

A MultiLit SUMMIT

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# ADVANCING EFFECTIVE EDUCATION 2025

In celebration of MultiLit's 30th anniversary

**30-31 May 2025 | Sofitel Sydney Wentworth**

The Advancing Effective Education two-day summit will host keynotes from national and international speakers, allow for participation in workshops and panel discussions, and provide insightful presentations on effective education.

- ▶ Learn about **current research** on reading, writing, oral language and numeracy
- ▶ Gain insights from change makers on **leading transformation** at the system and school level
- ▶ Hear about practitioners' experiences of translating **theory to practice**

Find out more at [multilit.com/summit](https://multilit.com/summit)





## Program: Day 1 – Friday 30 May 2025

	Research	Leadership	Theory to Practice
<b>8:00</b>	Arrival and registration		
<b>8:30</b>	Conference opening and welcome		
<b>9:00-10:00</b>	<b>Keynote: Dr Jenny Donovan</b> , Chief Executive Officer, Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) <i>Are we there yet? The long and winding road to evidence-based practice in Australian education</i>		
<b>10:00-11:00</b>	<b>Keynote: Dr Linda Siegel</b> , Professor Emeritus, University of British Columbia (Canada) <i>The right to read</i>		
<b>11:00-11:30</b>	Morning tea & trade exhibition		
<b>11:30-12:30</b>	<b>Keynote: Dr Jonathan Solity</b> , Director, Optima Psychology and Honorary Lecturer, University College London (UK) <i>Sold a story: Teaching reading through synthetic phonics and decodable texts in the UK</i>		
<b>12:30-1:30</b>	<b>Keynote: Dr Rhona Stainthorp OBE</b> , Professor Emerita, University of Reading (UK) <i>Teaching phonics and beyond: A case study from England</i>		
<b>1:30-2:20</b>	Lunch & trade exhibition		
<b>2:20-3:10</b>	<b>Interventions at the secondary level: Current practices in Australian schools</b> <b>Melanie Henry</b> PhD candidate, Science of Language and Reading (SOLAR) Lab, La Trobe University (Vic)	<b>Panel discussion – Leading change in school systems</b> <b>Patrick Ellis</b> Education Lead, Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn Education Limited <b>Elissa Baker</b> Education Office – Primary, Diocese of Lismore <b>Jennifer White</b> System Lead – Curriculum and Pedagogy, Catholic Education Tasmania	<b>Closing the Gap: Applying best practice in literacy in regional and remote schools</b> <b>Chloe Allen</b> Director, Closing the Gap School Partnerships Initiative, MultiLit <b>Andy Russell</b> General Manager, MultiLit Literacy Centres
<b>3:15-4:05</b>	<b>Evidence-based or evidence-informed: Coming to terms with terms</b> <b>Dr Robyn Wheldall</b> Director, MultiLit Research Unit (MRU) <i>Turning pages: Leisure reading in children with reading difficulties</i> <b>Dr Nicola Bell</b> Research Fellow, MultiLit Research Unit	<b>Leading sustainable whole-school growth</b> <b>Tyson Grinham</b> Principal, Lockleys North Primary School (SA)	<b>Understanding and supporting students' diverse needs: Evidence-based approaches</b> <b>Sarah Richardson</b> Program Director, Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO)

<b>4:10-5:00</b>	<b>Universal maths screening: Development of a numeracy check</b> <b>Glenn Fahey</b> Program Director – Education Policy, Centre for Independent Studies (CIS)	<b>Driving change in education: Empowering educators through collaborative and action research</b> <b>Jasmine Deighton</b> Assistant Principal, Grace Lutheran Primary School (Qld) <b>Jo Forrest</b> Director of Teaching and Learning, Grace Lutheran Primary School (Qld)	<b>Live video presentation – Reading for pleasure: The necessary knowledge</b> <b>Dr Teresa Cremin</b> Professor of Education (Literacy) and Co-Director of the Literacy and Social Justice Centre, The Open University (UK)
<b>5.00</b>	Cocktail party		

## Program: Day 2 – Saturday 31 May 2025

<b>8:00</b>	Arrival		
<b>8:30</b>	Welcome		
<b>8:45-9:45</b>	<b>Keynote: Dr Steve Graham</b> , Regents Professor and the Warner Professor in the Division of Leadership and Innovation in Teachers College, Arizona State University (US) <i>Evidence-based recommendations for teaching writing</i>		
<b>9:45-10:45</b>	<b>Keynote: Dr Karen R Harris</b> Regents Professor Emeritus and Research Professor, Arizona State University (US) <i>Self-regulated strategy development (SRSD) instruction for reading to learn and writing to inform or persuade, grades 1-5</i>		
<b>10:45-11:15</b>	Morning tea & trade exhibition		
<b>11:15-12:05</b>	<b>From scribbles to sentences to stories: Designing an effective early years writing program</b> <b>Dr Alison Madelaine</b> Principal Research Fellow, MultiLit Research Unit <b>Anna Taylor</b> Speech and Language Specialist, Senior Product Developer, MultiLit	<b>Panel discussion – Driving system change in public education</b> <b>Ken Lountain</b> Director – Curriculum Policy and Standards, Department for Education SA <b>Ben Duggan</b> Senior Director – Strong Foundations Implementation Team, ACT Government <b>Karene Janke</b> Manager – Reading, Curriculum Teaching and Learning, Queensland Department of Education	<b>Cognitive load theory in the classroom: What teachers should know</b> <b>Dr Greg Ashman</b> Deputy Principal, Ballarat Clarendon College (Vic)

12:10-1:00	<p><b>Handwriting fluency and the impact on literacy</b></p> <p><b>Dr Karen Ray</b> Lecturer – Occupational Therapy, School of Health Sciences, College of Health, Medicine and Wellbeing, University of Newcastle (NSW)</p>	<p><b>Leading school improvement</b></p> <p><b>Louise O'Donovan</b> Principal, Jilbup Primary School (WA)</p>	<p><b>Sustaining success: Implementing a whole-school writing framework in secondary English</b></p> <p><b>Rebecca Birch</b> Director of Research and Practice, Queenwood (NSW)</p> <p><b>Dylan Chalwell</b> Head of English, Queenwood (NSW)</p>
1:00-1:50	Lunch & trade exhibition		
1:50-3:20	<p><b>Workshop 1 – Evaluating controversial claims in education: Why we make mistakes and how to avoid them</b></p> <p><b>Dr Mark Carter</b> Dean, The Academy for the Science of Instruction Principal Research Fellow, MultiLit Research Unit</p>	<p><b>Workshop 2 – Choose your own evidence-based adventure: Charting a master plan to lead school transformation</b></p> <p><b>Georgie Wynne</b> Course Convenor, The Academy for the Science of Instruction</p> <p><b>Monica Wright</b> Course Facilitator, The Academy for the Science of Instruction</p> <p><b>Maddy Goto</b> Course Facilitator, The Academy for the Science of Instruction</p>	<p><b>Workshop 3 – Developing literacy through discourse-level oral language intervention</b></p> <p><b>Anna Taylor</b> Speech and Language Specialist, Senior Product Developer, MultiLit</p> <p><b>Lauren Koch</b> Senior Product Developer, MultiLit</p>
3:20-3:50	Afternoon tea		
3:50-4:50	Panel discussion with keynote speakers and wrap-up		



View speaker bios and find out more about the Summit at [multilit.com/summit](https://multilit.com/summit)



## Celebrating 30 Years

MultiLit has been a leading provider of effective literacy instruction in Australasia since 1995, when it began as a research initiative of Macquarie University, led by Emeritus Professor Kevin Wheldall AM with Dr Robyn Wheldall (Beaman). With the support of co-founder and Managing Director Iain Rothwell, MultiLit was spun out of the university, incorporating the MultiLit Research Unit (MRU) to continue the research agenda and to ensure all programs were founded in solid evidence.

MultiLit has come a long way in 30 years, extending beyond reading and now striving to enable effective instruction to ensure every child learns. Over the past 30 years, we have supported thousands of students in a variety of settings, including schools, our own Literacy Centres and community-based literacy projects across Australia, New Zealand and Asia. As we move through 2025, over half of Australian primary schools feature a MultiLit program, supporting whole-class instruction and intervention.

Over the next year, MultiLit will continue to celebrate this milestone by sharing and commemorating MultiLit moments, past and present.





## Abstracts: Day 1 – Friday 30 May 2025

Session	Abstract
<p>Opening keynote - <i>Are we there yet? The long and winding road to evidence-based practice in Australian education</i></p> <p><b>Dr Jenny Donovan</b></p>	<p>Pioneers like MultiLit have worked for decades to deliver evidence-based reading instruction and to advocate for policy change.</p> <p>Dr Donovan will discuss critical factors in building momentum for reform, the importance of recent policy announcements and the challenges ahead to turn those announcements into real change in schools for every student.</p>
<p>International keynote - <i>The right to read</i></p> <p><b>Dr Linda Siegel</b></p>	<p>This keynote will review the reaction to the Ontario (Canada) Human Rights Commission's <i>Right to Read</i> inquiry report. The Commission conducted a public inquiry that examined the alignment with scientific evidence of early reading instruction, reading interventions for students with reading difficulties, early screening and intervention, psychoeducational assessment practices and teacher preparation.</p> <p>The subsequent Report contained 157 recommendations. One of the most critical were a set of recommendations involving the language and literacy curriculum and teaching documents outlined by the Ministry of Education of Ontario. The Report explained that word reading skills are a critical foundation for reading comprehension and thus recommended that foundational word reading skills be incorporated into the curriculum and teaching guidelines, including instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics.</p> <p>Other key recommendations included the systematic use of early identification procedures to identify children at risk for reading difficulties and streamlined and evidence-based approaches to psychoeducational assessments.</p> <p>The Report also highlighted systemic issues in the treatment of Indigenous and Black students, as well as students from lower SES and students with disabilities. It urged faculties of education to prepare teachers in research-based approaches to teaching foundational word reading skills, and in the understanding and approach for students with reading difficulties, including dyslexia.</p>
<p>International keynote - <i>Sold a story: Teaching reading through synthetic phonics and decodable texts in the UK</i></p> <p><b>Dr Jonathan Solity</b></p>	<p>There is little doubt that children are best taught grapheme-phoneme correspondences through synthetic phonics. However, there is considerable variety in the way synthetic phonics is taught. Since the election of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government in the UK in 2010, the Department for Education (DfE) has been relentless in pursuing a policy best termed 'phonics first, fast and only,' for teaching reading exclusively through systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) and decodable texts. Schools in the UK have been sold a story by the DfE, together with the authors of commercial SSP programs, that the English way is the only way to teach phonics to beginning readers.</p> <p>Nick Gibb, the former Minister for Schools, has travelled far and wide reinforcing this view which may explain why it is frequently said that</p>

Australia is around 10 years behind England in its approach to teaching reading. This keynote will analyse the story that schools have been sold, explain how things are not quite how they appear, and suggest a note of caution for teachers and researchers in Australia pursuing similar policies to those in England. The English always talk a good game which is why we are going to win the forthcoming Ashes series and the football World Cup in 2026. However, past experience indicates that the reality rarely matches the rhetoric.

International keynote - *Teaching phonics and beyond: A case study from England*

**Dr Rhona Stainthorp OBE**

Programs of sustained synthetic phonics (SSP) teaching have been identified from many empirical studies as the way forward for early learners. The *Rose Review* 2006 recognised this and had a significant impact on primary schools' approaches to teaching reading. A program of SSP is now mandated in all state-funded primary schools in England. Two things immediately followed from this: teaching programs providing materials to teach SSP were needed, and teachers and teachers in training had to learn how to teach phonics.

Post *Rose*, the Department for Education developed 'Letter and Sounds', a complete two-year SSP program, free for all schools. All teacher education courses are now required to ensure all trainees can teach SSP. Also, established teachers in schools need to receive additional profession training. Political changes have reinforced the requirement to teach SSP, but now schools must buy commercially produced programs.

National data revealed that many schools were finding this challenging. This resulted in the introduction of the Phonics Screening Check (PSC) in 2012 for pupils at the end of Year 1 (age 6 years). For good or ill, the PSC has a positive impact on schools' teaching of phonics.

This keynote will provide evidence about the impact of SSP on word reading if pupils are to become confident readers who choose to read for progress, leisure and pleasure. It will also consider issues about performance beyond word reading that need to be addressed, including the impact of the pandemic.

*Interventions at the secondary level: Current practices in Australian schools*

**Melanie Henry**

There is wide variety in how Australian secondary schools support students with literacy difficulties. Limited resources are a key factor, shaping how schools identify students at risk, and select and implement supports. This session will present findings from interviews with 22 Australian teachers exploring current practices.

Panel discussion - *Leading change in school systems*

**Hosted by Dr Robyn Wheldall**

**Patrick Ellis**  
**Elissa Baker**  
**Jennifer White**

This panel will explore the shift to evidence-based practice and how this can be achieved at a system-wide level, with examples from within a Catholic education framework. Hear from education leaders from three dioceses at different stages of the change journey as they unpack the challenges they faced, discoveries along the way, and both unexpected and expected wins. Moderator Dr Robyn Wheldall will explore stakeholder engagement, the importance of professional learning, and tease out the advice others embarking on a similar journey will appreciate.



*Closing the Gap: Applying best practice in literacy in regional and remote schools*

**Chloe Allen  
Andy Russell**

This presentation will discuss the Response to Intervention (RtI) model within the context of the MultiLit Closing the Gap Initiative. It will explore the challenges and adaptations required when implementing structured literacy programs in regional and remote schools, including how the RtI model is adapted to meet the needs of students in these contexts. Attendees will gain practical insights into how structured literacy programs can be successfully adapted to improve literacy outcomes in complex learning environments.

*Evidence-based or evidence-informed: Coming to terms with terms*

**Dr Robyn Wheldall**

The focus on using evidence-based approaches in education is to be celebrated. Various terms are used to flag that practices and resources are grounded in evidence; or in other words, that they are effective. But what do the various terms mean, and is there universal acceptance of definitions? This session will explore standards of evidence and the differences in the terms commonly used.

*Turning pages: Leisure reading in children with reading difficulties*

**Dr Nicola Bell**

Children with literacy difficulties are found to participate less in leisure reading than their peers. Yet they are the ones with the most to gain from books. In this presentation, existing research on leisure reading will be reviewed, and the findings of a related pilot study will be described.

*Leading sustainable whole-school growth*

**Tyson Grinham**

What is a successful learner? Lockleys North Primary School (LNPS) is on an ongoing journey to define this collaboratively with students, staff and the community. This presentation will share their approaches for achieving sustainable whole-school improvement. Learn about LNPS's strategic focus on Learning & Performance Modes, Learner Qualities and Goal Setting to empower students. Discover how MultiLit programs are supporting pedagogical shifts and driving student growth. Attendees will gain practical insights for leading sustainable improvement in their own context.

*Understanding and supporting students' diverse needs: Evidence-based approaches*

**Sarah Richardson**

In this presentation, evidence-based approaches to supporting students' diverse needs through planning effectively, working with students and their support networks, and taking actions to help all students learn and achieve, will be discussed. This includes delivering high-quality instruction that aligns with how students learn.

Attendees will have opportunities to reflect on current approaches to supporting students' diverse needs to help recognise what's working well and what might need to be strengthened further, and to learn more about practical resources to draw on to support their practice.

*Universal maths screening: Development of a numeracy check*

**Glenn Fahey**

The need to screen in early numeracy is vital, but there are few evidence-based and efficient approaches currently used widely in Australian schools. Unlike with early literacy, an existing local evidence base has been lacking. Thankfully, Australia's education ministers are now committed to introducing universal early numeracy screening within the next few years.

Throughout 2025 and 2026, CIS is conducting research, in collaboration with Macquarie University and Auspeld, with schools in most states

and sectors. This research will help to assess the reliability, validity and useability of a new universal screening approach in early numeracy.

This session will present the rationale for early numeracy screening, the approach taken to screening, the evidence supporting it, early insights from the first round of screening, and how the screening will be undertaken in Australian schools throughout 2025 and beyond. Attendees will learn about how mathematical cognition research informs the design of effective screening, and how their school can take part in this research.

*Driving change in education: Empowering educators through collaboration and action research*

**Jasmine Deighton  
Jo Forrest**

This presentation will outline the strategic approach employed to lead transformative change within Grace Lutheran Primary School. It will detail how collaboration and the use of action research enabled identification of school priorities, fostered a deeper understanding of effective instruction and successfully implemented change.

*Live video presentation - Reading for pleasure: The necessary knowledge*

**Dr Teresa Cremin**

Reading for pleasure has considerable power and potential, academically socially and emotionally, yet the subject and pedagogic content knowledge needed to nurture the habit of reading is rarely foregrounded. In this presentation, drawing on both research and practice, Teresa will highlight the prerequisite knowledge base and offer a range of evidence-informed classroom strategies.

Abstracts: Day 2 – Saturday 31 May 2025

Session	Abstract
<i>International keynote - Evidence-based recommendations for teaching writing</i> <b>Dr Steve Graham</b>	This keynote examines what works and what does not work when teaching writing. It draws evidence from over 1000 studies to identify writing practices that are supported or not supported by research. Implications for developing a complete writing program are discussed, including the need to better coordinate writing, reading and learning.
<i>International keynote - Self-regulated strategy development (SRSD) instruction for reading to learn and writing to inform or persuade, grades 1-5</i> <b>Dr Karen R Harris</b>	Self-regulated strategy development (SRSD) is an evidence-based instructional method that results in stronger improvements in students' writing from Grade 2-12 than other methods used.  In this keynote, an overview of the SRSD instructional method will be given, sharing how it works and how trust in teachers is foundational to this approach. Finally, how teachers can learn SRSD will be shared.
<i>From scribbles to sentences to stories: Designing an effective early years writing program</i> <b>Dr Alison Madelaine Anna Taylor</b>	When children begin formal schooling, it can be challenging to get them started with writing while they are also learning to read, spell and form letters. This presentation will cover the research into early writing instruction and how this can be translated into effective writing instruction for students in the first three years of formal schooling.

## *Panel discussion - Driving system change in public education*

**Hosted by Rebecca Urban**

**Ken Lountain  
Ben Duggan  
Karene Janke**

South Australia led the way on a shift to evidence-based literacy instruction in Australia, introducing the Phonics Screening Check in 2018, while the ACT and Queensland have embarked on their respective Strong Foundations Program and Reading Commitment more recently. In this panel, state education leaders will discuss their approach to making system-wide change, managing cultural shifts and challenges, and sharing success. The panel will offer insights and advice for supporting evidence-based practice in schools.

## *Cognitive load theory in the classroom: What teachers should know*

**Dr Greg Ashman**

This presentation will discuss the origins of cognitive load theory, its key principles and why teachers should become acquainted with it. Key differences between biologically primary and secondary knowledge will be discussed and how this led to a number of misconceptions about learning.

## *Handwriting fluency and the impact on literacy*

**Dr Karen Ray**

This presentation will explore the link between early handwriting skills and literacy development. It introduces an evidence-based model for handwriting fluency acquisition, video analysis of handwriting fluency using the Letter Form Assessment and research findings on how handwriting intervention impacts literacy for beginning writers. Attendees will be equipped with a framework for understanding handwriting acquisition and approaches to effective assessment and intervention.

## *Leading school improvement*

**Louise O'Donovan**

Principal Louise O'Donovan shares her school improvement journey. Guided by the Science of Reading principles, she has cultivated a culture of teaching excellence and developed strategies for effective change management. In this presentation, she will explore the critical importance of getting literacy right - not just for schools, but for the future of our nation. Discover how investing in reading success can transform lives and provide every child with the opportunities they deserve.

## *Sustaining success: Implementing a whole-school writing framework in secondary English*

**Rebecca Birch  
Dylan Chalwell**

This presentation will explore the implementation and sustainability of a whole-school writing project in secondary English, developed in partnership with the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO). Queenwood was one of several schools selected to collaborate in designing and piloting a national secondary writing framework, which includes a comprehensive bank of instructional resources. Now in the project's second year, the team share the challenges of maintaining momentum and embedding the framework into long-term school practice.

This presentation provides a practical framework for sustaining initiatives after formal support ends, using action research to reinvigorate projects, engage staff and adapt to challenges such as turnover and shifting priorities. Attendees will learn strategies for meeting non-English teachers where they are, simplifying the teaching of writing and fostering continuity in whole-school approaches to literacy. Walk away with tools to ensure lasting success in writing instruction beyond the initial implementation phase.

## *Workshop 1 – Evaluating controversial claims in education: Why we make mistakes and how to avoid them*

**Dr Mark Carter**

Education has a long history of fad interventions. These often gain popularity, waste valuable time and resources, and fade into obscurity, only to resurface in repackaged form. This workshop will provide an overview of some of the cognitive biases that often result in bad decision-making, as well as red flags that may assist in identifying questionable interventions. Finally, some commonsense strategies for evaluating research will be presented.

## *Workshop 2 – Choose your own evidence-based adventure: Charting a master plan to lead school transformation*

**Georgie Wynne  
Monica Wright  
Maddy Goto**

This interactive and engaging workshop immerses school leaders in a dynamic problem-solving experience, equipping them with a clear roadmap for transformative school improvement. By examining the latest research on effective instruction and the key drivers of student success, attendees will gain practical strategies to implement high-impact, evidence-based practices in their schools. This workshop draws on key insights from Leading School Transformation, a course offered by The Academy for the Science of Instruction.

## *Workshop 3 – Developing literacy through discourse-level oral language intervention*

**Anna Taylor  
Lauren Koch**

Discourse-level oral language intervention plays a crucial role in helping children understand and use literate-style language. This hands-on workshop combines research and theory with practical strategies for teaching oral narrative skills in early years classrooms (Foundation to Year 2). Attendees will learn how to teach students to produce more complex and coherent oral narratives, building a strong foundation for both reading comprehension and writing.

## *Panel discussion with keynote speakers and wrap-up*

**Hosted by Rebecca Urban**

Join moderator and MC Rebecca Urban in discussion with the international keynote speakers from across both days of the Advancing Effective Education Summit as they discuss key takeaways from the event and advice for the Australian context.



**View speaker bios and find out more about the Summit at**  
[multilit.com/summit](https://multilit.com/summit)





## Do you know what literacy support your students need?

In addition to MultiLit's whole-class instruction programs, we offer a range of intervention solutions to support students.

Scan the QR code to take the intervention quiz and find out which of these best suits your students' needs.

[info.multilit.com/interventionquiz](http://info.multilit.com/interventionquiz)



## Essential knowledge for teachers

The Academy for the Science of Instruction draws on a wealth of research and expertise to offer in-depth courses for educators.

Expand your knowledge and skills in evidence-based teaching and the application of best practice in the classroom.

### Explore our courses:

- Effective Instruction in Reading and Spelling
- Positive Teaching and Learning
- Leading School Transformation



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