

Charity Kindles boost reading skills of indigenous children

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Jack Mailman, 11, has improved his reading skills with the help of a Kindle provided by the Indigenous Reading Project. Picture: Glenn Hunt *Source: TheAustralian*

A NOT-FOR-PROFIT organisation that sends e-readers to Aboriginal children across the country to improve their literacy is having staggering results, lifting the reading time of average students by 237 per cent.

The indigenous children involved improved their comprehension scores by 61 per cent and fluency scores increased by 26 per cent.

Indigenous leader Marcia Langton, the patron of the Reading Project, said it was a real example of something that worked. “The Indigenous Reading Project works so well, achieving superior results, I recommend every school adopt it,” Professor Langton said.

IRP — a new, non-government organisation — finds indigenous youngsters who want to read and lends them a Kindle e-reader. If the child makes progress over time and reaches key goals, they get to keep the Kindle.

IRP chief executive Dan Billing said the organisation was excited about the results.

Feedback from schools has been very positive. Teacher Terri-Ann Miller, from St Monica's School in Oakey in regional Queensland, said 11-year-old student Jack Mailman had made great progress under the program.

“Jack spends more time reading and has improved his comprehension skills,” Ms Miller said. “He's now reading for enjoyment and not just because he is told to. He is becoming an empowered reader.”

Jack said he knew that his reading had improved using the Kindle.

“I know more words and I'm reading much more,” he said. “I'm going to keep going now that I've got my own e-reader.”

Jack's mum, Trinette Gilvear, said there had been a change in her son's reading habits.

“He is reading each night and I have to tell him to turn his Kindle and light off each night as he is involved in his books,” Ms Gilvear said. “He speaks more positively about reading and is able to retell stories.”

This year IRP supported 150 students from city, regional and bush communities across Australia and the charity has expansion plans. “We know that our approach is scalable and cost-effective,” Mr Billing said.

“In the future we want to build a large cloud-based digital library so we reach more students, more efficiently. It is entirely possible for us to be working with 500 students in the years ahead.

“We'll be reaching out to Australia's top CEOs soon to see how we can get our digital library launched. We want young indigenous readers to be among the first to take advantage of the best technology available. We will get this done. It is simply a matter of time.”