

Media Release

Teaching with Impact: Evidence-Based Reading Instruction for ACT Schools

28/04/2025: More than 180 educators from across the ACT – the vast majority from public schools – have registered to attend today’s workshop with leading literacy expert Professor Lorraine Hammond AM, reflecting the strong interest in evidenced-based reading instruction in Canberra public school classrooms.

The 2024 NAPLAN results show that 1 in 3 Year 9 students in Canberra are not proficient in reading and maths. Among these struggling students, those who are educationally disadvantaged are overrepresented, indicating a significant equity gap.

Hosted by Snow Foundation, the free professional development workshop *Teaching Reading Explicitly* - held at the National Convention Centre - brings together teachers, school leaders, allied health professionals, and education policymakers. The event builds on the ACT Government’s Strong Foundations initiative, focused on closing the equity gap in education by promoting consistent, high-quality teaching practices across the system.

Professor Hammond is recognised nationally for her expertise in the science of reading. She played a key role in introducing high-impact teaching practices in Catholic schools across Canberra and the surrounding region, which have already led to measurable improvements in student reading outcomes through dedicated coaching and leadership support.

Professor Hammond has also led the Kimberley Schools Project in Western Australia, where reading outcomes improved significantly in remote schools, despite challenges like low attendance and high disadvantage.

Workshop attendees include representatives from the ACT Education Directorate and multiple school leadership teams. Several public schools have sent their entire teaching staff, while others are represented by principals, deputy principals and executive teachers.

“Teachers are inherently altruistic, when given the right tools and support, they’re eager to adopt methods that demonstrably improve learning,” said Scarlett Gaffey, Executive Director at Snow Foundation. “We know that high-quality, evidence-informed teaching changes lives, and today’s turnout shows a real appetite for this in our public schools.”

The workshop covers structured literacy, daily review, and how neuroscience, cognitive, and behavioural science inform effective reading instruction. Teachers learn to deliver fast-paced, engaging lessons using mini whiteboards for spelling and writing, with immediate, specific feedback that creates a fun, dynamic environment with plenty of practice.

Professor Hammond said she was encouraged by the change in momentum. “Teachers make the difference,” she said. “What we’re seeing today is a group of professionals who are curious, committed and ready to make change.”

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“The best way to ensure lasting change is for schools and systems to embed these practices through ongoing coaching and support. One-off professional development is a great start, but we need sustained, system-wide commitment.”

“When schools have access to skilled coaches who model techniques and provide ongoing feedback, the change is deeper and longer lasting.”

For this work to be effective at scale, ongoing support from the ACT Education Directorate will be vital, particularly to help embed these practices and sustain coaching across schools.

“We are proud to support educators on this journey and look forward to an ongoing partnership with the ACT Education Directorate,” Ms Gaffey said. “This is about lifting outcomes for every child in every school, and it is part of Snow Foundation’s broader commitment to equity in education.”

Photos from the workshop will be available from Monday afternoon.

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