

Submission to Literacy Advisory Panel Community Consultation

From Sally Fowler

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A brief response...

Current activity:

1: What is currently working well to improve literacy?

- System wide professional learning to build teacher understanding of literacy, including specific aspects such as phonics and effective classroom practices such as reciprocal teaching.
Repeating these programs over a number of terms and years enables teachers to continue to develop their depth of understanding and ensures that teachers entering the system can access the learning.
- System wide documents that provide a common reference point for teachers – building common understanding and language
- Support for teachers to implement changes to practice – Quality Teaching Coach initiative allows teachers to work alongside more experienced colleagues to implement more effective teaching practices

3: Organisational map – gaps, opportunities, supports

- **Department of Education** - Literacy Framework and Plan for Action 2019-2022 provides many opportunities that, given time and support will have significant impact on the knowledge and skills of the teachers in Tasmania
- There are opportunities for closer liaison between schools and community organisations such as **Child Health and Parenting Services** so that issues that may affect learning such as oral language delay are communicated and can be responded to quickly when a child starts school.
- CHaPS could provide information to parents to before school age opportunities such as Launching into Learning
- Possible gap or opportunity – what does the Department of Health have in place between the early years and the adult years? Where do the school nurses sit?

Measures and targets.

-these seem entirely focussed on reading. Literacy is much broader than reading. It is a challenge to avoid focussing on the easily assessed aspects of literacy such as constrained skills.

Other observations:

What is literacy?

- P.4 It is encouraging to see the UNESCO definition of literacy and the statement that where used in the paper, literacy refers to the full breadth.

How we learn to be literate

- P.13 The statement that there is general agreement about the skills needed to become literate - the Big Six – is misleading. **The Big Six refer specifically to reading**, not literacy in general, especially the breadth in the UNESCO definition. The Konza paper you have quoted is called Teaching Reading...
- It would be useful for readers of this document to understand that the Big Six are not equal or even similar. Some are constrained skills, are easily measured can be learned to mastery over a relatively short time (phonemic awareness, phonics) and some are unconstrained, much more difficult to measure, and continue to develop throughout life (oral language, vocabulary and comprehension)
- I wondered why one of the Big Six, phonics, was highlighted at the end of the paragraph under the table on page 13., and why the term phonics as used rather than the broader term letter sound knowledge as stated in the table.
At the recent opportunity to hear D Konza speak about the Big Six (Feb, 2021), she noted that letter sound knowledge was broader than phonics and need to include morphology as well.
- The recognition that reading and writing are reciprocal processes and these can develop together is important. (paragraphs 2 and 3 below the table)
- Opportunities to develop oral language are very important as stated in the last paragraph on page 13. This aspect of the Big Six needs to be highlighted.

Key themes.

- There are big gaps in what has been heard from teachers.
- Writing is not evident
- Explicit teaching of vocabulary in secondary years is mentioned, but this needs to happen throughout the school system
- No mention of the need to explicitly teach students how to read increasingly complex texts – this is more than more complex words. Text structure and grammatical knowledge influence comprehension. Through reading a wide range of texts, students build background knowledge and vocabulary.
- The importance of teaching phonics explicitly, **systematically** and providing opportunities to practice these skills in a range of reading and writing contexts.
- Provide opportunities for speaking listening, reading and writing for students of all ages for a wide range of purposes.