

AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR THE
ADVANCEMENT OF LITERACY

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Newsletter

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Visit our website here:

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

Research opportunities

A PhD scholarship is available for an international or domestic student to join Dr. Signy Wegener on an ARC-funded DECRA Fellowship. The project is titled: 'Bridging the decoding-vocabulary gap during children's reading' and will focus on how children adjust their initial mispronunciations as they learn to read irregular words.

[Read more here.](#)

Anyone interested in applying should [contact Dr. Wegener first via email.](#)

THE LINK BETWEEN READING ABILITY AND WELLBEING IN TEENS BY PROFESSOR GENEVIEVE MCARTHUR

Evidence from primary-school studies suggests that reading ability may be related to at least three aspects of wellbeing: self-concept, anxiety, and engagement. We do not yet know if the same relationships exist in teens due to lack of data. We have therefore created three new measures: the Reading Anxiety Test (RAT), the Assessment for Reading Engagement, and the Assessment of Reading Values.

[Read the full article here.](#)

GRADUATE CERTIFICATE SPECIALISING IN LITERACY

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.](#)

ONLINE SHORT COURSES

Our interdisciplinary team of researchers and clinicians provide you with high-quality, evidence-based and practical knowledge. Here are the latest two courses:

- **Explicit Instruction and Differentiation**
- **Living with Dyslexia**
- **Register here:** catalogue.acu.edu.au

MYTH: "Vision therapy and eye tracking can be good interventions for students with dyslexia".

FACTS:

- A 2019 review of studies testing these interventions showed some improvements in students' reading fluency and accuracy.
- The evidence in this review, however, was inconsistent and often low quality.
- There is not yet robust evidence to recommend these treatments for improving students' reading outcomes.

Read here for further information: <https://doi.org/10.1002/dys.70017>

THE LINK BETWEEN READING ABILITY AND WELLBEING IN TEENS

BY PROFESSOR GENEVIEVE MCARTHUR

Evidence from primary-school studies suggests that reading ability may be related to at least three aspects of wellbeing: self-concept, anxiety, and engagement [1]. We do not yet know if the same relationships exist in teens due to lack of data. This is partly due to a dearth of valid measures for adolescents - particularly for reading anxiety and reading engagement. We have therefore created three new measures: the Reading Anxiety Test (RAT) [2, 3], the Assessment for Reading Engagement [4], and the Assessment of Reading Values [5].

By pairing these new tests with the Reader Self Perception Scale 2 [6], we have created a unique assessment battery for reading-related wellbeing in teens. Thus equipped, we have started to co-design studies with secondary schools that will allow us to simultaneously serve them by providing detailed information about their students' literacy and wellbeing, and testing the relationships between reading ability and reading-related self-concept, anxiety, and engagement. This data will also allow us to standardise, norm, and validate our new reading-related wellbeing measures so teachers, clinicians, and families can detect students at risk. This project illustrates the virtuous relationship that can exist between research and practice.

Thus far, we have tested over 60 students in secondary schools for their reading, self-concept, anxiety, and engagement with the aim to test hundreds more over the next two years. A quick glance at the outcomes thus far suggests that word reading ability might be significantly related to reading self-concept and reading anxiety in teens, but not to reading engagement or reading values.

We have also analysed the results of 95 teens who completed assessments for different types of reading skills and different types of reading anxiety at the Australian Literacy Clinic [7]. We discovered that the percentage of secondary students who had poor scores on the Reading Anxiety Test (58-75%) was just as high as the percentage of students who performed poorly on reading tests (59-74%). In addition, correlations between scores on the Reading Anxiety Test and the reading tests were as high, if not higher, than correlations between the reading tests themselves. These results suggest that reading anxiety questionnaires might be a quick and easy way to screen for reading difficulties in teens that could then be validated using objective and valid reading assessments.

Findings such as these help reveal how we can improve practical support for teens struggling at secondary school in Australia and beyond. For example, versions of the Reading Anxiety Test have already been adopted for use in two large studies - one in Victoria (around 400 assessments) and one in New Zealand (1600 assessments). In addition, this test has been downloaded over 1200 times in the last year from www.motif.org.au by teachers, clinicians, and researchers from across the globe, including countries that do not use English as a first language. This rapid uptake of the RAT reflects a growing appetite for assessment and treatment tools to support reading-related wellbeing in teens.

References

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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.