

Bulletin



**Special Issue:
Learning Struggles
and Resilience**

LDA Council 2019-20

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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

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From the President

Lorraine Hammond

I recently had the opportunity to travel to the regional school in Western Australia where I began my career as a secondary English teacher in the 1990s. I didn't last long teaching the classics. One term in, I realised that my students, who ranged in age from 13 to 16 and were all in one class, did not have the reading skills to meet their needs. One term later I stopped trying to 'love them to literacy' and turned to *Corrective Reading*, a scripted Direct Instruction program recommended to me by a colleague but denounced by my university lecturers. A drought conspired against me and when numbers dropped, I moved to a neighbouring school where I met more of the same adolescents with the same reading difficulties.

As someone who has taught adolescents to read, I can attest to the importance of early intervention. The social, emotional and economic costs of poor literacy my students experienced left a lasting impression on me, and since then I have spent most of my life teaching pre-service and in-service teachers about evidence-based reading instruction to prevent instructional casualties and to best support those students with enduring learning disabilities.

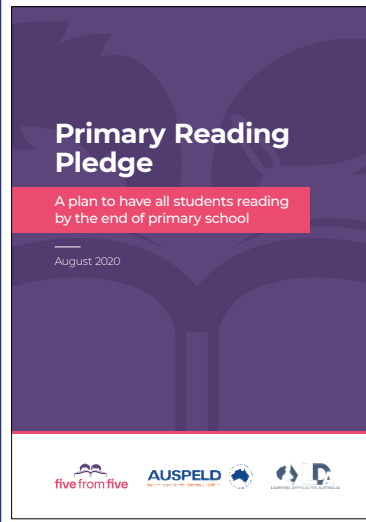
When Dr Jennifer Buckingham invited LDA and AUSPELD to collaborate on *The Primary Reading Pledge*, we embraced the opportunity for LDA to influence primary school teachers and administrators in their choice of systematic, synthetic reading programs.

It is not that Australian teachers don't teach phonics. In fact it is common practice in schools these days. But it may well be the choice of program and whether the phonics instruction is systematic, structured, and synthetic, and also whether it is implemented with fidelity, that could be behind the

high number of students entering high schools with poor reading skills.

The *Primary Reading Pledge* is a campaign to call on all Australian State and Territory Ministers to implement a systemic intervention plan to substantially reduce the number of children who leave primary school unable to read. The proposal calls on them to provide diagnostic assessment and appropriate evidence-based intervention to all children who do not achieve benchmarks in the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check (where applicable), and the Year 3 and Year 5 NAPLAN assessments.

Primary Reading Pledge: To reduce to near zero the number of children who finish primary school unable to read by providing primary schools with the resources and training to provide effective assessment and intervention.



If you have not signed the *Primary Reading Pledge*, I encourage you to do so. https://fivefromfive.com.au/support_primary_reading_pledge

LDA's President, Dr Lorraine Hammond AM, is an Associate Professor at the School of Education at Edith Cowan University.



Lorraine divides her time between research projects on high impact instruction, teaching pre and inservice teachers, supervising higher degree students and writing and delivering professional learning for The Kimberley Schools Project. Lorraine is the Chair, Deputy Chair and Board Member of three high performing schools in WA. Lorraine has been a member of LDA Council since 2010 and has previously served as President and Vice-President