

# Making Real Change in Schools Report

A data driven analysis of the *Track Your Success* initiative.

Presented by Seven Steps to Writing Success

The goal of Seven Steps to Writing Success is to empower teachers to create engaging classrooms where students learn to love writing and rapidly improve their writing skills.

Training over 6,000 teachers a year, it is important for the Seven Steps to ensure it is making a 'real' difference in teachers' and students' lives.

To measure the success of the Seven Steps and the teachers running it, the *Track Your Success* tool was created to allow teachers and schools to assess student data prior to and after 10 weeks (on average) of implementation of the Seven Steps.

Aggregating over 1,700 individual students' data provides a quantitative evaluation of the improvements in student writing from the implementation of the Seven Steps.

#### **Key Findings:**

- Students' writing scores improved overall by over **10%** – over an average 10-week period.
- An overwhelming 69.2% of students increased their post-Seven Steps test score by 1 or more NAPLAN bands
  - 34.5% of students improved by 2 or more
  - 12.5% of students improved by 3 or more bands.
- The greatest areas of improvement in the NAPLAN Marking Criteria were achieved in Paragraphing, Character & Setting (Narrative only), Text Structure and Persuasive Devices (Persuasive only).
- The majority of students progressed (at least) two entire years forward in their writing ability in just 10 weeks.

The following report outlines the research, method and results of the *Track Your Success* initiative.

## 1. Project Overview

Track Your Success was undertaken by 10 schools throughout 2016-17 with the goal of assessing the success of the Seven Steps program in their school after being trained at a Seven Steps professional development day.

Schools were provided with [instructions](#) on how to test students and given suggested writing topics. They were also provided with a spreadsheet to log the marks given to each student.

Schools attempted to run two tests as close to NAPLAN testing standards as possible. One test was to be performed before implementation of the Seven Steps program and one after about 6-16 weeks, depending on their own requirements.

Schools selected classrooms or year levels to test, along with a type of text (Narrative and/or Persuasive) and the topic.

The schools were then asked to mark and moderate the students' assessment using the NAPLAN Marking Criteria for the given type of text.

Implementation of the Seven Steps was completely up to the school with no set scope and sequence or additional structure given. This helped mirror the real-world application of the program as schools' needs vary greatly.

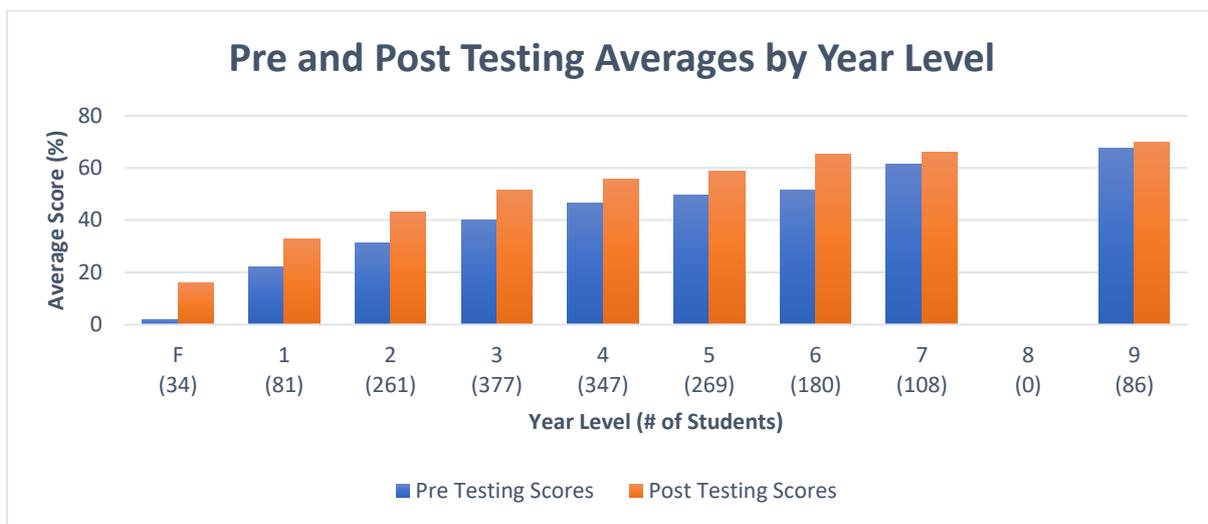
Schools then performed testing again on the same students and marked the writing. The marks for the pre and post tests were then provided to the Seven Steps.

A Track Your Success report analysed data at the class, year and school level, providing each school with a detailed report of achievements and further recommendations.

## 2. Project Findings

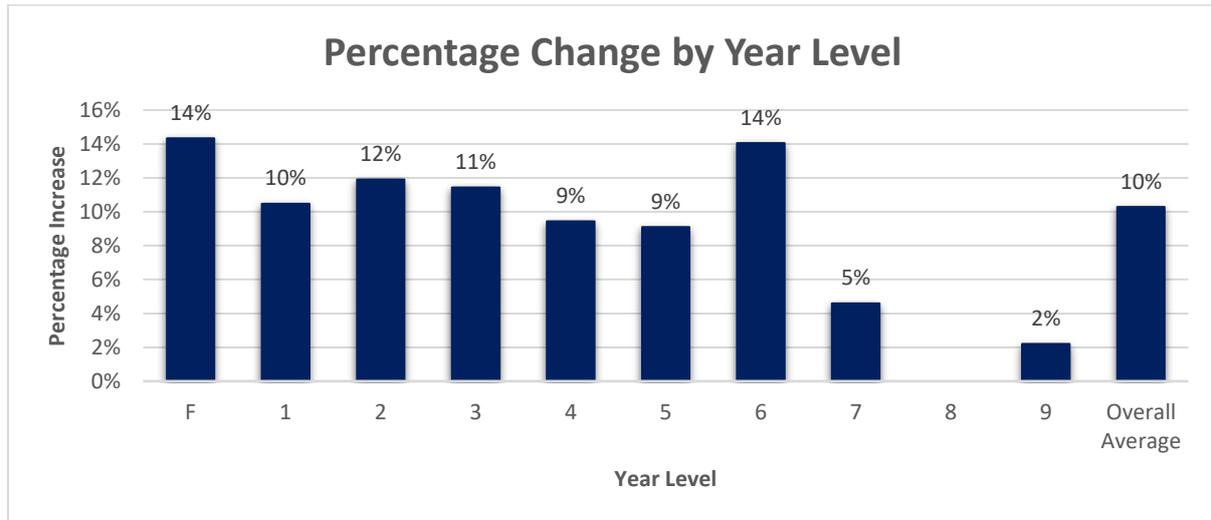
### 2.1 Pre and post testing marks

As an average score by year level, the following graph shows the aggregated students pre and post testing marks. This is using the NAPLAN marking guide and criteria. Note that none of the schools provided Year 8 data.



## 2.2 Overall student improvement

Across all 1,749 students from years F-9, students achieved an impressive overall average improvement in writing of 10%. The following graph shows the average percentage change by year level.



### Potential causes of the low improvements in years 7 and 9

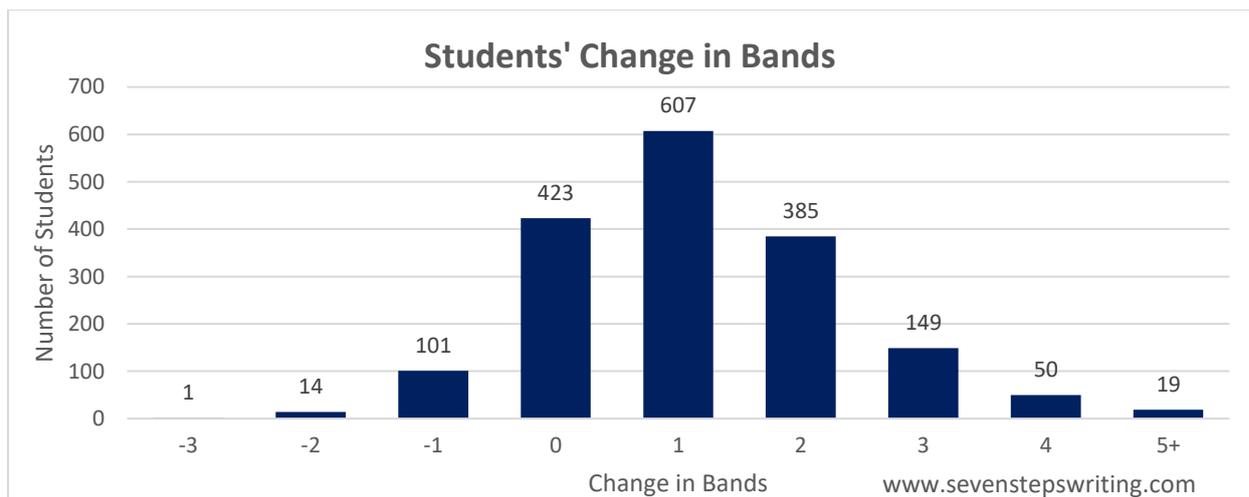
The potential theories for the decreasing trend in the rate of improvement for students in higher year levels could be the smaller sample size as only one school provided such data. As a private school, they already had a higher standard score.

It is also important to note that state and national expectations of growth tend to decrease as students progress through school.

### 2.3 Improvements in NAPLAN Bands

Obviously, not all year levels that participated in *Track Your Success* are required to sit NAPLAN. However, we thought it beneficial to measure how students were tracking, based on the NAPLAN bands.

The students' raw scores were fed into the [official score equivalence tables](#) to determine the NAPLAN bands of each individual student at the time of testing. The graph below shows the change in students' band between the pre-Seven Steps and post-Seven Steps testing.



#### Key insights:

- More than 69% of students improved by 1 band or more
- Less than 7% of students fell by 1 band or more
- 24% of students did not change band levels.

**The Seven Steps program was able to progress the majority of students at least two entire years forward in their writing ability in just 10 weeks.**

While NAPLAN expects a 0.75 to 1.5 shift in bands every two years, the Seven Steps outperforms all expectations.

Below is the expected growth rate taken directly from the DECD website:

*Table 5: Guide to expected growth, 2015-2017, by year level*

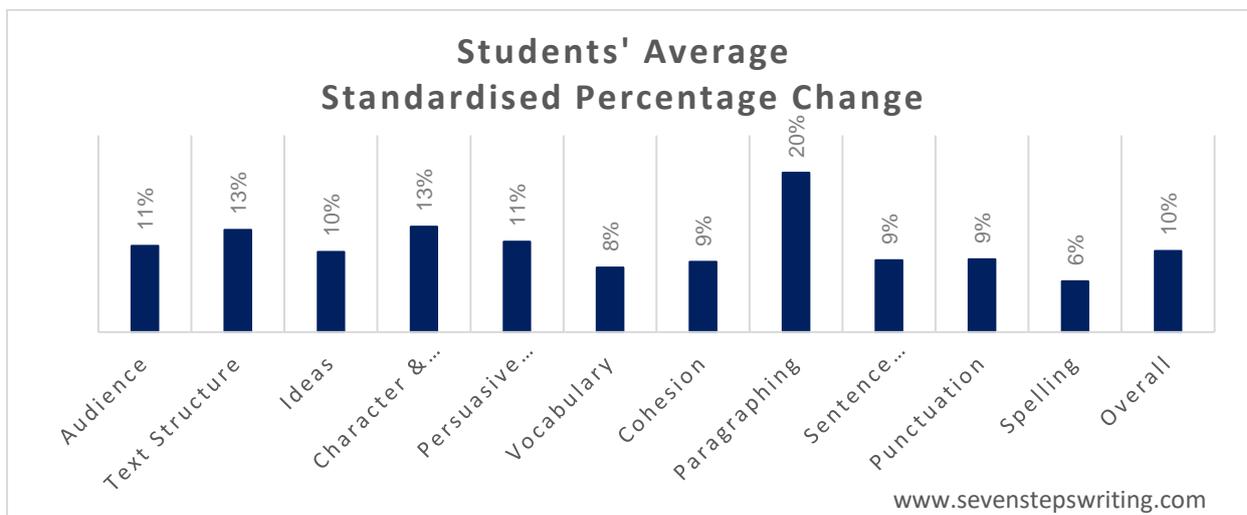
Test Year Levels	Band change
Year 3 to Year 5	About 1½ bands
Year 5 to Year 7	About 1 band
Year 7 to Year 9	About ¾ of a band

<https://www.decd.sa.gov.au/sites/g/files/net691/f/interpreting-naplan-results.pdf>

## 2.4 NAPLAN Marking Criteria improvements

The greatest improvements were found in Paragraphing, Character & Setting (Narrative only), Text Structure and Persuasive Devices (Persuasive only).

The breakdown of the improvement against each given NAPLAN criteria can be found in the below graph.



Test data provided shows the overall average percentage improvement after an average of 10 weeks of Seven Steps lessons. These improvements were standardised to allow comparisons across all year levels.

Standardised average percentage improvement was found by subtracting the pre-Seven Steps test percentage scores from the post-Seven Steps test percentage scores for each criterion.

## 2.5 Qualitative results and antidotes of observations

In addition to the improvement in students' writing, leaders, teachers and students found several other outcomes throughout the implementation of the program. Some of these include:

- Increases in teachers' confidence and ability to teach writing

- Increases in students' desire to write and/or have a writing lesson
- Increased engagement and participation during writing lessons
- Students writing for the first time
- Students excited to identify story structures outside of the classroom

### 3. Success Stories from Real Teachers

*I knew that I loved the Seven Steps program from my first professional development, but I never expected my students to love it so much ... They all use the same dialogue and say to me, 'Miss Brien, what do you think of my Exciting Ending, should I put some Six Senses in it?' It does not matter which text type I ask them to write, I can SEE evidence of Seven Steps to Writing Success all the way through it. It WORKS, the kids LISTEN, and EVERY STUDENT demonstrates improvement.*

*The greatest change is simply the **amount** that they can write! I asked my students to write a book review the other day and I had year 7 students producing over 1000 words of QUALITY writing in just two hours!*

***Student perception of their abilities** changed. I surveyed the students before the program and MOST students said they were not good writers. Now they all have confidence in their writing and believe they are great at writing. My lowest student who would not write a sentence at the beginning of the year is on the twelfth chapter of his novel!*

## More Success Stories from Teachers

*Students were engaged and excited about lessons – they would see me in the playground and ask when their next Seven Steps lesson was.*

*When I set homework of finding an ad that followed the story graph to be shared in the class the following week they would find me before then and excitedly tell me what they had found.*

**Writing quality.** *'Ban the Boring' has to be one of my favourite tools and something my students hear over and over again from me. They are now excellent at monitoring their writing to ensure it is engaging. I really enjoy reading my students' work because it is quality and it makes sense!*

*We have quickly reviewed the report as a staff and we have certainly celebrated our successes. As the year has progressed and we have really engaged heavily with the syllabus, the teachers have really been able to create great learning intentions around their writing goals and can more clearly see where the Seven Steps integrate nicely into the students' writing.*

*It certainly was a worthwhile experience to undertake the "Track Your Success" tool. As a staff we certainly have a greater understanding of the elements of writing for NAPLAN and the marking rubrics and it has allowed us to create some great goals for improvement.*

*We appreciate all your support.*

## 4. Conclusion

We've been overwhelmed by the success of each and every school who took part in the program and continue to be blown away by teachers' commitment in transforming their classrooms with the Seven Steps.

Nearly two years and 1,700 students later, the overwhelming evidence that together, teachers, schools and the Seven Steps can improve students' writing by multiple years - in as little as 10 weeks - has inspired us and everyone involved. We are immensely grateful to be able to see the changes in students' ability, attitudes and underlying passion for writing shine through. Together, we have made a lasting impact on these students, and over a million more throughout Australia.

As we continue to develop *the Track Your Success* project, we will continue to offer it to schools as a method of quantifying their students' results and giving them valuable feedback on their Seven Steps implementation.

### **Interested in Track Your Success?**

*Track Your Success* is offered to all schools who hold a [Seven Steps PD/PL](#) that have [Seven Steps Online](#) as part of their offerings, as well as to all [Seven Steps Coaches](#).

It is also available for teachers as a self-contained resource (no personalised report) on [Seven Steps Online](#).

## 5. Additional Resources

['Best Practice' Author Techniques](#)

['Best Practice' Pedagogy Principles](#)

[Action Research and Data](#)

[Research, Design and Summary](#)

[NAPLAN and the Seven Steps](#)