



# Reading Position statement

In Queensland state schools, reading is taught across all learning areas of the Australian Curriculum using evidence-informed teaching practices.

## Our commitment to reading

### To our students:

The Department of Education is committed to every student realising their reading potential. This is achieved through teaching reading across all learning areas and subjects of the Australian Curriculum using an evidence-informed approach. Research suggests that 95% of students can learn to read successfully when provided explicit, evidence-informed reading instruction.<sup>7,15</sup>

### To our staff:

The department will provide on-demand access to a suite of capability development, resources and advice that reflects contemporary research evidence. This will support educators and leaders on their continuous journey to improve student reading outcomes.



## The importance of reading

Reading has the power to change lives. It plays an essential role in learning, securing a job and being an active and engaged member of society. Reading provides us with information, knowledge, and makes us aware of people and places beyond our immediate circles. Learning foundational reading skills supports wellbeing and can translate to a love of reading and literature. As so much of our world rapidly changes around us, learning to read remains one of the most essential outcomes of schooling.

## Reading

Reading is the process of decoding and making meaning from text. Unlike speaking and listening, reading is not a naturally developing skill — all students need to be explicitly taught to read.<sup>2,3,15</sup>



## Our evidence base

Reading is taught through all learning areas and subjects of the Australian Curriculum, using evidence-informed practices. The updated curriculum provides increased clarity for teaching reading and has informed our Position statement.

Evidence-informed practices are drawn from a vast body of multi-disciplinary research which provides an understanding of how we learn to read, and the most effective instructional strategies to teach reading.<sup>1,2,11</sup>

### The Simple View of Reading

The Simple View of Reading is a theoretical framework widely supported for understanding reading.<sup>6,8,9,15</sup> It suggests that reading comprehension, or being able to gain meaning from text, is the **product** of word reading and language comprehension. The Simple View of Reading emphasises that if either component (word reading or language comprehension) is underdeveloped, reading comprehension will be impacted.



**Word reading** involves the use of phonemic awareness and phonic knowledge to decode written words. In Standard Australian English (SAE) this requires students to map 44 speech sounds (phonemes) to 26 letter or letter combinations (graphemes). Students blend sounds to read words, and segment words into sounds to spell. When students repeatedly decode words using letter-sound relationships, the words are committed to long-term memory through the process of orthographic mapping. This process supports automaticity and fluent reading.<sup>4,5</sup>

Word reading skills, specifically phonemic awareness and phonics, require explicit instruction.<sup>1</sup> Systematic synthetic phonics provides a solid foundation for word reading and writing by teaching the grapheme-phoneme correspondences of SAE in a planned, cumulative sequence. Decodable texts support beginning readers to apply their phonic knowledge and phonemic awareness at text level.

**Language comprehension** (sometimes termed listening comprehension in literature) is the ability to gain meaning from the language of text. It includes oral language, background knowledge, vocabulary, syntax and inferencing skills.<sup>9</sup> Language comprehension continues to develop across the life-span, and becomes the critical determinant of reading comprehension when word reading is automatic.

In the early years of school, shared and dialogic discussions about texts can support students reading. In later years, strategic text-based discussions related to complex curriculum texts continue to build reading comprehension.



## Scarborough's Reading Rope

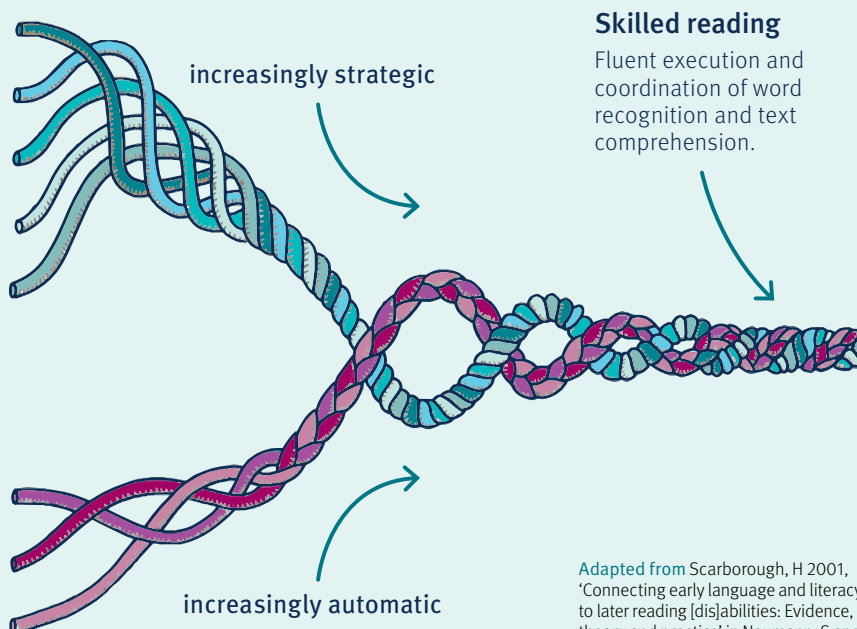
Scarborough's Reading Rope<sup>13</sup> confirms and extends the **Simple View of Reading**, identifying language comprehension and word recognition as essential components for skilled reading. It provides an additional scaffold through the rope metaphor, representing the interaction and interconnectedness of the components as students transition from beginning to skilled reader.

### Language comprehension

- **Background Knowledge** (facts, concepts, etc.)
- **Vocabulary** (breadth, precision, links, etc.)
- **Language Structures** (syntax, semantics, etc.)
- **Verbal Reasoning** (inference, metaphor, etc.)
- **Literacy Knowledge** (print concepts, genres, etc.)

### Word reading

- **Phonological Awareness** (syllables, phonemes, etc.)
- **Decoding** (alphabetic principle, spelling-sound correspondences)
- **Sight Recognition** (of familiar words)



Adapted from Scarborough, H 2001, 'Connecting early language and literacy to later reading [disabilities: Evidence, theory and practice]' in Neumann, S and Dickinson, D (eds.) *Handbook of Early Literacy*, Guilford Press, New York.

### Components that contribute to reading

Reviews into reading consistently identify key components necessary for reading.<sup>10,12</sup> Rather than being a framework for planning reading instruction, research emphasises the interconnectedness of the six components and sequence in which they occur for reading.<sup>14</sup>

**Phonemic awareness:** the ability to identify and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) within words

**Phonics:** the relationship between letters and sounds used to decode words when reading, and encode words in spelling

**Fluency:** the ability to read with accuracy, automaticity and prosody; fluency is an outcome of the components of reading

**Vocabulary:** the understanding of word meanings

**Comprehension:** understanding the meaning of written text; comprehension is an outcome of the components of reading

**Oral language:** provides the foundation for reading and writing

Reading is a complex process that involves the integration of these components. The Simple View of Reading and Scarborough's Reading Rope provide a framework for understanding how the components are interconnected and lead to skilled reading comprehension.<sup>1</sup>

## Text selection

As students' progress through year levels, they read increasingly complex curriculum texts, both in terms of structure and content. This requires continual instruction in the underpinning components of reading to ensure that students are able to read, comprehend and learn from texts. Intentional text selection that builds students' knowledge in a cumulative way supports reading. Authentic texts including picture books, literary and non-fiction texts are an essential component of reading instruction, and support student engagement.

## Assessment of reading

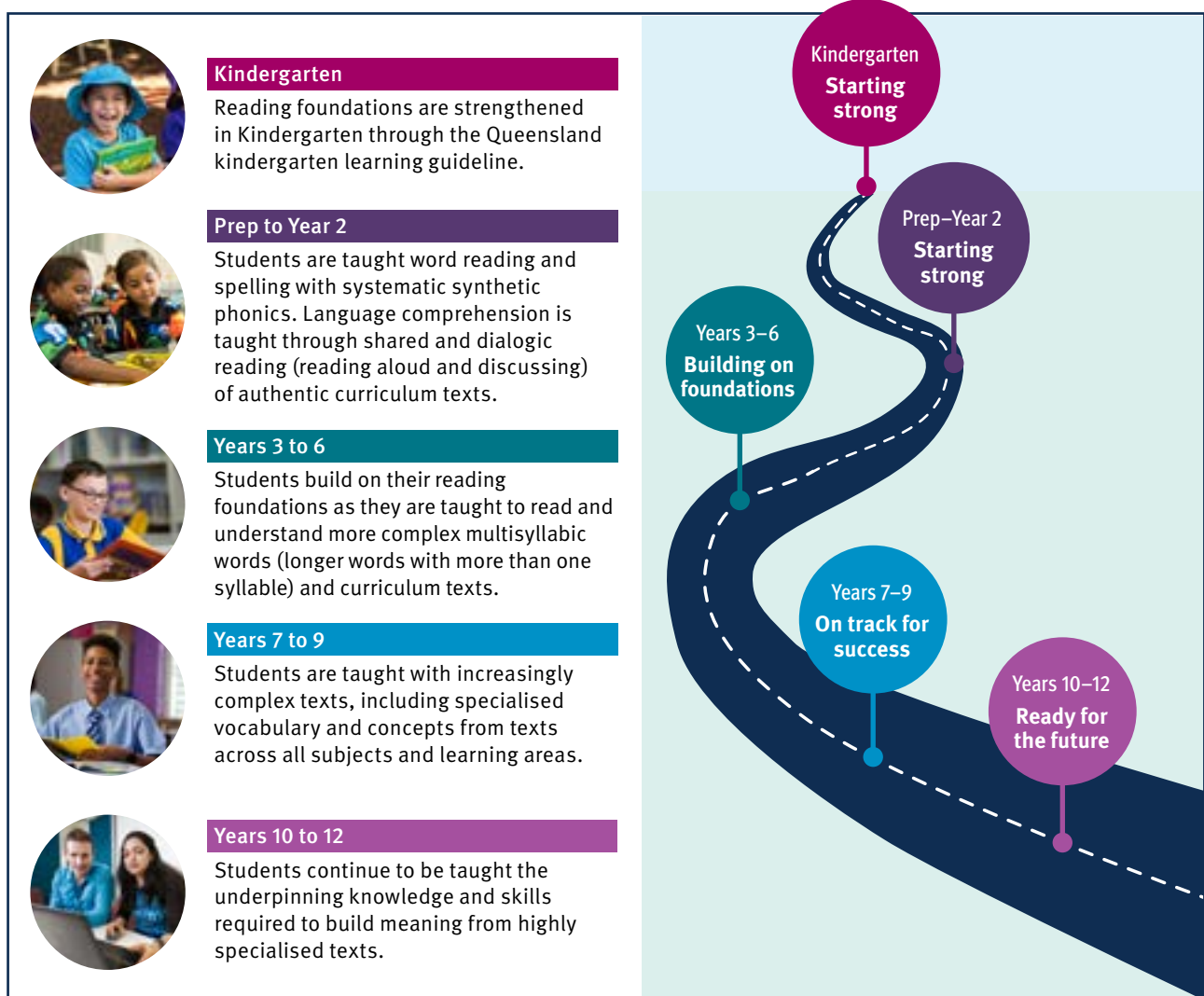
Reading comprehension is the outcome of a number of interconnected and interdependent cognitive processes. Given this complexity, assessing reading involves collecting specific data about a student's learning in relation to the essential components of reading, so that teaching is responsive to students' needs. This includes monitoring reading proficiency through the Australian Curriculum and using additional, evidence-based tools as required to identify students' reading needs and inform instruction.

## Differentiated reading instruction

Teaching reading in Queensland state schools is characterised by sequential content delivery, structured lessons and formative assessment to inform responsive and targeted differentiation. An explicit approach to teaching reading includes students mastering foundational skills before moving to more complex concepts. An individualised approach supports students across all year levels to retain knowledge and skills through purposeful practise, and the application of taught skills in line with their individual learning strengths and needs.

## Teaching reading across the phases of school

At each stage of learning, reading plays an integral role in students experiencing success. Reading is taught through the Australian Curriculum using evidence-informed practices across all learning areas and phases of learning.



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