



AUSTRALIAN LITERACY EDUCATORS' ASSOCIATION

Lifting Literacy, Lifting Tasmania Community Consultation Paper One: Setting the Scene

A submission in response to the Literacy Advisory Panel's Community Consultation Paper One. A response from the current TASMANIAN ALEA State Director and Local Council Presidents.

Attention: Literacy Advisory Panel policy@dpac.tas.gov.au

About the Australian Literacy Educators' Association (ALEA):

The Australian Literacy Educators' Association (ALEA) is an independent professional association dedicated to literacy and English language learning from early childhood through all stages of schooling and tertiary education contexts. ALEA recognises the critical role literacy plays in learning and communicating in all curriculum areas, and for effective participation in society.

ALEA Tasmania believes in the ALEA Declaration; that literacy encompasses the ability to understand, interpret and critique texts, and the ability to plan, design, produce, and communicate through texts across modes, disciplines, and media. Becoming literate comprises a lifelong continuum of learning that empowers individuals to participate successfully in diverse contexts in order to achieve their goals.

General Feedback and Comment:

The Literacy Advisory Panel have included the UNESCO, 2015 definition of Literacy as the foreword to this document which summarises the importance for a community-wide approach to supporting Tasmanians with achieving 100% Literacy. Indeed, "Literacy is a fundamental human right... For individuals, families, and societies alike, it is an instrument of empowerment to improve one's health, one's income, and one's relationship with the world." We have a duty of care and an obligation to improve literacy outcomes for all Tasmanians 'regardless of their background, personal circumstances or the location in which they live' (page 1 of the Consultation Paper), but it is a whole of Government piece of work requiring adequate resourcing and professional development to ensure we have a skilled and able workforce that can deliver what is needed for our community. There is clear agreement throughout this paper that the aims of improved literacy outcomes for Tasmania will mean greater access and participation for all within society.

SECTION ONE:

I. What is currently working well to improve literacy?

- a focus on the early years with Government funding and support for Launching Into Learning, Child and Family Learning Centres (CFLC), and ECIS (Early Childhood Intervention Services)
- a greater focus on research based, best practice methods, such as those in [the 10 Essential Instructional Practices in Literacy](#) as a framework for literacy instruction in the early and primary years- to be implemented in every classroom, every day.

- A strong focus on the principles of Reggio Emilia (developing student agency), and Early Years Learning Framework (to build vocabulary and engagement for learning)
- School Success Stories described on the Foundation for Learning and Literacy website: [Success Stories – Foundation for Learning and Literacy](#)

Particularly the story about reading improvement at Turner School:

Sustaining improvement in reading through expertise and a collaborative culture

At Turner School, we can identify key elements impacting our ability to sustain improvement in reading:

1. Establishing shared beliefs and practices that privilege reading
2. A culture of personalisation, collaboration, and inquiry
3. Structures and processes for collecting and talking about data
4. A model for identifying and targeting individual needs
5. Supporting teaching practice through a research lens, and,
6. Bringing our families with us.

[PowerPoint Presentation \(foundationforlearningandliteracy.info\)](#)

2. Do you know a program or activity that supports literacy development in Tasmania that is not listed in this document? (Provide all details of this)

- Teachers make the difference, not programs. “It is what teachers know, do, and care about” which will make the difference. The confident, skilled, and effective teacher in the classroom who can adjust and respond to the students within their class.” (Hattie, 2003, p. 2) ([link](#))
- Effective teachers use their professional expertise to tailor programs to meet the needs of individual learners. FFL’s Touchstone 10 reminds us that: ‘Even a good program relies on a good teacher for it to have an impact on learning for individual learners. ‘Focused practitioners, not programs, drive success. Professionals working together with focus is what counts.’ ([Fullan](#))
- A greater focus on **valuing** teaching as a practice and less about administering programs. The focus should be on pedagogical development and a shared understanding of what is considered best practice by research; instead of learning how to implement a program.

3. Considering the organisational map (on page 35):

What do you think the gaps are?

- Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECIS) is missing from the 0-4 years old section. This service provides early access to specialist support services for our most vulnerable children and families. It also provides support to schools as children engage and transition to their local school.
- MANY, many small schools across Tasmania have been given an allocation of a Quality Teaching Coach within their budgets, but many are unable to find an appropriate person or have the funds to enable this person to be released from class to fully engage with the role. Many schools are not equipped to have an independent Quality Teaching Coach within the current staffing quota.
- English is a morphophonemic language – a code that represents both sound and meaning. Writing is the representation of sense and meaning. The [role of morphology and context](#) is missing.
- The Big 6 but omits to acknowledge the critical importance of writing. The Big 6 does not mention morphology which is a critical component to the English language and literacy learners.
- The Early Years 4-5 years old – collaboration between speech pathologists and educators not possible when many schools don’t have a speech pathologist
- The School Years 6-12 years old – Again, phonics is emphasised when it is only one of many literacy skills taught during the primary school years.

What opportunities are there?

- Whole of Education support and training for supporting students with a diagnosed learning disability. Every classroom in Tasmania has an increasing number of children with a SLD (Specific Learning

Disability) and yet the training and development around this is up to the individual schools to provide. A systemic approach to supporting all learners would have a profound impact on learning outcomes.

- Engage and work with highly regarded Australian literacy experts such as MacKenzie and Adoniou who are already working with the Department of Education.
- Engage with the community and develop a whole of community awareness campaign for the joy of reading, where to access texts - partner with libraries. 'Emotion and cognition cannot be separated' (Vygotsky)
- Ensure teachers start with what children, adolescents, adults know and can do and build.
- More Teachers – if we want quality, talented teachers the ATAR required for entry into teacher education at university needs to be raised and a high score must be required on the Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education Students. Currently schools are receiving some teaching graduates with inadequate personal literacy and numeracy skills.

What supports need to be in place?

- A dedicated Literacy Support Teacher in each school to work in collaboration with the Literacy Coach. The Literacy Coach has the main task of working with individual teachers to improve their practice. A Literacy Support Teacher can closely monitor and support individuals and small groups of children to ensure they are making progress.
- A clear referral pathway and indicators for children at each stage of development. Educators and parents need to be clear about what the indicators of success look like and when is the right time to have intervention and support.
- A greater understanding of the current 1 in 2 Tasmanians having functional literacy. Our community communication, our expectations on parents and caregivers and the demands placed on families to complete complex documentation and requests are damaging relationships between education and care providers and the home.
- A streamlined assessment plan to stop an overreliance on commercially produced tests and children being tested more than they need to be.
- The 'skills needed to become literate' include more than 'The big six' skills for reading (page 13). Writing (the recursive process of gathering ideas, planning, drafting, revising, editing, publishing, and sharing as well as writing the various text types), spelling, punctuation, grammar, handwriting, and keyboarding are also skills needed to become literate.
- Phonics been singled out- 'In the early years of schooling, phonics is important for children to become successful readers and writers' (page 13). We agree that phonics is important, but so are all the other skills needed to become literate.
- 'Reading depends on speech' (page 13) is a misconception. Many people who cannot hear and/or speak are still able to read.
- Page 23 'Annually, from 2022, phonics will be explicitly taught from Prep to Year 2, aligned to the Australian Curriculum'. Teachers have been doing this for years, it's not new. Like anything, phonics should only be taught until it is mastered which is before grade 2 for some students.
- While there is general agreement about the importance of teaching phonics, there is not general agreement about 'The importance of teaching synthetic phonics'. (page 28)
- Allied health professionals (speech pathologists, psychologists, occupational therapists...) to 'screen, diagnose and support' (page 30) are lacking in Tasmanian schools e.g., one psychologist per 2000 students

SECTION TWO:

1. What measures and targets do you think are required for the community-wide framework?

- *An agreed community engagement plan to focus on improving literacy and learning outcomes for all Tasmanians*
- *A set of clear guiding statements based on the information from this Community Consultation and based on current best practice. We need a clear and focused way forward.*

2. Do you know of any sources of data, not listed in the organisational map (from page 54), that track literacy rates/ development in Tasmania?

- NA.

3. Are there any additional measures that you believe are required to track the progress of the community-wide framework?

- NA.

4. What short term (less than three years) and medium term (three to ten years) measurable targets across the lifespan do you consider important?

- NA.