

moments

MultiLit Reading Tutor Program PD training now available online

The highly regarded Reading Tutor Program (RTP) Professional Development training is now available online! This Professional Development Workshop provides quality professional eLearning in how to effectively deliver each component of the MultiLit Reading Tutor Program.

For a variety of reasons, some teachers are unable to attend face-to-face professional development. In particular, teachers and paraprofessionals in smaller communities often find it difficult and expensive to access the workshops. Travelling long distances can be very time-consuming and cost prohibitive. As an alternative to the live, face-to-face workshops, we are pleased to offer the RTP workshop via online self-paced eLearning modules. This format is also ideal for busy teaching staff and other paraprofessionals who prefer the flexibility of learning at their own pace, in small bites, during school relief time or in the convenience of their own home. The workshop is available on a range of platforms: PC, Mac, smartphone or tablet device.

The course comprises eight 30-minute modules with access to all content for four weeks, providing an opportunity to revisit the content and consolidate your learning.

The eight self-paced modules are:

- Course Introduction
- Unpack the Kit
- Word Attack Skills Introduction
- Word Attack Skills Accuracy



- Word Attack Skills Fluency
- Sight Words Introduction
- Sight Words Daily Session
- Reinforced Reading

Each module includes video demonstrations and practical activities, providing you with opportunities to apply and consolidate your knowledge of the key features of the MultiLit RTP. You will also receive immediate feedback on your responses as you work your way through the training.

The program of eLearning costs \$499 and participants receive a certificate upon completion. Visit www.multilit.com/professional-development/reading-tutor-program-pd-elearning-modules/ for more information and to register.

Why Positive Teaching is so important

Matt Tyler

Any teacher with a few years of classroom experience under their belt will tell you how important an effective student behaviour management strategy is to the success of a school. Unsurprising, really, when few things eat away at the wellbeing of its teaching staff more than disruptive behaviour and student inattention.

But how much impact on learning can and does poor classroom behaviour have?

Estimates put about one-third of students in affluent schools, and about half of those in disadvantaged schools, as saying that they experience noise and disorder in most, if not all, of their classes, while students who don't listen to the teacher can also make it a difficult environment for others to learn.

A recent report from the Australian Council for Education Research (ACER)



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Meet the team: Alison McMurtrie

MultiLit has a wonderful team of dedicated staff committed to the mission of helping all children learn to read. Alison McMurtrie, our Product Development Manager, recently celebrated 10 years with the company. Here she discusses what brought her to Australia and MultiLit, how she keeps up with the latest research in reading, and just how long it takes to develop a new product.

What were you doing before you joined MultiLit?

I began as a classroom teacher but became interested in reading and reading difficulties when I encountered children in the upper grades who had not learned to read well enough to participate in the regular curriculum. As a recent graduate, I was aware of my lack of knowledge around reading, and had been firmly schooled in whole-language approaches whereby miraculously children would learn to read simply by enough exposure to books.

This huge gap in my understanding of the reading process led me to enrol in a rigorous Postgraduate Diploma in Specific Learning Difficulties in London. I learned a great deal in that course and came to the realisation that many, many children were being let down simply because they were not being taught the basic alphabetic code in the early years of schooling in the first place. As is the case with many of the strategies developed by special educators, what is considered good teaching for children with special needs is actually just good teaching for everyone!

I ended up working with a not-for-profit organisation in London where we set up literacy support units in inner-city primary schools. Working with so many socially disadvantaged children was extremely rewarding and provided me with endless opportunities to see children progress in their reading and writing skills.

What does your role at MultiLit involve?

I have recently celebrated 10 years at MultiLit and during that time my role has evolved. When I started in 2007 MultiLit had just one program available to schools – the Reading Tutor Program, which had just been updated. We now have five more programs out in schools and we are working on a sixth. I have been involved

in the development of each of those programs by leading and coordinating the process. I work with a very talented team of educators who each play a role in writing and developing MultiLit programs.

Typically how long does it take to develop a MultiLit product, from concept to publication?

Writing programs that are very prescriptive and detailed takes an extraordinary amount of time. Some of our programs were in various stages of development for up to eight years before publication and others have taken 2-3 years to develop. The program development cycle involves planning, consulting, writing, trialling, refining, more trialling, more refining until it is ready for publishing. Alongside the writing, there is a lot of work around design and implementation that needs to happen. I liken the writing of a program to the building of a house in that the structure may be assembled fairly quickly but it can take forever to do the finishing touches! I consult with the MultiLit Research Unit regularly who provide guidance and gather data to check efficacy of each of the programs we develop. I also work closely with our Professional Development team on preparing training for the new program, which is another significant undertaking.

How do you keep up with the relevant research in reading and related skills, and how does this inform your work?

It is important to keep up to date with research so that our programs reflect best practice. Attending good quality conferences with internationally renowned presenters, reading articles and journals, and belonging to professional associations help tremendously to keep us in touch with what is happening. The leadership shown by the MultiLit Research Unit is critically important too. The internet has also made it so much easier for like-minded individuals to form communities to share and discuss evidence-based practice. Organisations such as LDA and the various SPELDs play an important role in disseminating information, while online communities such as DDOLL allow for great debate and sharing of expertise both locally and internationally.



“There is a tremendous sense of satisfaction when a program is finally launched... When feedback is received from so many teachers about the difference it is making for children, it makes all the hard work worthwhile.”

What are the most satisfying aspects of your job here?

There is a tremendous sense of satisfaction when a program is finally launched. All that hard work is translated into a program that one can be proud of. When feedback is received from so many teachers about the difference it is making for children, it makes all the hard work worthwhile. I find the work varied, challenging and highly rewarding, largely because I work with a great team who share the same passion and because I know the work we do literally changes the future for so many students.

MultiLit is seeking education professionals to join the growing Product Development team; if you are interested, please contact Alison McMurtrie at alison.mcmurtrie@multilit.com.

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found that Australian classrooms now have significantly lower levels of disciplinary standards and poorer student behaviour compared to that of the international averages for developed nations.

ACER's findings would appear to be further supported by recent research undertaken by Associate Professor Bauman and his colleague Hana Krskova from Sydney's Macquarie University. Their work concluded that better-behaved students learned more over the whole of their period of education, performed competitively among the world's best students, and ultimately contributed more to a more competitive workforce. Professor Baumann argues that investment in education alone is insufficient to boost educational performance and that the way schools are run would appear to have a very large effect on how its students perform.

Supporters of this argument cite the UK's controversial Michaela School. Set up in 2014 under the UK Government's free schools programme, the school was established in one of London's poorest suburbs. Its model saw it take elements from the UK's top-performing schools, implementing a rigorous academic curriculum, and creating a culture of clear expectations coupled with an emphasis on effective student reprimands. Positive behaviour management systems were introduced to provide a whole-school systematic approach towards establishing positive teaching methods of working with children. The hypothesis is that while punishment may be used to stop any kind of behaviour, only the appropriate use of more positive teaching methods

(applied contingently, immediately and consistently) can teach new more adaptive behaviours.

Research by MultiLit's Professor Kevin Wheldall and Dr Robyn Wheldall in Australia, and with the late Dr Frank Merrett in the UK, highlighted the fact that teachers typically praised academic performance but only very rarely praised students for good behaviour in the classroom. Their solutions, therefore, in the form of providing training packages for teachers in Positive Teaching methods, were aimed at addressing teachers' classroom management skills because they had rarely been taught to analyse the positive and negative effects of their own behaviour on the students in their classes, to be systematic in their observations of children, and to systematically manipulate the incentives at their disposal.

MultiLit's programs (developed specifically for classroom teachers, learning support staff and teacher aides) place significant emphasis on the importance of contingent praise relating to student's social behaviour and not just academic performance. This key element within the program delivery process helps create an effective and positive learning environment, allowing students to remain on task and open to receiving instruction, thereby maximising opportunities to learn.

When implemented well, students naturally respond positively as they have been taught what is expected of them, leading to increases in the students' overall and long term academic performance. Teaching staff benefit by enjoying a less stressful classroom environment as a result of their delivery of consistent responses

to student learning and behaviour. Developing clear communication with parents helps to support this process.

The result is something we have seen in many of the school programs MultiLit runs with its school partners, particularly in low socioeconomic areas of Australia. Unproductive and challenging behaviour is typically significantly reduced for most students, leading to noticeable improvements in overall classroom behaviour coupled with clear academic gains.

Australian students have now slid 10 months in reading performance since 2000 when the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) first began. Whether as part of the current 'back to basics' push, or just plain common sense, the way students behave in the classroom is receiving increased attention as one part of the puzzle to help better prepare our children for the challenges of the real world.

As parents, politicians and teachers seek solutions to Australia's academic decline, we can expect that students' behaviour in the classroom and the reliability and long-term effects of classroom behaviour management systems to come under increasing scrutiny.

For those interested, MultiLit provides a dedicated one day workshop on 'Positive Teaching for Effective Classroom Behaviour Management', designed to complement school-wide behaviour management programs.

Email multilit@multilit.com for more information or visit www.multilit.com/professional-development/positive-teaching-pd/.

Matt Tyler is General Manager, Program Delivery, MultiLit.

What teachers say about MacqLit Professional Development training

"This was the best product training course I can remember attending. I never give full marks but Kate Glenn earned and deserved them. She knew the product, company and history in-depth; answered EVERY question professionally, had a wonderfully clear and concise way of delivering information and a beautifully cheery disposition. The venue was terrific – fantastic food and well-spaced breaks. MacqLit looks great – can't wait to share information with my colleagues and, particularly, my students!! Also, every resource was available, videos all clear and worked. Can't fault this. Thanks for the opportunity to attend!"

Jennifer Riley, Gleneagles Secondary College, Victoria

Media mention

Glenorie Public School's use of MiniLit with its Year 1 students was showcased in a recent article in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Homework, technology, smaller classes: what works in NSW classrooms'.

The article focused on work by not-for-profit education group, Evidence for Learning, to analyse research to reveal what works and what doesn't in the classroom. The group aims to provide a 'toolkit' of actionable recommendations for teachers, school leaders and parents.

Glenorie's assistant principal and specialist learning and support teacher, Katie Harmon, told the *SMH* that in just over four years of using MultiLit's programs, reading has improved significantly at the school.

"We can target small groups of children for as long as they need to be on the program and what we have found is that for those children with reading difficulties, 80 per cent show very significant growth," she said. "And another 10 to 15 per cent still make good, sound growth."

On the road

MultiLit staff presented at the Language Literacy and Learning Conference in Perth in March. Alison McMurtrie and Simmone Pogorzelski presented on various MultiLit programs, while the MultiLit Research Unit – Kevin Wheldall, Robyn Wheldall, Alison Madelaine, Merece Reynolds and Sarah Arakelian – outlined findings of a project conducted in Cape York to improve the literacy performance in Indigenous Australian students in the area. These findings were also presented at the Australian Association of Special Education National Conference in Darwin in April.



Weighing the pig ...

An update on WARP and WARL progress monitoring

Kevin Wheldall

As the old saying has it, "weighing the pig doesn't make it any fatter". Perhaps so, but it does tell us if what we are doing is actually working to fatten it up! And so it is with progress monitoring of reading. The good news is that we may not have to weigh the pig quite so often.

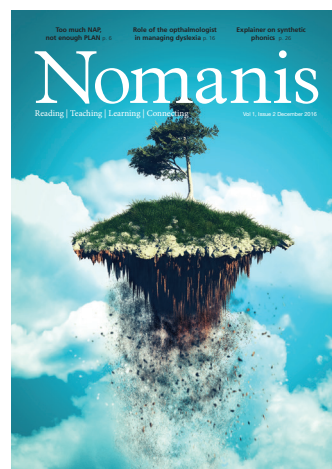
Users of our two reading performance measures, the Wheldall Assessment of Reading Passages (WARP) and the Wheldall Assessment of Reading Lists (WARL), will be interested to read that we have modified the advice we give regarding progress monitoring. Both measures comprise three Initial Assessment Passages/Lists and 10 Progress Monitoring Passages/Lists. We previously advised that one passage/list should be given to students on a weekly basis to track progress over the course of a school term.

Our reading of the latest relevant research literature, and our own in-house trialling, has convinced us that this may not be strictly necessary. Instead, we now recommend that two passages/lists be given to students on a fortnightly basis and that the average of the two passages/tests be employed to track progress. This appears to be a more reliable, and certainly less time-consuming, practice.

Users of both measures are, of course, free to continue with weekly monitoring if this is their preference. But, as scientific evidence-based reading specialists, we like to base our practice and advice on the best evidence available and to change our recommended practice when, in our view, fresh evidence warrants such a change.

Subscribe to *Nomanis*

Do you want to keep up with the latest research on reading, writing and learning but don't have the time to delve into academic journals? Then *Nomanis*, MultiLit's free online magazine, is for you. Recent editions have included an analysis of the Dyslexie font, an explainer on synthetic phonics, an update from Jim Rose on the state of education in the UK, and articles debunking learning and neuroscience myths.



Subscribe to our mailing list to be notified when we publish new editions of *Nomanis* at www.nomanis.com.au.

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