

Case Study

OATLEY PUBLIC SCHOOL, NSW

Insights from an InitialWrite classroom

At a glance

SECTOR:	Government primary school
LOCATION:	Metro
ICSEA:	1126
STUDENTS:	365
INDIGENOUS STUDENTS:	2%
EAL/D:	44%

“What stands out most about InitialWrite resources is their practicality and impact. The clear visuals, consistent language and ease of use make them highly effective for both teachers and students. They support a seamless integration of writing skills across the day and allow students to transfer their learning across a range of contexts with increasing independence.”

– Tammy,
Foundation/Year 1 Teacher

The context

For more than two years, teachers at Oatley PS have trialled InitialWrite to teach Foundation, Year 1 and Year 2 classes. During this time, they have given feedback on the program to inform its development.

Why InitialWrite?

InitialWrite focuses on teaching children explicitly about the writing process and on building the knowledge and skills required for the compositional aspects of writing. The program develops topic and discourse knowledge for different text types, alongside the discourse-level oral language required for writing, including a strong emphasis on sentence-writing skills. Using a carefully sequenced progression of lessons, teachers guide children to plan their writing and express their ideas orally before they write, and to read, check and edit their texts. Assistant Principal Lauren Edwards says that the program’s

“explicit, systematic progression supports students through shared, joint and independent writing experiences, helping them understand the purpose of their writing and the audience they are communicating with.”

InitialWrite consists of everything needed to run the program as well as extra materials to revise and extend learning. These are designed to be used alongside the techniques and strategies learned during InitialWrite lessons but can be used throughout the school day to support writing in other subjects.

Foundation/Year 1 teacher Tammy says that in her experience, some of these resources extend well beyond the writing lessons and have become an integral part of the class’s daily routine.

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“Watching students confidently use their planning time to create a written scaffold before beginning their piece was phenomenal. We were incredibly proud to see them approach this process with such independence, purpose, and confidence.”

– Lauren,
Assistant Principal

She and her students regularly use the Writing Checklist, both desk strips and the poster, during writing tasks in other subjects. She notes that it

“empowers students to independently check and edit their work, building confidence, independence and a genuine sense of ownership over their learning.”

She also incorporates the text planners during ‘free writing’ opportunities.

“These have been particularly valuable in providing students with a clear and supportive structure to organise their ideas, enabling all learners to approach writing tasks with greater clarity and confidence.”

Overall, InitialWrite has had a very positive impact in Tammy’s classrooms, supporting both the development of writing skills and student confidence in a meaningful and sustainable way.

The impact

Over the three years of the program (Foundation to Year 2), children are slowly given more responsibility and autonomy over their writing. For students with different abilities, the program also allows for differentiation. By the end of Year 2, children should be able to plan, write, check and edit a text independently, producing work containing well-formed sentences and a coherent structure.

Lauren says that the first cohort at Oatley Public School to have completed all three years of the program demonstrates these abilities. InitialWrite has been designed to reflect best practice writing instruction recommendations, supported by current research.

Using the program not only gives students a great start in learning to write but can also improve teachers’ knowledge. Lauren says,

“teachers across Kindergarten, Year 1 and Year 2 feel more equipped and assured in delivering high-quality writing instruction. The systematic approach truly works, and the growth we’ve seen in both students and teachers has been remarkable.”