

READY FOR SCHOOL

support for vulnerable children in wake of poor NAPLAN results

Annabelle Cornish, Mosey Bolton and Michael Reading at the TSH Literacy program. Below: Teacher Shannon Rose.
Pictures: Andrew Ritchie



TWO HOURS OF LEARNING POWER

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Every week during the school term, small groups of primary school children gather at the Teach Speak Hear headquarters to engage in intensive literacy lessons.

Over time and at their own pace each child develops their skills and, more importantly, according to teacher Shannon Rose, discovers a love for reading and writing.

"Many parents have shared their excitement when their child begins to choose books on their own or shows pride in their reading and writing," Ms Rose said.

"We regularly hear that children are applying their new skills in their larger classroom, feeling proud of their achievements."

The two-hour sessions for students in Years 1 to 3 aim to develop skills in reading, spelling and writing through early intervention and explicit teaching.

The program has seen increased demand over the past 12

months, which Ms Rose attributed to the growing awareness around the importance of early literacy intervention.

Ms Rose said she was seeing common trends in children who struggled with literacy — including difficulties with phonemic awareness such as hearing, identifying and manipulating the sounds in words, and struggles with emotional regulation.

"(Other trends are) challenges with attention and focus, which can affect how well they stay engaged and follow multi-step instructions, and difficulty organising and expressing their thoughts in writing, even when they have good ideas," she said.

"A clear pattern is that these children benefit from a systematic, explicit, evidence-based program that breaks learning into small, manageable steps.

"They also need regular review to move skills into long-term memory, supporting consistent growth and lasting confidence."

Ms Rose said early intervention gave children the best chance to close learning gaps before they widen.



"Classrooms are more complex than ever, teachers do an amazing job with stretched resources to cater for complex classrooms, and we call on the Government to step up support, in the early years but also across the board," he said.

"In a State as wealthy in WA, Western Australians shouldn't accept that one in three students aren't achieving those core base-

line proficiencies in reading, writing and numeracy."

He also called on the WA Government to release the findings of a review of the School Education Act, aimed at strengthening access, inclusion and services across the public system for students with a disability.

The review was completed in December and Ms Winton said

last month she was working through the details.

The 2025 NAPLAN results revealed location, family background and socio-economic status continue to be factors in students' scores.

Almost one-in-three Indigenous students was classified as needing extra support, compared with just under one-in-10 non-Indigenous students.

And just one-in-five students in very remote areas had results that were considered strong or exceeding expectations — far below the 70 per cent of students in major cities who achieved the same rankings.

Federal Education Minister Jason Clare said the national results showed encouraging signs but there was more work to do.

The \$16b, 10-year agreements signed with all States and Territories, which is tied to reforms, has started to roll out.

It will include phonics and numeracy checks in the first year of schooling. The WA Government is the only jurisdiction not to sign up to the numeracy checks, stating it already does out on-entry testing in pre-primary which includes numeracy.