

# Jolly Phonics



How one school transformed their literacy standards.



## O'Sullivan Beach School: A Case Study



## A School in Crisis

In 2011 O'Sullivan Beach, an R-7 (Reception - Year 7) School, south of Adelaide, South Australia, was a school in crisis. A Category 2 (high disadvantage) school, in the previous two years it had seen four principals come and go. The lack of leadership had left teachers and students in real trouble. With low academic results, poorly behaved children and diminishing enrolments, the school was in desperate need of stability in leadership and the development of a united sense of purpose amongst the staff, parents and students.

Sally Menadue's 5-year appointment as Principal in 2011 saw the start of a strong focus on consistency in learning and behaviour across the school. Sally and the staff were determined to raise standards, and they knew that literacy was critical to their success.



Sally Menadue

## Sally Menadue – Principal

When I joined O'Sullivan Beach School in 2011, I knew that we needed to make some drastic changes in order to raise standards and do the best we could for our students.

Up until that point, the teachers had been using a variety of methods to teach the children to read and write, none of which were working for them. I heard about the success that Westminster School, featured on *Today Tonight*, was having with Jolly Phonics and I thought that this was something that I could see working for us.

I made my decision, organised training, and the program was implemented with the Reception to Year 2 classes.

I knew that it was important to work through the process of change with the staff and I began by attending Jolly Phonics training sessions with all of the Junior Primary staff and the School Services Officers. By working with students in the classrooms and joining teachers at regular timetabled meetings where they openly reflected on their practice, I was able to really understand what was happening in the school.

The program engages students because it makes sense. From as early as the end of week one, they can begin to decode words without recourse to guesswork. Students feel successful from the start because they 'know' that they can read. The feedback teachers get from excited children is wonderful.

Importantly, every class was provided with all the necessary Jolly Phonics resources from the start and if a teacher felt that they needed to do a training session again, the school paid for it. Adopting the Jolly Phonics program throughout the school was a big commitment, but that meant that the staff knew that I was not going to change my mind. The school was committed to one program, Jolly Phonics, and it was here to stay.

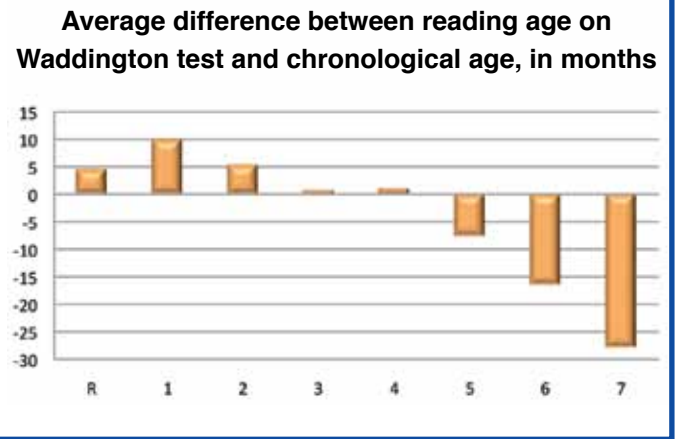




## Outstanding results

Skill-based assessments are used to track student progress as well as to make sure that children are placed in the most appropriate group for their abilities.

These assessments also allowed the school to quantify the fantastic progress that the teachers were seeing daily in the classroom. On average, students in Year R-2 had a reading age 7 months ahead of chronological age and a spelling age 9 months ahead.



*Assessments showed that students in R-2, who had been taught with Jolly Phonics, were racing ahead, while students in 3-7 were getting left behind.*

There was a buzz among the staff. After years of trying a variety of schemes and styles, one consistent program was being used throughout the school and the improvement in the students' skills was evident.

This also threw the results of the children in Years 3-7 into stark contrast. Those children, who had not been taught using Jolly Phonics, were on average 10 months below chronological age for reading and 11 months below chronological age for spelling.

## Getting the whole school involved

There was an outcry from the middle and upper primary teachers as they realised that their students were massively under-achieving compared to the students in the younger years.



The staff discussed their options and decided on a second important change. From the beginning of 2013, they would group the Year 3-7 students for their literacy block, just as they had been for the R-2 students. They would use the Jolly Phonics sequence of skills to determine what the students knew and place each student in the most appropriate group. This meant that each group might have a mix of students from Year 3 to 7 and in the lower groups they would start from the beginning of the Jolly Phonics program.

All of the teachers have embraced Jolly Phonics and the importance of a whole school program. As the students progress, they will be taught grammar, spelling and punctuation using the Jolly Phonics materials to ensure consistency of methodology across classes and a sequential, comprehensive development of skills from Reception to year 7.

## What the teachers have to say



"I have been teaching Jolly Phonics for three years now, and I cannot imagine not using the program. Jolly Phonics teaching is a key to the students' future. It impacts on all school

subjects and beyond because by the end of Reception all the children at O'Sullivan Beach School can read and write. I can envisage a future in which it will remain an integral part of the educational program here, securely embedded in our school culture."

*Christina Hooper - Junior Primary Teacher*

*Angela Weeks of the Specific Learning Difficulties Association made this comment on Today Tonight: "To see the confidence of the children, how comfortable they are working with their letters, their sounds, working together as groups, no fooling around, no behaviour problems, everybody on task, even when the teacher is talking to you, that is pretty special."*

## Jayden - Year 6 Student

Several years ago, Jayden was told that he had dyslexia and was really struggling at school. Since learning to read using Jolly Phonics, Jayden has begun to flourish and his literacy skills have improved massively. Furthermore, he now writes neatly and attributes the change to the emphasis placed on handwriting in the Jolly Phonics lessons.

Jayden said, "My school has made progress because of Jolly Phonics. Our reading levels have improved and students have grown in their development. Jolly Phonics is a good idea and it *does* work!"



"In the past, students had been taught using a range of programs. Test results, at the end of 2012, confirmed that they were entering their last years of primary school unable to read

and spell at an appropriate level. What was needed was a consistent, sequential program and Jolly Phonics has given us that.

The multisensory nature of the program is very effective. The students remember what they have learnt and I am able to provide connections across subjects easily. Significantly, the implementation of Jolly Phonics across the whole school has provided teachers with a common language to describe and discuss their teaching of literacy.

*Peter Van Dyk - Upper Primary Teacher*



*The improvement in the results achieved by students at O'Sullivan Beach School in the 2012 NAPLAN tests was so significant that it earned them a visit from the then Federal Minister for Education, Peter Garrett, and a segment on the Today Tonight program in 2013. Sally Menadue and the staff continue to work with SPELD SA and Jolly Phonics Trainer Jan Polkinghorne to refine their skills, learn new techniques and increase their repertoire of classroom activities to bring their teaching of phonics, spelling and grammar alive.*



**Jolly Learning Ltd**

Tailours House  
High Road, Chigwell  
Essex, IG7 6DL, UK

Tel: +44 (0)20 8501 0405  
Fax: +44 (0)20 8500 1696  
Email: [info@jollylearning.co.uk](mailto:info@jollylearning.co.uk)

82 Winter Sport Lane,  
Williston,  
VT 05495, USA

Tel: 1 800 488 2665  
Fax: (802) 864 7626