

iDeal Approach Case Study

In 2018, the Holy Family Catholic School in Wanaka embarked on a journey to implement evidence-based Structured Literacy across their entire school.

Led by Principal Jo McKay, the school were focused on success and achievement for ALL learners.



We had various interventions and programmes to assist our 'at risk' learners in Literacy and Numeracy. But we did not have specific diagnostic data and evidence to give us adequate information on the needs of these learners.

We just 'knew' they were struggling but not 'why'.

We had to do more. We could no longer wait for them to fail. We needed to be questioning, we needed to ensure the provisions were purposeful and made a difference to the achievement of our learners. We needed to ensure we were getting 'bang for our buck' and, if not, stop and look at alternative provisions to ensure that we are making a difference."

Jo McKay, School Principal

Roll: 225

Staff: 19

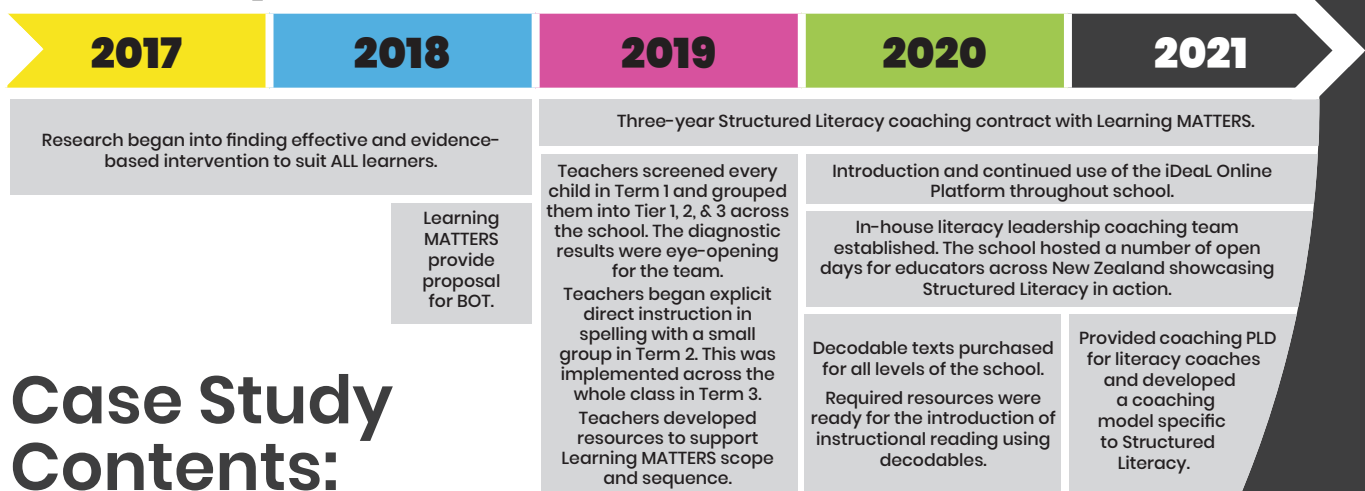
Classrooms: 10

Year Levels: 1 – 8

Decile: 10

Started SL: 2019

Journey at a Glance



Case Study Contents:

1. Life Before Structured Literacy
2. Recalling the Steps
3. Implementation
4. Observations
5. Resources and Costs

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1. Life Before Structured Literacy

While the school had good literacy outcomes for the majority of their students, spelling remained an area of concern, especially for those currently enrolled in intervention programmes. The team knew that changes needed to be made if they were to raise achievement and 'shift the tail.' However, they weren't entirely sure what this would 'look like or what they were looking for!'

Research began with the evaluation of current interventions at the school which included several inherited programmes. They realised the programmes did not offer adequate diagnostic tools to determine individual learners' needs and there

was inconsistency with teaching approaches. In addition, the impact of these programmes on student achievement was considered marginal in relation to the cost of intervention for the proportion of students involved.

The school decided to 'stop doing what had always been done,' and instead, focused on finding a consistent approach that spread the investment of time, energy, and money so that every learner would benefit.

In 2019 Holy Family Catholic School Wanaka began a three-year coaching contract with Learning MATTERS to implement a Structured Literacy approach

and embed a pedagogical shift. Their research indicated that not only would this approach benefit ALL learners but it would be most effective for their dyslexic learners.

Snapshot

- Began research from a place of intervention
- Wanted an approach that spread the investment to benefit every learner
- Had clear strategic goals and a PLD plan for all staff
- Presented a comprehensive proposal to the BOT
- Encouraged dialogue within teaching teams and across the school as part of the transformational change process.

2. Recalling the Steps

Following a period of extensive research, the next step towards implementation was seeking agreement from the Board of Trustees (BOT). Principal Jo McKay highlights, *"It was important to get support and 'buy in' from them in order for effective change to occur."*

Holy Family Catholic School Wanaka had clear strategic goals, *"This is what we want to do, and this is what we want to achieve."* Ensuring they had a clear and specific professional development plan was crucial to future success and this enabled the school to work effectively towards their set goals.

The school engaged with Learning MATTERS to prepare

a proposal to present to the BOT.

This proposal included:

- full PLD for all personnel (every team member was involved)
- coaching by Learning MATTERS consultants for the first three years of implementation
- the cost to implement.

Principal Jo McKay highlighted the importance of embracing and openly discussing different belief sets. *"We engaged in a lot of talk with the team early on. It was going to be a lot of new learning for our staff. We needed the buy in, and we needed the trust."*

Jo stressed the importance

of the team working within a culture of trust. *"Do not rush the process and do not shy away from the dialogue as it's part of the transformational change process."*

Consultation with the school community took place once a mutual understanding of the 'way forward' was reached. As the school were undertaking a pedagogical shift, they wanted to be confident with their understanding, and were purposefully strategic with the amount of communication to whānau in the first year.

3. Implementation

From the start of implementation, Principal Jo McKay made it very clear, *"We are not going to be a Structured Literacy school in one year. It is going to take time."*

A deliberate decision to focus PLD on Structured Literacy was made. In consultation with their Learning MATTERS consultant, the school created a timeline of steps for the teaching team to enable them to focus on what was planned for each year. This was an important part of the growth cycle. This timeline included:

1. Modelled lessons and observations
2. Team teaching
3. Video and analysis practice
4. Reading, sharing and understanding the research about the Science of Reading
5. Time allocated to 'have a go' in the classroom.

6. Using the teaching tools and resources
7. Observation time to review practice in other classrooms
8. Time allocated for reflection related to progress made
9. Modelling of coaching practice with Literacy Leaders.

Jo reflects: *"It was important that every single person was on that journey. All teachers, all learning assistants, everyone learning about the science of learning to read and write."*

This process led to consistency of practice in classrooms and a consistency in the language used throughout the school. This was fundamental in assisting with the changes that the school saw from NE all the way through to their Year 8 learners.

The initial focus was centred on spelling before moving to instructional reading using

decodable texts.

Once understanding, language and practice was established throughout the school (approx. two terms), a Structured Literacy teaching time was then allocated. Not only did this assist with school wide consistency but clear expectations for teachers and students now existed.

In 2020, the school formed an in-house Literacy Leadership team comprised of coaches and mentors subscribing to the iDeal Approach. A key focus for the third year of the coaching package with consultants from Learning MATTERS was to ensure the practice was embedded throughout the school and that the Literacy Leadership team were upskilled to take over the coaching role. The aim was to ensure sustainability of practice and investment.

Typical 'Day in the Life'

STRUCTURED LITERACY TAUGHT BETWEEN 9AM AND 11AM.

Structured Literacy is a priority area of learning in all classrooms and is therefore taught in the morning block (9 – 11 am).

Every class from Year 0–Year 8 have explicit direct instruction in spelling for 20 mins, 4 x per week. A typical literacy block in all areas of the school is 1.5–2 hours each day.

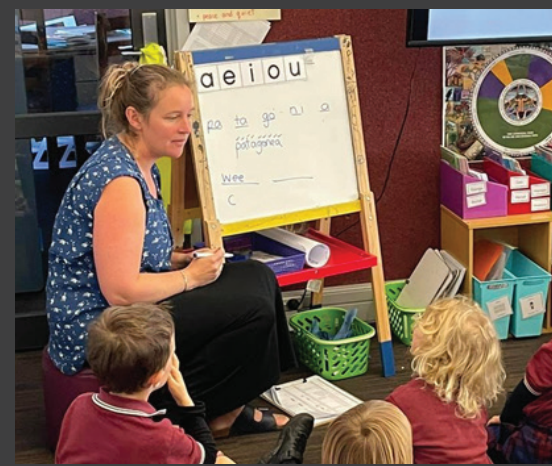
Tier 2 and 3 learners have a daily double dose of explicit instruction in spelling and instructional reading with a Learning Assistant. In addition, these students are involved in a follow-on lesson based around the same concept being taught in class.



3. Implementation /cont...

Tier 1 Classroom

- Time of session between 9am – 11am
- Length of session 20mins
- Teaching is explicit
- Lessons are systematic and follow the iDeal Scope and Sequence
- Lessons build on concepts previously learned
- Teaching using iDeal lesson plans and resources
- When in smaller groups the following methods are used as provided in iDeal lesson sequences:
 - » Phonological Awareness
 - » Review previously learned concept
 - » Review vowel sounds and open and closed syllables
 - » Introduce new skill
 - » Decode / Encode / Decode
 - » Introduce irregular words
 - » Sentence level reading and dictation
 - » Fluency – word level reading activities
 - » Morphology activities
- Use of decodable readers for novice readers and older struggling students
- iDeal Whānau Tips are sent home
- Diagnostic assessments administered each term



Tier 2 Intervention

- Group size = 2-4 students
- More focused sessions with a Learning Assistant
- Using the same approach as in class, but a more intensive session consolidating the concept taught in class to provide more exposure and further opportunities for practise to commit to memory
- Diagnostic assessments per term, PLUS progress graphs, non words reading test.

Tier 3 Intervention

- Group size = 1:1 maximum
- More focused sessions with a Learning Assistant
- Using the same approach outlined in Tier 1 but with intensive and explicit instruction
- Diagnostic assessments per term, PLUS progress graphs, non words reading test.

The implementation of Structured Literacy aligned consistency and cohesion of teaching practice and learning right through the school. This began with building teacher knowledge and practice at Tier 1. Once complete, a phased approach was undertaken to align with Tier 2 and 3 instruction.

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Aligned
Tier 1	Structured Literacy approach adopted	Structured Literacy	Structured Literacy	Structured Literacy
Tier 2	Previous intervention continued	Structured Literacy approach adopted	Structured Literacy	Structured Literacy
Tier 3	Previous intervention continued	Previous intervention continued	Structured Literacy approach adopted	Structured Literacy

4. Observations

Principal Jo McKay says, *“This whole process has been about making a difference for every learner.”*

“Although the school were (prior to Structured Literacy) seeing success, there were still children ‘in the tail’ that weren’t shifting. I can tell you that an evidence-based Structured Literacy approach CAN shift that tail.”

The biggest impact has been for neurodiverse learners, but it is an approach that has benefited every child.



The teaching team appreciated the fact that there was no other PLD undertaken during this time. They were therefore able to focus on the Structured Literacy learning. Principal Jo McKay reflected on the changes that had taken place: *“It has absolutely changed who they are as teachers, changed how they approach teaching. They now have knowledge on executive function, working memory, and neurodiversity, which they had probably heard about before, but didn’t really know what they meant.”*

The team now feel confident in what they do, they have a clear plan and there is a clear pathway. Jo emphasised that successful aspects and elements of previous teaching, training and experience were retained –

they did not ‘throw the baby out with the bathwater!’

Teacher Voice:

“Having a consistent school wide approach has supported each teacher to succeed.”

“I have gained a LOT of knowledge through teaching the concepts and my confidence is increasing slowly.”

“Knowing what to teach has allowed us to focus on how to teach and to have confidence that what we are doing is based on science and evidence.”

Student Voice:

The feeling around the school is a sense of achievement.

“I feel more confident spelling words and I will just try again by listening to the word and using my tool hand.”

“We can now spell these words: characteristics,

panther, citizenship, smother, productive.”

Whānau voice:

The feedback has been very positive from whānau. The communication has always been strategic, research and science based. This included bringing in experts to run parent evenings.

“We have loved the structured literacy programme at Holy Family. Our kids have benefited greatly from evidence-based learning and the consistent approach taken across the school. Listening to our kids sounding and figuring out each word as they are learning to read through the tools provided to them through the programme has been amazing. Both our children are now avid little readers at 6 and 7 years old.”

4. Observations /cont...

Diagnostic testing looked at aspects of phonological awareness as well as the students' ability across alphabetic principle. Within this group of learners were those who had previously been identified as having all the interventions the school had to offer. Following the testing, a large group of additional students requiring intervention came to the attention of the school.

The students were allocated to appropriate groups and taught four times per week.

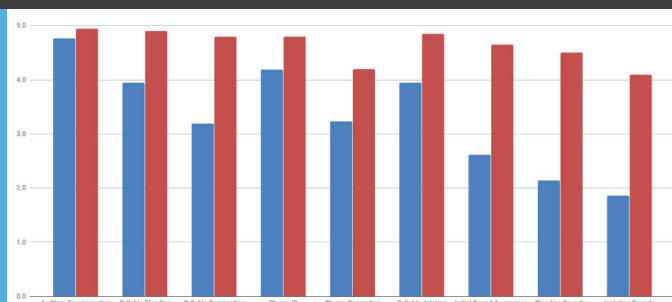
The charts to the right show pre and post data from Tier 3 intervention groups (taught for nine weeks) in relation to their progress in phonological awareness, sound to symbol association and spelling concepts (alphabetic principle).

Phonological Awareness

Year 1-2

Tier 3 students

Stage 1

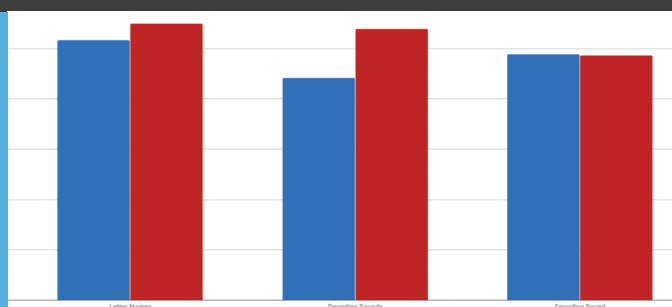


Sound to Symbol Association

Year 3-4

Tier 3 students

Stage 1

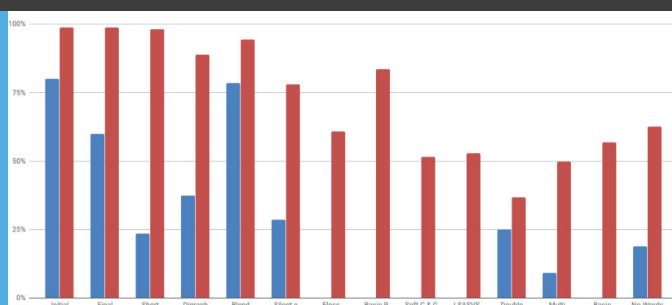


Spelling Concepts

Year 5-8

Tier 3 students

Stage 2



5. Resources and Costs

• iDeal Consultancy – 2019–2021:

- » 30 days of workshops and in-school coaching for all staff.
- » Subscription to the iDeal Approach (began in 2020).
- » \$67,135 over three years.

• Decodable texts and supporting materials:

- » Including Phonic Books, Learning MATTERS resources and Equipped for Reading Success by David Kilpatrick.
- » \$32,500 over three years
(this was the only literacy spending and \$16,000 was donated by Friends of the School).

Three year investment:

TOTAL \$99,635

(teacher release time not included)

Breakdown cost

\$147

per student

(per year : over three years)