

2007 AL student progress results – NT Schools

This report provides additional commentary for the *Student Progress – 2007 – Accelerated Literacy – NT Schools* report and attempts to highlight how the rapid expansion of the program and the changing profile of the participating student population impact on the reported summary student performance statistics.

2007 IL results appear disappointing – but are they?

The average student progress rate for IL assessments of 1.18 reading year levels per year is significantly lower than the corresponding rates during 2005 and 2006 (1.67 and 1.74 reading year levels per year respectively). The initial reaction to this decline in the program's headline indicator is likely to be one of disappointment and to conclude that students who participated in the Accelerated Literacy program during 2007 are not progressing as well as they did in the previous years.

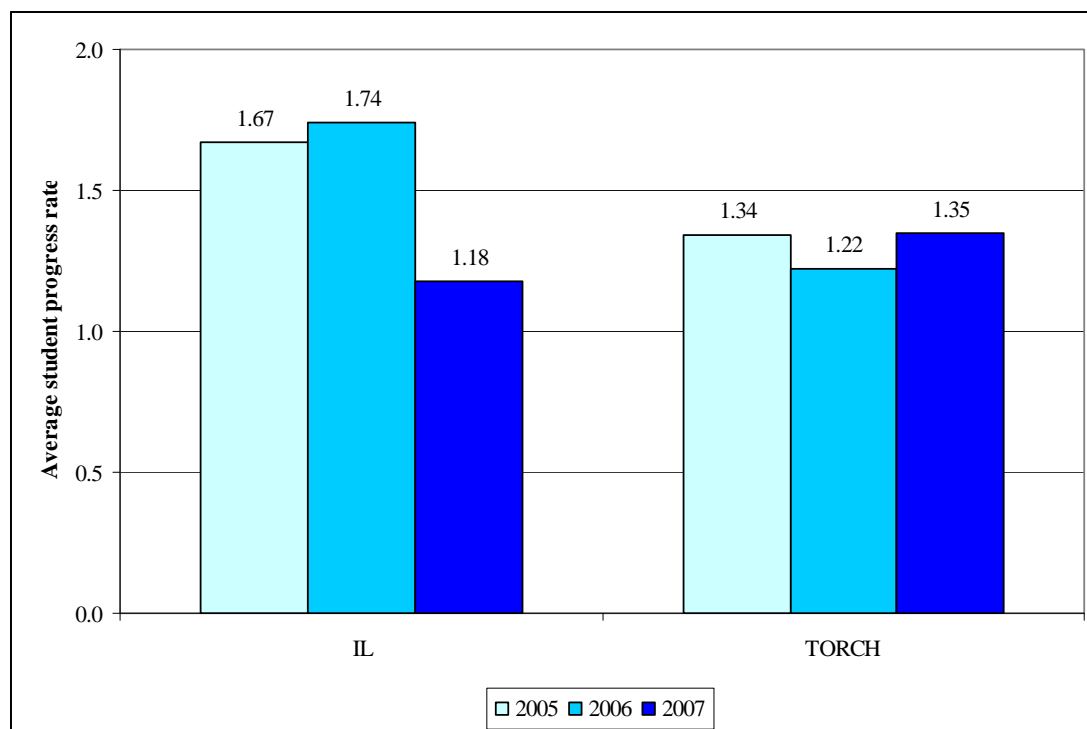
This report will attempt to provide additional analyses and discussion of these results with the intention of placing these results in the context of a rapidly expanding program in difficult conditions and highlighting the increasing number of students who are making significant progress.

Decline in IL student progress rate from 2006 to 2007

Graph 1 shows the average student progress rate for IL and TORCH during 2005 to 2007. It highlights that after a slight increase in the average student progress rate for IL assessment from 2005 to 2006, there was a significant decline from 2006 to 2007.

In contrast, the average student progress rate for TORCH assessments for 2007 has recovered the slight loss from the previous year.

Graph 1 Average student progress rate – IL and TORCH – 2005 to 2007



Measuring student progress

The ‘headline indicator’ for measuring the progress of students participating in the Accelerated Literacy (AL) program is the average student progress rate (measured in reading year levels progressed per year) using IL and TORCH assessment sequences.

- The *Individual Level (IL)* assesses reading from texts which have not been taught in class and which are sometimes known as ‘unseen’, ‘unfamiliar’ or ‘unsupported’ texts. These texts have been assigned a ‘benchmark’ level matching them with a school year level.
- The *TORCH assessment* is another reading test that is administered to students with a successful IL at Year 4 or above. It is an assessment of how well the student comprehends an unseen text.
- An *assessment sequence* is a series of student assessments of the same type (ie IL or Torch) in more than one term.

The rate of student progress is determined by calculating the ratio of the change in assessed reading levels and the time period elapsed.

$$\text{Student progress rate} = \frac{\text{student progress (in reading year levels)}}{\text{time elapsed (in years)}}$$

Important characteristics of this measure (student progress rate) are that it

- can be applied to any student assessment instrument that can be aligned to the year level of schooling
- makes sense for individual students who are well below their expected reading level
- focuses on student progress rather than on whether or not the student has reached a predetermined benchmark.

Table 1 shows the average student progress rate for those students with at least one valid IL or TORCH assessment sequence. Where a student has more than one valid assessment sequence, a progress rate is calculated for each sequence and not the total time period.

Only students whose assessment places them on the IL scale are included in this calculation.

Table 1 – Average student progress rate – Individual Level (IL) and TORCH

| | IL | | | TORCH | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 |
| Number of participating students - Term 4 | 2,534 | 4,165 | 5,167 | | | |
| Number of students with assessment sequences - on scale | 526 | 914 | 1,599 | 212 | 415 | 548 |
| Average progress rate | 1.67 | 1.74 | 1.18 | 1.34 | 1.22 | 1.35 |

Average student progress rate of greater than 1

The underlying assumption of the student program rate measure is that, under normal circumstances, students will progress at an 'expected' rate of 1 reading year level per year. An average student progress rate of greater than 1 means that, on average, students are bridging the gap between their reading level when entering the program and that expected for their year of schooling. That is, they are catching up (or moving further ahead).

However, the conditions in most of the participating NT schools are generally recognised as being far from 'normal'. In addition, it is unfortunate that the student progress rates for students prior to entering the program and for non-AL schools are unknown.

In fact, if student progress rates had been measured prior to their participation in the program, the average progress rates would be much less than 1 due to the majority of students reading at well below their expected reading year level. There is also a large number of students across all year levels that are 'unsuccessful at transition', that is, cannot read an unseen transition-level text (See Graph 6) and would have an individual student progress rate much lower than 1.

Many more students are making significant progress

All students with IL or TORCH assessment sequences that were completed during 2006 and 2007 were classified and reported in the groups described in Table 2.

Table 2 Student progress groups

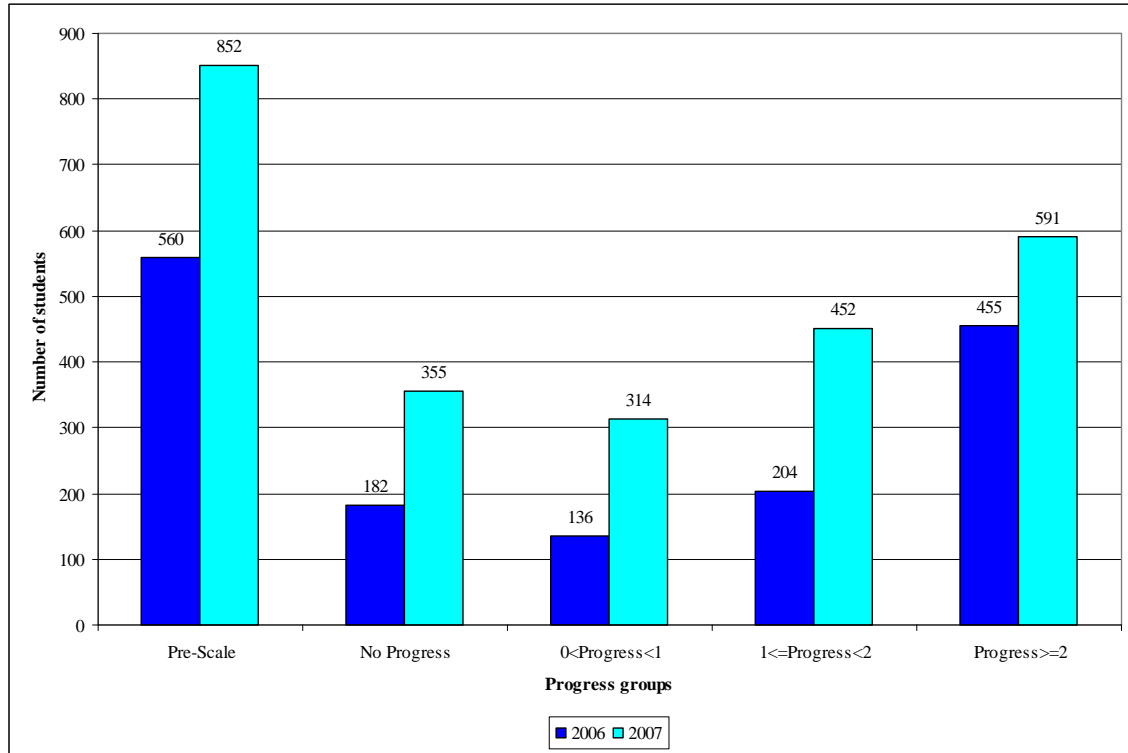
| Student progress group | Description |
|------------------------------|---|
| Pre-scale | Both assessments were 'unsuccessful at transition' |
| No progress | Both assessments are at the same level (includes negative progress) |
| $0 < \text{progress} < 1$ | Student progress between 0 and 1 reading year levels per year |
| $1 \leq \text{progress} < 2$ | Student progress between 1 and 2 reading year levels per year |
| $\text{Progress} \geq 2$ | Student progress greater than 2 reading year levels per year |

The number of students with an individual progress rate greater than 1 increased significantly from 2006 to 2007 for both IL and TORCH assessments (See Graph 2 and Graph 3).

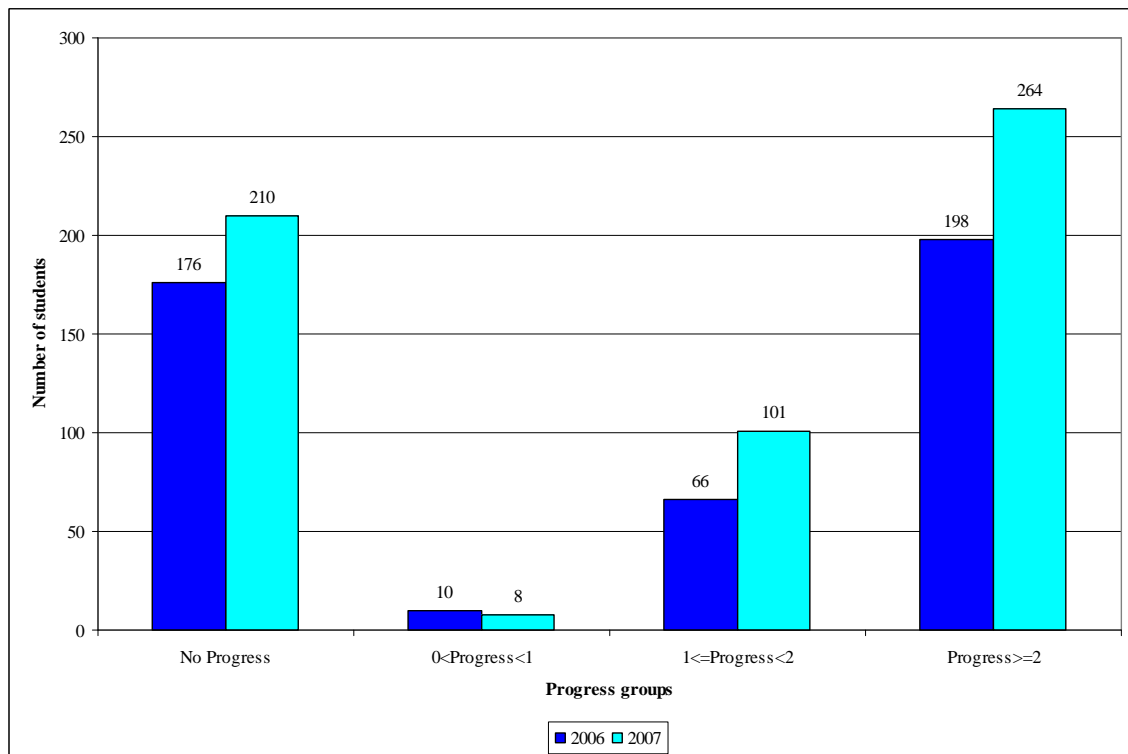
- From 2006 to 2007, the number of students whose IL assessment sequences indicated that they progressed at 1 or more reading year levels per year increased by 58.3% (from 659 to 1,043).
- For TORCH, the corresponding increase was 38.3% (from 264 to 365).

Graph 2 and Graph 3 show the number of students with IL and TORCH assessments respectively in each student progress group during 2006 and 2007.

Graph 2 Number of students – IL assessment student progress groups – 2006 and 2007



Graph 3 Number of students – TORCH assessment progress groups – 2006 and 2007



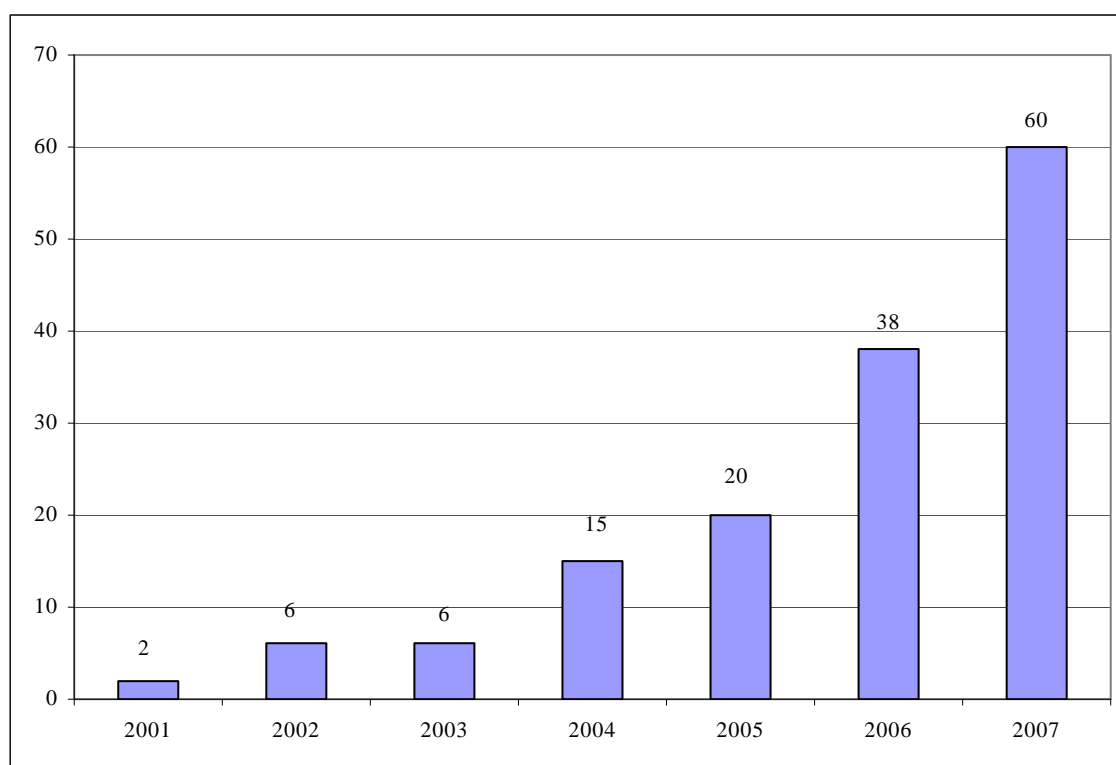
Rapid expansion of the program

Over the last 2 years, the number of schools participating in the AL program increased three-fold and the number of students has more than doubled.

From 2005 to 2007, the number of schools participating in the program increased three-fold (from 20 to 60 school sites – see Graph 4) and the number of students have more than doubled (from 2,534 to 5,167 students – see Graph 5). A significant proportion of these schools and students are in remote and very remote locations.

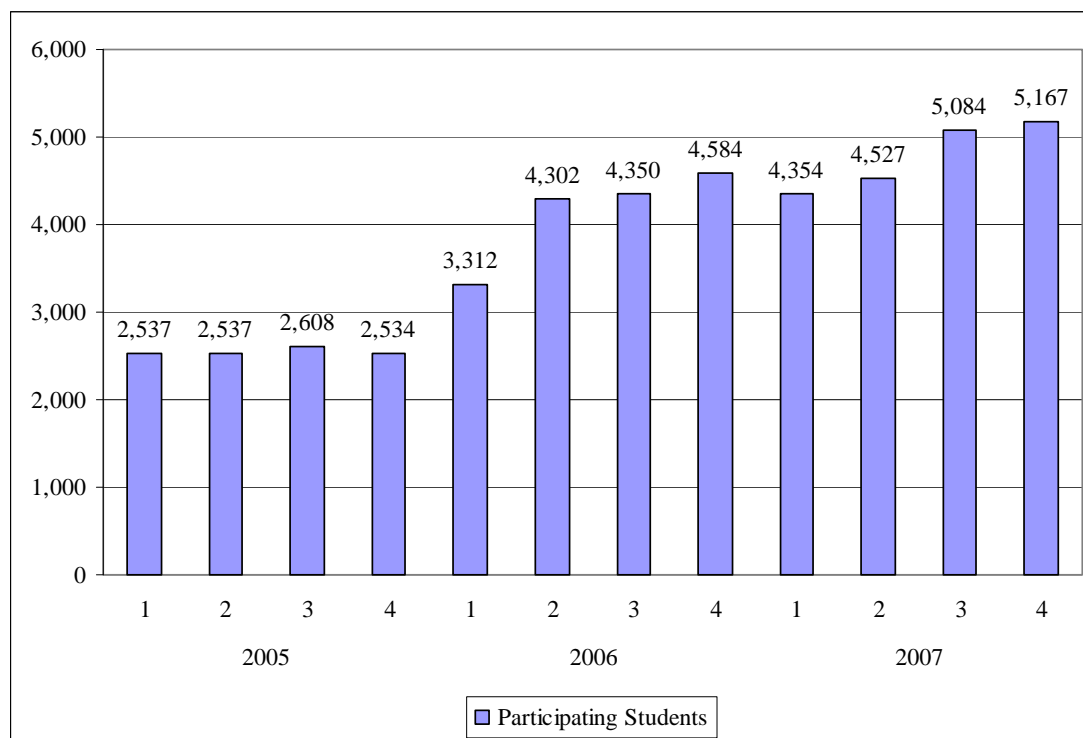
Graph 4 shows the total number of school sites with recorded assessments in the AL program each year from 2001 to 2007.

Graph 4 Number of school sites with recorded assessments by year



Graph 5 shows the number of students participating in the AL program during each term of 2005 to 2007.

Graph 5 Number of students participating each term during 2005 to 2007
(Census or point-in-time measure – end of week 8 each term)



The number of students participating in the AL program has not increased as rapidly as the number of schools because

- more remote and very remote schools with a small number of students are joining the program
- a number of schools are moving away from the 'whole-school approach' – decreasing the number of students participating at some continuing schools.

Changing profile of students participating in the program

Larger proportion of Indigenous students

- From 2006 to 2007, the percentage of Indigenous students participating in the program (at any time during the year) increased from 75.4% (3,898 of 5,167) to 84.6% (5,738 of 6,781).
- The number of non-Indigenous students in the program has decreased (from 1,269 to 1,043).

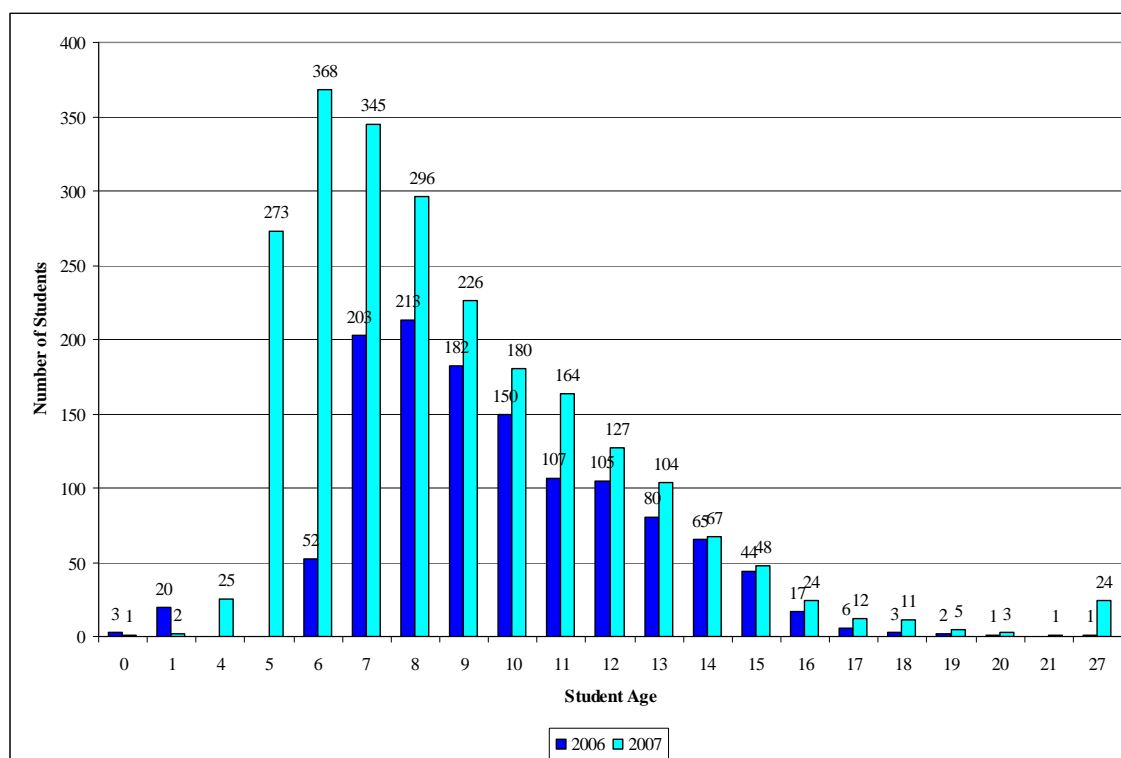
Many of the students participating in the program cannot read

- Almost half the students participating in the AL program were assessed as ‘unsuccessful at transition’ for one or more of their IL assessments.

During 2007, there were 4,765 students with one or more IL assessments recorded. Of these, there were 2,306 students (or 48.4%) who were assessed as ‘unsuccessful at transition’ at some stage during the year.

Graph 6 shows the age profile for the students who were assessed as ‘unsuccessful at transition’ at some stage during 2006 and 2007.

Graph 6 Age profile – students assessed as ‘unsuccessful at transition’ – 2006 and 2007

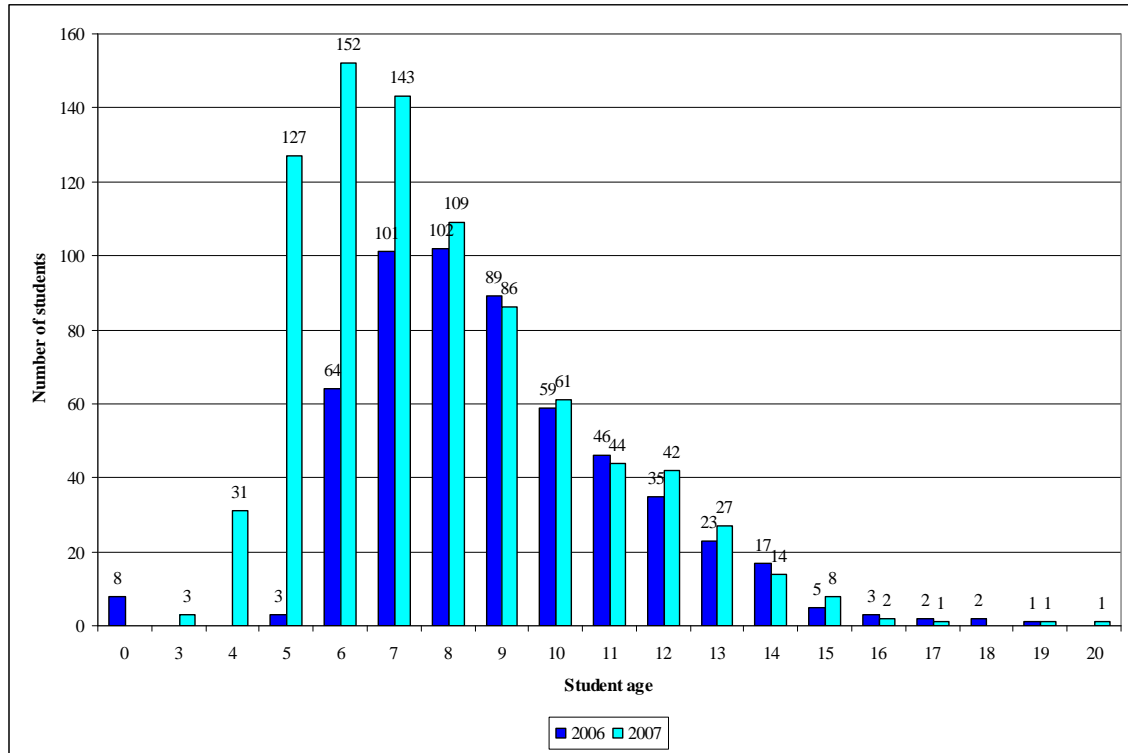


An assessment sequence is considered to be ‘pre IL scale’ when the second assessment in the sequence was ‘unsuccessful at transition’. All other assessment sequences are considered to be ‘on IL scale’.

- About half of the ‘unsuccessful-at-transition’ students do not have an assessment sequence. That is, they only have their initial assessment recorded. This indicates that they are recent entrants to the program.

Graph 7 shows the number of students by age whose IL assessment sequences were considered to be pre-scale during 2006 and 2007.

Graph 7 Age profile – pre-scale IL students – 2006 and 2007



Initial IL assessments during 2007

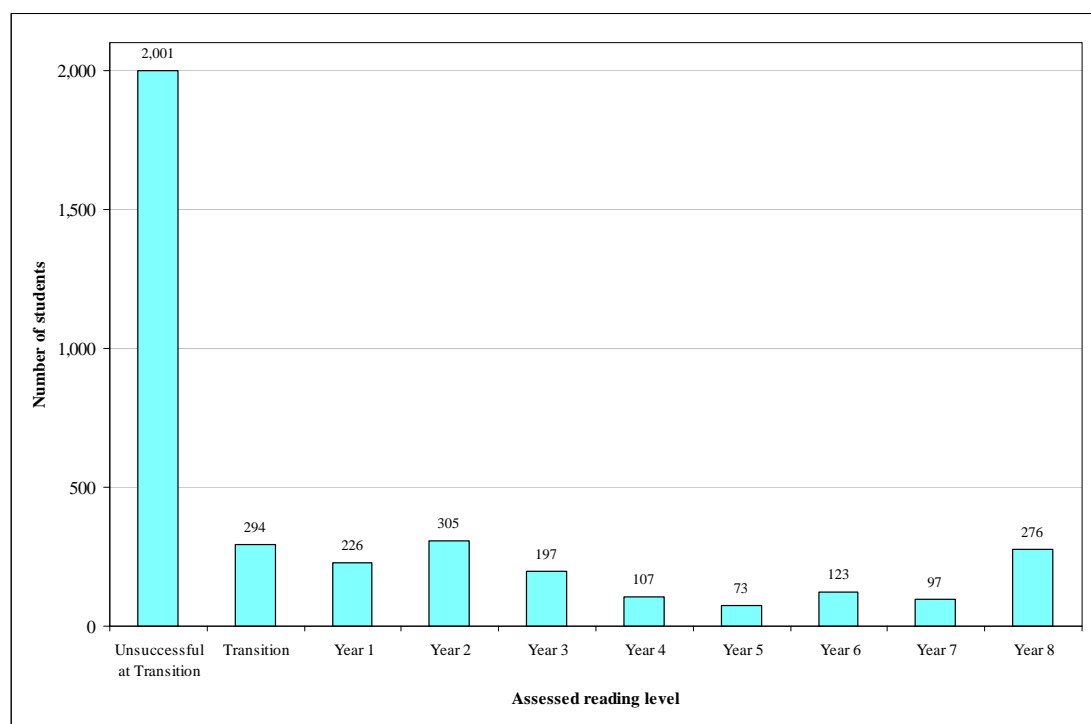
- There were 6,781 students who participated in the program at some time during 2007. Of these, 54.5% (or 3,699) recorded their initial IL assessment during 2007.

This indicates that over half the students participating in the program during 2007 recorded their initial IL assessment during the year and also highlights the high student transience (turnover) occurring in the program.

- Of the 3,699 students who recorded their initial IL assessment during 2007, 54.1% (or 2001) were assessed as ‘unsuccessful at transition’.

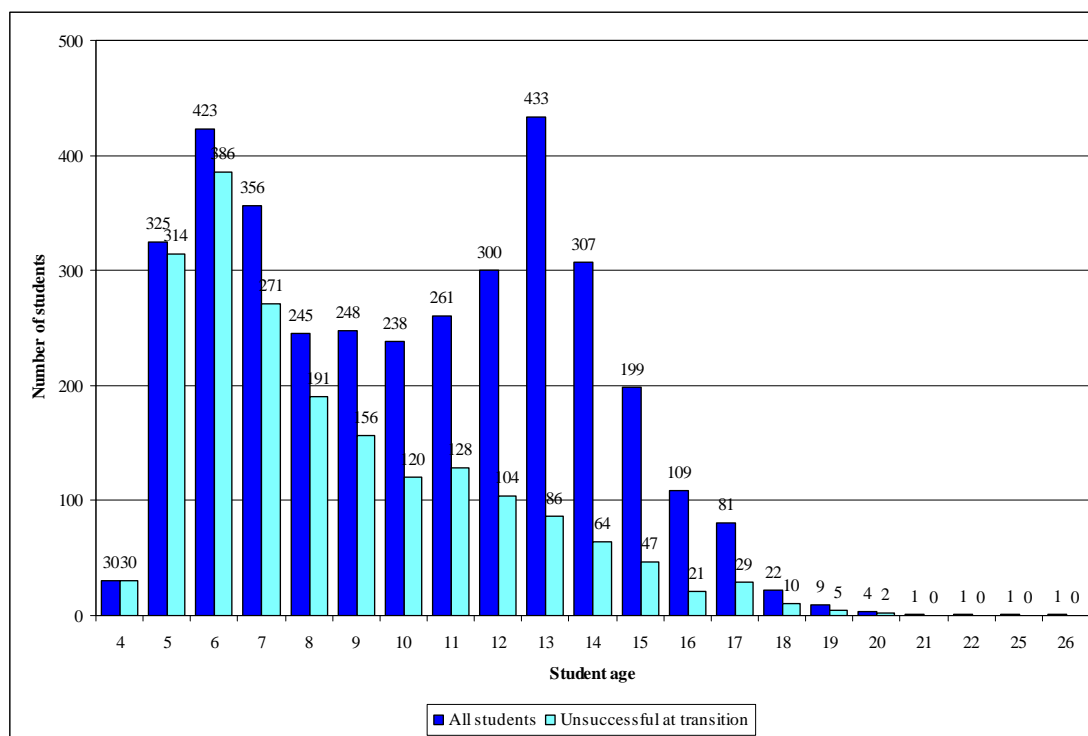
Graph 8 shows the number of students with assessments at each reading year level for those students whose initial IL assessment was recorded during 2007.

Graph 8 IL assessment distribution – initial assessment during 2007



Graph 9 shows the age profile for all students whose initial IL assessment occurred during 2007 and those with an initial IL assessment of ‘unsuccessful at transition’.

Graph 9 Age profile – students with their initial assessment during 2007



Note: Students whose recorded date of birth indicated that they were outside the age range of 4 to 26 were not included in this analysis (105 students).

Initial IL assessments during 2005 to 2007

- There were 7,690 students with an initial IL assessment during 2005 to 2007. That is, well over 7,500 students entered the program during the last three years.
- Of these, 3,884 students were assessed as ‘unsuccessful at transition’. That is, almost 4,000 of the students entering the program during 2005 to 2007 were non-readers.

Table 3 shows the number of the students with an initial IL assessment during each year from 2005 to 2007, and the number and percentage of these students who were assessed as ‘unsuccessful at transition’.

Table 3 Students with their initial IL assessment during 2005 to 2007

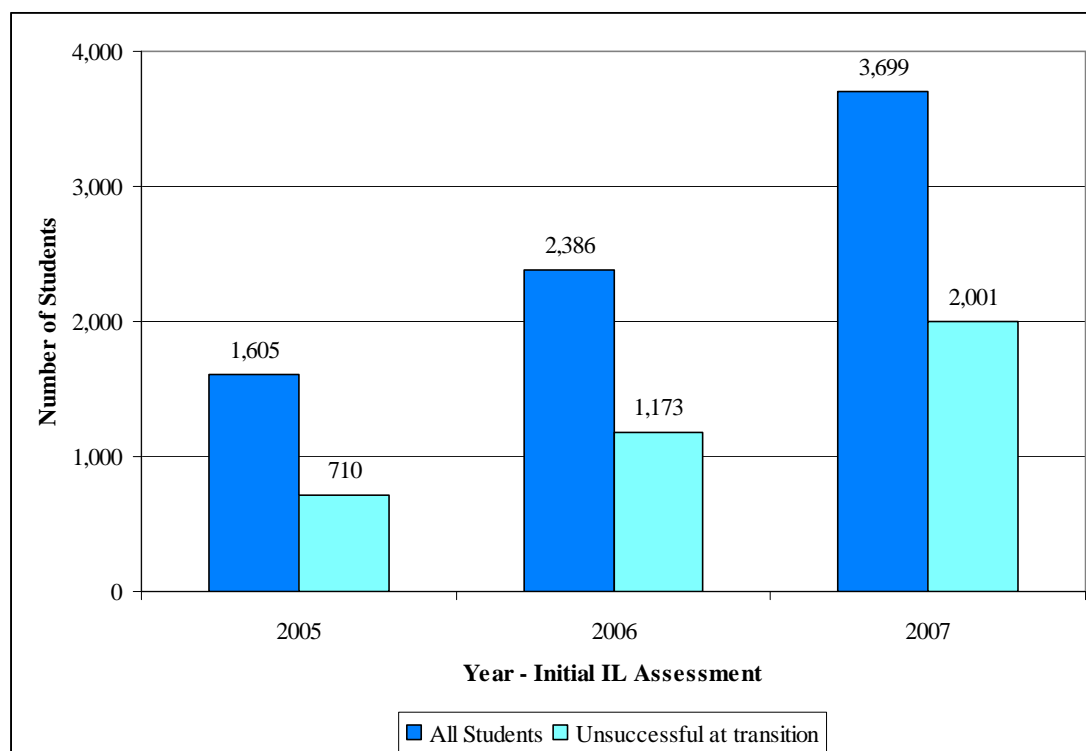
| Students | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | Total |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Students with their initial IL assessment during the year | 1,605 | 2,386 | 3,699 | 7,690 |
| Initial IL assessment of ‘unsuccessful at transition’ | 710 | 1,173 | 2,001 | 3,884 |
| % Unsuccessful at transition | 44.2% | 49.2% | 54.1% | 50.5% |

From 2005 to 2007, the number of students entering the program (indicated by the number of students with an initial IL assessment) increased significantly from at least 1,605 to 3,699.

The number of non-reader entering the program (indicated by an initial IL assessment of 'unsuccessful at transition') increased from at least 710 to 2,001. These figures are reported as 'at least' as there are a number of students who are not assessed due to irregular attendance.

Graph 10 shows the number of the students with an initial IL assessment during each year compared with the number of these students who were assessed as 'unsuccessful at transition'.

Graph 10 Students with their initial IL assessment during 2005 to 2007



Conclusion

The decrease in the IL average student progress rate from 1.74 to 1.18 reading year levels per year is disappointing.

However, the number of students with an individual progress rate of greater than 1 has increased by almost 60%. This has occurred during rapid expansion of the program (3 times the number of schools and double the number of students in 2 years) and while the proportion of non-readers in the student cohort has also increased significantly. Just over half of the students participating in the program during 2007 were new to the program (with their initial IL assessment occurring during 2007). Approximately 2,000 non-readers entered the program during 2007.

When considered within this context, the average IL student progress rate of 1.18 reading year levels per year is a pleasing result and highlights the significant progress being made by many disadvantaged students in the NT AL program.