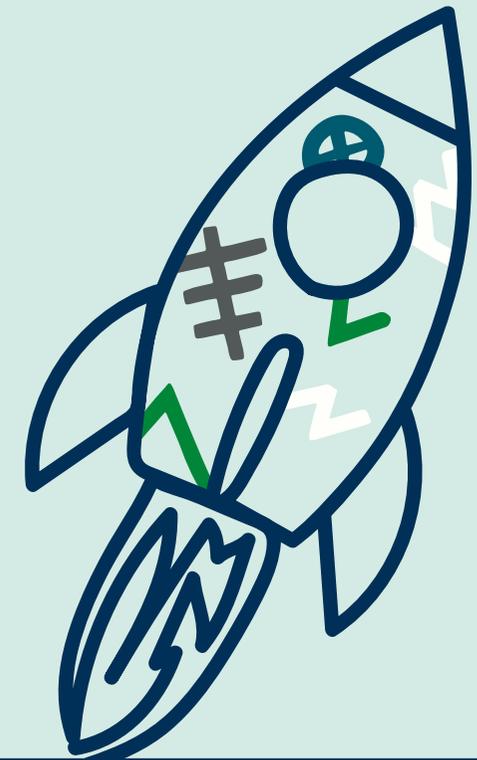


Miles State School chooses
Fountas & Pinnell Leveled Literacy
Intervention to improve the
literacy of students in small groups

Customer story



Miles State School is an independent public school, educating students from the Queensland town of Miles and surrounding rural areas. Close to 340 kilometres west of Brisbane, the region is home to farming and mining industries.

School principal Steve Bennett supervises a school of 225 students enrolled from Prep to Year 6, and 30 staff. Bennett has been at the school for two and a half years and recognises that one of the challenges of staff at the school is that one-on-one intervention for every student is difficult.

“The opinion of many of my staff,” says Bennett, “is that the challenge is we can’t get to everyone.”

Choosing small-group intervention

Miles State School uses Fountas & Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) to help struggling readers in intensive, small group settings. The goal of LLI is to lift the literacy achievement of students who are not achieving grade-level expectations in reading.

Miles uses diagnostic testing to identify children that are reading below grade level. Those children are then allocated to LLI groups of up to four children. Each group meets four days a week for an hour a day.

“I guess the big thing to acknowledge here is the amount of time that we pump into it,” says Bennett.

“It’s got to be the priority if we’re using such a resource.”

“ The children who weren’t meeting our school-based benchmarks were then considered eligible for LLI. ”

– **Steven Bennett, Principal,**
Miles State School



The early days of implementation

Staff from Miles were at a professional development session in Brisbane when they discovered the LLI program. They subsequently bought a system. Teacher Aide Toni Presnell also recalls staff travelling interstate to see the system in action.

“We actually went to Melbourne to see a school there and see how it operated and talk to them about how effective it was,” says Presnell. “They loved it, they thought it was great and they were all big fans of it.”

After they bought the systems for the school, Presnell remembers that there were some initial concerns about adopting a system that was developed in America.

“When we first started I was a little bit concerned because it was very Americanised and I thought some of the spelling was not correct,” says Presnell. “I actually found that’s probably a good thing because children see this everywhere and they can actually talk about the incorrect spelling. It’s just an extra learning tool.”

“ I just think the program is wonderful. It’s probably one of the best programs I’ve ever seen used with children with reading and the results talk for themselves. ”

– **Toni Presnell, Teacher Aide**
Miles State School

Looking back and looking forward

Before the LLI program and the small group intervention, Presnell used different methods.

“So before we had LLI, I probably used to support readers as well as a teacher aide, probably one-on-one and probably just by listening to them read and helping them,” says Presnell. “But the very scripted Fountas & Pinnell program is much easier.”

When it comes to literacy outcomes, Presnell is in no doubt about the effect on individual students.

“I have children that, in my head, I think would’ve been some of the children that could have left Year 6 without really being able to functionally read properly,” says Presnell. “But with students on LLI, I don’t see that happen. Because LLI has to be grouped. When you start the groups they have to be very like students... For those students that are picked up that are only slightly below, well there is huge improvement and you can still see it now, once they’re off it, that they are progressing really, really well. For students that were struggling to start with, they improve bucket loads as well.”

Bennett credits the trust of staff as one of the main impacts on the effectiveness of the program. “I would say one of the fundamental drivers behind this is the belief of the staff in the program,” says Bennett, “and that flows on into the child’s disposition to it as well.”

“ It certainly is a program that we can provide evidence as to being able to move children and over a long and sustained time. ”

– **Steven Bennett, Principal**
Miles State School

Showcasing the results

Schools in the area have been curious about the use of LLI at Miles State School.

“Every time we meet for a cluster meeting, which is four times a year, one a term, the host school highlights some of their work,” says Bennett. “I know that that has happened on a number of occasions and we used LLI in the past. I know that the other schools have adopted the program, and not necessarily run it the way we do, but I’d like to think that they too were seeing the benefits.”

Presnell remembers other schools observing the use of LLI at Miles.

“A lot of other schools came and had a look,” says Presnell. “We used to have some principals and teachers from other schools coming in and watching how we were doing it and most of them seemed pretty impressed. I don’t know that until you actually try and use it with your students you really realise how good it is. To me, it’s the best thing I’ve ever done with children with reading.”

Outcomes are a driving factor for the staff at Miles but Bennett says the program had support even before the outcomes were noticed.

“I think the outcomes have certainly added weight to the belief,” says Bennett, “but I think that belief came initially from the commonsensical approach and how it really explicitly align with their teaching styles, to be honest.”

“ The data shows that these kids improve huge amounts and more than the general population of the school does if they’re on LLI. ”

– **Toni Presnell, Teacher Aide**
Miles State School

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