

## Minilit Notes

### **What is MiniLit?**

MiniLit stands for 'Meeting Initial Needs in Literacy' and is an early literacy intervention program. It is designed to be delivered daily, for one hour, to small groups of up to four Year 1/5 students who have struggled to make adequate progress in learning to read during their first year of schooling.. It is a Tier Two school-based small group program (up to six students per group) within a Response to Intervention Framework.

MiniLit "s approach to improving the literacy skills of struggling students is to combine research and theory with program development and service delivery. The approach it takes is non-categorical, which means that it does not focus on the causes underlying or reasons why a child may have failed to make progress in reading. These labels have not been found to be useful in determining how a child can best be helped to learn. The approach is to find out what skills students do have and which areas are cause for concern, and to then fill in their knowledge with direct, systematic and intensive teaching and/or tutoring of these skills.

Children with poor working memory benefit from MiniLit's programs because the instruction is systematic presented in small chunks and plenty of revision is built into each session. MiniLit does not make a diagnosis, nor do we treat any disabilities. It "treats" the reading difficulties associated with such disabilities.

MiniLit is more than just the name of a literacy program for low-progress readers. It is an educational approach that has as its core belief the conviction that effective instruction is the key to growth in any area of the curriculum. MiniLit is more accurately conceptualised as an approach, or a determination, to bring about rapid learning for low-progress students by whatever means scientific research has shown to be most effective. Consequently, it is a continually evolving approach to literacy instruction, changing as more scientific evidence becomes available from either within the MiniLit research team or, more generally, from the international scientific reading research community.

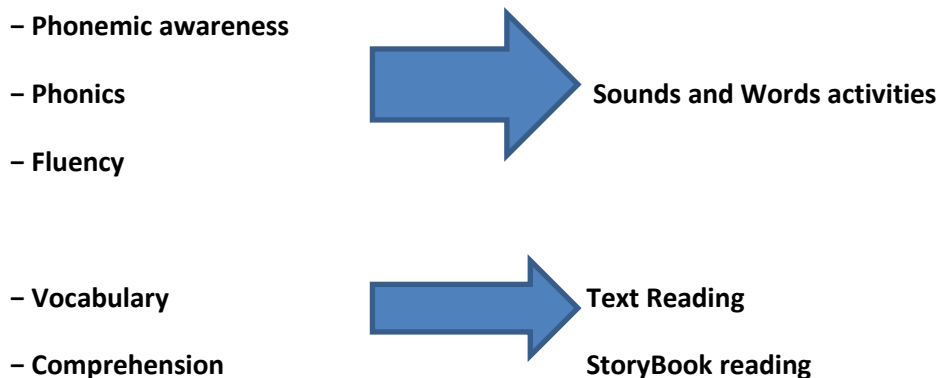
MiniLit is a data driven approach to education, employing programs of proven efficacy and continually collecting data on the effectiveness of the programs deployed so that far fewer children are left to struggle in school with inadequate reading and related skills, the skills essential for academic success in all areas.

### What do you mean by a 'low-progress reader'?

Low-progress readers are generally those students who have failed to “crack the alphabetic code” in reading, leading to consequent failure in reading and related skills. These students have failed to make any real progress in reading, usually due to deficits in phonological processing skills, relying instead on compensatory visual and contextual strategies. When we speak of low-progress readers, we are referring to those who typically do not make the average progress of one month for every month’s attendance at school.

### How are struggling students identified for participation in Minilit and how is their progress monitored?

Ideally, young struggling readers should be identified at the commencement of the second year of formal schooling (identified PP students are given targeted intervention and monitored. If the student is still making a D grade at the end of the year they should be assessed as a candidate for MINILIT. We must not adopt a wait and see approach as the reading difficulty becomes more entrenched and the student is more resistant to intervention). The aim to establish preliminary performance benchmarks to identify the bottom **25 per cent of Year 1 and Year 2 students**. The benchmarks for literacy need to relate to crucial components of the early reading process. Reviews of research have established that the key components of an early reading program are:



### What kind of results can I expect from a student enrolled in a MiniLit program?

Results from the MiniLit Monitoring Program show that students who attended a two-term program (20 weeks) made average gains of 15 months in reading accuracy and 11 months in comprehension. Of course, bearing in mind that every student is different, so it cannot be exactly predicted what gains a student would make.

### How long should a student need to be enrolled in a MiniLit program?

Students are initially enrolled for one (10-week) term. Students are continually monitored on progress on a weekly basis, and at the end of the term they are assessed on spelling, oral reading fluency and single word recognition. The results of these tests assist in determining whether further intervention is required. On average, students attend for two terms. Benchmarks(see examples below) can be useful in determining when previously struggling students are now achieving at a level close to the average of their peers across the state. It is acceptable for students to exit a support

program when achieving above a cut-off point or benchmark for 40% of their peers, when they may be said to be within the average range.

**MiniLit is predicated on ten desiderata drawn from these sources:**

1. Intervention is timely and offered during the second year of formal schooling, as soon as it is identified that the student has ongoing difficulties that cannot be addressed by the regular classroom instruction.
2. Instruction is delivered in small groups of up to four/six students.
3. The program includes phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary and text comprehension.
4. The main activities in phonemic awareness relate to learning to blend and segment and should ideally involve using letters once students are familiar with some letter sound relationships.
5. Phonics is taught through a synthetic approach.
6. There are planned procedures for students to build automaticity in word recognition.
7. Instruction is explicit and systematic.
8. A well-trained teacher or a paraprofessional with teacher support delivers instruction.
9. Sessions are frequent, preferably daily, and involve at least 20-30 minutes of intensive instruction.
10. Assessment procedures and tools are available to identify struggling students and to monitor their progress.

**What does MiniLit consist of?**

MiniLit consists of 80 carefully structured lessons (sufficient for at least two terms of instruction) in an easy to hard sequence and is divided into two levels, Levels 1 and 2, with 40 lessons at each level. There are three main components of each lesson:

- Sounds and Words Activities
- Text Reading, and
- Story Book Reading

It is very important that all of three of these components are taught daily, as specified in the manual for the program.