



## **Inclusive Learning - Secondary & Primary Readers For Life – Designing An Oracy-Based Reading Curriculum For Children With Special Educational Needs.**

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### **Abstract**

When working in Special Educational Needs environments, professionals are often faced with the challenge of balancing a range of additional, often complex, needs with quality of education. In some regard, the first aspect is considered the more challenging but realistically, the delivery of a broad, balanced and inclusive educational offer is demanding but essential.

As educators, we know that language is one of our key wellbeing indicators and in fact the language that students are gifted from birth is more likely to dictate their life outcomes than the social demographic from which they originate. We know that spoken language and reading supports students' access to a curriculum – cognitively, socially and linguistically. It empowers young people and offers them a window to the world.

At the Raedwald Trust we felt a strong moral imperative to ensure that the explicit teaching of vocabulary and reading was prioritised. Understanding that innovation is fundamental, we worked with partners Greenfields Education to develop a primary and secondary reading curriculum that was research led, and evidence informed. One which would reach right into the pedagogies practiced in mainstream and Special Educational Needs classrooms across the globe. Our universal reading curriculum is built on three pillars of vocabulary instruction (influenced by Law et al); fluency instruction (informed by Shanahan and Rasinski); and comprehension stimulated by a rich and diverse literature spine.

Our primary and secondary book titles celebrate diversity and differences – they spark interest and provoke discussion. They represent the voices of young people, positive role models, and protagonists with a range of special educational needs such as autism, visual impairment and ADHD. Topics cover a range of globally relevant themes such as climate change, conflict and relationships. The pedagogical approach of oracy-based teaching and learning, encourages and develops social interactions and spoken language through meaningful discussion, questioning, constructive critique and the sharing of students' life experiences.

A carefully structured unit accompanies each book, which is then delivered by teaching staff in a specific way to reduce cognitive load and allow for familiarity which supports confidence, self-esteem and success. Scaffolding opportunities, revisit and repetition are incorporated into each lesson, alongside fluency strategies to support prosody and comprehension.

9th International Conference on New Trends in

# Teaching and Education



20 - 22 June 2025

Nice, France

Across a range of mainstream and Special Educational Needs settings, the Readers for Life curriculum has become a valuable vehicle for quickly building positive relationships between students and educators, alongside assessing students to establish their starting point. The curriculum exposes students to big ideas whilst fostering a love of language and literacy that supports and transfers into the next steps of their education.

**Keywords:** Inclusion Learning; Special Educational Needs; Curriculum Design; Primary and Secondary; Barriers to Learning; Generic Skills and their Development