

Developing an Inclusive Literacy Attainment Strategy for Maltese Learners

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Literacy Support in Malta

- **Early 1990s** – Complementary Education teachers in schools to provide out-of-class literacy support to struggling learners
- **1996** – Literacy Unit with University of Malta to provide external support to schools to review resources and have stronger early intervention programmes
- **1997** – central SpLD Service to address learners with dyslexia
- **2001** – Foundation for Educational Services to provide out-of-school literacy and parental involvement support with special reference to at-risk and vulnerable families



The NWAR Programme:

General Aims

- Set up in 2002 within the Foundation for Education Services
- To support the basic literacy skills acquisition of learners at risk of educational failure aged 7 to 13
- To support schools in the application of Multi-Sensory methodologies
- To actively involve and support families in the learning support process.
- To support the adult in life-long learning journey



NWAR Parameters & Methods

- Referral from schools, Statementing Moderating Panel, other entities and by parents
- Basic phonic instruction that research shows to be critical to reading success.
- Logical, success-oriented, sequential instruction.
- The use of all the learning pathways: sight, sound and touch.
- The mastery of letter/sound relationship so learners can successfully read and write

Methodology cont/...

- Initial Assessment
- Individual learning plan is discussed
- Short term targets are identified
- A **Learning Contract** is signed
- Families are active participants
- Review of **Learning Contract** at the end of one semester
- Continuation/Termination of service

NWAR Development

- External evaluation by Profs. Sheila Wolfendale in 2004
- Significant improvement in decoding and encoding by the children. Need to consolidate other skills
- Led to whole-school approach, the Language Acquisition Programme (LAP)
- By 2007, LAP was in 30% of Maltese state primary schools



Key Elements of LAP

- Phonemic Awareness
- Systematic, explicit phonics instruction
- Sound symbol relationships
- Decoding
- Word attack skills
- Spelling instruction
- Comprehension instruction
- Independent reading of high-quality books

Training

Prior to the commencement of LAP, teachers are provided with:

- PD sessions
- Classroom Demonstrations
- Relevant resources/literature
- In-service training



Implementation

On commencement of LAP, the school is provided with:

- Parental meetings
- Ongoing classroom support
- Classroom demonstrations
- Resources

LAP Assessment Parameters

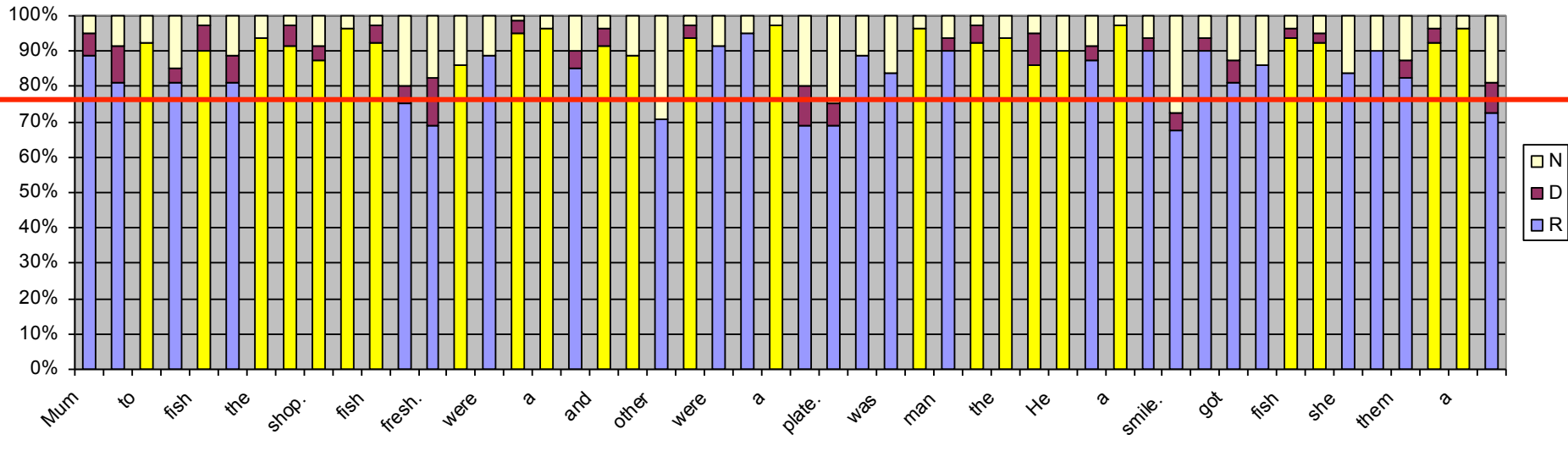
- LAP approach in 2005-06 in 9 schools, 20 Year 1 and 20 Yr 2 classes
- 80 randomly selected pupils, equal number of Years 1 and 2, boys and girls
- Assessment in the form of 4 'games' about 15 mins in all
- Carried out in June 2006 by FES staff
- Full school co-operation

Test Structure

	Year 1	Year 2
Section 1	recognition of the alphabet	
Section 2	reading of words with selected phonemes	
Section 3	reading of selected sight words	
Section 4	Reading and comprehension of 5 sentences	Reading and comprehension of short paragraph made up of 6 sentences

LAP Assessment: Yr 2 Sentence Reading Scores

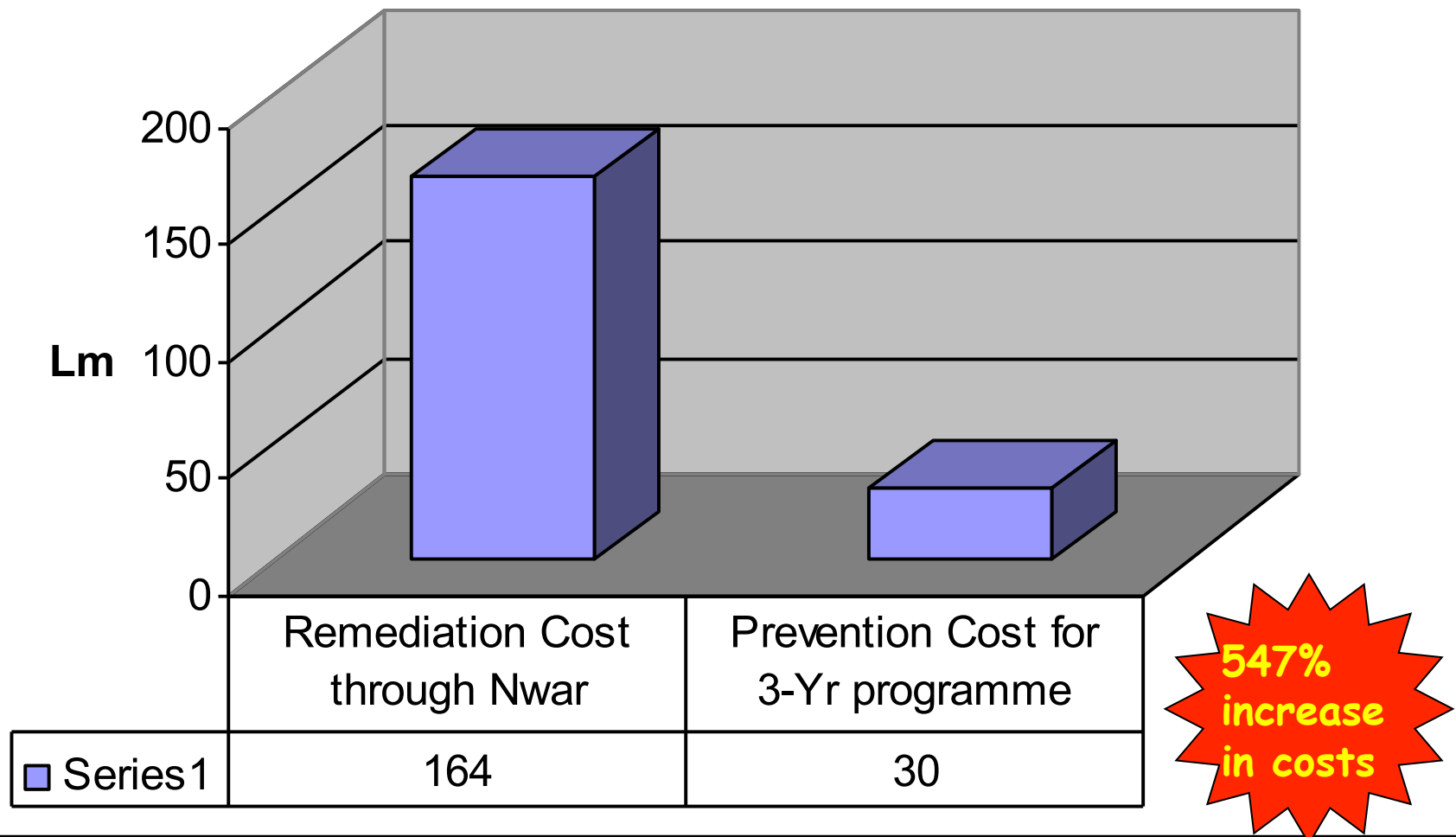
LAP Y2.4: Reading or Decoding of Each Word



Discussion of Results

- Year 2: Attainment targets were fulfilled.
- Year 1: Attainment Targets were not fulfilled; however, given Yr 2 results, the Yr 1 results may mean that:
 - The targets were unrealistic for the Year;
 - The LAP needs to be reviewed, perhaps starting earlier.
- Year 1: LAP decoding skills may have given a reading advantage of **15.1%**.
- Year 2: As expected, need to resort to decoding diminished to **5.4%**.
- No significant difference in scores between boys and girls
- No significant difference between learners of different ages within the same cohort.
- The indications are that the LAP approach compensates for these known variances. This mirrors findings in international studies on the effectiveness on the multi-sensory approach in literacy acquisition that is very similar to the LAP approach.

Cost per Child using Multi-sensory Approach PREVENTION vs REMEDIATION



Limits to Literacy Attainment

Approach up to 2008 (1)

A LOT OF EFFECTIVE SERVICE WAS GIVEN TO LEARNERS WHO WERE PREVIOUSLY FORGOTTEN, AND MANY LEARNERS ACHIEVED BOTH MASTERY AND INTEGRATION. **HOWEVER...**

- Lack of coordination and holistic coverage by the different services.
- Each service highlighted one approach, that was perceived as a 'magic bullet'.
- Schools expected to 'put the jigsaw pieces together' to make one whole picture – often the sum of the parts did not make a whole.
- Literacy needs of learners with Statement still under-served

Limits to Literacy Attainment

Approach up to 2008 (2)

- 'External support' programmes were not from central educational authorities. They were therefore 'allowed' rather than championed / embraced / adapted. They did not effect official curriculum guidance.
- In LAP, some teachers were not sufficiently trained or did not understand the whole process, leading to superficial application, negative results after schools were weaned off, and charges of 'same old phonics'.
- Services did not sufficiently engage schools and teachers in the literacy attainment debate and in considering whole-school and school-community comprehensive approaches literacy attainment

The Challenge...

- How do we preserve the strong elements of present services, especially trained staff, whilst
 - synergizing resources
 - coordinating services
 - empowering, supporting and responsabilizing schools
 - ensuring entitlement for all ?

A National Policy and Strategy

- 2009 – launch of National Core Competences Policy and Strategy for Mathematics, Maltese, English and eLearning.
- This was part of national reform programme that included:
 - decentralization of state compulsory education
 - removal of streaming in state primary schools
 - removal of end-of primary competitive exams in state and non-state sector, thus greatly reducing social inequalities
 - integration of 3 types of secondary schools towards a comprehensive-type system
 - reform of special needs provision to enhance further inclusion



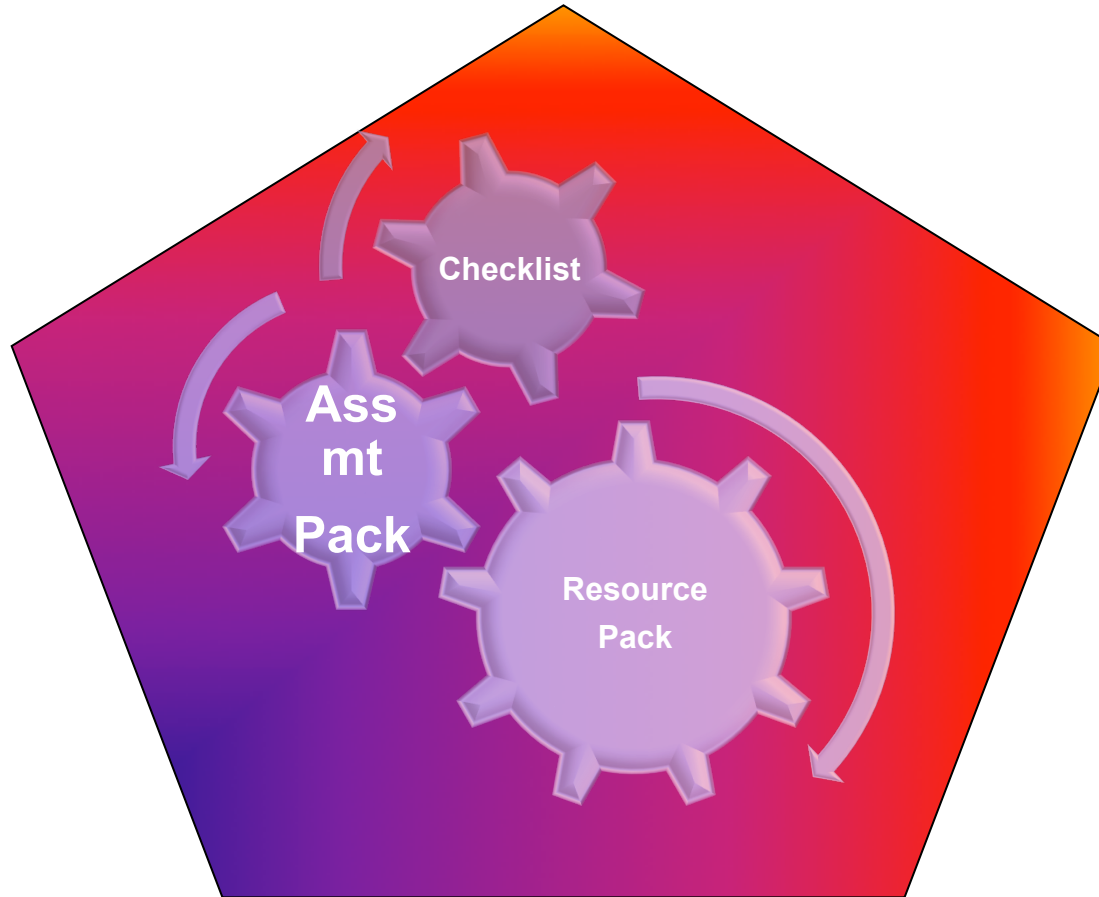
The Literacy Strategy

- First focus on bilingual literacy attainment.
- Rationalization and coordination of four different literacy support services into a central comprehensive service
- Literacy Strategy used as entry point for upskilling of curriculum leadership at school and class level through the School Development Plan process.

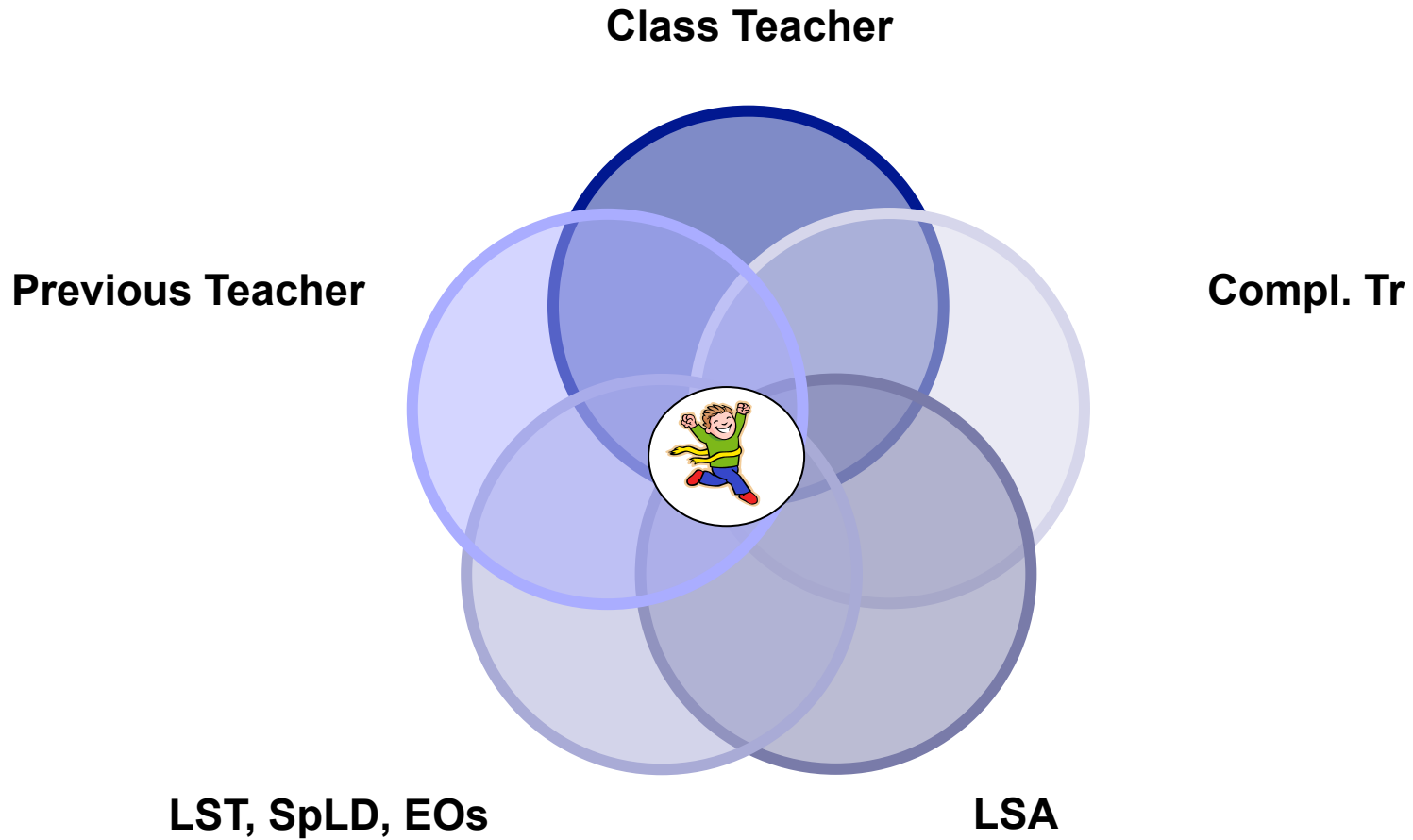
Strategy Framework

	<i>School-based Provision</i>	<i>Community-based Provision</i>
Early Support		
E a r l y Identification		
Integration		
Intervention		

In the context of a multi-faceted, phased school/College Strategy

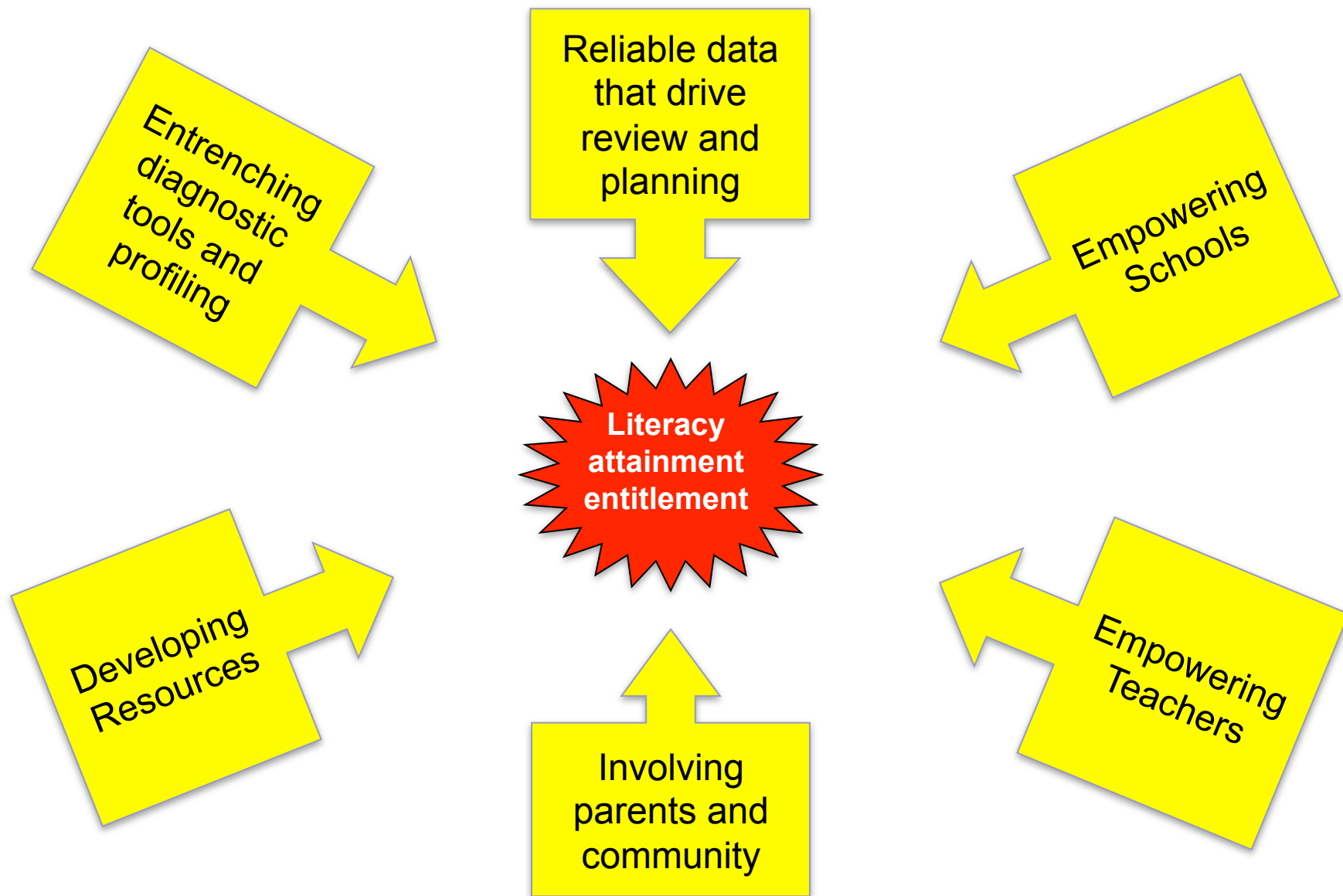


But it WORKS only if...

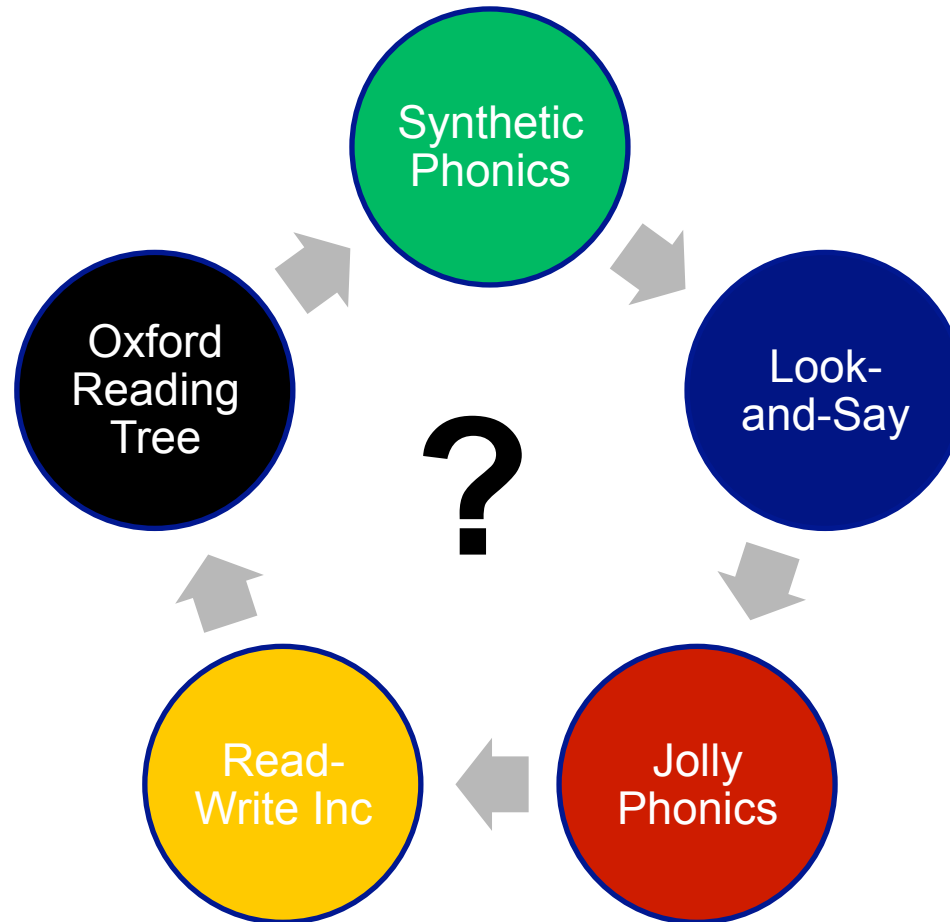




National Strategy



The Great Literacy Attainment Debate...



Making the 'Right' Choice

1. Investigate:

- How are your Yr 1-3 and complementary teachers going about literacy attainment?
- What do you 'believe' in?
- What do they feel competent in?
- What is the reading attainment success rate of each Yr 1-3 teacher?
- What reading preparedness do your learners come to school with?
- What resources are available?
- What does the Literacy Support Teacher recommend?
- What does comparable international research and best practice say?

2. Select and Commit

3. Implement fully, with appropriate investment

4. Evaluate and Review

Strategy Highlights

- Uniform upskilling of support staff
- Fully support for schools to develop programmes for early support, effective inclusive pedagogy, parental involvement
- Schools report number of identified learners and their progress at the end of Year 1, 2, 3
- Struggling learners at the end of Year 3 must have a literacy action Plan for Year 4
- School self-reporting counter-balanced by yearly testing of 10% random sample to give national picture in October of Year 3.
- External reviews include focus on literacy strategy.



The Way Forward...

Maximize literacy attainment by:

- Continuous training of Inclusion Coordinators and LSAs
- Continuous upskilling of teachers and Heads
- Enhancing IEPs of statemented learners to– pilot project underway
- Enhancing collegial planning and provision e.g. triads
- Promoting, supporting and expecting school ownership through SDP process



Thank You !