# Improving disadvantaged students’ reading outcomes through overcoming reading avoidance and building reading engagement (also known as the READ Project)

## Overview

It is costly for students to avoid reading. Low literacy levels impact negatively on academic success, earning levels and employment opportunities. This project aims to produce new conceptual and empirical knowledge to inform the development of effective teaching practices to promote reading engagement for disadvantaged students.

## Funding bodies and amount

- **ARC Discovery Grant** $530,898

## Research partners

- Clarence Ng, Claire Wyatt-Smith, Brendan Bartlett

## Industry partners involved

- Selected Queensland state schools in urban and rural settings

## Timeline/Duration

- 2011-2015

## Research Problem

1. Why, how and under what circumstances do disadvantaged students avoid/engage in classroom reading activities?
2. How do reading avoidance and engagement develop over time?
3. How can reading avoidance be reduced and engagement improved for disadvantaged students?

## Findings, including emerging findings

Key findings derived from interview and observational data collected between 2011 and 2014 include:

1. Reading avoidance is a common problem frequently observed in state primary schools serving disadvantaged students.
2. Reading avoidance can be observable using a behavioural checklist.
3. Reading avoidance (and engagement) among disadvantaged students in this project is influenced by a host of personal, social and interactive factors in the learning setting.
4. Teachers and their teaching play a significant role in promoting reading engagement for disadvantaged students.

This project is ongoing. In 2015, a major survey will be conducted examining antecedents of and correlates with reading avoidance using a large sample of disadvantaged students in Australia. An international comparative survey will be conducted using an adapted version of the questionnaire for a sample of disadvantaged students in Hong Kong. A group of participating teachers in Queensland will be engaged in an action learning study to examine various ways for promoting reading engagement for students from various disadvantaged backgrounds.