

The Oral Language Supporting Early Literacy (OLSEL) project was successfully completed with Foundation- Year 2 students in Catholic Education Melbourne schools in 2009. The OLSEL project sought to develop the oral language competence of students in the early years, to facilitate early literacy development. The goal of the research initiative was centred around professional learning to support teachers to more effectively plan and implement strategies which specifically targeted the development of oral language skills in the early years of schooling with a particular focus on the first year of schooling.

The results of the OLSEL project indicated that focused teaching of oral language abilities within the context of existing literacy work units in the early years lead to both statistically and educationally significant reading comprehension gains for students.

The OLSEL Project Extension seeks to continue the project for Foundation to Year 2 students, in addition to extending the project to students in Years 3-6.

This initiative involved participating schools completing a pretest of their knowledge in relation to oral language prior to participating in 3 days of professional learning with an oral language focus. Participants of the project had the opportunity to partner with speech pathologists and learning consultants from the Learning Diversity team. Together they planned for explicit oral language instruction and tasks and constructed and analysed formative assessments to monitor student progress.

Schools involved in the OLSEL project F-2 were introduced to the English Online Interview and invited to conduct this assessment, available on the Insight Assessment platform, with their students in Foundation, Year 1 and Year 2. The EOI gave teachers insight into their students' knowledge in the areas of:

- Oral Language
- Phonemic Awareness
- Reading
- Vocabulary
- Storytelling
- Words and Sounds
- Comprehension
- Writing

These insights allowed them to plan for explicit instruction in the following areas: Phonemic and Phonological Knowledge, Receptive Vocabulary, Story Grammar and Understanding and Using more Complex Sentences depending on the needs of the students.

For those schools participating in the OLSEL Extension project, schools were invited to use their existing PAT – Reading data as an entry point prior to beginning the project. Teams of teachers in Years 3-6 participated in professional learning on Dr John Munro's High Reliability Literacy Teaching Procedures:

1. Getting Your Knowledge Ready
2. Vocabulary
3. Reading Aloud
4. Paraphrasing/Visualising
5. Saying Questions the Text Answers
6. Summarising
7. Review