

Media release

Whole-school writing approach to boost key academic skill

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Australian schools are being encouraged to move towards explicitly teaching writing across all subject areas – not just during English classes – in a bid to improve students’ skills.

The Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) today released a new evidence-based framework to guide writing instruction in Australian primary and secondary schools.

The School Writing Instruction Framework (SWIF) includes professional learning for school leaders and teachers to build knowledge about how to support the explicit teaching and assessment of writing in the context of different subject areas.

AERO CEO Jenny Donovan said students’ ability to write well was a key part of their success at school and beyond.

‘Improving and strengthening students’ writing skills is a national challenge, but the good news is we know what works to address this,’ Dr Jenny Donovan said.

‘Teaching writing isn’t just the task of English teachers; it is an important skill in all subject areas and requires explicit and systematic instruction by both primary and secondary teachers.’

‘By supporting all teachers – whether they are teaching English, science, or humanities – to feel confident teaching their students how to write well, we can build the foundations for clearer thinking, deeper learning, and lifelong success.’

AERO’s evidence-based framework was developed following a research program that included analysis of a decade’s worth of NAPLAN results.

The NAPLAN data showed average scores for persuasive writing skills had declined since 2011, with the trend more pronounced in Years 7 and 9. Persuasive writing is used in many subjects, and being able to write persuasively is important in life beyond school as well.

‘AERO’s research has found that the best approach to writing instruction is as a responsibility shared across subject areas,’ said Dr Donovan.

‘When teachers have a shared language for discussing sentence structure, grammar and punctuation, it supports a cohesive and consistent approach to teaching writing and assessment.’

Dr Donovan said writing was not necessarily a skill that all students picked up naturally, and it could be a ‘challenging skill to teach’.

‘The new School Writing Instruction Framework is designed to support teachers to become more confident in teaching and assessing writing within their own subjects,

which is not something they may have previously considered to be part of their role,' she said.

'However, by doing so, they will be setting up their students for success.'

The new framework was developed in partnership with several schools, with dozens of teachers receiving training in how to effectively instruct the unique writing techniques of their subject.

Materials build on teachers' existing knowledge and practice, offering practical and supplementary support for teachers and schools.

The online professional development includes topics on developing student writing using the building blocks of language – such as sentence structure and grammar – and assessing student writing more effectively.

Resources for school leaders offer guidance on how to implement online professional learning within their school and support teachers to engage with it.

To find out more about these new resources, see AERO's [School Writing Instruction Framework](#).

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About Us

AERO is Australia's independent education evidence body, established in 2021 and funded by the Commonwealth, state, and territory governments.

Our vision is to achieve excellence and equity in education outcomes for all children and young people through the effective use of evidence. AERO's role is to generate high-quality evidence, make it accessible, and encourage the adoption and effective implementation of evidence into practice and policy.