

**Primary focus**

# Mapping the Science of Learning Community in Australia

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At SOLLA Melbourne (May 2022), Knowledge Society committed to identifying and mapping the emerging impact of the Science of Learning (including the Science of Reading) on Australian schools.

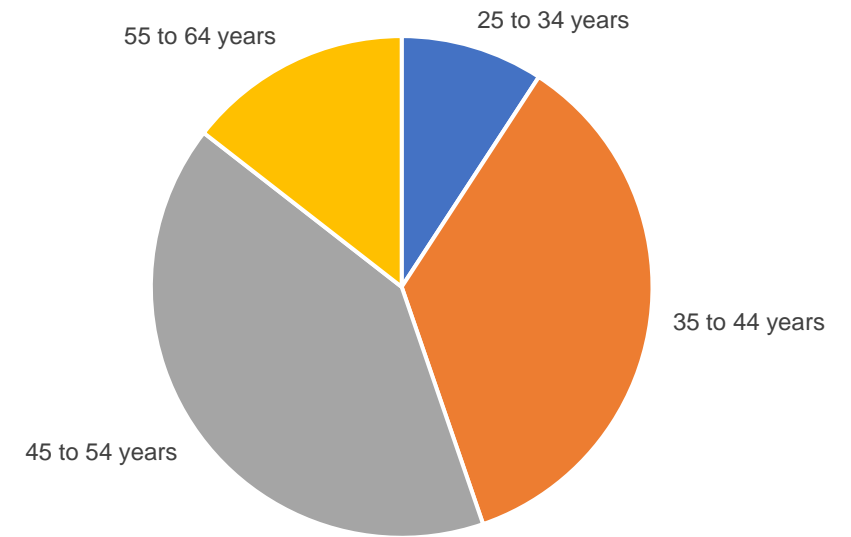
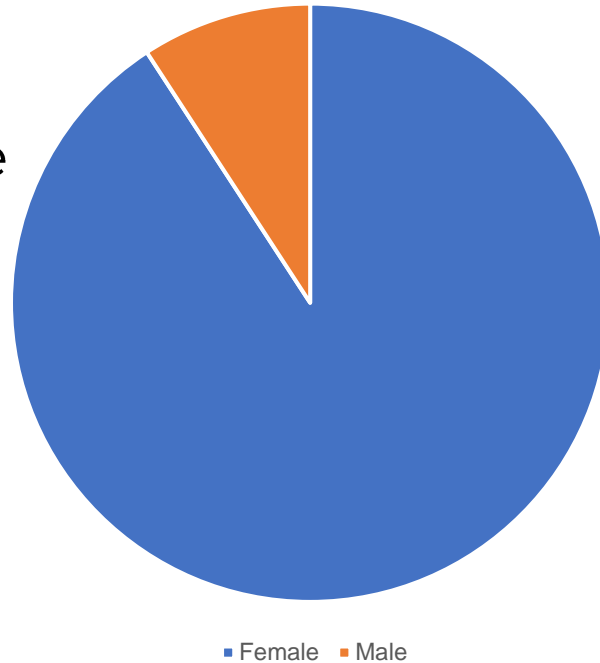
## **The purpose was to determine:**

- Change in practice in Australian schools in SoL and SoR direction
- Understand influencers and sources of knowledge valued by the teacher/leader community
- Mirror the ecosystem of change makers back to itself so that we can better understand and amplify this positive change
- Get insight into most important next steps for influence, potential allies and points of resistance
- Provide a metric for progress as collective influence expands and better teacher practice spreads across classrooms and schools

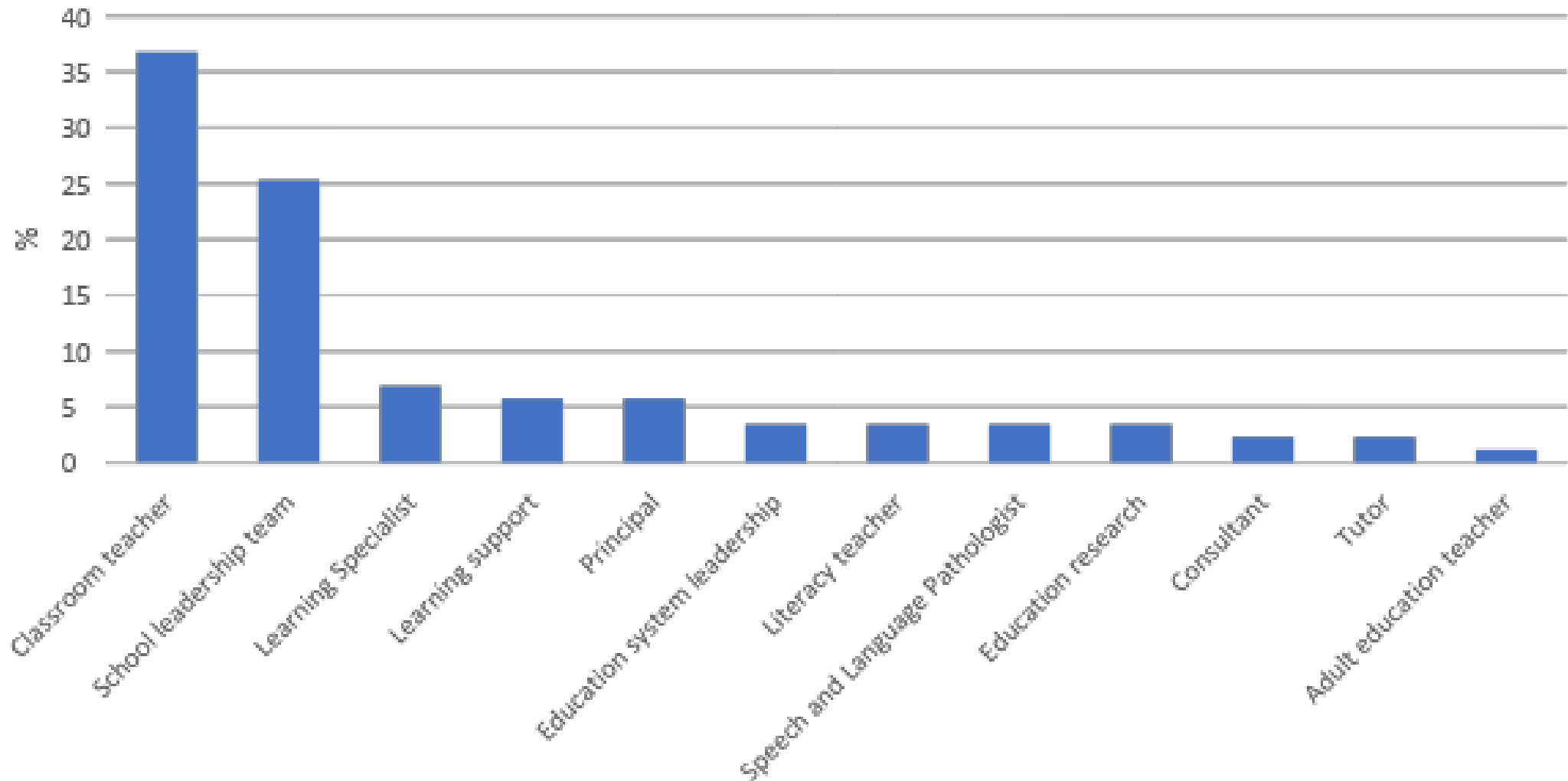
Methodology: Online survey distributed through social media networks.

# Typical member of the Science of Learning Community in Australia

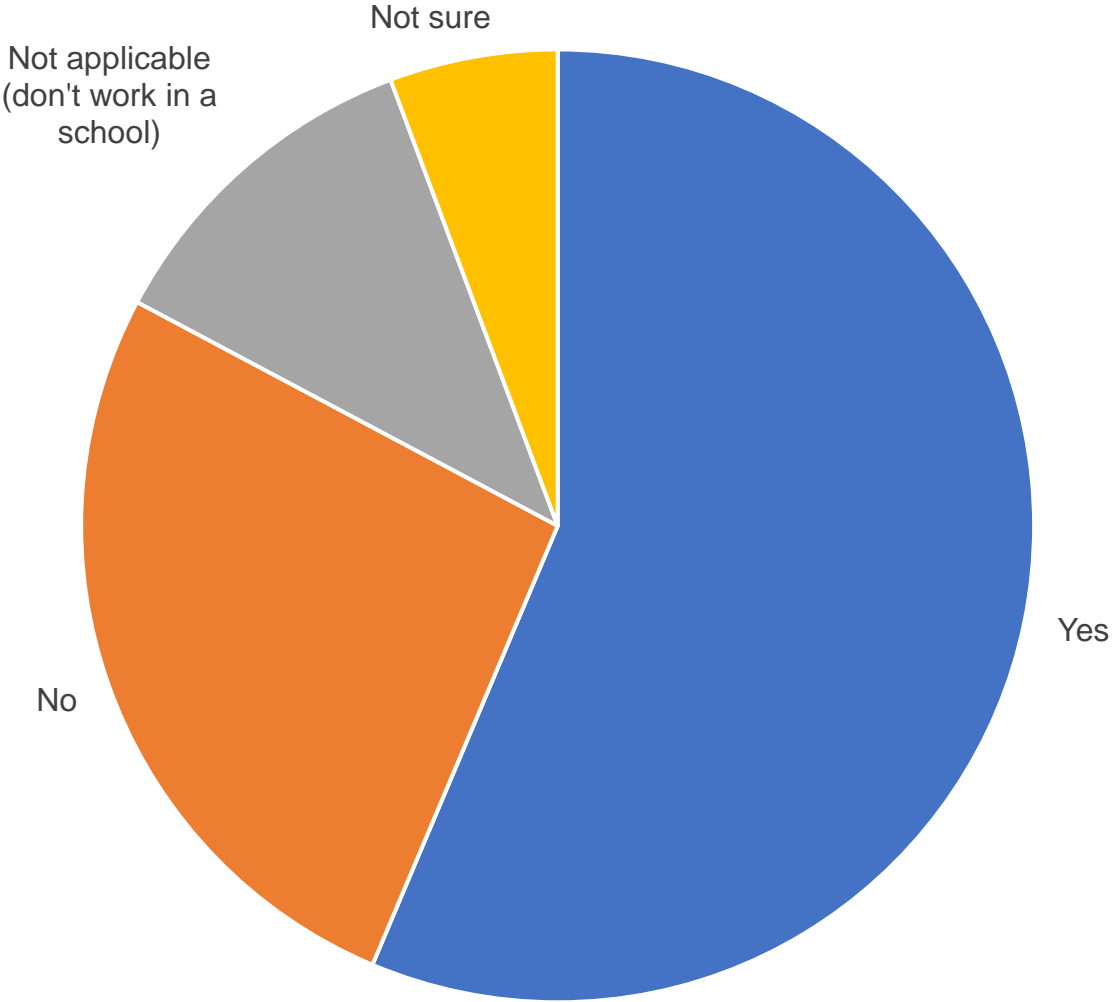
- Female
- Classroom teacher
- 45 to 54 years of age
- Lives in Victoria



# Typical role

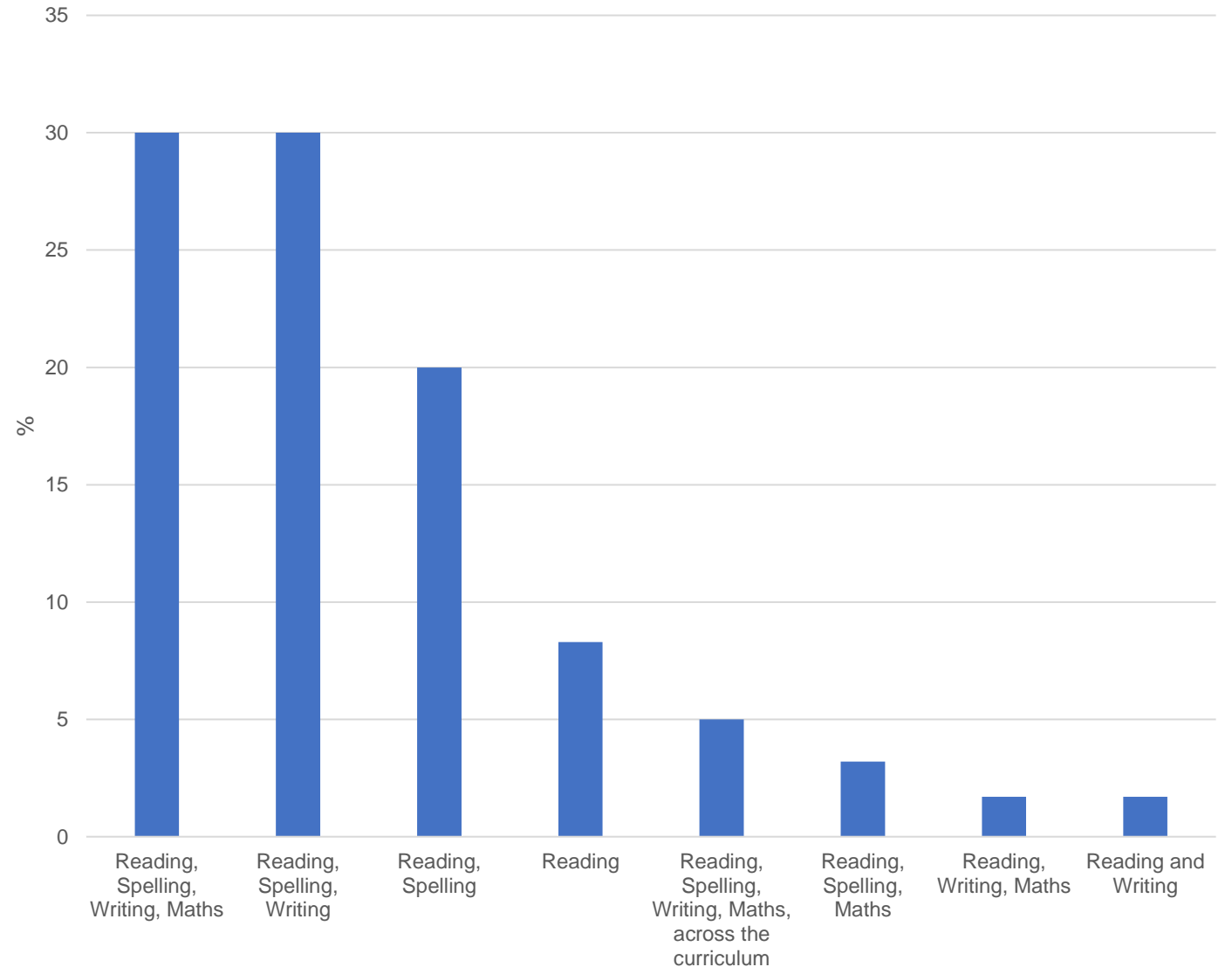


# Science of Learning practices in schools



# Curriculum areas

- Science of Learning practices evolving from initial exposure to, and implementation of, Science of Reading practices
- Gap in explicit Science of Learning spelling practices
- Some members now adopting Science of Learning practices across the whole curriculum

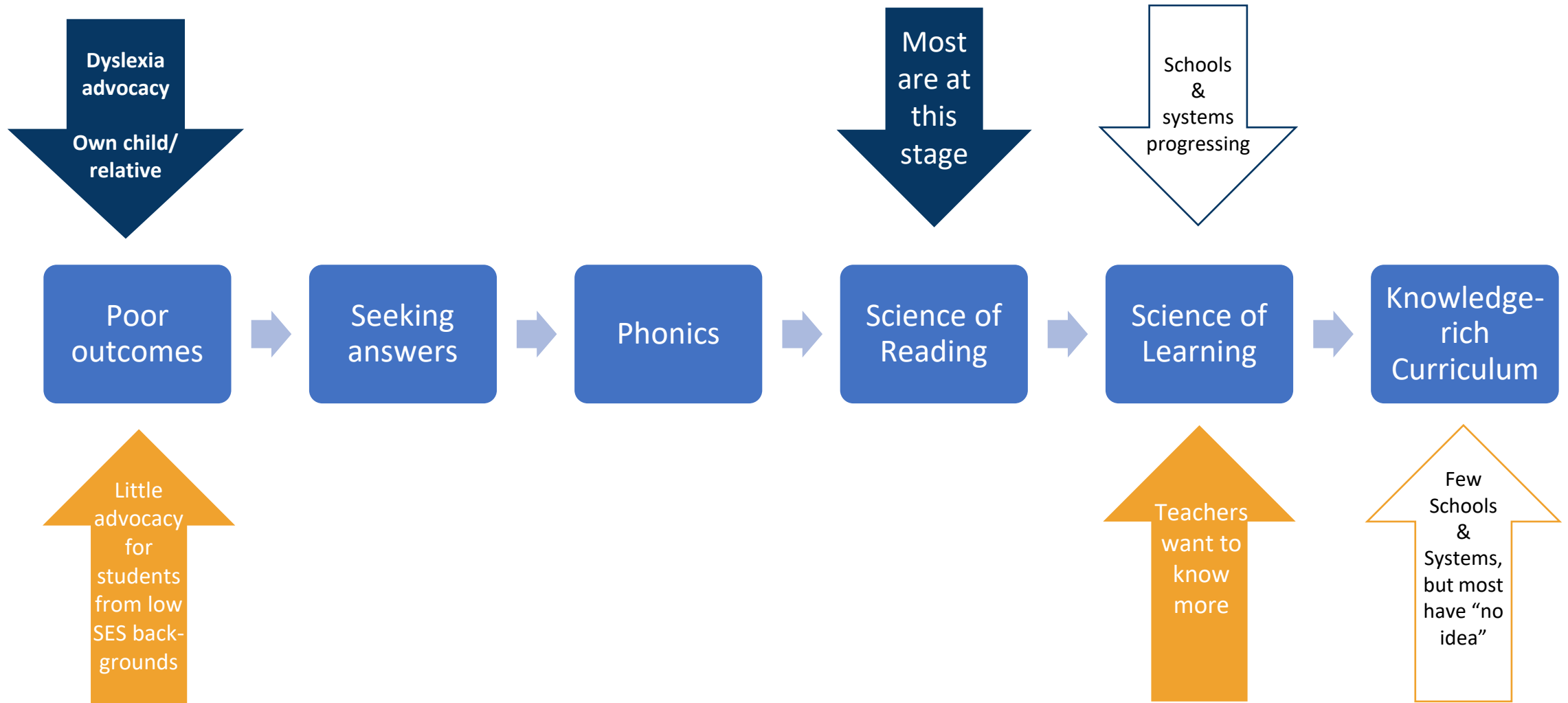


# Findings: some powerful themes

## Themes:

1. People engage with the Science of Learning/Reading driven by consistent poor learning outcomes of their students
2. They were in a quest for knowledge – and often accidentally found their way to SoL/SoR
3. When they find the knowledge it is powerful and transformational
4. This learning (online searching) is one of the benefits of the pandemic
5. For teachers – feeling alone
6. For leaders – exciting to lead change

# Process of change...





## Driven by poor outcomes

- No progress
- Struggling readers
- Intervention not working

“Blind Adam could see too many students were struggling with basic literacy.” *Classroom Teacher*

“I was shocked at my classes reading gaps and went looking for answers and stumbled across the Science of Reading.” *Classroom Teacher*

“Reading Recovery program not working, no evidence-based intervention.” *Principal*

“Feeling demoralised due to sense of helplessness for our students entering high school and already disengaged from their learning.” *School Leadership Team*

“Tracking data showed students were not making gains.” *School Leadership Team*

“I eventually decided to return and find out what was happening at the other end in primary. It led to me asking many questions about how to teach literacy and numeracy and teachers weren't able to give me an effective response.” *School Leadership Team*

“I knew it wasn't working and needed to find out why.” *Learning Specialist*



# Feeling alone

- Anguish
- On my own, own time, own resources
- Lone Ranger
- Black sheep
- Working rogue
- Operating under a cloak of darkness
- Made to feel like an outcast
- Isolated
- Out of hours

“For the most part I was working rogue, not supported by leadership or a more skilled internal support. I paid for all of my own PL including LLLL, MSL, LDA and SOLLA. I have also joined every free thing I could get my hands on. I am really happy now with what I know and how I use it, but it has taken years and versions of my thinking to get here.”

*Literacy Coach*

“I was flailing; a brand new teacher in a very difficult school with no support. I tried what was out there, sight word bingo, dolch lists, all the stuff I could get for free. My DP told me my students weren't learning to read because "I didn't love them enough.”

*Classroom Teacher*

# Transformational experience

Finding the Science of Reading/Learning has been pivotal in many educators' careers

- Turning point
- Intellectual stimulation a driving force
- Game changer
- Overwhelming
- Exciting
- Sense of relief

“SoL has changed my teaching in so many ways for which I am forever grateful and appreciative.” *Classroom Teacher*

It's been the most influential learning I've done in the 7 years I've taught –  
*Classroom Teacher*

The experience has change me as a person and an educator - *Principal*

We see that this is the 'way to go' to support ALL students – *Learning Support*

“Brilliant. Challenging, exciting to see the progress in students and share, empowering because I know what to do to help students learn.” *School Leadership Team*

“I was able to change my teaching practices and see results for my struggling readers. This made me want to learn more.” *Literacy Coach*

“It's been overwhelming as well as exciting. I love feeling like I have ideas of how to help all children learn.” *School Leadership Team*

“I specifically remember the moment I realised I had been in the wrong camp.” *Ex-Reading-Recovery teacher, now literary Teacher*

# Benefit of the pandemic

- Had to adopt new methods for
  - remote learning
  - online learning
  - Learning from home
- Additional time for
  - research
  - finding answers
  - building knowledge
- More time for social media

“I first came to explore the SoL journey in the Victorian lockdown when I was attempting to find a better way to convey learning to our students online.”

*Classroom Teacher*



“My learning throughout this period has changed my practice for the better and helped me initiate an entire shift across my school to every overarching idea for learning as well as the way we address teaching literacy and assessment.” *Learning Specialist*

“I sought a variety of professional learning (in my own time...plus side of lockdowns) and learned as much as I could.” *School Leadership Team*

“Reading Teachers Australia was started during the pandemic to collectively share our learning. It has since grown to around 8,300 members.” *Education Researcher*

“It feels like more and more teachers are talking about the Science of Reading or the Science of Learning thanks to social media platforms such as the Science of Reading in Schools Facebook group, Twitter as well as many quality blogs/websites such as Five from Five, Shanahan's blog, Spelfabet, Lifelong Literacy, and webinars and podcasts (thanks to COVID 19!).” *Classroom Teacher*

# Exciting at leadership level

Leaders were either told Science of Learning was the new pedagogy in their school, or they followed the knowledge quest path as a classroom teacher and progressed to the leadership team.

- Work together
- Committees
- Support each other
- Whole-school staff meeting PL
- Collective passion

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“I was given the licence to read and research and read and research some more and then work out how I would take best practice to my staff.” *School Leadership Team*

“The result of implementing SoR in my schools has been outstanding with 4 green boxes in our Year 3 2021 NAPLAN reading data.” *Education System Leadership*



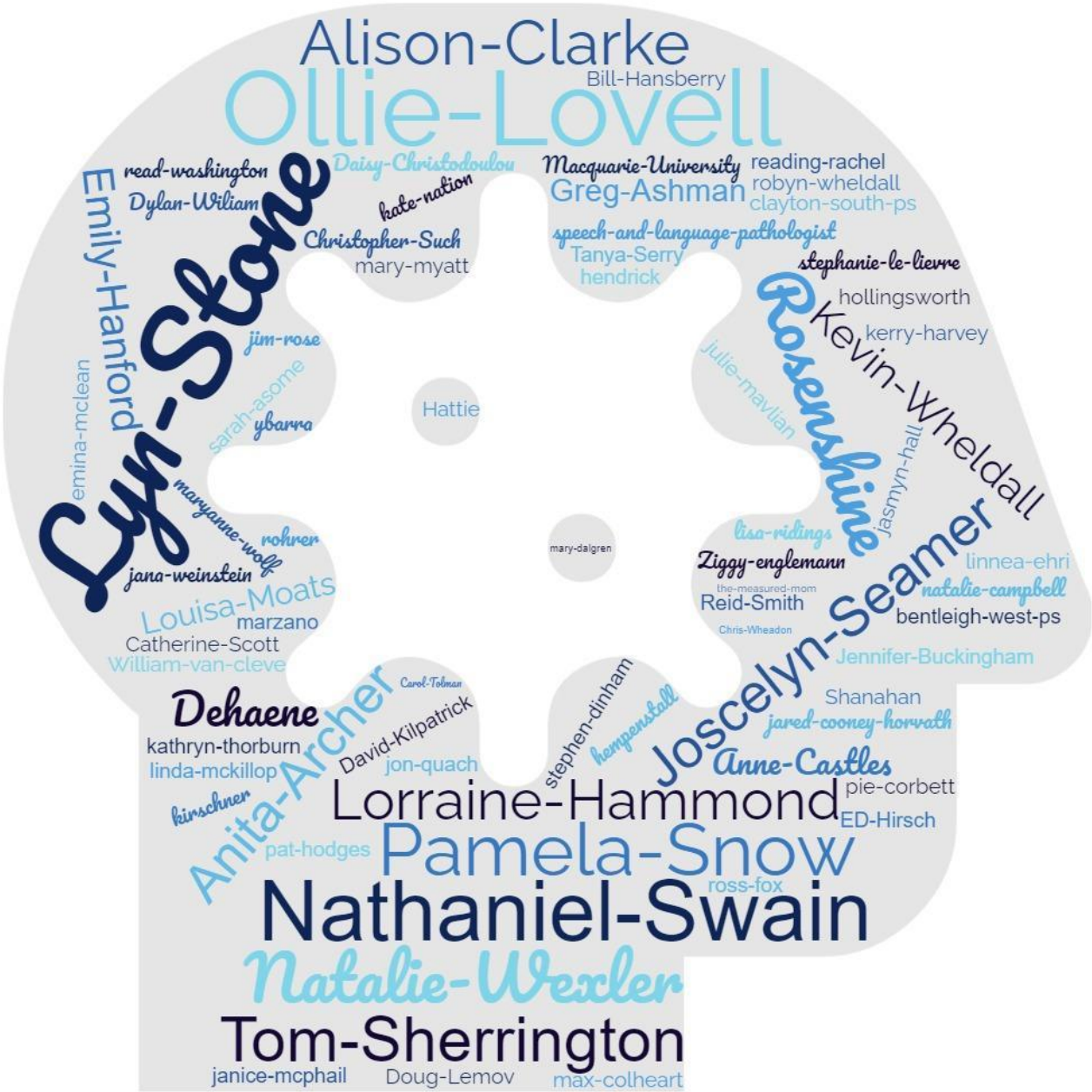
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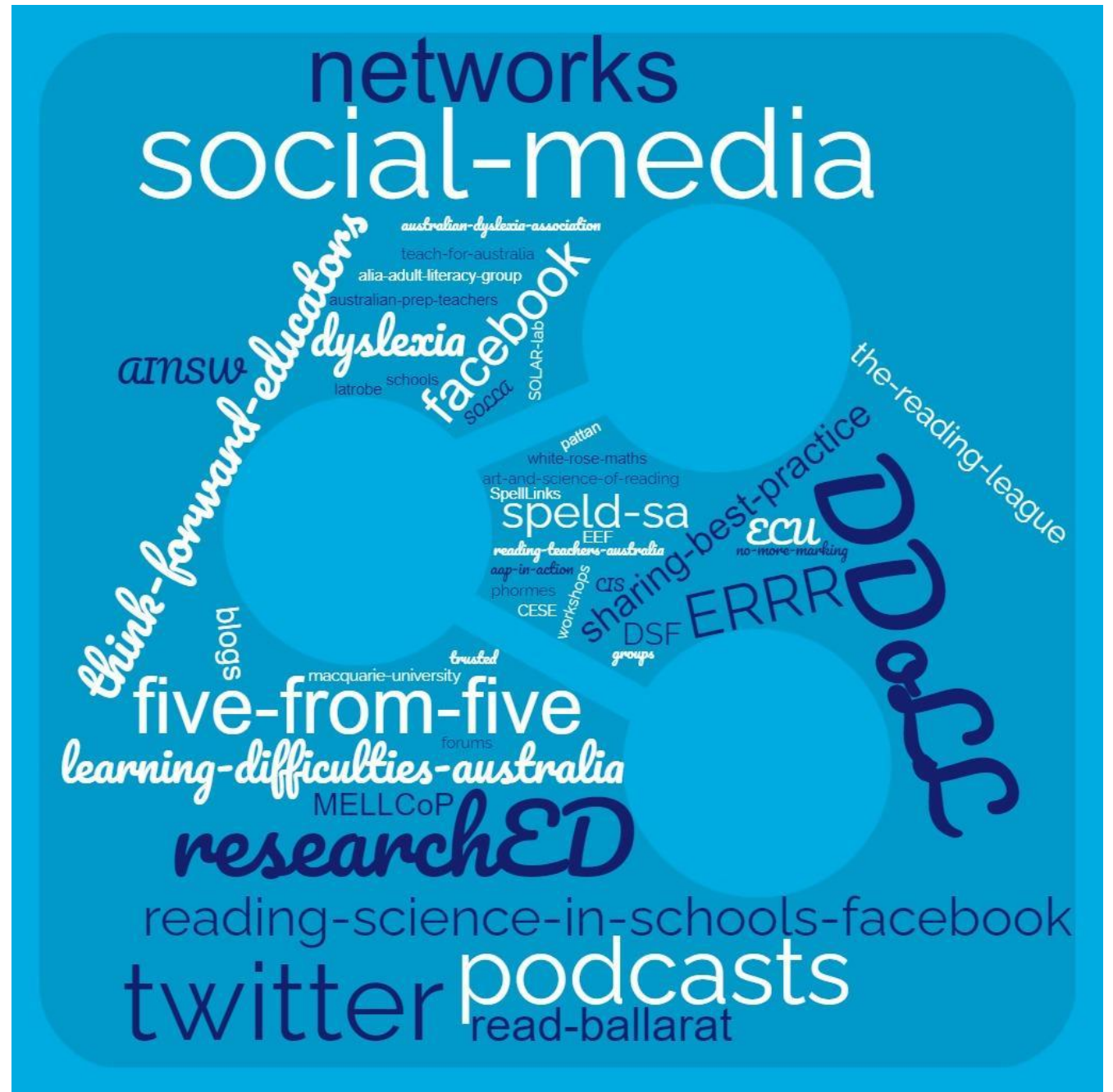
“We see that this is the 'way to go' to support ALL students. We want to continue to build the knowledge of staff as we believe that they will implement programs better when they have an understanding of why they need to use this body of knowledge with our students.” *Learning Support*

“We established a Literacy Committee who meet regularly to establish a vision, short and long term goals, identify best practices and programs, develop resources and provide professional learning and support to staff.” *School Leadership Team*

# Influencers

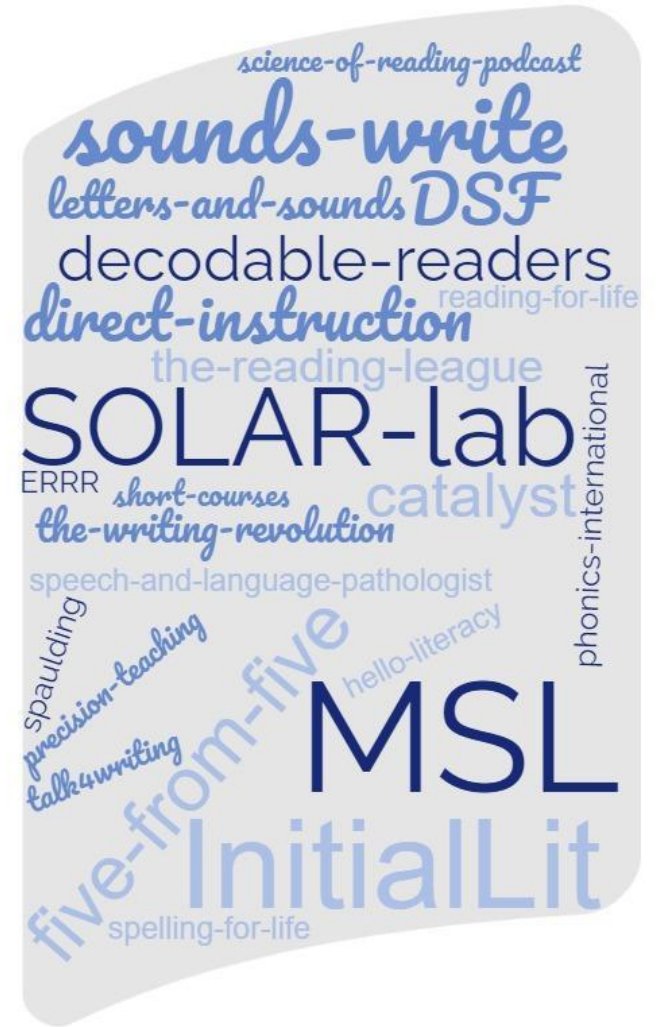


# Networks





# Resources



# What Science of Learning practices are being used?

- Science of Reading practices dominate
- Recognition of cognitive load and the role of working memory
- Focus on explicit instruction for new content
- Understanding of need for consolidation
- Daily review
- Check for understanding





# Summary

- The study offers hope that the more we get the message out, the more take up and satisfaction there will be.
- We are seeing a new level of momentum.
- There is still a long way to go.
- Science of Reading is yet to be embedded in schools and systems, let alone Science of Learning practices.
- There is limited awareness of Knowledge-rich Curriculum.
- There is a growing body of champions and influencers as well as a bottom-up wave of momentum.
- BUT there is also a strong body of dissenters and resisters.
- Social media is powerful for messaging, sharing resources, and expanding the ecosystem.

More than a decade ago progress was slow and frustrating, there is momentum gathering and it gives me great hope for the future of reading instruction in Australia – *School Leadership Team*

It's time we stopped failing children by not teaching them to read effectively! – *Principal*

I'm inspired, excited at the journey but also angry at the systems (universities, departments) that have taken our money (HECS) and sent teachers out thinking they knew what they were doing. Dismissing the cries of frustrated parents and ignoring the needs of those who need it most. How did this happen!!!! – *Principal*

The intellectual stimulation was a driving force. The more I read, listened, watched, the deeper my understanding became - I feel like a living example of Science of Learning principles! – *School Leadership Team*

It has been very frustrating along the way when colleagues around you do not share the same view. I have had to be an advocate in my school for what is current best teaching practice which is slowly starting to be listened to. – *Classroom Teacher*

My attendance at SOLLA in May did nothing but to fuel my fire and passion for ensuring that the Science of Learning is taken mainstream. Our kids deserve it. – *School Leadership Team*