

## Newsletter

### Issue 7, August 2025

#### IN THIS ISSUE:

#### Feature: Explicit instruction programs at the Australian Literacy Clinic

By Prof. Saskia Kohnen, Dr. Erin Banales & Tomi Liddle

- Study with us
- Myth versus fact
- Research opportunity
- Literacy Clinic

#### Visit our website here:

<https://www.acu.edu.au/advancing-literacy>

#### EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION PROGRAMS AT THE AUSTRALIAN LITERACY CLINIC

BY PROF. SASKIA KOHNEN, DR. ERIN BANALES & TOMI LIDDLE

Many schools are now embracing a research-informed, explicit approach to reading and spelling, including an early focus on phonics (teaching students the direct connections between letters and sounds) and ongoing work in morphology (which helps students decode and understand word structures). The Australian Literacy Clinic provides one-on-one, evidence-based instruction tailored to each learner's literacy profile. Our mission is to make the latest scientific discoveries in literacy accessible to every struggling student, no matter their postcode.

[Read the full article here.](#)

#### STUDY A GRADUATE CERTIFICATE SPECIALISING IN LITERACY

We offer an evidence-based postgraduate certificate designed by expert researchers and educators. Our graduate certificate can be used towards a Master's degree in Education.

#### Teaching Foundational Reading Skills

Expand your knowledge of the foundational skills necessary for the development of reading ability at any age. Learn the theory and research surrounding early reading instruction, and how to build, plan, deliver and evaluate evidence-based reading instruction that meets the needs of all learners. [Register here.](#)

#### MYTH:

*"You have to be highly intelligent to be diagnosed with dyslexia."*

#### FACTS:

- This is false. Reviews of research show that most people with dyslexia score in the normal range on intelligence/general cognitive skills.
- Requiring IQ scores to be higher than reading scores can lead to underdiagnosis of reading difficulties.
- While it is less common, it is also possible for people with below- or above-average intelligence to have dyslexia.

[Read here for further information on dyslexia.](#)

#### RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY

University researchers around Australia are investigating children's mental health and language and literacy skills during the transition to high school. Do you know a child in Year 6 (with/without reading or language difficulties) and their parent/caregiver? [Find out more](#) and [register here.](#)

# Explicit instruction programs at the Australian Literacy Clinic

By Prof. Saskia Kohnen, Dr. Erin Banales and Tomi Liddle

The 2025 NAPLAN results show that one third of Australian students are not meeting benchmarks in literacy. While these results demonstrate that the need to address foundational literacy skills remains pressing, there is a real momentum for change. Many schools are now embracing a research-informed, explicit approach to reading and spelling, including an early focus on phonics (teaching students the direct connections between letters and sounds ) and ongoing work in morphology (which helps students decode and understand word structures).

Despite this, some students will continue to need support beyond classroom instruction. For those who need this support, or face entrenched literacy difficulties, targeted interventions are essential. The Australian Literacy Clinic translates cutting-edge research into practical teaching strategies, and develops programs designed to meet a spectrum of needs. The Clinic provides one-on-one, evidence-based instruction tailored to each learner's literacy profile. Our mission is to make the latest scientific discoveries in literacy accessible to every struggling student, no matter their postcode.

Through ongoing term-time sessions and intensive school holiday formats, the Australian Literacy Clinic offers a suite of explicit instruction programs:

## **Advancing Literacy Foundations (ALF):**

Focuses on phonics, morphology, and text-level reading practice for children needing foundational skill support.

## **Spelling Mastery:**

Teaches sound-letter links, morphological patterns, spelling rules, and practice with regular and irregular words.

## **Advancing Literacy Intensive Support (ALIS):**

Delivers highly customised lessons – including reading, spelling, writing, and assistive tech – for students with complex needs.

## **Advancing Literacy Foundations Preschool (ALP):**

Gives at-risk preschoolers (e.g., young family members of people with literacy difficulties) an early boost in reading and spelling before starting school.

## **Writing to Advance Literacy (WALi):**

Addresses a critical gap in writing instruction, tackling genres and composition for students who need more than just spelling help.

Crucially, the Clinic's interventions aren't just based on theory – they have been evaluated and published in peer-reviewed journals (e.g., [Francis et al., 2021](#); [Kohnen, Banales & McArthur, 2021](#)), demonstrating real, reliable gains for participating students. With most programs available remotely, support reaches families in regional and remote communities who once faced barriers accessing specialist help. For more information, reach out to the Clinic at 02 9465 9777 or by email [literacy.clinic@acu.edu.au](mailto:literacy.clinic@acu.edu.au).



**Improving students' literacy skills so they can pursue their dreams**

AUSTRALIAN  
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## What we offer

At the Australian Literacy Clinic, our expert researchers and clinicians:

- assess literacy skills and related areas of cognition
- provide detailed evaluation reports
- use best scientific evidence to develop recommendations and intervention plans
- offer professional development for teachers and clinicians
- undertake world-leading research in literacy.