



Charles Sturt  
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# Turning the page: Pathways to lifelong reading for all!

Associate Professor Kathy Cologon,  
Associate Director Children, Families and  
Communities

Children's Voices Centre  
Charles Sturt University



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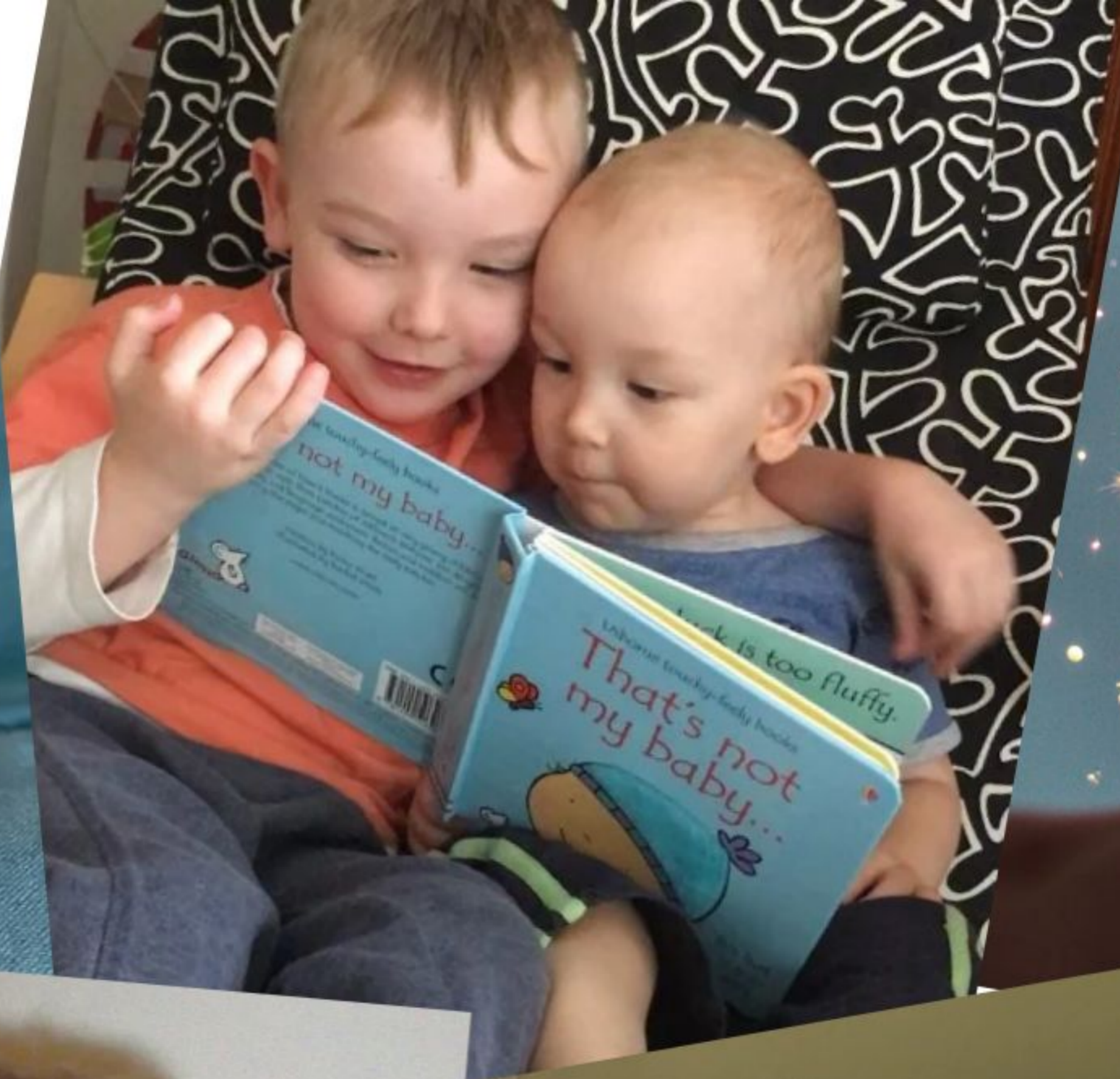


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# Turning the page: Pathways to lifelong reading for all!

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**Future makers**  
YOU are the architects of tomorrow, shaping the world by providing high-quality educational opportunities with and for every child.

think



# Hannah's story

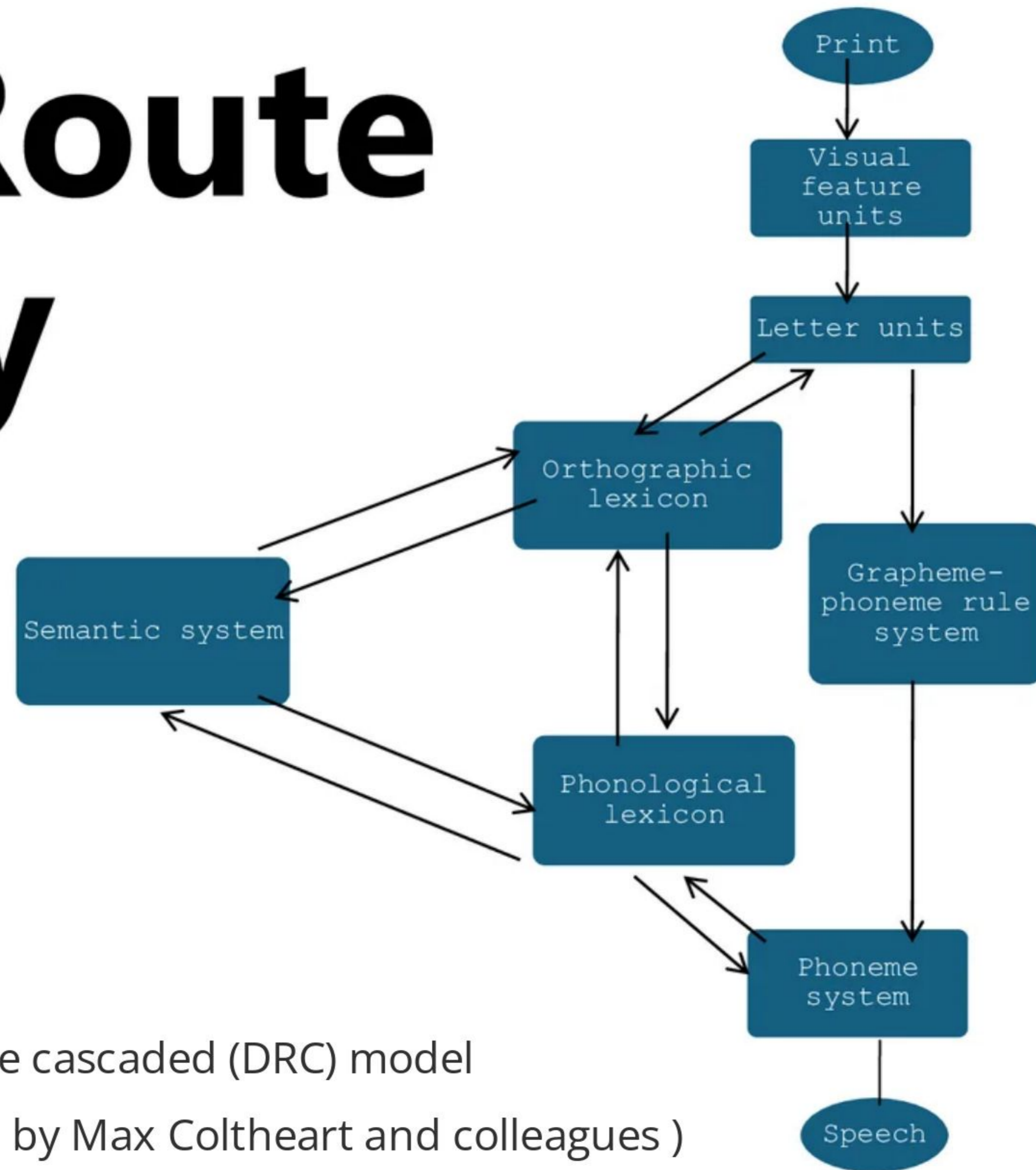




Literacy connects us across  
time and space...

...But the pathways into literacy  
are as diverse as the students  
we teach!

# Dual Route Theory



(Dual-route cascaded (DRC) model developed by Max Coltheart and colleagues )

“How much hangs on the love of reading, the instinctive inclination to hold a book! *Instinctive*. That is what it must be. The reaching out for a book needs to become and organic action, which can happen at this yet formative age. Pleasant words won't do. Respectable words won't do. They must be words organically tied up, organically born from the dynamic life itself. They must be words that are already part of the child's being.”

(Ashton-Warner, 1963)

# HUMAN RIGHTS

- Save our children
- Invest in our children
- Make our voice strong

## FREEDOM

- Knowledge
- teach Morals, Morals.

BE Kind → BE HUMAN

Verbs: to help, to care, to share

We are one

Integrity

- Strive for PEACE.

Literacy is a human right





# Pause and reflect

Imagine a student, or students, sitting in your classroom right now.

- What do you know about this student's interests?
- What lights this student up?
- How does this student communicate what matters to them?

What do you know about this student's interests? What lights this student up? How does this student communicate what matters to them?



# Section 2

## Inclusive Foundations: Language, Literacy and Presuming Competence

# All forms of communication



(Cologon, 2023a)



## Presuming competence

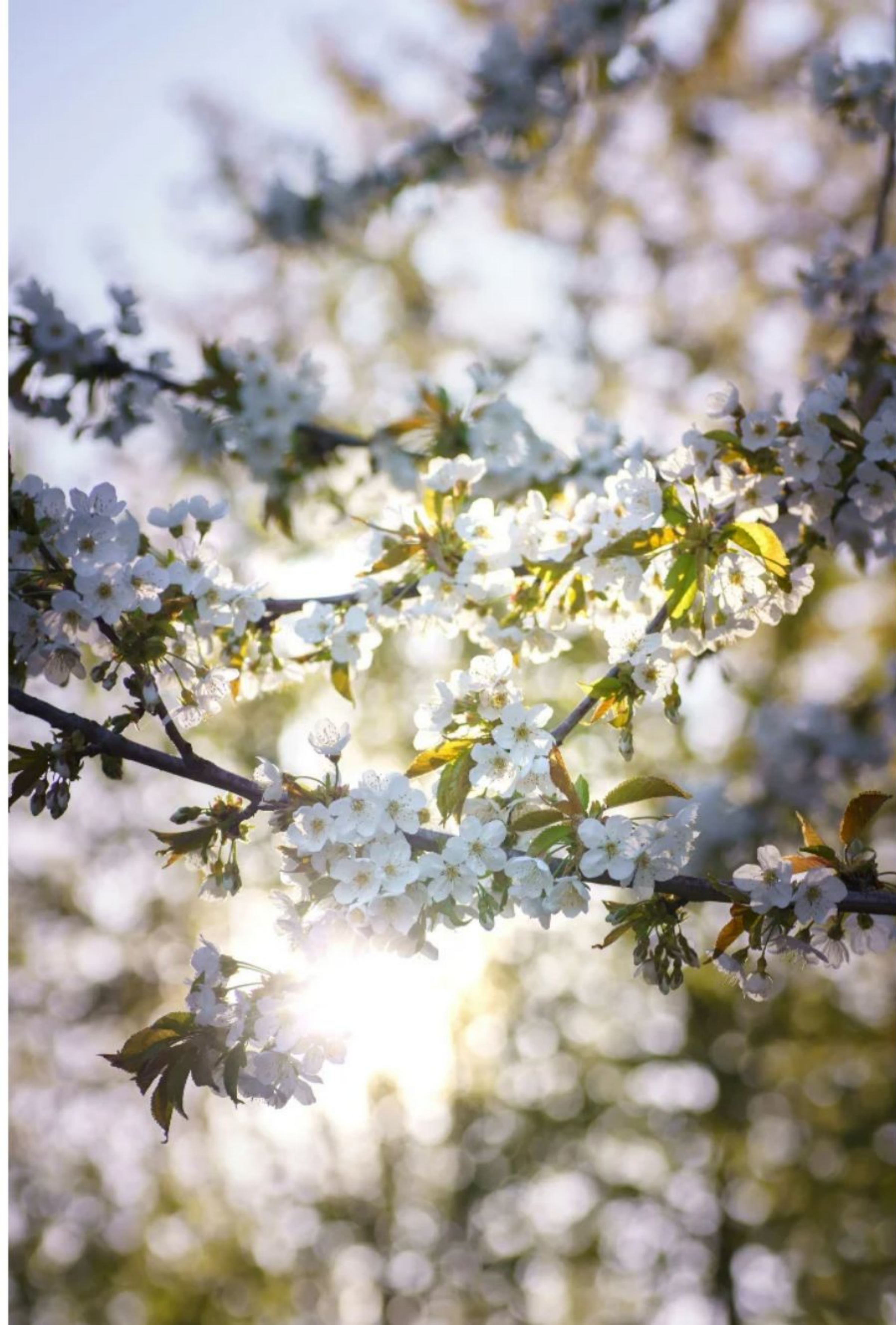
Presuming competence means providing opportunities for growth and learning without requiring anyone to prove their abilities first.

(Cologon & Mevawalla,  
in press)



When we presume competence, we provide opportunities and support a person to develop from wherever they are now to the next step.

(Cologon & Mevawalla, in press)



Presuming competence means finding a way to provide meaningful opportunities for participation, growth and flourishing for all of us.

(Cologon & Mevawalla,  
in press)

# Invisible question marks



# Pause and reflect

Think about a student you work with who faces significant barriers to communication or literacy.

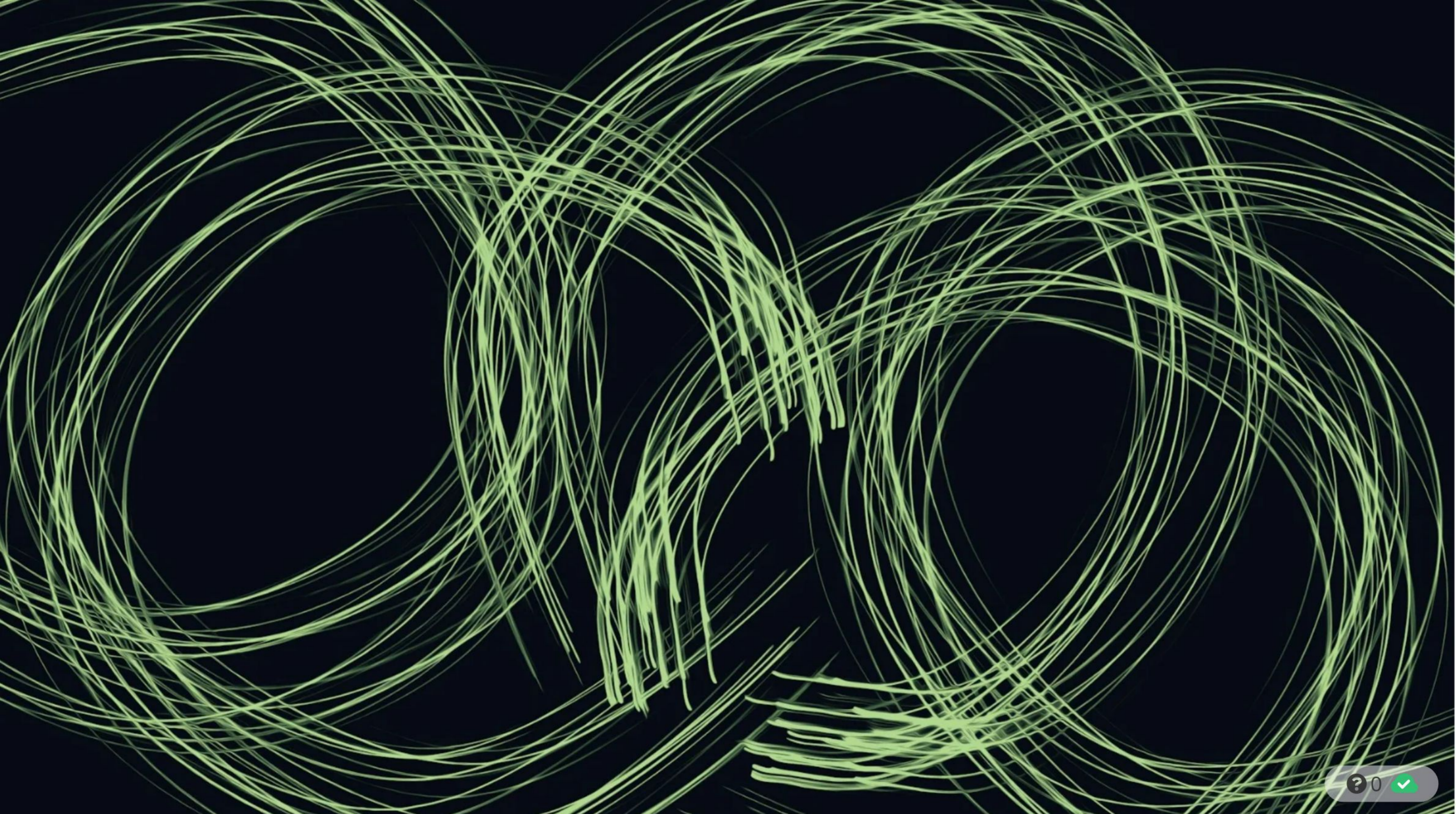
- How might your view of that student shift if you presumed they understood more than they could say?
- What would you do differently?
- How might this change the literacy opportunities you provide?



How might your view of that student shift if you presumed they understood more than they could say? What would you do differently? How might this change the literacy opportunities you provide?

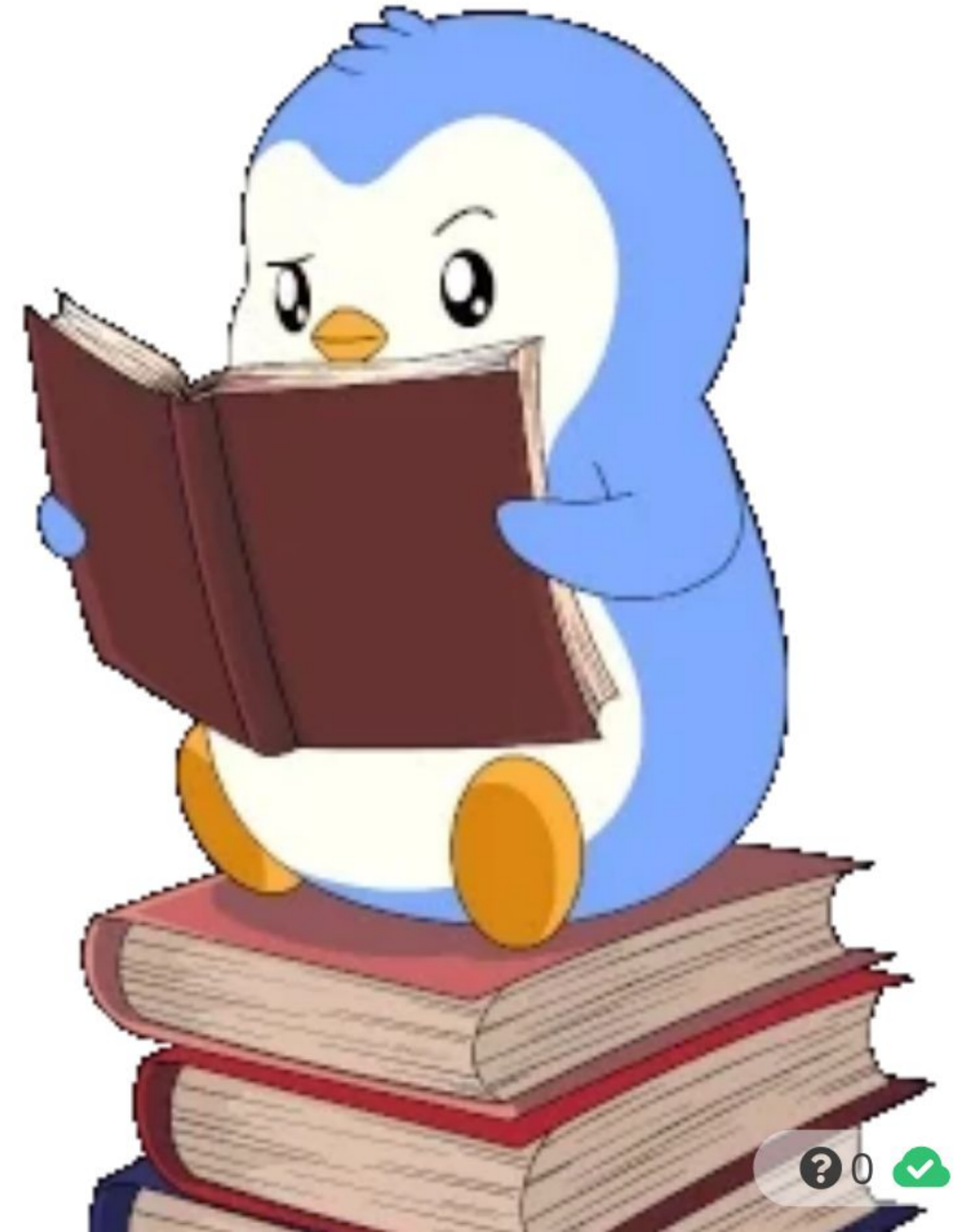
# Sanchez's story





# Section 3

## Reading Development: Evidence-Informed Pathways





# Individuality in life and learning

- Each of us is unique
- There is no 'recipe' for teaching reading to people with Down syndrome or intellectual disability

# Never too early and never too late

Learning to read can  
happen at any time.

The key is learning  
opportunities.

The time for learning is  
always now!





# Where we've come and where we're going

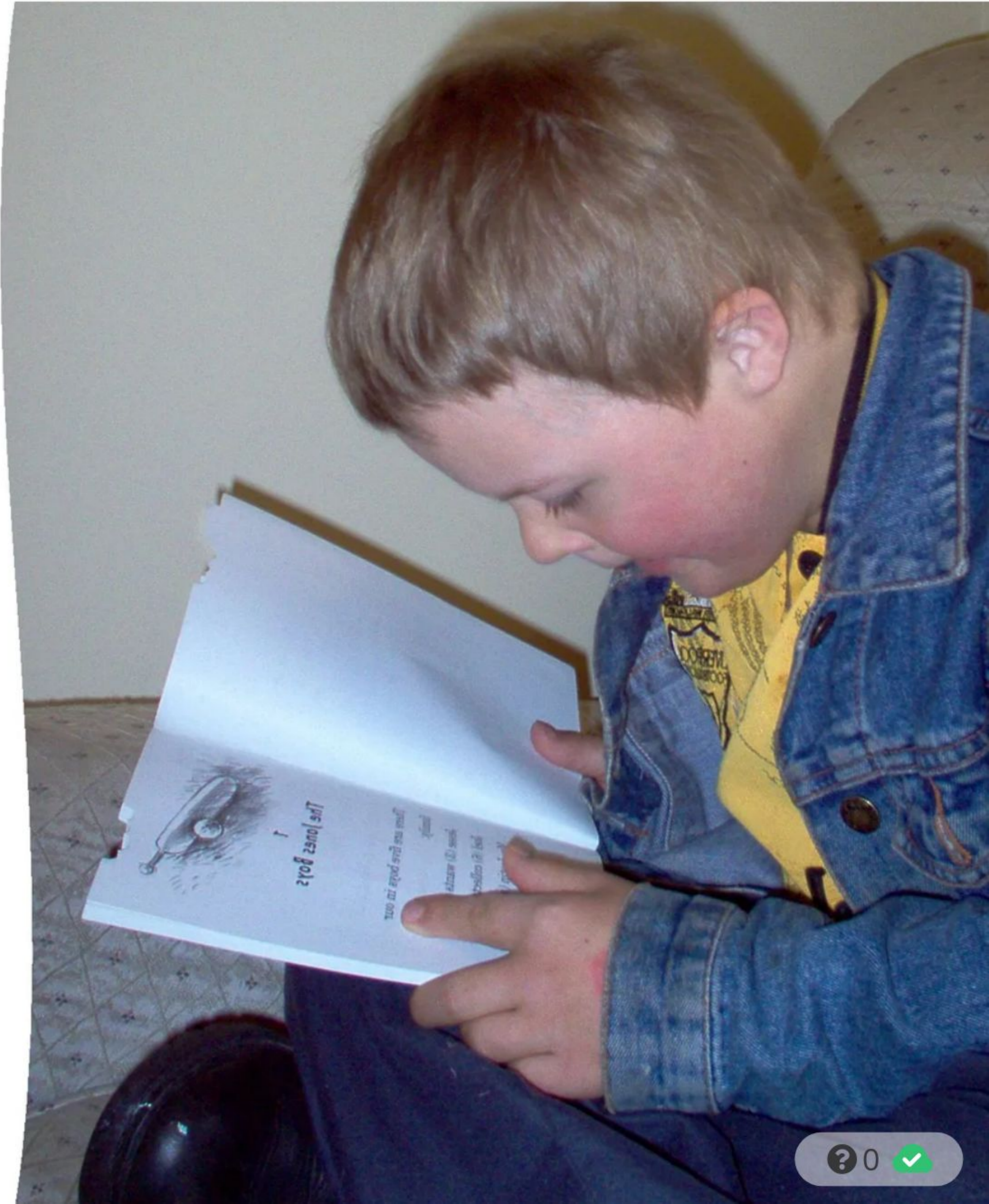
What has  
changed?

Where to from  
here?

# Learning to read: Making meaning through reading

- Making meaning of the communication of others
- Expressing meaning through print and other mediums
- Building up complexity through engaging in narrative creation
- Experiencing joy through engaging critically with print and other mediums

(Kliewer, 2008)





# Learning to read: Cracking the code

- Recognising letters and words
- Learning the sounds that letters (and combinations of letters) make
- Using these skills to decode unfamiliar words
- Recalling memorised letter sequences to identify printed representations of words
- Learning to read to find meaning (comprehension).

(Cologon, 2013)



**Phonological awareness and phonic decoding skills**  
To become skilled readers, all learners need opportunities to learn to 'crack the code'  
(Cologon, 2023b)



# Jack's story





## Expressive and receptive language

What we say is only one part of what we can understand and those of us who have Down syndrome or intellectual disability often understand far more than we can say.

(Cologon, 2023a)



# Teaching question words:

---

Question word

---

Tell About word

Who

People

Where

Places

What

Things

When

Time

*Introduced later*

How

Ways

Why

Reasons

---

Morgan, Moni and Jobling, 2009

# The hidden rules of language

Making explicit what can otherwise be the 'hidden curriculum'



for what is the  
to be best in any  
point of view.  
**Understand**  
comprehend th  
know the mean  
have knowledg

- Where reading comprehension lags behind reading accuracy, it is crucial to evaluate teaching strategies and assessment methods
- Ensuring literacy learning opportunities are meaningful supports comprehension
- Flexibility in teaching can help move past challenges and revisit them when the learner is ready.

(Cologon, 2023c)

It is *never* too late to learn to read

The time for literacy learning is always *now!*



# What we know from the research:

- People with Down syndrome have a relative strength in reading development.
- People with Down syndrome can develop advanced early reading abilities and can learn to read later in life.
- People with Down syndrome can demonstrate phonological awareness.
- People with Down syndrome can develop phonic decoding skills.
- People with Down syndrome can understand what they read.
- People with Down syndrome can be exceptional readers and benefit from engaging in reading alongside their peers in inclusive education settings.
- **Accessible learning opportunities are the key!**





## Reading to learn

So many aspects of learning are dependent on reading ability. This highlights the need to provide ongoing accessible opportunities for learning to read and reading to learn.



# Literacy rich environments and experiences

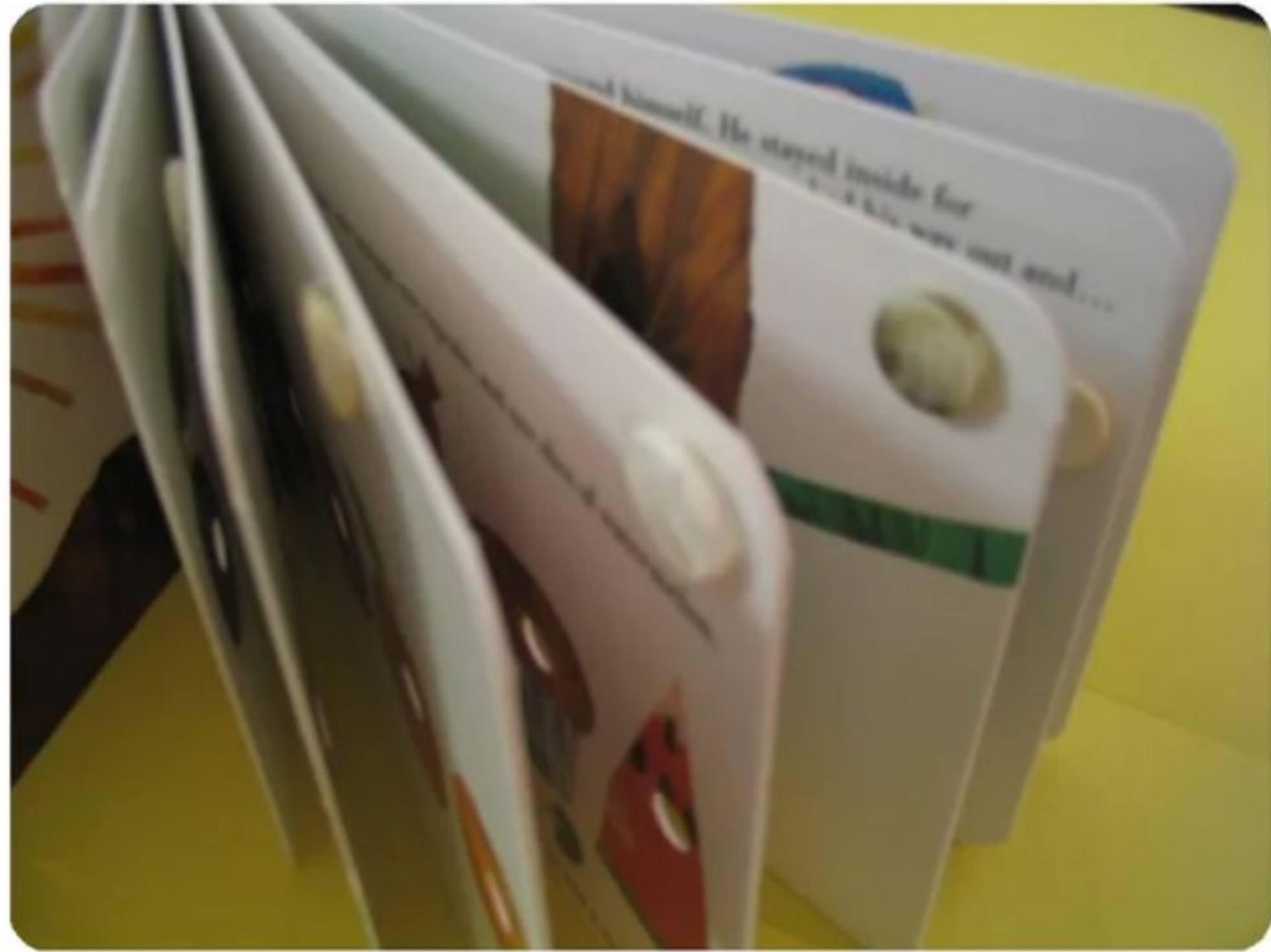
Words, words, words!

Words are everywhere, all around us!



## Accessible learning opportunities and materials

- Building from where we are to the next step
- Providing accessible learning opportunities and materials
- Using augmentative and alternative communication strategies



# Amira's story



**Remembering the joy of reading!**

Playfulness creates endless opportunities to support reading development.



A black silhouette of a complex scaffolding structure against an orange background. The scaffolding consists of numerous vertical and horizontal poles connected by diagonal cross-braces, forming a dense, geometric framework. The background is a solid orange color with a slight gradient from top to bottom.

# Zone of proximal development

Vygotsky's 'zone of proximal development' is the gap between a learner's current ability and their potential with support. Targeting this zone fosters independent learning.

*“The only way to find out what level of literacy each child is able to achieve is to give [each child] every opportunity to learn, with well-planned teaching activities from preschool years to adult life”.*

- Professor Sue Buckley

- **Access to literacy learning opportunities is a human right.** It's about connection, identity, and voice, not just decoding words on a page.
- **Reading development is non-linear.** Students develop skills in different orders and at different rates; there is no single 'right' way.
- **Presuming competence changes everything.** When we hold high expectations and provide opportunities, students rise to meet them.
- **Comprehensive literacy teaching benefits all learners.** We must provide access to phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and real-world reading and writing experiences – not limit students to 'functional literacy.'
- **Interests and strengths are the engine of engagement.** Connecting literacy to what students care about creates motivation and persistence.
- **UDL allows us to plan for variability from the start.** Multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression make learning accessible for everyone.

# How can I make it possible?



# Pause and reflect

I'd like you to take a moment to reflect on your own context.

- What is one insight from this first session for today that resonated with you?
- What is one small change you could make in your literacy teaching this term that would build on student strengths and interests?
- Who is one student you're thinking about differently now, and what opportunities might you offer them next?



What's one insight from this session that resonated with you? What's one small change you could make in your literacy teaching this term that would build on students' strengths and interests? Who is one student you're thinking about differently now, and what opportunities might you offer them next?

# Only the beginning...





# Thank you!

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voices-  
centre/home&nbsp;](https://www.csu.edu.au/voices-centre/home&nbsp;)