



Overview

Blaxcell Street Public School is situated in Granville, South Western Sydney. 98% of students who attend Blaxcell Street Public School are from language backgrounds other than English. In 2007 they found 48% of the children had reading ages below their chronological age. The school set out to buck this trend and aim for zero reading failure. Get Reading Right's cutting edge synthetic phonics programme was implemented. Within 16 weeks teachers saw huge improvements; failure was dramatically reduced – zero reading failure is becoming closer to reality.

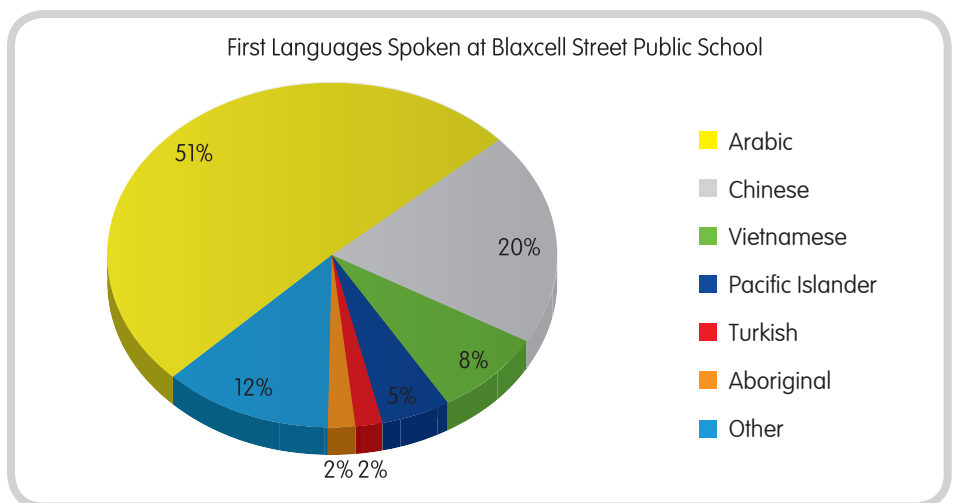


The challenge for Blaxcell Street Public School

Due to the socio-economic status of Granville, Blaxcell Street Public School was identified as a Priority School on the Priority Schools Program which aims to: 'improve the literacy and numeracy achievements and engagement of students from low socio-economic status backgrounds in New South Wales*'.

50% of the 45 teachers are newly graduated, which brings energy and enthusiasm to the class but less experience in teaching reading and in dealing with struggling readers.

A school of 785 children with 98% of children without English as their first language means children struggle with vocabulary as well as the reading problems associated with English as a second language.



*<http://www.psp.nsw.edu.au>

Reading levels at Blaxcell Street

The Burt Reading Test was administered to children. The test gives children an age score; ideally children should score equal to, or above, their chronological age. Children with scores below their chronological age have reading difficulties (e.g. Joe is five years old but his age score is 4.5 years, so Joe is struggling with learning to read).

At Blaxcell Street 52% of the class had a reading score six months or more, less than their chronological age. "Second language learners typically find it harder to learn to read. With 98% of our children in a second language, getting every child reading felt like an uphill battle." Hani Zahra, Deputy Principal, Blaxcell Street Public School.



Aiming for zero reading failure

Up to 40% of children failing to learn how to read has unfortunately become the norm in many areas of Australia. But Blaxcell Street Public School is putting a stop on this trend. They are setting high expectations for every child – aiming for zero reading failure.



How Get Reading Right is helping make zero reading failure a reality at Blaxcell Street

Jo-Anne Dooner, from Get Reading Right, provided two days of training for the teachers. The school then implemented the Get Reading Right programme with two of their year one classes. For 30 minutes a day over 16 weeks children were taught synthetic phonics with Get Reading Right's fun and multi-sensory programme. Each child's reading skills were tested pre and post the study.

Learning to read with synthetic phonics involves decoding or 'breaking' words into separate phonemes (sounds) that can be blended together to read a written word. Synthetic phonics explicitly teaches all 44 sounds of the English language and that this process can be reversed to 'encode' or spell words.

What they found

Get Reading Right' synthetic phonics programme made a dramatic difference to all children's reading and spelling:

- In only 4 months they reduced the number of children whose reading was six months or more, below their chronological reading age from 52% to 12% (8% below the national average)

- 94% of children showed growth by the end of the project

- In only 4 months 35% of the class showed between 10 and 38 months growth

Blaxcell Street have continued with the Get Reading Right programme, implementing it from kindergarten to year 3. "The parents are delighted at the improvements in their children. The teachers are motivated and highly engaged in the delivery of a quality teaching and learning program that supports all children in achieving success." Hani Zahra, Deputy Principal, Blaxcell Street Public School.

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the tools to read and spell

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