

Analysis of the impact of Teach For Australia on NAPLAN Value-Add

Dr Pete Goss, 25 September 2026



Executive Summary

About Teach For Australia (TFA)

Teach For Australia is a national not-for-profit that addresses educational inequity by recruiting and developing high-potential graduates and career-changers to become teachers in schools serving disadvantaged communities. Since 2010, TFA has placed thousands of Associates in secondary schools across Australia. Many TFA Alumni remain in education as teachers and school leaders.

TFA's impact extends beyond the individual students taught by TFA Associates and Alumni. TFAers support learning broadly, by contributing to more effective teaching at a school wide level. This means that the impact on schools who partner with TFA should be evident in multiple outcome metrics: student engagement, learning and attainment – including NAPLAN.

About this project

TFA commissioned Dr Pete Goss to test whether TFA partner schools see improved student outcomes as measured by NAPLAN. The project uses an innovative Value-Added methodology to analyse longitudinal trends in school-level NAPLAN outcomes after adjusting for demographics.

The project analysed Value-Add trends in NAPLAN Reading and Numeracy over multiple years. The main statistical analysis covered 131 TFA schools and 522 comparator schools from 2019 to 2025.¹ Using such a large sample of schools over such a long time-window maximises the chance of identifying a signal of TFA's impact.

Focus of the analysis

The project explored and validated three main hypotheses:

- ✓ All other things equal, schools that place TFA Associates and/or hire TFA Alumni should see NAPLAN value-add increase over time.
- ✓ All other things equal, the more TFAers (Associates or Alumni) a school employs, the more rapidly NAPLAN value-add improves.
- ✓ The NAPLAN Value-Added methodology can identify these signals if enough schools are analysed over a sufficiently long-time window.

Key findings

1. TFA Partner schools have improved Year 9 NAPLAN Value-Add since 2019 while comparator schools have not. These gains are not due to stronger Year 7 cohorts.
2. Schools that employ more TFAers show stronger improvement in Year 9 Value-Add, **up to 3.7 months** above what demographics and national trends would predict.
3. This pattern of improvement is robust across a range of school contexts including different states, geolocations, school sizes and student backgrounds.
4. Over the long term, Value-Add in well-established TFA schools is strongly linked to the number of TFAers they employ. The pattern of gains is most consistent when partner schools have sustained engagement with TFA, especially when multiple TFA Associates stay on in those schools as Alumni.²
5. Value-Add gains are visible in TFA partner schools that were previously performing poorly, and in schools that were doing well and have now moved from good to great.

1. While the project analysed trends as long as 12 years (2014-25), the main analysis used a 7-year window (2019-25) because of data availability and reduced noise arising from ACARA's 2019 shift to similar student comparisons.

2. This does not mean that every TFA partner school sees gains, which is unrealistic given how many factors affect student outcomes. But there is a clear, consistent pattern of impact across a wide range of contexts and analysis.

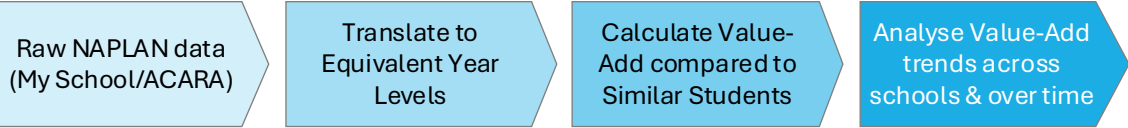
Source: S J Spencer Consulting.

Methodology and scope

About the methodology

The NAPLAN Value-Added methodology is a proprietary approach to analysing school-level NAPLAN data developed by Dr Goss to analyse trends over time in the NAPLAN outcomes of schools or groups of schools.

Value-add is calculated by comparing each school's average NAPLAN results (in Equivalent Year Levels, or EYL¹) with ACARA's similar student data. This measures relative performance adjusted for student context, so Value-add can be directly compared across schools even if NAPLAN scores can't.



Value-add is analysed longitudinally for up to 12 years², focusing on trends and trajectories rather than single-year results, to determine if each school's value-add is improving, declining, or remaining stable over time. **The emphasis is on progress relative to expectation, not raw achievement levels, school rankings, or causal attribution.**

By adjusting for student context, NAPLAN value-add has much lower year-to-year variation than NAPLAN achievement or progress scores. Aggregating value-add across groups of schools and NAPLAN domains further reduces noise, allowing small but consistent impacts to be identified. Presenting the results using EYL makes differences interpretable as months or years of learning.

Scope

Since the first cohort in 2010, TFA has placed over 1,700 Associates in over 320 schools, including about 250 schools since 2019. At least 450 additional schools have employed TFA alumni without placing Associates. A further 125 schools that have not employed any TFAers were included as comparator schools on the basis of their similarity to high-engagement TFA schools.

This project focused on core TFA Partner Schools with deep, well-established partnerships with TFA.

TFA Partner Schools are defined as those that:

- placed at least two Associates from 2019 to 2025, *and*
- employed an average of at least one TFAer (Associate or Alumnus) per year from 2019 to 2025.

The detailed statistical analysis included **653 schools**:

- **131 TFA Partner Schools**, of which 54 high engagement schools employed at least 3 TFAers on average each year from 2019 to 2025.
- **522 Comparator Schools**, including 283 schools that are currently eligible to partner with TFA³ but have placed no more than one Associate placed since 2019, plus 217 schools that are not eligible to place TFA Associates based on their ICSEA scores but that are otherwise fair comparators.⁴

1. The Equivalent Year Methodology was introduced in "Widening Gaps: What NAPLAN tells us about student progress", Goss et al, 2016, Grattan Institute. 2. In theory, value-add could be calculated from 2008, the first year of NAPLAN, but pre-2014 data is noisier and less relevant. In 2019 ACARA started comparing school averages to students with similar background, which makes value-add more robust. 3. TFA does not place Associates in socio-educationally advantaged schools. Currently this means that partner schools need to have ICSEA (Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage) scores below ~1035, but this threshold was higher in earlier years.

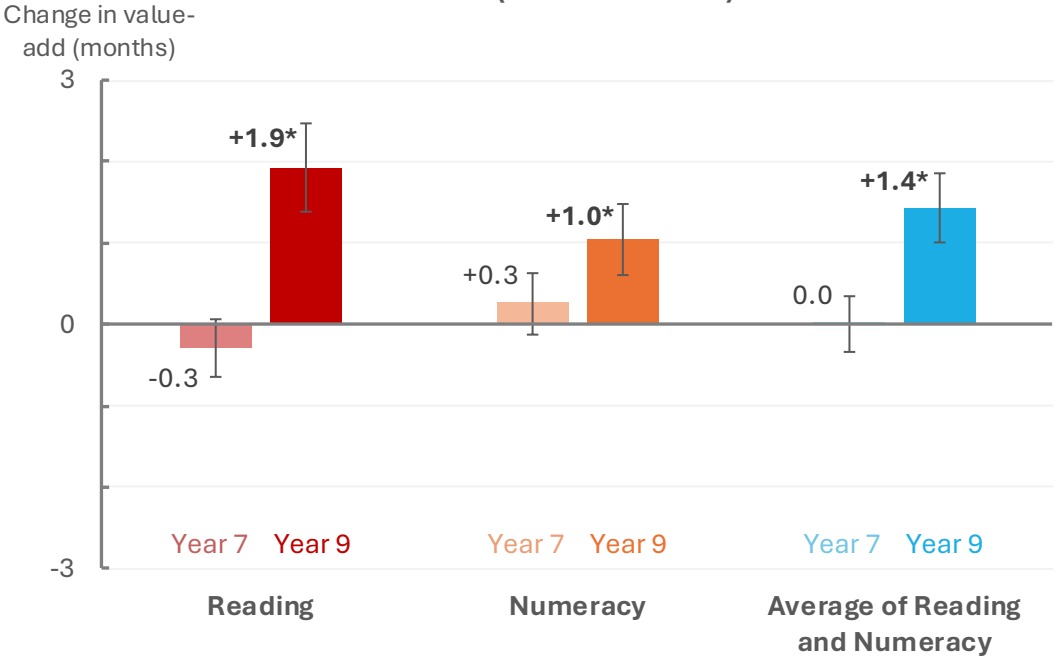
4. Many of these comparator schools have hired TFA Alumni, but typically in relatively small numbers and the potential impact of hiring TFA Alumni was controlled for throughout the analysis.

Source: SJ Spencer Consulting.

1. TFA partner schools have improved Year 9 NAPLAN Value-Add since 2019 while comparator schools have not

Change in value-add, 2019 to 2025, for TFA partner schools

(n = 131 schools)

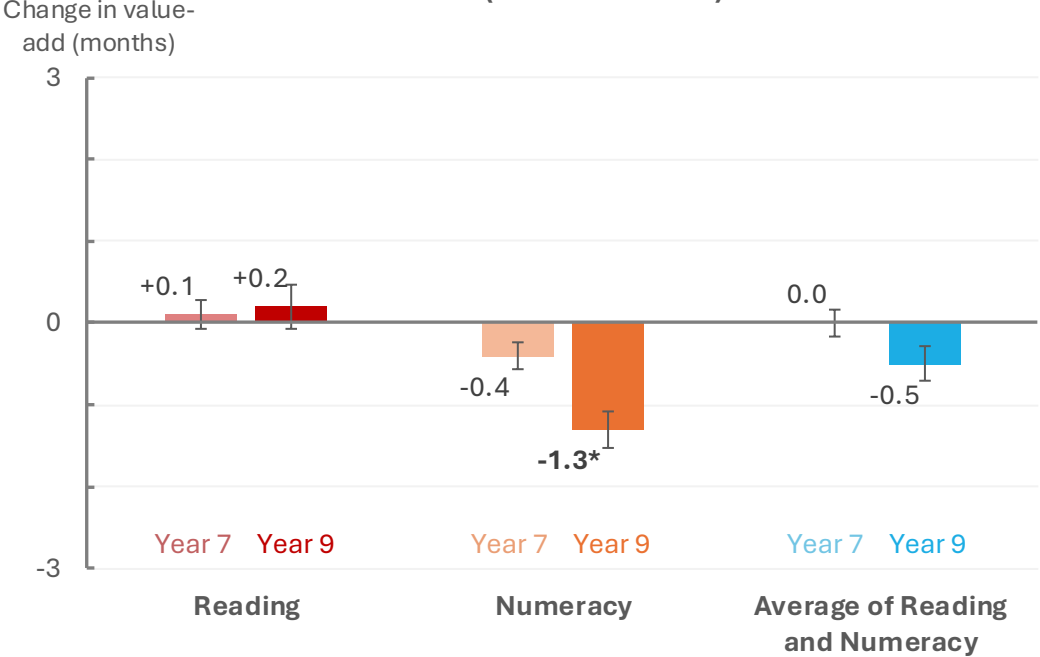


Interpretation:

TFA partner schools show significant gains since 2019 in Year 9 NAPLAN Value-Add for Reading, Numeracy and an average of Reading/ Numeracy. Year 9 gains are not due to stronger incoming cohorts: Year 7 trends are flat.

Change in value-add, 2019 to 2025, for comparator schools

(n = 522 schools)



Interpretation:

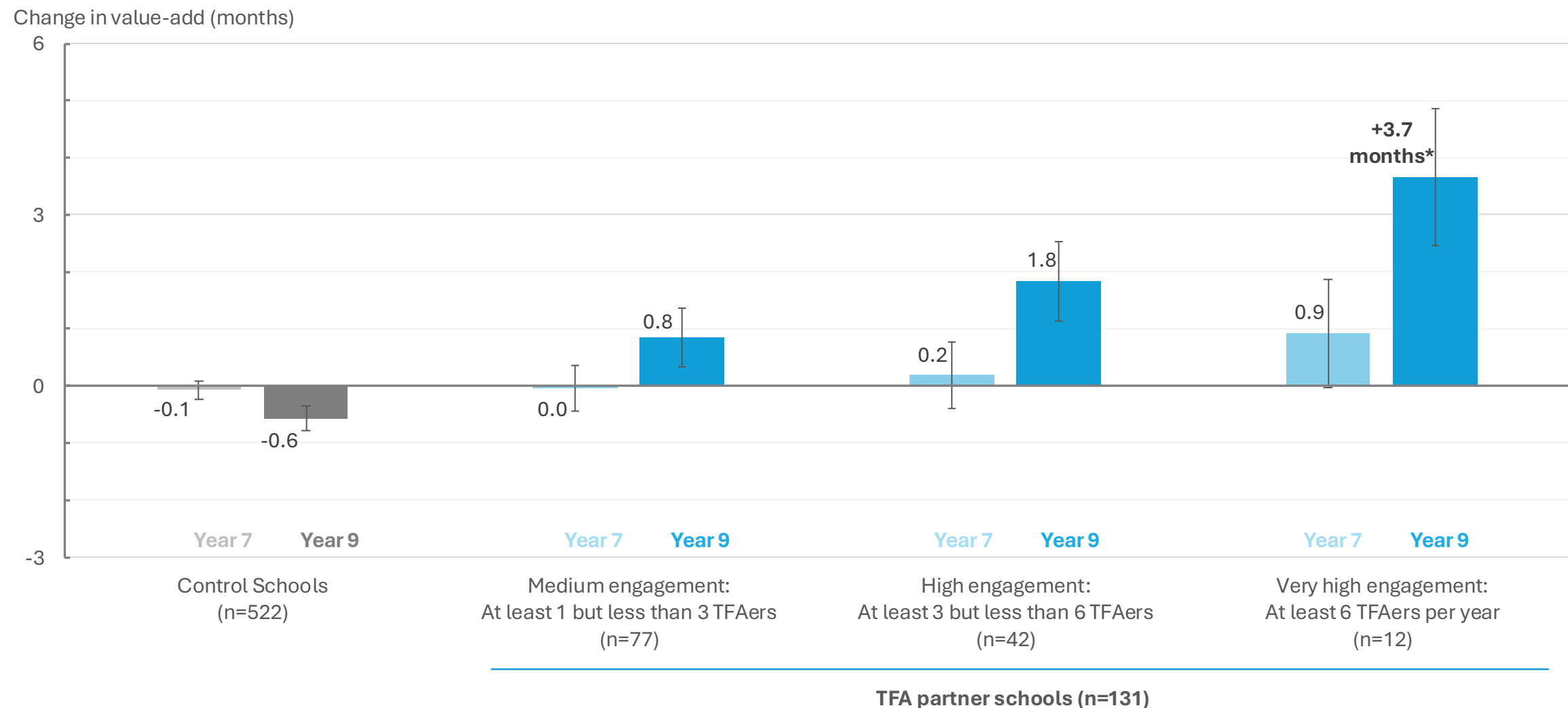
Comparator schools show no change for Year 9 Reading Value-Add since 2019 and a significant decline in Year 9 Numeracy. Year 9 gains for TFA partner schools are distinctive to TFA, not broader trends.

Notes: The 131 TFA partner schools all placed at least two TFA Associates from 2019 to 2025 and employed at least one TFAer on average across 2019-2025. The set of 522 Comparator schools includes 22 schools that placed TFA Associates but employed less than one TFAer per year; 385 schools that hired TFA alumni but placed no more than one Associate from 2019-2025; and 115 schools that did not employ TFAers but were identified through analysis as suitable comparators. Charts show Standard Error bars. Year 9 increases for TFA partner schools are significant at $p < 0.05$, shown as *. Averaging Reading and Numeracy (blue column) reduces noise.

Source: SJ Spencer Value-Added NAPLAN model based on data from ACARA and TFA.

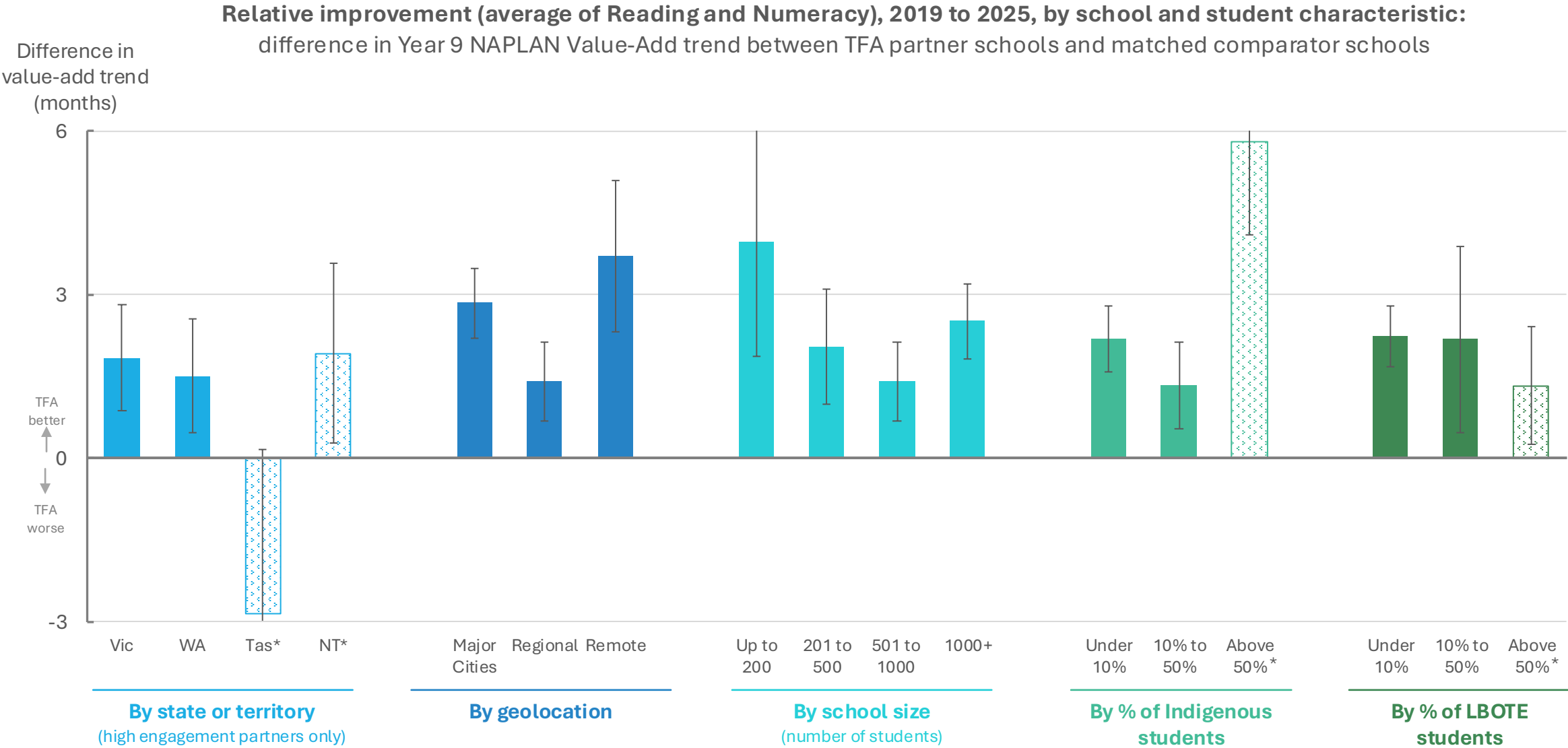
2. TFA Partner schools that employ more TFAers show stronger gains in NAPLAN Value-Add

Change in Year 9 NAPLAN value-add (average of Reading and Numeracy), 2019 to 2025
by the average number of TFA staff per school each year



Notes: TFA partner schools placed at least two TFA Associates from 2019 to 2025. Averaging Reading and Numeracy reduces noise and increases statistical robustness. Charts show Standard Error bars. The Year 9 increase for very high engagement is statistically significant at $p \sim 0.038$.
Source: SJ Spencer Consulting analysis of data from ACARA.

3. The pattern of improvement is robust across states, geolocations, school sizes and student backgrounds

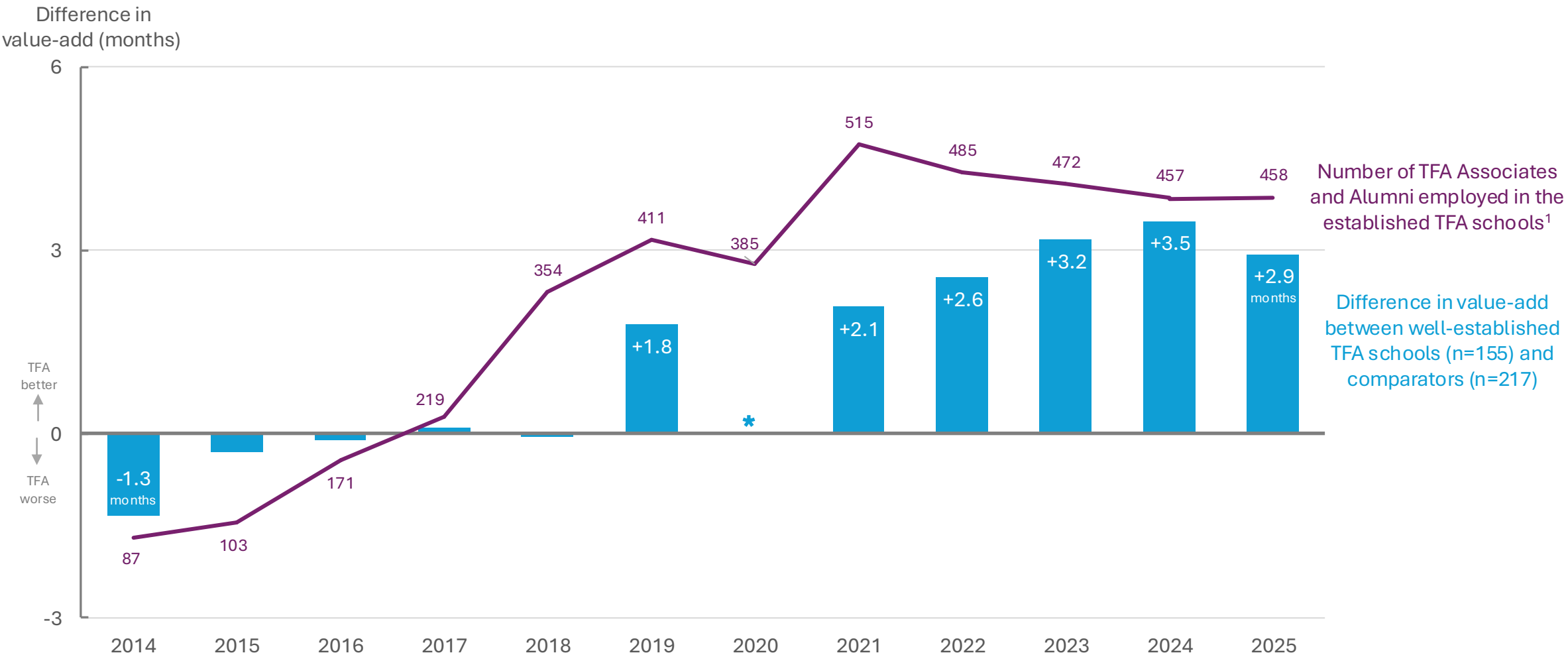


Notes: TFA partner schools (n=131) placed at least two TFA Associates from 2019 to 2025 and employed at least one TFAer on average between 2019 and 2025 (at least three TFAers for the state/territory analysis). Comparator schools (n=522) are matched on jurisdiction, geolocation, school size, and the proportions of Indigenous and LBOTE (language background other than English) students. Averaging Reading and Numeracy reduces noise. Charts show Standard Error bars. The size of the error bars reflect the smaller sample size in each segment; segments marked with * have less than 10 TFA schools while Tasmania and NT include just 5 TFA schools each.

Source: SJ Spencer Consulting analysis of data from ACARA.

4. Over the long term, value-add in TFA partner schools is strongly linked to the number of TFAers they employ

Relative improvement over time (average of Reading and Numeracy) by number of TFAers:
difference in Year 9 NAPLAN Value-Add between well-established TFA schools and comparator schools



Note: Excludes NSW, Qld, ACT and SA which collectively account for less than 5% of TFA placements since 2010. For this analysis, well-established TFA schools (n=155) are those that placed at least two Associates before 2023. Comparator schools (n=217) have never placed a TFA Associate, although they may have employed TFA Alumni. Comparator schools are restricted to those with ICSEA <1090, in line with the highest ICSEA of a historic TFA partner school. Only includes schools that reported at least 10 NAPLAN results (out of a possible 11) from 2014 and 2025; this prevents newly opened schools skewing the results. NAPLAN was cancelled in 2020 due to COVID.

(1) Alumni data is only available from 2018 onwards. Source: SJ Spencer Value-Added NAPLAN model based on data from ACARA and TFA.

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About the value-add methodology

About the methodology

- The NAPLAN Value-Added methodology is a proprietary approach to analysing school-level NAPLAN data developed by Dr Pete Goss to analyse trends over time in the NAPLAN outcomes of schools or groups of schools.
- Value-add is calculated by comparing each school's average NAPLAN results (in Equivalent Year Levels, or EYL) with ACARA's similar student data. This gives a measure of relative performance adjusted for student context.
- We then track value-add estimates longitudinally, focusing on trends and trajectories rather than single-year results. This lets us assess whether each school's value-add is improving, declining, or remaining stable over time. **The emphasis is on progress relative to expectation, not raw achievement levels, school rankings, or causal attribution.**
- By adjusting for student context, NAPLAN value-add has much lower year-to-year variation than NAPLAN achievement or progress scores.
- Aggregating value-add across groups of schools and NAPLAN domains further increases the signal-to-noise ratio, enabling the identification of small but consistent impacts from educational interventions.
- School-level value-add can be calculated since at least 2014, but the value-add methodology is most robust from 2019 onwards.¹

Why this is particularly suitable for analysing TFA's impact

- TFA (via Associates or Alumni) supports hundreds of schools, but the support for each school is relatively modest compared to instructional interventions or whole-school change efforts. Impact is much more likely to be visible at a portfolio-level rather than for individual schools.²
- NAPLAN Value-Added analysis allows direct and fair comparison across groups of schools, enabling analysis across the whole portfolio of TFA schools and comparison to non-TFA control schools.
- Longitudinal analysis examines whether value-add is improving or declining over time, focusing attention on change trajectories rather than historical levels of advantage or disadvantage.
- Uniquely, Value-Add can be compared across the 2023 NAPLAN data reset, allowing a much longer time series than other approaches. This reduces the risk of over-interpreting unusual results from a single year and greatly increases the statistical power of the analysis.
- Presenting the results using EYL makes differences interpretable as months or years of learning rather than abstract NAPLAN scale points.

In summary:

Using a more sensitive tool with more schools over a longer time period and across multiple domains maximises the robustness and sensitivity of the analysis and allows deeper analysis, e.g. by dosage or geolocation.

1. In theory, value-add could be calculated from 2008, the first year of NAPLAN, but pre-2014 data is noisier and less relevant. In 2019 ACARA started comparing school averages to students with similar background, which increased the robustness of the approach. 2. Looking at impact for an individual school also creates major attribution questions, given that all schools have many factors affecting their NAPLAN outcomes.

For further information about the NAPLAN Value-Add methodology, please contact Dr Pete Goss pete@sjspencer.com.au

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