

29–30 October 2026

PETAA Leading with Literacy Conference: 2026 Program



Attend in person:

Royal Randwick, Sydney

Attend Online:

Livestreamed and on-demand

petaaconference.edu.au

Illustration by Kathleen McLean

About the Conference

PETAA's 2026 Leading with Literacy Conference returns to Sydney at the iconic Australian Turf Club at Royal Randwick Racecourse, while remaining committed to equity and access for all teachers by delivering the Conference online via livestream and later on-demand.

This year's conference focuses on the **vital role of knowledge-building through the curriculum**, exploring the reciprocal relationship between knowledge and literacy. When students engage in content-rich learning that builds conceptual understanding, their literacy skills — reading, writing, and speaking — are deepened and enriched.

Across two days of keynotes and practical sessions, we'll unpack evidence-based pedagogy to foreground the importance of background knowledge, comprehension, vocabulary, engaging and challenging texts, writing, and purposeful classroom talk.

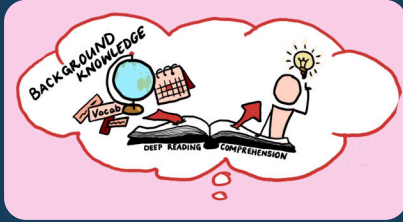
Who should participate?

- **Teachers Kindergarten/Foundation – Year 8**
- **Literacy Leaders & Instructional Coaches**
- **Principals, Deputy & Assistant Principals**
- **Heads of Teaching and Learning**
- **Heads of Curriculum and Instruction**
- **Teacher Librarians**
- **EAL/D Coordinators**
- **Your whole teaching team**

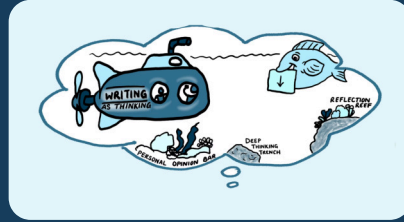
For effective implementation of strategies, insights, and learnings from the Conference

Conference Outcomes

Understand the interconnected relationship between literacy and knowledge rich learning across all learning areas so that students:



Build deep reading comprehension through background and domain knowledge, including vocabulary.



Use writing to consolidate learning, deepen thinking, demonstrate understanding, personal opinion, and reflection.

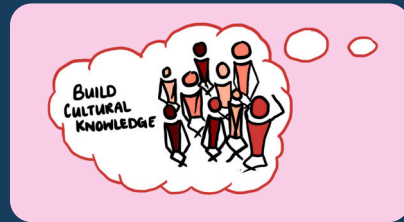


Discover the place of rich and purposeful talk to help students process new knowledge and clarify thinking.

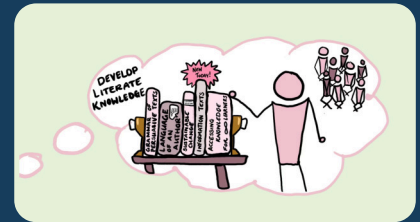
Integrate all three modes of English to strengthen reading, writing and talk through rich, challenging and varied text choices in both English and other learning areas:



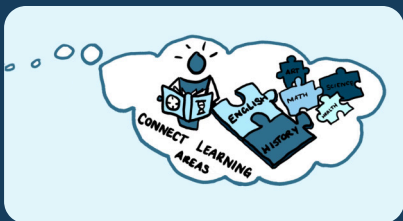
Prioritise vocabulary as knowledge being critical to literacy. Words are deep knowledge that transfer across contexts: the power to unlock meaning.



Integrate diverse cultural knowledge and perspectives to ensure equitable access to learning and to cultivate empathy, curiosity and critical thinking.



Build your professional literate knowledge to explicitly support students to become capable writers and speakers, and discerning readers.



Knowledge gives students power: to know how and what to write, how to read critically, and express ideas orally, building a students' understanding of themselves and their place in the world. Literacy is the key to creating engaging classrooms where challenging, deep learning is embraced by all!

Day One: Morning Plenaries

8:30

Welcome to Country

8:35

Opening address: What is knowledge rich?



Megan Edwards, CEO, PETAA

8:50

Vocabulary as knowledge: The wonder of words

- The significance of vocabulary to oral language, reading and intellectual development, social and emotional growth, and ultimately to broader life outcomes.
- The urgency of building our own vocabularies, and how to do this.
- Effective teaching of vocabulary — incidentally and explicitly.



Dr. Deslea Konza, Literacy researcher and educational consultant

9:50

Whose knowledge counts? Creating equity in a knowledge-rich literacy curriculum

- Curriculum is never neutral — who is seen, whose stories are told, and whose ways of knowing are valued directly shapes the nature of literacy instruction and children's engagement and achievement.
- A truly knowledge-rich curriculum should encompass three interconnected knowledges: the knowledge embedded in, and required by, the curriculum itself; the cultural and linguistic funds of knowledge children bring to learning; and the knowledge teachers hold about their students.
- Drawing on international fieldwork and doctoral research this keynote offers teachers a compelling evidence base and practical strategies for ensuring every child's knowledge counts.



Associate Professor Helen Adam, Researcher in children's literature and literacy and PETAA President

10:45

Morning Tea

Day One — Teachers stream

11:15

Whose story is it? Critical literacy and picture books in history

- Considering the social, cultural, political and historical contexts of picture books and their value as historical artefacts.
- Thinking critically when curating texts for the history classroom.
- Comparing picture books and voices across time.



Joanne Rossbridge, Independent language and literacy consultant

11:45

Author studies to build literate knowledge

- We can learn about ourselves and the world through story
- Repeated exposures to rich texts helps to build knowledge of the way language works in context
- Getting to know an author through their writing supports the development of our literate identity



Karen Rogers, Head of Literacy and Teacher Librarian, Junior Campus Xavier College.

12:15

Author session (Details TBA)



*Kate Simpson, children's author. Her award-winning titles include *How to Move a Zoo* and *Unreal! Can You Tell Fact From Fake?**

Extend your learning with PETAA membership

[PETAA members](#) receive significantly discounted Conference rates, plus exclusive access to whole-school staff registration — making it easier than ever to bring the conference to your entire teaching team.

Membership also provides ongoing access to evidence-based resources, professional learning, and classroom materials, supporting schools to embed and sustain the work beyond the conference.

Day One — Leaders stream

11:15

Leading Sustainable Development in Schools

- Leading for lasting impact — how to plan and enact purposeful, staged, collaborative efforts.
- Leading with flexibility — how to navigate the messiness of research versus reality.
- Leading with clarity and vision — how to articulate forms and functions of leadership in your context with attention to roles, systems and processes.



Emina McLean, Independent Literacy consultant

12:05

Leading with Knowledge: Aligning Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment for School Improvement

- Deepening shared knowledge of language to align curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, strengthening growth in literacy and learning.
- Organising curriculum through text to connect knowledge, language and task, supporting equity and excellence in practice.
- Applying finer-grained analysis of student work to enable data-informed, responsive teaching.



Kenmore State School

Build a coherent approach to literacy improvement across your school

The Leading with Literacy Conference becomes most powerful when schools use the learning beyond the conference itself — revisiting ideas, building shared language and connecting professional learning to classroom practice over time.

A [PETAA Professional Learning Subscription Membership](#) gives your whole staff access to this full program, plus two more full Leading with Literacy Conferences on-demand — connecting reading, writing and knowledge-rich curriculum through shared professional learning across your staff.

Day One — Afternoon Plenaries

12:45

Lunch

1:45

Oral language and the construction of knowledge in learning areas

- The role of language in knowledge construction.
- The reason that intentional talk is essential for constructing knowledge and reducing cognitive load.
- The process of making talk intentional, using a Junior Primary topic of 'Living things' as an example.



Dr. Bronwyn Parkin, Literacy Consultant

2:30

The page turner novel as Trojan Horse

- Journalism - the perfect training ground for a children's novelist
- Using suspense and plot to keep readers engaged while exploring ideas
- Representing real life and moral dilemmas without being didactic



Sarah Armstrong, Children's author

3:15

Afternoon Tea

3:45

First Nations Knowledge (Session Details TBA)



Professor Margo Neale, Author, historian and curator

4:30

A short address by a major sponsor & Networking Drinks

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5:35

End of Day One

Day Two — Morning Plenaries

8:30

President's Address



Associate Professor Helen Adam, Researcher in children's literature and literacy and PETAA President

8:45

Deknowable texts: Why knowledge matters to reading and what that means for teaching

- Understanding why content knowledge is crucial for reading comprehension.
- Making time for knowledge-building.
- Organising curriculum and instruction to build knowledge effectively.



Professor Nell K. Duke, University of Michigan (USA)

9:45

Using writing to facilitate comprehension and learning

- Talking about how writing facilitates comprehension and learning.
- Presenting writing techniques for learning from text.
- Presenting writing techniques for learning material presented in class.



Professor Steve Graham, Arizona State University (USA)
Virtual presentation

10:45

Morning Tea

Want to learn more about your Conference speakers?

The Leading with Literacy Conference website contains more information, and links to help you connect, explore their work, and discover their expertise. [Get started today.](#)

Day Two — Teachers stream

11:15

The grammar of persuasive texts

- Build foundational knowledge of functional grammar, with a focus on clause structure, to understand how persuasive texts construct meaning.
- Analyse persuasive and multimodal texts using functional grammar as a lens for critical evaluation.
- Apply practical classroom strategies to teach students how grammar choices influence persuasion and support critical literacy development.



Libby Baker, Primary teacher and literacy consultant

11:45

Redefining informative texts: Engaging the reader and freeing the writer

- Identifying the increasing multimodality of information texts and the literate knowledge students need.
- Addressing the tenor of modern information texts where there is often an appeal to humour, interactivity and an informal connection to the reader.
- Reflect on using modern information texts as models for writing versus traditional informative text types.



Rachael Hill, Head of Professional Learning, PETAA

11:45

Integrating oracy, reading, viewing and writing through drama

- Explore practical examples to highlight integration.
- Link practices to students' funds of knowledge and funds of identity.



Dr Margery Hertzberg, Independent language and literacy consultant

Day Two — Leaders stream

11:15

Building teacher autonomy in curriculum implementation

- Transforming whole-school culture and positioning teacher expertise at the centre of reform.
- Devolving decision-making in curriculum design through sustained engagement with EAL/D pedagogy, a functional model of language, metalinguistic understanding, and the principled design of learning through the teaching and learning cycle.
- Integrating speaking and listening, reading and writing to create challenging programs and engaging classrooms.



Joanne Rossbridge, Independent language and literacy consultant

Hurstville Public School



11:45

A peek inside the notebook – opening up an author’s creative process to inform creative writing

- Drawing on professional practice - making links between the author/editor and the student/teacher relationships, and exploring creative and critical thinking and writing strategies applied by creative professionals.
- Fostering collaboration - adapting the author/illustrator relationship in narrative units to foster oral and meta language, and increase creative opportunities.
- Treating creative writing as an art form - developing an arts-based evaluation framework for creative writing units, building in space for reflection, feedback and choice justification.



Lachlann Carter, Author, Educator and Director, PETAA

12:45

Lunch

Day Two — Afternoon Plenaries

12:45

Lunch

1:45

Understanding the visual (Session details TBA)



Associate Professor Jon Callow, University of Sydney

2:30

Expert Panel

Professor Nell Duke, Associate Professor Jon Callow and Dr Deslea Konza — hosted by Associate Professor Helen Adam

3:15

Closing address



Associate Professor Helen Adam, Researcher in children's literature and literacy and PETAA President

3:30

End of Day 2

Registration Options

Join us in person at Royal Randwick or participate online — with flexible options to suit every school and budget. **Early bird pricing ends Friday 26 June 2026.**



Face-to-Face

Two energising, strategy-packed days in person at the Australian Turf Club, Royal Randwick NSW.

Member Early Bird: \$675

Member Standard: \$800

Non-Member Early Bird: \$825

Non-Member Standard: \$900

Groups of 8+ — custom quotes available

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Non-Member Standard: \$650

Whole-staff access available on request

[Register Now](#)



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2026 Conference Exhibitors

We are proud to welcome the following exhibitors to the PETAA 2026 Leading with Literacy Conference. Interested in exhibiting? [Email us.](#)

Major sponsor

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About PETAA

The **Primary English Teaching Association Australia (PETAA)** is a national not-for-profit association supporting excellence and equity in the teaching of English and literacy at all stages of schooling, from early childhood, into the critical primary years, and beyond into secondary school, where new disciplinary literacies introduced.

For over **50 years**, PETAA has provided teachers and school leaders with research-based professional learning, evidence-informed classroom resources, and award-winning reference publications aligned to Australian curricula.

Through membership, professional learning and quality resources, PETAA works to strengthen teacher expertise and ensure every child develops the language and literacy skills needed to thrive.

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petaaconference.edu.au



Email Us

pl@petaa.edu.au — find the best whole-school or group booking rate for your school



Call Us

1300 307 382 — chat about the program and your ticketing options

Remember: for the most discounted Conference rates, sign up for PETAA membership first!