Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership

Building on Strengths to Embrace Complex Change

Milawa Primary School

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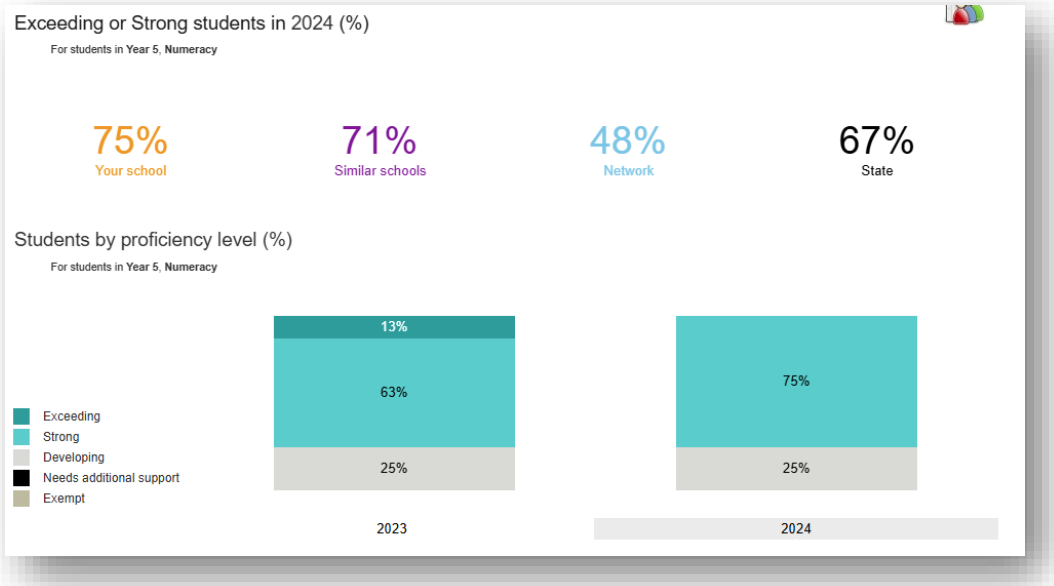
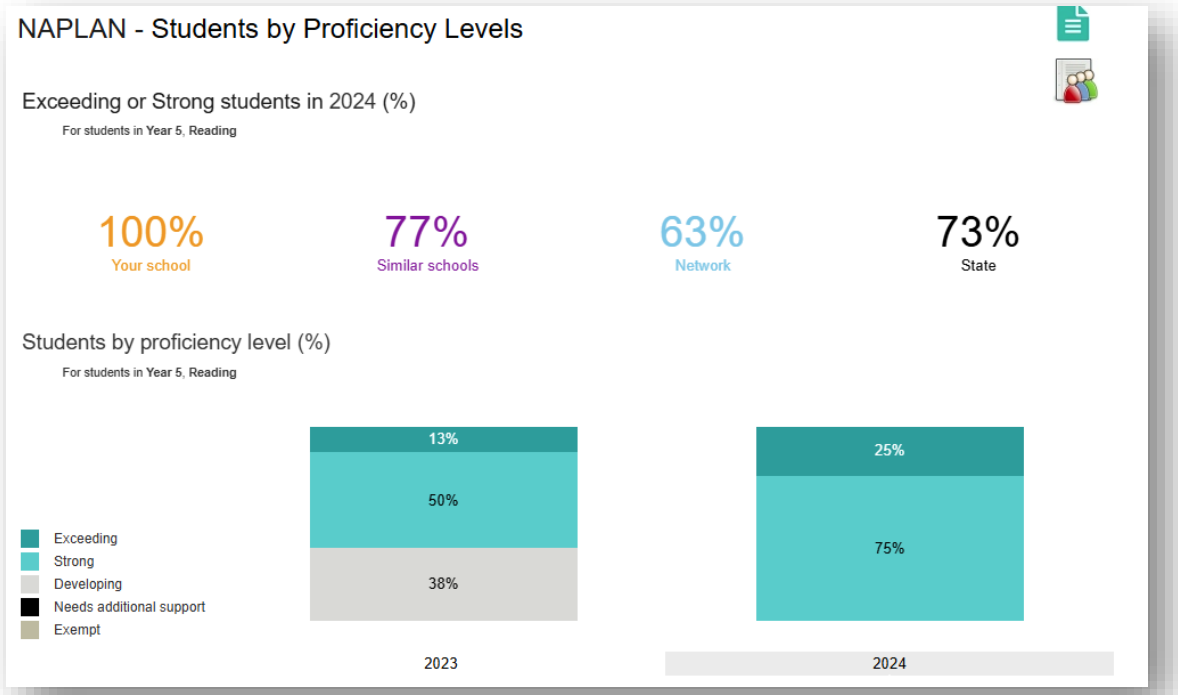
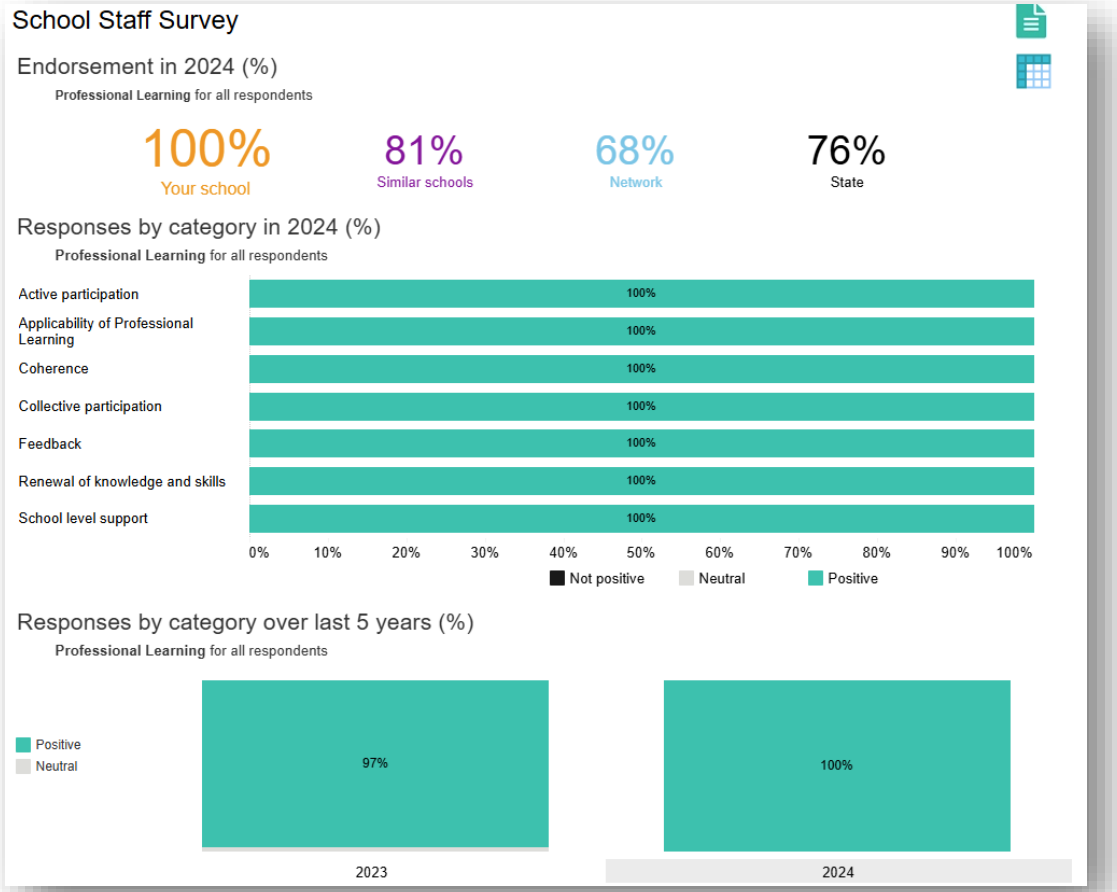
VICTORIA State Government | Department of Education

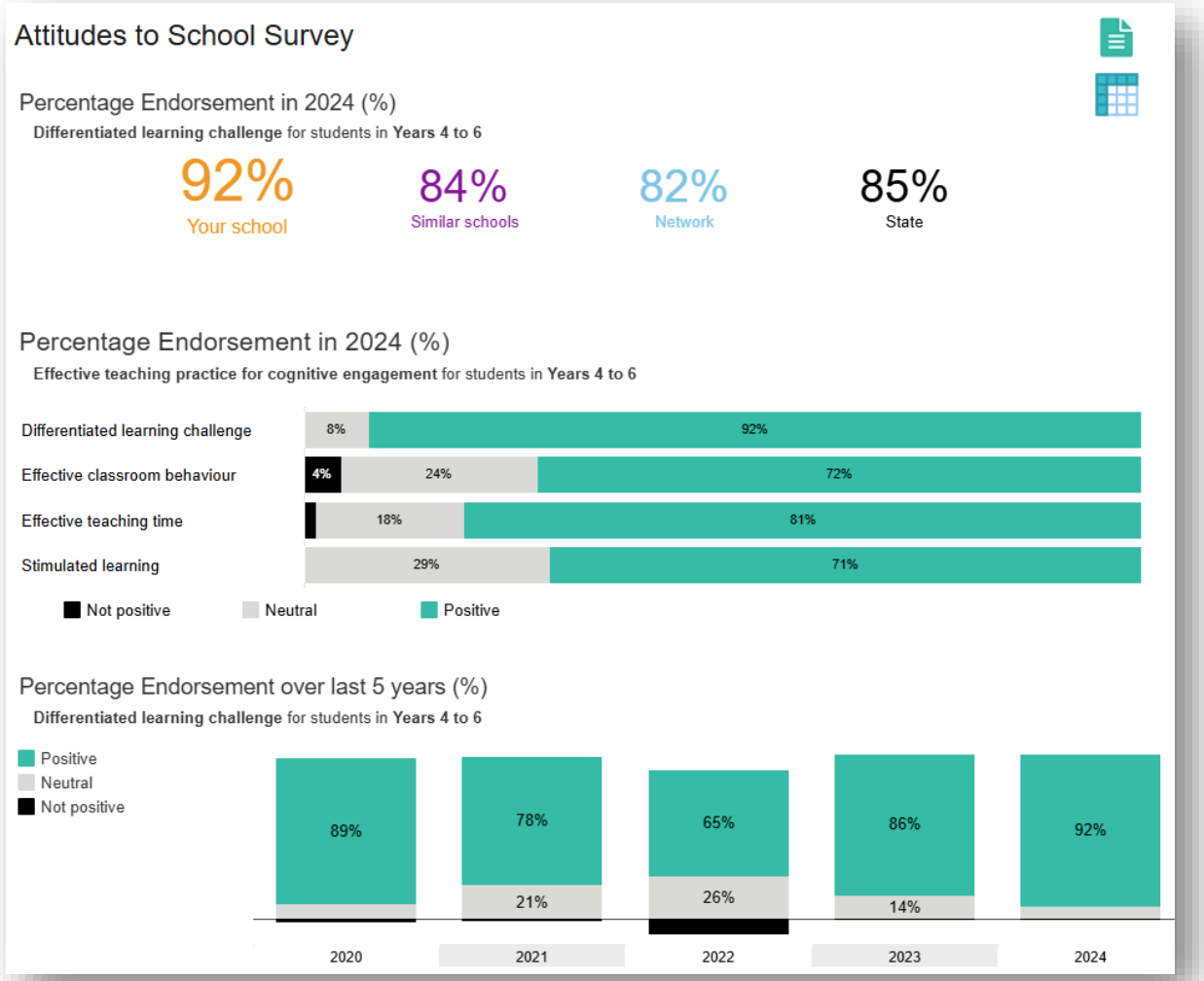
Welcome to Milawa





Welcome to Milawa

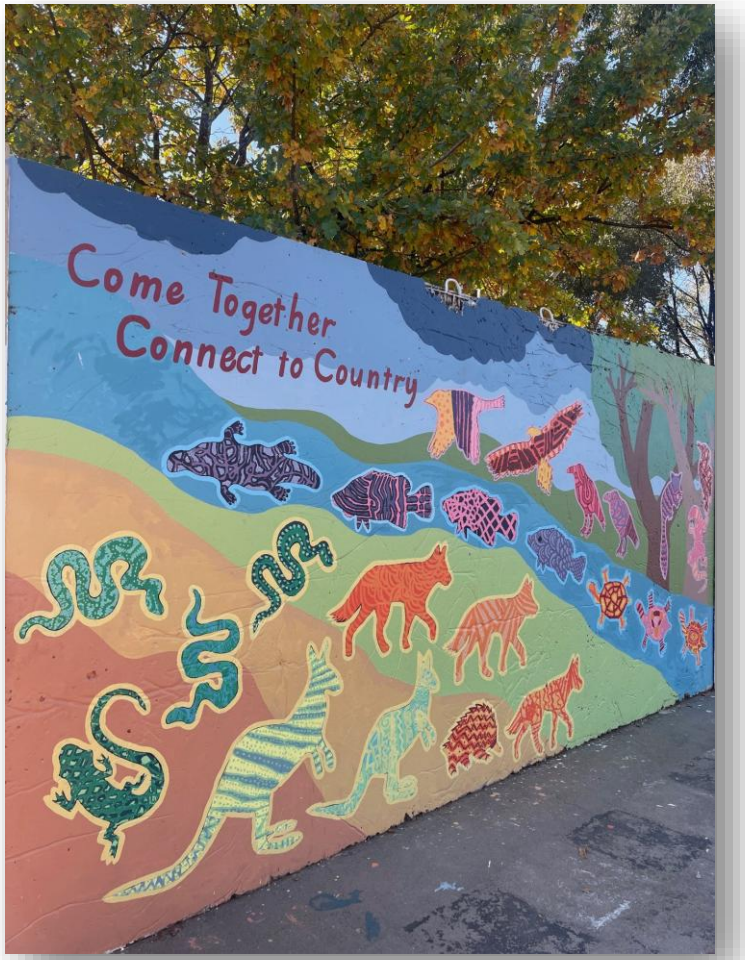




Welcome to Milawa

Setting the Scene for Complex Change

Covid → Change → Collaborative Practices → Coherent Culture



As you listen, consider and record:

1. ***Leadership actions***
2. ***Leadership research or frameworks***
3. ***DE supports and resources***

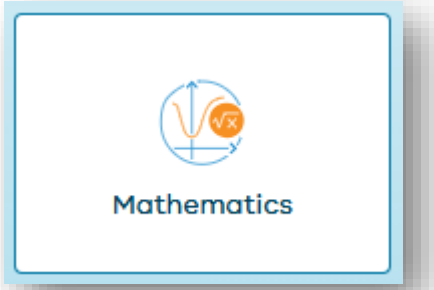
Part 1

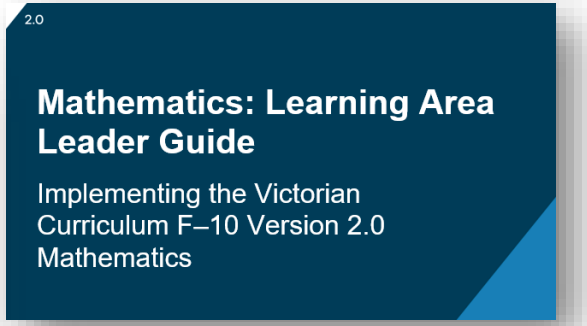
Mathematics as the Catalyst

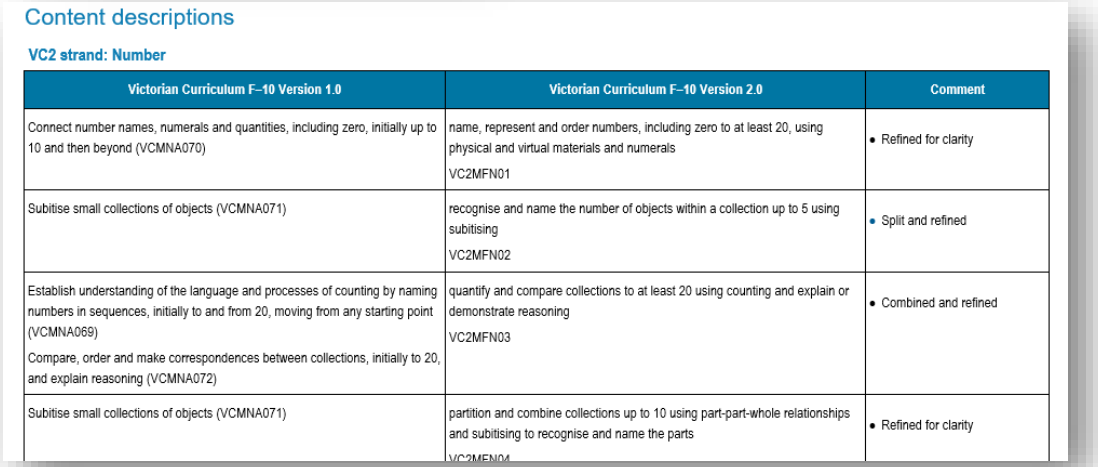
Mathematics as the Catalyst

Victorian Curriculum 2.0

- The rationale for why mathematics matters and the intentions of the curriculum
- The level descriptions, content descriptors, and achievement standards
- The proficiencies — understanding, fluency, reasoning, and problem-solving







Content descriptions

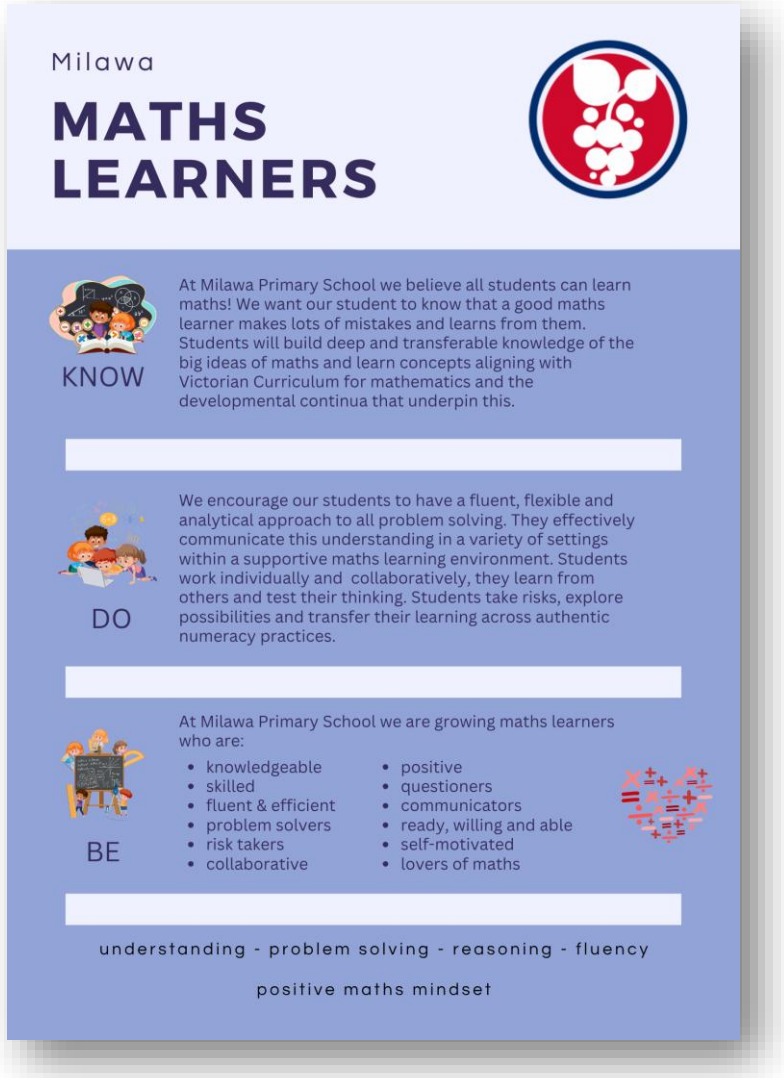
VC2 strand: Number

Victorian Curriculum F–10 Version 1.0	Victorian Curriculum F–10 Version 2.0	Comment
Connect number names, numerals and quantities, including zero, initially up to 10 and then beyond (VCMNA070)	name, represent and order numbers, including zero to at least 20, using physical and virtual materials and numerals VC2MFN01	• Refined for clarity
Subitise small collections of objects (VCMNA071)	recognise and name the number of objects within a collection up to 5 using subitising VC2MFN02	• Split and refined
Establish understanding of the language and processes of counting by naming numbers in sequences, initially to and from 20, moving from any starting point (VCMNA069) Compare, order and make correspondences between collections, initially to 20, and explain reasoning (VCMNA072)	quantify and compare collections to at least 20 using counting and explain or demonstrate reasoning VC2MFN03	• Combined and refined
Subitise small collections of objects (VCMNA071)	partition and combine collections up to 10 using part-part-whole relationships and subitising to recognise and name the parts VC2MFN04	• Refined for clarity

Mathematics as the Catalyst

From this work, we created a clear, shared document articulating what we believe students at Milawa should:

- **Know** – the core mathematical concepts and connections that form deep understanding
- **Do** – the strategies, processes, and skills they need to apply knowledge flexibly
- **Be** – the kinds of mathematicians we want to nurture: curious, confident, persistent, and capable problem-solvers

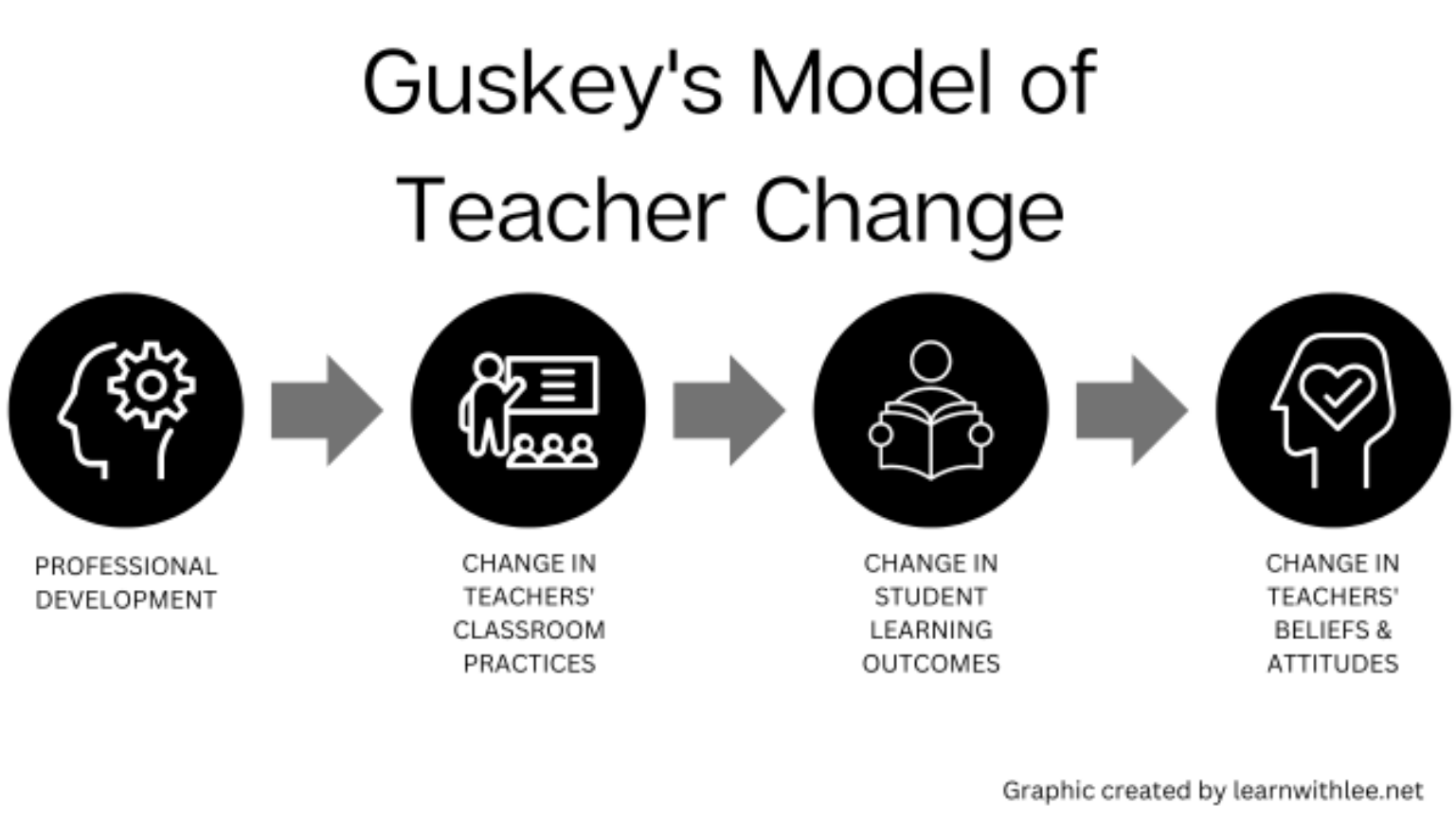


Mathematics as the Catalyst

To support this, we also renewed our Instructional Model for Mathematics. We clarified our approach to:

- Warm-ups and cumulative review
- Explicit teaching of concepts
- Supported application
- Rich, low-floor/high-ceiling tasks
- Spiralling review and mastery

Mathematics as the Catalyst



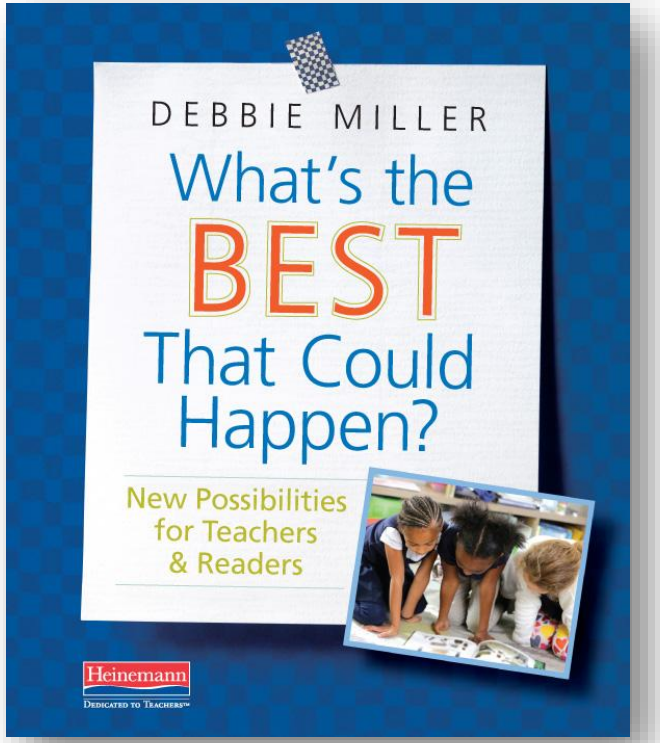
Part 2

What’s the Best that Could Happen?

What’s the Best That Could Happen?

Our goal was to create a school structure that supported curriculum breadth, staff sustainability, and coherence across teaching and learning.

- ACE – Australian Culture and the Environment: A deeply integrated Humanities and Science subject co-led with our Marrung Lead, taught explicitly through an Indigenous lens, helping us bring the Marrung Education Plan to life.
- Rotating ‘Specials’ Digital Technologies, Specialist PE, Performing Arts, and Kitchen Garden/Health
- And a weekly, year-long Wellbeing class that intentionally addresses the Personal and Social Capability curriculum — while also ***creating protected time for teacher collaboration and leadership***.

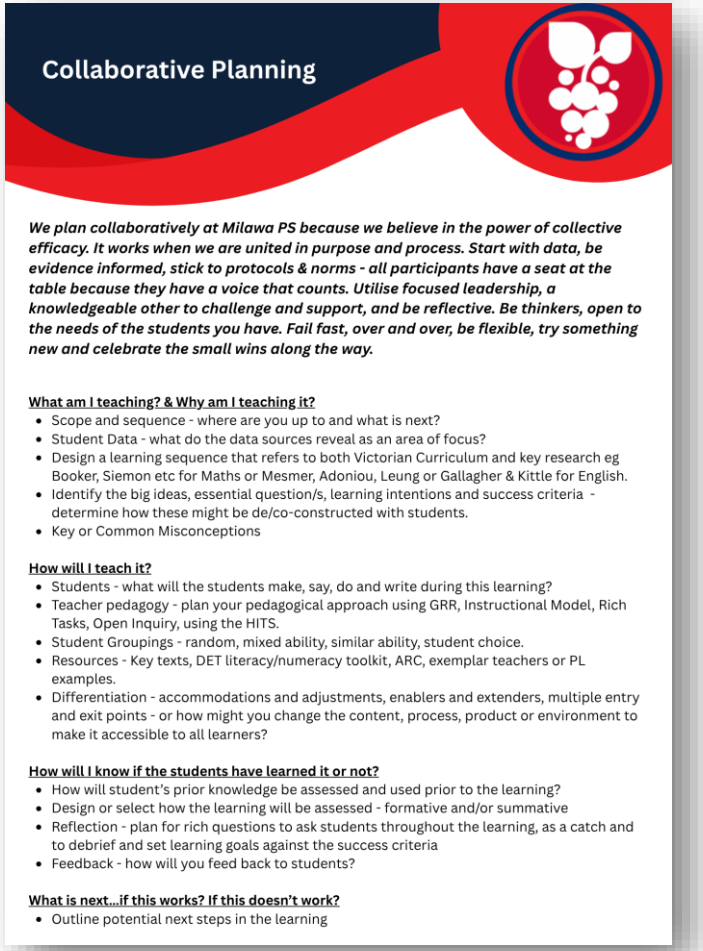


What's the Best That Could Happen?

Collaborative Planning

At the heart of these protocols are
Sharratt's 5 Questions for Teachers:

- What am I teaching?
- Why am I teaching it?
- How am I teaching it?
- How will I know when students have learned it?
- What's next for the learner if they have or haven't learned it?



Collaborative Planning

We plan collaboratively at Milawa PS because we believe in the power of collective efficacy. It works when we are united in purpose and process. Start with data, be evidence informed, stick to protocols & norms - all participants have a seat at the table because they have a voice that counts. Utilise focused leadership, a knowledgeable other to challenge and support, and be reflective. Be thinkers, open to the needs of the students you have. Fail fast, over and over, be flexible, try something new and celebrate the small wins along the way.

What am I teaching? & Why am I teaching it?

- Scope and sequence - where are you up to and what is next?
- Student Data - what do the data sources reveal as an area of focus?
- Design a learning sequence that refers to both Victorian Curriculum and key research eg Booker, Siemon etc for Maths or Mesmer, Adoniou, Leung or Gallagher & Kittle for English.
- Identify the big ideas, essential question/s, learning intentions and success criteria - determine how these might be de/co-constructed with students.
- Key or Common Misconceptions

How will I teach it?

- Students - what will the students make, say, do and write during this learning?
- Teacher pedagogy - plan your pedagogical approach using GRR, Instructional Model, Rich Tasks, Open Inquiry, using the HITS.
- Student Groupings - random, mixed ability, similar ability, student choice.
- Resources - Key texts, DET literacy/numeracy toolkit, ARC, exemplar teachers or PL examples.
- Differentiation - accommodations and adjustments, enablers and extenders, multiple entry and exit points - or how might you change the content, process, product or environment to make it accessible to all learners?

How will I know if the students have learned it or not?

- How will student's prior knowledge be assessed and used prior to the learning?
- Design or select how the learning will be assessed - formative and/or summative
- Reflection - plan for rich questions to ask students throughout the learning, as a catch and to debrief and set learning goals against the success criteria
- Feedback - how will you feed back to students?

What is next...if this works? If this doesn't work?

- Outline potential next steps in the learning

What's the Best That Could Happen?

School Wide Positive Behaviour Support

- Our vision for learning and behaviour
- Clear school-wide expectations
- An engaging acknowledgement system (Milawards and the MilliGOAT)
- A consistent flowchart for behaviour response, and
- A tracking and monitoring system embedded in our LMS
- Classroom Systems
- Positive Classroom Management Strategies

Reflect and Share

- *What have you heard?*
- *What questions do you have?*
- *What resonates with you?*
- *Where are the opportunities in your context?*

Part 3

The English Redesign

From Learning to Precision

The English Redesign

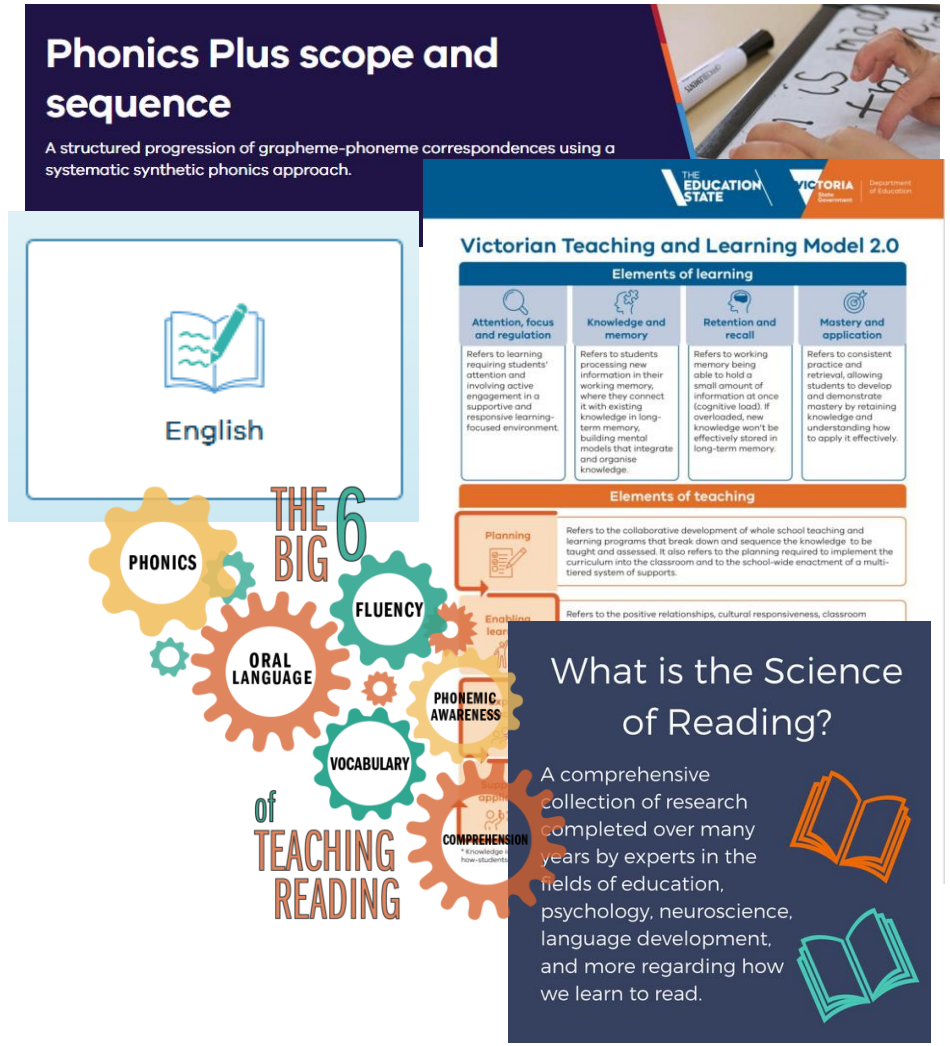
Mathematics gave us ***momentum,***

Leadership led to ***structure,*** our next challenge was English.

Outperforming others, underperforming against potential.

We made a strategic decision to pause, ***learn first***, and ***change deliberately***.

Our philosophy is clear: ***read, learn, explore, understand - and then design from within.***



The English Redesign

Dr Nathaniel Swain identified two critical challenges:

- A **content knowledge gap** among educators, and
- An **image problem** for the **Science of Learning**

The English Redesign

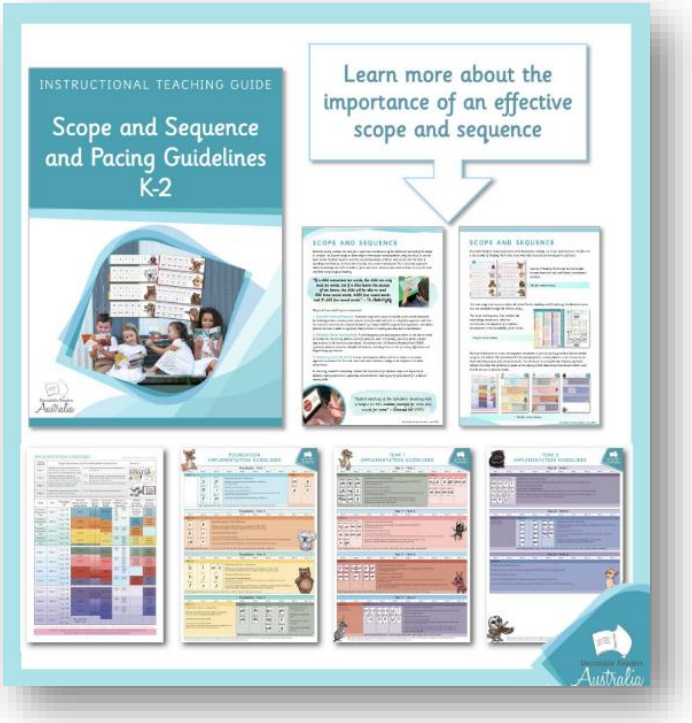
*Our 'ah ha' moment came through **Narissa Leung's Foray into Phonics course** and her **Emergent Reader Building Blocks**. This learning was **transformational**.*

We complemented this learning with the work of:

- **Jocelyn Seamer**, whose focus on teacher clarity and instructional design helped us refine our routines
- **Heidi Mesmer**, who showed us how decoding, spelling, and text work intertwine
- And **Cartwright and Duke's Active View of Reading**, which challenged us to go beyond the Simple View and consider the interactive, dynamic nature of **word recognition and language comprehension** along with the **bridging processes of fluency and metacognition.**

The English Redesign

- Leaders First
- Book Clubs
- Annotated Readings
- Professional Learning Communities
- Resourcing
- Sandbox



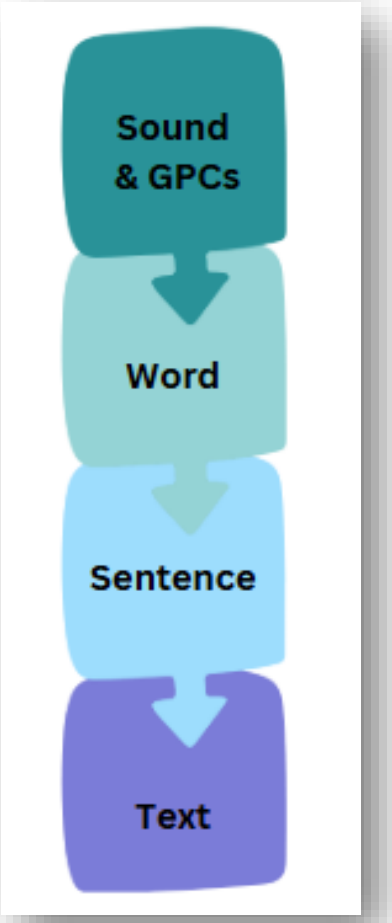
We asked: ***What do we need to change? What do we need to stop doing? What do we need to teach explicitly that we've previously left to chance?***

The English Redesign

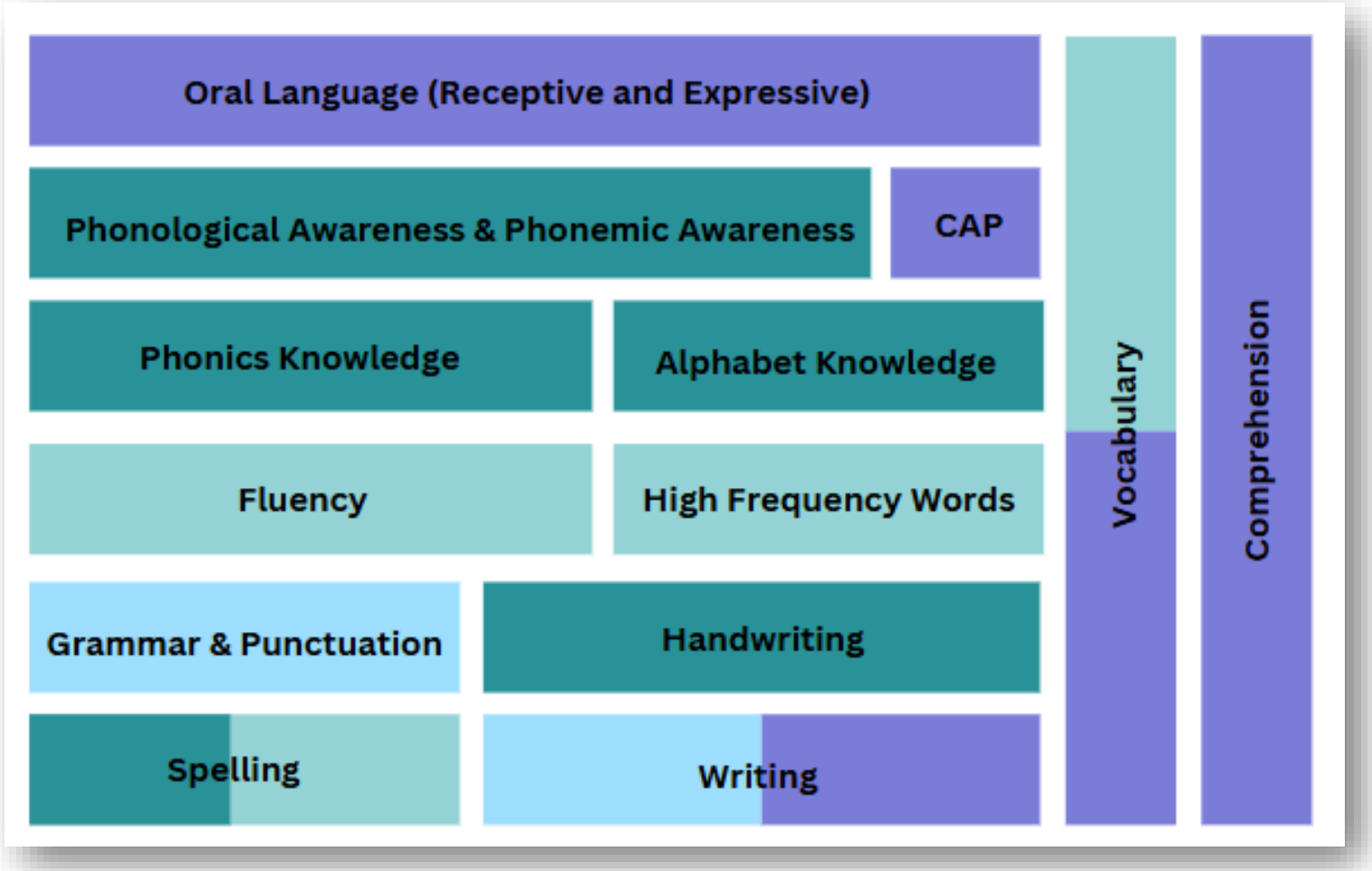
Redesigning our instructional model for English — and we didn't tinker. We **reimagined the entire structure**.

Moved from the legacy model of 1-hour for Reading and 1-hour for writing, to a **cohesive 2-hour English block** across all classes, from Foundation to year 6.

This block was designed to follow a clear instructional progression:
Sound → Word → Sentence → Text
Every lesson moves students through those layers, supporting decoding, meaning-making, and composition within the one, continuous learning experience.



The English Redesign



The English Redesign

*We used the **Emergent Reader Building Blocks** as a base, then expanded and adapted this to include all essential components of English instruction. We **colour-coded** each instructional element to show which level of text or task would best support it — creating a **visual model** that now anchors our English planning and ensures balance across the week.*

From there, we:

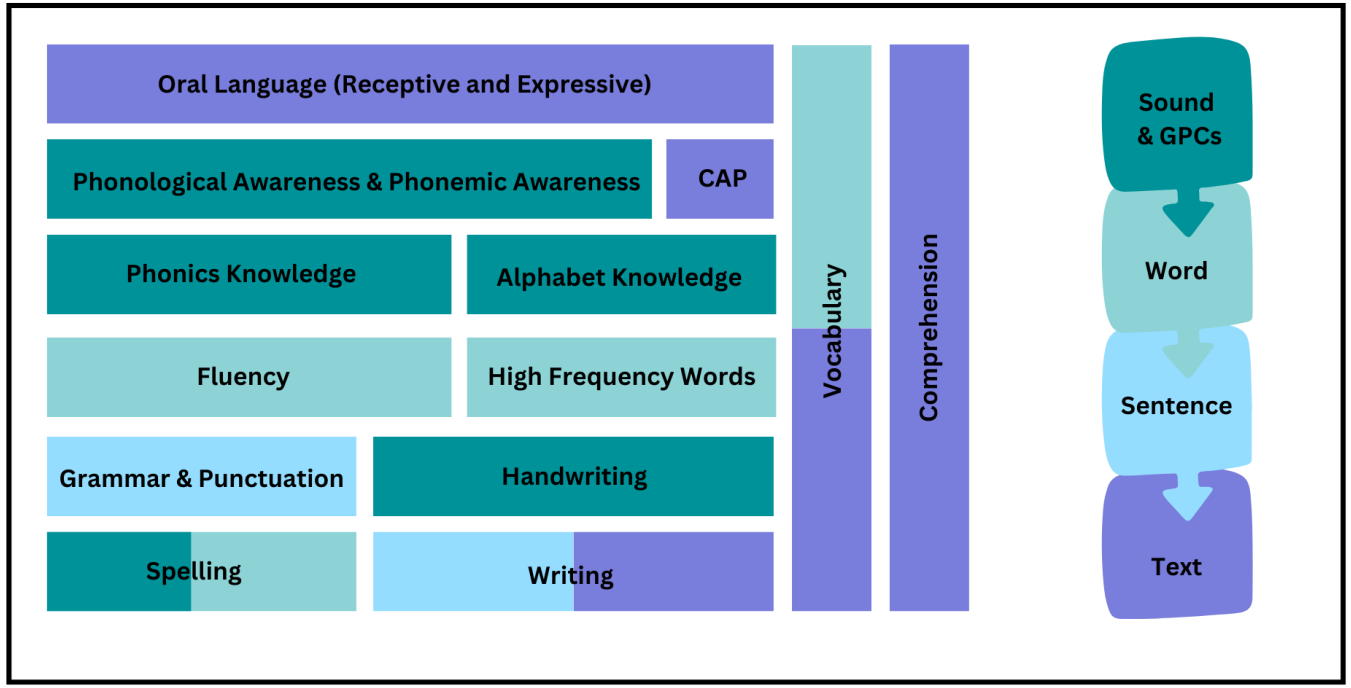
- Developed a whole-school **scope and sequence** for English
- Invested in **decodable texts**, **rich literature**, **non-fiction resources**, and aligned anchor charts and exemplars
- Built **clear protocols** for instruction, assessment, and moderation
- Created a **bank of annotated teaching exemplars**
- Supported all staff through **coaching, planning time**, and ongoing professional learning

The English Redesign

English at Milawa PS

MILAWA Primary School

Across the 2 hours of English learning each day, move through the language flow chart ensuring across the week all components are taught in accordance with Victorian Curriculum 2.0.
F-2 will prioritise a minimum of 25 minutes of phonics each day.



Adapted from Emergent Reader Building Blocks Ozlit Teacher 2024

Part 4

Leading Complex Change

Culture, Coherence and the Courage to Lead

Leading Complex Change

Influencing beliefs, behaviours and relationships

Sustainable change comes from a blend of:

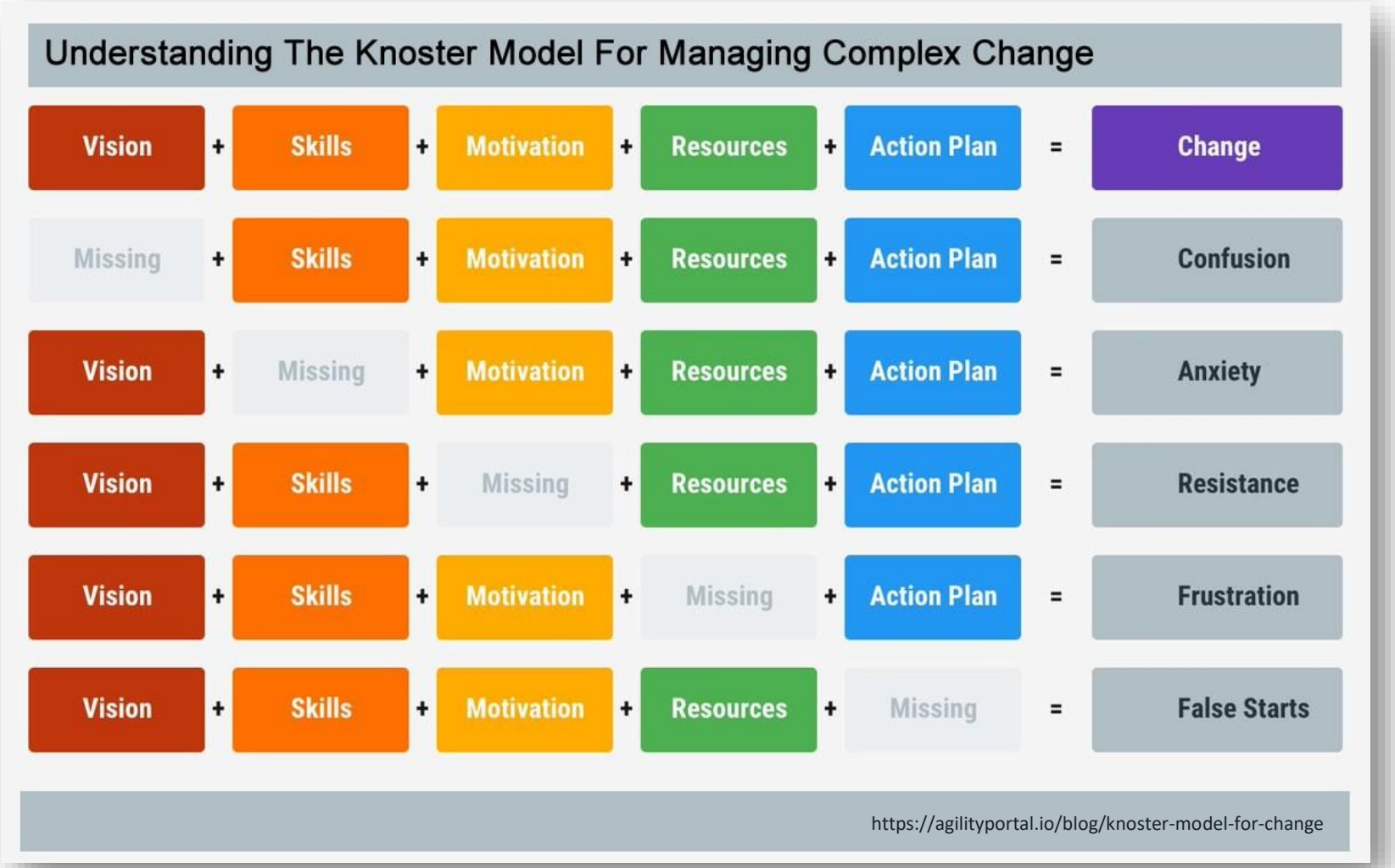
- Clear systems
- Shared understanding
- Human connection

Leading Complex Change

Stage		Outcome of stage
1	Problem identification	The leader gains agreement that a specific practice or student outcome is problematic
2	Problem causes	The leader surfaces, tests and gains agreement on the likely school-based causes of the problem
3	Solution requirements	The leader gains agreement on the requirements for an effective solution
4	Solution strategies	The leader gains agreement on solution strategies that, as far as possible, meet the set of solution requirements
5	Problem outcomes	The leader gains agreement on how to monitor the implementation and impact of the solution strategies

https://www.academy.vic.gov.au/about-us/academy-leadership-excellence-framework/capabilities

Leading Complex Change



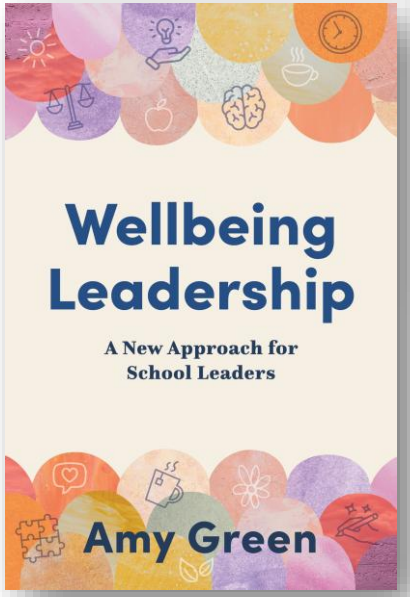
Leading Complex Change

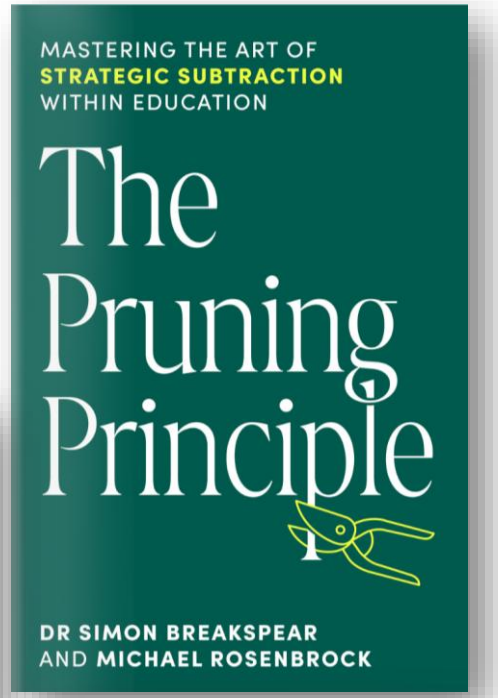
Dr Simon Breakspear – Disciplined Innovation, Agile Leadership

- Better, not more
- Responsive, not reactive
- Iterative, not impulsive

Amy Green – Wellbeing Driven Leadership

'The emotional climate of a school is the soil from which excellence grows. You can't plant deep change in dry ground.'





Leading Complex Change

So, what does leading complex change look like in a small school?

It looks like **walking beside your team**, not ahead of them.
It looks like **learning first, designing second**.
It looks like **being present, on purpose**.
It looks like **using evidence and empathy** — not just one or the other.

It looks like shaping a culture where people don't just comply — they contribute.

Prioritising *what matters most,* ***building culture*** *and* ***capability*** *side by side, knowing that transformation isn't about perfection it's about* ***coherence, persistence and shared ownership***.

Leading Complex Change

Key Takeaways

- **Start with strengths.** Build momentum where confidence already lives.
- **Do the reading.** Don’t buy the answer. Build internal expertise.
- **Use your small size to your advantage.** Be nimble, flexible, relational.
- **Structure matters.** Meeting schedules, planning time, and protocols drive culture.
- **Invest in middle leadership.** These roles have been the backbone of our transformation.
- **Build capacity, not dependency.** External support should leave your staff stronger.
- **Think long term.** Culture outlasts programs.

If we want **Excellence in Every Classroom**, we must be ready to **lead learning, not manage work**, and build **systems that are both intellectually rigorous and emotionally sustaining**.

Thank you

Victorian Academy
of Teaching and Leadership

Questions

&

Reflections