

Note: The sections in the Paper which are headed “What this tells us” will be the basis for the Panel’s recommendations.

Where questions are broken into life stages (early years, school years and adult years), you can provide responses to any or all life stages.

Please indicate clearly at the beginning of any responses you wish to remain confidential.

Unless indicated as confidential, responses will be treated as public information and published on our website. Please see the [Public Submissions Policy](#) for further information.

Name: Executive Committee

Organisation: Australian Literacy Educators’ Association Tasmania South Local Council

Postcode: 7000

Question One: Are there any key themes we have not identified to improve literacy across:

The Early Years (0-4 years-old)

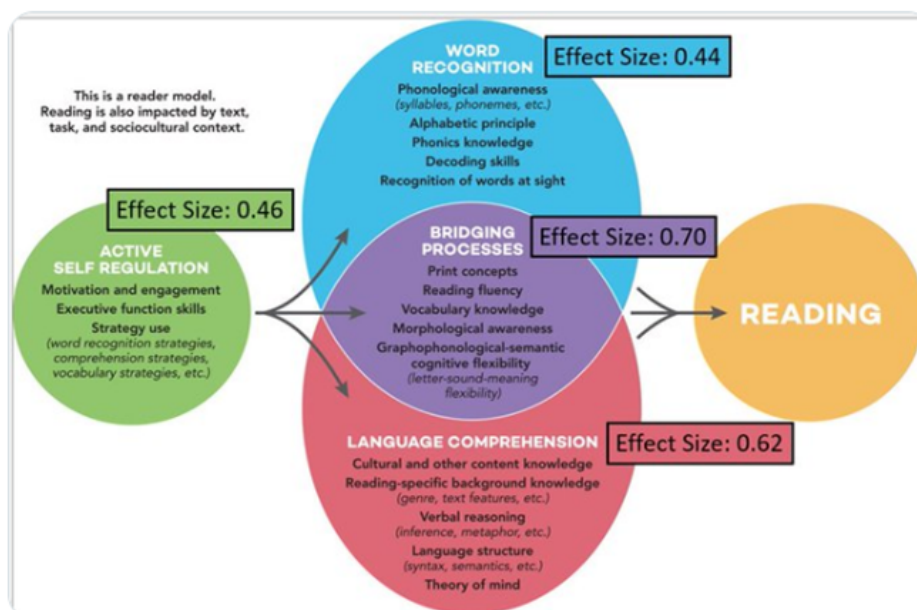
- Current programs that contribute significantly to early literacy learning are not acknowledged e.g. ‘Launch into Learning’
- The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), P 57 states “Literacy incorporates a range of modes of communication including music, movement, dance, storytelling, visual arts, media and drama, as well as talking, listening, viewing, composing, reading and writing.” The Report overlooks the crucial role of these modes of communication in purposefully planned play-based learning.
- Understanding the value of children’s early mark making, message forming, and writing is neglected in the Report. Such experimentation builds fine motor skills, provides opportunity for creative expression and enhances a child’s critical thinking and language development. Much can be done to support children’s early mark making and writing (Graham, Gillespie & McKeown, 2013).
- A monocultural stance is presented in the Report. It neglects the importance of a child’s home language. Success for children who are bi or multilingual learners is tied directly to mastery of their home language (Derby 2021).

The School Years (5-17 years-old)

- Writing is a key component of literacy development and is absent in the Report even though the definition of literacy at the beginning of the Report acknowledges that writing is a key component of literacy. ‘Early literacy instruction is patently incomplete when teachers focus only on foundational reading skills. Teachers need to provide adequate time and attention to the foundational elements of writing to have a powerful and effective early literacy program in classrooms. If you haven’t asked children to take it to

writing, then they haven't really mastered the foundational literacy skills they need to succeed.' (Reutzel, 2019, p. 30). Much attention should be given to the significant impact interactive writing and daily authentic writing opportunities can have on literacy learning along with an understanding of the elements of the craft of writing as outlined in the Australian Curriculum: English. Writers need to know how to make meaningful language choices, how those choices vary according to context, which choices are more effective.

- English orthography is the conventional writing system of the language. It has three interdependent components, morphology, etymology and phonology. While much attention is given to the phonological component, the importance of the underlying meaning structure of words (morphology) and the influence of etymology on grapheme choice when writing is neglected in the Report, yet it is foundational to the English writing system. Morphology provides the defining framework for word construction. Graphemes occur within these structures and do not cross morpheme boundaries. Letters often have functions that have nothing to do with representing sounds. (Venezky, 1999, Carlisle, J. F., 2010). This knowledge has been shown to improve spelling, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. (Bowers, P. & Kirby, J. R., 2010). Teaching about morphology in conjunction with phonology has been found to improve phonological awareness (Goodwin & Ahn 2013).
- The use of the term Science of Reading has been presented in a narrow way advocating for the Simple View of Reading although this is not directly stated in the Report. The Report does not present the broader views of this model that have been developed and expanded by the original research team and others to show how complex the reading process is. The Cognitive Foundations Framework (Hoover, Tunmer, 2020), combines the cognitive elements that underlie reading with those that underlie reading acquisition. Burns, Duke and Cartwright (2023) identify the effect sizes of the various components of the Active View of Reading demonstrating a broader view of the complex nature of reading and significance of active self-regulation of the learner. It is important to note the impact of text, task and context on the process of reading as well.



- The following are anecdotal notes from a classroom that has year 3 students who have had 3 years, (prep to year 2), at another school that has been teaching reading according

to the 'science of reading' as directed by a department speech pathologist. These students are this year in year 3 and results in this cohort include:

- in 2023 there is a much higher percentage of children who are two years or more behind in their reading
- in 2023 there is a much higher percentage of students who are two or more years behind in their spelling
- There is a lack of comprehension including literal comprehension for all students from the feeder school
- Sentence structure, in their writing, is behind their peers who did not attend the feeder school
- None of these students had been identified as needing extra support

The above percentage of students with lower levels is more over the last 2 years than the cohorts from the feeder school before this time. They have smaller class sizes than our school and so we would have expected if the simple view of the 'science of reading' was the answer, we would not be seeing these low levels in literacy.

- Attention needs to be given to the quality of the texts given to emergent readers. 'Texts young readers read, need to reward attention to letters in words by being mostly decodable based on the letter-sound relationships the children know so far. But they also need to make sense so children can successfully monitor their comprehension—and they need to be worthy of comprehending, so that students want to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words and the text as a whole.' (Duke, 2020). Birch et al (2022) recognised that experience with a variety of texts is still required. A restricted diet of 'decodable' texts can hinder progress if sensemaking is not prioritised.
- There is a lack of attention to the significance of motivation and engagement in the process of learning to read and write. Attention to purpose, audience, choice, opportunities to interact and opportunities to engage successfully with challenging texts that are relevant to students builds engagement which in turn builds learner agency. (Gambrell, 2011). There are repercussions on student wellness when they are required to participate in programs that do not engage and motivate, for example the behaviour of one student from the above mentioned feeder school, had been identified as significant however in the new learning environment this behaviour is non-existent and the student instead seems to be excelling.
- There is no recognition of the great work in literacy by many Tasmanian teachers that has preceded this report. Many teachers have a rich understanding of the reading and writing processes and know how to meet the diverse needs of their students by intentionally planning using the Gradual Release of Responsibility and a balanced approach to the components of their instruction informed by the Australian Curriculum: English and the National Literacy Progressions. Many children have successfully learned to be literate in these classrooms and these teachers' work, has on occasions, been recognised nationally by ACARA and others. Teacher voices are missing in this report. Instead, teachers are mentioned as passive stakeholders who should have something done to them.

The Adult Years (18+ years-old)

Question Two: What are the three main things we should prioritise doing in:**The Early Years (0-4 years-old)**

- Foster a love of reading by supporting parents and caregivers to make book-sharing engaging, interactive and fun in both English and their home language where possible. When adults talk about the content of the book and link it to children's interests and experiences, understanding of concepts and vocabulary is enhanced. Link to what is already working well, Launching into Learning.
- Early Childhood workers are responsible for many of our youngest children for long periods of time each day. They need to be acknowledged and supported with resources and ongoing Professional Learning opportunities that show them the importance of interactive read alouds, extended conversations, and intentional play-based learning opportunities. In addition early childhood educators need to be provided with good pay and appropriate working conditions.
- Promote the important role parents, families and carers play in oral language and early reading and writing development by ensuring all families have access to information, resources and support to assist in this critical role. Raise awareness and access to support services for parents and carers to access.

The School Years (5-17 years-old)

- Ensuring early years educators are empowered to design learning experiences that provide a simultaneous, rather than sequential, model of reading and writing instruction. (Cervetti, 2020; Swanson et al., 2011, Duke & Mesmer, 2018). Human learning is a progression but not a linear one although some developments do have to take place in a particular order such as self-regulation and executive function skills which will have unique dimensions in specific periods of life. (Darling-Hammond, L. et al., 2020, page 12).
- Provide support for teaching and learning opportunities for students that reflect the definition of literacy provided at the beginning of this Report and which deepen teachers' understanding of the Australian Curriculum and National Literacy Learning progressions appropriate for school students from 5-17 years. This includes Speaking and listening, Reading, and Viewing, Writing (including transcription skills) and Text Creation. The expectations of the Australian Curriculum extend beyond the Big Six that is mentioned in the Report. High School teachers should be supported to teach the literacies associated with their discipline area. The Learning Progressions provide the scope and sequence so new sequences are not necessary.
- Support teachers to have time to use ongoing cycles of formative assessment and monitoring in professional learning communities where student literacy progress is monitored and early identification and appropriate support and intervention is planned as a team. In addition, teachers are able to identify their own professional learning needs in relation to an identified student learning need. Calls for professional learning often focus on training and retraining, focussed on basic content knowledge rather than ways of implementing, generating and sharing knowledge from practice.

The Adult Years (18+ years-old)

Question Three: Are there any data sets not considered in this paper that should be used to monitor literacy achievement in:

The Early Years (0-4 years-old)

- Educator checklists (speech, fine or gross motor etc.) related to elements in the EYLF to monitor children in their play environments.
- Learning stories

The School Years (5-17 years-old)

- Closing the Gap measures
- What makes for effective professional learning? What makes for effective leadership of literacy?
- Teachers' anecdotal notes
- Student voice data - student interviews; feedback processes
- Attendance and well being data

The Adult Years (18+ years-old)

Question Four: If you are a provider of a service, what kinds of guidance would you hope to see in the Community-wide Framework?

- Clarity, coherence and cohesion with strong connections to the AC: English and the National Literacy Learning Progressions.
- A focus on precision over prescription. An expectation that any scoping of the learning developed will NOT be a generic offering with rigid lockstep sequence of learning. It ignores the importance of differentiation according to student learning needs - precision in classroom practice (Kuhn & Stahl, 2022).

Question Five: Are there any other comments you would like to make?

Throughout this Literacy Panel Report tier/wave 1, 2 and 3 are mentioned. The report states that tier/wave2 and 3 will need small group and one to one intervention. This is not new information but an ongoing problem teachers face in providing such support. Teachers know they have a group of children who have lower literacy levels and teachers know that they need small group and one to one intervention. The question is how is this managed when there are the following considerations/demands:

- The importance of keeping all children actively engaged in learning (reading and writing) while the teacher is working with this small group or individual child.
- How can schools provide time for teachers to plan for these specific needs?. Planning takes time and is proportional to the instructional time, that is 30 minutes or more of planning time for 30 minutes instruction time with students.
- How do teachers also meet the needs of the 5% to 10% of students in the class who are gifted or highly able?

- How do teachers engage and motivate students if they are expected to do a one size fits all literacy program that seems to be implied or, even at times, stated in this report?
- Time is of the essence, children have a right to engage with all aspects of the Australian Curriculum and frequently this provides the purpose and incentive to practice their reading and writing. It seems that some people feel that the only job teachers have is to teach the simple view of reading - reading is complex and required in every learning area.

Children with specific diagnosed learning needs require support in addition to classroom instruction, not instead of classroom instruction. This is the challenge that should be being discussed. How could outside of school hours tutoring be funded, perhaps. Having sessions in school hours means that these children miss vital classroom learning that puts them further behind in other learning areas and affects the confidence and wellbeing of these students.

The Literacy Panel Report seems to be arguing that a single approach is going to change the literacy levels of all students. This implies that there is one simple way to fix the complex problem of low levels of literacy in this state.

As acknowledged by the Literacy Panel, trusted partnerships are important: 'Trusted partnerships between educators, parents, families, carers, the community and across boundaries are critical for sustained approaches to high quality literacy teaching and supports.' (p.20) Teachers and leaders need to be involved in the decision making about literacy instruction in Tasmanian schools. Trusted partnerships are difficult to achieve when certain sectors/individuals denigrate the work of educators.

The Literacy Panel Report noted under 'workforce':

'The Workforce should be supported to ensure teaching aligns with the contemporary peer-reviewed research evidence, including cognitive research, and that educators have a "toolbox" of resources and skills to teach language and literacy skills to learners.'

then the Literacy Panel Report noted under 'schooling':

'The Australian Education Research Organisation³⁴ suggests that 'the science of reading provides the strongest evidence about how young children learn to read. Understanding the cognitive science behind how students learn to read and the research on effective instruction makes it easier for educators to align policy and classroom teaching with evidence.'

These two points seem to be at odds. Contemporary peer-reviewed research indicates that the science of reading is too simplistic in its description about how children learn to read, (Duke, N.K. & Cartwright, K. B, 2021). In addition, it was noted that many of the references citing the impacts of the Science of Reading are from the late 1990's and early 2000's. What is more contemporary research showing?

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