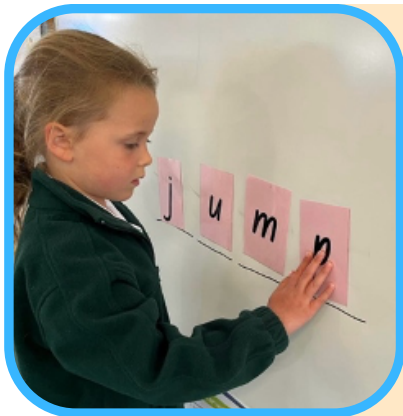


‘The key to reading success for EVERY student!’

Allambie Heights Public School, March 2023



We spoke to Angela Helsloot, who for the last ten years has been Principal at Allambie Heights Public School, a Sounds-Write Training School, about the impact of introducing Sounds-Write.



- School: **Allambie Heights Public School**
- Location: **Sydney, Australia**
- Pupils on roll: **445**
- Age range: **5-12**
- English as a second language: **17%**

Why did you choose Sounds-Write?

In 2017 the leadership team evaluated current practice and reviewed various programs that would enhance the teaching of reading. We opted for Sounds-Write as it used explicit, guided instruction, and allowed time in our morning sessions to focus on phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension.

How did you find the training and support provided by Sounds-Write?

We have found the investment in face-to-face and online courses invaluable, and Sounds-Write is an extremely important aspect of our school's learning culture. Staff's knowledge and experience of how children learn to read was mixed, and Sounds-Write training gave us a level playing field to develop this understanding whilst providing explicit, systematic and evidence-based teaching to all students in all classrooms.

What has been the reaction from children and parents?

The predictability of the lessons and the scripts allows students and staff to know what to expect in each daily session. We run parent and carer information sessions at the start of each year for our Kindergarten cohort where we demonstrate lessons so they can see why we teach reading the way we do. The shift from sight words was challenging for some of our parents and carers, and this is an ongoing problem for schools around us as they shift their practice to match the science of reading. Our community has seen the success of the program over the years and the long-term benefits to reading, writing and spelling that have come with our pedagogical change.

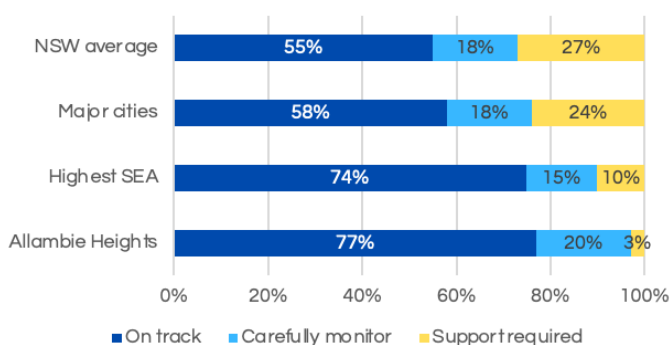
What impact has Sounds-Write had on pupil progress?

The growth in our students has been amazing. We no longer see that lag that comes with cognitive overload. We focus on decodable texts for guided, independent and home reading, and when we move away from decodable readers, the skills developed are much deeper. This has allowed our students to focus on the deep comprehension of what they are reading. In writing, our students are more willing to have a go with their spelling and the quality of what they are writing continues to improve as their confidence in their ability grows. While progress might be slower than what we were seeing prior to our shift to Sounds-Write, the skills are far more complex and lead to stronger literacy for students of all abilities.

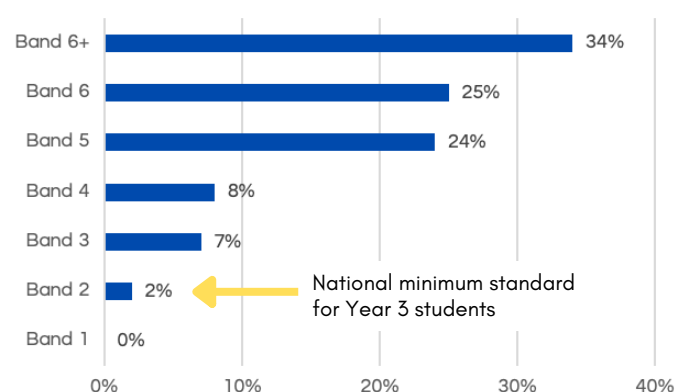
The results speak for themselves. In our last Year 1 Phonics Screening, our results were considerably above the New South Wales and Major cities averages, and also above the average for schools with similar socio-educational advantage (SEA). But what sets us apart is that very few students scored in the 'support required' range, only 3% compared to 10% in similar schools.

Equally impressive is that 98% of our Year 3 students were above the national minimum standard for reading in the 2022 NAPLAN results, with the other 2% being at standard. In fact, 83% of our Year 3 students were above the national minimum standard for reading for Year 5!

Year 1 Phonics Screening 2022



Year 3 NAPLAN Reading 2022



How do teachers feel about the programme?

Just as with our parents and carers, some staff have taken time to really appreciate the shift. We are now in our sixth year of implementation, and we have really seen the benefits for all students who have been exposed to this evidence-based approach from the start of Kindergarten. All staff now understand that by using Sounds-Write we are teaching an evidence-based approach that has benefits and positive outcomes for all learners in our classrooms. Staff share their excitement when a child 'clicks' and shows that it's all coming together. We celebrate these milestones because we know that should we have not changed our practice, these students would not be reaching their reading potential.

What would you say to other schools about the Sounds-Write programme?

As a Sounds-Write Training School, we welcome any schools interested in Sounds-Write to come and see us in action. What they see and hear about the simplicity of the implementation of the program will blow them away... short, sharp, simple and explicit... the key to reading success for EVERY student!

