



moments

Five from Five makes progress in policy

By Dr Jennifer Buckingham

Two major recent policy developments are the Primary Reading Pledge and the Year 1 Phonics Check. The Primary Reading Pledge is the result of a collaboration between Five from Five (a community education initiative of MultiLit), AUSPELD, and Learning Difficulties Australia. It is a practical framework and a call to action for schools to use evidence-based assessments and interventions to ensure that students learn to read before they finish primary school. An analysis of NAPLAN results revealed that more than 50,000 students start high school each year with low levels of literacy. More than 1300 people have added their names to support the Primary Reading Pledge. To find out more and to add your name to the Pledge, visit fivefromfive.com.au.

The Year 1 Phonics Check has been a key advocacy project for Five from Five since 2016. In 2018, the South Australian government made the Year 1 Phonics Check a mandatory systemic assessment and results have improved each year. This year the federal government launched its online version of the assessment, which is available to all schools. And, after a successful trial in August, the NSW state government announced that the Year 1 Phonics Check would be mandatory in NSW public schools from 2021. This assessment, if coupled with high-quality professional learning, will be a significant step toward making sure that all students are making good progress in decoding in the first few years of school. MultiLit research has found that schools using InitialLit achieve strong results in the Year 1 Phonics Check. For more information, visit multilit.com/wp-content/uploads/InitialLit-Research-Summary.pdf.

Sarah Mitchell MLC
30 November at 14:24 · 🌐
📖📚 Reading is a skill for life that every child needs to master. There is undeniable evidence that the best results come when phonics is explicitly taught. From 2021, every Year 1 student in NSW will sit a Phonics Screening Check with their teacher. The check will help identify gaps in reading ability and provide targeted support to those students who need it most.
Thrilled to see phonics in action at Oatley Public School. Thank you to Debbie, Lauren, Jane, Lachlan and Slavica for taking me to visit the 1M class today.



NSW Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning, the Hon. Sarah Mitchell, watched an InitialLit lesson on a visit to Oatley Public School

New More to Explore resource for Foundation students

Users of our InitialLit Readers Levels 1-9 (Series 1) with Foundation students will be excited by the release of a More to Explore student workbook to accompany this series.

The full-colour, scrapbook-size More to Explore book contains fun activities for reading and writing practice, and to consolidate and extend children's engagement with the InitialLit Readers. This resource can be used alongside the Readers in small groups for additional comprehension work or for homework (with the support of an adult).

Tasks include word building, word matching, sentence completing and story sequencing tasks for further early literacy skill development. Additional supporting worksheets are also available from the MultiLit Members' Area upon purchase of the workbooks.

More to Explore workbooks for InitialLit Readers Levels 1-9 (Series 1) are available for purchase from MultiLit in packs of five.



"It is easy to use, students enjoy completing the activities and it links perfectly with the decodable readers. The activities help to consolidate the children's early literacy skills and it means less preparation for me in organising reading tasks. I love it!"

Amy Downs Tuck,
Foundation Teacher,
Oatley Public School

Meet the Illustrator: Janet Tiitinen

In recent years, MultiLit has published three series of decodable readers, written by our in-house authors. Our partners in this venture have been a team of illustrators helping to bring the books to life. Janet Tiitinen is the longest-standing member of this team, having worked on all three series of readers, as well as our forthcoming range of picture books and the second series of Year 1 readers – both for release in 2021. We sat down with Janet to find out more about her work.

MM: How did you get started illustrating?

JT: I had always been interested in drawing and as a child I drew constantly. My mother used to save scrap paper for me and I loved the challenge of trying to make whatever I drew actually look like what it was supposed to be. Drawing took a back seat as work and motherhood took over, but while we were living overseas a friend gave me my first illustrating work as a monthly cartoon in a children’s magazine and a four-panel cartoon in a newspaper. These jobs lasted for many years, even when we returned to Australia. I found I loved drawing these monthly cartoons even more than my day job and decided to retrain as an illustrator.

MM: I understand you have another connection to literacy – can you tell us about that?

JT: I had been a primary school teacher before retraining as an illustrator, and once I started working from home I missed that connection with children. A friend who is a specialist in children’s learning difficulties asked me to join her tutoring business so now I have the best of both worlds – drawing for children with MultiLit, and helping children with difficulties to learn to read.

MM: How would you describe your style?

JT: My style is simple and straight-forward. I love detail and spend time getting things right. I love to add personality to animals and try to inject humour where possible. I want my art to be fun and enjoyable, with plenty to look at in the pictures.

MM: What do you enjoy about working on projects with MultiLit?

JT: I love the freedom of being able to choose whatever style



of drawing I think would best suit the book. I can choose my own colours and make my own decisions about the ethnicity of the characters and the location of the story. I also love the fact that they don’t apply undue pressure and just leave me to get on with it – except, of course, for the deadline.

MM: Do you have a favourite character or book?

JT: That’s a difficult question. I loved the detail needed for *Owl Cam*, *The Thick Book*, *Dear Albert* and *At the Shops*, but I think my favourites would be *Stop That Chimp* and *Groovy Haircuts* because they are fun.

InitialLit in Canberra Goulburn Catholic Schools

Next year will see the largest simultaneous implementation of InitialLit in any school sector when 24 schools in the Canberra Goulburn Catholic Diocese start teaching the program in Foundation, Year 1 and Year 2. Over 120 teachers, principals and Catholic Schools Office staff participated in two days of training during November and December this year. The schools

chose InitialLit as one of the options for initial reading instruction in Catholic Education Canberra Goulburn’s (CECG) new ‘Catalyst’ project developed with Knowledge Society, which is introducing evidence-based teaching and assessment across all schools.

MultiLit’s Jennifer Buckingham is also involved in a research project led by

the Science of Language and Reading (SOLAR) Lab at La Trobe University along with Professor Pamela Snow, Associate Professor Tanya Serry, Professor Lorraine Hammond, and Associate Professor Kym Simoncini. The research is funded by the Snow Foundation (no relation to Professor Pam Snow) and will investigate growth in teacher knowledge.

Recent advances in reading instruction

By Dr Nicola Bell

Last month, a special issue of the academic journal *The Educational and Developmental Psychologist* was published. This special issue was particularly special because it was edited by two members of the MultiLit Research Unit – Kevin Wheldall and me. As the title of the issue makes clear, *Recent advances in reading instruction* comprises a series of articles by authors invited to write about recent research of relevance to professionals involved in reading instruction.

Not only is reading a key feature of an educational or developmental psychologist's workload, it is also of course relevant to the work of teachers, educationalists and speech pathologists working in schools. As the Science of Reading gains momentum in Australia, more professionals in the field are looking for evidence-based methods of programming, assessing and teaching reading skills to children.

Even so, it was still a surprise to have received such a positive response from readers of the special issue. In fact, the interest has been such that *Recent advances in reading instruction* is currently being prepared for publication as a book. Below is a list of the article titles of articles included in the special issue (and soon, book!):

1. Teaching irregular words: What we know, what we don't know, and where we can go from here – Danielle Colenbrander, Hua-Chen Wang, Tara Arrow and Anne Castles
2. Systematic phonics instruction belongs in evidence-

based reading programs: A response to Bowers – Jennifer Buckingham

3. A national intervention in teaching phonics: A case study from England – Rhona Stainthorp
4. Instructional psychology and teaching reading: Ending the reading wars – Jonathan Solity
5. Teaching reading through Direct Instruction: A role for educational psychologists? – Kerry Hempenstall
6. Early identification and intervention to prevent reading failure: A response to intervention (RTI) initiative – Linda Siegel
7. Researching the efficacy of a reading intervention: An object lesson – Kevin Wheldall, Robyn Wheldall, Nicola Bell and Jennifer Buckingham

The special issue is available online at <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/educational-and-developmental-psychologist/issue/28955FD4D0E2F32702D7268753BC9E61>. If you'd like advice about accessing any of the articles for free, email nicola.bell@multilit.com.



MultiLit enters agreement with OpenLearning for PD delivery



MultiLit has partnered with education technology provider OpenLearning to utilise its learning platform for online delivery of professional development content.

While 2020 saw the successful delivery of MultiLit professional development workshops online via Zoom for the first time, enabling record attendances, a more long-term solution is now required to continue to enrich learning experiences for participants.

The new solution will be scalable, flexible and robust, and able to support both face-to-face workshop formats as well as self-paced eLearning modules. The platform will also underpin MultiLit's ongoing engagement with teachers and school communities.

On the partnership, OpenLearning managing director Cherie Diaz said, "OpenLearning's lifelong learning platform has an established track record in enabling quality teacher professional development. We are proud to partner with such a purpose-driven and research-based organisation as MultiLit. Their commitment to supporting teachers in developing positive teaching and learning environments is impressive and we look forward to seeing their first course go live early next year."

MultiLit co-founder and director Iain Rothwell, said: "Over the many years of developing literacy programs and supporting training courses, MultiLit has accumulated a vast array of content. The challenge now is to access this

rich content, enhance it and distribute it in a structured and secure way to our many thousands of learners. MultiLit's strategic objective is to build a partnership model with schools and in so doing, create communities of practice centred on MultiLit programs. We seek to ensure teachers can remain supported and connected with MultiLit and each other as we embark on the same mission – to ensure every child learns to read. We are confident that OpenLearning's industry-leading solution will enable us to achieve our objectives and continue our growth."

The first courses to be delivered via the OpenLearning platform will be the MultiLit Positive Teaching Workshops 1 and 2 in early 2021, with others to follow over the course of the year.

Announcing the Inaugural Takayuki Fukuda Perpetual Scholarship

In December, MultiLit lost a treasured member of our staff, Takayuki Fukuda (known as Taka) after a brief battle with illness. In honour of what Taka means to his friends and colleagues at MultiLit, the Directors have established the Takayuki Fukuda Perpetual Scholarship. This scholarship will be for the provision of MultiLit tutoring awarded to a deserving child who has a reading deficit as a result of illness or injury.

It is proposed that the first scholarship would be made to a student in Western Australia. The student had a brain tumour which has resulted in hearing loss and vision problems. Although the student is currently at the end of Year 4, they have been recommended for the MiniLit program. The student is estimated to be more than two years behind in reading ability.

We hope that with this scholarship, the gentle, kind spirit of Taka will live on in MultiLit.



Postcard from the US

Our team loves to hear feedback on our programs and products. A recent letter about the InitialLit Readers particularly caught our eye, coming all the way from Texas.

"I am a retired Reading Specialist & Dyslexia Specialist with 35 years' experience now in private practice. My clients include children with multiple challenges. The explicit, systematic, direct instruction programs that work for them do not have charming readers. And I have looked and looked. The InitialLit Readers are the answer to my search. (Thanks to The Reading League for recommending your books. I will adjust my programs to match your sequence.)

How do I love the InitialLit Readers? Let me count the ways. Great sequence. Only eight sounds needed to read first 10 books. Sounds added gradually with much practice before moving on.

By introducing low-frequency consonants after the short vowels, there are more opportunities for practice.

Great that 'ee' and 'ay' are introduced early to avoid confusions. I love the grouping of all the vowel teams that say their name introduced at one level.

Split digraphs (V-C-e in the States) introduced later! Brilliant!

Fantastic, charming artwork ... Perfect for this age group and the teacher! Superb!

Lots of practice at each level ... especially with the Series 2 readers, which my students need.

Humour, humour, humour ... please send my compliments to the authors & illustrators!

Plausible tales that a child can follow. I know how much thought went into creating a plot and crafting each and every sentence. Thanks for all your hard work!

Rare obscure words. Very creative plots with available target words!

Levels 10-16 use just the right amount of target words. Other readers use so many target words that the story sense is destroyed.

The teacher notes on the 'Ready, Set' feature are great. This saves prep time. Love the book introduction on the back cover. Y'all have thought of everything!

If you decide to make a Series 2 for Levels 10-16, I will be your first customer!"

Deanie Allen, Reading Specialist & Dyslexia Specialist, Houston, Texas

[Editor's note: A second series of InitialLit Readers Levels 10-16, for less confident Year 1 students, will be published in mid-2020.]

Share your experience with MultiLit

These days, online reviews make a valuable contribution when consumers are assessing businesses. We know many of you have had wonderful experiences with our Literacy Centres, through our Professional Development Workshops and using our evidence-based teaching and learning programs. If you can spare five minutes, we would love for you to share your thoughts on MultiLit via a Google review to help other teachers and parents find resources that will help them build confident young readers. Simply search for 'MultiLit Pty Ltd' on Google and leave us a five-star rating and your comments on our company listing. We appreciate your support.

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