

ASSESSMENT AND LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS

Newsletter | December 2012

Background

Literacy Assessment Project (LAP) and
Assessment and Learning Partnerships
(ALP) Research

In 2012 the project moved further into the research phase. Seven teacher instruments were developed which are helping us to understand the links between the function of a PLT, the development of teacher knowledge, skills and attitudes and the influence on student learning.

In 2012, the research has involved 148 schools from the Gippsland, Northern Metropolitan, Eastern Metropolitan, Southern Metropolitan, Hume and Grampians regions, as well as from the Catholic Education Office, Melbourne, and the Independent school sector. 1,085 teachers are involved as well as 36,963 students.

The ALP Steering Committee has met three times over the course of the year. Representatives from the University of Melbourne, the Catholic Education Office, Melbourne (CEOM), the Independent school sector and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) sit on this committee.

Thank you for your participation over the course of 2012. Have a wonderful end of year break. We are looking forward to working with you in 2013.



Prof Patrick Griffin



Associate Prof Esther Care

Chief Investigators, Assessment & Learning
Partnerships

ALP is a large-scale project, based on principles of collaborative use of assessment data to improve student outcomes, which encompasses programs across CEOM, DEECD and Independent sectors.

Catholic Education Office, Melbourne (CEOM)

Literacy Assessment Project (LAP)

CEOM schools are involved in LAP which was the foundation project for ALP research. CEOM organises cohorts of Literacy Leaders and Principals to take part in face-to-face professional development (PD) over the course of three years. Schools take part in pre and post testing in literacy.

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) and Independent sectors

Professional learning teams (PLTs) from DEECD and Independent schools are involved in the research program and take part in predominantly online PD. Schools carry out pre and post testing in any or all of the following: numeracy, literacy, problem solving.

Current Findings

Teacher Numeracy Knowledge

This questionnaire examines teachers' familiarity with and confidence to teach numeracy at the various ALP progression levels. Based on the initial round of responses, teachers reported that they were more familiar with numeracy content than they were confident to teach it. There were also statistically significant differences noted among secondary and primary teachers and among teachers with different number of years in teaching experience. For more details, a summary of findings for this questionnaire can be accessed from the 'Resources' section of the project school site.

Teachers' Metacognition

This instrument collects information about teachers' developing awareness regarding the complexities of differentiated teaching practice and its relationship with their own professional learning. This implies an understanding of the challenges that differentiated teaching entails for professional learning and teachers' capacity to plan and regulate their own learning to face these challenges. Based on the responses collected for this questionnaire, 6 levels in the development of teachers' metacognition have been identified and described. Individual feedback for teachers, in the form of a 'Learning Readiness report', will be available on ARCOTS from Monday 17 December.

A collaborative research project

Catholic Education Office (Melbourne), Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the University of Melbourne

PLT Functioning

Two developmental progressions, PLT Activities and PLT Engagement, have been produced from an analysis of the responses to the PLT questionnaires. Schools can download the developmental progressions from the 'Resources' section of ARCOTS. Teachers completing the questionnaires are able to download an individual 'rocket' or Learning Readiness report for each questionnaire. Those who completed the PLT questionnaires in each semester are able to access a profile report showing any changes between the two semesters.

Teachers' Familiarity with Literacy

Thank you to those who have responded to the Familiarity with Literacy Skills Questionnaire. We are currently undertaking our analysis of the responses we have at this stage. When we are finished we will provide feedback.

Teacher Beliefs and Attitudes

We encounter a lot of firmly held beliefs and attitudes and this instrument helps us understand how your beliefs about teaching and learning link to student performance.

Classroom Practices

This questionnaire will help us link teaching practices to changes in student performance. We are keen to ascertain and understand what you are doing in the classroom.

Student Testing

CEOM/LAP Schools

During Assessment Period 2, the online ARCOTS testing was available to all CEOM cohorts, following its use for calibration purposes by Cohort 5 and 6 schools at the beginning of the year. There was a great response from schools with 90% of students from Cohort 5 and 6 schools being tested, and 63% of students from Cohort 1 to 4 schools being tested with ARCOTS.

DEECD and Independent Schools

Figure 1 illustrates a major focus of the project team in 2012. Through data analysis we found a systematic pattern of higher capacity students showing less growth than lower capacity students. In the graph, the red line is illustrative of the average performance change in student performance in the lower quartile (lower

25% of each class in March testing results) of the study. The solid blue line demonstrates the average performance change between two testing time points for the upper quartile (upper 25% of each class). This pattern is repeated in all year levels across regions and systems throughout the state. It is consistent with NAPLAN data, PISA trends and the PIRLS results announced recently in the press, which makes this research even more important.

The basic premise is that all students can and should learn, so that if targeted instruction is aimed at the level of development or the zone of proximal development, improved performance will be achieved. Yet it is clear that most improvement is occurring in the lower quartile – growth is not spread across all proficiency levels. It is wonderful that the lower group is improving so much that the project is succeeding overall. Imagine how good it would be if the upper group improved by the same amount or more!

In Figure 1, the lower of the two dashed blue lines indicates the 'same' amount of growth as for the lower group, and the steeper dashed line indicates 'the optimum growth' patterns for the upper quartile. These are the kind of outcomes we hope you can achieve in 2013 and beyond. To help you, we have added a data analysis tool to ARCOTS which can be found in the 'Resources' section of the School site. This tool gives you the chance to carry out upper and lower quartile analysis on your

student data to find out where the growth is occurring.

The aim of the project is to enable teachers to use data within a developmental framework to improve the outcomes of all students; so the dashed blue lines are as important as the solid red line.

If your school has a growth pattern such as the two dashed blue lines in Figure 1, we want to hear from you! The project would like to know how you are differentiating in the classroom and what strategies you are employing to increase student outcomes in the upper percentile. Email us at alp-research@unimelb.edu.au.

We have included more about data interpretation in Module 8 to assist you in interpreting two points of time data as well as including analysis of the lower quartile (bottom 25%) and the upper quartile (top 25%) students.

Teacher questionnaires

The different teacher instruments are designed to work together. It is important that the outcomes of our research are applicable to school practice; to achieve this goal we need a larger sample size with completed data across the instruments.

To answer the research question we require both student and teacher data. Without both forms of data, the amount of analysis that can be performed is restricted. The current round of teacher questionnaires will remain open to give everyone a chance to win the Kindle. The

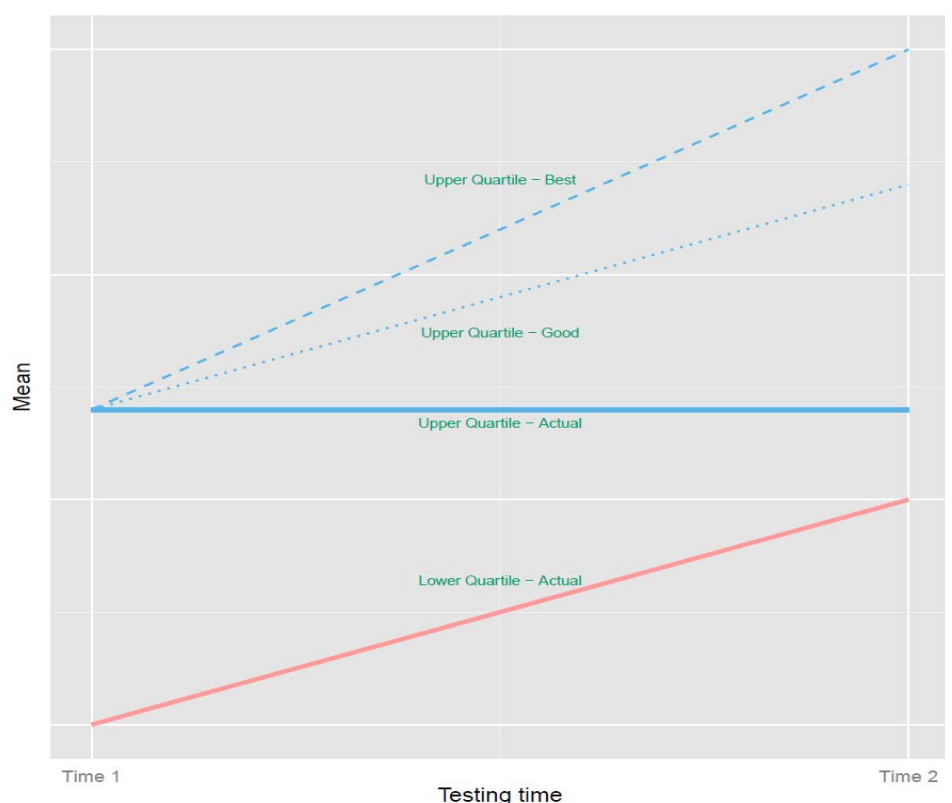
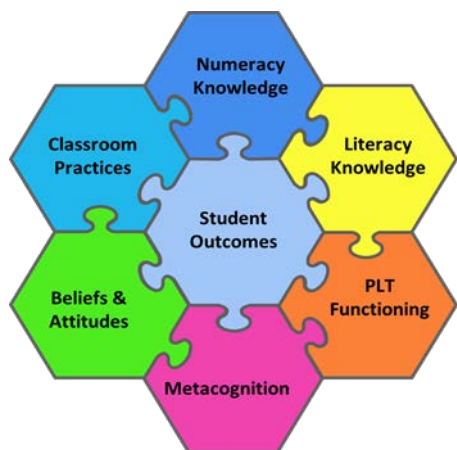


Figure 1. Average student growth pattern, years 3-10, between two testing time points - upper and lower quartiles

final decision on the remaining Kindle and the \$500 school award will be made on January 7th, 2013.



Congratulations, so far!

The following participants were awarded a Kindle as an Early Bird prize for their efforts in the research project:

- Jennie Vine, Wooranna Park Primary School
- Matthew Taylor, Our Lady's Primary School – Craigieburn
- Catherine Fay Foster – Sale College
- Toni Tsalikis – Balwyn Primary School

There are still four Kindles to be given away at the end of 2012 to teachers who complete all applicable instruments in this round (Semester 2), and who have completed all the instruments previously available. At the end of 2012, those schools at which a minimum 70% of teachers who are registered for the research have completed all questionnaires will go into a draw to win a **\$500 voucher for the school library**.

These incentives are available to any school or teacher within a school where at least one intact PLT has registered for the study.

Master of Teaching and the Assessment Project

In 2012 a concerted effort has been made by the ARC to link ALP more closely with the University of Melbourne, Master of Teaching (M. Teach) major unit on Assessment, Learning and Teaching (ALT). M. Teach candidates were given access to the ALP online units to support their lecture and tutorial sessions. As a result, candidates were introduced to the role of teacher professional learning teams in the use of data, and were required to collaborate on the use of data as a preparation for their major individual

assignment. Meanwhile, we have been simultaneously looking at introducing a key element of the M. Teach course – rubric writing using developmental frameworks – into ALP.

In 2013, knowledge gained from both ALP and ALT will be incorporated in a textbook entitled: 'Assessment for Teaching', to be published by Cambridge University Press. This will support both programs.



Patrick Griffin presenting Jennie Vine with her Kindle at the ARC Annual Function, 29 November 2012.

Building capacity

CEOM/LAP

The Literacy Assessment Project (LAP) has two cohorts involved in teaching programs in 2013. The teaching program has now been running for 8 years with participants from 109 CEOM schools.

DEECD and Independent Schools

ALP PD Program

Updates

A major change to the PD course in 2012 has been the introduction of visits by facilitators to the PLTs throughout the year. Facilitators and participants have found these visits beneficial and have reported an increased sense of partnership.

A major addition to the course for 2013 is the introduction of second year modules. The focus of these modules will be to build teacher capacity to develop, implement and analyse judgement-based

assessment. This will allow teachers to use school-based assessments alongside ARCOTS testing to inform teaching practice. Second year modules will be made available through the 'Resources' section of ARCOTS.

Information for 2013

PLTs are able to enroll in the research study's PD program for 2013. As ALP is a research program, not a standalone PD and testing program, enrolled teams must participate in the research and participation in the PD course is free to those engaged and active in the research. There is a fee for those not involved in the research.

Specialist Certificate in Leadership of Assessment Practice

The Specialist Certificate is available to all teachers in 2013 who have completed the PD program. Upon completion of the two subjects, the 25 points can be classed as credit towards a Master of Education at the University of Melbourne. During 2013 we aim to build this course into a complete Masters Degree based on the extended PD program and a project based on interpretation of your school's data.

Short Course for School Leaders

Principals, Assistant Principals and others who do not have direct access to a class or functioning PLT will be able to enroll in the Short Course for School Leaders in 2013.

All Principals/Assistant Principals will be able to access the modules through [this](#) website from Wednesday 19 December 2012.

2013 PD for DEECD and Independent Schools

Free research-based PD and testing program: click [here](#) to register.

[Fee based non-research program](#)

[Award pathways](#)

For further information please contact:

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Resources

Schools involved in the research have ongoing access to the following resources:

- PD modules
- Developmental progressions
- Instructional videos
- Summary findings
- Additional readings
- Data analysis tools

To access these resources please go to the School section of [ARCOTS](#) under 'Download Resources'.

ARCOTS Testing Dates 2013

Testing period 1

CEO: Feb 11 to Mar 1

DEECD & Independent: Mar 4 to 28

Testing period 2

CEO: Sep 2 - 20

DEECD & Independent: Oct 7 to Nov 1

Keep in touch

If you would like to keep in touch with ALP research you can add your name to the mailing list [here](#).

Further information

If you have any questions about ALP research please contact:

alp-research@unimelb.edu.au

Click [here](#) to visit the project webpage.