

Attachment B

Why MULTILIT?

Our strong view is that the MULTILIT (Making Up Lost Time In Literacy) program should be rolled out to all schools in Cape York. MULTILIT was developed by Professor Kevin Wheldall and Doctor Robyn Beaman of the Macquarie University Special Education Centre (MUSEC).

MULTILIT is specifically designed for low-progress readers in Year 2 and above (about seven years upwards) who are reading at a level considerably below (typically two or more years) that expected for their age.¹ The objective of the program is for students to master fluent alphabetic decoding, whatever the reason for their initial failure to do so.

The program has three independently paced components - MULTILIT Word Attack Skills, MULTILIT Sight Words, and MULTILIT Reinforced Reading. It is based on a direct instruction model, with more naturalistic approaches for generalisation also embedded. It is generally delivered in small groups by a qualified instructor or tutor, with three to four weeks' specific MULTILIT training.

Our rationale for recommending MULTILIT above other programs is fourfold:

- It is an effective, intensive program with a long track record of success in a wide variety of settings;
- It has solid foundations in reading and literacy research;
- Both Commonwealth and State Governments have acknowledged its success; and
- It is the most effective solution, given the nature and size of the literacy crisis in Cape York.

This rationale is described in more detail below.

(i) MULTILIT is a highly effective, intensive program with a long track record of success in a wide variety of settings.

MULTILIT has been demonstrated to work in multiple settings, including a remote Indigenous community. The program has delivered substantial improvements in reading ability wherever it has been introduced (Exhibit 6).

¹ There is also a MULTILIT program available specifically for younger students. MINILIT is targeted at Year 2 and below and is based on the same proven methods and techniques.

Exhibit 1

MULTILIT HAS ACHIEVED OUTSTANDING RESULTS

Results	MULTILIT Centre MUSEC	Exodus Foundation Schoolwise Ashfield	St Marys Primary School, Sydney	Coen State School
Improvement in reading accuracy	15 months	16 months	20 months	21.4 months
Improvement in reading comprehension	13 months	12 months	20 months	10.7 months
Improvement in single word recognition	15 months	19 months	19 months	19 months
Improvement in words read correctly per min.	96%	50%	44%	75%

The Exodus Foundation Tutorial Centre in Ashfield provides a strong example of the value of the MULTILIT program. The Centre has been running the Schoolwise Program based on MULTILIT for over 10 years. It serves students who are typically from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds and, on average, three to four years behind their peers in reading literacy. Students on average gain 15-20 months in reading accuracy and comprehension with less than 6 months of instruction.

Similar results were achieved in a trial in Cape York in 2005/6. In conjunction with Cape York Partnerships, MUSEC conducted a 12-month trial of MULTILIT at Coen State School. Initial assessments showed that students were on average 3¼ years behind expected benchmarks in reading accuracy and 3¾ years behind in reading comprehension. A tutorial centre was established at the school (in a separate building) and two MULTILIT instructors flown in for 6 months at a time to deliver the program to two groups of 10 students in Years 4 to 7. The results of the trial were outstanding. Students were given 17-18 weeks of instruction and on average, gained 21.4 months in reading accuracy, a 19 month increase in word recognition and a 10.7 month increase in reading comprehension, after only one year. They could also correctly read 75% more words per minute. A more detailed analysis of the results in Coen are outlined in Appendix C of this paper.

While the immediate effects on reading ability are impressive, MULTILIT can also produce significant flow-on effects from improved literacy levels. For example more than 98% of students involved in the MULTILIT program at the Gladstone Tutorial Centre go on to complete Year 10 or above. Forty-six percent gain full-time employment or apprenticeships and 52 percent are enrolled in senior school or school-based apprenticeship programs. Similarly, follow-up surveys of the Schoolwise program three years after completion show that 90% of students remain in mainstream

schooling, 56% plan to undertake further study at TAFE and 33% percent intend to go to university.

(ii) MULTILIT has solid foundations in literacy and reading research.

MULTILIT is a flexible, balanced and integrated program. It covers all five areas - phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension - identified by the National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (Australia) and the National Reading Panel (US) as essential for effective reading instruction.

- *Phonemic awareness:* the ability to hear and manipulate the sounds in oral language. Phonemic awareness is typically taught to young students prior to formal reading instruction. Given the target age of students participating in MULTILIT programs (Year 2 and above), instruction in phonemic awareness is provided alongside instruction in the alphabetic principle within the MULTILIT Word Attack Skills program;
- *Phonics:* the relationships between letters and sounds. The cornerstone of the approach is the MULTILIT Word Attack Skills program, an explicit, systematic direct instruction program predicated on synthetic phonics;
- *Fluency:* the ability to read quickly and naturally, recognise words automatically and group words quickly. Reading fluency is an essential component of the Word Attack Skills program. Similarly, the MULTILIT Sight Words program emphasises automatic sight word recognition by requiring responses to each sight word flash card within 2 seconds. Finally, within the MULTILIT Reinforced Reading program, based on the Pause, Prompt and Praise (PPP) strategy, there is a specific version of the technique targeting reading fluency with connected text;
- *Vocabulary knowledge:* new words and what they mean. The introduction of new words and what they mean is a focus within the Pause, Prompt and Praise procedures within the Reinforced Reading program. Prior to the student commencing to read (fresh) text each day, the tutor identifies and discusses new words that will be coming up in the text passage about to be read; and
- *Text comprehension:* understanding what is being read and developing higher-order thinking skills. Text comprehension is specifically addressed within the Reinforced Reading program, both in the main PPP strategy and in what is known as PPP-C. In the main PPP strategy, students are initially required to recall features of the text passage read the previous day prior to continuing to read from where they left off. At the end of each session students are asked questions about the passage they have just read to demonstrate their understanding. In PPP-C, which specifically targets comprehension, students read text at recreational level (95% plus accuracy) and are required to answer 5W+H questions (who, why, where, what, when, how) at regular intervals. This has been demonstrated to be a very powerful procedure for improving overall reading comprehension.

MULTILIT is based on the well supported 'simple view of reading', which regards oral comprehension and decoding as independent skills, the product of which is reading comprehension. It can therefore be integrated with programs aimed at oral reading competency. In other instances, standard SRA packages have also been used to support and develop spelling and comprehension skills.

MULTILIT uses direct instruction methods with proven effectiveness. The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) recently conducted a large-scale experiment on the use of direct instructional methods for Years 4-6 students with literacy and numeracy difficulties. The success of this experiment supports the general MULTILIT approach for low-progress students.

The whole MULTILIT approach is evidence-based and data driven (i.e., teaching is based on the assessed needs of individual students).

(iii) Commonwealth and State Governments acknowledge the effectiveness of the MULTILIT program.

In October 2006, Education Queensland awarded the Exodus Tutorial Centre in Gladstone the Award for Excellence in the Middle Phase of Learning. The Centre delivers intensive literacy instruction based on MULTILIT to students at risk of disengaging from the education system. Since its establishment in 2001, it has helped 173 students from 15 cluster schools to achieve increases in reading age of up to 4.75 years.

In October 2002, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training released *Boys, Getting it Right*, the report from its Inquiry into the Education of Boys. The report endorsed MULTILIT and the work of the MUSEC team: 'The knowledge and practical instructional techniques developed in MULTILIT by the researchers at Macquarie University should inform and enhance the initial and remedial literacy instruction throughout Australia and form the core of remedial reading programs in primary and high schools.' (5.62 p. 114)

(iv) MULTILIT is the most effective solution, given the size and nature of the literacy crisis in Cape York

A range of literacy programs and initiatives are available. The potential solutions evaluated for Cape York include the National Accelerated Literacy Program (NALP) (or Scaffolding Literacy), Reading Recovery, Yachad Accelerated Learning Project (YALP), University of Queensland Early Literacy Fundamentals (ELF), and UQ Phonological Awareness for Literacy (PAL). Each of these has its merits. However, MULTILIT stands out as an evidence-based, remedial program, able to be implemented on a large scale quickly and with a track record of results.

While evidential support for education program results is generally low (see Appendix B), we summarise our evaluation of alternative programs as follows:

- **Reading Recovery** was developed in the 1970s, has accumulated evidence on its effectiveness and is already an official Education Queensland program. However, its focus is mainly on reading comprehension rather than alphabetic

decoding, and its mode of delivery (one-on-one by a teacher with up to a year's training in the program) is expensive and not well suited to the scale or urgency of the problem in Cape York. It is not a solution for middle school and it is unclear whether it would be effective as a remedial program. Reading Recovery is promoted as a preventative program to get 'at-risk' readers back on track early rather than to compensate for a two- to four-year deficit in reading ability.

- **UQ-ELF** focuses explicitly on phonological awareness and motor skills, and can be delivered in groups or in class. An implementation at Boondall State School, which won a best practice prize from Education Queensland in 2006, has had a dramatic effect on year 3 and later assessment results. However the program focus is early primary (i.e., Prep and Year 1) rather than middle school. UQ-ELF could be a useful element of a longer-term strategy for the early years of schooling. Trials are planned for two Cape York schools in 2007.
- **UQ-PAL** is focused on middle school students and achieves significant improvements in literacy (e.g., 24-month gains in reading accuracy and 44 month gains in reading comprehension) from short, targeted interventions (20 hours over 10 weeks). Instructors require as little as one day's training. However, the program focuses exclusively on phonological awareness, a prerequisite for successful reading, rather than reading itself. While phonological awareness may be a problem for some Indigenous students in Cape York, the target group is much larger than would be expected if this were their major cause of literacy difficulties.
- **Yachad Accelerated Learning Project** is a \$3 million, three-year intervention program aimed at raising the academic achievements of students in remote locations, particularly low achieving Indigenous children. It is based on a 'whole of community' education approach developed by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel. The program is currently running in five sites: Alice Springs (NT), Aurukun (Qld), Halls Creek (WA), North Adelaide (SA) and Shepparton (Vic). The program appears to have had some success in improving literacy and numeracy levels, but the critical literature is limited and the program has not been implemented at the secondary school level.
- **National Accelerated Literacy Program / (Formerly Scaffolding Literacy)** aims to accelerate reading. NALP can be used from Prep to Year 12, is integrated into the curriculum, and is delivered by teachers in the classroom. It is funded by DEST and has been used in Qld, SA and WA. NALP will be rolled out to 100 schools in the Northern Territory by 2008. The program operates at the level of meaning and assumes the presence of basic alphabetic decoding skills (i.e., the skills that MULTILIT develops). It also depends on a fairly comprehensive training program for teachers, who have to be willing and able to explicitly model and explain what they want students to do. The average reading gain of 1.6 years per year of instruction is slightly lower than that for MULTILIT. NALP lends itself to the teaching of higher order literacy skills and may be useful in future for professional development for Cape York teachers. However it does not offer a literacy solution in the short term.