

Victoria's approach to teaching reading F-2

Reading is a foundational life skill and a source of pleasure and wonder.

It provides access to information, generates imagination, builds knowledge, enables creativity and shapes opinions.

This statement outlines the approach to teaching reading in the early years of school that is supported by the strongest evidence, implemented in many Victorian government schools that are achieving strong reading outcomes and will be expected to be implemented in all Victorian government primary and specialist schools commencing from 2025 with full implementation from the beginning of the 2027 school year.

Teaching reading F-2

The essential elements of reading are the 'Big 6' (Konza, 2014), each of which should form part of a structured literacy approach:

- Oral language – knowing and using spoken words to express knowledge, ideas and emotions
- Phonemic awareness – which is the knowledge of sounds (phonemes)
- Phonics – knowing the sound (phoneme) and letter (grapheme) relationships
- Fluency – reading accurately and at an appropriate rate with expression
- Vocabulary – understanding words in isolation and in context
- Comprehension – making meaning from text which includes developing knowledge of grammar.

These are the foundational skills that have a reciprocal relationship and are all necessary to enable students to independently read and respond to increasingly complex fiction and non-fiction texts.

In the early years of school, the development of decoding skills is best developed through a program that includes a minimum of 25 minutes of daily explicit teaching of phonics and phonemic awareness using a systematic synthetic phonics approach. This means teachers use a clear scope and sequence of increasingly complex grapheme-phoneme correspondences and morphology.

Students first learn to pronounce single letters and sounds and then blend them to form words. It also involves teaching students to segment sounds and spell words to make the link between reading and writing. Decodable texts are used to practice the letter-sound combinations that students have been taught. This builds students' skills so they develop automaticity and so can read words quickly and accurately.

Implementation support

Implementation support will include:

- English lesson plans aligned to the Big 6, the English Curriculum 2.0 and the Victorian Teaching and Learning Model 2.0. This includes the Phonics Plus program in F-2, progressively available in the Victorian lesson plans site, which uses a systematic synthetic phonics approach to teach reading
- Webinars and other professional learning opportunities to support implementation of this approach to teaching reading.
- \$5 million in one-off funding in early 2025 for government primary and specialist schools, to support transition to the systematic synthetic phonics approach.
- Year 1 Phonics Check, a literacy assessment aligned to the reading position, available in 2025 and implemented in all schools from 2026.
- The Victorian Teaching and Learning Model 2.0 (VTLM 2.0) and implementation of the Victorian Curriculum V2.0
- New teaching resources that will replace the current Literacy Teaching Toolkit that will be available on Arc from 2025.

Reference

Konza D (2014) 'Teaching reading: Why the 'Fab five' should be the 'Big six', Australian Journal of Teacher Education (Online) 39.12, pp. 153–169.