



Docksider Reading Intervention Programme A Case Study from Concord School, Victoria, Australia

About Concord School

Concord School is a Prep-12 specialist school for students with additional learning needs. It provides a safe and supportive learning environment where students are challenged to achieve and reach their full potential. Students are taught the mainstream Australian Curriculum for Victoria (AusVELS) Prep-Year 10 and the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) Year 11-12, however, the educational pathway of each student is specifically tailored, through the use of Individual Learning Plans, to meet their targeted learning needs. The students are supported through extensive resourcing, small class sizes of 8-12, education support staff in each classroom and specialised staff including a school nurse, occupational therapists, speech pathologists and student wellbeing coordinators.

When did your school start using Docksider and why was it chosen?

As an eLearning coach, my role is to support teaching and learning through effective, innovative and efficient use of digital technologies to improve student learning outcomes. The focus of eLearning is to promote multi-literate 21st Century-ready students.

At the start of 2015 we began to systematically use *Docksider* across year levels 9 and 10 for students with low literacy levels. By the time students who were struggling with reading reached year 9 they had become disengaged and reluctant to persevere with reading.

The reason for selecting *Docksider* was related to difficulties in finding appropriate books for guided and shared reading sessions that met our criteria of being age appropriate yet targeting low literacy levels. *Docksider* met our needs in that the texts are simple and students are able to relate to the content due to the use of familiar characters, events and settings. We wanted to motivate students to engage with reading and to achieve their individually set literacy goals.

How did you use Docksider?

We decided to target the notoriously disengaged age group (years 9-10). We hoped that the low level texts, and age-appropriate graphics and content would enhance motivation and thus improve reading outcomes.

Classes are small at Concord and so guided reading sessions consisted of two groups within the class. Teachers were supported by coaches to use *Docksider* and also to improve their practice in facilitating guided reading sessions.

There were a few variations of how students were supported to use *Docksider* dependant on the teacher and the abilities of students. Some developed question and answer worksheets to support comprehension, some asked students to write recounts, and others read the books out loud, then presented students with copies of the pages with the text from speech bubbles taken out. Students were then asked to write what they thought a character might say, or they were asked to make up a different story. Students enjoyed making these humorous and also enjoyed listening to each other's stories.

What are the benefits of using Docksider?

- Age appropriateness of the books that are tailored to their abilities.
- Particularly useful in engaging boys with special needs.

- Students have grown in confidence with reading and have wanted to continue to read.
- Due to the graphics and relevance to real life, even non-readers have been able to follow a storyline.
- Stories are short, engaging and motivating with some repetitive elements. There is a continuation of theme and characters (students don't stumble on names as new characters are gradually introduced).
- High interest – low word count.

How has Dockside had an impact on your teaching?

Some of the boys are no longer reluctant to read. They are finding reading an enjoyable process. Therefore lessons are quicker to begin and behaviour issues are less. We actually see more learning occurring. The intervention parts of the books have also assisted literacy planners.

Feedback on the Dockside reading intervention programme/materials

- Teachers found the resources to support the books to be excellent.
- Teachers were really pleased with both the literal and inferential questions.
- Worksheets were really good quality and fantastic for independent work.
- The resource guide allowed for a thorough understanding of phonics strategies.

What did the children think and how did it impact on their learning?

We absolutely loved *Dockside*. The visual nature of the books have helped students with a number of reading strategies such as word patterns, sounding out (phonics), initial letter recognition and developing onset and rime.

We have found the most unexpected impact on our students with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder). Whilst they have often been socially disconnected, when using *Dockside* as a prompt to re-write their own funny stories using the pictures, they want to listen to each other and they are finding connections to each other through story telling.

We found that *Dockside* promoted conversation. Students (including the ASD students) wanted to discuss the stories and the characters' traits. They formed connections with the characters. It has allowed them to connect their understanding of the story to their own experiences.

How effective do you think Dockside has been in raising reading attainment in your school and if so why?

- Students are more engaged and have a better understanding due to repetition of text and characters.
- Dockside has definitely been responsible for building confidence with reading.
- Due to the nature of our students, progress is slow but there has been improvement.

Would you recommend Dockside to other schools?

Definitely and unreservedly.

Case Study by Pam Wright, eLearning coach, Concord School, Victoria, Australia

For more information about the *Dockside Reading Intervention* programme visit:
<http://lioncrest.com.au/years/early-to-middle-years/dockside-complete-range-pack-detail.html>