

# Nuffield Early Language Intervention in an AISNSW School

A prospective longitudinal pilot study assessing the  
impact of Early Years Language Intervention on students'  
Oral Language, Literacy and Socio-Emotional Outcomes



HUNTER  
CHRISTIAN  
SCHOOL



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# Executive Summary

Oral language skills at school entry are critical for literacy, academic success and pro-social behaviour. This project implemented an evidenced based, oral language intervention –the Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) program– delivered in 2023 and 2024 to two cohorts of Kindergarten students. The NELI, developed in England, has an extensive evidence base with randomised clinical trials and an independent evaluation conducted with 193 primary schools by the Education Endowment Foundation. The research base identifies significant improvements in students’ oral language, early word reading and pro-social behaviour. The extent to which this program can be applied to an Australian independent school context has yet to be determined.

Hunter Christian School (HCS) is an independent, co-educational Christian school located in Mayfield, Newcastle, serving students from Pre-Kinder to Year 12. Established in 1981 as the first independent Christian school in the Hunter Region, HCS has a strong heritage of over 40 years, rooted in the ministry of Mayfield Baptist Church. The school is a member of the Australian Association of Christian Schools, the Association of Independent Schools in NSW, and Christian Schools Australia, providing direct bus connections to several surrounding local government areas.

The school’s mission is to *“ignite a life of purpose”* for every student, fostering individual growth and a love for learning within a Christ-centred community. HCS emphasises knowing each child as an individual, setting high goals, and equipping students to pursue their God-given passions and calling in life.

The 2021 student enrolment is 336 students, comprising 179 boys and 157 girls. The school enrolment includes 6% of students who identify as Indigenous and 2% of students who have a language background other than English. The Index of Community Socio-Economic Advantage (ICSEA) is 1041 (where an average value is 1000) and percentile rank of 66.

## Strategic Intent

Hunter Christian School’s strategic direction is encapsulated in its “Good to Great by 2028” plan, which outlines both short-term and long-term objectives.

## Short-Term Objectives:

- Strengthen the school’s presence as a caring, trustworthy, and safe community.
- Increase student enrolments.
- Develop an affirmative Christian culture that ignites purpose in learners.
- Enhance resources to enrich learning for all students.
- Establish strong foundations for collaborative leadership across all year levels.
- Develop a unique, research-based pedagogy.
- Foster inspirational influence and community contribution through partnerships.



### **Long-Term Objectives:**

- Advance the Kingdom of God and strengthen the Church through education.
- Maintain high standards in Christian education, ensuring staff alignment with the school's statement of faith.
- Double the student population within five years, expanding to double-stream classes in primary and secondary.
- Embed core values—Christ Centredness, Community Contribution, Inspirational Influence, Authentic Service, and Passionate Pursuit of Knowledge—into all aspects of school life.
- Establish globally recognised learning initiatives and a leadership centre of excellence for staff and students.

### **Strategic Pillars:**

- Christian Life & Service
- Academic Innovation & Excellence
- Quality Leadership
- Resourcing & Investment
- Entrepreneurship

## **Strengths**

### **Christ-Centred Community:**

HCS is anchored in Christian values, fostering a dynamic relationship with Jesus and a biblical foundation for learning and life. The school's culture is shaped by its core values: Christ Centredness, Community Contribution, Inspirational Influence, Authentic Service, and Passionate Pursuit of Knowledge.

### **Individualised and Holistic Education:**

The school is committed to knowing every student as an individual, tailoring education to meet unique needs, interests, and learning styles. Students benefit from a nurturing and supportive environment where their academic, social, and emotional growth is prioritised.

### **Academic and Co-Curricular Excellence:**

HCS offers a rigorous, innovative curriculum designed to ignite creativity and critical thinking. Students participate in a wide range of cultural, sporting, and outdoor education activities, supported by a well-established pastoral care program and dedicated, professional staff.

### **Community Engagement and Partnerships:**

The school places strong emphasis on community involvement, encouraging students to be contributors and leaders both locally and beyond. Partnerships and mentorship opportunities support personalised career planning and student success.

## Visionary Leadership and Strategic Growth:

Guided by a clear vision and robust strategic planning, HCS is focused on sustainable growth, resource enhancement, and the development of leadership capacity among staff and students. Hunter Christian School stands out for its commitment to holistic, Christ-centred education, its nurturing community, and its strategic vision for growth and excellence, making it a leading independent Christian school in the Hunter Region.

Our teaching team together with speech-language pathology academic and clinical leads delivered and evaluated NELI; a Tier 1 (whole class) program with Tier 2 (small group) and Tier 3 (individual) supports for those Kindergarten students who either did not meet the NELI language screener criteria or were determined to be educationally at-risk by the interdisciplinary team. Teacher acceptability of the NELI program was rated high, largely due to the play-based but explicit oral language teaching approach. The team also examined how well the NELI program aligned to the NSW K-2 English syllabus with the program's content being well aligned to the K-2 English curriculum and to other key learning areas including Mathematics, Science & Technology, Personal Development, Health, Physical Education and the Creative Arts.

Students' oral language and socio-emotional development improved for both cohorts of Kindergarten students as measured before and after NELI delivery. Benchmark oral language comparisons of students who had not received NELI (Year 1, 2023) compared to Year 1 students who had received NELI in the prior year (Year 1, 2024) identified a significant increase in the number of students moving from high risk cut off scores to achieving benchmark performance.

By implementing NELI, Hunter Christian School addressed the needs of Early Years children with weak oral language skills, giving them a better start to achieving literacy, social and academic success. NELI can be embedded successfully within the Early Stage 1 teaching team.





# Introduction

## Background

### What's oral language got to do with it?

The NSW K-2 English Syllabus (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2021) implemented the “Oral Language and Communication” and “Vocabulary” outcomes in Term 1, 2023.

Figure 1 displays the organisation of English K-2.

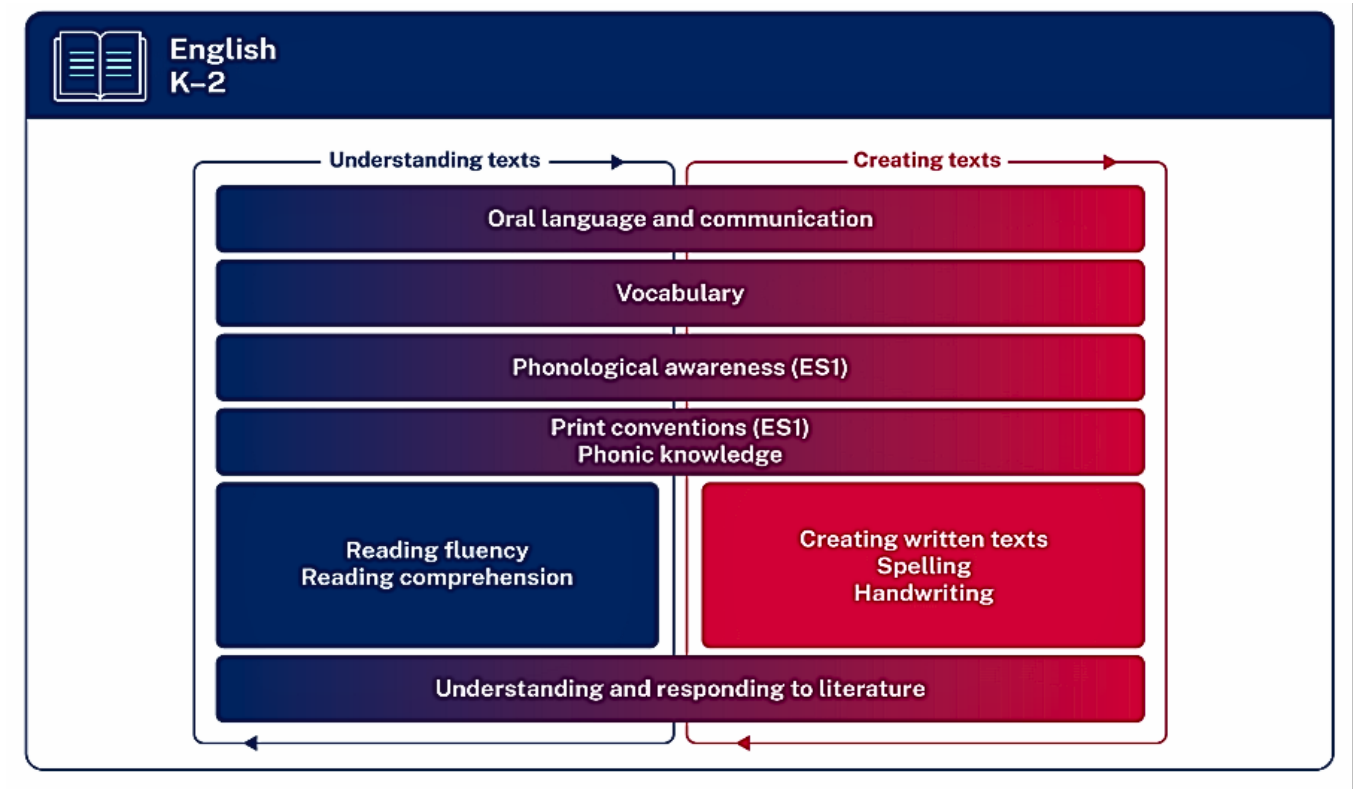


Figure 1: [The organisation of English K-2 from the NSW curriculum](#)

The structure of this new syllabus is in alignment with well-attested theories on the science of reading. The Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986) states that reading comprehension is a product of two components: word decoding and oral language comprehension. In Scarborough’s Reading Rope (Scarborough, 2001), the two components are illustrated as two main strands. The word recognition strands (e.g., phonological awareness and decoding) and the oral language comprehension strands (e.g., verbal reasoning, vocabulary, language structures) develop in tandem and “weave” together over time with teaching and practice, leading to skilled reading. Prior to the implementation of the new syllabus, many schools had made the shift to using explicit systematic synthetic phonics approaches to teach word reading skills however, there has been less focus on supporting oral language in the classroom in preparation for the development and support of student’s reading comprehension. This is counter to the extensive research evidence that demonstrates a strong relationship between oral language skills at the time of school entry and later literacy success (Hulme et al., 2020).

Further, the importance of oral language to children's social competence cannot be understated. There are many studies linking children's oral language proficiency to social competence and pro-social psychosocial development (e.g., Jurkic et al., 2023; Rose et al., 2018) and the Oral Language and Communication Outcomes in the NSW K-2 Syllabus includes content related to oral language for social and learning interaction. This highlights the importance of oral language for students' academic and social outcomes.

Twenty percent of Australian children at the age of four have below average oral language skills (Reilly et al., 2010; Speech Pathology Australia, 2022). This increases to 40% when considering children who experience social adversity such as those living in households with small parental incomes, single parenthood, low levels of maternal education or significant levels of parental mental or physical ill health (Law et al., 2011, Smith et al., 2021). Concerns about children's low oral language and social cognitive skills in subsequent years since the Covid pandemic have also been reported with poorer results identified for young children who experience social adversity (Nevo et al., 2024, Scott et al., 2024). One of the motivations behind the development of the Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) was to provide targeted language support to children with weak oral language early on. This then provides the foundations they need for good oral language to arrest the potential knock-on negative effects of poor oral language on later literacy development, and social and emotional well-being.

### What intervention options do families have to seek out support for their children's oral language skills?

The typical support model for oral language intervention in NSW schools is a parent pays 1:1 withdrawn Tier 3 style model delivered by private speech pathologists. Many schools and students in regional areas are unable to access speech pathology services due to costs and availability. Schools in NSW also do not typically employ speech-language pathologists (SLP) on staff. Speech pathology support is very difficult to access for school age students, especially in a public health setting and in many metropolitan, regional and remote areas (Verdon et al., 2011). Teachers typically have in-class assistance from teacher aides in order to support children with disabilities in the classroom but the aide's skill set can vary considerably for this purpose (Carroll et al., 2012). The change in educational curriculum with the 2022 implementation of the NSW K-2 English Syllabus has meant that there is a need to support teachers in their delivery of explicit, oral language classroom instruction. Classroom teachers and teacher aides must now directly teach children's oral language skills with this area of pedagogy known to be a skill area that requires professional learning support (Stark et al., 2016).

### Rationale and justification for the project

Hunter Christian School is a K-12 single stream comprehensive, co-educational independent school located in Mayfield, a suburb of Newcastle within the Hunter region of NSW. The school has a school prep program available the year prior to Kindergarten. The 2024 student enrolment across K-12 according to the My School Website ([www.myschool.edu.au](http://www.myschool.edu.au)), is 310 students comprising of 155 boys and 155 girls. The school enrolment across K-12 included 6%



of students who identify as Indigenous and 5% of students who have a language background other than English. The Index of community socio-economic advantage [ICSEA] is 1057 [where an average value is 1000] and percentile rank of 71.

This project allowed for the opportunity to work with a small but dedicated group of passionate teachers and speech pathologists. Hunter Christian School had already trained staff in explicit, systematic synthetic phonics teaching which was being implemented in Early Stage 1/Stage 1. This is important to recognise because we know that word recognition instruction (e.g., phonological awareness and decoding) and oral language instruction are both needed for students' successful literacy development. It also meant that the teaching staff were ready to focus on oral language explicit instruction.

With strong school leadership, the teaching staff and speech pathologists aimed to improve the oral language skills of all children entering kindergarten and to build interdisciplinary capacity and practice. The project has relevance for other independent schools in regional areas as we strive to address inequity of health service speech pathology provision for students living in NSW by delivering a whole of class, tiered oral language program, one that has an evidence base.

We proposed a prospective, pilot study with a longitudinal component assessing the pre and immediate post implementation of NELI as well as longer-term impact of early years language intervention on students' oral language, literacy, and socio-emotional development. This report provides student outcome data for oral language and socio-emotional development. The literacy outcomes will be forthcoming in another publication as that data set has yet to be analysed.

NELI also offered a solution for addressing teacher knowledge and confidence in explicitly teaching and supporting the needs of Early Years children through the training of teaching staff and the delivery of this evidence-based intervention. As such we were also keen to investigate the experiences and acceptability of the NELI program from our teaching staff. Our approach involved speech-language pathologist-teacher coaching, whole-class teacher-led, and small group/individual sessions by teacher aide delivery, coupled with a response to intervention (RTI) approach that fostered collaboration between teaching staff and speech pathologists for those children that needed additional support or diagnostic evaluation determined by assessment but also by progress monitoring data.

## Literature Review

### Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) – what is it?

The Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) is a structured program designed to improve the oral language skills of children aged 4 to 5 years. It includes an assessment phase, delivery phase and a re-assessment phase. Teaching staff have access to two, self-paced, online training modules (Module 1: language fundamentals) and (Module 2: practical guidance for delivering NELI) that should be completed by the teachers and teaching aides during the children's assessment phase. The assessment and re-assessment phases include

administering an oral language screener called LanguageScreen to all the children. The screener is delivered as a mobile app and takes less than 10 minutes per child. The program spans 20 weeks (two school terms), and combines whole class, group and individual sessions to provide comprehensive language support.

The assessment data informs a tiered approach to student support in that those identified as having low oral language skills are the likely candidates for the small group and individual sessions. The whole class lessons (20–30 mins) are delivered three times a week including an introduction, narrative or vocabulary activity and a plenary. The small group sessions are conducted three times a week for 20–30 minutes each. They focus on listening skills, vocabulary and an oral narrative activity that focuses on story telling and comprehension skills. Individual sessions are held twice a week (15 minutes) further reinforcing oral language skills. The program adheres to a standard schedule with enough flexibility for the teacher to adapt the schedule should other school activities arise (e.g., school excursions) and with a bank of activities for the teacher to choose from. The program comes with resources including detailed teaching plans, flashcards, music and narrative resources, as well as “Ted” the puppet.

For more information about the NELI program, refer to: <https://oxedandassessment.com/uk/>. At the time of our first-year (2023) implementation of NELI, OxEd and Assessment Ltd (OxEd) had a whole class UK version of NELI that was under refinement. The official launch of whole class NELI resources were available for 2024. Hunter Christian School was provided with these resources in-kind for 2023–2024 as part of this research project. OxEd is a University of Oxford spinout company who have now partnered with Pearson Australia and produced a NELI program for Australian and New Zealand. See: <https://oxedandassessment.com/au-nz/>.

## Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) – what’s the evidence?

NELI was originally developed by Professor Charles Hulme, Professor Margaret (Maggie) Snowling, Dr Claudine Bowyer-Crane, Dr Silky Fricke and Dr Gillian West. Randomised and cluster randomised clinical trials with the NELI program in schools across England have shown that small group NELI intervention in the first year of formal schooling can significantly improve oral language skills (Hulme et al., 2020; West et al., 2021). In six months, children’s oral language skills made 3–5 months of additional progress, with an average of seven months for children from less advantaged backgrounds (Education Endowment Foundation, 2023). In addition, there is evidence that implementation of the NELI program positively impacts behaviour and psychosocial development (Fricke et al., 2017; West et al., 2021).

An independent and national scale up impact evaluation study by the Education Endowment Foundation rated NELI’s evidence a 5 out of 5, and “very low” for costs (Education Endowment Foundation, 2023). A longitudinal study also showed that children’s oral language effect sizes were maintained six months after the delivery of NELI but found no improvement in word reading was observed (Fricke et al., 2013). However, a 2-year follow-up study of the West et al (2021) trial found that students who completed NELI had better oral language and better reading comprehension compared to students with lower language ability as well as



better single word reading skills than the control group (Hulme et al., 2025). LanguageScreen has also been validated as a reliable oral language screener (rated as good to excellent reliability) that is also sensitive to showing change following oral language intervention (Hulme et al., 2024).

At the commencement of this project it was not known whether NELI —an evidence-based intervention— would translate to an Australian educational context. Implementation research facilitates the translation of evidence-based interventions into real-world practice. Context is critical in implementation research because the effectiveness of an intervention hinges not just on the intervention itself, but also on the specific setting in which it is applied (Bauer & Kirchner, 2019) and factors such as organisational culture and stakeholder relationships play a crucial role in determining how interventions are embraced, modified, and maintained over time.

NELI is one potential solution for addressing the needs of NSW’s Early Years children with weak oral language skills. An added potential value of NELI is that it can also help build capacities of school staff regarding knowledge and skills support for children’s oral language and early reading development. Given that NELI provides clear instructions, resources and training for teachers and teacher aides it was an attractive program to pursue but the resources available at that time were developed for students and teaching staff based in England. We were uncertain about the vocabulary used within the program, whether the lesson objectives and content aligned with the NSW K–2 English curriculum and whether the schedule of lessons could be delivered within an independent school, kindergarten classroom. Teaching staff acceptability of NELI was therefore essential to evaluate. Students’ outcomes were also important to gather, as with any evidence base, data-informed teaching staff and schools can make strategic and evidence-based decisions regarding resource allocation which then speaks to the sustainability of a program in the longer term.

## **Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

The purpose of the study was to deliver an early year’s oral language program —the NELI — to two cohorts of kindergarten students from Hunter Christian School and evaluate teacher acceptability of the program and student’s oral language and socio-emotional outcomes.

Our research questions were:

1. Can NELI be implemented by a trained teacher and teacher aides within the educational context and routines of Hunter Christian School? Specifically, was the NELI program acceptable and appropriate for implementation and continued delivery after the project?
2. Do kindergarten students who received NELI show growth in their oral language skills and socio-emotional wellbeing?
3. Do Year 1 students who received NELI the year prior show more improvement in oral language when compared to Year 1 benchmarking performance of Hunter Christian School students who historically, did not receive NELI?

## Research Approach

We applied Komesidou and Hogan’s Generic Implementation Framework in Schools (GIF-School; Komesidou & Hogan, 2023), an implementation framework for school-based research and practice. Based on GIF-School, we conceptualised this research within the following implementation outcomes; teacher acceptability, appropriateness, fidelity, sustainability (based on teacher data) and student outcomes based on measures of oral language and psychosocial development. This project used a mixed-methods approach and a two-year implementation timeframe. The qualitative component addressed research question 1 while the quantitative data addressed research questions 2 and 3. Mixed-methods allowed for qualitative and quantitative data collection and analyses that was suitable and feasible within school-based research.

## Research design

This was a prospective, longitudinal, pilot study. In each year, terms 1 and 4 were designated for pre-post student and teacher data collection phases. NELI delivery was conducted in Terms 2 and 3. See Figure 2 for a schematic design of the study.

# Method and Data Collection Approaches

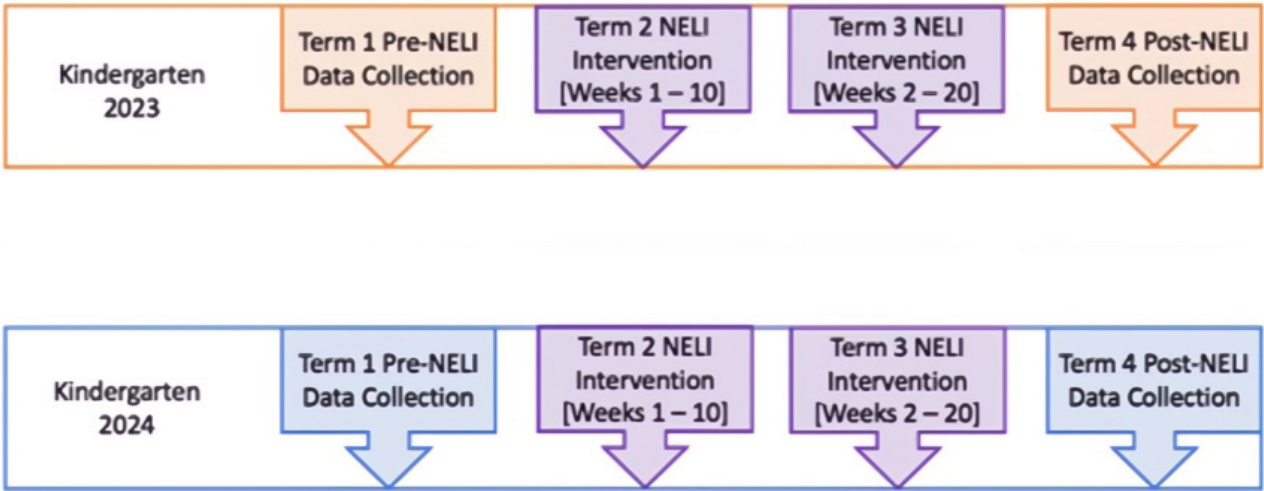


Figure 2. Implementation study timeline

The pilot involved one kindergarten class per year of implementation. As such, an experimental design with a concurrent control class was not possible. The implementation study timeline illustrates a within-group design that is appropriate for answering research question 2. The longitudinal follow-up evaluation (not included in Figure 1) involved using a benchmark comparison group. The comparison group is a no-NELI group by virtue of being in Year 1 and tested in Term 1, 2023. That is, they are students who were enrolled in the grade ahead of the NELI kindergarten students. Their performance was compared to the Year 1 2024 group (who received NELI in kindergarten 2023). This addressed research question 3 and is illustrated in Figure 3.



Figure 3: Year 1 students who received NELI (in orange) compared to Year 1 benchmark who did not receive NELI (in green).

## Intervention design

Whole-class NELI at Hunter Christian School was delivered by the class teacher while the small group and individual sessions were delivered by the teacher aide. Figure 4 illustrates the weekly schedule.

Who delivers?	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Time per week
<b>Class teacher</b>	<b>Whole Class</b> 20 - 30 minutes	<b>Whole Class</b> 20 - 30 minutes	<b>Whole Class</b> 20 - 30 minutes	1 – 1.5 hours
<b>TA</b>	<b>Small Group</b> (4 – 6 students) 25 minutes	<b>Small Group</b> (4 – 6 students) 25 minutes	<b>Small Group</b> (4 – 6 students) 25 minutes	1.5 hours
<b>TA</b>	<b>Individual</b> 15 minutes		<b>Individual</b> 15 minutes	2 – 3 hours

Figure 4: NELI weekly schedule delivered in Terms 2 and 3, 2023 and 2024.  
Note: TA = teacher aide



## Ethical considerations

This study was approved by The University of Sydney Human Ethics Research Committee (2022/HE000934). Note, for 10 Year 1 2023 students involved in the benchmark comparison data collection who presented with clinically significant concerns, our speech pathology team provided weekly in school support targeting oral narrative and phonological awareness skills for that term and discussed these results with their class teacher and parents.

## Recruitment

Potential adult participants included teaching staff (kindergarten teachers and the teacher aides) that support kindergarten at Hunter Christian School. Potential child participants included kindergarten students (2023 and 2024) and year 1 students (2023) also from Hunter Christian School. The school administrator sent out the study flyer, study information sheet and consent forms for students and the chief investigator sent the study information sheet and consent form for the teaching staff via email. See appendix 1 for the flyer, appendix 2 for the information sheet Kindergarten students, appendix 3 for the information sheet Year 1 students and appendix 4 for the information sheet for teaching staff. Parents/guardians signed written consent forms for their child to be included in the study. Teaching staff also signed written consent forms. See appendix 5 for parent/carer consent form Kindergarten and appendix 6 for parent/carer consent form Year 1 and appendix 7 for the staff consent form.

## Participants

We had three groups of participants. Teaching staff included one class teacher and two teacher aides, all female. The class teacher held a teaching degree and 25 years of teaching experience in early childhood education and care settings. At the start of the research program, it was her first year teaching kindergarten. The teacher aides had various classroom support experiences and a diploma in early childhood education. In terms of the student cohort, Table 1 identifies the number recruited for each kindergarten year as well as the number of year 1 benchmark students.

Table 1: Student’s demographics

Cohort	Number at the start of the year (M:F)	Number at the end of the year (M:F)	Number of students with English as an additional language
Kindergarten (2023)	19 (10:9)	18 (9:9)	1
Kindergarten (2024)	23 (12:11)	23 (12:11)	1
Total kindergarten students	42 (22:20)	41 (21:20)	2
Year 1 (2023)	16 (8:8)	NA	1

Note: M = male, F = female, NA = not tested at the end of the school year



## Research procedure

Fidelity of the delivery of the NELI program was measured by the proportion of planned lessons delivered to the NELI intervention small groups and the whole class teacher delivered lessons. The acceptability, appropriateness and sustainability of the NELI program was evaluated via semi-structured interviews at the end of 2023 and early 2025 with the teaching staff. These were conducted by a member of the university academic mentoring team. Appendix 8 provides the interview schedule.

Pre-assessment testing in 2023 was conducted by Mrs Kathryn Thorburn (KT; a dual trained speech pathologist and teacher), Dr Natalie Munro (NM; academic mentor and speech pathologist) and a student speech pathologist on her fourth-year placement at Hunter Christian School. Post testing 2023 and pre-post testing in 2024 was conducted by KT and NM. All testing was conducted in the learning support room next door to the kindergarten classroom. NELI uses LanguageScreen as the screening tool appended to the program to provide information to identify which students present with low language abilities. It is also used as an outcome measure. LanguageScreen has four subtests: 1) Expressive Vocabulary, 2) Listening Comprehension, 3) Receptive Vocabulary and 4) Sentence Repetition. LanguageScreen uses a traffic light system to identify language skills ranging from no concerns; “green” (a standard score of 90 or above), “amber” (a standard score between 82–89) and “red” (a standard score of 81 or below) indicative of clear concerns that oral language skills are in need of support. Our research team also wanted to assess the children’s oral narrative abilities, their socio-emotional skills and early reading skills. We chose the Cubed Narrative Assessment (Peterson & Spencer, 2016) in Term 1 and Term 4 of kindergarten for both kindergarten cohorts and at Term 1 of Year 1 (2023 cohort only).

The class teacher completed the Brief Early Skills and Support Index (BESSI; Hughes et al., 2015) in Terms 1 and 4 of kindergarten. For early literacy skills, students completed the York Assessment of Reading Comprehension (YARC; Hulme et al., 2009) in Term 1 of kindergarten and Year 1 and the Acadience Reading test (Acadience Learning, 2022) in Term 1 and Term 4 of kindergarten and in Term 1 of Year 1. The Acadience Reading and Cubed Narrative Assessments are free universal screening tools that allow student progress to be benchmarked against curriculum standards that also allows progress monitoring. The Brief Early Skills and Support Index (BESSI) is a behavioural adjustment measure. The sub-scale of 12 items covers behavioural regulation, attention and sociability and was used in the COVID-19 NELI roll out in schools across England (West et al., 2021). The YARC is a standardised reading assessment with Australian norms.

## Data Analysis

The interview transcripts from teaching staff were coded and analysed iteratively and thematically using NVivo. Due to the pilot nature of the study, descriptive statistical analyses were conducted on the student outcome data.

## Results and Findings

Receipt and set-up of the NELI materials took place in January 2023. All pre- assessment was completed during Term 1 (see procedures above) and a group of 6 students (three females, three males) were identified for the small group (2) and individual sessions (6). Implementation during 2024 occurred in a similar fashion with pre-NELI testing conducted in Term 1 and a group of 9 students (5 females, 4 males) identified for the small group (2) and individual sessions (9). The decision as to which students received small group and individual sessions was based on a collaborative discussion between the class teacher and the speech pathologists. It included discussion of the students' LanguageScreen results, the NLM results and teacher observation of the students' participation in class.

The class teacher implemented the Tier 1 classroom NELI lessons (see Figure 3) mid-morning, three times a week (Monday-Wednesday) and after the small group lessons. Having NELI delivered in the first three days of the week meant that if staff were unwell, then the lessons could be rescheduled to later on in the week. The small group and individual lessons were delivered by the teacher aides (one teacher aide for most of 2023 and then another teacher aide continued for the second half of 2023 and all of 2024). This allowed the students in the small groups to receive pre-teaching of key concepts and key vocabulary. The synchronisation of Tier 2 (small group) sessions with the Tier 1 (whole class sessions) allowed the students who received the small group lessons to preview and practice the session content prior to the whole class lesson. This meant that the students who were most at risk of learning failure had been primed for success through advance exposure to the vocabulary and narrative tasks with small group and 1:1 support, rather than waiting for students to fail.

The Tier 1 teaching materials required the class teacher to create a small number of resources and map the content of the themes in the NELI program to the NSW English Syllabus. The content covered within NELI has many cross-KLA links which were not apparent until after the delivery of the units at the completion of 2023. In terms of fidelity, the class teacher completed all NELI classroom lessons in 2023 and 2024. The class teacher and teacher documented each lesson and student observations with the teacher aide reporting back to the class teacher after each small group/individual session.

## Teacher and teacher aide interviews

To explore our first research question around teacher acceptability, appropriateness and sustainability of NELI, semi-structured interviews were conducted at the end of 2023 and early 2025. The following themes were identified and are represented in Figure 5.



Figure 5: Themes identified from teaching staff interviews

## Theme 1: NELI is fun learning for everyone

Both the teacher and teacher aide reported that the students were extremely receptive to the content, lessons, and games within the NELI program both within the whole class and intervention programs. Kindergarten students loved the games for vocabulary learning, the oral stories and retell activities. The teaching staff reported that while the program was structured, there was plenty of play-based elements to support and promote the oral language skills of all the students. Figures 6 and 7 are photos of whole class NELI in action.

*"They really do enjoy it and I love to do the things that they (the students) are having fun."*

*"They (the children) get familiar with the games. There's a bingo game and it's sequenced across 6 weeks on or off and by the time you get to the last sort of game, as you get to the end of that six weeks, they are loving it."*

*"I really loved TED (the puppet). Kindergarten you know, they are tiny, they are little, he's just a real eye catcher. It takes the emphasis off the teacher, initially. They start focusing on Ted and they really do enjoy that. I particularly love the stories that they listen to, the full narratives. I think that's a real training. They're not short. Even I've got to listen. It's a relaxing way to actually bring them down after doing different activities, we are stopping and we are listening to this. The kids find a comfy spot and everyone is quiet and its lovely and then drawing out their answers following the question prompts, you see that they can tell you so much more by the end of NELI than they could at the beginning."*

*"The role playing alongside the verbal interactions and instructions helped the students and they love Ted."*



Figure 6: Ted the NELI puppet interacting with the kindergarten students.





Figure 7: Whole class NELI lesson with Ted!

## Theme 2: Oral language gains seen in class and at home

The stories within NELI allowed the class teacher to share resources with the students' families. An unexpected benefit of the classroom NELI program was the ease at which oral narrative tasks have been incorporated into homework activities which generated opportunities for home practice for all students. The class teacher also invited parents to visit and talk about their occupation for the topic "People who help us".

*"There's lots of lessons that came go home, so the sequencing practice, after we've done it in class, there's a page that we can print, that can go home and then, when they practice it at home and then come back together, I saw them rise so much more so you can certainly share... I can tell you that every single one of my parents would know what NELI is".*

*"I'm really into the discovery play learning, so when we had specific topics that's when I tried to align some different areas in the classroom so if we were doing the community helpers we had the fire, the emergency services that related to that."*



Figures 8 and 9 illustrate story retelling and a parent visiting the class to participate in a NELI lesson.



Figure 8: A student retelling a story to his peers



Figure 9: A class parent talking about their occupation for the NELI topic "People who help us".



### Theme 3: Scheduling of lessons supports class participation

The teaching staff highlighted the importance of scheduling the Tier 2 small group lessons before the Tier 1 classroom lessons and that this synchronisation supported the outcomes of students with lower language levels. It challenged the concept that students need additional revision after they have experienced learning failure and instead highlighted the benefit of intervention support prior to the whole class lesson to proactively support students through opportunities to preview lesson content so that they are primed to maximise learning alongside their peers. This led to improvements in class participation for those students including an increase in volunteering answers and working collaboratively with their peers.

*“Having the targeted students spend time in the content prior to the whole class is just a really strong match up and those students wouldn’t be as confident as they were without having the extra support, they needed prior. It’s a definite strength to the program to have them feeling that way before coming into the whole class.”*

*“Their hands fly up and when they are called on, even if they don’t put their hand up, they’ve usually got the answer or they make a really good attempt and these are the students I would notice who generally take a back seat so it’s such a positive influence on their confidence.”*

*“The alignment (between classroom and small group/individual lessons) is a strength because you can have a teacher aide providing support but then how do those students develop their confidence when they come back in straight to different content or activities so that in itself is a strength.”*

*“It levels the playing field a little bit, they are more likely to raise their hand and participate, they are more likely to engage in other lessons not just in NELI lessons, we have seen their confidence raised in the class setting.”*



Figure 10: small group NELI lesson



Figure 11: An individual NELI lesson

#### Theme 4: Collaborative team work reaps benefits

The teaching team identified how the project has benefited from a cohesive team, where each team member actively fulfils a complementary role. The project was well planned and team members have been able to embrace their role, communicate effectively with the team as well as develop an appropriate degree of autonomy to implement their component of the project. The contribution of the support from the project team member Kathryn Thorburn (Language and Learning) and academic mentor Professor Natalie Munro ensured set-up of resources, provided mentoring and coaching to teaching staff, completion of the ethics application and annual progress reports as well as compilation of data and liaison with the UK NELI team. The Hunter NELI team have presented at a national and an international conference.

*"Your teacher aide is the person that you spend the most time discussing the students with, and that relationship is really important."*

*"From the school leadership, they were a listening ear and I certainly felt cheered on from that they would come by and that was lovely for them to come into classroom to see what was happening. The support from the research team had a thorough understanding of the project itself and I needed a go-to that was beyond the school especially across the first 10 weeks of the program where I had regular opportunities to catch up and then the next 10 weeks were easier. Me being able to share things was really good. The more conversations you have, helps you grow."*





Figures 12 and 13 show the Hunter NELI team presenting at national and international conferences.



Figure 12: The Hunter NELI team presenting at the Language, Literacy & Learning Conference hosted by DSF, Dyslexia+ SPELD Foundation in Perth, March 2024.

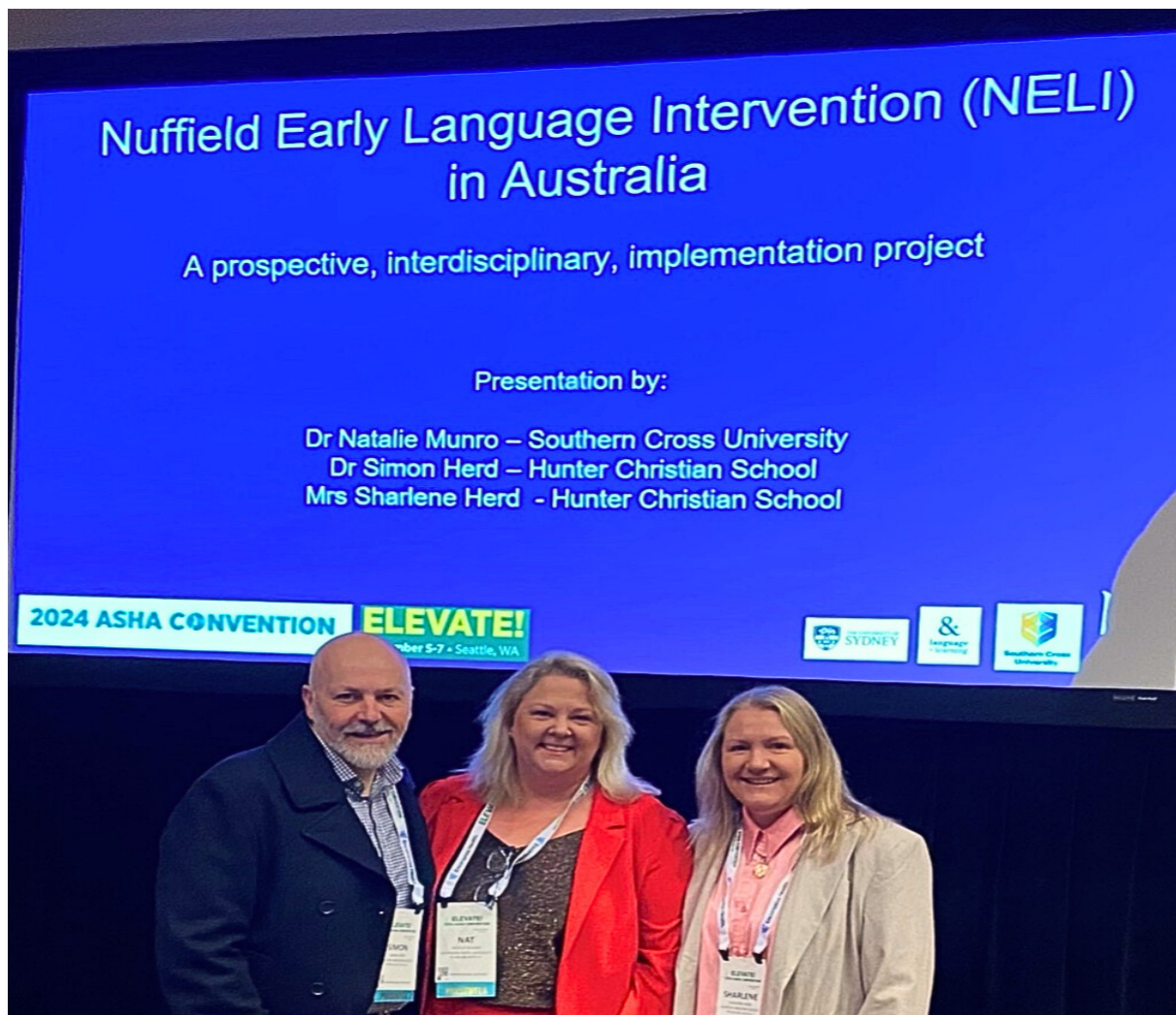


Figure 13: The Hunter NELI team presenting at the American Speech, Language & Hearing Association (ASHA) National Convention in Seattle, December 2024.

## Theme 5: NELI and beyond!

The teaching staff indicated their intent to continue to implement NELI in the future. The LanguageScreen was considered feasible for the teaching aide to complete at the beginning of each kindergarten year and the teacher was happy at how well NELI fitted in with the English K-2 curriculum and syllabus. The teaching staff felt confident that Hunter Christian School would support continuation of the NELI program within their school because it was a great way to address the oral communication needs of Early Years children which would provide all students a better start to achieving literacy, social and academic success.

*"I'm looking forward to presenting it (NELI) again."*

*"I know that parents of students who have done NELI, feel like their child has come a long way and I know the stage 1 staff are also interested in how Kindy has learnt in a certain way and how that can be transferred to what they do in Stage 1 next year."*

## Student outcomes

To consider student outcomes after NELI implementation we considered:

1. The students' growth of oral language skills and socio-emotional wellbeing, specifically their LanguageScreen and BESSI results for the 2023 and 2024 kindergarten cohorts.
2. A Year 1 benchmark comparison. To do this, we compared the oral language skills of students who had not received NELI (Year 1, 2023) compared to Year 1 students who had received NELI in the prior year (Year 1, 2024).

### LanguageScreen data from Kindergarten 2023 and 2024

Figure 14 shows Kindergarten 2023 and 2024 performance on the total standard score of the LanguageScreen. For 2023, of the 19 students who completed pre-post LanguageScreen, 13 of those students demonstrated meaningful gains. The average class gain was 10 standard score points. Meaningful gain on LanguageScreen is considered to be five standard score points. In 2024, of the 23 students who completed pre-post LanguageScreen, 20 students demonstrated meaningful gains. The average class gain in 2024 was 12 standard score points.

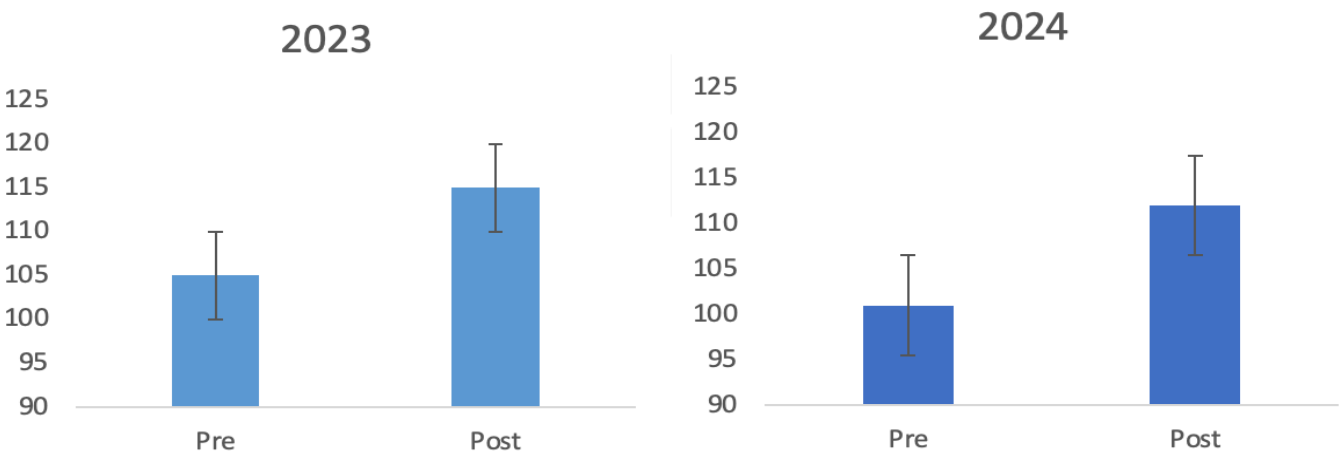


Figure 14. Language Screen Kindergarten class standard scores 2023 & 2024

### LanguageScreen subtest data from Kindergarten 2023 and 2024

Figure 15 shows the LanguageScreen subtests of expressive vocabulary, listening comprehension, receptive vocabulary and sentence repetition. Positive growth is noted for expressive and receptive vocabulary as well as listening comprehension after NELI intervention. Sentence repetition standard error bars overlap for pre-post 2023 which likely indicates less improvement for this subtest but 2024 data shows some improvement. Less growth observed may be due to this subtest reflecting more of a psycholinguistic processing measure which may not be sensitive to change but overall, the two years of data show positive growth pre-post NELI intervention.



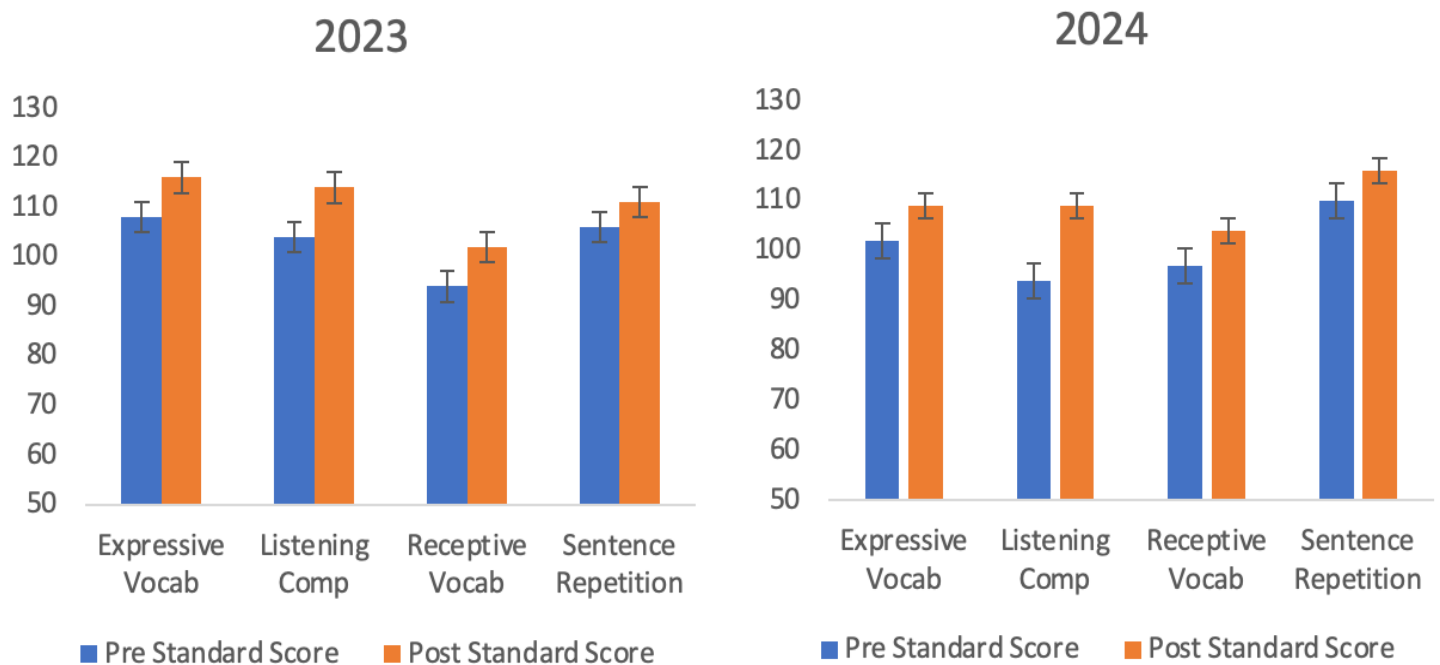


Figure 15. Language Screen subtests Kindergarten class standard scores 2023 & 2024

Brief Early Skills and Support Index (BESSI) data from kindergarten 2023 and 2024

Figure 16 shows improvement in the student's behavioural regulation in the kindergarten 2023 and 2024 cohorts. The 2024 cohort also shows improvement in the subscale Attention.

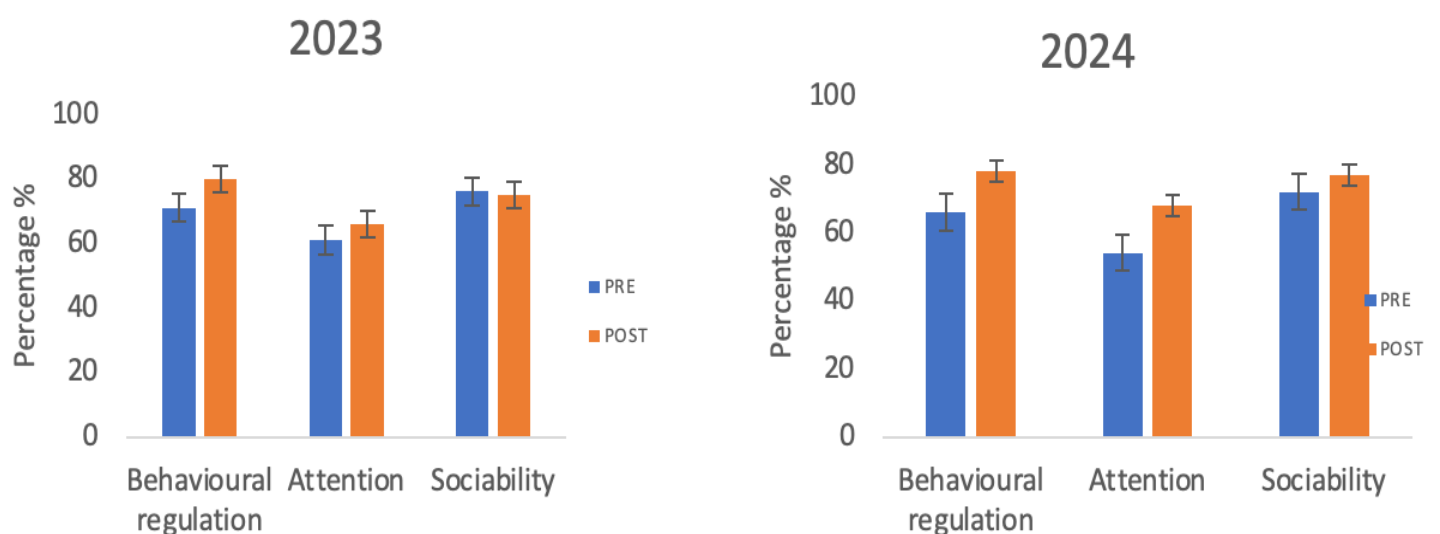


Figure 16: Brief Early Skills and Support Index (BESSI) scores before and after NELI intervention for the kindergarten 2023 and 2024 cohort.

## Year 1 benchmark comparison results

Figure 17 displays the benchmarking data for Year 1 (no NELI) to Year 1 (received NELI) using the Narrative Language Measure (NLM) from the Cubed Narrative Assessment (Peterson & Spencer, 2016). The average score for the Year 1 class who had not received the NELI intervention was 9.9 where the high risk cut off score was 13. The average score for the Year 1 class that had received the NELI intervention the year prior in kindergarten was 15.5. This surpasses the high risk cut off score for year 1 students and above the benchmark score of 15.



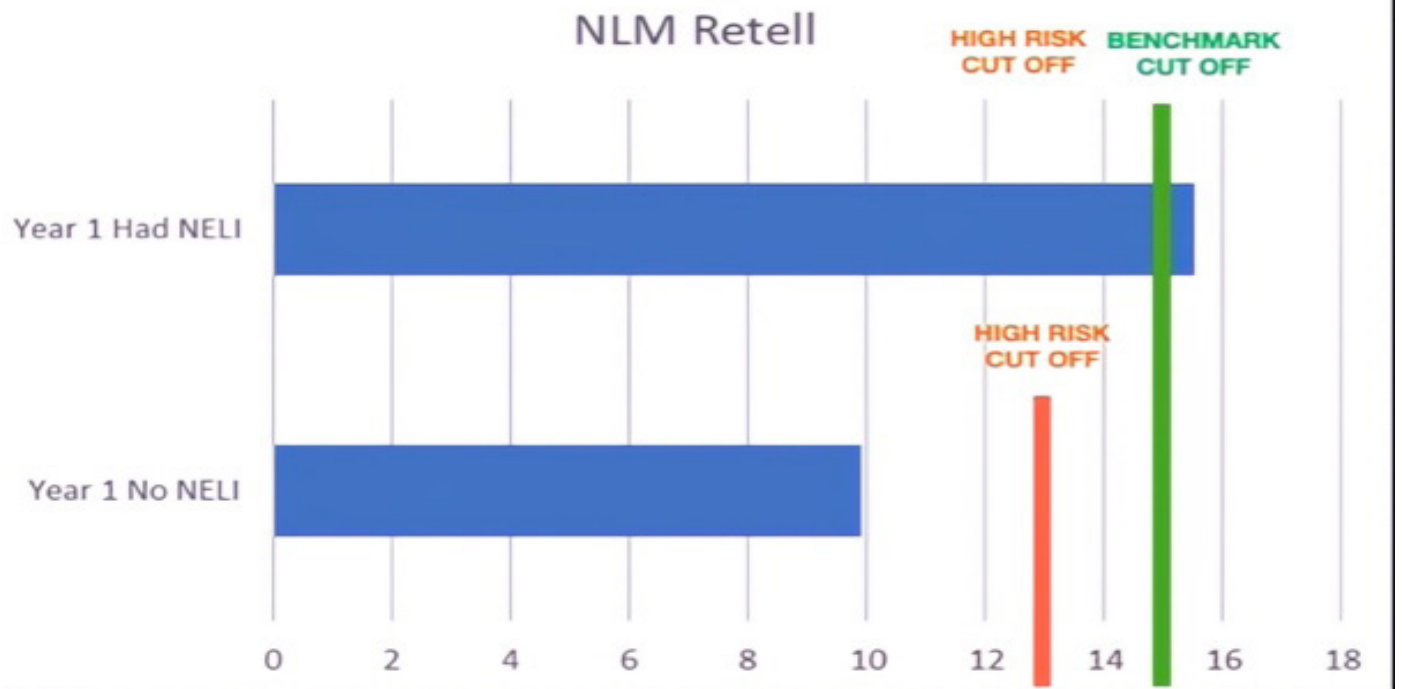


Figure 17: Benchmark oral language data from Year 1 (No NELI) compared to Year 1 (received NELI) showing benchmark and high risk cut off scores using the Narrative Language Measure (NLM): Cubed Narrative Assessment (Peterson & Spencer, 2016).



# Discussion

This research project examined the teaching experiences and student outcomes of a prospective, interdisciplinary, implementation project conducted in an independent school, Hunter Christian School, located in Mayfield, a suburb of Newcastle within the Hunter region of New South Wales. Our teaching team together with speech pathology academic and clinical leads delivered and evaluated the Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) program for students in the first year of formal schooling. NELI delivery included a Tier 1 (whole class) program with Tier 2 (small group) and Tier 3 (individual) supports for those kindergarten students who either did not meet the NELI language screener criteria or were determined to be educationally at-risk by the team based on a combination of test data and teacher classroom observation.

Teacher acceptability and fidelity of the NELI program was high. The teaching team was highly motivated to participate in the project and the play-based but explicit oral language teaching approach was valued. The team examined how well the NELI program aligned to the NSW K-2 English syllabus with the program's content being well aligned to the K-2 English curriculum and to other key learning areas. We identified 5 themes from the teaching staff interviews.

They were:

- NELI is fun learning for everyone
- Oral language gains seen in class and at home
- Scheduling of lessons supports class participation
- Collaborative team work reaps benefits
- NELI and beyond!

Collectively these themes supported the acceptability, appropriateness and sustainability of the NELI program which suggests that NELI can be implemented by trained teacher and teacher aides within the educational context and routines of Hunter Christian School.

Student's oral language and socio-emotional development improved for both cohorts of kindergarten students as measured before and after NELI delivery. This is consistent with the extant literature that evaluated NELI in England (Education Endowment Foundation, 2023; Fricke et al., 2017., Hulme et al., 2020; West et al., 2021; Hulme et al., 2025) though we need to be mindful that without a concurrent control or comparator group, we cannot discount the influence of time and overall child development.

Kindergarten is a big year of change from the beginning of the year to the end and there is a lot of physical, emotional and cognitive growth observed during one year! That said though, we do see improvements in both oral language skills and socio-emotional scales before and after NELI implementation. The BESSI items for Behavioural regulation are particularly noteworthy. For instance, some of the items on this scale are: "Is good at calming down when asked to do so", "Gets easily frustrated when a task is too difficult". These types of items are language mediated, meaning that the teacher's verbal responses to these behaviours are perhaps being better understood by the students after the NELI program, and/or that the students can now use oral language to express themselves better and therefore be more

patient, be able to calm down and be less frustrated. In this way, if students' oral language skills are explicitly taught, they then show improvement in behavioural regulation. This could be because of their improved ability to comprehend and verbally express themselves. Another possibility is what Hulme et al (2025) describe as training in meta-cognitive strategies where the NELI program focuses on listening skills, the need to attend and speak during classroom interactions where all of these skills could support improvements in behavioural regulation and attention.

Benchmark oral language comparisons of students who had not received NELI (Year 1, 2023) compared to Year 1 students who had received NELI in the prior year (Year 1, 2024) identified improvements in benchmarks from high risk cut off scores to achieving benchmark performance. While the research design did not allow for a concurrent control or comparison group, the prospective design of collecting benchmark data for the year in advance of NELI implementation (2023) allowed us to evaluate oral language performance within the context of No NELI and the receipt of Kindergarten NELI for students who were at the start of year 1. The leadership team and teaching staff can now be more confident and make key strategic and data-informed, evidence-based decisions regarding resource allocation which then speaks to the sustainability of the NELI program in the longer term.

## Conclusion

By implementing NELI, Hunter Christian School addressed the oral language needs of Early Years children giving them a better start to achieving literacy, social and academic success. NELI also promotes oral language and socio-emotional development in students with weak oral language skills and the structure of NELI implementation (whole class, small group and individual lessons) allows these students to increase their class participation. NELI can be embedded successfully within the Early Stage 1 teaching team.

## Research to Practice Impact

This project is significant as it is a prospective pilot of a well-researched intervention from England that has yet to be implemented in an Australian Context. Schools in NSW are unique in that they follow the NSW variation of the Australian Curriculum and speech pathologists are not typically employed as a school staff member.

Speech pathology support is very difficult to access for school age students, especially in a public health setting and in many rural and regional areas. This pilot explored a school-based oral language intervention program that can be administered by teaching staff. The purpose of the pilot was to explore the acceptability, appropriateness and fidelity of implementing NELI in an Australian mainstream school context. It trialled the resources generously provided in-kind by OxEd to examine acceptability and fidelity of use.

The results of this study will be of interest to other independent schools around NSW and potentially interstate too. It particularly has relevance for other independent schools in regional areas where there is a need to address the inequity of health service speech pathology provision for students living in NSW by delivering a whole of class, tiered oral language program,

one that has an evidence base and one that provides training to the teaching staff. We would argue that this training should be supported by ongoing coaching and support which could be offered by other NELI trained teaching staff and/or consultant speech pathologists.

Other important implementation factors that schools should be aware of include the need to allocate time to set-up the materials; to develop an implementation timeline (pre-post screening, 20 weeks of NELI programming) into a school calendar year, and the need for school executive support for the program. There is also the costs associated with access to LanguageScreen and the NELI materials and training.

By implementing the NELI program for students with language difficulties and documenting the adjustments and outcomes, schools can meet the criteria for NCCD Tier 2 (supplementary adjustments). This allows schools to include these students in the NCCD data collection and access the associated funding to support their ongoing needs. The Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) program can facilitate access to NCCD Tier 2 funding by serving as a targeted, evidence-based intervention for students with language difficulties:

- Targeted, Small-Group Support: NELI is designed to provide structured, small-group language intervention to students who are not making expected progress with universal classroom instruction alone. This aligns with NCCD Tier 2, which focuses on targeted interventions delivered to small groups for a specific purpose over a defined period.
- Supplementary Adjustments: When a student participates in NELI due to a language disorder or significant language delay, the school is making supplementary adjustments to support the student's access and participation in learning. This matches the NCCD definition of Tier 2 (supplementary) adjustments, which go beyond standard classroom differentiation.

Since our study, OxEd have partnered with Pearson Australia and have adapted the English version of the LanguageScreen and the NELI program. Our pilot was integral to providing OxEd and Pearson Australia with feedback about the NELI program as we were delivering it so it is important for schools to be aware that we did not have the Australian version of the NELI program until mid 2024. As such, our experiences of implementation from a content perspective could be different to those that implement the Australian version. In terms of research capacity, Hunter Christian School staff have received support and research capacity building from within the research project team and critical mentors. The training modules and NELI program provided by OxEd have also improved education knowledge and practice in relation to oral language teaching as did the coaching and feedback from a dual trained speech pathologist/teacher as well as academics from speech pathology. Our work on this project is not yet complete. We plan to co-write and submit a research paper to a peer-reviewed journal and to evaluate the literacy outcomes of the students from 2023 and 2024. We are also interested in exploring how Hunter Christian School can be a NELI mentoring school for other independent schools across NSW and indeed Australia.

The outcomes of this project have enabled Hunter Christian School to implement effective interventions that support the oral language, literacy, and socio-emotional development of kindergarten students. This also has the potential to bolster later literacy outcomes particularly in the areas of reading comprehension and single word reading outcomes. It is an exciting time of interprofessional team collaboration within education.



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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Study flyer



Nuffield Early Language Intervention




Attention Kindergarten  
parents!

Your child is invited to  
participate in the Nuffield  
Early Language Intervention  
program at Hunter Christian  
School (Hunter NELI)


Please read the information  
sheet about what the  
program involves and when it  
will be happening.

Hunter NELI will be  
supporting children's  
listening skills, vocabulary  
development, story telling  
abilities, literacy and social  
skills.


This project is supported by School Based Research  
Project funds from the Association of Independent  
Schools (AISNSW) also in partnership with The  
University of Sydney and Language + Learning.  
Contact: [natalie.munro@sydney.edu.au](mailto:natalie.munro@sydney.edu.au) or chat to  
Mr. Herd or Mr. Hill



HUNTER  
CHRISTIAN  
SCHOOL



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
SYDNEY



&  
language  
+ learning

This research project is approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at The University of Sydney [2022/934]  
Appendix A: Flyer  
Version 01 15 November 2022



## Appendix 2: Information sheet Kindergarten students



Discipline of Speech Pathology  
Sydney School of Health Sciences

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### **A prospective, longitudinal pilot study evaluating the implementation of an early years language program on teacher acceptability and student's oral language, literacy, and socio-emotional outcomes.**

#### **PARENTAL INFORMATION STATEMENT**

##### **(1) What is this study about?**

This education project is going to introduce an early years oral language program at Hunter Christian School. The program is called the Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) program and it has been tested in England with good outcomes for students enrolled in Kindergarten [Nuffield Early Language Intervention \(NELI\) | Project - Nuffield Foundation](#). Oral language includes listening and speaking skills such as vocabulary and grammar, the ability to tell a story and the ability to interact and be social with others. These skills are linked to good literacy outcomes. In 2023, the NSW K-2 English Syllabus introduces new Oral Language and Communication and Vocabulary outcomes in the Early Years. We plan to conduct an implementation study that will ask teaching staff at Hunter Christian School about their experiences of implementing the program (hereafter called the Hunter NELI program) and the program's curriculum outcomes. We are asking parents of children enrolled in Kindergarten 2023 and 2024 at Hunter Christian School to consent for their children to be part of the evaluation that examines student's oral language, literacy and socio-emotional outcomes.

Your child is invited to take part in an exciting school based research project, the Hunter NELI project.

##### **This aims of this study are to:**

- Investigate the implementation of NELI within the educational context and routines of Hunter Christian School
- Determine whether the teaching staff involved in the Hunter NELI project find the program acceptable, appropriate and sustainable for implementation
- Evaluate student outcomes of Kindergarten children who participate in NELI at the end of the program and 6 months later (when they are in Year 1)
- Compare student outcomes for those students who participate in NELI with benchmarking performance of Hunter Christian School students who historically, did not receive NELI

Your child has been invited to participate in this study because your child is enrolled in Kindergarten either in 2023 or 2024.

Participation in this research study is voluntary. By giving your consent you are telling us that you:

- ✓ Understand what you have read.
- ✓ Agree for your child to take part in the research study as below.
- ✓ Agree to the use of your child's school information, as described below.

You will be given a copy of this Participant Information Statement to keep.

## (2) Who is running the study?

The study is being carried out by Hunter Christian School and a team of teachers, speech pathologists, and researchers:

Natalie Munro, PhD<sup>1</sup>  
Anita Wong, PhD<sup>1</sup>

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This study is supported by School Based Research Project funding from the Association of Independent Schools, New South Wales (AISNSW). Hunter Christian School has also partnered with The University of Sydney and Mrs Kathryn Thorburn for specialist/academic research support. This partnership will not in any way compromise student learning or influence the investigator's professional judgment or actions in the performance of the study (e.g., the conduct, oversight, evaluation or reporting of the study results). This research team has no financial relationship with the publisher of NELI.

## (3) What will the study involve?

There are **four phases** to this study that will be **conducted over 2023-2024**. If you decide to allow your child to participate, we will collect a consent form from you before we start the project. It is important that you understand each of the phases and ask us any questions if you're not sure of the details included in this information sheet. **The four phases of this research include:**

### ***Phase 1: Student assessments***

This phase will occur in **Term 1, of the study**. During this phase, your child will be asked to complete oral language and literacy assessments. Specifically, your child will be asked to;

- Listen to a word and point to the relevant picture, listen to a sentence and repeat it back
- Look at pictures (like castle, sheep, watch) and name them
- listen to a story, answer questions about the story and re-tell the story back
- Listen and identify sounds in words, blend and segment sounds in words, identify letter names and read words and sentences

We will also be using a computer app called LanguageScreen. LanguageScreen is a 10 minute oral language screen developed by the NELI researchers in England. It will help us understand who may benefit most from receiving the NELI program. We will use a code to keep your child's identity anonymous and we will audiorecord your child's story re-tell so we can score it at a later date (ie., not during the assessment). The tasks listed above are routinely used by speech pathologists and teaching staff to evaluate student outcomes and will be delivered face to face or via the app. Phase 1 will take approximately 1 hour (breaks will be provided) and will be done at school. Your child's teacher will also complete a 12-item questionnaire about your child's behaviour and social skills.

**Phase 2: The NELI program**

This phase will occur in **Terms 2 and 3** of the study. The NELI program is delivered as whole class lessons, in small groups of 5-6 children and individually. Your child's results from the LanguageScreen app will determine whether they participate in small group, individual + classroom instruction or classroom-only instruction. The teacher will deliver the classroom lessons (twice a week, 30 minutes each as part of the oral language English syllabus) and the teacher aide will deliver the small group lessons (twice a week, 30 minutes each) and 2x15 minute individual lessons. The NELI program runs for 20 weeks (10 weeks over two school terms).

**Phase 3: Student assessments**

This phase will occur in **Term 4** of the study to evaluate student learning outcomes after the end of delivering NELI. The tasks are described in Phase 1.

**Phase 4: Student assessments**

This phase will occur in **Term 1** of the following year of the study to evaluate student learning outcomes 6 months after the end of delivering NELI. The tasks are described in Phase 1.

**(4) Who can take part in the study?**

All Kindergarten children enrolled at Hunter Christian School in 2023 and 2024 can take part.

**(5) Does my child have to be in the study? Can they withdraw from the study once they've started?**

Being in this study is completely voluntary and your child does not have to take part. Your decision whether to participate or not will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers of this study or anyone else at Hunter Christian School, The University of Sydney, Language and Learning, or the AISNSW.

If you decide to allow your child to participate in the study but then change your mind and no longer wish for your child to participate, you are free to withdraw your child from the study at any time. If you would like to withdraw from this study, you can contact Associate Professor Natalie Munro via (02-93519696) or by email: [natalie.munro@sydney.edu.au](mailto:natalie.munro@sydney.edu.au)

If you decide to withdraw your child from the study at any time, we will not collect any further information from your child. Please let us know at the time you withdraw what you would like us to do with the data we would have collected up to that point. If you wish for your child's data and audio recordings to be removed from the study, we can do this up until the time when we have analysed and published the results. If you decide to withdraw your child from the study, your child will still participate in the classroom NELI lessons as these will be part of the teacher's English lessons consistent with the NSW K-2 English Syllabus, but your child will not participate in the assessment phases of this study.

**(6) Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?**

There are no costs associated with participation in this study. The risks associated with this research are minimal. The assessments utilised for this research will screen your child's oral language skills and may identify that your child's oral language skills are not developing typically for their age. Should this happen, the speech pathologist/teacher researcher, Kathryn Thorburn will discuss this with you. If your child requires further support after NELI, we will provide you with information about your local health service to make a referral to your local speech pathology service.



As with any research involving children, there is a small risk that your child may become tired or bored by the tasks they are being asked to complete. Should this happen, we will provide breaks for your child.

**(7) Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?**

We cannot guarantee that your child will receive any direct benefits from being in the study. Based on the randomised controlled trials conducted on NELI in schools across England, we anticipate that our students will make improvements in their oral language, literacy and behaviour too but this cannot be guaranteed. More broadly, this study will contribute to our understanding about the acceptability of an early years oral language program and whether it is acceptable, appropriate and sustainable for teaching staff to deliver. The findings of this study will inform future research on the scalability of the NELI in other schools and on how schools can address the oral language syllabus outcomes using this program.

**(8) What will happen to information that is collected during the study?**

Your child's assessment data will be collected as a part of this study. Family and children's names will not appear on these documents, as a participant identification number only will be used.

Any audio recordings made and data collected will only be available to the researchers. These recordings will be stored with a unique identification number that is unique to your child but does not identify your child. These de-identified recordings will be stored on the secure Research Data Store of The University of Sydney. All data collected as part of this research (including assessment data and recordings) will be stored at The University of Sydney for 25 years. After this period the forms and electronic data will be destroyed.

Your child's information will be stored securely and their identity/information will be kept strictly confidential, except as required by law (e.g. mandatory reporting, court orders or subpoenas). Parents may contact the investigators at all times to access the data of their child, until the child reaches the age of 18.

Study findings may be published, but your child will not be individually identifiable in these publications. In any publication or presentation about this study no identifiable information will be used to ensure the anonymity of the children and the teaching staff.

By providing your consent, you are agreeing to us collecting personal information about your child for the purposes of this research study. Your child's personal information will only be used for the purposes outlined in this Participant Information Statement, unless you consent otherwise. No identifying information will be included in any presentations or publications that may arise from this research.

We will keep the information we collect for this study, and we may use it in future projects. By providing your consent you are allowing us to use your child's de-identified information in future projects. We don't know at this stage what these other projects will involve. We will seek ethical approval before using the information in these future projects.

**(9) Can I or my child tell other people about the study?**

Yes, you are welcome to tell other people about the study.

**(10) What if we would like further information about the study?**

When you have read this information, Natalie Munro will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you or your child would like to know more at any stage during the study, please feel free to contact

Natalie Munro  
(02) 93519696  
[natalie.munro@sydney.edu.au](mailto:natalie.munro@sydney.edu.au)

**(11) Will we be told the results of the study?**

You have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. You can tell us that you wish to receive feedback by ticking the relevant box on the consent form. This feedback will be in the form of one page lay summary. You will receive this feedback after the study is finished.

**(12) What if we have a complaint or any concerns about the study?**

Research involving humans in Australia is reviewed by an independent group of people called a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the HREC of the University of Sydney (protocol number 2022/934). As part of this process, we have agreed to carry out the study according to the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)*. This statement has been developed to protect people who agree to take part in research studies.

If you (or your child) are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the university using the details outlined below. Please quote the study title and protocol number.

The Manager, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney:

- **Telephone:** +61 2 8627 8176
- **Email:** [ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au](mailto:ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au)
- **Fax:** +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile)

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Discipline of Speech Pathology  
Sydney School of Health Sciences

ABN 15 211 513 464

**Natalie Munro PhD**  
*Associate Professor*  
*Speech Pathology*

Susan Wakil Health Building  
D18 Western Avenue  
Camperdown NSW 2006  
Telephone: +61 2 93519696  
Email: [Natalie.munro@sydney.edu.au](mailto:Natalie.munro@sydney.edu.au)  
Web: <http://www.sydney.edu.au/>

### **A prospective, longitudinal pilot study evaluating the implementation of an early years language program on teacher acceptability and student's oral language, literacy, and socio-emotional outcomes.**

#### **PARENTAL INFORMATION STATEMENT**

##### **(1) What is this study about?**

This education project is introducing an early years oral language program for Kindergarten students at Hunter Christian School. The program is called the Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) program and it has been tested in England with good outcomes for Kindergarten students [Nuffield Early Language Intervention \(NELI\) | Project - Nuffield Foundation](#). Oral language includes listening and speaking skills such as vocabulary and grammar, the ability to tell a story and the ability to interact and be social with others. These skills are linked to good literacy outcomes. In 2023, the NSW K-2 English Syllabus introduces new Oral Language and Communication and Vocabulary outcomes in the Early Years. We plan to conduct an implementation study that will ask teaching staff at Hunter Christian School about their experiences of implementing the program (hereafter called the Hunter NELI program) and the program's curriculum outcomes. Your child is invited to take part in this school based research project, the Hunter NELI project.

##### **This aims of this study are to:**

- Investigate the implementation of NELI within the educational context and routines of Hunter Christian School
- Determine whether the teaching staff involved in the Hunter NELI project find the program acceptable, appropriate and sustainable for implementation
- Evaluate student outcomes of Kindergarten children who participate in NELI at the end of the program and 6 months later (when they are in Year 1)
- Compare student outcomes for those students who participate in NELI with benchmarking performance of Hunter Christian School students who historically, did not receive NELI

Your child has been invited to participate in this study because your child is enrolled in Year 1 in 2023.

Participation in this research study is voluntary. By giving your consent you are telling us that you:

- ✓ Understand what you have read.
- ✓ Agree for your child to take part in the research study as below.
- ✓ Agree to the use of your child's school information, as described below.

You will be given a copy of this Participant Information Statement to keep.



## (2) Who is running the study?

The study is being carried out by Hunter Christian School and a team of teachers, speech pathologists, and researchers:

Natalie Munro, PhD<sup>1</sup>  
Anita Wong, PhD<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Discipline of Speech Pathology  
Sydney School of Health Sciences  
The University of Sydney  
Camperdown NSW 2006



Simon Herd<sup>2</sup>  
Nathan Hill<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Hunter Christian School  
Cnr Bull & Kerr Streets  
Mayfield NSW 2304



Kathryn Thorburn<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Language and Learning  
PO Box 265  
Medowie NSW 2318  
[www.languageandlearning.com.au](http://www.languageandlearning.com.au)



This study is supported by School Based Research Project funding from the Association of Independent Schools, New South Wales (AISNSW). Hunter Christian School has also partnered with The University of Sydney and Mrs Kathryn Thorburn for specialist/academic research support. This partnership will not in any way compromise student learning or influence the investigator's professional judgment or actions in the performance of the study (e.g., the conduct, oversight, evaluation or reporting of the study results). This research team has no financial relationship with the publisher of NELI.

## (3) What will the study involve for my child?

In order to compare 2023 Kindergarten student's longer term outcomes (ie., their Year 1 performance in 2024), we would like to compare their Year 1 performance with the 2023's Year 1 student performance as a benchmark for Hunter Christian School. Your child's involvement would include the following:

### **Student assessments**

This phase will occur in **Term 1 2023, of the study**. During this phase, your child will be asked to complete oral language and literacy assessments. Specifically, your child will be asked to;

- Listen to a word and point to the relevant picture, listen to a sentence and repeat it back
- Look at pictures (like castle, sheep, watch) and name them
- Listen to a story, answer questions about the story and re-tell the story back
- Listen and identify sounds in words, blend and segment sounds in words, identify letter names and read words and sentences

The tasks listed above are routinely used by speech pathologists and teaching staff to evaluate student outcomes and will be delivered face to face. This will take approximately 1 hour (breaks will be provided) and will be done at school. Your child's teacher will also complete a 12-item questionnaire about your child's behaviour and social skills.

## (4) Who can take part in the study?

All Year 1 children enrolled at Hunter Christian School in 2023 can take part.

## (5) Does my child have to be in the study?

Being in this study is completely voluntary and your child does not have to take part. Your decision whether to participate or not will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers of this study or anyone else at Hunter Christian School, The University of Sydney, Language and Learning, or the AISNSW.

If you decide to allow your child to participate in the study but then change your mind and no longer wish for your child to participate, you are free to withdraw your child from the study at any time. If you would like to withdraw from this study, you can contact Associate Professor Natalie Munro via (02-93519696) or by email: [natalie.munro@sydney.edu.au](mailto:natalie.munro@sydney.edu.au)

If you decide to withdraw your child from the study at any time, we will not collect any further information from your child. Please let us know at the time you withdraw what you would like us to do with the data we would have collected up to that point. If you wish for your child's data and audio recordings to be removed from the study, we can do this up until the time when we have analysed and published the results.

**(6) Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?**

There are no costs associated with participation in this study. The risks associated with this research are minimal. The assessments utilised for this research will assess your child's oral language skills and may identify that your child's oral language skills are not developing typically for their age. Should this happen, the speech pathologist/teacher researcher, Kathryn Thorburn will discuss this with you. If your child requires further support, we will provide you with information about your local health service to make a referral to your local speech pathology service and also offer you and your child oral language intervention provided by University of Sydney's speech pathology students on placement at Hunter Christian School supervised by Kathryn Thorburn during 2023-2024.

As with any research involving children, there is a small risk that your child may become tired or bored by the tasks they are being asked to complete. Should this happen, during the assessment, we will provide breaks for your child.

**(7) Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?**

We cannot guarantee that your child will receive any direct benefits from being in the study. More broadly, this study will contribute to our understanding about the acceptability of an early years oral language program and whether it is acceptable, appropriate and sustainable for teaching staff to deliver. The findings of this study will inform future research on the scalability of the NELI in other schools and on how schools can address the oral language syllabus outcomes using this program.

**(8) What will happen to information that is collected during the study?**

Your child's assessment data will be collected as a part of this study. Family and children's names will not appear on these documents, as a participant identification number only will be used.

Any audio recordings made and data collected will only be available to the researchers. These recordings will be stored with a unique identification number that is unique to your child but does not identify your child. These de-identified recordings will be stored on the secure Research Data Store of The University of Sydney. All data collected as part of this research (including assessment data and recordings) will be stored at The University of Sydney for 25 years. After this period the forms and electronic data will be destroyed.

Your child's information will be stored securely and their identity/information will be kept strictly confidential, except as required by law (e.g. mandatory reporting, court orders or subpoenas). Parents may contact the investigators at all times to access the data of their child, until the child reaches the age of 18.

Study findings may be published, but your child will not be individually identifiable in these publications. In any publication or presentation about this study no identifiable information will be used to ensure the anonymity of the children and the teaching staff.

By providing your consent, you are agreeing to us collecting personal information about your child for the purposes of this research study. Your child's personal information will only be used for the purposes outlined in this Participant Information Statement, unless you consent otherwise. No identifying information will be included in any presentations or publications that may arise from this research.

We will keep the information we collect for this study, and we may use it in future projects. By providing your consent you are allowing us to use your child's de-identified information in future projects. We don't know at this stage what these other projects will involve. We will seek ethical approval before using the information in these future projects.

**(9) Can I or my child tell other people about the study?**

Yes, you are welcome to tell other people about the study.

**(10) What if we would like further information about the study?**

When you have read this information, Natalie Munro will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you or your child would like to know more at any stage during the study, please feel free to contact

Natalie Munro  
(02) 93519696  
[natalie.munro@sydney.edu.au](mailto:natalie.munro@sydney.edu.au)

**(11) Will we be told the results of the study?**

You have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. You can tell us that you wish to receive feedback by ticking the relevant box on the consent form. This feedback will be in the form of one page lay summary. You will receive this feedback after the study is finished.

**(12) What if we have a complaint or any concerns about the study?**

Research involving humans in Australia is reviewed by an independent group of people called a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the HREC of the University of Sydney (protocol number 2022/934). As part of this process, we have agreed to carry out the study according to the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)*. This statement has been developed to protect people who agree to take part in research studies.

If you (or your child) are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the university using the details outlined below. Please quote the study title and protocol number.

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- **Fax:** +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile)

*This information sheet is for you to keep*



## Appendix 4: Information sheet teaching staff



**Discipline of Speech Pathology  
Sydney School of Health Sciences**

ABN 15 211 513 464

**Natalie Munro PhD**  
*Associate Professor  
Speech Pathology*

Susan Wakil Health Building  
D18 Western Avenue  
Camperdown NSW 2006  
Telephone: +61 2 93519696  
Email: [Natalie.munro@sydney.edu.au](mailto:Natalie.munro@sydney.edu.au)  
Web: <http://www.sydney.edu.au/>

### **A prospective, longitudinal pilot study evaluating the implementation of an early years language program on teacher acceptability and student's oral language, literacy, and socio-emotional outcomes.**

#### **TEACHING STAFF INFORMATION STATEMENT**

##### **(1) What is this study about?**

This education project is introducing an early years oral language program at Hunter Christian School. The program is called the Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) program and it has been tested in England with good outcomes for students enrolled in Kindergarten [Nuffield Early Language Intervention \(NELI\) | Project - Nuffield Foundation](#). Oral language includes listening and speaking skills such as vocabulary and grammar, the ability to tell a story and the ability to interact and be social with others. These skills are linked to good literacy outcomes. In 2023, the NSW K-2 English Syllabus introduces new Oral Language and Communication and Vocabulary outcomes in the Early Years. We plan to conduct an implementation study that will ask teaching staff at Hunter Christian School about their experiences of implementing the program (hereafter called the Hunter NELI program) and the program's curriculum outcomes. We are asking parents to consent for their children enrolled in Kindergarten 2023 and 2024 at Hunter Christian School to be part of the evaluation that examines student's oral language, literacy and socio-emotional outcomes.

You are invited to take part in this school based research project, the Hunter NELI project.

##### **This aims of this study are to:**

- Investigate the implementation of NELI within the educational context and routines of Hunter Christian School
- Determine whether the teaching staff involved in the Hunter NELI project find the program acceptable, appropriate and sustainable for implementation
- Evaluate student outcomes of Kindergarten children who participate in NELI at the end of the program and 6 months later (when they are in Year 1)
- Compare student outcomes for those students who participate in NELI with benchmarking performance of Hunter Christian School students who historically, did not receive NELI

You are invited to participate in this study because you are part of the teaching staff at Hunter Christian School that is involved in the Hunter NELI project.

Participation in this research study is voluntary. By giving your consent you are telling us that you:

- ✓ Understand what you have read.
- ✓ Agree to take part in the research study as below.
- ✓ Agree to the use of your information as described below.

You will be given a copy of this Participant Information Statement to keep.

## (2) Who is running the study?

The study is being carried out by Hunter Christian School and a team of teachers, speech pathologists, and researchers:

Natalie Munro, PhD<sup>1</sup>  
Anita Wong, PhD<sup>1</sup>

Simon Herd<sup>2</sup>  
Nathan Hill<sup>2</sup>

Kathryn Thorburn<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Discipline of Speech Pathology  
Sydney School of Health Sciences  
The University of Sydney  
Camperdown NSW 2006

<sup>2</sup>Hunter Christian School  
Cnr Bull & Kerr Streets  
Mayfield NSW 2304

<sup>3</sup>Language and Learning  
PO Box 265  
Medowie NSW 2318  
[www.languageandlearning.com.au](http://www.languageandlearning.com.au)



This study is supported by School Based Research Project funding from the Association of Independent Schools, New South Wales (AISNSW). Hunter Christian School has also partnered with The University of Sydney and Mrs Kathryn Thorburn for specialist/academic research support. This partnership will not in any way compromise student learning or influence the investigator's professional judgment or actions in the performance of the study (e.g., the conduct, oversight, evaluation or reporting of the study results). This research team has no financial relationship with the publisher of NELI.

## (3) What will the study involve?

There are **four phases** to this study that will be **conducted over 2023-2024**. If you decide to participate, we will collect a consent form from you before we start the project. It is important that you understand each of the phases and ask us any questions if you're not sure of the details included in this information sheet. **The four phases of this research include:**

### **Phase 1: Student assessments**

This phase will occur in **Term 1, of the study**. During this phase, child in Kindergarten will be asked to complete oral language and literacy assessments. Specifically, the students will be asked to;

- Listen to a word and point to the relevant picture, listen to a sentence and repeat it back
- Look at pictures (like castle, sheep, watch) and name them
- listen to a story, answer questions about the story and re-tell the story back
- Listen and identify sounds in words, blend and segment sounds in words, identify letter names and read words and sentences

We will also be using a computer app called LanguageScreen. LanguageScreen is a 10 minute oral language screen developed by the NELI researchers in England. It will help us understand who may benefit most from receiving the NELI program. We will use a code to keep the children's identity anonymous and we will audiorecord each child's story re-tell so we can score it at a later date (ie., not during the assessment). The tasks listed above are routinely used by speech pathologists and teaching staff to evaluate student outcomes and will be delivered face to face or via the app. Phase 1 will take approximately 1 hour (breaks will be provided) and will be done at school. You will be asked to complete a 12-item questionnaire about your student's behaviour and social skills.

**Phase 2: The NELI program**

This phase will occur in **Terms 2 and 3** of the study. The NELI program is delivered as whole class lessons, in small groups of 5-6 children and individually. The children's results from the LanguageScreen app will determine whether they participate in small group, individual + classroom instruction or classroom-only instruction. The teacher will deliver the classroom lessons (twice a week, 30 minutes each as part of the oral language English syllabus) and the teacher aide will deliver the small group lessons (twice a week, 30 minutes each) and 2x15 minute individual lessons. The NELI program runs for 20 weeks (10 weeks over two school terms).

**Phase 3: Student assessments**

This phase will occur in **Term 4** of the study to evaluate student learning outcomes after the end of delivering NELI. The tasks are described in Phase 1.

**Phase 4: Teaching staff interviews**

This phase will occur in **Term 4** of the study to evaluate the acceptability, appropriateness, fidelity and sustainability of NELI according to the experiences of teaching staff involved in the Hunter NELI project at Hunter Christian School. Teaching staff will be interviewed by a member of the research team from The University of Sydney (Munro or Wong) at a time convenient to the staff member. The interview can be conducted face to face on site at Hunter Christian School or online via Zoom at a time convenient to the staff member. The interview will take approximately 45-60 minutes and will be audio recorded.

**(4) Who can take part in the study?**

All teaching staff at Hunter Christian School involved in the Hunter NELI project in 2023 and 2024 can take part.

**(5) Do I have to be involved in the study?**

Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part. Your decision whether to participate or not will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers of this study or anyone else at Hunter Christian School, The University of Sydney, Language and Learning, or the AISNSW.

If you decide to participate in the study but then change your mind and no longer wish to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. If you would like to withdraw from this study, you can contact Associate Professor Natalie Munro via (02-93519696) or by email: [natalie.munro@sydney.edu.au](mailto:natalie.munro@sydney.edu.au)

If you decide to withdraw from the study at any time and if you wish for your interview data and audio recordings to be removed from the study, we can do this up until the time when we have analysed and published the results. If you decide to withdraw from the study, you will still participate in the NELI project in as much as the classroom NELI lessons will be delivered at Hunter Christian School as these will be part of the English lessons consistent with the NSW K-2 English Syllabus.

**(6) Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?**

There are no costs associated with participation in this study. The risks associated with this research are minimal.



**(7) Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?**

We cannot guarantee that there are any direct benefits from being involved in the study. This study can contribute to our understanding about the acceptability of an early years oral language program and whether it is acceptable, appropriate and sustainable for teaching staff to deliver. The findings of this study will inform future research on the scalability of the NELI in other schools and on how schools can address the oral language syllabus outcomes using this program.

**(8) What will happen to information that is collected during the study?**

Your interview data will be collected as part of this study. A participant identification number will be used instead of your personal information.

Your interview audio recording will only be available to the researchers. The recording will be stored with a unique identification number that does not identify you. De-identified recordings will be stored on the secure Research Data Store at The University of Sydney. All data collected as part of this research will be stored at The University of Sydney for 15 years. After this period the electronic data will be destroyed.

Study findings may be published, but you will not be individually identifiable in these publications. In any publication or presentation about this study no identifiable information will be used to ensure the anonymity of children and the teaching staff.

By providing your consent, you are agreeing to us collecting personal information about yourself for the purposes of this research study. Your personal information will only be used for the purposes outlined in this Participant Information Statement, unless you consent otherwise. No identifying information will be included in any presentations or publications that may arise from this research.

We will keep the information we collect for this study, and we may use it in future projects. By providing your consent you are allowing us to use your de-identified information in future projects. We don't know at this stage what these other projects will involve. We will seek ethical approval before using the information in these future projects.

**(9) Can I tell other people about the study?**

Yes, you are welcome to tell other people about the study.

**(10) What if I would like further information about the study?**

When you have read this information, Natalie Munro will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage during the study, please feel free to contact:

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**(11) Will I be told the results of the study?**

You have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. You can tell us that you wish to receive feedback by ticking the relevant box on the consent form. This feedback will be in the form of one-page lay summary. You will receive this feedback after the study is finished.



**(12) What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the study?**

Research involving humans in Australia is reviewed by an independent group of people called a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the HREC of the University of Sydney (protocol number 2022/934). As part of this process, we have agreed to carry out the study according to the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)*. This statement has been developed to protect people who agree to take part in research studies.

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the university using the details outlined below. Please quote the study title and protocol number.

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**Discipline of Speech Pathology  
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**NATALIE MUNRO**  
*Associate Professor  
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**A prospective, longitudinal pilot study evaluating the implementation of an  
early years language program on teacher acceptability and student's oral  
language, literacy, and socio-emotional outcomes**

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

I, ..... [PRINT PARENT/CARER'S NAME], consent to my child  
..... [PRINT CHILD'S NAME] participating in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

- I understand the purpose of the study, what my child will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.
- I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researchers if I wished to do so.
- The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.
- I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researchers or anyone else at Hunter Christian School, Language and Learning, The University of Sydney or the Association of Independent Schools, New South Wales (AISNSW).
- I understand that I can withdraw my child from the study at any time.
- I understand that personal information about my child that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about my child will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.
- I understand that data coming from this project may be stored in a database/research register and used for future research projects with The University of Sydney undergraduate or postgraduate research students. In this instance, all data will be de-identified so that my or my child's identity will not be known.
- I understand that unidentified audio recordings will be stored on the University of Sydney Research Data Store for a period of 25 years after the completion of this research.

- I understand that the results of this study may be published, and that publications will not contain the name of my child or any other identifiable information about my child.

**I would like to be contacted about future studies**

YES ☐

NO ☐

**I would like to receive feedback about the overall results of this study**

YES ☐

NO ☐

If you answered **YES**, please indicate your preferred form of feedback and address:

☐ Postal: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**I consent for my child's deidentified data to be stored in the University of Sydney Research Data Store for future research projects**

☐  
YES

☐  
NO

**I consent to participate in the described research (sign below)**

.....  
**Signature (PARENT/GUARDIAN)**

.....  
**PRINT name (PARENT/GUARDIAN)**

.....  
**Date**



**Discipline of Speech Pathology  
Sydney School of Health Sciences**

ABN 15 211 513 464

**NATALIE MUNRO**  
*Associate Professor  
Speech Pathology*

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**A prospective, longitudinal pilot study evaluating the implementation of an  
early years language program on teacher acceptability and student's oral  
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**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

I, ..... [PRINT PARENT/CARER'S NAME], consent to my child  
..... [PRINT CHILD'S NAME] participating in this research study.

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- I understand that data coming from this project may be stored in a database/research register and used for future research projects with The University of Sydney undergraduate or postgraduate research students. In this instance, all data will be de-identified so that my or my child's identity will not be known.
- I understand that unidentified audio recordings will be stored on the University of Sydney Research Data Store for a period of 25 years after the completion of this research.



- I understand that the results of this study may be published, and that publications will not contain the name of my child or any other identifiable information about my child.

**I would like to be contacted about future studies**

YES ☐ NO ☐

**I would like to receive feedback about the overall results of this study**

YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered **YES**, please indicate your preferred form of feedback and address:

☐ Postal: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**I consent for my child's deidentified data to be stored in the University of Sydney Research Data Store for future research projects**

☐  
YES

☐  
NO

**I consent to participate in the described research (sign below)**

.....  
**Signature (PARENT/GUARDIAN)**

.....  
**PRINT name (PARENT/GUARDIAN)**

.....  
**Date**

## Appendix 7: Staff consent form



**Discipline of Speech Pathology  
Sydney School of Health Sciences**

ABN 15 211 513 464

**NATALIE MUNRO**  
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### **A prospective, longitudinal pilot study evaluating the implementation of an early years language program on teacher acceptability and student's oral language, literacy, and socio-emotional outcomes**

#### **PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

I, ..... [PRINT TEACHING STAFF'S NAME], consent to participating in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

- I understand the purpose of the study, what I am asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.
- I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researchers if I wished to do so.
- The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.
- I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researchers or anyone else at Hunter Christian School, Language and Learning, The University of Sydney or the Association of Independent Schools, New South Wales (AISNSW).
- I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.
- I understand that my personal information that is collected will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.
- I understand that data coming from this project may be stored in a database/research register and used for future research projects with The University of Sydney undergraduate or postgraduate research students. In this instance, all data will be de-identified so that my identity will not be known.
- I understand that unidentified audio recordings will be stored on the University of Sydney Research Data Store for a period of 15 years after the completion of this research.
- I understand that the results of this study may be published, and that publications will not contain my name or any other identifiable information about me.

I would like to be contacted about future studies YES ☐ NO ☐

I would like to receive feedback about the overall results of this study YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered **YES**, please indicate your preferred form of feedback and address:

☐ Postal: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

I consent for my deidentified data to be stored in the University of Sydney Research Data Store for future research projects ☐ YES ☐ NO

I consent to participate in the described research (sign below)

.....  
**Signature**

.....  
**PRINT name**

.....  
**Date**

## Appendix 8: Interview schedule

### Appendix O Interview schedules for teaching staff

#### *Class Teacher and teacher aide interview schedule*

##### **Background questions**

How long have you worked in this school?

Which year groups are you involved with in the school?

Please can you specify the roles you have within the school.

What training have you received and for what areas of your work?

##### **Oral Language**

Approximately how many children entered your class in the academic year 2023/2024 with poor oral language?

What particular challenges do you think children with poor language skills face in school?

How well informed did you feel about the Nuffield Early Language Intervention programme?

Who gave you the information? Did you get a chance to look at the materials before, during or after the intervention?

In what ways did you link the intervention work with classwork? And with the curriculum?

Please comment on whether you thought that the Nuffield Early Language Intervention for a small group of children was a good use of the TAs time.

Did you think that the intervention targeting a small group of children worked well for your students?

Did you feel that the frequency and duration of the intervention sessions worked well or would a different arrangement of sessions have been more convenient?

##### **Nuffield Early Language Intervention questions**

How was delivering the intervention organised in your school?

How did you become involved in the project?

Can you tell me three things you liked about the intervention?

Can you tell me three things you didn't like about the intervention?

Overall, do you think it is a good or a bad idea for the school to use the programme?

Was the intervention compatible with the NSW K-2 English syllabus and the Oral Language and Communication and Vocabulary outcomes?

Was the intervention appropriate for the kindergarten students?

##### **Training to deliver the language intervention**

What did you like about the training? / What didn't you like about it?

How well do you think the training prepared you for delivering the programme in school?



## **Appendix O Interview schedules for teaching staff**

How did it compare in this respect to other training you have received?

How confident did you feel about delivering the programme?

Did you have any questions or concerns while you were implementing the intervention about the content or what you were supposed to do?

What kind of support, if any, during the intervention did you have?

Did you talk to the class teacher or others about the programme?

Did you contact the trainer/s for advice?

Would it have been helpful to have had more support during the intervention or did you not feel you needed additional support? If yes, what type?

### **Materials**

What did you like about the manual? / What didn't you like about it?

Was the manual clear? If not, can you tell us how it could be improved?

Did you have any problems with any of the materials provided?

What did you think about the choice of vocabulary that was included in the programme for the children to learn?

Which parts of the intervention could the children access the most easily?

Which parts did they have difficulty with?

Were there parts of the intervention that you found particularly easy or difficult to deliver?

Do you think the level was suitable for the children you were working with?

Did you know how to adjust the programme for children with differing needs?

How can the materials be made more appealing –either for the children or for the TA?

### **Practical issues**

From your experience of working in the classroom, did that work well or were there problems with it?

From your experience of working with small groups of children, did that work well or were there problems with it?

How well did the timing of the sessions work?

How easy or difficult was it to find space to work with the children for the lessons?

How did you find the children's behaviour during the sessions?

Were you able to administer all of the sessions to the children? If not, what issues meant that it wasn't possible?

## **Appendix O Interview schedules for teaching staff**

### **School context**

Overall, to what extent did you feel supported by the school staff?

Did you find that doing the intervention made a significant difference to your overall work load? (If yes, what was it that increased your workload? delivery? preparation? etc.)

Do you feel that doing this intervention has advanced your professional development?

If yes, how/why? / If no, why not?

What have you learned through delivering the intervention?

Do you think you have improved certain skills or become more confident?

Would you be happy to deliver it again?

Do you think there should be any changes to the program for this school context?

Can you see this intervention being maintained within the school setting's as an ongoing program?

Is there anything else you'd like to mention?

Adapted from Appendix A in Snowling, M. J., West, G., Fricke, S., Bowyer-Crane, C., Dilnot, J., Cripps, D., ... & Hulme, C. (2022). Delivering language intervention at scale: promises and pitfalls. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 45, 3, 322-366.

## Resource for other schools

### NELI NSW CURRICULUM MAPPING

Part 1 Topic 1: My Body	Creative Arts (Visual art, Music, Drama, Dance)	Science & Technology	Mathematics	History & Geography	PDHPE
WEEKS 1-4	VAES1.1 VAES1.2 VAES1.4 MUES1.1 MUES1.4 DRAES1.1 DRAES1.3 DRAES1.4 DAES1.1 DAES1.2	STe-1WS-S STe-2DP-T STe-3LW-ST STe4MW-ST STe-5PW-ST STe-6ES-S	MAE-GM-02 MAE-NSM-02	GEe-1	PDe-1 PDe-2 PDe-4 PDe-6 PDe-7 PDe-9 PDe-10 PDe-11
Part 1 Topic 2: Things We Wear	Creative Arts (Visual art, Music, Drama, Dance)	Science & Technology	Mathematics	History & Geography	PDHPE
WEEKS 4-7	VAES1.1 VAES1.2 VAES1.4 MUES1.1 MUES1.2 MUES1.4 DRAES1.1 DRAES1.3 DRAES1.4 DAES1.1 DAES1.2	STe-1WS-S STe-2DP-T STe-3LW-ST STe4MW-ST STe-5PW-ST STe-6ES-S	MAE-FG-01 MAE-GM-01 MAE-GM-02 MAE-NSM-01 MAE-NSM-02	HTe-1 HTe-2 GEe-1 GEe-2	PDe-1 PDe-3 PDe-4 PDe-6 PDe-7 PDe-9 PDe-10 PDe-11
Part 1 Topic 3: People Who Help us	Creative Arts (Visual art, Music, Drama, Dance)	Science & Technology	Mathematics	History & Geography	PDHPE
WEEKS 7-10	VAES1.1 VAES1.2 VAES1.4 MUES1.1 MUES1.4 DRAES1.1 DRAES1.3 DRAES1.4	STe-1WS-S STe-2DP-T STe-3LW-ST STe4MW-ST STe-5PW-ST STe-6ES-S	MAE-GM-01 MAE-NSM-02	HTe-1 HTe-2 GEe-1 GEe-2	PDe-1 PDe-2 PDe-3 PDe-4 PDe-6 PDe-7 PDe-9 PDe-10 PDe-11



## NELI NSW CURRICULUM MAPPING

Part 2 Topic 1: Growing	Creative Arts (Visual art, Music, Drama, Dance)	Science & Technology	Mathematics	History & Geography	PDHPE
WEEKS 1-4	VAES1.1 VAES1.2 VAES1.4 MUES1.1 MUES1.2 MUES1.4 DRAES1.1 DRAES1.3 DRAES1.4	STe-1WS-S STe-2DP-T STe-3LW-ST STe4MW-ST STe-5PW-ST STe-6ES-S STe-7DI-T	MAE-RWN-01 MAE-RWN-02 MAE-CSQ-01 MAE-CSQ-02 MAE-FG-02 MAE-GM-01 MAE-NSM-01 MAE-NSM-02 MAE-DATA-01	HTe-1 HTe-2 GEe-1 GEe-2	PDe-1 PDe-2 PDe-4 PDe-7 PDe-9 PDe-10 PDe-11
Part 2 Topic 2: Journey	Creative Arts (Visual art, Music, Drama, Dance)	Science & Technology	Mathematics	History & Geography	PDHPE
WEEKS 4-7		STe-1WS-S STe-2DP-T STe-3LW-ST STe4MW-ST STe-5PW-ST STe-6ES-S STe-7DI-T	MAE-GM-01 MAE-RWN-01 MAE-RWN-02 MAE-NSM-02 MAE-GM-02	HTe-1 HTe-2 GEe-1 GEe-2	PDe-2 PDe-3 PDe-4 PDe-5 PDe-7 PDe-9 PDe-10 PDe-11
Part 2 Topic 3: Time	Creative Arts (Visual art, Music, Drama, Dance)	Science & Technology	Mathematics	History & Geography	PDHPE
WEEKS 7-10	VAES1.1 VAES1.2 VAES1.4 MUES1.1 MUES1.2	STe-1WS-S STe-2DP-T STe-3LW-ST STe4MW-ST STe-5PW-ST	MAE-NSM-01 MAE-NSM-02	HTe-1 HTe-2 GEe-1 GEe-2	PDe-1 PDe-2 PDe-3 PDe-4 PDe-5

## NELI NSW CURRICULUM MAPPING

	MUES1.4 DRAES1.1 DRAES1.3 DRAES1.4	STe-6ES-S STe-7DI-T	MAE-DATA- 01		PDe-7 PDe-9 PDe-10 PDe-11
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# Acknowledgement

We wish to sincerely thank the parents and carers who consented and allowed us to conduct this research within Hunter Christian School. We also wish to thank the school administration and OxEd for their in-kind support of this project.

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