

# moments

## Next phase of InitialLit released

The second part of our evidence-based whole-class literacy program for the first three years of school, InitialLit, will be launched in November. Following on from last year's release of InitialLit–Foundation, InitialLit–1 provides an explicit and effective model for teaching reading, spelling and related skills for Year 1 students.

The program incorporates daily lessons in reading and spelling, as well as rich language instruction using children's literature. As with InitialLit–Foundation, a set of decodable InitialLit Readers (Levels 10-16) has been developed to align with the InitialLit–1 instruction sequence, and assist students to generalise and consolidate their skills. These Readers can also be purchased separately from the program.

From November, InitialLit Professional Development workshops will now cover both InitialLit–Foundation and InitialLit–1.

InitialLit–Foundation has already been adopted by 160 schools across Australia, and MultiLit is receiving strong pre-orders for the Year 1 program.

We are always pleased to hear feedback on the program, as Kate Wicker, Foundation teacher at Beeliar Primary School in Perth, has shared here:

"It's an understatement to say I'm impressed with our data for 2018 so far. Now that I have a better understanding of the program and I put interventions in place immediately after each

progress monitoring and review, I have seen gaps decrease or disappear altogether. I also send [data] home to parents. Parents can see in black and white where their child needs help and they have been working hard at home ... What a fantastic program InitialLit is. The proof is in these numbers."

For more information about InitialLit, please visit [www.multilit.com/initiallit](http://www.multilit.com/initiallit).



**Our sincere thanks to Oatley Public School, one of our InitialLit trial schools, who welcomed us in to capture their InitialLit lessons in action.**



Dr Robyn Wheldall and Emeritus Professor Kevin Wheldall with international expert on reading comprehension, Dr Kate Nation (centre), Professor in Experimental Psychology and Fellow of St John's College, Oxford. In September, more than 20 MultiLit staff attended a professional development session led by Professor Nation and organised by Learning Difficulties Australia, on 'Reading and Comprehension Difficulties: research-practice links and applications for the classroom'.

## Staff profile: Kate Glenn

**This edition's staff member is also one of the hardest to pin down – in her role as School Partnerships Manager, and as part of our training team, Kate is most often out of the office and in schools and training rooms! She tells us about her role and some of the key challenges she sees among our customers.**

**Can you tell us about your background prior to joining MultiLit?**

While completing a diverse degree in psychology, government and international relations, and Italian studies, I worked as a therapist for children with autism. I've always had an interest in working with children, and this role allowed me to develop my understanding of therapeutic interventions for children and build my experience working in one-on-one and group contexts in both home and school environments. My passion for languages, however, soon saw me furthering my studies in Italian in the best way possible: I took myself off to Italy and immersed myself in the language and culture (and food!). After a year of study and wonderful travel experiences across Europe, I eventually found my way back to Sydney, and to the area of psychology. I began work as a research assistant in the cognitive sciences department at Macquarie University. There I was able to combine my passion for working with children with my interest in research. It was this work that ultimately led me to MultiLit, where I began as a trainer delivering professional development workshops.

**What does your role at MultiLit involve, and how has it changed recently?**

While initially a part of the training team at MultiLit, I also soon came to be involved with product development, working on programs such as MacqLit and Spell-It, and of course our new whole-class literacy program, InitialLit. I contribute to various research projects and oversee teams of MultiLit tutors providing school-based delivery of MultiLit literacy intervention programs. More recently, and coinciding with the release of InitialLit, my role now focuses on overseeing the School Partnerships team, supporting schools in program implementation. I work closely with class teachers, literacy leaders and executive to ensure schools can get the

most out of our programs with good quality program delivery, and regular 'check-ins' face-to-face, online and over the phone.

**What are some of the most common challenges you see in schools implementing MultiLit programs?**

Schools face countless challenges in the implementation of any program. Some difficulties are easier to overcome, such as finding a suitable space within the school to deliver an intervention. Others are more challenging, such as ensuring the given program is delivered as prescribed within the very busy day-to-day school timetable. One of the most common obstacles is getting everyone 'on the same page' – upskilling staff with formal training at MultiLit PD workshops, integrating MultiLit programs into a school-wide approach to literacy instruction and intervention, and ensuring that this approach is consistent with evidence-based best practice. A big part of what we do at MultiLit, particularly in the School Partnerships team, is help schools to overcome these challenges and provide ongoing support, so that schools can get the most out of our programs.

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

Keeping on top of the latest research is so critical in what we do. I benefit hugely from the wealth of knowledge and expertise found in online forums and at conferences and presentations, where stimulating discussions take place, the latest research is discussed, and future research questions are raised. We want to share this knowledge with schools and, in doing so, see more teachers using evidence-based practice.

**What are the most satisfying aspects of your job here?**

I enjoy the diversity that comes with my role at MultiLit: engaging directly with individuals who are implementing our programs in so many different contexts, being involved in research projects, and continuing to benefit from the experience of my MultiLit colleagues. I value working with like-minded colleagues, knowing that what we do is making a difference in the lives of so many children.



*“I enjoy the diversity that comes with my role at MultiLit: engaging directly with individuals who are implementing our programs in so many different contexts.”*



# Summing up a thesis ... in just three minutes

Long-time colleague at MultiLit and PhD candidate at Edith Cowan University (ECU) in WA, Simone Pogorzelski, was recently named the winner of the 3MT competition at ECU. The 3MT (3 Minute Thesis) competition originated at the University of Queensland back in 2008, to encourage doctoral students to communicate their research in a fast, engaging format. Simone represented ECU in the Asia Pacific 3MT competition at UQ in September. Simone is supervised by ECU academics Associate Professor Deslea Konza and Drs Susan Main and Janet Hunter, as well as MultiLit Research Unit deputy director Dr Robyn Wheldall. Congratulations to Simone on her success in the competition – her 3MT presentation follows.

## A tale of two theories: the role of book types in the reading development of beginning readers

By Simone Pogorzelski

Without exception, I have never met a five-year-old who doesn't love books. I have, however, met plenty of 10-year-olds who hate them!

Hating books, and by association reading, learning and school are just some of the personal and social costs for children who struggle to learn to read. Children who haven't mastered the reading process by the age of 10 face a grim future, with decreased opportunities in education and employment often resulting in low self-esteem and poor mental health and wellbeing.

But how is it that a child attends school for five years, yet can't read, or if they can, is sometimes two, three or more years behind their peers?

Well for the past 30 years the teaching of reading in Australia has largely been dominated by a meaning-based model of instruction. This model is based on the theory that children learn to read in much the same way as they learn to speak: through experience, modelling and opportunity.

Research shows that while many children do learn to read with this model of instruction, far too many do not.

In comparison, a code-based model recognises that reading needs to be 'taught' not caught. In this model, children are taught to read words by converting a string of letters (which represent the written code) into sounds before blending them together to produce a spoken word.

This approach has repeatedly been found to be the fastest and most direct route to skilled reading.

Yet despite this knowledge, teachers are mandated by the curriculum to use two different types of books, based on either a code based or meaning based model, to support the development of reading in the first year of school. While both book types have been found to be beneficial to the beginning reader, we know very little about the unique contributions made by each to the reading process.

The fact that the two types of books are so different in purpose and style, and underpinned by different theories of reading, arguably in conflict with each other, has provided much of the momentum for my proposed study.

I want to know which book provides more support to the beginning reader.

By randomly allocating 96 children from four pre-primary classrooms into one of two reading groups: using either code-based books or meaning-based books and assessing their reading progress over the course of the year, I hope to determine which book provides better outcomes in overall reading development and growth.

The results of this study will contribute to the development of a set of guidelines for the use of each book in the classroom helping teachers to implement the curriculum content more effectively.

The type of book used in the first year of school might very well hold the key to ensuring that ALL children continue to love books, and reading, beyond the age of five!



Simone Pogorzelski giving her 3MT presentation

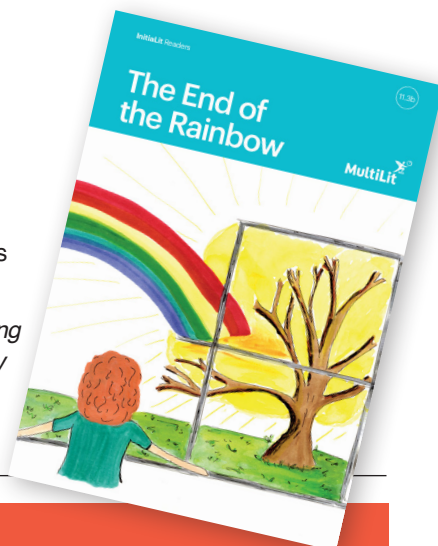


The 3MT finalists from Edith Cowan University

## Praise for InitialLit Readers

At MultiLit recently, we received some wonderful feedback from one of our MiniLit users, who has been a Reading Recovery teacher for 30 years.

In her words: *"I just wanted to tell you that I think the InitialLit Readers are fantastic. I've been using them with my MiniLit groups, and I know you wouldn't expect a Reading Recovery teacher to say anything good about decodable, but I looked at all of the series out there and didn't like any of them until I came across yours. I think they're just delightful!"*



## PD passes new milestone

MultiLit's Professional Development team passed a major milestone in 2018, for the first time training more than 3000 teachers in a 12-month period. We would like to thank our school customers for their ongoing support and commitment to continuing to further the professional education of their teachers.

## Meet the MultiKnitters

When Genevieve Godwin (left) joined MultiLit nearly two years ago she brought more than a gorgeous smile and fabulous skills to our Professional Development team. Gen has inspired many in MultiLit to pick up their knitting needles, some for the first time. Known affectionately now as the MultiKnitters, these terrific women designed and crafted beautiful baby blankets for Renelle Pittman and Sarah Arakelian, who both became first-time mums this year. Their babies have been wrapped in love in more ways than one. The other MultiKnitters are Rose Ye, our finance manager and organisational 'glue', and Barbara Healy from the Product Development Team, who creates equally fabulous material for the children we help to learn to read.



## Catch us at a conference

Dr Alison Madelaine and Alison McMurtrie from the MultiLit Research Unit and Product Development Team will be presenting on our approach to initial reading instruction and the InitialLit program at several major conferences in the coming months, including:

**The Reading League's 2nd Annual Conference,** October 29-30 in Syracuse, New York, on 'Effective initial instruction in reading: An Australian perspective'.

**The Language, Learning and Literacy Conference 2019,** hosted by DSF on 4-6 April 2019 in Perth, presenting on 'Exemplary initial instruction in reading shortens the tail of at-risk readers'.

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