

**A REPORT INTO
THE *LISTEN TO READ* SCHOOL TRIAL
CONDUCTED AT DE LA SALLE CATHOLIC COLLEGE
CARINGBAH**

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Executive Summary

The Program

- [Listen to Read](#) is a combination of the Read and Exceed reading curriculum and Sound Therapy. It was developed by Catherine McLennan of **Read and Exceed** and Rafaele Joudry and Helen Walden of **Sound Therapy International**.
- Program lessons are recorded with the special Sound Therapy high frequency filtering and the reading curriculum is delivered via audio lessons through a special listening device.

The Trial

- A 12 week trial of the program was conducted at De La Salle Catholic College Caringbah, a Secondary school for boys from Year 7 to Year 10 in Sydney's Sutherland Shire. It was delivered in Weeks 8 to 10 of Term 3 and Weeks 1 to 4 and 6 to 10 of Term 4. Lessons were not conducted in Week 5 as this was blocked off as exam week in the school.
1. The Trial was conducted by Mrs Elizabeth Varde the school's Literacy Facilitator, with Catherine McLennan acting in an advisory role in relation to the reading curriculum and Helen Walden and Rafaele Joudry advising on the technical issues with the listening device.
- ALL PARTICIPANTS demonstrated an improvement in their reading age and word recognition skills. The improvements in reading age ranged from 9 months to 3 years and 3 months over a twelve week period. Two students showed an improvement of 3 years and 3 months and the average improvement was 1 year and 9 months in overall reading age.
 - In relation to improvements in word recognition skills again the improvements were excellent. The improvements in word recognition skills ranged from 9 points to an amazing 67 points with the average improvement being 40.3 points.

Full Report

1. The Program

[Listen to Read](#) is a specialised, intensive reading program which is designed to help people of all ages overcome reading difficulties. The program is a combination of the [Read and Exceed](#) reading curriculum and [Sound Therapy](#) and has come about through the collaborative efforts of Rafaele Joudry and Helen Walden of Sound Therapy International and Catherine McLennan of Read and Exceed.

The combination of these two specialised programs has enabled a new advance in problem reading solutions. With minimal supervision, those experiencing difficulties with the reading process can overcome their difficulties often in a matter of weeks.

The reading curriculum component of the program teaches through a combination of:

- intensive phonics instruction
- whole word approaches
- word attack skills

Once these components have been developed, the students then employ decoding strategies and constantly practice breaking words up into syllables until they can do this effortlessly.

It is important to note that once confidence, accuracy in decoding and fluency are improved, comprehension techniques are employed to assist students to develop further in gaining meaning from what they are reading. The development of this skill must be ongoing to ensure that any improvements are maintained after the program has been completed.

The Sound Therapy component of Listen to Read is crucial in the development of reading skills. The reading curriculum is delivered via audio lessons on a special listening device. The lessons are recorded with the special Sound Therapy high frequency filtering. This filtering stimulates neural pathways to retrain the auditory centres of the brain. This added stimulation helps to improve memory and concentration which enhances the development of reading skills. Sound Therapy improves right ear dominance which allows increased speed and accuracy to the language centre of the brain.

The Program is available for individuals, schools, institutions and other organisations . For more information visit [Listen to Read](#) or phone 1300 473 234

The Founders of Listen to Read

Catherine McLennan (B. Ed, Dip. Teach, Irlen Diagnostician, M.A.A.I.C)

Catherine McLennan, also known by her married name Burnett, began her teaching career in 1986 and has taught extensively in both primary and secondary schools, specialising at secondary level in the subject areas of English and Drama. In 1996 whilst continuing to work part time in schools, she began the private tuition of children and adults with reading difficulties and has personally helped over 500 students to become effective readers to this day. Catherine realised that many students struggled with reading for a variety of reasons, including auditory and/or visual perception difficulties, auditory processing issues, and memory and concentration problems.

In 2010 the official documentation of the program known as Read and Exceed was completed. The program synthesised all the strategies she had learned and employed throughout her teaching career and in her reading tuition business. The

Read and Exceed Program was launched in 2011. Many students throughout the southern suburbs of Sydney showed major improvements in their reading. Word soon spread about the success of this reading intervention..

Rafaele Joudry

Rafaele Joudry has a background in early childhood education and community work. After working in early childhood for two years in France and Canada, she was a community development officer for the department of housing in Australia from 1984 to 1987.

She pioneered the first portable Sound Therapy program in conjunction with her mother, after discovering how the program could benefit her mother's hearing difficulties.

She founded Sound Therapy International in 1989 and has since authored three books on Sound Therapy: *Sound Therapy: Music to Recharge Your Brain*, *Triumph Over Tinnitus* and *Why Aren't I Learning?*

Since founding Sound Therapy International in 1989, Rafaele has toured Australia, Europe & the USA to educate about the impact of sound upon our health. She has given over three hundred lectures, hundreds of radio and TV appearances and has presented her findings at a variety of health related conferences.

Rafaele holds a Bachelor of Social Work and a Masters of Psychology specializing in Sound Therapy. She is also qualified as a teacher of the Alexander Technique, and produced the video: *An Introduction to the Alexander Technique*.

In order to further research into Sound Therapy and how it benefits brain function, hearing and learning, Rafaele is now leading a team of researchers in allied health fields, who are studying its effects on ear and brain function including such conditions as tinnitus, memory, stress, sleep, learning and depression.

In 2011 Rafaele Joined forces with Catherine McLennan to combine the Sound Therapy process with the McLennan reading curriculum, as one of the founders of the Listen to Read program.

How did the collaboration come about?

In 2010, Catherine met Helen Walden (Sound Therapy International) at an expo and purchased the book "*Why Aren't I Learning?*", written by Rafaele Joudry. A conversation ensued about teaching children with reading difficulties and Helen suggested that Catherine contact Rafaele to discuss Sound Therapy as it had helped numerous children with learning difficulties. After reading Rafaele's book and feeling that it answered a lot of questions, Catherine became a Sound Therapy consultant and began recommending Sound Therapy to some clients who were in need of extra help. After doing Sound Therapy and then completing the Read and Exceed Program with tutors the results were amazing to say the least!

The seed was planted and in a phone conversation one evening Catherine asked if the special Sound Therapy filtering would work with a voice. The answer was a resounding "Yes!" and it was decided then and there to combine the two programs and conduct some trials to test the effectiveness of the program.

Background to Literacy Issues

There are numerous reports and studies both recent and not so recent into the state of literacy problems in our schools.

Progress in International Reading Literacy Study

The findings of this 2011 study were released in December 2012 and the results do not augur well for Australia! 49 diverse countries participated in PIRLS (the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study), which seeks to measure reading achievement in a variety of areas for fourth grade participants around the world. The study was previously conducted in 2001 and 2006. 2011 is the first year that Australia has taken part.

In the main measurement area, Average Reading Achievement, where students' performance were assessed against a number of reading tasks, Australia ranked 27th, well behind other countries like Ireland, Canada, New Zealand and even Bulgaria, but just ahead of Poland, France and Spain, who were ranked 28th to 30th respectively.

One significant report finding was that fourth grade girls have much higher average reading achievement than boys in most countries, a trend that was highlighted in Australia's results where, on average, boys scored 17 points lower on the test than their female counterparts.

For more information about the study [visit the website](#) or the [download the report](#).

Auditor-General's Report (October 22nd 2008) "Improving Literacy And Numeracy in NSW Public Schools" Department of Education and Training

This 2008 NSW Auditor-General's Report into the state of literacy and numeracy highlighted the extent of current literacy problems in our schools, stating that "*one in five students are at or below the minimum level needed.*" and that compared to ten years ago the NSW Government has spent over three times more money on improving literacy and numeracy, yet there has been little real improvement. See www.audit.nsw.gov.au

Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training "National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy" 2005

This national inquiry developed a paper that stated "*Teaching children how to link sounds with letters enables them to break the code of reading. This is called 'explicit phonics instruction' and is the foundation of reading, writing, spelling and comprehension.*"

The Trial

- A 12 week trial of the program was conducted at De La Salle Catholic College Caringbah, a Secondary school for boys from Year 7 –Year 10 in Sydney’s Sutherland Shire It was delivered in Weeks 8 to 10 of Term 3 and Weeks 1 to 4 and 6 to 10 of Term 4 Lessons were not conducted in Week 5 as this was blocked off as exam week in the school.
1. The Trial was conducted by Mrs Elizabeth Varde, the school’s Literacy Facilitator, with Catherine McLennan acting in an advisory role in relation to the reading curriculum and Helen Walden and Rafaele Joudry advising on the listening device
 2. Background to the *Listen To Read* Trial
 - A trial of the Read and Exceed Program was delivered to 31 students at the school in the previous year with excellent results.
 - After continued development of the combination program incorporating the reading curriculum of Read and Exceed with the specialised high frequency Sound Therapy filtering, The program known as Listen to Read was documented and recorded onto a special listening device.
 - Two Primary schools one on Sydney’s North Shore and another in the Sutherland Shire trialed the Listen to Read program. The 20 students involved in these early trials showed great improvements in their reading ability. Feedback obtained from teachers involved in the trial was taken on board by the developers and suggestions were discussed and implemented.
 - The updated program was developed with an accompanying workbook. The students at De La Salle were the first to use an updated version of the program
 3. **Selection of students for the trial**
 - The School Executive decided to target to Year 7 students to determine whether intervention in the early years of high school would help these students to bridge the gaps in their reading.
 - MYAT results were considered to determine possible inclusion in the program.
 - Teachers and special needs staff were also asked to nominate students who might benefit from an intensive reading program.
 - The Curriculum Co-ordinator had the final say regarding inclusion in the program and 15 students were selected. Parents were informed about the opportunity and were asked for their support in encouraging the boys to participate fully in the program.
 4. **Prior to the Trial**
 - The Holborn Reading Age Test was administered to all participants before they commenced the program to determine their approximate reading age.
 - The Burt Word Recognition Test and the Castles and Coltheart Test were also administered. These tests are word recognition tests. The scores for both tests were added together to produce an initial word recognition score out of 230.
 5. **Administration of the Trial**
 - The trial consisted of 58 half hour lessons over 12 weeks.
 - Each student had to commit to arriving early to school. Lessons started at 8.30 each morning, students missed Homeroom and the first ten minutes of Lesson 1 each day.
 - The decision to conduct the lessons early in the day was made in order to minimise disruption to their normal lessons.
 - The students were briefed regarding expectations in relation to their participation in the program. They were also given some information about the development and history of the program and were told that they were the first

students to use the updated program Each student had their own personal listening device and a workbook

- They listened to the lessons through headphones following along with the audio in the workbook.
- Initial lessons focussed on going back to basics and refreshing knowledge of names and sounds of the alphabet, vowels and consonant clusters (beginning and ending)
- As the lessons progressed the students had to revise bossy e, vowel blends, prefixes, suffixes, middle sounds and advanced vowel blends. They also completed lots of practice breaking up known and unknown words into syllables.
- Once the students had listened to a particular lesson and felt confident with the content, they had to go to the workbook and write the words or sounds as the audio was playing. If they struggled to keep up they were instructed to listen to that lesson again before attempting the workbook activities again.
- The Facilitator, Mrs Elizabeth Varde, supervised to ensure that the boys were on track and moving through the program at an adequate pace.
- 3 students finished the program after 47 half hour lessons and were on the program for 10 weeks in total. These students worked through the content at a much faster pace than their peers. These students read a variety of short stories aloud to each other and the teacher, in order to practice fluency. They were also given short passages with comprehension questions to ascertain their understanding about what was read.

6. After the Trial

- The tests which were administered before the trial were administered again in the final week of the program to check improvements in reading age and/or word recognition skills.
- A debriefing session was also conducted for all participants and they were all asked to rate themselves with a score out of ten for how much they felt they had improved.
- They were also asked the question *“Is there anything that you can do now that you found hard before completing the Listen To Read Program?”*

7. Lessons from the Trial

- The testing of students before the trial is necessary but also very time consuming and needs to be factored into the staffing when running the program.
- Another reading age test needs to be found which measures reading ages above 13.09 as two participants reached the end of the reading age test without error after completing the program and thus their finishing reading ages could not be determined and included in the averaging of the results. These students show in the Appendix as 9 months +. They reached the end of the Reading Age test which goes up to 13.09
- It is suggested that other reading age tests may be suitable to use in future, the York Assessment of Reading for Comprehension YARC (which is predicted to replace the Neale in the future in many schools) and the Progressive Achievement Test in Reading PATR (available through ACER) Another reading age test which could be used is the New Group Reading Test NGRT.(Also available through ACER)
- The timing of the trial was not ideal. It began in the latter part of Term 3 and then the students had a two week break before starting again in Term 4. Also exams conducted in Week 5 of Term 4 meant that the students did not participate in Listen To Read lessons for another entire week. .
- Even though the students were strongly encouraged by all staff to continue with their studies and participate fully for the remainder of the term after exams, some

seemed to switch off in the latter weeks off term 4 and were difficult to motivate. This was evident in the lateness of some students arriving to class in the morning before school to begin their Listen to Read lessons.

- More information should have been given to parents about the importance of doing extra home study while their child was on the program.
- Some students struggled to finish all the lessons in the 12 week timeframe and did not get to complete the fluency and comprehension activities.
- It may be beneficial to give students a timeframe guide before they begin the program to help them organise themselves more effectively and ensure that time is available to work on these important skills

8. Trial Administrator Comments

- Mrs Elizabeth Varde, Literacy Facilitator at De La Salle Catholic College Caringbah ensured that all students were motivated and on task. One student in particular felt that he did not need to continue with the lessons as his reading was fine. He felt that he already knew all the components which were being revised. Mrs Varde encouraged him to continue and at the end of the program he gave her credit for her encouragement and said that if she hadn't taken the time to speak to him about his concerns then he would have pulled out of the program for sure.
- These are Mrs Varde's comments on the program

Strengths

Improvements in reading were evident after only a few lessons
 Excellent results across the board
 Workbook and Program very user friendly
 Most students engaged with the program
 Some were motivated and did extra listening at home
 Most took it seriously
 Involvement in the program taught them responsibility and commitment
 They began to attempt sounding out unfamiliar words as opposed to giving up
 Many students gained in confidence and were happy to attempt tasks in front of peers
 Students whose auditory processing problems were evident at the beginning saw a dramatic increase in processing time towards the end of the program
 Students enjoyed receiving rewards given out throughout the program
 Increased self esteem and confidence were evident
 Some students were happy to volunteer to read out loud in their normal classes
 Increased engagement in normal classes
 Improvement in organisational skills
 Multi-sensory approach (listening, touching, speaking, writing) kept them engaged in the lessons
 Option of using listening devices instead of computers as some preferred to use these

Areas for Improvement

Disruptions to classes
 Lateness and absences of students disrupted the flow of lessons
 Early morning classes some students struggled to focus before school
 Absence from Homeroom meant they missed out on announcements and award distribution
 Missed out on Monday morning Year 7 meetings and whole school assemblies (impacted sense of belonging)

9. Student Comments

The comments below came from the students in a debriefing session on the last day of the program. They were delivered orally and recorded for the purpose of feedback to the School Executive and for this report.

- I enjoyed using the listening device and I feel that the program helped me improve my reading. I will try to read more now so I get better and better
- I am putting up my hand more in class and volunteering to read aloud now
- Reading books at home and school is a lot easier now
- I am not as shy to read aloud in class because breaking up difficult words is easier
- Working out how many syllables are in words, I have never seen this before, has helped me to read words I would have given up on before doing the program
- I learnt to sound out words which also helped my spelling. I also learnt to read difficult words like "plague"
- I did not like doing the program it was too easy and I don't think it helped me
- I feel like I improved in everything to do with reading but especially breaking words up words into syllables
- I feel much better about myself and my reading. I am proud of myself and feel that my general knowledge of words has improved
- The program was fun I now know lots more words by sight
- I liked getting merit cards when I was working well
- I didn't like having to come to school early to do the program
- I liked the music breaks in the program and I liked doing the program on my own listening device. I did about 8 lessons at home
- I am now trying to read a little bit every day so I don't slip back
- I feel that I understand what I am reading more and I can read really hard words

Conclusions

In looking at the empirical and anecdotal evidence, and bearing in mind some of the limitations and lessons from the trial it seems more than reasonable to conclude that the trial has resulted in improvements in reading age, word recognition, interest in reading and improvements in self esteem and confidence for the students involved

The main points to be noted are

- ALL PARTICIPANTS demonstrated an improvement in their reading age and word recognition skills.
- The improvements in reading age ranged from 9 months to 3 years and 3 months over a twelve week period. Two students showed an improvement of 3 years and 3 months. Average improvement was 1 year and 9 months in overall reading age.
- In relation to improvements in word recognition skills again the improvements were excellent. The improvements in word recognition skills ranged from 9 points to an amazing 67 points! The average improvement was 40.3 points.

The Future

- It is hoped and anticipated that the excellent results of students from De La Salle Catholic Caringbah will be mirrored by many other students.
- The Founders have been approached by Education Officials in both the United States and Singapore who are interested in the program. Hopefully they will have the opportunity to demonstrate the program.

Thanks

Catherine McLennan, Rafaele Joudry and Helen Walden would like to thank the School Executive of De La Salle Catholic College for their faith in us to trial our program. Special thanks to Mr. Michael Egan (Principal) and Mrs Tanya Perritt (Curriculum Co-ordinator), who are always willing to try new ways and programs to benefit the students in their care. Our best wishes to Mr Michael Egan as he takes up his new Principalship at La Salle College Bankstown.

Thanks must also go to Mrs Elizabeth Varde (Literacy Facilitator) for her enthusiasm and professionalism in running the program. Nothing was too much trouble. Thanks also to all the students who participated in the program. The smiles on their faces when they saw the improvements they had made was very rewarding indeed!

Report compiled by Geraldine Massey in consultation with Catherine McLennan

Appendix A

Student Number	Lessons Missed	Chronological Age Sept	Reading Age 1 September	Reading Age 2 Dec	Improvement Points	Word Recognition September /230	Word Recognition December /230	Improvement Points
1	7/58	12.06	09.00	10.09	1yr 9 mths	154	203	49
2	2/47	12.08	13.00	13.09+	9 mths +	201	210	9
3	0/47	12.05	10.03	13.00	2 yrs 9 mths	164	210	37
4	0/47	13.06	10.00	13.03	3 yrs 3 mths	170	204	34
5	17/58	12.08	08.09	09.06	9 mths	114	183	69
6	5/58	12.07	09.03	11.00	1 yr 9 mths	133	183	50
7	4/58	13.00	09.09	11.06	1 yr 9 mths	177	207	30
8	3/58	13.04	10.00	10.09	9 mths	166	201	35
9	4/58	12.09	11.06	13.03	1 yr 9 mths	172	214	42
10	6/58	12.08	10.09	12.06	1 yr 9 mths	159	214	55
11	2/58	13.01	08.09	10.00	1 yr 3 mths	120	172	53
12	15/58	12.07	10.09	12.03	1 yr 6 mths	170	195	25
13	4/58	12.11	10.09	13.00	3 yrs 3 mths	171	217	56
14	5/58	13.00	10.00	12.06	2 yrs 6 mths	172	214	42
15	4/58	12.05	13.00	13.09+	9 mths +	193	222	29