

Training in Australia

Information sessions and training workshops are available for education and health professionals by our team of Speech Pathologists and Occupational Therapists. These can be tailored to address the needs of your school or district.

Please contact Elizabeth Savina or Heather Allison to discuss quotes and dates.

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elf Early Literacy Foundations

support programme



THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

Early Literacy Foundations

SCREENING AND EARLY INTERVENTION

GRADES 1 AND 2
6-8 YEARS

Early Literacy Foundations (ELF)

The ELF programme is an early literacy intervention, aimed at students in their first two years of formal schooling. Students who experience difficulties in the area of listening, reading or spelling also tend to struggle with motor, sensory and perceptual skills. This led to the development of a holistic intervention approach which focuses on two key areas.

1. Phonological awareness (and its application in reading and spelling)
2. Motor and sensory skills necessary for maintaining attention, sitting upright and handwriting.

The program assists teachers to detect struggling students at a very early stage in order to provide timely and specific assistance.

The screening process

A small group screening tool for all students is included, to be done either in the second semester of their first year of schooling, or the first semester of their second year. The ELF Screening Tool covers the following

- Phonological matching task
- Developmental and non-word spelling
- Writing, cutting and visual tasks
- Gross-motor tasks

In addition to identifying children who are overtly struggling with literacy, it is designed to identify those children who appear to be managing, but are using unsustainable strategies to compensate for their lack of underlying skills.

Delivery of the Learning Support Program

What? There are 12 themed sessions which incorporate activities addressing the two key areas of phonological awareness and sensory – motor skills. Sessions are ordered to gradually increase tone and stability through the trunk, shoulders, and arms so that by the end of the session, the children are most able to perform the complex fine movements required for handwriting.

How? Each of the sessions are designed to be delivered to small groups (up to six students). Session maps and detailed instructions for each activity are provided as well as all worksheets. Extra teaching notes for all goals are provided for teachers to assist students who have particular difficulties with certain skills.

How Long? Allow at least 1 hour for each group session/week. Some schools may choose to do this as two 1/2 hour – 45 min sessions/week.

Evidence-based and proven in practice

The ELF program was devised as a collaboration between Speech Pathology and Occupational Therapy in the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences at The University of Queensland, Australia. It was trialed in Brisbane schools from 1999 to 2002. Based on the results of these trials, and with a large body of supporting research findings, the ELF Support Program was devised as a self-contained package which could be implemented by specialist teachers to groups of students. Research is currently being conducted on the sensitivity and specificity of the Screening Tool, and on outcomes of the Learning Support Program.

ELF helps schools receive state and national recognition

Blackwater North State School, in Central Queensland, received a Highly Commended Award in the 2006 National Literacy and Numeracy Excellence in Australian School Awards. After implementing ELF, Blackwater North nearly halved the percentage of students identified as requiring extra intervention for reading in the Year 2 net with 51.9% in 2002 falling to 26.8% in 2004. This was further lowered to 19.6% - representing a 32.3% improvement over the 2002-2005 period.

Boondall State School, a community with 26 language groups, began implementing ELF in 2003. Students who participated in ELF in year 1 similarly showed sustained improvement in their literacy scores in Year 3, with only 3% of this cohort in the bottom 15% of the state, as compared to 21% in previous years. These results lead to the school winning Education Queensland's 2006 Showcase Award in the Early Phase of Learning category.

Review

"I am a learning support teacher... We used the ELF program to screen all of our Year 2 students at the beginning of this year ... This program with solid classroom teaching has achieved amazing results. The use of body movements with explicit teaching of sounds and blending and gross motor work has been loved and appreciated by the students and myself. We have been blown away by this program's results!"

- *Natalie Arnel*
(Learning Support Teacher)