

Literacy in the middle years: Learning from collaborative classroom research

Joint Authors

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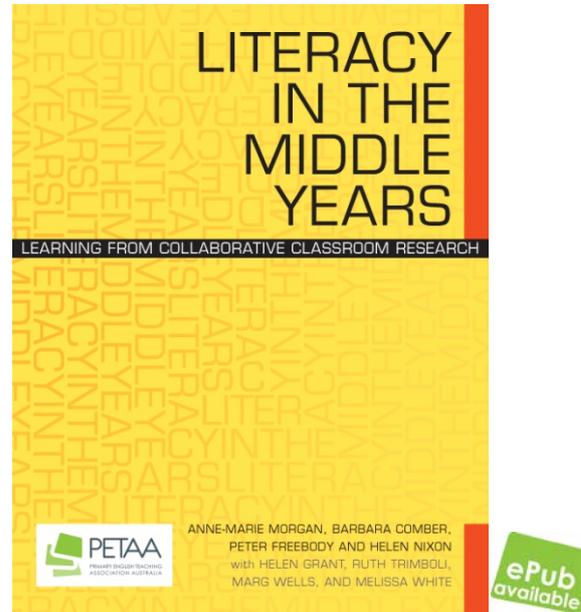
Melissa White, Ruth Trimboli, Margaret Wells, Helen Grant

New literacy demands in the middle years:

- arises from the work of middle years' classroom teachers involved in an Australian Research Council (ARC) project in which new literacy demands placed on middle years' teachers were explored through classroom-based research projects.
- will showcase, through individual teacher and school group case studies, the work of middle years' teachers, supported by university researchers and education department consultants, in both primary (Years 5-6) and early secondary (Years 8-9) classes.
- presents literacy as the overarching pedagogical focus, specifically 'new' literacies, or new literacy 'demands' of middle years teaching and learning contexts. Three pedagogical foci for investigating literacy were highlighted in the project and variously explored by the teachers: place-based pedagogies, curricula literacy pedagogies and digital and youth cultures pedagogies.
- will provide insights into how teachers are identifying and designing interventions to address new literacy demands in their school contexts, for the benefits of both improved learning for students, and enhanced wellbeing for themselves. The teachers' projects illustrate classroom practice in practical ways, supported by educational theory, to make the work accessible to teachers and useful for teacher educators.
- addresses national context imperatives, as they link directly with the Australian curriculum literacy requirements, in particular the need for understanding and implementing literacy not only in English, but as a general capability, understood generically and in specialised ways in subject or curricular literacies, including English, ESL, Science, the Arts and History; and in addressing the cross-curriculum sustainability priority, through identifying and exemplifying teacher work to support both student learning outcomes and teacher resilience and wellbeing.

The audience:

Teachers across Australia, in both primary and secondary contexts, will benefit from these exemplified practice elaborations, as well as the methodological approaches to designing classroom-based research. These examples will provide stimulus for teachers to reflect on their own work and what sustains them, and how the work of teachers can be demonstrated to and shared with others.



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About the authors

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About the authors

Joint Authors

Anne-Marie Morgan teaches in the English, Literacy and Languages Education (ELLE) team at the University of New England, where she is also a member of the Centre for Research in English and Multiliteracies Education (CREME). Her research and publication interests include literacy and languages education, the work of teachers, and Indonesian and languages and cultures studies. She is Vice President of the Northern NSW Australian Literacy Educators Association (ALEA) local council and is an executive of the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations (AFMLTA). She is the editor of the languages education journal *Babel* and author of the Indonesian textbook series *Dari Kami Ke Kita*.

Barbara Comber is a Professor in the Faculty of Education at Queensland University of Technology. She is interested in literacy education, teachers' work and social justice. Publications include the *International Handbook of Research in Children's Literacy, Learning and Culture* (Hall, Cremin, Comber & Moll, 2013), *Literacies in Place: Teaching environmental communications* (Comber, Nixon & Reid, 2007) and *Turn-around pedagogies: Literacy interventions for at-risk students* (Comber & Kamler, 2005).

Peter Freebody is an Honorary Professorial Fellow in the School of Education, University of Wollongong, Australia, and a Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia. Recent appointments include at The University of Sydney, The University of Queensland, and the National Institute of Education, Singapore. He has published in the areas of literacy education, educational disadvantage, and educational research methods. He has served on a number of state and national advisory groups in the areas of literacy and curriculum design, and is currently the Commonwealth Government's nominee on the National Literacy and Numeracy Expert Group, and a member of the Literacy Research Panel of the International Reading Association.

Helen Nixon is Adjunct Professor in the Children and Youth Research Centre and Faculty of Education at Queensland University of Technology, Australia. Her research interests include young people's relationships with place, their meaning-making using new media, and the implications of the changing landscape of communication for literacy curriculum and pedagogy.

Contributing Authors

Helen Grant teaches EALD and IELP English, Literacy and Media Arts in an inner city primary school in Adelaide. She works with students from over 45 cultural and language groups, using and creating a range of multimedia texts and resources. She researches different modes of communication and explores big themes around voice, points of view and power; as well as promoting dynamic local to global participation roles for students. She maintains close networks with teacher colleagues, academic mentors and professional artists, to ensure theory and practice are intertwined in her work. She has published a range of educational resources, and maintains and uses a large library of cultural, artistic and educational resources.

Ruth Trimboli teaches in the middle years at Woodville Gardens Birth-Year 7 School, and previously taught at Ridley Grove School, on the same site. Over the 13 years of teaching in these schools, she has had a keen interest in pursuing a curriculum that involves place and community-based education with a focus on students' lives, cultures and the local community; and has a particular interest in including learning about the environment. Ruth has been involved in a number of research projects with Barbara Comber and Helen Nixon, and with Marg Wells and students in their classes. She values these projects for providing benefits including learning from other educators, finding out what motivates and challenges students to excel, and involving students in learning experiences relevant to their lives.

Marg Wells teaches at Woodville Gardens Birth-Year 7 School in the western suburbs of Adelaide. Throughout her teaching career she has pursued an interest in the role of Place and Community-Based Education in the classroom, consistent with her strong belief that it engages students, assists learning and understanding, and fosters self-belief in students. This interest has led to her involvement in numerous research projects over several decades working with university researchers, and to her commitment to classroom-based inquiry to inform pedagogy.

Melissa White is the Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework Officer with the Department of Education and Child Development in South Australia. Previously she was a secondary Drama and English teacher, working for 17 years in regional South Australia, Canada and most recently at Brighton Secondary School in Adelaide. She has a keen interest in the role of ICTs in 21st century teaching and learning, which led to her participation in collaborative research focussed on the new literacy demands of internet research skills.