



The Role of Principals in Developing Subject Literacy

Aaron Wilson & Stuart McNaughton

May 27, 2013

 **WOOLF FISHER
RESEARCH CENTRE**

FACULTY OF EDUCATION
THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND

Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau

Three key assumptions

- ❖ The ambitious Starpath goals cannot be achieved without high quality subject-specialised literacy teaching in every classroom
- ❖ Research-informed PD content needs to be tailored to meet specific local needs identified through school-based analyses of student and teacher evidence
- ❖ Strong leadership is needed to drive within-school inquiry and to turn ~~new~~ knowledge into new practice



Our approach to literacy improvement

Key phases	Purpose
1. Analyse evidence of student subject literacy outcomes	To identify specific areas of student strength and need
2. Analyse evidence about literacy teaching (observations, knowledge)	To identify and prioritise specific areas of literacy instruction that can be fine-tuned to better meet identified student needs
3. Provide inquiry tools and professional development	To give middle leaders inquiry tools and knowledge to address specific identified needs



Task: to reflect on your role in relation to the three phases of our process

- ❖ Examine the student achievement data and the observation data and identify patterns and possible relationships e.g. *from what you know about literacy learning, how might current patterns of teaching contribute to patterns of student achievement?*
- ❖ But first, an explanation of the data:



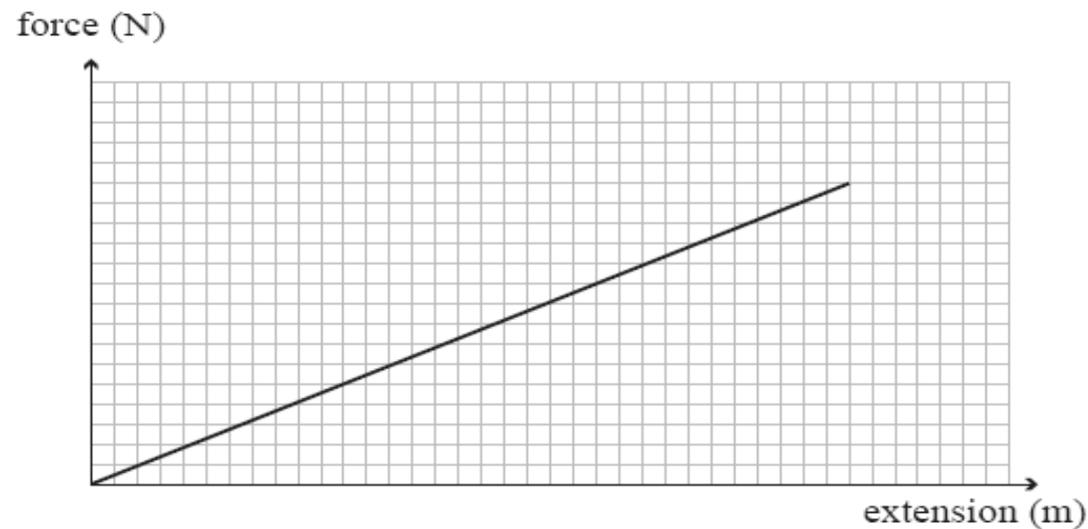
Proxy literacy achievement standards 2007-2011

- ❖ Subject achievement standards (AS) with high literacy demand
- ❖ Selection of Levels 1-3 from English, mathematics and science
- ❖ Nominated by subject experts
- ❖ Not (necessarily) related to L1 or UE Literacy Requirement
- ❖ Aggregated from 16 Group A schools
- ❖ Presented as difference of cluster pass rate from national pass rate

AS 90255: Demonstrate understanding of mechanics

A spider spins a web in the garden and a moth gets caught in the web. The web stretches downwards by 0.065 m when the moth of mass 0.003 kg is caught in it.

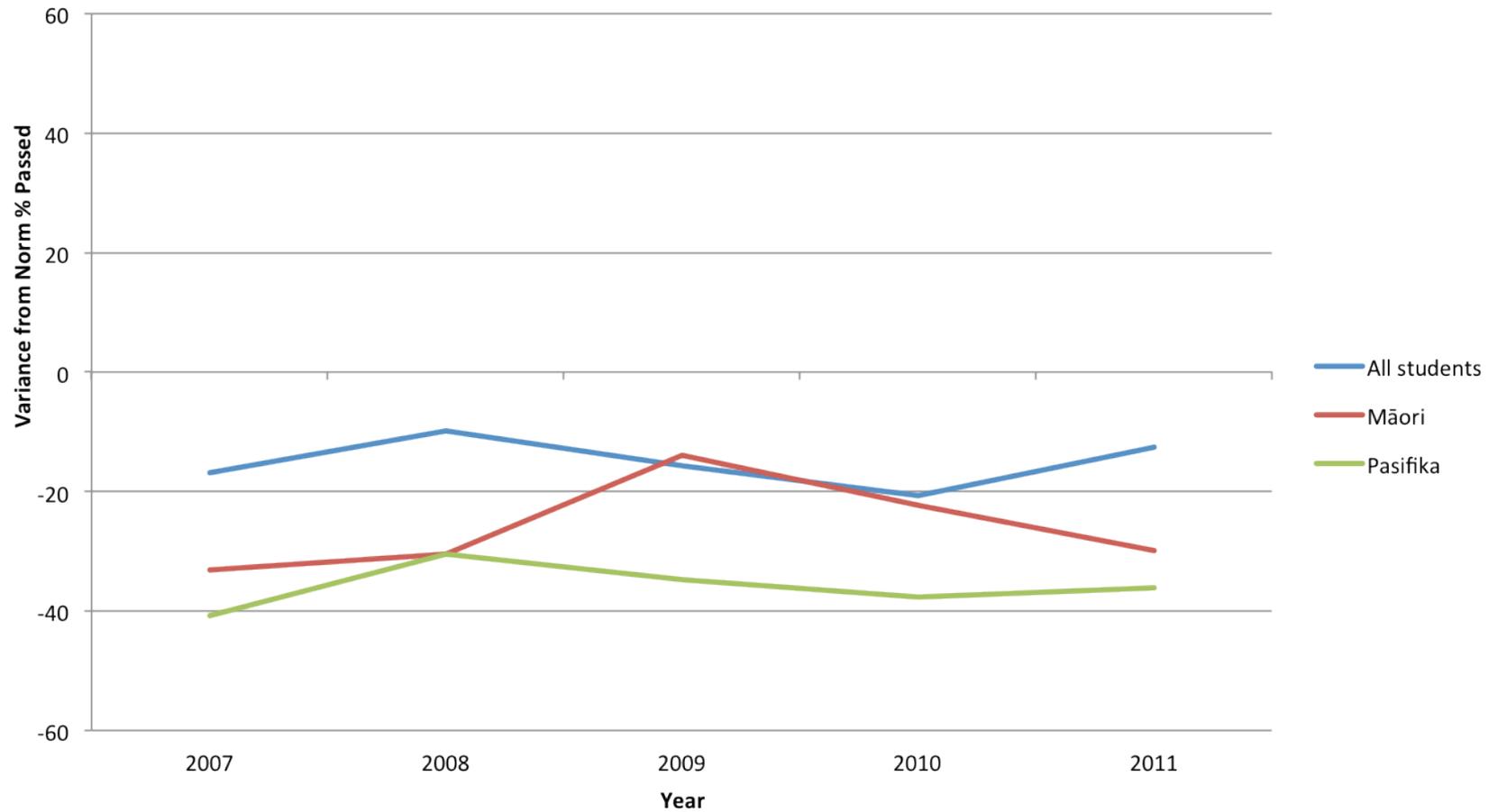
A graph for force against extension for the spider's web is shown below.



- (d) Explain why the formula $W = Fd$ cannot be used to calculate the elastic potential energy stored in the web when the moth gets caught in it.

AS 90255 Pass rates

Level Two: 90255





Classroom instruction: observations

- ❖ A total of fifty teachers from Group A schools observed
- ❖ Researcher actively watches teacher in 3 minute 'blocks' then codes/transcribes the teaching activities for 3 minutes, enabling a ~50% sample of each observed lesson
- ❖ Database contains a total of 413 observation 'blocks'
- ❖ Data generally presented as percentage of observed blocks in which that phenomenon was observed



Task

- ❖ Examine the student achievement data and the observation data and identify patterns and possible relationships e.g. *from what you know about literacy learning, how might current patterns of teaching contribute to patterns of student achievement?*



Some key messages from PD so far

- ❖ Increase the opportunities students have to read and write rich subject-area texts
 - Expect all teachers to routinely use ‘preparing for reading’ activities to scaffold students into more complex texts
- ❖ Increase opportunities for rich, authentic, student-centred talk about text



- ❖ Build on existing vocabulary focus with additional attention to:
 - Vocabulary other than subject-specific
 - Promoting students’ productive vocabulary
 - Developing students’ strategies (e.g. using context and morphology)
- ❖ Develop students’ knowledge of “how texts work” in different subjects (and how to use that knowledge in their reading and writing), esp.
- ❖ organisational features of text
- ❖ “language resources” (e.g. challenging subject-specific features of language at the sentence level)



Middle leaders were asked to follow up between sessions by:

- ❖ Using the *Reflecting on a Lesson* tool to identify and understand current patterns of teaching in their department
- ❖ Sharing the key messages about effective literacy instruction with other teachers in their department and school

Reflection Questions

1. How much do you as Senior Leaders think you should know about the content of these sessions?
– Does your answer differ by type of session? Why?
2. Whose role is it to follow up on the learning and its application in your school?
3. What do you know about how that follow-up is happening?





Key questions

How much should and do principals know about :

1. Patterns of student subject-literacy achievement?
2. Patterns of subject-literacy teaching?
3. Middle-leaders literacy professional development and follow-up inquiry and dissemination?

Task: Discussion based on handout