

## Health warnings over lack of literacy skills

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GRADUATE teachers lack the skills to teach reading with the phonics approach, says a principal, prompting warnings from medical authorities who say it has an impact on children's wellbeing.

Elizabeth Park Primary School principal Patrick Moran, below, has outlined his concerns in an article for the South Australian State School Leaders' Association magazine.

Mr Moran wrote: "It is unfortunate that some of our educators don't know how to teach reading.

"Teacher education courses at university and post graduate do not include evidence-based approaches to teaching literacy including explicit and systematic phonics instruction."

Mr Moran said universities needed to address the issue by examining the latest research to upskill teachers in the teaching of phonics, which should be approached in a systematic way.



... not being literate has high impacts on mental health and psycho-social wellbeing

PRINCIPAL PATRICK MORAN

teaching of reading as a health measure."

The national inquiry into the *Teaching of Literacy 2005* made 20 key recommendations — with some related directly to evidence-based phonics instruction and detailed on five big ideas — phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension.

All Elizabeth Park Primary students were tested on their knowledge of the 42 sounds of the English language, with help from the Adelaide Primary Health Network. Results found there wasn't a

class that had a 100 per cent success rate in fluency of decoding the sounds but junior primary classes had better results.

Mr Moran said if students were not skilled in phonemic awareness, they would struggle with reading.

"Without this, students cannot make the connections between letters and sounds," he said.

In small groups, students at the school are taught skills in listening for sounds, rhyming, identifying initial letter sounds in words and dividing syllables.

### One in five kids 'being left behind'

DYSLEXIA SA president Dr Sandra Marshall said 20 per cent of students nationally failed to achieve minimum literacy levels and would not catch up.

"Currently a "wait to fail model" is in place in most

schools, so instead of providing cost-efficient early intervention, students are being left to fail, and often they will never catch up," she said. "It's a relief that the Federal Government is mandating a phonics screen."



CARD TRICKS: Elizabeth Park Primary Year 7 student Pavel with Asmit (Year 1) and Jasper (Reception) with flash cards to help literacy skills.

### Kangaroo stew on student menu

BIRDWOOD High School's indigenous students took the lead in organising a special cultural event. Deadly Day, recently.

Together with teacher Goran Krivokapic, students planned activities to raise cultural awareness of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' culture.

Activities included making spears, cooking sessions in making damper with kangaroo stew, a range of art activities, storytelling and building didgeridoos. Co-ordinator - community liaison and enterprise Susan Melhuish said this was the first time such a day had been organised.

The technical studies teachers helped students with research, which included conversations with local indigenous elders to find out more about spear making.

The spear tips were burnt and scraped just as indigenous people would have done.



SPEAR MAKING: Birdwood High students Taj Molde, Gian Sharrock and Aiden Mott.

### School bans reality slang

"AIN'T" and "like" are two words one UK school has banned its students from saying.

Teachers at Ongar Academy don't want their students to copy the speech of reality TV stars because they fear it will set them back in job interviews.

TV show *The Only Way Is Essex* is filmed close to the secondary school and headmaster David Grant said it was influencing teenagers' language. He is now warning students that using slang "may not reflect favourably on them in future". "We want our pupils to be able to sit in front of future employers confident they are giving a good impression by the way they speak," he said. "Geezers", "bird" and "emosh" — short for emotional — are all set to be banned.