planning. Teachers said that they enjoyed their work, and that this was largely because of the high levels of support from the principal.

Planning

Most planning was done 'one to one' with the Year 2/3 teacher and, in 2004, with the Grade 4/5 teacher. They spent at least one hour per week in scheduled (DOTT) planning time and at lunchtimes. In addition to this time they sometimes planned from home, using the telephone.

The lessons observed reflected sound and detailed planning. There was a theme that was carried over into other activities like art and science (evidence of this was in children's art work and artefacts around the room, and the individual lessons were part of a longer unit or sequence. There were whole group activities, and carefully crafted small group activities. Timing was important as were the well managed transitions between activities. The roles of adults in the classroom had clearly been carefully constructed within the overarching concepts of the total plan.

Working in the classroom

The Specialist Teacher worked particularly closely with the Year 2/3 teacher because she actually shared the Grade 2/3 class with her, outside of her *Getting it Right* Specialist Teacher role. (Each teacher worked a 0.5 time fraction with this class). At the first and second visits, this class consisted of 11 children, nine boys and two girls. In 2004, there were only 12 children in the class. They combined with the 4/5 class (14 children) for the Literacy Hour and some other activities.

The Year 2/3 teacher was recognised by the principal and colleagues as a 'gifted' teacher. She and the Specialist Teacher worked in the 'shoulder to shoulder mode, planning together, observing each other, sharing whole group activities and individually taking small groups for specific activities. The Specialist Teacher would bring back new ideas from the *Getting it Right* PD and she and her classroom colleague would 'try them out' in the classroom. The Specialist Teacher was an avid searcher of the Internet, always 'on the look out' for good literacy teaching strategies.

In the Year 2/3 class during 2003 the Specialist Teacher often worked intensively with two high needs students who were of aboriginal background. The children clearly enjoyed the Literacy Hour. As the classroom teacher said:

They love the Literacy Hour and they are quite upset if anything happens to stop it from happening on a particular day. They keep asking – even when they are having sport. 'When's Literacy Hour'?

She said that from the very start of the relationship she and the Specialist Teacher had worked as 'equal' colleagues. The Specialist Teacher, in a separate interview, agreed with this. The Specialist Teacher did not model strategies or give direct feedback about her colleague's teaching, other than in the context of mutual reflection on particular lessons or strategies. Yet the teacher acknowledged:

I am teaching far better now. I was very caught up in traditional teaching. The Specialist Teacher, in her calm way has guided me. I would never have worked like this before.

The principal believed that the work of the *Getting it Right* Specialist Teacher had changed the teaching of literacy across the whole school. She said that others ‘followed’ the model developed by the Specialist Teacher and her Year 2/3 colleague.

Assessment and target setting

The principal said that the whole school was involved in setting targets for literacy. Targets were set out in the whole school literacy plan which was collaboratively developed under the Specialist Teacher’s leadership. Teachers believed that the targets were realistic and achievable.

Assessment tools used were:

- A document developed by the Specialist Teacher for teachers’ use, based on the Curriculum Framework and Student Outcome Statements
- The Literacy Net
- WALNA data
- Reading Recovery levels
- Student self evaluation (‘Passports’)

The Year 2/3 teacher used mainly the assessment sheet the Specialist Teacher had developed. She felt that this document was better suited to the small numbers they taught than the Literacy Net. She also used Reading Recovery Levels as an assessment tool. She used First Steps activities, but did not use First Steps for assessment purposes. The children liked to assess their own work using the ‘passports’ which were stamped at the end of each literacy hour.

The principal said she expected the WALNA data to show that the stronger students were getting better and the weaker students were ‘holding their own.’ ‘Some things’, she said, ‘are beyond out control. Intellect is one.’ She encouraged her teachers to be WALNA markers because: ‘That is very good PD’.

The Specialist Teacher said that she encouraged teachers to discover individual areas of weakness in the children, and to work on those, setting special targets for children at risk, in line with the Students at Educational Risk (SAER) strategy which was identified as one of three Priority Areas in the School Development Plan. (The others were Literacy Across the Curriculum and Physical Education and Health). The Specialist Teacher had developed diagnostic assessment tools to assist the teachers in this area. Targets were incorporated into the whole school literacy plan.

At the two earlier visits, the Specialist Teacher said that the teachers were still unsure about how to use data about student performance to enhance learning. She was trying to help them by compiling examples for discussion at staff meetings. She had also printed off information to give to individual teachers, but she said they had not yet accepted the need for a data based approach ‘across the board’. This began to change in 2004.

The Specialist Teacher was also working with the whole staff, at staff meetings and individually, to develop their understanding of the Curriculum Framework, the Curriculum Improvement Program and the Students at Educational Risk (SAER) strategy. The Curriculum Outcomes were incorporated into the whole school literacy plan, and the Specialist Teacher was encouraging the teachers to use them as the basis

of planning for their teaching programs. Initially, said the Specialist Teacher, the teachers seemed unfamiliar with the Outcomes and they were not 'comfortable' about using them for assessment. Over the four visits, however, teachers' knowledge and understanding in this area had grown substantially. They recognised this themselves and said that the great improvement was largely due to the Specialist Teacher's leadership and influence.

In October/November 2003 the aim was for all children to have reached Level 2 by the end of Year 3, Level 3 by the end of Year 5 and Level 4 by the end of Year 7. In 2004, these targets were being achieved. Some individual children were exceeding the targets set for them.

The principal pointed out that the small numbers of children needed to be taken into account when interpreting the school's WALNA data:

'Because of the small numbers it doesn't mean a lot. Just one child could skew the whole result.'

Training and support

The Specialist Teacher said that the aspects of the *Getting it Right* training she found most useful were the ongoing support from the central office staff, the 'straight information sessions' that had good presenters, and the round table presentations. The training had raised her enthusiasm so that she was keen to follow up the sessions with more reading and internet research. She had communicated her enthusiasm to the other members of staff, especially her Year2/3 colleague.

Changes in the classroom teachers' teaching that were the result of Getting it Right

The Year2/3 teacher believed that her teaching had changed as great deal, as a direct result of working so closely with the Specialist Teacher.

I am teaching far better now. I was very caught up in traditional teaching. I would never have worked like this before. The main change is that I now do much more planning. And more thorough planning, for a variety of activities within a common theme. It's a lot more work at the start, but once it's done, you start to really see the benefits. I also work better with other adults in the classroom and I use a more enquiry based, student centred approach. And of course the Specialist Teacher has helped me with finding more teaching strategies and better activities.

Similar comments were made by the Year 4/5 teacher. The principal and teachers believed that all teachers in the school had changed their practice in significant ways. (See below).

Changes in the Specialist Teacher's own teaching that were the result of Getting it Right

The Specialist Teacher said that her own teaching had changed in significant ways as a result of her *Getting it Right* role and training:

Oh yes, my teaching has really changed. I have learnt so many new strategies and I now spend much more time on planning. I am much more focused on student centred enquiry learning and on elements of the Curriculum Frameworks.

She made the point that, as a result of her *Getting it Right* role, she was now 'looking outward' for more resources and ideas, so that, in one sense, the *Getting it Right* training had extended beyond itself to 'seed' quests for other sources of specialist knowledge. This Specialist Teacher made good use of the Internet for this purpose and said that she found the UK Literacy Hour model especially useful. This had had a major influence on her own teaching. She now valued spending longer blocks of (well planned) time on literacy, used more group work and placed greater value on team teaching and working with other adults in the classroom.

She was enthusiastic about using the Curriculum Framework for planning teaching and assessment. She was certainly an important catalyst for Curriculum Framework implementation in the school. She said that, since undertaking the *Getting it Right* training she had become much more aware of the need for classroom programs to reflect the Curriculum Framework Outcomes. She was also more aware of the value of using student achievement data to plan for improvement for individual students, groups of students and at a whole school level.

Main developments observed and discussed at the third and fourth visits

School Context

By the time of the ACER researcher's third visit to School 4 enrolments had dropped further. There were only 14 children in Grade 3, taught by the previous year's Year4/5 class, and 12 in the class taught in tandem by Specialist Teacher and a colleague. A decision had been made to combine the two groups for the Literacy Hour and some other activities, so that the Specialist Teacher, and her two colleagues planned and taught together. This made for a very generous deployment of personnel, resources and space. Three teachers, at least one aide, and other adult helpers were present with the 25 children in most lessons. Because of the school's special training arrangements with Notre Dame University, student teachers were also present in the classrooms for much of the year. They were active helpers in the lessons observed during the two visits made by the ACER researcher in 2004. In the adjoining classrooms the partitions could be opened to create one large space, and there was constant movement of students and teachers between the two airy, well stocked and pleasant learning spaces.

By the researcher's fourth and final visit to North Lake, towards the end of 2004, it had been decided that the school was to close at the end of the year. Teachers and students were already busy packing up equipment in readiness for the move.

The *Getting it Right* Specialist Teacher, had applied for and received a transfer to another school where she was to teach a Pre Primary class. She was disappointed that her *Getting it Right* role appeared to be coming to an end and it seemed likely that she would have less opportunity to exercise the kind of curriculum leadership she had so enjoyed, and in which she had been so successful, at School 4. However, subsequent to the ACER visit, she was appointed as a Specialist Teacher to another school for 2005-2006.

The role of the Specialist Teacher

By the third visit, in 2004, the Specialist Teacher appeared to be much more confident that the staff understood, accepted and appreciated her role as the *Getting it Right* Specialist Teacher. This appeared to be chiefly due to three factors:

1. Maintenance and staff acceptance of her regular presentations at the fortnightly staff meeting
2. Her growing credibility among the staff. This was based strongly on of the knowledge and ideas she was bringing back from the *Getting it Right* training sessions, a developing network of *Getting it Right* Specialist Teachers and her own enthusiastic seeking of ideas and resources, mainly from the Internet
3. The highly successful model she had developed with the Year 2/3 teacher, about which other staff had become curious and, in the words of one teacher: 'rather envious.'

A major part of staff meeting time was used for curriculum activities, led by the Specialist Teacher. During this time she shared with the whole staff many of the ideas and strategies she had learned at the *Getting it Right* professional development. The principal said that the staff were 'more and more' looking upon the Specialist Teacher as the curriculum leader in the school. The Year 2/3 teacher believed that whereas, in 2003 *Getting it Right* had involved mainly herself and the Specialist Teacher, the whole staff had now been brought in:

Last year it was just the Specialist Teacher and me. Then the Year 4/5 teacher was brought in as the third brain. Now it's the whole school. They (the teachers) don't mind going to the Specialist Teacher for advice because that's her job and they understand that now.

The Pre-primary teacher still preferred to work alone in the classroom, but she was increasingly asking the Specialist Teacher for advice and suggestions. She was particularly interested to hear about the 'good' activities which the Specialist Teacher was bringing back from the *Getting it Right* PD sessions and was using many of them with her children.

The Specialist Teacher had also started to spend time in the classroom of the Grade 5/6 teacher, at his invitation. This class was not observed by the ACER researcher, but the Specialist Teacher reported that he now actively sought her support and that he had made some major changes to his practice. Where, formerly, he had taught the class mainly as a whole group, he was now much more inclined to do small group work with the children. He and the Specialist Teacher had adapted many literacy strategies to suit his class.

The Grade 3/4 teacher had now 'fully joined' the *Getting it Right* program. He explained that, as a person who had been teaching for more than twenty years, he had, initially been somewhat sceptical about *Getting it Right*. The main thing that had convinced him that 'there must be something in it' was his observation of how well the Specialist Teacher and her colleague seemed to work together, the 'buzz' of their classroom and the obvious engagement and happiness of the children. He could see, he said, that their classroom was operating in very different ways from his own. The

most obvious was that where he tended to teach mainly whole group activities in a very teacher-directed way, he could see that they usually worked with the children in groups and made maximum use of other adults to assist in group work. In 2004 he 'inherited' the children who had worked with these teachers in 2003, and was impressed with their progress and attitude to learning. He felt he had 'a lot to live up to.'

As an experienced teacher, he was at first hesitant about sharing his classroom practice with the Specialist Teacher. His comments, below, are quoted at length because they illustrate better than any commentary some of the early misconceptions about the Specialist Teacher's role and the success of her gentle and non threatening approach in helping and encouraging this teacher to change his teaching in quite substantial ways. The comments show how these changes were not just cosmetic, but the Specialist Teacher extended deeply into some fundamental aspects of his thinking.

Last year I did all the planning and the Specialist Teacher came in and helped with the group activities. I would plan, and report back to her and say: 'This is what you will be doing.' She would come in and I would have told her what activities she would be involved in. But then she brought in some good ideas, and I could see she was running a very successful literacy hour with her colleague.

This year it is completely different. This is partly because of the numbers. My class has 14 children and their class has 12. So we are all combined. We work as a team of three and all plan together. We plan who will do what and the Specialist Teacher comes up with good ideas and activities.

They have this very dynamic relationship, they are always bouncing ideas off each other. I feel envious at times, but now I feel really happy because I can participate.

I thought all that planning would make more work but as it's turned out I've been able to cut down on the amount of time I used to spend. So it's been beneficial. It's taken the planning burden off because we plan together and the Specialist Teacher does things like finding all the Internet sites for the different activities. She finds us a lot of things. But the planning is quite regimented, really. I know exactly what I have to do. We all know exactly...

I've learnt things I never knew about before. Like how to modify different activities to suit different groups. You can actually adapt activities for any group.

And reading isn't just reading any more. We modify the questions for comprehension. Reflecting, analysis, interpretive questions. In the past, I just did normal comprehension. After speaking to the Specialist Teacher I decided to give multiple choice. It's interesting to see what happens when you put in the analytical ones. I have enjoyed talking to her (about this).

In a way it's changed from learning to interpreting....

The kids like it when the Specialist Teacher and I do things like sharing banter. And we do modelling for the kids, like we pretend we have a problem to solve. This helps the students to work out a problem by listening to someone else.

I really appreciate working with her. I get quite lonely in the classroom.

I've had to change my ideas, but that's been to the good.

Support for the role of the Getting it Right Specialist Teacher

In 2004 as in 2003 the Specialist Teacher was totally supported and encouraged by the principal. The scheduled planning time was continued and resources were excellent.

Planning

Planning for the Literacy Hour activities continued as in 2003, except that the second teacher had now joined the Specialist Teacher and her colleague in the scheduled and unscheduled planning sessions. New ideas strategies and activities were constantly being developed. Some of these were the result of information the Specialist Teacher brought back from the Getting it Right training, others from internet and other research and reading.

Whole school planning, led by the Specialist Teacher, mostly took place at the fortnightly staff meetings. This too was informed by the Getting it Right training and other research and reading.

Planning was linked to assessment, and Curriculum Framework Outcomes, which were incorporated into planning documents designed by the Specialist Teacher. Teachers' planning skills were strengthened by their growing understanding of outcomes based education. This reflected elements of the schools Curriculum Improvement Plan (2004), for which the Specialist Teacher carried chief responsibility.

Working in the classroom

By the time of the third and fourth visits the Pre-primary teacher continued to prefer working alone with her children, but was now routinely asking the Specialist Teacher's advice and opening up her practice through discussion with her and the other teachers. In her classroom she was using many of the strategies and activities that had been brought back from the Getting it Right training.

The three way partnership was flourishing (see comments above) and the Grade 6 teacher had introduced a Literacy Hour, in which the Specialist Teacher participated at least once a week.

As explained above, the second teacher very much appreciated the shoulder to shoulder working relationship with his colleagues. Unlike the Year2/3 teacher, however, he liked to see the Specialist Teacher actually modelling the activities:

When we first started, she would just explain the activity and say 'try this or that.' Now it is more subtle. I find the best way is for me to see her do it first. The best way for me is to watch and then copy something I have

actually seen being done, e.g. the listening strategy, Game X plus Y. 'Are you listening? She points and talks as she goes, looking for a person. And she gives lollies. It's not just the activity, it's the way it's done and the way she encourages the kids.

Classroom observations showed that all of the 26 children in the group taught by the Specialist Teacher and her two colleagues were making excellent progress in literacy. In all classes observed, the level of engagement in a variety of stimulating carefully planned and coordinated activities was extraordinary. As at the first visit, the Literacy Hour showed the benefit of meticulous planning. The three teachers worked 'shoulder to shoulder' sharing the teaching role in various well co-ordinated large and small group activities which were unified under a common theme. Most, but not all, of the Specialist Teacher's time was spent with a small group who had been identified as being at educational risk.

The following anecdote illustrates the success of the *Getting it Right* teachers in relation to one difficult student:

At the first observed lesson in 2003, the Specialist Teacher and her colleague, in the pre observation interview warned the ACER researcher that one little boy would probably cause trouble.' They were quite nervous about this and clearly afraid that his behaviour might spoil the carefully crafted literacy hour.

In the initial whole group activity on the mats this boy quickly made his presence felt. He made little or no attempt to listen or participate. He was restless and soon became difficult, started to push other children, called out loudly, shuffled about in his space then got up and began to walk around the room talking loudly and generally making a nuisance of himself.

At one point, the teacher aide was about to remove him from the classroom, but after the transition to the small group activities he settled down somewhat, and managed to see out the lesson. But for most of the time he looked angry and unhappy. He was shunned by the other children, especially the little girls, who regarded him with disdain and were careful to position themselves as far from him as they could. The teachers were unfailingly patient with him. They tried, with occasional success, to engage him in the activities, but he was continually distracted and his behaviour, when not overtly disruptive, was inappropriate.

At the second and third visits, this boy was showing improvement. He seemed to be more accepted by the other children. The researcher noted that he seemed happier and more interested in his work, which, according to the teachers had also improved. However, he still had a few lapses, especially during the mat activities, when on a couple of occasions he was unable to resist the urge to push, pinch and shove the children around him.

At the fourth and final visit, the researcher witnessed a spontaneous event which illustrated the progress this child had made. The partitions between the two classrooms were (temporarily) shut and children were engaged in different small group activities in each of the two rooms. Four groups were working in one room with the teachers and a teacher aide, two groups were working in the adjoining room with

the Year 4/5 teacher and a student teacher. The literacy hour was nearly over. The researcher, who was with the Year 4/5 group decided to leave that group and go into the other room. As she entered, she saw an earnest looking young student leave his small group and approach the Year 2/3 and her group:

Mrs ..., I have written a play and I would like to read some of it to your group to see if they like it.

In a split second, the astonished researcher recognised this student as the child who had formerly been so troublesome. Permission granted to start; he positioned himself in front of the students and began to read fluently, with great expression and obvious pride in his work. The other children responded with encouraging remarks and clapping, to which he responded gravely and graciously. The former pariah, or so it appeared, had become the class hero!

Assessment and target setting

During the second and third visits the Year 2/3 teacher said that the teachers were becoming much more skilled in assessment, and that this was largely because of the Specialist Teacher's work in helping teachers to understand the principles of outcomes based assessment and the practical ideas she was bringing back from the *Getting it Right* training:

She gives us really practical help. One thing was the rubrics - she learned how to develop them at her training sessions and she sets them up for us. That's been really useful for assessment. And we also use them to allow the children to do self assessment for their passports.

The Specialist Teacher said that she saw herself as a kind of 'broker' of the Curriculum Outcomes in the school:

I seem to be always in the background making the links with the Outcomes.

The Year 2/3 teacher agreed with this view.

She has made the Curriculum Framework documents much more usable and understandable. We know how to make the links between planning and assessment, that's what we do all the time in our planning sessions. We don't just go blindly through them. She helps us to make sense of the Outcomes.

By the final visit, the teachers were noticeably more familiar with the idea of using the Curriculum Outcomes for assessment purposes. At the first visit, the Specialist Teacher had said that the teachers 'were not altogether comfortable' with the idea of assessing on the basis of the Outcomes. By the final visit, this situation had changed. Again, the nature and extent of the change is perhaps best illustrated in the words of one of the teachers.

We have sessions with the Specialist Teacher when we look at the Curriculum Framework Outcomes. So now we understand what they mean and we all use them for our planning and assessment all the time. We need to do this. We need to be

able to talk the same language and levels as the Uni students who are learning about this. The Specialist Teacher has the time to help us and to plan and to share.

Similarly with WALNA (At the early visits the Year 4/5 teacher said he was opposed to the idea of WALNA, partly on the grounds of Union opposition.)

I was a WALNA marker this year. The Specialist Teacher had done a lot of work with us in sharing the WALNA data and information. I knew exactly what they were talking about in the training. As a first time marker my marking was 90%-100% correct. This points to the good moderating activities that the Specialist Teacher had done with us. We had already been doing this in our marking at the school. I was amazed at the level of ease I was able to just slip into it. I compared myself (favourably) with teachers who hadn't had Getting it Right.

In this quote, the teacher was referring to the Specialist Teacher's work at the fortnightly staff meetings, where, in addition to her regular curriculum planning sessions, she was managing moderation activities, where all staff discussed and evaluated samples of students' work in relation to the Curriculum Framework Outcomes. The principal and the Specialist Teacher felt that these activities were very successful and now much better understood and accepted by all teachers.

The Year 2/3 teacher thought that the teachers would be less inclined to use data to inform their teaching if there were no Specialist Teacher to help them. Time was a major issue in this respect – she felt that the Specialist Teacher had the time to gather and interpret data and present it to teachers in ways that made it more accessible to them.

She uses her time to collect and analyse the data over the whole school. No one else really has the time to do that. She prepares the data and takes us through it. Someone has to do that or it won't get done.

Sustainability

The sustainability of *Getting it Right* ceased to be an issue for School 4 when it was known that the school would close.

The Specialist Teacher and the principal, felt that, had the school not closed, the general approach to literacy teaching that had been generated in the school as a result of the *Getting it Right* strategy would have continued. They believed that the teachers were sufficiently committed to this approach to ensure that the changes would be sustained. They maintained that the teachers had developed a strong awareness of the value of co-operative enquiry based learning for literacy, and now had the necessary expertise to support this approach.

They said that the teachers had incorporated many of the skills and strategies they had learned from the *Getting it Right* Specialist Teacher into their individual repertoires, and that these new strengths would be retained. They also believed that teachers now appreciated the need to continue their professional learning and to seek new ideas in a variety of ways. All teachers at School 4 had experienced the benefits of having a

Getting it Right Specialist Teacher in the school, they said, and would carry their learning with them into their new schools.

The Specialist Teacher was less sure that the teachers would continue to make good use of the Curriculum Framework in the absence of a Specialist Teacher. She said she found this part of her work the most challenging because of her role as ‘broker’, in making the Curriculum Framework meaningful for teachers and encouraging them to use it. This appeared to take quite a lot of time. It involved the preparation of planning and assessment documents and tools to suit the school and some preliminary analysis of data to present to the teachers. Without a Specialist Teacher she doubted if teachers would ‘go to the trouble’ of implementing the Curriculum Framework in ways that would allow the benefits to flow to the teachers and students.

Summary and Conclusions

In 2003 and 2004, when the ACER researchers visited School 4, it had fewer than eighty students and only four classes. The learning program was clearly becoming unviable as enrolments continued to fall, and the school was closed at the end of 2004. Yet the principal and teachers maintained a high morale and the children appeared very happy. The small classes and generous spaces and resources in some ways helped to create an excellent environment for the *Getting it Right* program to flourish, which it was seen to do. Upon the closure of the school the students and teachers were dispersed to other schools.

Initially, in 2003, teachers were slow to accept the Specialist Teacher’s new role as *Getting it Right* Specialist Teacher. Some saw her as a ‘remedial’ teacher and had expectations that she would conduct a withdrawal program. At first she worked only with the Grade 2/3 teacher with whom she job-shared the class, as this teacher worked part time.

The Specialist Teacher had a 0.5 time fraction for *Getting it Right*. Most of this time was spent in the classroom, initially with the Year2/3 teacher, later with two other teachers. The rest was used for planning (scheduled and unscheduled) and for conducting professional development activities with the teachers.

The development of a shoulder-to-shoulder model of working in the classroom included ideas and strategies learnt at the *Getting it Right* training. These went beyond individual techniques, strategies and activities. They involved much deeper changes, including a focus on students as learners, enquiry learning, understanding of outcomes based education and the use of the Curriculum Framework, using data to inform planning, and the design and use of a range of diagnostic, formative and summative assessment tools.

Strongly supported by the principal, the Specialist Teacher used a regular time-slot in the fortnightly staff meeting to lead the staff in curriculum development and planning. Recognised by staff as the curriculum leader in the school, she used this time to collaboratively develop the whole school literacy plan, share *Getting it Right* ideas and strategies with the staff and familiarise them with the Curriculum Framework and associated documents, the Curriculum Improvement Plan and SAER strategy. In 2004 she led the teachers in benchmarking and moderation activities centred on discussion of student work samples.

As time went on, the teachers became increasingly aware of the success of the classroom partnership. The Pre-Primary/Grade 1 teacher still chose not to invite the Specialist Teacher into her classroom, but was asking more and more for ideas and advice. The Grade 6/7 teacher who originally had been very wary of the *Getting it Right* role was, by the start of 2004, openly seeking her advice and asking her to spend time with him in his classroom. In a newly combined Grades 2/3/4/5 of 26 students (2004), the Grade 4/5 teacher became, as he described it, ‘the third brain’, joining the Year 2/3 partnership in the Literacy Hour, where the *Getting it Right* ideas and strategies were being implemented.

The classroom mode of working was that of ‘shoulder to shoulder’. While her colleagues looked to the Specialist Teacher for leadership and advice, they were protective of their own professionalism, and chose not to view her as an ‘expert’ who was there to tell them what to do. The distinction was subtle, but important. In essence, it meant that the Specialist Teacher was not seen as a sort of ‘trainer’ or person superior in a hierarchy, but as a respected colleague occupying a role in which she could be expected to lead and to share her particular expertise, especially that gained at the *Getting it Right* training sessions.

The Specialist Teacher was observed to be very responsive to teachers and their individual needs. One example of this is that, when asked about their working arrangements and expectations, the Year 2/3 teacher said that the Specialist Teacher did not model classroom activities for her and that neither of them saw any reason why she should. The Year 4/5 teacher, on the other hand, said that he had asked the Specialist Teacher to model activities because he felt that this was the best way for him to learn. Similarly, feedback on teaching performance was two or three way as the people, situations and circumstances seemed to require.

When asked about changes to her own teaching practice, the Specialist Teacher noted:

- Increased focus on student learning
- Emphasis on enquiry learning
- Increased use of small group activities
- Much more emphasis on planning
- Integration of planning, teaching and assessment
- Increased use and design of diagnostic formative and summative assessment tools to monitor students progress and inform planning
- Gathering and using data to monitor individual, group and whole school progress and inform planning
- Greater use of the internet and professional reading to expand her professional knowledge
- Increased understanding and use of the Curriculum Framework and outcomes based teaching and learning
- A vastly increased repertoire of literacy teaching strategies and activities

The classroom teachers also spoke of changes in the above areas of teaching in their own practice, adding that the Specialist Teacher’s work had influenced all teachers in the school, and brought about significant change. The Year 2/3 teacher said that before joining the Specialist Teacher in implementing the *Getting it Right* strategy she

had been ‘very much caught up in traditional teaching.’ She said she could not ever imagine working in the ‘old’ ways again. She was particularly keen to speak of the benefits of careful collaborative planning. She also said that she was enjoying teaching more and that she felt much more confident that she was helping the students to achieve success.

The Year 4/5 teacher, who had initially been hesitant about asking the Specialist Teacher for help, said that he had made substantial and major changes to his teaching. He now accepted the need for collaborative planning and enjoyed working in collegial and collaborative ways. He had developed new understandings, especially in assessment and linking assessment to planning and teaching. He said that he now emphasised comprehension when teaching reading and had learnt how to use literacy activities to develop students’ higher thinking skills. Formerly opposed to WALNA testing, in 2004 he became a WALNA marker and was surprised and pleased that he appeared to have expertise far beyond that of most of the other markers who had no involvement in *Getting it Right* programs. This had markedly increased his confidence in his ability as a teacher.

On the basis of the above, the conclusion was drawn that the *Getting it Right* program at School 4 had resulted in major benefits for teachers and students. Teachers as individuals had made substantial and highly beneficial changes to their practice. Whole school changes in the teaching of literacy, reflected in school programs and documented in the School Development Plan, had resulted in demonstrable improvement in student learning outcomes and the achievement of literacy targets, especially for those students considered to be at educational risk.

2.5 The collaborative development of a Literacy Plan

School 5

Context

School 5 is situated about 100 kilometres east of Perth. The school has about 180 students of whom 7% are aboriginal. There are 11 EFT teachers.

The school had high student transiency rates and many parents were unemployed. The literacy levels in Year 3 were low, but showed improvement from the first visit of the researchers in October 2003 to the final visit in November 2005. At the time of the first visit the principal had been in the school for three years.

The *Getting it Right* Specialist Teacher also taught at another primary school for part of the week. She said she found working in two schools ‘difficult.’

This school had both a literacy and a numeracy *Getting it Right* Specialist Teacher. The school was chosen to participate in the *Getting it Right* strategy at the end of 2001.

Two researchers visited School 5 in October 2003. At this first visit, *Getting it Right* had been operating in the school for eight months. The school was visited again in June, 2004, (two researchers) and November 2004 (one researcher).

Support for Getting it Right

Levels of support for *Getting it Right* appeared to be high. The principal said that he had identified literacy as a priority and had deployed extra school resources to develop a curriculum policy and provide time and materials. Time for meetings of *Getting it Right* teachers was built in to the timetable. The Specialist Teacher had a generous work area with desk and storage facilities, her own telephone, computer and access to email.

The Principal said that he was keen to encourage and support the *Getting it Right* Specialist Teacher and all teachers who were involved in the program. He made time available to talk to all the teachers, especially those who might be experiencing some difficulties.

I am keen to empower the teachers by encouraging their skills and ensuring openness and collegiality. We started (Getting it Right) with the K-3 teachers. The 4-7 teachers were initially resistant, but now they're saying 'What about us?'

Role of the Getting it Right Specialist Teacher

The Specialist Teacher believed that her role was to work at two levels:

1. planning for the whole school and
2. working 'alongside classroom teachers'.

The teachers understood and appreciated this. As one of the teachers with whom the Specialist Teacher worked in her *Getting it Right* role, said:

The Specialist Teacher was able to show us as a whole school how we could move on. She gives us the Big Picture and then provides us with ongoing support. She brings back so many great ideas and strategies from her Getting it Right PD.

At the first visit the Specialist Teacher said that she was supporting 6 teachers, K-4. She spent three hours in the pre-primary class and one hour with Year 4. The other eight hours were divided among the remaining four teachers. She endeavoured to spend at least one hour per week with every teacher.

Working with teachers in the classroom

The Specialist Teacher said that she varied her approach according to the needs of the individual teachers. At first she had done a lot of modelling. By October, 2003, when the first visit was made, the Specialist Teacher said that she was working more and more in the 'shoulder to shoulder' mode, but often modelled for part of the lesson.

In the lessons observed by the *Getting it Right* researchers, the Specialist Teacher played a very 'low key' role, allowing the teachers to carry out the planned activities while she provided support by working with some of the groups. In one lesson during the first visit the children became unsettled and the lesson did not progress well. The Specialist Teacher's response was not to intervene but to note the problems and provide feedback to the teacher in a post-lesson conversation. This teacher said that she appreciated this approach. At a subsequent visit, the same teacher showed

improvement in classroom management, and said that this was a direct result of the Specialist Teacher's feedback.

Planning, assessment and target setting

In 2002 and 2003 the school had four planning days. On each of these days all teachers in the school, led by the Specialist Teacher, worked on developing a literacy scope and sequence curriculum document, the *Whole School Literacy Plan*. The teachers and principal saw this as the 'key' to planning for literacy.

Individual teachers planned lessons in accordance with this whole school document. Each teacher who was involved in *Getting it Right* had about 35 minutes timetabled planning time with the Specialist Teacher which, 'as far as possible' was timetabled to be collaborative, involving other teachers. In addition to this time the Specialist Teacher and the teachers said that they met informally 'whenever possible.'

The main tool used for identifying and monitoring students at risk was the Literacy Net, which was used as the basis for IEPs. The teachers also used WALNA data, but the Specialist Teacher and the Principal pointed out that high student transiency rates needed to be taken into consideration when analysing this information.

The second visit: What had changed?

ACER researchers visited for the second time in June 2004. The Specialist Teacher was still working at the other school for two days a week. She worked at School 5 on Thursdays, Fridays and alternate Wednesdays. She was working with the same teachers as at the first ACER visit in October 2003.

The Specialist Teacher said that the main change in 2004 was that, with the Whole School Literacy Plan in place she now felt freer to concentrate her energy on working with the teachers in the classrooms. She was continuing to meet with each teacher individually to plan lessons (at least 30 minutes per teacher per week.) In these planning sessions she was now encouraging the teachers to reflect more on their teaching practice and on the strategies used. She was encouraging them to raise their own concerns and to discuss them with her so that they could attempt to find solutions to perceived problems. She and the teachers used many of the strategies from the central *Getting it Right* PD programs to address particular issues.

The Specialist Teacher and the teachers said that they were making more effective use of the Literacy Net as they became more familiar with it:

I encourage them to look more at the Literacy Net data. We reflect on it and on that basis we plan strategies to address the needs of those children who have been identified as under achieving. We will then plan a lesson together. We make decisions that are based on where individual children are at.

They agreed that the teachers were now be much more aware of the need to plan and were heartened to see the successful outcomes of sound planning. They had gained confidence:

(Specialist Teacher) The teachers now feel more confident. They see the development in the children and they know they can be successful. They feel more able.

(Interviewer) Why do you think that is?

(Specialist Teacher) It's because someone has walked beside them.

The Specialist Teacher said that most of the teachers were still not sufficiently 'comfortable' with planning to meet outcomes and using data as a source of planning. They were 'hungry' for strategies and ideas for lessons, she said, but they preferred to think in concrete and immediate terms, rather than strategically on the basis of data. The Specialist Teacher thought that if she were no longer there, this aspect of literacy, which was the lynchpin of the *Whole School Literacy Plan* might not survive.

The teachers would still use the strategies, but they might lose that reflective cycle of using the Literacy Net and planning for students at risk to meet the outcomes. One person here has gone on stress leave, just because she couldn't cope with working to the outcomes. She just couldn't take what she was doing in the classroom and map it to the outcomes.

The Specialist Teacher had recently attended a *First Steps* PD session. She believed that the second edition of *First Steps* would be a useful tool that would help teachers to work more effectively with outcomes. She believed, in particular, that many teachers found the language of the Student Outcome Statements very difficult, but that this would be overcome as they became more familiar with it. This process was being helped along by the WALNA PD in which all staff had been involved. She was finding that a lot of her work involved helping teachers to work in this 'new 'outcomes mode' and to see the documents as more 'user friendly'.

Targets were still being set on the basis of the Literacy Net and WALNA results.

In 2004, the Specialist Teacher had again played a key role during the four pupil free days in which the teachers had been engaged in PD activities. In previous years, this PD had focused on developing the Whole School Literacy Plan. In 2004, the emphasis had shifted to implementing the plan. The Specialist Teacher felt that some of the fruits of the *Getting it Right* work became apparent on these days:

'There was a lot more interaction between the teachers and they appeared to be more knowledgeable. It was particularly noticeable that there was more interaction between teachers who taught at different levels.'

Some of the PD was in the form of teachers meeting to moderate Common Assessment Tasks (CATs). The Specialist Teacher said that they found these activities very valuable. She was hoping to build on the successful experiences and to encourage teachers to spend more time sharing and discussing students work.

In the lesson observed on the second visit (June 2004) the teacher's reading to the children was noticeably more engaging than on the first visit. The researcher noticed that her classroom management skills were also better than in 2003, and that the

children appeared to be more involved and interested. Her questioning of students was also more appropriate than at the earlier visit; as her questions and comments were better pitched to the children's interests and levels of understanding. She gave encouraging feedback and her questions and comments elicited good responses from the students. The Specialist Teacher and the teacher agreed that they had spent a lot of time discussing these aspects of the teacher's work and interactions with the students, and that improvement had been steady and gradual. The teacher said that the Specialist Teacher's support and encouragement had helped her to overcome her earlier lack of confidence.

In the discussion that the teacher said that she had learnt from the Specialist Teacher's modelling, especially in reading to the children:

(Interviewer) I noticed that the children were really engaged in the story you were reading.

(teacher) Yes, I know my reading is much better now. I have listened so much to the Specialist Teacher – she has modelled reading for me. I have watched her reading style and also her questioning. Now I feel I am much better at reading stories to the children. I enjoy it now and I enjoy the children's reaction.

She felt that she had ('definitely – yes') developed as a teacher. She said that she and the Specialist Teacher now planned for each lesson and then 'evaluated' at the end. She was using the Literacy Net more and felt that it 'gives a good picture of where the kids are at.' She believed that this 'good picture' provided a sound basis for planning.

The teacher also said that the Specialist Teacher's feedback had helped her to identify why certain strategies may not have worked and how to 'pre-empt' failure.

Another *Getting it Right* teacher said that what he had gained most from his two years working with the Specialist Teacher was a new repertoire of strategies:

I've now got a toolbox filled with tools and strategies. That has made it much easier for me to teach.

He had also learnt from the Specialist Teacher's modelling

(Interviewer) Have you observed the Specialist Teacher's teaching very often?

(Teacher) Yes. It's refreshing. Sometimes you forget how to best go about things in the classroom. It's good to watch and be reminded of how you should be doing it.

He said one of the 'key things' he had learnt from *Getting it Right* was how to use the Literacy Net and WALNA data to identify individual children at risk. After working with the Specialist Teacher he now felt more confident about using the school planning documents.

He said that the Specialist Teacher was the ‘driving force’ in developing the documents.

All the literacy strategies are in there and she helps us with planning so we can make the best use of them.

The third visit: What had changed in the school?

At the third and final visit the principal said that the main change he had noticed in the three years since the introduction of *Getting it Right* was the professional growth among the teachers. *Getting it Right* had also helped to ‘stabilize’ the staff. Several teachers who worked with the Specialist Teacher were temporary teachers who had been offered other schools. Those teachers had chosen to stay at school 5, and the principal believed that this was partly due to the Specialist Teacher’s work. The teacher whose progress was tracked above was an exception in that she had chosen to give up teaching for the time being, but the principal was confident that the skills and confidence she had learnt from working with the Specialist Teacher would stand her in good stead in any future employment.

The principal felt that as a result of *Getting it Right* in the school, the teachers were ‘at last’ beginning to understand the significance and implications of working with the student outcome statements. He said that this was an area in which he himself had a long standing interest, and he believed his knowledge of the main concepts was sound. However, since working with the Specialist Teacher he believed that his knowledge had ‘broadened’ and that he was now able to provide leadership of higher quality:

Some teachers had difficulty coming on board (with the SOS) The PD run by the Specialist Teacher, especially the moderation - that’s made them realize that that’s where I’ve been coming from. But they needed those activities. It’s not enough just trying to tell them. And the Specialist Teacher has also given them the tools – the observation sheets, the assessment tools and all the strategies.

The principal was very pleased with the latest WALNA data in both literacy and numeracy, which, he said, showed considerable improvement: ‘They are now all moving up. No child is beneath the benchmark in reading.’ He also believed that using the WALNA literacy support materials had improved teachers’ understanding:

(Principal) It’s (WALNA) nothing like a narrow test. The marking guide has given (teachers) a really good understanding of what makes good writing. In reading we’re making a breakthrough. The teachers were really excited when they saw the results.

(Interviewer) Did having Getting it Right in the school play a part in all of that?

(Principal) Oh yes, Getting it Right gave our teachers a big advantage. The teachers who went to the Making Consistent Judgements PD said they understood it much better than teachers from other schools. They said the evidence teachers brought with them (from other schools) showed no

understanding of the breadth of what they were trying to assess. Our teachers had really good stuff.

The principal described the school's literacy plan as a 'legacy' of *Getting it Right*.

What had changed for the Getting it Right Specialist Teacher?

The Specialist Teacher said that she felt had changed in a personal sense. She was now much more confident that when she started, largely because she knew that her knowledge had increased 'remarkably.' She said she had also learnt a lot about working with different teachers:

I suppose you'd say my interpersonal skills have improved. I know that every person is different and has to be approached differently as an individual. At first they thought that because of my presence they weren't doing a good job. So I had to treat everyone differently. Find out where each one was coming from. I tried to show that I did value what they were doing.

One teacher was really resentful because I wouldn't take children out to do phonics worksheets. He got really uptight and went to the Principal. I just had to stand my ground and persevere. Then he gradually started to come around and ask for advice. In the end even rang me in the holidays to ask me to recommend a good school for a relative's child. He must have developed some respect.

What had changed for the teachers?

The principal believed that an important change that had resulted from *Getting it Right* was that the teachers had learnt to work more collaboratively: They were 'now much more prepared to work together and to share responsibility for the achievements of the students across year levels.'

The second teacher interviewed said that helping to develop the Literacy Plan had changed his perspectives on teaching. He had started teaching in 1987 and used to think he had little to learn. When he first became involved in *Getting it Right* he had not thought that he needed to change his practice. However he now believed that through his experiences in helping to develop the Literacy Plan, and through working with the Specialist Teacher, he had learnt 'new things' about how to build on the existing knowledge of students to bring about improvement in their learning:

The Literacy Plan was a process of showing what we had in place and what we had to do to get it better. I became more aware, through the testing, of where the kids were and how to put in a plan of building them up. It was a conscious thing of knowing which strategies to use that would help individual kids, especially the group who were struggling.

He said that the Specialist Teacher had helped him in two main ways. The first was 'professional advice'. This included advice on strategies, many of which came from the *Getting it Right* PD which she had attended, and advice on print and other resources. The second way was through modelling. In watching the Specialist Teacher, he said, he realized that he could become more 'flexible' in his approach to the students. She was 'full of good ideas' which the students enjoyed and appreciated.

He had learnt to reflect on his own performance and think of ways in which he could engage students more. He also appreciated the ways in which the Specialist Teacher worked with him in a team teaching mode, especially when he felt unsure about trying new approaches.

The first teacher interviewed said that she had ‘definitely’ changed her practice for the better as a result of working as a *Getting it Right* teacher. She said that she was now much more aware of seeing each child as an individual and assessing their capabilities and progress. She was enjoying using ‘First Steps’ and said that the Specialist Teacher had helped her to understand the concepts of developmental learning and how to help them to ‘move up’. She was also confident that she had a good understanding of the curriculum and SOS.

The Specialist Teacher has such a wealth of knowledge and information in depth and detail. I have been so lucky to have worked with her. And the kids have benefited from having her around. They always ask: ‘When is she coming?’ I was a new teacher and she was a great support. She helped to foster my progress in a non threatening way. We’re a partnership. Two people doing similar things. That has definitely given me confidence.

Summary and conclusions

The School 5 principal and teachers were observed to be responding well to problems of literacy and numeracy that were largely the result of SES factors and high rates of student transiency. *Getting it Right* was a key factor in this response, and *Getting it Right* programs in both literacy and numeracy operated successfully in the school.

At the first visit, in October 2003, levels of support for the program in terms of resources and encouragement appeared to be very high. Support continued to be strong throughout 2004, when the ACER researchers visited the school for the second and third times.

The *Getting it Right* Specialist Teacher said that she operated at (a) a whole school and (b) individual teacher level. The main product of her whole school work was the *Whole School Literacy Plan*, developed by teachers under her leadership. The Plan was described as the ‘lynch pin’ upon which her planning with individual teachers was based.

The Specialist Teacher supported six teachers, K-4. She spent three hours in the pre-primary class and one hour in the Year 4 class. The other eight hours were divided among the remaining four teachers. Time for collaborative planning of activities was timetabled, but the Specialist Teacher spent a lot of additional time planning with individual teachers.

The Specialist Teacher’s preferred way of working with individual teachers was:

- To plan each lesson carefully with the teacher, often introducing strategies learnt at her *Getting it Right* PD sessions
- To take a ‘low key’ role in the actual lessons, working mainly with small groups

- To discuss what went well and what did not go well after the lesson and plan onwards from that point.

In the lessons observed the Specialist Teacher was careful not to ‘take over’ the lesson. The classroom teacher was, at all times, ‘in charge.’

The Specialist Teacher said that ‘at the start’ she had often modelled effective practices and strategies for the teachers. By late 2003 she was working more in the ‘shoulder to shoulder’ mode, but still modelling, at least for part of a lesson, when this seemed appropriate.

The teachers said that they enjoyed watching the Specialist Teacher teach, and had learnt a lot from observing her. One teacher, with over 20 years experience said that observing the Specialist Teacher in action had ‘opened his eyes to other ways of doing things.’ Teachers greatly respected the Specialist Teacher’s skills as a teacher, and her knowledge of literacy.

The *Whole School Literacy Plan* became the focus for planning in 2004. Whereas 2003 was seen as the period of developing the *Whole School Literacy Plan*, 2004 was the year of its implementation.

The Literacy Net was the main tool used for identifying students at risk and developing IEPs. WALNA data was used with caution, given the high student transiency rates.

At the second visit (June 2004) the Specialist Teacher and the principal said that the teachers were still ‘uncomfortable’ about planning with the Outcomes and using data to inform their planning. The Specialist Teacher thought that if she were no longer at the school, this aspect of the *Whole School Literacy Plan* might not survive. This situation had improved by November 2004. Teachers from the school who attended *Making Consistent Judgements* PD sessions reported that they felt very knowledgeable at these sessions because of their experiences in *Getting it Right*. This was largely the result of the Specialist Teacher’s work in the school. The Principal said that teachers’ knowledge and confidence had increased because the Specialist Teacher had given them ‘tools’, such as observation sheets and assessment guides, and helped them to use these tools effectively.

The Specialist Teacher found her *Getting it Right* work personally fulfilling and felt that she had developed as a teacher and leader of other teachers. The teachers reported major changes in their teaching and their attitudes towards their work and students. The Principal believed that one of the most important changes was that teachers had learnt to work collaboratively and to value the assistance of their colleagues. The collaborative development of the Literacy Plan had set the scene for its effective implementation.

2.6 Getting it Right in a remote setting

School 6

Context

This remote District High School was identified in the first round of the *Getting it Right-LNS* initiative, and a literacy Specialist Teacher was appointed, from the school staff, for 2002-2003. The school's allocation was then rolled over for a further two years, 2004-2005. A second Specialist Teacher, new to the school, was appointed at the beginning of the 2004-2005 round, after the first Specialist Teacher transferred to another school.

This school, with an enrolment of approximately 500 students during the period of the case study, is located in a very remote coastal area, in a town with a substantial population. The primary component of the school has an enrolment of 300 students. There was a high percentage of Aboriginal students, estimated to be around 60%. There was also a Catholic school in the town, and the Kimberley School of the Air was located in the town. Separate buildings in spacious shady grounds housed the administration block and a number of classroom blocks designated for the different stages of schooling.

The Specialist Teacher commented on the high number of *very different kids with special needs... many come from non-literate home backgrounds ... attendance is irregular ... some come for a week, and then there is a gap in attendance*. There was a high turnover of staff, many graduate teachers, a few staff who have been at the school for several years, and continuity had been a problem. The school received Commonwealth funding for the Indigenous Language Speaking Students (ILSS) program.

During the first visit the primary deputy principal discussed the benefits of the *GiR-LNS* for the school, noting how the Specialist Teacher had been able to *focus on target students, strengthening the remedial program and upskilling teachers*. The Specialist Teacher was a member of the primary senior management team, and played a central role on the team. The school provided office space for the Specialist Teacher.

The Specialist Teacher had access to teachers' 'Duties other than teaching' (DOTT) time in the junior primary school, and to the collaborative DOTT sessions. She also had ongoing informal opportunities to work with the teachers in the junior primary school. The deputy principal described her as 'pro-active', and identified the wide range of activities she had undertaken: whole staff professional development, Support-a-Reader, providing support and structure for beginning teachers, setting up a home reading program, including take-home 'literacy back packs', writing articles for the local paper, and generally raising the profile of literacy in the school and the local community. The Specialist Teacher worked in collaboration with other key support personnel and programs in the school, for example, the ILSS program and the Early Literacy and Numeracy (ELAN) teacher.

Targets for improving spelling and reading were set by the primary senior management team, after the Specialist Teacher brought draft targets to the team meeting.

The *Getting it Right* training for GiR Specialist Teachers was seen as very beneficial by the deputy principal: *she has access to the latest stuff – and that’s of particular value to a remote community ... she has access to her own support and networks.*

Ways of working: 2003

In 2002 and 2003, the Specialist Teacher had worked with classroom colleagues in a variety of ways. She worked particularly closely with the ILSS teacher, *almost combining the role and dividing the work load.* There was some demand from the upper primary school for a general helping role. The Year 1 teachers were more experienced and more open to working collaboratively. Some planning and teaching together took place with the Year 3/4 special needs/ESL teacher. The off-site pre-schools were visited once a week.

Time spent in classrooms with colleagues was *flexible and varied.* There had been some resistance to the model of providing in-class support rather than withdrawal, and many teachers would have preferred withdrawal. The model of the Specialist Teacher and a teacher planning then teaching together was not always used, and planning was often incidental, in the form of sharing. There had been some more extended collaborative planning, but this was *not the kind of help people in this school wanted.*

The physical layout of the classroom block where the junior primary classes were located lent itself to opportunities for informal interchange and planning. The classrooms were centred around a large shared staff working space. The Specialist Teacher moved freely in and out of classes, knew the names of all the students, and was clearly familiar with all the classroom programs.

The Specialist Teacher reported that as whole group, the junior primary staff *worked really well together,* and that she took a *subtle approach, giving information, running PD, providing articles.* The Year 3 teachers were *doing really well,* using cooperative learning in mixed ability groups, particularly in language and spelling, providing incidental support for students in class, and involving the Aboriginal and Islander Education Officer (AIEO) in planning every week.

In summary, the role tended to be viewed, to some extent, as a support role, with the Specialist Teacher providing informal support to teachers. It had clearly been difficult, in the context of this remote school, to establish regular collaborative planning and shoulder-to-shoulder teaching in classrooms, Years 1-3.

Teachers had developed increased confidence in using different strategies, including learning centres and cooperative learning. One teacher had commented that *I wouldn’t have had the confidence to do this without [the Specialist Teacher].* Students appeared to have gained confidence, and attendance had improved for Year 1 students.

Target setting had not been carried out until the second half of 2002, when targets were set against the background of the school strategic plan. A more consistent approach to spelling throughout the school was set up, with lists of the 100 most used

words, and ‘word walls’ in every classroom. A key objective for reading was to increase the amount done by students. All classes engaged in silent reading after lunch; teachers from different classes would go into the rooms and read to students. Book Week had been a big initiative, with all classes making a book for another class. The target was set to increase the reading age by one year (using the Waddington test) for students who had attended for 60% of the time. For this school, this was a challenging target. All teachers were given file information on their students, including Literacy Net and Waddington results, and this was generally used for planning. Other assessment instruments used included Phonological Awareness testing, PiPS, and the Kimberley Band Scales which were available as a hyperlink on staff computers.

The Specialist Teacher had done considerable one-to-one professional development work about the Literacy Net, helping teachers understand how to use the Net, and how to assess students’ progress using the Net. The information from the phonological awareness testing had increased teachers’ understanding, as previously they had not realized the extent of the gap, and had now introduced more phonological awareness activities, such as rhyming games.

The Specialist Teacher had found the *Getting it Right* three-day training workshops most useful. Because the role was new, she found it really important to meet with other Specialist Teachers, and valued the small group presentations given by colleagues. She had found the early sessions rather theoretical, but later sessions had been more practical. Email contact with other Specialist Teachers had also been useful. There had been a considerable focus on the viewing strand of the framework and she had passed this on to her school colleagues. Incorporating viewing into all learning areas had proved to be especially useful for Aboriginal students.

The Specialist Teacher commented on the value of the training sessions in providing support for working with classroom colleagues, and the time allocated to talking together about how things were going. Some of the strategies introduced at the *GiR* training were not seen as relevant to this school, for example critical literacy. The needs at this school were described as ‘really basic’ and while work on the WALNA and moderation was interesting, it had not been as relevant to this school as sessions on running records and miscue analysis.

In the latter part of her second year as the Specialist Teacher, this teacher noted that she thought her time as a specialist teacher had *probably changed my whole way of thinking about teaching and pedagogy*.

A Year 1 teacher’s experience

One of the Year 1 teachers had worked closely with the Specialist Teacher, and made her classroom available for an observation session during the evaluator’s first visit.

This teacher had worked full-time as the ILSS teacher in 2002. In 2003 she taught a year 1 class for 0.8. She commented on how it was *wonderful for have [the ST] come back [from GiR training workshops] with god ideas not all new ...* In her class she was linking oral language with reading and writing, using ‘two-way talking’. She also used ‘write two ways’ approaches, where students wrote in Aboriginal English and in Standard Australian English, using different colours to distinguish the two ways. She

described her teaching as ‘explicit, for example in activities such as ‘let’s write the news’.

Her planning with the Specialist Teacher took the form of sharing, and this sharing often led to the development of other ideas. She reported that she had found this stimulating, and that she had not worked with a colleague in this way before. One outcome of this process of sharing had been the establishment of ‘learning centres’. She had previously used these in Pre-primary, but developed this approach in a more formal way for Year 1. The Specialist Teacher provided resources and suggestions. The year 1 teacher organised the classroom into five or six centres focused on, for example:

- maths
- handwriting
- oral language
- fine motor skill development
- computers
- sight words.

The teacher usually managed the centres on her own, sometimes with an aide. The students had been explicitly taught to recognise the colour coded activities. Peer tutoring strategies had also been explicitly taught, with children learning how to be ‘experts’.

This teacher spoke about using many more collaborative strategies in her teaching. While not new for her, she was including phonological awareness activities, and being more explicit about this. She had monitored the levels of phonological awareness for all students early in the school year, was listening more to how the students spoke, and including teaching about ‘focus’ words. She referred to the Literacy Net, the Kimberley Band Scales and the First Steps continua as tools for identifying what students can do.

The literacy back packs, resourced with ILLS funds, created home-school links. Four packs were available for each classroom.

In summary, this teacher had *found it really good having an extra person ... helping things to keep going smoothly*. But even in this relatively isolated case in this school of extensive sharing of strategies, there was little evidence of collaborative planning between the Specialist Teacher and the classroom teacher, followed by shoulder-to-shoulder work in the classroom, focusing on the needs of identified students. Much useful work was being done, especially in the form of professional development and the introduction of new practices, and the work of the Specialist Teacher was highly valued but at this school, the planning and structured in-class support had not been established as regular practice.

The second round of Getting it Right

A new literacy Specialist Teacher was appointed for 2004-2005. She was interviewed in June and November in 2004.

In June, when she had been in the role for a few months, the Specialist Teacher said that she saw her role as that of

a colleague whose job is to support her peers in the English learning area (literacy) by working alongside them in the classroom, assisting with planning and implementation of teaching strategies using the Curriculum Framework and Student Outcome Statements. I am also available for mentor support for those teachers who do not require classroom assistance.

In 2003 the previous Specialist Teacher had described the different ways in which she worked with colleagues, and the limitations to providing in-class support. This situation seemed still to prevail. The new Specialist Teacher worked in a variety of ways to support seven classes: three classrooms by spending time in class with the teacher, providing outside and mentor support for another class, and mentor support for three other classes. Overall, she spent thirteen hours in classrooms each week,

participating in collaborative planning sessions and assisting in class – modeling learning activities, working as a support person in small group situations. I provide resources where needed. For those teachers whose classes I cannot spend time in due to the current timetable, I do what I can – mentor support, organise reading aid with volunteers from the community, implement the Literacy Backpack program alongside the ILSS teacher. I run PD sessions where appropriate and generally help anyone who asks for strategies to help with particular problems that arise in their classrooms. My colleagues and I have regular planning meetings in their DOTT times or after school – once a fortnight.

There seemed to be limited opportunity for the targeted planning encouraged by GiR, where the Specialist Teacher and a classroom teacher identify students experiencing difficulties, clarify the nature of those difficulties, plan activities to support the students, and then, in further planning meetings, review progress and plan for further learning. Although to some extent, this did occur: *assessment information is used to inform future learning activities during planning sessions – students have been put into like ability groups so there are three levels in each classroom, and activities planned cater for all three levels.*

A recent planning session was described as follows:

Myself, Year 1 and 2 teachers and block coordinator (the ELAN teacher) were involved. The classroom teachers had chosen two texts they wanted to work with for the next fortnight – one fictional, one non-fiction, but on a similar theme. We had the First Steps Reading resource book and English SOS book for reference as well as the GiR strategic plan to refer to. We looked at the books, discussed activities for each session – what to do to cater for each group of students, and consulted SOS to make sure that we were addressing all of the sub-strands. We were planning a sequence of lessons. We didn't discuss assessment and monitoring – that is something we need to work on. We considered the needs of students when planning activities, in terms of the three levels, the interest factor, and the purpose of the activity.

Although the Specialist Teacher sometimes modeled a lesson for colleagues, so they could observe the students and the lesson, it seemed that the classroom teacher usually managed the whole class aspects of the lesson:

The classroom teacher introduced the new book to the students who were seated on the mat. She did the usual pre-reading activities (predicting, picture clues, etc), read the book and then discussed the story. Students were then separated into their three groups and all completed an activity that was appropriate to their year level.

At this stage of the year, the Specialist Teacher thought that her colleagues felt

more confident about having someone to confer with, bounce ideas off, and having confirmation that what they are doing is the right thing to do, or just guidance towards trying something new that they might not have been confident enough to try before, or just not have known about.

The GiR workshops for Specialist Teachers and the support of the GiR leadership team were valued by this Specialist Teacher. She said that the program had strengthened her capacity to support colleagues to meet the learning needs of their students, *although I think I still have a lot to learn. I get many good ideas and strategies from the workshops, both for myself as a support teacher, and for use in the classroom.* She felt that she had acquired knowledge that would enable her to extend the teaching repertoires of her colleagues, *to the extent that many of the suggestions I can now make are ideas that the classroom teachers hadn't tried, or hadn't thought of. It's always good to learn something new and it's good to be able to suggest something new or different.*

Later in the year, this Specialist Teacher commented on the timing of the GiR three-day training workshops. Each three-day program occurs at the beginning of a school term, when the teachers' work plans are already established. She had found that this made it difficult to explore new ideas presented in the workshops.

Overall, the impression left by this visit, and from the earlier visit with the 2002-2003 Specialist Teacher, was that the GiR work was focused somewhat broadly on introducing new ideas and resources, but did not have an intensive focus on the specific needs of individual students in this remote location. There were significant challenges: the majority of students were from an ESL background (Kriol and Language), there were many itinerant children, and attendance was poor. Many students had little or no literacy support at home. Initiatives such as the Backpacks program, collaboration with the ILSS teacher, and the introduction of the Kimberley Bandscales were designed to address some of these needs. The school administration team was very supportive of both Specialist Teachers, but the GiR was not incorporated centrally in a strong school policy framework.

Changes after three years of Getting it Right

Towards the end of the 2004 school year, the evaluator visited the school for a third time. Some changes were reported.

The Specialist Teacher worked on a regular basis for three hours a week with the two Year 1 and 2 teachers. One of these teachers was also the ILSS teacher at the school. These teachers had formed a planning group that includes the ELAN teacher, who, in 2004, was sharing the GiR training with the Specialist Teacher. This group was meeting every second week in DOTT time. The teachers continued to meet even when the Specialist Teacher and the ELAN teacher were away from the school. The Specialist Teacher commented that as a result of the GiR training she was able to

remind the group of the need to be aware of the purpose of the activities planned, and the assessment possibilities. She was also trying to build up awareness of the student outcome statements in these meetings. This collaboration represented a significant change.

A recent development had been the introduction of reciprocal reading. The mixed success of this indicated some of the complexities of introducing change at the school. This strategy had been presented at the August 2004 three-day workshop for Specialist Teachers. The Specialist Teacher modeled the approach, and one of the Year 1 and 2 teachers, had introduced it into her classroom, with some adaptations. By contrast, one of the Year 3 /4 teachers who tends to perceive the role of the Specialist Teacher as an aide tried to introduce reciprocal reading in her class, wanting a quick implementation, but did not continue. This teacher was concerned about where her students were at the present time, and appeared not to be prepared to take extra time to persist with a different approach. She also viewed *GiR* as taking time away from what she had planned, rather than providing additional support.

In an interview, the teacher who had successfully implemented reciprocal reading noted the increased depth in teaching using the reciprocal reading approach, and the explicit teaching of what each role involved. She made connections with her ILSS role, in which *you need to be really explicit*. She indicated that *GiR* had made a lot of difference at the school, in terms of increasing access to professional development. She noted that the Specialist Teacher could access other Specialist Teachers for advice on specific needs, and that this network was valuable, especially for teachers in a remote location.

Just prior to the visit, the Specialist Teacher had collected the Semester 2 Literacy Net Class profiles from teachers. The WALNA results for Year 3 reading were pleasing. For Reading and Spelling, most Year 3 children were close to the benchmark. (However, it was noted that the ESL/ESD students in Year 3 did not perform as well). Students had been given practice in completing tests, using old WALNA papers.

Some other developments were observed during this visit, including some increase in the provision of in-class support. The Specialist Teacher had been working in the classroom with one of the Year 3 and 4 teachers since Term 3. No planning time was used, but the Specialist Teacher worked with the classroom teacher for one hour on Tuesdays and between half and one hour on Wednesdays. Earlier in the year the *GiR* teacher's time and the class teacher's available time had not coincided.

Years 3 and 4 at the school had been organized into three groups, and it was anticipated that the *GiR* Specialist Teacher would teach one of these literacy groups on a regular basis. This seemed to be outside the parameters of the *GiR* role, and after Term 1 the *GiR* discussed her involvement with the school leadership team and was able to resolve the potential difficulty.

A final interview with the primary Deputy Principal identified some of the major benefits to the school of the three years of *GiR* staffing. He said that both Specialist Teachers appointed to the school had made a valuable contribution, although they had different ways of working. He particularly noted the benefits of the Specialist Teacher's regular involvement in the *GiR* PD, and the important contribution to a

remote school of the passing on of this professional knowledge, which was an acknowledged part of the *GiR Specialist Teacher's* role. *We know that our Specialist Teacher will come back with strategies and has time to implement them, and to work alongside the classroom teachers, sometimes modeling the strategies ... We have people in their first and second year of teaching, and more experienced teachers who need upskilling.* He considered that the improvements in the Year 3 WALNA results were 'indisputably' due to the work of the ELAN and *GiR* teachers – *this stands out in comparison with the Year 5 and Year 7 data.*

Summary

The *GiR Specialist Teachers* were seen to have provided extremely valuable support, especially in terms of providing professional development for teachers at this remote school. There were significant challenges in meeting the learning needs of the student population, but the work of the *GiR Specialist Teacher* was seen to have contributed to improved WALNA results. Both Specialist Teachers had established strong working links with the ILSS teacher. The concepts of collaborative planning, and working shoulder to shoulder in classrooms to target individual students' needs had not been fully implemented in this context.

2.7 Focus on collaborative and planning

School 7

Context

School 7 is a small school of 150 students. It is situated in the well established suburb east of the Port of Fremantle.

Established in 1901, the school has a long and varied history. In the early years most of the children came from families whose parents were employed in the marine industry, on the Fremantle wharves, and on local farms. During the 1960s and 1970s the school accommodated children of many different ethnic backgrounds, as the suburb experienced the impact of the migration boom. Today the school still has a diverse student population. About 25% of students come from a non English speaking background and 7% of children are of indigenous origin. The area attracts people from Fremantle's art and cultural community, and the school draws students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds who live in Homes West housing.

School 7 has a 'H' index of 95.08 (100 is an 'average' socio economic area, according to a Commonwealth rating system). This qualifies the school as a 'school of special need' eligible for a Commonwealth Government funded Literacy and Numeracy program. This funding provides an additional 0.2 FTE. The time is used for class teachers to develop inclusive teaching and learning plans, write intervention plans and monitor students' literacy development.

The researcher visited the school in September, 2003, June, 2004 and November, 2004. On each visit she spoke with the principal, the Specialist Teacher and classroom teachers. She also observed classes in progress and collected relevant documents.

Documents collected from the school included copies of:

- School reports
- Curriculum planning documents,
- the Whole School Plan and Curriculum Improvement Plan
- The *Getting it Right* Literacy and Numeracy Strategy Plan
- Literacy Net Class Profiles
- Teachers' *GiR* Literacy Action Plans
- Documentation relating to the school's winning a national Literacy and Numeracy Week Achievement Award

The role of the Specialist Teacher

The *Getting it Right* Specialist Teacher was appointed at the start of 2003. She spent 80% of her allocated time in the P-3/4 classes and the remaining time planning with five teachers. The Specialist Teacher said that she 'really enjoyed' her position and found it very rewarding.

The Specialist Teacher had worked at School 7 for nearly fifteen years. A Level 3 teacher, who was formerly a literacy support teacher at the school, she already had a great deal of knowledge and experience in the teaching of literacy. The principal said that she was the person who, even before she was appointed as a *GiR* Specialist Teacher, played a leading curriculum role in the school. He had no doubt that her *GiR* training had greatly improved both her professional knowledge and her ability to lead other teachers. These enhanced qualities were being put to good use in the school because of the extra time that the *GiR* program made available.

She does excellent work with the teachers. You need someone to drive curriculum and she has always done that. What's the difference with GiR? Well she is now getting this great training. New training. Training in the latest literacy teaching skills. This is the great advantage of us being in the program. That and the extra time. Key teachers must have the time.

The Specialist Teacher saw her role as being to support teachers in the classroom. Apart from the scheduled planning time, and time spent in co-ordinating the collection of data, she spent all of her time working 'shoulder to shoulder' with the *GiR* teachers in classrooms. She was firmly of the view that she was 'not there to show experienced teachers how to do their job', but was in the classroom to work with them, providing advice and assistance as needed. She felt that a major strength of the *GiR* Specialist Teacher concept was that it provided expertise within the school. She said (and the principal and teachers agreed) that this was greatly preferable to having an outside advisor or consultant who came only intermittently to the school.

It's definitely best to have someone who is working in the school, who can work side by side with the teachers. You have the time and the continuity. Sometimes it's good – like on a PD day - to have someone in with special knowledge. We always do that too, and GiR has been useful in that way because it's increased my range of contact people, but you can't beat having a person there in the school to work with the teachers all the time.

In the lessons observed, she modelled activities and strategies for the classroom teachers. This generally occurred at the start of the lesson, but was not necessarily a part of every lesson. Much of her time in the classroom was spent in collaborative teaching and in moving around the various groups who were engaged in different activities.

Although her preferred way of working was to share classroom teaching duties with the teachers, she was much more to them than a co-worker. The teachers learnt a great deal about literacy teaching from the Specialist Teacher. She modeled new approaches and techniques, and gave them feedback about their teaching, so that they were able to build a broad repertoire of activities and strategies which they used in well designed, collaboratively planned programs.

She also modeled the use of tools, especially technology. (One example of this was taking photos with captions and stories, using a digital camera; another was using Karaoke equipment to allow children to hear themselves read and sing).

Two teachers, G and J, said that they found it useful to observe the *children* while she was teaching the whole group. J said it was useful to have ‘two people’s vision about what is happening to a child.’ In planning sessions, the *GiR* teachers developed an ‘observation grid’ to use and record their observations of the children. They thought this helped them to maintain ‘a student centred focus.’

It’s great just to watch the students as they interact with the Specialist Teacher. You don’t always have the time to do that when you’re teaching. It really helps me to see where they’re at. You can see how they are participating and how their little minds work. One student identified ‘it’s’ as ‘is’ the other day. I noticed and I wrote it down while I was watching. That was interesting because I think this student only did that because she was nervous in front of the whole class. The Specialist Teacher and I talk about our observations after the class.

The Specialist Teacher continually provided her colleagues with professional reading material, some, but not all of which she had obtained at the *GiR* training sessions. Much of this and other material about literacy was displayed in a dedicated *GiR* space in the staffroom. The teachers said they appreciated receiving this information, as they believed it kept them up with the latest ideas about literacy teaching.

At the second and third visits the teachers reported continuing improvement in the ways in which they communicated with each other and shared resources. They believed that communication was improving among all the teachers, (not only the *GiR* teachers) and that the Specialist Teacher’s work was a major reason for this.

This Specialist Teacher also performed a wider role in professional development for the whole school, in which she planned and delivered workshops on literacy teaching for all teachers. She also spoke at staff meetings at least once a term. These activities generally reflected her own learning from the *GiR* training.

At the second visit the principal said he thought that the Specialist Teacher’s most recent *GiR* training had helped her to work even more creatively and confidently in the school. This had lifted the performance, not only of the teachers with whom she worked, but of other staff as well.

She has brought a lot of new ideas into the school this year. The whole staff is more positive. And that’s all because of her enthusiasm and expertise. Teachers increasingly see the value of a whole school approach to literacy.

At the third and final visit, the teachers who worked with the Specialist Teacher said that they were now working smoothly and confidently as a team. The *GiR* approaches were now consolidated in the school through the implementation of the whole school literacy plan. The teachers believed that the children were benefiting from the consistency of approach, especially in assessment, on the part of all their teachers. Yet the emphasis was still on flexibility and using new strategies:

There is now real consistency throughout the school. We all use the same paperwork and kind of operate on the same plane. That's good for the children that we're so united. It's good to have that consistency of approach and assessment. (J)

I'm constantly trying new things. I don't get into a rut. Every fortnight the Specialist Teacher and I try something different. I couldn't do that on my own. (J)

*I would not have gone into literacy at so much depth. It's so in depth – going into reflection with the children. And also the activities. Debbie brings ideas back (from the *GiR* training.) There is great variety. (G)*

The Specialist Teacher was continuing to model for the teachers, who still found this invaluable:

I learn so much from watching her. Her questioning – how she reinforces what the students have learnt. The way she encourages kids, makes them feel they are achieving, 'Champion!' (she says). She has so much enthusiasm. Yet she is always firm. (T)

The Specialist Teacher said that she was learning to consciously emphasise different things in her modelling. Recently she had been modelling how to value children's responses. She had also been modelling how to encourage the children to reflect, to 'see the point' of what they were learning.

At the third visit the principal said he felt confident that the changes were now embedded in the school. He made the point that, unlike professional development people external to the school, the Specialist Teacher had to actually remain in classrooms and deal with the consequences of her actions. Thus there could be no 'pie in the sky' ideas or programs. If ideas worked, she, as well as the students and teachers, saw and received the benefits, and the reverse applied:

There is always that person (the Specialist Teacher) there on a regular basis as a support person. The person is trained about how things work in a real classroom. And then they have to put it to the test in a real classroom - themselves! It's not just about 'Do it this way...' and then walk away. They actually have to do it themselves, as well as showing other people how it should be done.

The Specialist Teacher said that she had developed good relationships and networks with Specialist Teachers from other schools. They met for coffee and at each others' houses. She was making connections between these networks and her Level 3 teacher

network. She said she found the exchange of ideas and information useful because this helped her to be 'outward' rather than 'inward' looking.

Support for the role of the GiR Specialist Teacher

The school principal was very supportive of her work as a *GiR* Specialist Teacher. He gave personal encouragement and made the staff aware of the high priority he and the school placed on the program.

In practical terms, the school provided timetabled time for the teachers to plan collaboratively. This was arranged in accordance with common DOTT time. Some relief teacher funding was also made available to assist with planning.

The school also provided funding for resources, professional development and teachers' membership of professional organisations.

Planning

The Specialist Teacher said that she had regular (fortnightly) formal planning meetings with the teachers of pre-primary, and grades 1/2 3/4 in which she and the teachers discussed common themes and planned common activities and strategies. She shared ideas and strategies from the *GiR* professional development sessions she attended. She and the teachers said that, while they already knew about some of these, they still found them very helpful, largely because they felt more confident and able, with her help, to integrate them into coherent programs. She had also gained new knowledge and strategies from the *GiR* PD which she shared with her colleagues. They said that some of these had caused them to make major changes to their teaching.

She also co-ordinated the collection of student achievement data and helped the teachers to analyse it and to make decisions about the teaching program on the basis of this analysis.

Teachers used DOTT time for planning. The principal was very supportive. Every effort was made to provide common DOTT planning time and a planning timetable had been prepared. Some teacher relief time was available to release teachers for planning.

At the second visit, the teachers were beginning to use the Student Outcome Statements (as well as other materials), for planning. The Specialist Teacher described the approach as:

We plan together. We start with the Outcome Statements plus a theme. Then we come up with activities. Some are group and some are whole class. The idea is to have activities that will help to achieve the outcomes.

By the second visit, teachers appeared to have clearer understanding of the purposes of planning and of the Curriculum Framework and Student Outcome Statements. T., a Grade 1 teacher, said that she 'understood the processes much better now' because 'I've been so involved in the planning.' Teachers also reported that the processes had become much 'smoother' because they now had more resources and were more used

to working together. The Specialist Teacher thought that planning was now ‘much more directed towards achieving targets.’

J. saw the collaborative planning as, possibly, the most valuable aspect of *GiR*. She said that she and the Specialist Teacher spent one hour in formal planning per fortnight. She said she wished it was once every week.

I always feel better in the week we do the planning. If it (planning) was every week it would be better. Collaboration and planning really are the focus because we can talk and share. Instead of just one person’s view there are two. That’s two people’s vision of what’s happening, so you feel more confident. It’s not just what you think yourself.

By the third visit, the teachers were taking more responsibility for planning. The Specialist Teacher said that, at the beginning of her work with *GiR* she used to do a lot of the actual writing of plans. This had now changed, and she encouraged teachers to write as part of the shared planning sessions. The new school Literacy Action Plan framework allowed more space for details of literacy tasks and the Curriculum framework Overarching Outcomes and Core Shared Values. Since the Core Shared Values were to be included in the new student reports in 2005, she was encouraging the teachers to include the values across all learning areas.

Some children with learning difficulties had been allocated Teacher Assistants to help them with their work. A feature of the planning was the ways in which the work of these teachers was co-ordinated with that of the teacher and Specialist Teacher

Working in the classroom

Classes were observed during all visits. In all classes, the teacher and the specialist teacher were seen to be working ‘shoulder to shoulder’. Typically, the Specialist Teacher or the teacher would teach a whole group activity at the start of the lesson. The person not teaching would observe, or sit with the children and join in the activity, helping to sustain the children’s engagement. A Teacher Assistant would sit with a student or students with special needs. This whole group activity would be followed by small group or pair activities which were monitored by the Specialist Teacher, the teacher and other adults in the classroom. Most activities were in mixed ability pairs and groups, but some were in differentiated groups. The children were used to working in various groupings, and transitions between activities were always smooth. The sessions would often end with a whole group activity.

The Specialist Teacher modelled teaching practices in the classroom, especially activities and strategies she has learnt about in the *GiR* PD sessions. She said that she ‘uses lots of other ideas as well.’ She seemed to have developed very collaborative and equal relationships with the teachers. The activities had been carefully planned and sequenced, with clear and carefully orchestrated roles for the teacher, the specialist teacher and classroom assistants (including parents). Even though the literacy sessions lasted for an hour, it was particularly noticeable that children remained engaged all the time. Whole group, small group and pair activities varied and were timed carefully. In the reading activities, especially, attention was paid to phonics.

Children at risk were continually monitored by one of the adults (but not the same one all the time), so that they remained engaged, and contributed to the activities. One little girl, 'H.' who was in Pre-Primary during the first two visits of the researcher and in Grade 1 during the second appeared to be benefiting greatly from this approach. She had a serious physical disability coupled with learning difficulties. Often her attention would appear to flag, but each time she was gently brought back into the activities with a timely question, action, or request. She had been given special responsibilities, like helping to give out equipment, which she carried out with pride. Her confidence and social skills had markedly improved by the researcher's third visit, and she was achieving most of the Literacy Net checkpoints. Other students at educational risk were seen to be enjoying similar benefits.

Part of the success of these students was undoubtedly due to the presence in the classroom of Teacher Assistants (who had been allocated to them because of their learning difficulties). These people were seen to be 'taking their cues' from the teacher and the Specialist Teacher. They worked very effectively, joining in the planned activities, helping with the materials, and responding to the needs of the children. They appeared to be enjoying their work, and finding it fulfilling. Their success can be linked with the work of the Specialist Teacher in providing interesting and stimulating activities. It was also due, in large part to the time that had been spent in planning the integration of the roles of all adults in the classroom. The importance of this planning became apparent in the execution of the lessons.

Another very important feature of the *GiR* classrooms was the excellent relationships between the adults, the children, and the children and adults. The Specialist Teacher said that everyone understood the classroom's 'ground rules', that had been established and consistently reinforced. These were based on mutual respect.

Assessment and target setting

At the first visit in June 2003 the teachers were using mainly First Steps as an assessment tool. They were also starting to use the Literacy Net. The Specialist Teacher said that the teachers still lacked confidence in their ability to work with the Student Outcome Statements.

The Student Outcome Statements are very broad. Teachers are still coming to grips with them. They are not quite sure what they need to be doing to achieve the outcomes or how to assess them.

*I've become more familiar with the outcomes from the *GiR* training and I've shared that with the group (at the school.) But we haven't used it much. The teachers are used to First Steps. We report to parents on the First Steps developmental phases. This (the SOS) seems to be adding another layer.*

At this and the second visit, she and the teachers said that so far there had been little collaborative discussion of actual students' work and few attempts to moderate.

In 2003-4 targets were set for all students at risk to achieve all Writing Literacy Net checkpoints. Students at risk had Individual Intervention Plans (IIP).

By the second visit, in November, the teachers appeared to be clearer about the SOS. Two teachers (T. and G.) said that their teaching was now more ‘specific’ and ‘targetted’.

(T.) My teaching has changed. It has become more refined.

(Int.) Refined?

(T.) Yes it's more specific to the outcomes. (In our planning) we use the outcome statements plus the theme. Then we come up with group or whole class activities. We use the Literacy Net, so it's specific. We choose tasks more carefully for the purpose.

I have a lot more knowledge and my skills have built. I feel more confident and I'm more creative. We are now more specific in what we are targeting. (G.)

At the second visit, teachers were more confident about using the Literacy Net. They said they were finding it a very useful tool for focusing on students at risk. However they were starting to wonder whether they should be looking at all students, not just those at the lower end of the spectrum. As one teacher said ‘Should we be looking at the next lot?’

At the third visit November 2004 the teachers said that they were now much more confident using the SOS for assessment purposes. They were still concentrating on setting targets for lower achieving students to achieve the checkpoints on the literacy net. Teachers appeared to be using more of their own initiative in this area.

I'm still feeling my way. The Specialist Teacher has helped me to understand and use the SOS so I can do it on my own. (G.)

By this third visit in teachers were using the second edition of First Steps. The Specialist Teacher had attended *GiR* training about the new edition and had shared and modelled new strategies for P-7 classes. She had also purchased copies of the new *First Steps Reading Resource Book* and the *Reading Map of Development* text for every class teacher. She asked teachers to develop a Term 4 Literacy Plan including nine new *First Steps* Reading strategies to trial in their classrooms. And she had applied for three days *Reading First Steps* professional development to be delivered to all teachers in February 2005. This professional development would also involve three other local schools.

The Specialist Teacher and some teachers from School 7 had attended the two day District professional development sessions in Making Consistent Judgements (MCJ), Year 3 English. She had facilitated the collection of evidence and moderation processes across two schools with Year 3 teachers.

She said that she and the teachers found that the MCJ training accorded with what they had been doing as part of *GiR*. They also found that they had considerably more knowledge of making judgements about students’ work than teachers from schools that did not have a *GiR* Specialist Teacher. She also said that the samples of student

work that the teachers from her school brought with them to the professional development were far more suitable for moderation than some brought by teachers from other schools, She believed this showed a better understanding, on the part of her colleagues, of the moderation and assessment processes.

The principal said that the school had, for some years, collected data about student achievement, but that it had not been used until now:

We've always collected the data and reported in the MIS (Management Information system.) But we haven't really done a lot with the results before. The teachers now discuss their observations using the Literacy Net and then they use (the information). They discuss what to do about the results.

Sustainability

The principal and teachers believed that the *GiR* approach and strategies were sustainable because they had been built in to the school's literacy strategy plan. The teachers also believed that the strategies had now become part of their regular teaching repertoire. They had doubts, however as to whether they would continue to plan as collaboratively if the Specialist Teacher was no longer there to provide leadership.

The strategies would stay, they're ingrained. But the collaborative planning might go. (G.)

By the second visit, the Specialist Teacher thought that the teachers had become more confident and independent. She felt that they would be able to manage on their own.

The teachers are not dependent now. They have a go themselves. And it's becoming more part of the school now. The other teachers (not in *GiR*) participate in literacy professional development sessions too, so it's becoming more of a school thing. But I do think we need to continue to have a person in a support role.

Summary and conclusions

The work of the Specialist Teacher

The Specialist Teacher at School 7 worked very effectively as a dynamic curriculum leader in the school, particularly in the area of literacy teaching. Her leadership role as a Level 3 teacher combined well with her Specialist Teacher role. Her work was facilitated by excellent support from the school principal and leadership team.

The teachers appreciated her 'shoulder to shoulder' way of working with them in their classrooms and her non dogmatic approach. She herself said that she 'was not there to 'show experienced teachers how to do their job' but rather to advise, help and support them. They appreciated the way she modelled new practices and the way they shared feedback about their teaching. The principal and teachers felt privileged to have, through the Specialist Teacher and her *GiR* training, access to what they believed to be the best and latest ideas and strategies for teaching literacy. Three main elements were involved:

1. The Specialist teacher, because of the *GiR* training, her own professional interest and reading, and the networks she had made, was in possession of powerful knowledge about how to teach literacy well.
2. She was able to bring her learnt knowledge and skills directly to the point of curriculum delivery - the classroom – to use them herself, and to share them with the teachers who were ultimately responsible for students’ learning.
3. This arrangement was not one-off or short term, but an on-going commitment that allowed time for new ideas and practices to become embedded in the curriculum and in teachers’ ways of working.

Having more than one teacher in the classroom created opportunities for new professional learning based on observation and reflection. This mode of working also allowed for ongoing discussion, monitoring, improvement, and refinement of programs and strategies.

The Specialist Teacher’s work with her colleagues was becoming a model of collaboration for other teachers in the school. Her long standing role as a curriculum leader was strengthened by her Specialist Teacher role, largely because of the new expertise she was gaining, but also because other teachers in the school saw that *GiR* was working as a collaborative experience for her colleagues and wanted to know more about it. The principal and teachers said that since the introduction of *GiR* in the school most teachers in the school appeared to be communicating more effectively and were more inclined to develop collaborative working practices.

Planning

The importance of sound and coherent planning with varied and innovative activities was highly apparent in the successful lessons observed. The main elements that contributed to the successful planning were:

- Formally scheduled time for planning between the Specialist Teacher and the classroom teacher;
- Good resources and strong support from the principal and school leadership team
- The Specialist Teacher’s advanced subject knowledge and knowledge of related teaching approaches and strategies;
- The good working relationships between the Specialist Teacher and the classroom teachers;
- The fact of the Specialist Teacher working with the teachers ‘shoulder to shoulder’ in executing the planning in the classroom. This encompassed her knowledge and skills and the classroom teachers’ knowledge of the children, and the capacity to plan on the basis of ongoing monitoring and reflection.

Assessment and target setting

At the first visit, teachers were using mainly *First Steps* as an assessment tool. Over the three visits there was increasing use of the Literacy Net, the Curriculum Framework and SOS. Teachers reported increasing confidence in their use of these documents. This was largely due to their collaborative work with the Specialist Teacher, who had attended the relevant *GiR* training sessions. By the third visit

teachers were using the second edition of First Steps. Target setting was still mainly for lower achieving students using the Literacy Net.

The Specialist Teacher's comments about the Making Consistent Judgements professional development for Year 3 teachers, to the effect that her colleagues were much more knowledgeable in this area than teachers who had not had the benefit of *GiR* provided significant evidence that the *GiR* approaches had developed teachers' knowledge and ability in assessment and moderation using an outcomes based approach.

Changes to practice: second and third visits

The teachers reported *that their practice had changed significantly as a result of the Getting it Right- Literacy and Numeracy Strategy*. By the third visit, they all appeared much more confident about their effectiveness as teachers of literacy.

The main changes that were reported and observed over the period of the three visits were

- Teachers having individually different expectations for children
- Teachers giving children more opportunities to do things differently according to their individual learning needs and special abilities
- Teachers using more open ended activities to cater, especially, for more advanced students
- Teachers becoming more aware of, and more structured and specific about the learning needs that were being targeted
- Improved teacher subject knowledge and a much broader repertoire of skills
- Much improved planning skills
- Much higher levels of confidence on the part of teachers in their own ability to teach well.
- Improved teacher understanding of and use of the Literacy Net. (Some teachers thought this was the change that had most influenced their practice.)
- Teachers accepting feedback from the Specialist Teacher, other teachers and other adults, including parents, and making subsequent changes to their practice. (This included being more inclined to give and accept feedback that was helpful and constructive.)
- Greater understanding and confidence in using the Curriculum Framework and SOS

The Specialist Teacher listed three major changes that had occurred from 2003 to 2005:

I think three things, the collaborative planning; the target setting and the student centred focus. We no longer just pay lip service to the idea of target setting and the literacy net.

Section 3

***Getting it Right* as a strategy for improving literacy and numeracy learning**

***Getting it Right* as a strategy for improving literacy and numeracy learning**

The *Getting it Right* strategy is clearly a comprehensive and well-resourced reform strategy with its main emphasis on building professional capacity among teachers and principals. The data we gathered as part of the evaluation, through school and classroom observations, interviews, survey and document collection, left no doubt that the strategy was highly regarded by teachers and principals, and that it was having a significant impact on practice.

The success of the *Getting it Right* strategy, in linking State Government policy to significant change in teachers' beliefs and practice, suggests that it would be worthwhile to examine its main components in relation to research on professional learning for teachers and in relation to the literature on educational change in teachers, schools and systems.

A feature of the *Getting it Right* strategy is the depth of understanding it reveals of what it takes for reform policies to penetrate to the level of everyday practice. The Strategy is primarily about enhancing the capacity of existing teachers to meet the needs of children at risk. It is a targeted and coordinated program that directs serious money at a serious problem. The strategy reveals a sophisticated understanding of the complexities of change and the conditions that need to be in place if professional development is to make a difference to student learning outcomes.

Fullan (1991) outlines a simplified overview of the change process that we will adopt for the purposes of this next section. He names four steps in the process: initiation, implementation, continuation and outcomes. We will explore the *Getting it Right* strategy for literacy and numeracy with the factors he identified as affecting initiation and implementation of a change process. We will look at some of the factors impacting on continuation and using the data from our case studies describe some of the issues facing the WA Department of Education and Training in ensuring continuation and seeking the maximum outcomes from the *Getting it Right* strategy.

Exploring the Getting it Right strategy with research on change

Factors Affecting Initiation

Factors Associated with Initiation

1. Existence and Quality of Innovations
 2. Access to Information
 3. Advocacy from Central Administration
 4. Teacher Advocacy
 5. External Change Agents
 6. Community Pressure Support/Apathy
 7. New Policy – Funds (Federal/State/Local)
 8. Problem-Solving and Bureaucratic Orientations.
- Fullan (1991) p, 50.

1. Existence and Quality of Innovations

Fullan notes that many innovations are developed in response to the market rather than with a view to developing ideas and materials to meet the needs of some communities or subgroups. This is often countered by governments who sponsor the development of new policies and programs for disadvantaged groups as those working with such groups often do not have the time, resources or skills to develop the solutions they need all by themselves. Once in existence Fullan claims that program clarity and quality have been a major problem for innovation. In the past educational changes have been adopted without any clear understanding as to their specific meaning. This he says makes people in education more careful in taking on change. The innovation still needs to be open to interpretation, modification and adaptation by those who have to implement the program.

The *Getting it Right* strategy for numeracy is underpinned by a high quality, research-based curriculum development resource – *First Steps in Mathematics*. This resource was developed by tertiary experts, working in the field with teacher-researchers and sponsored by government education department. Teachers use this resource collaboratively to plan the school's mathematics curriculum, to plan learning activities tailored to students in their classroom and to map development in their mathematical thinking. They do this by working with specially trained Specialist Teachers who have been appointed to the school to work with teachers planning and teaching in the classroom together. So the *Getting it Right* strategy for numeracy was made possible by the existence of the First Steps materials. These were clearly something that could not have been developed by teachers working in isolation. Having access to materials informed by quality research about mathematics, teaching mathematics and student learning of mathematics imbued the teachers with confidence. The teachers found the materials easy to use and easy to implement. Over time the teachers working with the Specialist Teachers found the materials easy to adapt to suit their own particular context.

The *Getting it Right* strategy for literacy is underpinned by a comprehensive research base in literacy learning and development, and the training sessions for the Specialist Teachers draw extensively on current research, for example, *In Teachers' Hands* (Louden et al., 2005; Louden, 2005), a national project investigating effective literacy teaching practices in the early years of school. Teachers in Western Australia were already familiar with First Steps, and, when the second edition of *First Steps* became available, the training sessions included a focus, initially, on the Reading Map of Development. The connections between the second edition of first Steps and the Curriculum Framework contributed to its usefulness for Specialist Teachers and their colleagues. Many resources for literacy teaching, developed from recent research, were incorporated into the *GiR* training and taken back to schools by the Specialist Teachers. The concept of the four roles of the reader, developed by Luke and Freebody (1999) was a key resource, and the Cooperative Reading program developed by Glenda Raison was also a well-used resource.

2. Access to Information

Fullan outlines how typically central office and district personnel spend a lot of time learning – at conferences, in workshops, and in professional networks. Teachers, on the other hand, spend a lot less time learning about new ideas, and while they get access to professional development ‘here and there’ they do not have the opportunity for ‘continuous personal contact’ which is necessary for the implementation of a new program.

The *Getting it Right* strategy was planned deliberately to help overcome this problem with change planning. A Specialist Teacher was allocated to schools in need for a minimum 2-year period. The Specialist Teacher was released from classroom duties to work ‘shoulder to shoulder’ with a number of colleagues, for about half a day each week for each teacher. The literacy Specialist Teachers engaged in a considerable amount of professional learning about the use of assessment approaches, including ways of monitoring and recording student growth, and about a wide repertoire of effective teaching strategies.

The Specialist Teachers received extensive and intensive training and support from a central *Getting it Right* team in using the First Steps in Mathematics materials and in research related to learning the mathematics. The training and support takes place over two years – twenty-one days spread over seven three-day training sessions run by Central *Getting it Right* staff. However the problem of teacher access to the ideas, the thinking, the research and the strategies was to be overcome by the Specialist Teachers working alongside the teachers.

The Specialist Teachers help their colleagues in the collection and analysis of student performance data, using that data to inform planning, modelling lessons, and team teaching. The classroom teacher retains responsibility for the mathematics learning of the children in his or her class. In a typical week Specialist Teachers spend half an hour or so planning the next week’s session/s and an hour or so teaching with that teacher using the activities they had planned together. From time to time, the Specialist Teacher might assist the teacher to run a diagnostic task to monitor progress in understanding and identify difficulties students might be experiencing.

The Specialist Teacher does not act as a support teacher or routinely teach groups of students withdrawn from a class. The Strategy places heavy reliance on the professional judgment of the teacher and on informing that judgment. The strategy then is underpinned by the work between the Specialist Teacher and the teacher happening week in and week out over an extended period thereby allowing the teacher to get the ‘continuous personal contact’ necessary for change to occur.

3. Advocacy from Central Administration

Fullan claims that initiation of change never occurs without an advocate. In the government school system the government and the central office are the key advocates.

The *Getting it Right* strategy was developed by the central office bureaucracy in response to the government of the day's desire for a strong powerful strategy in the area of improving literacy and numeracy outcomes for students. Prior to that the development of the First Steps mathematics materials was underpinned by a research and development program funded by the Department of Education and Training. This was in response to a perceived lack of quality materials based on recent research in early learning of mathematics by young children. Without the sponsorship of either the government for the strategy and the department for the First Steps mathematics materials it would not have existed. Likewise the original First Steps for literacy, and the recently completed second edition, were outcomes of department initiatives.

4. Teacher Advocacy

Fullan claims that teachers, despite not having access to new ideas and less time and energy to follow through on even those they do become aware of, they still do innovate – in their classrooms every day. Teachers also prefer new ideas to come from other teachers. However this transfer of knowledge is limited by the lack of time teachers have to work with each other. He quotes Little's (1982) research that supports the idea that school improvement occurred when teachers talked to each other about their teaching practice; they frequently observed and provided feedback to each other; and when they planned, designed and evaluated teaching materials and practices together. Rosenholtz (1989) supported the work of Little. However others (e.g. Elmore, 2002) have claimed that the working conditions of teachers in most schools does not support teachers talking to each other about their practice.

The *Getting it Right* strategy uses teacher advocacy as a key driver of the change. Firstly the First Steps materials were developed by teachers working with teachers and mathematics education experts. The ideas and activities suggested in they materials resonated with the teachers. Many teachers were also very familiar with the First Steps literacy materials, which had been in widespread use in WA since the early 1990s.

Secondly, the strategy uses teachers as the 'implementation' experts (the Specialist Teachers) and locates them in the schools and classrooms rather than in the district or central office. Further the Specialist Teachers were often chosen (at least initially) from within the existing school staff and they were teachers who were already well respected by the other staff.

Thirdly, the Specialist Teachers spent time each week working with each targeted teacher talking about teaching, student learning, planning lessons, evaluating student learning, looking at materials, and teaching together in classrooms allowing for giving and getting feedback on teaching. This approach allowed for the teachers to also adapt the ideas and to develop new ideas for their own for implementation.

5. External Change Agents

Fullan outlines how such people play an important role in the initiation stage of a change process. He references Corbett, Dawson and Firestone (1984) in saying

that external change agents helped make people aware of the new program, worked with people in schools to choose among a range of new practices, sometimes helped with funding arrangements, arranged and conducted initial training and sometimes played a continuing support and evaluation role.

The *Getting it Right* strategy had two levels of external change agents, the first being the central office literacy and numeracy teams. The literacy team was comprised of knowledgeable and experienced literacy educators. The team of four for numeracy was made up of the teachers who had been involved in the research and development of the First Steps materials. These people facilitated the implementation of the strategy. They trained the Specialist Teachers and had an ongoing role in supporting and working with Specialist Teachers in their schools.

The second level of change agent was the Specialist Teachers. However they worked in the schools rather than externally to the schools. This allowed them to be involved in facilitating the program and working with the teachers – all the time – rather than from a distance where they would have to be continually negotiating and re-negotiating their entry to the school and the work they would do once there.

6. Community Pressure Support/Apathy

Fullan outlines how communities create the pressure for taking action around a particular problem (or not), provide support for an approach to a problem (or oppose it) or do nothing by being passively supportive or apathetic to it.

In the case of the *Getting it Right* strategy there is a case that the government created the strategy in response for society support for action to be taken to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes in WA in government schools and particularly in relation to some schools where results were well below state benchmarks. The focus developed to target such schools was driven then by the government and the central office rather than direct pressure from the particular school communities.

7. New Policy - Funds (Federal/State/Local)

There is no doubt in the case of *Getting it Right* that the state government directing funds to the implementation of the strategy enabled the change to be taken up. Without the injection of the \$28 million the strategy would not have been possible.

8. Problem-Solving and Bureaucratic Orientations

The *Getting it Right* strategy and the First Steps mathematics materials and approach are fundamentally based on teachers in schools both adopting an approach to teaching mathematics and also implementing new practices in relation to teaching mathematics. The *Getting it Right* strategy acknowledges that it is essential to expand teachers' repertoires of literacy teaching practices to meet the needs of diverse groups of students. It assumes that change is necessary. It makes that claim. It recognizes that the change will take time. It acknowledges that the

change needs to take place in the classroom. It provides significant resources but where they are targeted at teachers working in the classroom. And it allows for a problem solving approach in each school over time. It continues to provide for a central office sponsored professional development program of the Specialist Teachers over 2-year time span which allows for continual ‘tweaking’ to meet the needs of the group. Such an approach enhances the chances of the change being taken up and implemented.

Factors affecting Implementation

A. Characteristics of Change

1. Need
2. Clarity
3. Complexity
4. Quality/Practicality

B. Local Characteristics

5. District
6. Community
7. Principal
8. Teacher

C. External Factors

9. Government and other agencies

Fullan (1991) p, 68

A. Characteristics of Change

1. Need

Fullan talks of teachers needing to see the need for a change. He outlines three complications in relation to the perceived need of a change. Firstly, that not only does it need to be seen as important but also to be more important than the many other priorities facing teachers in schools. Secondly, that clarity about particular needs sometimes only become apparent once teachers become involved in trying to do things. Thirdly, over time needs can become clearer or not as the implementation process evolves.

In the case of *Getting it Right* from our case studies it was apparent, as we have previously noted, that the teachers in the schools acknowledged there was a need for improved literacy and numeracy outcomes for their students.⁸ Given the resource allocation to the school they were also happy to adopt literacy or numeracy as a key focus for change in their classrooms. Secondly, once the implementation process began it was apparent to the teachers that they had much to learn – about students learning of literacy and mathematics, about how to diagnose and identify student problems with learning in these crucial curriculum areas, about the content of literacy and mathematics curricula, and about how to teach literacy and mathematics. Their needs multiplied once they started to learn more. Thirdly, their needs became clearer as they engaged in the process.

⁸ The target setting that is a key element of the Getting it Right strategy was critical in identifying the need for change. Recognition of need was directly connected with target setting.

2. Clarity

According to Fullan clarity is a perennial problem in the change process and that problems related to clarity occur in every change project. This is exacerbated when the changes being touted are complex and when teachers find that the change is not clear as to what it means in practice. Fullan explains how this can lead to either false clarity - when the change has more to it than the people involved realize, or where the change causes great anxiety and frustration to those trying to implement them.

The *Getting it Right* strategy had an explicit process for how it would operate in schools. The Specialist Teacher was to work with a teacher once per week in planning and regularly in the classroom. Nearly all the teachers involved understood that it was a strategy to improve and where necessary change their practice in relation to the teaching of literacy and mathematics. The approach taken by the Specialist Teacher in working with teachers was also explicit. For example, if a group of students were seen to need support in writing well-sequenced narratives, the Specialist Teacher and the class teacher would work together to develop a series of teaching and learning activities with a strong focus on sequence. In the First Steps mathematics materials, the key understandings of a particular aspect of mathematics were outlined for the teachers to read and learn. Diagnostic tasks from First Steps would be given to the students to ascertain what they could already do and what they didn't understand. The student work was used in relation to the First Steps materials to help identify what activities the students might need to do in order to learn the mathematics. The teacher in collaboration with the Specialist Teacher would then plan some lessons choosing from the activities outlined in the materials and defining some focus questions to help anchor the lessons. The materials although new to the teachers were made available and the activities outlined in the materials enabled teachers to see how the change was to impact in practice.

Teachers then were able to seek and get clarity about the intention of the change, the approach to the implementation of the change, and the resources to be used in the change. They were able throughout the implementation process of trying things out in their classrooms to experience how the change to their practice would be achieved and what it meant for their practice. Early gains in confidence and their learning seemed to help many of the teachers to engage with the work and keep going.

Some teachers did talk about their lack of clarity about the First Steps mathematics materials especially initially. They mentioned the need for a stronger induction process into the approach. This is something that each school might be more cognizant of in the future, particularly for teachers who are new to the school.

3. Complexity

Fullan describes complexity as the referring to the difficulty and extent of change required of the teachers. He then points to a dilemma inherent in this issue that the research indicates. That is, that the more complex the change the

more likely change would occur but on the other hand if the change is too ambitious and too much is being attempted it can result in massive failure.

The *Getting it Right* strategy for numeracy is indeed a complex change. Teachers are confronted with ‘a sophisticated array of activities, structures diagnoses, teaching strategies and philosophical understanding’ (Fullan, p, 71). They are confronted with the fact that the strategy is all about changing their practice with regard to teaching literacy and mathematics. Even teachers who thought they already had an innovative approach to teaching students using problem solving and hands on activities found there was more to knowing mathematics than the strategy being used to learn it. So *Getting it Right* is seeking complex change and in our view achieves much because of it. But this is assisted because so many of the other factors to support implementation are in place as well.

4. Quality/Practicality

Ambitious projects, according to Fullan, are nearly always politically driven. This is true for *Getting it Right*. Historically he says that this results in decisions being made on the grounds of political necessity and without due regard for development and implementation time. With the case of *Getting it Right* numeracy the central office responded to the political request for the strategy by using an approach that had been researched and developed over the previous 15 years. The centre had learned much from its previously successful First Steps in Literacy professional development approaches. *Getting it Right* borrowed heavily from these particularly with regard to the use of the Specialist Teacher in the school. Secondly the central office used the recently completed First Steps research and development project as the source for its particular approach to numeracy and materials for teachers to use. Quality was evident in both the approach and the materials.

According to Fullan changes also have to pass the test of practicality. Mortimore (1988) describes practical changes as those that address salient needs, fit well with the teachers situation, are focused and include concrete how-to-do it possibilities. This does not mean that the changes need to be easy but rather than some practical ways of implementing the changes are present. *Getting it Right* numeracy passes this test.

B. Local Characteristics

5. District

Fullan talks about the District but in the case of the *Getting it Right* in WA his comments are more aptly directed at the central office. Fullan outlines how district administrators affect the quality of implementation to the extent they set the conditions for the implementation, they show specific forms of support and active knowledge and understanding of the realities of attempting to put a change into practice.

The district offices in WA did not play a major role in the implementation of the *Getting it Right*. They had a part to play in the identification and selection of the schools that were to participate. The local District Director would talk to

the Principal about how the program was going in a particular school through the normal school review process and around the setting of targets but little else. The central office created the strategy and the central office team was responsible to ongoing supervision of the implementation process. In the case of *Getting it Right* for literacy and numeracy the central office, as we are outlining here, put in place robust processes for maximizing the success of the program by paying close attention to many of the factors we are describing here.

6. Community

Fullan explores the role of the community and school boards in the implementation of change. He identifies the problems middle class communities can cause when they do not like an innovation while other communities respond with apathy. He points out that when school Boards work closely with the school to support the implementation of a change it can enhance the process. He also points out that the local community is often 'left out' when innovations are introduced. He makes a reference to rural communities often having less access to the innovations and form needed sources of assistance during implementation.

We did not see much evidence of involvement by any of the school communities nor their involvement in the decision to be part of the *Getting it Right* program. Several *Getting it Right* Specialist Teachers mentioned how they gave presentations to and workshops with parents and talked of how they would have liked to have done more in relation to these things. Presentations at the end-of-year *GiR* symposia highlighted some examples of strong school-community connections. There were references to *Getting it Right* in school newsletters, end of year reports, and school development plans. From that we can assume that some school councils and some parents knew of the program.

7. Principal

The research indicates that the principal strongly influences the uptake of change in a school. They influence the strength to which a change program is to be taken seriously by others, they help create the context which encourages and supports the change or not, and they can support the change in teachers through their interactions with them and the resources they make available to them.

The principals in the case study schools were invariably keen supporters of the *Getting it Right* strategy. They valued the intention, the approach and the resources it brought to the school. Some had applied to the district to get literacy Specialist Teachers but were more than happy to have been allocated a numeracy Specialist Teacher. The Department's rationale for allocating either a literacy or numeracy Specialist Teacher to schools was to avoid overstretching schools and to allow schools to focus strongly on improving one this at a time.

Most of the principals endeavoured to create structures and processes that would support the role of the Specialist Teacher (for example, often giving the Specialist Teacher a leadership role in the school); provided teachers time to

meet collaboratively to talk in groups about this work, to develop moderation activities and to learn more about the materials; ensured that literacy or numeracy became (or remained) a key priority for the whole school; worked with the Specialist Teacher in setting targets for improvement; and a number looked to provide extra resources for teacher use in the classroom and for teacher time to work with Specialist Teacher.

Special sessions are held by the central office *Getting it Right* team for principals in target setting and in identifying specific actions they can take to support the work of the Specialist Teacher. However some of the schools had a succession of Principals even in the two years of this evaluation. While they were all supportive the lack of continuity of leadership in these schools did mean that for a large time span the schools had principals who were not always familiar with the entire program and who were not formally inducted into the program nor its processes.

8. Teacher

Fullan writes ‘in the final analysis it is the actions of the individual that count’. However the influence of colleagues is a crucial factor in an individual taking up and implementing a change to their practice. “New meanings, new behaviours, new skills and new beliefs depend significantly on whether teachers are working as isolated individuals (Goodlad, 1984; Lortie, 1975; Sarason, 1982) or are exchanging idea, support and positive feelings about their work (Little, 1982, Rosenholtz, 1989)” (Fullan, p, 77). More recent research has affirmed the importance of the ‘professional learning community’ as it relates to improving student learning outcomes (Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996). That is, where teachers work collaboratively to develop shared purpose, have a collective focus teaching and learning, de-privatise their practice and develop a capacity for reflective dialogue.

The *Getting it Right* strategy supported such activity. Teachers worked with other teachers, talked about literacy and mathematics, planned together, analysed student work, reflected on what was working and what wasn’t and worked together in the classroom. Most of the schools supported this by enabling teachers to also meet together in larger groups, sometimes in learning teams and sometimes as a whole staff.

C. External Factors

9. Government and other agencies

We have already outlined elsewhere the pivotal role the central office played in the setting up and implementation of the *Getting it Right* program. This was crucial in the success of the program at the school level. The centre sponsored the research, the development of the materials and the professional development approach through the First Steps project during the 90s. It created the *Getting it Right* strategy and the approach to be taken after the government identified the focus and the resources to make it possible. It employed a central office team who delivered the 21 days of spaced professional development over two years for the Specialist Teachers, the induction days for Principals, and other days where Specialist Teachers,

Principals and teachers came together to learn from what they had tried. Importantly they provided a consultancy service to the Specialist Teachers and the schools in the program visiting most schools each term.

SECTION 4

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions

The concept of working shoulder to shoulder in classrooms, and in collaboratively identifying students' learning needs and planning activities that will move them forward is central to the GiR-LNS. This collaborative work has enhanced on the understandings, confidence and teaching skills of the Specialist Teachers and their colleagues. It has made a definite impact on the capacity of teachers to select, apply and develop diagnostic, formative and summative student assessment strategies and instruments so that they are now better able to focus on individual learning needs in literacy and numeracy. (Volume 1, p 118)

The conclusion to Volume 1 of this report emphasises the impact of the central concepts of the *Getting it Right*-Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. The centrality of the shoulder to shoulder work in classrooms and the collaborative planning for meeting students' learning needs was evident in all the case study schools.

The illustrative case studies in this volume show this collaborative work in action, and explore, in some depth, the key features of the work of the Specialist Teachers and their colleagues. The case studies show how this work involves a complex interplay between a number of key elements.

The support of the school leadership is one of these elements. In almost all of the case study schools, the Specialist Teacher had been included on the school leadership team. In interviews, all principals indicated their very strong support for the initiative, and for the work of the Specialist Teacher in their own school. Leadership support is linked to the importance of setting goals for improving literacy or numeracy achievements as a whole school priority. In those schools where a school literacy or numeracy policy was in place, and where this policy focused clearly on targets for improvement, the work of the Specialist Teacher was valued as a key strategy for achieving improvement

In-class support and collaborative planning were strongly connected. Working shoulder to shoulder in class requires that the Specialist teacher and the classroom teacher have a shared understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the class. While the class teachers always held ultimate responsibility for their students, the collaborative examination of student performance data from a variety of sources, the ongoing monitoring of students' development, and the planning of teaching activities to meet specific needs drew on the professional knowledge of both the Specialist Teacher and the classroom teacher. Often, the Specialist Teacher drew on new knowledge of effective literacy and numeracy teaching practices gleaned from the *Getting it Right* professional development program to suggest appropriate strategies. Sometimes, they modeled the strategy for their colleagues, and thus enhanced the teaching repertoires of these teachers. This, in turn, led to the improvement of instructional practices in the *Getting it Right* schools. Where a teacher and the Specialist Teacher had established a strong collaborative partnership, the exchange of feedback about the effectiveness of teaching became an ongoing part of their conversations, further strengthening teaching practices.

The setting of 'challenging but realistic' targets for improvement in literacy and numeracy achievement brought in its train the need for diagnostic assessment, monitoring of progress, assessment of learning outcomes, and planning for further

improvement. It also required a deeper understanding of the English and mathematics Curriculum Frameworks. This focus was a key driver of the initiative.

The content of the *Getting it Right* professional development program included current knowledge about the two curriculum areas, about how students learn literacy and numeracy, and about ways of teaching literacy and numeracy. The program also included sessions designed to support Specialist Teachers to work with their colleagues. The content of the professional development combined with the consultancy provided to all Specialist Teachers by the central *GiR* team, was a vital element that contributed to the success of the initiative.

The case studies provided a great deal of evidence of the success of the *Getting it Right* strategy. They also provided insights into some of the challenges for Specialist Teachers and their colleagues, and how they had endeavoured to meet these challenges.

One of the indicators of the success of the strategy was the reference in a number of schools to their intention to extend the role of the Specialist Teacher to the upper primary grades, in some cases by utilising their own resources. The role of Specialist Teacher combines the roles of coach, mentor, expert consultant, teaching partner and locates significant expertise in schools. It could well be applied to secondary schools, even though there are organisational differences between primary and secondary schools.

The case studies reinforce the major conclusions presented in Volume 1:

The success of the GiR-LNS to date has assured the continuation of the strategy. In order to maintain the effectiveness of the strategy, it will be important to maintain key elements that have been crucial to the effectiveness of the strategy. The model of working shoulder to shoulder, the high quality professional development program and the use of student data have combined to create a highly effective strategy for improving learning opportunities for all students, including those at risk of not making progress.

Firstly, there must be continued investment in high quality professional development for the Specialist Teachers. The program of twenty-one days of professional development provided in three-day workshops for Specialist teacher in the first two years of their appointment, the continuing professional development opportunities for Specialist Teachers who continue in the role has been crucial to the success of the GiR-LNS. The content of the program, which has had a strong basis in research about effective teaching of literacy and numeracy has been of major significance in building a considerable body of literacy and numeracy teaching expertise in Western Australian government schools.

The work of the GiR-LNS central team, who have brought considerable knowledge and expertise to the strategy has provided ongoing support to Specialist Teachers, and has contributed in very important ways to their capacity to work effectively with classroom colleagues. The maintenance of these levels of support will be important to the future professional learning of Specialist teachers and their colleagues on schools.

Secondly, the model of Specialist Teachers working shoulder to shoulder through regular collaborative planning and in-class support should continue. ... The support of school leadership teams is a crucial factor in the success of the strategy, and will continue to be so.

Finally, the use of performance data in a variety of ways will continue to be of major significance. The use of data to set challenging but realistic targets for improving students' achievement in literacy or numeracy has been a most useful aspect of the strategy. The process of target setting enables schools to monitor their progress, to celebrate achievement, and to adjust teaching programs where necessary.

The fine-grained use of data by teachers, on an ongoing basis, to identify and diagnose students'; learning needs has been critical to the success of the strategy. Teachers are now able to assess students' knowledge and skills more effectively, and to plan explicit teaching approaches to address the diversity of students' needs. Not only have students benefited to a considerable degree from this approach, but teachers' knowledge and understanding of effective teaching practices has been significantly enhanced, and their repertoires of effective teaching strategies have been extended.

This evaluation of the GiR-LNS model was focused on the early years of schooling. The findings of the evaluation suggest that the model has applicability at all levels of schooling. (Volume 1, pp 120-121)

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APPENDIX 1

Focused interview schedule

Specialist Teachers	
Focus	Interview questions
REVIEW	What has changed at this school since 2003? Staff changes, new Specialist Teacher literacy rather than numeracy focus, different time fraction, etc)
SCHOOL CONTEXT	<p>How does your role as a Specialist Teacher fit into the overall context of your school?</p> <p>What features of this school are important for us to understand why <i>Getting it Right</i> is important for the school?</p>
THE GETTING IT RIGHT SPECIALIST TEACHER	<p>How do you see your role as a Specialist teacher?</p> <p>What do you mainly do as a Specialist teacher?</p> <p>How many classroom colleagues do you currently support? For how long? (a term? a year?)</p> <p>How much time do you spend working in the classrooms of your teacher colleagues each week?</p> <p>How do you manage to have regular and ongoing <u>planning time</u> with the colleagues with whom you work?</p> <p>In what ways does the school leadership team support your work as a Specialist Teacher?</p>
SETTING TARGETS	<p>How much of your time have you spent this year on the collection and analysis of data?</p> <p>What targets have been set for improved student achievement in your school? Have they been modified since 2003?</p> <p>How do you conduct the target setting process?</p> <p>Who is involved in setting targets?</p> <p>How is it decided that these targets are realistic yet challenging in the context of your school?</p> <p>What use is being made of assessment information in classes/ the school?</p>
Planning	<p>Can you describe a recent planning session with one of your teacher colleagues? What <i>Curriculum Framework</i> outcomes were the focus of the planning session? Were you planning a sequence of lessons, or a single lesson? What instructional practices did you suggest? Was there discussion of assessment and monitoring?</p> <p>Were there any problems with the planning session?</p>

	<p>Was this session typical of planning sessions you regularly share with this teacher, or with other colleagues with whom you work?</p> <p>How were the needs of students considered in the planning?</p> <p>Have these planning sessions changed over time? In what ways? What do the teachers now do differently?</p> <p>Are you been involved in planning at the whole school level? If so, can you describe these planning activities?</p>
Working with colleagues in classrooms	<p>Following the planning session you have described, what happened in the classroom the next time you worked alongside this teacher? Can you describe this session in detail?</p> <p>Was this typical of how you usually work in this teacher's classroom? In the classrooms of other colleagues?</p> <p>What other strategies have you used when working in your colleagues' classrooms?</p> <p>Have you observed changes in the repertoire of teaching approaches used in class by your teacher colleagues? Can you describe these changes?</p> <p>Do you think the colleagues with whom you work are now more confident about teaching literacy/numeracy as a result of your support? In what ways has confidence increased? Why? Why not?</p>
Assessment and reporting	<p>What strategies do you suggest that teachers might use to collect evidence of students' progress towards meeting Curriculum Framework Outcomes? Towards meeting the set targets?</p> <p>What diagnostic assessment strategies have you found useful to use with the teacher colleagues with whom you work? How have you used these?</p> <p>What assessment and monitoring record approaches do you use with your teacher colleagues: - the literacy/numeracy Net? The <i>ESL Bandscales</i>? Other?</p> <p>What support have you needed to give teachers to use these resources? How have you worked with teachers? What else do you feel you need to do?</p> <p>Have you undertaken any work in analysing school literacy/numeracy data? If so, can you describe this? Did the analysis contribute to planning teaching approaches?</p> <p>Have you provided or supported moderation activities in the school? Was this linked to planning and teaching?</p> <p>Can you describe other ways in which evidence of student achievement in literacy or numeracy has been used to plan for improved learning for students?</p>
Literacy/numeracy outcomes	<p>How do you help the teachers with whom you work develop a clearer understanding of the literacy/numeracy outcomes of the <i>Curriculum Framework</i>? How has this understanding been apparent?</p> <p>How have you worked with teachers to address literacy outcomes for particular groups of students: Aboriginal? ESL students with learning</p>

	<p>difficulties?</p> <p>In what ways have you been able to support colleagues in taking up teaching approaches that provide better literacy/numeracy learning opportunities for students?</p>
<p>Training and support</p>	<p>What aspects of the <i>Getting it Right</i> training program for Specialist Teachers have been most useful to you?</p> <p>In what ways has the <i>Getting it Right</i> training program deepened your understanding of Curriculum Framework outcomes relating to literacy/numeracy?</p> <p>Has the program built your capacity to support colleagues in meeting the needs of identified students in the mainstream classroom?</p> <p>To what extent has the program helped you to enhance the repertoire of instructional practices of the colleagues with whom you work?</p> <p><i>What emphasis did the program place on monitoring student learning?</i></p> <p><i>Has the program provided you with sufficient support for working as Specialist Teacher with your teacher colleagues?</i></p>
<p>Support from the Getting it Right team in Perth</p>	<p>What sorts of things happen when the <i>Getting it Right</i> team member visits each term? How important are these visits?</p> <p>How often do you contact your <i>Getting it Right</i> contact person between visits? Why do you make contact?</p>
<p>The role of Specialist Teacher</p>	<p><i>What factors have been most critical in enabling you to work effectively in this school as a Specialist Teacher? What factors have hindered your work?</i></p> <p><i>Has the school set up any way of sustaining the changes to teaching practices that your work has brought about, after the two year Getting it Right program?</i></p>
<p>Your own teaching</p>	<p>If you are currently teaching a class, in addition to your Specialist Teacher role, <i>can you describe ways in which your own teaching has changed as a result of the professional development program and support you receive as a Specialist Teacher?</i></p>

Focused Interview Schedule

Principal

Focus	Interview questions
Review	<p><i>What has changed since 2003 (staff changes, different Specialist Teacher, more/less time, more/fewer classroom teachers working with Specialist Teacher, different arrangements for planning time, etc)</i></p>
SCHOOL CONTEXT	<p>How long have you been involved with the <i>Getting it Right</i> strategy in this school?</p> <p>What arrangements have been made in the school for the Specialist Teacher and teacher colleagues to have regular and ongoing time to work together, for planning, and in the classroom? (Same or different from 2003?)</p> <p>In what ways do you, and the school leadership team, support the work of the Specialist Teacher? (Changes since 2003?)</p> <p>In what ways has your involvement with <i>Getting it Right</i> engendered stronger connections across literacy and numeracy planning relating to programs such as the Curriculum Improvement Program, the Students at Educational Risk strategy, Commonwealth Literacy and Numeracy Program, and the Aboriginal Educational Operational Plan?</p> <p>What changes do you hope to see in the school as a result of <i>Getting it Right</i>? <u>Have your expectations changed? If so, why?</u></p>
SETTING TARGETS	<p>What targets have been set for improved student achievement in your school?</p> <p>How is the target setting process conducted?</p> <p>Who is involved in setting targets?</p> <p>How is it decided that these targets were realistic yet challenging in the context of your school? Are they realistic and challenging for the students in this school?</p> <p><u>Has there been any need or opportunity to modify these targets? If so, how and why?</u></p> <p>What instruments/processes are being used? Why? What cohorts of students are being targeted?</p>
Planning	<p><i>There is a clear expectation in <i>Getting it Right</i> that the Specialist teachers will have regular and ongoing planning time with each teacher they are working with: <u>how has this been arranged in this school?</u></i></p> <p>In what ways has the Specialist Teacher worked collaboratively with other staff to find out what the children know and then plan to work together to bring about that learning?</p> <p><i>Have there been opportunities for the Specialist Teacher to contribute to the development of whole school approaches to literacy/numeracy improvement?</i></p>

<p>Working in the classroom</p>	<p>How are teachers who are working with the Specialist Teacher (the colleagues) selected?</p> <p>Are you aware of the ways in which the Specialist teacher and colleagues work together in classrooms and in planning sessions? Can you describe your impressions/observations?</p> <p>Do you anticipate that the support of the Specialist Teacher will have added to your teachers' teaching skills and repertoire of teaching approaches?</p> <p>Are your teachers now more confident about teaching literacy/numeracy? Why? Why not? How has the work of the Specialist Teacher contributed to this?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for the responses you have given to these questions?</p>
<p>Assessment and reporting</p>	<p>How has the <i>Getting it Right</i> helped teachers to choose and use assessment strategies and instruments to gather evidence to inform their planning and teaching?</p> <p>What strategies are used in the school to collect evidence of students' progress towards meeting <i>Curriculum Framework</i> Outcomes? Towards meeting the set targets?</p> <p>What assessment and monitoring record keeping methods are used: - the literacy/numeracy net? The <i>ESL Bandscales</i>? Other?</p> <p>Have teachers been given support in using these resources? How was this support provided?</p> <p>Have your staff been involved in moderation activities in the school? Were they linked to planning and teaching?</p> <p>Can you describe ways in which evidence of student achievement in literacy or numeracy has been used to plan for improved learning for students?</p>
<p>Literacy/numeracy outcomes</p>	<p>As a result of your involvement in <i>Getting it Right</i>, do you and your teachers now have a clearer understanding of the literacy/numeracy outcomes of the <i>Curriculum Framework</i>? What do you understand better? How did the Specialist Teacher assist in the development of this increased understanding?</p> <p>How have staff members worked with the Specialist Teacher to address literacy outcomes for particular groups of students: Aboriginal? ESL students with learning difficulties?</p>
<p>Training and support</p>	<p>What aspects of the <i>Getting it Right</i> initiative have contributed to professional learning for teachers in this school?</p> <p><i>Has the Getting it Right program provided your staff with sufficient support?</i></p> <p><i>What other support might have been useful?</i></p>
<p>The role of Specialist Teacher</p>	<p><i>What factors have been most critical in enabling the Getting it Right Specialist Teacher to work effectively in this school?</i></p>

	<p><i>Has the school set up any way of sustaining the changes to teaching practices brought about by the Getting it Right program?</i></p>
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Focused Interview Schedule

Getting it Right Teacher Colleagues

Focus	Interview questions
SCHOOL CONTEXT	<p style="text-align: center;">Did you work with the Specialist teacher last year?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Are there any changes in the way the <i>Getting it Right</i> Specialist Teacher works in this school?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">How much time do you spend working with the <i>Getting it Right</i> Specialist Teacher each week? (More or less than in 2003?)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">For how many weeks has the <i>Getting it Right</i> Specialist Teacher been available to you?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">What arrangements have been made for you to have regular and ongoing time to work together, for planning, and in the classroom?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">In what ways does the school leadership team support your work with the Specialist Teacher?</p>
SETTING TARGETS	<p style="text-align: center;">What targets have been set for improved student achievement in your school?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">How was the target setting process conducted? (Do you know?)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Who was involved in setting targets?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">How was it decided that these targets were realistic yet challenging in the context of your school? Are they realistic and challenging for the students in your class?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Has there been any need or opportunity to modify these targets?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">What instruments/processes are being used? Why?</p>
Planning	<p style="text-align: center;">Can you describe a recent planning session with the Specialist Teacher? What <i>Curriculum Framework</i> outcomes were the focus of the planning session? Were you planning a sequence of lessons, or a single lesson? What instructional practices were considered? Was there any discussion of assessment and monitoring?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Were there any problems with the planning session?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Was this session typical of planning sessions you regularly share with the Specialist Teacher?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">How were the needs of students considered in the planning?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Have these planning sessions changed over time? In what ways? What, if anything, do you now do differently?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Did your planning focus on a particular student/group? Why? What were you trying to achieve/overcome?</p>

Teaching skills	Would you tell us about your teaching? Please talk about a particular aspect of your literacy/numeracy teaching – for example shared book reading, or problem solving – - and describe how you plan, select resources, design activities and so on.
Working in the classroom	<p>Following the planning session you have described, what took place in the classroom the next time you worked with the Specialist Teacher? Can you describe this session in detail?</p> <p>What did the Specialist Teacher do? What did you do?</p> <p>Was this typical of how you usually work in the classroom? If it was different, can you talk about what was different?</p> <p>Are you teaching literacy/numeracy differently than before you started with <i>Getting it Right</i>? Can you talk about these differences?</p> <p>Has the support of the Specialist Teacher added to your teaching skills and your repertoire of teaching approaches?</p> <p>Are you now more confident about teaching literacy/numeracy? Why? Why not?</p>
Assessment and reporting	<p>How has the <i>Getting it Right</i> helped you to choose and use assessment strategies and instruments to gather evidence to inform your planning and teaching?</p> <p>What strategies do you use to collect evidence of students' progress towards meeting <i>Curriculum Framework Outcomes</i>? Towards meeting the set targets?</p> <p>What diagnostic assessment strategies have you found useful? How have you used these?</p> <p>What assessment and monitoring record keeping methods do you use: - the literacy/numeracy net? The <i>ESL Bandscales</i>? Other?</p> <p>Have you been given support in using these resources? How was this support provided?</p> <p>Have you been involved in activities involving comparing judgments about student achievement with your colleagues in the school? Were these activities linked to planning and teaching?</p> <p>Can you describe ways in which evidence of student achievement in literacy or numeracy has been used to plan for improved learning for students?</p>
Literacy/numeracy outcomes	<p>As a result of your involvement in <i>Getting it Right</i>, do you now have a clearer understanding of the literacy/numeracy outcomes of the <i>Curriculum Framework</i>? What do you understand better? How did the Specialist teacher assist you to develop this increased understanding?</p> <p>How have you worked with the Specialist Teacher to address literacy outcomes for particular groups of students: Aboriginal? ESL students with learning difficulties?</p>

	<p>In what ways have you been able to take up teaching approaches that provide better literacy/numeracy learning opportunities for students?</p> <p>Would you like to comment on the practicalities of the advice and support you have received from the Specialist Teacher?</p>
<p>Training and support</p>	<p>What aspects of the <i>Getting it Right</i> initiative have contributed to your professional learning?</p> <p><i>What emphasis was placed on the content that you teach? On ways in which students learn that content? On effective strategies for teaching that content? On monitoring student learning?</i></p> <p><i>Has the Getting it Right program provided you with sufficient support?</i></p> <p>What else would you like/find useful?</p> <p>Have you had previous experience with professional development opportunities similar to those provided by <i>Getting it Right</i>?</p>
<p>The role of Specialist Teacher</p>	<p><i>What factors have been most critical in enabling you to work effectively in this school with the Getting it Right Specialist Teacher?</i></p> <p><i>Has the school set up any way of sustaining the changes to teaching practices brought about by the Getting it Right program?</i></p> <p><i>If the Specialist Teacher were to disappear tomorrow, what impact would endure in the school?</i></p>