Bridging the Literacy Gap –

Secondary Schools

By Ros Lugg

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The current landscape

"Literacy is essential for achievement across the curriculum."

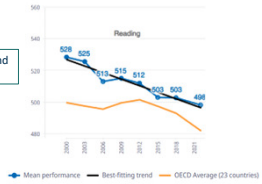
"Research has demonstrated a significant relationship between literacy and the ability to reason efficiently and critically."

EducationHub, 2022

The current landscape - PISA results

Results are deteriorating – although Australia is above the OECD average.

Australia has dropped around 30 points.



The current landscape

PISA 2018 tested 14,000 Australian students.
Percentage of illiterate 15-year-olds had grown to almost 20%.

Around 40% were unable to read at a 'proficient standard'.

Nearly 1 in 5 Australian students start secondary school at or below minimum standards for literacy.

Some Australian Studies

ACER study, 2022

Few secondary schools are consistently providing students with support they are confident will make a difference.

A third of school staff said they found it difficult to identify students who are struggling.

Some Australian Studies

ACER study, 2022

Some teachers also lack confidence about which foundational skills to prioritise and how to organise support in secondary education.

One concern was that interventions are often aimed at providing access to curriculum material at the current year level, rather than developing missing foundational skills.

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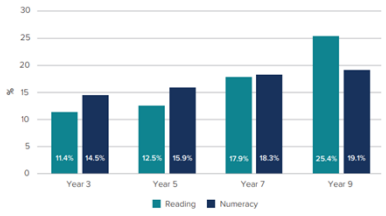
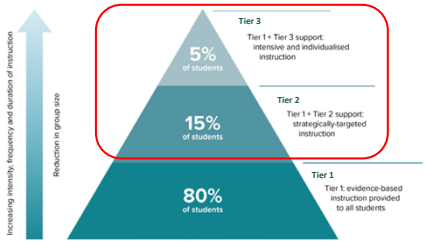
Some Australian Studies

ACER study, May 2023

Figure 1: Proportion of students at or below national minimum standards in 2021



ACER



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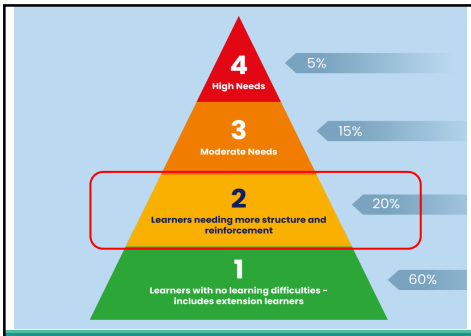

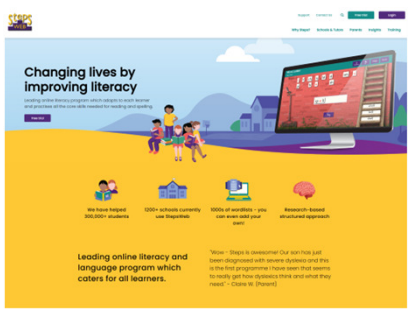

Course Scope & Sequence

Course Level	Scope	Sequence	Grammar & Content
Foundation A	Single consonants Short vowels	a, t, s, p, i, n, d, o	vc/cv/cvc
Foundation B		g, e, m, c, b, u, h, r	Recognise digits and number words
Foundation C	Consonant digraphs	l, f, k, w, th, j, sh, v	Open/closed syllables Suffixes -s, -ing, -ed
Foundation D		ck, ng, x, y, z, wh, qu, ch	High frequency words
Level 1	Initial and final blends Long vowel sounds Consonant patterns	CVC, sh, th, st, ch, ng, ck, r-blends, ay, -all WF	CVCC/CCVC Number words/numeracy concepts Question words
Level 2	Long vowels Vowel digraphs Vowel patterns Doubling consonants	l-blends, end blends, sounds of 'y', -tt /-ll /-ss /-zz, ea, oo (book), doubled consonants	Days of week Suffixes (intro) Compound words Common homophones Months (Read only)
Level 3		ay, ai, a-e, i-e, oo (school), o-e, u-e, -ice WF	Plurals Syllables

Course Scope & Sequence

Level 4	Vowel patterns Consonant patterns R-modified patterns Vowel patterns Prefixes	tch, e-e, -ie, ea (eat), ar, or, aa, igh, str/spr, -old WF	Above, plus Apostrophes (intro) Contractions Silent letters Prefixes Plurals Homophones
Level 5		oi, ou, ir, ow (now), qu-/squ-, oy, ur, soft 'g', er, -ce, ee	
Level 6		ew, ea (head), ow (know), ey, k/ck/ke, un-, ear, oi, are, -ight WF, ck/k/ke	
Level 7	Vowel patterns Consonant patterns R-modified patterns Vowel patterns Prefixes	-nce, -nch, aw, mb, dge, -ness, re-, air, -ue, au, oy/oi, ai/ay	Contractions Prefixes Suffixes Plurals Homophones Maths/numeracy vocabulary Noun/adj/verb Vocabulary study
Level 8		ir/ur, ight/ite, -ure, ch/tch, wa-, non-, tion, ore, -ound WF, -ore WF	
Level 9		ie, ou (u), or, ei, oy exceptions, -ire, -ue, gu-, ou, -ly, -less, -ory /-ery /-ory, -el	

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Course Scope & Sequence

Course Level	Scope	Sequence	Grammar & Content
Level 10	Vowel patterns Consonant patterns R-modified patterns Vowel patterns Prefixes Doubled 'll'	wo- (work), -ible, -able, ch sounds, -cy, rh/ph/gn, ch (sh), ear, -g, end -y (short)	Contractions Prefixes & suffixes Plurals Homophones Maths/numeracy vocabulary Noun/adj/verb Comparatives/superlatives Adverbs Collective nouns Root words Vocabulary study
Level 11		tion (adv), ance, au, ir/er/ur, sion, au/aw, cian, -ar, -ful, soft c	
Level 12		ou/ow, gn, in-, not-, ough, mis-, pre-, ure, eigh, are/air, ch (k), ual WF	
Level 13	As above, cont'd	ar, -ment, -se (z), -ssion, ible/able, qua-, in-/im-, gh, ui, -ire, -al	Prefixes & suffixes Plurals Vocabulary study Morphology (adv) Homophones Noun, adj, verb Maths vocabulary
Level 14		-ibility/-ability, -tion , aw, dis-, -que, sc (s), oar/ear, enge, ive WF, pre-, ph	

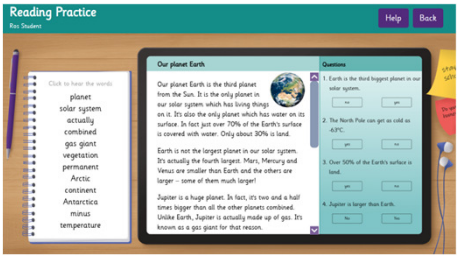
Course Scope & Sequence

Course Level	Scope	Sequence
Level 15	-ful, ic, ish, al, ort, etic, anti-, sub-, -ous, cc, ent, ual	
Level 16	eer/ier/ere, un-/non-, -que, ant, uni/bi/tri, -our, ent/ant	
Level 17	ui, ure, -ect, -ic,-ly, ab-,-ly, -ious, -etic,-ive	
Level 18	au, ph, cc, ssion/sion, ei, ent/ant, -fy, -cation	

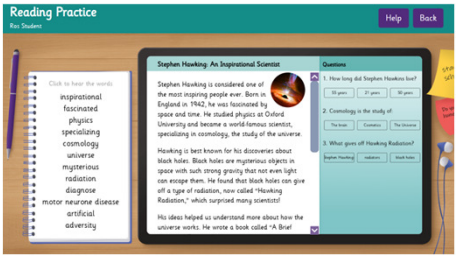
Course Scope & Sequence

Grammar & Content	
CVCC/CCVC	Contractions
Numeracy concepts/words	Prefixes & suffixes
Maths vocabulary	Plurals revision
Days and months	Homophones
Silent letters	Tricky words
Prefixes and suffixes	Maths vocabulary
Plural rules	Vocabulary Development
Compound words	Grammar
Homophones	Comparatives
Word Building/segmentation	Superlatives
Apostophes	Collective nouns
Contractions	Word Roots
Phoneme segmentation & blending	Morphology
Syllabification	Syllabification
Syntax	Syntax
Semantic awareness	Semantic awareness

Course Scope & Sequence



Course Scope & Sequence



Identifying Needs and Reporting

Every student takes the Placement Test when they first go onto StepsWeb.

Placement Test analyses each student's literacy knowledge and places them at the right Level of the Course.

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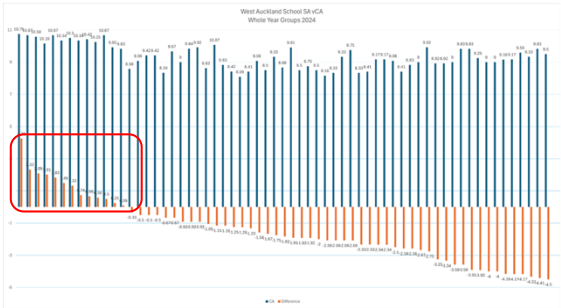
Detailed analytics

Manage Students – Tools – Student Export

Full Name	Latest Spelling Test Result	Latest Spelling Test Result vs Age at Test	Latest Visual Test Result	Word Flash Delay	Overall Accuracy*	Reading / Spelling Accuracy*	Comprehension / Language Accuracy**	Phonics Knowledge / Skills	Notes
Demo Student A	7y 6m	-2m	400ms	250ms	90%	89%	86%	88%	Visual recognition improving.
Demo Student B	15y 0m	6y 4m	50ms	50ms	84%	88%	88%	73%	Needs extra help with phonics.
Demo Student C	9y 9m	1y 8m	100ms	50ms	92%	92%	94%	88%	
Demo Student D	10y 1m	1y 4m	200ms	100ms	85%	87%	86%	79%	Needs extra help with phonics.
Demo Student E	8y 11m	4m	800ms	450ms	92%	91%	86%	93%	Visual recognition improving.
Demo Student F	12y 6m	5y 2m	50ms	50ms	88%	93%	83%	89%	
Demo Student G	6y 0m	-3y 4m	50ms	50ms	89%	90%	90%	84%	
Demo Student H	9y 2m	0m	50ms	50ms	93%	94%	94%	91%	
Demo Student I	7y 0m	-8m	150ms	150ms	89%	91%	89%	82%	
Demo Student J	6y 3m	-1y 3m	200ms	250ms	84%	87%	73%	86%	ESOL Student. Needs extra comprehensio

Identifying Needs and Reporting



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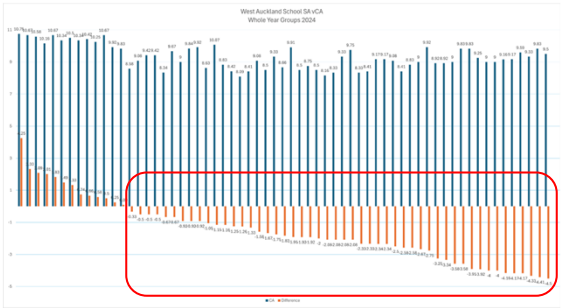
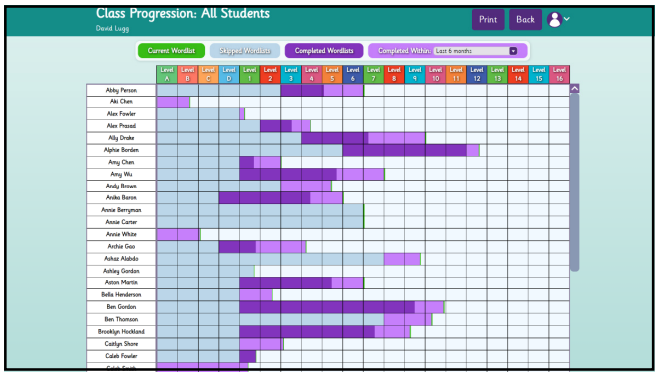


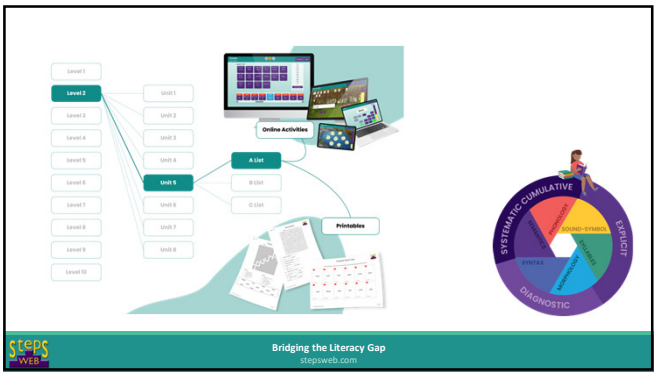
RTLB 6 Whole-Year Group Research Study 2023

Primary Schools	Average gain in 6 months	Average Visual Recognition Speed - initial*	Average Visual Recognition Speed - Current*
Chaucer	14 months	243ms	144ms
Fruitvale	20 months	268ms	121ms
Glenavon	14 months	456ms	219ms
Laingholm	14 months	332ms	164ms
Prospect	12 months	344ms	151ms
St Leonards	14 months	388ms	196ms
Overall	14 months	339ms	166ms

On average, students gained 14 months in spelling age after using StepsWeb consistently for just 6 months.

Class Progression: All Students





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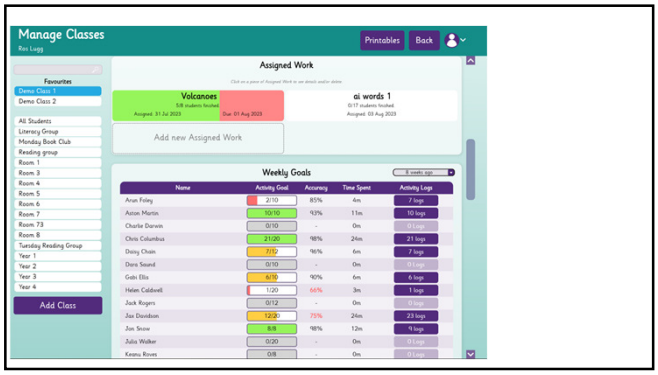

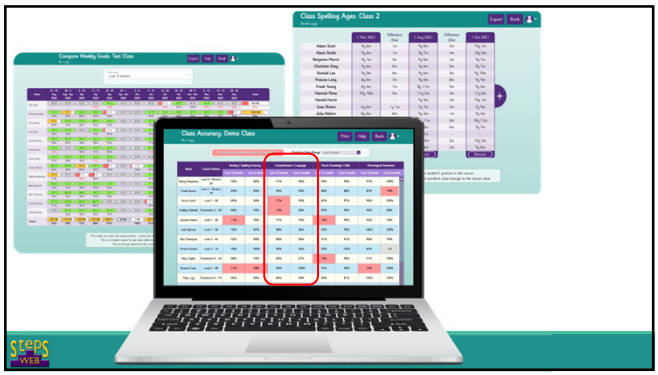

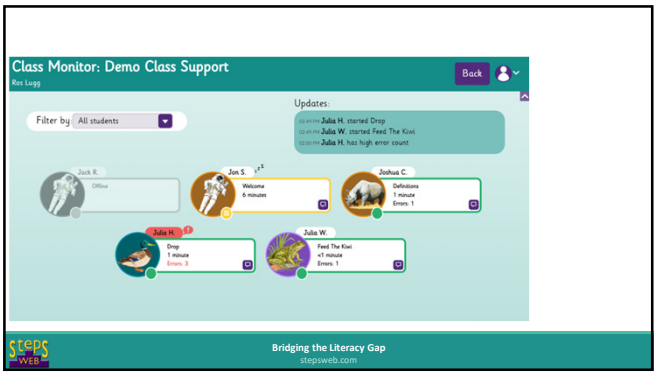

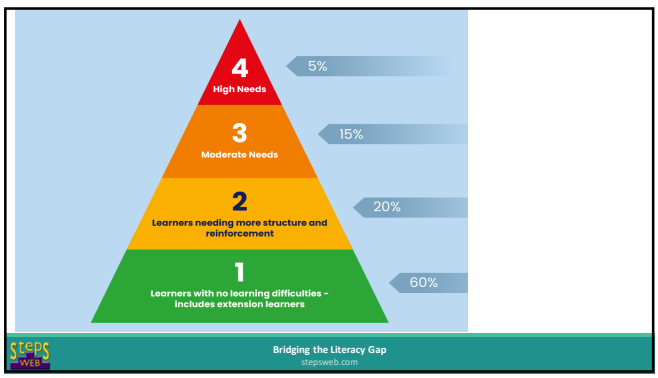

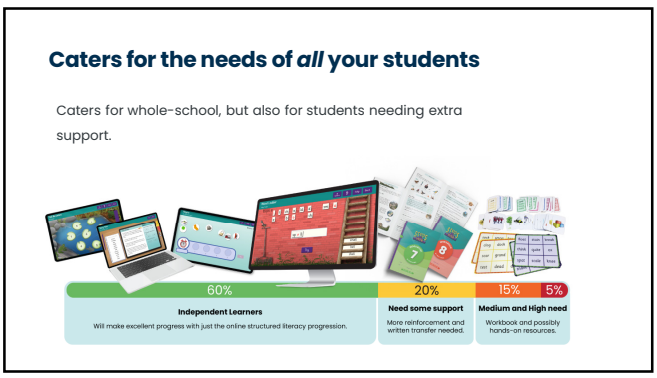

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In summary

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