

# Accelerated Literacy: Opening new worlds







# introduction

Imagine seeing a 16-year-old boy struggling to read a year one book about a fox in a box – his head down, hands over his face, mumbling apologies.

Unfortunately this is seen too often in schools with a high proportion of students with low literacy skills. Through Accelerated Literacy this is becoming a thing of the past.

Literacy is an essential skill for life success – it allows people to navigate the world and shape their future.

Yet there are many students, particularly those from remote regions of Australia, who fail to learn even the most basic reading and writing skills.

Many of these students fail because they have not learnt two key things - how to be learners and how reading works. These are skills that need to be taught.

Accelerated Literacy offers a solution for many students who would otherwise remain illiterate.

# Accelerated Literacy – a unique teaching method

Accelerated Literacy is a highly effective literacy program designed to raise students' literacy to age appropriate levels in the shortest possible time.

The program goes beyond teaching the 'basics' of reading to teaching the complex literacy skills students need to participate in a literate society at the highest level.

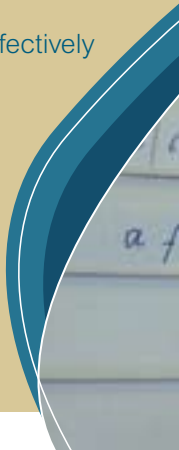


It achieves this by:

- » using fluent reading of high quality children's literature to teach the ground rules of literacy that we sometimes assume all students understand but need to be taught for students to be successful at school and
- » building student confidence and sense of achievement through regular classroom routines, which teach students to use and understand the complex language associated with success in school.

This teaching approach varies from traditional teaching methods. Teachers develop the new skills to teach Accelerated Literacy successfully through extensive training and support including:

- » structured training on how to teach Accelerated Literacy effectively
- » individual mentoring in the early stages of teaching
- » support materials to assist professional development, and
- » assessment procedures which allow teachers to refine their teaching and track individual student progress.



## Accelerated Literacy helps students be successful learners



Students of all ages, backgrounds and abilities respond to Accelerated Literacy teaching because it:

- » respects the individual student's knowledge and experiences while teaching the underlying principles and skills necessary for being successful at reading and writing
- » engages students by using age-appropriate books which encourage their interest in reading
- » positions every student as a successful learner
- » provides long-term consistency through intensive study on one text, and
- » provides familiar structure to lessons, so students know what to expect and feel successful participating.

The ability to read fluently in English may assist Indigenous students in reading songs and books written in traditional Indigenous language. Learning to use literacy skills can empower students in their Indigenous culture as well as providing the tools to succeed in the academic schooling context.

# How is Accelerated Literacy taught?

Accelerated Literacy is based on the premise that you can't teach complex literacy skills from simple texts and that it is possible to teach students with low literacy skills on much more complex texts than they can read on their own.

Key features of the teaching method are that teachers use age-appropriate texts and the entire class works on the same text over an extended period.

**The teaching style follows a sequence of activities.**

## 1. Literate Orientation

Here the teacher and students begin the process of building common knowledge and shared understanding about the text they are studying. This common knowledge helps students understand the meaning of the text, the writing techniques the author uses to make this meaning and the effect these techniques have on readers.

For further information about the Accelerated Literacy teaching sequence visit [www.nalp.edu.au](http://www.nalp.edu.au)

## 2. Transformation

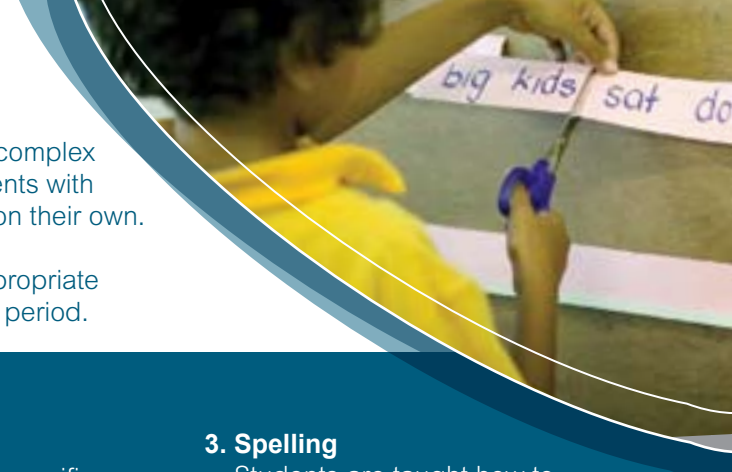
This stage focuses on specific passages within the story. The passage is divided into chunks of meaning, and eventually into words, allowing teachers and students to discuss the choice of words and manipulate them. This creates learning opportunities ranging from word recognition games to analytical discussion about how the writer's language choice affects readers. Common knowledge about the text is considerable at this time and enriched by student's as well as teachers' contributions.

## 3. Spelling

Students are taught how to decode and spell by learning word and sound patterning. They are also taught some of the rules and challenges posed by spelling correctly.

## 4. Writing

The common knowledge built around the text includes understanding the techniques authors use to write a narrative story. In this stage, students learn to use these techniques in their own writing.





## Accelerated Literacy is delivering results

A feature of Accelerated Literacy is the ability to track and report individual student progress.

Student progress is measured in reading year levels where 1.0 is the expected improvement rate per year for most mainstream students.

Positive results are being delivered.

- » In 2005, 526 students had pre and post program assessments. The average progress rate was 1.67 reading year levels during the school year.
- » In 2006, 914 students had pre and post program assessments, and the average progress rate was 1.74 reading year levels.

Evidence suggests that Accelerated Literacy can also contribute to a dramatic increase in students' overall schooling performance due to their improved literacy skills.

With successes in reading and writing, students feel more confident, have a positive outlook for the future and are more likely to attend and participate in school.



# About the National Accelerated Literacy Program

The National Accelerated Literacy Program was established to help tackle low literacy levels in remote communities around Australia – particularly Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory.

Featuring the Accelerated Literacy teaching method, the program aims to help 10,000 NT students improve their literacy levels by the end of 2008.

The program is underpinned by extensive research and development activities conducted by Charles Darwin University. The research continuously investigates and refines the core elements of the program to improve its delivery whilst taking into account challenges related to rapid expansion of the program, providing support to remote locations and responding to high staff turnover.

The program is jointly funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training and the Northern Territory Government Department of Employment, Education and Training and supported by Charles Darwin University.

The Department of Employment, Education and Training manages the implementation of the program, providing high level support and extensive professional learning for teachers and other educators in the school. Charles Darwin University provides resource materials and conducts the evaluation and ongoing research and development activities of the program.



## Program objectives

By the end of 2008, the program aims to:

- » be successfully implemented in 100 NT schools, 90 per cent of which will be remote
- » provide targeted support to 10,000 NT students
- » train 700 NT teachers in AL methodology and a further 370 as in-school coordinators
- » develop a range of courses and course materials for teacher support
- » develop 60 teacher resource packages and
- » monitor and report student progress data.

The program provides services for other states including targeted support for:

- » 1469 students in 21 remote area schools in Western Australia
- » 340 students at Shalom College in Central Queensland
- » 568 students in 12 schools in South Australia.



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Materials are produced under agreements between DEST and other education providers in relation to the National Accelerated Literacy Program.

These education providers are:

- » Department of Employment, Education and Training, Northern Territory;
- » Western Australia Aboriginal Independent Community Schools;
- » Department of Education and Children's Services, South Australia;
- » Shalom Christian College, Queensland; and
- » Catholic Education office of Western Australia.

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National Accelerated Literacy Program