

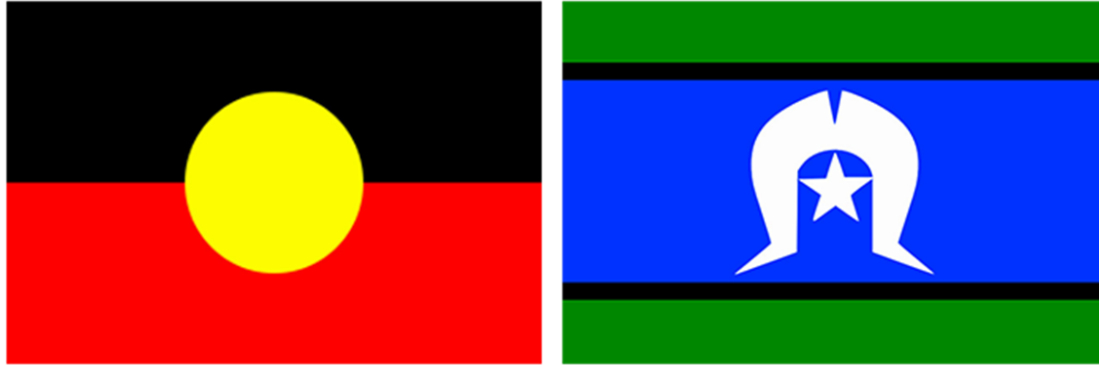
Literacy Development in a Secondary School Context

Principal's Conference June 2025
Excellence in Every Classroom



KYNETON
HIGH SCHOOL

Acknowledgement of Country

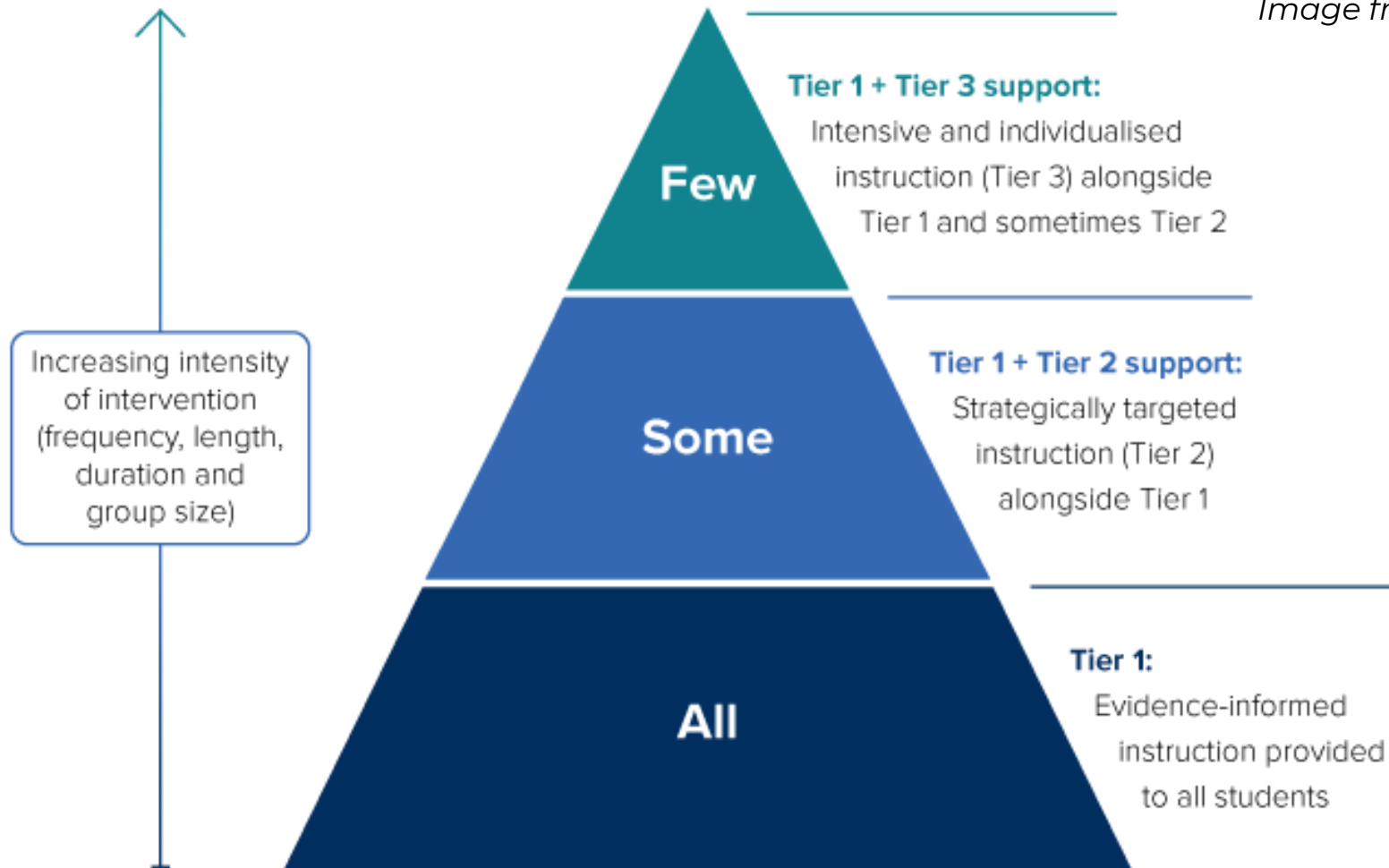


We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Narm, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation. We pay respect to elders past and present, and to the future generations. We extend that respect to other First Nations people among us. We appreciate their connection to Ancestors, and how their knowledge can teach us to care for the sky, land, water and all living things.

Learning Intention

We are learning how the Multi-Tiered System of Supports model can be implemented to improve student literacy outcomes in the secondary school context.





Kyneton High School

- 1 hour north-west of Melbourne
- 640 students and growing
 - Large catchment area
 - Largely culturally homogenous, but this is starting to change
- Learning growth... but with urgency!





Where we have come from..



At the start of this journey...

*“At primary school you learn to read;
at secondary school you read to learn.”*





Where we are now..



Literacy Learning Support (LLS)

Tier 2 & 3



A story of three Zacks



[]

3/2

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sat ✓	het ^{hit} x	lide ^{lid} x	chap ^{cap} x	had ✓
let ✓	dole ^{doll} x	bela ^{bell} x	yes ✓	then ✓
may ✓	tree ✓	by ^{bye} x	eil ^{ill} x	egg ✓
Land ✓	how ✓	your ✓	could ^{x cold}	talk ^{talk}
flower ^{flower} x fluey	son ^{son} x sun	seem ^{seem} x semar	four ^{four} x for	loud ✓
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7/12/17

53.

net ✓	can ✓	fun ✓	top ✓	rag ✓
Sat ✓	hit ✓	lid ✓	cap ✓	had ✓
Let ✓	doll ✓	bell ✓	yes ✓	then ✓
may may ✓	tree ✓	by ✓	ill ✓	egg ✓
Land ✓	how ✓	your ✓	could ✓	talk talk ✓
flower ✓	x soft ✓	seem ✓	four fore ✓	loud ✓
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Background – why are we where we are?

We know how to teach kids to read – the evidence is overwhelming,
yet:

- Many students come to high school unable to read
- It is a very long road from evidence to practice

If we go back to **foundational skills** almost all students can learn to read,
but:

- It is a big job to catch up so many lost years – no easy fixes
- Without intervention students stay stuck at around Yr 3 or 4
- The gap will only get bigger



Comprehension/fluency or decoding issue?

Just a note to be sure to identify **WHAT** the issue is

- **many** struggles that look like comprehension & fluency issues are actually decoding issues in disguise
- If a student can't efficiently lift the words off the page they will not have enough brain space to comprehend what they are reading and reading can be very slow and effortful
- Ensure that foundation skills are in place first



NOTE

Cognitive ability  learning to read – very little connection

It's all about TEACHING

Very strong evidence through:

- Science of Reading
- Science of Learning – e.g. Cognitive Load Theory
- Staff knowledge of SoR and SoL is crucial

The Government mandate on literacy teaching should move things



Impact of not learning to read early

- Profound negative impact - behaviour and wellbeing
- Most vocab and background knowledge comes through reading
 - They've missed years of reading
- We can teach them to lift the words off the page but
 - Improving vocab and background knowledge is a huge task
 - Deficit in these will continue to affect comprehension and test results
- Tier 1 explicit vocab teaching in all subjects and knowledge rich curriculum, are vital



It's a big job

- To catch students up is a huge job but it CAN be done
- Without intervention they will be stuck where they are - the gap will widen
- Most can't unpack multisyllabic words – where the meaning lies
- Working in Tier 2 & 3 there are lots of disengaged students who don't believe they can learn and present with behavioural challenges
 - Establishing **genuine high expectations** and a positive, warm culture with calm, focused learning spaces is a critical first step for these students who need to learn 3 times as fast to catch up



The Nitty Gritty

Literacy Support Leader – 4 days a week
ES staff – 4 days a week

Screening on Orientation Day

- DIBELS Maze (3 minutes) & Schonell Spelling 85 words (30 minutes)

Follow up assessments early in Term 1:

- To check they ARE low
- Then to decide which stream and if they can work in a group
- Students at benchmark in reading but low in spelling – term 3 & 4



Year 7 - Incoming Screening

DIBELS Maze 7 BEG	Schonell Spelling	Priority
14	10.11	1
13	10.11	1
15.5	9.7	1
8.5	6.11	1
12	10.11	1
17	10.1	1
12	9	1
4	8.7	1
11	9.8	1
3	6.5	1
15	9.6	1
13	10.8	1
11	10.2	1
7.5	9.1	1
14.5	9	1
-0.5	7.1	1
7	6.6	1
13	9.11	1
14.5	7.1	1
10	9.2	1

DIBELS Maze 7 BEG	Schonell Spelling	Priority
0.5	6.4	1
14	10.11	1
15	8.5	1
17	10.8	2
23.5	10.5	2
19	10.2	2
17	10	2
24	11	2
33	10.8	2
22.5	10.4	2
18	10.5	2
20.5	10.1	2
22	10.11	2
24	10.1	2
19.5	10.2	2
21	10.8	2
34	10.11	2
32	11.1	2

DIBELS Maze 7 BEG	Schonell Spelling	Priority
24	10.4	2
17.5	10.11	2
23.5	10.2	2
23	10.8	2
19	10.11	2
19	9.8	2
42	10.7	2
15.5	11.5	? Check may be ok
12.5	11.8	? Odd re check
11	11.7	? Retest
19	9.4	?1 or 2
15.5	10.5	?1 or 2
23	9.8	?1 or 2
24	8.11	?1 or 2
25	11.1	?2
26.5	11.2	?2
17	11.2	?2
29	11	?2
35	11.1	?2
18.5	9.5	?2 +vol



Assessments – post screening

- Year 3 DIBELS Maze & Year 3 DIBELS ORF
- If they meet Year 3 benchmarks then they are ready for REWARDS
 - If unclear also use MOTIF CC2 non-word sub test
- If not meeting Year 3 benchmarks, then Phonics for Reading
- If REWARDS – then benchmarking with:
 - MS Word Reading Fluency (REWARDS)
 - DIBELS ORF 7
- If Phonics for Reading – then
 - P4R placement test



Once we've placed students...

- We collect students - after roll marking
- 4 times a week (full period) - groups/individually/pairs
- Aiming that they only miss one session a week of any subject
- Minimum 2 terms (retest - end of term 2)
- Term 1 and 2 - students that require both reading and spelling support
- Term 3 and 4 - spelling only program/those who need to continue
- TIMETABLING is a really big challenge



Handwriting – all students

- All students in intervention get explicit handwriting teaching embedded in our general teaching
 - Crucial to enable fluent writing, to free up cognitive space for spelling and for composition – VITAL
 - Lots of evidence that handwriting helps embed spelling patterns and activates parts of the brain involved in literacy learning



1	Net	2	Can	3	Fun	4	Hit	5	rag
6	Sat	7	Hit	8	Lid	9	Cap	10	Had
11	Let	12	Doll	13	Bell	14	Yes	15	Then
16	May	17	Tree	18	By	19	Ill	20	Egg
21	Land	22	How	23	White	24	Cob	25	Talk
26	Flower	27	Son	28	seem	29	Four	30	Low
31	Grand	32	Lowest	33	Brain	34	White	35	Amount
36	Noise	37	Remain	38	Hopped	39	Worry	40	Dancing
41	White	42	Else	43	Through	44	Entered	45	Cough
46	Fitter	47	Square	48	Daughter	49	Edge	50	Search

50

5+5 = 10 yrs 0 mths



1	2	3	4	5
net	can	fun	top	rag
6	7	8	9	10
sat	hit	lid	cap	had
11	12	13	14	15
let	the doll	bell	yes	then
16	17	18	19	20
may	tree	bag by	ill	egg
21	22	23	24	25
land	how	your	cold	talk
26	27	28	29	30
flower	son	seem	four	loud
31	32	33	34	35
ground	lowest	brain	wright ✗	amount
36	37	38	39	40
noise	remain	hoped	was worry	dancing dance ✗
41	42	43	44	45
damage	else	the through	entered	cough
46	47	48	49	50
fitted	↳ spair spare	daughter	edge	search
66 $6.6 \times 5 = 11.6$				



The Programs – Phonics for Reading

Phonics for Reading – Anita Archer et al

- For students below a Year 3 level
- Phonemic Awareness
- Phonics
- Fluency, comprehension & vocabulary
- Generally one-to-one
- In pairs 30 minutes face-to-face and 30 minutes on a computer program
- Highly structured and comprehensive – written for older learners
- Affordable – free training online included



The Programs – REWARDS

REWARDS – Anita Archer et al

- Strong strategies to unpack MS words
- Revising vowel pairs
- Prefixes and suffixes
- Tier 2 academic vocabulary & background knowledge - all non-fiction
- Fluency and comprehension
- LOTS of spelling/writing of MS words
- Affordable and free online training included



The Programs – Word Origins

New this year – to boost spelling – the key is LOTS of writing of words with explicit teaching around patterns

- Twice a week/twice a week REWARDS – 2 terms

Word Origins – morphology

- Adapted version to suit high school (each wk = 1 lesson)
- Explicit teaching of Latin bases and Greek combining forms with prefixes and suffixes
- LOTS of spelling/writing of MS words (> 50 per session)



Word Origins – Scope & Sequence

<p>Spelling affixes and roots</p> <p>Word Origins Level 1 Word Origins Level 2 (2026) Word Origins Level 3 (2027)</p> <p>30 minutes per lesson 4-5 lessons per week</p>	<p>Level 1 Whole Year Spelling Assessment (pre-test, p.19-21)</p> <p>Week 1: un-, -s/es, -ed, -ing, -ly, -er/est, -ful, -less, -ness, un-, -hood Week 2: tract, -or, dis-, re-, sub- Week 3: ject, in-, pro, ob- Week 4: act, -ion, -ive Week 5: port, -able, ex-, trans- Week 6: rupt, ex-/e-, ad-/at-, in-/im- Week 7: struct, con-, de- Week 8: press, -ure, sup-, com- Week 9: Revision</p>	<p>Term 2 Spelling Assessment (p.154-156)</p> <p>Week 1: mand, -ate, counter- Week 2: vis, super-, -ible Week 3: bio, logy, auto, graphy, geo Week 4: rect, -cor-, di-, -angle Week 5: duct/duce Week 6: micro, kilo, gram, metre, milli Week 7: cede, pre-, inter- Week 8: script/scribe, post- Week 9: form, -uni Week 10: Revision</p>	<p>Term 3 Spelling Assessment (p.5-7)</p> <p>Week 1: cycle, bi, tri, ist, ic Week 2: sign, -al, as- Week 3: flect Week 4: spec/t, -acle, per-, a- Week 5: var, -ious, -iety, -iation Week 6: photo, phon, tele, scop Week 7: fract Week 8: numer, -ical, -ous, -ate Week 9: fore, be, cast, hold Week 10: Revision</p>	<p>Week 1: astro, cosmo/cosm, naut Week 2: tain, abs- Week 3: centi, -ury, -(en)ary Week 4: cred, -it Week 5: dent Week 6: chrono Week 7: Revision Week 8: Revision Week 9: Revision</p> <p>Level 1 Whole Year Spelling Assessment (post-test)</p>
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Spelling Patterns

Spelling Patterns – my own program – lots of Lyn Stone’s strategies

- What are those ‘e’s doing on the end of words
- Suffixing patterns
- When does ‘c’ sound /s/ and ‘g’ sound /j/
- How to spell /uhj/ (age)
- Tricky endings – ture - /chuh/; tion – t blends into /i/ /on/
- Techniques to change spelling fast - on the google site



Then what...

Two terms work then reassess

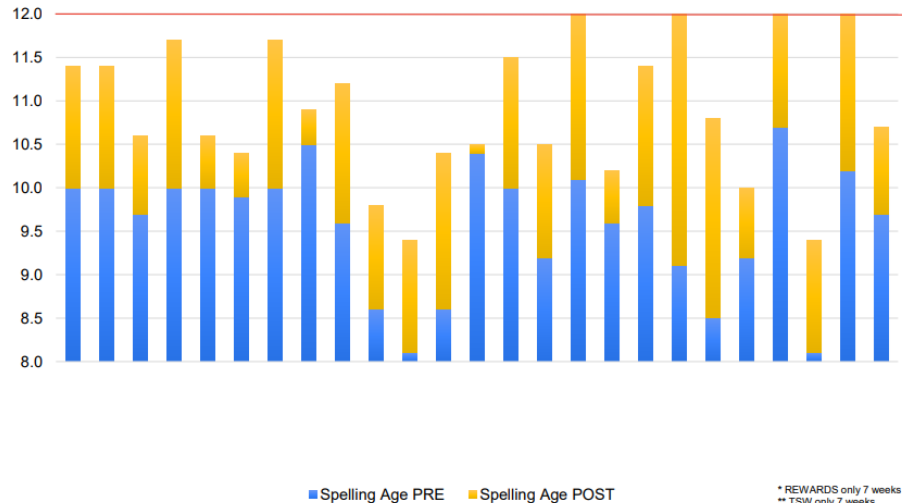
- Most students exit program
- Some move to one-to-one for further support
- Generally get 2-5 years growth in 6 months
- Many of < Yr 3 will need up to 2 years



Pre to Post Assessment Results

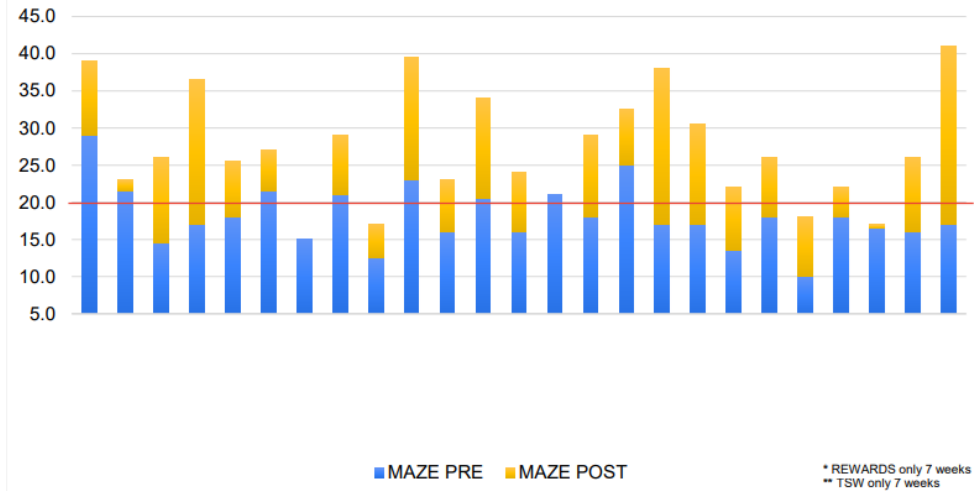
Spelling Age PRE to POST

Frequency: 4x 1hr per week
Duration: 14 weeks



DIBELS MAZE PRE to POST

Frequency: 4x 1hr per week
Duration: 14 weeks



Mixed group of **low reading and spelling** and **low spelling only**
– this year different streams



Computer programs...

Computer programs as supplement

- **Reading Doctor** – turn off ‘yay, well done’ – basic phonics – fairly age neutral
- **Spellcaster**
 - Written for older learners
 - In development – phonics – morphology coming
- **Lexia PowerUp** – we’re about to trial
 - Designed for teenage learners
 - Goes from a Year 1 level to a Year 9 level
 - Can be used for whole classes - offers blended learning potential
 - Goes well beyond phonics
 - Wouldn’t recommend using the Grammar Stream for intervention - need to go where there is most bang for buck



In conclusion

PLEASE use programs written for teenagers or adults

- DO NOT use programs written for 5 year olds
- Age appropriate and dignified
- CHECK CAREFULLY – many claim to be good for teenagers but are not
- PLEASE use decodable readers written for older learners
- Teachers and students understand in Year 7 their focus is literacy
 - Modify expectations
- Teachers need to have a strong understanding of SoR and SoL
 - The programs do a lot but not all
- LOTS of empathy, patience, support needed – it's worth it!!



All teachers are teachers of literacy

Tier 1 & 2



Our Professional Learning Journey

1

Building Knowledge

Specific Learning Difficulties
Systematic Synthetic Phonics
Linguistics

Building Skill

University of Melbourne Grad
School of Education
Assessment PD - TILLS

2

MYLNS

Student Voice

Gathering Information

Student Equity files

3

Explicit Teaching

Cengage Explicit Teaching of
Writing Text Types PD

Audit

VCE Exam writing expectations
NAPLAN Reading text types
PAT-R Reading text types

4

Expanding

Reading Comprehension PD
Comprehension Strategies

Gathering more information

All student files
NCCD

5

Building Expertise

Bastow Literacy Leaders PD

Master of Learning Interventions
(SLDs) - YARC and DASH

Master of Education (Language
& Literacy)

6

Student Supports

Top Ten Strategies to Support
All Learners

Considerations and Reasonable
Adjustments

PLCs

Writing focus

7

And now...

The Writing Revolution

Our Journey

Professional learning

- Inviting staff to join professional learning sessions on using reading comprehension strategies to support students to engage in and learn their content and skills in their classrooms.

Resources created for our staff

- Top ten tips
- Considerations and Reasonable Adjustments resource to support teachers to make effective adjustments easily.



Explicit Teaching of Writing

Tier 1



Tier 1

There is a huge evidence base underpinning Literacy instruction. This encompasses all levels of literacy instruction, not just foundational.

Good literacy practice = good teaching practice.

Staff professional knowledge is an important foundation. Staff feel invested when they can get excited about the evidence behind methods/programs/pedagogies.



Staff PL- The Writing Process

Writing is **the most** cognitively challenging thing we ask students to do.

Writers need to juggle a lot of things in order to get words onto paper.



Simple View of Writing

Transcription

- Letter formation
- Handwriting fluency
- Typing fluency
- Spelling
- Mechanics (posture, pencil grip etc.)

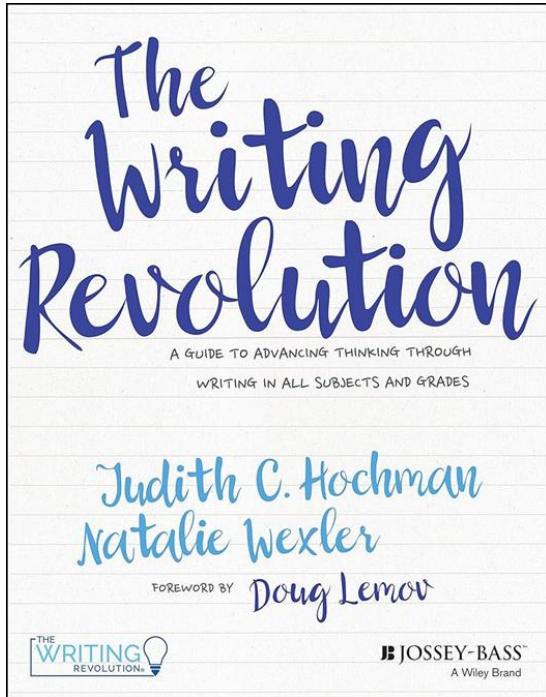
Composition

- Topic knowledge
- Vocabulary knowledge
- Sentence formation skills
- Genre awareness
- Audience awareness

All underpinned by *Working Memory*



How can we support writing?



- Underpinned by strong evidence
- It is a method, not a program
- Highly appropriate for secondary school students
- Applicable to every learning area



Why *The Writing Revolution*?

The Writing Revolution (TWR) does a few main things:

- It promotes a shift in teacher mindset- from assigning writing to teaching writing.
- It moves writing instruction away from being disproportionately the responsibility of English teachers to the responsibility of ALL teachers.
- It promotes mastery of writing at a sentence level before moving onto paragraphs and extended pieces. Even for our brightest students, this is really beneficial.



The Writing Revolution

Explicit Instruction

Breaks writing into teachable chunks (sentences → paragraphs → essays)

Cross-Curricular

Writing tasks align with content from any subject

Consistency Across the School

Shared routines and terminology (e.g. "because, but, so" sentences)

Students transfer writing strategies between classes

Equity

Especially effective for EAL/D learners, struggling writers, and students with learning needs. Scaffolding gives every student the opportunity to succeed.



The Writing Revolution

11 willing participants have undertaken the Writing Revolution training.

4 x English

2 x Humanities

1 x Maths

2 x Applied/VM

2 x intervention/Tier 3



Next steps of *The Writing Revolution*

Trained staff and their PLC groups have had a chance to use TWR strategies during 2025.

- From 2026 the plan would be to embed this systematically across all curriculum areas starting from Year 7.
- All staff need ongoing professional development in evidence-based literacy and evidence-based teaching practices.
- Curriculum documentation needs to include things like sentence stems as teachers can't make these up on the spot.





What worked for us





Q & A

