

AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR THE
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Newsletter

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By Dr. Danielle Colenbrander, Dr. Valeria Rigobon, Ms. Kirsty Parra and Ms. Amanda Vaga

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POSITIVE PARTNERSHIPS - NORTH SYDNEY PUBLIC SCHOOL AND ADVANCING LITERACY

BY DR. DANIELLE COLENBRANDER, DR. VALERIA RIGOBON, MS. KIRSTY PARRA AND MS. AMANDA VAGA

We have been working closely with North Sydney Public school in a professional development partnership since 2024. The partnership focused on applying research-based strategies in a way that was practical and informed by the teachers' classroom experience. Our approach was guided by research on vocabulary instruction, discussion-based pedagogies, and Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD), an approach to writing instruction. Learn firsthand from Kirsty Parra, the school's Assistant Principal Curriculum and Instruction, and Amanda Vaga, Deputy Principal, about the impact of this partnership on the school's Year 2 teachers and students.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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MYTH: "Dyslexia is always caused by issues with phonological awareness."

FACTS:

- No; there is no evidence of a causal link between a phonological processing deficit and dyslexia.
- However, a large body of research does show a strong association between having dyslexia and having poor phonological awareness.
- While phonological awareness difficulties are common among people with dyslexia, they are not universal among all people who show the primary symptoms of dyslexia.

Read more here: <https://www.nessy.com/en-gb/dyslexia-explained/understanding-dyslexia/phonological-and-phonemic-awareness>

Positive Partnerships - North Sydney Public School and Advancing Literacy

By Dr. Danielle Colenbrander, Dr. Valeria Rigobon, Ms. Kirsty Parra and Ms. Amanda Vaga

We have been working closely with North Sydney Public school staff in a professional development partnership since 2024. The partnership has focused on applying research-based strategies in a way that was practical and informed by the teachers' classroom experience. Our approach was guided by research on vocabulary instruction, discussion-based pedagogies, and Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD), an approach to writing instruction. Keep reading to learn firsthand from Kirsty Parra, the school's Assistant Principal Curriculum and Instruction, and Amanda Vaga, Deputy Principal, about the impact of this partnership on the school's Year 2 teachers and students!

A reflection on the partnership from Kirsty Parra and Amanda Vaga

Navigating the significant changes to pedagogy and practice brought on by the new NSW curriculum has been a great opportunity for professional growth for primary schools across the state. Year 2 teachers at North Sydney Public School have taken on the challenge with enthusiasm and willingness to learn more about the evidence base that underpins our new curriculum.

In our third year working with the new English curriculum and accompanying resources, we sought to dive more deeply into the evidence base and upskill ourselves further to make confident and evidence-based decisions to modify lessons and create resources to best suit the needs of our students.

Partnering with Advancing Literacy for a targeted professional development project has allowed the Year 2 team to meet and discuss the literature and the research with those who are writing it. With a strong collaborative partnership, we were able to create a bespoke professional development experience that was built around teacher areas of interest, student needs, and overcoming identified roadblocks.

Broadly, this experience upskilled Year 2 teachers to confidently adapt four English units - putting into practice a new explicit vocabulary instruction structure, more specific and supportive discussion prompts, and scaffolding more in line with an SRSD approach. The opportunity to watch Dr. Colenbrander and Dr. Rigobon break down how the research around explicit instruction, vocabulary, and reading comprehension applies to the overall unit, as well as the activities themselves, was incredibly powerful. Equally valuable was the opportunity to apply the professional development independently and seek feedback on the changes the teachers had made to their units.

Ultimately, we were able to walk away with a stronger understanding of how to create an effective, evidence-based English unit that supports students in our particular context and how these skills can be generalised across all of our English units. Further, this experience has allowed us to identify larger changes we want to make in Year 2 English programming and equipped us with the vocabulary, strategies, and ultimately, the confidence to do so and therefore ensure the sustainability of this professional development experience.

Resources on the teaching strategies mentioned:

- Podcast episode about vocabulary instruction: <https://www.ollielovell.com/margaretmckeown-vocab/>
- Podcast episode about discussion-based pedagogy: <https://literacypodcast.com/podcast?podcast=Buzzsprout-16296050>
- Guide for implementing SRSD: Lienemann, T., Reid, R., & the IRIS Center. (2009). Written expression: Grades 2–5. Retrieved from https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/wp-content/uploads/pdf_case_studies/ics_writex.pdf (PDF)

If your school is interested in developing professional learning partnerships with the Australian Centre for the Advancement of Literacy, please feel free to reach out to us on Advancingliteracy@acu.edu.au.



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