

Phonics research review confirms NSW syllabus approach

July 30, 2018

In response to the increasingly politicised arguments regarding the teaching of reading in schools, Federation commissioned Professor of Teacher Education and the Arts at the University of Sydney, Robyn Ewing, to publish a review of relevant research into teaching reading and literacy, and the role phonics plays within it.

The paper, [Exploding SOME of the myths about learning to read: A review of research on the role of phonics](#), was released last Thursday, with a link emailed to all Federation members.

The paper aims to first review the most well-established predictors for success in learning to read, before reviewing contemporary research on the teaching of phonics and the role it plays in learning to read.

In the paper, Professor Ewing documents “the advantage to systematic teaching of phonics alongside other, clearly established known strategies that foster the development of children’s reading”.

The paper states that research over recent decades demonstrates “that systematic phonics instruction is a valuable strategy in helping children learn to read, especially when tailored to meet individual students’ needs and used with other strategies in a broad and rich literacy curriculum”.

Federation President Maurie Mulheron said Professor Ewing’s review shows that the research supports the approach to teaching reading currently written into the Australian Curriculum, and particularly the NSW syllabuses.

“The key issues here are professional judgement and adequate resourcing,” Mr Mulheron said. “Teachers know the students in their classrooms and need to be free to employ the most appropriate strategies as required.”

“Similarly, when a teacher identifies a student who is struggling to learn to read, they need to have immediate access to adequate resources and supports, such as speech pathologists, to ensure that student achieves the best possible outcomes.”

Professor Ewing’s paper takes direct aim at the controversial mandatory synthetic phonics check, which has been implemented in the United Kingdom, concluding that the research does not support the policy of implementing such a check in Australian schools.

Federation members interested in learning more about phonics in the classroom can access professional learning via the [Centre for Professional Learning \(CPL\) website](#).

