

Bulletin



**In the spotlight:
Writing Instruction –
From Transcription through to
Critical Thinking. What works?**

LDA Council 2022-2023

(As at March 2024)

OFFICE BEARERS

PRESIDENT

Geoff Ongley

VICE-PRESIDENTS

Dr Robyn Wheldall

Elaine McLeish

TREASURER

Iain Rothwell

SECRETARY

Stephanie Murphy

COUNCIL MEMBERS

Felicity Brown

Eleanor McMillan

Dr Alison Madelaine

Dr Damon Thomas

Stephanie Murphy

Laura Glisson

Erin Rollason

Siobhan Merlo

EDUCATION MANAGER

Hema Desai

ADMINISTRATION

Business Administrator: Bec Rangas

LDA Committees

PUBLICATIONS

Convenor: Dr Alison Madelaine

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Convenor: Erin Rollason

AWARDS

Convenor: Eleanor McMillan

CONSULTANTS COMMITTEE

Convenor: Dr Anne Bellert

LDA Publications

AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL OF LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

Editor: Dr Alison Madelaine

Assistant Editor: Kim Knight

LDA BULLETIN

Editor: Laura Glisson

Copyeditor: Kate Laister

LDA Contacts

CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS

PO Box 76, Mount Waverley VIC 3149

EMAIL ENQUIRIES

enquiries@ldaustralia.org

LDA MISSION

Learning Difficulties Australia is an association of teachers and other professionals dedicated to assisting students with learning difficulties through effective teaching practices based on scientific research, both in the classroom and through individualised instruction.

THE BULLETIN

The Bulletin is published three times a year. For information about submitting articles, and for requests to reprint articles, please contact the Editor: bulletin.editor@ldaustralia.org

The Bulletin is designed by Andrew Faith (www.littledesignstudio.com) and printed by DTS Communicate.

The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily the views of, or endorsed by, Learning Difficulties Australia.

3

From the President

Geoffrey Ongley

4

Consultant notes

Dr Anne Bellert

5

In this issue of the Bulletin...

Laura Glisson

7

Richard (Dick) Weigall OAM

Mim Davidson and

Diane Barwood

9

Why writing instruction is needed

Joan Sedita

13

Why AERO is working to support a whole-school approach to writing

Christine Jackson and

Annie Fisher

15

The Syntax Project: An explicit approach to target sentence level writing (and speaking!)

Stephanie Le Lievre

19

Developing students' metalinguistic understandings for writing: Moving beyond form to function

Damon Thomas and

Nathan Lowien

Crafting sentences: Four simple writing techniques to elevate your students' learning

Ingrid Sealey

Writing their way through the forest

Kim Knight

Supporting schools to implement an evidence-based and effective approach to teaching spelling

Tessa Daffern, Kate Hogg, Nicole Callaway, Heath Wild and Sharon Kelly

How the Peggy Lego program supports your student's handwriting from the very beginning

Berenice Johnston

Kathryn Thorburn's Top 15 Resources for Writing

Kathryn Thorburn

Book Review: The Writing Rope: A Framework for Explicit Writing Instruction in All Subjects

Hema Desai

24

29

32

40

43

46

From the President

Geoffrey Ongley

We have kicked off the year to a good start with an incredibly positive response to our writing course 'Think it, Say it, Write it!', both in terms of feedback from the crowd, and ticket sales themselves. I would like to extend my personal thanks to the presenters: Laura Glisson, Peta Collins, Jenny Baker, Jacinta Conway, Toni Lang, Dr Alison Madelaine, and Mel Micallef. The presentations have been exemplary, and of course, I pass on my great thanks to Hema Desai as well for doing the hard work in pulling this together. If you didn't manage to catch the presentations, replays will be available until the 26th April 2024, and there's much more to come in the year ahead.

The beginning of the year also has brought some organisational changes.

Firstly, I would like to welcome Laura Glisson as our new Bulletin editor. She is a very welcome addition to the team! Thank you also goes to Julie Scali for all of her hard work in 2023 as our previous editor. She did an incredible job last year on the Bulletin and we know Laura is going to do just brilliantly as well.

Secondly, in regards to staffing, I would also like to note that Dr Sherree Halliwell concluded her role as the General Manager with us in February. We thank her for her contributions throughout her time with us and appreciate all the work she put into her time here at LDA.

From here, execution on our vision remains the key focus for the association. That vision is to ensure that supporting students with learning difficulties is the business of every teacher. In this regard, we are listening,

and you may hear from us in the near future asking you for your inputs and feedback as to how you feel we can best support you'.

Professional development will no doubt be key (but not the only thing) to improving the value we offer our members. On this front, we are making some small adjustments to facilitate further cohesion and less overlap between the Education Manager role, and the role of the PD Committee. Both remain extremely important, and focus areas will delineate between the two. The PD Committee will be primarily responsible for working on the longer term PD strategy and presenting this to council for comment and feedback, as well as continuing in its support of our Education Manager. Our Education Manager's focus will remain on execution of the plan and handling the tactical and operational areas of delivering our PD.

Finally, I am pleased to share that our membership is stronger than ever! We have recently grown the membership beyond any previous record, which is very exciting news. We deeply appreciate your shared commitment to supporting students with learning difficulties. Your involvement is crucial in making a difference. Thank you for being part of LDA!

Geoffrey Ongley
President, LDA
president@ldaustralia.org

Geoffrey Ongley is the Co-founder, Director and CEO of Training 24/7, as well as the CEO of Get Reading Right. Educationally, he has completed a Bachelor of Computer Science, Master of Business Administration (Finance), and a Graduate Certificate in Professional Legal Studies.



Consultant notes

Dr Anne Bellert, Consultant Committee Convenor

It would seem that our LDA consultant members are back at it for 2024 – hard at work, providing expert support for some of the most vulnerable students in the education system. Their work is so valued by the students they help, their families and (hopefully) teachers working in schools.

Many of you will have read or heard about the recent Grattan Institute report, 'The Reading Guarantee: How to give every child the best chance of success' (Hunter et al., 2023). The report discussed how a failure to teach reading impacts individuals across the lifespan. As experts who work 'up close' with students who experience learning difficulties, I'm sure you are aware of the social and emotional impacts on the child of experiencing ongoing reading failure, and the educational impacts (underachievement, disengagement etc.). However, the great tragedy of not being taught to read with evidence-based approaches is the long-term impact – both on the individual and on their community and society more broadly. "Every child we fail to teach to read misses out on a core life skill, and Australia misses out on their potential too. For those students in school today who are hardest hit by poor reading performance, the cost to Australia is about \$40 billion over their lifetimes" (Hunter et al., 2023, p.3). Lack of confidence to engage with print for living skills and requirements, limits in self-confidence (especially around engaging with their children's learning), unemployment and having low-paid jobs, or not feeling able to participate in community activities...

the list of negative consequences of a failure to be taught to read is long indeed. As an LDA Consultant member, you are one of the 'quiet achievers', making a huge difference to the learning and life outcomes of your students. Please know that LDA is very proud to have our LDA consultant members out in communities, working hard to overcome student disadvantage and disengagement. We 'see' you and we are so appreciative of the work you do.

I would like to mention another 'quiet achiever', LDA Council and Consultant Committee member, Felicity Brown. Felicity has been working assiduously (even on her holiday) to ensure that all our Consultants evidence annual professional development requirements in order to renew their membership. This is an important task that helps us maintain the very excellent reputation of LDA Consultants. There have been a couple of system issues that have made her job quite challenging at times, but Felicity has shown quiet tenacity and, as I write this, just about all the renewals are now approved. Thanks Felicity – your dedication and professionalism is a great asset to the Consultants Committee and I'm sure many consultants have benefited from your advice and assistance.

I wish all Consultants a successful Term 1 and hope you will all manage to have a well-earned rest over the Easter break (and have no hesitation to go hard on the chocolate!).

Dr Anne Bellert
Consultants Committee Convenor

Reference

Hunter, J., Stobart, A., and Haywood, A. (2023). *The Reading Guarantee: How to give every child the best chance of success*. Grattan Institute.



Are you interested in becoming a Consultant Member of LDA?

Consultant Membership is a special category of LDA membership, currently open to Specialist Teachers and Speech Pathologists with training in the learning difficulties area and experience in teaching and consulting with students with learning difficulties.

In addition to standard membership benefits, Consultant Membership provides:

- Recognition of your expertise in the LD field
- Inclusion in a Consultant Network Group
- Eligibility for inclusion in the LDA Online Referral Service

For more information about becoming a Consultant Member, please contact our Consultant Convenor at consultant.convenor@ldaustralia.org or phone Elaine McLeish on 0406 388 325.

We would love to hear from you!

In this issue of the Bulletin...

Laura Glisson, Editor, LDA Bulletin

I am pleased to bring you our first edition of the Bulletin for 2024 entitled *'Writing Instruction – From Transcription through to Critical Thinking. What works?'*. This edition will be in your hands after the completion of our 6-week writing course *'Think it, Say it, Write it! The Fundamentals of Written Expression'*, inspired by Joan Sedita's *'The Writing Rope'* (Sedita, 2019).

In order to provide effective instruction and intervention for students, including those with underlying learning difficulties, we need to understand the many complexities involved in writing. Two important frameworks that can assist us with this endeavour are Berninger's "Not So Simple View of Writing" (Berninger et al., 2022) and Sedita's "The Writing Rope" (Sedita, 2019). Both frameworks propose that writing involves a complex interaction of cognitive processes, essential skills and knowledge areas crucial for writing success.

But what works to improve the development of these skills and knowledge bases in the primary and secondary years? How can we *best* teach writing in schools to ensure that all students develop a solid foundation in transcription, spelling, syntactic knowledge, vocabulary breadth and depth, punctuation, text structure knowledge and author's craft so that they can produce texts for a wide range of audiences and purposes? In this issue, we bring you a series of articles written

by researchers, classroom teachers, education leaders and therapists who generously share with us what they know about best practice in writing instruction.

Firstly though, we remember Richard (Dick) Weigall OAM. Dick is an important person in LDA history, and his commitment to supporting children and adults with learning difficulties in Australia is legendary. Dick passed away peacefully in May of 2023, surrounded by his loving family. In a heartfelt obituary, written by Mim Davidson and Diane Barwood, we find out just a little bit about Dick's life and the legacy that he leaves behind.

Our feature article of this edition is 'Why writing instruction is needed' by Joan Sedita. In this article, Sedita introduces us to 'The Writing Rope' instructional framework, explaining each strand and why it's important for writing development. Packed full of essential information for educators, this piece gives us a theoretically and empirically sound evidence-base for writing instruction.

The second piece is 'Why AERO is working to support a whole-school approach to writing' by Christine Jackson and Annie Fisher. In this republication of an article from May 2023, Jackson and Fisher present a compelling argument for why we need whole-school approaches for writing instruction in Australian schools. They signpost additional resources published by AERO that support the explicit teaching of writing across a range of year levels and subject areas, including their practical sentence-level writing and punctuation guides available on the AERO website.

Our next article is by Stephanie Le Lievre, who was responsible for coordinating 'The Syntax Project', which many of our readers will be

familiar with and no doubt have benefited from. In her article titled, 'The Syntax Project: An explicit approach to target sentence level writing (and speaking!)', Le Lievre explains the importance of developing sentence-level writing skills for reading and writing success and shares practical ideas for how to effectively teach syntax to our students.



Next, Damon Thomas and Nathan Lowien bring us, 'Developing students' metalinguistic understandings for writing: Moving beyond form to function'. In this piece, Thomas and Lowien present an argument for building not just a shared metalanguage in schools for writing, but also for building *metalinguistic understanding* in our students. Metalinguistic understanding is the ability to think and talk about how language choices are used to make meaning in a text. Using examples from their work within a teacher education context, Thomas and Lowien share three practical strategies that help build *metalinguistic understanding* for writing instruction.

'Crafting sentences: Four simple writing techniques to elevate your students' learning' is the next article, written by Ingrid Sealey. Here Sealey shares four high-impact sentence-level writing activities that don't just help build effective writing skills in students, but also help students to better learn complex ideas and concepts in lessons.

Following this, Kim Knight brings us some practical ideas in her article, 'Writing their way through the forest', to help older students develop their analytical essay writing skills,

including the helpful 'Text + Theme Schema' tactic.

Moving onto the transcription component of writing, we have two articles of equal interest. In their article, 'Supporting schools to implement an evidence based and effective approach to teaching spelling', Tessa Daffern, Kate Hogg, Nicole Callaway, Heath Wild and Sharon Kelly, utilise two case studies to demonstrate the importance of effective spelling assessment and instruction in the primary years.

'How the Peggy Lego program supports your student's handwriting from the very beginning' by Berenice Johnston is our second piece on transcription. In this article, Johnston, an occupational therapist and PhD candidate in Perth, describes the 'Peggy Lego' program, a theoretically driven prewriting program that addresses prewriting motor patterns in the early years.

Following on from this article, we have a new article format where practitioners share their top tips or top resources on a given topic. In this edition, Kathryn Thorburn shares her 'Top 15 Resources for Writing'. Thorburn— a dual-qualified teacher and speech pathologist with a significant amount of expertise in instruction across all 3 tiers of intervention— identifies 5 practical resources, 5 technology tools, and 5 reference books that she often recommends to those working on writing instruction.

To wrap-up, we have Hema Desai who has written a book review for 'The Writing Rope: A Framework for Explicit Writing Instruction in All Subjects' by Joan Sedita.

A sincere thank you to our contributors for this issue. Thank you for generously sharing your knowledge and expertise with our readers, and for your patience in working with me on my first edition as editor. If you are interested in contributing to a future edition of the Bulletin, please get in touch at bulletin.editor@ldaustralia.org.

Finally, I would like to thank my predecessor, Julie Scali, who helped curate and produce four excellent editions of the Bulletin in 2022 and 2023. Julie brought us four special editions covering mathematics, Tier 2 intervention, oral language and writing. These, and previously published editions of the Bulletin, are available to read on the LDA website. I hope that I can bring the same level of knowledge,

enthusiasm and rigour to the role of Bulletin editor that Julie did. Happy reading everyone!

Laura Glisson, Editor, LDA Bulletin

Laura is a Certified Practising Speech Pathologist (Speech Pathology Australia) with over 13 years experience working with school-aged children and young people with speech, language and literacy difficulties. Laura works as the Co-director and Co-founder of Tracks to Literacy, where she provides professional learning support to educators and clinicians on oral language and literacy instruction, intervention and assessment. Laura also works clinically with upper primary and secondary-aged students with language, literacy and associated mental health difficulties, and is a member of the Language and Literacy in Young People research lab at Curtin University in Perth.

References:

- Sedita, J. (2019). *The Writing Rope: The strands that are woven into skilled writing*. Rowley, MA: Keys to Literacy.
- Berninger, V.W., Abbott, R.D., Abbott, S.P., Graham, S., & Richards, T (2002). Writing and Reading: Connections Between Language by Hand and Language by Eye. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*. 35(1), 39-56.

LDA & AJLD Awards

Celebrating our Professional Colleagues

- Would you like to see formal recognition of a colleague who has a career history that involves valuable contributions to the area of learning and learning difficulties through research and practice, innovative programs or excellent work as an LDA Consultant? The LDA Mona Tobias, Bruce Wicking and Rosemary Carter Awards, named in honour of our predecessors in the field, are all designed for this purpose.
- Would you like to celebrate a university student who is doing excellent research and producing publications in the area of literacy or learning difficulties? Let them know that they can apply for the LDA Tertiary Student Award.
- Would you like to see special recognition of a researcher in the field who is still in the early stages of their career? The publishers of LDA's Australian Journal of Learning Difficulties (AJLD), Taylor & Francis, provide a generous and prestigious Early Career Researcher Award to the first author of an outstanding article accepted for publication in the Journal. You can inform researchers you know about this opportunity.
- Would you like to have the chance to applaud a successful researcher whose work has made an important difference to you in your own career supporting children with learning difficulties? Taylor & Francis have available a generous Eminent Researcher Award, awarded by invitation of the AJLD Editor. Acceptance of the award involves the submission of an article to the AJLD, and these articles always provide an excellent bonus for the readers of the journal. Please contact LDA if you would like to put forward a suggestion for an eminent researcher who you would like to see considered for this award.

Recipients are presented with their awards at the LDA Annual General Meeting.

Criteria and nomination procedures for all the awards, and lists of previous recipients, are available on the LDA website.

All nominations for the 2024 awards are due by 30th June. Contact enquiries@ldaustralia.org if you would like more information, or for information and to apply, go to www.ldaustralia.org/award-nominations/

