

# Jessica wrote this:

I'm a shark  
and I jump  
and flip into  
the water.

and I dive  
and I eat fishes  
I'm a cat and I  
go myow myow  
I'm a dog and I  
Barck.



- She's 5,
- in her first school year,
- and English is her second language.

So what is her school doing right?

# And why are the children so excited about it?

Let Our Lady of Lebanon School tell you in their own words...

\*Sydney, Australia



Tina's class learn the "ie" sound with its action – they're pretending to be sailors and saying "Aye aye!"

## Why we adopted *Jolly Phonics*

by Celeste Musgrave & Tina Di Mauro, kindergarten teachers

At our school, we have always been concerned about the children's literacy standards. With our old phonics programme combined with a whole language approach, the children had a good knowledge of the 26 alphabet letters and sounds by the end of their kindergarten year. But they didn't know how to blend these sounds for reading, or identify them in words for writing, and were unaware of sounds made with more than one letter: digraphs and blends.

*Jolly Phonics* teaches these things, and we realised that the programme had other advantages for our school community. The children come from non-English-speaking backgrounds, and while a small percentage receive parental support with their schoolwork, the vast majority rely on the teacher as their sole educator. The multisensory approach of *Jolly Phonics* sounded ideal; teaching the 42 sounds with actions and letter shapes would really help the children learn and remember them.

**Introducing the programme ...** We attended an inservice on *Jolly Phonics* by author Sue Lloyd, and soon afterwards

began to trial the programme with our kindergarten classes. At first we adopted a flexible approach to suit our school's special needs; we decided to introduce the letter sounds at a slower rate than *The Phonics Handbook* suggests.

**The initial stages ...** We used phonemic awareness activities in the kindergarten pre-reading programme to help the children identify the sounds in words. After a few weeks they were already doing this by themselves, choosing a word and sounding it out with the actions they had learnt. The *Jolly Phonics* multisensory approach made the learning great fun for them.

In this first term, we had only planned to explore one new sound each week. However, each letter sound is introduced with a story, and we found that the children grew impatient for more stories and actions, so informally we began to introduce all the sounds. During subsequent terms the pace was increased until eventually we were teaching all 42 sounds in the first term.

As suggested by *The Phonics Handbook*, the children took

home a Soundbook containing each week's new sounds, and later Word Boxes and lists of irregular or "tricky" words. The children enjoyed this as they began to experience their own reading success. Meanwhile changes were made to our reading programme, to complement the whole language approach with phonetics-based games and activities from *The Phonics Handbook*.

**... And the success** Over the course of the year we saw how the children's confidence increased with their understanding of the 42 sounds. With the phonetics component of our reading programme and *Jolly Phonics* as our phonics programme, all the children were able to read and write by the end of the kindergarten year. Ability levels varied, but the standard was high. Jessica's work (shown on front cover) is typical of a five-year-old's writing towards the end of kindergarten, since we started using *Jolly Phonics*. She has

used words with both single-letter sounds and digraphs, as well as a repertoire of "tricky" words that cannot be sounded out.

The handwriting style in *Jolly Phonics* did not confuse the children, who were being taught the "foundation" style set by the NSW Dept. of Education. We thought this difference insignificant, since children are exposed to so many different styles of print in books, signs and computers.

All the children began to succeed in reading and writing very early in their schooling and they loved it. They would often ask if they could write in spare moments! This success is yet more astonishing when one considers how many of these children are not given parental support and speak English only in school. We can only imagine the success that *Jolly Phonics* could have in schools where the parental support is high and English is the children's main language.

**"The multisensory approach was ideal for our ESL school community"**

**"The children loved it – they would ask to write in spare moments!"**

**"All the children could read and write by the end of kindergarten"**



Celeste teaches the "p" sound – the children pretend to puff out candles, saying "p!"

# Using Jolly Phonics

by Julie Figuero, Year 1 teacher

I have been using *The Phonics Handbook* for two years now, focussing mainly on reading. Through weekly phonics lessons, I have taught the children all the sounds of English in the recommended order, giving all of the spelling possibilities for each sound. In comparison with our old phonics programmes, *Jolly Phonics* gives the children more information, significantly extending their word attack skills. As a result, their attempts to sound out new words are more successful.

The children's response has been very positive. They have shown far more interest in reading than in previous years, and are more confident about reading new words. They often describe aloud how they are tackling unfamiliar words, and I can see that they are modelling strategies from phonics lessons. When confronted with a difficult word they remain positive, simply labelling the word "tricky" and then moving on without feeling that they have failed. The children are more positive even when they make mistakes. Instead of being discouraged, they are interested in finding out how the word should be read correctly. Phrases such as "That's a tough word", or "That time the rule didn't work", really helped in maintaining a positive atmosphere and developing good self-esteem in the children's reading and writing experiences. I believe these positive feelings towards reading are a direct result of using *Jolly Phonics*.

**"The children remain positive even when confronted with difficult words"**

Initially, I was anxious about preparing classroom resources from the reproducible material in *The Phonics Handbook* – and it did take time to make all the books, flash-cards, board games, charts, etc. for the children's hands-on activities. With hindsight, though, I realise that the preparation was more than worthwhile, in creating fun activities for the children to practise their word attack skills. I was also able to use many existing classroom resources with only minor modifications, and I had fun making up games of my own.

In my second year with *Jolly*

Phonics, as well as being better prepared in terms of resources, I felt more confident in my personal understanding of the teaching principles. I made a more determined effort to encourage the children to use the word attack skills they had learned during phonics lessons whenever they were reading and writing during the normal school day. So, in effect, phonics became a natural part of daily work, taught formally in specific timetabled lessons and informally throughout everyday learning across the curriculum.

Parental response to the programme is very positive. Parents frequently comment on how much their children enjoy reading



and on the improvements they have noticed themselves.

**"Parents often say they notice children's reading has improved"**

So far I have only used *Jolly Phonics* for two years – but I feel sure I shall continue to do so for a long time to come!

## Results of Standardised Reading and Spelling Tests

### Kindergarten Red (Celeste's class)

Pupil:	Boy/ Girl:	Actual Age:	Reading Age:	Spelling Age:
BH	b	5:4	6:7	6:2
BN	b	5:11	6:1	6:3
CK	g	5:6	7:7	7:9
CM	b	5:5	6:7	6:2
DO	b	5:4	6:0	5:8
DD	b	5:7	8:1	8:7
FB	b	5:3	6:3	6:1
FU	g	5:10	5:8	6:4
GO	g	5:8	6:9	6:7
HF	g	5:11	8:0	7:6
HS	g	5:6	6:7	6:4
HB	g	5:6	6:7	6:4
HD	b	5:4	6:1	6:0
IB	b	5:10	6:3	6:1
IT	g	5:7	6:5	6:4
IS	b	6:1	6:8	6:10
IN	g	5:3	7:2	6:6
LD	g	5:9	6:7	6:11
MC	g	6:2	6:4	6:4
OS	b	5:9	7:2	8:3
SA	g	5:8	6:5	6:4
TF	g	6:2	5:9	6:5
TB	b	6:0	7:8	8:0
UT	g	5:4	6:4	6:1
UD	g	5:11	6:8	6:4
AH	g	6:0	7:0	8:3
AN	b	6:2	7:4	8:3

**Average:** 5:8 6:8 6:9  
Boys: 5:9 6:9 6:11  
Girls: 5:8 6:7 6:7  
**% above Actual Age:** 92.6% 100%

### Kindergarten Blue (Tina's class)

Pupil:	Boy/ Girl:	Actual Age:	Reading Age:	Spelling Age:
FF	b	5:11	8:0	8:10
IN	b	6:0	8:4	9:3
FS	g	5:10	6:7	8:10
CD	b	6:2	5:7	6:2
IB	b	5:5	5:3	6:0
LD	b	5:10	6:1	NS
GE	g	5:4	5:7	6:2
NN	g	5:8	5:9	6:7
NB	b	6:1	7:0	7:3
SN	g	5:7	6:7	6:2
JK	g	5:4	6:0	7:5
BN	b	5:6	7:9	8:7
GK	b	5:3	6:0	6:3
ON	b	5:7	6:2	6:4
DF	b	5:3	5:8	6:6
IK	b	5:11	6:6	6:11
OU	b	6:0	7:3	7:9
DU	g	5:9	6:0	6:5
OC	g	6:2	5:9	6:11
MS	g	5:11	5:7	6:2
NK	b	5:6	5:8	6:4
KM	g	5:7	6:4	6:5
NB	b	6:1	7:3	7:9
NK	b	5:6	6:1	6:1
GK	g	5:9	6:3	6:5
HN	g	6:2	6:0	6:7
HF	b	5:6	5:8	6:5
OT	g	5:4	6:6	6:8
AR	b	5:11	5:2	6:8

**Average:** 5:9 6:3 6:11  
Boys: 5:9 6:5 7:2  
Girls: 5:8 6:1 6:8  
**% above Actual Age:** 79.3% 93.1%

Reading Test: Daniels and Diack Standard Test of Reading Skills  
Spelling Test: The South Australian Spelling Test (NS, or no score, considered as 5.8)  
All ages shown in years and months.

**87.5%** of the children were ahead in reading and **96.4%** were ahead in spelling!

# Jolly Phonics in a balanced literacy programme

by Angela Hassarati, Reading Recovery teacher

At the start of the year, as part of our New Reading Recovery Programme, I administered Observation Surveys to those Year One children who were at risk of becoming poor readers. The results showed the success of the *Jolly Phonics* programme in kindergarten, especially on phonics-based tests. The children had few problems identifying letters by their names or sounds, and confusion over letters with similar sounds or shapes was

**"The children's writing is fluent and independent"**

minimal. The children were successful in transferring their knowledge to their writing. Dominant vowel and consonant sounds were represented correctly with the appropriate graphemes, and were almost always sequenced in the right order. Thanks to their easy recall of consonant blends and digraphs, the children's writing was fluent and independent.

**"Remarkable results!"**

In reading, unfamiliar words were sounded out slowly with minimal teacher support. The only danger, as with any phonics-based literacy programme, was of the children's seeing reading purely as a word-decoding exercise. Emphasis should also be placed on reading for meaning. Ideally *Jolly Phonics* should be used to provide the phonics component of a school-based Balanced Literacy Programme. In the two years since its implementation



here, *Jolly Phonics* has certainly helped us to produce some remarkable results!



## Welcoming beneficial changes

by Sister Irene Boughosn, Principal

children's level of literacy has often been a concern. When two of my kindergarten teachers approached me, I welcomed their suggestion that we try a new phonics programme, provided that a trial period proved it to be beneficial.

*Jolly Phonics* was noticeably different from our old phonics programme. Now I have seen what the children can achieve, I realise that the old programme did not equip them with the necessary tools for becoming efficient readers and writers. I

have now seen the kindergarten children growing in confidence and literacy achievement in ways I had never

seen before. It is also a blessing to see the Year One teachers implement the programme, allowing this success to continue and develop. *Jolly Phonics* has given our children the chance to succeed in reading and writing. Our teachers become more confident each year they use it, and the results are astonishing.

**"I am delighted with the new literacy level"**

The children now begin to read and write in their first year of school, and continue to develop these skills in Year One. Parents have begun to notice a difference between the skills their older children had acquired in their early years of schooling, with younger ones who have just completed kindergarten or Year One with *Jolly Phonics*.

I am delighted with the level of literacy achieved by teachers and children over the past two years with *Jolly Phonics*. I hope that the benefits can be maintained as the children progress onto the higher grades of their schooling.

## Jolly Phonics and my children

by Emilie Khoury, mother of two

As a parent, I believe reading and writing are two of the most basic skills for life. Thanks to *Jolly Phonics* both my children have made an excellent start towards acquiring these skills. The programme gives children an understanding of the alphabetic code, introducing the 42 main sounds of English, including digraphs such as "ch", "ow", "ai" and "er". Each sound has a related action which makes it memorable. Through the actions, my daughter Chantal has learnt the sounds of letters, and when to use which combination of them. *Jolly Phonics* also shows how to use the sounds to decode words – Chantal has not only

learned to decode new words by working out all the sounds, but can also recognise a wide repertoire of words by sight. As her kindergarten year has progressed, I have seen Chantal develop in reading and writing and maintain high levels of achievement in both. What is more, thanks to *Jolly Phonics* she enjoys reading and writing, and does not see them as tedious chores.

*Jolly Phonics* was also taught to my older child Charbel, who has just completed Year One. Charbel is seven, but has an above-average reading age. He reads at a level similar to many children in the grade above, who did not

receive *Jolly Phonics* at the start of their schooling. Charbel's comprehension and vocabulary skills have also progressed dramatically, along with his story writing. He finds reading difficult books an enjoyable challenge.

I am amazed at the eagerness with which both my children read the words around them, and the enjoyment they display as independent readers and writers. *Jolly Phonics* has helped them both enormously.

