



Ignite Reading and Writing

22–23 October 2026 | CHRISTCHURCH

PROGRAMME

A workshop focused
on combining research
and creativity to
transform achievement
for your students



YOUR HOSTS



The Writing Teacher aims to help raise achievement in writing by sharing evidence-based, practical methods to engage every student. She spends most of her time in classrooms, working alongside teachers and students. She is also busy delivering workshops and publishing her research.



Essential Resources is a trusted New Zealand educational publisher supporting practical, evidence-based resources and courses that make a real difference in the classroom. Their focus is on delivering solutions that translate research into effective practice – tools teachers can rely on from day one.



THURSDAY 22 OCTOBER | READING

REGISTRATION: 8.15AM – 8.45AM

WELCOME: 9.00AM

SESSION 1 | 9.05AM – 10.05AM

Choosing texts for a range of needs

Dr Christine Braid

Christine will outline the challenge involved with selecting the right texts for a range of needs in a reading programme. She will guide us to feel secure in using decodable texts with purpose and consider when and how to move from decodable texts to less controlled texts and a wide variety of reading material. Together we will investigate the importance of keeping curriculum as the focus with a book series as supporting the teaching and learning. Overall, we will examine how to build an approach we can trust.

MORNING TEA: 10.05AM – 10.30AM

SESSION 2 | 10.35AM – 11.50AM

Part 1: Tiny tweaks but powerful gains

Marina Mounsey and Caroline Morritt

Aligned with structured literacy principles and the refreshed NZ curriculum, this session provides junior teachers with practical, evidence-based tools to support decoding, encoding and comprehension. Learn how to implement tried, tested and tailored literacy strategies to:

- build accuracy and automaticity through cumulative practice and word reading ladders
- get the most out of word chains
- build reading comprehension by getting the gist from our early decodable series and picture books.

Part 2: Accelerated gains for older struggling readers

Marina Mounsey and Caroline Morritt

An introduction to Isabelle Beck's "Syllasearch", extended by Caroline to improve reading, spelling and handwriting. You will learn about:

- useful formative assessment
- free teaching resources
- multisyllabic and morphemic strategies that will accelerate struggling readers and writers in Years 2–8.

SESSION 3 | 11.55AM – 12.40PM

Children's literature

Dr Christine Braid

With Christine's guidance, we will explore using all sorts of books with purpose across the primary school. We will delve into picture books, novels, non-fiction and poetry. The session will be filled with ideas of titles and of ways to use them to develop reading and writing.

LUNCH: 12.45PM – 1.30PM

SESSION 4 | 1.35PM – 2.35PM

The importance of knowledge-building

Dr Helen Walls

Helen will summarise research about the importance of teaching knowledge to raise achievement in reading comprehension. She will then share strategies and model unit plans for a range of primary levels which will support knowledge building and reading comprehension.

SESSION 5 | 2.40PM – 3.05PM

Panel discussion: Structured literacy – how's it going?

WORKSHOP DAY ENDS: 3.15PM



FRIDAY 23 OCTOBER | WRITING

REGISTRATION: 8.15AM – 8.45AM

WELCOME: 9.00AM

SESSION 1 | 9.05AM – 10.05AM

Three actions to transform achievement

Dr Helen Walls

In “Writing Teacher” classrooms, three key actions appear to be game-changers for writing achievement and motivation. These actions have huge potential to advance reading skills too.

In this session, Helen will demonstrate the three actions in question, which are:

- writing on extending topics
- supporting spelling
- reading and checking at the sentence, paragraph and whole text levels.

She will discuss research findings, including areas of uncertainty that justify teachers using their own intuition to best meet the needs of students.

MORNING TEA: 10.05AM – 10.30AM

SESSION 2 | 10.35AM – 11.30AM

Catering for a range of needs in writing classrooms

Dr Helen Walls

It is often a challenge in writing classrooms to support students with vastly different needs. In this session, Helen will discuss the importance of close support for students still struggling with certain foundational skills, and practical methods for accommodating these students – at any level of primary school. She will explore possibilities for grouping in writing classrooms, as well as the potential of a whole class writing model, so that every student is exposed to age-appropriate goals – with no pressure to independently apply the same skills. The needs of your most proficient writers will also be addressed, including ways to keep these students inspired, motivated and feeling seen.

SESSION 3 | 11.35AM – 12.40PM

Spelling: Stepping away from slides

Marina Mounsey and Caroline Morrill

Understand how to use your spelling knowledge to explicitly teach spelling lessons using the basics. We will help you:

- understand the science of good spelling instruction
- utilise formative and summative assessments to plan a lesson sequence
- use spelling games and follow up tasks that consolidate learning through practice
- model writing to ensure transfer of spelling skills.

LUNCH: 12.45PM – 1.30PM

SESSION 4 | 1.35PM – 2.35PM

Sentence blocks

Dr Christine Braid

This session will focus on the knowledge we need for understanding and teaching sentence structure and helping students to use sentence variety with purpose. Building from the sentence structure, Christine will outline a practical and successful method for connecting one sentence to the next for a powerful paragraph.

We will use some of the ideas from the children’s literature session to explore author techniques to build success in writers.

SESSION 5 | 2.40PM – 3.05PM

Panel discussion: Getting assessment right

WORKSHOP DAY ENDS: 3.15PM



MEET YOUR PRESENTERS



DR CHRISTINE BRAID

Christine brings 40 years of experience as an educator, including 12 years as a classroom teacher and 25 years as a teacher educator with a focus on literacy teaching. In her academic studies, she has specialised in literacy. Christine has a Diploma of Children's Literature, her MEd thesis looked at using picture books for developing comprehension discussion. Her PhD examined the influence of teacher knowledge and practice on literacy outcomes for new primary students. Combining her practical and her experience, she works with teachers to promote systematic and explicit teaching and to provide opportunities for incidental learning. Christine has written resources for children, published by the NZ Ministry of Education and is the author of several Essential Resources publications.



DR HELEN WALLS

Helen is an educational researcher and professional learning facilitator with 20 years' experience working alongside teachers to support confident, informed writing pedagogy. She is committed to raising achievement in writing by sharing evidence-based, practical methods to engage every student. For her PhD thesis, Helen conducted two empirical studies into the teaching of writing, which included a trial of the Fast Feedback Formative Evaluation System. Helen is managing director of *The Writing Teacher*, a consultancy that provides writing workshops and resources for teachers, all accessible online. She has published with The Australian Journal of Learning Difficulties, The Education Hub and is the author of several Essential Resources publications.



CAROLINE MORRITT

Caroline spent nine years as a Resource Teacher of Literacy servicing 34 primary schools across Banks Peninsula and southwest Christchurch. She supported students with significant learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, to read and write and provided professional development for their teachers and school leaders, helping initiate, guide and implement whole school literacy change. Caroline gained a master's degree in literacy and today delivers writing professional development with Helen Walls and reading professional development through her own company, *Literacy Reset*.



MARINA MOUNSEY

Marina is a dedicated educator and literacy specialist with over nine years of experience as a Resource Teacher of Literacy, supporting teachers and students in the North Canterbury region. She holds a Master of Education from Massey University and is accredited in Yoshimoto Orton-Gillingham training and Multisensory Structured Language (MSL). Currently, Marina brings her deep expertise to the education sector through a dual focus: serving in a coaching and intervention role at a local school and working with Helen Walls, *The Writing Teacher*.