



# NELI Preschool

Build oral language foundations  
through stories and play



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NELI Preschool is part of  
the OxEd F-6 Program



### Assessments



Language  
Screen



Reading  
Screen

### Programs



Preschool

For 3-6  
year olds



Whole Class

For F-6  
Classes



For F-6  
Intervention

Find out more at

[pearson.com/en-au/oxed](https://pearson.com/en-au/oxed)

# What is NELI Preschool?

Who it's for, what it supports, and the underpinning research.

NELI Preschool is a research-backed program designed to enhance children's oral language skills before they start formal schooling. Through shared book reading and guided play, children develop their vocabulary knowledge, storytelling skills and active listening skills.

The program is aligned with the Early Years curricula for Australia and New Zealand.

## Inside NELI Preschool

- Enhance children's oral language skills before they start formal schooling through shared book reading and guided play.
- Receive a research-based early language enrichment program designed to strengthen the oral language skills of children in the year before they start school.
- Built on proven educational principles: Combines shared book reading and guided play to support young children's language development.
- Focuses on core oral language skills: Enhances vocabulary, listening comprehension, storytelling and expressive language abilities.
- Engaging and diverse content: Features activities based on 20 high-quality story books, including traditional tales, contemporary stories, and non-fiction texts.
- Curriculum-aligned: Designed to support the Early Years Learning Frameworks in both Australia and New Zealand.



# The research that powers NELI Preschool

## Context and need



In Australia, almost **one in four children start school poorly equipped** for learning due to oral language difficulties. Without intervention, they risk lower educational attainment along with socio-emotional and behavioural issues<sup>1</sup>.



Similarly, around **20% of children in NZ start school with below expected oral language levels**, which is associated with lower academic outcomes, as well as social-emotional and behavioural difficulties<sup>2</sup>.



**The gap widens over time:** Without intervention, the gap between strong and weak language children grows (*the Matthew Effect*) affecting progress in all subjects.



**Early action is critical:** Targeted, early support is essential to improve both short-term outcomes (e.g. school readiness) and long-term outcomes (e.g. academic achievement, wellbeing, career opportunities)

Sources:

1. [mcri.edu.au/impact/a-z-child-adolescent-health/o-r/oral-language-and-literacy](https://mcri.edu.au/impact/a-z-child-adolescent-health/o-r/oral-language-and-literacy)
2. [evidence.ero.govt.nz/documents/lets-keep-talking-oral-language-development-in-the-early-years](https://evidence.ero.govt.nz/documents/lets-keep-talking-oral-language-development-in-the-early-years)
3. [www.nuffieldfoundation.org/project/development-evaluation-of-a-preschool-language-programme](https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/project/development-evaluation-of-a-preschool-language-programme)

# The research behind NELI Preschool

**NELI Preschool** was developed by early language and literacy experts, incorporating feedback from preschool practitioners.

It uses structured **small-group sessions** focusing on vocabulary, narrative skills, and listening through play-based activities like stories, games, and role-play

NELI focuses on early **oral language as the foundation for literacy**, learning, and social skills, offering an evidence-based approach to reduce language delays before school entry

**A randomised controlled trial** led by the University of Oxford showed the program led to three months' additional progress in children's oral language skills<sup>3</sup>.

**NELI Preschool** has been developed to enable practitioners to make the most of story time and shared book reading activities. The program can be implemented alongside both In the Moment Planning and more structured routines, making it suitable for a variety of preschool settings.

Designed for easy delivery by early years educators with minimal training using scripted, weekly theme-based sessions that reinforce vocabulary and interactive practice.

NELI Preschool focuses on **vocabulary** and **storytelling** development to effectively boost oral language. It improves vocabulary, develops narrative skills, encourages active listening and builds confidence in speaking.

### Vocabulary

It is well documented that there is a difference in the number of words used by children from disadvantaged backgrounds vs advantaged backgrounds – the ‘Word Gap’. NELI supports early language development by explicitly teaching the meanings of new words and ensuring that children are exposed to a wide variety of words during the day.

### Storytelling

Narrative skills help develop grammar and are an effective way to introduce new words and ideas. Storytelling includes shared reading, imaginative play, and creating personal narratives. Research has shown that preschool children use more complex oral language skills (such as mental state verbs: say, talk, tell, explain) when involved in imaginative play compared to other forms of play.

## Curriculum-aligned resources

### For Australia

Aligned with the Australian Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), supporting children as effective communicators and building confidence through group interaction

### For New Zealand

Supports New Zealand’s Te Whāriki curriculum, promoting communication, belonging, and contribution through small-group peer learning and responsive teaching



# Program Structure



# Program Structure

## a 3-step language journey

NELI Preschool offers scaffolded sessions for the whole group delivered by teachers, along with small group and individual language intervention sessions for teacher aides to support students identified with oral language difficulties after LanguageScreen testing.

**The length of the program is flexible but generally completed in 20 weeks.**

It consists of:

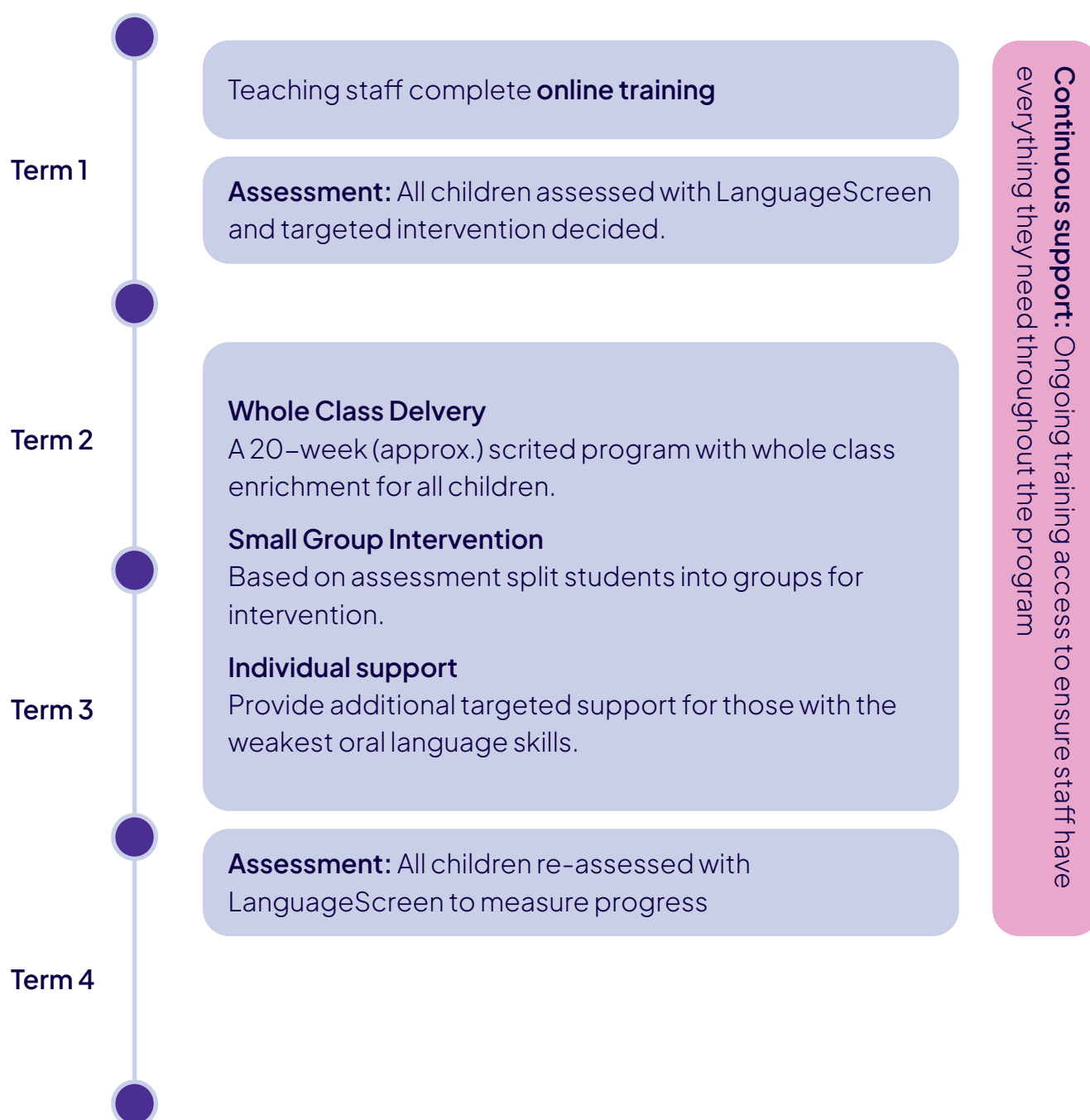
Session Type	What is it?	How many per book	Duration
<b>Whole Group Sessions</b>	In the first of these sessions, the children listen to the whole story and engage with the text through interactive questioning and discussion. In the following four sessions, the class is introduced to a new Special Word, or pair of words, and takes part in Whole Group activities to deepen understanding and encourage use of the new word(s).	<b>5 sessions per book</b>	<b>15–20 mins</b>
<b>Small Group Sessions</b>	The first of these sessions involves six children, in groups of three, retelling the story together. The other two sessions focus on strengthening the children's ability to use the taught words and aim to extend this learning into other contexts. <i>These sessions can be used for intervention, and are optional if not needed.</i>	<b>3 sessions per book</b>	<b>10–15 mins</b>
<b>Individual Sessions</b>	These one-to-one sessions are an opportunity to focus on each child's understanding and skill development. We suggest that teachers use the provided press-out characters to retell the story. By using prompts, the child is encouraged to improve their narrative skills.	<b>1 session per child</b>	<b>5–10 minutes</b>

Preschools are further supported to create a language rich environment with play-based activities and by engaging families to continue learning at home with Home Learning newsletters and links.



# Implementation timeline

A recommended guide for implementation:



# Program Structure

## Example program structure 1: One book per week

### Weekly Program: total program time is 20 weeks

The program can be delivered flexibly to suit your preschool's schedule, children's attendance patterns, or their interest in and enjoyment of the stories. It is important to deliver the books in the order they are presented in the Teaching Handbooks, but how long you spend on each book is up to you.

If your preschool can deliver sessions daily, all sessions for each book can be delivered in one week. If delivered in this way, the program takes 20 weeks to complete (one book per week). It is also possible to extend the program beyond 20 weeks if the children do not attend preschool daily or if you would like to spend more than one week on each book.

Example program structure 1 below shows a suggested schedule if you deliver one book per week, with sessions delivered daily from Monday to Friday.

		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	<b>Whole Group</b> (15–20 mins)	<b>Introduction and story time:</b> Read whole book interactively	Special Word 1	Special Word 2	Special Word 3	Special Word 4
	<b>Small Group</b> (10–15 mins)	<b>Storytelling:</b> Act out story as a group		<b>Special Words:</b> Games using Special Words 1 & 2		<b>Special Words:</b> Games using Special Words 3 & 4
	<b>Individual</b> (5–10 mins. This session can occur on Wed/Thu/Fri)				<b>Storytelling:</b> Small-world play (story retell with press-out characters)	

*Excerpt from the NELI Preschool Teacher Handbook*

## Two-weekly Program: total program time is 40 weeks

This is an example program structure that shows a suggested schedule if you deliver one book over two weeks, showcasing the flexibility of NELI Preschool. For example, if children attend preschool on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays only.

		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	Whole Group (15–20 mins)	<b>Introduction and story time:</b> Read whole book interactively	Special Word 1	Special Word 2		
	Small Group (10–15 mins)	<b>Storytelling:</b> Act out story as a group		<b>Special Words:</b> Games using Special Words 1 & 2		
	Individual (5–10 mins)					
Week 2	Whole Group (15–20 mins)	Special Word 3	Special Word 4			
	Small Group (10–15 mins)			<b>Special Words:</b> Games using Special Words 3 & 4		
	Individual (5–10 mins)	<b>Storytelling:</b> Small-world play (story retell with press-out characters)				

*Excerpt from the NELI Preschool Teacher Handbook*

Even with limited attendance, children benefit from the structure, repetition, and vocabulary focus of NELI Preschool. Additional support can be provided through home learning links for families, reinforcing oral language development across both preschool and home environments.

# What's in each lesson?

Whole Group Sessions	Format
<b>Introducing the Book and Story Time</b> (15–20 minutes)	
<b>Session 1</b>	Introduce the book and go over the listening rules with Neli Read whole story interactively (with questions) Explain tomorrow's session
<b>Story Recap and Special Words</b> (15–20 minutes)	
<b>Sessions 2–5</b>	Recap the story up to the Special Word Show the Special Word flashcard Children repeat the word Give the definition Read and explain the word in context Do the related activity
Small Group Sessions	Format
<b>Retelling the Story</b> (10–15 minutes)	
<b>Session 1</b>	Show the book, story picture cards and press-out characters Decide who will play each role Guide the children to act out the story Encourage lots of dialogue
<b>Recapping Special Words</b> (10–15 minutes)	
<b>Sessions 2–3</b>	Briefly recap the story Show the Special Word flashcard and ask what it means Do the related activity
Individual Sessions	Format
<b>Retelling the Story</b> (5–10 minutes)	
<b>Session</b>	Show the book and press-out characters Guide the child to tell the story using the characters In Books 1, 10 and 20 you will transcribe the story the children tell in order to track their progress



# Whole Group Sessions (15–20 minutes each)

## Session 1: Introducing the Book and Story Time

Show the children the book and ask if they can guess what it might be about, who might be in it, where they might be going, etc.

Read the whole story, asking lots of questions throughout. Give children time to think about the question. Include the question types in the table below, from the CROWD model of dialogic reading. For an overview of CROWD techniques, see Morgan & Meier (2008).



Question Type	Explanation	Example
Completion	Asking the child to fill in the blanks in a repetitive phrase	'Run, run as fast as you can, you can't catch me...'
Recall	Asking the child to remember aspects of the story or characters	'Can you remember who was hiding in the woods?'
Open-ended	Asking the child to respond in their own words	'What is happening on this page?'
Wh-	What, where, when, why, who and how questions	'Why did the Gingerbread Man run away?'
Distancing	Asking the child to relate aspects of the story to parts of their own life	'Have you ever made gingerbread people? What did you do?'

There are suggested questions for each page in the Handbook and on the Whole Group slides for each book:

- **Blue = easier questions**
- **Red = more challenging questions.**

Red questions are more challenging because they may incorporate more advanced language, or the answer may require inference, or they may be more challenging to answer overall, e.g. 'why' questions or questions about emotions.

Show the children the book and pictures. Tell them that that they are free to look at these and read the story themselves or with an adult throughout the day.

Explain that tomorrow you will look at the story again and talk about the Special Words which they have heard in the story. Show the children their NELI Preschool display board with a picture of the book on it.

At the end of the session, ask the children what their favourite part of the story was and why.

**Tip:** The questions suggested in the Handbooks and on the slides are there as prompts to encourage dialogue. We encourage you to follow them up with questions of your own. Try to include lots of different open-ended questions (avoid questions which can be answered by yes or no) and encourage the children to give full answers, using a wider variety of vocabulary. The main aims here are to engage the children in the story and to get them talking!

# Whole Group Sessions

15–20 minutes each



## Sessions 2–5: Story Recap and Special Words

Show the children the book again. Ask if they can remember what happens.

Recap the book up to the page on which the Special Word appears.  
Ask the children to describe what is happening on the page.

Show the children today's Special Word on the flashcard.

- Ask the class to repeat the word.
- Ask if they know what it means and give the definition.
- Read the sentence/description from the book again. Ask if they can spot the Special Word.
- Explain the word in the context of the book.
- Do the Special Word activity from the Handbook.
- At the end of the session, ask the children to say the Special Word again and ask one child to add the flashcard to the display board.

## Step Down Words/Step Up Words

Supplementary Special Words have been included to facilitate adapting the materials for children who may find the chosen word too easy or too difficult.

A Step Up Activity is included at the end of each day. This is optional and can be used if the practitioner feels it is appropriate to extend the children's learning.

**Tip:** Not all the vocabulary will be new to all the children, but asking them to explain meanings and use words in context will deepen their understanding and ability to use them correctly. Make links to related words.

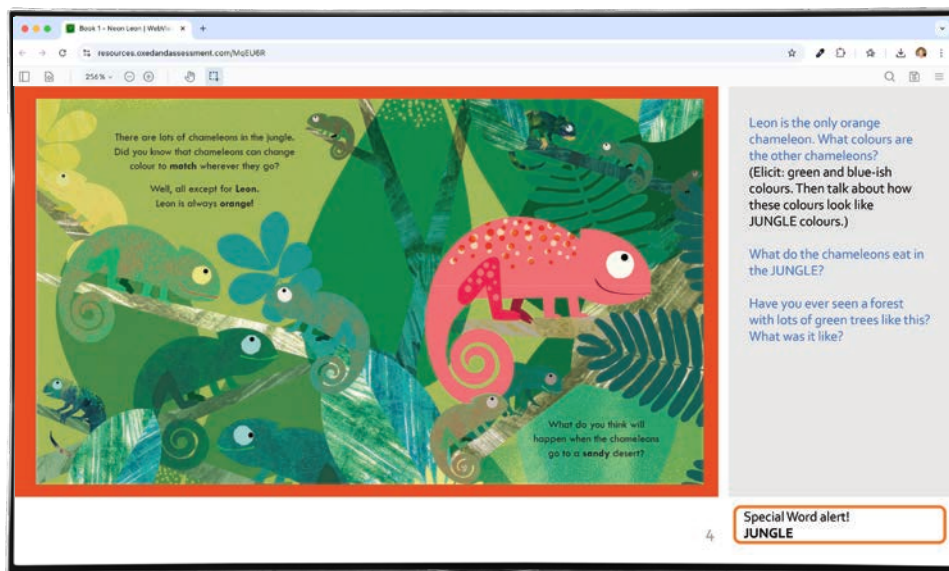
Special Words from previous weeks are flagged when they appear in subsequent books to help children consolidate their learning. Please note that, although some words appear in books several times, they are only flagged once in each book in which they appear. The Special Words 'BIG', 'SMALL' and 'HOME' are not flagged, as they appear many times throughout the program.



# Samples

## Whole Group Session 1

In Whole Group Sessions, all children hear the story and are introduced to new words. The teacher prompts questions for every page (or slide, as below in the digital platform). Questions are shown beside the page in blue (easier questions) and red (more complex questions)

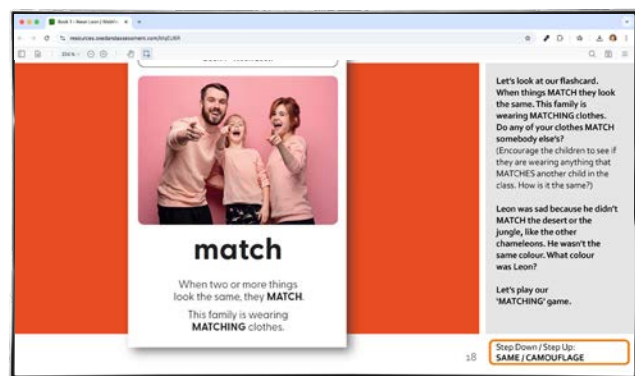
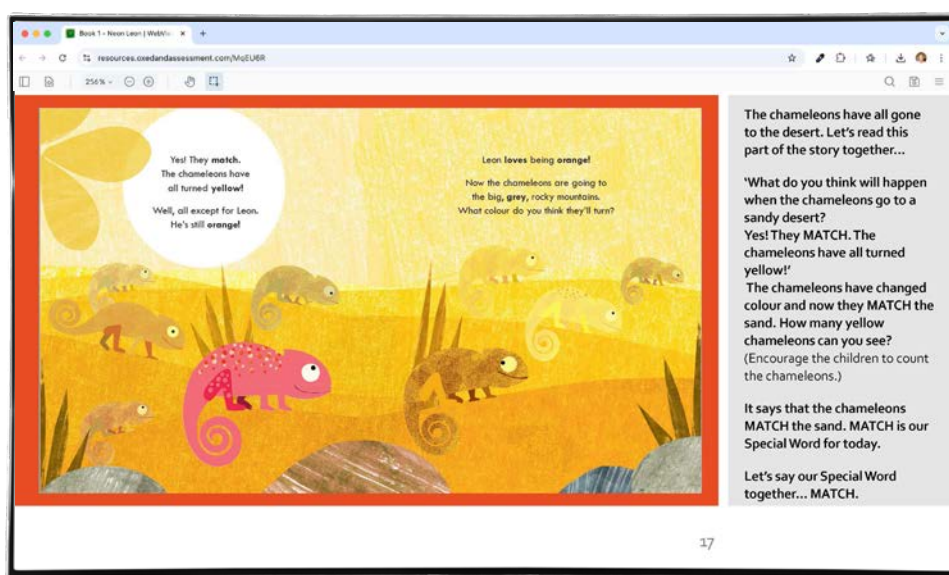


## Whole Group Session 2-5

### Whole Group Session 2:

In session 2 you recap the story and ask them to remember what happens. Here you introduce a special word as a theme. In this example 'Match'.

For struggling children the Step Down word is 'Same' for children that find it easy, or to extend at the end of the day the Step Up word is 'Camouflage'.



With the **Teacher Handbook** to guide you with prompts and activities for every session.

# Small Group Session 1

## (15–20 minutes)

Small Group Sessions reinforce learning as children retell stories together, focusing on target words and applying them in new contexts. While NELI Preschool supports all children, it is designed to narrow the language gap through targeted intervention for those with weaker oral language skills. Alongside whole-group activities, these tailored sessions accelerate progress for children needing the most support to be school-ready.

Safe, supportive spaces reinforce vocabulary and narrative skills. Practitioner-led with high adult input early on, sessions gradually shift toward encouraging independent language use, building confidence and helping monitor understanding.

Small Group Sessions are completed with 3 children at a time.  
Each session is run twice by practitioners, once with each group of children.  
The children do not have to remain in the same groups throughout the program; they may work in different combinations for each session.  
What is important is that each child participates in all 3 sessions each week.

### Session 1: Retelling the Story

Gather any outfits, costumes and toys which could be used in the retelling of the story (e.g. a sheet that could be used as a cape for Little Red Riding Hood, glasses for Granny, a mask for the Big Bad Wolf).

Show the children the book and tell them that you are all going to act out/pretend-play the story.

Decide as a group who will play each role. (The practitioner may take a role themselves if they would like to, and two children may play a single role if appropriate).

Using the book, story sequence cards and script, guide the children to act out the main events from the story.

Particularly encourage the children to:

- a) explain what is happening or what will happen next
- b) what they think their character would say or feel at each point.

**Tip:** This method is based on guided play. Your role is to scaffold the children's activities and respond to their retelling of the story in a way which will encourage the development of their storytelling skills.



# Small Group Session 2 & 3 (10–15 minutes)

## Session 2 & 3: Recapping Special Words

Gather any toys and materials which could be used in the session.

Show the children the page in the story where the first Special Word appears. Just as in the Whole Group Session, ask the children to tell you what is happening in the story.

Briefly recap the story and read aloud the relevant sentence or description.

Show the children the flashcard and ask if they can remember the word and what it means. Encourage them to talk about the picture and explain it using the Special Word.

Do the Special Word activity from the Handbook.

Repeat this sequence of activities for the second Special Word.

**Tip:** Don't feel constrained by the activities suggested in the Handbook. If you have an idea for an activity to support the learning of the new vocabulary or suitable equipment in your setting, then incorporate it into the session!



# Individual Sessions

## Individual Sessions

5–10 minutes each

Individual Sessions are an opportunity for practitioners to engage with children on a one-to-one basis in order to focus on building storytelling skills and revisit any vocabulary which they are struggling to master.

This session will be repeated by practitioners, once with each child identified as needing extra support. Although it can be done at any point, we recommend that this session takes place once the child is familiar with the story and characters.

### Retelling the Story

Collect the press-out characters from the book.

Show the child the book and explain that you are going to tell the story using the characters.

Either the child can use all the characters, or the practitioner can play some of the roles if this would facilitate the child's ability to tell the story coherently.

Using the book, story sequencing cards and script (from Small Group Session 1), guide the child to tell the main events from the story.

Encourage the child to use the Special Words in their storytelling and have the flashcards in view to stimulate their use.

### Special Words: Recapping Learning

If you have extra time, you may want to revisit the Special Words which they have been focussing on this week.

You could redo the activities from the Whole Group and Small Group Sessions, or you may want to extend the child's learning by using the Special Word in a new context. You could also develop a new game together!

**Tip:** Encourage the child to tell the story in their own words. Supporting the child to speak freely and use their imagination is more important than a perfect retelling of the story.





# Components

# Components

## What's included?

### The core book

20 children's books from Nosy Crow (2019 British Book Awards Children's Publisher of the Year)

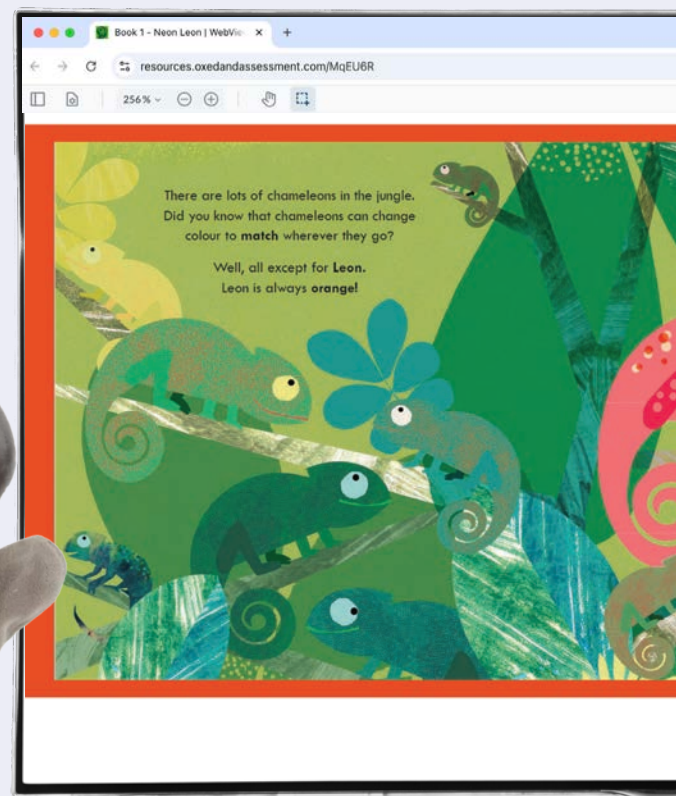


### Neli the elephant

Engage the class in your storytelling and questioning with the Neli puppet!

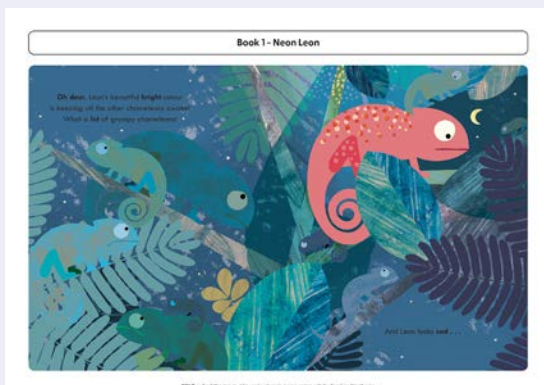


### Digital platform with book as slides



### Sequencing cards

Physical cards of book spreads to help you tell the story and prompt questions.



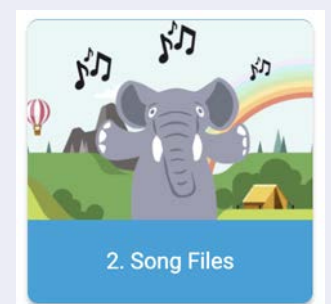
### Press-out characters

Press-out characters for Small Group and Individual Sessions



### Songs

A song per text in the digital platform

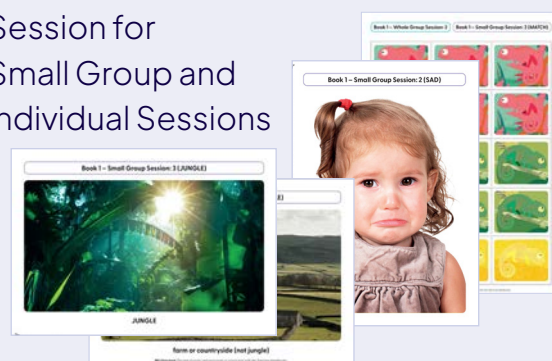




Whole Group Session slides. Sound files for all songs in the program. Printable resources

## Small group session cards

Session for  
Small Group and  
individual Sessions



## Stickers & Posters

'Best listener'  
stickers, poster and  
listening rules



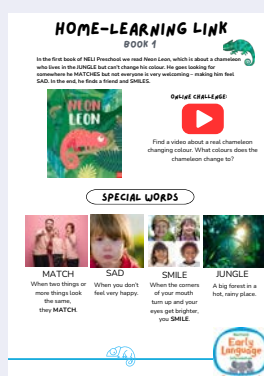
## Flashcards

Flashcards for  
Special Words



## Home learning

Take home activities  
for parents



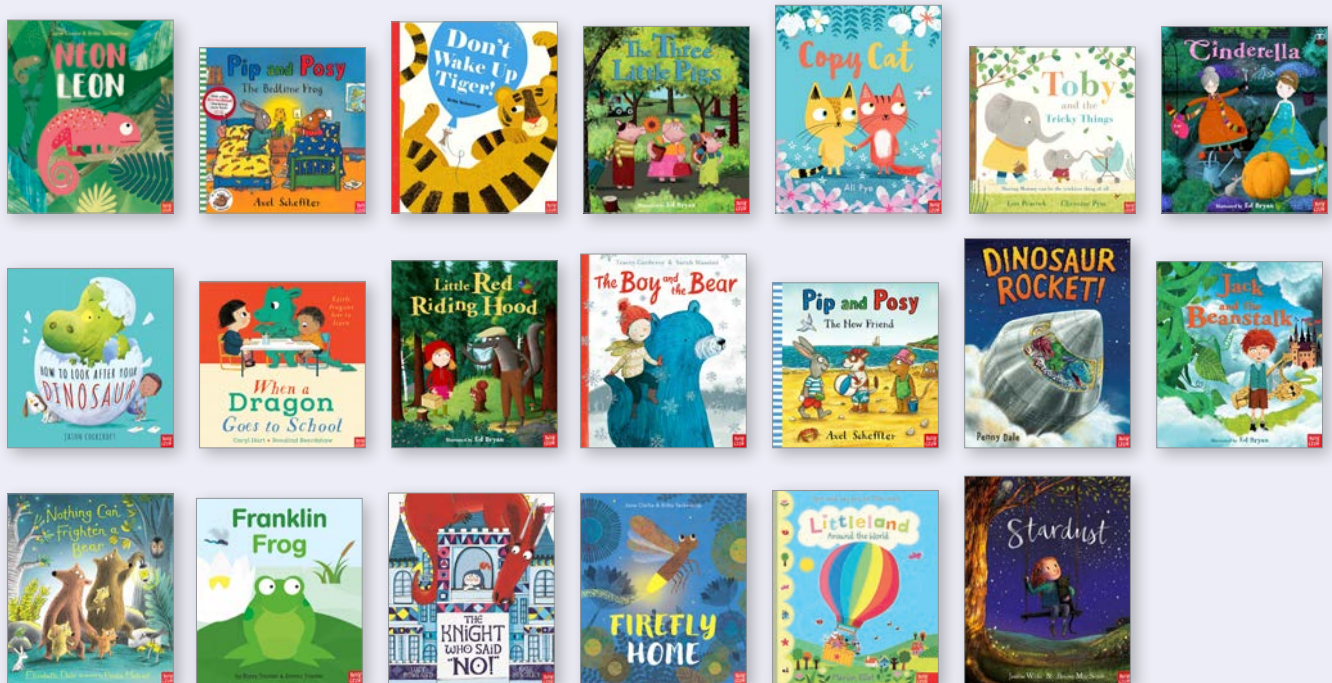
## Teaching Handbook

Two handbooks with detailed  
session plans (Books 1-10 and  
Books 11-20)



# What's included?

## 20 beautifully illustrated books



## On-demand training for all educators

Easy to deliver. Simple to start.

### 10 hours of CPD-certified online training

Delivered via FutureLearn, staff can complete training at their own pace, and revisit as needed to learn.

#### Courses cover:

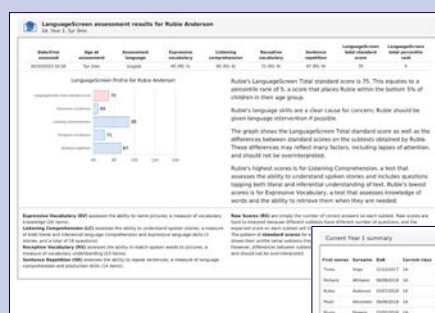
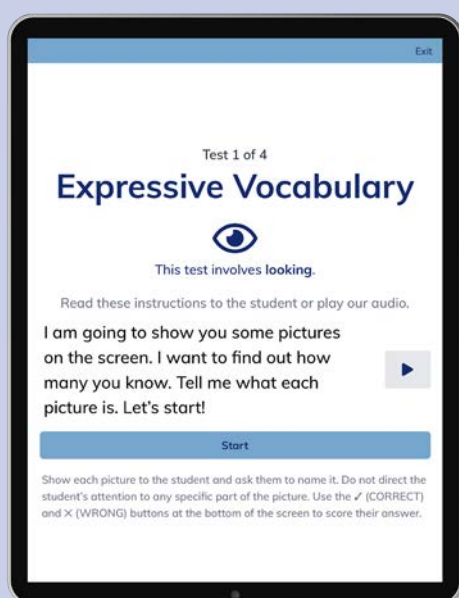
1. The role of oral language in early development
2. Practical steps for delivering NELI Preschool in any setting
3. A learning community for sharing experiences
1. Access to extra resources through the Delivery Support Hub
1. Access to a rolling program of webinars

# LanguageScreen

## Identify and Support with NELI LanguageScreen



**LanguageScreen** forms the essential assessment to begin the NELI Preschool program with. It helps to identify children needing extra support and gain understanding of each child's oral language skills.



*The LanguageScreen report gives you a class summary, and individual child report of their oral language skills*

First name	Surname	Roll	Current class	Assessment date	Age at assessment	Standard score (raw age 5:00)	Percentile	Description	Alerts	Label	Interpretation	Explanation date
Anna	Nguyen	20230017	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	
Benjamin	Nguyen	20230018	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	
Benjamin	Nguyen	20230019	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	
Benjamin	Nguyen	20230020	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	
Benjamin	Nguyen	20230021	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	
Benjamin	Nguyen	20230022	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	
Benjamin	Nguyen	20230023	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	
Benjamin	Nguyen	20230024	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	
Benjamin	Nguyen	20230025	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	
Benjamin	Nguyen	20230026	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	
Benjamin	Nguyen	20230027	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	
Benjamin	Nguyen	20230028	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	
Benjamin	Nguyen	20230029	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	
Benjamin	Nguyen	20230030	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	
Benjamin	Nguyen	20230031	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	
Benjamin	Nguyen	20230032	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	
Benjamin	Nguyen	20230033	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	
Benjamin	Nguyen	20230034	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	
Benjamin	Nguyen	20230035	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	
Benjamin	Nguyen	20230036	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	
Benjamin	Nguyen	20230037	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	
Benjamin	Nguyen	20230038	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	
Benjamin	Nguyen	20230039	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	
Benjamin	Nguyen	20230040	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	
Benjamin	Nguyen	20230041	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	
Benjamin	Nguyen	20230042	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	
Benjamin	Nguyen	20230043	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	
Benjamin	Nguyen	20230044	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	
Benjamin	Nguyen	20230045	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	
Benjamin	Nguyen	20230046	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	
Benjamin	Nguyen	20230047	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	
Benjamin	Nguyen	20230048	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	
Benjamin	Nguyen	20230049	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	
Benjamin	Nguyen	20230050	2A	20230001	5;0	75	1	Very low	Alert	Very low	Very low	

- **LanguageScreen** provides a clear benchmark of each child's oral language skills before the program, supports classroom segmentation to identify those needing extra support, and is used again after the program to measure progress and track impact.
- **LanguageScreen** is a fast, accurate assessment tool designed to identify children who may benefit from additional language support
- Used before and after the program to track progress and measure impact
- Can be administered in under 10 minutes by teachers or teacher aides, using a tablet or desktop – no paper marking required
- Provides instant, standardised results in a clear, detailed report
- Includes four core tests: expressive vocabulary, receptive vocabulary, listening comprehension, and sentence repetition
- Offers age-appropriate versions and uses Australian-accented audio, tailored for Australian and New Zealand classrooms

Access an example report here: <https://bit.ly/OxedSamples>





# Start Your NELI Preschool Journey today!

Find out more, get samples  
and request a demo at:

[bit.ly/NELIPreschool](https://bit.ly/NELIPreschool)

Or scan:



Or contact your Pearson Education Consultant

Lauren Mirabella  
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0448 918 029