

'I've used this program with anxious 6-year-olds, disengaged teenagers and struggling adults'



SPELD SA Literacy Clinic, South Australia, October 2024

SPELD SA (Specific Learning Difficulties South Australia) is a not-for-profit organisation based in Adelaide, that provides literacy interventions as part of 'advice and services for children and adults with specific learning difficulties and those who care for, teach and work with them'.

Angelik Pishas, Literacy Clinic and Speech Pathology Manager, talked to us about how they use Sounds-Write in their Literacy Clinic.

Why did you choose Sounds-Write?

We started working with students in 2018, but it wasn't until 2019 that it officially started being called a Literacy Clinic. One prerequisite for a diagnosis of Dyslexia or a Specific Learning Disorder is that the student must have received six months of intervention. We discovered that a significant number of students had not had intervention so the Literacy Clinic meet that need. Furthermore, upon diagnosis of a learning disorder such as Dyslexia, students required an effective intervention strategy for reading and spelling instruction, and Sounds-Write seamlessly addressed this need.

Tell us a bit about the clients that you see in the Literacy Clinic.

The clients that attend the clinic range in age from five years of age to adults. We have students who attend the clinic with a variety of challenges including Dyslexia, ADHD, ASD, intellectual disabilities, auditory processing issues, vision-impairment challenges and speech and language difficulties. We also have students who experience anxiety or low confidence and students who are reluctant to engage with literacy-based tasks due to their prior experience in school. There are also students who have not had explicit phonics instruction in their schooling who we refer to as instructional casualties.



I feel very positive using Sounds-Write with my clients. The program provides a very good sequence to work through, that builds on skills and concepts that are needed for efficient decoding and encoding. I have used this program with anxious 6-year-olds, disengaged teenagers and struggling adults and it provides the same low-variance lessons that are needed to read and write. We find that anxiety, low self-esteem, and disengagement dissipate over time as we provide a safe and supported environment in which to learn.' Jacqui Edwards



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Describe what you typically do in a session.

Our sessions run for 45 minutes, once a week, over 12-week blocks. At the initial session, we use the Sounds-Write diagnostics, discuss the individual student's needs with the parent/caregiver and advise that regular homework is vital to ensure progress. Short, frequent bursts of practice are best (e.g., 10-15 mins daily rather than a one-hour block once a week).

During the one-to-one sessions, the students review the previously taught code - this may be through the Progress Checks or games such as Wiz Words, Spelfabet cards and the Sounds-Write activities specific to each unit. To keep the students engaged, practitioners use a variety of materials such as little whiteboards, different coloured post-it notes, magnetic letters, duplo blocks with letters and erasable pens and texters. Students' favourite is writing on the tables with whiteboard markers!

The rate at which we move through the units varies but we typically find that sticking to 2 weeks per unit is effective. For students with significant learning difficulties, we go slower and make sure we consolidate before we move on to the next unit.

Homework is given to consolidate knowledge, and we typically provide games and activity sheets. We also encourage parents to support reading practice of connected text, using decodable books that match the Sounds-Write scope and sequence, and are loaned out from our SPELD SA library.

The practitioners do a wonderful job at catering to the students' needs, for example, having a wobbly chair to promote movement while sitting, therapy putty as a sensory strategy and to develop hand strength, and using a visual schedule to assist in time comprehension.

'My child loves coming here, and she loves the teaching method.'

'This clinic made more of a difference to Archer than all his other school days!'

'Tom's attitude to learning has improved significantly.'

(Parent feedback)

How do clients react to the Sounds-Write sessions?

One of the positive aspects of Sounds-Write is the low variance in the lessons - the lesson scripts are the same but the content changes. This is great for students learning new information as they can focus on the content, not worrying about what is asked of them. Once students have experienced the lessons, we often have students saying, 'I know what to do here!' Students enjoy the familiarity of knowing what comes next. This means we can progress students through the program in a supported way.

The repetition within the program allows students enough practice to consolidate new learning. Often, students with learning difficulties need a lot more revision. Even choosing a plausible spelling is a great step worth celebrating for some students. For students with working memory issues, we might support them in dictation by writing down the plausible spellings so that we are not assessing their memory of the different spellings but their ability to choose the correct spelling.