



moments

MultiLit expands in the West

MultiLit's new Perth Centre in Subiaco has been officially opened! The launch was attended by co-founders Emeritus Professor Kevin Wheldall AM and Dr Robyn Wheldall, and Managing Director Iain Rothwell, as well as other MultiLit staff.

They were joined by guests including Knowledge Society's Elena Douglas, Glenn Fahey from the Centre for Independent Studies, Edith Cowan University Associate Professor Lorraine Hammond AM, and representatives from the WA Department of Education's Phonics Initiative team.

Georgie Wynne, MultiLit General Manager, Western Australia, spoke at the launch and said that the local response to the Perth Centre had been very encouraging, both from educators and families who had already engaged in tutoring services via the new Subiaco Literacy Centre.

Also presenting were Iain Rothwell, who discussed MultiLit's heritage and growth in Western Australia, and Dr Jennifer Buckingham OAM who spoke on the current state of literacy education in Australia.



From top to bottom: MultiLit staff; Kerryn Middleton, Anna Taylor, Alison McMurtrie, Dr Anna Desjardins, Lauren Koch; Georgie Wynne, Dr Robyn Wheldall, Emeritus Professor Kevin Wheldall, Iain Rothwell, Dr Jennifer Buckingham

SpellEx Part A released

MultiLit has launched its much anticipated SpellEx Part A program. This new product is the first of two programs that will be released to support teaching students to spell in Years 3, 4 and beyond.

SpellEx Part A is a whole-class Tier 1 spelling program for students in Year 3 onwards. It uses explicit language-based instruction to help them develop their phonological, orthographic, morphological and etymological skills to spell words correctly.

Since 2020, the Product Development team has worked hard to bring the program to fruition. Field testing commenced in 2021 during a challenging time of COVID-19 lockdowns. Despite the disruptions, the results of the trial

indicated excellent gains in students' ability to represent written words accurately as well as their ability to apply phonological, orthographic and morphological knowledge that underpins spelling development. The results provided an informed basis to further enhance the program's features.

The exciting new program includes a manual, handbooks, student workbooks as well as concept posters to use in the classroom. The program is supported by an extensive library of downloadable resources including slides, extension and support worksheets, word lists and record forms. Further practice resources and engaging games

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...continued from page 1

provide additional opportunities for students to consolidate their learning.

MultiLit’s Product Development Manager, Alison McMurtrie, has found the process of developing this evidence-based program a true labour of love. “Working on SpellEx has renewed our appreciation for the richness of the English language. It is no wonder that it is challenging to teach!”

The program is supported by a one-day Professional Development workshop. These sessions have been quick to fill up with teachers eager to learn more about the program and how it can benefit their students, and feedback has been positive: “*Exceptional delivery of an exceptional resource. I am excited to deliver the program to my class.*”

To date, more than 390 schools around the country have adopted SpellEx Part A, continuing their commitment to exemplary Tier 1 instruction into the middle primary years. SpellEx Part B will be released in late 2024.

To find out more about SpellEx, visit multilit.com/spellx.



New teaching academy launched

MultiLit is pleased to announce the launch of The Academy for the Science of Instruction – a new initiative that will provide in-depth training to school teachers in essential evidence-based teaching skills.

Commencing this month, courses offered by The Academy will range from effective instruction in reading and spelling to classroom behaviour management.

The Academy has assembled a team of professionals with extensive knowledge and decades of expertise in the science of instruction.

Dr Mark Carter, an Honorary Associate Professor at the University of Wollongong, has been appointed Dean of The Academy.

Emeritus Professor Kevin Wheldall AM, Chair of the Academic Board for The Academy, said he expected the courses to prove popular with teachers.

“The Academy seeks to provide

teachers with the very best, scientifically supported knowledge and information in an interesting and accessible format that is highly applicable to the classroom.”

“Teachers are critical to students’ success and it’s essential that they be provided with the tools and knowledge to empower them to deliver effective instruction with impact.”

It offers a new NESA and TQI-accredited course in Effective Instruction in Reading and Spelling – with the first of four modules commencing in June.

Participants will learn about the research base for the science of reading, supporting positive classroom behaviour for learning, the difference between evidence-based and evidence-informed practice, and how to evaluate when the practices can be applied to the classroom or instructional setting.

It also covers the most effective way for teachers to plan and sequence oral language, phonemic awareness, and



The Academy for the Science of Instruction

phonics programs to promote word reading and comprehension.

The course draws on the recently published textbook, *Effective Instruction in Reading and Spelling*, an Australian-first collaboration between internationally renowned and leading local reading researchers.

Visit scienceofinstruction.com.au to learn more.

MultiLit researchers feature at DSF conference

MultiLit Research Unit (MRU) researchers had a strong presence at the DSF Language, Literacy and Learning Conference in Perth in March, including leading a symposium on evidence-informed practice in schools.

Titled 'Getting evidence-informed practice into and out of schools: trials and tribulations', the session addressed both the barriers to, and opportunities for, creating and disseminating the evidence base around specific approaches in education.

The delegation, which included MRU Director Dr Robyn Wheldall, Founding Director MRU Emeritus Professor Kevin Wheldall AM, Senior Research Fellows Dr Alison Madelaine and Dr Jennifer Buckingham, Research Fellow Dr Nicola Bell, and MultiLit Product Development Manager Alison McMurtrie, provided insights from MultiLit's work in promoting evidence-based classroom spelling instruction to accurately measuring students' phonic decoding skills.

Discussing the Closing the Gap project, Buckingham said it was critical that Australia generate its own education research.

"Research on reading in other countries is useful but may not translate directly into Australian education."

"Each country has different sociodemographic features and a different context for teaching, and this is particularly true in regional and remote schools – especially schools with high Indigenous populations," she said.

The conference, held over three days, also provided an opportunity for MultiLit to discuss its role in the transformative Canberra Goulburn 'Catalyst' program, including providing system-wide professional learning to boost teachers' knowledge of evidence-based literacy instruction.

Meanwhile, MultiLit's Perth-based Speech and Language Specialist Anna Taylor, and MRU Research Fellow Dr Anna Desjardins hosted

a workshop on developing oral language to support literacy, which was well attended. Reflecting the increasing level of interest in the link between oral language and early literacy, several school systems have now requested that the workshop be presented for their teachers and speech pathologists.

Dr Robyn Wheldall described the DSF Language, Literacy and Learning Conference as "a highlight on the education and research calendar".

The conference also provided an opportunity for visitors to the trade exhibition to find out more about MultiLit's programs and resources for schools.



From left to right: Emeritus Professor Kevin Wheldall, Dr Robyn Wheldall, Dr Nicola Bell, Dr Alison Madelaine, Alison McMurtrie, Dr Jennifer Buckingham

Partnership yields impressive NAPLAN uplift

MultiLit has been supporting educators to provide effective literacy instruction for almost 30 years. This case study demonstrates how MultiLit programs are having a significant impact: both in building teachers' knowledge and capacity and lifting student learning outcomes.

[St Columba's Catholic Primary School](#) in Western Australia has reported a dramatic improvement in students' literacy achievement since partnering with [MultiLit](#) seven years ago.

When principal Allen McMahon joined the South Perth school in 2014, literacy quickly became a priority.

Despite drawing students from relatively advantaged suburbs, the school had been underperforming against similar schools as well as socio-economically disadvantaged schools in the Year 3 NAPLAN reading test.

"We looked closely at what the research was saying about learning to read, and importantly how to teach reading effectively, and that's what led us to MultiLit," Mr McMahon said.

"I recall travelling to Sydney where I was able to observe what was going on inside schools that were using MultiLit programs and was really impressed. Schools that were considered much more disadvantaged than our own and with high numbers of students whose main language spoken at home was not English were doing far better. It was obvious that we needed to do more to ensure that our students became proficient readers."

In 2016, St Columba's introduced [InitialLit](#), a whole-class program for Foundation to Year 2 that systematically teaches core literacy knowledge and skills, including phonics, vocabulary, oral language and listening comprehension. The school also used [PreLit](#) to support kindergarten students' preliteracy skills, such as phonological awareness and oral language development, and the [MacqLit](#) intervention program for small groups of older low-progress readers. St Columba's also participated in a pre-publication trial of the oral language program [LanguageLift](#).

The impact on student achievement has been profound. Between 2015 and 2022, the school's average Year 3 NAPLAN reading score improved by 13



"There's a lot of time pressures on educators these days, but there is really no need for individual teachers to have to go off and reinvent the wheel ..."

per cent, while the writing score jumped by 10 per cent. Last year's NAPLAN saw the school perform well above the state average in both categories.

McMahon said he believed fidelity to the programs, which have been informed by years of research evidence into how children learn to read and how to best teach reading, was crucial to its success.

"All our teachers and education assistants across Foundation to Year 2 classrooms are trained and supported to teach their students the same essential content in the same systematic and

structured way, ensuring consistent and high-quality instruction across the school. We screen students continuously to ensure they're learning what is being taught so there's less chance of anyone falling behind. But if they do, we know we can support them."

Mr McMahon said teachers had wholeheartedly supported the school's move towards structured literacy.

"There's a lot of time pressures on educators these days but there is really no need for individual teachers to have to go off and reinvent the wheel regarding reading instruction. We do things this way because the evidence says it's the most effective way and we have the proof in our students' results."

St Columba's has begun opening its classrooms to visits from educators from other government and non-government schools who are keen to find out more about its success and how to implement a structured literacy approach in their own classes.

"Things are certainly moving in the right direction in WA," McMahon said. "More teachers are undergoing professional development that has been informed by the Science of Reading and they are keen to align their instructional practice with what works for all children. It's all about improving outcomes for students."

MultiLit has seen the uptake of programs by WA schools jump substantially, with two-thirds of schools across the state employing at least one of its reading, language, intervention or spelling programs.

New release: Firecracker Books



Having received many requests for hi-lo books for older low-progress readers (including MacqLit students) over the years, MultiLit began developing a new series early last year.

The Ignite Series of Firecracker Books – so named as they aim to ignite a love of reading with their engaging storylines and characters – has been launched. The series comprises 25 titles for students in Years 4–6 who are developing their decoding,

fluency and comprehension, and includes both fiction and non-fiction. With exciting titles such as *Bella on the Stage*, *Crazy Plants* and *Bad Unicorn*, children will love to learn to read using these beautiful books.

Each book has been carefully crafted to combine high-concept stories and subject matter with text at an accessible reading level, and includes questions to encourage further discussion with the student.

Find out more at multilit.com/firecrackerbooks.

New releases from Putto Press

When I Was a Lad



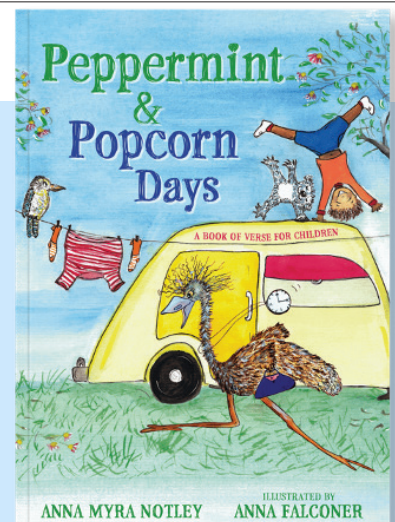
MultiLit Chairman Emeritus Professor Kevin Wheldall AM's love of poetry is well-known to MultiLit staff, and many have been fortunate enough to hear some of his specially written poems to mark important occasions.

As our resident Dr Seuss, Kevin is a dab hand at verse and it is fitting that his first picture book, *When I Was a Lad*, has now been published by Putto Press.

Written in rhyme and beautifully illustrated by Caroline Keys, the book celebrates the simpler pleasures of childhood in years gone by, drawing on Kevin's childhood in the UK.

Congratulations to Kevin and Caroline on the book's publication. *When I Was a Lad* is available now at bookshop.multilit.com

Peppermint and Popcorn Days



Come on a whimsical journey through fanciful imaginary worlds and befriend a treasure trove of delightfully silly characters along the way.

MultiLit Product Developer, Research Fellow and author Anna Myra Notley (Desjardins) has teamed up with illustrator Anna Falconer to create a collection of Australian poetry for children which invites us to stop and consider the wonder that can be found in the everyday. Available now at bookshop.multilit.com

Catholic school families to benefit from MultiLit partnership

[MultiLit](#) and [Catholic School Parents Australia \(CSPA\)](#) are proud to announce a new partnership that will see Catholic school families receive discounted access to literacy assessments.

CSPA is the national, peak body for the parents/carers of the 804,618 children and young people in Australia's 1,760 Catholic schools. One in every five Australian students is educated in a Catholic school.

Commencing in 2024, the one-year partnership will assist Catholic school families to access leading-edge literacy programs to support their children's learning.

Parents of children attending Catholic schools will also benefit by receiving 50 per cent off the cost of literacy assessments.

"We're delighted to welcome MultiLit to the CSPA family and look forward to working with them for the benefit of over 800,000 children attending Catholic schools in Australia," said CSPA chair Andrea Obeyesekere.

"With the recent focus on the literacy standards in Australia's education system, this partnership reiterates the importance of high-quality, research-based literacy programs so that our school children are supported through



From left to right: Andy Russell, MultiLit General Manager of Literacy Services, Andrea Obeyesekere, CSPA Chair, and John O'Brien, CSPA Executive Officer, launch the partnership

their learning journey."

MultiLit General Manager of Literacy Services, Andy Russell, said the partnership was a natural fit, with both organisations dedicated to improving education outcomes for children.

"The CSPA's important work in parent engagement really spoke to us as we also see parents as vital when it comes to helping to improve students'

literacy and overall educational achievement," Russell said.

"We look forward to this partnership benefiting the many children and families who are supported by CSPA."

Chairman honoured with prestigious award



**Emeritus Professor
Kevin Wheldall AM**

MultiLit Chairman and Director, Emeritus Professor Kevin Wheldall AM, has been awarded the 2023 *Australian Journal of Learning Difficulties* Eminent Researcher Award. This prestigious award is given to a researcher that has made a significant contribution to the field of learning and learning difficulties.

Professor Wheldall has had a long history of pioneering research in this field, enjoying a career spanning five decades. He has authored more than 350 academic books, book chapters and journal articles, including as a co-editor of the recently released *Effective Instruction in Reading and Spelling* by MRU Press.

He said he was honoured and delighted to receive the award from the *Australian Journal of Learning Difficulties*. [His acceptance address is available to view here.](#)

"The journal has been close to my heart for many years and so this award is especially sweet," he said.

Professor Wheldall continues to support effective reading instruction for students as Founding Director of the MultiLit Research Unit. The work of this Unit underpins and informs the programs released by MultiLit.

Remote learning trial in APY Lands

The MultiLit Closing the Gap Schools Partnership Initiative is a four-year, Commonwealth-funded program seeking to contribute to the achievement of Target 5 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap – ‘Students achieve their full learning potential’ – by supporting gains in literacy outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

MultiLit has been working alongside school leaders, teachers, and support staff in the most remote schools to help meet this need. There are 42 partnership schools spanning across the country in NSW, Qld, SA, WA and the NT.

Schools in remote areas often act as a central hub on which the whole community leans. While many of these schools have some of the most dedicated and passionate leaders, teachers and support staff, there are significant challenges.

For example, low attendance and lack of regular casual support staff can leave no time for training or implementing high-quality programs such as InitialLit. This makes consistent and effective lesson delivery difficult to achieve.

MultiLit set about developing a short trial to see if we could assist by providing lessons to a class through the MultiLit Literacy Centre. Late last year, we worked with Murputja Anangu School. Over six weeks, one of our tutors delivered InitialLit via satellite lessons to a small cohort of around four students. With much learned along the way, we set out to extend this trial into another of the APY schools, but this time on a larger scale and across a longer period.

The current trial seeks to upskill staff, including teachers and Anangu educators, to model high-quality lessons, provide consistent delivery across a significant period, and ultimately aim to improve student reading growth. We will deliver



whole-class instruction online for 20 weeks before passing back to the local team to continue the progress to the end of the school year. If successful, the trial could demonstrate the suitability and feasibility of delivering lessons this way to the most remote schools.

While there are many challenges to overcome, the Literacy Centre team and the local staff have been very encouraged by the positive start to this trial. During the community consultation phase, Anangu Educator Brenda said it is “a wonderful opportunity for our students and teachers to learn using this technology”. The SA Department of Education, along with the Commonwealth Department of Education, are very supportive and eager to see the results of the second trial.

Reading Pledge

[Five from Five](#) and [Learning Difficulties Australia](#) have collaborated on an evidence-based framework for schools to dramatically reduce the number of children who finish primary school unable to read proficiently and to support struggling readers in secondary school. The Reading Pledge is an updated version of the Primary Reading Pledge (2020) that extends the framework and guidance to secondary schools.

Add your support to the Reading Pledge by using the Reading Pledge badge on your email signature or through social media with the hashtag #readingpledge.



Work with us!

MultiLit is expanding its operations around the country, and we are always looking for people who share our mission to join the team. Available roles are listed at multilit.com/work-with-us, so please check them out and share with your colleagues and networks.

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