



## Diocesan e-News

# “READER LEADER” INITIATIVE IN WARRACKNABEAL

Early years students in “Chickpeas” at St Mary’s Primary School have recently completed one semester of regular reading with their Secondary College “Reader Leaders”. Once a week, six “Reader Leaders” spend quality one-on-one time with two or three buddies from the Primary School, helping them develop their reading skills.



With the support of St Mary’s Primary School Early Years teacher, Claire Schulz, and training provided for the Secondary College students from literacy coach, Dr Rosemary Wallis, the “Reader Leaders” learn what reading is like for beginners and develop a range of strategies to help their buddies.

The “Reader Leader” program was established as part of the community-wide *WORDS (Warracknabeal Oral Reading Development Strategy) – Linking Learning Warracknabeal Program* and is an integral part of the Warracknabeal Secondary College Middle School elective program, where numerous students are involved in supporting the various primary school students throughout the district focusing on reading.

Throughout the program, strong, respectful relationships develop between the “Reader Leaders” and their primary school buddies. After children read to their school readers, there is shared reading and discussion of an interest book. The pair then play a literacy game devised by the “Reader Leader” with a strong focus on conversation. *We want children to enjoy conversation, enjoy reading and enjoy talking about stories. In an increasingly digital world, the skill of conversation must not be forgotten. It is such an important building block for successful reading, writing and learning.*



While there are significant benefits from the program for the young children, the Secondary College students also gain skills in relationship building, patience, creative thinking, confidence and leadership. Several “Reader Leaders” over the years have gone on to study teaching after enjoying the program so much – but whether that is their direction or not, the program has always been regarded as very worthwhile.

The level of commitment and maturity of the Secondary College students over the three years that the program has been in operation has been tremendous.

### **WORDS – Linking Learning Warracknabeal:**

The St Mary’s Primary School story is an integral part of the collaboration that has been operating across a number of organisations now focusing on enhancing the learning and development of 0 to 12 year olds.

The project is a whole of community partnership between the schools within the Warracknabeal district (across all sectors), Local Government, the local LLEN, Uniting Care, the local Health Service, the Police, the media and the wider community with a strong focus on reading. It aims to tackle declining student achievement levels by harnessing the local community as a whole, to work closely with families to ensure adequate acquisition of literacy and language development for children aged 0-12 years. Check out the video: [WORDS – Linking Learning Warracknabeal](#)

“Words – Linking Learning Warracknabeal” is one of the statewide [Linking Learning projects](#) established by the State Government as a key strategy in improving the learning and development of children from 0 to 12 years of age, and focuses on bringing together the various education sectors, children services and the community to support their children and families.



*Article by Phil Brown first printed on the CEP (Country Education Project) website. [www.cep.org.au](http://www.cep.org.au)*