‘It's a collaboration not a course’: Evaluation of the effectiveness of the University of Melbourne Network of Schools 2014-17

Elizabeth Hartnell-Young & Nives Nibali
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We are especially grateful to all those UMNOS participants – school leaders, University experts and critical friends – who responded so positively to our requests for evidence.

Authors

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The University of Melbourne Network of Schools (UMNOS) is an initiative of the University run by the Melbourne Graduate School of Education (MGSE). It brings together a wide range of schools who apply to join for a three-year period. The purpose of the Network is to collectively impact on improving the learning outcomes and experiences of students, through a structured program that focuses on teaching and learning, and to inform, build and use the evidence base of the University of Melbourne. Over ninety schools were involved in the period 2014-17.

The UMNOS Research Steering Committee requested an evaluation into the effectiveness of UMNOS to date, seeking evidence in relation to four areas:

- the key characteristics and perceived goals of UMNOS
- the most effective features of the structure and practice of the UMNOS network in assisting schools to better identify goals, work with partners to implement evidence-based practices and improve student outcomes
- the evidence base to support judgements that UMNOS makes a difference to student learning
- how UMNOS might operate more effectively in future.

The evaluation team used a qualitative approach, incorporating a survey and interviews with current and past UMNOS participants, and collection of artefacts. Data were analysed inductively to develop a theory of action (below). The theory was based on developing collective efficacy through a partnership between schools and the University, to achieve a collective impact on teaching practices and thereby student outcomes, as reported by each school.

UMNOS was not driven by government or an education system seeking to implement a particular policy, and schools came from all sectors and from across the range of socio-economic status. UMNOS encouraged schools to choose a focus for action and work together to develop solutions. What set UMNOS apart was the strength of the instructional leadership of school leaders and the backbone support provided by the University, so that solutions emerged from the schools as they developed collective efficacy. These elements were critical in ensuring that the four key characteristics identified in this evaluation worked towards improving student learning outcomes. For this reason, schools appeared to benefit most from UMNOS when they joined in a state of readiness.

UMNOS theory of action

If this... Instructional leadership (Schools) then...
- Purpose and focus
- Commitment and accountability
- Trust and collaboration
- Capacity building and support

Collective efficacy

UMNOS SCHOOLS

Collective impact

ALL SCHOOLS
(ecosystem)

Changes in teaching practices, culture and structure

Improved student learning outcomes

University of Melbourne Network of Schools (UMNOS)
The four characteristics of UMNOS described in more detail in this report are:

- Purpose and focus
- Commitment and accountability
- Trust and collaboration
- Capacity building and support

The essential backbone support came mainly from the Director, expert researchers and critical friends. The critical friends provided a link between the University and school members, and between schools. Expectations of the role could have been clearer and more consistent to achieve desired outcomes.

The structure of UMNOS, with focus groups made up of several school leadership teams within each Network, enabled participants to build collective efficacy to target a specific area of improvement. The University considered the school leadership team as the agent for change, providing instructional leadership in schools, and participants recognised this feature as most valuable in generating improvement. In some cases, groups continued to collaborate after their formal membership concluded.

The reputation of the University of Melbourne and the evidence and expertise it provided gave school teams leverage to implement changes in teaching practice, culture and structure in their own context, beyond their expectations. Members were clearly learning through their participation, and for some this would be a springboard to further study and joint research with the University.

UMNOS encouraged schools to measure impact by planning evaluation of interventions at the outset. Participants in many schools confidently reported positive outcomes in relation to student learning growth in their focus area, measured by large scale testing and local data collection. In several schools, results for reading and writing showed growth greater than similar schools outside UMNOS. However, in other cases it was difficult to attribute outcomes to UMNOS interventions due to the ways that schools reported their data, indicating an opportunity to strengthen evaluation strategies and measures.
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Glossary

**ABLES** assessment tools are provided by the Victorian Department of Education and Training and designed to describe skills and abilities that teachers can observe in everyday school and classroom contexts and interactions with students in special settings.

**ACARA** Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (acara.edu.au) is an independent statutory authority.

**AITSL** Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (aitsl.edu.au) provides leadership for the teaching profession across Australia, including professional standards.

**ATAR** (Australian Tertiary Admission Rank) shows a student’s achievement in relation to other students and is calculated so tertiary institutions can compare the overall achievement of potential students.

**AusVELS** was the Foundation to Year 10 Curriculum (2013-2016) for Victorian government and Catholic schools, now replaced by the Victorian Curriculum F-10 as the mandated curriculum for all Victorian government and Catholic schools.

**Guttman Scale** (named after Louis Guttman) is formed by a set of items if they can be ordered in a reproducible hierarchy. For example, in a test of achievement in mathematics, if students can successfully answer items at one level of difficulty (e.g., summing two 3-digit numbers).

**MySchool** (myschool.edu.au) is a website provided by ACARA to display a range of information about schools across Australia.

**NAPLAN** (National Assessment Program: Literacy and Numeracy) is an annual assessment for students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9, made up of tests in the four areas (or ‘domains’) of reading, writing, language conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation) and numeracy.

**On Demand Testing** is an online resource provided by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) for teachers to use when, where and how they choose. Tests are designed to link to curriculum and standards and can be administered to a single student and/or a whole class.

**SOLE** (Student Online Learning Environment) is a learning management system of the University of Melbourne.

**VCE** (Victorian Certificate of Education) is the certificate that most students in Victoria receive on satisfactory completion of their secondary education.

**VRQA** Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (vrqa.vic.gov.au) maintains a register of all schools in Victoria.

**ZPD** Zone of Proximal Development is a concept introduced by Lev Vygotsky, psychologist and social constructivist. It refers to the difference between what a learner can do without help and what he or she can do with help.
Chapter 1: Understanding UMNOS and its impact

The University of Melbourne Network of Schools (UMNOS), based on voluntary membership, has operated since 2014. Unlike many networks that are made up of like schools, such as government schools, or those in a particular geographical area, UMNOS has been cross-sectoral – open to government, Catholic and independent schools – and potentially unbounded by geography. In order to join UMNOS, each school paid an annual membership fee (around $16,500) to the University and committed resources of personnel and time for a three-year period. With new networks commencing each year, and one specifically formed by geography (Goulburn Valley), five networks existed by December 2017. We refer to them as:

UMNOS 14 (16 schools)
UMNOS 15 (20 schools)
UMNOS 16 (20 schools)
UMNOS GV (18 schools)
UMNOS 17 (20 schools).

The five UMNOS networks considered in this report involved over 90 Victorian schools and one from Queensland. Figure 1 shows the proportion of schools in each sector, with government schools predominant. It includes schools that withdrew before completing three years’ involvement. While the proportion of independent schools has been constant over the period, the proportion of Catholic schools grew to reach 40% in 2017.

Figure 1: UMNOS schools by sector 2014-2017 (N = 94)

How the University saw UMNOS

The University, through the Melbourne Graduate School of Education (MGSE), provided a structured approach to improving teaching and learning through:

- A dedicated Director
- Access to expert researchers and research evidence
- A critical friend to support each focus group
- Access to professional learning seminars for principals and school leaders. A structured approach to working with school data sets and access to research-informed dashboards, so that the Network schools can evaluate how a school is progressing and demonstrate the impact of initiatives
- Support in building teachers’ instructional strategies aligned with agreed Network targets and the individual needs of each school
- A space for each Network on SOLE (the University’s Learning Management System)
- Wider engagement with the University in line with its engagement policy.

The Director, Katherine Henderson, had been a senior public servant with experience in leading large-scale improvement in schools (Suggett, 2013) and the researchers included Dean Emeritus Professor Field Rickards, Laureate Professor John Hattie, Emeritus Professor Patrick Griffin and Professor Stephen Dinham. A group of critical friends were also appointed by the University to act both as facilitators for sub groups of around five schools, and as brokers across schools.

These experts, researchers and critical friends provided the backbone support which Henderson described as ‘the deep expertise around learning’, saying ‘it’s not just technical and admin, it’s very much content around our work’.

UMNOS aimed to draw out the knowledge residing within schools and to build knowledge across schools. Laureate Professor John Hattie, one of the instigators of the network, said in a newspaper interview:

The network is about getting people to work together to actually understand that success is in that group. We keep looking elsewhere and suddenly thinking that out there somewhere there is a magic answer when my research shows that that is not the case. The answer is in schools (Villella, 2016).
The structure and operation of UMNOS was designed to build collective efficacy (Bandura, 1993): teachers’ belief in their collective ability to promote successful student outcomes. Collective efficacy is important, as Hattie (2012) found in his synthesis of meta-analyses. It is much more powerful and predictive of student achievement than socioeconomic status, prior achievement and the home environment. He suggests it requires a culture where teachers believe all students can learn, and where schools work together to develop interventions and provide evidence of impact.

The University therefore aimed to assist schools to share research, knowledge and resources, to work within and across school teams to use disciplined innovation methods, and to learn from leading researchers and practitioners and from each other. It worked directly with leadership teams to implement successful change, as the Director explained:

…our aim is about supporting schools and we work at the school leadership level… the collaboration is key to it …we support leadership teams. We do work around leadership, managing change, measuring impact and then translating that into what might happen in the classroom (Henderson).

The UMNOS structure for each three-year block created a network comprising up to eighty school members from twenty schools supported by the University. Schools selected into UMNOS committed to active involvement of the principal and the appointment of a success coordinator (SC) from within the staff at 0.5 EFT for a period of three years. Principals, success coordinators and up to two other team members from each school were key participants in the network and were expected to attend eight day-long seminars each year. UMNOS also provided 4-6 additional targeted seminar days for success coordinators.

Each UMNOS network (14, 15 and so on) can be represented as in Figure 2, with the backbone support underpinning activities. Within each network, small ‘focus groups’ of school leadership teams chose a shared focus (the star in Figure 2) such as reading, writing or data literacy, and developed common goals for interventions to improve teaching and learning. Each school developed a specific resourced action plan. Schools had opportunities to report on their progress at seminar presentations and a ‘showcase’ at the end of the three years. The critical friend ensured strong links between school leadership teams in the focus group, and connections with other schools within the bounds of the whole network.

How schools saw UMNOS

Schools who joined UMNOS sometimes described the network as research-informed professional learning. According to a presentation given in one UMNOS 15 school:

University of Melbourne Network of Schools is a three-year professional learning journey that gives schools access to the latest academic research in education. It also requires us to work in a focus group with other schools to collaborate on our shared topic – data literacy

Another, commencing in 2017, described UMNOS on its website, pointing out the focus on learning growth rather than purely achievement:

In this cutting-edge ‘clinical model’, teachers interrogate educational theories and models and provide evidence-based support for new educational theories that can be implemented at member schools. The development model changes our mindsets from achievement, where there are inherently good and bad learners and summative grades are important indicators, to growth, where communication is based around progress and movement recognising that all students can and will grow.

Schools generally saw the benefits of being involved in a collaboration with the University of Melbourne in terms of the resources of the Melbourne Graduate School of Education (MGSE). As one UMNOS 15 success coordinator noted, they valued ‘access to MGSE’s human resources and research, high calibre staff and educators that are in touch with both research and policy’.

The research team asked what benefits survey participants had hoped to gain from joining UMNOS. Among all survey respondents, almost two thirds of the open-ended responses referred to access to experts and current research, with one third relating to networking and professional development. Improving student learning outcomes fell lower in the listing. We extracted the responses from principals and success coordinators in particular, to produce the comparison in Table 1.
Table 1: Principals’ and success coordinators’ expectations of involvement in UMNOS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of principal responses</th>
<th>% of SC responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n=56</td>
<td>n=87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to experts and current research</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff professional development</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking/collaboration</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student and school improvement</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for school goal/focus</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to evidence-based strategies</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time out to reflect and plan</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results include rounding errors involved in numerical calculations.

The principals and success coordinators were clearly attracted by the experts in the University and the professional development based on their research. Other expected benefits were the opportunities to work with other schools. It appears that inputs were higher in participants’ minds than outcomes such as improving student learning or even the implementation of change. Some were looking for support in particular focus areas and evidence-based strategies, while time out to reflect and plan was much less important. One UMNOS GV school had reflected these priorities in its expression of interest:

> What we would hope to gain from joining this network is a stronger focus on current research and findings that would better inform our decisions at this point when we will be initiating significant changes and challenging the preconceived practices and ideas of our staff. Having direct access to some of the best and most respected Educational practitioners will help us to challenge the practices of those staff who may be more reluctant to embrace new ideas. Sharing our approaches and understandings with our colleagues from other schools will also be beneficial, as we are sure that we have many shared challenges. In addition, the opportunity to have a ‘critical friend’ who questions what we are doing should ensure that we are rigorous in our work and well informed.

This report explores how these expectations have played out since 2014.

The evaluation project

This evaluation was designed to provide evidence of the benefits and limitations of the UMNOS model and its implementation, to inform future planning within the University, and provide advice more broadly to schools, educators and education systems about effective school networks. Four key questions framed the project:

1. What are the key characteristics and perceived goals of UMNOS, and what changes in their instructional leadership do school leaders attribute to their involvement in UMNOS? How have these changes influenced improving student learning?
2. What are the most effective features of the structure and practice of UMNOS in assisting schools to better identify goals, work with partners to implement evidence-based practices, and improve student outcomes in the short to mid term? What are its limitations?
3. What is the evidence base to support judgements that UMNOS makes a difference to student learning, and how is it used by schools and the University?
4. In light of the evidence from participants, how might UMNOS operate effectively in future?

Data collection

The approach was interpretive rather than hypothesis driven. A two-stage data collection approach was used, incorporating a survey to gather information about the value of the various aspects of UMNOS, followed by targeted semi-structured telephone interviews and the collection of artefacts from selected schools. We attended several seminars where we observed the program and met participants, but did not visit any schools.
Stage 1
Using a list provided by the administrative managers of UMNOS (UoM Commercial), we sent emails with a survey link to principals, success coordinators and teachers in 91 schools who had ever had a direct involvement with UMNOS. This took place in term 4 (November-December 2017) when UMNOS 15 participants were just completing their three-year involvement, and UMNOS 14 was one year beyond its formal involvement. The total number of respondents was 122, from 71 schools across all networks. As Figure 3 shows, more than three quarters of respondents were Principal Class members or success coordinators, as might be expected. Three were both assistant principal and success coordinator in their school. ‘Others’ included a Director of Learning and Development, learning area leaders and a consultant employed in a school.

Figure 3: Roles of respondents to Stage 1 survey (N = 122)

Results include rounding errors involved in numerical calculations.

Stage 2
Everyone who responded to the survey also agreed to be involved in Stage 2. The research team expected to create a purposive sample of approximately twenty schools (from the five networks) and used the survey data relating to eight criteria to select them. We wanted to cover a range of school sizes and year levels, participant roles, locations, focus areas, reported changes in practice and outcomes, and length of time in UMNOS. The resulting sample covered all networks as shown in Table 2, with a total of 77 schools involved. After reviewing the response rates from the Stage 1 survey, we followed up schools from UMNOS 14 and invited several for interview. We conducted most interviews during Term 1, 2018, in February and March. The number of schools represented in Stage 2 increased to 26 as we included some interviews with principals with particular insights (including two whose schools had withdrawn from UMNOS and who did not complete the survey). All school interviews were conducted with individuals rather than teams to encourage them to comment freely about school matters. One interviewee was a teacher who had experience as a success coordinator in two UMNOS schools.

The evaluation questions were informed by meetings with the UMNOS Research Steering Committee and by University documents, and while similar for all participants – to allow for comparison – the questions were tailored to roles. The dimensions covered were:

- capacity for instructional leadership
- backbone support
- outcomes and impact
- focus on the instructional core
- collective efficacy
- collaboration
- bridging theory and practice
- sustainability

We also conducted tailored semi-structured interviews with University participants including Laureate Professor John Hattie; the Director of UMNOS, Katherine Henderson; five critical friends, and a data expert from MGSE, Jesus Camacho, bringing the total number of people interviewed to fifty-three. We recorded and transcribed all interviews to create digital text files.

As UMNOS did not require schools to submit specific outcome data, the research team contacted schools for evidence of outcomes relevant to the UMNOS work. Schools used a range of commercial and local tests to measure student outcomes and to evaluate the effectiveness of their interventions. We also viewed video clips and presentations on SOLE (the University’s Learning Management System). We accessed selected schools’ annual reports from their websites and the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority’s State Register.

Table 2: Participants in Stage 1 and 2 by Network

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Network</th>
<th>Schools Invited</th>
<th>Stage 1 survey schools responded</th>
<th>Number of individual responses</th>
<th>Stage 2 schools</th>
<th>Interviews conducted</th>
<th>Total Stage 1 &amp; 2 schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UMNOS 14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5 (4 Prin)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMNOS 15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14 (6 Prin)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMNOS 16</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13 (6 Prin)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMNOS GV</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5 (1 Prin)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMNOS 17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8 (3 Prin)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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We considered whether NAPLAN data on the MySchool website would assist in measuring student outcomes in relation to UMNOS. However while in some cases the relationship between a school’s focus area and relative student gain was clear, the very specific focus areas in some schools meant that their UMNOS interventions were not covered by NAPLAN testing. Where they were covered by the literacy or numeracy tests, many schools only used matched cohort data for the Years 3-5 (primary) and 7-9 (secondary), thereby limiting the possibility of showing growth over a longer time or for more of their students. Although it is possible to transfer individual student data across the primary-secondary boundary with permission, we found few schools reported on Year 5-7 data.

Data analysis

As well as informing the selection of Stage 2 schools, we used the survey data to identify reported behaviour change in terms of instructional leadership and teaching practices, and indications of improved student outcomes. Using an inductive approach, we coded all text – including survey comments and other digital data such as documents and interview transcripts – for themes, using NVivo software. These were based on the dimensions listed above, as well as other emerging themes. Using a grounded theory approach, we developed categories from the themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), looking for both positive and negative examples, expressed as strengths and limitations.

Finally, we used the qualitative data to flesh out and explain artefacts and outcomes data we had gathered. In this report we have included both majority views and singularities to identify the important features of UMNOS, its effectiveness, and suggestions for the future.

In the following chapters we report on each of the evaluation questions to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of UMNOS.
Chapter 2: ‘It really opened our eyes’: Key characteristics of UMNOS and its influence on changes in schools

In this chapter, we describe the key characteristics and goals of UMNOS. This is in line with the first question of this evaluation: What are the key characteristics and perceived goals of UMNOS, and what changes in their instructional leadership do school leaders attribute to their involvement in UMNOS? The effect of these changes on improving student learning is expanded in the next chapter.

Other researchers have identified essential characteristics of networks designed to lift student learning outcomes. In the UK, Earl, Katz, and Temperley (2005) categorised the key features as purpose and focus; relationships; collaboration; enquiry; leadership; accountability, and capacity-building and support. Rincón-Gallardo and Fullan (2016) found eight essential features of effective networks, including developing strong relationships of trust and internal accountability. In Victoria, Suggett (2014) found ten key features of effective networks, many of them similar, but also including thinking ‘as a system’.

When Horng and Loeb (2010) conducted in depth research on instructional leadership in three large urban school districts in the US, they consistently found that schools demonstrating growth in student achievement were more likely to have principals who were strong organisational managers. These principals developed the organisation structures and strategic personnel practices for improved instruction more than they spent time in classrooms or coached teachers.

Beyond education, the literature on collective impact provides useful understandings of successful backbone support. In their work on accelerating change in community contexts, Turner, Merchant, Kania, and Martin (2012) included shared measurement as an important condition.

The research team considered the literature, and the responses of school and university participants in UMNOS, to develop a set of four characteristics describing UMNOS, and labelled them:

- Purpose and focus
- Commitment and accountability
- Trust and collaboration
- Capacity building and support

We describe each characteristic in some detail in this chapter. While some researchers list leadership separately, we have taken leadership to be important in underpinning all characteristics, and all four to be important in developing leadership within and beyond UMNOS. We suggest that instructional leadership from schools and backbone support from the University are elements of leadership fundamental to the operation of UMNOS, as Figure 4 illustrates. As a result of undertaking the evaluation, we mapped the theory of action, whereby the four central characteristics influence growth in collective efficacy, leading to collective impact, evidenced by the implementation of changes in teaching practices, culture and structure in schools, and consequently by improved student learning outcomes, as reported by the schools involved.

Figure 4: UMNOS theory of action

![UMNOS theory of action](image-url)
i. Purpose and focus

Participants held a common view that the purpose of UMNOS was to improve student learning outcomes.

*Our focus is, through whatever we do, to have impact on kids learning. Everything else is for that purpose* (Henderson).

The key criteria for school selection into UMNOS, as listed on the website, were ‘a deep commitment of the School Leadership Team and the School Council or Board to leading student learning and instruction, and a clear purpose in wanting to participate in the Network’. In the survey, participants were asked why they applied to join UMNOS. We coded the responses into broad categories, which revealed that improving student outcomes was clearly important to participants, whether expressed as a ‘pull’ factor (improve outcomes) or a ‘push’ factor (poor data/review). Also important were an interest in collaboration; professional learning around research; access to experts and evidence-based practices. The curriculum content areas came under mathematics or STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) and literacy. Success coordinators were also very motivated by the research-informed professional learning on offer. Collaboration featured highly for both groups.

One success coordinator provided a very detailed list, including seeking greater understanding about growth in student learning, an important element of UMNOS:

*To learn more about ‘IMPACT’ – To answer the questions: What is it? How do we measure it? Where are we having impact in our school? BUT to also delve deeper to understand what 12 months’ growth looks like and to take our data to a more complex level, by developing a growth mindset in both our teachers and students.*

*To encourage teacher reflection by asking ‘why’ questions and for teachers to design the learning sequences around the formative assessment.*

*To further ‘share’ with our learning community, the learning afforded, to allow ‘our teachers to see learning through the eyes of their students’ and ‘for students to see themselves as their own teachers’ (SC, UMNOS 17).*

Several respondents spoke about a ‘moral purpose’ underpinning their work, while one principal saw benefits in working with others within a rigorous framework:

*We wanted an opportunity to work with others on school improvement. We wanted to have access to high quality professional learning and an opportunity to learn and work together over an extended period of time with a more rigorous framework potentially provided by participating in UMNOS. Also to improve the way we use data to inform our practice (P, UMNOS 15).*

Defining a focus for action

Within the broad purpose, schools worked in focus groups – supported by input from experts and a critical friend – on clearly-defined areas of concern or interest. Schools reported focus areas such as data literacy, STEM, reading, writing and feedback, but forming into these groups was not simple.

In the Goulburn Valley Network, every school focused on reading: ‘We were lucky in the Goulburn Valley in that we were working on one thing’, one success coordinator said. This was strongly supported by a critical friend:

*Some of them wanted to do maths, or writing, but they were happy to go with reading and that’s been another plus in my opinion because we’ve been able to tailor all of the time for reading (CF 4).*

One school in this Network noted the long-term nature of the focus in its Annual Report:

*During 2016 [this school] was a member of the University of Melbourne Network of Schools (UMNOS) in the Goulburn Network. It was the first year of a long-term project designed to improve the reading comprehension of all students…The aim of Year One was to establish effective strategies and practices and to facilitate their adoption by all teaching staff.*

In other networks, several focus areas were evident, with reading and writing popular. During the UMNOS seminars, time was provided to support schools to choose a focus, with assistance from the critical friends. The focus group topics since the inception of UMNOS are listed in Table 3.
In every new UMNOS Network, focus groups were established slowly, usually taking at least six months after schools joined UMNOS, and sometimes longer. One critical friend explained why:

‘We weren’t going in to them and saying to them that this has to be your focus based on your data or based on anything else. They were choosing that focus, so we had to have that flexibility that we would adapt to whatever that focus area was, or we would get a critical friend in who had that level of expertise, and that flexibility I think, is something that schools have appreciated (CF 5).’

School participants also described the time taken to make a decision:

‘When we were first in the focus group we were struggling a little bit near the end, in the end of the first year or at the start of the second year, just getting our focus and having the schools all agree in the sort of process we were going through to do our work and then report back (P, UMNOS GV).’

Our critical friend supported us a lot and guided us in how to form ideas. In the beginning they really struggled to find a focus, not just our school, a lot of schools. We really had to analyse the data and make a decision (SC, UMNOS 15).’

And after initial concern, a success coordinator appreciated the process:

‘Everybody is swimming in their own data and trying to work out what their focus is; and forcing connections where there isn’t a purpose for that would be wasteful (SC, UMNOS 17).’

These focus areas demanded sustained instructional leadership within schools – particularly from the principal and the success coordinator, supported by the critical friends – to keep up the momentum within the school and in the focus group. While schools chose a specific focus for their UMNOS work, the way of working and learning could transfer easily to other areas of the curriculum, as in this school from UMNOS 14:

‘We had a team that met every week just on UMNOS. And every week we were looking at our targets, and where are we at next. And of course that informed the work of a whole series of other teams, professional learning teams, the academic committee. So it really helps set the agenda instead of other things that really weren’t that important filling the void; this helped drive the agenda. That’s why I think this sort of model is a long-term model (P, UMNOS 14).’

Once determined, the focus areas translated into specific goals for individual schools and groups of schools. These focus groups were the main opportunity for collaboration. An UMNOS 14 school committed to ‘NAPLAN growth for the matched cohort from Year 7 to Year 9 to be 10 points above the state mean in writing’. One UMNOS 15 school stated that ‘our goal is to strive for best practice in this area to improve our knowledge of our students and to inform teaching practices for student improvement’. Similarly, another aimed to improve student learning ‘by building staff capacity as evidence-informed practitioners in Years 4, 7, and 10 Mathematics’. A third UMNOS 15 school reported the school goal ‘to develop a culture where teachers see themselves as learners and work collectively to provide maximum impact on student learning growth’, and went on to note:

‘We were in the ‘Feedback’ group. Our group logic was: Collaborative learning communities where teams of teachers give and receive feedback; use evidence to diagnose learning needs of students; develop effective learning interventions; and evaluate the impact these interventions have had on their students’ learning growth.’

Another group of UMNOS 15 schools chose the goal ‘To improve student learning by building staff capacity as evidence-informed practitioners’, and outlined specific objectives in assessment, instruction, curriculum and leadership. As an example of a specific objective, this group chose instructional practice, and stated ‘Teachers will use the student’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) to differentiate learning’.

Several schools then followed through by incorporating their UMNOS goal into school planning documents. One school set a broad goal ‘to improve student achievement in Years 7-12’ with indicators including ‘to have a 0.8 or more effect size in NAPLAN reading and numeracy between Years 7 and 9’, and as this principal reported:

‘We are two years in...the hard yards are to come. Our 2018 Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) has our Goal 1 dedicated to UMNOS (P, UMNOS GV).’

Documenting and then broadcasting the goals is an important leadership action in embedding the focus for improvement into the vision and operations of the school.

Table 3: UMNOS focus group topics by Network, 2014-17

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<tr>
<th>Network</th>
<th>Focus Areas</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UMNOS 14</td>
<td>writing</td>
<td>UMNOS 15</td>
<td>data literacy feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>UMNOS 15</td>
<td>writing</td>
<td>UMNOS 16</td>
<td>STEM feedback reading</td>
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<td>UMNOS 16</td>
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<td>data literacy feedback</td>
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ii. Commitment and accountability

In order to join UMNOS, schools had to commit to ‘leadership of learning and instruction’ as their priority, and, as noted earlier, schools made a significant practical commitment. This commitment drove an internal accountability within schools and to network colleagues, unlike a compliance mentality to an external authority. In addition to leading learning and instruction, in 2018 the website listed the other commitments as:

- Participating in 5–8 Network seminars per year
- Developing and sharing dashboards to evaluate Network and school outcomes
- Appointing a dedicated 0.5 EFT success coordinator
- Full participation of the school’s success coordinator in the professional learning program
- Participating in the Network for three years
- Each school needs to commit the 0.5 EFT salary for their success coordinator, and a Network membership fee of $16,500 per year.

Leadership teams were the basis of school participation in UMNOS. With the principal’s involvement obligatory, schools usually nominated additional school leaders such assistant principals or literacy leaders. As the Director explained:

> It’s important that the leadership participates – which is why we have that as a requirement – because we know the evidence is if you want to make sustainable improvements and change, the principal has to be evidently a leader of instruction (Henderson).

Seminar attendance was essential so ‘they had time out or away from all the normal kind of operational pressures in the school to pay attention and think about the work they do’ (Henderson) and was valued by a principal because ‘you’re not going to get the runs on the board, without the principal there’ (P, UMNOS GV).

Conceptions of leading learning and instruction varied, and were often intertwined with the term ‘school improvement’. Some principals were clear before entering UMNOS, expressing a team approach:

> I think you have to be a leader of instruction before you get to UMNOS to be included. Certainly when we applied, you had to demonstrate a track record of, and a commitment to, school improvement. If the leadership team’s not committed... definitely the leadership team’s got to be absolutely 100% behind it (P, UMNOS 14).

For others it led to greater understanding:

> When you are at school and you’re caught up with lots of different things happening, the instructional leadership is something that you can easily put aside because you’re caught up in every day. So being able to go to UMNOS and actually sit down and not have that distraction, and be able to work with your team, that’s also leading teaching and learning. I think that builds, not just your capacity, but the team that you’re working with, and I get to actually understand my leadership of teaching and learning (P, UMNOS 17).

Several participants reported that UMNOS provided other leaders with a purposeful framework for regular meaningful discussions with their principals.

They generally appreciated the three-year commitment and the need to contribute to ensure the success of UMNOS because ‘it keeps you on track all the time’ (SC, UMNOS 15). A critical friend also described the tangible value of the time frame:

> Three years’ commitment means there’s genuine change. We’re seeing that change in Goulburn Valley. Teachers say ‘I can’t believe that kids coming up know so much about reading’. They’ve got a grounding in what reading’s about (CF 4).

The University clearly required each participating school to appoint a success coordinator from their staff with time release to work with their school leadership team, as well as Network and University of Melbourne colleagues to implement the Network’s shared professional approaches to teaching and learning in their schools.

On the UMNOS website, the University also suggested the following approaches:

- Developing dashboards and other resources that focus on leading the use of educational data in the school
- Collaborative processes in our schools to support all students’ learning
- Developing a regular monitoring process for all students
- Generating and sharing school-based solutions based on internal and external research
- Evaluating all school-based implementations and outcomes
- Collaborating with teaching and learning leaders in your school to provide relevant leadership and professional development on high impact instructional strategies
- Working with teachers to develop evaluation of interventions
- The collection of evidence, and conducting sessions about the interpretation of evidence and impact, leading to defensible and transparent evidence about interventions

As the success coordinator was the key school leader with a time allowance, he or she was the driver of many of these approaches. This led to the initial appointment of data experts to this role in some schools, notwithstanding their areas of curriculum expertise. However, the topics covered in the success coordinator seminars show a broad range, including learning and change theory, assessment, evaluation, literacy leadership and promoting deep knowledge acquisition. Figure 5 shows one success coordinator’s job description in an UMNOS 15 school with the focus of data literacy.
summed up the role as ‘superhuman’:

“... working closely with the principal, the UMNOS school encompassing change management, coaching and advocating. The role tended to evolve over the time of UMNOS involvement, catalysing many schools to make such an appointment: It signalled the importance of the chosen focus, enabled the time allowance enabled both symbolic and practical leadership.”

In an UMNOS 14 school, the success coordinator reflected that her role had included ‘management of data and assessment at a whole school level, and coaching staff and leaders to be data literate and use research-based practices’. Having a significant time allowance enabled both symbolic and practical leadership. It signalled the importance of the chosen focus, enabled the success coordinator to meet with leaders and teachers during the day, and allowed time to prepare survey instruments, find readings and influence instructional practice.

UMNOS was the catalyst for many schools to make such an appointment:

“UMNOS gave us that time, even though you have to pay for it. During the day, you’re in your teams, because you’re an appointed success coordinator. It doesn’t just dissipate during the day. You’ve got your success coordinator that’s going to make it happen (SC, UMNOS 15).”

The role tended to evolve over the time of UMNOS involvement, encompassing change management, coaching and advocating.

In summary, the success coordinator had a pivotal leadership role, working closely with the principal, the UMNOS school team, other staff and the critical friend. One critical friend summed up the role as ‘superhuman’:

“It would be really difficult to write the role description for the success co-ordinator, because you’re needing a superhuman person who’s got this data background, interpersonal skills, really interested in professional learning for the research but can also walk in the classroom and do a demonstration in a lot of content areas (CF 2).”

Vertical and lateral accountability

With such a large commitment comes accountability. Within UMNOS accountability occurred in relation to achieving the vision, particularly for instructional leadership that improved teaching practice and growth in student learning. Participants felt vertical accountability to the school governing bodies and line managers, and lateral accountability to their peers, for the financial investment as well as the time allowances they were given. Success coordinators felt accountable to their line managers, usually principals, and had their UMNOS work documented in performance plans. Principals mentioned that they felt accountable ‘in every sense’ for measurable outcomes in opinion surveys or test results, with one declaring ‘you don’t want to feel like you’re just throwing money at random acts of improvement’. Principals in government, Catholic and independent schools said:

“I’m answerable to the school board and I report to them based on what our key performance indicators are from our annual action plan and from our strategic plan... We pay levies to the Catholic Education Office and they support curriculum areas, and we’ve made the decision to go outside of that because we didn’t feel that we were getting the support that was required, so they will ask me about accountability around that money as well (P, UMNOS 17).”

For me and in terms of the cost and staff resourcing it’s about making sure that the learning and the work from those seminar days comes back into the school and drives the school improvement. The priority is the priority, it’s in the AIP. I have equity funding so all of my funding, it’s all linked back into the work related to that priority which is coming from UMNOS work (P, UMNOS GV).”

“I look for improvement especially in the learning and teaching area. So I do a 360 [degree feedback] as well, so I look for my impact as an educational leader within my own 360 data, and all that data that an independent school uses to evaluate and to deliver surveys through Independent Schools Victoria, so we get that data and we talk about that and we feed that back to staff as well (P, UMNOS 15).”

One UMNOS 15 success coordinator claimed ‘at the end of the day if the data was bad, I’d have my butt kicked’ and other leaders reported similar accountabilities within their schools:

“It’s part of my performance plan, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): responsibility to college executive to lead the data-informed practice charge, to push people where necessary. We have a significant metric for performance plans (school leader, UMNOS 14).”

“I’m accountable back to the principal so I meet with her regularly and she monitors exactly what I am doing. I’m accountable within my team, in the sense of making sure that they are reflecting on what we’re doing. So how effective have the strategies been within the classroom and how or what are they putting into place or hoping to change in their teaching practice? (SC, UMNOS 15).”
The UMNOS model also encouraged lateral accountability and many participants expressed this in relation to their focus group and network. Accountability was particularly evident through interactions and presenting vignettes about their work in the regular seminars, and in the showcase held for each network at the end of three years. School leaders said:

One way [UMNOS] assisted was by providing a sense of accountability to self and to others, to implement actions and follow up. So there’s that external commitment you’ve made professionally to a group of colleagues that we’re going to do ‘x’ so we know that in a month’s time we will be meeting here again and we’ll be telling our colleagues about whether we have implemented ‘x’ or not (P, UMNOS 14).

I owe it to any of the schools in that 2015 intake, that if they called and needed anything whatsoever, or if even another school called me and said ‘you’ve been recommended because of a school that I worked with’, I would absolutely say ‘Yep, what can we do. How can we help?’ (AP, UMNOS 15).

We always have our homework done, and we’re always turning up and saying well this is how we’re doing… if we’re ever asked to present something we certainly make sure that we’ve got it there for them (AP, UMNOS 16).

A small number were more concerned with their individual situation with comments like ‘overall I think that we’re more accountable to our own schools’ (SC, UMNOS 15).

iii. Trust and collaboration

Trust is required in order for any school team and network to operate successfully. It requires high levels of emotional intelligence and acceptance of accountability. Building on the strong base of the University’s reputation, the Director and the University team took a proactive and sensitive approach to developing trust:

We’re actually aiming to build a group where deep relationships develop and in that context when those relationships develop you see trust developing and when you see trust developing you’re in a position for people to be vulnerable and put their data on the table to share what they’re struggling with as well as what they’re doing well… So we do not get to the point of sharing data, until we’re confident—and everyone in the room is confident, that that trust is at a level where they can rely on it. And we have never had that trust broken (Henderson).

As UMNOS crossed sectoral barriers government, independent and Catholic schools were expected to share their concerns, successes and data. For some schools this was a new experience. One government school principal commented:

I think it would be silly not to embrace cross-sectoral opportunities as they arise, because in the end that will help the whole teaching force, a much better, more skilled teaching force, and it also helps build up trust. There is a fundamental lack of trust across the sectors, and until you experience something like this you have got no chance of establishing that trust really (P, UMNOS 14).

Collaboration within and beyond one school

With trust in the University and developing trust in each other, school leaders made decisions collectively to improve their schools while collaborating with others to improve education more broadly. The Director clearly explained:

I’ve held strongly that this is a collaboration. It’s not a course. We don’t dictate. We take responsibility for guiding and direction but basically it’s not collaboration if we tell them what they have to do (Henderson).

While a fundamental of UMNOS membership is collaboration, schools experienced this in different ways and to varying degrees. For most, the collaboration occurred within the focus group, often facilitated by a critical friend, and in some cases within the Network of the year they commenced. In a few cases, schools made contacts across the years. Whatever collaboration occurred was clearly up to the schools themselves, as these leaders said:

We would do pre-work before we went to each of the seminars, particularly around the focus groups, and talked about what we thought was going to happen and to make sure that it kept going in a really positive way. I did some work in between the times because I wanted it to work (P, UMNOS 14).

Within the structure of the program you’re talking with people about what you’re doing and then they’re talking as well. So then you’re saying ‘Oh that’s interesting, I’d really like to see that in practice’, so I think it’s encouraged those connections and that ability to know what another school is doing to be interested in it, then to make that decision that you’re going to follow up on it (AP, UMNOS 16).

Two critical friends noted:

My best example of collaboration is the UMNOS 15 group. They visited each other’s schools for part of what they’ve done as an ongoing [thing]. So they would turn up to the seminars and talk about what’s happening in their school. To actually go to their school and see it, visit the classroom and be shown this is what it actually is, has been a great form of collaboration (CF 2).

and

I can’t think of another project where [these two UMNOS 15 schools] would build such a strong connection. They’re about 25 minutes away from each other. They could not be more different in their socio-economic status, yet [one] has openly said that they’ve learnt so much from the way that [the other] has structured their teaching and learning (CF 5).

In order to clarify the unique features of UMNOS, we asked participants to consider how UMNOS differed from other networks they had been involved in. An UMNOS 15 principal said:

We were all so different, primary, secondary, special, private, public, but that commonality. You were all actually involved in that overarching education, what it means, all sorts of strategies you need to be using. You don’t usually get to network with such a broad range (P, UMNOS 15).
iv. Capacity building and support

The backbone support provided by the University interacted with the instructional leadership offered by schools, resulting in high-level change. As one success coordinator commented: ‘[UMNOS] strengthened our capacity to lead change and be strategic about making the plan’. Key aspects of capacity building and support provided by UMNOS were: the regular seminar program where groups of school leadership teams heard from experts and collaborated on their focus areas; the support provided by critical friends; and the resources offered, particularly research readings and a data analysis tool known as the ‘Effect Size Calculator’. The apparent consequences of this capacity building on teaching practice, school culture and structures are detailed in Chapter 3. Additionally, the evaluation identified potential influence of UMNOS participants in the broader education system, often through personal career progression.

Seminar program

As noted previously, seminars for the full school teams were held regularly to provide input from research experts in a lecture format, followed by activities in the focus groups, generally led by critical friends. A sample day program showing time for expert input and presentations from schools, is shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Program for UMNOS end of year seminar, November 2017

Network of Schools – UMNOS 17
SEMINAR 8: WEDNESDAY 22 NOVEMBER 2017
‘Looking Back, Looking Forward – Time to Celebrate’

AGENDA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Presenter(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30 – 8:35</td>
<td>Welcome and overview</td>
<td>Katherine Henderson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:35 – 9:15</td>
<td>Panel Preparation</td>
<td>Focus Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:15 – 10:45</td>
<td>Keynote: The Role of Visual, Grammar and Real Literature in Improving Student Outcomes</td>
<td>Dr. Misty Adoniou</td>
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<td>10:45 – 11:15</td>
<td>Morning Tea</td>
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<td>11:15 – 12:05</td>
<td>Feedback Group</td>
<td>Focus Group</td>
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<td>12:05 – 12:55</td>
<td>Data Literacy</td>
<td>Focus Group</td>
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<td>12:55 – 1:40</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:40 – 2:30</td>
<td>Writing Presentation 1</td>
<td>Focus Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>2:30 – 3:20</td>
<td>Writing Presentation 2</td>
<td>Focus Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>3:20 – 3:30</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>Terri Cambell &amp; Mardi Gorman</td>
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Critical friends

Part of the backbone support for UMNOS schools included work with critical friends: ‘highly capable and experienced educators, who offer leadership, support and professional learning to schools collaborating in focus groups to achieve growth in student learning’. The critical friends were University staff or consultants employed to support instructional leadership with UMNOS schools. Critical friends attended seminars, facilitating sessions particularly with focus groups; conducted professional learning in schools; and connected schools with similar interests for visits and other collaborations.

Without a definite role description, the work evolved over the four years covered in this report. Here we describe the role based on contributions from participants in the network. Hattie described the role of critical friend as ‘another set of eyes...a diagnostician, a verifier’ and ‘a person with expertise in a particular focus area, external to the school, to ask those hard questions’. The Director of UMNOS said:

“We don’t expect them to drive the change; we expect them to stimulate, to engage people, to get them thinking...Every school has a critical friend and there’s about five schools in a focus group with one critical friend and that person gets to know those schools. Our backbone support is the deep expertise around learning through the critical friends (Henderson).”

In discussion, critical friends suggested the role was clearly to ‘model learning’ and employ a ‘gradual release of responsibility’ as they built up a picture of the work:

“Working with the critical friend group and connecting that to the keynotes, so saying, ‘this is where we’re at, what’s the keynote today? Is there any sort of connection between what they’re talking about and what we are working on?’ (CF 5).

“It may be we take them back to their core business. Are they an instructional leader, do they know what they’re looking for when they visit classrooms, you know, all of those sorts of things we’re guiding them there. Are they looking at the right evidence, are they setting up the right teams in their schools? (CF 2).

“We are very much about specific content, and I think they are almost crying out for that because there’s a lack of knowledge in the schools around certain content areas (CF 1).

“I would say critical friend role in UMNOS is a range of different roles: it might be PD provider, it might be critical analysis of data and strategic plans, it could be that you’re a learning partner (CF 5).”

One suggested that UMNOS gave permission to approach a school:

“Without a structure like the university has set up, with a preconceived project in mind, it’s very hard to go to a school and say ‘you need a lot of work in reading’ (CF 4).

Not only did the critical friends support schools, but they supported each other. As several reflected, a consultant’s life can be isolated, so it was attractive to collaborate with UMNOS critical friends to share strategies and seek advice, while supporting other research experts and the evidence base.
Resources

The University offered numerous resources to support the work of UMNOS. A site for each Network (14, 15, 16, GV and 17) was created on the University’s learning management system known as SOLE, with access restricted to representatives of schools in that Network. Resources on SOLE included seminar agendas, readings, video recordings and slide packs of the main seminar presentations.

Other resources included surveys such as Hattie’s School Health Check (Hattie, 2012) and a Progression of PLT Activities developed by MGSE’s Assessment Research Centre. These resources informed schools in the development of customised tools for data collection, as an UMNOS 15 success coordinator reported:

A lot of the tools we made were actually driven by us, but examples were given initially and we came to understand how to improve student learning, and then to devise tools for that (SC, UMNOS 15).

One of the resources most used by schools was the Effect Size Calculator developed by a PhD student and data expert, Jesus Camacho. This Microsoft Excel-based tool, shown in Figures 7 and 8, was designed to analyse individual school NAPLAN data and present a dashboard to schools in order to measure growth.

The tool was presented during the seminar days when participants became familiar with the data using their laptop computers and could understand the theory behind analysis. Figure 7 shows aggregated data within a hypothetical school, and Figure 8 shows the type of analysis that schools could use for NAPLAN data to identify performance and growth of individual students.

The main panes in Figure 8 show the student’s NAPLAN performance at two time points two years apart, the effect size of each element, and a dial showing the calculated effect of the teaching. Schools can also use a simpler, related tool that works with any sort of pre-test and post-test data without expert help. As with most UMNOS resources, schools could choose to engage as they wished.

Another popular tool for data representation was the Guttman Chart developed by Patrick Griffin, mapping student performance on test items of increasing difficulty, which one participant described as ‘easy to read because they’re colour-coded, and they’re organised; the teachers feel like it gives them a direction’ (SC, UMNOS 17).

As well as influencing and building capacity in the participating schools, over time UMNOS has the potential to influence the broader education system (or ecosystem), as one success coordinator noted:

The networks of the University of Melbourne are well-placed to contribute to the education sector in a meaningful and influential way (SC, UMNOS 15).

This has already occurred particularly through the influence of the University experts, through participants sharing information and resources beyond UMNOS, through promotions and transfers of staff and participants’ connections with other networks. This is described by one as ‘the tentacles that are starting to go beyond your year and your network’. As a result of its relationship with UMNOS, one school worked with New Zealand principals and school leaders to share the structures and processes it implemented.

Figure 7: Aggregated report in Effect Size Calculator (hypothetical school) (source: UoM)
The main panes in Figure 8 show the student’s NAPLAN performance at two time points two years apart, the effect size of each element, and a dial showing the calculated effect of the teaching. Schools can also use a simpler, related tool that works with any sort of pre-test and post-test data without expert help. As with most UMNOS resources, schools could choose to engage as they wished.

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Changes in instructional leadership due to participation in UMNOS

At the time of the evaluation, understandings of instructional leadership among UMNOS participants varied from strategic planning to modelling instruction and visiting classrooms. While several of the principals asserted that they had not changed their instructional leadership behaviour, but found it reinforced by UMNOS, others noted that they had learned more about instructional leadership from being involved – questioning their own practices – and several claimed to have raised the profile of instructional leadership in their schools. In describing this development in one school, an UMNOS 15 leader noted an important feature of UMNOS: gauging effectiveness.

I was able to immerse myself deeply in instructional leadership opportunities, and I felt it’s helped me in my own understanding of effective leadership. I think it in turn has had a great impact on the teams I lead across the school and therefore the significant initiatives we’ve been developing and implementing. So, that has been the absolute standout… We’ve moved from being intuitive leaders to intentional leaders that know exactly how to accurately gauge our effectiveness or the effectiveness of anything that we’re doing, so it’s built into our language (AP, UMNOS 15).

Others reflected on the opportunity to consider the fundamentals of their own practice:

Some of the days that we went to were really focused around those skills and what makes you a really good instructional leader, and it gave me time to sit back and reflect on my practice and how I was a leader in the school (SC, UMNOS 15).

I think it’s helped make me become clear about what good instruction is in itself. It affected me in that I thought, we don’t know everything, what we’ve got to do is just keep learning and keep learning every year (P, UMNOS 14).

In terms of intellectually, I think it added to my understanding of teaching and learning and helped me think about how I can influence, not just the teaching and learning of my leadership team and also the professional learning of my teachers, also indirectly how my leadership and the culture of what I was trying to establish, could constantly influence teaching and learning in the classroom (P, UMNOS 15).
I think the program has been very helpful in regards to understanding some of the theory behind instructional practice…So that’s one of the things that we’ve got back through our staff opinion surveys that teachers are viewed –my leading teachers and ourselves as principal class – as instructional leaders. They’ve rated that quite highly because they see us in class more often, rather than sitting in our offices delivering information and not actually getting out there and seeing how it’s done (P, UMNOS 16).

The success coordinators provided strategic support to the principals’ instructional leadership as well as being a ‘role model for pedagogy’. One from UMNOS 15 said ‘it gave me a framework that we worked on as a team within the school to bring about change in an area that we thought could benefit from it significantly’. Another focused on skills and passion:

It all centres around pedagogy and teacher practice for the best student outcomes. And so I need to be engaging, I need to show that this is, you know, my vocation and how passionate and dedicated I am, not only in this role but also as a teacher and a leader, to my staff (SC, UMNOS 17).

As intended, in most schools the learning from UMNOS ‘trickled’, ‘rippled’ or ‘cascaded’ from the leadership team who ‘paid it forward’ through professional learning teams and across discipline areas. An UMNOS 16 success coordinator reflected:

It really does open your eyes up to a whole lot of different things, so for one example, there was a presentation about writing which didn’t necessarily relate to mathematics but it made me realise how important that was for science, which is my area, or mathematics or whatever and there were little things that I took away from there that I can use for my own class (SC, UMNOS 16).

Given the importance of the commitment to instructional leadership required to participate in UMNOS, we asked participants to consider if they felt a state of readiness was required before schools joined the Network. Several suggested ‘buy in’ or commitment across the school was necessary, accompanied by a level of maturity and competence, at least within the leadership team. Principals said:

There are probably schools that would not be good for UMNOS if they are not committed…And you do not want people like that in a network, it would be so damaging (P, UMNOS 14).

I think you need to have your foundation building blocks in place before you do something at that level. I think you want to be a pretty well-organised school that has all the essential elements in place. You’re not going there looking for a quick fix (P, UMNOS 15).

In this chapter we have described the four key characteristics of UMNOS – purpose and focus; commitment and accountability; trust and collaboration; and capacity building and support – and how they are enriched by the instructional leadership in schools and the backbone support of the University. Instructional leadership was implemented in a range of ways, from classroom involvement to organisational management, by principals often working with their leadership teams. Backbone support came from the expertise and evidence base of the University in a climate of developing trust.

With a clear purpose to improve students’ learning, schools that joined UMNOS were driven by a desire to assist all their students – high and low achievers – to achieve growth in their learning. Over several months, schools developed a focus informed by data, and were able to document their goals.

Schools made a large commitment to join UMNOS, in terms of time and resources. As membership was voluntary, this meant that participants felt accountable to each other and their schools rather than to an external agency.

Trust underpinned collaboration, as school teams expressed trust in the reputation and the expertise of the University and developed trust across school boundaries that can be rarely crossed in other networks. Trust led to openness with data and collaboration on shared focus areas, driven by schools themselves with backbone support. Some schools continued to collaborate after their formal membership of UMNOS ended.

Through the input of experts and critical friends and the knowledge from within schools, UMNOS developed the capacity of its members in specific areas: strategic planning to improve student learning, using data to inform teaching, building instructional strategies to meet students’ needs, and using helpful tools and resources. Many participants believed that this capacity could influence education more broadly.

In the next chapter we consider the importance of specific features of UMNOS in assisting schools to plan and achieve change in culture, structure and practices.
Chapter 3: Collective efficacy: Effective features of UMNOS structure and practice

This chapter focuses on the effectiveness of the features of the structure and practice of the UMNOS network in assisting schools to better identify goals, work with partners to implement evidence-based practices, and improve student outcomes in the short to mid term (research question 2). Taking the view that identifying goals, implementing evidence-based practices, and improving student outcomes are elements of change in schools, we created survey and interview questions and collected documents to show school goals, practices and outcomes, and how schools attributed change to their involvement in UMNOS. Examples of actual outcomes are considered in the next chapter.

Change in schools

The University documents suggested that over the three years, schools would move through the phases shown in Figure 9, although even where schools were in a state of readiness, the pace would vary.

In summary, Year 1 is a year of challenge and developing collaboration, Year 2 is to be focused on implementation (hence ‘the work is the work’) and Year 3 is when schools use their own data and evidence to review and plan for embedding practices for sustainability following UMNOS. As a broad indication of the relationship between change and time, we asked respondents in the survey to rate the improvement to date in their chosen focus area using only three categories: major improvement, signs of change and just beginning.

UMNOS 17 schools had been involved for one year, UMNOS 16 and GV for two years, UMNOS 15 had just completed their three-year involvement, while UMNOS 14 had been beyond UMNOS for one year. The general trend in Figure 10 was to report more change, particularly major improvements, after greater length of participation, although most respondents in four of the networks cautiously claimed ‘signs of change’ were occurring. The proportion of respondents indicating that change was ‘just beginning’ in networks that commenced in 2015 and 2016 reflects issues in establishing a clear focus and developing an action plan in some schools. The scale of change (i.e. whole school or specific group) was not addressed.

To flesh out the survey data we used interview responses and available documents and classified the changes into three areas: teaching practice, cultural change and structural change.

Change in teaching practice

Changing teaching practice in order to achieve improved student learning outcomes was an important aspect of the UMNOS theory of action. In the survey we asked if practice in the focus area had changed, and if so, how. Figure 11 shows the proportions of Yes/No responses among all respondents.
Figure 11: Reported change in teaching practice by Network (N =122)

Figure 11 shows that almost 100% of respondents in the earlier networks reported change, while respondents from UMNOS 17, which had only operated for one year, were not surprisingly, more equivocal. Tables 4-7 provide mainly verbatim examples from the survey and interview responses, classified as changes in the three categories. The similarity between the examples from different Network years shows the strong influence of UMNOS structures and practices.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Network</th>
<th>Reported change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UMNOS 14</td>
<td>Improved teacher and student monitoring of progress against rubrics/continuums; Using evidence in our teaching practice, like using Guttman Charts; English and Maths for example, most of the classes they have the rubrics out on the table, marking what they are in the free assessments in line with the learning intentions and success criteria; Identifying ZPD for students; Greater use of formative assessment; Introduced 6 Trait Writing; A focus on differentiation; More frequent whole-school moderation;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMNOS 15</td>
<td>Using different methods to access feedback; Introduced word walls (Snowball &amp; Bolton, 1999); Independent reading implemented in Years 7-9; Introduction of the 6+1 Trait Writing and Scaffolding Literacy; Teachers using data to inform their differentiation in the classroom; Teachers use Guttman Charts; Developed new programs Year 7 &amp; 8; Teachers using a wider range of evidence-based teaching strategies as well as using data to inform their practice; Building an explicit model for the data-driven cycle, providing staff with tools and training to use the tools to assist them in the process; Greater use of data and learning intentions; Learning intentions and success criteria are visible and part of curriculum documentation, visible use of props to determine where students are at, sharing of ways of providing formative assessment as part of professional learning teams;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMNOS 16</td>
<td>A lot more professional reflection and consideration given to explicit teaching; Reading conferences, reciprocal teaching strategies; eWrite, conferencing, discussions about writing, displayed writing, modelled writing; Problem-solving rubric has been adapted and trialled across three year levels and is now embedded in Inquiry Based Learning Projects; A pre-testing project developed and run in 7-9 Science, team moderation and an Effect Size Calculator incorporated into project assessment; Inquiry cycles and action research;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMNOS GV</td>
<td>More explicit focus on reading based on UMNOS PD; $20,000 to spend on buying books to support the program; Focused planning around success criteria and learning intentions; Changed to the Real Reading approach; Created data walls; Got rid of the rotation of busy activities; Unit design work has incorporated problem solving and critical thinking skills across year levels; Maths teachers doing some effect sizes with their classes;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMNOS 17</td>
<td>Teachers are trialling different ways of providing feedback to students to develop more independent learners, using explicit learning intentions and success criteria; Ensuring all teachers plan for learning intentions and success criteria which are made visible to students;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 indicates a range of changes that have resulted directly from involvement in UMNOS, including a greater use of data to know students, undertaking action research and implementing new teaching and assessment resources, including ‘high-impact strategies’. Teachers reported using tools such as Guttman Charts; pre-tests and post-tests; using rubrics and calculating effect sizes. Reading interventions included several introduced by critical friends.

Only one respondent mentioned discontinuing some activities, a condition that is likely to be necessary to implement new practices. Many credited UMNOS with ‘catalysing’ and providing the tools to make the change, like these schools from three UMNOS Networks:

**UMNOS was the lever for us to really begin to be far more strategic, fine grained and focused in basic skills (school leader, UMNOS 14).**

**In 2016 we continued our work with the University of Melbourne Network of Schools program (UMNOS)…I commend each member of staff of this community, as well as the school leadership, for their commitment, enthusiasm and excellent work ethic. Their dedication to school improvement has resulted in a shift towards more collaborative and cohesive practices within the school (School, UMNOS 15 Annual report 2016)**

**We’ve started the use of the Effect Size Calculator. We’ve introduced it quite slowly, we wanted to get it right, so what we’ve done is develop a pre-test which includes questions that will come up again in the post-test…A selection of those questions are used for our Effect Size Calculator, so there might be as many as 20 questions or more, using the same skill. We might use 8-10 skills within a unit of work (SC, UMNOS 16).**

During 2017, the publication of High Impact Strategies (Department of Education and Training Victoria, 2017), mirrored some of the UMNOS work, and several interviewees referred to this document as ‘reinforcing what we had in our plans anyway’, due to their involvement in UMNOS.

A critical friend noted a major change influenced by UMNOS:

**[School 15_14] is a good example of a school that’s come in and said, ‘we’re doing pretty well, we just want to tinker at the edges’ and by the end of it, standing in front of the whole 2015 group, saying ‘we’re changing everything we’re doing about assessment and teaching in our school based on the work that we’ve done’ (CF 5).**

### Cultural change

Cultural change refers to improvement and change such as increasing collective efficacy (Donohoo, Hattie, & Eells, 2018), improving teacher attitudes, using the evidence base of research and successfully implementing and aligning approaches across the whole school. UMNOS leadership teams had an important role in developing the culture around learning. Table 5 includes many examples of UMNOS practices spreading within schools. We also looked for changes in ways of working with other schools and accountability to peers, which some participants explicitly saw as ‘embedding’ the UMNOS model.
Table 5: Examples of cultural change by Network

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Network</th>
<th>Reported change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UMNOS 14</td>
<td>Whole-school approach in relation to writing, no more programs or quick fixes; Teachers are using explicit common language; Mindset change: What students are ready to learn rather than what don’t they know; Differential professional development for teachers; Whole-school leadership team coaching in two schools; Working with four other schools on evidence-informed practice;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMNOS 15</td>
<td>A shift in attitude to data is probably the biggest thing that we have achieved; Developing a culture of unconditional respect; Now making decisions based on data; Teams now seeing themselves as leaders of instructional practice; Developing belief that literacy education is a whole-school responsibility; Reading is now taught by all staff; More consistent approach across classrooms including protocols for reading conferences; Teachers use a common approach across all areas of the school; Teachers looking deeper at what their students can do, we are developing a culture of teaching and learning; We changed the mindset around quality checks and high impact reading strategies; Teachers were challenged to rethink what they know about teaching writing. Many changed the way they view the teaching of writing; Coaching, questioning and supporting staff to find their own answers; Principal attends PLT meetings and visits classrooms; Increasing student agency: For past two years students have led conversations with staff across the school; Shifting teachers thinking from achievement to growth; Action research in PLTs on an area of interest; Creating a culture of shared responsibility for student learning and school improvement; Shared data with more teachers to inform planning; Conducted data-informed teaching inquiries; Improved quality of informal conversations;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMNOS 16</td>
<td>Greater consistency of teacher practice; Teachers working in teams to moderate and assess student work; Consistent approach across Prep-Year 6 with explicit teaching in reading; Teachers track student data and are made accountable for their students’ results; Established faculty libraries to support professional reading and discussion about evidence-based practices; There is a sense of collective efficacy…a very strong sense of working together, and the science team are really strong in that area;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMNOS GV</td>
<td>Whole-school instructional model; Classroom/peer observations increased; Transferring pre-reading to inform planning from literacy to numeracy, to deal with misconceptions; All staff attend PD run by critical friends in the school including office admin, because this is about the whole school;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMNOS 17</td>
<td>Research into Scaffolding Literacy (Axford, Harders, &amp; Wise, 2009) approaches to writing; We are all speaking the same language; Introduced peer observations; Students becoming more aware what feedback is and ways they can use it in their learning; With our UMNOS team we’re all on the same page, we’ve got a vision which actually maps the way we’ve got to put things in place through our action plan; We tapped in to [other school] because they are in the writing group, so we have started to listen actively to what they were using. They sent through what they asked their staff and what they asked their students;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Beyond capacity building, the UMNOS model and activities supported a sense of ‘professional commitment, professional obligation and moral imperative’ within and beyond the school. An UMNOS 15 principal said:

*I would say that part of the work through UMNOS was our understanding of the importance of collective efficacy, and that if you want real school improvement you have to have it, because it has to be owned by everybody and everybody working towards it (P, UMNOS 15).*

Echoing the sense of collective efficacy and Hattie’s sentiment that ‘the answer is in schools’ (Villella, 2016), it was encouraging to note a success coordinator from UMNOS 15 ‘supporting staff to find their own answers’.

**Table 6: Examples of structural change by Network**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Network</th>
<th>Reported change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UMNOS 14</td>
<td>Established PLTs; Improved PLT process using data to plan; Our model is directly attributed to UMNOS, our PLC process, it’s not the same as the Patrick Griffin one but it was heavily influenced by it; Started a Literacy Leadership Group; Established a Success Reference Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMNOS 15</td>
<td>Established PLTs; Changed meeting structures; Modified timetable to enable curriculum team meetings; Using PLCs centred around an action research model as the driving force; Introducing reading classes in addition to English classes; Increased timetabled English classes from 5 to 7 periods; Allocated additional support staff to independent reading classes; Developed a ‘library curriculum’;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMNOS 16</td>
<td>Curriculum mapping/auditing; New pedagogical framework; Changed literacy block structure, employed literacy coach; Structural change of the reading hour; More structured rubrics and curriculum mapping on critical skills from Yr 7-12; Unit design work has incorporated problem solving and critical thinking skills across year levels and demonstrates teacher capacity in this area; Reimagined Professional Learning Time to include PLCs; Created strategic leadership of the principal, the deputy principal, curriculum leader and the business manager, and operational leadership made up of the teacher leadership team, curriculum leader and the level leaders, our band leaders; Brought in an hour session that includes Sustained Reading, Reading Conferences and World Knowledge at all levels with all staff involved; Measured PLT activities on a progression; Changed physical layout of classrooms;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMNOS GV</td>
<td>Structure of lessons has changed, more independent reading; Professional learning teams established; Reading budget, dedicated Leading Teacher to help deliver PD. Set up classroom libraries and desktop libraries; Published assessment schedule and consistent practice across the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMNOS 17</td>
<td>Introduced PLCs; Changed assessment schedule of gathering student data; Extended teachers’ time for planning as a level; We’ve re-worked our meeting schedule to accommodate at least 2 whole staff meetings per term, to share with the teachers at the school the learning that we have got through UMNOS;</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Respondents from every network mentioned professional learning teams. Establishing successful professional learning teams can lead to a growing sense of collective efficacy, as one UMNOS 15 success coordinator described:

*I think collective efficacy has come up in the research as something we need to be doing and we really wanted to look at how we could do that and do it better. The professional learning team is certainly something that has been a massive shift here, because we weren’t doing it really at all and the ones that were happening weren’t being done well (SC, UMNOS 15).*

As part of structuring UMNOS implementation within the school, seminars considered ways to successfully manage change through a team approach:

*We did some work on that in UMNOS which was really interesting to look at: how to run meetings like PLTs that are really effective, which we weren’t doing before (SC, UMNOS 15).*

One principal from UMNOS 14 felt that the University had assumed that schools would have PLTs, and therefore introduced them once the year had begun. He later reflected ‘If it hadn’t been for being involved in the Network, there’s no way we could have done that’. An UMNOS 17 principal also reported a significant structural change influenced by UMNOS:

*The change from year level leaders to band leaders is really a response to UMNOS. We thought we needed to up-skill only 4 people rather than 7, 8 or 9 people, and get them on board to drive those bands – that’s prep, year 1/2, year 3/4 and year 5/6 – and be able to drive those bands with issues we’re bringing back from UMNOS, and they’ve been great doing that (P, UMNOS 17).*

To support the successful implementation of PLTs, participants mapped the progression of team activities along the following dimensions:

- Viewing existing student achievement information
- Sharing practices
- Exploring student evidence to inform teaching
- Changing professional practices
- Taking shared responsibility for student and teacher learning
- Synthesising evidence-based practices
- Conducting research to inform practice.

Sharing a different type of structural change, a success coordinator explained how UMNOS (through experts and other schools) had influenced the whole school’s pedagogical framework, shown in Figure 12:

*I would say the basis of our pedagogical framework emanates from the University of Melbourne, so all the information that we have gleaned from other schools and also predominately though from the presenters has basically gone into formulating that pedagogical framework. So 97 teachers at this school, they are all attending to pedagogical practices from Melbourne University (SC, UMNOS 16).*

A great deal of activity took place in individual schools as a result of involvement in UMNOS. Many new ways of working were added, but there is little evidence of what was dropped. As maintaining focus is important to the UMNOS model, this might explain the differences in overall change reported in Figure 10. One school leader expressed this frequent experience in schools:

*We were trying to attend to far too many things, so a nice, sharp, narrow focus which was born out of UMNOS for us…It made us focus on a number of pedagogical practices where we could get high yield and basically it’s kept us to that approach, rather than deviating off into a hundred different things (AP, UMNOS 16).*

Taken overall, the terminology used in the three tables above shows that UMNOS also had an effect on developing a shared language and consistent practices that focused on student learning among participants, an indicator of movement towards collective efficacy (Donohoo et al., 2018).

### The effectiveness of features of UMNOS

Considering the characteristics discussed previously and other features found in UMNOS documents, we provided a list in the survey and asked respondents to rank each one as essential, helpful or neutral in generating change in their schools. Figure 13 shows the percentage of responses at each level. At least two thirds of survey respondents listed each feature, except the cross-sectoral nature of UMNOS, as essential. In order to better understand what participants valued in relation to each feature, we considered the relevant interview responses. Each feature from the survey is explored in some detail below the graph, in the rank order shown in Figure 13.
Learning and working as a school team

A key feature of UMNOS is its requirement that members from each school comprise a leadership team, unlike networks solely for principals, or for teachers of particular subjects. Henderson made it clear ‘we support leadership teams’ and this was recognised by survey respondents as the highest-ranking feature on the list. Not only is this important as symbolic leadership, but it means that the principal gains the same content knowledge as the rest of the team, and can advocate for and support change in the school from a knowledge base.

From the point of view of principals this commitment enabled better understanding of how to support the focus of the work through adequate resourcing and through their own leadership:

I have an opportunity to go out of the school with a group of instructional leaders for the PD (professional development) and then directing the focus of what we need to do, based on our data...It’s about being able to come back and make sure that everything that we are doing at UMNOS is resourced and being able to provide all that time and professional learning back at the school. If you’re not there with them, you don’t really know what the expectations are back at school’ (P, UMNOS 17).

It was important for me and also for the Assistant Principal to be there to have a really good understanding about what I call the ‘how’ in teaching which is where I thought we were best placed to understand the heavy research (P, UMNOS 17).

Similarly, one principal realised that she should include her assistant principal in the UMNOS team after the second year, to avoid leaving her ‘out of the loop’, while a success coordinator said: ‘my principal is on board with what we are doing but there’s others within the executive that really don’t have any idea of what’s happening.

A critical friend described ways in which the leadership teams are supported:

I think we really try and analyse where they’re at as a leadership team very early on because it becomes very obvious where that work is. That can be supporting a team that’s well experienced, maybe you have to step in there and model for them things like, this is how you actually make change happen at your school. It may be we take them back to their core business, are they instructional leaders, do they know what they’re looking for when they visit classrooms? We’re guiding them there, are they looking at the right evidence, are they setting up the right teams in their schools to be able to make that change happen? (CF 2).

Success coordinators and other team members reported on the value of being with ‘fellow learners’. However, some principals delegated the UMNOS leadership to another member of staff, and others did not attend all the seminar sessions, according to the University’s attendance records. Another principal reflected on this:

My point of view if I wasn’t prepared to go, my school couldn’t have been in that…because it wouldn’t get ‘bang for its buck’ back at school. It would be some of my staff coming back trying to relay the importance of whatever, to me in line with every other priority or whatever was happening in school at the time…But that goes back to the research too. If the principal’s not on board, it’s not going to happen (P, UMNOS GV).

Belief that all students can learn

An individual belief that all students can learn is a necessary condition for a sense of collective efficacy. Almost 90% of survey respondents found the belief that all students can learn to be an essential aspect of UMNOS. Participants generally saw this as aligned with their own values and goals for all learners. For example, a principal said:

Our collective, moral purpose statement is that, we believe in improving the life and the learning for all learners, for all who we are responsible for. That’s for any child in our class, any colleague we’re working with or any adult we have around, so you know that really aligns with our staff, our school philosophy, our school moral purpose as well (P, UMNOS 17).

As UMNOS has a focus on growth in learning, its practices support students in all types of settings, as these principals recognised:

We’re a special school and we’re very conscious of putting a focus on teaching and learning and a belief that every student will learn (P, UMNOS 15).

...every student can learn but in different ways and at different rates. It’s really been a process of redefining what excellence looks like. (P, UMNOS 16).
Access to latest learning research and theory through the Melbourne Graduate School of Education (MGSE)

Providing access to research and theory through UMNOS was designed to create a bridge between researchers and their evidence and what teachers do in a classroom, particularly via the critical friends and through the seminar series. Further, according to Henderson in an interview, ‘we’re also about practice informing theory’. Although some school participants came to UMNOS familiar with the research, others found it important to actually meet the researchers, commenting on the power of both the research evidence and the researchers:

> When you read about John Hattie or you read about Patrick Griffin, they’re only a person, just a name until you meet them. Then you see the passion behind the person as well. Their conviction in their beliefs and how everything they’ve done is research based (SC, UMNOS 17).

You go to the UMNOS days and the sessions that we get are just so practical, you get the theory behind it but you get a lot of practical ideas that you can do within your school. So it eased a lot of the pressure because you know that something is going to work, you can take it back straight away with staff, and then they can do it in their classes as well (SC, UMNOS GV).

Among other benefits, principals and success coordinators alike reported that this provided them with evidence and credibility to implement change in their schools:

> I’ve used the UMNOS as a definite support. When the teachers believe there is a model and it’s well researched, they’re more willing to accept (SC, UMNOS 17).

Gaining skills in using data and evidence to inform instructional strategies

The University offered a structured approach to working with school data sets and access to research-informed dashboards, so that the Network schools could evaluate their progress and demonstrate the impact of initiatives. Given the UMNOS focus on learning to analyse and use data, almost 90% of survey participants rated this aspect ‘essential’.

As Table 4 shows, teachers used data to inform their teaching and ‘differentiation within the classroom’. Principals described how, as a result of participation in UMNOS, data and evidence were applied:

> We came in really looking at how do teachers use evidence to improve student learning, so that that focus then got tightened up around developing continuums, the PLC process and a whole lot of things like that, and that was really the strongest influence probably of UMNOS (P, UMNOS 14).

Teachers wanted more information and they wanted to do more pre-reading before they were planning for an area of mathematics. They wanted more knowledge around the sequence of learning and all those sorts of things, and so that level of questioning and buy-in from the staff has been fantastic (P, UMNOS GV).

The Effect Size Calculator introduced in Chapter 2 was an important resource for many school teams in understanding their data. Schools usually requested a support visit to make best use of the tool. Many participants reported using the Effect Size Calculator and related instruments to better ‘know their students and how they learn’ (Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership, 2017).

One success coordinator spoke of the importance of UMNOS aligning with the school’s leadership team in developing teachers’ data skills:

> Our teachers’ capacity to unpack data, it’s not all a result of UMNOS, it’s I would say the result of a fairly strong leadership team. I wouldn’t say cause and effect, but I would say UMNOS has played a part, a big part (SC, UMNOS 17).

Building instructional strategies to meet our school’s needs

Having used data and evidence to inform action, UMNOS aims to help school teams build appropriate instructional strategies. Unlike top down program initiatives, UMNOS takes a more open approach to content, which participants valued. The role of the critical friends was reported as very important in meeting the needs of individual schools:

> I expected to be told more what to do and it was good that we weren’t. We were able to put things to our context and we were guided by our critical friend to do that. In PDs that you normally go to you get told to ‘do this, do that’. It involved a lot more really planning and thinking (SC, UMNOS 15).

They were trying to do a really difficult thing where they were trying to make all of the sessions valuable for everyone in a very diverse community. I think they were responsive to feedback (P, UMNOS 14).

Some schools did not use NAPLAN data as a measure of student learning, either because they were special schools or had only senior students (beyond Year 9). While one school found it unhelpful that ‘a lot of the discussion was around NAPLAN data’ another said: ‘our critical friend was fantastic, she’d always ask what’s relevant for you’?

Choosing our own focus for action

Bearing in mind that the focus for UMNOS is student learning, it was important for schools to take up a data-informed focus that would benefit their students, rather than a ‘one size fits all’ solution. Eighty-five percent of survey respondents saw this as essential, and as one said ‘each school can have a different lens and slightly different approach and it will look different in your own context.’ One success coordinator reported:

> All of the critical friends repeatedly said ‘narrow it down, narrow it down’. And then we looked at our data again. I suppose direct feedback from regional office about ‘if you don’t do something about your writing data’. It made sense that we focus our energies and we learn how to use data through writing because it can also affect every classroom (SC, UMNOS 17).
For some, this was difficult initially, as the Director recognised:

'It takes time to get clear what is the right work for each school, to agree on what the right work is for them to be doing, so they need time first of all. We very deliberately do a lot of front loading in the first two or three seminars where we'll bring in the people who we think are the most powerful in challenging their idea of what's the right work (Henderson).

Principals noted the support UMNOS provided to adapt to the school's needs:

'We didn’t go and pick up UMNOS on something we weren’t doing, we were looking at something we were trying to improve, we tried to use UMNOS as a resource and a way of having to be accountable and to be sharing with others about things that we were actually doing and that was the work at the school (P, UMNOS 14).

We needed the expertise of UMNOS and the Hattie research to allow us to develop our teams back at school. We stayed true to purpose, and there was a time when they weren’t sure where to put us, because our focus was very different to some of the other schools, but we’ve made sure that we got out of it what we needed to get out of it (P, UMNOS 16).

Face to face professional learning seminars
UMNOS offered leadership teams a program of eight full day seminars per year, while success coordinators attended an additional four to six seminars, an opportunity rarely available to people at this level. Principals were expected to attend as part of the school’s UMNOS team. UMNOS 14, 15, 16 and 17 met in Melbourne, while UMNOS GV met in Shepparton, a regional city. Over 80% of survey respondents found the seminars essential. Participants valued the face to face nature of the seminars, because ‘it’s at the set time, you’re physically leaving the school, there’s no interruptions, that’s your sole business for the day, and everyone’s there’. The opportunity for teams to work together during the seminars and the informal communication ‘to talk about what’s happening before we get there and debrief on the way back’ when travelling were also practical benefits for school teams. Principals and success coordinators from different UMNOS years concurred:

…but I had not been privy to those seminars, those workshops, I may not have had the skill set to be able to deliver literacy across the school (P, UMNOS 16).

I think the concept of people having/sharing their journeys and having an opportunity to meet and greet with people within your network and beyond, really opened our eyes to different approaches to things and yes, I think it stopped us getting stagnant. We were quite reflective every time when we left UMNOS and thought ‘OK what did today mean for us?’ (SC, UMNOS 17).

I find that the other thing that’s really good about UMNOS is it’s opened me up to other things that I never would have thought of before so when I’ve gone to the PL days, even though a lot of the presentations might not necessarily be related to mathematics (SC, UMNOS 16).

I know on the success days when it’s the smaller group of people and they share resources and knowledge there so that creates its own network in itself. Whereas the principals, we’re already connected and it’s part of the broader work that we do generally together (P, UMNOS GV).

I really look forward to every time the session’s on and the success co-ordinator days. I think it’s really changed my practice and helped me to really support staff and hopefully change reading in the school (SC, UMNOS GV).

For our part, you wouldn’t miss an UMNOS. If I couldn’t go someone else would. The success coordinator would never miss a seminar (P, UMNOS 15).

Notwithstanding the value of the seminars, some participants suggested that the University could support networking and collaboration more actively on these occasions, simply by facilitating interaction with a wider range of participants.

Having a success coordinator
This is an important role, and almost 80% of survey respondents found it essential. Having the appropriate person as success coordinator or ‘agitator’ – as one critical friend described it – and allowing a full 0.5 time fraction to the work, appeared to be crucial. As described in Chapter 2, the role was implemented differently in different schools. Sometimes the role was shared, and in at least one case, the success coordinator had a full-time allowance. It appears that in a few schools the time release was reduced or not made available. Those success coordinators who had the time release allocated recognised the benefits in being able to ‘fit our UMNOS meeting into the day’, find readings and research, and work on the project with other colleagues.

Some success coordinators made a slow start as the school teams determined their focus. As one said:

‘We spent a lot of last year meeting and creating the plan and now, I love the sentence “the work is the work”. My role is evolving because there is now so much more to do (SC, UMNOS 17).’

Where the original success coordinators did not remain in the role for the three years of UMNOS, participants had mixed views, both positive and negative. In some cases this was slightly detrimental to the UMNOS work, while in other cases it was reported as beneficial. It may be that having someone in the role each year, with the time allowance, is more important than a three-year tenure.

Trust and respect between UMNOS (University) team and schools
Collaboration depends on relationships of trust and Figure 9 showed the intention to build trust between members of UMNOS early in the period. 75% of survey respondents found this essential. Trust and respect were strongly modelled by those providing the backbone support: especially the Director supported by the critical friends. One said:

‘I think it’s about learning but it’s developing relationships like trust and respect, in order to be able to feel comfortable and safe to learn and to open up about your own personal situations in terms of your schools (CF 3).’

A principal confirmed the important role of the Director:

[The Director] did an excellent job of supporting everyone. She was a really good coordinator and obviously put a huge amount of time into ensuring that it was a well-constructed program (P, UMNOS 15).
However, providing the backbone support was much more than coordinating. John Hattie stated in an interview for this report:

[The Director] had that skill to build the trust amongst them, to focus on their question…focus on the right problems, by not breaching the confidentiality of the group, by sometimes, as I’ve seen Katherine do, stop and say ‘no we’re not going there’, not embarrassing anyone, sometimes having those difficult conversations, not necessarily in public (Hattie).

Support from critical friends

The critical friends were an important element of the backbone support provided by the University. Working closely with the success coordinator in each school and leading a focus group with a determination to ‘narrow the focus’ to achieve results, over time the critical friends developed a close relationship with many of their schools. Some participants used them as a contact point to discuss ‘problems of practice, or to seek feedback. As one said, ‘They sort of know what you need and are asking you, where to next?’ A principal from UMNOS GV said ‘[the critical friend] will challenge you, it’s in a softer way, but she’s certainly making a point. There’s no doubt that you know, if she thinks you’re wrong, you’re wrong’.

An UMNOS 15 success coordinator described the broad role of critical friend in the seminars:

Sometimes it was a more focused professional learning session, so they would ask us, as a smaller network, what did we need or what did we want? and they would present some professional learning to us, and at other times it was listening to somebody else’s critical friend, like with sharing knowledge and things like that and then other times, there was the opportunity to work on our projects with our schools and the critical friend would kind of float around and provide support and feedback (SC, UMNOS 15).

However, this item ranked 10th of 13 in the survey results. One limitation raised by both university and school participants was the amount of time the critical friends could spend with schools, compared with schools’ expectations and the amount of time required to do the job well. The Director recognised this as a ‘gap in our model’. A second limitation was change in personnel, both in schools and particularly among assigned critical friends. Several schools reported that having built a relationship with a critical friend, a change in personnel was not only ‘disappointing’ but affected ‘the momentum’ and had ‘a big impact’. One school reported that ‘because our critical friend has changed three times, we don’t really access our critical friends. Several schools reported that having built a relationship with a critical friend, a change in personnel was not only ‘disappointing’ but affected ‘the momentum’ and had ‘a big impact’. One school reported that ‘because our critical friend has changed three times, we don’t really access our critical friends. So in a sense we’ve never developed a critical friend has changed three times, we don’t really access our

Trust and respect between schools

Trust and respect are necessary conditions for collaboration between schools. UMNOS participants exhibited openness, trust and respect through sharing data, visiting each others’ sites and ‘building each other’s knowledge’. The critical friends were mentioned frequently as facilitating these connections through the seminar days or communications in between sessions.

Having the critical friend there, the contact person I suppose, and when you’ve got a strategic plan in place and other schools are on the same journey, you can make contact with people in the schools and learn from the network (AP, UMNOS 16).

We’ve had teams of teachers go and visit [School 15_13] and visit [School 15_1] and have a look there. We’ve had teams of teachers go to other UMNOS schools and see what it looks like, and to a teacher when they’re busy, where you can actually go along and see day to day what’s going on, I think that’s really, really critical (P, UMNOS 15).

A group of five schools from UMNOS 14 continued to meet twice a year to share data based on a protocol, and representatives presented on ‘Lessons from trans-sectoral collaboration through school networking’ at ACER’s Excellence in Professional Practice Conference in 2016. Other participants have invited neighbouring schools to professional development opportunities, as one principal described:

We’ve also got a program in place, where my staff meetings go for an hour, there’s 15 or 20 minutes just admin and on school stuff we just have to do and then we always run a 40 minute workshop. This week it was an questioning, so we’ll put out, we’re going to put our meeting schedules out for next term and then other people can access that learning through us (P, UMNOS GV).

Three-year time frame

While survey respondents rated this feature 11th of 13 options, with 64% seeing it as essential, interviewees were very positive, one suggesting ‘I’d probably like to stay in it for the rest of my life!’ Underpinned by the recognition that embedding change in one school takes time, a success coordinator said ‘I think the further we’ve gone along our journey the more value we get out of it’. Another said:

I’m sad its finished. I really really got so much out of it and I watched it get better and better as I was in it. I think the length is good, I just don’t want to miss out on it now (SC, UMNOS 15).

Where school teams developed a clear action plan with milestones, they worked with the time frame:

We knew we had three years, we knew that each year there was a different point that we sort of wanted to be at, it was very focused, we had a finish date as such, as well. I think when you’re in a school it’s easy to get lost when lots of things are going on (SC, UMNOS 15).

It gives you a timeline to say that you’re invested in something that you’re actually going to decide on working with and I think you can then nut out how you’re actually going to roll this out over the next two or three years (P, UMNOS 16).
While most participants felt that three years was enough to embed the process and sustain the learning within a school, establishing collaboration across schools could take longer. Participants from UMNOS 14 and 15 reflected:

This is long term work. it’s an ongoing, continuous improvement model and if the growth is incremental, at times it seems glacial, so I think the three-year model is a very good model, but really you should be talking six, or something like that. I fear for some of the schools maybe where...once they’re no longer in the network, what happened? (P, UMNOS 14).

I think as schools we get so immersed in leading our own improvement that we don’t necessarily prioritise the time it takes to build networks across. So I’m not sure that’s quite there yet (AP, UMNOS 15).

Cross-sectoral nature: Government, Catholic, independent

The least important feature for survey respondents appears to be the cross-sectoral nature of UMNOS. However, these responses are skewed because one Network (GV) had only government schools, and as noted in Chapter 1, 68% of all schools in UMNOS 2014-17 were government schools. In the interviews, those who had the experience of working with other sectors were very positive, also mentioning the benefits of being ‘from all over the place’ rather than from a ‘tight geographical area’ ‘not to think about ourselves as some sort of low SES, far out in suburbia’ and crossing the primary-secondary boundary.’

Principals valued the ‘broader insight’ gained from ‘being able to speak to principals in Catholic schools and state schools, both secondary and primary’. One UMNOS 15 principal was enthusiastic:

Amazing. We were all so different, primary, secondary, special, private, public, but that commonality. You were all actually involved in that overarching education, what it means, all sort of strategies you need to be using. You don’t usually get to network with such a broad range (P, UMNOS 15).

Success coordinators also appreciated the opportunity to meet school leaders from other sectors:

I suppose this is by design, having the Catholic, and the government, and the secondary and the primary schools all together, and the independent schools. So that was something that was different and it was great. Most of the networks I’ve been involved in are all Catholic networks. So it was fantastic to be able to liaise. Especially with schools that are just down the road that we probably wouldn’t have connected with otherwise (SC, UMNOS 15).

It gives me a forum to continue my learning and a forum to collaborate with other like-minded people, and opportunities to network across Victoria in different settings. You know, we’ve shared resources with the Catholic system in Ballarat and there’s some really young teachers in positions of responsibility, so it’s an opportunity to share and to learn, and see different ways they all operate (SC, UMNOS 17).

Obviously the fact that I’m sitting at the table with the staff from [independent school], talking about our learning in a very similar way, is not something that I have ever done before. Even being exposed to how their schools operate, the resources that they have and yet it sounds like very, very similar challenges (SC, UMNOS 17).
Chapter 4: Collective impact: How schools used evidence to evaluate effectiveness

This chapter reports on the third evaluation question: What is the evidence base to support judgements that UMNOS makes a difference to student learning, and how is it used by schools and the University? ‘Making a difference’ begins with knowing students and how they learn (Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership, 2017) and implies that schools gather baseline and ongoing data, particularly relating to their focus. In UMNOS, growth was an important construct to be measured at the school and individual student level. UMNOS participants were also made aware of the importance of planning for evaluation of interventions from the outset, as a school leader said:

From the commencement of anything that I’m doing within my leadership role I build in evaluative tools and measures, to make sure that I know what my impact will be (AP, UMNOS 15).

We viewed seminar and showcase presentations, and analysed interview and survey data and school artefacts to identify the types of evidence, the learning outcomes reported, and how schools used data to improve student learning, evaluate teacher impact and measure the growth of teams.

The evidence base in schools

UMNOS did not conduct aggregated measurement activities to judge the effect of the Network on student learning, but assisted participants to ‘set their own numerical baseline and measure against that’ (Henderson). School teams began their ‘UMNOS journey’ by establishing a focus area in common with about four other schools. They took into account various data sets to determine their areas of need as shown in Figure 14, where survey responses are categorised by network and year. NAPLAN data was the most important to almost every network, except UMNOS 15, in which teacher observation scored highly. Other influences on the choice of focus area included VCE results, commercial test results and government initiatives at the time.

Figure 14: Data used by schools to determine UMNOS focus

The following excerpt from an UMNOS GV school’s annual report for 2016 shows how specific NAPLAN data informed its focus for UMNOS:

The College also was accepted into the University of Melbourne’s Network of Schools project. As a result, a whole College focus on literacy, in particular reading, has been implemented for the next three years. An action plan has been formulated to assist with the increase in student outcomes after taking into consideration the following data sets:

- Students across Years 3 to 5 are showing low to medium learning gain (29% to 62%) across NAPLAN areas
- Students across Years 5 to 7 are showing low to medium learning gain (23% to 53%) across all NAPLAN areas.
- NAPLAN data from Year 3 indicates that students are achieving similar results to comparison schools in Reading and in Number.
- NAPLAN data from Year 5 indicates that students are achieving similar results to comparison schools in Reading and lower in Number.
- NAPLAN data from Year 7 indicates that students are achieving results that are below the State median in Reading and in Number.
- NAPLAN data from Year 9 indicates that students are achieving similar results to comparison schools in Reading and higher in Number.
- Years 7 to 9 learning gain indicates low to medium learning gain (27 to 61%) across all NAPLAN areas.

Many participants claimed that student learning outcomes had improved during their membership of UMNOS, and both students and staff presented evidence during seminars and showcase presentations. Some provided additional behavioural, impressionistic and anecdotal evidence for this evaluation. From this material, the survey responses, and interviews we built up a list of the types of evidence that schools used to identify areas for improvement and to identify impact in these areas. Sources that are national or large scale and able to support comparisons between schools are listed in Table 7, and small-scale tools used mainly within schools in Table 8. Some of the tools listed provide evidence of staff outcomes in relation to their knowledge, skills and attitudes.
Table 7: Sources of large-scale evidence used by schools to measure student and staff outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NAPLAN (National Assessment Program: Literacy and Numeracy): Standardised tests of Year 3, 5, 7 and 9 students across Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Demand Testing provided by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA): Online tests designed to link to Victorian curriculum and standards, which can be administered to a single student or a whole class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panorama (DET Victoria) which provides interactive dashboards and reports of school achievement, wellbeing and engagement measures over time, and comparisons with similar schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial testing packages such as:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive Achievement Tests PAT-Reading, PATMaths, (ACER): online or hard copy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eWrite testing (ACER): online writing assessment for students in Years 4 to 10, providing instant diagnostic feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Performance Analyser (SPA); Academic Assessment Services tests; Fountas and Pinnell literacy testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior school assessment data from the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) and in some cases, International Baccalaureate (IB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance, retention, Year 12 outcomes, and NAPLAN data provided to Queensland by Education Queensland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude and opinion surveys of school staff, students and parents provided by Department of Education and Training (DET) Victoria and commercial suppliers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National School Improvement Tool (ACER, 2012): for internal or external review</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the tools listed in Table 7 have been used widely over several years, enabling comparisons within and between schools. They are generally not designed for frequent use, so schools need to use additional, fine-grained tools to build up a picture of student learning that can inform teaching, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Sources of small-scale evidence used by schools to measure student and staff outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School-devised survey of student vocabulary, sophisticated terms and correct expressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-school ‘pre- and post’ surveys of staff eg on what they know about writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-devised surveys of staff, using items from Hattie’s (2012) School Health Check</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher judgement, informal (in conversations) and formal; attitudinal, behavioural and disposition data, eg ABLES Assessments (DET) designed for teachers in special settings to observe and describe skills and abilities in everyday contexts and interactions with students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom observations eg Reflect Learning Walk program; instructional rounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student videos; filming teachers (Visible Learning approaches); photographs; digital portfolios, [SEESAW software];</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student work samples, conference sheets, reading logs recording goals and progress, running records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routinely-collected data from learning management systems: eg feedback to students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate of book borrowing from school library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracking student involvement in Premier’s Reading Challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anecdotal evidence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The tools listed in Table 8 were a mix of tools suggested through UMNOS (such as the School Health Check, pre- and post-surveys), those that schools had previously used (using mobile devices to note classroom observations, running records of reading), and the emerging data source created through routine use of technology. It was not clear in some cases whether or how the various data sets were triangulated with those in Table 7.

Some schools implemented systematic ways to better know their students, as this principal explained:

*We’ve introduced a longitudinal data baseline testing, not only from NAPLAN but we’ve gone and sought additional support from other companies where they have a parallel, where you can parallel the 2 data sets, one a national performance indicator. So what we’re building to now is having a data set on every child who is with us in Year 4 through to Year 10, so we’ve got our school journey (P, UMNOS 16).*

Many developed their understanding of the available tools, as this success coordinator noted:

*One of the things we were looking at is how to use standardised testing more effectively, so we have gone back to using PAT which we hadn’t used before. PAT showed some interesting results last year so we are going to continue with that this year (SC, UMNOS 16).*

### Growth and achievement

Many schools, particularly those from the first UMNOS years, perceived and reported general improvement in student learning outcomes, as reported by this UMNOS 14 principal:

*Improving in learning growth in writing was quite dramatic actually. Happily, also, in mathematics, some significant improvements there as well. Obviously one of the big learnings through UMNOS was about the focus on growth and so we did implement and we are still running a number of growth measures, which we used to track our impact (P, UMNOS 14).*

As each school team addressed its own context, each had specific goals in particular content areas. Table 9 shows some of the positive outcomes reported by participants, relating to specific focus areas in reading and writing, as well as improvements in attendance data and attitude surveys of students and staff.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Network</th>
<th>Reported change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UMNOS 14</td>
<td>EPersuasive writing tested through eWrite: Average cohort effect size Nov 2014-Oct 2016 = 2.54; Increase in Year 5 reading NAPLAN scores amongst boys, but not on the third; NAPLAN reading and numeracy results are improving and so is the number of students that are getting high scores. Our VCE results in the last 4 years have improved every year; Student survey results are improving, staff survey results show ‘collective focus on student learning’ is above state average;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMNOS 15</td>
<td>Achieved 1.35 times the state average growth in reading comprehension; Shifted % of students ‘at standard’ (Fountas and Pinnell) from 21% to 71% over seven months; The UMNOS Reading focus paved the way for an increase of 16% of students working in Foundation towards Level 4 in Reading and Viewing; The school achieved its Annual Implementation Plan target for student learning. 100% of students demonstrate learning growth against their ILP goals and 61% of students achieved above and well above their expected progress levels; DET Attitudes to School survey results now high in the 4th quartile;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMNOS GV</td>
<td>Our students are growing 1.7 or 1.8 [effect size] in a two-year period, that’s a significant amount of growth: three year’s growth in a two- year period; On Demand reading results are showing a huge growth between May and October. One grade 5/6 class had all bar one student improved with an average growth of 1.3 years;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMNOS 16</td>
<td>Improvement in PAT Reading scores for matched cohort of 182 students between September 2015 and October 2017 (see Figure 6); NAPLAN results show that we’ve got improvements in our writing; Increased Indigenous attendance by 9 percentage points 2013-17;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMNOS 17</td>
<td>‘Too early to say’ No specific outcomes reported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Many schools used Progressive Achievement Testing from the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) and Figure 15 shows the results for a matched cohort of 182 students tested in their school at three points in time, over 25 months before and during involvement in UMNOS 16. The school reported to the Network that Period 3 showed a significant improvement on the previous periods.

Figure 15: Change over time in PAT reading data for a matched cohort

An UMNOS 15 school reported that in 2016 it achieved its Annual Implementation Plan target for student learning. A special school, it provided the following evidence in its 2016 Annual Report:

The AusVELS [Victorian Curriculum] data, which is based on teacher judgement, has shown an increase of 3% of students working from Foundation to Level 1. 59% of students are now working in AusVELS Foundation Level to Level 4 in English and Mathematics. 4% of students are showing an increase in the areas of Reading and Writing and 8% in Speaking and Listening.

An UMNOS GV school measured growth using a commercial tool:

We are currently in the midst of Fountas and Pinnell testing and teachers are already seeing growth and having to keep retesting. Talking to our students also shows their growth in how they can articulate their reading goals and talk about what they are reading (SC, UMNOS GV).

Using the same tool, an UMNOS 15 school achieved and shared the changes over seven months, as shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Changes in reading and comprehension scores (Fountas and Pinnell testing)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Above standard</th>
<th>At Standard</th>
<th>Below Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 2017</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 2017</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a result of their participation in UMNOS, many schools established pre- and post-testing of interventions over the short term and produced spreadsheets showing individual student performance. They used the Effect Size Calculator described in Chapter 2 to identify growth. Figure 16 shows a section of a much larger spreadsheet recording individual student performance on mathematics skills in one school, including identifying place value, ordering decimals, adding, multiplying and dividing decimals, and explaining a worded problem and interpreting information from a diagram.

Figure 16: Individual student growth as shown in Effect Size Calculator

Students’ names have been removed from the left-hand side of Figure 16. The points awarded for each skill have been added to calculate an overall growth figure. Finally, the tool classified each student into one of the four quadrants in relation to the Victorian State values provided in the Effect Size Calculator:

- Optimal: the ideal group to be in as both performance and effect size are above Victorian State values.
- Growth: Effect size is above Victorian State values, but performance is below.
- Cruising: Performance is above Victorian State values, but growth (effect size) is lower.
- Must change: Both performance and effect size are below Victorian State values.

The Success Coordinator reflected on the school team’s increasing understanding of growth:

We weren’t using that before (pre- and post-testing data), when we talked about growth it was very subjective the way that we were using that term, whereas the Effect Size Calculator really does allow you to back that up with data (SC, UMNOS 16).

An UMNOS 14 school presented the growth in its writing data compared with the whole state’s rate of growth as shown by NAPLAN results. It appears from Figure 17 that the school (labelled DSC) had achieved its goal to improve its growth ‘beyond other schools in the state’, as documented in the school’s UMNOS Action Plan.
In the cases presented above, schools attempted to increase their collection of evidence to build up a richer picture of student achievement and growth. In addition to national, state and commercial testing, they tracked engagement in activities, collected student work samples and recorded observational videos. Reflecting on the evidence in their professional learning teams, they found that the trajectory was not always upward, and one UMNOS 16 school reported in a seminar presentation that the results ‘were a surprise’ as the overall effect of one intervention calculated for all classes in Year 8 and 9 ranged from negative 0.8 to positive 1.9. An UMNOS GV participant reported ‘last year we went back slightly with our literacy data, but we’re sticking with UMNOS’.

As participants increased their understanding of data, they realised the limitations of the collection and analysis of their local data sets and the need to make stronger choices about the ‘right evidence’. An UMNOS 15 participant reported ‘we are getting very sophisticated at looking at what we say is the right evidence or data measures and in fact starting to critique those’, and a success coordinator said:

> It’s about trying to figure out how to have the most effective type of pre-testing, to get really good data that we could use at the end, so UMNOS has supported us through that project (SC, UMNOS 16).

**How schools used the evidence**

As part of the NAPLAN reporting, schools received detailed data that they used in various ways, particularly with staff and students. Participants regarded NAPLAN as one point-in-time data that they used in various ways, particularly with staff and commercial testing, they tracked engagement in activities, collected student work samples and recorded observational videos. Reflecting on the evidence in their professional learning teams, they found that the trajectory was not always upward, and one UMNOS 16 school reported in a seminar presentation that the results ‘were a surprise’ as the overall effect of one intervention calculated for all classes in Year 8 and 9 ranged from negative 0.8 to positive 1.9. An UMNOS GV participant reported ‘last year we went back slightly with our literacy data, but we’re sticking with UMNOS’.

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**How schools used the evidence**

As part of the NAPLAN reporting, schools received detailed data that they used in various ways, particularly with staff and students. Participants regarded NAPLAN as one point-in-time measure that could provide an overview to be fleshed out with other forms of evidence. Several described how they used data from multiple sources to identify and present student learning and growth:

> Every year we baseline our students by using the PAT testing schedule. So we do that with our sevens, eights and nines. At the end of the year we also test them so we are able to track that data over a three-year period. We also triangulate the NAPLAN results so that gives us an indication of growth over the two-year period from 7-9 while we have them here in high school (SC, UMNOS 16).

Because writing is our focus we’re really digging into eWrite, we have mapped eWrite against NAPLAN writing criteria. So, for example, Year 8 English teachers have got their cohort with their students’ NAPLAN assessments next to their eWrite assessment that are presented in Guttman Charts, so that’s much, much more data than the teachers have ever had access to (SC, UMNOS 17).

> Our teaching staff in the middle school specifically, are taking from all of that longitudinal testing and embracing all that with Guttman Charts. You know 5 years ago nobody here could probably spell Guttman, whereas now I’ve got teachers who are regularly looking at: OK here is the skill set, just go into the classroom and teach this (SC, UMNOS 17).

A Guttman Chart (informed by a Guttman Scale) is a way of representing performance of students individually in a spreadsheet. Many UMNOS schools used this tool to identify students’ demonstrated skill levels, to group students based on those skills, and to identify what needed to be taught next for each group of students. Some schools presented individual student data more publicly in data walls and posters:

> The lead teacher is part of our UMNOS team, and she’s actually created data walls so each year level had English and maths or literacy in maths. She’s got the bands up and we’ve got laminated pictures of all the kids and they’re on that band. So it’s a very differential thing, and they’re on large canvases, the idea is that they will get taken to our PLCs, so that they can use that to inform some of the work that they’re doing, and more differentiation (SC, UMNOS GV).

After identifying where students were with their learning, teachers used data for differentiation and targeted teaching. Participants also reported sharing data more widely with staff than previously, to measure teacher and team impact so that ‘teachers asking “did this work and how do we know?” will be our golden bucket at the end’. School leaders said:

> Teachers are becoming better practitioners at evaluating their impact, right through to lesson by lesson, using formative assessment, using feedback from students, moderating student assessments so deeply that they’re able to look at which of their strategies have worked and which haven’t (AP, UMNOS 15).

By Year 11 and 12 basic skills need to be entrenched and not waste time with that. So we went back to the drawing board and did formative testing at the beginning of the year to see how students were progressing in that. Then identified and tracked, to be able to identify what skills students needed to do. Then conferenced with the students so they were really clear about what they needed to focus on. Then specifically taught those skills, then re-tested and saw the teacher impact. It was varied. One quite weak teacher had an impact but not what you would expect. And some of our stronger teachers that really took it on, the impact was phenomenal. So we’re using those teachers to support the others and that is something that really informs us, that student data (SC, UMNOS 15).
The Principal of a rural school with relatively low achievement scores found that sharing growth data helped build morale among teachers:

“Our students do show significant growth, and my school does show significant growth, so that’s a great set of data for me to take back to my staff, for them to recognise the work that they’ve done when our students are growing: we’re getting three year’s growth in a two-year period. And that’s the work of my whole staff and that’s the only sets of data that come from outside that show that, because all the other data sets show we don’t meet standards (P, UMNOS GV).”

One success coordinator provided evidence showing how teachers analysed student work in a professional learning team.

“The notes of the UMNOS team meeting state:

Steve Dinham had discussed use of PLT and PLC and this will be our method in meetings. Student work needs to be the focus. Below is how we will do this:

• [two teachers] to provide. The process will be:
  • 5 mins reading student work without talking
  • 5 mins asking questions
  • 5 mins feed forward

[three teachers] will trial it in their classroom: record what prompts you had to give and the wording and report back to the group next meeting” (School 16_2)

PLTs also gathered evidence to evaluate their own practices:

“We use the school data like student aptitude, staff and parent, but we also do our own surveys. We’ve developed an ‘effective schools, effective teams’ rubric, that goes from agendas down to collaboration, use of data and things like, you know, it goes like from a 1 to 5, so maybe [staff are] just starting to use data up to what it looks like if they’re using data highly effectively. So that survey’s a great survey, we give it to our teams at the start of the year, at the middle of the year and at the end of the year and they can see how they’ve grown as a team” (SC, UMNOS 17).

Several schools, mainly secondary, involved students in ‘conversations’ looking at their own data, with school leaders involved:

“We print off a page for an individual student of their NAPLAN data which measures their growth from years 7 to 9...Last year we had conversations with those students, so the head of year level and the head of sub-school and myself, we sat down with those students and we said, ‘look this is your data from NAPLAN and it’s measured a number of things’, whether they were cruising or optimal or needed change, and so we spoke to them...but also used other sources of data such as their semester report and also their progress reports too” (P, UMNOS 16).

“I’m experimenting with giving it back to the students and talking about what it means and using it identify strengths and weaknesses and set goals and really involving the kids in owning their data, because our goal is actually for all teachers and students to use data to improve teaching and learning” (SC, UMNOS 17).

One school invited students to assist in interpreting the school data as a means to encourage student agency:

“Our attitudes to school survey data is really very strong, but there is a big concern around the component of teacher concern in years 10, 11 and 12. It’s sitting around 35 percent and so that’s some work that we’re unpacking further. We’re having a student forum with a large proportion of Year 12 students, both highly performing, disengaged, from different cultural groups and we’re going to try and unpack that and get an understanding of what they mean by that (AP, UMNOS 15).

Fewer reported collecting and using evidence as a group of schools. However an UMNOS 14 principal described how one focus group continued to operate:

“We’ve got a series of questions which we develop within the network, our little team of 5 or 6 schools within our group, but basically a survey that we can apply or administer to our staff, and then we did that survey on a number of other occasions throughout our UMNOS journey, and then what we actually did as a school was applied, if you like, to look and see if we had an effect” (P, UMNOS 15).

This chapter reveals that for many UMNOS schools the structure of the professional learning team provided an impetus for sharing, understanding and analysing data, thus encouraging a sense of collective impact. Schools used locally-collected evidence from tests, routinely collected data such as attendance figures, classroom observations and student work samples to identify growth. They also used large-scale commercial tests in addition to NAPLAN and senior school results. Based on the available evidence, many participants genuinely believed that student learning was improving, and presented this during UMNOS seminars. But as one principal said:

“I think the process that you go through, everyone would put some sort of improvement in place and they would all improve by some sort of percentage. If you spread that across a number of schools and then continually you’re having cohorts go through, then I think it’s a system that will improve every school that’s involved. How much each individual school improves by being part of it would be variable” (P, UMNOS 15).

While UMNOS supported schools in using current assessment measures, one principal looked further to new and better methods, and coverage of areas that the University would be well placed to include:

“How can we better represent kids who are very able, but not able to express their talent through an ATAR score? What’s a better measure, or a whole range of measures that bring out a stronger sense of individuals and what their strengths are and how they’re growing and how to celebrate that? (P, UMNOS 16).

In the final chapter we consider participants’ satisfaction with their UMNOS experience, and their suggestions for the future.
Chapter 5: ‘The further we’ve gone along our journey the more value we get out of it’

This chapter relates to the fourth evaluation question – focusing on the future – and looks at the overall return on investment from the participants’ perspective, in terms of outcomes, leadership and sustainability as well as ideas and opportunities for the future operation of UMNOS.

The chapter is based on survey and interview data, particularly in relation to several questions about:

- whether their expectations were met
- whether they would recommend UMNOS to other schools
- how they would continue UMNOS learnings following the formal relationship
- the importance of the connection with the University of Melbourne
- suggestions for future relationships with the University, and
- suggestions for improvement of UMNOS.

Although responses tended to reflect schools as individual entities, we also considered benefits to the networks of schools – and to the education ecosystem – that might have accrued through participation in UMNOS.

Overall return on investment

Schools committed substantial resources to work towards a specific purpose: $16,500 per year over three years, time release for the success coordinator (SC), eight days of seminars for the leadership team, 4-6 days of seminars for the SC, and travel time and other in-kind resources. The tangible returns on this investment came through measures of improved practices, as outlined in Tables 4-6 in Chapter 3, and through student learning outcomes. The potential for continuing collaboration with other schools and greater ongoing engagement with the University of Melbourne are more intangible.

Most were satisfied that they had made a wise investment. As one principal from UMNOS 17 explained:

> I have a vision, I know what we need to achieve and how we need to achieve it and UMNOS fits in that. That’s how I feel like I’m spending the money wisely (P, UMNOS 17).

Schools found the required financial resources in different ways. Some received ‘equity funding’ based on their socio-economic status:

> If I didn’t receive equity funding my school couldn’t have joined. So, because we have equity funding we’ve got access to this that we probably wouldn’t have before. But it’s paying dividends. I wouldn’t have been able to commit three years, and the $16,500, I wouldn’t have been able to say ‘yes I could do that’, so I wouldn’t have done it (P, UMNOS GV).

Others argued that joining UMNOS need not be dependent on extra funding if current resources were distributed differently:

> We’re getting a lot of value for money. It’s a large commitment, we’re using our equity money. We’re getting a lot out of it, and then, when we go away and do the professional learning, we’re coming back and giving that to staff, so that in a sense it’s paying it forward and is probably a lot cheaper than a lot of people going out and doing different professional development (SC, UMNOS GV).

> I have recommended to several principals over the past three years, the importance of being a part of the network of schools and that if they don’t necessarily have equity funding or anything, to do what they can to find the money, because the cost is minimal compared to what the actual value the school has (AP, UMNOS 15).

In terms of opportunity to join UMNOS, views on how to find the resources differed, with a few participants suggesting ‘I think there should be a different payment. I think there should be more equal opportunity for less financial schools’. On the other hand, an interstate participant, from a school that had to cover additional costs for travel and accommodation, found the investment worthwhile because ‘it’s to keep us focused on our approach and moving forward’.

In summary, for those who were prepared for active involvement, expressed as ‘you get out what you put in’ and ‘we have the maturity and the capacity to use this network in a way that suits us’, UMNOS was very beneficial. On the other hand, participants advised ‘if it’s going to be passively done to you, then it’s not going to work as well’. This perhaps explains one principal’s disappointment:

> We don’t really feel there has been much directed our way in between the days when we’ve gone to Graduate House. It’s been quite static in regard to the provision of service from UMNOS (P, UMNOS 16).
Outcomes

Although the expected benefits reported in Chapter 1 were predominantly processes such as access to experts and engaging in professional development – rather than student learning outcomes – many school leaders from all Networks reported that their expectations of UMNOS had been ‘exceeded’. They mentioned ‘getting value for money’ and ‘the payoff is that we are seeing improvements in the student data’, while UMNOS members from one school wanted to ‘join UMNOS for another three years’. The Principal of this school valued participation in terms of student learning outcomes:

I couldn’t have asked for a better set of data, outcomes, from this project. I think the credibility and the investment…the School Council approved $46,000 worth of funding to the project and it’s highly resourced…As a principal, I have seen extraordinary applications in the middle school and this demonstrates the success of our learning and involvement in the UMNOS Program (P, UMNOS 16).

Another, from UMNOS 14, said:

I would actually say it exceeded [my expectations]. Teachers are probably practical sceptics. I suppose anyone involved in school education is a practical sceptic and knows how hard it is to improve student learning outcomes. And we probably weren’t expecting to see the amount of shift that we did achieve in that period of time (P, UMNOS 14).

Like many worthwhile pursuits, sometimes this involved a struggle:

I don’t think I really understood how much, not just time, but how it would really direct our focus with school improvement across the school. I think the first couple of meetings I went to, I had a sense of fear and apprehension because I had a sense of this was going to ensure that everybody in my team was starting to think in a different way, and then I would say that it actually exceeded it (P, UMNOS 15).

Leadership

Many participants reported a positive effect on their own learning and their leadership of others, with one principal saying ‘it really taught learning in a way that I didn’t think was possible’. Others reflected:

For every principal that I have spoken to that have been part of the program, it has had value… I look in the mirror and I think I look at my leadership in a different way… I understand my leadership and my ability to influence and the power of that. Therefore I think my team is starting now to understand that and engage in that sort of conversation, which is having an impact… Really, we don’t know what we don’t know and maybe UMNOS has opened our eyes to things that we didn’t know or different ways of doing things (P, UMNOS 15).

I’ve been really happy with fact that I’ve been able to say I’ve got eight seminars, scheduled for me personally, with my success coordinators, and know that when I go there, I’m learning, actually hearing and discussing a lot of the theory before I actually start to put it in action (P, UMNOS 16).

It was a fantastic learning opportunity for key school leaders. Also a unique opportunity to network with schools that were ready to learn from one another and collaborate at a high level (P, UMNOS 15).

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Sustaining the work of UMNOS

The intention of UMNOS was to assist schools to embed evidence-based practices to improve student learning. To continue the work after three years, participants had suggestions for follow up: such as ‘liaising with and visiting and developing partnerships with other schools working on similar projects in the network’; ‘becoming a school others will want to visit’; ‘having community events and ‘access to the University library’. One UMNOS 14 principal recognised the value of the alignment and commitment of school leadership teams within UMNOS, assisted by its voluntary nature, and suggested that the model be expanded:
The Melbourne Uni model is sitting there as a case study, and if that was up scaled with serious Commonwealth money, we would see some major impact across the nation...I think this is really so efficient and has such impact it’s just...politicians, policy makers, bureaucrats in departments, really need to be aware of this sort of model and it’d be great to see it upscaled (P, UMNOS 14).

In the period 2014-17, six schools (three regional, three suburban) withdrew from UMNOS within the three years. One school left after two years in the Network and the Principal said:

    I found a lot of value in the program, and it built the capacity of me as a leader and my team individually. I don’t think we really were able to reach value out of the networks. I won’t say I’m disappointed, not in a way that I think that it was a waste of time, it just would have been good to get everything that theoretically we were going to get out of it...I didn’t regret the two years we were in it, I just thought that was the time for us to step down and go in a different direction (P, UMNOS 15).

The Principal of another school that withdrew after two years spoke highly of UMNOS in relation to its ‘focus and the power of collective action,’ but did not feel the school gained enough value for the time invested. The value of voluntary involvement coupled with alignment and commitment of the leadership team was highlighted in a third school that had been ‘pressured’ to apply for UMNOS after a school review indicating poor results. School leaders reported that expectations of UMNOS had not been met and the focus area was not the school’s priority.

**Intangible value**

Engagement with the university was attractive, giving credibility and leverage to many of the principals and success coordinators to lead change in their schools. Initially we asked survey respondents about their previous connections with the University of Melbourne. Forty-three (35%) had studied at the University while 38 (31%) had attended lectures or conferences at the University. Twenty-six (21%) read university publications. UMNOS provided an opportunity for many to become involved for the first time.

We also asked respondents about the importance of the University of Melbourne connection. Considering each Network by year, Table 11 shows the differing value placed on the University of Melbourne ‘brand’. GV, the network reporting the lowest importance overall, was made up of rural and regional schools. Of those in metropolitan schools, 73% believed it was extremely important, while 26% rated the connection important only for particular activities. The proportions were similar for rural schools. In contrast, those from regional cities were more equivocal (47% for each option). Only four respondents rated the connection as not important at all.

### Table 11: The importance of the University of Melbourne connection by Network

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Network</th>
<th>Not important</th>
<th>Only for Particular activities</th>
<th>Extremely important</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GV</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We also asked respondents about the importance of the One principal noted ‘The University of Melbourne is an attraction, it’s got a very solid graduate school and is one of those quality institutions’ while another said ‘It gives a really high profile to the work that you’re doing in schools’. An UMNOS 17 success coordinator reported ‘we’ve got a partnership with Melbourne with social and emotional learning, and with our literacy and numeracy, we’re kind of covered through UMNOS’. Several participants mentioned the leverage afforded by UMNOS experts, other schools and the University name:

    There were probably some changes that we couldn’t have made as quickly as we did, but for the fact that we were involved in this project. Because we were able to say, ‘John Hattie says this and Melbourne Uni says this, and all these other schools are doing x, and really we’re behind the eight ball here and we need to be moving this way’. Some of the things we implemented quickly, there’s no way you would have been able to implement them without that prestige of Melbourne Uni. Those things really help, and give these initiatives a certain gravitas. That probably surprised us, how much traction and how far we could get (P, UMNOS 14).

Once their involvement in UMNOS ended, some participants looked to other networks. One chose to join a Department-based network of Professional Learning Communities whose membership overlapped with the UMNOS Network:

    Our [Department] group is my UMNOS group, so I’m connected with principals who are also connected to UMNOS, and that was because the big priority was the big work, there was no point doing other work, because it just spreads too thin (P, UMNOS GV).

An independent school joined other networks ‘to fill the void’.

    They’re not as sophisticated as the Melbourne Uni one, but they still have a role and do help. But I think the Melbourne Uni model with the Principal and a number of senior leaders committed to it: that really works (P, UMNOS 14).
Conclusions

In terms of the UMNOS theory of action, the desired characteristics were implemented thoroughly and a growing sense of collective efficacy was evident. With a clear purpose to improve students’ learning, UMNOS members were driven by a shared purpose to assist all their students – high and low achievers – to achieve growth in their learning. Schools made a large commitment to join UMNOS, in terms of time and resources. As membership was voluntary, this meant that participants felt accountable to each other and their schools rather than to an external agency.

Trust underpinned collaboration, as school teams expressed trust in the reputation and the expertise of the University of Melbourne and developed trust across school boundaries that can be rarely crossed in other networks. Trust led to openness with data and collaboration on shared focus areas, driven by participants themselves with backbone support. Some schools continued to collaborate after their formal membership of UMNOS ended.

Through input from the experts, researchers and critical friends who formed the backbone, as well as the knowledge within schools, UMNOS developed the capacity of its members in specific areas, including strategic planning to improve student learning, using data to inform teaching, and building instructional strategies to meet students’ needs.

Instructional leadership developed among UMNOS school leadership teams in various ways and led to changes in their schools. Most participants reported changes in teaching practice including greater use of data to inform teaching. They also reported cultural changes that led to greater collective efficacy, and more consistent approaches within schools. Many made structural changes, particularly around professional learning teams.

School teams used a range of evidence to measure their impact, and reported improved student learning outcomes in particular cases. However, the collective impact of the work across schools was harder to identify.

In light of their experience, participants suggested a range of practical actions that they believed would improve the operations of UMNOS.

Some participants suggested that the University should provide more information regarding commitments of time, staffing and budgets well before schools apply to join. One also suggested more advice about the initial period of uncertainty as participants determine their focus and establish groups:

> Probably communicate the phases to the schools involved, what the phases might be as a felt experience. And that the first six months will be for most people uncomfortable. But that’s a really critical stage to get through and every school will get through it, and then the learning and the purposeful and the strategic approach. You take your learning from UMNOS, you bring it back to the school, that really starts to cement probably from about towards the second half of the first year. Probably just being a bit clearer on that one (AP, UMNOS 15).

Several participants recognised the research expertise of the University and expressed interest in continuing to partner in this way:

> The problem for me is we don’t have the time to generate the questions that are necessary to conduct the research around schools. I think schools and universities are going to have to work much closer…but this is the first university that has come to us and said ‘we want to try and focus on evidence-based pedagogical practices for schools’ and now what we need to move to is enabling people within the schools to start generating the questions for research or rich research questions and working with academics to have a look at how we can actually move all that forward (AP, UMNOS 16).

Others suggested internships into UMNOS schools for MGSE students to work as ‘researchers in supporting rigorous use of data’, ongoing action research ‘and ‘leading learning using a research basis’. The ongoing effect of UMNOS was described by one success coordinator in relation to research opportunities:

> I think we have a broader view and have been more influenced by the university in terms of what we think we could be doing here, so it plays back to the actual research that teachers themselves are doing…So I think it has quite tangibly changed the way we think about what we could be doing using ourselves as a site of research and also potentially aligning ourselves with the broader research (SC, UMNOS 15).

Although UMNOS is ‘a collaboration, not a course’ participants also mentioned the possibility of ‘further study’ currently and in future as important in developing instructional leadership for themselves and their colleagues. And although participants had the opportunity to present project vignettes in the UMNOS seminars, a principal suggested incorporating more implementation experience from principals who had been in earlier networks: ‘I’d really like to hear from a principal about their journey or what they’ve actually done with a particular change process in their school’.

Participants had a range of suggestions for ‘light touch’ influence trickling through the education community, while several believed that UMNOS could be bold in leading debate around instructional leadership for themselves and their colleagues. And although participants had the opportunity to present project vignettes in the UMNOS seminars, a principal suggested incorporating more implementation experience from principals who had been in earlier networks: ‘I’d really like to hear from a principal about their journey or what they’ve actually done with a particular change process in their school’.

Participants had a range of suggestions for ‘light touch’ influence trickling through the education community, while several believed that UMNOS could be bold in leading debate around assessment and pathways in education. Several participants suggested that the UMNOS model should be implemented more broadly, and the last word comes from an Assistant Principal who had participated in UMNOS for three years:

> It if [schools] all had an opportunity then that’s how we strengthen the system. I honestly believe that. We are a better school, we are better leaders, because of our involvement over the past three years (AP, UMNOS 15).
References


Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself.

By learning, you will teach. By teaching, you will learn.

Helen Keller: It is the supreme art of the teacher to produce not knowledge but the love of learning.

The highest result of education is tolerance.

Whilst academic education is important, it is even more important to learn how to live.

'It's a collaboration not a course': Evaluation of the effectiveness of the University of Melbourne Network of Schools 2014-17