



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION NEW ZEALAND

Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga Aotearoa

An Evaluation of Network Learning Communities — Technical report

Report to the Ministry of Education

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CYPERUS
with Quigley and Watts

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CYPERUS

Network Learning Communities Technical Report

Prepared for: The Ministry of Education.

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Supported by Quigley and Watts

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter One: Sector Leader Survey	3
Introduction	3
Section One: NLC and participant demographics	3
Section Two: What is happening in the NLC?.....	8
Section Three: Personal outcomes from participation in the NLC as a sector leader	21
Section Four: Outcomes for participants in the NLC	26
Chapter Two: School Leader Survey	34
Introduction	34
Section One: participant demographics	34
Section Two: Expectations and satisfaction with the NLC	38
Section Three: Professional development and learning for The New Zealand Curriculum	44
Section Four: Outcomes from participation in the NLC on a personal level	47
Section Five: Outcomes for your school from participation in the NLC	60
Chapter Three: The Case Studies	69
Country Calendar: Making it work for us	69
Scooby Doo: The case of the mysterious NLC	76
Coffee, Cake and Twiducate.....	81
Bridging the Islands: A DIY approach	88
Dream Sleepers: Wakening the dream within everyone	95
Family Ties: Doing it together	100
The Sky is the Limit: A learning pathway	106
The Honest Teacher: True confessions of a language teacher on the path from confusion to clarity!	114
The Trials and Tribulations of the Pataka Classroom	120
What's the Point? Meaningful learning through curriculum integration	125

Tables

Table 1: Percentage of respondents by school support services region.....	3
Table 2: Total number of schools represented by this survey by school type.....	4
Table 3: Percentage of NLCs by number of schools involved	4
Table 4: Percentage of respondents by when NLC was formed.....	5
Table 5: Percentage of respondents by role within school	6
Table 6: Percentage of respondents with multiple roles within schools	6
Table 7: Percentage of respondents reporting how they became the sector leader	7
Table 8: Percentage of respondents by length of time personally been involved with NLC as sector leader or leader in their school	7
Table 9: Length of time as sector leader	7
Table 10: Percentage of time spent as sector leader spent on activities	9
Table 11: Frequency of activities in the NLC	11
Table 12: Frequency of areas as focus in activities in the NLC in the past 12 months	14
Table 13: Frequency of use of communication/meeting tools in NLC.....	17
Table 14: Current level of knowledge/expertise.....	23
Table 15: Current knowledge/expertise directly attributed to involvement in the NLC	24
Table 16: Percentage of respondents identifying single most valuable area of support as the sector leader.....	25

Table 17: Percentage of respondents identifying single most significant benefits as the sector leader	26
Table 18: Number of participants reporting each measure of success	27
Table 19: Number of participants reporting each type of benefit9.....	28
Table 20: Number of participants reporting each type of challenge	29
Table 21: Number of participants reporting each critical factor	30
Table 22: Percentage of respondents by school support services region	35
Table 23: Percentage of respondents by school decile	35
Table 24: Percentage of respondents by school type	35
Table 25: Range of teachers and corresponding MoE U category and school size	36
Table 26: Percentage of respondents by school size (number of teachers)	36
Table 27: Percentage of respondents by role within school.....	37
Table 28: Percentage of respondents with multiple roles within schools	37
Table 29: Percentage of respondents by year school joined the NLC	37
Table 30: Length of time personally involved with NLC activities.....	38
Table 31: Level of expectation that particular activities would occur by percent of respondents	39
Table 32: Mean and standard deviation by school type, decile, and size	42
Table 33: Mean and standard deviation by school type, decile, and size	44
Table 34: Mean and standard deviation by school type, decile, and size	45
Table 35: Mean and standard deviation by school type, decile, and size	47
Table 36: Levels of knowledge/expertise in areas before engagement in the NLC	49
Table 37: Levels of knowledge/expertise in areas at time of survey	52
Table 38: Comparison between knowledge/expertise before engaging with NLC and at the time of the survey	54
Table 39: Change in knowledge/expertise attributed to involvement in the NLC.	57
Table 40: Mean and standard deviation by school type, decile, size and respondent role in school	60
Table 41: Current situation of practices/foci in school.....	61
Table 42: Number and percentage of respondents by school type.....	62
Table 43: Number and percentage of respondents by school type.....	64
Table 44: Mean and standard deviation by school type, decile, and size	65
Table 45: Mean and standard deviation by school type, decile, and number of teachers	66

Figures

Figure 1: Criteria for how schools were chosen to partake in NLC	5
Figure 2: Mean frequency of activities occurring in NLC.....	12
Figure 3: Mean frequency of areas as focus in activities occurring in NLC in the past 12 months.....	15
Figure 4: Mean reported use of communication/meeting tools in NLC	18
Figure 5: Percentage of respondents by frequency of school leader meetings	19
Figure 6: Percent of respondents by participant school engagement – outside of school leader.....	20
Figure 7: Mean response by reported level of current knowledge/expertise	23
Figure 8: Mean response by reported level of attribution of current knowledge/expertise	24
Figure 9: Percentage of respondents who would recommend being a sector leader to others	26
Figure 10: Percentage of respondents rating NLC with regard to success criteria identified	28
Figure 11: Extent to which respondent would choose NLCs, by percentage of respondents.....	31
Figure 12: Mean levels of expectation that each activity would happen	40
Figure 13: Extent to which NLC meets overall expectations by percent of respondents	41
Figure 14: Extent to which respondents would choose NLCs by percentage of respondents.....	43
Figure 15: Percentage of staff engaging with information/learnings from NLC.....	45
Figure 16: Coherence of other professional learning opportunities with regard to <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i>	46
Figure 17: Reported mean levels of knowledge/expertise <u>before</u> engagement with the NLC	50
Figure 18: Reported mean levels of knowledge/expertise at time of survey.....	53
Figure 19: Shift in overall means between knowledge/expertise before engaging in NLC and at the time of the survey	55
Figure 20: Reported mean levels of knowledge/expertise attributed to the NLC.....	58
Figure 21: Percentage of respondents by influence on <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i> in school as result of NLC.....	59
Figure 22: Breadth of changes to teaching and learning practices within their school by percentage of respondents.....	63
Figure 23: Extent to which changes/intended changes to teaching and learning practices attributed to NLC by percentage of respondents	64
Figure 24: Extent to which the NLC has helped to meet schools need in supporting implementation of <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i> by percentage of respondents	65

Introduction

This technical report contains the detailed analyses of two surveys undertaken as part of the NLC evaluation. The first of these is the sector leader survey which was completed by 79 participants. The second is the school leader survey completed by 144 participants. Both were completed online.

Chapter One presents the findings from the sector leader survey while Chapter Two presents those from the school leader survey. Within both these surveys wide standard deviations reflect the diverse experiences of the respondents with regard to the NLC initiative.

The lack of large differences found for mean responses across key demographic groups, as reported in the school leader survey, (school size, type, decile) suggest individual contexts are more important determinants of experiences than demographics. One possible exception is the extent to which the NLC initiative has influenced small schools; something alluded to in the case studies. It appears that for small primary schools the NLC initiative has been particularly beneficial.

Chapter Three presents the detailed case study summaries of the ten NLCs visited as part of the evaluation. During these case studies data were gathered primarily through comprehensive interviews with the sector leaders for each NLC. A sample of the other members of the NLC also participated. Dependent on their availability this was either through a face-face interview, telephone interview or they completed a questionnaire and returned it to the evaluation team.

The purpose of the case studies was to provide a more in-depth description of a sample of NLCs than is possible through survey data alone. Findings from the case studies affirmed and elaborated the survey data providing a rich picture, overall, of the NLC initiative at the end of 2010.

Across the case studies were four primary only NLCs, four secondary only and two cross-curricular. They were drawn from across New Zealand including schools from rural, provincial and large urban areas. All of the case studies highlight the benefits for participants from being in an NLC. They also reflect the challenges experienced during their respective journeys. Each story is different and offers a unique lens on the NLC initiative.

Findings from the surveys and case studies are discussed, where relevant, in the main evaluation report, which also contains data gathered from interviews with the advisors working with the NLC and policy document analyses. In addition, a summary report is available and ten abbreviated case studies have been published online.

Chapter One: Sector Leader Survey

Introduction

This survey was completed online in 2010. An email was sent to all sector leaders as identified by the school support advisors in each region. In the email they were provided with a participant information sheet outlining the purpose of the survey, the use of the data and what their involvement would entail.

A total of 82 surveys were begun. Of these, two were duplicate entries, and one was incomplete, containing insufficient information to be included in the data analyses. These were discarded. Not all of the remaining 79 respondents answered every question and reported totals for each question vary.

Standard deviations were high for all questions throughout the sector leader's survey. This illustrates the broad range of responses provided, reflecting the diverse opinions and/or experiences of individual sector leaders.

For Likert-type questions¹ in the survey a six point, positively-packed response scale was utilized. The rationale for utilising this form of scale is that respondents were more likely to respond positively than negatively. Greater variance is possible with four rather than three positive responses. Further, six items avoids a tendency to choose the middle response.

Qualitative responses were coded into broad thematic categories for analysis. In some instances respondents were asked to provide a list of three responses ranked from the most important to the least. These were given a score of 1, 2 or 3 to denote importance for analysis.

Section One: NLC and participant demographics

Respondents were firstly asked to report what region their NLC was in. Table 1 shows their responses to this question. The largest number of respondents (n=20; 26.3%) were from the *Northland/Auckland* region. A further 22.4% (n=17) were from the *Wellington, Wairarapa* region, while 19.7% (n=15) reported being from the *Waikato, King Country, Coromandel, Bay of Plenty, Rotorua, East Coast* region. Just 5.3% of respondents (n=4) reported being from the *Otago, Southland* region.

Table 1: Percentage of respondents by school support services region

Region	n	%
Northland, Auckland	20	26.3%
Waikato, King Country, Coromandel, Bay of Plenty, Rotorua, East Coast	15	19.7%
Manawatu, Wanganui, Taranaki, Hawkes Bay,	12	15.8%
Wellington, Wairarapa	17	22.4%
Nelson, Marlborough, West Coast, Canterbury	8	10.5%
Otago, Southland	4	5.3%
Total	76	

¹ In these questions respondents are asked to choose an item from a given list that best reflects their response to a question or statement.

Respondents were also asked to report the type and number of schools in their NLC. Table 2 reports the overall number of schools involved in NLCs led by respondents. Nearly half (n=253; 41.7%) of the schools represented by this survey are full primaries. The next largest groups are contributing primaries (n=165, 27.2%) and year 9 – 13 secondary schools (n=113, 18.6%).

Table 2: Total number of schools represented by this survey by school type

School Type	n	%
Contributing Primary	165	27.2%
Full Primary	253	41.7%
Intermediate	17	2.8%
Middle school (7-10)	7	1.2%
Secondary (7–13)	29	4.8%
Secondary (9-13)	113	18.6%
Area (0–13)	22	3.6%
Total	606	

Table 3 summarises the number of schools in each of the respondent's NLCs. Half of the respondent sector leaders (n=37, 50.7%) reported that there were between six and ten schools within their NLC. A further 31.5% (n=23) reported there were between one and five schools, while 17.8% of respondents reported their school had more than 10 schools involved (n=13).

Table 3: Percentage of NLCs by number of schools involved

Number of schools	n	%
1 to 5	23	31.5%
6 to 10	37	50.7%
11 to 15	7	9.6%
16 or more	6	8.2%
Total	73	

On average there were 7.79 schools per NLC in the sample represented in this survey. The minimum number of schools per NLC reported was 3, and the maximum number of schools reported was 22. There was one outlying NLC with a reported 45 schools involved.

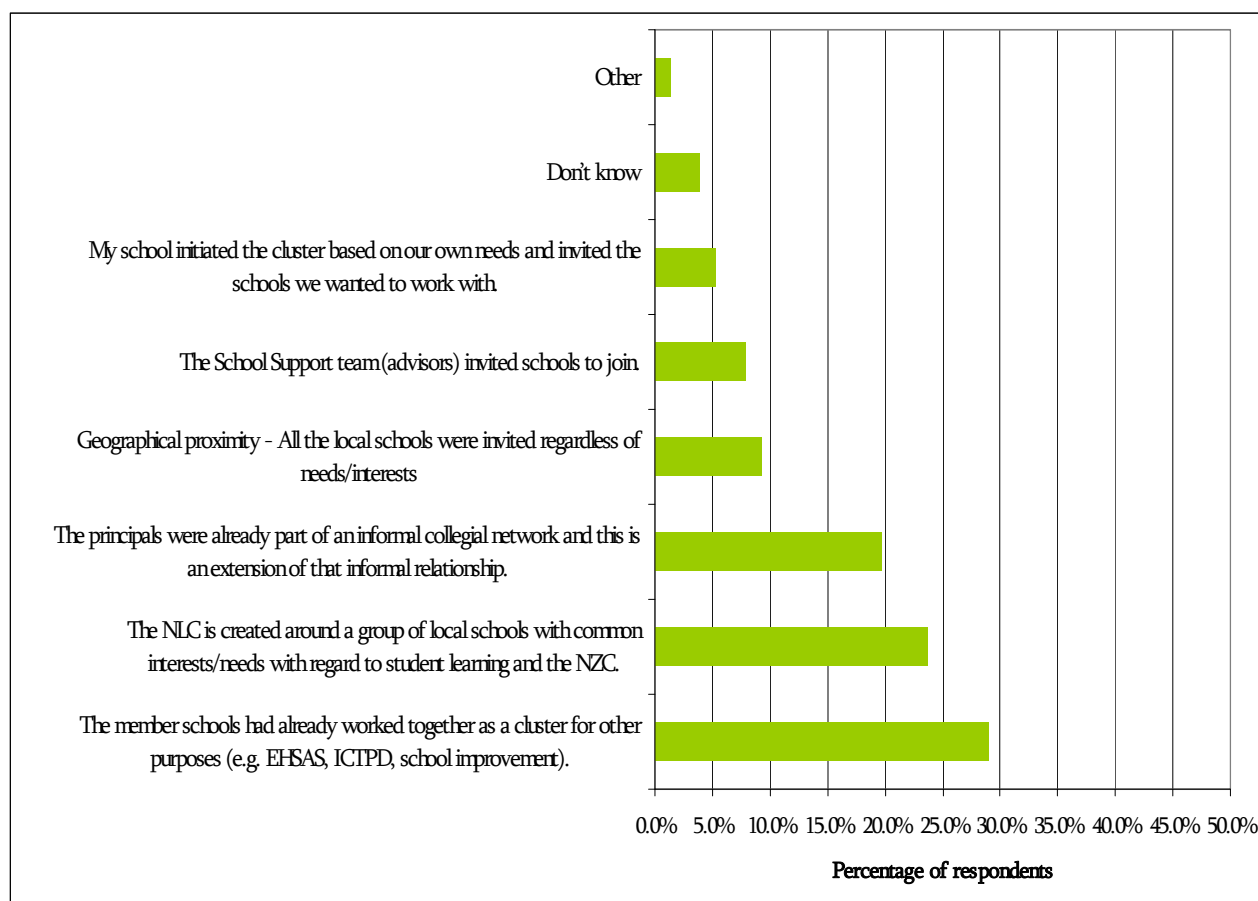
The majority of NLCs (n=61, 83.6%) were comprised of one type of school only. There were 41 (56.2%) primary school only clusters, and 20 (27.4%) secondary school only clusters. There were only 12 (16.4%) cross-sector school clusters reported.

Respondents were also asked to specify when their NLC was formed, as shown in Table 4. The largest group of respondents formed their NLC in 2010 (n=37, 48.7%). This indicates that at the time of the survey they were likely to have had little involvement with the NLC. One quarter of respondents (n=19, 25%) formed in 2009, followed by 22.4% (n=17) in 2008.

Table 4: Percentage of respondents by when NLC was formed

Year	n	%
2010	37	48.7%
2009	19	25.0%
2008	17	22.4%
Don't Know	3	3.9%
Total	76	

Respondents were next asked to think back to when their NLC was formed, and to indicate how it was decided which schools would participate (Figure 1). There were a total of 76 respondents to this question. The highest number of respondents (n=22, 28.9%) reported that schools were chosen because they were *already working together as a cluster for other purposes* (eg. EHSAS, ICTPD, schooling improvement). 23.7% of respondents (n=18) reported that their NLC was created around a group of local schools with common interests/needs with regard to student learning and The New Zealand Curriculum while 19.7% (n=15) reported that their principals were already part of an informal collegial network and it was an extension of that informal relationship.

Figure 1: Criteria for how schools were chosen to partake in NLC

Respondents were asked to indicate their role within their school (Table 5). They were able to give more than one response to this question. There was a total of 93 responses to this question, with 16 respondents (21.6%) reporting multiple roles.

In Table 5 *Senior management* includes those respondents who reported they were an assistant or deputy principal. *Middle Management* incorporates those respondents who reported they were a syndicate, department or faculty leader, the specialist classroom teacher or curriculum leader (formally recognised role such as literacy or numeracy leader, assessment responsibilities). If respondents reported two roles within a category (eg. numeracy leader and faculty leader), responses were counted only once.

Of the 74 respondents, 68.9% (n=51) reported they were a *Principal*. A further 24.3% (n=18) indicated they were *middle management*, 23.0% (n=17) were *classroom teachers* and just 9.5% (n=7) were *senior management*.

Table 5: Percentage of respondents by role within school

Role	n	% ²
Principal	51	68.9%
Senior Management	7	9.5%
Middle Management	18	24.3%
Classroom Teacher	17	23.0%
Total	93	125.7%

A number of respondents (n=16, 21.6% of total respondents) reported they held more than one role in their school. As Table 6 shows 8.1% of all respondents (n=6) reported they were both the *principal and a classroom teacher*. The same number of respondents (n=6) reported they were a *middle manager and a classroom teacher*. This reflects the small size of many of the schools involved.

Table 6: Percentage of respondents with multiple roles within schools

Multiple roles	n	% of total respondents (n=74)
Principal/Classroom teacher	6	8.1%
Middle manager/Classroom teacher	6	8.1%
Senior manager/Middle Manager/Classroom teacher	3	4.1%
Senior manager/Middle manager	1	1.4%
Total	16	

Respondents were next asked to identify how they became the sector leader of their NLC. This was an open ended question with responses coded into six categories as identified in Table 7. The largest number of respondents (n=35, 47.3%) reported that they were asked by the *school support services* for a number of reasons e.g. as a result of their experience as a principal; their past experience or research; or on recommendation from other staff. Almost a quarter of respondents (n=17, 23.0%) indicated that they had *initially applied to form a NLC* and remained on as the sector leader. All other categories contain less than 10% of responses.

² These percentages reflect the percentage of respondents within each role. They add up to 125.7% because of the multiple responses.

Table 7: Percentage of respondents reporting how they became the sector leader

Code	n	%
School Support Services Advisor asked	35	47.3%
Initiated NLC through application process	17	23.0%
Nominated/voted in by colleagues	7	9.5%
Prior Cluster Leader	7	9.5%
Replaced Sector leader	5	6.8%
Volunteered	3	4.1%
Total	74	

Respondents were also asked how long they had personally been involved in the NLC, as either sector leader or leader from their school (Table 8). The highest number of respondents (n=30, 39.5%) reported they had been involved for less than one year. A further 30.3% (n=23) indicated they had been involved for more than two years, while 18.4% (n=14) reported being involved for between one and two years, and 11.8% (n=9) for one year.

Table 8: Percentage of respondents by length of time personally been involved with NLC as sector leader or leader in their school

Involved with NLC	n	%
Less than one year	30	39.5%
One year	9	11.8%
Between one and two years	14	18.4%
More than two years	23	30.3%
Total	76	

Following this, respondents were asked if they had been the sector leader since their NLC was formed. The majority of respondents indicated that they had been (n=54, 72.0%). Those who reported they had not (n=21, 28%), were asked to indicate how long they had been their NLCs sector leader (Table 9). Over half of the respondents to this question (n=11, 52.3%) reported they had been in the role for one year or less, while eight (38.1%) reported they had held their role for between one and two years.

Table 9: Length of time as sector leader

Length of time	n	%
Less than one year	7	33.3%
One year	4	19.0%
Between one and two years	8	38.1%
More than two years	2	9.5%
Total	21	

Respondents were then asked to indicate, on average, how many days a term they spend on their NLC activities. The overall mean for this question was 4.25 days. The minimum number of days reported was one, while the maximum number of days was 12. There was a high reported standard deviation of 2.477, which indicates that responses varied widely from the mean.

Section Two: What is happening in the NLC?

Sector leaders were asked to identify the current, main focus of their NLC. A total of 68 responses were provided. The extent to which these goals were described fully varied considerably; from one word to a small paragraph. The specificity of the goals and the extent to which they appear to be measurable and/or observable also varied considerably. A number of responses reflected multifaceted goals, while others appeared very general in nature and largely abstract.

The goals were grouped into broad thematic areas for analysis. There were three main categories of goal. Half of the responses (n=34, 50.0%) referred to *The New Zealand Curriculum* and/or its implementation. Very few of these (n=7, 10.3%) made comments directly referring to classroom practices in relation to *The New Zealand Curriculum*. Student achievement or enhanced outcomes for students were directly referred to by 14 respondents (20.6%). Of these, six made specific reference to Māori students. The other main category was National Standards; which were mentioned by 13 respondents (19.1%). In most instances the reference was in relation to aligning National Standards with the curriculum. In some the focus was on moderation of the National Standards across schools.

Other areas commented on include self review (n=4, 5.9%); student voice (n=2, 2.9%) and raising leadership capacity in schools (n=1, 1.5%). A number of other areas were also identified as exemplified in the following quotes, which illustrate the diversity of goals within and across the NLCs.

- *Developing teaching as inquiry, robust self review and evidence based practice.*
- *Investigate, build on and sustain effective self review practices and processes within and across schools.*
- *Our cluster aims to use the "Teacher as Inquiry" diagram as a structure to guide us in developing the links between The New Zealand Curriculum and National Standards that will lead towards raising student achievement in our rural schools.*
- *Moderation processes across our contributing cluster schools in relation to National Standards will be undertaken to gain consistency in our reporting formats.*
- *We have called our focus "Beyond the Documentation" as we believe a lot of schools have created supporting documentation but we are not confident it is embedded in the classrooms etc.*
- *To align with our ICTPD goals and the development of a visible curriculum using SOLO taxonomy.*
- *Deeper knowledge and understanding of The New Zealand Curriculum related to the relationship between 'student voice' and quality teaching in the context of The New Zealand Curriculum pedagogy.*
- *What do our curricula 'look like'? Aligning school documentation to the conceptual school-based curricula currently being implemented in each school.*
- *The main focus is the development of the school's curriculum, to which we have added how the National Standards fit in with this development.*
- *Building an on-line learning community and up-skilling in moderation against the National Standards.*
- *To evaluate integrated programmes running in secondary schools in the Wellington region.*
- *To work towards becoming a collaborative learning community of school leaders with the implementation of The New Zealand Curriculum as our key purpose in embracing the responsibility to learn individually and collectively thereby support adult, student and organisational learning.*
- *To come up with an overview for Te Reo Māori for years 0-8 as well as become confident in implementing and leading the school wide development of TAAM.*

- From data that has been collected it has been identified that Yr 7 and 8 teachers in secondary settings have differing needs to primary settings. Teachers are grappling with the challenges of curriculum design and review and National Standards as signposts, and are keen to share practice and strategies to enhance the learning for the students.
- Building leadership capability amongst our staff using the KLP areas/Ka Hikitia to focus school review, and The New Zealand Curriculum as a context.
- Exploring the way that Education for Sustainability can be a context for developing the key competencies of The New Zealand Curriculum through 'Action Competencies'.
- Specialist teachers understand and are confident and supported in their role and actively contribute to school based PD. Effective pedagogy beliefs are established, understood and shared within the NLC.

Following this, respondents were asked to indicate whether the focus or goal identified in the question above had ever changed. The 23 respondents (33.8%) who indicated that there had been a change in focus were asked to report what their original focus had been. In most instances the original goals were less specific, related to developing a general understanding of *The New Zealand Curriculum* prior to developing a school curriculum or considering pedagogical practices within their schools. Their later goals were more practice based. This would suggest a shift overtime from learning about *The New Zealand Curriculum* to implementing it.

Respondents were then asked to indicate the amount of time spent working as a sector leader on a range of activities as shown in Table 10. They were also asked to indicate if there were other activities not covered by the four responses provided. They were asked to ensure that their responses added up to 100%. Where this did not occur responses were discarded from the analysis.

Respondents indicated spending the most time being a professional learning facilitator (e.g. leading professional learning workshops, developing resources and materials for colleagues). This was reported as having the highest overall mean time of 37.6%, with over half of respondents (n=34, 52.3%) indicating they spent between 26 and 50% of their time on this activity. An average of 27.7% of respondent's time was spent on being an activity coordinator (e.g. planning and organising meetings/symposia). The mean time spent on the other two activities was less than 20%. In most instances, less than 25% of their time was spent as either an administrator/manager (n=58, 81.7%) or resource manager (n=59, 92.2%).

An average of 32.2% of respondent's time was reported as being spent on other activities. However, this only equated to nine responses. Activities reported included partaking in professional learning alongside colleagues and liaising with outside facilitators and experts.

Table 10: Percentage of time spent as sector leader spent on activities

	Less than 25%		26% - 50%		51% - 75%		More than 76%		Mean %
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Professional learning facilitator	19	29.2%	34	52.3%	10	15.4%	2	3.1%	37.6
Activity co-ordinator	39	55.7%	27	38.6%	4	5.7%	0	0.0%	27.7
Administrator/manager	58	81.7%	11	15.5%	1	1.4%	1	1.4%	18.2
Resource manager	59	92.2%	4	6.3%	1	1.6%	0	0.0%	17.2

Respondents were next asked to report how often specific activities occurred in their NLC. They were provided with a list of possible activities. For each activity respondents were asked to indicate their response using the following six point scale:

1. Never
2. Rarely
3. Occasionally
4. Frequently
5. Very Frequently
6. Always

Table 11 presents the descriptive statistics regarding the frequency of activities, while Figure 2 is a graph of the overall mean responses. The standard deviations are high for all categories reflecting a wide variation in responses.

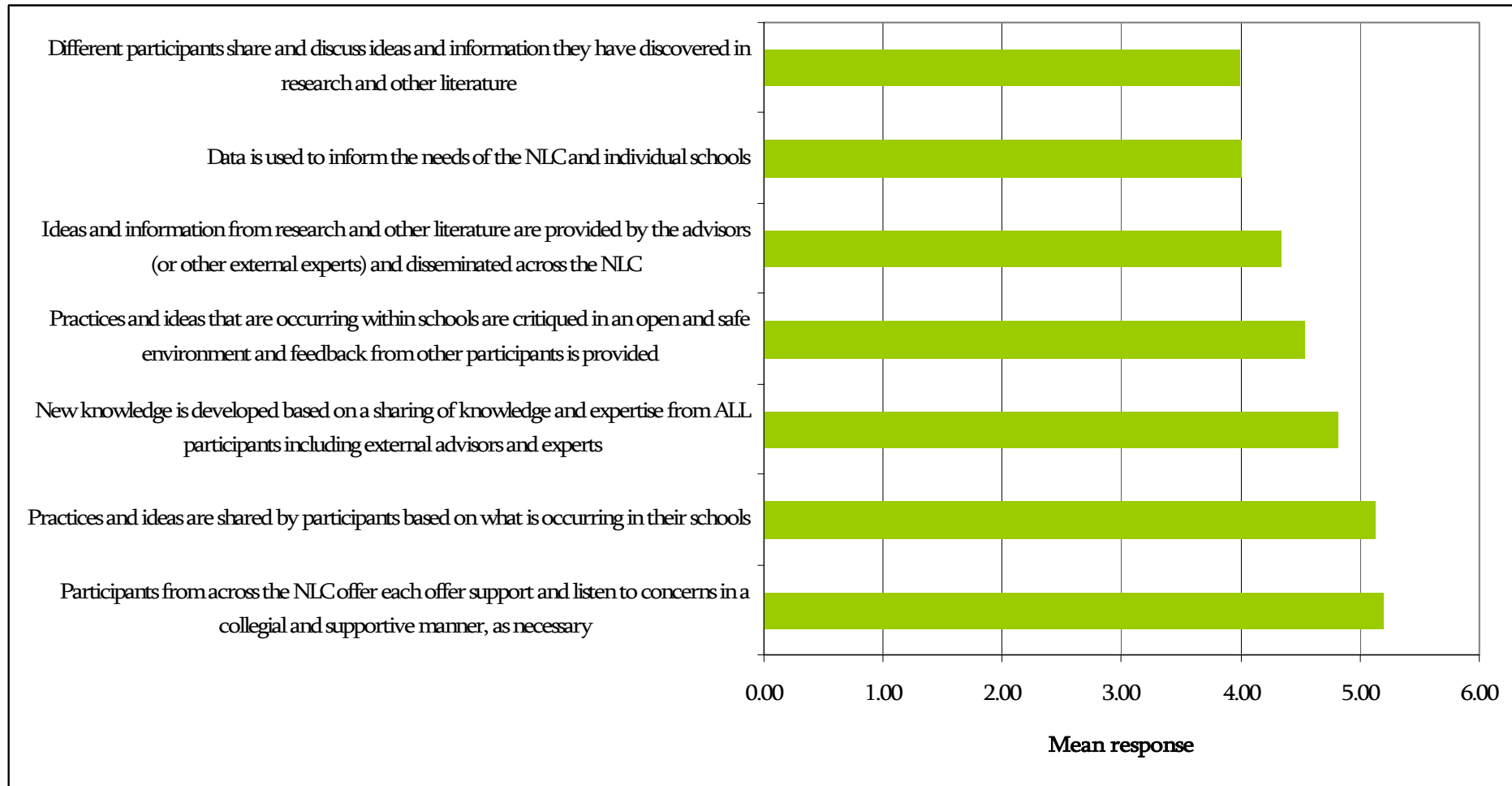
Two activities had means of over 5.00 indicating that they take place “very frequently”, if not “always” within the majority of NLCs. These were:

- *Participants from across the NLC offer each other support and listen to concerns in a collegial and supportive manner, as necessary (5.20).*
- *Practices and ideas are shared by participants based on what is occurring in their schools (5.13).*
- *The two activities with the lowest overall reported means were:*
- *Data is used to inform the needs of the NLC and individual schools (4.00).*
- *Different participants share and discuss ideas and information they have discovered in research and other literature (3.99).*

Whilst their overall means were the lowest, across the activities provided, means of 4.00 and 3.99 indicate that these activities are “frequently” happening in NLCs. It is likely this is because of a few NLCs for whom these are very common activities.

Table 11: Frequency of activities in the NLC

	Total (n)	1		2		3		4		5		6		Mean	SD
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Participants from across the NLC offer each offer support and listen to concerns in a collegial and supportive manner, as necessary	71	0	0.0%	1	1.4%	2	2.8%	17	23.9%	13	18.3%	38	53.5%	5.20	0.995
Practices and ideas are shared by participants based on what is occurring in their schools	71	1	1.4%	0	0.0%	4	5.6%	12	16.9%	21	29.6%	33	46.5%	5.13	1.041
New knowledge is developed based on a sharing of knowledge and expertise from ALL participants including external advisors and experts	71	0	0.0%	1	1.4%	7	9.9%	20	28.2%	19	26.8%	24	33.8%	4.82	1.060
Practices and ideas that are occurring within schools are critiqued in an open and safe environment and feedback from other participants is provided	71	2	2.8%	5	7.0%	7	9.9%	18	25.4%	17	23.9%	22	31.0%	4.54	1.361
Ideas and information from research and other literature are provided by the advisors (or other external experts) and disseminated across the NLC	71	0	0.0%	3	4.2%	16	22.5%	21	29.6%	16	22.5%	15	21.1%	4.34	1.170
Data is used to inform the needs of the NLC and individual schools	70	2	2.9%	8	11.4%	16	22.9%	19	27.1%	12	17.1%	13	18.6%	4.00	1.373
Different participants share and discuss ideas and information they have discovered in research and other literature	70	1	1.4%	1	1.4%	21	30.0%	31	44.3%	7	10.0%	9	12.9%	3.99	1.056

Figure 2: Mean frequency of activities occurring in NLC

Respondents were next asked to indicate how often each of the areas given had been the focus of activities in their NLC in the past 12 months. Again a six point scale was used.

1. Never
2. Rarely
3. Occasionally
4. Frequently
5. Very Frequently
6. Always

Table 12 provides the descriptive statistics regarding the frequency of activities, while Figure 3 graphs the overall mean responses. As with the earlier question the standard deviations are high across all areas. Further, the range of means across the areas was 1.86 suggesting a wide variation in the extent to which some areas have been the focus for NLCs.

Two areas of focus had means of over 4.50 which indicates that they had been the focus of NLC activities between “frequently” and “very frequently” in the past 12 months. These were:

- *Raising student achievement generally (4.63)*
- *Teaching and learning practices in the classroom as defined in The New Zealand Curriculum (4.53)*

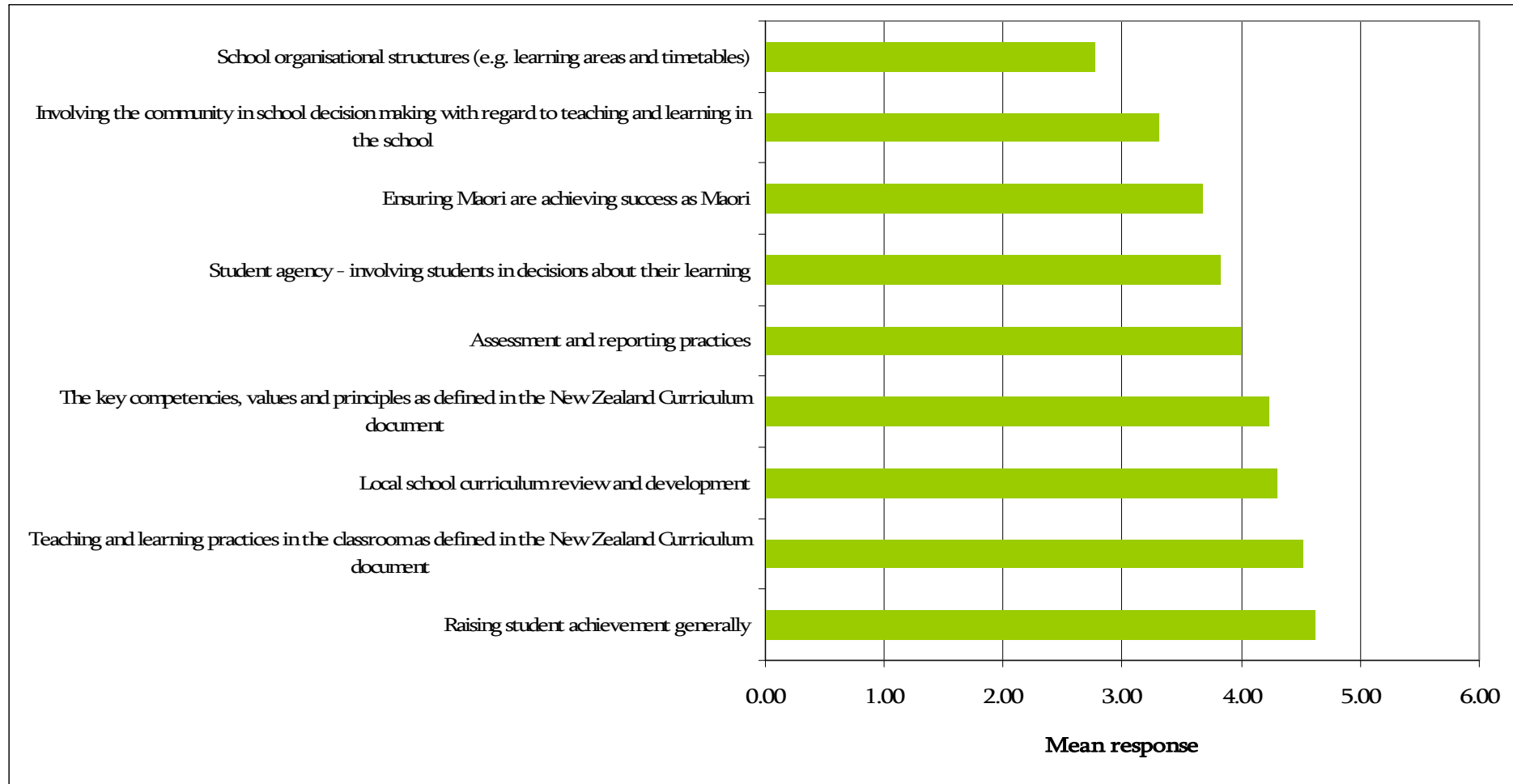
Respondents reported spending relatively low amounts of time on school organisational structures (e.g. learning areas and timetables) and involving the community in school decision making with regard to teaching and learning in the school. Their means were 2.77 and 3.31 respectively, suggesting they are only “occasionally” a focus.

Nine respondents also commented on other areas regularly incorporated into their NLC activities. These were understanding National Standards and their moderation; the use of online technologies; sharing knowledge and resources; examining leadership; and professional development/support.

Table 12: Frequency of areas as focus in activities in the NLC in the past 12 months

	Total (N)	1		2		3		4		5		6		Mean	SD
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Raising student achievement generally	72	1	1.4%	2	2.8%	7	9.7%	24	33.3%	17	23.6%	21	29.2%	4.63	1.168
Teaching and learning practices in the classroom as defined in <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i> document	72	1	1.4%	2	2.8%	9	12.5%	21	29.2%	24	33.3%	15	20.8%	4.53	1.126
Local school curriculum review and	71	4	5.6%	2	2.8%	12	16.9%	18	25.4%	20	28.2%	15	21.1%	4.31	1.358
The key competencies, values and principles as defined in <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i> document	68	3	4.4%	4	5.9%	11	16.2%	16	23.5%	24	35.3%	10	14.7%	4.24	1.306
Assessment and reporting practices	72	3	4.2%	6	8.3%	17	23.6%	18	25.0%	18	25.0%	10	13.9%	4.00	1.332
Student agency - involving students in decisions about their learning	70	3	4.3%	7	10.0%	18	25.7%	20	28.6%	15	21.4%	7	10.0%	3.83	1.285
Ensuring Māori are achieving success as Māori	70	2	2.9%	7	10.0%	25	35.7%	21	30.0%	8	11.4%	7	10.0%	3.67	1.201
Involving the community in school decision making with regard to teaching and learning in the school	71	4	5.6%	11	15.5%	24	33.8%	25	35.2%	5	7.0%	2	2.8%	3.31	1.090
School organisational structures (e.g. learning areas and timetables)	71	8	11.3%	22	31.0%	27	38.0%	8	11.3%	4	5.6%	2	2.8%	2.77	1.149

Figure 3: Mean frequency of areas as focus in activities occurring in NLC in the past 12 months



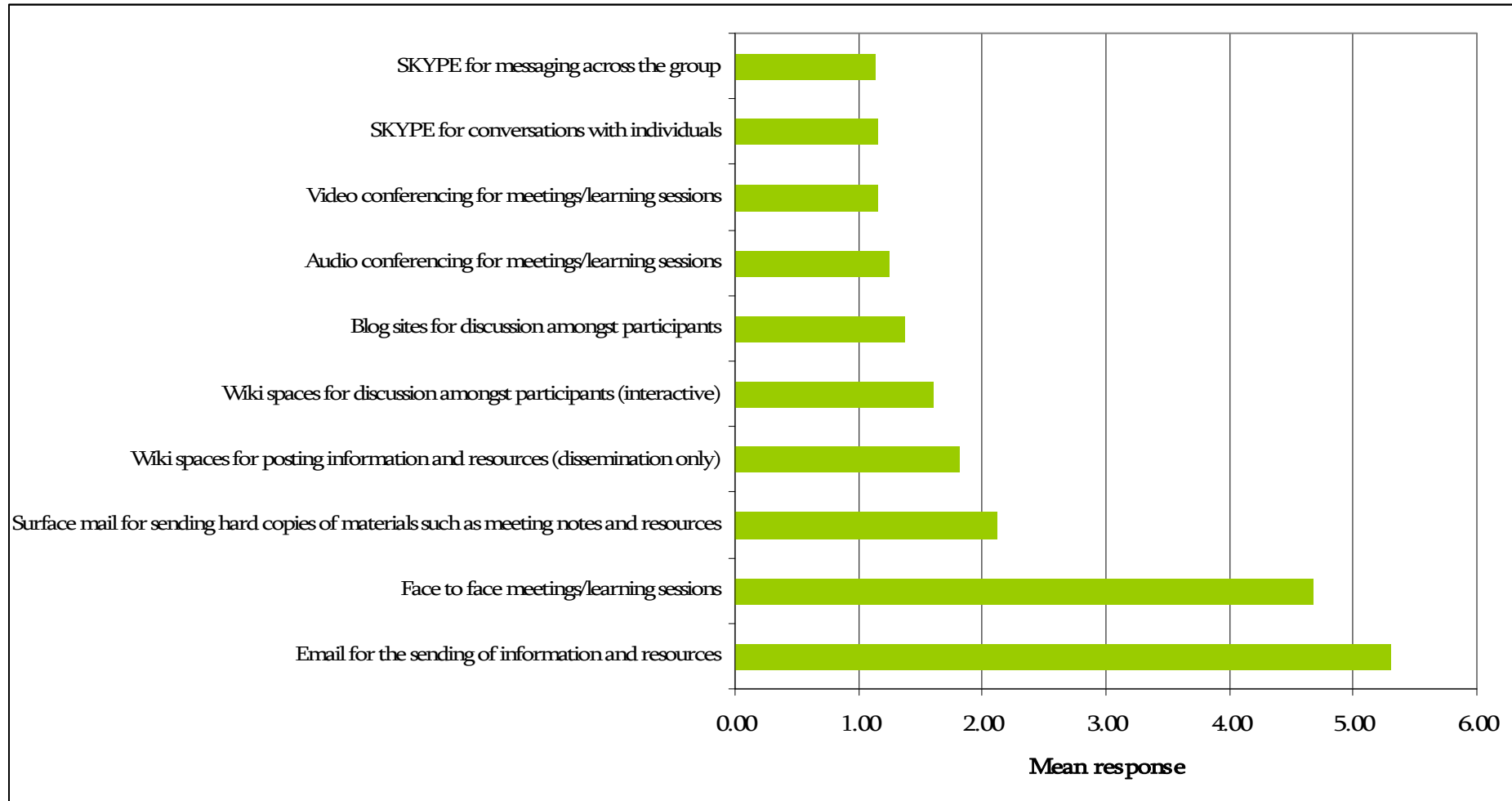
Respondents were next asked to indicate how often each of the communication/meeting tools listed were used within their NLC. For each tool respondents were asked to indicate their response on a scale of 1 to 6.

1. Never
2. Rarely
3. Occasionally
4. Frequently
5. Very Frequently
6. Always

Table 15 provides the descriptive statistics for this question, while Figure 4 graphs the overall mean responses. Just two *communication/meeting tools* were reported as being used at least “frequently”. They were the *use of email for the sending of information and resources* (5.30) and *face to face meetings/learning sessions* (4.68). All other tools were on average used “rarely”, or “never” with means of 2.12 or less. Particularly low scores (less than 1.2) were reported for *Skype* and *video conferencing*.

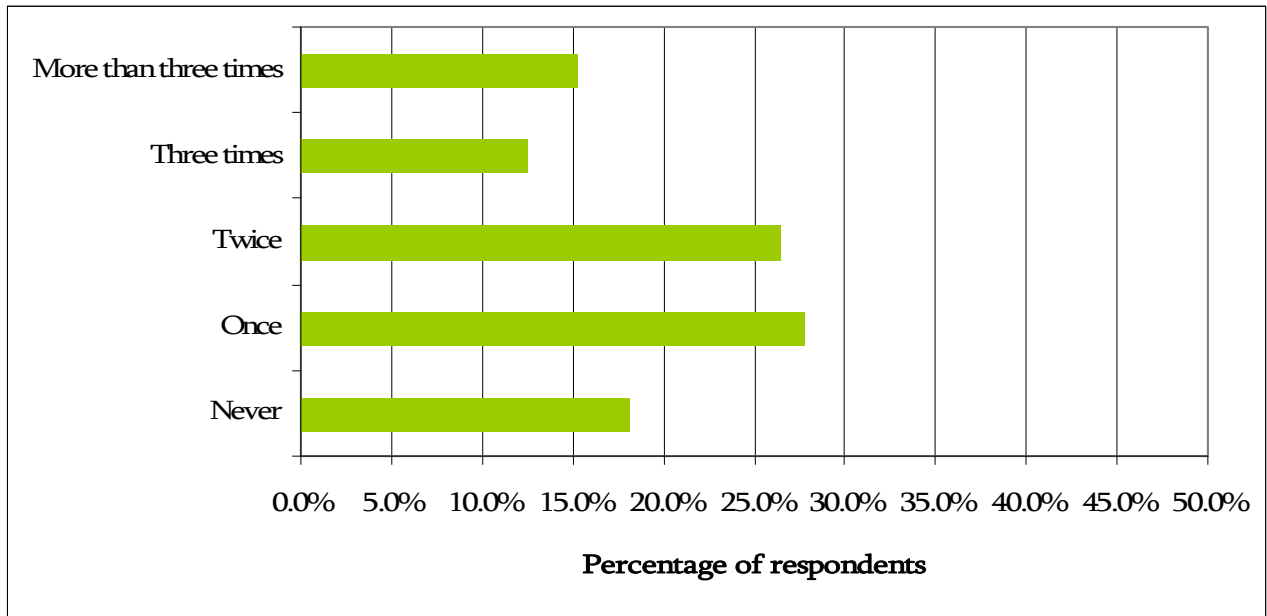
Table 13: Frequency of use of communication/meeting tools in NLC

	Total (N)	1		2		3		4		5		6		Mean	SD
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Email for the sending of information and resources	71	0	0.0%	1	1.4%	4	5.6%	9	12.7%	16	22.5%	41	57.7%	5.30	0.991
Face to face meetings/learning sessions	69	3	4.3%	0	0.0%	9	13.0%	13	18.8%	23	33.3%	21	30.4%	4.68	1.278
Surface mail for sending hard copies of materials such as meeting notes and resources	68	27	39.7%	22	32.4%	9	13.2%	5	7.4%	4	5.9%	1	1.5%	2.12	1.264
Wiki spaces for posting information and resources (dissemination only)	68	42	61.8%	10	14.7%	8	11.8%	4	5.9%	2	2.9%	2	2.9%	1.82	1.304
Wiki spaces for discussion amongst participants (interactive)	68	50	73.5%	8	11.8%	4	5.9%	2	2.9%	1	1.5%	3	4.4%	1.60	1.271
Blog sites for discussion amongst participants	68	57	83.8%	4	5.9%	3	4.4%	2	2.9%	1	1.5%	1	1.5%	1.37	0.991
Audio conferencing for meetings/learning sessions	69	61	88.4%	3	4.3%	2	2.9%	2	2.9%	1	1.4%	0	0.0%	1.25	0.775
Video conferencing for meetings/learning sessions	69	63	91.3%	3	4.3%	2	2.9%	0	0.0%	1	1.4%	0	0.0%	1.16	0.609
SKYPE for conversations with individuals	70	62	88.6%	5	7.1%	3	4.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1.16	0.470
SKYPE for messaging across the group	70	65	92.9%	2	2.9%	2	2.9%	1	1.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1.13	0.509

Figure 4: Mean reported use of communication/meeting tools in NLC

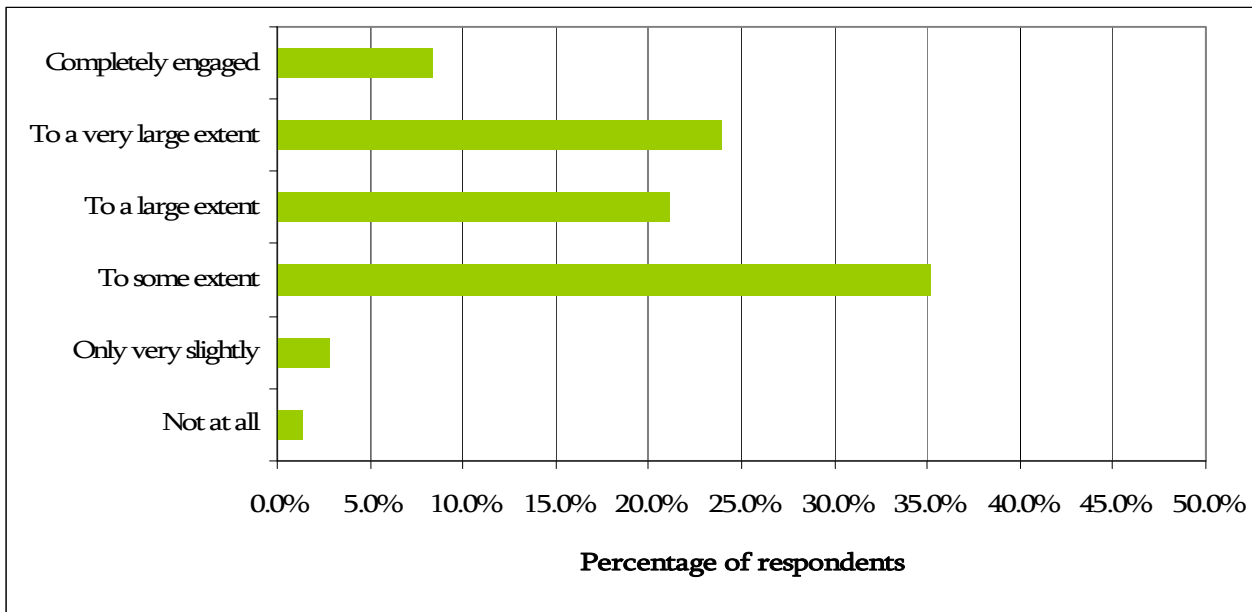
Respondents were next asked how often in 2010 they had met with other sector leaders, as part of their professional learning (Figure 5). There were a total of 72 respondents to this question. The majority of respondents (n=39, 54.2%) reported they had met other sector leaders as part of the professional learning *once or twice*. Over a quarter of respondents indicated they had met *three or more times* (n=20, 27.8%), while 13 (18.1%) reported *never* meeting other sector leaders. The overall mean for this question was 2.79 (sd = 1.310) indicating that, on average, respondents had met other school leaders between one and two times.

Figure 5: Percentage of respondents by frequency of school leader meetings



Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they believed staff from schools participating in their NLC were engaged with the work of the NLC, outside of the nominated school leader (Figure 6). There were a total of 71 respondents to this question. Five respondents (7.0%) reported they were not able to make a judgment and were not included in the analysis.

Figure 6 shows that the vast majority of respondents (n=57, 80.2%) felt that participating school staff were engaging with the NLC either to “some” (n=25, 35.2); “a large” (n=15, 21.2%); or “a very large” (n=17, 23.9%) extent. Only 2.8% of respondents (n=2) reported only “slight” engagement, with just 1.4% (n=1) reporting they were “not at all” engaged, while 8.5% (n=6) reported school staff were “completely engaged”. The mean for this question was 3.95 (sd = 1.129) which indicates that the overall majority of respondents believe staff in participating schools are engaging with the work of the NLC to “some” or “a large extent”. The number of small schools in the survey sample should be noted here.

Figure 6: Percent of respondents by participant school engagement – outside of school leader.

If a judgment was made for the question above, respondents were then asked what evidence they used to base their response on. In the majority of instances this was feedback and discussion during NLC meetings, often involving the sharing of resources and other school documentation. In three instances the sharing of data was specifically mentioned. In another three instances cross-cluster school visits had been undertaken allowing for the observation of school practice. One sector leader reported that they had undertaken a survey across all schools to determine the impact of the NLC work. Three sector leaders made comments reflecting that the small number of staff in participant schools meant it was easy to disseminate information and to involve teaching staff. Comments from some sector leaders highlighted the variability of the involvement of the wider teaching staff even within individual NLCs.

The following are examples of the responses to the question of evidence, reflecting their diversity.

- *All schools are committed to having the principals visit the school.*
- *From data collected and collated from schools at beginning of 2010, discussion with principals at sector meetings, sharing of school documentation, staff meetings etc.*
- *All schools have scheduled staff meetings and because they are all relatively small schools there is frequent staff interaction and discussion.*
- *Each participant's involvement in the wider school varies and some work with a few individuals. Others have established a greater link with many areas in the school structure and staff. Evidence is shown by the resources they are able to share with the cluster.*
- *Another sector leader and myself visited all schools at the beginning of the year to get a feel for where each school was at with the implementation of The New Zealand Curriculum. We found everyone had done something and everyone was developing it in their own way. The isolation in this development up until then would be a barrier.*
- *Cluster discussions, local newspaper clippings, student data provided, school surveys, report formats, school charters etc.*
- *Reflection/review document is collected at each meeting about the meeting before. The question is asked about the impact on the school. Small staff size so reasonably sure that everyone is involved.*

- *Discussions at the NLC workshops reflect the journey each school is taking. Several schools have 2 or 3 participants and this greatly helps to keep up the momentum for action at the individual school level.*
- *Our meetings have a core of schools attending regularly. Each school has collected data that is being used by the NLC to base our decisions on. Each participant has a job to do before the next meeting. Responsibility for minutes and bringing the food is being shared.*
- *The discussions that we have at our NLC meetings - members will share stories of staff meetings or full school activities that they are running.*
- *Survey of staff in each school on success of our sector groups programme in 2010.*
- *Material presented at meetings indicating department programmes as implemented.*

Section Three: Personal outcomes from participation in the NLC as a sector leader

Respondents were asked to rate their current knowledge/expertise with regard to a number of areas identified using a scale of 1 to 6.

1. Very poor
2. Poor
3. Fair
4. Good
5. Very Good
6. Excellent

Table 14 provides the descriptive statistics regarding participant's reported level of knowledge/expertise. Figure 7 graphs the overall mean responses. Overall means for this question were fairly similar with a range of only 0.83 across the different areas.

The overall means reported for all areas of knowledge/expertise were above 4.00 indicating that respondents felt their current knowledge/expertise was "good", if not "very good" or "excellent". The area with the highest reported mean was *the concepts/ideas in The New Zealand Curriculum and their implications for schools* ($\bar{x} = 4.70$), and the lowest, with a mean under 4.00, was *the organisation of professional learning events such as conferences and symposia* ($\bar{x} = 3.87$). It should be noted that even with a mean of 3.87 respondents still believed they had a "fair" level of knowledge/expertise in this area.

Respondents were then asked to indicate the extent to which their current, reported levels of knowledge could be attributed directly to their involvement in the NLC, again on a 6 point scale.

1. Not at all
2. Only very slightly
3. To some extent
4. To a large extent
5. To a very large extent
6. Entirely

The extent of attribution is presented in Table 15 and Figure 8. Again, overall means for the extent of attribution across all areas were fairly similar with a range of only 0.93. For all areas the mean extent of attribution to their involvement in the NLC was between 3.00 (“some extent”) and 4.00 (“large extent”). The area which had the highest reported overall mean was *the concepts/ideas in The New Zealand Curriculum and their implications for schools* ($\bar{x} = 4.00$). The area that had the lowest reported overall mean was *the organisation of professional learning events such as conferences and symposia* ($\bar{x} = 3.07$).

Four respondents reported other areas of knowledge in response to this question. They were teaching education for sustainability; implementing school wide self review and professional inquiry; using on-line tools to build an online learning community; and leading professional learning communities. Those who reported these indicated they had “very good” or “excellent” knowledge/expertise in these areas, and that this could be directly attributed to their involvement in the NLC to a very large extent or entirely.

Table 14: Current level of knowledge/expertise

	Total (N)	1		2		3		4		5		6		Mean	SD
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
The concepts/ideas in <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i> and their implications for schools	70	0	0.0%	1	1.4%	3	4.3%	21	30.0%	36	51.4%	9	12.9%	4.70	0.805
Using assessment data to inform practices	70	0	0.0%	1	1.4%	5	7.1%	25	35.7%	32	45.7%	7	10.0%	4.56	0.828
Effective leadership practices for change	70	2	2.9%	0	0.0%	8	11.4%	30	42.9%	26	37.1%	4	5.7%	4.29	0.950
The characteristics of effective learning communities	70	0	0.0%	5	7.1%	10	14.3%	27	38.6%	20	28.6%	8	11.4%	4.23	1.066
The organisation of professional learning events such as conferences and symposia	70	3	4.3%	3	4.3%	19	27.1%	24	34.3%	17	24.3%	4	5.7%	3.87	1.141

Figure 7: Mean response by reported level of current knowledge/expertise

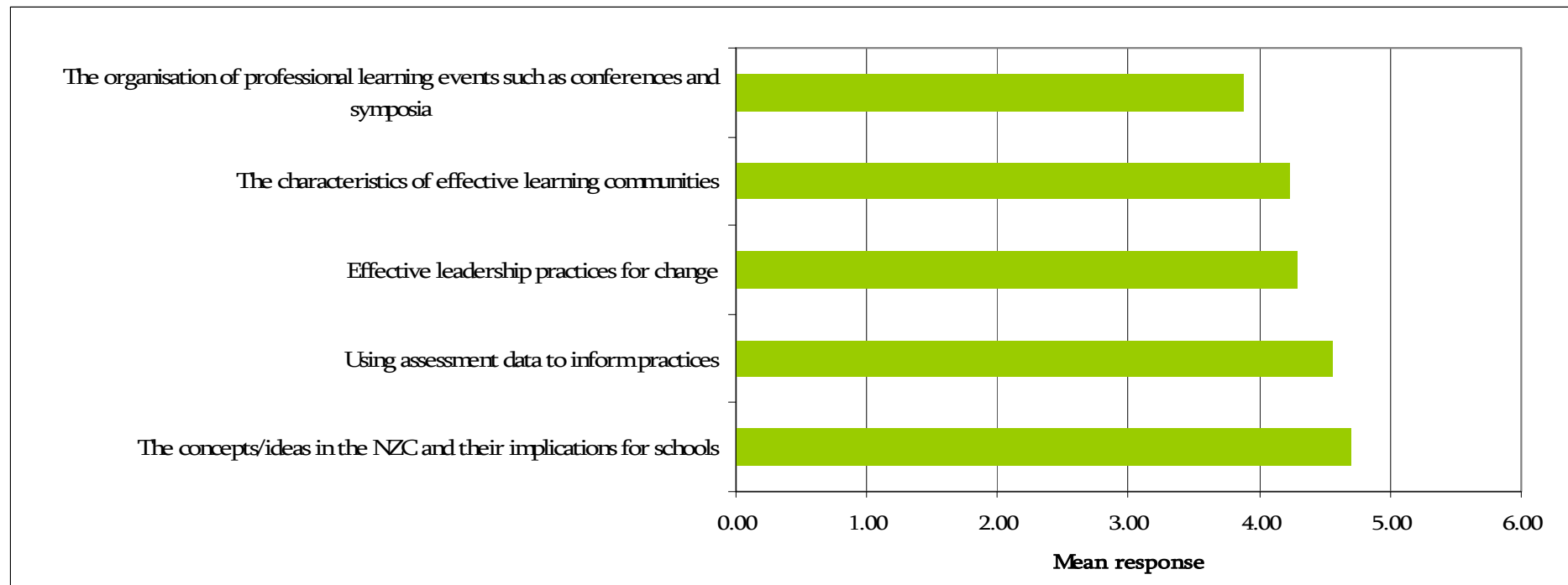
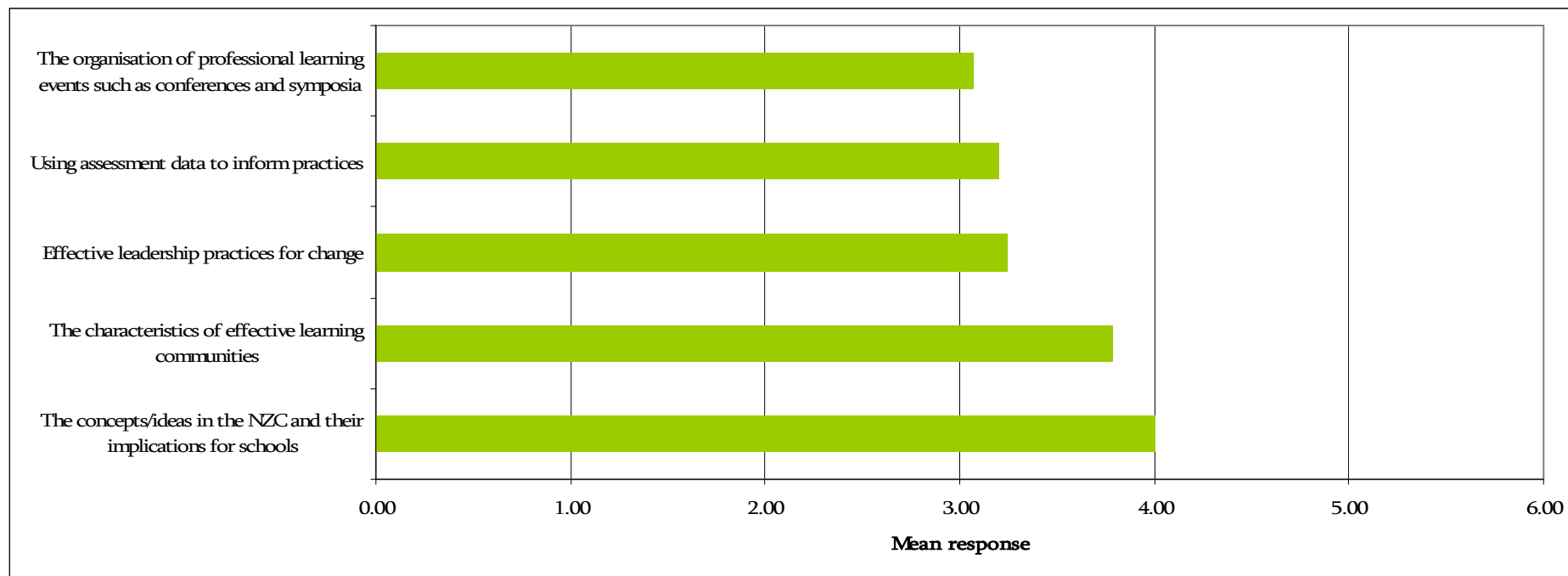


Table 15: Current knowledge/expertise directly attributed to involvement in the NLC

	Total (N)	1		2		3		4		5		6		Mean	SD
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
The concepts/ideas in <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i> and their implications for schools	70	0	0.0%	5	7.1%	15	21.4%	29	41.4%	17	24.3%	4	5.7%	4.00	0.993
The characteristics of effective learning communities	70	1	1.4%	6	8.6%	23	32.9%	21	30.0%	15	21.4%	4	5.7%	3.79	1.102
Effective leadership practices for change	70	4	5.7%	16	22.9%	19	27.1%	21	30.0%	10	14.3%	0	0.0%	3.24	1.135
Using assessment data to inform practices	70	4	5.7%	16	22.9%	26	37.1%	14	20.0%	6	8.6%	4	5.7%	3.20	1.223
The organisation of professional learning events such as conferences and symposia	70	8	11.4%	17	24.3%	20	28.6%	15	21.4%	7	10.0%	3	4.3%	3.07	1.311

Figure 8: Mean response by reported level of attribution of current knowledge/expertise

Respondents were next asked to identify what had been the single most valuable area of support for them, in terms of being a sector leader. This was an open ended question. Responses were coded into three broad categories³ (Table 16). Over half of the respondents (n=32, 51.6%) reported they greatly valued *the knowledge and expertise of their school support services advisor*. A further 29% of respondents (n=18) reported the *opportunity to work and meet with others within the NLC group*, while 19.4% (n=12) reported the *sector leader workshops*.

Table 16: Percentage of respondents identifying single most valuable area of support as the sector leader

Code	n	%
Support from advisors	32	51.6%
Opportunity to work with others	18	29.0%
Sector leader workshops	12	19.4%
Total	62	

Comments regarding the *support from the advisors* were very general referring simply to the fact that the advisors had been working with them. In many instances specific individuals were named with comments about how “*brilliant*” the support had been. In some instances reference was made to the provision of resources by the advisors.

Most of the comments included within the category “*the opportunity to work with others*” included references to the collegiality of the NLC. A few referred more directly to collaboration and working together, including the sharing of ideas.

Within the final category, “*sector leader workshops*” were comments related to professional development days for sector leaders. While many were general mentioning only that these days had been beneficial others were more specific, including references to the resources provided and being exposed to new ideas and research.

Respondents were then asked to identify what had been the single most important benefit for them, as the sector leader. Again, this was an open ended question. Responses were coded into six categories (Table 17)⁴.

Three of these categories, as identified by an asterix, are related to engaging with others in some way; ranging from collegial support through to critical discussion. Combined these three categories account for 50% (n=33) of responses. Amongst this group of respondents 21 (31.8% of all responses) reported that the opportunity to *network and share ideas and practice* was the single most important benefit. Six respondents (9.1% of all responses) reported the *collegial support* they received from others was important for them, while another six reported that what they gained through *interacting with others for a specific purpose* e.g. to critically discuss ideas or pedagogy or develop new tools or practice, was most important.

An *increase in their personal knowledge* was the single most important benefit for 29 respondents (43.9%). Within this category, 12 of the 29 respondents made particular reference to an increase in their *leadership skills*.

³ Six responses could not be coded and were discarded from the analyses. These responses were either not of relevance to the question asked or we could not infer sufficient information to correctly code them.

⁴ Again, four responses could not be coded and were discarded from the analyses.

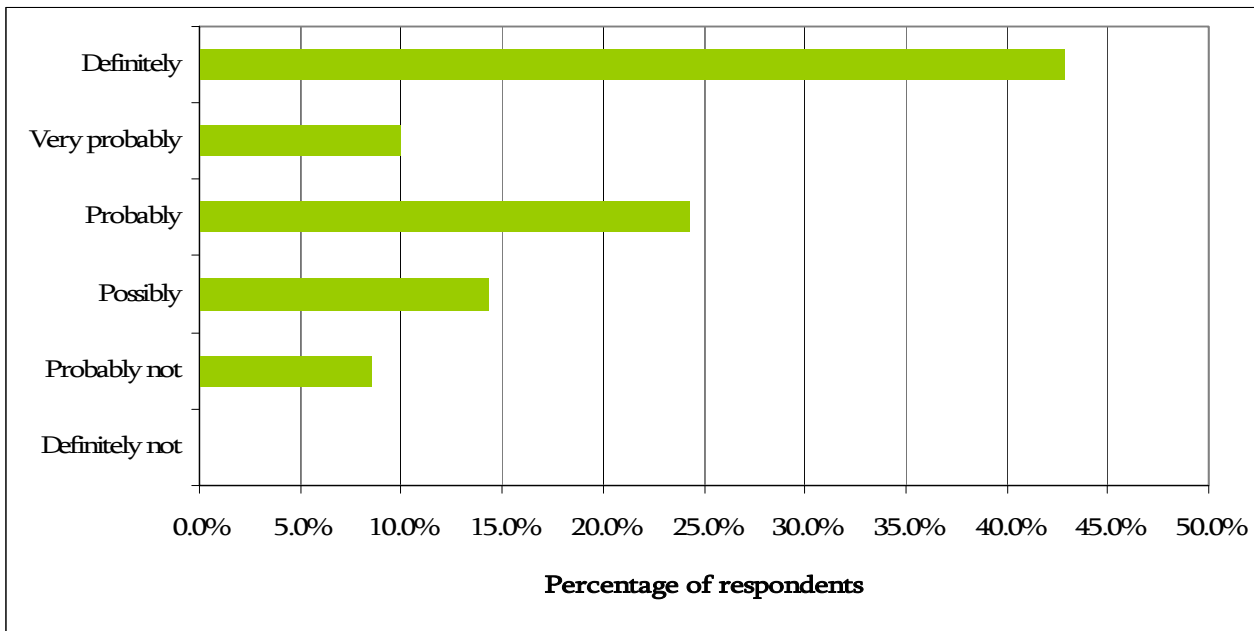
Table 17: Percentage of respondents identifying single most significant benefits as the sector leader

Code	n	%
Increased personal knowledge	29	43.9%
Networking/Sharing ideas and practice*	21	31.8%
Collegial support*	6	9.1%
Interaction with a purpose*	6	9.1%
Sector leader/cluster workshops	2	3.0%
Too early to tell	2	3.0%
Total	66	

Respondents were next asked if they would recommend being a sector leader to others (Figure 9). There were a total of 70 respondents to this question. The largest number of respondents (n=30, 42.9%) indicated that they would *definitely* recommend being a sector leader to others. A further 34.3% (n=24) reported they would *probably* or *very probably* recommend it, while just 14.3% (n=10) reported they would only *possibly*. Just 8.6% (n=6) reported they would *probably not*.

The overall mean for this question was 4.64 (sd=1.384) suggesting that on average respondents would *probably* recommend being a sector leader to others.

Figure 9: Percentage of respondents who would recommend being a sector leader to others



Section Four: Outcomes for participants in the NLC

The first question in the outcomes section asked respondents to identify up to three key measures of success for their NLC. Respondents were asked to order their responses from the most to the least important. During analysis the most important measures of success were given a score of 3 and the least a score of 1 to determine a mean score for each category of measure of success.

Responses to this question were firstly coded into broad categories. Second order coding then allowed for more specific grouping of responses within each category (Table 18)⁵. While there were a total of 193 reported measures of success, 40 of them were actually enablers rather than measures of success. As such these have been removed from the analysis.

Of the 153 reported measures of success 88 referred to the *operation of the NLC*. The overall mean level of importance for responses within this broad category was 2.10. Within this category, a *developed learning community* was reported as being a key measure of success with an overall mean of 2.38. Following this, *developed collegial communities and relationships* (2.33) and *having a shared purpose and/or focus* (2.14) were also reported as important measures of success.

The largest number of respondents reported *commitment to the NLC* (n=22) and *networking/sharing practice* (n=31). However, their overall means were low (2.00 and 1.94 respectively) indicating that while mentioned by a number of respondents they were likely to be relatively unimportant when compared with other measures.

A further 51 responses were regarding school outcomes. The overall mean level of importance for this category was 2.06. Within this category, *the implementation of The New Zealand Curriculum* was reported as being the key measure of success (2.09). This was followed closely by *influenced or changed school practices* and *student achievement/engagement* (2.06; 2.00 respectively).

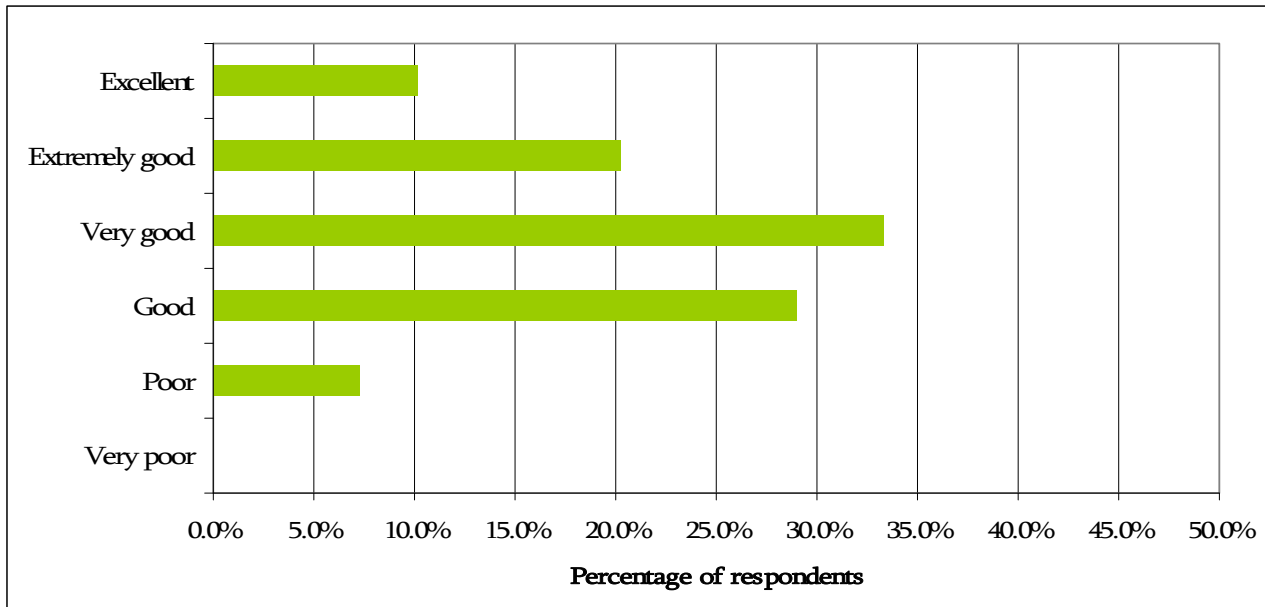
A further 14 respondents reported a key measure of success was *developed professional knowledge and skills* (1.86).

Table 18: Number of participants reporting each measure of success

Codes	3 (greatest importance)	2	1 (Least importance)	Total	Mean
NLC Operation	33	31	24	88	2.10
Learning community developed	7	4	2	13	2.38
Collegial community developed/relationships	7	6	2	15	2.33
Shared purpose/focus	3	2	2	7	2.14
Commitment to NLC	8	6	8	22	2.00
Networking/sharing practice occurs	8	13	10	31	1.94
School Outcomes	18	18	15	51	2.06
NZC Implementation	3	6	2	11	2.09
School practices have been influenced/changed	13	7	11	31	2.06
Improved student outcomes (achievement/engagement)	2	5	2	9	2.00
Developed professional knowledge/skills	3	6	5	14	1.86

Respondents were next asked to rate the success of their NLC based on the criteria they had identified in the previous question. Responses are illustrated in Figure 10. There were a total of 69 respondents to this question. The clear majority of respondents (n=57, 82.6%) reported that they would rate their NLC as *good* (n=20, 29%); *very good* (n=23, 33.3%); or *extremely good* (n=14, 20.3%). Overall, 10.1% reported their NLC as *excellent*, based on their success criteria. Just 7.2% of respondents (n=5) indicated their NLC was doing *poorly*, while no one reported *very poorly*. The overall mean for this question was 3.97 (sd = 1.098) suggesting that on average respondents rated the success of their NLC as *very good*, based on their reported criteria.

⁵ Nine responses could not be coded and were discarded from the analyses. These responses were either not of relevance to the question asked or we could not infer sufficient information to correctly code them.

Figure 10: Percentage of respondents rating NLC with regard to success criteria identified

Respondents were asked to identify up to three benefits they believed schools gain from joining an NLC. They were asked to order their responses from the most to the least important. These were coded into thematic categories. Again the most important responses were given a score of 3 and the least a score of 1 to determine a mean score for each category of benefit (Table 19)⁶.

There were a total of 178 reported benefits. Comments related to *teaching and learning* in some way had the highest reported mean level of importance overall at 2.55. This benefit category was mentioned by 22 respondents. Responses within this category included effective teaching, planning for teaching and learning, the ability to make changes to practice within and across schools and increased student engagement and achievement.

Collegial support (n=29); *networking/sharing* (n=69) and *interacting for a purpose* (n=26) were also important benefit categories with mean levels of importance of 2.38, 2.13 and 2.12 respectively. *Professional learning and gaining new knowledge* had a mean of 1.69 (n=26) with responses including a heightened understanding of *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

Table 19: Number of participants reporting each type of benefit⁹

Code	3 (greatest importance)	2	1 (Least importance)	Total (N)	Mean
Teaching and Learning	14	6	2	22	2.55
Collegial Support	18	4	7	29	2.38
Networking/sharing	23	32	14	69	2.13
Interaction for a purpose	10	9	7	26	2.12
Professional learning, gaining new knowledge	10	14	2	26	1.69
Consistency across schools	0	0	3	3	1.00
Time to reflect/think	0	0	3	3	1.00

⁶ Again, 11 responses could not be coded and were discarded from the analyses.

Respondents were next asked to identify up to three of the biggest challenges for a group of schools working together as an NLC. They were asked to order their responses from the most to the least important. They were specifically asked not to include time or money, as these would be taken as a ‘given’. The purpose of this was to try to move beyond the obvious challenges. The 162 responses to the question were coded into appropriate categories (Table 20)⁷.

A total of 93 responses related to challenges within the *culture of the NLCs*, while 69 related to challenges involved with the *operation of NLCs*. Within the *culture of the NLC*, *personalities/egos* was the challenge with the highest overall reported mean level of importance (2.67). However, this was only reported by three respondents. This suggests that where egos are an issue it is a very important challenge but that this only occurs in a very few instances.

Developing a learning culture was identified by 12 respondents as being an important challenge with a reported mean of 2.50. This was followed by the challenge of *remaining focused* with a mean of 2.25 (n=16). Another important challenge was the *diversity of participants’ needs and the differing stages of development* ($\bar{x} = 2.21$, n=24) as well as having *everyone contributing* ($\bar{x} = 2.18$; n=11). *Commitment and momentum* ($\bar{x} = 1.94$, n=16) and *implementation at school level* ($\bar{x} = 1.73$, n=11) were also identified challenges.

Within the *operation of the NLC*, having *everyone able to attend* was identified as an important challenge with a mean of 2.35, reported by 34 respondents. *Changes to personnel* within the NLC ($\bar{x} = 2.17$, n=6), having *sufficient knowledge/expertise/support/resources* ($\bar{x} = 2.00$, n=16) and *government influence/guidance* ($\bar{x} = 2.00$, n=4) were also identified as important challenges. A certain level of difficulty was also reported to be experienced with *organising activities/workshops* ($\bar{x} = 1.78$, n=9).

Table 20: Number of participants reporting each type of challenge

Codes	3 (greatest importance)	2	1 (Least importance)	Total	Mean
NLC Culture	39	30	24	93	2.16
Personalities/ego's	2	1	0	3	2.67
Developing a learning culture	8	2	2	12	2.50
Remaining focused	8	4	4	16	2.25
Diversity of participants needs and stages of development	9	11	4	24	2.21
Everyone contributes	3	7	1	11	2.18
Commitment/momentum	6	3	7	16	1.94
Implemented at school level	3	2	6	11	1.73
NLC Operation	27	26	16	69	2.16
Everyone able to attend	18	10	6	34	2.35
Changes to personnel	3	1	2	6	2.17
Having sufficient knowledge/expertise/ support/resources	4	8	4	16	2.00
Government influence/guidance	1	2	1	4	2.00
Organising the activities/workshops	1	5	3	9	1.78

Respondents were next asked to identify up to three factors (eg. resources, people, ideas, NLC culture etc) that were the most critical for developing an effective NLC. Again they were asked to order their responses from the most to the least important and not to include time or money, as these were taken as a ‘given’. Responses have been coded into appropriate categories (Table 21)⁸.

⁷ Again, two responses could not be coded and were discarded from the analyses.

⁸ Again, five responses could not be coded and were discarded from the analyses.

There were a total of 173 responses to this question. Respondents reported that *having the right people* was the most critical factor for developing an effective NLC, reporting a mean level of importance of 2.62 (n=21). This was closely followed by *effective leadership* ($\bar{x} = 2.50$, n=12).

Factors also considered relatively important were:

- External experts with knowledge to facilitate/lead/advise ($\bar{x} = 2.22$, n=18)
- Clear vision/purpose ($\bar{x} = 2.19$, n=16)
- Trust/respect/collegial culture ($\bar{x} = 2.19$, n=26)
- Commitment/ownership of members ($\bar{x} = 2.09$, n=23)

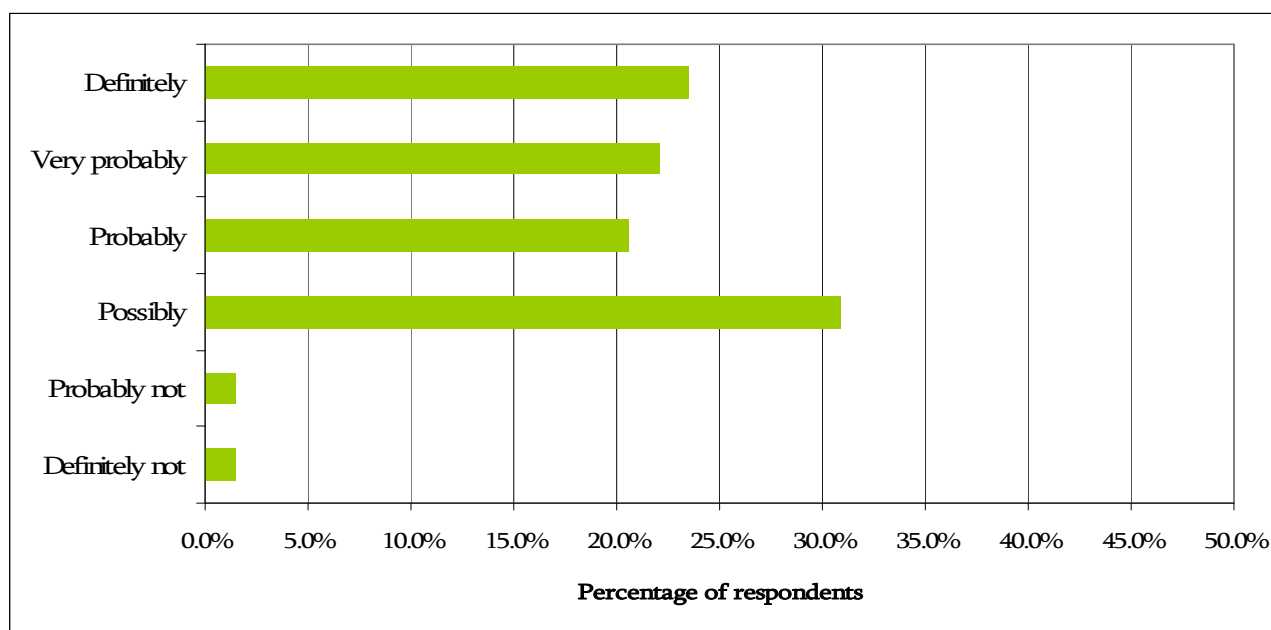
Table 21: Number of participants reporting each critical factor

Codes	3 (greatest importance)	2	1 (Least importance)	Total	Mean
Having the right people	16	2	3	21	2.62
Effective leadership	7	4	1	12	2.50
External experts with knowledge to facilitate/lead/advise	9	4	5	18	2.22
Clear vision/purpose	6	7	3	16	2.19
Trust/respect/collegial culture	9	13	4	26	2.19
Commitment/ownership of members	8	9	6	23	2.09
Sharing practice/networking	6	5	7	18	1.94
Access to resources/current info/ideas	2	16	11	29	1.69
Effective processes	2	2	6	10	1.60

Respondents were asked whether, if they were given the opportunity to determine how New Zealand Curriculum professional learning occurred for their school, they would choose NLCs as the most effective way to influence changes to teaching and learning practices. Figure 11 illustrates their overall responses.

There were a total of 68 responses to this question. The clear majority of participants (n=66, 97.1%) responded positively to this question indicating they would *possibly* (n=21, 30.9%), *probably* (n=14, 20.6%), *very probably* (n=15, 22.1%) or *definitely* (n=16, 23.5%) choose NLCs as the most effective way to influence change in their schools. Further, almost half of the respondents (n=31, 45.6%) stated that they would *very probably* or *definitely* choose NLCs. Only one respondent reported they would *definitely not* or *probably not* choose NLCs (1.5%).

The overall mean for this question was 4.31 (sd = 1.261) suggesting that, on average, respondents would *probably* choose the NLCs as the most effective way to influence changes to teaching and learning practices within their school.

Figure 11: Extent to which respondent would choose NLCs, by percentage of respondents

Finally, respondents were asked if there were any general comments they wished to make. In total 44 did so. The majority of these comments were supportive of the NLC initiative. However, in some instances while the respondents were generally positive about the initiative they also expressed reservations or concerns. These included:

- the timing of the initiative, in that it did not commence until the middle of 2010
- the distraction the National Standards had become
- the need for more time for the initiative to “gain traction”
- that continuity was needed for 3 to 5 years rather than changing the model all the time
- the need for release time and payment for the sector leader to reflect the workload
- the need for templates for developing applications and milestone reporting
- more advisor support.

Some respondents commented on the importance of selecting the right schools to work together and having an effective sector leader. It was mentioned that there was a need to ensure individual school needs were met by the NLC and that there was a link between these and the work of the NLC. Others commented on how the NLC was a valuable platform for other work they were doing and part of a bigger picture. There were four comments (11.0%) that were largely negative. These were to do with the cascade nature of the model, and a preference for school wide professional development.

Following is a sample of comments reflecting the range of responses. These have been broadly categorized based on the general nature of the comments.

Comments where reservations are noted include:

- *I feel that the very best professional learning happens when the "experts" go into a school and work alongside a whole staff.*

- *NLC are valuable assets to helping move forward, but alone will not create the sufficient shift needed. They are a stepping stone to allow thought and movement in the right direction but to encompass a whole school requires a much bigger influence.*
- *This model supports leadership but it would be a mistake to think that this alone will change teaching practice just because it is a cheap option*
- *They are incredibly valuable but need to continue for several years. As teachers use teaching as Inquiry as the framework for the NLC, new areas of focus emerge...teaching as inquiry is continuous so teachers need the continual support of NLCs.*
- *My fears if this model was adopted that some schools could miss out. Sector leaders need the contacts and motivation to make this model work. I have been in one that didn't through the leader's lack of leadership and knowledge and most of the cluster was disinterested too. It appears to be cumbersome model and other PD needs to be available. This can be difficult for small schools on small budgets.*
- *The model is a good one. Theory behind it is sound but it competes head on with the daily grind/ really urgent stuff that happens in schools.*
- *I think the NLC model is powerful could even be described as very probably. But if it was the model v any opportunity for other models that would cater for full staff involvement I would have to say I hold some reservations.*
- *I feel that my success has been limited but is growing as the pressure is on to use this model by the current educational climate. National Standards have set us back a little bit as often discussions have moved towards negativity and confusion rather than Ka Hikitia, Pasifika, NZC student voice and curriculum design. BUT I am immensely hopeful and feel more skilled to be pushier to develop this and ultimately new ideas take time. Money is NOT an issue it is a change in attitude and we can make things happen but time to develop relationships and foster change is much harder.*
- *Our NLC has proved particularly challenging to move in thinking and action. There are Principals who have been in their schools for a long time or in the area and concepts are not taken on board with incredible regularity, I get little response and feedback and sharing is challenging and scary. I have gone wider this year to find other models and have also become more determined. I have just started a smaller NLC with better results but don't have data as yet. I do believe in the model and expect to see better engagement but it is disheartening that the model of early tomorrow's schools is the norm and private practice is adhered to - by this I mean that sharing is scary as someone might take your idea or it will be discussed in a wider community and the schools are in competition for student numbers.*

Two comments reflecting the need to consider individual schools are:

- *In response to the above there are two aspects to this. The model for professional development needs to consider the needs of the individual school and unless there is a well established NLC there is potential for conflict if the cluster model doesn't suit the schools needs.*
- *In the light of Q.6. I would note that I think the NLCs are especially effective when they are complementary to other professional development initiatives active in schools - e.g. AtoL, AfL, Restorative Practices etc.*

Seven comments which reflected the overall very positive nature of the respondent's views are:

- *A brilliant idea. It has been wonderful for the schools involved and for me as the curriculum leader.*

- *Hugely beneficial having a pool of money to draw on. We have visited schools, spent a weekend away as a group debating and discussing the current state of the nation, called on facilitators, developed very strong collegial relationships, first time principals are well supported - no-one would have a problem picking up a phone seeking help. We share resources verbally and physically, have begun the moderation process between schools and across the cluster, are looking into strengthening transition into our intermediate - hugely successful cluster. Thank you.*
- *.It is a valuable experience for me, and I constantly receive feedback from the NLC participants that they really appreciate having the dedicated time to consider and work on aspects of their curriculum, and to learn more about related research and MoE strategic documentation.*
- *Have loved and appreciated the opportunity to engage with other teachers to develop my own knowledge and gain ideas for teaching and learning. Also the validation that there is more to NS it's our fabulous NZC and the front end is a focus. Makes me feel great and want to do the best for my students.*
- *Our successful NLC has most definitely hinged on the make-up of the team. We have five first-time principals, two 4th years and two experienced principals. Everyone is committed to improving practice and understands and are open to change - they are not entrenched in their ways. Though we all have very different approaches to school culture and leadership, we are open to questions and challenges and the ensuing discussion forms the basis of excellent problem solving and action plans. People leave each meeting/retreat with the next step - crucial for their buy-in to a successful model.*
- *I think that NLCs are extremely effective, particularly as a teacher from a smaller school. I think the ones that were for school leadership seemed very effective - having participants in NLCs that are able to make influences in their schools seems like an extremely efficient system, money wise.*
- *People that are willing to be a part of a NLC generally want to "upgrade" their knowledge, pedagogy and passion. I have found it hugely beneficial to be a part of such an amazing group of Art HoF's. Looking at resources, getting help with moderation, collectively looking at how to raise student achievement and learning to understand the new NZC and how to implement it. But all this was ultimately made possible with the help of our Arts Advisor. Without her help we would not have known where to start.*

Chapter Two: School Leader Survey

Introduction

This survey was completed online by school participants in NLCs in 2010. All sector leaders were asked to forward information regarding the survey to the members of their NLC and to encourage them to participate. The extent to which this occurred is unknown, but the low return rate (estimated at less than 20%⁹) suggests it is unlikely many did so. This may also be a reflection of the level of engagement in the NLCs by some participants with a few sector leaders indicating their members were unlikely to participate.

As a result of this low return rate the respondents cannot be considered representative of those participating in NLCs. We do not know how many NLCs are represented by these data. Further, it is highly likely that those who have responded are the most personally engaged on an individual level and have a strong sector leader.

The demographic data also suggest other limitations with regard to the representativeness of the sample.

- First, a large proportion of these respondents are from clusters involving smaller schools; often with roll sizes small enough to mean a teaching principal. It was noted in the case studies that leaders in smaller schools particularly welcomed the opportunity to share what they are doing and to be involved in the NLC. This may have meant they were more likely to complete the survey.
- Second, a large proportion is from NLCs formed less than a year before the survey was undertaken. This means they are unlikely to have undertaken many activities prior to the survey.

As with the sector leader survey data standard deviations are large across most questions. This reflects the diversity of opinions and experiences of the respondents. A six-point positively-packed response scale was again used for all Likert-type questions. Broad thematic coding was undertaken for qualitative responses¹⁰.

Where responses were compared based on demographic factors no testing for statistically significant differences were undertaken due to the overall sample size, and the wide variation in cell sizes between different participant groups. Where differences are mentioned these are likely to have some practical significance worth noting. However, many of these differences are small, suggesting demographic factors do not have a large influence on response.

A total of 152 surveys were begun. Of these, six were duplicate entries, and two were incomplete, containing insufficient information to be included in the analyses. These were discarded. Not all of the remaining 144 respondents answered every question thus reported totals for each question vary.

Section One: participant demographics

Table 22 presents the spread of respondent schools across the six school support services regions. The largest number of respondents (n=50, 35%) were from the *Northland, Auckland* region. A further 20.3% (n=29) were from the *Manawatu, Wanganui, Taranaki, Hawkes Bay* while 18.2% (n=26) reported being from *Wellington, Wairarapa*. Just 2.1% (n=3) of respondents indicated that they were from *Otago, Southland*.

⁹ If there were six schools in each of the 195 clusters the return rate would be only 12%

¹⁰ More detailed descriptions were provided in the sector leader chapter.

Table 22: Percentage of respondents by school support services region

Region	n	%
Northland, Auckland (Team Solutions)	50	35.0%
Manawatu, Wanganui, Taranaki, Hawkes Bay (Massey)	29	20.3%
Wellington, Wairarapa (Accent)	26	18.2%
Nelson, Marlborough, West Coast, Canterbury (U Learn)	22	15.4%
Waikato, King Country, Coromandel, Bay of Plenty, Rotorua, East Coast (Waikato)	13	9.1%
Otago, Southland (Otago)	3	2.1%
Total	143	

Respondents were also asked to specify what decile their current school was (Table 23). Almost half the respondents (n=69, 48.3%) were from *medium* decile schools. A further 32.2% (n=46) were from *high* decile schools, with the remaining 19.6% (n=28) coming from *low* decile schools.

Table 23: Percentage of respondents by school decile

Decile	n	%
Low (1-3)	28	19.6%
Medium (4-7)	69	48.3%
High (8-10)	46	32.2%
Total	143	

Table 24 indicates the type of school respondents are from. The *primary* category is made up of those schools who reported being a contributing primary, full primary or intermediate school. The *secondary* category is made up of those schools who reported being a middle school (years 7-10), secondary (years 7-13 or 9-13), or area school (years 0-13).

Over three quarters of respondents (n=111, 77.1%) reported coming from schools in the primary sector with 21.5% (n=31) reporting coming from secondary schools. Two (1.4%) *other* school types were identified. These were a special school and a designated character bilingual school.

Table 24: Percentage of respondents by school type

School Type	n	%
Primary	111	77.1%
Secondary	31	21.5%
Other	2	1.4%
Total	144	

Respondents were asked to indicate approximately how many full time teaching staff were currently employed in their school in order to get an indication of school size. The total number of teachers reported were then approximately equated with the corresponding school sizes used by the Ministry of Education, as shown in Table 25. In establishing these ranges, we estimated that there are 25 students to each member of the teaching staff at a school.

Table 25: Range of teachers and corresponding MoE U category and school size

Range of teachers identified	Ministry category	School size related to Ministry categories
1 - 4 teachers	U1, U2	Less than 100 students
5 - 10 teacher	U3, U4	100 - 300 students
11 - 20 teachers	U5	301 – 500 students
21 - 30 teachers	U6, U7	501 – 850 students
31 - 40 teachers	U8	851 – 1000 students
41 + teachers	U9 and above	More than 1000 students

Table 26 presents the responses to this question. Over a quarter of respondents (n=38, 27.9%) reported between five and ten full time teachers working within their school with a further 22.1% of respondents (n=30) reporting between one and four teachers. Half of the respondents were from schools likely to have less than 300 students (n=68, 50%). Only a third of the respondents (n=40, 29.4%) were from schools with more than 21 teachers.

Table 26: Percentage of respondents by school size (number of teachers)

Number of teachers	n	%
1 - 4 teachers	30	22.1%
5 - 10 teacher	38	27.9%
11 - 20 teachers	28	20.6%
21 - 30 teachers	16	11.8%
31 - 40 teachers	6	4.4%
41 + teachers	18	13.2%
Total	136	

Respondents were also asked to indicate their role within their school. They were able to give more than one response to this question. The total number of respondents for this question was 145. There were a total of 184 responses with 31 (21.4%) respondents reporting they held multiple roles.

Of the 145 respondents, 66.2% (n=96) reported being a principal. A further 26.9% (n=39) indicated they were *classroom teachers*, 18.6% (n=27) were *middle management*, and 15.2% (n=22) were *senior management* (Table 27).

Middle management incorporates those respondents who reported they were a syndicate, department or faculty leader, the specialist classroom teacher or curriculum leader with a formally recognised role such as literacy or numeracy leader, or had assessment responsibilities. *Senior management* includes those respondents who reported they were an assistant principal or deputy principal. If respondents reported two roles within a category e.g. numeracy leader and faculty leader, responses were counted only once.

Table 27: Percentage of respondents by role within school

Role	n	% ¹¹
Principal	96	66.2%
Senior Management	22	15.2%
Middle Management	27	18.6%
Classroom Teacher	39	26.9%
Total	184	126.9%

Table 28 describes the multiple roles held by the 31 respondents who indicated more than one role. The majority (n=19, 61.3%) indicated that they were both the *principal* and a *classroom teacher*. Six of these reported they were also *middle managers* suggesting they work in very small schools resulting in multiple responsibilities. Seven respondents (22.6%) reported they were *middle management* and a *classroom teacher*.

Table 28: Percentage of respondents with multiple roles within schools

Multiple Roles	n	%
Principal/Classroom teacher	19	61.3%
Middle management/Classroom teacher	7	22.6%
Senior manager/Middle manager/Classroom teacher	3	9.7%
Senior manager/Middle manager	2	6.5%
Total	31	

Respondents were also asked to specify when their school joined the NLC (Table 29). The largest group of respondents reported joining in 2010 (n=54, 37.5%). About a quarter (n=38, 26.4%) joined in 2008.

Table 29: Percentage of respondents by year school joined the NLC

Year	n	%
2010	54	37.5%
2009	32	22.2%
2008	38	26.4%
Don't Know	20	13.9%
Total	144	

Respondents were next asked how long they had personally been involved with NLC activities as shown in Table 30. Again, the highest percentage of respondents identified they had been involved for less than one year (n=54, 37.8%) with a further 12.6% (n=18) reporting they had been involved for one year. This means that half of the respondents (n=72, 50.4%) had been involved for one year or less. This is important to remember when considering the reported impact of the NLC on their learning and/or on their schools.

¹¹ These percentages reflect the percentage of respondents within each role. They add up to 126.9% because of the multiple responses.

Table 30: Length of time personally involved with NLC activities

Involvement with NLC	n	%
Less than one year	54	37.8%
One year	18	12.6%
Two years	38	26.6%
More than two years	33	23.1%
Total	143	

Section Two: Expectations and satisfaction with the NLC

Respondents were asked to think back to before they engaged with the NLC and to comment on the extent to which they expected a number of activities to happen (as identified in Table 31). Respondents were also given the option to report other activities. They were asked to rate these activities on a scale from 1 to 6.

1. Did not expect this to happen
2. Did not think this was likely to happen
3. Thought this might happen
4. Thought this was likely to happen
5. Thought this was very likely to happen
6. Definitely expected to happen

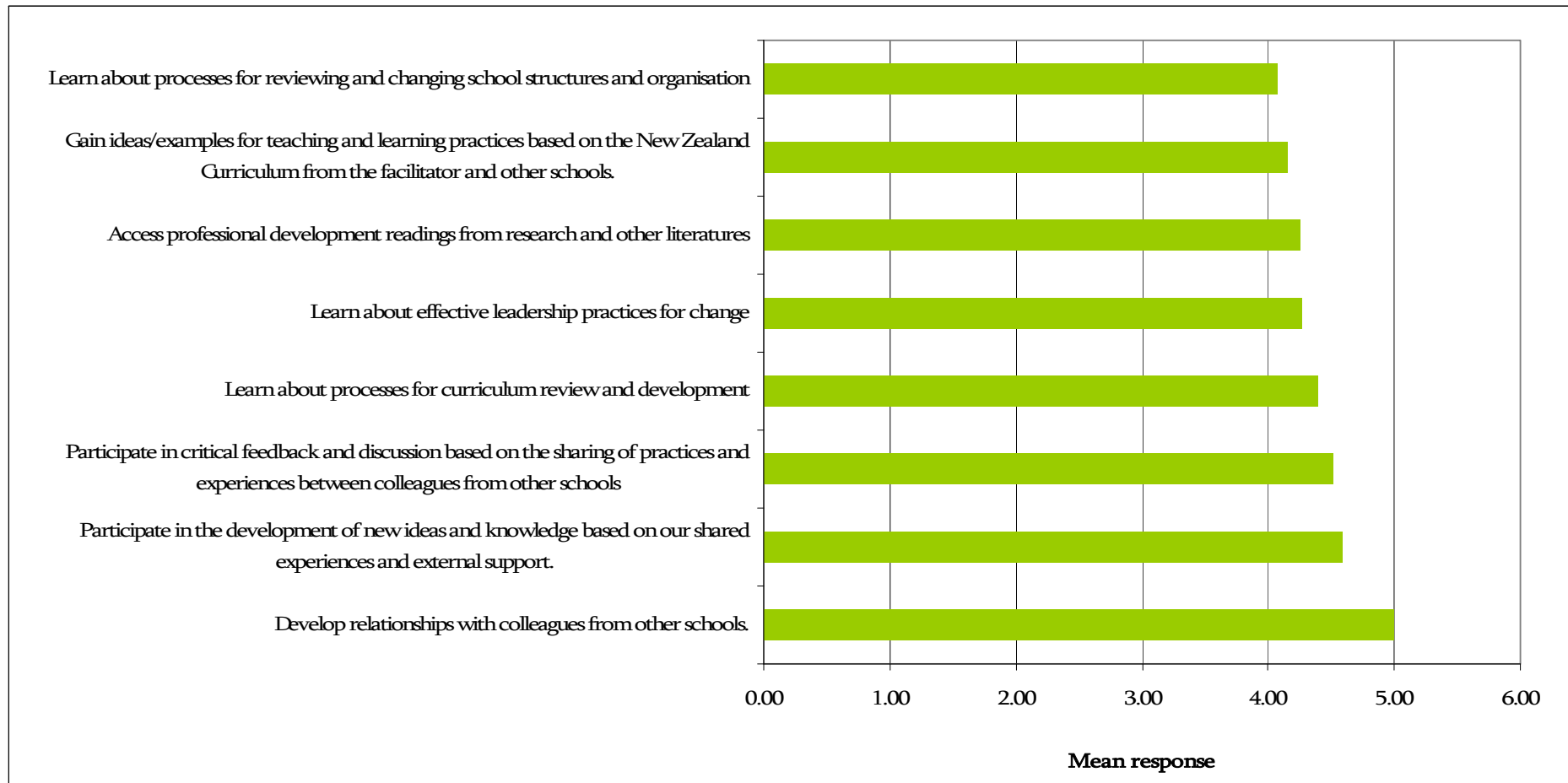
Table 31 displays the descriptive statistics for this question while Figure 12 directly compares the mean levels of expectation for each activity. Of particular note are the high standard deviations (between 1.151 and 1.374).

Figure 12 clearly shows *developing relationships with colleagues from other schools* was the only activity where the mean was 5.00. Almost half of the respondents to this question (n=64, 45.7%) reported this was definitely something they expected to happen. This was a much higher percentage than for any other activity. All other activities had medium levels of expectations with means between 4.07 and 4.59, indicating that overall respondents thought all activities were likely to happen. The high standard deviations suggest that the extent to which they expected individual activities to occur varied considerably between participants.

The activities respondents were most likely to report as being at least “very likely to happen” were that *they would participate in the development of new ideas and knowledge based on [our] shared experiences and external support* ($\bar{x} = 4.59$) and *participate in critical feedback and discussions based on the sharing of practices and experiences between colleagues from other schools* ($\bar{x} = 4.51$). These had 57.3% (n=79) and 51.1% (n=71) of respondents, respectively, reporting these activities were “very likely to happen” or would “definitely happen”

Table 31: Level of expectation that particular activities would occur by percent of respondents

Activities	Total (N)	1		2		3		4		5		6		Mean	SD
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Develop relationships with colleagues from other schools.	140	2	1.4%	1	0.7%	13	9.3%	27	19.3%	33	23.6%	64	45.7%	5.00	1.151
Participate in the development of new ideas and knowledge based on our shared experiences and external support.	138	2	1.4%	6	4.3%	18	13.0%	33	23.9%	40	29.0%	39	28.3%	4.59	1.230
Participate in critical feedback and discussion based on the sharing of practices and experiences between colleagues from other schools	139	2	1.4%	4	2.9%	23	16.5%	39	28.1%	34	24.5%	37	26.6%	4.51	1.212
Learn about processes for curriculum review and development	139	2	1.4%	4	2.9%	28	20.1%	45	32.4%	23	16.5%	37	26.6%	4.40	1.237
Learn about effective leadership practices for change	139	3	2.2%	12	8.6%	22	15.8%	38	27.3%	35	25.2%	29	20.9%	4.27	1.312
Access professional development readings from research and other literatures	139	7	5.0%	7	5.0%	25	18.0%	33	23.7%	38	27.3%	29	20.9%	4.26	1.374
Gain ideas/examples for teaching and learning practices based on <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i> (e.g. lesson plans, unit ideas, and assessment models) from the facilitator and other schools.	139	5	3.6%	11	7.9%	30	21.6%	32	23.0%	34	24.5%	27	19.4%	4.15	1.367
Learn about processes for reviewing and changing school structures and organisation	138	3	2.2%	11	8.0%	33	23.9%	37	26.8%	34	24.6%	20	14.5%	4.07	1.259

Figure 12: Mean levels of expectation that each activity would happen

The two activities with the lowest reported mean levels of expectation were learning about processes for reviewing and changing school structures and organisation ($\bar{x} = 4.07$) and gaining ideas/examples for teaching and learning practices based on *The New Zealand Curriculum* (e.g. lesson plans, unit ideas, assessment models) from the facilitator and other schools ($\bar{x} = 4.15$).

Only two *other* activities were mentioned by respondents. These were:

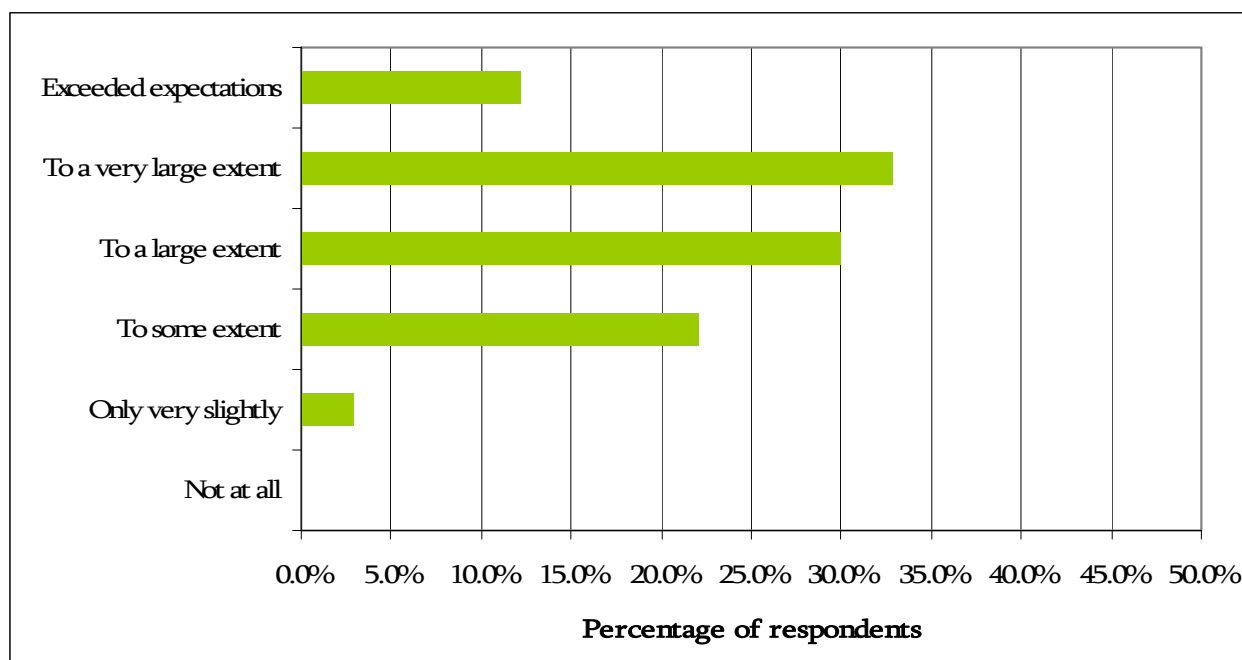
- developing a sense of inclusion in a wider initiative ($\bar{x} = 2.00$)
- receiving guidance for involving staff in meaningful professional development ($\bar{x} = 4.00$)

Respondents were then asked to indicate to what extent, overall, their experiences in the NLC had met these expectations. They were asked to indicate this using a scale from 1 to 6:

1. Not at all
2. Only very slightly
3. To some extent
4. To a large extent
5. To a very large extent
6. Exceeded expectations

Figure 13 illustrates their responses to this question. Overall, 12.1% ($n=17$) of respondents reported that the NLC had *exceeded their expectations*, while only 2.9% ($n=4$) reported that the NLC had *only very slightly* met their expectations. Three quarters of respondents ($n=105$, 75%) reported that the NLC met their expectations *to a large extent* or more.

Figure 13: Extent to which NLC meets overall expectations by percent of respondents



Responses to this question were further analysed with regard to overall means by school type, school decile and size¹². Results are detailed in Table 32. The overall mean for this question was 4.29 (sd=1.035) suggesting that across all respondents their expectations had been met “to a large extent”.

The widest range of means was reported when the data were analysed by size of school (range = 0.93). Respondents from schools with between 31 and 40 teachers (n=6) reported a very high mean of 5.00. There was a slightly lower mean response ($\bar{x} = 4.07$) for those respondents from schools employing between 11 and 20 teachers. This was lower than for any other group.

Responses by school type showed no substantial variance with a mean of 4.27 for primary schools and 4.35 for secondary. Medium decile schools had a slightly lower mean ($\bar{x} = 4.12$) than low and high decile schools ($\bar{x} = 4.56$, $\bar{x} = 4.40$ respectively).

These data suggest that the extent to which expectations are met is not substantially mediated by any school demographic factor.

Table 32: Mean and standard deviation by school type, decile, and size

		n	Mean	SD
Type	Primary ¹³	111	4.27	1.051
	Secondary ¹⁴	31	4.35	1.018
Decile	Low (1-3)	28	4.56	1.086
	Medium (4-7)	69	4.12	1.052
	High (8-10)	46	4.40	0.963
Size (Number of teachers)	1 - 4 teachers	30	4.30	1.119
	5 - 10 teacher	38	4.32	1.118
	11 - 20 teachers	28	4.07	1.016
	21 - 30 teachers	16	4.38	0.719
	31 - 40 teachers	6	5.00	0.894
	41 + teachers	18	4.39	1.092
Overall			4.29	1.035

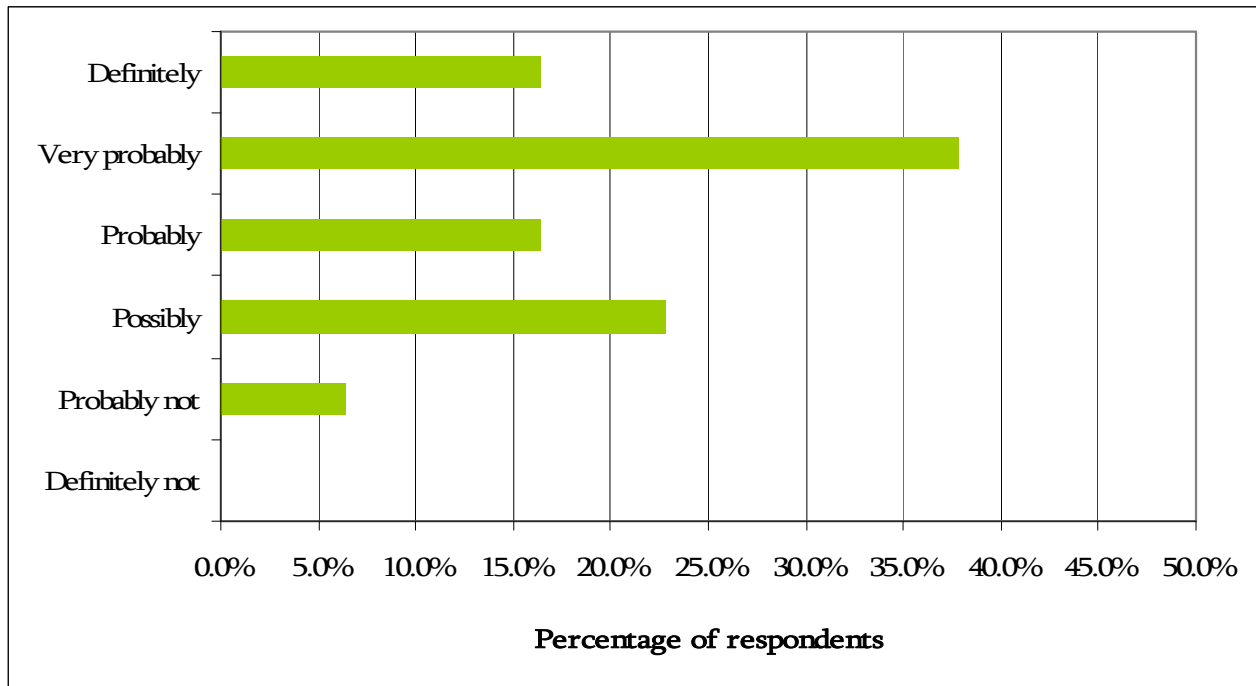
Respondents were asked whether, if given the opportunity to determine how *The New Zealand Curriculum* professional learning occurred for their school, they would choose NLCs as the most effective way to influence changes to teaching and learning practices. Figure 14 illustrates their overall mean levels of response. The six point scale used ranged from *definitely not* to *definitely*.

The majority responded positively to this question (n=131, 93.6%) indicating they would *possibly* (n=32, 22.9%), *probably* (n=23, 16.4%), *very probably* (n=53, 37.9%) or *definitely* (n=23, 16.4%) choose NLCs as the most effective way to influence change in their schools. Further, over half of the respondents (n=76, 54.3%) stated that they would *very probably* or *definitely* choose NLCs. No respondents reported they would *definitely not* choose NLCs with just 6.4% (n=9) reporting they *probably would not*.

¹² As discussed at the beginning of this chapter statistical testing was not undertaken. The differences reported here and elsewhere are small but worth noting for future consideration.

¹³ Primary includes both contributing and full primaries as well as intermediates.

¹⁴ Secondary include 7-13, 9-13 7-10 and area schools

Figure 14: Extent to which respondents would choose NLCs by percentage of respondents

These responses were also analysed by school type, decile and size as detailed in Table 33. The overall mean for this question was 4.35 (sd=1.187) suggesting that on average respondents would *probably* choose the NLCs as the most effective way to influence changes to teaching and learning practices within their school.

Again, the largest range of responses is by school size. Schools with between 5 and 10 teachers (100-300 students) had the highest overall mean ($\bar{x} = 4.58$) with schools with 11 to 20 teachers (301-500 students) reporting the lowest mean ($\bar{x} = 4.11$). Schools in the two smallest size categories were the most likely to choose NLCs, suggesting higher levels of satisfaction than larger schools. Primary schools had a slightly higher overall mean ($\bar{x} = 4.40$) than did secondary schools ($\bar{x} = 4.13$). Low decile schools reported a higher mean ($\bar{x} = 4.52$) than both medium and high decile schools ($\bar{x} = 4.27$, $\bar{x} = 4.36$ respectively).

Table 33: Mean and standard deviation by school type, decile, and size

		n	Mean	SD
Type	Primary	107	4.40	1.156
	Secondary	31	4.13	1.310
Decile	Low (1-3)	27	4.52	1.252
	Medium (4-7)	67	4.27	1.162
	High (8-10)	45	4.36	1.209
Size (Number of Teachers)	1 - 4 teachers	30	4.47	0.973
	5 - 10 teacher	38	4.58	1.130
	11 - 20 teachers	28	4.11	1.315
	21 - 30 teachers	16	4.25	1.291
	31 - 40 teachers	6	4.17	1.472
	41 + teachers	18	4.33	1.328
Overall			4.35	1.187

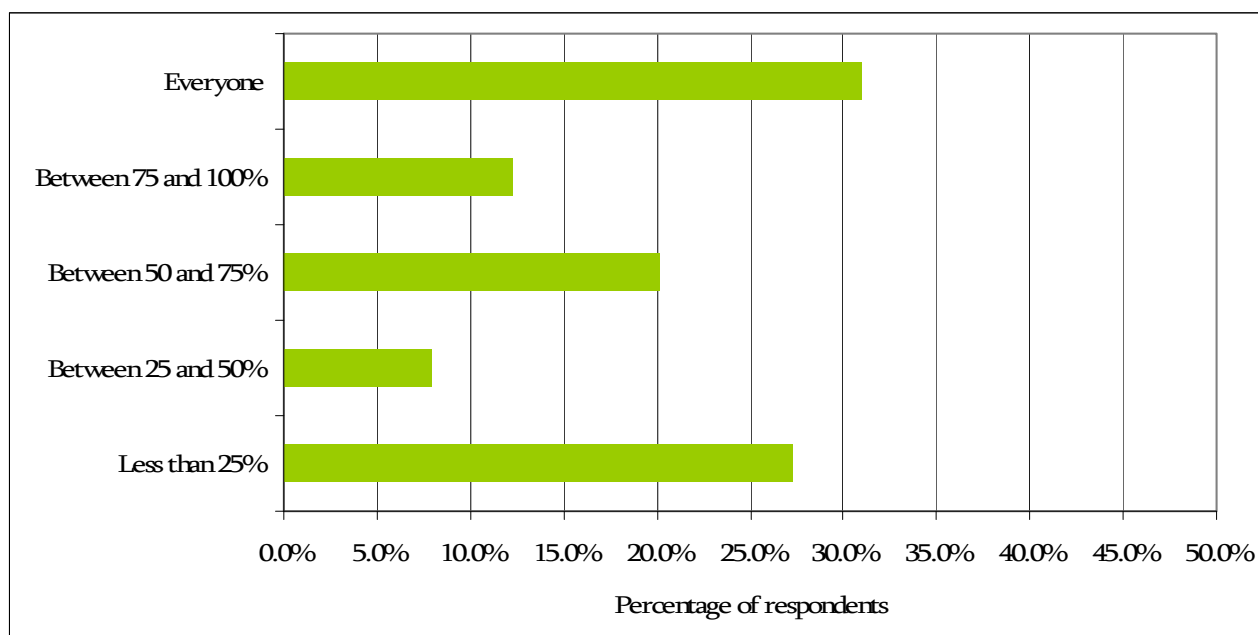
Section Three: Professional development and learning for *The New Zealand Curriculum*

Respondents were asked to identify what percentage of their school staff they believed were engaging with information and learnings from the NLC.

The responses to this question need to be considered with caution. Given that most of the schools in this sample are relatively small the actual numbers of staff represented in the percentages reported below could be very small. For example, in some instances “everyone” represents just one or two people.

Initially, respondents were asked to indicate if they were the only person engaged with information and learning from the NLC. A total of 23 respondents (16.5%) indicated that they were. Their responses were recoded to reflect the size of the school and the percentage of staff their involvement represented. Six of these respondents were from sole charge schools and were re-coded into the “everyone” category; 13 were coded as less than 25%, 2 as between 25 and 49% and 2 as between 50 and 74%.

Figure 15 illustrates that the majority of respondents (n=88, 63.3%) reported that *more than half* of their staff were engaging with information and learnings from the NLC. Over a quarter of all respondents (n=43, 30.9%) reported that *everyone* within their school was engaged while 27.3% (n=38) reported less than 25% of staff were involved. Just two respondents (1.4%) reported *not knowing or were unsure*.

Figure 15: Percentage of staff engaging with information/learnings from NLC

These responses were also analysed by school type, decile and the number of full time teachers employed in the school as detailed in Table 34. The overall mean for this question was 3.12 (sd = 1.605), suggesting that in most instances between 50 and 74% of staff in the respondent's schools were engaged.

The largest variance in means (range of 2.70) was found for school size where mean levels of overall engagement decreased as size increased up to 40 teachers. The mean level of engagement of other staff was lowest for secondary schools ($\bar{x} = 1.69$) and for schools with 31 to 40 teachers (1.60). Respondents reporting the greatest level of involvement, both by school size and overall, were those from schools with between 1 and 4 teachers ($\bar{x} = 4.30$). Very little variance in terms of the range of means was reported when considering decile (range = 0.15).

Table 34: Mean and standard deviation by school type, decile, and size

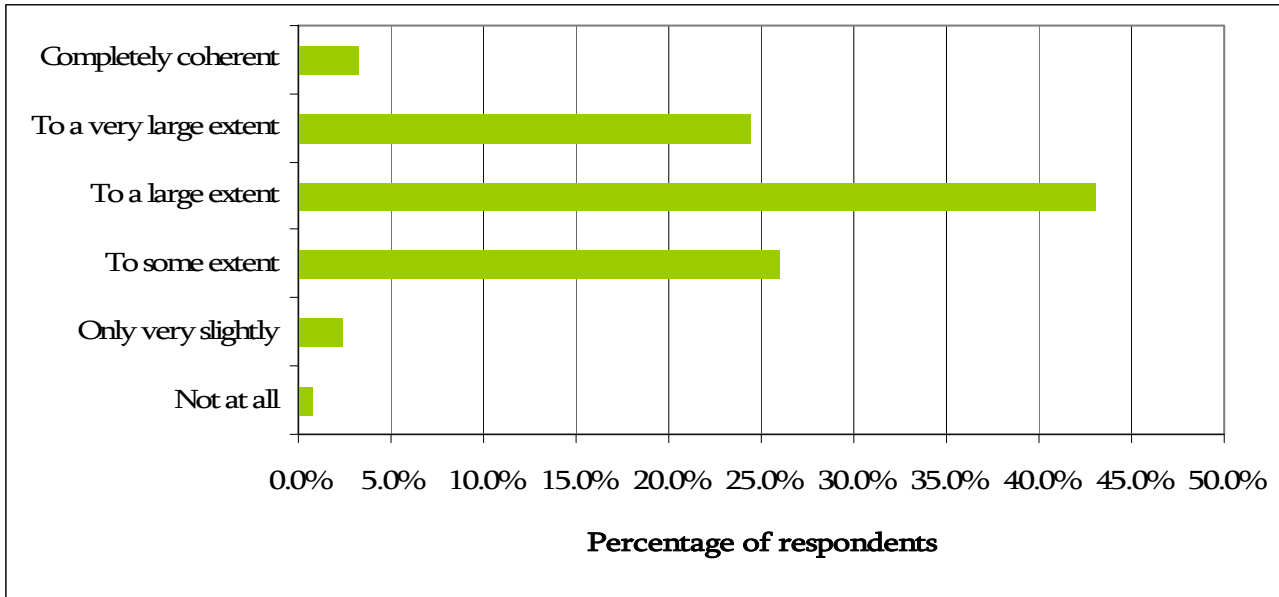
		n	Mean	SD
Type	Primary	107	3.51	1.475
	Secondary	30	1.69	1.168
Decile	Low (1-3)	27	3.04	1.698
	Medium (4-7)	67	3.28	1.546
	High (8-10)	44	2.89	1.631
Size (Number of Teachers)	1 - 4 teachers	30	4.30	1.149
	5 - 10 teacher	38	3.62	1.479
	11 - 20 teachers	28	2.57	1.451
	21 - 30 teachers	16	2.50	1.366
	31 - 40 teachers	6	1.60	1.342
	41 + teachers	18	1.94	1.349
Overall			3.12	1.605

Respondents were asked to indicate if their school had participated in other professional learning opportunities related to *The New Zealand Curriculum* outside of the NLC. Those who responded "yes" were then asked to indicate the extent

to which the messages and learnings across these different opportunities had contributed to a coherent and consistent body of knowledge.

The vast majority (n=122, 88.4%) of respondents indicated their school had done so. As Figure 16 illustrates 69.1% (n=85) of these respondents indicated that these opportunities had contributed to a coherent and consistent body of knowledge to “some extent” or a “large extent”. Over a quarter (n=34, 27.6%) reported that these opportunities contributed to a “very large extent” (n=30, 24.4%), or even “completely” (n=4, 3.3%).

Figure 16: Coherence of other professional learning opportunities with regard to *The New Zealand Curriculum*



Those that responded that they had not participated in other professional learning opportunities related to *The New Zealand Curriculum* (n=16, 11.6%) were mainly from primary schools (n=14, 87.5%), with less than 20 teachers (n=14, 87.5%). The other two were secondary schools with either 501 - 850 students or more than 1000.

Responses regarding the coherence and consistency of other learning opportunities were also analysed by school type, decile and size. Results are detailed in Table 35. The overall mean for this question was 3.98 (sd = 0.900) suggesting that, across all respondents, other professional learning opportunities they have participated in have contributed to a coherent body of knowledge regarding *The New Zealand Curriculum* to “a large extent”.

The largest range of means (0.99) is by school size. Respondents from schools with between 5 and 10 teachers (100 – 300 students) reported a reasonably high mean ($\bar{x} = 4.27$). The remaining size category means were fairly evenly distributed. Respondents from primary schools reported a higher mean ($\bar{x} = 4.05$) than did those from secondary schools ($\bar{x} = 3.75$). Means by school decile were all relatively evenly spread with respondents from high decile schools reporting just a slightly higher overall mean ($\bar{x} = 4.05$), than the others ($\bar{x} = 3.95$ and $\bar{x} = 3.96$).

Table 35: Mean and standard deviation by school type, decile, and size

		n	Mean	SD
Type	Primary	93	4.05	0.864
	Secondary	28	3.75	1.005
Decile	Low (1-3)	24	3.96	0.751
	Medium (4-7)	59	3.95	0.955
	High (8-10)	39	4.05	0.916
Size (Number of Teachers)	1 - 4 teachers	24	3.92	1.018
	5 - 10 teacher	33	4.27	0.801
	11 - 20 teachers	25	3.92	0.759
	21 - 30 teachers	15	3.73	1.033
	31 - 40 teachers	6	3.83	0.753
	41 + teachers	17	3.88	1.054
Overall			3.98	0.900

Section Four: Outcomes from participation in the NLC on a personal level

The first question in this section was asked in two parts. Respondents were first asked to think back to their knowledge and/or expertise in the areas identified before they first engaged with the NLC (Table 36, Figure 17). They were then asked to think about their **current** (at the time of the survey) knowledge and/or expertise in the same areas (Table 37, Figure 18). For each area respondents were asked to indicate their level of expertise using the following categories:

1. I knew/know in a very general sense about the process or concept.
2. I was/am beginning to think about how I could/can incorporate this process or concept into my practice or that of the school.
3. I had/have begun to work through and consider the implications of this process or concept for my own practice or that of the school including some initial planning.
4. I had/have begun to include this process or concept into my own practice or that of the school.
5. I was/am regularly including this process or concept into my own practice or that of the school.
6. I was/am actively facilitating others in my school to include the process or concept into their practice.
7. I was/am actively facilitating others across the NLC to include the process or concept into their practice.

It should be noted when considering these responses that the length of time participants have been involved in NLCs is likely to impact on this question. Those who joined in 2008 would have been likely to have had lower levels prior to joining than those joining in 2010. However, for those joining in 2010 there has been less opportunity for their knowledge/expertise to increase as a result of the NLC.

Table 36 provides the descriptive statistics regarding levels of knowledge/expertise prior to joining the NLC, while Figure 17 summarises overall mean levels for each identified area. The size of the standard deviations for both questions highlights the broad range of knowledge/expertise across the participants (between 1.274 and 1.586). There were 130 respondents to this question for all items.

The reported means for all activities, before respondents joined an NLC, were above 3.00 indicating that respondents had begun to at least work through and consider the implication that each area might have on their practice or that of their school.

In one instance, *assessment practices to inform teaching and learning*, the mean was above 4.00 indicating that on average respondents were beginning to include this process into their own practice or that of their school. The majority of respondents (n=93, 71.5%) had begun to include this process into their practice (n=35, 26.9%), were regularly including it (n=32, 26.4%) or were actively facilitating it with others in their school (n=26, 20%).

There were three areas where the total percentage of respondents indicating option 4, 5 or 6 was relatively high suggesting the process or concept was being put into practice in their own school at least; if not beyond. These were:

- The key competencies as described in *The New Zealand Curriculum* document (3.88)
- All learning areas described in *The New Zealand Curriculum* document (3.86)
- Effective pedagogies as described in *The New Zealand Curriculum* document (3.81)

There were three areas where the total percentage of respondents indicating option 1, 2, or 3 was relatively high. In these instances it seems respondents were not putting these processes or concepts into practice before joining the NLC. These were:

- Engaging the community in decisions related to their children's learning (3.23)
- The principles as described in *The New Zealand Curriculum* document (3.32)
- How to review and develop curriculum (written documents, course structures etc) (3.32)

However, the small range of means for this question suggests a relatively similar level of knowledge/expertise across all areas.

Table 36: Levels of knowledge/expertise in areas before engagement in the NLC

	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		Mean	SD
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Assessment practices to inform teaching and learning	3	2.3%	10	7.7%	24	18.5%	35	26.9%	32	24.6%	26	20.0%	0	0.0%	4.24	1.305
The key competencies as described in <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i> document	8	6.2%	14	10.8%	29	22.3%	35	26.9%	23	17.7%	21	16.2%	0	0.0%	3.88	1.425
All learning areas described in <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i> document	4	3.1%	14	10.8%	32	24.6%	43	33.1%	20	15.4%	17	13.1%	0	0.0%	3.86	1.274
Effective pedagogies as described in <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i> document	9	6.9%	19	14.6%	30	23.1%	24	18.5%	26	20.0%	22	16.9%	0	0.0%	3.81	1.515
Leadership practices for facilitating change	10	7.7%	19	14.6%	26	20.0%	30	23.1%	31	23.8%	14	10.8%	0	0.0%	3.73	1.446
The values as described in <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i> document	8	6.2%	16	12.3%	36	27.7%	26	20.0%	33	25.4%	11	8.5%	0	0.0%	3.72	1.360
Engaging students in decisions around their learning	4	3.1%	20	15.4%	38	29.2%	34	26.2%	17	13.1%	17	13.1%	0	0.0%	3.70	1.327
Enabling Māori to succeed as Māori	11	8.5%	17	13.1%	34	26.2%	40	30.8%	16	12.3%	12	9.2%	0	0.0%	3.53	1.354
Teaching as inquiry as described in <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i> document	11	8.5%	31	23.8%	20	15.4%	32	24.6%	21	16.2%	15	11.5%	0	0.0%	3.51	1.506
How to review and develop curriculum (written documents, course structures etc)	18	13.8%	29	22.3%	26	20.0%	22	16.9%	20	15.4%	15	11.5%	0	0.0%	3.32	1.586
The principles as described in <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i> document	13	10.0%	27	20.8%	33	25.4%	28	21.5%	21	16.2%	8	6.2%	0	0.0%	3.32	1.392
Engaging the community in decisions related to their children's learning	12	9.2%	26	20.0%	47	36.2%	19	14.6%	17	13.1%	9	6.9%	0	0.0%	3.23	1.350

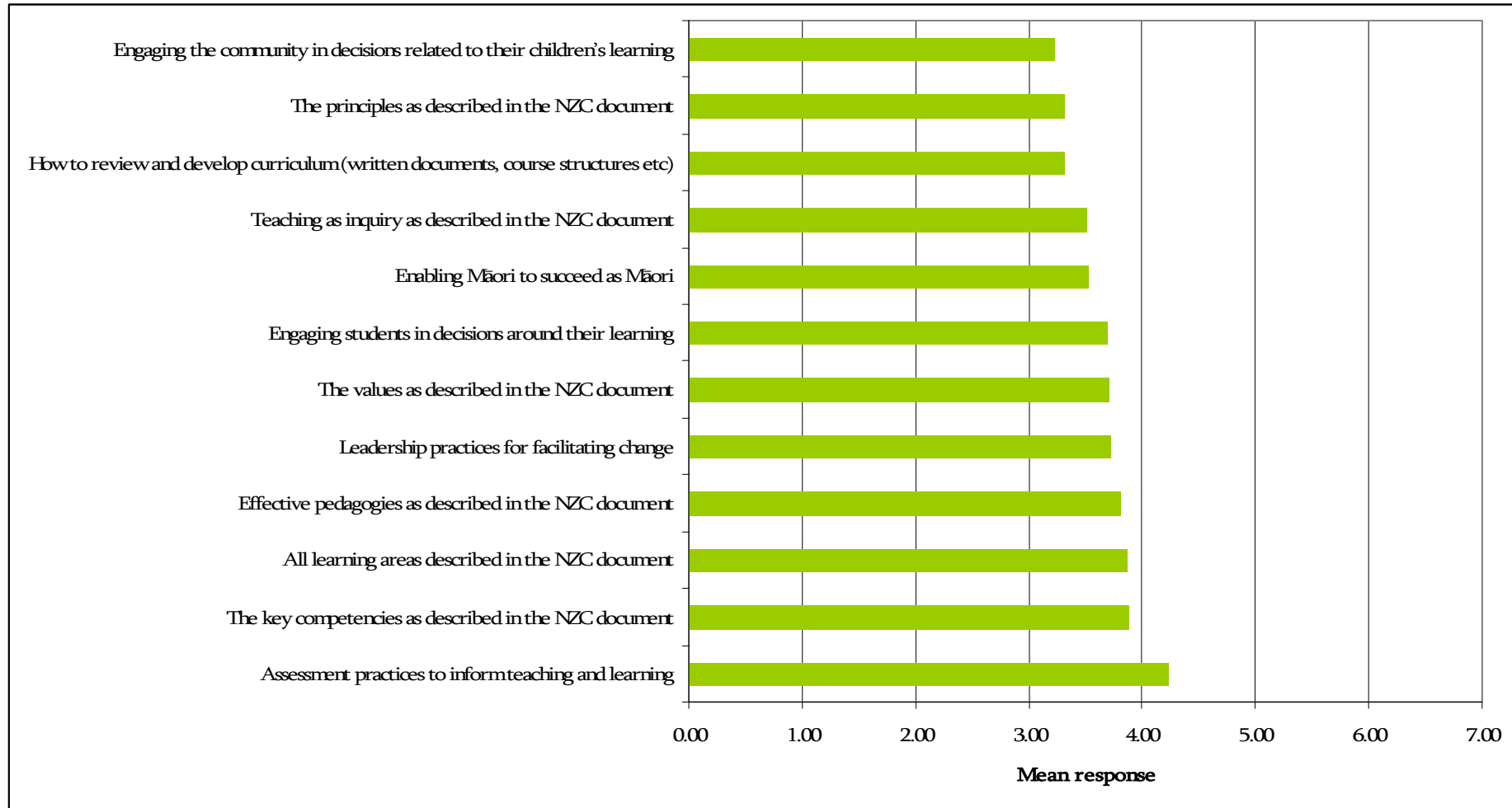
Figure 17: Reported mean levels of knowledge/expertise before engagement with the NLC

Figure 18 (Table 37) illustrates that overall means had increased significantly at the time of the survey, with means for all but two areas reaching above 5.00. However, both these means were still approaching 5.00. This indicates that all processes/concepts were at least being regularly included into teacher and/or school practice. There is a slightly larger range of means across the different areas than there was for the data prior to joining the NLC. It may be that the different foci of the NLCs has meant increased knowledge/expertise in certain areas. Again, there were 130 respondents across all items in this question.

For the processes/concepts listed below over 60% of respondents reported either actively engaging in facilitation with others in their school (6 on the response scale), or actively engaging in facilitation with others across the NLC (7 on the response scale) at the time of the survey. The means for these were 5.58 and 5.52 respectively.

- The key competencies as described in *The New Zealand Curriculum* document (n=63, 48.5%; n=15, 11.5% respectively)
- Assessment practices to inform teaching and learning (n=67, 51.5%; n=13, 10.0% respectively)

For a further group of five processes/concepts over 50% of respondents reported that they were at least regularly being included into teacher and/or school practices. The means for these ranged from 5.33 to 5.46. The figures in brackets relate to the number of respondents reporting a 6 or 7 for each area.

- *Effective pedagogies as described in The New Zealand Curriculum document* (n=56, 43.1%; n=19, 14.6% respectively)
- *The values as described in The New Zealand Curriculum document* (n=53, 40.8%; n=19, 14.6% respectively)
- *Leadership practices for facilitating change* (n=55, 42.3%; n=17, 13.1% respectively)
- *Engaging students in decisions around their learning* (n=53, 41.1%; n=14, 10.9% respectively)
- *Teaching as inquiry as described in The New Zealand Curriculum document* (n=47, 36.4%; n=20, 15.5% respectively)

There were two areas where the mean levels of knowledge at the time of the survey were less than 5.00. These were *engaging the community in decisions related to their children's learning* ($\bar{x} = 4.81$) and *enabling Māori to succeed as Māori* ($\bar{x} = 4.75$). In both instances there were higher percentages of respondents reporting that they had begun to include this concept/process into their own practice than for any others (23.8% and 26.2% respectively).

Table 37: Levels of knowledge/expertise in areas at time of survey

	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		Mean	SD
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
The key competencies as described in <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i> document	0	0.0%	1	0.8%	1	0.8%	13	10.0%	37	28.5%	63	48.5%	15	11.5%	5.58	0.905
Assessment practices to inform teaching and learning	0	0.0%	2	1.5%	6	4.6%	8	6.2%	34	26.2%	67	51.5%	13	10.0%	5.52	1.021
Effective pedagogies as described in <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i> document	2	1.5%	3	2.3%	1	0.8%	15	11.5%	34	26.2%	56	43.1%	19	14.6%	5.46	1.189
The values as described in <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i> document	1	0.8%	1	0.8%	6	4.6%	14	10.8%	36	27.7%	53	40.8%	19	14.6%	5.45	1.135
Leadership practices for facilitating change	0	0.0%	3	2.3%	7	5.4%	11	8.5%	37	28.5%	55	42.3%	17	13.1%	5.42	1.133
Engaging students in decisions around their learning	0	0.0%	1	0.8%	6	4.7%	19	14.7%	36	27.9%	53	41.1%	14	10.9%	5.36	1.060
Teaching as inquiry as described in <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i> document	0	0.0%	2	1.6%	9	7.0%	20	15.5%	31	24.0%	47	36.4%	20	15.5%	5.33	1.208
The principles as described in <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i> document	2	1.5%	2	1.5%	6	4.6%	21	16.2%	43	33.1%	46	35.4%	10	7.7%	5.15	1.175
All learning areas described in <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i> document	1	0.8%	3	2.3%	8	6.2%	19	14.6%	40	30.8%	53	40.8%	6	4.6%	5.13	1.144
How to review and develop curriculum (written documents, course structures etc)	0	0.0%	7	5.4%	10	7.7%	22	16.9%	33	25.4%	49	37.7%	9	6.9%	5.03	1.276
Engaging the community in decisions related to their children's learning	2	1.5%	9	6.9%	10	7.7%	31	23.8%	31	23.8%	33	25.4%	14	10.8%	4.81	1.442
Enabling Māori to succeed as Māori	1	0.8%	4	3.1%	17	13.1%	34	26.2%	29	22.3%	38	29.2%	7	5.4%	4.75	1.282

Figure 18: Reported mean levels of knowledge/expertise at time of survey

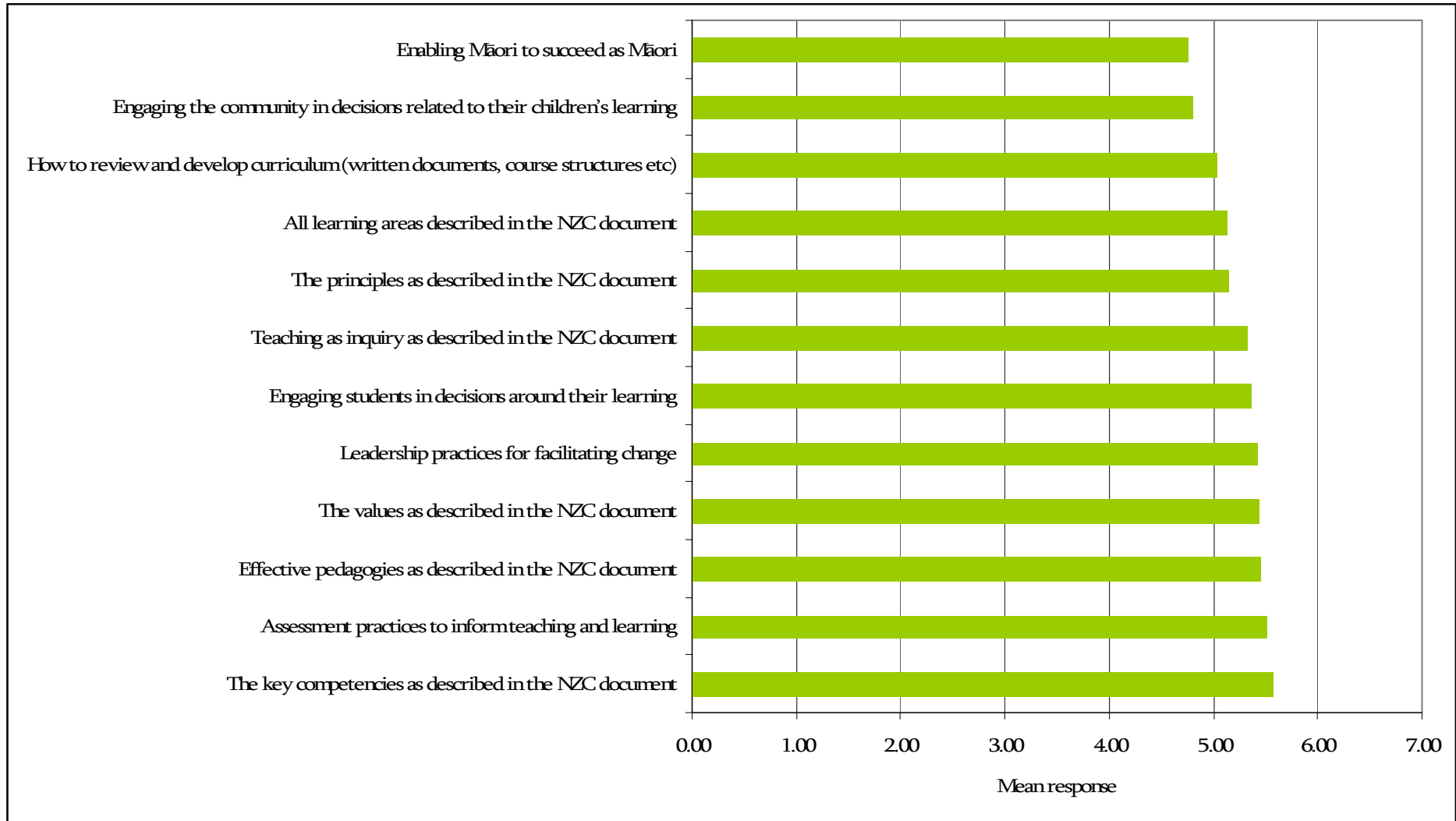


Table 38 directly compares the overall means for each process/concept before joining the NLC and at the time of the survey, and identifies the size of the shift in mean levels for each process/concept. Figure 8 illustrates these shifts. The means for all processes/concepts increased between one and two levels from where respondents were before engaging with NLCs to where they were at the time of the survey (minimum mean increase = 1.22; maximum mean increase = 1.83). The overall shift between means across all processes/concepts was 1.60.

The two processes/concepts with the greatest increase (shift = 1.83) were *the principles as described in The New Zealand Curriculum document* and *teaching as inquiry as described in The New Zealand Curriculum document*. These data suggest these are areas where NLCs have had an influence on the knowledge/expertise of participants.

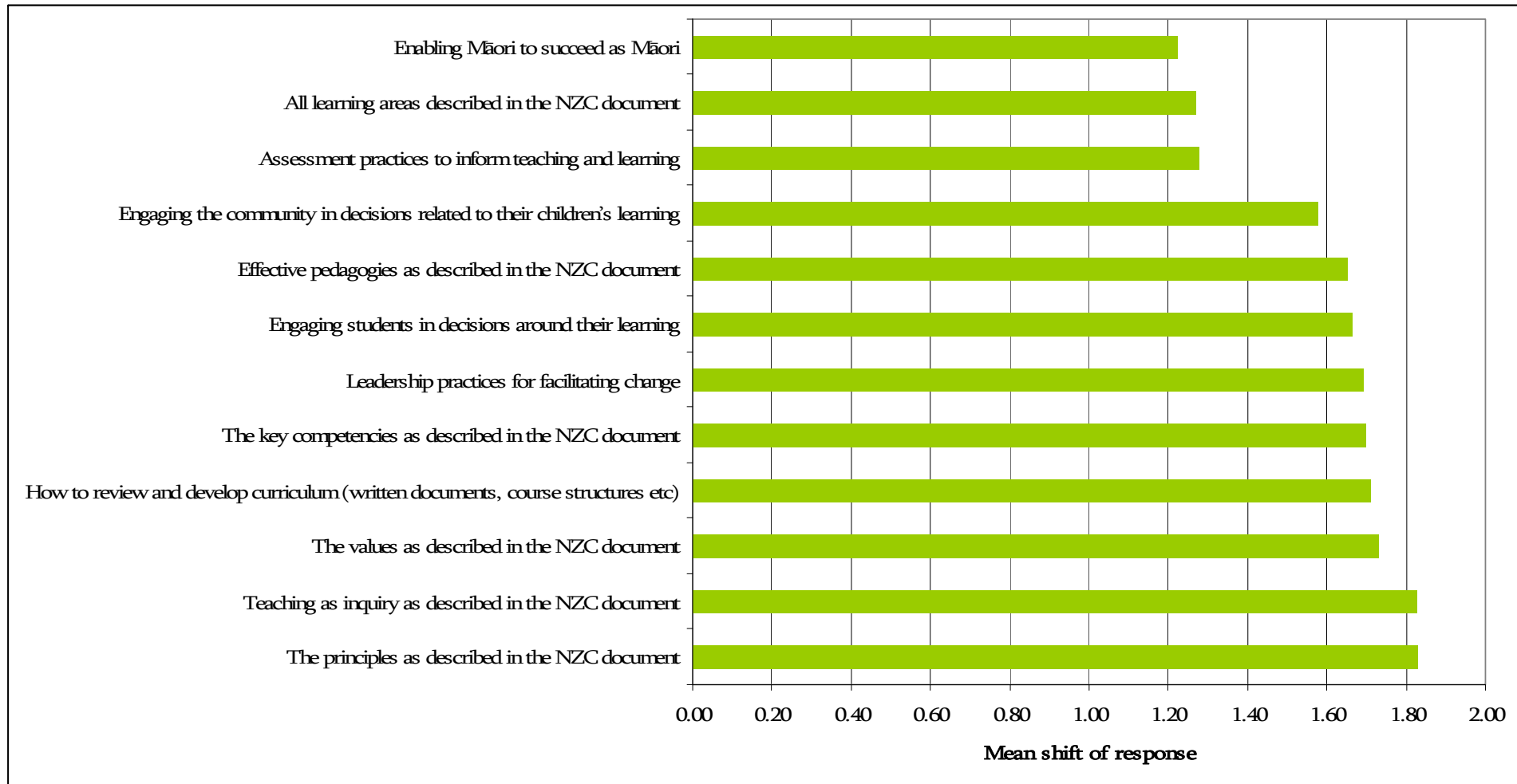
The process/concept with the lowest reported mean increase was *enabling Māori to succeed as Māori* (shift = 1.22). This had been in the top half of the processes/concepts listed in terms of the mean level of knowledge/expertise prior to joining the NLC; but was the lowest at the time of the survey suggesting this has not been a focus for NLCs.

The mean increase was also low for knowledge/expertise around *all learning areas as described in The New Zealand Curriculum document* (shift = 1.27). This process/concept had the second highest mean prior to joining the NLC but at the time of the survey it was in the bottom half of the processes/concepts listed. Similarly, *assessment practices to inform teaching and learning* which had the highest reported mean level of expertise/knowledge prior to joining the NLC had a mean increase of only 1.28. The size of these three shifts is noticeably lower than for any other areas. It is likely these processes/concepts have not featured in the NLCs represented by these data.

Table 38: Comparison between knowledge/expertise before engaging with NLC and at the time of the survey

	Before		At survey		Shift
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
The principles as described in <i>The New Zealand Curriculum document</i>	3.32	1.392	5.15	1.175	1.83
Teaching as inquiry as described in <i>The New Zealand Curriculum document</i>	3.51	1.506	5.33	1.208	1.83
The values as described in <i>The New Zealand Curriculum document</i>	3.72	1.360	5.45	1.135	1.73
How to review and develop curriculum (written documents, course structures etc)	3.32	1.586	5.03	1.276	1.71
The key competencies as described in <i>The New Zealand Curriculum document</i>	3.88	1.425	5.58	0.905	1.70
Leadership practices for facilitating change	3.73	1.446	5.42	1.133	1.69
Engaging students in decisions around their learning	3.70	1.327	5.36	1.060	1.66
Effective pedagogies as described in <i>The New Zealand Curriculum document</i>	3.81	1.515	5.46	1.189	1.65
Engaging the community in decisions related to their children's learning	3.23	1.350	4.81	1.442	1.58
Assessment practices to inform teaching and learning	4.24	1.305	5.52	1.021	1.28
All learning areas described in <i>The New Zealand Curriculum document</i>	3.86	1.274	5.13	1.144	1.27
Enabling Māori to succeed as Māori	3.53	1.354	4.75	1.282	1.22
Overall	3.65	1.428	5.25	1.197	1.60

Figure 19: Shift in overall means between knowledge/expertise before engaging in NLC and at the time of the survey



Respondents were then asked to indicate the extent to which they believed the shifts reported in the earlier questions could be directly attributed to their involvement in the NLC using the following scale:

1. Not at all
2. Only very slightly
3. To some extent
4. To a large extent
5. To a very large extent
6. Entirely
7. No shift

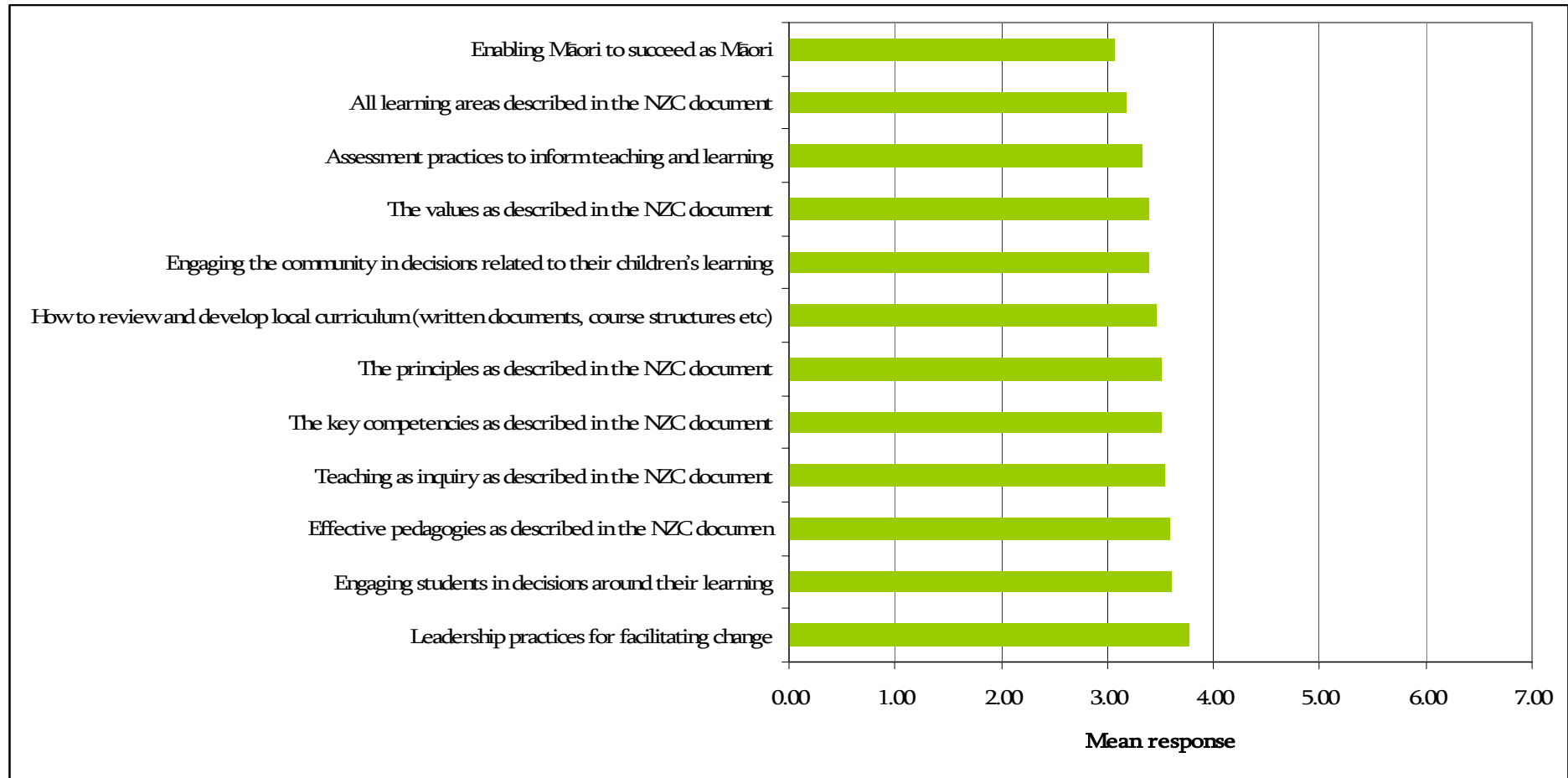
Those respondents who indicated that there was no shift in their knowledge/expertise in the areas identified were not included in analyses shown in Table 39 which presents descriptive data for this question. Figure 20 depicts the overall mean responses. All increases in their knowledge/expertise as reported in Table 39 were attributed to the NLC to between “some extent” and “a large extent” with mean levels of attribution ranging from 3.07 to 3.77.

The highest mean level of attribution ($\bar{x} = 3.77$) was reported for *leadership practices for facilitating change*. This was followed by *engaging students in decisions around their learning* ($\bar{x} = 3.60$) and *effective pedagogies as described in The New Zealand Curriculum document* ($\bar{x} = 3.59$). In all three cases, over 50% (53.5%, 51.6% and 51.9% respectively) of respondents reported that the shifts in their knowledge/expertise could largely, very largely or entirely be attributed to their involvement in the NLC.

For over a quarter of respondents (n=38, 29.7%) the reported increase in their knowledge/expertise with regard to *enabling Māori to succeed as Māori* could only slightly be attributed to their involvement in the NLC, if at all. A similar level of attribution was reported for *all learning areas described in The New Zealand Curriculum document* (22.5%, n=29 reporting only a slight attribution if any). As discussed earlier these are areas with relatively small shifts in overall mean levels of knowledge/expertise.

Table 39: Change in knowledge/expertise attributed to involvement in the NLC.

	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		Mean	SD
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Leadership practices for facilitating change	5	3.9%	13	10.2%	33	26.0%	29	22.8%	31	24.4%	8	6.3%	8	6.3%	3.77	1.258
Engaging students in decisions around their learning	7	5.5%	12	9.4%	38	29.7%	38	29.7%	22	17.2%	6	4.7%	5	3.9%	3.60	1.199
Effective pedagogies as described in <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i> document	7	5.4%	14	10.9%	35	27.1%	38	29.5%	25	19.4%	4	3.1%	6	4.7%	3.59	1.194
Teaching as inquiry as described in <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i> document	11	8.5%	13	10.1%	41	31.8%	24	18.6%	26	20.2%	9	7.0%	5	3.9%	3.55	1.364
The key competencies as described in <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i> document	13	10.1%	9	7.0%	32	24.8%	38	29.5%	23	17.8%	4	3.1%	10	7.8%	3.51	1.288
The principles as described in <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i> document	9	7.0%	11	8.5%	42	32.6%	32	24.8%	23	17.8%	4	3.1%	8	6.2%	3.50	1.212
How to review and develop local curriculum (written documents, course structures etc)	5	3.9%	21	16.3%	40	31.0%	29	22.5%	21	16.3%	5	3.9%	8	6.2%	3.45	1.204
Engaging the community in decisions related to their children's learning	7	5.4%	19	14.7%	43	33.3%	30	23.3%	20	15.5%	4	3.1%	6	4.7%	3.40	1.192
The values as described in <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i> document	12	9.3%	14	10.9%	38	29.5%	33	25.6%	22	17.1%	3	2.3%	7	5.4%	3.39	1.257
Assessment practices to inform teaching and learning	12	9.3%	13	10.1%	44	34.1%	28	21.7%	20	15.5%	3	2.3%	9	7.0%	3.33	1.239
All learning areas described in <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i> document	11	8.5%	18	14.0%	47	36.4%	29	22.5%	15	11.6%	1	0.8%	8	6.2%	3.18	1.140
Enabling Māori to succeed as Māori	16	12.5%	22	17.2%	37	28.9%	28	21.9%	14	10.9%	2	1.6%	9	7.0%	3.07	1.260

Figure 20: Reported mean levels of knowledge/expertise attributed to the NLC

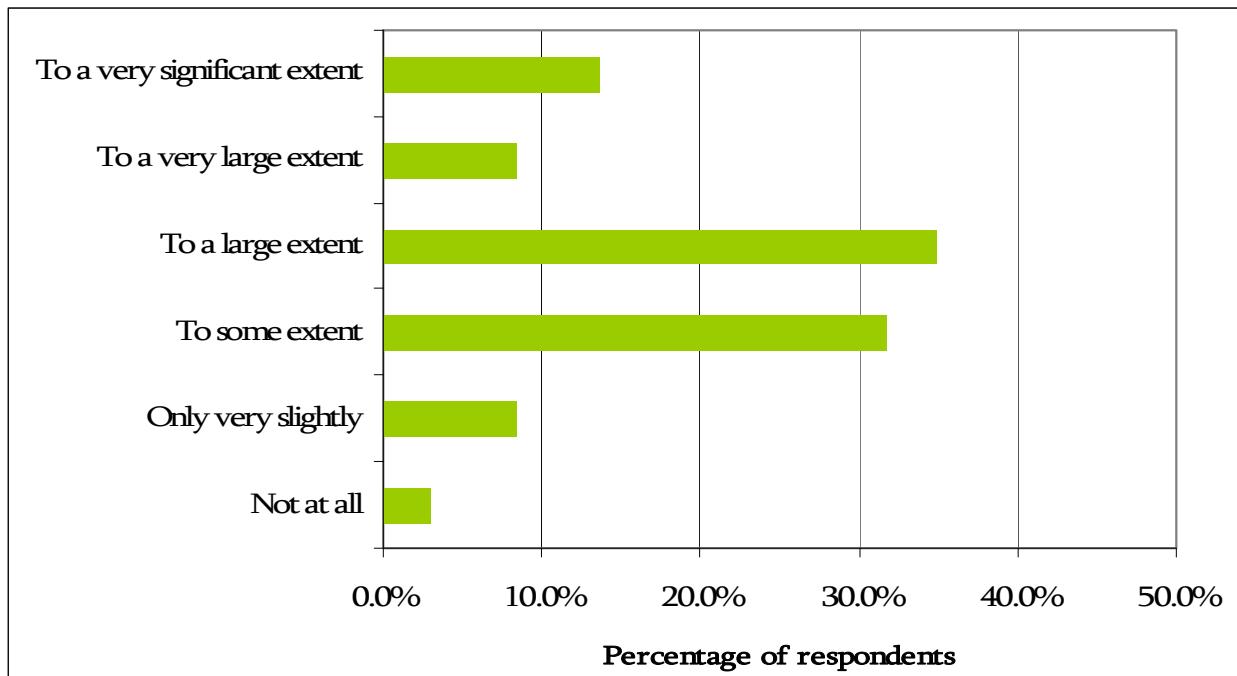
Respondents to this survey were then asked to indicate the extent to which they believe they had been able to influence the implementation of *The New Zealand Curriculum* in their school, as a result of their involvement in the NLC (Figure 21).

The following six point scale was used:

1. Not at all
2. Only very slightly
3. To some extent
4. To a large extent
5. To a very large extent
6. To a very significant extent

Over 50% (n=75, 56.8%) of respondents reported that they had “a large” (n=46, 34.8), “very large” (n=11, 8.3%) or “very significant” (n=18, 13.6%) influence over the implementation of *The New Zealand Curriculum* in their school as a direct result of their involvement in the NLC. Only 11.4% of respondents (n=15) indicated their influence had been only “very slight”, or “not at all”. This is probably due to the large number of principals in the sample.

Figure 21: Percentage of respondents by influence on *The New Zealand Curriculum* in school as result of NLC



These responses were also analysed by school type, decile, and size. In addition, respondent role was also analysed as a possible mediating factor for this question. Results are detailed in Table 40.

The overall mean for this question was 3.78 (sd = 1.231) suggesting that on average respondents believe they have been able to influence the implementation of *The New Zealand Curriculum* in their school to at least some extent. The largest range of responses is by role in school ($\bar{x} = 1.85$). Classroom teachers reported a low mean level of influence ($\bar{x} = 2.44$)

in their school; the lowest reported mean across all categories. Principals had the highest reported level of influence ($\bar{x} = 4.29$) of all categories of respondent. Schools with between 1 and 4 teachers (less than 100 students) had a much higher mean reported level of influence ($\bar{x} = 4.28$) than any other size schools (range = 0.88). Secondary schools had a lower mean ($\bar{x} = 3.30$) than primary schools ($\bar{x} = 3.91$). Results when looked at by school decile did not show high variance in means.

Table 40: Mean and standard deviation by school type, decile, size and respondent role in school

		n	Mean	SD
Type	Primary	103	3.91	1.205
	Secondary	27	3.30	1.265
Decile	Low (1-3)	26	3.92	1.412
	Medium (4-7)	64	3.80	1.157
	High (8-10)	41	3.61	1.202
Number of teachers	1 - 4 teachers	29	4.28	1.162
	5 - 10 teacher	37	3.92	1.164
	11 - 20 teachers	27	3.37	1.182
	21 - 30 teachers	15	3.67	0.976
	31 - 40 teachers	6	3.83	1.169
	41 + teachers	15	3.40	1.682
Role in school	Classroom Teacher	9	2.44	1.236
	Middle Management	15	3.60	1.183
	Senior Management	15	3.40	1.454
	Principal	24	4.29	1.042
Overall			3.78	1.231

Section Five: Outcomes for your school from participation in the NLC

In this section respondents were asked to think about the practices/foci in their school at the time of the survey. They were given the following five response categories and asked to indicate which most accurately described the situation for each given area.

1. Early stages of reviewing or considering
2. Reviewed but decided not to do anything as it was believed no changes were needed
3. Changes have happened or are happening already
4. Changes have not happened yet but are planned for the future
5. Don't know/unsure

Table 41 presents the number and percentage of responses given for each practice/foci. Mean and standard deviations could not be calculated for this set of data as the responses were not a progressive scale. There were 127 respondents for each item in this question.

Overall, across all practices/foci, the vast majority of respondents indicated that changes have happened, or are happening already in their schools. *Teaching and learning practices in the classroom as described in The New Zealand Curriculum* had the lowest number of responses reporting that changes had not happened yet, but were planned for the future (n=5, 3.9%). *Community involvement in school decision making with regard to teaching and learning in the*

school (n=18, 14.2%) and *student agency – involving students in decisions about their learning* (n=16, 12.6%) were the two areas most often identified as being where changes were planned for the future but had not happened yet.

Table 41: Current situation of practices/foci in school

	1		2		3		4		5	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Teaching and learning practices in the classroom as described in <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i>	7	5.5%	7	5.5%	106	83.5%	5	3.9%	2	1.6%
Local school curriculum review and development	10	7.9%	4	3.1%	99	78.0%	12	9.4%	2	1.6%
Assessment and reporting practices	13	10.2%	6	4.7%	97	76.4%	8	6.3%	3	2.4%
Student agency – involving students in decisions about their learning	9	7.1%	7	5.5%	92	72.4%	16	12.6%	3	2.4%
School organisational structures (e.g. learning areas, timetables)	13	10.2%	15	11.8%	84	66.1%	11	8.7%	4	3.1%
Community involvement in school decision making with regard to teaching and learning in the school	20	15.7%	9	7.1%	75	59.1%	18	14.2%	5	3.9%

Responses to this question were further analysed with regard to overall number and percentages by school type as shown in Table 42.

With the exception of *local school curriculum review and development* secondary school respondents were less likely than primary schools to report changes had happened or were happening already. In this instance, their responses were very similar with 77.8% of primary reporting this compared to 80.8% of secondary.

The area with the greatest difference between primary and secondary schools is *school organisational structures*. While 75.8% (n=75) of primary school respondents reported changes had happened or were happening already in this area only 34.6% (n=9) of secondary school respondents did so. A further 26.9% (n=7) of secondary school respondents reported changes were intended for the future in this area compared with only 3% (n=3) of primary respondents.

Only 46.2% (n=12) of secondary school respondents reported that changes had happened or were happening already in the area of *community involvement in decision making with regard to teaching and learning*. This compares with 63.6% (n=63) of primary respondents. For primary schools this was the area that was most commonly reported as being under review or in the early stages of consideration (15.2%, n=15). It was also the area that was most commonly reported as having changes planned for the future for primary respondents (12.1%, n=12).

Amongst the secondary school respondents none reported that changes were intended in the future *to teaching and learning practices as described in The New Zealand Curriculum*. Although 76.9% (n=19) reported that changes had occurred or were occurring; 15.4% (n=4) reported that no changes were needed in this area. The two areas where secondary school respondents were most likely to report planned changes for the future were *school organisational structures* (26.9%, n=7) and *student agency* (23.1%, n=6). Student agency was an area for future change for 10.1% (n=10) of primary school respondents.

Table 42: Number and percentage of respondents by school type

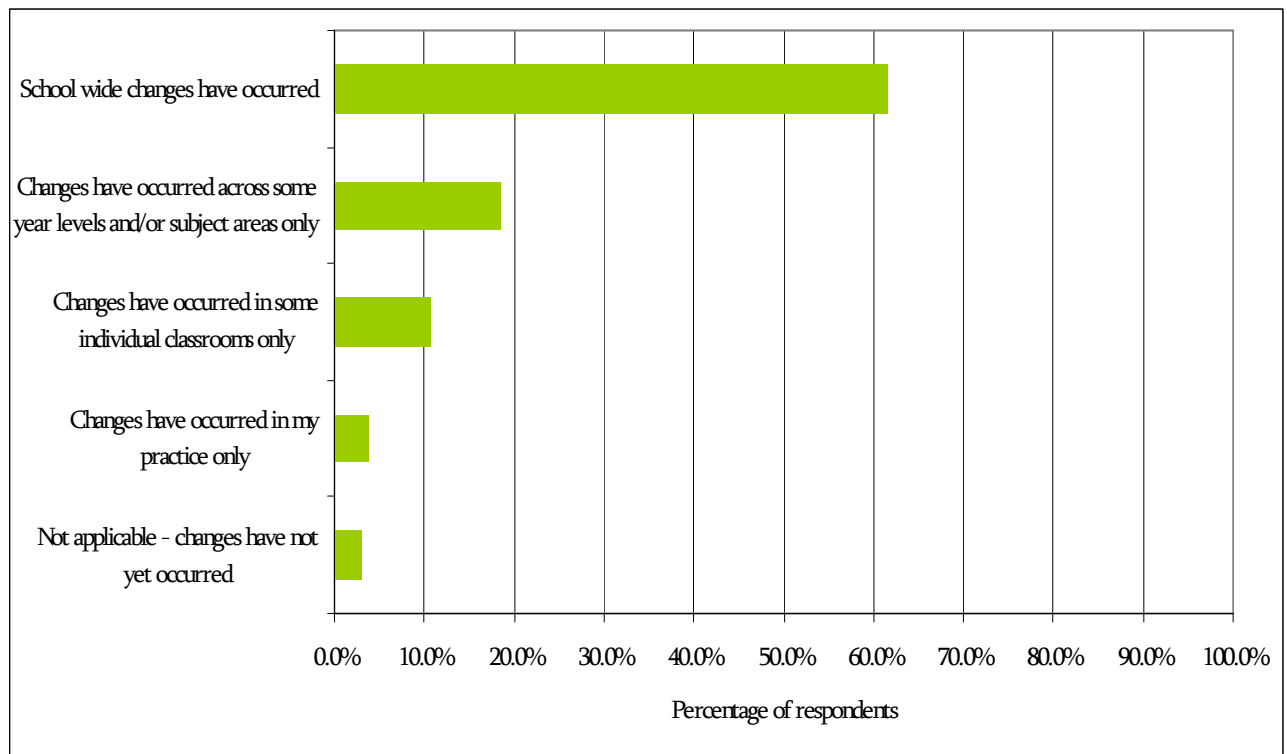
	Primary										Secondary									
	1		2		3		4		5		1		2		3		4		5	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Local school curriculum review and development	9	9.1%	3	3.0%	77	77.8%	8	8.1%	2	2.0%	1	3.8%	1	3.8%	21	80.8%	3	11.5%	0	0.0%
School organisational structures (e.g. learning areas, timetables)	8	8.1%	11	11.1%	75	75.8%	3	3.0%	2	2.0%	4	15.4%	4	15.4%	9	34.6%	7	26.9%	2	7.7%
Teaching and learning practices in the classroom as described in <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i>	6	6.1%	3	3.0%	84	84.8%	5	5.1%	1	1.0%	1	3.8%	4	15.4%	20	76.9%	0	0.0%	1	3.8%
Student agency – involving students in decisions about their learning	8	8.1%	4	4.0%	75	75.8%	10	10.1%	2	2.0%	1	3.8%	2	7.7%	16	61.5%	6	23.1%	1	3.8%
Assessment and reporting practices	9	9.1%	4	4.0%	81	81.8%	4	4.0%	1	1.0%	3	11.5%	2	7.7%	15	57.7%	4	15.4%	2	7.7%
Community involvement in school decision making with regard to teaching and learning in the school	15	15.2%	7	7.1%	63	63.6%	12	12.1%	2	2.0%	5	19.2%	1	3.8%	12	46.2%	5	19.2%	3	11.5%

Respondents were also asked to indicate the breadth of changes across their school, focusing only on changes to teaching and learning practices (Figure 22), using the following six categories. Mean and standard deviations could not be calculated for this set of data as the responses were not a progressive scale.

1. Not applicable - changes have not yet occurred
2. Changes have occurred in my practice only
3. Changes have occurred in some individual classrooms only
4. Changes have occurred across some year levels and/or subject areas only
5. School wide changes have occurred
6. I don't know how widely any changes are spread

The majority of respondents indicated that school wide changes had occurred to teaching and learning practices (n=80, 61.5%). Smaller numbers reported changes had only occurred across some year levels and/or subject areas (n=24, 18.5%) or individual classrooms (n=14, 10.8%). Three respondents (2.3%) commented that they did not know how widely any changes had spread.

Figure 22: Breadth of changes to teaching and learning practices within their school by percentage of respondents



Responses to this question were further analysed by school type as shown in Table 43. Primary respondents (n=73, 71.6%) were more likely than secondary (n=7, 28%) to report that changes had already occurred to teaching and learning practices. Nearly half (n=10, 40%) of secondary respondents reported changes across some year levels and/or subject areas only compared with 12.7% (n=13) of primary school respondents.

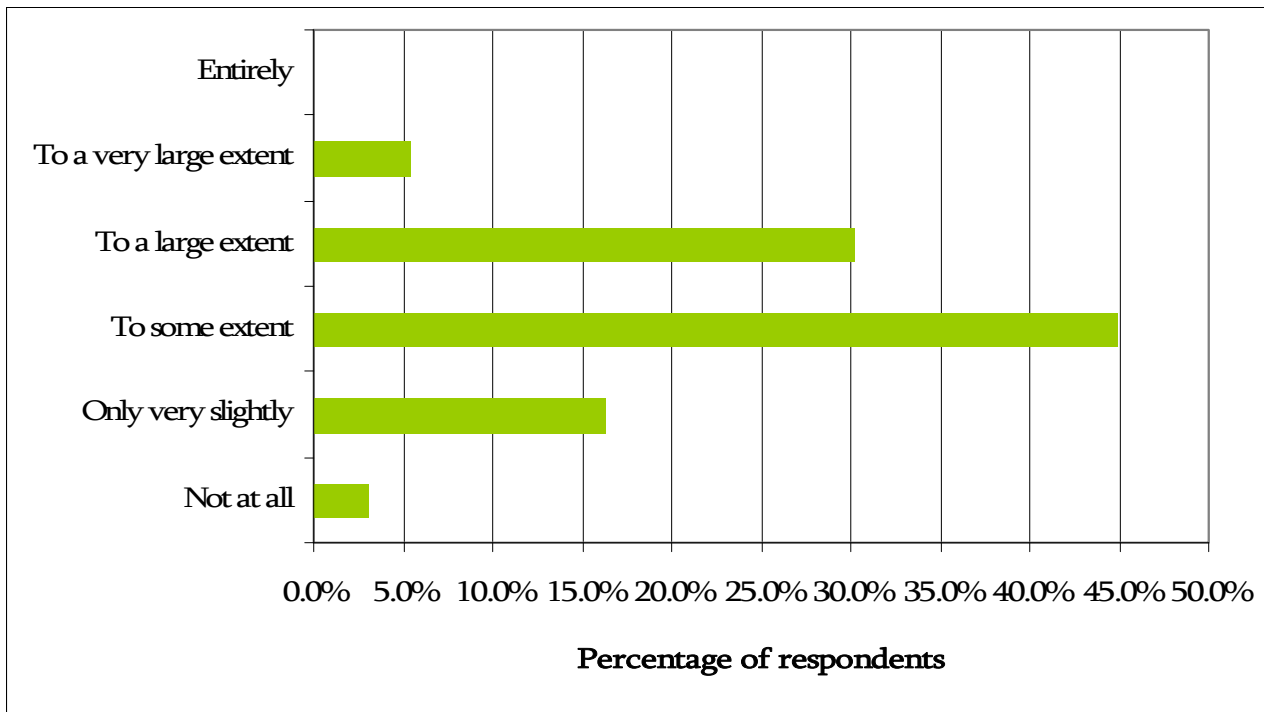
Table 43: Number and percentage of respondents by school type

	Primary		Secondary	
	n	%	n	%
Not applicable - changes have not yet occurred	3	2.9%	1	4.0%
Changes have occurred in my practice only	3	2.9%	2	8.0%
Changes have occurred in some individual classrooms only	9	8.8%	4	16.0%
Changes have occurred across some year levels and/or subject areas only	13	12.7%	10	40.0%
School wide changes have occurred	73	71.6%	7	28.0%
I don't know how widely any changes are spread	1	1.0%	1	4.0%
Total	102		25	

Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they believed any changes or intended changes to teaching and learning practices in their school could be directly attributed to the NLC (Figure 12).

Over three quarters of respondents (n=46, 75.2%) reported that the changes/intended changes to teaching and learning practices could be attributed to the NLC to either “some extent” (n=58, 45.0%) or “a large extent” (n=39, 30.2%). Only 16.3% of respondents (n=21) reported only “very slight” attribution, with 3.1% (n=4) reporting “none at all”. Over a quarter of respondents (n=39, 30.2%) reported that all changes/intended changes could be attributed to the NLC to “a large extent”, while no respondents reported that all changes/intended changes could be “entirely” attributed.

Figure 23: Extent to which changes/intended changes to teaching and learning practices attributed to NLC by percentage of respondents



Responses to this question were further analysed by school type, decile, and size as shown in Table 44. The overall mean for this question is 3.19 (sd = 0.882) indicating that across all respondents the mean extent to which changes could be attributed to the NLC was to “some extent”. Primary school respondents reported a higher mean level of attribution ($\bar{x} = 3.26$) than secondary school respondents ($\bar{x} = 2.85$). Low decile school respondents reported a higher

mean ($\bar{x} = 3.57$) than those from medium and high decile schools ($\bar{x} = 3.09$; $\bar{x} = 3.07$ respectively). There did not appear to be any pattern with regard to school size. However, those who employed between 11 and 20 teachers (501-850 students) and 41+ teachers (1000+ students) reported lower overall means ($\bar{x} = 2.85$; $\bar{x} = 2.86$ respectively) than others. The highest reported mean level of attribution overall was for the smallest schools ($\bar{x} = 3.59$).

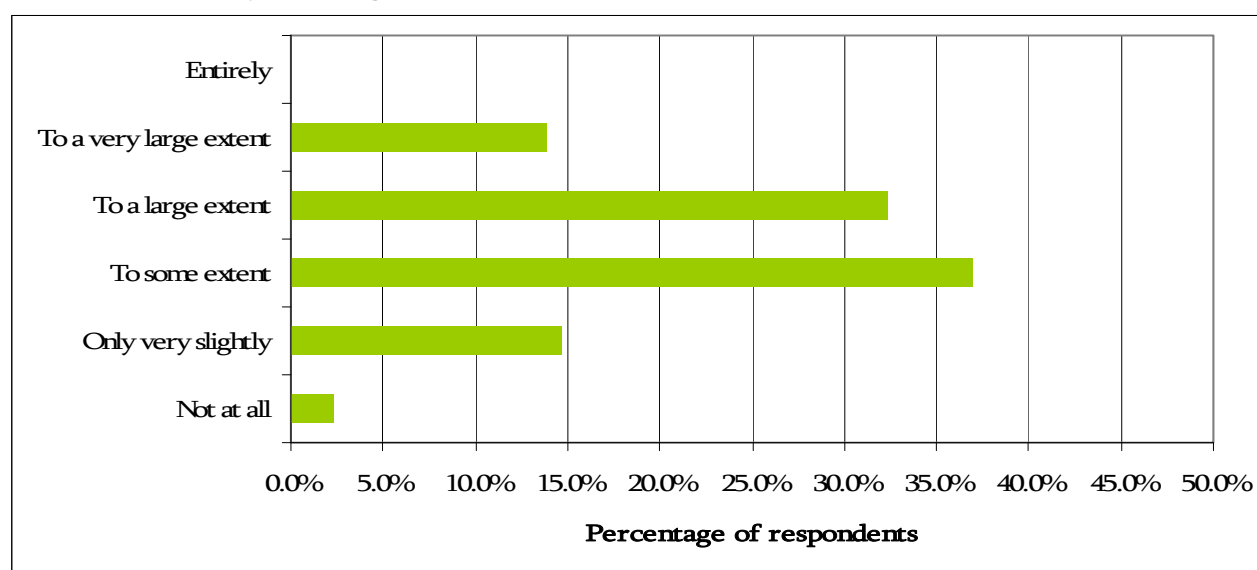
Table 44: Mean and standard deviation by school type, decile, and size

		n	Mean	SD
Type	Primary	101	3.26	0.902
	Secondary	26	2.85	0.732
Decile	Low (1-3)	23	3.57	0.788
	Medium (4-7)	64	3.09	0.868
	High (8-10)	41	3.07	0.877
Size (Number of teachers)	1 - 4 teachers	29	3.59	0.946
	5 - 10 teacher	36	3.22	0.760
	11 - 20 teachers	26	2.85	0.967
	21 - 30 teachers	15	3.13	0.834
	31 - 40 teachers	6	3.33	0.516
	41 + teachers	14	2.86	0.864
Overall			3.19	0.882

Finally, respondents were asked to specify, to what extent, overall, the NLC had helped to meet their school's needs in supporting the implementation of *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Figure 24).

The majority of respondents (n=90, 69.2%) reported that the NLC had helped to meet their school's needs in supporting the implementation of *The New Zealand Curriculum* to either "some extent" (n=48, 36.9%) or a "large extent" (n=42, 32.3%). A further 13.8% (n=18) reported the NLC did so to a "very large extent". No respondents reported that the NLC "entirely" met their school's needs. A small percentage (n=19, 14.6%) reported it met them to only a "very slight extent", while just 2.3% (n=3) reported the NLC did not meet their needs at all.

Figure 24: Extent to which the NLC has helped to meet schools need in supporting implementation of *The New Zealand Curriculum* by percentage of respondents



Responses to this question were further analysed by school type, decile, and size. Results are detailed in Table 45. The overall mean for this question was 3.41 (sd = 0.998) suggesting that across all respondents their school's needs had been met by the NLC to at least some extent.

The largest range of responses was reported by school type with a considerable difference between means reported by respondents from primary ($\bar{x} = 3.53$) and secondary schools ($\bar{x} = 2.88$). Low decile schools had the highest reported mean ($\bar{x} = 3.75$), followed by high ($\bar{x} = 3.34$) and medium ($\bar{x} = 3.31$) decile schools. In terms of school size the range was 0.69 with the largest schools reporting the lowest mean ($\bar{x} = 3.00$) and the smallest, the highest means ($\bar{x} = 3.69$). With the exception of schools employing between 11 and 20 teachers, the mean levels of attribution decreased with school size.

Table 45: Mean and standard deviation by school type, decile, and number of teachers

		n	Mean	SD
Type	Primary	102	3.53	1.002
	Secondary	26	2.88	0.711
Decile	Low (1-3)	24	3.75	0.847
	Medium (4-7)	64	3.31	0.941
	High (8-10)	41	3.34	1.087
Number of teachers	1 - 4 teachers	29	3.69	0.930
	5 - 10 teacher	37	3.54	0.869
	11 - 20 teachers	26	3.15	1.120
	21 - 30 teachers	15	3.40	1.183
	31 - 40 teachers	6	3.33	0.816
	41 + teachers	14	3.00	0.877
Overall			3.41	0.988

At the end of the survey all respondents were given an opportunity to make any general comments with regard to the NLC initiative. The following quotes exemplify the breadth of responses from the respondent school leaders. The majority of these responses were very positive with only a few negative (examples are included below). The chance to network and to develop collegial responses seems to be a key benefit for the school leaders. The expertise and knowledge of the advisor involved was mentioned both as a positive and a negative. The comments also reflect the extent to which the NLC is integrated with other professional development opportunities in some instances. Further, the variation in the extent to which the NLC has begun to impact on school practices is also evident.

Comments where some reservations or concerns were mentioned include:

- *I have only been to two meetings due to other commitments. I have shown interest and discussed issues/changes/ future priorities for the future with rest of our SMT. However, slow to take up or they believe they can leave it to curriculum and learning leaders. Feel it is hard to affect thinking of rest of my team because they are not exactly on same wave length. I believe we are not sharing the new curriculum with the students as well as we could.*
- *Because there was involvement of more than one process, excellent resources etc on TKI and my staff are generally very experienced it is hard to know for sure how much effect NLC really had - however, it certainly was a very important component. :-)*
- *The NLC I am part of is not focused on The New Zealand Curriculum. It is focused on Self Review. The facilitator has limited knowledge of the process of review within the cluster (NLC)*

- *We have only been in the cluster since the beginning of this year. Some changes have been made but we still need support to implement these changes.*
- *I may have misunderstood but there seems to be an assumption that I have significant influence in my school in terms of being able to deliver back to my school at ground level what I have gained from my involvement personally in this programme.*
- *It has to be noted that I am new in my school and entering this group without any prior knowledge of it whatsoever. I am not a fair reflection of the work carried out as a member of the group as I have had very little to do with it.*
- *As our NLC began this year we spent the year in the embryonic stages and are only now towards the end of the year growing a full set of limbs! Next year (2011) we plan to use these limbs to take grasp at the opportunities for sharing what we have put in place around The New Zealand Curriculum with the rest of our school communities. So as yet we I feel we have had little impact on our school's practice our intention is to go beyond this next year.*
- *We had already decided on our course of action before the NLC funding arrived. It was actually minimum funding compared to the amount of admin involved - including dare I say this. By the time we add all of the pressures of this year (which has also impacted on NLC providers) I feel the NLC has not had the impact I would have liked.*

Examples of comments related to the facilitators are:

- *It would help if the NLC facilitator was more informed or could communicate these outcomes.*
- *Very dependent on the skills of the facilitator and luckily we had a great one, who was organised, prepared, well-read and passionate about helping us.*
- *Our facilitator was outstanding. It was useful that we all shared our ideas, trialed ideas and shared outcomes. Really influenced the way PD was implemented in our school.*

A number of the positive comments refer to sharing and networking. These are:

- *The NLC model has enabled us to build a collegial support and sharing environment amongst a group of small, geographically isolated schools.*
- *The NLC was great at letting everyone bring their ideas, sharing them and the others there took them on board, changed them or decided that the idea was not for them. We were very open and honest and supportive. Everyone shared their ideas, we had great discussions. we then took the ideas back to our schools and led PD with our staff from there, went back and reviewed what had happened with NLC. Our facilitator was great and we were a very collegial group.*
- *It was essential that we had the collegial opportunities that NLC offered!*
- *Having a group that is only rural schools has been very beneficial in terms of collegiality and support.*
- *Working together in your cluster provides a forum to test own thinking, learn about what others are doing and discuss the merits of the range ways schools are implementing / leading development etc.*
- *Our cluster focus has been more on developing understanding around Nat Stds and implications for our schools. NLC has been hugely beneficial in supporting collaboration between schools via meetings, proof readings, visiting other schools, external support via facilitators etc. We are now looking to moderate across the cluster. We have a high level of support and collegiality within our cluster and this is probably the single most factor this NLC model has helped. Our cluster is made up of first time, and experienced Principals, rural to urban and primary to intermediate. The above questions do not really adhere to our goals of the cluster and, therefore, does not adequately give voice to the way we have used our monetary resource.*

- *Have found the NLC model to be very supportive in terms of providing models of practice, feedback and opportunity for reflection. Has kept me focused on what is necessary. Has provided moments of validation of practice but has also generated new ideas or alternative ways to approach the implementation of The New Zealand Curriculum. I feel very privileged to be part of such a great network of support.*
- *The best part of the NLC model was the networking with other Principals - even if it was only affirmation of where we were at. You could link into other schools and their principals if their style suited yours. these meetings facilitated this opportunity.*
- *I have really valued the NLC model as a way of engaging with highly talented teachers from a range of schools, sharing ideas and getting very effective feedback on next steps.*
- *The NLC model has been a powerful opportunity for those involved in implementing The New Zealand Curriculum and curriculum design in their own school, a chance to operate as a community of learners, sharing their school journey and learning alongside others.*
- *I found our involvement in the NLC professional development really useful as we have so far visited one school a term and spent the morning learning about the school's journey. There has been really valuable observing, discussing and sharing what each school has been doing. As well all our cluster teachers have attended two morning workshops on the revised curriculum.*

Finally some more general positive comments include:

- *Our group has gone from strength to strength. As a group we are very concerned about the negative impact of National Standards - the huge pressure that National Standards have put schools under and the distraction that they have been to schools as they seek to embed their new curriculum framework*
- *Network Learning Community/Community of Practice has provided a wonderful model of support for professional development across our cluster schools. We have been working together prior to joining the NLC as part of an EHSAS so the ground work had been laid and much of this years progress is attributable to the fact that we have been working together as a Network Learning Community for 2-3 years. It does take a longer period than a year to set up and get this community working effectively to then make an impact on student learning and engagement in the schools.*
- *The ability to be able to drive the PD is important along with the sharing with colleagues.*

Chapter Three: The Case Studies

Country Calendar: Making it work for us

Introduction

The sector leader chose the title “*Country Calendar: Making it work for us*” for this case study to reflect the rural values that underpin the cluster; to highlight that they share who they are “*warts and all*” with each other; and that they are “*making things work for them*” and “*having a bit of fun as well.*”

This case illustrates how educational knowledge can be successfully filtered through a specific lens to provide external knowledge and understandings to a professional learning group. Resources gathered from the sector leader training days have been translated into practical support materials for these school leaders as they make sense of *The New Zealand Curriculum* and develop their own school curricula.

Data for this case study were gathered through an interview with the sector leader, two face-face interviews with participant school leaders and written responses to the questions from a third participant. Both the sector leader and one other school leader had been with the cluster from the outset, while the other two were relatively new to both their schools and the cluster.

The NLC

This is a cluster of eight rural primary schools; approximately one hour from a major urban area. The school rolls vary from 14 to 185, while the deciles range from 2 to 9. Despite this diversity the schools are similar in other, perhaps key, ways. They are all rural schools, with principals with some level of teaching responsibility. Each of these schools has reasonably stable rolls, some are growing. Their local community is rural, although the proportion of traditional farming families is decreasing in some cases; as their communities attract a greater ‘life styler’ population.

Maintaining their links to the country, and to a rural lifestyle, is important to the schools; as are their own unique identities as individual schools. This uniqueness can be seen in the different vision pictures some have created. Through this cluster they are able to stay true to what is important to them, without losing sight of the bigger education landscape beyond their communities. That the principals all have some teaching responsibility ensures the relevancy of the curriculum focus of the NLC at a practical level.

Most of the schools had worked together previously in another cluster. However, in terms of individual principals, the membership of the NLC has not been stable. Only two principals from the previous cluster are also in the NLC, including the sector leader. Four of the eight principals in the NLC in 2010 had been in their schools for less than two years; and were not part of the previous cluster. A fifth school had an acting principal at the time of the evaluation. In addition, two schools joined the NLC later than the others; when their principals changed.

The schools are linked through other activities beyond the NLC. The majority of them are part of a group of schools who regularly compete against each other in local sports competitions. Further, the principals meet at local principal association meetings. In some instances there were already professionally based friendships amongst the principals. These other connections are likely to have mitigated the potential challenges changes of membership can bring to any learning group.

Differences such as the range of deciles do not appear to be as important as the similarities when considering the culture and operation of this NLC. It would seem that rural identity and school size have a stronger influence on need than decile. It was commented by the sector leader that these schools were unique in the wider district because of their size and location and, as such, had different needs to many of the larger schools they regularly meet with in other circumstances. This influenced not only need, but also how they perceived themselves and, to some extent, the degree to which they felt relevant on other occasions.

The journey

The cluster was formed in 2008 when the sector leader responded to an invitation for principals who wished to be sector leaders. This was done out of a desire to further develop his/her own leadership and professional knowledge. The role has been part of his/her formal professional development and appraisal processes. The NLC was seen as an opportunity to enhance his/her knowledge and expertise in pedagogical leadership.

The sector leader had initially invited schools s/he had already worked with in the School Administration Support Cluster (SASC) because of the similarities of their situation (rural, teaching principals) to join the NLC. Initially, only six schools joined with the other two joining in 2009 and 2010. The additions to the NLC have happened as a result of professional connections and discussions at wider principal association meetings. There has always been a link into the group in some way; the new principals have been invited to join as a result of conversations or meetings elsewhere. This seems to have been important in mitigating the impact of changes to personnel.

The initial focus in 2008 was on understanding *The New Zealand Curriculum* and what it meant for participant schools and their communities; a sense-making exercise. This then shifted to the need to develop school-based local curricula that met not only the requirements of *The New Zealand Curriculum* but also the needs of their individual communities. In the words of the sector leader “*the cluster was a way to make The New Zealand Curriculum work for us.*” Through the NLC the principals have been encouraged to “*look at the front pages*” of the curriculum; whereas they had previously focused on the back pages.

The culture

The NL was described by more than one participant as operating as a senior leadership team. Due to the size of their schools these principals do not have deputy or associate principals in the formal sense of a larger school. The NLC has enabled them to have focussed professional conversations, at a leadership level, which they may not otherwise have had.

The environment was described as safe and collegial. One of the principals commented that s/he had always being “*treated professionally and respectfully.*” Another said that they always “*acknowledge each other.*” The sector leader commented that there are “*no egos*”; that there is “*nothing to boast about*” and so competitiveness does not get in the way of the collaboration. None of the schools have enrolment schemes; there is no real competition for students – indeed buses were described as “*the natural enrolment scheme.*” The group was described as a “*tried and true collaborative group.*” They do not appear to openly critique or challenge each other. Rather, they focus on highlighting what they do like about what is being shared and on supporting each other. One of the principals commented that they are very “*empathetic to one another.*”

Another principal interviewed felt that the NLC members all shared similar philosophies and pedagogies; although they had different personalities and strengths and described them as “*highly professional; dedicated and committed to getting it right.*” S/he felt they were in the same place in their learning journeys and that this was largely due to the size of their schools.

There is a strong sense of volunteerism in the way this NLC works and operates. Each principal is doing what they need to do and want to do, which they are willing to share, making it easier for themselves and others. There is no sense of compulsion, although there are tight structures around the meetings. What is taken and used by individuals is entirely up to them. This volunteerism is particularly strong in the sector leader who views this role as important professional development. If others also benefit that is an added bonus.

The highlights

School leaders offered a range of personal highlights. A key highlight, for all, were the conversations that had happened and the relationships that had been fostered, including the willingness to share and to ask questions of each other. One school leader explained that there is “*no fear*” amongst the group; they can give and receive feedback.

Also mentioned was the development and sharing of school-based curricula, which had both empowered and affirmed the school leaders and what they were doing in their schools. For one school leader the NLC had opened the door to other opportunities, including an ICTPD cluster.

The activities

The NLC meets once a term at the sector leader’s school for three hours. They are reimbursed \$125 per meeting to cover some of their costs and refreshments are provided. The sector leader ensures that copies of all documents are available for them to take away. The reimbursement – and the refreshments – are seen as important factors in the success of the meetings, as is the chance to take material home. For these principals release time is expensive and the payment of their time is seen as respecting that and making it possible for them to go.

Each meeting is highly structured and the agenda is followed closely. Initially, the meetings opened with an ice-breaker of some kind but this stopped as it was no longer seen as necessary. At the time of the case study each meeting began with a “what’s on top” session. During this session the principals share professional concerns and issues and discuss what is currently commanding their attention in some way. This enables them to offload; to talk and to release frustrations before focussing on the purpose of the meeting. While the time for this session is limited it is seen as important, as principals of smaller schools do not have the same opportunities to talk openly in their own schools as those with larger senior management teams.

After this session they consider readings and other materials that have been brought back from sector leader meetings. These are discussed and ideas for their use in the schools is a key consideration. The sector leader summarises key documents for the other members and highlights what is relevant. Each school discusses their curricula and the changes they are making; sharing their progress. They regularly monitor what they are doing against the MECI framework.

The enablers

The sector leader was described as a strong leader who is well organised and ensures things remain focussed and on task. S/he was described as an excellent communicator who is able to translate what is learnt at the sector leader meetings into something accessible and relevant to the others. The synopsis of the key readings by the sector leader including how they might be used was described as making them more accessible for the others.

The strong similarities across the schools means that the sector leader has been able to filter what is learnt at sector leader meetings through a strong lens of what is needed across the NLC; maximising the benefit of what is shared. The sector leader also felt that it was an advantage that the group members were teaching principals; being involved in the delivery of the curriculum meant that what was developed was “*more real*.”

Finally, the money for release time was seen as important in assisting the principals to attend. The size of the schools means they have limited resources for professional development and the funding is seen as recognising the value of their time.

The challenges

One of the potential challenges for this group was the membership changes. It was possible that, whether through school principals changing and/or new schools joining, changes to personnel would upset the culture that had been formed through the early work in this NLC and in previous clusters. This was recognised by the group when the decision was made to allow two new principals to join. However, it was generally agreed by those interviewed that this had not occurred and that it had been mitigated in three ways. First, there was the highly structured approach to the meetings. It was made clear to the new principals that they were joining a group which already had a certain way of doing things and that they needed to be able to slot in with that. The sector leader explained that the group “*just go about their business; have a joke and a laugh*”. Second, the changes to membership were gradual; with time for each new member to become part of the group before another joined. Finally, the principals all have connections through other networks and as such this group is not their only meeting place. These other relationships have provided a foundation on which to build the work in this group.

Another challenge was getting everyone to the same place at the same time as “*things come up and people cannot attend the meetings.*” This was partially mitigated by scheduling meetings well in advance and by having them in the morning, enabling people to come straight to the meeting and avoid getting caught up in what was happening at their school. Making the commitment to attend was seen as a challenge by a school leader who said that the sector leader did “*a great job of people organising*”. S/he acknowledged that missing a session made it hard for everyone.

It was felt by one of the school leaders that more meetings were needed; that there was currently too long between them and this impacted on the flow of information and levels of communication. As a result it was felt that some of the impetus was lost between meetings.

Main benefits for the participants

The opportunity to network, to springboard ideas with other school leaders from small schools was seen as a key benefit for one of the school leaders as “*it can be lonely to be the sole leader in a school.*” This included learning how other, similar, schools would approach things and what they would do differently to avoid past mistakes. For this principal there was a sense that belonging to the NLC had helped “*develop [his/her] passion for leading change*”. Further, talking to others helped “*clarify why [you] are doing what [you are] doing*” and “*the commitment of sharing is a deadline for getting it done.*”

This idea of sharing is linked to another reported benefit of “*knowing where others are at and being able to gauge [your own] progress against that.*” For this second principal there was also the benefit of having models to work from; a starting point which could be adapted to suit his/her specific context.

One of the principals is a first-time principal and the NLC provided knowledge about how to create a curriculum which s/he did not have before. At his/her school very little had been done with regard to the development of a local curriculum. S/he found the other principals to be “*extremely helpful*” when “*they knew of [his/her] dilemma.*”

Other benefits for the participants

The following list summarises some of the other benefits school leaders felt they had gained from belonging to the NLC.

- While other principal association meetings offered an opportunity to talk about educational issues this is viewed as a forum for the specific needs of this group; as smaller primary schools. Further, the focus of this group is clearly on the curriculum which did not happen elsewhere.
- Professional development benefits included access to new resources and readings. This included having models to work from, so they were not beginning from scratch but had something they could adapt to suit their schools.
- The collegial support provided including the idea of pastoral support.
- Increased confidence in the implementation of their school curricula as they were able to share with others and to see what was happening in other schools. This included the idea of having increased confidence to share their ideas with their Boards and wider school communities.
- Lightening their workloads through the sharing of paper work such as developing charters and school curriculum. Also mentioned was the sharing of places to get assistance and support e.g. new computer equipment.

Benefits for the school communities

All participants agreed that there was a real benefit for their school communities in the professional development their leaders gained; in their access to new trends and pedagogy, as provided by the school support services advisors and accessed through the sector leader. One specifically mentioned being able to take ideas and things learned back to the Board; which had also come a long way in their understanding of *The New Zealand Curriculum* as a result.

One of the school leaders commented that to succeed schools need school leaders who “*have a passion and thirst for change.*” The NLC was seen as reigniting this passion and providing the necessary knowledge and ideas to take back to school.

More specific benefits mentioned by one of the school leaders included:

- a much improved reporting system to parents
- ensuring students knew where they were going in their learning
- developing a teaching curriculum structure which had not previously been in place, including better planning by all teachers.

What is happening in the schools

For one school, the NLC had “*pushed the creation of their charter booklet forward.*” The principal reported that something would have happened anyway but the NLC had been a catalyst; providing them with a model to work within. As a result the school had developed a “*vision picture*” of who they are and what is important to them, which has been turned into a mural for the school hall. They also have a clearly outlined document of the type of learners they want their children to be. In addition, their charter booklet includes a table listing the themes through which they will learn; the knowledge that will be gained and the competency and values underpinning what the students will do. The links between this document and *The New Zealand Curriculum* are clear. This vision picture is included as an artefact of this case study.

Another school leader reported that they now had a school curriculum and an assessment schedule. The latter included up-to date collection of data and reporting to parents. Again there was a sense that without the NLC this would still have happened, but not as quickly and perhaps not to the same extent.

A third school leader described using a planning template, which meant planning was grounded in the principles from *The New Zealand Curriculum*. An example was the linking of a unit on “*Proud to be a New Zealander*” to the principle of high expectations. In addition, a timeline for the implementation of *The New Zealand Curriculum* was on the wall in

the staffroom and referred to frequently. Both students and the wider community had been surveyed about how they saw a local curriculum being formed to meet their needs. Further, the Board had worked through an exercise related to determining what was important for them. This exercise had been provided by the sector leader as something that had been learned at a professional development day for sector leaders.

Ingredients for success

The following list includes all the ingredients for success mentioned by the school leaders interviewed. In most cases an ingredient was mentioned by more than one school leader with strong similarities in their responses to this question.

- High trust amongst the participants and a willingness to share practice.
- The provision of knowledge and practical models from external sources to share and discuss.
- Having very structured agendas (instructions) and ensuring they are adhered to, including the timings for each item.
- The “what’s on top” sessions which allow the principals to “*get things off their chest*” before moving on with the curriculum work.
- Making it easy for members to attend – ensuring that NLC activities are not seen as adding to their workloads and paying for release time.
- Having homework and setting deadlines. Without these guidelines and expectations there was a belief that the participants would not be so well prepared when they did turn up.
- A strong sector leader who is highly organised and able to keep the meetings on track.
- A sector leader who has good interpersonal skills, a passion for driving a learning community and a willingness to ask for evidence to demonstrate that changes in practice have occurred. Someone who is able to “*share his/her own learnings well.*”

Looking ahead

All those spoken to agreed that there was a future for the NLC in some form. The sector leader suggested they should become a more distributed model, with other school leaders determining the agenda and the issues to be considered at meetings. Further, the venue could move around the different schools so they were visiting each other rather than always coming to the same school. One school leader thought that looking ahead they could focus on job descriptions; incorporating the new professional standards and the reporting of National Standards.

One of the principals commented that there would always be a network amongst these principals focused on whatever was the latest initiative or concern. S/he felt they were a well established collaborative group, who would continue to meet regardless of funding (although s/he did emphasise the extent to which the funding was an enabler).

An example of how the NLC could continue in some form was the development of an ICTPD cluster which included some of the schools from the NLC. The idea for the ICTPD cluster had come through discussions at the NLC.

Number one tip

Have a common thread and establish that from the very start – this is what pulls you together and keeps you together.

An artefact from the study

This is the vision picture referred to in the case study. It was developed partially as a result of the NLC.



Alongside the vision picture in this school's charter booklet is the following list which explains what the vision picture shows:

- Our school is about Children
- We care for each other regardless of age, gender and ethnicity
- We are a big family
- We have a sense of belonging, with our uniform/logo
- We are happy, enthusiastic learners
- We promote peace
- We take pride in our appearance
- We value academic education, physical fitness, team sports, healthy eating
- We promote sun safety
- We value our rural background and traditions, we celebrate Calf Club day
- The backpack symbolises the gathering of skills and strategies for life in society.

Scooby Doo: The case of the mysterious NLC

Introduction

The sector leader suggested the title *Scooby Doo: The case of the mysterious NLC* because at the time of the interview the NLC was something the participants were still “*trying to figure out.*” During the interview the sector leader described the cluster as a “*haphazard group of friends travelling down the road together*” who were just “*missing a few clues at the moment*”. However, s/he believed “*they would all get it together.*” Subsequent to the interview this was proven to be the case when the “*last clues fell into place*” during their final meeting and at a sector leader hui, the first the sector leader had attended.

This case study illustrates how difficult it can be to gain initial momentum within a professional learning group and how what seems to be a “*muddle*” can be part of the learning process. It highlights the importance of embedding what has been achieved, of ongoing reflection and affirmation of success, and of ensuring that motivation is maintained. It also highlights the value of external expertise to both support the sector leader and to provide pedagogical and content knowledge to the group.

Only the sector leader was interviewed face to face for this case study, reflecting the issue of competing demands on the time of others. In addition to this interview the evaluation team communicated with the sector leader by email a month later, after the NLC had had their final meeting and there had been a sector leader hui, to see if these had clarified anything.

Copies of the questions were also given to the sector leader so the school participants could complete them and post them to the evaluation team. Three members of the group returned completed forms: a science teacher, a head of English and literacy leader and a year 11 dean with responsibilities for *The New Zealand Curriculum* and literacy. The sector leader is the literacy co-ordinator and assistant head of English. This range of roles and responsibilities reflects the diversity of this secondary group.

The NLC

This NLC includes eight secondary schools (one a Catholic girls’ school and one a year 1 - 13 school) and is a learning area NLC. Its focus is to support the teaching of literacy across the curriculum through the development of an online wiki for teachers. The purpose of the wiki is to unpack literacy skills for teachers in their schools and to provide support for the teaching of literacy across the curriculum.

The schools range from decile 2 to decile 8 with school rolls from 288 through to 921. Six of the schools are medium decile schools (4 to 7) with only one low decile and one high decile. Five of the schools have rolls of 500 or less. Geographically they are reasonably wide spread, with travelling times of over an hour for some to meet at a central location.

At the time of the interview the involvement of the schools had been variable with three more involved than the others. For those more on the fringes the sector leader believed it was not about a lack of desire to make the NLC work but an issue of competing responsibilities and priorities, due to their multiple roles in their schools.

The journey

At the time of the evaluation the NLC had been operational for two terms only. However, four of the NLC members had worked together as literacy leaders for five years before forming the NLC. As a result there were already strong relationships across the group. Becoming an NLC was one way of ensuring the group could continue this work which was “*important to them.*”

Despite this, the NLC experience in the initial months had not been easy for the sector leader. At the time of the interview the feeling expressed was that the NLC was a long way from where they needed to be. However, there was also a belief that they would “*get there in the end*”; they just needed to “*find a way forward*.” This was for a number of reasons. First, there had been considerable frustration around developing an action plan as they had been asked to rewrite it a number of times. There was also frustration in the extent to which they had been asked to complete milestone reports and meet evaluation requests. For the sector leader it felt as if these administrative tasks had hindered their ability to actually get underway with the core work of the NLC.

Second, the sector leader felt that the considerable autonomy available had made things more difficult for them; they had needed more initial guidance. The group had seemed more organised before becoming an NLC, when they had been working under the leadership of a literacy advisor, who had been responsible for organising the meetings and providing the professional development that occurred. The shift to an autonomous group appears to have been too abrupt for this NLC.

Third, at the time of the interview the sector leader was uncertain about not only the role but also that of the advisors. S/he had been asked by the regional school support services to take on the role of sector leader and felt considerable responsibility to make it work. One of the challenges was that there were a lot more experienced teachers in the group and this made professional leadership potentially more difficult.

Despite these concerns there were already resources on the wiki in the initial two months and in a subsequent email communication the sector leader reported that completing a milestone report had shown that the NLC had achieved more than s/he had realised when interviewed. Further, the sector leader had come to realise that “*expectations that the NLC structure was going to immediately change the world and Africa would be fed were a little unrealistic*”.

In this email the sector leader mentioned that the regional hui had reassured him/her that most of the necessary enablers to make an NLC work were in place. The one thing missing was momentum, but this could be solved. The intention was to hold an “*embed meeting*” a couple of weeks after key day long meetings with experts. This embed meeting would probably be by video conference and would be a chance to “*all touch base again and bring the issues back to the forefront of [their] minds*”. Other plans for the future include spending money on experts to facilitate professional learning within the NLC.

During the interview the sector leader spoke of how in hindsight, while it is “*a little soul destroying*”, they “*needed to go through a muddle ...to work out what is most important from what is not important*.” If starting again with an NLC s/he would ask the advisors a lot more questions and also ask more questions of the group about what they wanted to do. The subsequent email communication made it clear that this sector leader had indeed worked through the muddle positively.

The culture

At the time of the interview the sector leader felt that the NLC still needed to take ownership of what they were doing, to gather some momentum and be more proactive. As already discussed, the key issue, seems to have been the need to manage the transition between an advisor led group to one which is responsible for leading itself.

Talking with the sector leader there was a sense that beneath the frustration expressed there was a very strong desire to make the NLC work and a belief that, in time, it would function well and would achieve its goal. It just needed to be “*more organised*” and “*everything needs to be clearer*.” The other participants wanted to be involved and to stay in touch but were just struggling to make the time. There was a strong desire to make the NLC work in that what “*we are doing is important to us*” and “*we are not in this to make ourselves look good*”. This was reiterated in the comments from the three school leaders.

The highlights

The highlight for the sector leader, at the time of the interview, was getting the wiki started. S/he expressed the hope that the next meeting, where 2011 was to be planned, would also be a highlight. As the subsequent email communication showed this was the case.

The school leaders also identified personal highlights. For two of them these were related to working with others in the NLC; the discussions they had had and the sharing within the literacy wiki. For the third, the personal highlight was developing a better understanding of how to present data to staff.

The activities

Prior to the interview the NLC had met three times. The agenda at these meetings was determined by the needs of the group. They began with a *“little group support session...a rave rather than an agenda item.”* The sector leader reported that their meetings had gone *“really well”*; with *“lots of ideas and discussion”* and that there was always a positive feeling afterwards. Certainly, the comments from the school leaders regarding both the benefits to them from participation and their personal highlights would seem to endorse this view and highlight the extent to which the sector leader’s concerns during the interview were largely unfounded.

The NLC had spent two days working with a literacy advisor in the term 2 holidays considering secondary practice. This appears to have been very successful with the sector leader and the school respondents reporting they had learnt a lot over these two days. The NLC had also met during school hours in term 3 to discuss what the resource was going to be with support from an advisor. The third meeting was in the term 3 holidays when they started to pull their wiki together. As a result of these meetings each member of the group was given a job to do for the wiki and the sector leader believed they were being done.

The enablers

During the interview, rather than what was enabling success for their cluster, the sector leader spoke about what they needed to move forward. These were:

- clearer guidelines from the advisors about what they wanted the NLC to be
- less emphasis on milestone reporting and more on actually doing the work
- more access to advisors and/or to experts as this would give the cluster and its wiki *“more credibility.”*

The challenges

The key challenge for this NLC has been *“making sense of what we are trying to do”* and what is expected of them. The sector leader commented that there were times when it felt *“like the blind were leading the blind”*; that they were *“only just now [two terms into the NLC] finding out what they were meant to be doing.”* The intention was to overcome this challenge by *“getting around the table and talking.”* Linked to this was a concern that what they were doing did not fit into the bigger picture in that it had been difficult to frame the proposal in light of *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

Another challenge, for the sector leader, was not being an expert in the field and not having the same access to resources as the advisors. These concerns were related to the need for specific expertise in literacy to support the work of the group. Comments from the school leaders suggest this desire for external expertise was across the NLC. A challenge for them all could be to value what they already know and to share their own practice. Leading a group of colleagues from another school was also challenging for the sector leader who felt it was much easier to lead in his/her own school where everyone knew each other.

At the time of the study the NLC had not had a meeting which everyone had attended and this was another challenge. For 2011 the intention was to set the NLC programme at the beginning of the year with agreed dates so that people

could lock them into their diaries. However, as the sector leader stated “*everyone of these people is a fantastic teacher*” and their “*own school comes first.*” The difficulties they had in attending were also mentioned by two of the school leaders who saw time as a key challenge to ensuring NLCs were effective. Two also commented that funding was an issue, although in what way was not made clear.

Main benefits for the participants

The main benefits described by the school leaders were:

- professional development provided and increasing confidence in implementing *The New Zealand Curriculum* in class
- the opportunity to discuss and learn from one another
- clarification of knowledge of literacy and how to be inclusive for students.

Other benefits for the participants

In addition to the main benefits described above, two of the school leaders stated that the following were also benefits they had gained from being part of the NLC:

- specific professional development regarding data analysis and recording.
- input from experts
- good lunches
- good professional conversations on literacy.

Benefits for the school communities

The school leaders were also asked what benefits there had been for their school communities as a result of their involvement in the NLC. Responses to this question were:

- a number of staff groups (HoDs, staff members, literacy learning professional development group) have all received guidance and professional development relating to specific strategies we are using as part of a whole school literacy focus
- having the ability to disseminate information and strategies during whole staff professional development
- has enhanced the literacy committee delivery with current knowledge.

What is happening in schools

The school leaders were asked to describe one concrete thing that had happened in their school as a result of their participation in the NLC. As with the above questions their responses reflect an increased literacy knowledge, which has then been disseminated to the wider staff in their school to support ongoing literacy initiatives. Much of this increased knowledge is likely to have come from the group’s work with a literacy advisor. The focus of this NLC is directly on the teaching of literacy across the curriculum and as such there seems to have been a much more focussed dissemination back to the teaching staff to effect change. Their responses were:

- identified and modelled strategies to be used cross-curricular
- formation of a professional development learning group and staff accessing the NLC wiki
- *The New Zealand Curriculum* has been put in front of staff as a lead document along with our literacy project.

Ingredients for success

The following are what the sector leader reported were the key ingredients for a successful NLC:

- organised leader
- clear idea of what you want to achieve and then a way to get there
- good people in the NLC – people who will make it happen
- having access to the “*big picture stuff*”; to what is happening nationally
- long term commitment from the Ministry of Education to enable the benefits to filter down to the schools.

In addition the school leaders mentioned:

- enthusiasm and support from each other and their respective schools
- funding and the buying of expertise to enhance knowledge for the group
- commitment from the whole group
- funding and the opportunity to be released from school to attend meetings.

Looking ahead

The sector leader would like to see the NLC become a professional learning group; where they are all learning together, able to critique each other’s practice and make change in schools. S/he wants them to be able to identify what is working and why. Previous experiences, of the sector leader, in leading a professional learning group suggested to him/her this could take two years.

The wiki was not seen as an end in itself; once it was created and implemented it would be necessary to keep adding new resources, to facilitate discussion and to promote the ongoing improvement of literacy teaching and learning. As such this was seen as a long-term project. For the sector leader success would be when people in the schools were using the wiki.

Number one tip

Keep it simple; keep it small; the project does not have to be as big as it appears at the beginning.

Coffee, Cake and Twiducate

Introduction

The sector leader of this NLC wanted a title that reflected both the collegial nature of their NLC, the way they supported each other, and also the focus on their students and on using technology to meet their needs. The title *Coffee, cake and twiducate* was suggested as illustrating both the culture of this NLC and their dual focus.

This NLC is interesting because of the unique nature of the schools involved. Most are sole charge schools (one has two teachers). The nature and focus of the NLC reflects the need for these principals to have a support network they can rely on and which is relevant to the size of their schools. What was clear from the interviews was that the collegial nature of this NLC was more important than in others. For these principals their colleagues in the NLC were often the only people they could really talk to about the educational and management issues they faced. As such this is a critical support group on a number of levels and the nature and extent of its influence on these principals appears huge.

The sector leader was interviewed for this case study as were two other principals from the NLC. During the sector leader interview there was an opportunity to talk to students; one of whom showed the evaluator how to use Twiducate and Voice Thread (two tools the school is using to break down the isolation for these students). Two other principals from two different NLCs were also interviewed as they often participate in professional development with the NLC.

The NLC

The NLC cuts across a number of other principal based clusters and all the schools are involved in more than one. Officially only four schools comprise this NLC. However, there are nine sole charge schools in the region and, often, they all meet under the umbrella of this NLC for professional development opportunities. Two of these other sole-charge principals actually belong to other NLCs. In some instances this caused confusion when interviewing as the principals do not always differentiate between the groups that are actually meeting. What was clear was that the strongest affiliation was to the wider sole charge network in the region rather than individual NLCs.

The sector leader described the NLC as “*very important for sole charges*” in that their work can be “*very fraught*” and they are “*so isolated*.” As s/he explained sole charge principals need someone to talk to who understands their needs and the issues they face. They need to be able to trust this person, to be able to share their emotions. In other clusters they often feel marginalised as there are not many commonalities between them and larger schools.

This belief was affirmed by one of the principals from another NLC. This second NLC was based around the local high school and was geographically determined. His/her school was much smaller than any of the others and this principal often felt marginalised as a result. S/he gained more support and help from the sole charge NLC where others shared the same issues and where solutions could be found to the unique problems of small, sole charge schools. However, the connection with the local NLC was important because his/her students would go on to the high school.

Most of those interviewed described similar experiences when attending meetings involving principals from larger schools. They felt such meetings were often about promoting individual schools and had a competitive edge. One explained that when attending local principals’ association meetings things were often discussed which had very little relevance because things were “*so completely different*” and s/he would often “*go away with nothing*.”

One of the school leaders interviewed had only been principal for a short time when interviewed and had not been working in schools for some time prior to the appointment. The belief expressed was that s/he “*could not survive without the sole charge network*.” S/he saw huge developments for sole charge schools with ICT believing this was “*the way of the future for the kids*.” S/he also commented on the uniqueness of the sole charge situation; explaining that in

other schools issues get solved amongst the staff. As a sole charge principal there was no time to “*reinvent the wheel*” nor was there senior management to draw on, so the network of other principals was very important.

The journey

The cluster was first formed in 2006 by the Leading and Management advisory. They had noted similar problems across the schools related to their small size and the isolation of the principals as sole charge and had provided professional development that was targeted directly at these needs.

The current NLC was developed in 2010 although the sector leader had previously belonged to another NLC which had folded in 2009. This previous cluster had been led by a relatively inexperienced principal and it was felt this had been an issue.

The NLC goals were to support each other but also to cut their workloads down; to break down the distance between the schools. They wanted to provide opportunities for the students to edit each others work online. They also wanted the students to be able to communicate, to break down their isolation from other students their age. In addition, they were looking at how to moderate online for National Standards. While they had not done so yet they had practiced moderation of writing during a workshop. For the sector leader success for the cluster would be when they were online literate and confident. S/he had a vision of a digital campus across the sole charge schools.

The culture

The sector leader described the uniqueness and closeness of the bonds the principals across the wider sole charge network shared. As a result of similarities between them they had built up a strong sense of trust and could “*just get on the phone to each other.*” S/he described how they were all “*accepting and loyal to each other*”; how there was a “*protectiveness*” and “*genuine friendships*” between the principals. Their similar situations meant there was always someone who had experienced the same problems. This meant there was never any need to “*go into long explanations*” when discussing issues. During their conversations they were able to “*download, to share issues.*” One of the school leaders also commented that they all had similar philosophies about things and that as a result there was a connection between them.

This sense of trust was echoed by a school leader who described how they were able to ask questions; to be honest when they did not know how to do something without feeling judged in any way. One example s/he gave was asking how often others reported to their Boards. S/he believed they were all challenging each other including the advisors. This school leader remarked that the culture was different in small schools’ clusters than in others and this high level of trust and lack of judgement appears to have been the key difference.

Another school leader spoke of how the sector leader involved them all in decisions about future professional development and was open to what others wanted to do. S/he felt this was important as the sessions had to be relevant to everyone. S/he explained that there were different levels of involvement in the NLC depending on the experience and knowledge individuals were able to bring to the meetings.

The highlights

For the sector leader the highlight had been the breaking down of the distance barriers between his/her school and that of the sector leader from the other NLC cluster. The sector leader described how his/her school was “*like a family*” in that there were only 8 students. The result was that the students were often very shy at events involving other schools. Technology was exposing them to other children, to other thoughts and ways of thinking outside their small peer group. It also provided the students with an opportunity to compare their work with that of others their age.

Voice thread was a highlight for both the sector leader and one other school leader. It was described as “*an exciting new piece of technology - a vehicle.*” The same school leader felt that voice thread was the answer to the problem of how they could moderate and consult each other about student work.

One school leader said that the highlight for his/her was “just dealing with the loneliness; knowing that others were walking the same path.”

The activities

The NLC, along with the other sole charge schools, meets regularly at a central venue for professional development sessions led by external facilitators. At the time of the interview they had had two such days with a third planned.

- The first had focussed on the use of ICT in the morning and mathematics moderation in the afternoon.
- The second was on the moderation of reading and writing.
- The third was to focus on National Standards and ICT.

In addition, members of the wider network regularly share resources and materials. They make things available to others if they want to use them. In many instances these resources are used as a starting point to be adapted to fit individual needs and preferences. As with other NLCs volunteerism appears to be strong. An example of a shared resource is included as an artefact.

As with many other NLCs they always begin their sessions with a ‘what’s on top’ session, which provides an opportunity to “*just dump what is important.*” There is usually at least one principal who has an issue to be discussed.

The enablers

The NLC is very dependent on the support of school support services advisors and on the professional development they provide. Professional development was described by the sector leader as “*the lifeline for keeping yourself stimulated.*”

To ensure they were able to use the technology and to keep up-to-date the NLC required ongoing support and direction. At the time of the interview this was being provided by an advisor and one of the principals who is very computer literate.

The challenges

One of the challenges for the participants in this NLC was finding the time to do things. As sole charge principals they were faced with a myriad of tasks and juggling many competing demands.

The cost of running the professional development days was an ongoing challenge and concern was expressed that the changes to professional development provision in 2011 could increase costs. Further, as sole charge principals they have limited release time and small school budgets. This makes it difficult for them to attend professional development. The sector leader interviewed from the other small school NLC explained how the members of that NLC took turns attending professional development sessions to save money and maximise their time.

The distance between the schools was also a challenge, as was the distance to travel to sector leader days. The need to travel adds considerably to both the time and the cost of attendance.

While the wiki and other technologies could go some way to mitigating the geographical issues faced by these schools one of the school leaders did discuss how communication through multimedia was not as effective as face-face. S/he

felt that it was difficult to pick up nuances and that the feedback was limited somehow. While this was not an issue for moderation it could be for other forms of support where more responsiveness was required.

A key challenge in terms of their specific online goals was the reliability of their networks and technology. The sector leader described the system at his/her school as a “*rubber band system which is weather dependent.*” There was also the need for both the teachers and students to develop the necessary skills and be confident in their use of the technology. To do this required skilled professional development which was not always easy to access.

Other challenges mentioned included:

- meeting the needs of everyone involved
- being able to meet regularly enough, preferably more than once a term
- ensuring that ‘What’s on top’ does not take too long on one issue
- getting buy in from everyone involved.

Main benefits for participants

In all instances the main benefit was related to the networking and the ability to share resources, concerns and solutions in the context of small schools. This networking was described as critical by one school leader who commented that it was “*important they stay as a group, for chewing the fat and sorting out issues*” as well as for professional development. Another explained that the main benefit was related to being able to “*share what is happening with others who understand.*” For a third the benefit was “*being able to say how it really is because there is no one else you can talk to.*”

Other benefits for participants

Other benefits mentioned include:

- access to good professional development through external experts and being able to put this in the context of a sole charge school
- the creation of a wiki where they could share questions and answers and resources
- the networks which are developed enabling individual principals to call others and to share resources.

Benefits for the school communities

Learning about Voice Thread had been of real benefit to the schools involved. While not all were using it those who were saw it as a valuable tool for enriching the learning experiences of students. Others intended to use in the future. For one school leader the opportunities for the future use of ICT included sharing community consultation results and displaying student work prior to parent interviews.

Also mentioned as a benefit was that individual principals became better leaders and professionals through increased knowledge and expertise. Further, they are able to bring back resources and ideas that they can share with their students.

What is happening in schools

One school had now incorporated a wiki into their school website which the students could use. The same school was also using Voice Thread so that the students could share narratives with students from other schools.

The students from two other schools were communicating with each other through Twiducate. In particular two of the girls (one year 6, one year 8) had developed a strong friendship and regularly used Twiducate. Both these girls were the

only ones of their age in their schools. They had also begun to involve a 12 year old boy in the conversations. An email from these girls is included in this case study.

Two schools were using Twiducate for debating between students. In addition, there was a question of the week which students had to answer.

Ingredients for success

The recipe for success described by the sector leader included high levels of trust between participants, a respect for confidentiality and honesty. The participants needed to be willing to share material; to just “*flick things around.*”

In addition, the sector leader felt there was a need for the NLC to be driven by someone who is passionate about it. Further, there had to be more to the NLC than the curriculum; a wider vision for their schools. S/he felt that some of the other NLCs were merely “*going through the motions*”, that there was no bigger vision, and that with more accountability they would disappear.

The school leaders interviewed mentioned the following ingredients:

- a good leader who collaborates and consults; who makes things happen
- ensuring that the needs of the participant schools are matched; that they get what they want
- that it is a cohesive group and people are at ease with each other; they are comfortable and feel able to share mistakes and ask questions without others “*rolling their eyes.*”
- the participants should all be “*on the same learning journey and not leave anyone behind*”
- there should be “*no grandstanding*”; people should just “*be themselves*”
- flexibility in the planning and delivery of professional development sessions was seen as important to ensure relevancy and currency e.g. including National Standards
- keeping the group small
- ensuring they are from similar sized schools; otherwise the circumstances are too different
- enabling everyone to have their say.

Looking ahead

There were plans to visit other schools outside the NLC to see what they were doing with regard to ICT. However, at the time of the interview the sector leader thought it was more important to grow the confidence of others in their wider group.

There were also plans to focus on ensuring National Standards were incorporated into their charters. They also intended to share what each was doing across the NLC regarding reporting to parents.

The sector leader was clear that even without funding they would continue to find ways to work together. S/he was not convinced that the NLC model was the best way to provide professional development describing it as “*drip feeding through one person.*” However, the value of meeting and sharing ideas and concerns was considered too important not to continue in some form.

One of the school leaders felt that the NLC was at the point where things were going to change although s/he was not sure how. S/he was keen to continue something similar where they shared and critiqued best practice from their own schools in a more formal way, rather than just making material available for people to use if they chose.

Number one tip

The number one tip from this sector leader was that you had to be passionate about the NLC and to be inclusive of others.

The student voice

The following was written by two students who had developed a strong friendship through the use of Twiducate. This is their view of the benefits they have gained as written in an email to the evaluation team. Their online names have been used to protect their privacy.

Bubbles

Twiducate has helped immensely with my typing skills and it has been great to communicate with other children of my age from different schools. One of the best things would have to be talking to a 10 year old girl from W School. At first I knew nothing about Kinamunch but after writing on Twiducate for a while we managed to get each others phone numbers and have rung each other for a chat regularly

After many phone calls and communicating through Twiducate, we arranged to meet and go to the movies, now we have moved further along and have started talking on Skype

This experience has opened up so many opportunities for me with internet communication and it has been great to meet and talk to Kinamunch. At my school I have no other girls my age so this has been great for me socially.

Kinamunch

Having Twiducate is the best thing that has happened to me because I can communicate with children that I have never meet before. For privacy we use avatars, nicknames and passwords. However it doesn't really matter because they tell you what they are like on their Bio. So take Bubbles for instance, she told me all the things she liked and disliked and then I told her about me. (We also found out that my teacher used to teach Bubbles and her sister at another School and also that our Dads were great mates years ago)

First when we were joined up to Twiducate, the person I was meant to be writing to was Snowman at H School, when one day Bubbles and I were the only ones on. We started to write and now we are like best friends!!!! The two things I dislike about Twiducate is when it freezes or when no one is on!!!!

Voice Thread: I have also used VoiceThread with M School. I uploaded my story onto the site and it was funny to hear people make comments about my story using the microphone. They could also write comments. It will be useful in future for others at other schools to read my stories, edit them and help me to improve my writing and I can help others too.

Skype: I like Skype because you can see the other person on camera and it is fast. I can talk to them or I can see them writing- and there it is!!

An Artefact from the NLC

This is an example of the resources shared and is part of their moderation work.

End of Year Expectations for English/Literacy and Maths/Numeracy - NATIONAL STANDARDS										
	English NZC/ STANDARD	Exemplars	STAR	Reading STANDARD	AsTTle	Maths NZC/ STANDARD	GLOSS Numeracy Stages	Numeracy Stages	PAT Maths	Basic Facts
Year 1	early 1	1i-1iii		Green		early 1	2	CA		about 5
Year 2	at 1	1ii-1iii		Turquoise		at 1	4	AC		
Year 3	early 2	1iii-2	at or above stanine 6	Gold		early 2	4,5			
Year 4	at 2	2		8.5-9.5 y	2p-2a	at 2	5	EA	at or above stanine 6	2X, 5X, 10X
Year 5	early 3	2 to 3		10-12 y	3b-3p	early 3	5,6			All up to 10x10
Year 6	at 3	3		10-12 y	3p-3a	at 3	6	AA		All up to 12x12, Division,
Year 7	early 4	3 to 4		12-14 y	4b-4p	early 4	6,7			
Year 8	at 4	4		12-14 y	4p-4a	at 4	7	AM		
Year 9	early 5	4 to 5		14+ y		early 5	7,8	AP		

Bridging the Islands: A DIY approach

Introduction

This case study is entitled *Bridging the Islands: A DIY approach* to reflect the key focus of the NLC, which is to connect the different schools within the local area and to promote a common curriculum and pedagogy across them. For the sector leader these schools have been like islands and the purpose of the NLC is to build a network of bridges between them.

It is an extremely large NLC and its goal is equally large. The sector leader described the project as “*bigger than Ben Hur*” and acknowledged there are challenges as a result of the sheer scale of the project. S/he realises that the project “*is not going to go away*”; that “*the more [they] do the more [they] need to do.*”

As a case study it highlights how the NLC initiative can be a focal point for a larger piece of work. The core of the actual NLC is the leadership committee and the key events they organise. Beyond these the different schools appear to implement their own initiatives and ideas as relevant. The NLC provides a central meeting point for the wider cluster.

To gather data for this case study the sector leader was interviewed and discussions were held with two of his/her staff. In addition, core documentation was studied including funding applications, milestones and NLC newsletters. Curriculum and school leaders were also interviewed from two of the participating primary schools and the secondary school. This was a hard NLC to get a sense of scale for, in terms of both intended outcomes and participation. The actual NLC seems to be part of a much larger project, which has been ongoing for some time in different guises and with different activity levels.

The NLC

There are 20 schools involved in the NLC; 19 contributing primaries and one secondary. While this many schools was a challenge the sector leader believed that it had to be all or none, given the nature of the project. While all do participate the nature and extent of their participation varies.

The activities of the wider cluster are coordinated by a leadership team comprised of principals, classroom teachers and an RTLB. The ten members of the leadership team represent seven schools including the high school. Where possible the advisor from school support services also attends their meetings.

The overall goal of the cluster has always been seamless transition for students through primary and into secondary school. It has been to “*develop a shared understanding that year 9 is the next year of learning for students; not the first year of high school.*”

In 2008, when the cluster of schools was first formed, the focus was on the nuts and bolts of transition; in 2010 the NLC was focussed on pedagogy and curriculum. In the past the primary schools had consistently received feedback from parents that their students were not prepared for secondary school. Further, there was the realisation that for the primary students to be successful the high school had to be successful. It had to be a school where “*a large majority of the students are on the same page.*” This requires consistent practice across the primary feeder schools.

The goal of the NLC in 2010 was to share and develop curriculum and pedagogy across years 0 to 13 with a particular focus on years 7 to 10. The intended outcomes were:

- student transitions from year 8 to year 9 are smooth and meet individual student needs
- each school’s curriculum and pedagogy for years 7 to 10 are aligned

- integrated studies programmes are provided in years 9 to 11 to assist students to engage in secondary learning
- student achievement patterns are analysed and used to plan professional development priorities
- teachers and external experts are used to increase curriculum alignment and develop teacher knowledge and skills
- teachers have the opportunity to observe other practice and to discuss what they may need to keep or change in their own practice.

The journey

The origin of the current NLC was in 2006 when local principals identified transition issues for students going to secondary school. As a result, in 2007, leaders from the 19 contributing schools and the local high school met to establish what they could do to smooth transition for their students. A transition cluster was formed in 2008 with a steering group. In 2009 this group applied for and received funding as a special project within the NLC initiative. They again applied for and received funding as an NLC in 2010. The 2010 work is the key focus for this case study but it does need to be understood within the long term context of this project.

Initial work was undertaken in 2008 to find commonalities in the pedagogy used across the cluster schools and in their school curricula. This included a survey by the high school and meetings of the curriculum leaders and principals from the schools. These activities led to the decision to apply for special project funding in 2009.

During 2009, year 7 to 10 teachers were involved in classroom observations in different schools. Also in 2009, 60 teachers from across the cluster met and undertook a detailed PMI exercise related to transition. The result of this early work in 2008 and 2009 was the achievement of several first-order changes, including the identification of problems and finding solutions for these. The acknowledged challenge in 2010, and beyond, is to promote second-order change; where new skills and knowledge are sought and implemented and new practices are established across the schools.

The intended learning for the NLC is how to build bridges between their separate islands so they do not just “*throw stones at each other.*” There were some false starts initially. The early visits to other schools in 2009 had not had a clear purpose and as a result there had been no real outcomes for the NLC. In 2010 the visits were much more structured with a clearly defined intent linked to individual school action plans. The sector leader felt that in 2010 there was much greater momentum; that “*the islands were coming together*” and had been doing so for a while. S/he believed that there was now “*a foot in the door*” keeping it open, whereas in the past the doors between schools had often been shut.

Success for the sector leader would be when a model was developed which included all aspects of transition and in which it was “*fully recognised that year 9 is the next year of learning.*” S/he acknowledged that it had taken them three years to get to the point where the teachers recognised that transition is more than the nuts and bolts of moving students between schools. The importance of looking at curriculum so there are no gaps or overlaps was now understood. The school leaders were also aware that this is a long term change process. One of them commented that they were only “*taking baby steps and thinking about the best way forward.*”

The culture

The commitment to the NLC of all those interviewed was obvious. There appeared to be a strong sense of co-ownership of the project with more than one school leader discussing their involvement in its formation and how important it was for the wider local community. The NLC seems to have been arisen from a shared understanding of the importance of their work and does not seem to have been the idea of any one person in particular.

The sector leader described the NLC as a defined community, with a common purpose, that was “*doing things with and for each other.*” The schools interact at a range of levels with increasing buy in from classroom teachers. While the core

philosophy is to work with “*willing horses only*” the door is always open to others and there is a belief that the project is gaining momentum.

One of the school leaders spoken to described how there was “*no ceremony at the schools...all know each other...they are all just comfortable coming into other schools.*” As a result there was a real sense of community developing across all the schools.

The highlights

For the sector leader the highlight has been having his/her “*eyes opened wide to transition,*” becoming “*passionate about it*” as a result. Further, being a sector leader has provided an “*opportunity to be visionary, to do a lot of work.*” As a result s/he is applying for a fellowship to undertake further research into transition.

The common highlight for all those interviewed was the dialogue between the two sectors and the networking that had occurred. One member of the leadership team described this as “*extremely invigorating*” in that it “*prevents [them] from dwelling on an any set belief.*”

One of the high school leaders talked of getting the community together and of seeing “*the secondary staff having coffee with the primary staff.*”

Similarly, one of the primary school members of the leadership group spoke of how the improved dialogue between the primary schools and the high school had been a real highlight. This person was at “*the first meeting to begin the journey and was extremely happy to be part of the two day sessions where teachers from both sectors looked at sharing teaching and learning pedagogy.*”

The activities

The key NLC activities in 2010 were the buddying of year 7/8 teachers from the 19 primary schools with teachers from the high school and a professional development day, including a workshop based on John Hattie’s Visible Learning work.

In the buddying programme a teacher from the high school is buddied with a primary school. Where there are a number of year 7/8 teachers more than one high school teacher is involved with that school. One high school teacher at each school had to be a core subject teacher. If they were an option teacher they would work with one of the schools requiring more than one teacher. About 30 teachers from the high school were involved in the 2010 activities. These were described by more than one interviewee as the “*willing ones.*”

The focus of the buddy visits was “*what causes best learning.*” Teachers were required to report back on their visits at their schools. During these visits participants used a framework for recording practices they believed should be started, stopped, parked or kept.

Only teachers who were part of the buddy programme, and had undertaken a visit, were able to attend the cluster wide professional development day. In this way accountability to the project is built into the activities. The goal of this professional development day was to develop agreed common pedagogical threads for the cluster based on research and observations.

The leadership team meets once a term to coordinate activities. These are professional learning meetings, where they consider where to next and what is happening in the overall project as well as looking after the administrative details. In addition, there appears to be regular informal communication across the leaders at the key schools in the cluster.

Other processes/activities include:

- the high school surveying students and teachers to gather information regarding the transition experiences of students into their school
- schools developing their own action plans which relate back to the overall goals of the NLC
- the development of a regular newsletter known as an advisory which keeps all participant schools informed.

The enablers

A number of enablers were mentioned by those interviewed including:

- a willing high school and the majority of the contributing schools attending regularly
- a significant number of principals and senior leaders involved from the participating schools
- a lead team with the capacity to have rigorous debate and to challenge their thinking and that of the wider community
- a willingness and enthusiasm across all levels.

The challenges

The key challenge is the sheer scale of the project and the size of the NLC. There have been issues in enabling as many teachers as possible to be involved and in finding ways to release them all for professional development opportunities. This includes finding dates when all the involved parties are available for meetings and planning sessions.

For the sector leader finding the time to do the role effectively is a challenge. Part of this challenge is the time spent communicating with people across the cluster, including getting them to respond to requests for information.

The other challenge faced by the NLC is enabling change. This has been mitigated by using recognised change management techniques including engaging with teachers directly and involving them in planning the next steps. Linked to this challenge is ensuring that all participants have both a shared vision and shared values to avoid fragmentation and that the desired changes actually appear in practice.

Getting the secondary teachers to move out of their comfort zones was seen as a challenge by one of the secondary leaders. S/he also felt the high school needed to be viewed as being in partnership with the others not as the “*mothership*.”

Main benefits for the participants

One of the members of the lead group described how his/her motivation for involvement was the chance to make a positive difference in the transition between primary and high school. One of the real benefits for him/her personally was in seeing the “*gap between the two sectors close*” and a lessening of the us versus them attitude which had prevailed for a long time in the district.

For a high school leader the main benefit was being able to “*listen to the varied points of view and frustrations from the primary sector*.” Further, their involvement in the project had provided them with a great deal of information to reflect on when considering pedagogy at a secondary level. The key focus to come out of the NLC for this person was how to ensure secondary teachers teach the child not the subject, when the school is designed to focus on subject departments.

Other benefits for the participants

Other benefits mentioned include:

- a greater understanding of the constraints faced by secondary teachers
- getting to know teachers from the other contributing primaries as well as the high school
- really getting to know their buddy teacher and being able to have meaningful conversations about teaching and learning
- determining a number of practical changes that can be made in terms of offering high school resources to the contributing schools such as arranging access to the science labs
- becoming aware of the overall ability of the year 9 students when they enter high school which they had previously underestimated.

Benefits for the school communities

The improved communication and relationship across the two sectors was seen as a key benefit by all respondents with one reporting that the buddy visits have “*opened people’s eyes both ways.*” As a result the primary teachers reported having more understanding of what one called the “*mechanisms of a high school.*” Another teacher spoke of being “*exposed to the high school classes; to their routines...their expectations...the teacher/student relationships.*” As a result they have been able to put things in place to prepare students better.

In addition, the primary teachers reported being more willing to communicate with the high school than they had been in the past. There was now someone they could talk to about what their students needed to know; about what else needed to be covered in their curricula. One teacher commented that: “*it has taken the us versus them away...they are all on the same playing field now...how can we make this work better.*”

Another primary teacher reported that while the year 8 teachers were developing a better understanding of the constraints faced by the high school, the high school teachers were realising that eight years of education had gone on; “*that the level a child is on does not mean they have not progressed.*”

For the high school the reported benefits included their teachers learning more about primary school pedagogies and how to teach the child rather than the subject. There was a desire expressed to introduce more integrated studies for some of the students combining core subjects. The development of this programme had been modified with input from the primary teachers

Other benefits, for the high school, included breaking down some of the barriers with the wider community and students feeling better about going to high school. The communication between teachers meant that the high school teachers were more aware of what the students had already learnt and so material was not repeated as often.

Benefits for the wider community included:

- the changes to the orientation day meaning year 8s were not as stressed
- the parents of year 8 students being better informed re Open Days and choices at high school.

What is happening in schools

At one school some of the changes made for their year 8 students included:

- the use of a seating plan
- having year 9 students return to talk to the current year 8.

This school was also considering giving them mock tests in 2011 that simulated what would happen when they got to high school.

Another school had changed the way they prepared their year 8 students. The dialogue with the high school had enabled them to be much more explicit about what would be expected of them and what would happen on the orientation day. Further, while the year 8 teacher spoken to had not changed the way s/he taught the language used had been altered. For example, when the class was doing topic it was now talked about it as science and social studies, using secondary school terminology. In addition, common terminology was now being used around the Key Competencies across both sectors.

The high school had restructured their orientation day into little blocks rather than expecting the students to sit exams all day as a result of feedback from the primary schools. More significantly, there was a move towards integrated studies at the high school and a sense that year 9 could look more like primary school in the future. Other changes included more classes where students were seated in groups rather than rows.

Ingredients for success

The sector leader's recipe for success would include:

- a clear purpose or focus
- a large enough group of people thinking the same way to gain momentum
- opportunities for people at various levels to be involved and to shape what is happening
- both internal and external professional development
- heaps of opportunities for reflection and review.

The list from across the leadership team was similar including:

- regular meetings of the leadership team
- regular gatherings of the participating teachers
- shared values and vision
- joint planning and problem solving through collaboration
- mutual trust and respect between all participants
- reflective professional inquiry.

Other ingredients mentioned include a leader or leaders with sufficient drive and energy to maintain the momentum and a clear, achievable plan. Also mentioned was *“the ability to resource and research quality opportunities for professional growth.”*

Looking ahead

There is a commitment to getting both student and community voice included in the future. Also intended is for schools to begin to have conversations around student achievement data using effect sizes. Other intentions included sharing what they are doing with the wider community through the media; framing material for teachers to use in schools and ensuring there is consistent messaging back to schools.

One of the members of the lead group described how they had laid the foundations for future work. S/he explained that what had been achieved so far was relatively easy to change. Looking ahead to a common pedagogy and common outcomes for all students across the cluster was much more difficult to attain but “*absolutely worth aiming for.*”

One area of concern mentioned was the lack of common assessment practices and the lack of information shared between schools. The streamlining of assessment processes was seen by most of those interviewed as a critical step for the future.

Number one tip

The number one tip offered by this sector leader to other sector leaders was to not do it by yourself but to have a good mentor/coach; someone who is good at helping you to think; a touchstone. This person should challenge thinking and ask the hard questions.

Dream Sleepers: Wakening the dream within everyone

Introduction

The title for this case study is *Dream sleepers: Wakening the dream within everyone*. This is because the sector leader saw the purpose of this NLC as ensuring that principals were reinvigorated; that they were not tired and bitter. It is not that principals have “*lost the dream*” it has “*just been lost in administrivia*.”

The clear message from this NLC is that it is possible to critique and challenge practice at an early stage in the life cycle of a cluster. This group set out with the clear intention of working together to become better practitioners. They developed a set of guidelines and a charter clearly laying out responsibilities and expectations, which go beyond collegiality and sharing.

Data for this case study were primarily collected through an interview with the sector leader. In addition, two other school leaders completed the written questionnaire and returned it to the evaluation team.

The NLC

The sector leader was clear that there was a moral purpose to the NLC; that the only way to become a better school leader is to get colleagues to help, enabling “*lots of input*” and someone to “*hold up the mirror*.”

The goal of the NLC is to “provide a better place for kids to achieve at and to develop a collegial network.” They wanted to “go beyond superficial chit chat” as principals and “go quicker into a model where [they] could bare [their] problems.” In this NLC the key purpose of the meetings is to “bring puzzles of practice to the table and to explore these from different paradigms and lenses.”

The work of Patrick Lencione on high performing teams has informed the processes and culture of the NLC. Lencione believes that trust, conflict, commitment, accountability and attention to results are critical. The NLC purposefully engages in deep conversations; critiquing practice and helping each other solve ‘puzzles of practice’.

The journey

There are five schools in the NLC. They are a mixture of high and low deciles and one is an integrated Catholic school. The sector leader contacted a group of principals with the same philosophical alignment and applied for the funding for 2009. These principals all view “*education as a public good not a commodity*.” Further, none of them are “*precious*”; all are “*slightly cynical and up for informed debate*.”

All five schools were described by the sector leader as “*being on a course of achievement*” and “*all trying different things; to do things differently to what they used to do*.” Examples given of the projects being undertaken at the schools included projects for promising leaders and curriculum mapping.

The culture

The sector leader did not like the term learning community as a descriptor for their group feeling it was “*very presumptuous*.” Rather the NLC was described as an “*intentional group*”; one that “*cares for each other but is more deliberate and intentional than others*.” As one school leader explained “*we are a lot more than a coffee group*.” They are “*blunt*” with each other exploring why their colleagues act as they do. For one school leader the ‘puzzle of practice’ sessions are “*like having a professional supervisor*.”

Both school leaders described the NLC as a professional body in response to different questions. They were very clear that this NLC was not a social or support group; they “*need to be able to challenge woolly thinking*” and go beyond superficial details.

The highlights

For the sector leader the highlights have been the continued growth of both the team and the individual members in their principalships. They were becoming less defensive and far more open to feedback about their practice. Further, their involvement in the NLC meant their decisions were more informed and they were more likely to stop and consider different points of view; engaging in learning conversations. They were now clearer in their own beliefs and more effective communicators.

For both school leaders the ‘puzzle of practice’ was a highlight. As one explained they “*make them go beyond surface details.*” The other described how using video to deconstruct practice was invaluable. Further linking the reading to the ‘puzzle of practice’ was a “*clever way of making research relevant.*”

The charter was also a highlight for both school leaders. As a result of the charter “*everyone knew what they were buying into.*” A template developed from the charter is included as an artefact in this case study.

The activities

The principals met for one day at the start to talk about what they really wanted to do and achieve. They employed a facilitator for this day and worked on the ideas of Lencione. This was to ensure that they developed an initial group understanding and that the group did not just grow in an ad hoc manner. They felt that they did not have three years to develop sufficient trust or shared understandings to begin to work together at the level they wanted. As a result the “*mechanics of the group*” were outlined in a team charter describing how things would run.

The group now regularly meets once a term. The agenda is always the same, beginning with a ‘puzzle of practice’. This must be a significant and authentic issue; enabling deep reflection. Successes and challenges experienced since the last meeting are then shared before engaging with a professional reading provided by one of the members. This reading is always linked to the ‘puzzle of practice’ discussed in the preceding meeting. People are sent the reading prior to the meeting.

All members have a role at each meeting and the responsibilities are rotated. For example, the person who provides the ‘puzzle of practice’ at one meeting will be responsible for bringing the reading at the next. Administrative tasks such as leading the meetings and taking the minutes are also rotated.

In addition to these meetings, visits between schools have occurred, including by other staff.

The enablers

The sector leader felt it was important to start with a small group of like-minded people. Also mentioned was ensuring that people included the NLC goals into their appraisal documents as this would keep them to the forefront and formalise them within individual schools.

For the school leaders the enablers mentioned were clearly linked to the use of the charter and the ‘puzzle of practice’. These have ensured that the NLC serves a professional purpose, rather than a social or support role. One of the school leaders mentioned making explicit what the group wants from the NLC. They explained that although “*fun is important you have to go beyond that*” and that doing so had made the NLC a “*professional body.*”

The challenges

From the sector leader’s perspective one of the issues for the NLC was the introduction of National Standards. It was felt that principals had been “*swamped by the standards, [that] they had taken their eye of the ball*” with too much energy going into the Standards.

Another challenge described by the sector leader was ensuring that successes were revisited. S/he believed they “*needed to come back to what pushes [their] buttons; to stop and think about what has gone really well.*” For him/her success can become normalised and “*swept under the red carpet.*” Linked to this was the need for the NLC participants to not get too cynical; “*to retain a sense of aspiration and inspiration*” in what they were doing and to “*make sense of the muddle*” so they could see their way out of it.

One of the school leaders felt that the challenge was to ensure that the NLC was more than a social group. S/he believed that if something is “*professionally uplifting*” principals will make the time available to attend and find the money necessary. The other school leader also commented on the need to ensure that they went “*beyond the mundane - moving the NLC beyond support and guidance.*”

Main benefits for the participants

The main benefit for one of the school leaders has been moving out of their comfort zone and improving their self-awareness. This school leader was not previously aware of the extent to which s/he filtered information. Further his/her professional knowledge has increased through the regular reading and the ‘puzzle of practice’ sessions.

Similarly, the other school leader, who participated in the case study, reported that his/her leadership had become “*a lot more reflective against specific criteria.*” It was “*no longer a journey into a stream of consciousness*” in that they have “*more closely aligned [their] deliberate acts with the BES leadership.*” These shifts were believed to be a direct result of the NLC providing them with supervision type scenarios and reflection criteria that were linked to the BES.

Other benefits for the participants

Other benefits mentioned included making contact with the sector leader who had become the appraiser for one of the school leaders involved. For this school leader “*having someone who knows and is a critical friend is fabulous.*”

The second school leader mentioned two benefits. These were:

- support and guidance from colleagues
- improved understanding of *The New Zealand Curriculum* and, therefore, improved articulation.

Benefits for the school communities

The benefits for school communities listed by the participant school leaders included:

- setting up professional learning groups within their school
- arranging for staff to swap with teachers from other schools
- better systems to capture student voice and increased opportunities for students to share learning
- increased opportunities to involve the wider community
- their school leader is now “*a lot less grumpy.*”

What is happening in schools

There has been a focus on student voice at the participant schools. Four schools have moved to capturing student voice as part of the teaching/learning cycle. During staff meetings teachers have discussed what this looks like in their schools, and what it could look like. All five schools have talked to students about what authentic and rich conversations might look like.

Further, one school leader provided an example of something concrete that had happened in their school. This was the introduction of class blogs which provided opportunities for students to share their insights. At one of the NLC

meetings they had discussed teacher influence on student voice and how to reduce teacher voice. The classroom blogs emerged as a potential tool for achieving this after a discussion of 21st century means of providing for student voice.

Ingredients for success

For the sector leader the following are the ingredients for a successful NLC.

- be careful who is invited; they need to have similar philosophies and the same value base. There is a need to agree on some of the big issues while avoiding “*group think*”
- holding everyone accountable to both the students in their schools and to themselves
- enjoying each others company
- remembering that what is said is important not what is written down
- being able to critique practice and policy.

The school leaders also mentioned:

- setting up a charter which articulates the purpose of the NLC
- spreading the workload
- ensuring relevancy by linking to practice.

Number one tip

The number one tip was to be very clear what you want out of the NLC; to make sure everyone understands what this is and to get them all to include the goals of the NLC in the appraisal documents.

An artefact from the NLC

This is a blank template created from the charter used by this NLC.

2010 Sector Leaders PLG Charter

Our team charter has two sections.

Section 1: Our team goals linked to the annual plan

This section records our team goals so we all know exactly what we are intent on achieving. It helps us to focus and ensure we are on track. We will monitor our performance in relation to these goals regularly.

Section 2: Our agreements

These agreements spell out how we will work together in this team. It clarifies what we can expect of ourselves and each other. It helps us reflect on our teamwork and give each other feedback. We will update these agreements from time to time as needed.

Section 1: Our PLG Goals and action plan

Focus area 1 STUDENT VOICE	Goals for 2010 Knowledge: Practice:	Actions: Term 2 Actions: Term 3 Actions: Term 4	Indicators of success of the learning community: Knowledge - related Practical/practice-related
Focus area 2: PERSONAL PRACTICE	Goals for 2010 Knowledge: Practice:	Actions: Term 1 Actions: Term 2 Actions: Term 3 Actions: Term 4	Indicators of success of the learning community: Knowledge - related Practical/practice-related

Section 2: How this team will work together

1. Our team members	
2. Our roles and responsibilities in our team	
3. Our team values	
4. Our basic expectations of each other in our team	
5. Basic expectations when facilitating the meeting	
6. Meetings of this team (when, how, expectations)	
7. How we will make decisions in our team	
8. How will we monitor growth within our team	
9. How we will share information in our team	
10. How we will monitor the health of our team	
11. How we will manage tension in our team	
12. Things we will do to ensure some fun in our team	

Family Ties: Doing it together

Introduction

When asked what a good title for this case study would be the sector leader commented that the NLC was like a family, that they argue a bit but then always apologise. While the schools were very different they were also growing together with “*all the dramas in between*”. For this reason the evaluation team have named the case study *Family Ties: Doing it together*.

This case study highlights the value of external expertise; of bringing in new ideas and research and of ensuring that the focus of the NLC reinforces that of the individual schools. It also highlights how different initiatives can work together to provide a greater resource, when aligned through a clear vision.

Data for this case study were provided by the Sector Leader only. While two other principals indicated a willingness to participate they did not respond to several requests for information either through an interview or by completing a questionnaire. It may simply have been a matter of timing; the end of the year can be frantic for principals in small schools.

The NLC

This NLC is comprised of primary schools with deciles range from two to ten. They are a mix of rural and urban schools and their school sizes range from U3 to U6.

A core group of seven schools, from the NLC, also form an ICTPD cluster which was established in 2010. It is this core group of seven schools that are most commonly referred to throughout this case study. The other three schools in the NLC seem to be slightly marginalised in that the ICTPD cluster is a much larger initiative and provides the bulk of resourcing. They are only invited to meetings if there is an NLC curriculum focus and a specific decision is made prior to any meeting whether this is the case or not.

The sector leader commented that it was “*luck more than planning*” that the seven schools were now in both clusters. The 2010 ICTPD cluster came out of the NLC in the sense that a core group of schools knew they could work together. Once other schools heard that these four schools were applying they also asked if they could be part of the group. The same school leads both initiatives.

A conscious effort had been made to link the two initiatives and they are now seen to “*tie seamlessly together*.” This cross over was seen as hugely beneficial by the sector leader who commented that the NLC “*would have fizzled by now if we had not had the ICTPD cluster*.” The additional resources available through ICTPD funding have meant they have been able to do a lot more.

This is a very busy NLC; one in which the key activities involve the classroom teachers rather than just the leadership team. The school leaders involved appear to meet more often than most. They communicate both face-face and through other media. This appears to be due to the resourcing available through the ICTPD cluster funding and also to the shared vision and focus across the individual schools.

The journey

The NLC was formed in 2008 when the initial sector leader sent out an email asking schools if they wished to participate. This sector leader left within four weeks of the NLC starting and was replaced by the current one, who has retained the role since.

There has been some change of membership since the cluster was formed. Three of the original schools were asked in 2010 if they wished to continue and decided not to. These schools had been only marginally involved and it was felt

they were not sufficiently committed. They were replaced by three schools who had already joined the ICTPD cluster providing a greater overlap between the two groups. The current group of schools at the end of 2010 was seen as ideal. Finally getting the right mix of schools was viewed as one of the successes of the NLC to date.

When the NLC first formed in 2008 the focus was very much on “*getting to grips with the documents - a kind of nuts and bolts thing.*” The focus in 2010 was described as “*more specific*”, as being around “*making learning visible for our students.*” The sector leader explained that the schools were now working on making sure that their students understood the revised curriculum, that they were able to write success criteria, and to understand the purpose of school and of lessons.

This NLC focuses heavily on external expertise providing access to best and next practice ideas, both as individual schools and collectively. Individually, they have all been involved with the Visible Learning work out of Auckland University. This focus on the use of data to inform practice was driven by the introduction of National Standards. For the sector leader, the Visible Learning work was “*like a light going on*” and had prompted a desire to work more with others, in that “*once you start looking at effect sizes you need someone to talk with*”. As a result of this work the NLC was now looking at sharing school data across the cluster. These included school entry and asTTle data.

In addition to the Visible Learning work, both the NLC and ICTPD Cluster had worked with Pam Hook (Hooked on Thinking) utilising the SOLO taxonomy in their planning and assessment across the school. The work on the SOLO taxonomy was the main professional development focus for the seven schools involved in both clusters.

The culture

The sector leader spoke of the “*huge degree of trust*” between the core group of seven schools. They were at the point where they were beginning to share data which had been a big step for them. The sector leader felt the relationship between the principals was strong and that they would not “*use information against each other.*” All the schools involved have falling roles so there was potential for some tension but the principals had agreed that this was “*not something we are going to worry about*”.

The seven principals get along as people due to their personalities. They do have arguments; there are “*tantrums every now and then*” but there is enough of a relationship between them that “*people can say when they are cross or when others are not really pulling their weight.*” The sector leader did not feel that any of them had egos, which could hinder their ability to work together.

Further, the sector leader was clear that they did not always want to hear about other people’s success stories. S/he felt that it was also important that they shared what had gone wrong; that people were able to say “*hey we tried it and it was terrible.*” Such conversations do occur in their meetings.

The highlights

The Visible Learning workshops were a highlight for the sector leader. Prior to this there had been frustration that they had come so far in decoding *The New Zealand Curriculum* document but there was a need to further understand learning. The Visible Learning workshops offered “*research on learning rather than theories about learning*”; they were academic in nature and provided evidence of what works.

The activities

In 2010 the NLC held three teacher only days. Two were in January and one in June. These involved all the staff from across the participant schools, a total of 109 teachers. In November they also held two half day sessions where the same programme was repeated twice. Schools could send along whoever they wanted to these sessions.

In addition, there were two trips to visit other schools with similar goals and intentions. These schools are also part of NLCs but the initial link was through their work on the Solo taxonomy not the NLC structure. The first visit involved principals only, who visited four schools. They were particularly impressed with a school which they felt was about 18 months ahead of them in their implementation of *The New Zealand Curriculum*. This school became a benchmark for the NLC; the “*place where we want to go.*” As a result a trip was offered to all staff in the NLC schools to visit this school on a Saturday. A total of 50 teachers took up the offer and spent the day with senior leaders from the benchmark school discussing Visible Learning and the Solo taxonomy work and how they were implementing it.

Beyond these formal professional development activities the principals themselves communicate regularly utilising audio conferencing and email. Often this communication is daily. Much of this is for planning. They also meet two or three times a term.

The enablers

One of the key enablers for the sector leader was having a really clear strategic plan so that there was “*no wriggle room.*” If things are not working they always refer to that plan.

Further, s/he explained that it took commitment to make the NLC work, that it “*becomes your baby.*” Another enabler was ensuring there was a flow of information between the schools involved.

The challenges

The main challenge for the sector leader was to find professional development opportunities which would challenge the teachers at their schools. The difficulty was in finding new people, knowing who they are and being able to access them. S/he commented on her frustrations at times with the same people delivering the same messages.

The sector leader also mentioned a concern that National Standards had been a distraction but was confident that they had “*gone through that panic and [were] not letting it rule [us] now.*” However, there remained a need to make a commitment to ensuring their focus was on the curriculum in 2011. Also expressed was a desire for any professional development provided by the Ministry to focus on curriculum and to not be driven by National Standards.

What is happening in schools

The sector leader reported that changing practices in her school had been “*surprisingly undaunting.*” S/he was “*amazed at how seamlessly the teachers had taken things on in her school.*” They had been an AtoL school for three years prior to the Visible Learning and Solo work and this had given them a foundation to build on. One wall of the staffroom was covered with a large curriculum mapping document which highlighted the links between different areas of an integrated curriculum. This mapping was not complete but the competencies, the principles and the values from *The New Zealand Curriculum* were clearly threaded into the teaching and learning across the four terms. This map is included as an artefact in this case study.

Ingredients for success

The sector leader provided the following list of ingredients for a successful NLC:

- a good relationship between the principals involved
- principals who are learners; who are always open for learning
- regular communication and remaining in touch with each other via email and the telephone
- ensuring that all participants have ownership of the NLC, that it is not just an add on through almost daily contact
- seeing examples of what other schools are doing and linking with schools who have a common vision and shared focus.

Looking ahead

The sector leader described how they had been on a “*huge journey*.” They also “*realised there is no end point*” that there is a need for a “*constant iteration of teaching and improvement*”. They had revised their school curriculum three times and were “*completely accepting that it is going to continue to evolve*”; that they were “*seeking perfection they will never get*”, but that “*makes it exciting*.”

As a curriculum group they will continue to visit other schools to learn what they are doing. In 2011 a trip is planned to Wellington to visit a school there who is also working on the Solo taxonomy and Visible Learning.

Number one tip

Work with people that you know you can trust and share information with.

An Artefact from the NLC

This is the curriculum map developed at one school during 2010. It was a work in progress at the time.

HOT Concept Curriculum Wall		2011			
		Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4
		Weeks 1- 11 (1 st Feb – 15 th April)	Weeks 1- 11 (1 st May – 15 th July)	Weeks 1-10 (1 st Aug-7 th Oct)	Weeks 1-8 (26 th Oct – 15 th Dec)
Macro Concept		TRADITION	CHANGE	TAONGA	
Enduring Understanding		“Telling Tales”	“Life on Earth”	“Win and Lose with Dignity”	“You get out what you put in”
Driving Questions		Why do we have stories?	Are we changing planet earth?	Who are the real winners?	Are you treating yourself as a Taonga?
SOLO Coded questions (Multi-structural, relational, extended abstract outcomes)	Multi-structural	Define a fairy tale/story/fable/legend	List earth systems	Define a taonga	Define healthy mind, body and soul
	Relational	Compare and contrast stories	Sequence events in the system	Compare and contrast winners	Classify healthy mind, body and soul
	Extended Abstract	Generalise about the message in the story	Predict how the earth will change	Reflect on how you felt Create scenario's	Generalisation
Micro Concept	Junior	Tales, fables, myths and legends.	Seasons inc. weather	Acceptance/rejection	Energy (food)
	Middle		Cycles, planting by the moon	Co-operation and competition	Wellbeing (body journey)
	Senior		Global warming, preserving resources	Conflict (external)	Balance (WOF) (internal)
Enviroschools Principles		Māori Perspectives	Empowered Students	Respect for people and diversity of cultures	Maintenance, sustainable communities

NZC				
Key Competencies: Thinking Managing self Participating and Contributing Relating to others Understanding Language Symbols and text	Thinking Understanding symbols and texts	Relating to others	Participating and contributing. Relating to others Managing self	Managing self Understanding symbols and texts
Values: Excellence Innovation Inquiry and curiosity Diversity Equity Community and participation Ecological sustainability Integrity Respect	Equity Integrity	Community and participation Diversity	Integrity Respect Excellence	Ecological sustainability Innovation and enquiry Respect Inquiry and curiosity
NZC: Learning Areas, Essence Statements and Achievement Objectives				
English Children study, use and enjoy language and literature communicated orally, visually or in writing.	Reading			
	Writing			
	Speaking			
	Presenting			
	Listening			
	Viewing			
School, National and International Events	(Anzac Day and Easter in Term break)	School production Queens Birthday T.O.D. Fri 3 rd June (Dr. Angus Macfarlane – Raising Māori achievement) Matariki	Rugby World Cup Kidshealth.org	Life Education Labour Day – Mon 24 th Oct T.O.D. Tues 25 th Oct (2012 curriculum planning) Lamb and Calf Day Sunsafes Swimming? Swim safe

The Sky is the Limit: A learning pathway

Introduction

This case study is entitled “*The Sky is the Limit: A learning pathway*” reflecting that the journey they are on is a learning pathway, and that the potential for what can be learnt is limitless. The sector leader explained that they were “*looking out to the horizon*” and that their path “*goes on to infinity*.” On this path s/he acknowledged the need for a sense of direction but also for reflection, for a willingness to change the way they were heading and for a sense of reality. For him/her there have to be “*mirrors along the way [as they need to keep] reflecting on whether they are going in the right direction or is it time to change*”, and they “*have to come back to earth sometimes*.”

This NLC is interesting for two reasons. First, it is cross sector and second, it has shifted and changed direction as it has moved along the learning pathway. In particular, it has shifted from a focus at the principal level to one at the deputy and associate principal level. This shift is a reflection of the need to move from a strategic consideration of curriculum to an implementation and practice one. Also of interest is how, while there were some initial difficulties, the sector leader has been willing to make changes; to reflect on what is happening and to work out what is needed.

For this case study the sector leader was interviewed and provided some documentation for analysis. In addition, three school leaders were interviewed.

The NLC

This NLC includes primary schools, an intermediate and the local secondary school. There are seven or eight schools involved at various times. It was originally set up in 2008. The schools are all broadly similar in terms of the ethnicities of their students and are from the same geographical location, grouped around the secondary school. However, the involvement of the secondary school has been minimal in 2010. The sector leader is very experienced having been a Leading and Management advisor in the past.

The original intention was to develop a continuum for school-based curriculum across the NLC schools. However, the 2010 goal was to understand what a curriculum looks like and to begin to implement that into their schools. While the idea of the continuum had not been completely forgotten, it was no longer to the forefront. The key desire in 2010 was that the schools develop and implement curricula which are “*authentic in each school*.”

The 2010 action plan included both a knowledge and a practice goal. The knowledge goal was that by the end of 2010 all members of the group would have deepened their knowledge and understanding of *The New Zealand Curriculum*. The practice goal was that they would have used the information gained from a curriculum review to inform school-wide professional development and their roles in developing their curriculum.

As with other case studies, this group of principals do meet in other professional groups. Their local principals’ group is the umbrella cluster. Underneath this are a number of “*breakaway clusters*” including an ICT cluster, one focussed on Pasifika students, the NLC and a group of principals working together on action research. Learning about critique and building capacity within schools is a focus of their action research work, where they also learn about how to have challenging professional conversations. In addition, there have been three occasions where there has been cluster wide professional development for the teachers at each school.

The NLC work is an extension of these activities and the sector leader commented on how having the other meetings is “*a great advantage*” in that it “*behoves them to keep finding connections to other things*.” One of the school leaders mentioned that the NLC had made it easier for them to discuss curriculum at other meetings and in informal situations.

The connections made between the different meetings was also made clear by a second school leader who explained that the work of the NLC “*never sits on its own.*”

The journey

This NLC has changed over time as the understandings of the principals have evolved and as the needs of the schools have changed. It was initially a group of principals but is in the process of shifting to a group of deputy and associate principals (DPs/APs). This is because DPs/APs are where the “*rubber meets the road, they are the implementers.*” The final meeting of the principals was held in conjunction with the DPs/APs in Term 3 of 2010.

In the early stages of the NLC the principals had conversations around the notion of a continuum for school-based curricula and what that would look like. This formed the basis of their initial meetings, where the discussions they had provided the primary school leaders with a greater understanding of what happens in secondary schools.

However, this proved to be “*too hard*” and while they had not completely “*backed-off*” this idea it was no longer at the forefront of their work in 2010. It had not been discussed with the DPs/APs. Realising how hard this would be to achieve was something the sector leader felt was “*important to discover.*” This had been a key outcome of their learning journey in its initial stages.

One of the school leaders spoke of the need for consistency across the schools, so that students were learning progressively. There was a desire to see portfolios used across all levels of schooling so that a student’s education could be easily tracked. S/he had seen some commonalities developing but was aware they were a long way from achieving consistency.

Initially the NLC was incorporated into the principals’ cluster meetings; during a 45 minute slot at the end, almost as an agenda item. The sector leader asked that they set aside a separate meeting time to indicate how important the curriculum work was. S/he was worried that: “*they were in danger of paying lip service*” to it and that they were not meeting their goals as a result. The other principals agreed and this changed midway through 2009, when separate meetings for the curriculum work were established.

One of the issues for the NLC has been determining what needs to be documented as a curriculum and how this is best managed. The sector leader felt they had been so busy implementing *The New Zealand Curriculum* that they had not documented it. However, s/he also explained that if they were not doing it there was no point in writing it down.

Success for the sector leader would be when the DPs/APs said they no longer needed to work together because “*they knew they were on the right track.*” This was the point the principals had reached. During a review session in one of their meetings the principals had used a formal speaking frame and each had talked about some innovation or change in their schools as a result of the work with the group. At the end the general feeling was “*gosh we have done heaps - it is time to step back and have a look.*”

At a review day, in term 3 of 2010, attended by the principals and at least one DP/AP from each school, it became clear that while the principals had a good understanding of *The New Zealand Curriculum* and its implications for their schools this had not yet been transferred to the DPs/APs, who were “*not as confident about what they knew.*” This, along with the need to focus on implementation, was the rationale for altering the direct membership of the group. The review highlighted that there was still work to do on making connections, on ensuring that the key competencies and principles were at the centre. As a result, the NLC work has become part of a regular DP/AP meeting with one hour scheduled at the start of each meeting. They “*start on the dot*” and keep to a definite agenda. This has been seen as a real turning point for the NLC, a new pathway for them to follow.

The culture

The Sector Leader did not feel the NLC was a professional learning community. This was because they did not often challenge each other, although they did in some of their other work. This was a goal for the work with the DPs/APs. Similarly, a school leader discussed how s/he did not feel they were a formal professional learning group in that the sector leader brought the material to the sessions. This school leader felt it had been *“hard for [the sector leader] to get [them] to engage, but they had fed off her passion.”*

The sector leader described the principals as *“having a strong sense of commitment to each other”* and wanting to be part of the NLC and their wider work. This sense of commitment was echoed by those interviewed, who spoke of how important the NLC work is.

The school leaders also spoke of the collegiality of the group and how well they knew each other through the many opportunities they had to interact. One of the school leaders explained that this group worked better than many others because they were from the same geographical community. That they knew each other so well was not seen as an issue in the immediate future, although there was a sense that in time they would *“need new blood to challenge their thinking.”*

In addition the school leaders used the following descriptions when talking about the NLC:

- no one makes judgements; they offer possible solutions to issues or concerns
- *“it is always nice to know you can talk to someone who understands”*
- there is openness and trust; it is a *“very open cluster”*
- we *“have a laugh together”*
- we all share the same philosophies and want to *“grow our kids”*
- *“amongst us there are some wise people.”*

The highlights

For the sector leader the highlight has been the opportunity to *“keep [his/her] head in curriculum.”* The role has meant s/he has had to attend professional development, retaining *“some balance in the job”* as a result. In addition, s/he has enjoyed seeing how people have responded to the activities and the thinking and talking that has resulted. The review day in term 3, 2010 was also a highlight. It allowed the NLC to see how far they had come and what the others were doing.

Highlights mentioned by the school leaders include:

- the resources provided which are useful in *“getting their thinking on the same track”*
- bringing the DPs/APs on board so that the principals are not doing it on their own
- the sharing from other schools
- the review day in 2010.

The activities

One of the main events was the review day involving the principals and their DPs/APs. This was a full day during which they reviewed their individual curricula and aligned them with *The New Zealand Curriculum*. They discussed what a curriculum is and what it should look like. A pantry was used as the metaphor to describe a curriculum in the sense that what was in it could be used at different times as needed; it contains the ingredients for different recipes. The focus for the day was to develop a one page representation of their individual curricula, which could then be supported

by other materials and resources with links back to the one page. Part of the review process was to determine what materials they already had and what they needed to develop or adapt.

The regular meetings are very structured with agendas and a clearly stated purpose. They meet once a term. The sector leader believes it is better to have one effective meeting a term than a number of smaller ones. There are protocols regarding attendance and contributions. The sector leader filters the material received from the sector leader training days and ensures that others receive copies of what is relevant at the meetings. Others also share resources and materials, both at meetings and informally between the meetings.

The enablers

Enablers mentioned by the sector leader were:

- the commitment of the members to the work of the NLC and to each other
- the development of protocols and the expectation that people will “*do their utmost to get to the meetings and to contribute*”
- for the DP/AP group the support of the principals is critical so that they have release time to attend meetings.

The sector leader also talked about how every school needs “*a lone nut*”; people are needed who “*run ahead of everyone else.*” However, the followers are “*critically important.*” In this instance they are the DPs/APs who need to believe they can do the work; that they can “*take the idea somewhere.*”

Geographical proximity means the schools are linked; they are all part of a wider community with a common secondary school. This has pulled them together from the start. They have informal and formal meetings and know each other really well.

The school leaders mentioned the sector leader and how well organised and prepared s/he was as an enabler. The sector leader was described as “*bringing things together*” and “*being very clear about the work [s/he] has to do.*”

The challenges

One of the key challenges for this NLC has been to keep the secondary school involved. While they were very involved at the start they have since been on the fringes. The sector leader has kept them informed; making sure they know what is happening. Not having them closely involved has made it more difficult to implement the original purpose.

The National Standards have proved to be a distraction and have slowed things down for the NLC. However, they have agreed to “*keep their eyes on the curriculum*”, as they do not want to lose what they have achieved to date.

Other challenges mentioned by the sector leader were ensuring:

- “*it is not about the sector leader leading all the time*”
- the group give the work enough time
- there is accountability beyond the NLC
- managing the extra workload, doing the preparation, meeting people’s needs.

The school leaders mentioned the following challenges:

- finding consistent meeting dates so that everyone can attend
- ensuring that everyone is heard; that certain people do not dominate

- managing egos
- ensuring that everyone attends and is prepared to contribute.

Main benefits for the participants

A key benefit for the sector leader has been having the time to just focus on curriculum without other issues intruding. The NLC “*forces [him/her] to think about curriculum.*” A similar sentiment was expressed by one of the school leaders who explained how being a part of the NLC had “*forced [him/her] to do something.*” Further, it reduced the sense of isolation and provided an opportunity to consider whether s/he was “*on the right track.*”

For the school leaders the benefits have included:

- the collegiality and networking, which reduces the sense of isolation and provides opportunities to share ideas
- the support and conversations around what is happening in the different schools
- learning about the journeys of the other schools and being able to refer to these when talking to their staff/board as examples
- being able to discuss National Standards and how to make them meaningful
- the focus on curriculum providing a time out from management and administration.

Other benefits for the participants

Other benefits mentioned by the school leaders include:

- talking about what others are doing and what works for them
- being able to draw on the experience of their colleagues and gather examples of what they could do
- being allowed/challenged to think outside the square
- having their “*batteries charged*”; being “*invigorated*”
- to be able to go somewhere to discuss curriculum with a facilitator who knows what s/he is doing.

Benefits for the school communities

The school leaders mentioned the following as benefits for their wider school communities:

- the opportunity to review their curriculum and link into their strategic planning
- a much more effective roll out of their curriculum
- the development of a curriculum that meets the needs of their students
- the staff have a greater understanding of what curriculum is
- being able to bring ideas and resources back to the school and share them at staff meetings and with key people
- resources, ideas very good; they are pertinent and useful for school curriculum days
- being able to share what is happening in other schools
- including the DPs/APs in the meetings; no longer just dissemination from the principal.

What is happening in schools

One of the school leaders reported that the NLC had driven the development of an integrated plan by making it very obvious that such a plan would better meet the needs of their students. While they were still “*only taking baby steps*” progress had been made. Through the NLC they had been able to see what other schools were doing and to draw on

their expertise in areas such as the implementation of the SOLO taxonomy. This had invigorated their own work. This school leader also reported that there were increasing commonalities across the schools in their teaching and learning and that the NLC was supporting this development.

The other two school leaders spoken to were able to display their school curriculum documents and demonstrate the impact of the NLC on their development. For them the NLC had meant the development of school curricula had been more effective and more focussed.

One school leader described how the review day had enabled them to “*put the jigsaw together.*” Prior to this day the curriculum had been all over the place; the day enabled them to get started. The school now has a one page strategic plan which is linked to various resources through hyperlinks. “*This day was a real treat*”; the school leader “*came out buzzing.*” After this the school had a day in the holidays working on what they had planned and finding the gaps, determining what still needed to be done. This plan is included as an artefact at the end of this case study.

Ingredients for success

The ingredients for success mentioned by the sector leader include:

- building and maintaining relationships; ensuring everyone is kept informed
- being over prepared so there is always plenty to do
- realising that the sector leader does not need to know everything; that they are not “*the keeper of all knowledge*”
- ensuring that the work is always on the wider principals’ cluster agenda so that it is embedded in their wider practice.

The school leaders mentioned the following ingredients:

- having a strong leader who deals with administrative details, but also has curriculum knowledge to share
- having respect for each other
- being willing to hold each other accountable to a commitment
- valuing their time together
- staying focussed on the topic but allowing for innovation
- having professional conversations
- ensuring there is some fun involved; celebrating and “*having a laugh*”
- being able to question practice without “*hurting people’s feelings.*”

Looking ahead

At the time of the evaluation the NLC had got to the point where they had developed their school-based curricula. The focus for the DPs/APs would be to “*get to grips with the documentation - Ka Hikitia, LLPs - and how they link to The New Zealand Curriculum.*” Making sure that every school has a review process in place is also an important outcome for the NLC. This will enable them to always come back to *The New Zealand Curriculum*; to make sure they are keeping it central in their schools. The sector leader hoped that they would also still be visiting each others schools and ensuring they did not become isolated.

Number one tip

For other sector leaders the number one tip from this sector leader was to be enthusiastic; to keep informed and to be a motivator. If developing a new cluster the tip would be to give the schools a really good reason for joining; a possibility

that is intriguing or interesting and to link that to what they are supposed to be doing. The schools need to be able to find connections back to their work. In addition, s/he recommended involving schools that already had a connection in some way, which helps build commitment and loyalty to the group. This might be as simple as the principals already knowing each other.

Artefacts from the NLC

STRATEGIC PLAN 2010

Together Growing Inquiring Minds for Successful Futures

Through

PARTNERSHIP ACHIEVEMENT LEARNING

WE FOCUS ON

- Dynamic staff who understand and can confidently articulate, what needs to be done to lift student achievement, and do it.
- Providing diverse learning programmes enabling children as they learn through different pathways.
- Families knowing how their children learn and understanding how they can help this learning.

WE VALUE:

Respect, diversity, ecological sustainability, excellence, and each and every child and adult who belongs to this place.

Children who leave our School in year 6 will be;

articulate, confident, adaptable, and self motivated, inquiring learners who achieve academically, have a passion for learning and a belief in their own potential

The Honest Teacher: True confessions of a language teacher on the path from confusion to clarity!

Introduction

The title for this case study reflects the journey undertaken by the participants of the NLC as they worked through *The New Zealand Curriculum* and its implications for them as language teachers. This journey has been reflected in the feedback provided to the sector leader such as: “*yes this all makes sense, I can see where I am going with The New Zealand Curriculum, the pieces of the puzzle fit together, the sheer positiveness, people want to meet and they want to continue regardless of whether the funding continues.*” It is this notion of finding a sense of direction; of putting the pieces of a puzzle together that has motivated the choice of title.

The NLC is interesting in terms of the shared leadership model and that the leaders are all middle managers rather than senior management. It reflects the need for such groups and the issues with implementing *The New Zealand Curriculum* at a secondary level. Further it highlights the importance of accessing external experts.

The sector leader was interviewed for this case. Also interviewed were the other two members of the leadership team and two other teacher participants.

The NLC

This NLC comprises six secondary schools from one region, two of which include year seven and eight, and is focused on the language curriculum. The schools differ in many ways. There are two single sex schools, two large co-educational schools, a small co-ed Roman Catholic integrated school and a small country co-educational school. This diversity brings a range of challenges arising from different school structures and management systems.

The NLC is led by a leadership group, comprising the sector leader supported by two other teachers. All three teachers are the Head of Languages (HoDs) in their respective schools. Along with sharing the organisational load, the leadership team allows for significant professional and personal development in relation to the leaders’ roles as HoDs.

Developing an understanding of what *The New Zealand Curriculum* means in practice is a key focus for the NLC. *The New Zealand Curriculum* was seen as “*quite vague*” with a large gap existing between the document and what this means in the classroom. The concepts the school based participants wanted to discuss and find answers for include:

- “*What are the achievement objectives – they are very general, they don’t really say anything. For example – ‘receive and produce information’ what does that mean and are we doing the implementation well?*”
- “*It took quite a while to understand, what are these new achievement objectives, key competencies, what does this mean in reality?*”
- “*Social awareness when interacting with others – what does that mean for German, French etc. How do we make this work for us and our students? We have to redesign every class plan, every assessment – I couldn’t do that on my own, that’s where the cluster has been great.*”

The journey

Prior to the NLC being formed there had been some level of informal network operating for many years in the area. This informal network had worked closely with regional advisors to begin implementing *The New Zealand Curriculum*. Teachers from across the network had all previously come together for a “*jumbo day*”, during which they had considered the principles for successful instructed language acquisition and the principles for intercultural communicative language teaching and learning. This was seen as a positive start and they wanted to continue working together. The NLC was a way to do this. They applied, unsuccessfully, for NLC funding in 2009. Funding became

available in 2010 and the NLC formally began at the beginning of term two 2010. Initially, a letter was sent to all schools in the area (principals and language teachers) inviting them to be part of the NLC.

The NLC provides an opportunity for the language teachers at each school to come together on a regular basis and is seen as a first due to the level of commitment from participants and the learning that is occurring. There is a high level of value placed on the NLC meetings by the participants, many of whom *“have wanted to meet twice a term,”* For the sector leader it was *“huge”* that they wanted to keep meeting and a strong indicator of success.

Being an NLC has reportedly brought a focus to their meetings; making them more efficient. Prior to the funding being obtained meetings had been more ad hoc. As the sector leader explained: *“we have become more efficient ...forward planning has really helped us to be more efficient and focused ...this structure has come from the cluster.”*

Participation has been stable from all six of the schools with a core group of teachers attending all NLC meetings. Some of the ESOL teachers have taken part from time to time. A Te Reo teacher has also regularly attended; even though there is a separate Te Reo cluster in the region.

One of the key learnings for the NLC leadership team has been to allow more school time for planning. In 2010 much the NLC planning had been done outside of school hours in their personal time. While the time spent planning was seen as very valuable by the three HODs, both professionally and personally, they recognise the need to balance personal and professional responsibilities.

The NLC has now moved from understanding to implementation. One teacher described this as *“turning good ideas into new curriculum relevant classes...Now we have so much of a better understanding of this we can get together with a view of making resources and teacher support material...We are starting to look now at what resources we need to put all of this into place – every day in the class room we need to reflect the new curriculum in our teaching. You need to know that what you are doing is sound.”* The teachers involved have begun to work on templates and plans for teaching next year. These are being shared via the wiki.

The culture

The relationship between the three NLC leaders is one of trust, support and collegiality. This positive leadership culture is reflected throughout the NLC, which is focused and purposeful. As the sector leader explained: *“We made it very clear from the beginning that this was not a place to moan and groan about issues. We said this is where we are and we are moving forward.”*

The NLC has developed into a community where ideas are shared and critiqued, in order to facilitate professional learning and changes to practice. Networking occurs on many levels, within the NLC meetings, between the NLC leadership group and outside of the NLC between language-specific teachers. The NLC provides a safe place for professional learning. While many of the teachers belonged to professional language-related associations there was not always the confidence to share new ideas in these forums due to the size of them. This has not been an issue in the NLC.

The highlights

A number of highlights were reported by both the sector leader and the school participants. Central to achieving the purpose of the NLC, and a highlight for many, was the workshop facilitated by Gunhild Litwin. One of the leadership team commented on the success of this workshop and explained its influence in helping the NLC participants better understand *The New Zealand Curriculum*: *“I would say that everyone went away with a much better understanding [of how] to make changes to the curriculum for next year. Before this we were swimming around in the dark – [s/he] was very clear and we came away knowing how we would progress. Without being able to bring her, who knows how things*

would have turned out? Everyone understood where we are heading – it was momentous! From that we have set another half day to do some action in the last week of school in language groups e.g. French, German. Now we understand what and we have some tools we can work out how. I don't know how schools that don't have this opportunity will manage.”

A highlight for the leadership team was the conference. This was “*hugely beneficial, it put everything in context.*”

Other highlights mentioned include:

- unpacking and fully understanding *The New Zealand Curriculum* and what this means in terms of effective practice
- the sharing of ideas that work and being able to trial these with the support of others. As one participant explained: “*My favourite part of the cluster meetings is always when we are sharing new ideas – it is just so nice to have extra things to put in my teaching tool box*”
- having a clear direction for 2011 as to how the new achievement standards and New Zealand Curriculum will be delivered
- professional development for teachers that flows directly on to benefit students and the wider school communities they come from
- a strongly networked community with a sense of collegiality, trust, positivity and passion for improvement.

The activities

NLC funding has been used for teacher release time, travel, costs of bringing in outside speakers and to contribute to attending the NZ Association of Language Teachers conference for the three leaders. The conference included a large number of presentations and workshops relevant to *The New Zealand Curriculum* and was seen as a catalyst for learning. This learning was passed on through the NLC. The three members of the leadership team made sure they attended every session through a co-ordinated approach. All were very aware that their attendance had been funded by the NLC.

Ongoing communication has been through email and a central wiki set up for the NLC. The wiki works very effectively as a central repository for information about meetings and to share resources. All NLC documents are posted on the wiki including workshop notes and programmes, PowerPoint presentations, ideas and templates.

Six meetings were held in 2010 with a seventh planned for after the case study. Three were led by school support services advisors and focused on effective language teaching and learning, including key competencies, teacher as learner and inquiry-based teaching.

Meetings have a clear structure and purpose. They are organised by the leadership team but hosting meetings has been shared across the schools. This is seen as beneficial as it cuts down travelling time, creates buy-in and shares the planning load. One of the meetings focused on sharing good ideas for revising for exams. This was seen as “*a wonderful opportunity to share things that work.*”

For the last cluster meeting funds were used to bring Gunhild Litwin to a meeting. This was mentioned by all interviewees as highly effective and inspiring.

The enablers

The enablers mentioned by those interviewed were:

- good communication which was described as central to the successful operation of the cluster

- the support of the advisors and access to the experts
- strong shared leadership. While one person has been the central coordination point they are supported by two others
- having the meetings in school time (1-4pm) giving the participants “*a much better head space*”.

The challenges

The challenges have been predominantly those related to finding time. For the sector leader it was finding the time to send out the emails and coordinate the meetings. For classroom teachers it was having time away from students, although there was a strong feeling that the NLC has been well worth it. Endeavoring to meet everyone’s needs has also been a challenge for the leadership group.

Main benefits for the participants

The relationship between the three HoDs on the leadership team was described by the sector leader as hugely beneficial not only to the NLC but also to them personally: “*It has been so rewarding and worthwhile. It has been something that has come out of the cluster that we did not expect – we are all HoDs and we are sole language teachers. It has been so valuable – we met one night for a hot chocolate and that collegiality and confidentiality – the professional support that we have been able to give has been huge. I have been teaching for 25 years but it has been a first for me to have that level of professional support. It is just brilliant, very special – we are able to feed off one another and then go back into our schools.*”

This view was reiterated by one of the other HoDs in the leadership team who commented that language teachers are often quite isolated as languages have been viewed as peripheral to the core curriculum. Therefore, “*to spend time with colleagues who understand; that has been so valuable even more so than the NLC.*”

School participants reported the following main benefits:

- the opportunity to share ideas and develop an understanding of the new curriculum and what it means for classroom teaching and learning
- meeting others who teach the same language
- the increased efficiency of the group, due to more structure and a greater focus from the NLC
- growing in confidence through meeting and working with others.

One participant described the wiki as the most tangible benefit in that all the participants contribute to it and it can be accessed anytime, anywhere. Further material from it can be adapted to suit different contexts.

Other benefits for the participants

In addition, participants mentioned the following other benefits:

- having their thinking “*shaken up*” and trialling new ideas in a year 10 class as a result
- getting NCEA updates
- being able to “*bounce ideas off other people*”
- access to professional development through funding to attend a conference.

Benefits for the school communities

The knowledge and resources that the participants gain through the NLC are key benefits for their communities, through the enhanced teaching and learning possible. They have reportedly been of direct benefit to the students and other teachers in the schools.

Other specific benefits reported include:

- sharing resources from the NLC at department and school level. One participant reported putting these on the school intranet
- having all language teachers “*on the same wave length*” was seen as hugely beneficial for students
- the NLC goal of Māori participation and achievement was the same as one of the school goals for one participant
- the good practice ideas, which participants have been able to use in their classrooms.

What is happening in schools

A number of examples were provided of material being taken back to schools to trial after NLC meetings. One such example was the idea of co-creating lesson plans with students. This had been presented at one of the NLC meetings and after successfully trialling the concept one of the other participants now uses this concept in planning for all senior classes. Further, the idea had reportedly started to flow through the school after presenting it at an HoD meeting.

During the interview the teacher concerned explained that: “The result has been a direct benefit to the department staff and students. There is increased buy-in and enjoyment of students. It is a big shift but a very beneficial one. I wouldn’t have moved forward as quickly otherwise. This improves the status of languages in the school – we are a leader it has improved our profile. I have good practice to share.”

Another participant described working more closely with a teacher from another school. As a result of their new relationship they were going to share classes across the two colleges and had begun to prepare classes together. This was a direct result of networking through the NLC.

Ingredients for success

The ingredients for success mentioned by the sector leader were:

- having really good communication. For this NLC the wiki had played a central role in enabling communication across the NLC
- having one person as the central co-ordinator ensuring communications are sent out
- sharing the leadership; “*there should not be a cluster leader all on their own*”
- the support of the advisors and access to the experts because “*it is not just what is going on in the classroom – it is about professional development*”.

Key ingredients for success mentioned by the school participants were:

- having a clear purpose and aims for the NLC
- teachers who are passionate about wanting to improve, prepared to contribute, to share, to try new ideas, and are engaged and open minded
- support and buy in from senior managers at their schools
- access to outside expertise – either the regional advisors or other key topic experts “*someone who knows how to find what you need, someone with knowledge about what is actually going on*”

- regular meetings with clear objectives that allow a balance of directed activities and information dissemination with time for discussion (both in large and small groups)
- leadership which is willing and able to make things happen.

Number one tip

The number one tip from the sector leader was to have a clear purpose and share the leadership.

The Trials and Tribulations of the Pataka Classroom

Introduction

When asked to suggest a title for this case study the sector leader said it would be a photo essay called “*The trials and tribulations of the Pataka classroom*”. Pataka is an art gallery where this NLC regularly meets. The title reflects the hard work that has gone into making this NLC a success.

The NLC is interesting in respect of its size and its ‘floating’ population, with a number of itinerant schools, as well as a core group. It is very task oriented and focussed on the core aspects of secondary school: assessment and content. In this way it highlights how an NLC can be very practical in nature and directly related to the problems of practice teachers face every day. It also highlights how much can be achieved.

The sector leader and two participants were interviewed for this case study.

The NLC

This NLC is focussed on the visual arts curriculum at secondary level. It is a very large NLC. There are nine secondary schools that regularly attend meetings and a further six to ten schools, from the greater region, that attend from time to time. The NLC also includes art teachers and gallery educators from local museums and galleries.

For larger events up to 20 schools can attend at any one time. The participant schools cover all deciles and are a mixture of single sex, co-educational, Kura Kaupapa and boarding schools. Some include years 7 and 8 as well. Despite the diversity of the schools involved, similar problems and issues face their visual arts teachers. They have been “*drawn together for sharing, networking and professional development*”.

The goals for the NLC were set by the sector leader in consultation with others. These goals are:

- raising achievement for Māori and Pasifika students in the written component of the achievement standards
- extending senior students to excellence in scholarship
- building a community to support *The New Zealand Curriculum* including resources and professional development.

The journey

The NLC was formed in 2010 and grew out of the frustration felt by visual arts teachers at the perceived lack of support for curriculum implementation. In addition, the sector leader felt frustrated by a culture that accepted achievement rather than striving for excellence as a goal. The sector leader had spoken to the arts advisor about these frustrations, who recommended applying for NLC funding.

Once the NLC was set up the sector leader emailed an existing network of art teachers to explain the goals of the NLC and to ask what professional development they felt was needed to meet these goals. As a result of the work of the NLC a number of resources have been created including worksheets and templates to be used in schools. The NLC met regularly at the Pataka art gallery across 2010 with at least two or three meetings per term. A conference was also held.

The NLC has enabled greater links between art teachers across the region with school participants reporting that they had met many of their colleagues for the first time at NLC meetings. From these meetings a number of smaller working groups have also developed, which meet independently of the NLC, such as the design teachers.

In 2011 the plan is to create a web-based communication tool where resources can be placed, possibly a wiki. Several people, including the sector leader, indicated that some form of web-based information hub would enable more networking and sharing to occur.

The culture

The most important aspect of the NLC culture is the collegiality and support. There is a national Visartsnet run by TKI, but it is accessed by many people. As a result of its size “*people don’t want to ask stupid questions.*” However, because the cluster is relatively small people feel they can ask questions in a safe and supportive environment.

The highlights

The key highlight mentioned was the conference with participants listing a number of features of the conference. These included:

- examples of best practice. In particular the use of artists’ models in visual arts achievement standards
- hands on workshops for teachers to make art and have fun including book binding, print making and painting workshops. These activities were readily transferable into the classroom
- considering how to extend students to excellence in scholarship
- the open forum to discuss issues.

In addition, a number of other highlights were mentioned. These were:

- the collaboration and collegiality experienced, including practice advice and feedback e.g. teachers took in students’ art portfolio boards for discussion and feedback
- the opportunity to network, including the development of partnerships between neighbouring colleges
- the venue – Pataka Art Gallery
- having artists attending some NLC meetings was seen as inspiring. Teachers could pass on new ideas and information from the artists to their students
- great food
- the opportunity for socialising.

The activities

The NLC always meets at the Pataka Gallery, which was viewed by both school participants and the sector leader as being central to the culture of the NLC. Meeting at the gallery provides teachers with the opportunity to view exhibitions and take ideas back to their schools. Each meeting has an agenda and a specific focus for the discussion; “*not just chatting*”. As well as the meetings there is regular contact via email and the NLC operates through an email contact list.

In the first term the meetings focussed on how to organise the NLC and what topics to cover. The arts advisor and the national moderator attended these initial meetings. In addition, task sheets were developed for the written components of the achievement standards and circulated to all teachers for comments. These task sheets are aimed at students who do not necessarily have good vocabulary and written skills and/or critical thinking skills. Task sheets have been made available for 1.1 and 2.1 that meet the goals of *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

In the second term, there was an evening workshop and a session on the new achievement standards. There was also a two day conference for art teachers from the wider region. Guest speakers at this conference were both local, experienced teachers and speakers from outside the region. A national moderator also attended and addressed the conference.

A resource package has been put together including over 300 different artists. The resource was provided on CD to all attendees at the conference. It will also be provided in hard copy to all NLC members and will be added to over time.

In term three there were five pre-verification meetings for completed art work. These meetings were attended by teachers, advisors and gallery educators. For term four two post verification meetings were planned.

The enablers

Both the sector leader and the school participants mentioned key enablers for the success of their NLC. These were:

- the passion and commitment of the participants
- having a clear purpose for the NLC and a goal for each meeting
- meeting at a positive, relevant venue, which participants enjoyed and used to develop ideas for work with students.

A school participant described the gallery as “*the best place to have the meetings.*”

The challenges

The main challenge reported was finding time. For participants this meant finding time to attend the NLC meetings. Teachers often have to use personal time with meetings being from 4 till 8pm. For the sector leader it was time to organise meetings. As s/he explained “*I am not a good delegator, I prefer to do everything myself. My goal for next year is to learn how to delegate.*” A solution offered by the sector leader was for his/her school to be paid some relief time for the administration work to be done.

For the sector leader an unexpected challenge was having to manage the egos and attitudes of some of the participants. This was unexpected and it had been “*a huge, huge challenge.*” The main issue was with “*one or two people who are very negative – they don’t want solutions they just want to moan.*” A further frustration, for the sector leader, was the sense that some teachers did not want to share their resources with others in the NLC. There had been negative feedback from some of the participants; something the sector leader attributed to being relatively new to the region. The feeling expressed was that s/he was seen as “*stepping on toes.*” While the strategy in 2010 had been to ignore the issue s/he was aware that in 2011 it would have to be faced. As s/he explained: “*I don’t know how to deal with it, I haven’t dealt with it. Next year I know I will have to deal with it – there are three schools that haven’t been coming and I know I need to address this.*”

Main benefits for the participants

For the school participants the benefits of the NLC are highly practical and directly related to their needs as visual arts teachers. They commented on how the NLC had helped them understand the new arts curriculum and to consider how they mark artwork. In particular they valued:

- the ideas they gained for how to approach the achievement standards that are being introduced
- access to the expertise of the arts advisor and the national moderator
- the practical help and feedback provided, such as helping each other with the assessment of student work
- the opportunity to participate in arts specific and curriculum specific workshops
- the practical workshops; including the distribution of new materials and techniques to apply in the classroom
- the NLC had helped reduce the sense of isolation many felt in showing that “*others are in the same boat*”
- the opportunity to help with the planning for the conference.

Other benefits for the participants

Other benefits mentioned in the interviews were:

- the networking and contacts they were able to make
- the opportunity for teachers to share their expertise

- exposure to other schools' curriculum planning and their approach to *The New Zealand Curriculum* were important. Also exposure to NCEA markers and feeding back comments and suggestions to students
- getting feedback on their own planning/ideas
- the NLC helped with forward thinking and planning
- teachers felt less isolated, exposed to more personalities and approaches, inspired to try new things out in the classroom.

Benefits for the school communities

The benefits for the school communities have largely been related to the resources and expertise the teacher participants bring back to their schools. Sharing their learnings from the NLC with other teachers and students has, reportedly, directly influenced school practice in a number of instances. For example, school participants reported that the NLC had helped them develop ideas for implementing *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

There has also been a benefit in the sharing of moderation and assessment processes. This has included school participants bringing their students' portfolios for feedback from other teachers. The ideas and comments provided were then taken back to the students to support their ongoing work. As a result of this sharing of student work the teachers concerned gained new ideas and their students were often inspired and motivated to extend their work to a new level. Further, the school participants reported that some of their students were motivated to complete their work more quickly in order to get feedback from the NLC.

Both students who needed extra help and high achievers have benefited from the cluster; gaining a greater passion for the arts and a new awareness of various artists. The NLC has meant that in many instances art students are exposed to an increased amount of art.

Further, some teachers reported that having the formalised structure of the NLC had helped increase the status of art in schools. It was also seen to have helped the organisers gain access to high quality speakers from other places for the two day conference.

What is happening in schools

Two schools ran a combined arts session for students from both schools. They used professional development time and involved students in planning the session. Through an exhibition of their work, 60 students critiqued each other's art. In addition, an opportunity was provided for both students and staff to socialise from across the two schools. The idea for this session came directly from conversations at the NLC meetings about various approaches to student involvement in providing feedback about artwork. The involvement of students was particularly innovative. While other departments had run combined sessions for moderation purposes, these involved teachers only.

At another school, internal professional development sessions were run during which new techniques learnt at the NLC meetings were presented to other staff.

Ingredients for success

The ingredients for success suggested by the sector leader were:

- purpose and a lot of passion
- having a goal for each meeting and moving people onto the next topic
- dedication. "*That's all you need for anything really*"

- having a supportive and open atmosphere, which is non-judgemental, friendly and helpful. This was seen as particularly important for new teachers
- passion and inspiration
- having a variety of schools attend is important as this brings a range of teachers' experiences
- the venue
- funding and a formalised structure
- backup and enthusiasm from key leaders in the NLC
- use of the web and email to communicate across the cluster
- approval of enough professional development time for the teachers to attend in school time
- the NLC being teacher and student driven
- Practical assistance through group discussions and workshops (e.g. giving advice, tips)
- Knowledge sharing with both teachers and students. Brainstorming with other teachers helps increase innovation and ideas to develop new curriculum.

Number one tip

The number one tip from the sector leader was to have a very, very specific goal in mind and have a bunch of people help you out.

What's the Point? Meaningful learning through curriculum integration

Introduction

The sector leader chose the title “*What's the point?*” to reflect the ongoing journey towards greater meaning and relevance, both for students in their learning process and for teachers leading the integrated studies programmes and taking part in the NLC. At times it had been a comedy and s/he had wondered what the point was.

This NLC is interesting because it includes a large number of secondary schools with teachers from many different departments. It “*takes many of the positive strategies used in primary schools into the secondary school setting*”. Most other secondary NLCs are based around a curriculum area, which is more consistent with the traditional culture and structures of the secondary model. NLCs may be one way of breaking down the siloing that results from the strong subject area foci in secondary schools and in the professional development opportunities provided.

As well as the sector leader, two other school participants were interviewed.

The NLC

This NLC is comprised of 15 secondary schools and is focused on curriculum integration. The schools cover a wide range of deciles. The participants were described by the sector leader as “*innovative and leaders in their schools*” who want to “*give more meaning to learning*”. The schools vary widely in their implementation of curriculum integration, both in the type of approach and the length of experience in delivering integrated studies programmes. For example, some schools offered an integrated studies class on an ongoing basis throughout the school year (e.g. 8 hours per week for Year 9 students), while others hold a one-off integrated studies programme for just one week per year. Some school participants had had experience with running integrated studies programmes for many years, while others had had much less experience, or were just beginning to consider offering such a programme.

The purpose of the NLC is to provide an opportunity for those schools that already have an integrated curriculum programme to share their experience and explore effective ways of reviewing and developing their practice. The focus of the NLC work is on sharing good practice both from within the NLC and externally. They also want to develop programme review practices and to evaluate what works and what does not through a consideration of effective integration.

The expected outcomes, as detailed in their application to become an NLC, were:

- increased teacher awareness of good practice in the area of curriculum integration
- increased teacher/school confidence in the effectiveness of their curriculum integration programme
- improved student achievement for students participating in integrated curriculum programmes.

The journey

The NLC was formed in 2009 after discussions between the sector leader and an effective pedagogy advisor. While it was felt that several secondary schools had been developing innovative and worthwhile integrated programmes for year 9 and 10 students for some years, this work had occurred largely in isolation. Some of the programmes were in need of review, while other schools wanted to learn more about what had already been done in this area.

The first meeting was in October 2009. All relevant schools in the region were invited to attend the first hui on Curriculum Integration in Year 8, 9 or 10. Participation has varied across the meetings but everyone has remained on the NLC mailing list. The success of the NLC is evident in that: “*people have gone on to set up or develop integrated studies programmes in a way that they might not have otherwise.*” Also viewed as a success is that senior administrative staff from two of the schools have continued to attend the meetings.

The sector leader felt that networking outside of the formal NLC meetings had been limited to a degree by the diversity of schools. However, a school participant did believe that informal networking was occurring through emails and individuals approaching each other for advice and mentoring.

While there had been excellent feedback from the participants the sector leader was aware that they needed to work out what they were going to do in 2011. The original plan was to evaluate all the programmes operating, which was achieved in 2010. Many of the participants from 2010 want to keep meeting and work on developing different types of integration, working together on planning.

One concern expressed for the future was that the diverse levels of experience and the different levels of implementation of programmes had made it difficult to meet everyone's need. Consideration had been given to splitting the group into sub-groups able to work at different levels. In addition, one school participant felt the NLC could have involved more engagement in the critical academic literature on curriculum integration.

The culture

The NLC approach is based on a model of cooperation and the wide sharing of information. The sector leader reported receiving positive feedback about the NLC from school participants. S/he described the NLC as definitely being a learning community as *“people take a lot of ideas away from meetings”*. Participants spoke in interviews of a positive learning and sharing environment; of an NLC that was collegial and encouraged open sharing.

The highlights

Highlights for the participants included the shared learning possible through telling and listening to each others stories and experiences. This had provided opportunities for in-depth discussions and reflections on learning and what works. A related highlight was evaluating what works and what does not, based on the experiences of others and professional readings.

Another highlight reported was the mentoring and support of teachers who were new to integrated studies by their more experienced colleagues. This resulted in a realisation for some that they are not alone in *“struggling to implement changes and new innovative way of working.”*

One of the specific activities that was mentioned as a highlight was a trip to one of the schools, where students shared their experiences and views of the integrated studies programme.

The one-day Network Learning Community (NLC) conference was highlighted as a useful networking opportunity by the sector leader.

The activities

The NLC meets approximately once a term. Agendas are circulated by the sector leader prior to the meeting. The format of the meetings has evolved over time to focus strongly on individual teachers' stories of implementing integrated studies, and the shared learning possible from these through discussion and debate. What works is evaluated both through the experiences of others and professional readings.

The enablers

There were two enablers described in these interviews, both related to the attributes of the people involved. These were their passion and commitment and that they are innovators willing to take risks and try new things.

The challenges

The key challenge for this NLC has been the diversity of the participant schools in terms of both their decile and the extent of their experience with the implementation of integrated studies. These differences have made it difficult to

meet the needs of all participants. The decile differences were seen as affecting the relevance of shared information; as what works in one school may not be appropriate or feasible for another. One of the school participants interviewed explained how the wide variation in how schools had implemented curriculum integration meant there were not enough new ideas and insights to benefit his/her school, so s/he had not continued to attend.

Finding time to attend the meetings was a challenge for the participants and there had been a lack of consistent participation. This had led to frustrations for those who attend regularly as they often had to listen to shared stories they had already heard to cater for new arrivals. The inconsistent participation was, at least partially, driven by the difficulties some participants experienced in getting leave from their schools due to classroom commitments.

For the sector leader the biggest challenge was people management skills; dealing with unproductive members of the group who dominated the meetings. S/he also commented that it would *“be useful to share the facilitation with others”*. This had been suggested but no one had wanted to take on the role.

Main benefits for the participants

The main benefit for the school participants was the access to relevant information and shared learning. This included:

- learning how other schools would approach things and what they would do differently to avoid past mistakes
- sharing with others and getting feedback on their own programme
- seeing how different school structures enable and constrain what is being attempted
- having access to a *“smorgasbord of ideas to pick and choose from”*
- learning what does and does not work through the sharing of successes and failures
- having time to debate and discuss ideas
- it was *“engaging and efficient to be able to ask real teachers questions about what they do and why.”*

Further learning that: “you are not on your own” has given people the energy to keep going. “For a long time people have been battling away on their own. It is good to meet with other like minded teachers.”

For the sector leader it had been a beneficial experience to lead a group from different schools and to meet a group of passionate people, sharing ideas. S/he had *“got a lot out of it personally and professionally.”*

Other benefits for the participants

Other benefits mentioned were:

- the collegial support that is provided including affirmation from others
- the opportunity to discuss and analyse professional readings on the topic of integrated studies
- professional advice from school advisors
- the development of creativity, passion and innovation.

Benefits for the school communities

One of the main benefits to the school communities was the application of their learning to the classroom. As a result of the NLC people have reportedly gone on to set up integrated studies programmes in ways they might not have otherwise. For example, participation in the NLC had helped increase one school’s focus on integration and collaboration between teachers of various subjects.

There was also reportedly increased engagement by students involved in integrated studies programmes which had positively influenced student learning. The sector leader reported that the NLC had kept the integrated curriculum department at her school *“fresh and alive with new ideas”*. One teacher reported being able to prove that students with low literacy skills could improve.

What is happening in schools

In one school the NLC had prompted the implementation of an idea discussed at a meeting. This was to use a thematic approach to integrate learning around a particular topic. The school had not used this approach before.

Another school participant reported that participation in the NLC had led to a more collaborative approach across two departments: English and Social Studies. While the school was not implementing an integrated studies class programme in 2011, the two departments had begun to work more closely together to integrate some aspects of learning. Planning was underway to offer an integrated studies class in 2012. The Board of Trustees had approved integrated studies as a formal part of the school programme for any teachers who chose to deliver it. In addition, the school participant in this instance had shared ideas from the NLC with other teachers and was mentoring teachers with an interest in integrated learning.

Another school hosted a ‘show and tell’ session on its integrated studies programme and facilitated a discussion based on a professional reading that was sent out to NLC participants.

Ingredients for success

The ingredients for success mentioned by the sector leader were:

- support from other sector leaders
- a group of committed, motivated teachers
- funds to allow payment for release
- support from schools
- good leadership and direction
- clear purpose or goal
- diversity of ideas.

The following are the ingredients of success, as mentioned by the participants in this case study:

- having a clear purpose and common goal for meeting that is needs-based.
- increased learning through professional readings before and after sessions.
- a strong sector leader who is highly organised and able to keep the meetings on track.
- flexible (e.g. time for discussion) but also structured (purpose-focused) meetings.
- good networking and access to the right people to ensure there is mentoring and support.
- buy-in from teachers in that: “you can’t tell them to implement integrated studies, they need to want to do it – need to get inspired about it themselves”.
- access to funding.

Looking ahead

A potential split into several subgroups is being considered for 2011 to ensure information sharing can be better tailored to individual needs given the range of knowledge and expertise across the participating schools. It is felt that perhaps a mentoring system may be more appropriate for some school participants.

Number one tip

The number one tip from the sector leader is to have a common goal and tailor learning to individual needs.