

Teaching literacy: Review of literature

Phase 1 Report for the Review of Literacy Teaching, Training
and Practice in Government Schools

Prepared for the Department of Education, Tasmania

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Glossary

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AC:E	Australian Curriculum: English
ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
ACER	Australian Council for Education Research
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
LIFT	Learning in Families Together
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment Training and Youth Affairs
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
NMS	National Minimum Standard (NAPLAN)
NPS	National Proficient Standard (on PISA tests)
OECD	Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development
PALL	Principals as Literacy Leaders
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment

Executive summary

This literature review was conducted as part of the *Review of Literacy Teaching, Training, and Practice in Tasmanian Government Schools* commissioned by the Tasmanian Department of Education. It was prepared by personnel from the Peter Underwood Centre with input from the Project Reference Group (see Appendix A). This literature review focuses on the teaching of literacy. A subsequent review will examine literature in relation to pre-service teacher education for literacy.

Context

The meaning of the term literacy has broadened considerably in recent decades. This review uses the nationally-agreed definition provided by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), which includes comprehending and composing written, oral, and visual texts. Literacy is a process of learning to make meaning with as well as extract meaning from language. Each curriculum area has its own specific literacy requirements and literacy practices differ according to context and purpose.

Literacy is vital for learning in school and also forms socio-cultural capital essential for civic engagement. Data from national and international standardised tests indicate that a significant minority of Australian and Tasmanian students have yet to develop the literacy skills needed for effective and productive participation in society.

Low socio-economic status has been linked to poor educational outcomes. Results from the National Assessment Program: Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), in conjunction with data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), suggest that the proportion of Tasmanian students below the national minimum standard for reading is high in families where parents are unemployed and on low incomes, as well as in households with no internet connection.

Improving literacy levels has rightly become a key focus for the Tasmanian government, an effort evident in recent Department of Education policies and literacy initiatives. This literature review is part of one such initiative, the *Review of Literacy Teaching, Training, and Practice in Tasmanian Government Schools*, which is due for completion in December 2019.

Standardised Testing Programs

Key standardised testing programs are the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)—administered by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the National Assessment Program: Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)—administered by ACARA.

PISA tests several educational proficiencies among 15 year-olds internationally, including those for reading literacy. Results indicate that, compared to the national average, fewer Tasmanian students meet the National Proficiency Standard. However, Tasmanian 15 year-olds tend to be in a year level lower than their peers elsewhere in Australia, and this may account for the disparity in scores.

PIRLS examines reading among Year 4 students against internationally-agreed benchmarks. Of concern, 17 per cent of Australian students scored at the low benchmark, while seven per cent scored *below* the low benchmark. Tasmanian students scored similarly. Additional data collected as part of PISA and PIRLS demonstrate the correlation between literacy achievement and particular demographic factors (such as socio-economic status and location) and with school context (such as resourcing and school 'climate' or culture).

NAPLAN was introduced nationally in 2008 and tests students at Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. Unlike PISA and PIRLS, NAPLAN gauges literacy across a range of domains: reading, writing, spelling and grammar, and punctuation; aligns with the Australian Curriculum; and tests whole cohorts, rather than using a sampling approach. Indigenous students, those from backgrounds other than English, those living in remote regions, and those in families with low SES are disproportionately affected. Students who fall behind in the early years are unlikely to catch up without targeted remedial support.

Standardised international and national testing regimes have their limitations and can contribute to a focus on ranking at the expense of learning. However, used diagnostically, these data can usefully signpost the way forward to much-needed educational interventions.

Policy

Improving literacy outcomes has become a policy focus nationally and in Tasmania in the past two decades. The 1997 National Literacy and Numeracy Plan called for a coordinated approach by the Commonwealth, States, and Territories. The plan was followed by the *National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy* (Rowe 2005a, 2005b), which found:

- literacy is the responsibility of all teachers across the curriculum;
- teachers need a repertoire of skills to effectively implement an integrated approach to reading;
- sound data is needed early to identify children experiencing difficulties; and
- pre-service teacher education and in-service professional learning need to be systematic.

The 2008 Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians updated government commitments to enhance education outcomes for young Australians, focusing on equity and excellence. The Declaration led to the establishment of ACARA, which was charged with developing the national curriculum and for NAPLAN assessment and reporting.

Literacy teaching across Australia was then given a significant boost by two Council of Australian Governments (COAG) initiatives: The *National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy* and the *Improving Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership*. These partnerships emphasized a collaborative approach to responsibility for literacy and numeracy, and resources developed through these initiatives have since been incorporated into an extensive online repository.

Tasmania was an active participant in the two national partnerships as a member of COAG. Major initiatives included:

- Raising the Bar (RTB), which focused on whole-school approaches to literacy by strengthening school leadership and offering targeted professional learning for teachers;
- Raising the Bar maana (moving forward), which focused on participation of Aboriginal students;
- Principals as Literacy Leaders (PALL), which focused on developing school principals as instructional leaders in literacy.

In the past few years the Tasmanian Department of Education has produced a suite of resources that are based on and complement the Australian Curriculum: an overview document entitled *Supporting Literacy and Numeracy Success: A teachers' resource for early years to Year 12* and specific *Good Teaching Literacy Guides* for Years K–2, 3–6, 7–10, and 11–12. Overarching these resources is the Department's (2015) *Literacy and Numeracy Framework 2015–2017*, which outlines seven elements of effective literacy and numeracy teaching. These are:

- creating the optimum conditions for learning;
- developing a whole-school approach;
- fostering collaborative learning communities within schools;
- targeting teaching to address individual student needs;
- enacting evidence-based practice;
- using data to inform action; and
- engaging with families and communities.

In its 2016–2017 budget, the Tasmanian Government committed substantial funding to improving literacy and numeracy outcomes. Current initiatives include the employment of literacy specialists and literacy coaches in schools identified as needing support, the Middle Years Literacy Project, and the Learning in Families Together (LIFT) program.

Meanwhile at the federal level, several government initiatives reflect a 'back to basics' approach that includes a renewed focus on phonics as a specific component of literacy.

The Australian Curriculum

The Australian Curriculum aims to prepare students for active and meaningful lives as learners, individuals, and citizens. The Australian Curriculum (AC) has three dimensions—discipline-based learning areas, general capabilities, and cross-curriculum priorities (ACARA, 2012). Most relevant for this review are the general capability of literacy and the learning area of English.

ACARA specifies literacy as a general capability that encompasses 'listening to, reading, viewing, speaking, writing and creating oral, print, visual and digital texts'

(ACARA 2012, p.16). Thus becoming literate involves learning how to use language in different contexts and for various purposes. It entails both comprehending and composing texts. ACARA's learning continuum for literacy provides a formative assessment tool for teachers. Literacy as a general capability applies to all teachers, across year levels and across learning areas.

The Australian Curriculum: English (AC:E) recognises that language is a socially-constructed meaning-making system and that students bring diverse experiences to school. ACARA articulates three interrelated strands of AC:E that enable the development of necessary skills and knowledge; these are language, literature, and literacy. Integrating these three strands in the curriculum using varied content enables teachers to refer to multimodal texts and engage students in receptive and productive modes, so they learn to communicate effectively in real-life contexts. ACARA provides guidance on how to build skills and knowledge progressively, gradually, and continuously, across the year levels. Importantly, the AC:E is not prescriptive, but rather is designed for flexible use, encouraging teachers to develop differentiated programs that cater for individual needs.

Approaches to teaching literacy

Approaches to teaching literacy have evolved from a focus on developing reading and writing skills to incorporating more complex multimodal practices and multiliteracies based on more nuanced and socially-embedded understandings of literacy.

Basic skills approach

Until the early 1970s, literacy was conceptualised narrowly as the ability to read and write. This 'basic skills' approach tended to compartmentalise skills into a series of steps. Building on behaviourist learning theories, this approach is associated with terms such as 'letter-sound relationships', 'word attack skills', and 'sight vocabulary'. Teacher-directed, it exemplifies a performance model of curriculum based on strong sequencing of skills and set rates of maturation, regardless of students' prior knowledge, experiences, or individual differences. On its own, the approach is problematic because it uses learning by rote and lacks relevance for real world literacies and teaches skills in isolation from social and cultural contexts to which students might relate.

While the limits of the *basic skills approach* are now widely recognised, there is broad agreement that the acquisition of skills is important: this is a major component of the language strand of the AC:E, including the development of phonics and word knowledge, and knowing about sounds (phonemic awareness), letters (graphemic awareness), spelling, word origins, and prefixes and suffixes that create meaning (morphemic awareness). From its inception in 2009, the AC:E has recommended that basic skills in phonics, grammar, punctuation, and spelling be taught in authentic situations using authentic texts. In other words, teaching these basic skills should be contextual and situational, involving interacting with others and applying knowledge.

Whole language approach

The whole language approach to literacy was developed partly in reaction to the perceived narrowness of the basic skills approach and, in contrast, is based on an understanding of language as guided by social participation and relationships. Relying heavily on psycholinguistics, the whole language approach understands reading as a process in which readers draw on meaning (semantic), sentence structure (syntactic), and visual-sound (grapho-phonetic) cues. Miscue analyses (now referred to as 'running records') are used by teachers to identify the types of errors students make. This process enables them to adjust individual programs to a reading level appropriate for each student. Advocates of the approach promote reading aloud and the use of authentic literature, giving learners control over their reading to encourage meaning-making and critical thinking.

The whole language approach was strongly advocated during the 1980s and 1990s. Critics of the approach argue that its dominance has resulted in several decades in which teachers have relied heavily on students simply being exposed to and internalising correct grammatical structures and spelling. As a consequence, many current teachers who were themselves schooled during those decades may have missed out on developing a deep knowledge of the English language.

Language and literacies for the twenty-first century

Twentieth century theories of literacy development have largely focused on written and oral language. Being literate in the twenty-first century involves 'multimodal designing' as people need to be able to engage in a wide range of linguistic practices, modes and media, including digital media. Thus, literacy in the twenty-first century involves communicating via a range of texts involving visual, auditory, and spatial modes of communicating. The resulting 'multiliteracies' encompass 'the multiplicity of communications channels and media, and the increasing saliency of cultural and linguistic diversity' (New London Group 1996, p.63). Multiliteracies pedagogy is characterised by four key components:

- situated practice – drawing on the experience of meaning-making in life-worlds, the public realm and workplaces;
- overt instruction – through which students develop an explicit 'metalanguage of design' (a way to talk about, comprehend and use language and multimodal texts);
- critical framing – to interpret social context and purpose of designs and meaning;
- transformed practice – in which students, as meaning-makers, become designers of social futures.

Ongoing discussions about literacy development have also been enriched by input from genre theorists, who advocate explicit teaching about language and its functions. Genre theory has contributed significantly to the current framing and content of the AC:E, which emphasizes socio-cultural perspectives on language as a meaning-making process occurring in varied contexts.

A balanced approach

Debates regarding the relative merits of various approaches continue today. Nevertheless, there is increasing recognition of the dangers of establishing a false dichotomy between basic skills and whole language approaches. The AC:E does not stipulate a prescribed approach to literacy teaching, instead indicating that basic skills, whole language, and multiliteracies approaches all have both strengths and limitations.

Leading education scholars now favour what has become known as a 'balanced approach' to literacy teaching. This approach is founded on a comprehensive view of literacy, combining 'explicit instruction, guided practice, collaborative learning, and independent reading and writing' (Tompkins 2014, p.16). It is not intended to be mere eclectic bricolage, but rather to form a thoughtful and systematic process. By focusing on context, a balanced approach aims to resolve any tensions between explicit skills-based teaching and meaning-based instruction.

A balanced approach facilitates a shifting pedagogy from highly visible teaching and learning to less visible and invisible pedagogy, combining teacher-focused and learner-centred theoretical perspectives. While research evidence suggests that such an approach is effective for a range of learners, care must be exercised in its implementation. Teachers need to be well-equipped to incorporate all of the principles of a balanced approach so that they can adapt their teaching to the specific needs of individual learners and personalise learning in a considered way.

Pedagogies and enablers

Effective teaching strategies

Reviews by Hattie (2009), Marzano (2004), Sawyer (2015), and the Australian Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR, 2009) provide strong evidence for effective teaching strategies. Although each review has a somewhat different focus and emphasis, common elements include:

- knowing each student and valuing and building on their background and prior knowledge;
- explicitly instructing and intentionally teaching in ways supported by clear planning;
- fostering higher-order thinking and metacognitive skills;
- explicitly questioning, and modelling inductive and deductive reasoning;
- enabling peer collaboration and cooperative learning groups;
- ensuring there is time for practice, review, and continuity in experiences;
- using formative assessment and tailored feedback to students;
- providing opportunities to apply new knowledge and demonstrating growing understandings; combining high expectations of students with a commitment to equity.

Two models that incorporate such strategies, and which have been influential in the teaching of literacy, are the Effective Reading in Content Areas (ERICA) model (Morris & Stewart-Dore 1984) and the Four Resource Model (Freebody & Luke 1990; Luke & Freebody 2003). The ERICA model consists of four stages: preparing for reading; thinking through the reading; extracting and organising information; and translating information. Each stage equips teachers with ways to deal with particular literacy concerns in the classroom. The Four Resource Model provides a repertoire of social practices or resources, some of which are explicitly taught and others of which are acquired informally or implicitly. These integrative and non-hierarchical practices are designed to foster specific literacy skills for different situations such as school, work, social settings, and home.

Enablers to implementing evidence-based practice

The implementation of evidence-based practice is enabled by certain conditions both within and beyond the classroom, in particular those ensuring teachers are well-prepared and supported. Pre-service teacher preparation needs to equip new teachers with the requisite linguistic subject knowledge as well as pedagogical knowledge to teach literacy well; this matter will be explored further in a subsequent literature review. Thereafter, teachers need to be enabled to continue learning about current and emerging state-of-the-art research about developments in literacy teaching. They need such research to be conveyed in accessible summaries of evidence that avoid jargon and provide practical guidance, examples, and illustrations that can be easily transferred to and adaptable in classroom contexts.

Collaborative professional learning opportunities enable teachers to share teaching practices, and to challenge and justify their pedagogical decisions and better articulate their understandings of literacy. Such opportunities are most effective when teachers' professionalism, prior knowledge, and experience are respected and taken into account. Importantly, teachers need time to refine existing ideas and explore new ones, and support to adapt instructional approaches to the learning and teaching contexts in which they work. Foster (2014, p.53) lists nine enabling actions for consideration by school leadership teams in relation to providing this support:

- identify teachers' needs and readiness for practice change;
- facilitate the establishment of communities of practice;
- model processes to select evidence-based practices;
- critically evaluate evidence-based practices for best fit;
- undertake and support others to undertake professional development;
- provide manageable strategies and resources that fit the practical realities of the classroom;
- support teachers to experience success;
- provide ongoing coaching to lift teachers' capabilities; and
- support teachers to evaluate programs and analyse appropriate data.

The Tasmanian Department of Education (2013, p.24) also encourages a collaborative whole school approach to literacy (and numeracy), highlighting 'collective responsibility for the achievement of every student within a school community'.

Hattie (2009) cautions about the use of the term 'effectiveness' as almost everything that teachers do can be said to 'work', simply because students themselves mature over time. The question 'what works?' is unhelpful unless it is accompanied by other questions that take account of the diversity in classrooms such as when, for whom, and to what ends? The key story that Hattie has generated from findings from a number of large-scale research projects combines several influences that represent what he calls the 'teacher as activator' approach. This approach is based on the premise that the ultimate goal of teaching is to help students develop metacognitive skills that enable them to 'self-regulate and teach themselves' (Hattie 2009, p.245). The 'gradual release of responsibility' model embedded in the Tasmanian *Literacy and Numeracy Framework*, builds on such insights about as well as on Vygotsky's (1978) work. In this framework, teachers use guided literacy practices so that students learn over time to work independently and the pedagogy becomes implicit.

Conclusion

There is widespread agreement about the critical importance of literacy, which is reflected in public interest in international and intra-national comparisons of literacy levels. Australia's standing shows a decline in literacy proficiencies relative to other OECD countries, while Tasmania's overall performance in national testing lags behind several other jurisdictions. The association of high levels of social disadvantage and low literacy levels is well-documented and sheds some light on the situation in Tasmania. This context serves as an incentive to properly investigate literacy teaching in Tasmanian schools in order to improve outcomes for all young Tasmanians.

As understandings of literacy have changed, so too have approaches to teaching literacy. Views on methods of teaching this composite skill—once polarised—have gravitated to a middle ground. Thus, 'good practice' is now seen as a systematic blend of methods, resulting in a balanced approach that combines the most salient features of multiple approaches.

Substantial evidence as to what constitutes effective teaching strategies applies also to teaching literacy. However, knowing the elements of proficient literacy teaching practice does not guarantee effective implementation. A range of factors, both within and beyond schools and classrooms, affect the implementation of evidence-based practice, not least initial teacher education and ongoing support for teachers and their professional development.

A significant challenge for those with responsibility for managing and working in the education system is addressing how to apply knowledge about effective teaching strategies to literacy learning. Finding appropriate responses to that challenge will enable all teachers to become 'activators of literacy' and ensure that all teaching practices are also effective *literacy* teaching practices.

Section 1: Introduction

In schools, communities, scholarly groups, and governments of all persuasions, literacy is recognised as a foundational capability for participation in modern society. In Tasmania, there is a state-wide groundswell of support for efforts to improve literacy outcomes for all students. As part of such efforts, the Tasmanian Government announced a suite of initiatives to support literacy and numeracy. This literature review informs one of those initiatives—a *Review of Literacy Teaching, Training, and Practice in Government Schools*.

The literature review has been carried out through the Peter Underwood Centre at the University of Tasmania in collaboration with a Project Reference Group (Appendix A). The review analyses research about literacy practices in schools and, where available, about evidence in relation to the effectiveness of those practices. The review refers mostly to Australian research about pedagogical approaches to literacy teaching and ways of working, and to theoretical perspectives informing such approaches and practices.

This first section provides definitional and contextual parameters to the study, and outlines the methods of approach used in this review of the literature. Section 2 presents a discussion on policy, curriculum, and media debates and, with reference to national and international data sets. Section 3 reports on approaches to literacy teaching. Section 4 reports on pedagogical models and enablers for teaching literacy in Australian schools.

1.1 Defining literacy

Understandings of the meaning of ‘literacy’ have changed over time. Once, ‘being literate’ was defined as two separate abilities: to read and to write (Freebody, 2007; Mills & Unsworth, 2015). However, literacy is now widely understood as a complex and sophisticated construct that is multimodal and multifaceted, and that involves multiliteracies¹. These features interact, interrelate, and integrate as a complex meaning-making system. This system works in at least two ways: making meaning is a pathway to literacy and it is a product of literacy (Martinez, Roser, & Dooley, 2003). Functionally, *being literate* encompasses the abilities to operate in meaning-making processes to produce text—to make meaning with language, and to consume text—to obtain meaning from language (Frankel, Becker, Rowe, & Pearson, 2016). Such abilities are crucial for full participation in daily life—as individuals and in communities (Doyle, 2011).

In Australia, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) works under direction from the Education Council of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to develop national curriculum as well as administer and report on national assessments in schools. The Education Council

¹ “Multimodal” refers to the many forms of language; “multifaceted” refers to literacy’s many features; and “multiliteracy” refers to literacy’s many representations (Doyle, 2011). The term “multiliteracies” was coined by the New London Group (see section 3.6.1), the members of which discussed what literacy teaching and learning might mean for the twenty-first century. They concluded that literacy teaching should respond to cultural diversity and should cater for an increasing range of text forms, accounting for information and multimedia technologies.

Literacy involves students listening to, reading, viewing, speaking, writing and creating oral, print, visual and digital texts, and using and modifying language for different purposes in a range of contexts.

represents federal, state, and territory education ministers, and has significant influence on national and subnational educational policy and practice. ACARA produces the national curriculum across primary and secondary school years from Foundation to Year 12. The national curriculum incorporates “learning areas” (such as English) as well as “general capabilities”, including literacy. This review adheres to the nationally-agreed definition of literacy provided by ACARA:

In the Australian Curriculum, students become literate as they develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions to interpret and use language confidently for learning and communicating in and out of school and for participating effectively in society. Literacy involves students listening to, reading, viewing, speaking, writing and creating oral, print, visual and digital texts, and using and modifying language for different purposes in a range of contexts. (ACARA, no date-d, np)

Becoming literate thus involves knowledge and skills, and behaviours and dispositions found in other capabilities such as critical and creative thinking. Hence, in educational settings literacy encompasses the knowledge and skills students need to access, understand, analyse, and evaluate information; make meaning; express thoughts and emotions; present ideas and opinions; interact with others; and participate in activities at school and in their lives beyond school.

Literacy practices differ according to the form of literacy required in specific contexts and for specific purposes (MacLellan, 2008). In any situation, the goals of language and literacy are to communicate using meaning-making strategies in an overarching system socially constructed according to purpose (Bernstein, 2000; Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Language and literacy needs change according to contexts, and shift under the influence of all those involved in communication, as they shape its purposes and subject matter (Adoniou, 2013).

Multimodal practices are also *subject-specific* so that each content area requires people to comprehend explicit linguistic, visual, auditory, gestural, and spatial ways of working. ACARA (2016, np) acknowledges this characteristic:

Success in any learning area depends on being able to use the significant, identifiable and distinctive literacy that is important for learning and representative of the content of that learning area.

Each curriculum content or subject area has its own language and literacy requirements (Christie & Misson, 1998). One way to demonstrate a grasp of the complexity of literacy required to comprehend meanings in different content areas is to draw attention to the specific text types and associated grammatical structures present in a specific content area (Freebody & Luke, 2003). For example, Table 1 shows how science has its own language, grammar, literacy requirements, and types of text (Doyle, 2011; Halliday, 1978; Lemke, 1998).

Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, p.3) define text as ‘any instance of language, in any medium, that makes sense to someone who knows the language’. Therefore, *in science*, the examples shown in the left hand column of Table 1 are ‘text types’ relevant to science. The centre column shows the structure most likely to be used in the spoken or written text type listed to the left. The right hand column lists grammatical and vocabulary knowledge required in understanding science texts. In order to fully comprehend, use, build on, and communicate scientific concepts

and practices, people need to know and understand the language of science and understand how it works. The same principle applies to *all* other curriculum content areas.

Table 1. Examples of science text types

Text Types	Text Structures Examples	Language considerations across Science
Analysing	Listing/describing	Technical/specialised vocabulary
Arguing	Cause/effect; Problem/solution	Verbal process types: acting, linking, abstract relations; thinking
Explaining	Cause/effect	Active/passive voice
Comparing/Contrasting	Compare/Contrast	Tense: past, present, future
Generalising	Description	Participant types: generalised or specific
Hypothesising	Description	Clause extensions: enhancement; elaboration; extension
Identifying variables	Description Comparison	Nominalisation
Investigating	Problem/solution	Connectives/conjunctions
Inventing	Problem/solution	Taxonomies
Justifying	Cause/effect; Problem/solution	Multimodality
Interpreting data	Description	Non-linearity
Inferring	Description	Interactivity
Making links	Cause/effect; Problem/solution	
Predicting	Description	
Observing	Description Comparison Cause/effect	
Reasoning	Description Cause/effect	
Reporting	Cause/effect	
Summarising	Description	

In summary, 'being literate' is about making meaning with, as well as deriving meaning from, language. Literacy skills used in and beyond school involve multiliteracies. Literacy is also multimodal and multifaceted; involves knowledge, skills, behaviours, and dispositions; and varies according to learning areas, contexts, and purposes.

1.2 The significance of literacy

To be literate is a quality held in the highest regard because, without foundational literacy capabilities, people have difficulty engaging fully in society and civic life. Indeed:

literacy competence is foundational, not only for school-based learning, but also for students' psychosocial wellbeing, further education and training, occupational success, as well as productive and fulfilling participation in social and economic activity. (Rowe, 2005b, pp.4–5)

Literacy is vital for learning in school and also forms socio-cultural capital essential for civic engagement.

Literacy is also a form of socio-cultural capital for civic engagement (Luke, 2003), including in terms of learning, social activities, and employment. Literacy enables people to make sense of the world and, as such, it is both a means to an end (Luke, 2012) and, taken seriously, is also an end in itself—that is, it has intrinsic worth. It enables individuals to take control of their lives, shape their own pathways, and contribute to society. In contrast, functional illiteracy has profound social and economic costs for individuals, people, and communities.

Broad recognition of the importance of literacy means it is a highly scrutinised and controversial field of educational endeavour. Scholarly studies, policy interventions, and practices in schools can all lead to debates about literacy and significant media attention. In particular, the release of data from both the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) leads to attention across politics and in the media.² Results from such standardised tests will be discussed in more detail in section 2.1. In general, the findings highlight the point that efforts to improve literacy outcomes in Tasmania are important and timely.

1.3 The Tasmanian context

Tasmania has relatively high levels of social disadvantage compared to other states and territories in Australia. Tasmanians are, on average, older, poorer, sicker, and less educated than mainland counterparts. Eslake (2016) shows that, compared to mainland populations, more Tasmanians between 15 and 75 years of age leave or have left school at or before Year 9. In 2015, the apparent retention rate from Year 7 to Year 12 was 72 per cent in Tasmania, compared to the national average of 84 per cent (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2017).

In general, low socio-economic status has been linked to poorer educational outcomes (Goss & Sonnemann, 2016; Lamb, Jackson, Walstab, & Huo, 2015). In Tasmania, the same applies: lower socio-economic status is linked with lower educational outcomes (Ramsay & Rowan, 2016). Yet compared to their counterparts' circumstances interstate, the economic circumstances of many Tasmanian students do not fully serve to explain their lower school completion rates. As Eslake (2016) notes, Tasmanian students from areas of *higher* socio-economic status are also less likely to complete Year 12 than those from disadvantaged backgrounds in other states. Arguably, the single most important intervention in order to improve Tasmanians' material living standards relative to those of other Australians 'is to increase the levels of educational participation and attainment which, despite some improvement in recent years, remain way behind those of most other parts of Australia' (*ibid.*, p.91).

² For example:

<http://www.news.com.au/pisa-report-finds-australian-teenagers-education-worse-than-10-years-ago/news-story/620109da306e11b1a7c70bbacaac4ee9>

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-12-08/australian-students-literacy-levels-declining/2366804>

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-08-02/naplan-results-show-small-change-in-school-students-performance/8764994>

Those who most struggle to meet curriculum and national and international testing standards include students from disadvantaged backgrounds and those whose language at home either does not equate to school or societal standards or is other than English (Adoniou, 2013; Lamb et al., 2015). In this respect, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2014) has established that the proportion of Tasmanian students working below the national minimum standard for reading is significantly higher in families where parent(s) are unemployed, in low income households, and in households with no internet connection—which can be as many as 50 per cent of households in disadvantaged, or rural, or remote areas. This analysis is based on data from the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), introduced in Australia in 2008 as a standardised testing regime across all states and territories. Results from NAPLAN, as well as from its international counterparts, will be discussed in section 2.

Tasmania's performance in these national and international assessment programs has led to critical media reports outlining shortcomings in Tasmanians' (functional) literacy levels.³ Such media attention serves to alert educators, politicians, and members of the public to the challenges of literacy teaching and learning at all educational levels. In this context, raising educational attainment in general—and raising literacy levels in particular—has become a strong focus for the Tasmanian government and the Department of Education. This focus is evident in policies and specific literacy initiatives, which will be examined further in section 2.

1.4 This review of the literature in context

Two major national reports on literacy were published a decade ago. The report by the *National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy*, commissioned by the Australian Government, was focused on teaching reading (Rowe, 2005a). Soon after, Freebody (2007) provided an historical review of research about literacy education, focused on written and multimodal texts. Since then, significant developments relevant to literacy teaching include the establishment of ACARA and the introduction of the national curriculum and NAPLAN. It is, therefore, timely to consider literacy teaching again. The work presented here is part of the Review of Literacy Teaching, Training, and Practice in Government Schools commissioned by the Tasmanian Government, due for completion in December 2019.

The Review has five phases. The first phase is this review of literature. Subsequent phases will involve empirical research in Tasmanian government schools; a literature review and in investigation of approaches to literacy teaching in pre-service teacher education; the development of a practice framework for literacy; and a final and synthesizing report.

³ For example:

<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2013/12/13/no-easy-answers-tasmanian-illiteracy>

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-19/education-experts-sound-alarm-over-tasmanian-literacy-levels/5270968>

<http://www.examiner.com.au/story/4828063/drop-in-states-naplan-writing-scores/>

In this report for Phase 1, a comprehensive literature review identifies what is known about the most effective practices for teaching literacy in the primary and secondary school years. In the next literature review report attention will turn to consider evidence of effective pre-service training to prepare new teachers for teaching literacy.

1.5 Methodology

Randolph (2009) suggests that the steps to conduct and report on secondary research parallel those needed for primary research. A first step in any literature review is to determine which sources are included, and the criteria generated during that determination are influenced by the review's focus, goals, and coverage. The literature reviewed in this report was collected in ways consistent with protocols for conducting systematic literature reviews (Creswell, 2013). Members of the research team considered a grid that listed criteria for including sources and then, based upon their knowledge of the field, collectively identified sources that met those criteria. Extensive electronic searches were also made in a key Australian database, "A+ Education: Australian Education Index Plus Text (AEIPT)". Criteria included:

- relationship of source to
 - evidence-based practices;
 - what classroom teachers have reported as 'working';
 - the different cohorts of students, such as those with learning disabilities, for whom English is an additional language, and first Australians;
- specific school level cohorts from Kindergarten to Year 10;
- language and literacy education including literacy as a general capability;
- literacy pedagogies, multiliteracies, and digital literacies; and
- practicality of classroom implementation.

After an initial reference list was generated using A+ Education, additional online academic databases and Google scholar were searched using a range of key words, terms, and questions associated with, for example, basic skills approach, multimodality of texts, prominent author names, or questions such as what enables teachers to teach literacy? Other examples of search terms included pairing of topics such as "remote schools and literacy strategies" or "diversity and literacy approaches". Text books, Department of Education publications, and associated documents and reports provided additional data and information. Members of the reference group (see Appendix A) provided additional suggestions for relevant literature. Data collection stopped at saturation; that is, on the understanding that everything reasonable had been done to identify all relevant publications (Randolph, 2009).

Once selected and secured, each source was examined in terms of its relevance to the research questions and aims of the project, and its links to the AC:E, and to the general capability of literacy as identified in the Australian Curriculum. Where applicable the research method, participants, and data collection methods were

disclosed. Every attempt was made to demonstrate findings that replicate and generalise across studies (Shavelson, Phillips, Towne, & Feuer, 2003).

The analysis of data also involved collating all sources deemed relevant according to the selection criteria and categorising them according to their status as government documents, national reports, approaches, and general articles. Sources were read and summarised according to topic, theoretical perspective, methods used, findings, and main discussion points. Subsequently, all summaries were then compared.

Denzin (2005) nominates credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as the criteria for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research. In this review process, credibility has been achieved by using and cross-referencing multiple sources of data. Various sources thus have been included, among them journal articles, scholarly books and book chapters, public and internal evaluation reports, practitioner papers, policy briefings, and media commentaries. Transferability has relied on thick description (Geertz, 1973), a method of approach used to explain both a phenomenon and its wider context. Dependability has been ensured by examining peer-reviewed literature that met the review criteria. Confirmability refers to trustworthiness associated with data, interpretations, and outcomes (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) and has been assured by examining peer-reviewed literature published in reputable and highly-ranked journals. Finally, in reporting the findings in this review, members of the research team shared two mature drafts with associates, reference group members, and partners, taking cognisance of feedback on the document for revisions (see also Stratford & Bradshaw, 2016).

Section 2: Testing, policy, and curriculum

Literacy teaching is influenced by standardised assessment programs, policy and policy-related initiatives, and curriculum. In this section, each of these significant factors is examined in detail. *Standardised assessment programs* are discussed first: these have attained a high profile over at least the last decade, prompting significant levels of media and policy attention that has been focused on test results. Three such programs are relevant here: PISA's reading component, the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), and NAPLAN. *Policy and policy-related initiatives* are then outlined in detail. Consideration is given to the National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (Rowe, 2005a, 2005b), initiatives from the 2008 Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (Ministerial Council on Education, 2008), the National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy (Council of Australian Governments, 2008), and the Quality Schools, Quality Outcomes report (Australian Government, 2016). A brief overview is provided of both Tasmanian initiatives related to these national programs and of specific state-funded resources. Finally, discussion turns to consider *curriculum*; specifically the Australian National Curriculum, general capabilities in literacy, and the Australian Curriculum: English (AC:E).

2.1 Literacy achievement on standardised assessment programs

2.1.1 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA)

PISA is an initiative of the OECD to test several educational proficiencies among 15-year-olds. It is used to make international comparisons of student achievement. Seven PISA scales were initially constructed so that the average OECD score was 500. Reading literacy was a major focus in 2009, and was last assessed in 2015.

Overall, the average reading literacy score for Australian students continues to be significantly higher than the OECD average (in 2015 503 versus 493 points) (Thomson *et al.*, 2017). Nevertheless, Australia was one of nine countries where test populations showed a significant decline in performance between 2009 and 2015, equivalent to almost half a year of schooling. In contrast, populations in 14 countries significantly improved their test performances between 2009 and 2015. Distinguishing among the Australian states and territories, Thomson *et al.* (2017) also show that relatively fewer young Tasmanians (48%) achieve the National Proficient Standard to the same extent as the national average among young Australians (61%), while a higher proportion of young Tasmanians are considered low achievers (26% compared to 18% across Australia).⁴

⁴ PISA results are grouped into six levels. For Australia, 'students performing at or above Level 3 have met or exceeded the National Proficient Standard' (Thomson *et al.*, 2017, p.xxxiii); "Low performers" have proficiency below level 2.

These results need to be treated with some caution. The Tasmanian Audit Office (Crown in the Right of the State of Tasmania, 2014) points out that PISA results lack robustness because PISA tests a sample and an age group rather than full cohorts of year levels. This method works poorly for Tasmania, since 15-year-old Tasmanians tend to be in a year level lower than students of the same age elsewhere in Australia. In the 2015 PISA sample, 32 per cent of Tasmanian students were in Year 9, compared to 11 per cent nationally, and less than 1 per cent were in Year 11, compared to 15 per cent nationally (Thomson *et al.*, 2017). There is a strong argument that this discrepancy explains much of the difference between Tasmanian and Australian scores (Crown in the Right of the State of Tasmania, 2014; Ramsay & Rowan, 2016).

One of the more useful aspects of the PISA results is that they enable distinctions between specific student cohorts and backgrounds relevant to the Australian context:

- socio-economic status: based on highest level of the father's and mother's occupations (highest international social and economic index or HISEI) and economic, social, and cultural status (ESCS), capturing wider aspects of students' family and home backgrounds;⁵
- location: students attending schools classified as metropolitan, regional, or remote;
- language background: speaking English or a language other than English at home;
- immigrant status: PISA distinguishes between Australian-born, first-generation migrant, and foreign-born students on the basis of 'students' self-report of the country they and their parents were born' (p.x);⁶
- Indigenous background: students who self-identify as First Australians.

⁵ ESCS includes (1) the highest occupational status of parents (HISEI); (2) the highest educational level of parents in years of education (PARED); and (3) home possessions (HOMEPOS) comprising (a) family wealth (WEALTH), (b) cultural resources (CULTPOSS), and (c) access to home educational and cultural resources and books in the home (HEDRES). Adjustments to the computation of ESCS have been implemented over successive PISA cycles.

⁶ Australian-born students—students born in Australia with both parents born in Australia; first-generation students—students born in Australia with at least one parent born overseas; foreign-born students—students born overseas with both parents also born overseas.

Figure 1. Average Reading Literacy score by demographic cohorts (Australia, 2015)⁷

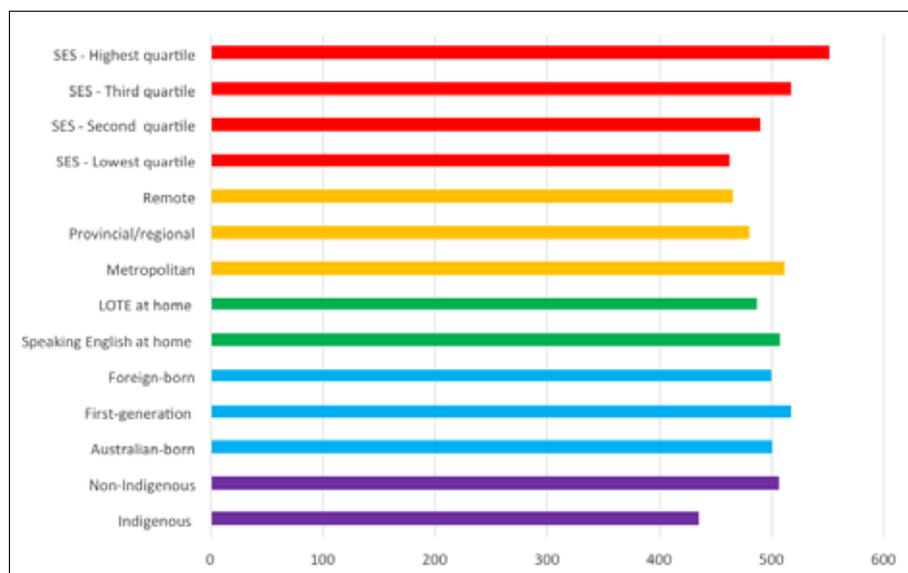


Figure 1 shows the average score on reading literacy in 2015 among Australian students. Relatively higher performing cohorts are in the highest socio-economic quartile, are metropolitan, speak English at home, and are first generation immigrants and non-Indigenous students. First Australians scored 58 points below the OECD average, while non-Indigenous students scored 13 points higher than the average.

Although these differences are not surprising, it is important to have sound evidence to confirm (or refute) expectations. Tasmanians overall have relatively lower socio-economic status and are more commonly located in regional and remote areas compared to residents in Australia overall (Eslake, 2016; Ramsay & Rowan, 2014). The PISA results for reading literacy in terms of these characteristics are therefore of particular relevance to Tasmania (Ramsay & Rowan, 2014).

Thomson *et al.* (2017) depict the achievement differences vividly by expressing them in terms of a gap in school years:

- The 71 point score difference between Indigenous students and non-Indigenous students equates to a gap of about two-and-a-third school years.
- The 89 point score difference between students in the highest socio-economic quartile and those in the lowest socio-economic quartile is a gap of approximately three years of schooling. In addition, the difference between each socio-economic quartile and the next equates to approximately one year of schooling.
- The 31 point score difference between students from metropolitan schools and those who attended regional schools is a gap of about one school year, and the 46 points score difference between metropolitan and remote students equates to a gap of about one-and-a-half school years.

⁷ SES = Socio-Economic Status; LOTE = Language Other than English

2.1.2 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)

Every five years, the PIRLS is used by the OECD to gauge achievements in reading among Year 4 students. At that point, children tend to shift from primarily *learning to read* to *developing reading to learn* skills (Meeks, Kemp, & Stephenson, 2014). PIRLS examines reading in terms of (a) literary experience and information acquisition; and (b) explicit information retrieval, inferential reasoning, integration of ideas and information, and evaluation of content. PIRLS benchmarks are agreed upon internationally, and comprise the following levels (Thomson et al., 2012, p.17):

- the *advanced international benchmark*: 625
- the *high international benchmark*: 550
- the *intermediate international benchmark*: 475
- the *low international benchmark*: 400

The Australian average score of 527 is well within the range for the intermediate international benchmark, but 17 per cent of Australian students scored at the low benchmark, and seven per cent scored below the low benchmark (Thomson et al., 2012, p.17). The proportion of Tasmanian children scoring at each benchmark level is similar to proportions across Australia. As with PISA, some caution is required in interpreting results, since PIRLS also uses a sample of students rather than testing the full cohort in Year 4.

Of interest for this review is that PIRLS examines factors that influence students' achievement. Thomson *et al.* (2012) discuss three noteworthy components in relation to findings from the 2011 test, which are all correlated with indicators of school (dis)advantage.

First, parent and guardian questionnaires are included to gauge participation in literacy activities by them and by and with their children. Not surprisingly, frequent participation in literacy activities at home with children from their early years contributes to higher PIRLS scores. In Australia in 2011, 52 per cent of students whose parents participated in the PIRLS questionnaire reported that they engaged in early literacy activities 'often' while 46 per cent engaged 'sometimes'. Both internationally and nationally, students with parents who enjoy reading (48% in Australia) also scored significantly higher results than those students whose parents did not enjoy reading so much.

Second, a questionnaire for school principals includes questions about school resourcing. The results show that 57 per cent of Australian Year 4 students may be somewhat affected by resource shortages related to reading. In 2011 in schools where principals reported that there were no resource shortages, students scored significantly higher than did those in less well-equipped schools.

Third, teacher and principal questionnaires also ask questions relate to 'school climate', and this was found to affect students' performance. In the 2011 test round, achievement was higher for students who had a sense of belonging in school, were engaged in class, felt safe, and were almost never bullied. At the school level, achievement was higher when staff indicated that academic success was emphasized, the school was safe, and there were few problems with discipline and attendance.

These findings from PIRLS, as well as the findings from PISA in relation to social, cultural and economic backgrounds, are useful reminders of the variety of factors that can influence literacy achievement, beyond the literacy pedagogies adopted by classroom teachers.

2.1.3 Testing at the national level: NAPLAN

Across all states and territories NAPLAN has been implemented annually since 2008 in all schools to students in Years 3, 5, 7, and 9 (ACARA, 2017b). For literacy, NAPLAN tests reading, writing, spelling, and grammar and punctuation, thus gauging levels across a range of literacy skills that are broader than those measured in both PISA and PIRLS. Moreover, as noted by the Tasmanian Audit Office (Crown in the Right of the State of Tasmania, 2014), when compared to PISA and PIRLS two advantages of NAPLAN are that it is aligned with the Australian Curriculum and that it aims to test whole cohorts rather than using a sampling approach.

ACARA (2016) has set National Minimum Standards (NMS) for NAPLAN such that, in each domain, the tests have a scale of 10 bands, with bands 1–6 reported for Year 3, and progressively higher bands reported for Years 5, 7, and 9. The NMS is set at the second lowest reported band for each Year level:

- Year 3: NMS = Band 2;
- Year 5: NMS = Band 4;
- Year 7: NMS = Band 5; and
- Year 9: NMS = Band 6.

Figure 2. Students at or below NMS (NAPLAN), Australia (%)

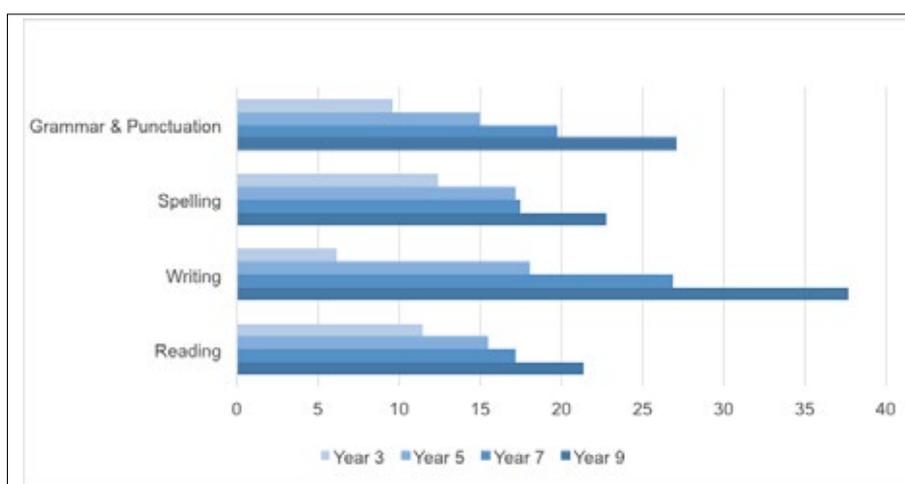


Figure 2 shows the proportion of Australian students at or below NMS for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 in each domain (adapted from ACARA, 2016). These findings highlight the point that a significant minority of students need additional support, and that their numbers increase between Year 3 and Year 9.

Students who do not meet the NMS 'are likely to need focused intervention and additional support to help them achieve the skills they require to progress in schooling' (ACARA 2016, p.v) and 'students who are performing at the national

minimum standard may also require additional assistance to enable them to achieve their potential' (ACARA, 2017b, np).

Goss and Sonnemann (2016, p.1) argue that 'NAPLAN's minimum standards are set too low to identify the stragglers'. In general, "straggling" is strongly associated with disadvantaged backgrounds, including among Indigenous students, students with a language background other than English, those from remote regions, and those at the lower end of socio-economic status scales (Lamb *et al.*, 2015). For literacy, but not for numeracy, boys tend to perform less well than girls overall (ACARA, 2016). Evidence highlights the gap in literacy performance standards between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, in particular for Indigenous students living in remote areas (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2013).

According to Goss and Sonnemann, (2016, p.2), mapping changes in NAPLAN achievement over time is not straightforward because it tends not to follow a linear growth curve. As an alternative, they have developed a measure of 'years of progress that enables comparison over time and between different groups' (p.2),⁸ which is similar to the work done by Thomson *et al.* (2017) in relation to PISA. Their analysis of Victorian data using this measure confirms that underperformance worsens over time, and may pertain to social advantage and disadvantage:

- In Year 3, those achieving at low levels are two years and eight months behind those achieving at high levels. By Year 9, this gap is three years and eight months.
- In Year 3, students of parents with limited formal education are ten months behind students whose parents have a degree. By Year 9, this gap is two and a half years.
- Among students with similar capabilities in Year 3, by Year 9 those from disadvantaged backgrounds are between 12 months and 21 months behind those from more advantaged backgrounds.
- Among students with high achievement in Year 3, by Year 9 those in disadvantaged schools have made about two and a half years less progress than those in highly advantaged schools.

Goss and Sonnemann argue that in the cohort of students whose achievement is well below their peers in the early years at school: 'Most will never catch up without effective targeted teaching or specific remedial support that accelerates their learning' (*ibid.*, p.18). These conclusions place significant responsibility on schools to better support student learning. Importantly, the analysis provided by Goss and Sonnemann shows there is no ground for blaming parents with limited formal education or blaming staff in disadvantaged schools. Rather, their findings reinforce the need for school-based and education system staff to work together to implement systematic, targeted support for student learning, especially for students who are lagging behind and for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Compared to the rest of Australia, Table 2 shows that the mean score for Tasmanian students in 2016 was statistically significantly below scores among students in some other jurisdictions (ACARA, 2016).

⁸ In brief, the "years of progress" measure uses "typical" student NAPLAN achievement in a given school year level as a benchmark, which then 'allows us to see if students are catching up or falling further behind relative to others' (Goss & Sonnemann, 2016, p.2).

Focused intervention and support is needed by students who do not meet the National Minimum Standard and those performing at the NMS are also likely to benefit from additional assistance to achieve their potential.

Table 2. Comparative achievement Tasmania and other states and territories for literacy domains among Year 3, 5, 7 and 9, NAPLAN 2016

Year	Reading	Writing	Spelling	Grammar & Punctuation
Australia	----	----	3--9	3---
NSW	----	----	3579	35--
Vic	35--	3579	3579	35--
Qld	----	----	----	----
WA	----	----	---9	----
SA	----	----	----	----
ACT	3579	----	3-79	3579
NT	3579	3579	3579	3579

3 = Year level in which Tasmanian mean score is statistically significantly below the jurisdiction in the left column

3 = Year level in which Tasmanian mean score is statistically significantly above the jurisdiction in the left column

- = no statistically significant difference

Based on ACARA (2016)

Tasmania's relative standing compared to other parts of Australia is not entirely surprising, given the link between literacy achievement and background factors such as socio-economic status and Aboriginal background. Table 2 highlights, however, that in NAPLAN 2016, comparative achievement differed across literacy domains: comparisons were more favourable for Reading and Writing, however Spelling was a particular area of concern for Tasmania. The Tasmania Audit office (Crown in the Right of the State of Tasmania, 2017) observed that in the 2012 and 2016 Year 9 data it reviewed many Tasmanian Government high schools performed above Australian schools serving similar students in Reading, Writing and Grammar and Punctuation, but were more often below in Spelling.

2.1.4 Summary

Standardised international and national testing methods have been subjected to significant critique, both for the validity of the results and for the impact such testing has on students and schools (Eggen & Stobart, 2015; Harris, Smith, & Harris, 2011). In particular, when these methods are used as summative assessments and generate judgements on students, schools, communities, and countries their focus appears to be on ranking rather than on learning. When standardised tests are used for diagnostic purposes, however, results can provide insights beyond a given locale, and highlight educational areas for attention that would be invisible without such data. It is difficult to know what support to offer for struggling students or schools without knowing the nature of the struggle or even that some are struggling, and it is unfortunate if addressing such matters is politicized.

Across Australia, including in Tasmania, the findings suggest that a significant minority of students is likely to need more support to enhance various aspects of their literacy achievement. Based on national and international correlations between achievement and background variables, additional support is likely to be most needed by students and schools experiencing social disadvantage.

2.2 Australian and Tasmanian policy and initiatives

This section provides a synopsis of key policies and initiatives, and establishes that there is strong interest in, and commitment to, enhancing literacy outcomes nationally and in Tasmania. Nationally, significant effort is made to forge agreements among the federal, state, and territory governments. Much of that work is at meetings of the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) and the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), and in initiatives flowing from those meetings and agreements. In Tasmania, relevant initiatives include the National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy and state-based funding agreements.

2.2.1 National policies and initiatives

Australia's goals for education are agreed to by the MCEETYA. In 1996, for example, it was agreed that 'every child leaving primary school should be able to read, write, spell and communicate at an appropriate level' (Education Council, 1999, p.ix). This agreement reenergised significant national interest in literacy. In 1997, a National Literacy and Numeracy Plan was developed, calling 'for a coordinated approach by the Commonwealth, States and Territories to improving literacy and numeracy outcomes and achieving the national goal' (*ibid.*, p.11).

In 2004, the Australian government established the *National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy*, the sole focus of which was reading (Rowe, 2005a, 2005b). The inquiry was led by the Australian Council for Education Research (ACER) and supported by a reference group and Commonwealth Education Department secretariat. To prepare its final report entitled *Teaching Reading*, the Inquiry Committee led by Rowe used 435 submissions, consultations, a literature review, visits to schools, and a study of pre-service teacher education courses. Findings relevant to this literature review are outlined below.

First, literacy is understood to be the responsibility of all teachers across the whole curriculum, and teachers play a vital role in literacy:

- 'the effective teaching of reading is a highly developed professional skill' (p.12);
- 'the "starting" levels of children from less advantaged backgrounds is lower than those from more advantaged backgrounds, [but] findings from a large body of evidence-based research consistently indicate that quality teaching has significant positive effects on students' achievement progress regardless of their backgrounds' (p. 12); and
- highly 'effective teachers and their professional learning *do* make a difference in the classroom' (Rowe, 2005b, p.19).

Key findings from Rowe 2005a:

- Literacy is the responsibility of all teachers across the whole curriculum.
- A broad and integrated repertoire is needed by teachers and in schools for effective teaching of reading.
- Better, more systematic pre-service and in-service learning is needed to develop that repertoire.
- Sound data is needed to assess students' literacy.

Second, the repertoire needed by teachers and in schools for effective teaching of reading includes:

- 'an integrated approach to reading that explicitly teaches phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary knowledge and comprehension' (p.11);
- 'an integrated approach to reading that supports the development of oral language, vocabulary, grammar, reading fluency, comprehension and the literacies of new technologies' (p.14);
- 'an integrated approach [which] requires that teachers have a thorough understanding of a range of effective strategies, as well as knowing when and why to apply them' (p.14);
- '[knowing] how students best learn to read, how to assess reading ability and growth, and how to use assessment information to apply appropriate intervention strategies from a repertoire of effective practices' (p.21);
- 'knowing students and understanding their diverse backgrounds and learning needs from observation and monitoring' (p.21); and
- 'a consistent and comprehensive whole-school approach that is clearly specified in a *literacy plan*' (p.15).

Third, there is need for sound data:

- the 'early identification of children experiencing reading difficulties means that interventions to provide support for these children be put in place early. This early assessment should be a key element of responsible system and school literacy planning and monitoring' (p.13); and
- 'current assessment of students' literacy achievements against national benchmarks [is supported by the inquiry, whose members propose] their extension so that the results for individual children are available for diagnostic and intervention purposes' (p.13).

Fourth, there is need for better, systematic pre-service (and indeed in-service) learning to develop the repertoire noted above:

- the 'provision of such a repertoire of teaching skills is a challenge for teacher education institutions, and to practicing teachers as they assume the responsibility for the literacy learning of a whole class' (p.11);
- 'there is little evidence [about] the most effective way to prepare pre-service teachers to teach reading. This [knowledge gap] must be given much more research attention by higher education providers' (p.20); and
- 'all schools [should] identify a highly trained specialist literacy teacher with specialised skills in teaching reading [to link] teaching and learning, and [support] school staff in developing, implementing and monitoring progress against individual literacy plans, particularly for those children experiencing reading and literacy difficulties' (p.16)

In 2007, ACER followed up Rowe's reports with a review of its own, led by Freebody, who had been a "critical friend" on the 2005 Review. *Literacy Education in School: Research Perspectives from the Past, for the Future* aimed to expand knowledge and understandings of the nature of literacy. Freebody (2007, p.6) notes that as 'more aspects of life have become literacy-dependent' over time, people also 'need more complex and sophisticated literacy capabilities'. Alongside the 2005 review, and the 1997 National Literacy and Numeracy Plan, his report informed subsequent national policy developments.

In 2008, the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians was used to update commitments to improving education outcomes by Australian, state and territory governments and statutory bodies (Ministerial Council on Education, 2008). The Declaration has two goals: that Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence; and that all young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens. These goals are supported by action in eight key areas, of which two are of particular relevance here:

1. Promoting world-class curriculum and assessment: This action area refers to a national curriculum, general capabilities and learning areas.
2. Strengthening accountability and transparency: This action area refers to nationally comparable reporting about school and student performance.

Building on earlier policy developments, the Melbourne Declaration led to ACARA's establishment in December, 2008. ACARA is responsible for developing the national curriculum (responding to action area 1 above), and for NAPLAN assessment and reporting (responding to action area 2).

A renewed federal budget commitment was made in 2008 to the *National Action Plan for Literacy and Numeracy* and by the end of that year, via COAG, all state and territory governments and the Commonwealth had signed up to a new *National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy* (Council of Australian Governments, 2008). Operating between 2009 and 2012, this national partnership provided AU\$570 million to education:

to galvanise the collective resources and energy of the Australian Government and the state, territory and non-government education systems, to put in place the infrastructure and practices that will deliver sustained improvement in literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students, especially those who are falling behind. (*ibid.*, p.3)

This Partnership Agreement was followed in 2013 by the *Improving Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2014a), which provided an additional AU\$243.9 million:

to help states and territories improve the performance of students who are falling behind in literacy and/or numeracy, with a particular emphasis on students from disadvantaged backgrounds and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. (Commonwealth of Australia, 2014a)

Both agreements emphasized a collaborative approach to taking responsibility for the literacy and numeracy achievements of all Australian students, and for sharing knowledge about successful initiatives. The Australian government agreed to manage a database collated from across the country that referred

to educational strategies with strong evidence of being effective. The resulting framework of effective practice was to be used by education authorities:

as a mechanism to report on the success of targeted literacy and numeracy interventions. It is expected that the Framework will be a mechanism that will support a learning community that will share information and effective practice that will lead to better informed and evidence-based decisions to improve the literacy and numeracy outcomes for Australian students. (Council of Australian Governments, 2008, p.7)

Three years later than intended, the database was launched as a website entitled Teach Learn Share (Australian National Audit Office, 2012). The resources have subsequently been incorporated in the Scootle website: 'a national repository that provides Australian schools with more than **20,000 digital resources** aligned to the Australian Curriculum' (Education Services Australia, no date). The resources listed in a search for "**teach learn share**" on Scootle tend to describe individual initiatives trialled as part of the National Partnership Agreement. Often, these initiatives were based in one or a few schools, although sometimes they were implemented across a whole state or even several jurisdictions, such as occurred in relation to the Principals as Literacy Leaders Project (Commonwealth of Australia, 2014d).

The resources included in the Scootle repository appear to have much to offer Tasmanian teachers and schools. There is a risk, however, that the scale of the database is overwhelming, and that staff may find it difficult to find and select the most appropriate resources for their students and contexts. Initiatives to ensure the resources in the repository are of high quality and are up to date, as well as initiatives to support staff with search and selection techniques would help unlock the potential offered by the repository.

Finally, in 2016 the Australian government's *Quality Schools, Quality Outcomes* report highlighted a 'back to basics approach' that included revision to the Australian Curriculum to boost the teaching of phonics (Australian Government, 2016, p.5). The report flagged the introduction in Year 1 of a reading, phonics, and numeracy assessment. The assessment foregrounds phonics as one specific component of literacy. In September 2017 the federal Minister of Education announced he had accepted the recommendation of a panel of experts to introduce a new test in Year 1, which would include a phonics screening test (Birmingham, 2017). Members of the expert panel argue that this test will provide useful feedback to teachers (Snow, Castles, Wheldall & Coltheart, 2016). Not everyone is convinced the test is worthwhile. Other experts and stakeholders agree that teaching phonics is important but are concerned that the test is unnecessary and even potentially counterproductive (Adoniou, 2017; Doyle, 2017; Singhal, 2017). These recent developments highlight that literacy continues to be a contested and politically-sensitive field.

2.2.2 Tasmanian policy and initiatives

Tasmania's Department of Education policy documents reach across all educational centres from early childhood years and kindergarten to senior secondary schools. The Department's fundamental responsibility is to provide high quality education by means of excellence in curriculum, leading to effective teaching and learning programs for all students.

Along with all other states and territories, Tasmania has actively participated in the National Partnership Agreement from 2009 to 2012 and, in 2013, also signed up to the *Improving Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2014a). Major initiatives include:

- *Raising the Bar* (RTB), which was focused on ‘strengthening school leadership, engaging teachers with targeted professional learning, implementing whole-school approaches to literacy, and effectively monitoring and tracking students’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2014c, p.2);
- *Raising the Bar maana* (moving forward), which was an extension of Raising the Bar, focused on ‘accelerating literacy and numeracy achievement of participating Aboriginal students and establishing effective, meaningful and ongoing partnerships with local Aboriginal communities’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2014b, p.2); and
- Principals as Literacy Leaders (PALL), which was trialled in other states and territories, before being introduced in Tasmania in 2013 and 2014 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2014d, p.9). It focussed on offering professional learning for school leaders to develop their knowledge and skills in relation to literacy as well as instructional leadership. The PALL program was reintroduced for Tasmanian government school principals in 2017 under the auspices of the Tasmanian Professional Learning Institute, and extended so that principals are able to bring literacy leaders from their schools into the program (Tasmanian Government Department of Education. Professional Learning Institute, no date).

Of particular note, a set of resources has been published by the Department of Education to support literacy teaching; the set includes an overview document entitled *Supporting Literacy and Numeracy Success: A teachers’ resource for early years to Year 12*. (Tasmanian Government Department of Education, 2013) as well as specific *Good Teaching Literacy Guides* for literacy across years K–2, 3–6, 7–10 and 11–12, written in collaboration with Australian literacy expert Derewianka. These resources are based on and complement the Australian Curriculum. The Department has also developed a poster for use in school staff rooms that summarises four key actions for every teacher:

- know where students are in their learning;
- know the literacy and numeracy demands and opportunities of each learning area;
- use evidenced-based effective teaching practices and strategies; and
- reflect on teaching practice.

The Department’s (2015) *Literacy and Numeracy Framework 2015–2017* identifies seven elements of effective literacy and numeracy teaching:

1. conditions for learning – creating engaging, responsive, and challenging environments for learners, while holding high expectations for them to become engaged responsible learners;

2. whole school approach – developing instructional leadership to promote collective responsibility and shared understanding of teaching and learning expectations, including sequenced curriculum delivery;
3. collaborative learning communities – valuing and enacting professional collaboration with a twin focus on improving student learning and fostering a collaborative learning culture for teachers and learners;
4. targeted teaching to address individual needs – building on students’ strengths and addressing their diverse needs, differentiating by adjusting content, process, and product for delivery in flexible groupings;
5. effective evidence-based practice – clarifying learning goals; providing explicit instruction that builds on prior knowledge and seeks connections; scaffolding rich learning experiences; and providing tailored feedback within a framework that aligns curriculum, assessment, and pedagogy;
6. data informed – using both (a) data to inform action, including systemic data provided by Tasmanian and other government resources such as *edi*, *Student Support System*, *NAPLAN Toolkit*, and (b) *DocPoint*, a tool to identify learning needs, inform formative assessment, and engage in regular moderation processes; and
7. family and community engagement – initiating and sustaining participation with families, and building learning partnerships based on supportive connections with local communities.

For over a decade, Tasmanian Government schools have been required to assess all students in Prep at the start and end of the school year to inform early intervention, using a common literacy and numeracy test titled PIPS: *Performance Indicators in Primary Schools*. The Tasmanian government monitors assessment options within the context of the National Assessment Program. In the Tasmanian Government’s 2016–17 budget⁹ significant funding was committed to raising literacy (and numeracy) standards, including \$17 million over four years for literacy and numeracy initiatives in Years K–2 via Learning in Families Together (LIFT); and \$10.7 million over four years for initiatives targeted at improving the literacy and numeracy outcomes of students in government schools (Tasmanian Government Department of Treasury and Finance, 2016-17). Thus, the Department of Education continues to prioritise literacy and numeracy. In the 2017 update of the Learners First Strategic Plan, literacy and numeracy are grouped together with only four other high-level priorities: targeted initiatives for their improvement include employing literacy specialists and literacy coaches in schools identified as needing support, the Middle Years Literacy Project, and LIFT (Tasmanian Government Department of Education, 2017).

⁹ <http://www.treasury.tas.gov.au/Documents/2016-17-Budget-Paper-No-2-Volume-1.pdf>

2.3 The Australian Curriculum

Since 2008, ACARA has been responsible for developing the national curriculum and administering NAPLAN. The curriculum is explained as follows: 'The Australian Curriculum has a three-dimensional design—discipline-based learning areas, general capabilities as essential twenty-first century skills and contemporary cross-curriculum priorities' (ACARA, 2012, p.15).

The eight learning areas for which the Australian Curriculum has been developed are English, mathematics, science, humanities and social science, the arts, languages, health and physical education, and technologies (ACARA 2012). These discipline-based learning areas comprise the first dimension the curriculum and provide the foundation for learning in schools. However, subject-based knowledge is not enough to equip young people with needed knowledge, skills, behaviours, and attitudes. For this reason, ACARA (2012) has formulated a set of integrated and interconnected general capabilities that form the second dimension of the curriculum. To different degrees these are represented in each of the learning areas, but apply across all subject-based content. These seven general capabilities are literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology capability, critical and creative thinking, personal and social responsibility, ethical understanding, and intercultural understanding. The third dimension of the Australian Curriculum is concerned with priorities to be addressed across the curriculum. These are to provide students with understanding and language to engage with their world, and are intended to stimulate dialogue across the learning areas and among students, teachers, and members of the wider community. The three cross-curriculum priorities are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia, and sustainability (ACARA, 2012).

Of particular relevance for this review are the general capability of literacy (ACARA, no date-c) and the discipline-based learning area of English (ACARA, no date-b).

2.3.1 General Capability: Literacy

ACARA (2012, p.16) lists literacy as one of the general capabilities and proposes that:

Students become literate as they develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions to interpret and use language confidently for learning and communicating in and out of school and for participating effectively in society. Literacy involves students in listening to, reading, viewing, speaking, writing and creating oral, print, visual and digital texts, and using and modifying language for different purposes in a range of contexts.

In line with other general capabilities statements, ACARA has developed a learning continuum for literacy which describes literacy development in terms of two overarching processes: comprehending and composing texts. These are supported by text, grammar, word, and visual forms of knowledge. Together, these comprise the organising elements of the literacy continuum which offers a formative assessment tool for teachers to understand students' achievement in relation to intended learning outcomes at two year intervals selected from Foundation to Year 10. Detailed guidance is provided to teachers about what is expected of students as they progress across the six levels articulated in the literacy learning continuum.

Of particular relevance for this review are the general capability of literacy and the discipline-based learning area of English in the Australian Curriculum.

In 2015, the Education Council agreed to revisit the literacy and numeracy learning continua:

to better assist teachers to identify and address individual student needs according to the expected skills and growth in student learning at key progress points from the early years through high school, given the evidence of the spread of student achievement within any classroom. (Education Council, 2015, p. 9)

In response, ACARA has engaged in consultations and trials of new national literacy and numeracy learning progressions. Depending on the outcome of the consultations as well as the response by the Ministers of Education these may be introduced in 2018 (ACARA, 2017c).

2.3.2 Australian Curriculum: English

In 2009, the National Curriculum Board (2009, p.8) proposed a new English curriculum recognising that:

learning English is made useful and durable through the interplay between, on the one hand, explicit knowledge about language, literature, and texts and, on the other, the complex demands of understanding and using language effectively to express meaning—using the norms of the curriculum to engage and influence the changing, diverse environments in which that knowledge can be applied.

The final materials were published at the end of 2011 (and revised in 2014) and are entitled the “Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum: English content and achievement standards” (ACARA, no date-b). Underpinned by a social perspective on language and how it works, the AC:E is constructed on an understanding that language is a socially-constructed meaning-making system that operates in different social and cultural contexts. This perspective situates the AC:E in frameworks indebted to theorists such as Vygotsky (Cole, John-Steiner, Scribner, & Souberman, 1978), Halliday and Hasan (1985), Freebody and Luke (2003), and Gee (2008). The AC:E thus supports the Australian Curriculum’s overarching aim to prepare students for active and meaningful lives by helping them develop as ‘successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens’ (ACARA, 2017a, np). It recognises that students with different experiences need to learn the multiliteracies of the English language, as they come to ‘analyse, understand, communicate and build relationships with others and with the world around them’ (ibid., np). Drawing attention to the diversity across Australia in terms of the languages and cultural differences that students bring with them to school, Freebody understands these attributes as significantly differentiating Australia from other countries (ACARA, 2017a). Viewing this foundation as a rich one upon which educators can build, Freebody also emphasizes the importance of learning English in terms of equity.

Building on Freebody’s work, the AC:E recognises and emphasizes the diversity of the Australian population, and the cultural and contextual differences that students bring to school. In this context, the AC:E also acknowledges, values, and respects First Australians, their contributions to Australian society, and their wealth of traditional and modern literacies and literature. Australia’s links to Asia are similarly recognised and various resources in classic and contemporary

literature draw on these connections. Teachers can employ these resources to help students examine literature, explore texts in context, analyse language variations and create texts.

Reiterating the significance of literacy, ACARA (no date-c) emphasizes the centrality of English ‘to the learning and development of all young Australians’. It lists the following knowledge and skills that students acquire when they study English:

- analysing, understanding, communicating and building relationships with others and the world around them;
- developing reading and literacy skills; and
- developing knowledge and skills for education, training and the workplace.

Literacy knowledge and skills develop with ongoing study of English. Knowing about the language and understanding how the language works enables students ‘to become ethical, thoughtful, informed and active members of society’ (ACARA, 2017a, np). Three interrelated strands enable this knowledge formation. These are:

- language: ‘students develop their knowledge of the English language and how it works’;
- literature: ‘engage students in the study of literary texts of personal, cultural, social and aesthetic value’; and
- literacy: ‘develop students’ ability to interpret and create texts with appropriateness, accuracy, confidence, fluency and efficacy for learning in and out of school, and for participating in Australian life more generally’.

These strands, and several sub-strands, are structured to provide a balanced approach to learning English. Table 3 outlines how these strands relate to each other.

Table 3. Sub-strands of language, literature, and literacy: AC:E

Language	Literature	Literacy
Language variation and change	Literature and context	Texts in context
Language for interaction	Responding to literature	Interacting with others
Text structure and organisation	Examining literature	Interpreting, analysing and evaluating
Expressing and developing ideas	Creating literature	Creating texts
Phonics and word knowledge	N/A	N/A

Adapted from ACARA’s 2016 structural plan (ACARA, no date-c)

Integrating the three strands in the curriculum through content enables teachers to engage students using varied multimodal texts to improve receptive modes of learning such as reading, viewing, and listening, and productive modes such as speaking, writing, and creating. By such means, students learn about how the English language works in order to communicate effectively in real-life contexts.

The AC:E is designed to be used flexibly and, as such, does not prescribe approaches or ways of working with students. Rather schools and teachers are encouraged to develop programs that cater for individual need (ACARA, 2017a). Thus, the AC:E is a canvas, and provides content and resources from which teachers can draw to teach students literacies in English in context. The latest version of the AC:E, available from the Australian Curriculum website, outlines the structure of the curriculum and the rationale, key ideas, content descriptors, and guiding principles—namely student diversity, cross-curricula priorities, and general capabilities.

2.3.3 Literacy progression across the school years

When students enter school, they come with diverse experiences. Lennox (2012) describes these experiences as funds of knowledge that children bring to learning. Recognising each individual student's out-of-school experiences and building upon these in the classroom is part of the socio-cultural construction of learning. The power of such recognition is reflected in the first key action for teachers contained in the core Tasmanian resources (Tasmanian Government Department of Education, 2013): that teachers should know “where students are” in their learning. Approaching the learning of literacy as a socio-cultural practice, the Australian Curriculum supports teachers to build knowledge and skills progressively, gradually, and continuously, thereby expanding content across the year levels (ACARA, 2017a; see also ACARA, no date-a, no date-b, no date-c).

Foundation Year to Year 2

The curriculum in English for these year groups provides content descriptors as pedagogical springboards for teachers to guide students in literacy and English language learning. The achievement standards outline sought-for skills and knowledge about print, texts, and vocabulary. Progressively, these standards include recognising letters, blends, and words, decoding, recalling text events, understanding types of text, producing simple texts, and using software and word processing to construct text. They advance to understanding language features and structures, reading texts with more complex sentence structures, identifying literal and implied meanings, developing a wide vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and creating more complex texts.

The role of enjoyment in student learning is valued in the English curriculum. It encourages the use of a wide range of traditional and modern and fictional and non-fictional texts. Students start to learn to communicate using written, oral, and digital texts. Reading, listening, and viewing, they come to understand that there are many kinds of text with different purposes. They are introduced to new words, sounds, and capital and lower case letters. They learn to make meaning of texts using images and words, and explore how print and digital texts differ in form, placement, and direction. These tasks offer opportunities to enjoy, comprehend, and practise fluency techniques.

Years 3–6

From Year 3, English content descriptors continue to build and expand upon those of the earlier school years. By the end of Year 6, students should have reached a stage where they are able to analyse texts in English as well as across the other learning areas. Students are expected to be able to explain how authors use

language features, images, and vocabularies to achieve particular literary effects, demonstrating that they have a more in-depth understanding of texts and text structures than in earlier years. It is expected that they are able to compare and contrast information in analytical ways, and that they have the ability to explain literal and inferential meanings of complex texts. Having read, viewed, listened to, or spoken about texts, Year 6 students are expected to be able to employ reasoning, clarify and justify ideas, and challenge others' ideas using critical thinking and critical analysis. They should be able to understand that these activities, too, produce types of text, each with its own specific language features and grammatical structures.

Subject specific literacies become increasingly important through the middle years.

When producing texts, students at this stage should be able to employ and justify language features and patterns to emphasize specific details and support particular perspectives. Year 6 students are expected to create detailed and elaborate texts for a range of purposes and audiences. For example, they should be able to prepare a report to their class, engage in class discussions, mount a persuasive argument to school leaders, or create an animated movie for parents. It is expected that they understand specific effects and grammatical structures of texts, consider vocabulary choices, and produce cohesive and well-structured texts. They should also use accurate spelling and punctuation. Language and literacy in the learning areas is also reinforced in the ACARA AC:E Learning Area Achievement Standards. Subject specific literacies become increasingly important through the middle years. By Year 6, the technical vocabulary for each learning area has increased to a level that if it is not known and understood then students have difficulty comprehending texts and following instructions and procedures, or solving problems in each respective learning area.

Years 7–10

In Years 7 and 8, more emphasis is placed on students' communication with others outside the classroom by using various media or by meeting with them. Students explore more and more varied fiction and non-fiction print and digital texts, and come to understand more deeply how texts work in different contexts for particular purposes and audiences. Students are expected to be independent readers and refine interpretive skills learned earlier. By the end of Year 10, innovation is expected and students develop their own styles, cognisant of the influence of language choices on those styles. They are meant to be adept at justifying, interpreting, and analysing both their own texts and those produced by others, and also able to play with the power of language to generate precise and stylised effects in speaking, writing, and creating. Students are expected to provide and present explanations, justifications, and reasoning by critically analysing texts and formulating and conveying logical and cohesive arguments.

By Year 10, students should have sound knowledge about how the English language works, know how its grammatical structures function, and be able to use a wide range of vocabulary to solve problems, create meaning, and communicate in diverse contexts. The expanded knowledge and skill of language and literacies in each of the learning areas that students should be achieving by the end of Year 10 are also provided in the ACARA AC:E Learning Area Achievement Standards for Year 10.

2.4 Summary

This section has presented the context in which this review has been produced, and that context has been described in terms of three elements. First, we noted that student achievement on international and national standardised tests is commonly foregrounded in popular discussions about the need for attention to literacy teaching. The analysis showed that in Tasmania comparatively many students need extra support across several literacy domains, and this number increases between mid-primary school and the upper end of junior high school. Next, we provided an outline of the most relevant national and Tasmanian policies and initiatives. The main point is that there is significant interest in literacy, accompanied by an array of initiatives to improve literacy outcomes across Australia. In the final section, we examined in some detail the ways in which literacy is approached in the Australian Curriculum, both in the learning area of English and as a general capability across all learning areas.

Section 3: Approaches to teaching literacy

3.1 Overview

Teaching literacy and enacting literacy practices have both evolved—from being informed by basic views of literacy as the ability to read and write, to embracing more complex and nuanced understandings that account for multimodal practices, multi-textual practices, multiliteracies, and diverse socio-cultural practices. This section provides historical context to further explain these trends. In the following discussion, any “approach to teaching literacy” is viewed as a theoretically-framed methodology such as the traditional skills approach or the whole language approach. “Ways of working” or “practices” consist of teaching strategies that comply with a particular theoretical framing and methodology. For example, the traditional skills approach is most often associated with phonics or the phonological awareness strategy—that is, the knowledge of the sound structure of language. Thought is given to a range of theoretical frameworks informing both teaching of literacy and literacy practices, and attention is paid to the span of grades from Foundation to Year 10 in urban, rural, and remote school settings. Students’ status as First Australians, or those using languages at home other than English, or those experiencing disadvantage will also be considered in relation to theories of literacy and literacy practices. Empirical research is cited to demonstrate the sorts of outcomes arising from different approaches, and to highlight the varied ways in which teachers work in classroom contexts according to individual needs.

While this review focuses on in-school learning and teaching from the foundation year, the process of becoming literate begins well before children enter formal educational settings; minimally, for example, there is evidence for learning via auditory processing in utero (Pino, 2016). Young children enter school with a wealth of background literacy knowledge (Clay, 1989), and recognise and make meaning from complex signs and symbols (Neumann & Dickson, 2011). They have rich capacity to tell and retell stories and invent forms of “writing”; some are also able to read and write in their native language(s) before attending school. Such “emergent literacy”, a term coined by Clay (1967) means that children enter school with a repertoire of literacy practices, including digital practices accumulated largely by observation and participation (McNaughton, 2011; 2017). The more varied, nuanced, and extensive the opportunities for such activities, the more likely it is that literacies have emerged. Safe environments are key to such skills acquisition, and exposure to neglect or violence complicates matters significantly (Maguire et al., 2015).

After children start school their learning, including literacy, continues to occur outside of school as well, and teachers are challenged to build upon students’ growing funds of knowledge (Moll, Vélez-Ibañez, & Greenberg, 1990). Thomson (2002) refers to this phenomenon as the “student’s virtual school bag”. Introducing the AC:E, Freebody also emphasizes the importance and value of students’ experiences *outside* school in more exposure to formal language and literacy

development *inside* school (ACARA, 2017a). Building upon students' full range of literacy experiences is part of the collection of pedagogical practices teachers use to work with individual students and respond to their needs and aspirations. That work means tapping into the diverse experiential, cultural, and language differences that students bring to the classroom. Examining such pedagogical practices is core to understanding a key principle in the AC:E—namely to generate continuity in learning English. Freebody likens the AC:E to mathematics or physics curricula, traditionally construed as “knowledge-building” subjects. In the case of English, as one progresses from Foundation to Year 10, there should be increasing skill and capacity to understand and use language, literacy and literature. This view has implications for English language and literacy pedagogical practices for pre-service teacher training and in-service teacher professional development, considered later in the report.

3.2 Social construction of language and literacy

Diverse cultures and language backgrounds are found in Australian classrooms, and this diversity reinforces the importance of pedagogical practices that build on these rich resources, and situates English teaching in the context of students' experiences (ACARA, 2017a). This conceptualisation of the Australian Curriculum draws on Luke's (1999, p.6) assertion that while 'literacy is an aspect of an individual's history, capability, and possibilities, it is also a feature of the collective or joint capabilities of a group, community or society'.

Such insights are based on socio-cultural understandings that learning is socially constructed. *Social constructionists* concentrate on talk, interaction, and language, and seek to understand how literacies' conventions operate in given settings such as home, school, community spaces, or the workplace (Alvermann, 2004; Tuominen, Savolainen, & Talja, 2005; 2005; 2005). People change or adapt their modes of communicating according to setting. Each communication act mediates and helps construct our understandings of and learnings from “lived experiences” and experiences with multimodal texts. Such ideas build on work by Dewey (1938), in which he asserted that new curriculum knowledge interacts with experience to produce “real” learning. They are also indebted to ideas promulgated by Vygotsky (Cole et al., 1978; Vygotsky, 1962), who argued that knowledge is constructed via social interactions, interpretations, and understandings and then posited that language and other symbolic systems are tools for the social construction of knowledge. In like vein, Gee (2008) suggests that literacy is intricately associated with the social, cultural, and societal institutions with which individuals are connected and through which they communicate.

One of the most influential theorists working with ideas about the social construction of knowledge was Basil Bernstein (1975, 1977, 1990, 2000). Bernstein's ideas are important for this review given its brief to investigate pedagogical practices that can influence students' attainment of language and literacy. He used the phrase “pedagogic device” to describe how pedagogy helps convert knowledge into instructional communication. His pedagogic theory outlines the influence of choices that teachers make in relation to curriculum, timing, space, or social control (Bernstein, 1977). It also considers how language and social contexts are implicated in the construction of meaning and knowledge,

and accounts for the power of pedagogy and pedagogical choice to effect change on social groups such as students (Bernstein, 2000). The Australian Curriculum promotes pedagogical choice for teachers. It is not prescriptive about resources or learning programs, assuming that teachers are best placed to make those decisions according to the needs of classes and students (ACARA, 2017a). Bernstein's ideas provide a useful platform from which to examine pedagogical approaches to literacy teaching and learning.

The basic skills approach tends to compartmentalize specific skills into steps and is associated with behaviourist theories.

3.3 Basic skills approach

Historically, being literate meant learning skills for reading and writing, and implied that a young child came to school to be made ready for such ends. One of the ideas embedded in this larger expectation was referred to as “reading readiness” and it dominated the literacy curriculum and teaching in western societies from the inception of compulsory schooling until the mid-1960s and early 1970s. From then on, a number of other language and literacy education initiatives were developed and these began to reshape how educationalists considered literacy development (Chomsky, 1966, 1972; Clay, 1967; Durkin, 1978; Goodman & Goodman, 1965; Graves, 1978, 1983; Halliday, 1975, 1978; Holdaway, 1979).

The basic skills approach tends to compartmentalize specific skills into steps ‘from letter formation, to letter-sound relationships, to vocabulary words, to sentence grammar’ (Mills & Unsworth, 2015, np). This approach is associated with behaviourist theories, which focus on ‘observable and measurable aspects of human behaviour’ (Tompkins, 2007, p.3). Its focus is on visual and perceptual skills and phonics—often referred to as “word attack skills”, sight vocabulary, and comprehension (Anstey & Bull, 2004). Literature that refers to extensive data on teaching basic skills is available; and drawn on in the following sections.

A basic skills approach is distinguishable from a systematic phonics approach. Phonics instruction can be implemented as a way of working, and is present as such in numerous approaches and related theories (Mills & Unsworth, 2015). This approach is steeped in teacher-directed, whole-class set learning of skills regardless of students’ prior knowledge, experiences, or individual differences. It exemplifies a performance model of curriculum based on strong sequencing of skills, strong teacher control over social interactions in the classroom, and set rates of maturation and attainment of skills (Bernstein, 2000).

Luke and Freebody (1997) argue that a skills-based approach is problematic because reading methods are inculcated using rote learning and do not account well for texts’ social contexts or assumed or inherent meanings. For example, young children working from Kindergarten to Year 3 might know the sounds of letters and be able to sound out text, but may not understand the meaning of a text or be able to relate back its story or content. Students from Years 3 to 10 may have the ability to parse a text ‘into its grammatical components, but the content or meaning ... which contains implicit or explicit social values, is arbitrary to the instructional purpose’ (Anstey & Bull, 2004, np). In this method, students are not always taught how to apply the grammatical rules to real world literacies (Mills, 2005). Yet, creating and comprehending everyday, societal, and occupational texts requires grammatical structuring of content area texts, digital texts, and

other multimodalities of texts such as symbols or signs. The basic skills approach thus focuses on teaching skills in isolation from social and cultural contextual meanings. While explicit teaching of basic skills such as phonics is important, it is only one part of the jigsaw. In order to be able to decipher texts and also understand their meaning, there is widespread agreement that an integrated approach is necessary (Centre for Independent Studies, 2017; National Reading Panel, 2000; Rowe, 2005a).

It is important to acknowledge that skills in themselves are important for learning to read and write. However, teaching them in isolation from contextual meanings in a hierarchical fashion fails to account for emergent literacies, and detracts from social and cultural contextual meaning-making in literacy—for example, as posited in the AC:E in terms of ‘knowledge, understanding and skills in listening, reading, viewing, speaking, writing, and creating’ across the three strands of Language, Literature, and Literacy’ (ACARA 2017a, np).

3.3.1 Implementing a basic skills approach in the curriculum

The AC:E is organised into three interrelated areas or strands that are labelled language, literature, and literacy, and the last of these is considered both a ‘strand’ and a ‘general capability’. According to the AC:E:

Literacy is developed through the specific study of the English language in all its spoken, written and visual forms, enabling students to become confident readers and meaning-makers as they learn about the creative and communicative potential of a wide range of subject-specific and everyday texts from across the curriculum. Students understand how the language in use is determined by the many different social contexts and specific purposes for reading and viewing, speaking and listening, writing and creating ... Students learn about language and how it works in the Language strand, and gradually develop and apply this knowledge to the practical skills of the Literacy strand in English, where students systematically and concurrently apply phonic, contextual, semantic and grammatical knowledge within their growing literacy capability to interpret and create spoken, print, visual and multimodal texts with appropriateness, accuracy and clarity. (ACARA, 2017a, np; ACARA no date-c)

A general capability ‘encompasses knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions. Students develop capability when they apply knowledge and skills confidently, effectively and appropriately in complex and changing circumstances, in their learning at school and in their lives outside school’ (ACARA, 2017a, np; ACARA no date-d). As a general capability, literacy is organised into two overarching processes: comprehending texts by listening, reading, and viewing; and composing texts by speaking, writing, and creating. The Australian Curriculum stipulates that text, grammar, word, and visual forms of knowledge are needed for both processes (Table 4).

Underlying the attainment of literacy “knowledges” are requirements for specific language and literacy skills linked to knowing about the English language and understanding how the English language works; such is the content of the language strand of the AC:E. These skills are fundamental to literacy as a general capability.

Table 4. Forms of knowledge for literacy processes

Text	Grammar	Word	Visual
understand the different types of text structures used in all content areas	understand types of sentence structures	develop strategies and skills for acquiring a wide range of vocabulary for each content learning area	interpret still and moving images, graphs, tables, maps, and other graphic representations
understand text cohesion and how it works through various grammatical structures	link and elaborate ideas	spell words accurately	understand and evaluate how images and language work together in distinctive ways in different content areas to present ideas and information.
use knowledge of text structures	know how different types of words and word groups convey information		understand how visual elements create meaning.
use knowledge of text cohesion	know how different types of words and word groups represent information		

Table adapted from AC:E Key Ideas: Literacy (ACARA, no date-c)

While the limits of the basic skills approach are now widely recognised, there is broad agreement that the acquisition of skills is important. This is a major component of the language strand of the AC:E, which emphasizes the development of phonics and word knowledge, and that includes knowledge about sounds (phonemic awareness), letters of the alphabet (graphemes), spelling, word origins, prefixes and suffixes, and visual and meaning strategies (ACARA, no date-c). Phonemic awareness and phonic knowledge are applied mainly to the development of reading from Foundation to Year 2 and are of ‘critical importance’ (ACARA, 2017a; Ahlgrim-Delzell et al., 2016; Fredrick, Davis, Alberto, & Waugh, 2013). The language strand thus scaffolds teaching of the ‘the patterns and purposes of English usage, including spelling, grammar and punctuation at the levels of the word, sentence and extended text, and they study the connections between these levels’ (ACARA, 2017a, np; ACARA no date-c). In practice, teachers are able to account for class and individual needs when addressing various skill components at each level.¹⁰

¹⁰ Skills-based approaches often have relied on ‘basal readers’ or commercially produced materials that support the hierarchical model of skills development. Such products usually apply a ‘synthetic’ approach to teaching phonics. In this way, only certain letters and sounds are taught and then built into words. Gradually, more letters are taught followed by blended consonants, gradually adding a variety of combinations of letters and sounds. In contrast, an ‘analytic’ approach to teaching phonics uses the ‘alphabetic principle’ which encourages breaking the whole word into phonemes (or chunks of sound) (Ewing & Maher, 2016). Several British and American examples of commercial and online resources are readily available to teachers and parents. Australian schools have access to programs such as Jolly Phonics and Letterland, but there is little empirical evidence to support the claims by Letterland International (2009) or Lloyd (2005) about the effectiveness of these programs (Campbell, Torr, & Cologon, 2014; Flint, Kitson, Lowe, & Shaw, 2014; Tompkins, Campbell, Green, & Smith, 2014).

From its inception in 2009, the AC:E has included a recommendation that basic skills in phonics, grammar, punctuation, and spelling be taught in authentic situations using authentic texts. Although key learning activity may emanate from one particular strand, pedagogy should draw on all three (ACARA, 2017a, no date-c). In other words, phonics, grammar, punctuation, and spelling activities should be contextual and situational, and involve interacting with others, creating texts, exercising comprehension, and applying knowledge.

As students make progress through school, expectations about the acquisition of phonics and word knowledge skills should increase. By Year 3, students should be able to use letter-sound patterns to spell less common words. They will delve into more complex word structures and, by the end of Year 6, should have attained knowledge on word origins and be familiar with spelling generalisations in order to spell new words, including technical terms from content areas such as science and mathematics (ACARA, no date-b).

Year 6 is the last year in which phonics and word knowledge are nominated for particular focus in the AC:E content descriptors. However, the skills attained in primary school do set the foundation for continued development in literacy and language skills. Students reach a stage where basic skills in phonics and word knowledge are assumed (Fisher, Frey, & Hattie, 2016). From Year 7 to Year 10, literacy and language skills development is incorporated into the content descriptor 'expressing and developing ideas' (ACARA, 2017a), and involves working with sentences at the clause level, and knowing and understanding word and clause level grammar. Vocabulary and spelling skills expand. Visual language is also a focus of multimodal text expression of ideas, and incorporates knowledge of how sound, image, movement, verbal elements and layout of texts work.

3.3.2 Ways of working with basic skills

Teachers are responsible for assisting students to learn how the English language works in terms of grammatical structuring of multimodal texts; of the language at the clause level; of language for specific purposes; and of each language constituting a curriculum content area (Doyle, 2011; Exley, Kervin, & Mantei, 2015; 2012; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). Acquisition of metalanguage is also essential (Halliday, 2002), and that capacity to use a language about language is provided by functional grammar (Halliday, 1985; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

Above, it has been established that the basic skills approach has resulted in spelling, vocabulary, and grammar being taught in ways removed from social contexts with which students might relate (Derewianka, 2012, p.130). This means students have difficulty connecting their isolated learning to real life, and many fail to see why they are learning what was presented to them; learning appears compromised as a result (Fisher *et al.*, 2016).

Basic skills approaches need not be so cut-and-dried, however. Bernstein (1975, 1977) defines visible pedagogies as explicit devices or practices thought to benefit teaching basic skills for language and literacy. The Australian Curriculum builds on such practices, emphasizing that explicit teaching of skills must involve meaningful contexts and not be provided in isolation. The Tasmanian Government Department of Education (2013) resource *Supporting literacy and numeracy success: A teachers' resource for early years to Year 12* reflects that

proviso and draws on Hattie's (2009) work on visible teaching practices, which is elaborated on in many other sole and joint publications.

Playful and creative periods of time in class are also highly beneficial to learning (Campbell et al., 2014; Doyle, 2011; Exley et al., 2015; Scull, Nolan, & Raban, 2013). Bernstein (1975, 1977) refers to such occasions as "invisible pedagogies" through which students have time to think about, process, explore, and learn in their own ways—individually and with peers. The Australian Early Years Learning Framework defines play-based learning as 'a context for learning through which children organise and make sense of their social worlds, as they engage actively with people, objects and representations' (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009, p.6). Play-based learning is associated mostly with early childhood settings; however, it is fundamental to all stages of learning. Again, accounting for that insight, the Tasmanian Government Department of Education (2015) Literacy and Numeracy Framework uses a Gradual Release of Responsibility Model, which shifts between visible and invisible pedagogical practices (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983).

Evidence also exists for the efficacy of contextualized basic skill development to help develop phonemic awareness through reading and writing (Emmitt, Hornsby, Wilson, & Meiers, 2006; Goswami, 2006; Wyse & Goswami, 2008). According to Adoniou (2013, p.3) pre-service teachers learn to teach language using 'beautifully written children's literature, [and by] looking at how real authors tell their stories through their careful vocabulary choices and their exciting sentence structures'. However, Adoniou notes, in some school settings 'graduates are sometimes ... required to implement a commercial phonics programme, where no books are read, no rich vocabulary is learned, no stories are written and lots of stencils are coloured in' (*ibid.*). Some studies suggest the need to question the use of synthetic phonics or commercial phonics programs, it does support explicit contextualised systematic phonics instruction (Wyse & Goswami, 2008; Wyse & Styles, 2007).

To teach basic skills well, rather than using a 'basic skills approach' there is strong evidence to suggest that:

1. teaching the basic skills of language and literacy is best practised within meaningful, social contexts rather than in isolation (Freebody & Luke, 2003; Luke & Freebody, 1997; Scull et al., 2013), and
2. basic skills must be explicitly taught (Campbell et al., 2014; Fang, Sun, Chiu, & Trutschel, 2014; Fisher et al., 2016; Hattie, 2009; Tompkins, 2007; 2014).

Campbell (2015), for example, has employed a qualitative analysis to investigate 115 early childhood teachers' views on teaching phonics in early childhood settings. She examined perspectives on commercial programs such as Jolly Phonics and Letterland, and asked teachers about how they perceived interactions with parents or broader community expectations to provide structured phonics lessons. Parental and community pressure in this respect often opposed teachers' own views about best practices, which align more with "emergent literacies", where phonological awareness and phonics are taught as part of play-based and child-centred experiences such as stories, rhymes, singing, shared reading, and dramatic play.

It is useful to note that phonological awareness and phonics often have been taught using explicit, systematic, and synthetic ways of working. Here, “explicit” refers to a visible style of teaching where a teacher controls the content and ways of working with subject matter. A “systematic” style refers to a specific and orderly, sometimes quite rigid, ‘progression of phoneme-grapheme instruction’ (Campbell, 2015, p.14). Alternatively, teachers might elect explicitly to teach a phonics lesson in a play-based experience in a meaningful context or setting using, for example, a picture book, song, or dramatic play, and this strategy would be considered “synthetic” and more efficacious.

Campbell (2015) has established for her case study that educators have mixed views about teaching phonological awareness and phonics. Some see that commercial programs are “fun” while others think these programs narrow at best, meaningless at worst. In turn, Foote, Smith and Ellis (2004) have shown that commercial programs potentially limit children’s literacy-learning opportunities. Evidence such as that presented by Bowman, Donovan and Burns (2001) and by Rogoff (2003) supports the development of emergent literacy practices for young children, and off-the-shelf tools have only partial efficacy in this respect.

In and beyond foundational school years, basic skills development also concerns vocabulary, spelling, and grammar (Kress, 1993). Spelling was taught in terms of series of rules and exceptions (for instance, I before E except after C as in science, glacier, species but not in words such as receive, ceiling, or deceit). Parsing texts was common: analysing isolated texts at the word level into parts of speech such as nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and so on; analysing sentences by reference to subject, object, phrases, and clauses. Capturing such approaches to basic skills development, Christie (1990, p.6) refers to ‘a series of measured stages in school learning, so that the learner could move from the smaller to the larger units of language’. Staging occurs regardless of individual need. Learning to read, for example, involves progressing from recognising the alphabet and then words, to reading phrases and sentences, and then engaging with stories less immediately related to students’ social contexts and experiences. Under the influence of this idea of staging, writing has been about copying texts and drafting compositions on given topics with little or no time to prepare plans or edit work.

Models of teaching traditional grammar via text books with limited contextual resonance have been described as ineffectual (Piper, 1983) and inadequate (Love, Macken-Horarik, & Horarik, 2015; Macken-Horarik, 2009). This is not to say that traditional grammar is itself irrelevant, but Cope and Kalantzis (1993) point to the need to teach both formal grammatical skills and to be alert to varying social contexts among friends, families, sporting teams, work groups, and so on: each of these will have a specific language structure known to the group. In addition, traditional grammar does not extend to describing multimodal texts such as visual, audio, spatial and gestural modes (Lemke, 1998), so other strategies are needed to deal with these.

Section 3.3 has outlined the basic skills approach as envisaged traditionally and compared this approach with current views of teaching basic skills in context, thus providing some insight into current pedagogical praxis. It is clear that debate continues about what constitutes best pedagogical practices to enhance literacy skills in classroom situations (Buckingham, Wheldall, & Beaman-Wheldall, 2013; Christie & Misson, 2012; Coffin, Donohue, & North, 2013; Kress, 1999). The following

sections extend and expand this latter notion to consider more fully current approaches and ways of working with basic skills and with the wider content that constitutes language and literacy teaching and learning.

3.4 Whole language approach

The whole language approach results from the work of theorists such as Chomsky (1959, 1966, 1972)—who viewed language as acquired rather than learned, and the Goodmans (1968; 1976; Goodman & Goodman, 1965, 1979)—who worked on psycholinguistics and “cues and miscues”. In this latter schema, reading was described as a process in which the reader draws on specific cues: semantic (meaning), syntactic (sentence structure), and grapho-phonetic (vision and sound).

Early on, miscue analyses (Goodman & Goodman, 1965; Goodman, Burke, & Sherman, 1980) were employed to detect and assess the extent to which readers used semantic, syntactic, and/or grapho-phonetic cues. Such analyses are presently referred to as “running records” and involve identifying miscues or errors in students’ reading, and then determining the types of errors in play—for example, substituting absent words for words that are actually written/present, mispronouncing words, repeating words, phrases, clauses, and/or not knowing words. From the number of errors calculated, teachers can identify the suitability of the level of text. Students’ miscues can be classified and individual programs adjusted for each student.

The whole language approach has also emphasized “error avoidance”, and assumed that language and literacy are acquired rather than learned (Kolln & Hancock, 2010). As a result, over many years grammar and grammatical structuring, spelling, and other literacy skills, have not been taught by many teachers, who have relied on students being exposed to these skills and internalising them. In turn, large numbers of current teachers are now “unschooled” in grammar and ‘do not carry into teaching a deep grounding in knowledge of the language’ (*ibid.*, p.34).

Whole language has also relied heavily on psycholinguistics, oral language, and reading aloud to support students’ abilities to use their knowledge of language to make predictions and construct meaning from text. Holdaway (1979), for example, has drawn on psycholinguistic theory to develop shared book experiences as a way to teach about language and literacy using meaningful contexts drawing on semantic, syntactic, and grapho-phonetic cueing systems in a sequential or hierarchical manner. Works by Cambourne and Turbill (1987) and Cambourne (1988) are indebted to these antecedents, including that which proposes eight conditions of learning that illustrate the relationship to psychology:

- immersion in what has to be learned;
- demonstration or modelling of subject matter;
- engagement of the learner (note: Cambourne stressed that the learner must desire to learn and be willing to take the risk of learning);
- expectations (by others as well as the learners that they are capable of learning subject matter);

The whole language approach assumed that language and literacy are acquired rather than learned.

- responsibility (the learner has control to make decisions about learning);
- approximations (mistakes are acceptable and a necessary part of learning—learners learn from their mistakes);
- employment or use (learners learn new skills through opportunities to practise the skills); and
- response (feedback about their use of the skill).

Whole language is based on the idea that reading and writing are elements of social practices and social patterns of language guided by social participation and relationships (Gee, 1996). Advocates developed the use of authentic literature, gave learners more control of what they read and wrote about, and used authentic assessment—on the understanding that this approach encourages critical thinking. Cooperative learning, multi-graded tasks, and family groupings have been used. The curriculum has been integrated and language across the curriculum recognised (Goodman & Wilde, 1992).

3.5 Debates about approach

Recall that the basic skills approach has focused on the role of the grapho-phonetic system where independent readers draw on visual and sound properties of text prior to semantic and syntactic cues (Wren, 2010). In comparison, the whole language approach has focused on child-centred, meaningful contextual teaching and learning (Fountas & Hannigan, 1989). Recall, too, that theorists have identified three language cueing systems, semantic, syntactic, and grapho-phonetic, that contribute to the reading process. Those using the whole language approach have drawn upon these systems to frame the reading process—with semantic cueing being the overarching and privileged system in the reading process, followed by syntactic, and finally grapho-phonetic cueing systems. Goodman, Watson, and Burke (1987) have argued that the grapho-phonetic system was only enacted when the other systems were unavailable. Proponents of the whole language approach thus have assumed that skilled readers were prone to employ meaning and grammatical structural cueing systems.

The debate between basic skills and whole language approaches started in earnest in the 1970s and, although less heatedly, continues still. A key contention has centred on the cueing systems or reading strategies employed by skilled readers. While whole language advocates most value semantic and syntactic cueing systems, basic skills proponents value grapho-phonetic cues. Whole language methods have offered a holistic view of language, focused on the whole child, and valued 'creativity, identity, the writer's unique voice, self-discovery and individuality' (Derewianka, 2015, pp.69–70). Predominantly, reading has been understood as best supported when done to enjoy 'rich, authentic literary texts'.

Differences also arise between these approaches in terms of writing. Whole language advocates understand writing as 'a natural human need for self-expression' (Derewianka, 2015, p.70). That view has been reflected in "process writing" (Graves, 1983; Turbill, 1983). Martin (2009) has reported on analyses done in the 1970s of hundreds of children's written texts, which found that the range of writing was narrowly focused on journal recounts of personal experiences,

personal observations, and comments. Hence the emphasis in process writing on giving writers choice of topics and leeway to write about personal experiences. An allied method known as “individual conferencing” has also been seen as apt for students working from languages other than English. At the same time, process writing has been criticised by teachers who considered that it did not allow for appropriate modelling of a wide range of language structures and writing conventions (Wales, 1990). This conclusion could readily be understood as a *non sequitur*: in principle, process writing and modelling are not mutually exclusive tasks.

The debate that typifies the basic skills and whole language approaches ultimately reduces to the question of how students are taught. Where basic skills advocates have determined that they rely more on grapho-phonics cues when approaching unfamiliar words in text, whole language advocates have concluded that more skilled readers rely on semantic and syntactic cues. One study by Beatty and Care (2009) conducted a miscue analysis with 100 students aged five to eight years of age to identify the grapho-phonics, syntactic, or semantic cueing systems used in reading when students met unfamiliar words in text. The study showed that readers with average and above-average skills relied mostly on grapho-phonics cues when compared with readers with below-average skills. Students had better control over syntactical cues with easier texts and there was no significant difference with either ability group’s reliance on semantic cues. Beatty and Care have acknowledged that miscue analyses do not reveal all processes or strategies used by readers, nor did the study take into account students’ prior knowledge. Furthermore, the impact of the type and length of text was not considered. However, as a result of the study, Beatty and Care concluded that, for beginning readers, phonics skills are critical when they read new texts. They have recommended blending basic skills and whole language approaches, and have observed that classroom practitioners tend to do so in any case (also see section 3.7). A blended method was preferred by an ‘overwhelming majority’ of 169 early childhood teachers participating in a study about the use of basic skills and whole language approaches (Huang, 2014, p.71). This finding is in keeping with others established by Rowe (2005a), Ellis (2005), Ewing (2006), and Tompkins, Campbell, and Green (2014).

Further input in relation to whole language has been generated by genre theorists, who have questioned how students are being taught; query the narrow and personal scope of subject matter about which students were reading and writing (Derewianka, 2015); and advocate for explicit teaching about language and its functions. Those writing about genre theory such as Martin (1992), Rothery (1996), and Christie and Martin (1997) have extended Halliday’s (1985) functional model of language and focused on the social purposes of text and their specific structures as, for example, reports, explanations, descriptions, arguments, or instructions. Genre theorists have also investigated language choices and patterns according to certain registers: field, tenor, and mode. *Field* refers to the subject matter; *tenor* to the roles participants take on in specific contexts and the relationships between them; and *mode* to oral, written, digital, or other forms of communication (Halliday, 1978, 1985).

Genre theory continues to evolve and its advocates continue to contribute to functional views on language and literacy development. Consequently, it is considered as a precursor to the current framing of the AC:E as well as remaining a major contributor to the current content of the AC:E. Indeed, elements of

**Process writing
(in the whole
language
approach)
and modelling
(in the basic
skills approach)
are not mutually
exclusive.**

genre theory are closely comparable to approaches taken in the AC:E, which emphasizes socio-cultural perspectives and focuses on language as a meaning-making process occurring in varied contexts and which requires specific language choices according to purpose.

3.6 Language and literacies for the twenty-first century using the AC:E

The AC:E rationale links English literacy and language learning to the multicultural society and diverse needs of all students. It emphasizes the rights of all to be able to communicate in Standard Australian English. It enshrines respect for cultural and linguistic differences, and incorporates the view that knowledge is socially constructed. It describes learning as a social process which takes place through social interactions.

This section examines models and methods of working that are connected to the AC:E's language and literacy strands, cognisant of the fact that literacy is both a general capability and a strand. Theoretical perspectives which frame the implementation of the AC:E are revisited. Teaching and learning models linked to these theories are described along with associated ways of working. Language, literature, and literacy will connect to listening, reading, viewing, speaking, writing, and creating foci (ACARA v8.3)¹¹ at each level of schooling from K to Year 10. Disadvantaged students, those for whom English is an additional language, those with learning disabilities, and those in rural and remote schools are considered.

3.6.1 The multimodality of texts and multiliteracies

With multimodality of textual representations increasing in the latter part of the twentieth century, a group of literacy educationalists came together to discuss the state of literacy, its definitions, practices, and possible futures. They formed the New London Group¹² (Kalantzis, Cope, Chan, & Dalley-Trim, 2016). As a result of their deliberations, members of the group coined the term “multiliteracies”, which they felt encompassed ‘the multiplicity of communications channels and media, and the increasing saliency of cultural and linguistic diversity’ (New London Group, 1996, p.63). The New London Group has described a pedagogy of multiliteracies as supplementary to, if nevertheless contrasting with, traditional literacy pedagogy insofar as traditional literacy pedagogy is more authoritarian while multiliteracies pedagogy focuses on four components:

- situated practice, which draws on the experience of meaning-making in lifeworlds, the public realm, and workplaces;

¹¹ AC:E description retrieved from <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/english/curriculum/f-10?layout=1>

¹² The New London Group composed of: Courtney Cazden (United States); Bill Cope (Australia); Norman Fairclough (Great Britain); James Gee (United States); Mary Kalantzis (Australia); Gunther Kress (Great Britain); Allan Luke (Australia); Carmen Luke (Australia); Sarah Michaels (United States); and Martin Nakata (Australia). This group of educators had common concerns which included “the pedagogical tension between immersion and explicit models of teaching; the challenge of cultural and linguistic diversity; the newly prominent modes and technologies of communication; and changing text usage in restructured workplaces” (New London Group, 1996, p.62).

- overt instruction, through which students develop an explicit metalanguage of design;
- critical framing, which interprets the social context and purpose of designs of meaning; and
- transformed practice, in which students, as meaning-makers, become designers of social futures (ibid., p.65).

The group understands that literacy pedagogy occurs within students' life-world experiences where meaning is made in real-world contexts. Overt instruction is akin to visible or explicit pedagogy that enables students to use a metalanguage of design—to access language to talk about, comprehend, and use language and multimodal texts. The New London Group has also described the concept of design as one where 'we are both inheritors of patterns and conventions of meaning and at the same time active designers of meaning'. Design is composed of a number of meanings: linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, spatial, and multimodal patterns of meaning that relate the first five modes of meaning to each other.

In the AC:E, this design concept manifests in the two overarching processes of the literacy continuum: 'Comprehending texts through listening, reading and viewing; and Composing texts through speaking, writing and creating' (ACARA, no date-e). These processes encompass literacy as a general capability.

The third component of a multiliteracies pedagogy, critical framing, is about interpreting social contexts and the purpose of designs of meaning. Finally, transformed practice relates to students transforming existing meanings to new meaning designs (Mills, 2005; New London Group, 1996). In transformed practice, students demonstrate their abilities to transfer knowledge they have learned in one context to work in new contexts. Therefore, such practice requires creativity and innovation rather than copying or reproducing knowledge. For example, children have transformed their practice if they have learned information about a specific subject and transfer that knowledge into a film to share with an audience, such as their parents, thus re-representing their knowledge learnt in situated practices, through overt instruction and critical framing.

Researchers such as Goodman and Goodman (1979), Lemke (1998), and Cope and Kalantzis (2000) have argued the need to re-evaluate theories in literacy and language to encompass the growth of, and changes to modes of communication (Unsworth, 2001). Several studies have drawn attention to the need for visual literacy and the need for an associated theorisation to describe the essence of visual literacy—that is, a metalanguage (Callow, 2003; Callow & Unsworth, 1997; Unsworth, 2001). In Australia, these ideas were evident in the development of national statements and profiles in the 1990s, which were the precursors to the national curriculum (Ludwig, 2005; Yates & Collins, 2008). The predominant twentieth century theories of literacy acquisition were established on the basis that language is the only mode of representation and communication. Acknowledging that such theories were inadequate for twenty-first century literacy, Kress (2000a, 2000b) promoted a theory of semiosis—that is, processes to understand relationships between signs and their meanings (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996).

Literacy in the twenty-first century involves coming to terms with a range of texts that involve linguistic, visual, auditory, and spatial modes of communicating.

Literacy in the twenty-first century involves coming to terms with a range of texts that involve linguistic, visual, auditory, and spatial modes of communicating, a task which differs vastly from those requiring conventional forms of oral and written communication. The term 'text' refers to any method of communication: spoken, written, gestural, or visual, as well as to combinations of those methods or modes. Texts comprise single or several modes of representations. In other words, there are many ways to represent communications via text. For example, physical marks on paper which are read or speaking and listening are modes of representation of text. These particular modes are recognised in traditional approaches to literacy. However, meaning can be represented in, for example, Braille, or in the textural feel of timber or fabric, or through drawn, painted, or digital and other images, and through social class differentiations in language forms, cultural norms, vocabulary for specific contexts such as work, home, or peer groups.

These examples are forms of the multimodal systems of representations for communication. Furthermore, for each mode of language representation there are embedded modes of making specific meanings such as: spoken language. Consider variations in pace, pitch, rhythm, tone of voice; gestural language; facial expressions, mouth, eyes, arms, upper body dispositions, movements and attitude; or visual language such as drawing, photography, paintings; or types of close-up or distant shots, or how the visual subject relates to the viewer, placement of subjects, spatial relations and so on (Kress, 2000b).

Being literate involves 'multimodal designing' as people now 'engage in a much richer repertoire of linguistic practices, modes and media' (Mills, 2011, p.124). Design is about planning something new, either from the perspective of the "designer-as-producer", or from the perspective of "designer-as-user". Design is also about creating products, and also about influencing social interactions. Design allows formation of communicative resources and social interactions (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996, 2001). Multimodal design in the classroom is what happens in the teaching/learning process where students learn new concepts and then represent their new learning via spoken, written, or visual textual design. Interactive digital media play a vital role in the ways in which students engage with text. In considering literacy education, both print and digital texts contribute to communicative design texts. In particular, digital media is increasing introducing "an explosion" of new ways of working with digital text modes—for example, smartphones, iPods, design blogs, movie creation, or games, as well as, icons, abbreviations, or symbols and so on (Flint et al., 2014, p.19). The Australian Curriculum explicitly signifies a need for multimodal literacy with content descriptors across several levels indicating that students need to comprehend, compose and critically analyse multimodal texts.

3.6.2 Case studies involving the multiliteracies approach

Those advocating the multiliteracies approach recognise the multimodality of communicative representational devices as well as the grammatical meanings of different modes such as time, space, gestures, or visual stimuli. They also understand the need to account for cultural differences as they influence or are influenced by spoken, written, signed, visual, and spatial texts and their sequences (Kress, 2000b).

The multiliteracies approach has been exhaustively investigated in class settings. By way of example, one such project conducted with those enrolled in an early year program investigated the effects on students of an inquiry rainforests and sustainability. Students from diverse backgrounds, including those with refugee status, cooperated to produce a multimodal “info-narrative” promoting rainforest environments. Results show that students integrated a range of key learning areas’ content knowledge authentically connected to their individual and cultural identities (Exley, 2007).

Exley (2012) later completed work with middle years students in a remote Indigenous community which combined history and English content areas to study the lives and contributions of noteworthy Australian politicians. Situated practice was enhanced when students went on excursion to their local council chambers to learn about local governance structures, and share with council personnel their own emergent knowledge about politics and politicians. Then in class they worked through a series of lessons on grammatical structures and nominalisations aimed to assist their critical literacy skills and comprehension of texts for individual research tasks. Finally, they produced a multimodal biography to demonstrate their understandings of the historical development of Australian society; the genre requirements of biographical writing, and ways of communicating using multimodal production techniques. Exley and the class teacher noted that this method of working enhanced students’ commitment to learning.

Another study by Doyle and Dezuanni (2014) is framed by Bernstein’s (1975) visible and invisible pedagogies and digital media literacy building blocks and focuses on science participation among culturally-diverse Year 4 students from a lower socio-economic community on the outskirts of a major Australian capital city. Based on multiliteracies and multimodal approaches, they studied the impact of digital media literacies on science lesson participation and communicative abilities in science. Results show that students’ practices are situated in lifeworlds that have meaning in and beyond the classroom, and that they readily assumed what they understood to be the personas of scientists and film makers. Students received overt instruction—visible or explicit pedagogy—on science processes and solutions-focus, and completed experiments, media arts training, video making, and interviews. Their learning experiences were critically framed by connections they made to real-world science and social contexts as they conducted interviews with each other. This method of approach enabled them to interpret new science knowledge, represent science meanings using explanation, and demonstrate their understandings to others. Interviews provided opportunities for students to critically analyse the idea that problems have solutions, and draw on thinking, reasoning, and decision-making and justification, particularly in relation to cause and effect. The full suite of activities resulted in students transforming science practice into other media for communication, engaging in knowledge transfer, and actively communicating science knowledge to audiences comprising teachers, parents, and peers (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015; Kalantzis & Cope, 2008). The study also highlights the positive effects of media arts and digital literacies on those deemed reluctant learners, teachers reporting that students participated more fully in science processes and learning when other methods of communication were introduced.

The AC:E does not stipulate a specific approach to language and literacy teaching. Clearly basic skills, whole language, and multiliteracies approaches each have

certain strengths and drawbacks. On that basis, the following section considers a balanced approach to English language and literacy education.

3.7 A balanced approach

Debates regarding the relative merits of various approaches continue today. Nevertheless, there is increasing recognition of the dangers of establishing a false dichotomy between basic skills and whole language approaches. Leading education scholars now favour what has become known as a ‘balanced approach’ to literacy teaching. A balanced approach to language and literacy education is based on an inclusive view of literacy and on an understanding that pedagogical practices need to be tailored to individual student needs. This balanced approach is framed by a ‘comprehensive view of literacy that combines explicit instruction, guided practice, collaborative learning, and independent reading and writing’ (Tompkins et al., 2014, p.16). The approach resolves tensions between explicit skills-based and meaning-based instructional perspectives and focuses on context (Lombardi & Behrman, 2016). It is not intended to be mere eclectic bricolage (see the critique by Snow, 2017), but rather is meant to form a thoughtful and systematic approach. In Australia, such a balanced approach was recommended by the *National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy* (Rowe, 2005a), especially for teaching beginning readers.

Tompkins *et al.* (2014, pp.16–17) identify several common features of balanced literacy programs:

- Literacy involves reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.
- Reading instruction includes skills to break code, make meaning, and use and analyse text/s.
- Writing instruction includes the writing process, the qualities of effective and appropriate writing, and the ability to use conventional spelling, grammar, and punctuation to make ideas more readable.
- Reading and writing are used as tools for content-area learning.
- Strategies and skills are taught explicitly and accompanied by a gradual release of responsibility to students.
- Students often work collaboratively and talk with classmates.
- Students are more motivated and engaged when they participate in authentic literacy activities. An authentic literacy activity is deemed to be that which has a clear purpose or outcome known to students and valued by them.

The balanced approach thus facilitates a “shifting pedagogy” from highly visible teaching and learning to less visible and invisible pedagogy (Bernstein, 1975, 1977; Doyle, 2011). On such grounds, it has been described as combining teacher- and learner-focused theoretical perspectives (Cunningham & Allington, 2007; Pressley & Allington, 2014).

Studies point to the efficacy of a balanced approach. For example, Lombardi and Behrman (2016) have demonstrated positive outcomes using a balanced literacy program with under-achieving Year 10s in an urban high school with a

preponderance of Hispanic students in New Jersey. The study did not measure the effectiveness of balanced literacy programs against either skills-based or meaning-based programs. However, it established that both English learners and students already proficient in English improved, and that this improvement was particularly marked among those learning English, who showed the greatest gains in reading and reading comprehension abilities. Students' Year 8 scores in the New Jersey State Skills and Knowledge Assessment were compared to their Year 10 scores. English learners working in the balanced literacy program scored above peers not enrolled in the program. While those proficient in English and enrolled in the program improved over the two assessments, their assessments were not above English-proficient peers who were not in the program.

Another study by Bingham and Hall-Kenyon (2013) worked with 581 teachers in the United States to consider their perspectives on implementing balanced literacy approach. The results echo findings that implementation is highly variable, which has also been established by Tompkins *et al.* (2014) and Lombardi and Behrman (2016). Teachers reported that they tend to use a balanced approach more with reading than with writing, which is deemed by the researchers as 'unfortunate [given the] interaction between reading and writing development' in strengthening students' literacy development (Bingham & Hall-Kenyon, 2013, p.11). Thus, teachers may not be incorporating all of the principles of a balanced approach into their class programs. This insight leads Bingham and Hall-Kenyon to the conclusion that 'effective literacy instruction requires that teachers possess sound literacy expertise that allows them to adapt their literacy instruction to meet the specific challenges and needs of the age group they teach [and] the needs of individual students' (*ibid.*). In like vein, Hattie (2009, p.245) makes the point that it is:

not a particular method, nor a particular script, that makes the difference; it is attending to personalizing the learning, getting greater precision about how students are progressing in this learning, and ensuring professional learning of the teachers about how and when to provide different or more effective strategies for teaching and learning.

Thus, in a balanced approach, design and delivery of specific elements of English literacy and language may vary (Flint *et al.*, 2014), but studies suggest that such variation should be considered rather than arbitrary.

Here, a balanced approach is intended to mean a way of working that caters for literacy as a general capability involving comprehension of texts by listening, reading, and viewing print and digital texts, and composition of texts by speaking, writing, and creating print and digital texts (ACARA). A balanced approach so understood also assumes that resources are drawn from basic skills, holistic, and/or multiliteracy approaches to teach text, grammatical, word, and visual forms of knowledge in context. Students learn about language in explicit ways applicable to AC:E literacy processes and according to students' individual needs. Teaching tools and resources are explicitly used to teach literacy and language concepts as described in the AC:E, and such methods are augmented by teachers providing opportunities for students to reflect on and practice new learning in less formal settings. The next section outlines influential pedagogical models and strategies for teaching language and literacy components of the AC:E. It links specifically to the teachers resource "Supporting literacy and numeracy success" (Tasmanian Government Department of Education, 2013) and emphasizes evidence-based ways of working.

A balanced approach assumes that resources are drawn in a considered manner from basic skills, holistic, and/or multiliteracy approaches.

Section 4: Pedagogies and enablers

The previous section has focused largely on approaches to literacy teaching in terms of the content or substantive core of lessons. In this section, the focus shifts to pedagogies and other enabling factors that support implementing a productive literacy teaching approach.

4.1 Pedagogical models and methods in English language and literacy

Models that make a difference to students' learning should strive to reduce the gap between pedagogy and learning. A commitment to such outcomes means increasing students' abilities to grasp and grapple using verbal, graphic, or gestural skills with which they are already familiar and staging learning until students are able to fully immerse themselves in working with concepts and practices (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Select pedagogical models and ways of working are described in this section on such understanding, and on the basis that they link to both the Tasmanian Government Department of Education (2013) literacy resource for teachers and to specific learning levels from Foundation to Year 10 as described in the Australian Curriculum. Prior to outlining the teaching strategies attention is paid to elements of effective pedagogy, and consideration given to ideas about what constitutes teaching.

Singh, Dooley, and Freebody (2001) have built on the work done by Bourdieu and Passeron among Samoan students in a disadvantaged setting, and their study has led them to conclude that both the content of what is to be learned, the ways in which it is organised and paced, and the ways in which it is assessed all need to be made explicit to students. Singh *et al.* have also established that new content should be relevant to, or connect with, students' prior knowledge. Pedagogies that 'make a difference' should explicitly focus on teaching new knowledge and fostering 'disciplined inquiry' (p.66). These ideas link to extensive reviews by Hattie (2009) and Marzano (2004) that analyse studies on teaching strategies that 'make a difference'. The strategies on which Hattie and Marzano agree, and which expand upon those of suggested by Singh *et al.* (2001), are summarised as follows:¹³

- Develop a clear lesson focus that both the teacher and students understand.
- Provide explicit instruction. Students need to understand what they need to know and be shown methods or taught content. Hattie describes explicit instruction in a carefully sequenced curriculum that is cumulative. Marzano describes explicit instruction as the most important element of teaching
- Students need to engage with content; this means linking new knowledge to students' prior knowledge of the topic. This may involve students taking

¹³ Note that Marzano's findings are based on teacher-designed assessments, while Hattie's are based more on results from standardised tests.

notes and working with physical manipulative methods as well as teacher questioning.

- Hattie finds that struggling or novice students require immediate feedback while more experienced students benefit from delayed feedback. Ultimately, feedback must meet the individual student's needs and 'knowing each student' in the class is crucial.
- Students need to be exposed to new knowledge several times. Hattie (2009) refers to "rehearsal" and "review" strategies to help students go over new knowledge until it is internalised and then it can be revised and synthesized with knowledge already secured. Hattie stresses the need for students to have time to practice new learning in ways that invite "shifting" pedagogies from more explicit to more implicit ways of working. Feedback remains critically important.
- Students apply their knowledge to demonstrate deeper understandings or to transfer new knowledge and skills to new situations or problems. Inductive and deductive reasoning apply.
- Students work together in cooperative learning groups, which aids whole-class instruction and individual learning. Both Hattie and Marzano see value in inter-group appropriate forms of competition to enhance intra-group cooperation.
- Efforts to build students' self-efficacy has substantial impact on achievement. Marzano cautions that praise must be genuine and related to specific accomplishments linked to learning tasks. Over-lavish praise directed at mediocrity fails to communicate a genuine message of students' ultimate capabilities. Hattie notes that the link between self-efficacy and achievement is reciprocal so that genuine achievement impacts self-efficacy as self-efficacy impacts on subsequent achievement.

The *principle* that teachers need to know the individual needs of each child in their classes underlies Hattie's (2009) argument that teachers also need *methods* to equip students with a range of learning strategies so they have choices in learning processes and can use meaningful ways to construct sense from text. Hattie emphasizes the point that teachers need to plan *active* programs to instigate deliberate and explicit teaching of skills and strategies and ultimately foster deeper understandings. He affirms two levels of understanding—"surface knowledge" at the basic skills level and "deep understanding" at the creative level—on the understanding that 'one needs to know something before one can think about it' (Hattie, 2009, p.160).

The following overview of teaching models offers a range of pedagogical resources on which teachers may draw. Tasmania's Literacy and Numeracy Framework promotes a whole school approach to literacy, where principals and teachers develop shared views about effective practices for teaching literacy that provide for consistency and continuity (Tasmanian Government Department of Education, 2015). The practices that the Framework promotes link to Hattie (2009) and Fisher *et al.* (2016). Teachers need to be familiar with a range of pedagogical strategies in order to individualise learning according to each student's needs; this on the basis that the goal of teaching is 'to help students develop explicit cognitive schemas to thence self-regulate and teach themselves' (Hattie 2009, p.245).

4.1.1 Specific models and strategies

The Tasmanian Literacy and Numeracy Framework refers to work by Pearson and Gallagher (1983) that describes a “gradual release of responsibility model”. This model employs strategies that involve explicit whole class and teacher-centred pedagogy, whereby the teacher teaches and exemplifies new learning, and has all the responsibility. Approaches to pedagogy then shift, gradually releasing responsibility of learning to students using guided practices. Eventually students work independently, and the pedagogy becomes implicit or invisible. Time must be provided for students to use and practice new knowledge and skills. When students are afforded time to deeply consolidate their learning using metacognition, class/group discussion, and planning using “new designs” and multiliteracies, they can monitor their learning, self-regulate, and comprehend new knowledge.

According to Kuhn (2000), the ability to think metacognitively begins at about three years of age and continues into adulthood. It is essential that teachers ask students fundamental questions such as how, why, what, where, when, or who in relation to their learning and practice. Students also need to learn how to self-question and explain. Hattie’s (2009) effect size for metacognitive strategies is very high (0.69), which ranks in the top group of influential strategies for learning. Implicit pedagogies provide additional opportunities for feedback to students via informal assessment and evaluative practices from the teacher, peers, and self.

Knowing a text’s structure provides a way to create a graphic organiser or concept map and provides a means to justify decisions about the ways a student has organised text. Graphic organisers provide students with ways to think metacognitively and organise their thinking. Top level structuring is one method to structure or organise written, oral, and visual text information strategically (Doyle, 2005; Meyer, Brandt, & Bluth, 1980; Morris & Stewart-Dore, 1984). It equips a reader or writer with four plans to list or describe, compare, establish cause and effect, and think about problems and solutions. Teaching students to apply a plan to written, oral, and/or visual text enables them to select, discuss, create, represent, and present oral, written, and visual texts with reasoning and justification, and use tables of information, and symbolic and digital texts, for example. Top-level structuring has been used successfully from foundational to upper secondary and tertiary levels to help students manage texts across the curriculum both in English and content areas (Bartlett, 2003; Doyle, 2007). Fisher *et al.* (2016) confirm that concept mapping and graphic organisers have a high effect size on Hattie’s (2009) scale to enhance student learning when students are taught to create and use them effectively. They also note the high to very high effect size of note-taking and summarisation on comprehension.

Related to text organisation is the Effective Reading in Content Areas (ERICA) model, which consists of four stages: preparing for reading; thinking through (the) reading; extracting and organising information; and translating information. Any one or combination of these stages can be selected by a teacher to help students engage with text according to need (Morris & Stewart-Dore, 1984). Each stage is meant to equip teachers with ways to deal with particular concerns in the literacy classroom. Using graphic organisers, the first stage helps students who have difficulty using texts effectively by making explicit the concepts to be learned and the ways in which they are presented, and by identifying and categorising new vocabulary. The second stage helps students who can “read” a

text but who may not comprehend its' meaning by enabling modification of the graphic organiser so the student can make predictions about text by thinking about headings and sub-headings. The third stage helps students who rely on copying text rather than taking notes and then using their own words for reports, explanations, and so on. Students are taught to extract and organise information into concept maps or graphic organisers. Top level structuring provides a means of accomplishing this skill. In this schema, teaching technical vocabulary is essential for students to comprehend texts in content areas. Likewise, teachers working with students on English must ensure they know the vocabulary needed to read and comprehend a text. Students negotiating texts need to be able to extract information and interpret information. Three "level guides" provide methods for literal, interpretive, and applied comprehension to extract, think about, transform and design respectively. These guides provide teachers with tools for guided reading and writing, and methods to promote class and group discussion, to hear students think out loud, to identify any challenges, to focus on lesson objectives, and to ensure students are focus on relevant information, and share and clarify ideas.

Collectively, these kinds of strategies encourage and help students from diverse backgrounds and capabilities advance their skills in concept mapping, vocabulary development, repeated reading, discussion, questioning, peer collaboration to co-construct meaning, metacognitive thinking, comprehension, creativity, and critical thinking. All are rated by Hattie as having a medium to very high effect on learning. They link to the Socratic Seminar, a means to discuss texts that can be used across a number of age or year levels. They also provide an alternative means for students to receive feedback from teachers and peers.

Finally, the "four resource model" provides a repertoire of social practices or resources, some of which are explicitly taught and some that are acquired informally or implicitly (Freebody & Luke, 1990; Luke & Freebody, 1999, 2003). These integrative and non-hierarchical practices and resources are designed to foster specific literacy skills for different social situations such as school, work, social groups, or home, and embody effective language use. The practices are influential, and can be designed critiqued, and redesigned. They include breaking text codes using fundamental skills such as word and sound recognition; participating in the meanings of the text by showing understanding and by composing written, visual, and spoken texts; using texts functionally and understanding contexts that influence or determine how texts are used; and critically analysing and transforming texts in ways that convey particular perspectives. The four resource model has been influential for the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, no date-d) and in specific states (see for example Ludwig, 2003; Victoria State Government Education and Training, no date). It is taught to pre-service teachers as part of a repertoire of pedagogical practices in several universities, including the University of Tasmania.

In the AC:E, language is viewed from a functional perspective (Halliday, 1978) but integrates this functional approach with the traditional Latin-based perspective on grammar (Willis & Exley, 2016). Looking at language functionally means realising that language has a purpose or function: for example, the language of science differs from the language of history, spoken language differs from written language. For Derewianka (2012, p.133), a functional view of language describes how language enables us to represent 'what is going on' and construct our understanding of the world; to interact with others; and to create coherent,

The Four Resource Model provides a repertoire of integrative and non-hierarchical practices and resources designed to foster specific literacy skills for different social situations such as school, work, social groups, or home.

well-structured texts in both the spoken and written modes. Derewianka cites several studies to establish how teaching language from a functional perspective improves student outcomes in literacy in general and in NAPLAN in particular—as shown with students aged five to sixteen and students for whom English is an additional language. Because the AC:E addresses learning about language in terms of functional and traditional grammars, teachers need to know about both perspectives. To such ends, the AC:E provides illustrations and explanations in content descriptors, such as by providing examples of nouns, pronouns, and noun groups (ACARA, 2016). To teach language from a functional perspective, teachers can draw on resources and explanations provided by a Tasmanian Government Department of Education such as “Supporting literacy and numeracy success” (2013) and the associated Good Teaching Literacy Guides for Foundation-2, 3-6 and 7-10. However, to teach grammar effectively may mean that some teachers require further professional development because they have not been exposed to functional grammar and belong to cohorts schooled during the whole language era, when many language programs did not focus on grammar.

This section has highlighted a selection of models and strategies available for teachers. Following is an account of some research that illustrates how these models and strategies have been translated into classroom practice. The projects cited provide evidence for ways of working that have had positive effects on student learning outcomes.

4.2 Research-evidenced ways of working in practice

The ways of working described here bring together a range of strategies which, on the basis of evidence, have been endorsed by Hattie (2009), Fisher *et al.* (2016), and the Tasmanian Government Department of Education (2016), among others. Putting those methods into practice requires teachers to know how a wide range of strategies work and to be able to adapt them for classroom settings, and be provided ongoing professional development, and support in the classroom and from peers, educational leaders, and parents. This section describes a range of strategies and summarises how they have been shown to work in classrooms.

The first study of note concentrates on “teacher talk” in explicit literacy teaching, teachers’ use of metalanguage in learning and teaching process, and students’ engagement in literacy practices (Geoghegan, O’Neill, & Petersen, 2013). The study took place in two primary schools in a major Australian capital city where students were predominantly from backgrounds where English is an additional language. It showed that the explicit teaching and modelling of metacognitive and metalinguistic strategies and personalised learning in a whole school approach heightened students’ engagement in literacy practices. The researchers reported that the work led to ‘improved literacy learning with exceptional outcomes in reading’ (*ibid.*, p.127). The major foci of their project were differentiated instruction—where students were grouped into core, extension, and support groups aimed at creating and supporting ‘successful, productive learning environments’ (*ibid.*, p.121); practitioner inquiry—where teachers were encouraged to participate in reflective practices on their own practices; student voice and engagement; explicit teaching aims and teaching of literacy; and, in one of the schools, professional development by design. That professional development

allowed teacher leaders, learning support teachers, and other professionals to 'contribute to the "in-house" professional learning network to model and mentor' followed by guided practice with new skills so that the mentee and the mentor participate together in 'ongoing professional reflection' (*ibid.*, p.125). This form of professional development has proved highly beneficial, and especially for beginning teachers.

In another study, Sawyer (2015) reported on several findings from other projects conducted over a period of 15 years, which were related to successful teaching in the New South Wales High School Certificate (Ayres, Dinham, & Sawyer, 2000); exceptional schooling outcomes in Years 7 to 10 in New South Wales (AESOP) (Sawyer, Brock, & Baxter, 2007); engaging middle years boys in rural educational settings (Cole et al., 2010); and 'Teachers for a Fair Go', a study of teachers who make a difference to students in poverty (Munns, Sawyer, Cole, & The Fair Go Team, 2013).¹⁴ The first three projects related to effective teaching practices and their impact on student outcomes; the latter two projects to student engagement and conditions for successful student engagement in classroom activities. Evident in all the projects is the employment of a balanced approach and a clear link to teacher expectations for students (Fisher *et al.*, 2016; Hattie, 2009).

In the studies summarised by Sawyer (2015), the main strategies employed were as follows:¹⁵

- An explicit focus on questioning such as "how did you get there?" or "what was your process?"
- An emphasis on the value of higher-order thinking, problem solving, problematizing knowledge, and analysis, reasoning, independent thinking, group work, and the application of new knowledge—which are related to multiliteracies, design-transformation of new knowledge and skills, and critical thinking.
- Research and experimentation encouraging students to ask "how did I work that out?" or "are there other ways of doing this?"
- A commitment to a culture of inquiry using "judicious questioning" leading to higher-order thinking, discussion, and peer collaboration.
- Explicit instruction.
- Modelling by teachers and peers.
- Vocabulary development such as modelled in ERICA.
- A comprehensive understanding by teachers of students' backgrounds and funds of knowledge.

¹⁴ The study by Cole et al. (2010) included other strategies such as providing disengaged boys with challenging projects and problem-based learning experiences connected to their 'real-world knowledge' and positioning them as "experts".

¹⁵ Ways of working that enable such strategies to be implemented in classrooms include planning programs around the SOLO taxonomy (Biggs & Collis, 2014). Such resources draw on and complement strategies highlighted here and allow students a voice, choice in learning, and means to use skills, as well as build new knowledge and capabilities.

One of the most pertinent components of literacy pedagogy is assessment, in particular formative assessment.

- Use of relevant resources and multimodal practices, hands-on experiences, and information and communication technologies.
- A commitment to a culture of high and fair expectations.
- A commitment to articulating explicit goals, content, key concepts, and assessment criteria.

As the final point above suggests, one of the most pertinent components of literacy pedagogy is assessment. Its role is to inform pedagogical practice to support students' learning—and, arguably, teachers' professional development as well. Formative assessment approaches have been particularly encouraged by the Tasmanian Department of Education (2013), drawing on work by Wiliam (2011). In addition, summative methods continue to play a key role, that is, more formal assessments given at specific points in time to provide evidence of achievement against learning outcomes.

Other forms of assessment such as diagnostic testing can lead to differentiated instruction for students with special needs (Flint *et al.*, 2014). Such forms of assessment can occur daily and are designed to capture students' learning processes and learning outcomes. They provide regular feedback to teachers, students, and parents so that learning and teaching processes can be adapted to best fit individual needs. Sometimes, work known as “pre-assessment” is appropriate, especially when baselines are needed from which to design useful instruction. Fisher *et al.* (2016, pp.136–42) provide practical advice about how teachers can use pre-test and post-test data to determine the effect size of their practice. The data can track student learning and foster teacher self-reflection, informing shifting pedagogies and enabling teaching practices to be calibrated to enhance student learning.

Finally, play-based learning approaches have much to offer literacy teaching, especially from Foundation to Year 2, but also beyond those years; this is because play enables the development of metacognitive strategies. Of interest here is the Australian Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR, 2009), which has synthesised research to highlight the principles and practices that support positive learning outcomes for children. The five principles are:

1. Secure, respectful, and reciprocal relationships: these relationships provide children with the consistent emotional support necessary for development and learning.
2. Partnerships with families: collaboration built on mutual respect, understanding, and the strength each person's knowledge brings.
3. High expectations and equity: a commitment to equity goes hand in hand with the belief that all children are capable of success.
4. Respect for diversity: understanding that diversity makes our society richer and offers meaningful and valid different ways of knowing, In Australia greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing and being is especially important.
5. Ongoing learning and reflective practice: educators are co-learners with children, families, and communities.

The Framework (DEEWR, 2009 p.12) makes explicit that these principles ‘reflect contemporary theories and research evidence concerning children’s learning’ and form the foundation for the following practices (p.14) that are aimed at enabling all children to learn:

1. Adopting holistic approaches.
2. Being responsive to children.
3. Planning and implementing learning through play.
4. Intentional teaching.
5. Creating physical and social learning environments that have a positive impact on children’s learning.
6. Valuing the cultural and social contexts of children and their families.
7. Providing for continuity in experiences and enabling children to have successful transition.
8. Assessing and monitoring children’s learning to inform provision and to support children in achieving learning outcomes.

The synergies between these practices and the conclusions drawn by Sawyer (2015) (see above) as well as by Hattie (see section 4.3.4 below) further reinforce their relevance beyond the early childhood sector.

4.3 Conditions enabling literacy and language pedagogical practices

This section presents a synopsis of conditions favourable to the effective implementation of literacy pedagogies such as those discussed above. It also refers to practical models of classroom interventions found to enhance classroom practice and to support classroom teachers.

Fisher *et al.* (2016, pp.3–4) outline what ‘great teachers know’:

- ‘Great teachers understand that different approaches work more effectively at different times’.
- ‘Great teachers know that different approaches work for some students better than for other students’.
- ‘Great teachers know that different approaches work differently depending on where in the learning process a student may be’.
- ‘Great teachers intervene in specific, meaningful, and calculated ways to increase students’ learning trajectories’.

These points apply to all teachers, regardless of the learning area they teach. It is useful to reiterate that all teachers are teachers of literacy. Literacy as a general capability applies across all learning areas and teachers in specific areas (such as science, mathematics, music and so on) need to know the language of their field.

Teachers of English language and literacy specifically need to know the grammar of the English language and how the language works in order to teach the same concepts to their students. They need to know that the language is evolving and expanding at a rapid rate, resulting in multimodal textual devices that are multi-dimensional and multi-stratal, which means language has many layers of meaning, representation, and expression as well as many aspects and interpretations. The AC:E's requirement that teachers teach English knowledge and skills progressively across year levels obliges teachers to understand the English language and literacy content of the year levels preceding and following their own year level. The AC:E assumes linguistic subject knowledge in teachers.

4.3.1 Linguistic subject knowledge

To implement English literacy and language programs successfully teachers need a strong pedagogical content knowledge in the English language, pedagogical confidence in their knowledge and skills, and supportive conditions in order to enact an effective pedagogy.

In the Australian context, Love *et al.* (2015) have provided relevant insights into such linguistic subject knowledge and linguistic pedagogic subject knowledge requirements for any English language and literacy teacher. These forms of knowledge are requisites for teaching literacy well. Love *et al.* (2015, p.172) have reported on 373 English teachers' views about linguistic subject knowledge and linguistic pedagogic subject knowledge, their research aiming 'to provide empirical evidence about teachers' readiness to plan for, teach and assess language, according to the 'scope and sequence' of the AC:E'. Their work has centred on teachers' perceptions of their own expertise about language in both general and specific terms. It has considered both skills at text, sentence, and word levels of language structure and abilities in naming, defining, explaining, and relating grammatical and linguistic choices for literary and multimodal meaning. Ultimately, the study has sought to identify teachers' expertise in implementing linguistic subject knowledge in their classroom programs and, in doing so, has focused on teachers' pedagogical linguistic subject knowledge. The researchers have recognised that the multi-dimensional and multi-stratal features of language may represent a challenge for some teachers, as might immersion in digital environments. These forms of knowledge suggest the expanding understandings required for multimodal contexts now apparent in English language and literacy teaching.

Findings from their study thus indicate that the vast majority of respondents felt that knowledge of language is important and considered that this knowledge should extend across all levels of schooling. However, the majority of respondents did not consider knowledge of grammatical structure at the sentence level important. Yet this knowledge is partly what constructs knowledge about how the language works, which, in passing, is essential to the AC:E's language strand. Thus, the authors question what the respondents understand by the idea of linguistic subject knowledge and query what the respondents actually do know about all aspects of linguistic subject knowledge. One solution provided by the researchers is to introduce professional learning in systematic and technical ideas about linguistic and multimodal communications such as via Halliday's (1978) systemic functional linguistics (SFL) (Walker & An-e, 2013).

Ultimately, Love *et al.* (2015, p.181) reveal ‘rich data about teachers’ views of the professional support needed to support them in building their students’ language knowledge in coherent and cumulative ways’ as required by the AC:E. Despite reporting confidence in linguistic subject knowledge, respondents voiced urgent need for effective teacher professional learning across more technical aspects of linguistic subject knowledge and linguistic pedagogic subject knowledge, with a particularly strong need for further support in cumulative building of knowledge. The study concluded that addressing these needs is crucial if the profession is to exploit the gains afforded by the consistent, rhetorically-oriented metalanguage of the AC:E; to continue to build a secure knowledge base for teachers of English and literacy; and to avoid retreat to a narrowly focused and prescriptive view of grammar.

Evidence-based practices need to be accessible to educators to ensure implementation in schools.

4.3.2 Enablers and barriers to implementing evidence-based practice

Evidence-based practice depends on certain enablers and is constrained by certain barriers, and while these tend to vary according to context, there are generalizable patterns worth exploring.

Work by Foster (2014) draws on experiences as a former education advisor with School Support Services in New Zealand who has been involved in several professional learning and development projects, reviews of school systems, and oversight of the implementation of evidence-based classroom practices where teachers have been coached and supported. Completing ‘thousands of visits to classrooms’ in different schools, she has concluded that ‘no two teachers implemented the key principles of each contract in the same way’; rather she witnessed teachers adapt new knowledge and skills to their prior knowledge ‘in ways they considered most appropriate to their context’ (*ibid*, p.51). Foster has noted that evidence-based practices need to be accessible to educators to ensure implementation in schools. Summaries of evidence need to be presented using language without jargon, providing practical guidance, examples, illustrations, anecdotes, and analogies with which teachers can relate. These practices must be easily transferred to and adaptable in classroom contexts, and allow teachers to ‘take ownership of the process and to put their own stamp on implementation’ (*ibid*, p.51).

Yet, even where such conditions are met, behaviour management can be a barrier to evidence-based practice implementation, alongside environmental factors such as school routines and systems, class sizes, resourcing, and lack of support from school or senior leadership (Foster, 2014). In Tasmania, for example, the 2017 update of the Learners First strategy promotes the implementation of a respectful schools and workplace framework, and of the Department of Education’s conduct and behaviour standards. Teachers nevertheless require hands-on support when managing certain kinds of behaviours manifest by students. In any context, where such needs remain unmet, teachers may also experience elevated stress levels exacerbated by heavy workloads, extra-curricular duties, and time constraints (Wolgast & Fischer, 2017).

In one study considering such matters, Zinsser, Christensen, and Torres (2016) have investigated preschool teachers’ psychological health and workplace experiences as they sought to support young children’s social and emotional learning. In centres where teachers received more support for their class programs—such

as access to mental-health consultants, curriculum support and resources, as well as more training—they experienced greater job satisfaction; felt supported in managing challenging behaviours; experienced higher levels of emotional well-being; and believed their workplace climate to be positive.

In another study, Beusaert *et al.* (2016) have reported on stress and burnout among school principals arising from a lack of social support from colleagues, supervisors, and the community. Their results have highlighted the positive impact that wider school *community* support can have in supplementing *professional* support for principals.

Finally, it is noteworthy that while there is a wealth of literature on what teachers should do in the classroom, there appears to be little about support for teachers to access specialist advice, for example for specific cohorts of students. However, there are studies that exemplify elements of a socially-just education such as when academics and teachers work together in a lower socio-economic school community of diverse learners enabling teachers, as collaborative researchers, to participate in a supportive professional environment (Carter, 2012; Woods, 2012).

Of interest in this respect is an Australian five-year project (Luke, Woods, & Dooley, 2011, p.161), in which multimodal / multiliteracy programs were implemented across school levels as a result of professional learning, collaborative planning, and reflective practices. Initial results from this longitudinal study point to enablers that benefit classroom teachers. The school in question had a population drawn from an area classified in ‘the lowest quartile of communities by combined indicators of socio-economic position, with many children coming from families that are third generation unemployed’ (Luke *et al.*, 2011, p.161). Australian Indigenous and migrant students with English as an additional language made up about one quarter of the total student body of around 560 students. Approximately 15 to 20 per cent of students at any given year level received specialised learning support. Key conclusions are that supporting the explicit teaching of cognitive and metacognitive strategies is useful, but that such skill-based approaches must be accompanied by a focus on substantive content, including ‘links to students’ lives and worlds outside of school, and the use of literacy to engage with specialized knowledge required by the school’ (*ibid*, p.162).

4.3.3 Collaborative practices

Collaboration with colleagues and external advisors is known to be a powerful way for teachers to receive support. Indeed, ‘the most dynamic and ongoing changes [to practice] occurred where the teachers involved engaged in collaborative inquiry with colleagues and data’ (Foster, 2014, p.51). Certainly, collaboration between teachers—and between teachers and academics—enables evidence-based practice in literacy and language pedagogy.

In a study in Victorian schools, for example, O’Mara & Gutierrez (2010) have witnessed teachers using collaborative practices to share, develop professional knowledge, and reflect on and rethink their practices. They have also documented a range of challenges to collaborative opportunities for teachers in rural and remote schools where teachers require time and means to meet with colleagues and participate face-to-face in professional activities. One regional teacher elected distance as an inhibitor for him to meet with other colleagues, despite funding and support from his principal. Regardless of situational context, other

inhibitors for all teachers included timetable clashes with sports days or exam times, and teachers note that release claims are time-consuming tasks that add to workloads.

In Tasmania's *Literacy and Numeracy Framework 2015-2017* (Tasmanian Government Department of Education, 2015) a whole school approach and collaborative learning communities are two of the seven overarching elements outlined for effective literacy and numeracy teaching.

School principals have a role in ensuring that collaboration among personnel is effective. For example, instigating behaviour management strategies warrants both internal and external support from teachers, external advisors, academics, parents, and so on; that external/internal work is often appropriate to the principal's office (Foster, 2014; McCollow, 2014; O'Mara & Gutierrez, 2010).

Collaboration among literacy teachers is also important. Woods (2012) has recognised three considerations for literacy teachers that pertain. Regularly audit practices and continue to access new ways of thinking about literacy teaching; share what you are doing; and celebrate what you are good at with your community of literacy teachers. Such practices are not gratuitous; they provide opportunities to learn from each other; embed substantive disciplinary and community content that is useful and relevant to students; and enhance literacy pedagogy and curriculum practices.

Collaboration has also been seen to improve literacy and, in particular, reading outcomes as a result of "teacher talk". Geoghegan *et al.* (2013) have examined teacher talk in the classroom and in professional discussions about pedagogy, which were shown to have high levels of impact on teachers, and to foster among them a metalanguage for teaching and learning. Professional collaboration and peer mentoring enabled teachers to discuss literacy teaching practices and reflect upon their teaching to both challenge and justify pedagogical decisions and better articulate deep, even tacit, understandings of literacy teaching.

Such self-reflection on classroom practices can be an enabler of evidence-based practices (Foster, 2014).

Importantly, self-reflection in conjunction with professional development is most effective when teachers' professionalism, prior knowledge, and experience are respected. Teachers need time to investigate and consolidate new ideas, and to refine existing ideas and practices. Providing teachers with support enables them to innovate and adapt instructional approaches, and be highly sensitized to the learning and teaching context in which they work. On this basis, Foster (2014, p.53) lists nine points that need to be considered, particularly by school leadership teams, in order to provide appropriate support to teachers:

- Identify need—when teachers request support it suggests productive dissatisfaction with their practices and readiness to consider change.
- Facilitate the establishment of a community of practice.
- Model processes to identify and select evidence-based practice that might suit teachers, students, and the educational setting.
- Critically evaluate evidence-based practices for best fit.

Collaborative learning communities are supportive of effective literacy and numeracy teaching.

- Undertake, and support others to undertake, professional and learning development using simple, succinct messages, narrative stories, and practitioner examples.
- Provide manageable strategies and resources that fit the practical realities of the classroom and that work to benefit all students.
- Support teachers to experience success and see improvements in students' learning and behaviours.
- Provide ongoing coaching to lift teachers' capabilities based on professional judgement and student need, and to allow for innovation and adaptation.
- Support teachers to evaluate programmes by collecting and analysing appropriate data and to maintain, modify, or abandon practices on the basis of that analysis.

Similar findings have been made in the Queensland-based URLearning project, which exemplifies how teachers can be supported from within and outside challenging school settings. Woods (2014) has reported that in that project teachers would demonstrate pedagogical expertise when they felt they have a voice; were supported to then give support to others; were given opportunities to work with others in teaching new literacies; and could become writing partners with others. Students in the URLearning project became eager participants in English language and content area learning, despite the fact that many of them came non-English speaking backgrounds, had learning disabilities, experienced behavioural issues, or who struggled with basic skills such as phonemic awareness or grammatical structures. Students engaged in critical literacies, which included intellectually-demanding thinking and participation in activities where they felt connected to the world around them. Parents were also invited to events such as the Kindergarten students' reading party or the Media Club members' presentations of their design project. At such events children were afforded the status of experts as they showed and taught family members about how to negotiate digital devices for specific purposes. They also showed their films to families, visiting teachers, and university personnel. These activities enhanced their self-esteem, and encouraged engagement.

At the end of five years, students in URLearning were producing transformed representations of their learning via video production, documentaries, interviews, claymations, computer games, music, and robotics innovations. The processes involved in getting them to this point included explicit teaching of skills and processes. Basic skill such as spelling and grammar were explicitly taught; the impact of such teaching was shown in students' reading and writing achievements; and these were associated with innovative teaching practices involving print and digital literacies. Thus, the project also exemplifies what can be achieved when teachers collaborate and feel worthwhile and supported. Their renewed and strong self-efficacy can then contribute to enhanced planning and organisation; more openness towards new ideas; further willingness to investigate alternative methods to meet individual needs of students; more persistence and resilience; and less criticism of students.

Not labelling students is rated as having a highly-desired effect on student outcomes by Hattie (2009). He affirms that classifying or labelling students may result in increased funding for a school but otherwise rarely makes a difference to

what works best. Finally, stronger levels of self-efficacy lead to less inclination to nominate students for special education services (Fisher *et al.*, 2016). Ultimately, individual self-efficacy also fosters collective efficacy and supportive school communities.

An initiative to support collaboration and shared professional learning among principals has been the Principals as Literacy Leaders Program (PALL). Principals were supported to undertake a series of modules to develop their capabilities leading literacy learning, and in particular to develop methods to enhance reading (Commonwealth of Australia, 2014d). They were able to support staff with teaching strategies, new materials, and processes to teach reading; ways to develop and implement specific interventions where needed; form partnerships with teachers in a supportive manner trusting teachers' professionalism in supporting students; develop teachers as leaders in action-research into their interventions; and were encouraged to take an active role in collaborating with teachers to develop of literacy learning strategies (Dempster *et al.*, 2017).

A version of PALL has been offered again in 2017 under the auspices of the Tasmanian Professional Learning Institute (Tasmanian Government Department of Education. Professional Learning Institute, no date). The Department has encouraged a whole school approach to literacy and numeracy, which means that 'there is collective responsibility for the achievement of every student within a school community' (Tasmanian Government Department of Education, 2013, p.24). A supportive environment for teachers should be achieved through 'instructional leadership from the principal and leadership team' and an established 'collaborative culture' (*ibid.*).

4.3.4 Key influences on student learning

Work by Hattie (2009) analysing key influences on student learning has been very influential, in and beyond Australia. Analysis in previous sections has drawn on this work, and this section concludes with an overview of the main lessons to be learnt from Hattie's research. Based on an in-depth synthesis of over 800 international studies, Hattie (2009) offers insights into the 'effect size' of various strategies; that is, 'the magnitude of the impact that a given approach has' (Fisher *et al.*, 2016, p.6). Before discussing the relevant implications arising from the identification of the effect size, it is important to acknowledge a key limitation that Hattie (2009) himself notes: the focus of the work is on statistical analysis based on quantitative studies, and therefore it cannot speak to the qualitative experiences and nuances of classroom life. It provides the "big picture" across many different schools, classrooms and students, rather than a more in-depth understanding of a specific context or child.

Over time, based on additional analysis, Hattie has adjusted the effect sizes of various factors, but the key narrative he draws from the data has remained largely unchanged (Waack, 2014). The first important point is that almost anything that teachers do can be said to "work" in the sense that it has an effect size higher than zero, simply because students themselves mature over time. To make more than an average positive contribution to student achievement, Hattie (2009, p.17) sets what he calls the 'hinge-point' at an effect size of 0.40.

Second, there is no single and simple magic bullet. As an example, Hattie (2009) explains that while his work demonstrates that providing feedback has quite a

large effect size (0.73, p.297), ‘Simply applying a recipe (for example, “providing more feedback”) will not work in our busy, multifaceted, culturally invested, and changing classrooms’ (p.4). Hattie describes as ‘barren’ the commonly-asked question “What works?” (p.247) unless it is accompanied by other questions such as when, for whom, and to what ends; these enable teachers to tap into and recognise the diversity of classroom contexts.

Finally, the key story that Hattie has generated from his findings combines several influences that represent what he calls the ‘teacher as activator’ (p.243), outlined in Table 5.

Table 5. Elements of the teacher as activator

Influence element	The teacher ...	Effect size (d)
Reciprocal teaching	Empowers students to take on a teaching role in order to practise and learn cognitive strategies such as summarising, questioning, and clarifying.	0.74
Feedback	Provides information about aspects of learning performance, including the learning intentions of the task, evaluation of achievement, and progression to new goals.	0.72
Teaching students self-verbalisation	Enables self-talk so that students can self-regulate and monitor their learning.	0.67
Meta-cognitive strategies	Supports students to learn to think about thinking, in order to consciously select and monitor how to approach a learning task.	0.67
Direct instruction	Takes active responsibility for all stages of a lesson, from deciding on the learning intentions to closing the lesson. Not to be confused with didactic teaching.	0.59
Mastery learning	Provides conditions and explanations necessary for students to ‘master’ new concepts.	0.57
Goals - challenging	Sets challenging goals in order to make clear what success looks like and to regulate action.	0.56
Frequent testing / Effects of testing	Includes repeated tests in order to provide feedback about learning to both teachers and students.	0.46
Behavioural organisers	Uses organisers as a bridge between prior and new knowledge, by articulating to students in advance the learning intentions of the lesson and the associated notions of success.	0.41

Table based on Hattie (2009)

Successful classroom pedagogy is a two-way process and active students thus have responsibilities as well. In order to learn, students must self-regulate, self-question/reflect, question, and listen. As Hattie (2009, p.245) puts it, the 'aim is to get students to learn the skills of teaching themselves—to self-regulate their learning'. However, students must be taught these skills and learn to engage in such behaviours.

The elements listed in Table 5 are strongly directed towards such ends. Hattie (2009, p.245) suggests that teachers adopt a 'backward design' approach, starting with the results desired of a particular unit of learning, and then decide which specific resources and activities will help achieve these results.

Overwhelmingly, the literature is clear that all teachers are teachers of literacy—and that successful approaches for teaching generally (such as those above) are also good for teaching literacy.

Section 5: Conclusion

While the meaning and scope of literacy continues to evolve, and opinions about how literacy is best developed continue to differ, there is widespread agreement about its importance. People with minimal literacy struggle to fully engage in community life. Their life chances are limited, and their participation in society is curtailed. Little wonder that teaching literacy is a priority for educators, is in the public spotlight, and remains an ongoing policy concern.

Attention to and apprehensions about literacy must be viewed in the context of international and intra-national comparisons. Australia's standing internationally shows a decline in literacy levels relative to populations in other OECD countries. Tasmania's overall performance in national literacy testing tends to fall behind several other states and territories. The association of high levels of social disadvantage and low literacy levels is well-documented and sheds some light on the situation in Tasmania. However, these patterns and findings do not reveal the whole story, nor justify complacency. Rather, they serve as incentives to thoroughly investigate literacy teaching in Tasmanian schools in order to improve outcomes for all children and young people.

Testing programs shape policy responses and influence curriculum design; in turn, these inform approaches to literacy and teaching practices. As understandings of literacy have changed so too have approaches to the teaching of literacy. At times, these changes and the debates that typify them have resulted in clashes founded on opposing theoretical or paradigmatic perspectives. However, views on teaching literacy that once were polarised have gravitated to a middle ground so that "good practice" is increasingly seen as a systematic blend of methods, resulting in a balanced approach that combines the most salient features of multiple approaches..

There exists substantial evidence as to what constitute effective teaching strategies and this evidence applies to teaching literacy as much as to specific learning areas and curriculum priorities. However, knowing the constituent elements of good literacy teaching practice does not guarantee effective implementation. A range of factors, both in and beyond schools and classrooms, affects the implementation of evidence-based practice, not least preparing and providing ongoing support and professional development for teachers. On this understanding, a second literature review for this project will turn its attention to the aspect of pre-service teacher education in relation to literacy.

In the final analysis, successful classroom pedagogy is a complex and relational process. In order to learn, students must self-regulate, self-question and reflect and listen. However, students must be taught these skills and teachers must be taught how to become activators of learning. Parents and communities can support these efforts in many ways. A significant challenge for those working in the education system, therefore, is to address how to apply this insight to literacy learning, so that all teachers become 'activators of literacy' and all teaching practices are also effective literacy teaching practices.

Appendix A

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