

InitialLit–Foundation

Frequently Asked Questions



whole-class initial instruction in literacy

What is InitialLit–F?

InitialLit–F is a comprehensive whole-class beginning reading and spelling program for all children in their first year of schooling (Foundation/Kindergarten/Prep/Reception/Pre-Primary/Transition). It includes an explicit and systematic synthetic phonics program as well as a literature component to enrich oral language, listening comprehension and vocabulary. InitialLit–F is the first year of a three-year program. The programs for Year 1 (InitialLit–1) and Year 2 (InitialLit–2) will be released in 2018 and 2019 respectively.

Who is InitialLit–F for?

InitialLit–F is suitable for all children in Foundation, including children who speak English as an additional language. The explicit nature of the program, the focus on the pronunciation of sounds, the opportunities for vocabulary development in both the phonic and storybook reading components will build a solid literacy foundation for all children, regardless of language background.

What is the focus of InitialLit–F?

InitialLit–F has two components. The first component explicitly teaches letter-sound correspondences and how to apply this knowledge to reading and spelling. The second component focuses on oral language, vocabulary and listening comprehension through Storybook Lessons using quality children’s literature.

Does InitialLit follow the recommendations of the 2005 National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (NITL)?

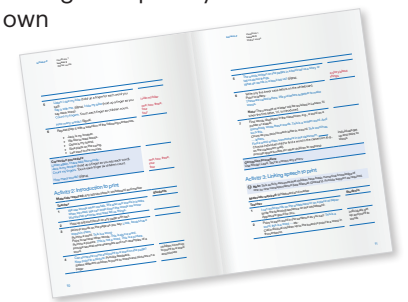
The National Reading Panel (USA, 2000), the National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (NITL) (Australia, 2005) and the Rose Report (UK, 2006) examined a body of scientific evidence into reading acquisition and determined that there are five critical instructional areas that should be taught: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. InitialLit addresses each of these areas in a very explicit and structured way.

What does the program look like in the classroom?

InitialLit–F should take place four to five times a week over a 90-minute literacy block. There are 126 lessons which are spread across a year. The lesson begins with an explicit, whole-class session on the mat for 20-25 minutes, followed by consolidation activities and teacher-led small group work for 30-45 minutes. There is sufficient time to do extra revision when needed. The Shared Storybook component takes place at least three to four times a week for 15-20 minutes, using the books specified by the program.

Is InitialLit–F very prescriptive?

Yes, the program is unapologetically prescriptive. The whole-class lessons are scripted and there is a set way to teach the skills. This does not mean that teachers don’t bring their own personalities and professional judgement to the program. Teachers who have used the program in our trial schools have been able to adapt to using a script very easily without losing their own teaching voice. There is still some scope to include your own literacy activities during the independent work time. Of course, you will still need to plan and respond to the needs of individual children in your class.



How does InitialLit align with the National Curriculum?

The phonic work, together with the Shared Storybook component, will ensure that much of the English curriculum is addressed. InitialLit does not cover digital and visual literacy. Details of the link between InitialLit and the National Curriculum can be found on the MultiLit website.



Find out more

1300 559 919

multilit@multilit.com

www.multilit.com/programs/initialit



Does InitialLit–F use a synthetic phonic approach?

Yes, InitialLit–F uses a synthetic phonic approach. The relationship between sounds (phonemes) and letters (graphemes) are taught explicitly in a predetermined order. Children are taught how to blend the sounds together for reading and segment words for spelling. For example, once the letter-sound correspondence for ‘s’, ‘m’ ‘a’ and ‘t’ have been taught, children will learn how to put those sounds together to read ‘am’, ‘at’, ‘mat’, ‘sat’, ‘Sam’. As more letters are taught, children will be able to read and spell an increasing number of words.

How does InitialLit–F fit into a Response to Intervention (RtI) model?

InitialLit is a Tier 1, whole-class program. The program’s assessment procedures will enable teachers to identify children who are not making progress very early on. At this point teachers should put extra support in place and monitor children closely. Intervention is much more effective if put in place early. Those children who continue to struggle should be identified for more intensive support (Tiers 2 and 3). MultiLit intervention programs are available for students who need Tiers 2 and 3 reading support, starting with MiniLit for children in late Foundation through to Year 2.

Does InitialLit allow for differentiation?

We know that some children learn to read very easily while others need a bit more practice and instruction. A minority will need intensive support. That said, the core approach is suitable for all children beginning to learn to read and spell, with additional opportunities for practice and repetition to meet the needs of individual students during small-group activities.

How are children assessed on the InitialLit–F program?

InitialLit–F has a set of procedures to monitor children throughout the year. This enables teachers to identify children who are not making the expected progress and then put support in place before they get too far behind. There are regular Progress Monitoring assessments and termly Cumulative Reviews. These curriculum-based assessments assist teachers in making informed instructional decisions regarding individual children’s progress and instruction.

What sequence is used in InitialLit–F and how quickly are the letters and sounds introduced?

InitialLit–F teaches one new letter-sound correspondence at a time, at a rate of a new letter every one to three days. Children are taught letters and digraphs in the following order: m, s, t, a, f, i, p, r, o, c, d, h, e, n, g, l, k, u, b, j, w, ck, ll/ff/ss, sh, qu, ee, z/zz, ch, v, x, y, wh, th, oo, ng, ay. The rate of introduction to new letters and sounds is tempered by the need for children to be as solid as possible with the letter-sound correspondences they have been taught and how this knowledge is used for reading and spelling. InitialLit–F provides all children in their first year of schooling with the firmest of foundations on which to build further skills.

Does InitialLit–F include the teaching of writing?

The primary focus in the first year of InitialLit is teaching children the link between sounds and letters and how that knowledge is used for reading and spelling, starting with the basic code. Children will learn to form letters and spell words sound by sound. They will learn basic punctuation through dictation. Learning the building blocks of print will improve their ability to do a range of simple written tasks at the appropriate level. The InitialLit worksheets consolidate the skills taught for both reading and writing. Opportunities for generalising their skills to writing tasks are provided in the activities that follow the whole-class lesson. By the end of Foundation, children will understand that they can express themselves through print and should be using their phonic knowledge to attempt to write words when they compose a sentence. At Foundation level, there should be a focus on oral language to prepare children for more complex writing tasks in later grades.



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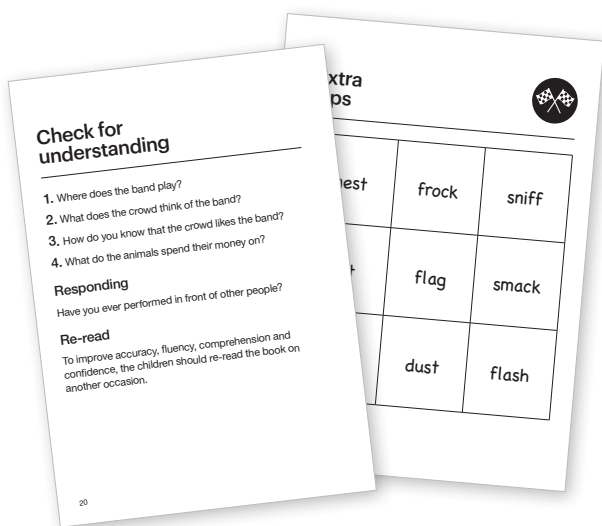


Does InitialLit–F include the teaching of comprehension?

Oral comprehension is part of the Storybook Lessons component of the program. Children’s literature is used to enrich vocabulary and work on listening comprehension, which impact reading comprehension skills down the track. InitialLit Readers have questions at the back to check for understanding and this is an important part of the reading session. InitialLit–F does not teach comprehension strategies explicitly at this point, but rather works on the underlying skills required to read with understanding.

What will parents think of the program?

The feedback from parents has been very positive. They have been thrilled to see the development of their children’s reading skills and once they understand what the program is based on, they feel very reassured that their children are getting such quality instruction.



What are the benefits of InitialLit–F?

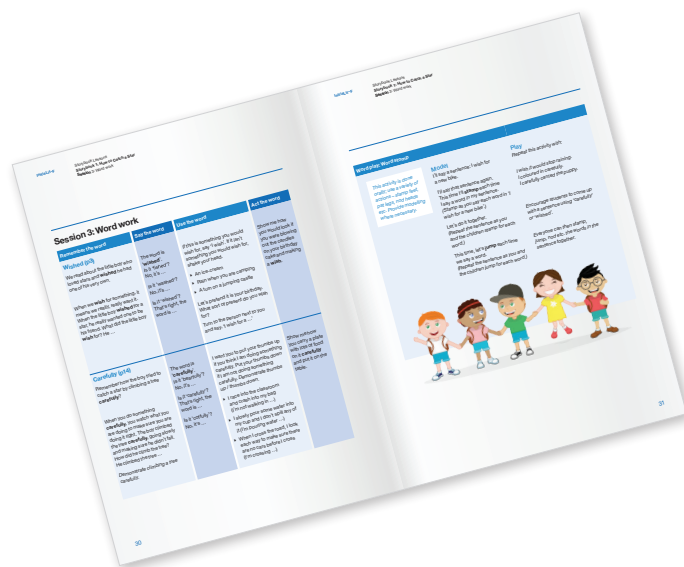
All children need to be taught to read well. InitialLit encompasses all the key elements of good reading, spelling and vocabulary instruction. The approach that InitialLit takes is based on over 30 years of research into how we learn to read and spell. InitialLit allows teachers to focus on the children themselves rather than constructing content. Many development hours have been spent on ensuring that the program is thorough, explicit and engaging. InitialLit provides principals, teachers and parents with the assurance that the needs of all children are being met and should greatly decrease the risk of children presenting as struggling readers in later grades.

What kind of readers should I use alongside InitialLit–F?

Children need to practise how to apply the code to the reading of words in context. For this reason, decodable readers are required to support the program. InitialLit Readers (Levels 1-9) are used in Foundation and should be purchased alongside the program. Some schools may have already purchased these readers so these schools will need to purchase just the Kits and training. Schools should ensure that they have a couple of different schemes of decodable readers available for use in the classroom and for home reading, as children need a lot of early reading practice. InitialLit Readers are highly engaging and have a good story line which should be discussed with the children.

Why is training necessary?

InitialLit–F encompasses much of the literacy curriculum so it is vital that teachers know how to deliver the program for maximum success. A program is only as good as the person who is delivering it! The explicit, scripted teaching approach may be new to many teachers and training will ensure that the program is delivered with fidelity. Those who are familiar with explicit instruction techniques will still need to learn how these are used in InitialLit. The two-day training will not only train Foundation teachers in InitialLit but will also provide these teachers with more general professional development around a scientific approach to the teaching of literacy and what that looks like in practice.



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