

# Kids engaged in boosting literacy



**Special:** Coen children have reaped the benefits of a new program to increase literacy and numeracy as well as school attendance

A PROGRAM to increase literacy and attendance rates in Cape York schools is moving forward in leaps and bounds

The Cape York Partnerships program "Every Child is Special" has developed a new method of teaching to engage students and their families.

"We're working closely with families so they get a stronger sense of why education is important," Cape York Partnerships CEO Bernardine Denigan said.

The project was initially trialled in Coen, but because of its success, it will soon expand into Mossman, Aurukun and Hope Vale.

"In terms of finding the right literacy program, we looked around the country," Ms Denigan said.

"Macquarie University had a very good program called MULTILIT for special education that worked for both middle class and underprivileged kids in Sydney ... so we tried it here.

"It's phonics-based and relies on a combination of different literacy approaches."

Ms Denigan said intensive remedial support was also included in the program.

"On average a child improves from 12 to 18 months in literacy and

numeracy," she said.

"What we learnt most from the trial was that with the right instruction method, these kids can learn."

Ms Denigan said the new attendance strategy was rigorous.

"Every time there's an unexpected absence the attendance officers go straight to the houses.

"We've got a very strong emphasis on family engagement and the children who do regularly attend school are celebrated.

"People really start to build a sense of community around it."