InitiaLit–1
Parent/Carer information

MultiLit

whole-class instruction in literacy

What is InitiaLit–1?

InitiaLit–1 is a literacy program for all children in their second year of school (Year 1). It has been developed by MultiLit, a research-based initiative of Macquarie University.

What does InitiaLit–1 do?

InitiaLit–1 teaches children how to read and spell through daily lessons, using research-based teaching methods. It also uses a range of engaging storybooks to develop children's vocabulary and oral language.

How does InitiaLit–1 teach reading and writing?

InitiaLit–1 teaches children that words are made up of sounds and that those sounds are represented by letters. Unlike learning to talk, which children do without formal instruction, children need to be directly taught the relationship between sounds and letters. In InitiaLit–1 children will build upon the knowledge of the alphabetic code that they gained in their first year of schooling (Foundation). They will learn that a letter or letters can make different sounds, and that two or three letters together can make a sound. They will also learn key terminology such as 'vowel', 'syllable', 'phoneme', 'grapheme', and 'digraph'.

An InitiaLit lesson will take place at least four times a week. The first 25 minutes are spent on the mat where the children are introduced to new letters and sounds or a grammatical concept in a set order. They will do a number of targeted activities to practise reading and spelling words with the new sound during this whole-class session. After the lesson on the mat, the teacher will work with different groups of children to help them read words, sentences and stories using all the sounds and letters they have been taught. While the teacher is working with a group, the rest of the class will be doing an activity to consolidate what they have been learning. This may be a spelling worksheet, a game to practise their tricky words (words with irregular spelling patterns that cannot be sounded out letter by letter), or more practice using an InitiaLit reader. As your child's reading becomes more confident, they will be able to read a variety of texts.

All children will benefit from the structured nature of the program, regardless of how many or how few skills they bring to the task.

How does InitiaLit–1 develop oral language and vocabulary?

Children will enjoy a quality storybook over four teaching sessions. They will learn three new vocabulary words per book and do fun activities to help them understand when and how to use those words. They will also discuss the themes surrounding the book and think about how the story relates to their own world. These sessions will provide opportunities for children to use new words, express their thoughts clearly writing full sentences, improve their listening comprehension and develop a love of literature. Specifically teaching children new words has a very positive impact on later reading comprehension. The books will also be linked to a writing task.

How will my child be assessed in InitiaLit–1?

There will be regular opportunities to assess your child's developing reading and spelling skills. Progress monitoring, Stop and Checks and Cumulative Reviews are built into the program. Children's reading progress relates to their ability to lift words off the page both accurately and fluently. Reading comprehension is assessed more informally during time spent in reading groups.

How can I help with my child's reading and spelling at home?

Read a storybook each day to your child and discuss the story, pointing out any new words to enrich their vocabulary. Spend time teaching your child nursery rhymes, songs and poems. Play language games. Talk about letters and sounds in the environment. Help your child learn to spell the target words which relate to the sounds they are learning. Practise reading and spelling tricky words. A list of words is found at the back of the Home Reading Diary.

When readers are sent home, make sure that you spend time listening to your child read, providing support to help them apply their knowledge about sounds and letters to the text. Talk about what they are reading, checking for comprehension.

Find out more
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