

# **To Explore Initiatives Used in Schools to Raise the Standard of Comprehension Skills of New English Language Learners**

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“The more you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn,  
the more places you’ll go.”

- Dr Seuss “I Can Read With My Eyes Shut.”

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## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements .....	3
Purpose .....	3
Background .....	3
Current Research .....	3
Making Meaning Using Comprehension .....	5
A Study of Strategies Required .....	6
Programmes Undertaken.....	7
Conclusion.....	20
Bibliography.....	22

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## Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate ways of teaching Reading Comprehension Strategies to New English Language Learners.

## Background

Over a period of seven years the dynamics of students within our school changed rapidly with over 160 new English Language Learners enrolling. For many of these students they had come from an environment where lessons were taken in English. However, beyond the classroom English was rarely spoken.

By the end of 2008 we had 78 new English language learners, the majority were able to decode at their chronological age and beyond. Difficulties arose with the discrepancy between their ability to decode text and a lack of understanding of the text content. As a staff we researched programmes that we felt would assist our students to develop comprehension strategies.

In this study I will share two methods we use to teach reading comprehension strategies that have proven to be very successful.

## Current Research

Research was carried out to establish the steps needed to assist students and teachers to fully understand steps that needed to be taught to develop sound comprehension skills for all students.

### **A Definition of Reading Comprehension:**

Dr Kate Cain of Lancaster University UK presented her research at the International Reading Comprehension Symposium held at the University of Canterbury in 2012. She defined reading comprehension as:

- An integrative process: information from different sentences is combined
- A constructive process: explicit information in a sentence or sentences is supplemented by world knowledge stored in long-term memory.
- Is dependent on context: interpretation (of words, phrases and actions) does not occur in isolation

Dr Cain reinforced the belief that word reading is not enough for good understanding. She stated, "Comprehension is supported by a range of language and cognitive skills and knowledge bases, including vocabulary, general knowledge, and working memory, and several higher-level language skills that support the construction of the representation of a text's meaning, namely integration and inference, knowledge and use of reading strategies, and narrative skills."

"Learning to read is not an end in itself. It is a skill that opens doors and provides opportunities throughout one's lifetime. Successful comprehension of written text enables the reader to acquire and apply new knowledge, to experience other (fictional) worlds, to communicate successfully, and to attain academic success".

Reading is a complex activity (Huey 1968) stated. "To completely analyse what we do when we read would almost be the acme of the psychologist's achievements, for it would be to describe very many of the most intricate workings of the human mind".

Dr Cain's research showed that about 10% of young readers acquire age appropriate word reading skills but do not develop commensurate reading comprehension ability. Studies show that children with poor reading comprehension have difficulties with the skills needed to construct the meaning based representation of a text. Interestingly these difficulties do not relate only to visually presented text, they are linked to listening comprehension problems. Published studies show that instruction in text processing skills will alleviate poor comprehenders' difficulties.

Dr Cain's research shows that the foundation skills for word reading begin prior to the teaching of reading. Similarly reading comprehension draws on skills and knowledge that develop prior to learning to read. Pre-schoolers understand spoken and television stories. Children under 3 are able to follow a series of events in a favourite story book and know if these are changed. Through stories and making sense of every day events an understanding of narrative develops.

(This is a reason why we encourage our families to read and tell stories to their children in both their first language and where possible in English by doing this they sow the seeds of future comprehension skills).

In summarising Dr Cain explained that successful comprehenders must engage in meaning making processes in addition to word identification and sentence processing. Students must make links between the meanings of different sentences and fill in the missing details, often by making inferences. Skilled comprehenders monitor as they go, asking themselves if the

text makes sense. They use the knowledge of text structure to guide the construction of the representation of the text's meaning.

### **Professor John Everatt (University of Canterbury)**

Professor John Everatt also presented his research at the International Reading Comprehension Symposium. This presentation was based on reading deficits for bilingual learners. The main discussion was on dyslexia and the reading at word level. Dyslexia it was explained is when accurate and fluent word reading and/ or spelling develops very incompletely or with great difficulty. The most likely cause is a phonological processing deficit which are seen as leading to problems in basic word level literacy acquisition via poor letter-sound decoding.

If you are a slow decoder or inaccurate this will affect your understanding of the text.

Reading comprehension involves:

- Word recognition
- Reading comprehension
- Linguistic comprehension (being able to understand verbal language).

For dyslexic adults if given longer they will score the same as non-dyslexics in comprehension. If asked for fine detail they will score well below, however if asked for the general gist they will score the same as non-dyslexics.

## **Making Meaning Using Comprehension**

To fully understand text our students needed strategies that went well beyond the understanding of the vocabulary. They needed to be able to draw on their own knowledge, experiences and to develop inference skills e.g.

“Sue was riding her scooter to school.

She tripped and hit a sharp rock.

Her mother took her to the hospital.”

To fully understand this text the reader must understand the meaning of the individual words and combine them into sentences. A skilled reader, intending to gain meaning will go beyond the surface level of what is written. They construct the text's meaning by relating the sentences. They see the link between the sentences with the pronoun “she” referring back to Sue in the first sentence. An inference must be gathered that Sue injured herself and as a result was taken to hospital. If the second sentence had read:

She was gasping for air.

The reader might infer that Sue was experiencing an asthma attack and required medical help.

For New English Language learners traditions and cultural differences may also provide comprehension difficulties.eg

John was eating an apple and his tooth fell out.

He put it under his pillow.

In the night the fairies came.

To a New Zealand born student they would fully understand that it was the tooth put under the pillow and not the apple. They would also have an awareness that the fairies would remove the tooth and leave a coin for the child. If however you lose a tooth in the Philippines a child may throw their tooth over the roof in the hope that a mouse would bring a sharper and stronger permanent tooth, as strong and sharp as the teeth of a mouse.

## A Study of Strategies Required

“Comprehension strategies are specific, learned procedures that foster active, competent, self-regulated, and intentional reading.” – Trabasso and Bouchard, 2002.

- **Making Connections:**  
Here the teacher may model examples and prompt the students to make links from their own experiences. From here they may be encouraged to predict, and build their own understanding as they read.
- **Forming and testing hypothesis about texts:**  
This will be initiated prior to reading the text. It may include discussion around the title, the cover, opening section and illustrations. The development of strong oral language is an off shoot of this.
- **Questioning:**  
This will help the reader to have a purpose in reading. By asking questions the reader is able to pick up ideas within the text and to gain focus or purpose in reading.
- **Visualising or gaining a mental image:**  
Research has shown that creating an image in the memory will help the reader to use the information at a later time.
- **Inferring:**  
This is where the reader is taught to “read between the lines” to make predictions, be prepared to review these, to understand underlying themes, to make critical judgements and to formulate their own final opinions.
- **Seeking clarification or purpose for the text:**  
To identify the ideas behind the text, what the author is setting out to tell us, why the author wrote this text.
- **Identifying and summarising main ideas:**  
This involves finding the main ideas in the text, taking the information and summarising it into their own words.

- Analysing and synthesising:  
This relates directly to the students prior experiences. It is a time when the reader takes apart the text, thinks about it based upon their own experiences re configures it and makes it their own.
- Evaluating ideas and making it the readers:  
To reach this stage a student needs to make generalisations from a text they fully understand. From here they may change their thoughts on an issue, may follow it up to further investigate an issue and make a balanced decision on the content of the text.

## Programmes Undertaken

### Programme 1: Comprehension Strategy Instruction (CSI)

With our rapidly growing number of New English Language Learners we had studied the above strategies and were in search of a strong programme that would reinforce these learning steps school wide, with the strategies taught in a way that all students would benefit from. Once taught and used daily our wish was that these skills would become a natural part of reading in all curriculum areas.

In 2009 we became a trial school for the CSI programme written by Hilton Ayrey and Brian Parker. The programme had been used successfully in an overseas school where English was a Second Language. The CSI programme has a strong research base in that it is grounded in the research of Michael Pressley, Gerald Duffy, and Tom Nicholson. These literacy experts have been working in the field of comprehension strategies for over twenty years.

**Michael Pressley** is the author of many publications including “Reading Instruction that Works: The Case for Balanced Teaching” This was reviewed in 2005 By J.K. Wagner of Education Oasis.

Pressley made several pertinent points to assist teachers,

- Reading is an extremely active process
- The point of reading is not to simply read the words but rather to construct meaning
- Students can and should be taught comprehension strategies beginning in the primary years
- Effective reading instruction includes skills instruction, immersion in a rich literacy environment, and the explicit teaching of comprehension strategies.

An analysis made by Michael Pressley and Peter Afflerbach in 1995 resulted in a summary of what good readers do.

- Overview the text

- Are “clear about what they want to get from it”
- Make a reading plan
- Decide what part of the text should be read first; which parts should be read with care
- Relate their prior knowledge to what they are reading
- Vary their speed
- Stop to reread when necessary
- Draw conclusions while reading (these might change as they read further)
- “Integrate ideas encountered in different parts of the text”
- Look for cause and effect connections
- Make many interpretations as they read
- Form mental images
- Use fix-up strategies when understanding text breakdown
- Create summary comments
- Reflect on the text.

**Gerald Duffy** “Explaining Reading: A Resource for Teaching Concepts, Skills, and Strategies” Duffy points to the need for teachers to place students in a supportive, literate environment that promotes a love of learning. Students, he says, will be inspired to read when they become aware that reading enhances their own interests. They will realize that is useful and be less likely to give up when faced with difficulties.

A decision was made to introduce the programme to all students from years 3 and 4 as we were aware it would benefit all students in learning how to source information.

The programme writers researched how the construction of meaning (comprehension) takes place and uncovered the following:

- It is a very complex process
- There are a number of interdependent strategies used
- These strategies are employed at an automated level in a split second

The CSI programme recognises that quality comprehension is gained by slowing down the reading process, insisting on careful clarification of meaning, attention to how the text is structured, and provides for the explicit, direct instruction of strategies to solve problems.

The programme was introduced to our teachers via video tutorials. These tutorials were clear and easy to follow. Another advantage of the video tutorials was that they could be studied as a group and discussed and referred to during the contract.

A very positive aspect of the programme is that the strategies may be used with the school’s existing reading resources including journals. Over time we have also built a collection of the “Handy Resources” including titles such as “Mammals” and “Reptiles”. These are very



helpful as teachers are able to hook into the students' interest and inspire them to want to read.

The programme is divided into clearly defined stages:

At Stage 3 (Fluent Readers –Sentence Level Comprehension) here we focused primarily on the prompt “I think that means” which was discussed after every sentence was read. This is a time when students are encouraged to identify the main idea. Interestingly our NELL simply repeated their answer word for word from the text. Over time and with modelling from the teacher and listening to other students they began to put answers into their own words. Students took their prompt cards home and parents were informed of the programme.

At Stage 4 (Fluent Readers-Sentence Level Comprehension) there is strong teaching related to developing sentence level understanding. Students are introduced to “The Deep Five” where they learn to make connections to prior knowledge. This is a valuable aspect as our NELL have a wealth of knowledge tucked away from their own learning and experiences, in their own language. They learn to make connections to information within the text, to visualise the action, to ask questions and to form hypotheses.

At Stage 5 students are learning to organise information from sentences into a structure that can be remembered.

Stage 5a introduces story webs for narrative texts and looks closely at story structure.

Stage 5b relates to the comprehension of non-fiction text assisting students to identify headings and trigger words.

Both teachers and NELL speak positively of the follow-up activities linked to the CSI programme. These activities provide opportunities for remembering the texts, understanding new vocabulary, applying their understanding of the story, analysing what is happening and why and coming up with new ideas or creating ideas that might assist a character in the text.

In the follow-up activities opportunities are also given to rate the story. This is done in an informative manner referring back to the story structure with grading carried out on characters, story structure, language features and theme. Students may also be invited to write a short review of the text.

We also had a, well attended, parent evening to explain the CSI programme with the programme writers attending. This evening followed two previous evenings where at the first we showed videos of families including our new migrant families reading to their children. At a second evening we had local librarians explaining what was available at libraries and joined up families to the library system. We used many strategies to encourage

families to read to and with their children. We also opened the library up for a time after school to encourage families to select books to take home.

### **Comprehension Strategy Instruction:**

It was apparent that the programme followed the lines of research into teaching the specific steps to assist students to understand text. To assist teachers prompt cards were written for students and model lessons were presented as part of the tutorials.

Examples of prompts include: (There are more in the actual programme).

#### **Making Connections:**

Our New English language learners have a vast amount of knowledge and experiences locked away within their own language and are able to draw on this to gain meaning.

Prompts included "I know about that because..."

"I read about that in ...."

#### **Forming and Revising Hypotheses:**

As understanding of vocabulary grows students are able to weigh up the facts and revise their thinking.

Prompts included "I think this is not going to work out because..."

"I think it must live all by itself because..."

#### **Asking Questions:**

Here readers look for clues as they read and ask themselves questions relating to the story.

Prompts included "I wonder what will happen next..."

"I don't understand what that means?"

#### **Visualisation :**

As a richer vocabulary develops readers unfold information by inwardly posing questions.

Prompts included "I have a picture in my head"

"I have a good picture of that character"

#### **Inferring:**

After gathering clues students make connections between pieces of information.

Prompts included "I think that means because it said..."

"Maybe it's because..."

#### **Seeking Clarification:**

This leads to a deeper understanding of text. This is an opportunity for group discussion.

A time for re-reading and consulting others in the group. A chance to gain information from a thesaurus, website etc.

Prompts include “I wonder why...”

Summarising Main Ideas:

This may hinge on headings and trigger words in non-fiction. It may involve finding the main idea in the text and summarising it to gain information or purpose of the text.

Analysing:

Here the student learns to take the text apart and to reconstruct it in a way that has meaning to them (In their own words). They may analyse the new information, understanding characters, setting, problems, feelings, action, outcome and theme.

Evaluating:

Here students learn to make judgements about the text based on their understanding of the topic.

With the programme successfully underway teachers investigated a variety of assessment tools to ascertain pupil progress. Initially Running Records were used school-wide. These have proven very successful for emergent and early readers where the major focus is the correct decoding of the written word. With so many NELL we were eager to gauge not only their decoding skills but their full understanding of text. We introduced the Informal Prose Inventory also designed by Hilton Ayrey. Our reason for doing this was it allowed teachers to gain a clearer picture of pupil understanding. After reading to the teacher the student reads the passage silently. The student then retells the story to the teacher.

A fluent decoder is expected to meet an accuracy level of 97% which was never an issue for our NELL. The retell is required to meet 50% followed by a section of question prompts at 75%. By achieving this level teachers understand objectively that the student has good understanding and is using the comprehension strategies taught in the programme.

The answers given in the students’ own words require a strong level of English proficiency, building on from clear comprehension of the text. Teachers value this retell and question prompt exercise as they gain greater understanding of students’ needs. The STAR test used before and after the second programme, whilst helpful for noting development, simply requires the students to select a correct answer often in a multi-choice format.

The following results were gathered from our NELL who have used the programme over a 4 year period. On the left is the chronological age of the student with the reading age on the right. Also included is the area of growth shown with a plus or minus in years. The data was gathered using the Informal Prose Inventory from age 8. Records show that in many

instances several records are taken before the student reaches the required 50% or more for the retell and 75% of the question prompts to ensure acceptable understanding of the text.

NELL student	2009	2010 Growth	2011 Growth	2012 Growth
1	8yrs – RA 6	Overseas	Overseas	11yrs – RA11
2	8yrs – RA 8	9yrs – RA 10 +2	10yrs – RA 13 +3	11yrs – RA 13 -
3	8yrs – RA 9	9yrs – RA 12 +3	10yrs – RA 13 +1	11yrs – RA 13 -
4	8yrs – RA 6	9yrs – RA 7 +1	10yrs – RA 8 +1	11yrs – RA 12 +4
5	9yrs – RA 10	10yrs – RA 11 +1	11yrs – RA 11 -	12yrs – RA 13 +2
6	9yrs – RA 7	10yrs – RA 9 +2	11yrs – RA 8 -1	12yrs – RA 12 +4
7	8yrs – RA 9	9yrs – RA 9 -	10yrs – RA 10 +1	11yrs – RA 13 +3
8	Overseas	Overseas	10yrs – RA 8	11yrs – RA 12 +4
9	8yrs – RA 6	9yrs – RA 7 +1	10yrs – RA 9 +2	11yrs – RA 12 +1
10	7yrs – RA7	8yrs – RA 8 +1	9yrs – RA 8.5 +0.5	10yrs – RA10 +1.5
11	8yrs – RA 6	9yrs – RA 6 -	10yrs – RA 8 +2	11yrs – RA 9 +1
12	8yrs – RA 8	9yrs – RA 8 -	10yrs – RA 9 +1	11yrs – RA 10 +1
13	8yrs – RA 6	9yrs RA 8.5 +2.5	10yrs RA 9 +0.5	11yrs – RA 11 +2
14			9yrs – RA 8	10yrs – RA 9 +1
15	7yrs – RA 5	8yrs – RA 6 +1	9yrs – RA 8 +2	10yrs – RA 9 +1
16	8yrs – RA 6	9yrs – RA 6 -	10yrs – RA 8 +2	11yrs – RA 9 +1
17	7yrs – RA 8	8yrs – RA 11 +3	9yrs – RA 13 +2	10yrs – RA 13 -
18	7yrs – RA 7	8yrs RA 6.5 -0.5	9yrs – RA 8.5 +2	10yrs – RA 10 +1.5
19	7yrs – RA 10	8yrs – RA 12 +2	9yrs – RA 11 -1	10yrs – RA 13 +2
20			8yrs – RA 8	9yrs – RA 10 +2
21		7yrs – RA 5	8yrs – RA 7.5 +2.5	9yrs – RA 8.5 +1
22	7yrs – RA 6	8yrs – RA 8.5 +2.5	9yrs – RA 8.5 -	10yrs – RA 10 +1.5
23	5yrs – RA 5	6yrs – RA 6 +1	7yrs – RA 8 +2	8yrs – RA 8.5 +0.5
24	6yrs – RA 7	7yrs – RA 11 +4	8yrs – RA 12 +1	9yrs – RA 13 +1
25	5yrs – RA 5	6yrs – RA 6.5 +1.5	7yrs – RA 8.5 +2	8yrs – RA 10 +1.5
26	6yrs – RA 6	7yrs – RA 6.5 +0.5	8yrs – RA 8 +1.5	9yrs – RA 8.5 +0.5
27	6yrs – RA 5	7yrs – RA 7 +2	8yrs – RA 8 +1	9yrs – RA 8.5 +0.5
28	5yrs – RA 5	6yrs – RA 5 -	7yrs – RA 6 +1	8yrs – RA 7.5 +1.5
29			7yrs – RA 7.5	8yrs – RA 8 +0.5
30	5yrs – RA 5	6yrs – RA 6 +1	7yrs – RA 7.5 +1.5	8yrs – RA 8.5 +1

After two years using the CSI programme the average growth for the new English Language Learners was 1.7 years. In year 3 the average growth was 1.3 years and in year 4, 1.6 years. After four years on the programme it is very pleasing to note that all but one student raised their reading age in the November testing. A very pleasing group of 13 students are reading above their chronological age, 7 students are at their chronological age and 10 are slightly below their chronological age. This group of 10 are mainly younger students who will benefit from further years on the programme.

Examples of analysed data show the importance of retell as part of ascertaining whether a child has mastered a particular level:

Year 5 student: In May 2012 aged 9years when tested on an 8-8.5year text had an accuracy of 100% and a retell of 55% and comprehension of 80%. When tested at 8.5- 9 years his

retell dropped to 16% and comprehension to 50% giving a clear instructional level of 8.5 - 9.0years

Year 6 student: In March aged 10 years was tested on 10-11 text with an accuracy of 100% a retell of 36% and comprehension of 45%. When retested at a text for 9-10 years his retell rose to 44% and comprehension to 60% giving his instructional level. In May he was retested on a 9-10 text and gained 60% in retell and 80% in comprehension. By November aged 11 he achieved 72% retell and 80% comprehension for a text at a 10-11 year level.

Year 6 student: In November 2011 aged 10 years was tested on an 8-8.5 text gaining an accuracy of 98% a retell of 25% and comprehension of 60%. However when tested on an 8.5-9 year text the retell rose to 36% but the overall comprehension fell to 45%. In February 2012 when tested on an 8-8.5 text he was unable to retell the story in his own words. (A long summer holiday with little English may have been a factor). Using a 7-8year text the student achieved 50% in retell and 78% in comprehension. By May he had mastered a year 8-8.5 text and in September achieved well at a 9-10 level now aged 11 years

This is one form of assessment used along with several standardised tests and overall teacher judgement.

### **Student Questionnaire for the CSI programme**

We also used a pupil questionnaire to gather student feeling using the CSI programme. The students were in years 6, 7 and 8. The results collated were all from students who stated that English was not the main language spoken at home.

1. Do you think the strategies taught to you in the CSI programme has made you better at understanding what you read?  
Yes 67%  
No 0%  
A little 33%  
Don't know 0%
2. When you use the CSI programme in class do you find it helpful reading in a small group?  
Yes 78%  
No 0%  
A little 22%  
Don't know 0%

3. When you are reading a story you don't fully understand, do you use a strategy like "I think that means" without your teacher?  
 Yes 11%  
 No 22%  
 Sometimes 67%
4. You use the CSI programme at school. Do you use it at home when you are reading for enjoyment or reading for information?  
 I use CSI 15%  
 I never use CSI 22%  
 I use CSI sometimes 63%
5. We had a Home School Partnership evening to teach parents about CSI. Do your parents know that you use the CSI programme to help you with your reading?  
 They do know about "I think that means" and encourage me to use it 41%  
 They do not know about the programme we use 59%

### **Overall Findings:**

Having used the programme for several years the students automatically use the learned CSI steps to gather meaning from the text. From year 3 and 4 where we introduce the first stage using "I think that means..." Students are given time to initially find relevant links then as their confidence grows to put the meaning into their own words rather than repeating the actual text.

The programme using the accompanying resources complete with teaching notes relates directly to the teaching points e.g. forming an hypothesis, making connections, asking questions, visualising what the words say, using a story web etc.

Teachers have found these lessons very beneficial. The lesson plans are clearly formulated with specific time given to the teaching of a particular skill, an opportunity for the teacher to model it and for students to practise it.

When interviewing a year 7/8 class students stated that they like working in small groups. They feel able to contribute and feel valued. They were all keen on the Bloom's activities (part of the programme). They also stated that they like the lead into reading where time is given to discuss the title, characters and setting (making connections) particularly when the text relates to life beyond their cultural experiences.

A small group of NELL commented that they like the quiet time with all groups focused and the time to think.

Several students stated that they don't consciously use prompts anymore they are just part of the way they gather information when they are reading. Finally several students said it was a fun way to learn and they are able to use these skills in all areas of the curriculum.

### **Programme 2 AVAILL (Audio Visual Achievement in Literacy, Language and learning.**

This programme was written and trialled by the late Dr Alice Killackey. Her research showed that students who were not achieving in understanding science concepts were able to do so when visual media was used.

This is a short term programme and **was not written to replace traditional reading** programmes. Unlike other programmes it does involve teaching the whole class.

In 2008 pilot research was completed in Christchurch by Dr Killackey a research report was written by Jilaine Johnson and Faye Parkhill (SET, No. 1, 2009,)

The programme as the title suggests includes literacy activities whilst watching DVD's. By reading the subtitles on the movies students complete a series of games and activities that hold their attention whilst reading the subtitles.

The programme is particularly suited to students in years 5-8 and provides opportunities for enjoyment and fun whilst students are being introduced to a range of well- respected children's novels. The novels include, Hook (Spielberg, 1991), Holes (Davis, 2003) Bridge to Terebithia (Csupo, 2007), March of the Penguins (Jacquet,2005 ) and others.

### **Research in Relation to Audio-Visual Reading Programmes.**

An international global reading survey conducted for the International Education Association by Dr Warick Elley of the University of Canterbury in 1991 uncovered unexpected correlation about the media's potential for reading improvement.

It was discovered that the five countries, including Finland with the highest reading level of the five discovered increased television viewing correlated with increased reading achievement. It was also noted that in these countries young people watch mostly subtitled television.

"The instructional Value of Subtitles" by Dr Broddason (2006) of the University of Iceland reported that in Denmark, 138 minutes per week was spent watching subtitled media while 112 minutes per week was spent on all other reading.

A New York Times article by, Richard Rothstein (2001) noted Educational Analyst points out that in Finland, "Children learn from cartoon subtitles, flashing so quickly that word recognition, not sounding out, is the only way to read."

“What We Can Learn From Finland: Facts and Reflections on the PISA Study” Dr Elaine Gautschi (2005) explains, “There are only a few television programmes in Finnish, so that watching television became another form of reading practice, because films are not dubbed, but rather given Finnish subtitles. Because of this, if they want to understand what happens on the screen, children have to automatically train themselves to read quickly and retain what they have read.

### **Teaching the Programme.**

AvaiIII is designed to be taught in a six week block, with one hour per day. This includes both the viewing and a variety of activities which are completed individually, in pairs, groups and teams. There is an emphasis on developing reading fluency, comprehension, development of vocabulary with dictionaries and for visualisation.

These skills are taught in the following ways;

- “Surprise subtitles: This encourages rapid reading through chunking of text
- Next word hunt: Focussed vocabulary teaching
- Take a dictionary to the movies: Extending word meaning
- Fostering Fluency: Providing an oral/ written link and reading with phrasing and fluency.
- Read it-see it: teaching visualisation to extend comprehension and recall.

### **Use of the AVAILL Programme:**

In term 4, 2012 teachers carried out a 6 week block using the programme. It was used with students in years 5 -8. Teachers followed the instructions from the teaching manual and found it very helpful.

An example of a Movie (Meet the Robinsons) and the detailed lessons includes.

Activity 1: In 27 minutes of viewing the movie is stopped 8 times and students have 15 seconds to record the final word.

Activity 2: This focuses on the development of a wider vocabulary. It also provides an opportunity to learn and practise a visual spelling strategy. The movie is paused 4 times giving students an opportunity to find the appropriate word to match 4 explanations given to them. To gain full points it must be spelt correctly.

Activity 3: Brings in a word study dimension, with students searching for synonyms and checking the meaning of words.



Activity 4: The lessons goals include having fun, improving vocabulary and assists in developing spelling skills.

Activity 5: “A read It-See It” teaching activities are also included in the programme. This provides opportunities for students to visualise the story from the written text. The students record images in sketch form at the completion of a paragraph. An advantage of this exercise is that there are two versions of the text, written for two different reading levels.

Activity 6: Using subtitles students learn to interpret and summarise information. By identifying key words and learning to summarise they develop sound comprehension strategies. At this stage activities are provided to develop prediction skills.

Activity 7: Here students continue to enjoy improving vocabulary. Word study opportunities on affixes help students to gain greater understanding of how words are formed.

### Outcomes of Student Achievement.

Prior to teaching the block of six weeks of lessons a decision was made to use a standardised reading test. We chose the STAR test and repeated it after the block of lessons. The results were averaged and were as follows. The results show before and after the lessons with a plus or minus after the programme.

#### Year 5 New English Language Learners

Before Word Recog	After Word Recog	Before Sentence Comp	After Sentence Comp	Before Parag Comp	After Parag Comp	Before Vocab	After Vocab	Before Stanine	After Stanine
7.2	8.0	5.2	4.0	6.8	7.8	4.4	4.4	4.8	5.0
	+0.8		-1.2		+1.0				+0.2

In year 5 our NELL slipped slightly in sentence comprehension but made a gain in paragraph comprehension. A positive outcome was the rise in stanine from 4.8 to 5.0.

#### Year 5 English Speaking Students

Before Word Recog	After Word Recog	Before Sentence Comp	After Sentence Comp	Before Parag Comp	After Parag Comp	Before Vocab	After Vocab	Before Stanine	After Stanine
7.75	9.0	7.6	8.1	12	12.5	5.6	6.2	6.5	7.1
	+1.25		+0.5		+0.5		+0.6		+0.6

Our ESS in year 5 showed improved scores in all areas, in particular in word recognition. There was also a sound improvement in overall stanine growth from 6.5 to 7.1

### Year 6 New English Language Learners

Before Word Recog	After Word Recog	Before Sentence Comp	After Sentence Comp	Before Parag Comp	After Parag Comp	Before Vocab	After Vocab	Before Stanine	After Stanine
9	9	7.6	7.6	10.5	13.7	6.3	6.5	5.2	5.7
					+3.2		+0.2		+0.5

In year 6 our NELL whilst word recognition and sentence comprehension scores remained the same there was a gain made in paragraph comprehension with the average rising by 3.2 points. The overall stanine also showed development rising from 5.2 to 5.7

### Year 6 English Speaking Students

Before Word Recog	After Word Recog	Before Sentence Comp	After Sentence Comp	Before Parag Comp	After Parag Comp	Before Vocab	After Vocab	Before Stanine	After Stanine
9.1	9	8	8.5	14	16.1	7.4	7.7	6.1	6.5
	-0.1		+0.5		+2.1		+0.3		+0.4

Interestingly the ESS overall stanine growth was slightly below that of the NELL rising from 6.1 to 6.5. Apart from a slight dip in word recognition there was steady growth in all other areas. For all year 6 students the greatest improvement was in their paragraph comprehension.

### Year 7 New English Language Learners

Before Word Recog	After Word Recog	Before Sentence Comp	After Sentence Comp	Before Parag Comp	After Parag Comp	Before Vocab	After Vocab	Before Advert	After Advert.	Before Diff Texts	After Diff Texts	Before Stanine	After Stanine
9.6	9	3.9	4.5	9.1	11.0	5.9	5.9	6.6	6.6	6.4	7.5	5.1	5.7
	-0.6		+0.6		+1.9						+1.1		+0.6

As with NELL in years 5 and 6 the greatest progress for this cohort was in reading comprehension of paragraphs rising an average score of 1.9. At this level students are also tested on an advertising component and on different text types. The rise in stanine from 5.1 to 5.7 was also commendable.

### Year 7 English Speaking Students

Before Word Recog	After Word Recog	Before Sentence Comp	After Sentence Comp	Before Parag Comp	After Parag Comp	Before Vocab	After Vocab	Before Advert	After Advert.	Before Diff Texts	After Diff Texts	Before Stanine	After Stanine
10.8	11.4	8.0	8.8	13.2	15.4	8.4	9.4	9.0	9.6	9.4	9.6	7.2	7.6
	+0.6		+0.8		+1.8		+1.0		+0.6		+0.2		+0.4

For the ESS in year 7 there greatest area of progress was also in paragraph comprehension. The average stanine for this group was 7.6.

### Year 8 New English Language Learners

Before Word Recog	After Word Recog	Before Sentence Comp	After Sentence Comp	Before Parag Comp	After Parag Comp	Before Vocab	After Vocab	Before Advert	After Advert.	Before Diff Texts	After Diff Texts	Before Stanine	After Stanine
10.6	10.9	5.0	6.1	10.5	11.8	7.3	7.9	7.8	7.6	8.4	8.6	5.2	5.4
	+0.3		+1.1		+1.3		+0.6		-0.2		+0.2		+0.2

In all areas excluding advertising steady progress was made. Overall there was a slight rise in stanine levels. Good progress was made in both sentence and paragraph results.

### Year 8 English Speaking Students

Before Word Recog	After Word Recog	Before Sentence Comp	After Sentence Comp	Before Parag Comp	After Parag Comp	Before Vocab	After Vocab	Before Advert	After Advert.	Before Diff Texts	After Diff Texts	Before Stanine	After Stanine
12.0	11.6	11.6	11.4	16	17	10.6	11.2	9.6	10.0	11.0	11.4	7.8	7.8
	-0.4		-0.2		+1		+0.6		+0.4		+0.4		

An average stanine of 7.8 remained the same for this cohort. There were slight dips in word recognition and sentence comprehension but good progress in all other areas.

### Summary of STAR Results for the New English Language Learners.

Overall it was found that all students made sound progress after the six week block of AVAILL lessons. For our NELL progress in sentence comprehension was made in years 6, 7 and 8. The greatest advances were in paragraph comprehension from an average improvement of 1.0 in year 5 to a significant jump of 3.2 in year 6.

Final STAR testing also showed by average that the NELL year groups raised their final stanine from:

- 0.2 in year five to an average stanine of 5.0
- 0.5 in year six to an average stanine of 5.7
- 0.6 in year 7 to an average stanine of 5.7
- 0.2 in year 8 to an average stanine of 5.4

### Student Questionnaire for the AVAILL programme.

This survey was carried out with students in years 6,7 and 8 who were all New English language learners and completed the programme in Term 4 2012.

1. What was your favourite Movie?
  - Holes 28%
  - Bridge to Terebithia 20%
  - The Water Horse 32%
  - Meet the Robinsons 16%
  - Whale Rider 4%

Don't know 0%

2. Do you think you have got better at reading?

Yes 68%

No 32%

A little 0%

Don't know 0%

3. What was your favourite activity?

Surprise subtitles 28%

Take a dictionary to the Movies 12%

Word hunt 44%

Read watch and don't stop 8%

Sketching 4%

Other 4%

The students when interviewed said they liked working in groups and solving the activities. Some commented that the pictures helped them to understand the story more. Others said they liked being active and competing with others. They also said that they would like to do it once a year as they enjoy the CSI programme and in particular the Blooms activities and reading exercises.

## Conclusion

One cannot help but be impressed by the excellent progress our new English Language Learners have made in their understanding of text. The teaching of the CSI programme had provided sound modelling for teachers to follow. It has clearly focused strategies that are planned for with clear prompts allowing students to grow in independence when searching for meaning in all curriculum areas. Teachers feel the data gathered when testing students using the Informal Prose Inventory helps provide not only accuracy in decoding but excellent data on recall and comprehension of text. With a large number of NELL this is vital. When interviewed 67% of NELL expressed that the CSI programme had helped with their reading. Specific data gathered reveals the strength of the programme and the need to teach reading comprehension strategies. Gathered over a 4 year period achievement in the development of student comprehension skills has gone from strength to strength. These rapidly improving comprehension skills are evident across all curriculum areas including an annual science fair and speech competition.

The second programme is relatively new to the school. Data gathered in November 2012 points to sound progress for students with stanines on average for NELL rising between 0.2

of a stanine to 0.6. There is a slight area of concern with the speed of the text for NELL. Interestingly there was good progress in both sentence and paragraph comprehension. The students also commented that they enjoyed the choice of movies used in the AVAILL programme. When interviewed 68% of NELL said that they felt the programme had helped their reading. As this is a relatively new programme to the school, we do not have the wealth of data gathered over several years as with the CSI programme

The opportunity to learn about and teach these two outstanding programmes has been of great value to all our students. The idea of introducing two programmes was to provide a rich series of well researched reading programmes for all students. In all areas of research sound evidence exists for the need of well structured, planned reading lessons providing opportunities for students to master strategies that unlock the true meaning of text.

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