

## **Article for ACT TEACHER**

### **U-CAN READ: Literacy Intervention Years 3-10**

Increased parent education is critical to improving literacy for all children, particularly with children who struggle to attain literacy success. U-CAN READ is a literacy intervention that is based on 25 years of parent education as well as a well-researched intervention model. The results of U-CAN READ verify the positive impact of parent participation on literacy standards. The time is right for educators to rethink how parents can contribute to improved literacy results. According to the Literacy and Numeracy Report (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2008) despite ongoing attention to benchmarking and monitoring performance over the past decade the literacy levels of Australian children have not improved. Collaboration between parents, teachers and students can help remedy the problem.

### **Parent Education**

Research highlights the lack of effective and successful parent initiatives in literacy. Cunningham and Allington (2003) point out that most parents are unsure of how to teach reading or help their children with literacy development. The positive impact of parent education on children's reading acquisition is crucial and too often underestimated. According to research involving 1174 families by Senechal (2006) when parents were taught specific literacy skills to use with their children, they were twice as effective as parents who listened to their children read and six times more effective than parents who read to their children. In addition, Project ROAR (Reach Out And Read) indicates that parents are eager to help their children and when

instructed in appropriate literacy activities can positively affect the academic progress of their children (Gilliam Gerla & Wright, 2004).

U-CAN READ was established to address the needs of struggling readers by educating parents in the use of reading strategies and ideas and an understanding of how children learn to read and write. Parents participate in a series of five two hour workshops and a reflective session in which they learn strategies, acquire knowledge and gain support in assisting their children achieve literacy success. In addition, parents accompany their children in the Individual Assistance Program (IAP). Up to twelve sessions are conducted in collaboration with a literacy advisor. The Literacy Centre operates five days a week with extended hours to cater for the diverse needs of families. U-CAN READ endorses current best practices in literacy interventions and includes a strong research component.

### **Success of the program**

92 children enrolled in U-CAN READ in 2009. As well as supporting children's literacy success, there were positive comments from parents regarding improvements in their literacy and parenting skills. When asked about the benefits to the family, parents responded

He has become more confident and enthusiastic about reading within two weeks of this course (Parent, 2009).

There is no stress anymore when getting [Jon] to read. Everyone now is laid back and enjoys listening. It has been a very rewarding experience (Parent, 2009).

The evaluation data highlights the success of the intervention. In 2009, 57% of all children gained more than five reading levels, 33% gained more than 7 reading levels and 18% gained 9 or more reading levels.

Children's attitudes towards reading and their perceptions of themselves as readers also improved. At the conclusion of the program, 45% of children considered themselves to be "good" or "very good" readers and writers, 35% considered themselves to be improved readers and writers. This was compared to 25% of children saying they were good readers and 4% saying they were improved readers at the beginning of the program.

U-CAN READ is currently accepting applications for 2010. For further details about the program or to apply, please go to: <http://www.canberra.edu.au/centres/ncclr/ucanread>

## References

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