

## Growing Expertise Through PaL: Hoekstra's Journey of Learning and Collaboration

by Haley-Anne Rogers

One of the most rewarding aspects of the PaL programme is seeing how teachers develop over time. Not simply what they learn during workshops, but how their confidence deepens, their understanding expands, and their classroom practice evolves through consistent engagement with the approach. At Hoekstra Farm, this long-term development has become clearly visible through teachers who have been part of PaL for several years.

Leandra joined the PaL programme in 2021, during the early stages of our work at Hoekstra Farm. In the years since, she has become a strong example of what long-term engagement with the approach can achieve. The difference between a teacher in her first year of PaL and one who has spent four years connecting theory to practice is striking and Leandra illustrates that progression clearly.

What stands out most is not just what she knows, but how she applies that knowledge in meaningful ways. During workshops, she regularly draws on her own classroom experiences to help colleagues better understand the concepts being discussed, grounding conversations in real moments with children. The result is a training environment where teachers learn not only from facilitators, but also from one another.

Her classroom practice reflects the same depth of understanding. The way she introduces and reinforces new vocabulary, while giving language to children's thinking during activities, reflects how intentionally PaL supports both language development and cognitive growth. The children in her class are forming more complete sentences, explaining their reasoning more clearly, and approaching creative tasks with increasing confidence and curiosity.



Leandra and Haley-Anne

Years of experience with the approach have strengthened Leandra's confidence and have also allowed her to witness firsthand the impact PaL can have in the classroom. Her continued enthusiasm for implementing the approach, even with younger age groups, reflects the commitment and belief in the approach that have developed over time.

This year, the school enrolled a new teacher, Chante, to begin learning about PaL and applying the approach in her own interactions with children. Although she is still in the observation phase, early changes are already visible. Through observing lessons and participating alongside the team, she is beginning to identify ways to improve her interactions with children to align more closely with the PaL philosophy. Having an experienced colleague like Leandra nearby, modelling what the approach looks like in practice, has become an invaluable part of that process.



What is taking shape at Hoekstra Farm is something more than a programme being implemented successfully. It is a culture, one where learning is ongoing, reflection is encouraged, and experienced teachers naturally support and strengthen those around them. That kind of environment does not develop overnight. It is built through years of consistent practice, honest engagement, and a shared belief in the value of the work being done.

As teachers deepen their understanding of the approach, children gain access to richer language experiences, more thoughtful facilitation, and classrooms where exploration, creativity, and thinking are genuinely valued. The long-term investment at Hoekstra Farm, in its teachers, its practice, and its commitment to the PaL approach, is creating the kind of learning environment where both children and teachers are able to thrive.