

Action Learning Pilot Project **2017**

*An innovative approach to
support early career teachers to
strengthen their professional
knowledge and practice of
effective literacy teaching*



About the Project...

This initiative draws together some of **Western Australia's leading academics** in the field of literacy education and early career teacher studies. The initiative has been designed to **support beginning teachers' knowledge and understanding of effective literacy instruction** in the most meaningful context - the classroom - as they carry out action learning projects to investigate and improve their current practice. Projects will be centered around the **teachers' professional learning goals** and will specifically focus on **outcomes for students**. The projects will only focus on one or two aspects of literacy teaching and will provide teachers with an opportunity to collect evidence that will **support them in the process of transitioning from provisional to full registration**.

Our facilitators will lead each meeting and guide participants through the action learning cycle. The group will meet periodically throughout the year to discuss and refine their projects with the guidance of the facilitator. Early career teachers will be encouraged and **supported to share their projects at ALEA's annual Early Career Teachers' Conference and to disseminate their findings in ALEA's academic journals** with the support of a facilitator.

This initiative has been designed to compliment graduate teacher induction programs and support early career teachers by providing an opportunity for them to engage with professional associations and **foster the link between schools and universities**. Facilitators will help graduate teachers make the links between **classroom practice and the AITSL standards**, to assist teachers in the process of applying for full registration.



What is Action Learning?

In a book entitled 'Action Learning in School' Aubusson, Ewing and Hoban (2009) define action learning in education as:

"...professional learning involving a small group of teachers who regularly reflect and share their experiences as a community to help them understand or address a school-related issue, dilemma, problem or project. The emphasis of action learning is on the social interaction between the teachers as they share their experiences and learn from each other."

(Aubusson, Ewing and Hoban, 2009:14)

In the context of ALEA's ECT Action Learning Project, teachers will select an aspect of literacy to focus on. Support from our experienced facilitators will help teachers explore issues relating to literacy education by sharing examples, research and resources.

Furlong (2011) notes that action learning involves creating a learning environment where professionals can come together to seek answers to questions that are relevant to them and their needs. Action Learning is a form of continuous professional development that helps teachers to strengthen their professional knowledge by focusing on issues that relate directly to the needs of their students.

Action learning differs from action research, the distinction between the two is explained by McGill and Beaty:

"Action learning as a process is more general than an approach to learning. Research is not the primary aim and the project may not involve any formal research at all. The individual is undertaking learning through the process of reflection in the set and therefore the process is essentially a group process. In action research, the researcher may be a lone individual, although there will inevitably be others involved in the project... So while action learning may involve some research in the action phase, it is not essentially a research-oriented venture and indeed the research undertaken may use techniques quite different from those advocated by action research."

(McGill and Beaty, 1995: 32)

What Does the Research Say...



In Western countries we know that between **25% and 40% of beginning teachers are likely to leave the teaching profession in the first 5 years** (Ewing & Smith, 2003; Moon, 2007; Day & Gu, 2010).

A large Australian Research Council Linkage Project (2008–2012), 'Addressing the Teacher Exodus: Enhancing Early Career Teacher Resilience and Retention in Changing Times' was carried out by Professor Bruce Johnson, Professor Barry Down, Dr Anna Sullivan, Associate Professor Rosie Le Cornu, Dr Judy Peters, Dr Jane Pearce and Dr Janet Hunter. The research team identified several themes that impact the wellbeing and resilience of an early career teacher, **teacher identity** being one of these themes. ALEA Perth recognises that professional associations provide an avenue whereby early career teachers can develop their identity as effective literacy educators. The initiative seeks to foster teacher identity by providing the opportunity for ECTs to connect with the broader educational community to help them establish and develop their beliefs about quality literacy teaching. We are fortunate to have Janet Hunter participating as one of our facilitators for the project.

Further to this, Hoban et al. (2005) explains that by participating in action learning teachers become more aware of how they learn best professionally. Teachers become metacognitive about their own learning.

Meet the Facilitators



Janet Hunter

Dr Janet Hunter teaches undergraduate and postgraduate literacy programs at Edith Cowan University. She coordinates the graduate Certificate of Education (Literacy Education) for postgraduate students. Janet has a particular interest in supporting early career teachers as teachers of literacy. She was a co-researcher in the Australian Research Council funded project "Addressing the Teacher Exodus: Enhancing Early Career Teacher Resilience in Changing Times" (LP0883672) and her doctoral research the conditions surrounding early career teachers as they taught literacy in remote and rural schools in Western Australia.

Val Faulkner

Dr Val Faulkner had held a number of academic positions in universities in both Western Australia and the ACT. Her research interests include academic literacies/literacy across the curriculum, spelling, reading comprehension in the middle and upper year levels and the teaching of writing. One aspect of her academic career that she found particularly fulfilling was mentoring graduating and novice teachers within the profession.

Di Rees

Di Rees has provided leadership, professional development and support in the area of literacy learning over many years. As Principal Literacy Consultant for the Western Australian Department of Education she was responsible for providing strategic leadership in the area of literacy to schools and teachers in the public school system. Di played a significant role in the development and implementation of major systemic initiatives including the First Steps Literacy Program and the Getting it Right project. Di currently provides professional learning and advice to schools and is employed as a sessional tutor at the University of Notre Dame.

Paul Gardner

Dr Paul Gardner is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Education at Curtin University where he holds a teaching and research post. He taught at three universities in the UK before moving to WA three years ago. His specialist area is literacy education with an emphasis on writing. He is himself a published writer of several books, numerous research articles and poetry. He has an interest in education for social justice which challenges the current trend towards prescriptive curricula and high stakes testing. He believes education is premised on the empowerment of teachers and students as they negotiate understandings about the world in its many forms and facets.

Structure of Events



Term Two

Project Launch

Participants will develop an understanding of action learning and begin to identify possible action learning questions.

Meeting 1: Looking at Baseline Data *Conducted in Schools*

Participants will use the baseline data to discuss how their students are progressing/ what challenges they are facing.

Term Three

Meeting 2: Refining Practice *Conducted in Schools*

Participants will share what changes/ refinements they have made to their practice. With the support of the group and facilitator, participants will identify ways in which they can further refine their practice.

Meeting 3: Challenges and Successes *Conducted in Schools*

Participants reflect on their project and share what successes/challenges they have observed for both their students and themselves. Projects will be refined according to the challenges and successes observed.

Term Four

Meeting 4: Results and Reflections; Next Steps *Conducted in Schools*

Teachers will reflect on the outcomes of their project for the students involved and for themselves professionally. Teachers will be supported to disseminate their findings if they choose to do so.

Early Career Teacher Conference *The University of Notre Dame Australia 4th Nov*

Participants from the project will be invited along with their school principal/ mentor to share their projects with other early career and pre-service teachers.

Registration Information



Pricing Structure

non-member registration for AL Project \$150
member registration for AL Project \$100

ALEA Membership Details

**Student membership only applies to full time students and new graduates in their first year of teaching.*

| Membership Type | Membership Price |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| Student Basic* (1 year) | \$44 |
| Individual Basic (1 year) | \$94 |
| Institutional (1 year) | \$195 |

Please register your interest with Local Council President Kelly Taylor prior to **Friday 9th of June**.

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References

- Aubusson, P., Ewing, R., Hoban, G. (2009). *Action learning in schools: Reframing teachers' professional learning and development*. London: Taylor & Francis.
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- Johnson, B., Down, B., Le Cornu, R., Peters, J., Sullian, A., Pearce, J. & Hunter, J. (2012). *ECTs: Stories of Resilience*, University of South Australia, Adelaide.
- Hoban, G. F., Butler, S. and Lesley, L. (2005). 'The dynamics of teacher learning in professional development: a collaborative self-study', *Studying Teacher Education*.
- McGill, I. and Beaty, L. (1995). *Action learning: a guide for professional, management and educational development*, London: Kogan Page.
- Moon, B. (2007). *Research analysis: Attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers: A global overview of current policies and practices*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.