

MULTILIT[®] Moments

The Newsletter of MULTILIT[®]

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MULTILIT[®] IN THE MEDIA

ABC TV's 'Health Dimensions' (9/7/02) recently featured our Director of MULTILIT[®], Professor Kevin Wheldall, speaking about the literacy level of boys. The episode featured the 'Schoolwise' Program, a MULTILIT[®] program based at the Exodus Foundation Tutorial Centre in Ashfield, NSW. Reverend Bill Crews, Chair of the Exodus Foundation, was also featured.

The 'Schoolwise' Program provides an intensive, skills-based program for final year primary school students and first year high school students identified as being at risk of becoming seriously disaffected from school as a result of their low literacy levels. A social and school survival skills element aims to help students to come to terms with school cultures, attitudes and expectations.

To gain entry to the program students must be at least two years behind in reading, at serious risk of becoming disaffected from school, and not able to access services to assist with reading skills development (such as private tutoring).

Programs such as 'Schoolwise' can go a long way in improving the literacy levels of older low-progress readers, as demonstrated in the results of the recent graduates of the semester-long program (see our article on Page 2 for some amazing improvements).

The success of the program has ensured its gradual growth over the years. In its seventh year, the program now has a larger intake of students each semester, an appointed psychologist and more extensive resources.

For more info visit www.multilit.com and www.exodusfoundation.net.

MULTILIT[®] Moments launches...

Welcome to the first issue of MULTILIT[®] Moments, the newsletter of MULTILIT[®].

Our objective is to keep you abreast of MULTILIT[®] news and views, as well as provide informative snippets on topical issues of interest to parents and educators. We would be pleased to receive your suggestions for future issues, as well as your feedback on this

one, at clinic@multilit.com.

MULTILIT[®] Moments will be published on a term by term basis, keeping you up to date with program information, research and development, staff news, student achievements and more. This issue we have featured some fantastic recent student results. Happy reading!

Ainsley Gilkes,

Editor, MULTILIT[®] Moments

Special Interest Articles:

- MULTILIT[®] in the Media
- The Power of Positive Teaching

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QUICK FACT

It seems as though male teachers all over the world are a vanishing species. The ratio of male to female teachers in Australian primary schools is 1:27. In high schools it's a lot better at 1:9, but still the trend is downwards.
(Source: Centre for Marketing Schools, 5/8/02).

THANK YOU, MULTILIT®

MULTILIT® always appreciates your feedback on your experience with us, and in particular with our educational programs. The following is an extract from an *unsolicited* letter sent to us by the parents of Rhys Eudale, who was enrolled in the MULTILIT® Independent Program in Terms 1 & 2 of this year.

"Dear Simone,

We would like to say thanks to you and the MULTILIT® program for helping Rhys over the last two terms. The program has benefited his reading and spelling greatly.

We undertook the home tutoring program and we would strongly recommend it to anyone who encounters learning difficulties within their family unit. It requires a lot of hard work and dedication of students, parents, teachers and clinicians who administer and use these programs.

More recognition of these programs should be forthcoming from the community and educational bodies. We hope that the continued research and development of programs such as yours helps bring an educational improvement to children with learning difficulties.

Once again thank you.

Nick & Julianne".

Excellent Results for Latest 'Schoolwise' Students

In July 2002, the latest intake of 36 students 'graduated' from the 'Schoolwise' Program, a version of MULTILIT® provided for the Exodus Foundation Tutorial Centre at Ashfield.

The following results relate to the 36 Year 6 and Year 7 students who attended for two full terms in the first half of 2002 and who were assessed at the commencement and conclusion of the program.

Low progress readers, by definition, would typically make only about two months progress, at best, in reading and related skills in two terms. Many would have stopped making any progress at all. But after two terms of instruction, the results achieved by these students are nothing short of wonderful.

- Average reading age had risen

by nearly 16 months for reading accuracy and nearly 10 months for reading comprehension.

- For word recognition, the gains were even greater, averaging 21 months.
- Reading fluency increased by an average of 39 more words read correctly per minute, a 53% improvement.
- Spelling age improved, on average, 12 months.

These sorts of gains would be impressive even for regular students in mainstream schools since they are in excess of the five month gains one would typically expect in two terms of instruction.

- Taken from Professor Kevin Wheldall's graduation address, July 2002.

Our Senior Clinician rewarded!

Simonne Pogorzelski, Senior Clinician in the MULTILIT® Clinic, has been awarded the Lee Mills Teacher Education Award by the New South Wales Chapter of the Australian Association of Special Education.

Simonne received the award for a research paper based on her postgraduate research co-authored by her supervisor, MULTILIT® Director Professor Kevin Wheldall. Congratulations Simone!



Photo: Simone Pogorzelski and Professor Kevin Wheldall

The Power of Positive Teaching

An edited extract from Professor Kevin Wheldall's
Address to the Schoolwise Graduation, July 2002.

In regular primary schools 'out there', classroom observations have revealed that primary teachers, in Australia and in the UK, typically praise students for their *academic work* three to four times as much as they express disapproval. But disapproval and reprimand for inappropriate *classroom behaviour* is typically three to five times more common than praise for behaving well.

The *rates* of approval are also typically very low. The group of Australian primary teachers observed had a total approval rate of, on average, only 36 positive responses per hour. Thus each student in the class, on average, received only just over one positive comment per hour.

To be effective in keeping students motivated, praise needs to be far more abundant than this and in a ratio of three or more times as much praise as reprimand. But is this feasible? And what is the point of all this 'being nice to kids'?

In fact 'being nice' is not the point! The research clearly shows that praising students for behaving well leads to reductions in inappropriate behaviour

and increases the amount of time students spend getting on with what they are supposed to be doing or being 'on task', as we call it.

In MULTILIT® programs, we specifically train our teachers to be very positive and to use high rates of praise, and it is certainly paying off.

As is our regular practice, we recently systematically observed all of our Schoolwise teaching staff on three separate occasions as they went about their business of teaching. In our classroom observations, we too focused on teachers' use of praise statements and reprimands.

The results were quite remarkable. Our Schoolwise teachers typically praise seven times more often than they reprimand for *academic work* and praise 30 times more often than they reprimand for *classroom behaviour*.

On average they praise at nearly 250 smiles per hour! Given our small group sizes and very favourable staffing ratio, this means that each child is typically receiving about 35 praise statements per hour.

"To be effective in keeping students motivated, praise needs to be far more abundant... and in a ratio of three or more times as much praise as reprimand".

Approaches to Dyslexia

Which of the following approaches to treating dyslexia have actually been seriously advocated and which have I made up as a joke?

1. Play baroque music to your child daily.
2. Put magnets in your child's bed and shoes.
3. Give your child travel sickness pills.
4. Roll your child around in a padded barrel.
5. Ask your child to pass objects from one hand to the other behind his or her back or above the line of sight while standing on a cushion on one leg and saying aloud a

multiplication table.

6. Have your child wear special glasses with coloured lenses.

In fact I have made up none of the above. All of these have been and some still are being advocated as appropriate 'treatments' for children with learning disabilities. At MULTILIT® we have serious reservations about such approaches, preferring to concentrate instead on effective instruction in reading and related skills.

Kevin Wheldall

The things they say

Overheard from a teenager: "Sorry I didn't unstack the dishwasher put putting on my jumper took longer than expected!"



Making Up Lost Time In Literacy

DIRECTOR:
Professor
Kevin Wheldall

EDITOR:
Ainsley Gilkes

BUSINESS ADDRESS:
Building X5A,
Macquarie University
NSW 2109 AUSTRALIA

PHONE:
61-02 9850 9695

FAX:
61-02 9850 8254

E-MAIL:
clinic@multilit.com

We're on the Web!

See us at:
www.multilit.com



Macquarie
Research Ltd
ACN 003 849 198

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News Snippets

Congratulations to our MULTILIT® Intensive Program Teacher Fiona Ryan, on her recent engagement to Ash McMullen.

A new and improved MULTILIT® web site is now under construction. We'll keep you posted on the online launch date of the updated and new look www.multilit.com. Until then, you can still access all our program information at our temporary site at the same internet address.

We recently hosted our inaugural MULTILIT® Reading Tutor Program Professional Development Workshop, and have three upcoming workshops for Terms 3 and 4. This new service is for regular classroom teachers and special educators, providing practical instruction on how to implement the popular MULTILIT® Reading Tutor Program in the school environment.

About Us

MULTILIT® comprises not only the MULTILIT® Clinic, but also Publications, Consultancy, Research and Development. Professor Kevin Wheldall explains,

"My colleagues and I are aiming to combine research and theory with program development and service delivery in an attempt to demonstrate just what can be achieved to help low-progress readers to learn reading and related skills rapidly."

When your child enrolls in a program, or your school purchases our resources, you are actively assisting us in seeking to research and define best practice in literacy education!

Web Site Links

Some useful web sites for parents and students:

www.mumsweb.com.au

An information and discussion site for busy at home and working mums. Free membership is available, and their email newsletter has updates on products and events. Yes, dad can join too!

www.youthgas.com

Youthgas is an ok web site, but it is their email list you really need to join! Great for students aged 14 and up, there are loads of wonderful opportunities offered for them, such as volunteer work, community awards, competitions and training.

A big welcome to all the new clients who have joined us this term. We look forward to assisting your child to 'Make Up Lost Time In Literacy'.

We'd like to publicly extend a big thank you to Mrs Leonie Roach, who has been a fantastic and dedicated volunteer in our MULTILIT® Intensive Program for some time now. Her son Patrick attends the program, and Leonie has been enthusiastically helping out with PPP reading each weekday morning. Thank you for your generosity - our students and staff are very appreciative!

This year saw our youngest entrant in the MULTILIT® City to Surf staff team. Only 11 months old, Kai Watkins was pushed by his mum Renae! Well done to all eight team members!

Making Up Lost Time In Literacy