Ontario

# A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction

*Grades 4 to 6*

## VOLUME ONE
### Foundations of Literacy Instruction for the Junior Learner

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# A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4 to 6

**Volume One: Foundations of Literacy Instruction for the Junior Learner**
1. The Junior Learner
2. Knowledge and Skills Required for Literacy
3. Principles of Effective Literacy Instruction

Subsequent volumes in the series will cover a range of topics, including assessment; planning instruction; the classroom environment and resources; instructional approaches in oral communication, reading, writing, and media literacy; and technology as it supports literacy instruction and learning.

# A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4 to 6

*A Multivolume Resource from the Ministry of Education*

VOLUME ONE

Foundations of Literacy Instruction for
the Junior Learner

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Une série de publications équivalente est disponible en français sous le titre suivant :
*Guide d'enseignement efficace en matière de littératie de la 4e à la 6e année.*

# PREFACE

In order to improve the achievement of all students from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 6, the Ontario Ministry of Education requires elementary schools to participate in a regular cycle of assessment, target setting, and improvement planning. These practices, combined with effective instruction, have been shown by research to be key factors in improving the achievement levels of students.

In the spring of 2004, the Ministry of Education convened two bilingual expert panels – one for literacy and one for mathematics – to report on effective instructional practices in literacy and mathematics in the junior grades. The literacy report, *Literacy for Learning: The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy in Grades 4 to 6 in Ontario*, was published in October 2004.

*A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4 to 6*, is based on the research and advice set out in the expert panel report. It provides Ontario teachers with a framework and practical resources for planning a successful literacy program that equips all junior students to grow as strategic readers, writers, talkers, listeners, and thinkers.

This multivolume guide was written by teachers for teachers. It builds on the strengths that exist in Ontario's education system and supports the crucial work that teachers do every day to equip their students to become confident and successful learners. It is intended for all teachers of Grades 4 to 6 in the English-language school system, including those responsible for French immersion, English as a second language, special education, and specific subjects. A similar reference guide, reflecting research and effective practices in literacy instruction in the French language, has been developed for educators in Ontario's French-language school system.

Certain portions of this guide rely heavily on, or are actually taken from, the expert panel report. The ministry gratefully acknowledges the panel's permission to use excerpts from its report in this guide without attribution. (Citations for direct quotations refer simply to *Literacy for Learning*.) Although the report and the guide cover similar ground, each has a different focus. The report presents current research and best practices, while this guide suggests practical ways in which the research can be applied in the classroom. Educators charged with improving the literacy learning of students in the junior grades are strongly encouraged to use the guide in conjunction with the expert panel's report.
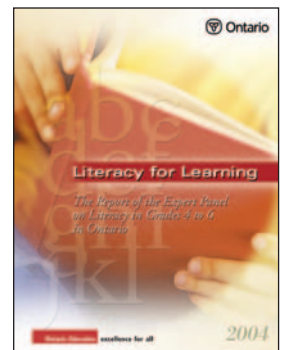
# INTRODUCTION

In this guide, *literacy* is defined as the ability to use language and images in rich and varied forms to read, write, listen, speak, view, represent, and think critically about ideas. Literacy enables us to share information, to interact with others, and to interpret various kinds of texts. It connects individuals and communities and is an essential tool for personal growth and active participation in a democratic society. The development of literacy is a complex process that involves building on prior knowledge, culture, and experiences in order to instil new knowledge and deepen understanding.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF LITERACY INSTRUCTION IN THE JUNIOR GRADES

To be successful personally and professionally, today's students need to be independent, flexible, creative, critical, and strategic thinkers and communicators. They need to be proficient in many "literacies" – that is, they must be able to understand and communicate with people from diverse backgrounds by means of a wide and constantly expanding range of texts, media, and communication methods. They need to be confident in their learning and motivated to continue to learn throughout their lives.

Effective literacy instruction is the backbone of teaching and learning in the junior grades. Although junior learners may have a basic understanding of how to read and write, teachers need to teach these students explicitly the specific skills that will help them understand the increasingly complex texts and concepts they will encounter in school.

### Multiliteracies

The term *multiliteracies* is used in this guide to describe the increasingly diverse ways in which ideas and information can be expressed and understood – using conventional and innovative text forms, symbols, and media. Students need to become proficient at understanding and using a wide range of text forms, media, and symbol systems in order to maximize their learning potential, keep pace with changing technologies, and actively participate in the global community. Building on their first language, students develop skills in critical literacy, visual literacy, media literacy, technological literacy, cross-curricular literacies (involving music, mathematics, science, visual arts, and other subjects), and literacy in other languages.

Current research and best practices, such as those set out in *Literacy for Learning: The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy in Grades 4 to 6 in Ontario* (2004), offer educators a great deal of information about how junior students develop as literate learners and about the knowledge and skills these students need to succeed at each stage in their development. This guide touches on the research, but its focus is on practical suggestions for implementing current research in the classroom.

## THE ONTARIO CONTEXT

Ontario has two official languages – English and French – and a wide range of other languages and dialects that thrive in homes, workplaces, and communities across the province. English is the language of daily life for the majority of people in Ontario; for a growing minority, however, it is an additional language.

Census statistics from 2001 show that over 70 per cent of Ontarians identify English as their first language; just over 4 per cent report French as their first language; and approximately 24 per cent have a first language other than English or French (Statistics Canada, 2001 Census). In some large urban areas, school boards have identified more than seventy-five different home languages and dialects among their students.

Ontario's language diversity can present challenges in the classroom, but it also offers tremendous opportunities. With increasing globalization, the shift to an information economy, and growing awareness about how languages influence creative thinking and problem solving, the evidence is strong that language and cultural diversity are resources that can enrich classroom learning and benefit all students. The challenge for schools is to equip children to build on their language foundations while developing high levels of academic proficiency in English.

Ontario's children have an unparalleled opportunity to learn how to live with respect and confidence in a multicultural world and to develop the higher-order thinking skills and critical-literacy skills they will need for responsible citizenship in the global community and for lifelong learning in the twenty-first century. Teachers play a key role by ensuring that their literacy instruction and classroom practices address the needs and experiences of all students. As students participate in building an inclusive community of learners in the classroom, they learn ways to communicate more effectively in the wider world.

## LITERACY GOALS FOR JUNIOR LEARNERS

Literacy instruction in the junior grades has one overriding purpose: to enable all students to develop as competent communicators in a multiliterate, multicultural, multimedia world. Embedded in this broad purpose are four major goals for each junior learner:

1. to become a strategic reader, writer, and oral communicator

2. to expand thinking skills (including metacognitive and critical-literacy skills), developing the necessary habits of mind

3. to deepen the motivation to learn

4. to develop independence as a learner

These four goals are linked to one another, and they permeate literacy instruction across the curriculum. They provide a lens through which educators can view all planning, assessment, instruction, and related classroom practices. The strategies involved in achieving these goals are all discussed in detail in this guide.

### Goal 1: Become a Strategic Reader, Writer, and Oral Communicator

Many students who enter Grade 4 are able to understand text at the literal level, can engage in paired and group discussions, and can communicate thoughts, feelings, and ideas in writing. In other words, they come with the basic foundation for literacy development. However, as many experts describe, this basic foundation is only the beginning. To progress through the junior grades and beyond, students need to continually develop their strategies for "making meaning" and communicating effectively. Strategic readers, writers, and oral communicators are able to do the following:

• identify the purpose of a text, and the intended audience

• work with a variety of text forms, technologies, and media

> **"Making Meaning"**
>
> The phrase *to make meaning* is used throughout this guide to refer to the *active involvement* of readers and writers in interpreting the meaning of various texts they read and conveying meaning in various ways in the texts they create. It suggests the application of a variety of strategies and skills in the process of *making sense* of texts and enhancing and enriching one's understanding and interpretation of them.

- apply their literacy and communication skills in all subjects and in new situations

- make choices about which strategies and skills to use in a given situation

### Goal 2: Expand Thinking Skills, Developing the Necessary Habits of Mind

Research has shown that "effective readers and writers use intentional thinking skills to regulate their reading and writing processes, to formulate ideas, to solve problems, and to make meaning. Using higher-order thinking, they are able to move beyond rote learning and literal interpretation to a deeper, more discerning understanding of texts" (*Literacy for Learning*, p. 32).

In junior classrooms where effective literacy instruction takes place, there is an emphasis on higher-order thinking. *Higher-order thinking* refers to the transformation of information and ideas that occurs when students combine facts and ideas and use them to synthesize, generalize, explain, hypothesize, or arrive at some conclusion or interpretation. By manipulating information and ideas through these processes, students are able to solve problems, acquire understanding, and discover new meaning (*Literacy for Learning*, p. 116).

As well, higher-order thinking involves the development of "metacognitive" and "critical-literacy" skills. **Metacognition** is the process of thinking about one's own thought processes. Using metacognition, students reflect on how they learn, what they know and need to know, and what strategies they need to make sense of what they see, hear, and say. Teachers model how to think metacognitively to give students the ability to construct meaning from texts and to plan, monitor, and improve their own learning. Metacognitive skills help students to achieve independence as learners.

**Critical literacy** requires the ability and willingness to look beyond the literal meaning of texts to observe what is present and what is missing, in order to analyse and evaluate the meaning and the author's intent (*Literacy for Learning*, p. 116). It goes beyond conventional critical thinking to engage with issues of fairness, equity, and social justice. Critical-literacy skills equip students with the ability to analyse how authors develop texts in order to influence readers; they also give students the knowledge, skills, and confidence to develop their own perspectives and world view (*Literacy for Learning*, p. 37). For reflective learners, these skills can become a call to social action, challenging them to examine their role in making the world a better place.

## Necessary Habits of Mind, According to Costa and Kallick

Learning
continuously

Managing
impulsivity

Gathering data through
all senses

Thinking
flexibly

Taking
responsible risks

Creating, imagining,
and innovating

Listening to others
with understanding
and empathy

Thinking about
our thinking
(metacognition)

Thinking and
communicating with
clarity and precision

Thinking
interdependently

Persisting

Striving for accuracy
and precision

Questioning and
posing problems

Finding
humour

Responding with
wonder and awe

Applying past knowledge
to new situations

**Habits of mind** necessary for higher-order thinking include open-mindedness, persever-ance, curiosity, and independent thinking. Costa and Kallick define *habit of mind* as the stance that individuals adopt when confronted with problems that do not have immediate answers. The habits of mind that facilitate higher-order thinking transcend all subject areas. "They are what make… learning continual, workplaces productive and democracies enduring" (Costa and Kallick, p. 12).

Costa and Kallick believe that students need to develop the habits of mind represented in the diagram above. They agree that these habits of mind are characteristic of peak performers in all fields.

### Goal 3: Deepen the Motivation to Learn

Another major goal of literacy instruction is to instil in students an appreciation of the value and power of reading and writing so that they will choose to read and write throughout their lives for personal and professional reasons. Students need to under-stand how reading and writing will help them learn about themselves, solve problems, and explore and influence the world.

"To motivate… is to bring out the best in people and to celebrate both their achievement and potential. When you enjoy helping others excel, grow, and discover, you are motivating them. Motivating others must always, by its very nature, be positive – though it must also be challenging."

*(Wilhelm, 2002, p.16)*

### Goal 4: Develop Independence as a Learner

Proficient communicators dig deep for meaning and develop their own stance and voice as independent thinkers. Effective literacy instruction strives to move students along a continuum of learning towards this independence, scaffolding their learning and gradually releasing responsibility to students as they master strategies and skills. Along the way, students learn to do the following:

- use appropriate strategies during reading and writing, with limited teacher support
- select texts and text forms for different purposes
- engage in accountable talk
- draw on internal motivation to read and write
- transfer learning to new situations
- persist when faced with a difficult task
- pursue meaningful activities after completing assigned tasks
- set personal goals and assess progress towards their goals
- draw on their strengths and develop new abilities
- think independently

## KEY MESSAGES FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

The key messages for teachers listed in the following chart are intended to help teachers address the goals of the junior literacy program. They are the fundamental ideas that underlie all of the approaches, strategies, and tools described in this guide. They answer the question, "Why am I teaching this material, in this way, to this group of students, at this time?" Teachers can use these key messages to guide their practice.

The key messages for students correspond to the messages for teachers. By conveying these messages to students and ensuring that students internalize them, teachers will have gone a long way towards giving their students the understandings and tools they need to become proficient readers, writers, and oral communicators, and to succeed at school and in their future lives.

### Key Messages

**Look for this symbol**

Look for the symbol of a key throughout this volume to identify key messages related to the text.

## Key Messages for Teachers and Students

| Effective literacy teachers in Grades 4 to 6 understand that: | | Successful students in Grades 4 to 6 understand that: |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Literacy instruction must be driven by equitable ongoing assessment. | → | Assessments are a way for the teacher and for me to understand how well I am learning. |
| Literacy instruction must be explicit and relevant to students' lives. | → | I learn best when I am reading and writing for a real purpose. |
| Literacy instruction must be differentiated, inclusive, and respectful of all students. | → | Some tasks will be difficult, but I can learn the strategies that I need to succeed. |
| Students' unique identities and diverse experiences can contribute greatly to a rich learning environment. | → | I have valuable knowledge and experiences that I can share with my classmates. |
| Talk is the foundation for literacy. | → | Accountable talk helps me to improve my reading, writing, and thinking. |
| Reading, writing, talking, listening, thinking, viewing, and representing are reciprocal literacy processes. | → | Reading will make me a better writer, and writing will make me a better reader. Talking, listening, and thinking will make me a better reader and writer. |
| Students need to become proficient in "multiliteracies", involving texts of all types. | → | I need to use my literacy skills to work with texts of all types. |
| Students need to learn that their literacy skills are transferable to all content areas. | → | I can apply the strategies and skills that I learn in Language to all subjects. |
| Students learn best when they are motivated and actively engaged in their learning. | → | If I am actively involved in making meaning when I read and write, I will improve my learning. |
| Explicit feedback given immediately after assessment leads to improved levels of student achievement. | → | The teacher's feedback will help me to improve my learning. |
| By gradually releasing responsibility for learning to students, teachers help students improve their learning and develop a greater level of independence. | → | The strategies I am learning will help me become a proficient and independent reader, writer, and communicator. |
| When students are encouraged to assess their own work and set their own goals, they take ownership of their learning. | → | I need to think about my learning and set goals for my learning. |
| Authentic literacy experiences help students develop skills and attitudes that will serve them throughout their lives and improve the quality of their lives. | → | Knowing how to read, write, and communicate effectively will help me be successful during my school years and throughout my future. |
| Metacognitive skills give students a growing awareness of themselves as learners and a greater degree of independence. | → | Thinking about my thinking will help me understand what I have learned, make decisions about my learning, and become a more independent learner. |
| Critical-thinking and critical-literacy skills are the tools students need to develop into active, responsible participants in the global community. | → | I need to think critically about all the texts I encounter, and ask myself questions about the accuracy and fairness of the stories or information in these texts. |
| Professional collaboration and ongoing learning help teachers develop a deeper, broader, more reflective understanding of effective instruction. | → | Working with others gives me new ideas and helps me to reflect on and expand my own thinking and learning. |

# ORGANIZATION AND FEATURES OF THIS RESOURCE GUIDE

*A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4 to 6*, is organized into several volumes. The first three volumes provide the foundation for effective literacy instruction and literacy learning in the junior grades. Subsequent volumes go more deeply into what to teach – and how – in order to help all students experience success.

## About Volume 1

Volume 1, "Foundations of Literacy Instruction for the Junior Learner", establishes the context for a comprehensive examination of effective literacy instruction in Grades 4 to 6. The volume comprises three chapters – Chapter 1, The Junior Learner; Chapter 2, Knowledge and Skills Required for Literacy; and Chapter 3, Principles of Effective Literacy Instruction – and an appendix, which provides more than fifty practical classroom strategies and tools. The strategies and tools outlined in the appendix will be helpful to teachers as they apply the ideas presented in Chapters 1–3 in their classrooms. Throughout this guide, the "Application in Appendix" icon shown here in the margin is used to draw teachers' attention to items in the appendix that are relevant to the specific teaching/learning situations being discussed at that point.

APPLICATION
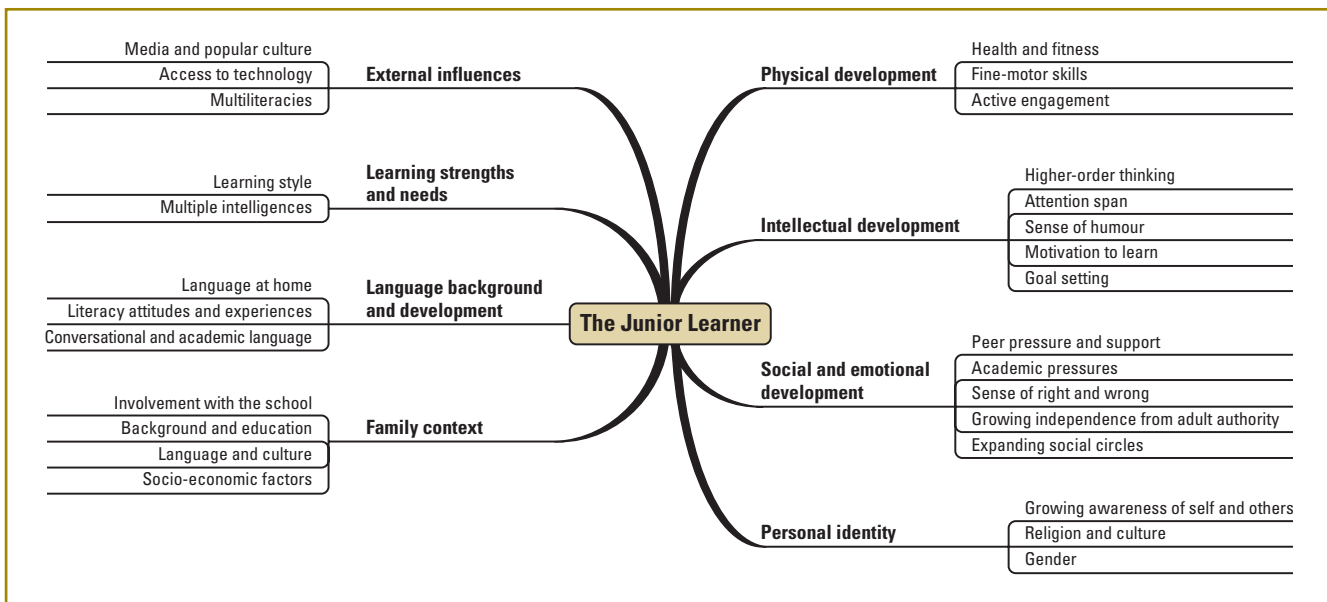IN APPENDIX

# 1 THE JUNIOR LEARNER

# INTRODUCTION

Students enter the junior grades with a zest for learning, full of wonder, excited to discover more about themselves and the world. They are ready to be taught the skills they will need to become independent thinkers and learners. They enliven the classroom with their wealth of experiences, backgrounds, abilities, and interests.

These students generally range in age from nine to twelve years, putting them squarely in the category of *tweens*. The term *tweens* was coined by marketers to identify children between the dependent stage of early childhood and the growing independence of later adolescence, when parental influence wanes and peer pressure increases. Because children at this age tend to be impressionable and have spending money, they are targeted aggressively by retailers and advertisers. Effective literacy instruction can help them to become more critical thinkers, more cautious consumers of information in all media, and more independent decision makers.

## Factors That Affect Literacy Learning in the Junior Grades

In a typical junior classroom, students will be at varying stages of physical, intellectual, social, and emotional development. Some will be operating at a primary level while others may already have progressed beyond their grade level. Each student's progress in literacy and in specific subject areas will be influenced by a complex interplay of factors, which are depicted in the web diagram below and discussed in the subsequent sections of this chapter. It is the job of the classroom teacher to build on the diverse strengths of all students and support them as they continue to develop into proficient, confident communicators.

## The Junior Learner: A Web of Characteristics and Influences

**External influences**
- Media and popular culture
- Access to technology
- Multiliteracies

**Learning strengths and needs**
- Learning style
- Multiple intelligences

**Language background and development**
- Language at home
- Literacy attitudes and experiences
- Conversational and academic language

**Family context**
- Involvement with the school
- Background and education
- Language and culture
- Socio-economic factors

**The Junior Learner**

**Physical development**
- Health and fitness
- Fine-motor skills
- Active engagement

**Intellectual development**
- Higher-order thinking
- Attention span
- Sense of humour
- Motivation to learn
- Goal setting

**Social and emotional development**
- Peer pressure and support
- Academic pressures
- Sense of right and wrong
- Growing independence from adult authority
- Expanding social circles

**Personal identity**
- Growing awareness of self and others
- Religion and culture
- Gender

# PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

From the ages of eight to twelve years, students undergo many physical changes. Although the rate of physical development varies widely from one individual to another, most junior students:

- are able to sit and pay attention for longer periods of time;

- are developing greater manual dexterity and coordination, which influence fine-motor tasks such as handwriting;

- need opportunities to move and engage in active learning.

## What Teachers Do

Teachers:

- actively involve students in reading, writing, talking, and thinking, in various forms;

- include drama, role playing, and hands-on activities that involve tools, props, and other manipulatives;

- let students demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways (for example, through visual arts, drama, songs and chants, and multimedia reports);

- promote healthy attitudes about body image and critical reflection about how the media portray girls, boys, men, and women.

*"If I am actively involved in making meaning when I read and write, I will improve my learning."*

# INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Intellectually, junior students develop the capacity to examine increasingly complex topics in greater depth and breadth. They begin to see themselves as readers and writers. However, the literacy development of students in a typical classroom varies widely. Their interests and confidence greatly influence what and how much they read and write.

As thinkers and learners, junior students:

- begin to apply logical rules and reasoning;

- progress gradually from identifying and solving concrete problems to identifying and solving abstract ones;

- develop greater understanding of the concept of time and of spatial relationships;

- develop decision-making skills;

- are able to juggle many tasks;

- pay attention for longer periods of time and show sustained, intense interest in specific activities;

- develop higher-order thinking skills, including skills of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation – although they remain susceptible to believing what they see in print and other media;

- are motivated to acquire knowledge and to explore and investigate the world;

- develop a greater appreciation of the subtleties in different texts, in language, and in humour (although they continue to enjoy slapstick and other broad forms of humour);

- are able to play with words and language.

## Grade 4 – A Critical Year

A large number of students with initial reading and writing skills may be challenged by the more intricate tasks required to make meaning of the subject-specific texts that are introduced in the junior grades. Starting in Grade 4, students are faced with new demands and responsibilities – they are asked to read and write longer texts involving more complex subject matter and to think about more abstract ideas.

Grade 4 teachers are challenged to guide students carefully towards developing the skills and knowledge they need to meet these new demands, while at the same time preserving and nurturing in them a love of reading and an appetite for discovering new ideas and gaining new understandings and new perspectives on the world through reading, writing, and thinking.

"We consider everything we do to be sure we are teaching a more sophisticated [approach to] … reading and that we are passing the responsibility for understanding what they read on to our students. We plan how to … foster a community of readers who have meaningful conversations about reading. We consider instructional experiences for our students that will help them understand that reading is thinking."

*(Sibberson and Szymusiak, 2003, p. 10)*

### What Teachers Do

Teachers:

- provide texts of all types that are developmentally appropriate, interesting, and relevant;

- introduce increasingly complex texts that are appropriate for the students, presented in a wide range of text forms and genres;

- include anecdotes, mysteries, humour, word play, facts, puns, riddles, fiction, inquiry, and research on a range of topics;

- offer choices that include texts with multiple layers of meaning;

- provide daily opportunities for sustained reading, writing, and accountable talk;

- establish a safe environment that promotes risk taking;

- provide time and opportunity for a variety of responses to allow students to build confidence;

- engage students in authentic, relevant, and rich learning experiences, including opportunities to read and write about things that interest the students;

- use graphic organizers and the arts to explore ideas, deepen understanding, and convey meaning;

- draw attention to the writer's craft in texts that interest the students (mentor texts), and encourage them to try similar language and techniques in their own writing.

### To develop student strategies and skills, teachers:

- use instructional approaches that are highly structured and that include scaffolded support, in order to ensure that students are able to respond to the task;

- explicitly teach strategies (through modelling, demonstration, and think-aloud) that promote comprehension and problem solving, and that lead to independence;

- demonstrate and explicitly teach literacy skills in all subject areas;

- provide multiple opportunities for practice, feedback, and reteaching, if necessary;

- invite students to discuss, question, reflect on, and analyse what they see, hear, and experience, with opportunities to examine and discuss issues from different points of view;

- engage students in "accountable talk" (see p. 32) to solve problems, clarify their understanding, and consolidate their learning;

- challenge students to "dig deeper" for meaning, to wonder about possibilities, and to discuss contradictions, using higher-order thinking skills.

*"The strategies I am learning will help me become a proficient and independent reader, writer, and communicator."*

*"I learn best when I am reading and writing for a real purpose."*

*"Accountable talk helps me to improve my reading, writing, and thinking."*

*"I can apply the strategies and skills that I learn in Language to all subjects."*

### To promote learning through goal-setting and self-assessment, teachers:

- set high yet attainable targets or standards;

- create time for reflection and involve students in setting personal literacy goals, assessing their own progress, and making decisions about their literacy learning;

- explain expectations and assessment criteria at the beginning of a learning task so that students know what to expect and where to focus their efforts;

- teach time-management, organization, and information-management skills to promote independence, including how to handle pressures, how to prioritize, and how to make appropriate choices;

- present tightly structured, well-focused lessons based on a clear sense of purpose and tied to the achievement of clear goals;

*"Thinking about my thinking will help me understand what I have learned, make decisions about my learning, and become a more independent learner."*

*"I need to think about my learning and set goals for my learning."*

*"Assessments are a way for the teacher and for me to understand how well I am learning."*

- provide constructive, focused feedback on a regular basis to involve students in monitoring their own learning;

- build upon students' strengths and celebrate their successes, using positive and concrete examples to generate an "I can do this" feeling.

## SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Junior students are developing social awareness and skills that influence their relationships with others and their ideas about the world. They:

- develop a sense of justice, concern, and empathy for others, and become less egocentric;

- are more willing and able to consider different points of view and to change their opinions;

- form critical judgements about social issues;

- have a more flexible sense of right and wrong than they did when they were younger;

- develop leadership qualities;

- may challenge the adult world and test boundaries that are set for them – although they continue to look to adults for guidance and approval;

- begin to feel greater pressures and expectations, both socially and academically;

- increasingly seek acceptance, support, social standing, and identity from their peers and peer groups;

> "Kids begin to challenge their parents. Instead of seeing things in black and white, middle school kids start to see things in 250 shades of gray, but they can't sort it out yet."
>
> *(Kutner, n.d.)*

- enjoy working in groups;

- may strive to include or exclude others from their groups;

- are socially sensitive and more vulnerable to embarrassment than a younger child might be;

- may suffer a loss of self-confidence when they are compared with others;

- are increasingly conscious of and affected by gender roles;

- may expand their social circles beyond the home and school (for example, by venturing into online chat rooms).

### What Teachers Do

Teachers:

- provide plentiful opportunities for students to talk and interact in flexible and dynamic groupings, including small groups and pairs;

- model and help students to build a community of learners where all students feel affirmed, support each other's learning, and are prepared to take risks;

- extend opportunities for collaborative learning to include learning buddies in other grades;

- teach students to assume a critical stance when responding to texts of all types;

- model and provide opportunities for exploration, active listening, debate, discussion, and persuasive argument;

- establish routines and procedures that promote personal responsibility and respectful interaction, and reinforce these with lessons and anchor charts (see "Anchor Charts" in the appendix).

> "Safety in classrooms means intellectual safety as well as physical safety…. All students are more likely to be engaged in the learning, rise to the challenge, and have a sense of self-confidence as they approach the task if they feel that they have a chance to succeed."
>
> *(Gregory and Chapman, 2002, p. 5)*

**APPLICATION IN APPENDIX**

## Personal Identity

Junior students are strongly influenced by the cultures of their families and communities but are also developing their own identity. They:

- begin to develop their own beliefs and values and to take responsibility for their own actions;

- realize that some of their attitudes and values differ from those of their siblings, their parents, and other adults;

- may look beyond parents and teachers for their role models – towards characters from various media, including television, movies, music, sports, and books;

- may be unsure of who they are and where they fit in;

- are anxious to cultivate a more sophisticated self-image – seeking ways to be "cool";

- are influenced by popular culture, intentionally targeted by the media, very brand aware, and vulnerable to media advertising, which may include potentially harmful messages;

- look ahead to independence and start to think about possible careers;

- seek opportunities to test their own skills and abilities.

### What Teachers Do

Teachers:

- ask students about themselves, their attitudes, and their interests. They do not assume that any one aspect of a student's cultural, linguistic, or personal identity is the defining characteristic of that student;

- provide opportunities for students both to read and to write about things that interest them;

- provide positive role models through biographies, historical texts, informational texts, current events, and literature in many genres, and include heroes who break free from negative peer pressure;

- ensure that texts, images, celebrations, and examples reflect the global nature of Canadian society;

- encourage students to reflect on what they think and feel about the texts and characters they encounter, how they are influenced by the writer's craft and message, and why others may have different responses to the same text;

- teach critical-literacy skills to help students read their world and become more aware of how media, peers, and others portray roles and convey messages;

- provide an environment where each student feels valued and is comfortable taking risks;

- encourage students to question what they see and value in advertising and other forms of popular culture.

## Gender

There is a large body of evidence, including data from the province-wide assessments of literacy achievement in Grades 3 and 6, showing a discrepancy in both the literacy attitudes and the literacy achievement levels of boys and girls. Research indicates that fewer boys than girls like to read and write, and fewer boys than girls feel that they are good readers and writers.

### What Teachers Do

Teachers:

- offer varied forms of literacy instruction, including active-learning opportunities and concrete, step-by-step instruction;

- integrate technology into the literacy program, including visual media and computers;

- consider the differing, gender-related interests and text preferences of some boys and girls, and offer choices that reflect those interests and that include non-traditional reading material, such as comic books, baseball cards, magazines, Internet material, and e-mail messages;

- consider differences in fine-motor skills, language development, learning pace, and learning styles, and offer opportunities for students to choose activities that draw on their strengths in order to show what they know and can do;

- provide opportunities for flexible and varied groupings (for example, all boys, all girls, and mixed groupings);

- recognize that sometimes boys may be more reluctant than girls to ask for help when they need it, preferring to do things by themselves;

- offer inquiry-based learning, which allows students to ask questions and develop knowledge and skills in their areas of interest;

- provide texts that show male and female protagonists in non-traditional roles;

- make students aware of the relevance of what they are learning in every subject area;

- provide opportunities for talk;

- embrace the arts;

- demonstrate that they care about students as individuals and want them to learn.

## LANGUAGE BACKGROUND

Regardless of their language background, most junior students are far more confident as speakers than as readers or writers. Their vocabulary is increasing – although the language they use to express themselves (their expressive language) tends to lag behind the language they understand (their receptive language).

Students whose first language is not the language of instruction have both advantages and challenges.

From their language background, they have:

- an understanding of how languages work;

- prior knowledge and experiences that can enrich their analysis and interpretation of texts;

- a foundation for becoming multilingual that can broaden their opportunities in the global community.

At the same time, however, second-language learners face the daily challenges of developing their academic vocabulary in the language of instruction, and of working collaboratively and making friends in an unfamiliar language.

"'Conversational fluency' can get [these students]… through the first few years of school but by fourth grade they need to have 'academic proficiency' – a more complex range of skills that facilitates comprehension of increasingly difficult texts."

*(Cummins, n.d.)*

## What Teachers Do

Teachers:

- consider a student's literacy in his or her first language as a foundation for developing literacy skills in the language of instruction;

- provide the background knowledge that students need to understand unfamiliar concepts;

- allow second-language learners to use their first languages when necessary to clarify their understanding and to keep up with content learning in all subject areas;

- encourage students to maintain and further develop their proficiency in other languages and to use this knowledge as a scaffold for developing their proficiency in English and French;

- support the use of translation programs, electronic dictionaries, and other technological tools that can help students to understand the language of academic texts and to build bridges from one language to another;

- provide flexible student groupings that allow students to support one another in their first languages and in the language of instruction;

- encourage parents to read to their children in the family's home language;

- celebrate language diversity in the classroom by talking about the language backgrounds of students and by encouraging students to share stories and information from their backgrounds;

- in selecting texts for classroom learning, include stories and information that feature the languages and cultures of the students, and encourage students to see the connections among various languages and cultures;

- use total physical response (TPR) to help second-language learners – for example, through gestures, variation in voice, or pantomime (see "Total Physical Response" in the appendix);

- offer student-led conferences in which students can use their first language;

- use graphic organizers and concrete materials and experiences to support comprehension and language development.

**Helping Students to Develop Academic Language**

For more information about helping students to develop academic language, see the Signature Page, "The Challenge of Learning Academic Language", by Jim Cummins, on pages 24–25.

APPLICATION IN APPENDIX

# FAMILY INVOLVEMENT WITH THE SCHOOL

"Junior students thrive in schools that are family-friendly, and in families that are school-friendly. They are better able to draw meaning from their school experiences and apply that meaning in other contexts when they sense that school is a valued and vital part of the bigger world around them. Most families, students, and teachers value strong family-school partnerships at all grade levels; however, these partnerships tend to decline in the junior grades unless schools and teachers make a conscious effort to sustain and develop them at each grade level. Students provide a vital link between the home and school, but they need information and guidance about how to help maintain this link (Epstein, 1995)."

*(Literacy for Learning, p. 19)*

## What Teachers Do

Teachers:

- communicate regularly with parents about the literacy learning of their children;

- welcome parents into the school and actively engage them in supporting student learning;

- become aware of the local community and its cultures – especially the cultures of students and their families – and use this awareness when choosing texts and literacy activities for the classroom;

- organize family literacy events;

- use translators to help families participate and feel included in school events.

# LEARNING STRENGTHS AND NEEDS

Students who understand their own learning strengths and needs are better equipped to succeed in the classroom and in life. With this self-awareness as a tool, they become more engaged in their learning, more strategic in setting their own learning goals and advocating for their own needs, and more effective at working independently and with others. Teachers who recognize and capitalize on the strengths and needs of their students are better able to provide targeted instruction and support to individual students and groups of students.

There are many different theories about human intelligence, learning styles, and temperament, and many different models to describe the similarities and differences among learners. This guide offers a brief introduction to *learning styles* and *multiple intelligences*. Either of these models, alone or in combination, can be used as part of diagnostic assessment before learning. The information that is collected about each student's strengths and preferences can help the teacher to consciously adapt instructional methods to meet the needs of all learners.

## Learning Styles

Learning-styles theory suggests that there are three kinds of learners:

1. **Visual learners** learn through seeing. They prefer to have ideas and concepts demonstrated for them. Charts, diagrams, and visual displays also help the visual learner.

2. **Auditory learners** learn best by listening and talking through ideas with others. Written information may make little sense to them until it is read aloud or discussed with others.

3. **Kinesthetic/tactile learners** prefer to be actively engaged. They enjoy hands-on activities using concrete materials and the opportunity to move about and engage in physical activity.

## Multiple Intelligences

Multiple intelligences, as identified by Howard Gardner, reflect eight different ways to demonstrate intellectual ability (Gardner 1983; 1993). Individuals generally have some abilities in all eight categories but will tend to favour or show strength in a particular few. Being aware of all eight forms of intelligence enables teachers to plan activities that build on the strengths of each student and that help students to develop their intelligences in areas that are not naturally strong. It is important for teachers to vary their approaches and class work to ensure that students grow in all eight areas.

The chart on page 23 outlines the eight intelligences and identifies several characteristics that describe each form of intelligence.

APPLICATIONS
IN APPENDIX

### Multiple Intelligences Surveys

The appendix includes two different multiple-intelligences surveys and a scoring tool to help students identify their natural strengths as learners. Survey 1 is suitable for Grades 4 to 6. Survey 2 uses more advanced ideas and language, and may be more suitable for older junior students. The scoring tool can be used with either survey (see "Multiple Intelligences Survey 1", "Multiple Intelligences Survey 2", and "Multiple Intelligences Score Sheet", all in the appendix).

## The Eight Intelligences

### Verbal/Linguistic

The student:

- uses language for a variety of purposes
- develops logical arguments
- is sensitive to the sounds and meanings of words
- decodes and makes meaning from text
- responds to oral language
- understands diverse vocabulary

### Logical/Mathematical

The student:

- recognizes abstract patterns and relationships
- reasons logically
- hypothesizes
- invents
- investigates issues scientifically
- likes challenges

### Visual/Spatial

The student:

- recognizes and manipulates patterns in a wide area or a confined space
- needs to see in order to understand
- uses visual clues to make meaning
- works with images, mind mapping, visualizing, drawing

### Bodily/Kinesthetic

The student:

- is active and energetic
- demonstrates good fine-motor and gross-motor control
- learns best by doing
- processes information through touch, movement, dramatics

### Musical/Rhythmic

The student:

- may hum and whistle while working
- makes connections to sounds in the environment
- creates imaginative and expressive performances
- responds to auditory stimuli using rhythm, melody, patterned sound, song, rap, dance
- learns through rhythm, rhyme, and repetition

### Interpersonal

The student:

- is people-oriented and outgoing
- understands the intentions, motivations, and desires of others
- learns best cooperatively
- demonstrates confident and appropriate social skills
- shares effectively

### Intrapersonal

The student:

- understands self as a learner and uses this information to regulate his or her own life
- is independent and self-directed
- can be reserved
- reflects on and analyses personal learning
- uses metacognitive skills

### Naturalist

The student:

- loves nature and is curious about it
- recognizes and classifies many of the species found in nature
- notices patterns in the environment
- has extensive knowledge of the living world
- can precisely discriminate among objects or phenomena
- spends time outdoors

# The Challenge of Learning Academic Language

**Jim Cummins**
University of Toronto

Jim Cummins teaches in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. His research has focused on the nature of language proficiency and second-language acquisition, with particular emphasis on the social and educational barriers that limit academic success for culturally diverse students. His publications include *Language, Power, and Pedagogy: Bilingual Children in the Crossfire* (Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters, 2000).

## What Is Academic Language?

The major challenge for students in the early grades of elementary school is learning how to decode written text. Students acquire decoding skills by means of balanced instruction that develops their awareness of how the sounds of the language map on to written symbols and encourages them to apply these skills in the context of extensive reading and writing. However, the acquisition of fluent decoding skills in the primary grades is only the beginning stage in becoming a strong reader. Students in the junior grades face a new set of challenges.

As students progress through the grades, they are required to read increasingly complex texts in the subject areas of the curriculum (science, mathematics, social studies, literature). The complexity of academic language reflects:

- the difficulty of the concepts that students are required to understand;
- the vocabulary load in subject texts that include many low-frequency and technical words that we almost never use in everyday conversation (for example, typical of academic texts are words such as *analysis, sequence, fluctuation, criterion* that derive from Latin and Greek sources);
- increasingly sophisticated grammatical constructions (such as the passive voice) that again are almost never used in everyday conversational contexts.

Students are not only required to read this language, they must also use it in writing reports, essays, and other forms of academic work.

In short, academic language is the language of school success. We find this language predominantly in books. Therefore, students who read extensively both inside and outside the school have far greater opportunities to acquire academic language than those whose reading is limited.

## How Long Does It Take Second-Language Learners to Catch Up Academically?

There are large numbers of second-language learners in urban schools across Ontario. Therefore, any discussion of literacy development must take account of the specific challenges that these students encounter in acquiring the language of school success.

Many research studies conducted in several countries show clearly that second-language learners usually require at least five years to catch up to native speakers in academic language proficiency. By contrast, it takes only about one to two years for students to become reasonably fluent in conversational language. An implication of these time periods is that second-language students will typically require additional support to gain access to the language of the curriculum and to harvest the language of academic texts.

A crucial component of this support is encouraging and enabling students to read extensively. Because academic language is found primarily in written texts and in all curricular areas (novels, textbooks, newspapers, and math problems, for example), support must extend across the curriculum and be provided by all teachers, not just by specialized language teachers.

## What Strategies Enable Students to Develop Academic Language?

Increasing the amount of reading and writing that students carry out in school and out of school is obviously a central strategy in helping students develop their knowledge of academic language.

Many schools organize book fairs, author visits, student-generated newsletters, and other activities designed to place reading and writing at the centre of school life. These activities recognize that helping students develop strong literacy skills involves more than just effective instructional techniques. Students' affective response to reading and writing will determine the extent of their literacy engagement just as much as, if not more than, the instructional techniques that teachers use.

When students see literacy valued by important members of their communities (teachers, peers, parents), their motivation to participate in literacy-related activities increases significantly.

This perspective implies that schools should articulate, implement, and monitor school-based language and literacy policies aimed both at increasing students' engagement with literacy practices and at deepening their knowledge of academic language. These policies should apply to all grades of elementary school (including Kindergarten) and should explicitly address three areas that are sometimes neglected:

- the involvement of parents in supporting students' literacy in both the home and the school languages;
- the school's orientation towards the language and culture of diverse students. Extensive research clearly shows that literacy in two languages is educationally enriching; thus, schools should be proactive in supporting the development of students' home language and literacy skills;
- the ways in which technology can be harnessed to amplify students' language exploration and literacy engagement.

It is important to note that school-based language and literacy policy is a process rather than a product. Although at some point a policy may be articulated in a written document, it should be revisited and monitored on a constant basis to ensure that there is regular dialogue among teachers and parent representatives about initiatives, resources, and directions.

Specific strategies that schools in Ontario and elsewhere have adopted to enable culturally and linguistically diverse students to invest their identities in literacy include the following:

- From Kindergarten on, students bring in words to class (in either the home language or English/French) to explore with peers and the teacher. Students discuss why they chose these words and, working in groups, they incorporate them into technology-supported multimedia glossaries (print, image, audio) that reflect their "language detective" work. Students can carry out image searches on the Internet to create picture dictionaries, and they can audio-record definitions of the words in both their home languages and the language of the school.

- Students create dual-language books written in both English/French and the students' home languages. Students illustrate these books, which can then be scanned into the computer and uploaded onto the school's website (for an outstanding example, see the website created by Thornwood Elementary School in the Peel District School Board, http://thornwood.peelschools.org/Dual/). These books can be termed *identity texts*, insofar as students invest their identities in the creation of the texts (written, spoken, visual, musical, dramatic, or combinations in multimodal form) that then hold a mirror up to students in which their identities are reflected back in a positive light. When students share identity texts with multiple audiences (peers, teachers, parents, grandparents, sister classes, and the media, for example) they are likely to receive positive feedback and affirmation of self in interaction with these audiences.

In short, in the junior grades the major challenge for schools is to create a climate in which students' engagement with literacy shapes their identities as intelligent, imaginative, and talented human beings who have something important to contribute to their schools, their families, and, ultimately, their societies. Under these conditions, students will take ownership of literacy and invest their identities in powerful literacy practices.

# 2 KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS REQUIRED FOR LITERACY

# INTRODUCTION

The knowledge and skills required for literacy are not isolated elements taught in a lock-step sequence; rather, they are interrelated components that support and build on each other as students explore increasingly complex language and texts in the junior grades.

- **Reading, writing, talking, listening, thinking, viewing, and representing are reciprocal literacy processes.**
- **By gradually releasing responsibility for learning to students, teachers help students improve their learning and develop a greater level of independence.**
- **Authentic literacy experiences help students develop skills and attitudes that will serve them throughout their lives and improve the quality of their lives.**

To develop as literate learners, students need explicit instruction in the individual components of reading, writing, oral communication, and higher-order thinking – and plenty of practice using the components in combination in authentic contexts. Students need to have the knowledge and skills that enable them to make decisions independently, just as proficient communicators do. They need to think like readers, writers, and speakers as they interact with, and create, increasingly complex texts of all types.

Students require explicit instruction in essential skills and strategies. They also need to understand that becoming literate is a lifelong process. The learning never stops, as new forms of communication are developed and language continues to evolve over time. Teachers need to model that they themselves are learners.

This chapter outlines some of the knowledge and skills that junior students need in order to develop literacy. Literacy learning continues throughout school and beyond the school years. It is important to remember that the skills and knowledge taught through the use of specific resources are transferable to other subject areas and aspects of life, and that they are enduring. It is not essential that students learn the parts of a plant. It *is* essential that they learn how to find the information, how to read a diagram, and how to remember significant information.

## The Four Roles of a Literate Learner

Literacy in the twenty-first century involves not a single skill but a complex combination of skills and resources that the literate learner draws upon to make meaning from texts of many types. One approach to understanding this complex process is offered by Peter Freebody and Allan Luke in their "Four Resources Model" (1990, and later works). The four resources are also referred to as "four roles" or "four families of practices".

To be literate, students must learn (1) to make meaning from texts, (2) to break the "code" of texts, (3) to use texts to acquire knowledge/information and perform tasks, and (4) to analyse and critique texts. One family of practices does not stand alone as more important than the others; students integrate all four simultaneously when they read, write, listen, and speak. Freebody notes that "any program of instruction in literacy, whether it be in kindergarten, in adult [second-language] classes, in university courses, or any points in between, needs to confront these roles systematically, explicitly, and at all developmental points" (Freebody, 1992, p. 58).

It is important for teachers to integrate the four roles in a meaningful way in all subjects across the curriculum. The roles are *not* intended to be addressed in a linear sequence – for example, by teaching code-breaking skills first and then moving on to meaning making when students have learned the essential code-breaking skills. Students who are struggling with reading or writing may need considerable scaffolded support from the teacher as they work with increasingly complex texts; however, all students can develop as critical and analytical thinkers while they are acquiring their literacy skills.

## The Four Roles of a Literate Learner

| Meaning Maker | Code User |
|---|---|
| *(What does this mean?)* | *(How do I crack this?)* |
| The learner: | The learner: |
| • uses prior knowledge and experience to construct and communicate meaning when reading, viewing, writing, representing, and speaking.<br>• understands diverse vocabulary. | • recognizes and uses the features and structures of written, visual, and spoken texts, including the alphabet, sounds in words, spelling, conventions, sentence structure, text organization, graphics, and other visuals. |
| **Text User** | **Text Analyser** |
| *(What do I do with this, here and now?)* | *(What does this do to me?)* |
| The learner: | The learner: |
| • understands that the purpose and audience help to determine the way a text is structured, the tone, the degree of formality, and the sequence of components, and uses this knowledge to read, write, and speak. | • understands that texts are not neutral, that they represent particular views and perspectives, that other views and perspectives may be missing, and that the design and messages of texts can be critiqued and revised. |

(Based on Freebody and Luke's "four resources model", 1990; adapted from *Literacy for Learning*, p. 9)

## The Relationship Among the Reader, the Text, the Teacher, and the Author

As reflected in the accompanying diagram (on page 30), Jim Burke illustrates the idea that meaning is constructed as a result of negotiation among the reader, the text, the author, and, at times, the teacher or a knowledgeable other. That is why two readers looking at the same text can arrive at totally different interpretations, both of which might be equally appropriate. The diagram speaks to the importance of questioning texts, the author, and oneself in order to seek the best possible understanding. No text is entirely neutral, and no reader is without bias. Being critically literate demands an inquiring, open mind. Effective teachers stretch their students' thinking through intense and deliberate dialogue that questions texts and digs deep for meaning.

# The Relationship Among Reader, Text, Teacher, and Author

**The Teacher Asks:**
- Why did I choose this text?
- What is my objective in teaching it?
- How does it relate to what they read before and will read after?
- Who (or what) do I want them to be when they enter this text?
- What knowledge/skills must I develop in them BEFORE they read/use this?
- What is my attitude toward this text?
- What is my role/responsibility in this particular interaction (between reader and the text)?
- What is the best way to introduce this text to the reader (in light of my rationale for teaching it)?
- How do I want them to read/use this text in this context?
- What evidence am I willing to accept that they have read and understood it?

**The Reader Asks:**
- Who am I as I read this text?
- Why am I reading it?
- What do I need to know and be able to do to read/use this successfully?
- How does this text relate to what I have read and studied before?
- How will I read this text?
- How does the author (based on the format/design) expect me to read it?
- Why should I trust this author?
- How does this text work?
- What, if anything, should I do while I read this text?
- What strategies can I use to read this text successfully?
- What question do I need to be able to answer when I am finished?
- How does this relate to other works by this author?

**The Author Asks:**
- What is my subject?
- What is my objective?
- Which is the most appropriate form or genre for this text?
- Which is the most appropriate medium for the content?
- How does this text relate to my past work and the tradition within which I am working?
- Who is my audience?
- What assumptions can I make about my intended audience?
- Who (or what) do I want them to be when they enter this text?
- What will the reader/user need to know to read/use this text successfully?
- What is the best way to organize this information?

**The World Asks**
- Why are you asking our children to read this particular text?
- How does this text reflect our standards and expectations?
- How does this text help to prepare them for life?
- Is this text consistent with our community's values?
- What role can we play to help our children read/use this text successfully?

OUTSIDE INFLUENCES

OUTSIDE INFLUENCES

OUTSIDE INFLUENCES

OUTSIDE INFLUENCES

Teacher

Author

Text

Reader

World

when • why • how?

when • why • how?

assumptions
expectations
intentions

assumptions
expectations
intentions

assumptions
expectations
intentions

assumptions
expectations
intentions

## The Interrelationship of the Knowledge and Skills Required for Literacy

The knowledge and skills required for literacy – the focus of this chapter – fall into a number of distinct but interrelated areas. Each of these areas has its own unique set of skills and strategies that help students become proficient communicators. These skills and strategies are related and mutually reinforcing and should be taught in an integrated, connected way so that students clearly understand that what they learn in each aspect of their language program is connected and transferable to all subject areas. For example, the expository text form they learned to write in their writing class will help them to understand both the text they will be exploring in their next reading class and the report they will need to write in their social studies class.

*Students need to learn that their literacy skills are transferable to all content areas.*

# ORAL COMMUNICATION

> "Four decades of research has established oral language as the foundation of reading and writing development, especially for intermediate students, who are expanding their use of literacy as a tool for learning."
>
> *(Fountas and Pinnell, 2001, p. 21)*

Oral communication skills – both speaking and listening – provide the foundation for literacy. These skills include oral fluency (the smooth flow of speech) and the cognitive and social skills of accountable talk.

## Oral Fluency

Students need to develop oral fluency if they are to become proficient speakers and effective readers and writers of increasingly complex texts. Fluency refers to the ability to use language with ease, clarity, and automaticity – without struggling at the level of words and sentences. Fluent language users are able to decode words and sentences quickly and accurately; to read, write, and speak with expression and ease; and to comprehend the meaning in written and spoken language.

Fluency in reading is sometimes considered to be less important than other aspects of the reading process. However, lack of fluency can indicate problems with comprehension. Timothy Rasinski, a noted literacy educator, explains: "If readers read quickly and accurately but with no expression in their voices, if they place equal emphasis on every word and have no sense of phrasing, and if they ignore most punctuation, blowing through periods and other markers that indicate pauses, then it is unlikely that they will fully understand the deeper levels of meaning embedded in the text" (Rasinski, 2004, p. 46).

- *Talk is the foundation for literacy.*
- *Literacy instruction must be differentiated, inclusive, and respectful of all students.*

Fluency also affects the motivation to read and write. Students are less likely to persist in a subject if they lack the technical vocabulary and familiarity with the concepts and content they need to decode texts with relative ease and automaticity. (See the Signature Page, "The Challenge of Learning Academic Language", by Jim Cummins, pages 24–25 in this volume.)

When faced with texts that are beyond their level of fluency, or subjects beyond their current understanding, students need explicit strategies and scaffolded support that will help them to make meaning. For more on scaffolding, see page 80 in Chapter 3 of this volume, "Principles of Effective Literacy Instruction".

## Accountable Talk

The term *accountable talk* refers to talk that is meaningful, respectful, and mutually beneficial to both speaker and listener. When students engage in accountable talk (Allen, 2002), they do the following:

- focus on the topic and purpose of the discussion

- attend to the listener's needs and what others are saying

- seriously respond to and build on what others have said

- give evidence to support their points of view

- help each other to reach a common understanding, and share responsibility for the learning of the whole group

Accountable talk stimulates higher-order thinking – helping students to learn, reflect on their learning, and communicate their knowledge and understanding. To promote accountable talk, teachers create a collaborative learning environment in which students feel confident in expressing their ideas, opinions, and knowledge. The chart on page 33 describes aspects of accountable talk in the junior classroom.

For more information on accountable talk, see the following:
- the section entitled "The Importance of Talk" in Chapter 3, "Principles of Effective Literacy Instruction" (p. 93 in this volume)
- the following strategies/tools in the appendix to this volume: Book Talks; Carousel; Four Corners; Graffiti; "I" Message; Inside-Outside Circle; Jigsaw; Literature Circles; Place Mat; Questioning the Author; Ranking Ladder; Retell, Relate, Reflect; Say Something; Tea Party; Value Line; Walkabout

**Characteristics of Accountable Talk in the Classroom**

| Actions or Behaviour | Speech |
|---|---|
| Sitting facing other group members (knees to knees and toes to toes) and talking one at a time | Quiet conversation |
| Watching the speaker | Speaker speaks; others listen |
| Nodding to encourage the speaker | "I agree … and I also think …" |
| Leaning forward to show interest | Speaker speaks; others listen and wait their turn without interrupting |
| Setting goals and staying on topic | "How does what you have said relate to the article we just read?" <br> "I see the connection you are trying to make, but …" |
| Asking questions for clarification | "I am not sure I understand what you mean. Could you please explain your thinking?" |
| Encouraging the speaker with positive feedback | "That is a really interesting idea. Can you show me the evidence in the text?" |
| Building on the ideas of others to deepen understanding | "I understand what you mean, and I think that …" <br> "What you are saying makes me think that …" |
| Offering opinions in a respectful way and disagreeing in a courteous way | "Your ideas are interesting. Have you thought of …?" |

# Cueing Systems: How Language and Words Work

Researchers have noted that the brain is a pattern seeker. It is this capacity to detect patterns that enables humans to acquire language and to use language to communicate with others.

When students understand some of the predictable patterns in language, they possess powerful tools they can use to expand their vocabularies and develop fluency. As students learn about words and about different text forms and structures, they develop a *schema* – an understanding of how language and words work. As they meet increasingly complicated texts, they draw upon their schema to help them understand how a new text works and what is expected of them as users of that text.

Effective teachers deliberately teach the writer's craft to students to make them more aware of the techniques that writers use to communicate with their readers. They also teach text forms and structures to familiarize students with the patterns that writers use to convey meaning and that readers interpret to make meaning.

The patterns in spoken and written language are sometimes referred to collectively as "cueing systems". They include the following:

- **Semantics**
- **Syntactics**
- **Pragmatics**
- **Graphophonics**

## Semantics (Meaning)

*Semantics* refers to the *meaning* in language that comes from the reader's experiential and conceptual background. It is what the reader *brings to* the words, phrases, sentences, signs, and symbols of language, alone and in context, that enables the reader to make meaning from a text. Meaning exists in the mind of the reader rather than on the printed page. In order to develop comprehension and fluency, therefore, junior students must go beyond memorizing a bank of words to develop the habit of using prior knowledge and problem-solving skills to find the meaning of new words.

The word *microscope*, for example, is easier to recall if students know that *-scope* refers to an instrument for viewing and *micro-* is a combining form meaning "very small". Equipped with this knowledge, students can then tackle words that share the same origins (derivatives), such as those illustrated in the following chart:

### Exploring Word Origins and Derivatives
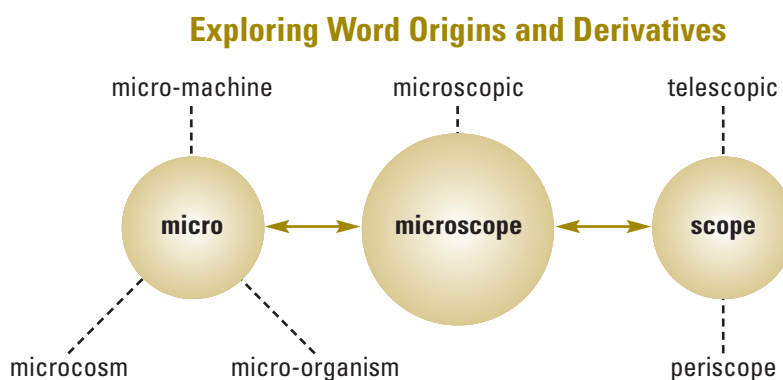


Far from being passive consumers of information, proficient language users monitor their understanding of language and actively try to make sense of words. They ask for clarification if they do not understand a new word, and compare new concepts with their existing understanding. For example, when faced with a new word such as *equivalent*, effective readers might notice the *equi-* portion and reason that this word could be related to *equal*. They would then confirm or modify their guess by reading the word in context, asking a peer, checking a dictionary, or using other strategies. When reading a passage, they monitor their comprehension and use appropriate fix-up strategies if the text fails to make sense.

Effective writers monitor their use of language by reading a draft aloud to see if the content conveys the intended message when they hear it in spoken form. Depending on the purpose and audience, the vocabulary and grammar of a written text may need to be more precise than would be necessary in speech, but the written text should still convey the clarity and flow of effective oral language.

## Syntactics (Language structure)

"*Syntax* refers to the generally accepted ways words in a language are combined to form phrases, clauses, and sentences. Syntax includes classes of words (such as noun, verb, and adjective) and their functions (such as subject and object)" (*Literacy for Learning*, p. 65).

As they develop greater language awareness, students begin to see patterns at the level of syntax. They realize, for example, that *-ed* added to the end of a base word usually signals the past tense, as in *jumped*. This is important in spelling, since the sound at the end of *jumped* is /t/, yet the spelling is still *-ed*. In reading, the *-ed* ending likewise signals that the action took place in the past.

Students also learn, of course, that there are many exceptions to this rule. Through listening to oral language, they realize that the past tense of *to go* is *went* rather than *goed*. Patterns at the level of syntax become more complex as students progress through the junior grades and include concepts such as possessives and contractions.

## Pragmatics (Context)

"*Pragmatics* is the study of how people choose what they say or write from the range of possibilities available in the language, and how listeners or readers are affected by those choices. Pragmatics involves understanding how the context influences the way sentences convey information" (*Literacy for Learning*, p. 65).

Strategic communicators are able to use all aspects of language to make sense of the world, and use language in diverse ways to accomplish specific purposes. They understand the pragmatics involved in engaging an audience; getting to the point; checking for understanding; sustaining interest; and striving for truthfulness, clarity, and comprehension (Bainbridge and Malicky, 2004, p. 46).

Students learn pragmatic skills by watching their teachers model the skills and then by practising and refining the skills in authentic situations, such as debates, brainstorming sessions, critiques of ideas, and focused discussions. For example, a group of students might write a letter to the editor of a local newspaper to express concerns about a nearby park that is littered with garbage – using a text form, conventions, and voice that would suit this formal context. If their intent is to influence their schoolmates to help clean up the park, they might create posters or brief comments for morning

announcements, using a more informal voice and graphical style that would appeal to a younger audience.

Pragmatics also involves understanding subtle, non-verbal nuances of communication. For example, knowledge of how design, light, colour, and sound influence a person can equip students to be more conscious and critical consumers when they view a television program or a product display in a department store. In face-to-face communication, being able to "read" body language, intonation, and pace of delivery can help students to be more sensitive and competent communicators and to "read between the lines" to make meaning in a variety of situations.

## Graphophonics (Sound-symbol relationships)

Readers use graphophonic cues – along with semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic cues – to determine if a work is logical or makes sense. *Graphophonics* refers to the relationships between the symbols (e.g., letters of the alphabet) and the sounds of a language, as well as visual information on the page (including word patterns and words recognized by sight) that helps readers to decode text.

Literate learners recognize sound-symbol relationships and word families in the texts they see and hear. This knowledge allows them to deal with new words they encounter. For example, if students see the word *guild* in a unit on the Middle Ages, they will be able to read it correctly by relating it to the word *build* that has the same spelling pattern. Likewise, *guild* will be easier to spell if they link it by analogy with *build*.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF TEXTS

In addition to recognizing patterns at the level of words and sentences, literate learners look for recognizable patterns in whole texts. These include the following:

**Text features:** features of the design and structure, or orderly presentation, of text

**Text forms:** structures and functions of texts

**Genres:** literary or thematic categories

The chart on page 37 lists some examples of text features, text forms, and genres.

*Students need to become proficient in "multiliteracies", involving texts of all types.*

Learning to draw consciously on their understanding of text features, text forms, and genres helps junior students to make meaning from increasingly complex texts in a range of media, including print and electronic texts. This knowledge also helps students to write more effectively, using strategies that match their purpose and intended audience.

## Text, Features, Forms, and Genres

| Text Features (Design/presentation) | Text Forms (Physical forms and functions) | Genres (Literary or thematic categories) |
|---|---|---|
| **Structural elements and navigation aids** such as:<br><br>Table of contents<br>Index<br>Title and topic<br>Headings<br>Preface or Foreword<br>Epilogue<br>Captions<br>Footnotes and endnotes<br>Glossary<br>Bibliography<br>Pull-down menus<br>Hyperlinks<br><br>**Typographical or design elements** such as:<br><br>Font or type style<br>Bold and italic print<br>Colour<br>Layout<br><br>**Illustrations** such as:<br><br>Inlays and cross-sections<br>Pull quotes<br>Sidebars<br>Photos<br>Graphs and charts<br>Timelines<br>Maps | **Narrative (fiction or informational)** such as:<br><br>stories told in poetry, novels, short stories, picture books<br><br>**Recount (fiction or informational)** first-person accounts such as:<br><br>diaries, journals, short stories, novels, memoirs<br><br>**Procedure** such as:<br><br>recipes, rule books, directions and maps, instruction manuals, "how to" books and posters, experiments<br><br>**Exposition** such as:<br><br>essays, position papers, articles, advertisements<br><br>**Explanation** such as:<br><br>textbooks in science, social studies, history, geography<br><br>**Report** such as:<br><br>magazine and newspaper reports, letters, editorials, critical reviews, essays, posters<br><br>**Electronic text** such as:<br><br>multimedia texts, e-mail, blogs, websites, broadcasts<br><br>**Functional text** such as:<br><br>lists, memos, notes, pamphlets, brochures, flyers, print advertisements, CD cover inserts, invitations, announcements, programs, business letters, scripts, minutes of a meeting | Adventure<br>Epic<br>Fable<br>Fairy tale<br>Fantasy<br>Folk tale<br>Historical fiction<br>Horror<br>Humour and satire<br>Legend<br>Mystery<br>Myth<br>Poetry<br>Realistic fiction<br>Science fiction<br>Autobiography<br>Biography<br>Memoir<br>Diary or journal<br>Travel book<br>Atlas<br>Textbook<br>Reference text |

## Text Features

Text features are physical or design characteristics of a text that clarify and/or give support to the meaning in the text. Examples include the title, headings and subheadings, bold and italic fonts, illustrations, and other elements listed in the "Text Features, Forms, and Genres" chart. Well-designed text features can help readers to navigate the text, find the most important information, and see the connections among related ideas.

Students who pay attention to recurring text features are better able to comprehend, organize, and remember information in the text than those who do not. Writers enhance their ability to convey meaning by using appropriate text features.

> "Every piece of writing, every text we read, comes to us both as a text – the piece it is – and as a kind of text – an instance of genre. And what kind of thing it is puts some limits as to what we expect to find there. Genre, an oft-overlooked cueing system in reading, constrains our prediction, and lays down a track for our reading."
>
> *(Bomer, 1995, as cited in Lattimer, 2003, p. 3)*

## Text Forms and Genres

Text forms and genres offer a framework within which readers and writers make or create meaning. The distinctions between the two are not always perfectly clear and straightforward, since some writers blend text forms and genres to suit their particular audience and purpose. This guide makes a distinction between the two terms, and defines them as follows:

> "In order to become competent, literate members of society, students must be able to navigate multiple genres. Students need to learn about particular genres through implicit experience and explicit instruction."
>
> *(Lattimer, 2003, p. 3)*

*Text form* can refer to both the function and the structure of a text (for example, a summary, laboratory report, procedure, essay, narrative, or jot notes – in print or electronic form). The content may be fiction or non-fiction.

*Genre* refers to the theme or literary category of a text (for example, fantasy, science fiction, historical fiction, biography, poetry, satire). The content may be imaginative (e.g., fiction, poetry) or informational.

As the expert panel notes, "There is no single defining list of text forms [or genres] that teachers can memorize and share with their students. The concept of text forms is simply useful as a way for readers and writers to think about the purpose of a text and its intended audience" (*Literacy for Learning*, p. 82). Students need to be exposed to many and diverse text forms in order to expand their reading "diet", to explore what good writing looks like, and to draw connections between the reading and writing processes. Knowledge of the characteristics of a wide variety of text forms and genres

leads to greater independence for students, since they will be able to apply their knowledge to unfamiliar texts of all types that they encounter in school and throughout their lives. What is important is that they understand how to determine the characteristics of the texts they meet and how such characteristics convey meaning.

In various informational text forms, particular organizational patterns can often be identified. Familiarity with these patterns can help students navigate and make sense of the texts they read and convey meaning more effectively through their writing. The chart on pages 39–40 outlines various organizational patterns, as well as associated signal words used to guide readers and questions readers might ask themselves in order to achieve an accurate and full understanding of the content.

> "There continues to be an explosion of genres and blending of genres as new technologies become the norm for communication. We cannot know what genres students will need to know in the future, but we can teach ways of learning genres and help them develop the flexibility with form and habits of inquiry that will allow them to be competent in interacting with many forms of text."
>
> *(Lattimer, 2003, p. xi)*

## Organizational Patterns Found in Informational Texts

| Organizational Pattern | Questions That Promote Understanding | Signal Words That Guide the Reader |
|---|---|---|
| *Chronological*<br>• presents events in time sequence | What sequence of events is being described?<br>What are the major incidents that occur?<br>How is this pattern revealed in the text? | after, afterwards, as soon as, before, during, finally, first, following, immediately, initially, later, meanwhile, next, not long after, now, on, preceding, second, soon, then, third, today, until, when |
| *Comparison and contrast*<br>• presents information about similarities and differences | What items are being compared?<br>What characteristics are being compared?<br>What characteristics do the items have in common?<br>In what ways are these items different?<br>What conclusion does the author reach about the degree of difference and similarity between the items?<br>How did the author reveal this pattern? | although, as opposed to, as well as, both, but, compared with, different from, either … or, even though, however, in common, instead of, on the other hand, otherwise, similar to, similarly, still, yet |
| *Concept/definition*<br>• presents *general* information about a class of persons, places, things, and events<br>• identifies characteristics or attributes | What concept is being defined?<br>What are its attributes or characteristics?<br>How does it work or what does it do?<br>What examples are given for each of the attributes or characteristics?<br>How is this pattern revealed in the text? | for instance, in other words, is characterized by, put another way, refers to, that is, thus, usually |

*(continued)*

| Organizational Pattern | Questions That Promote Understanding | Signal Words That Guide the Reader |
|---|---|---|
| **Description**<br><br>• describes characteristics of specific persons, places, things, events | What is being described?<br><br>What are its most important attributes or characteristics?<br><br>Would the description change if the order of the attributes were changed?<br><br>Why is the description important? | above, across, along, appears to be, as in, behind, below, beside, between, down, in back of, in front of, looks like, near, on top of, onto, outside, over, such as, to the right/left, under |
| **Episode**<br><br>• organizes a large body of information about specific events<br><br>• identifies time, place, specific people, specific duration, specific sequence of incidents, and causes and effects | What event is being explained or described?<br><br>What is the setting where the event occurs?<br><br>Who are the major figures or characters that play a part in the event?<br><br>What are the specific incidents or events that occur? In what order do they happen?<br><br>What caused this event?<br><br>What effects has this event had on the people involved?<br><br>What effects has this event had on society in general? | a few days/months later, around this time, as a result of, as it is often called, because of, began when, consequently, first, for this reason, lasted for, led to, shortly thereafter, since then, subsequently, this led to, when |
| **Generalization/principle**<br><br>• organizes information into general statements with supporting examples | What generalization is the author making or what principle is being explained?<br><br>What facts, examples, statistics, and expert opinions are given that support the generalization or explain the principle?<br><br>Do these details appear in a logical order?<br><br>Are enough facts, examples, statistics, and expert opinions included to support or explain the generalization/principle? | additionally, always, because of, clearly, conclusively, first, for example, for instance, furthermore, generally, however, if … then, in fact, it could be argued that, moreover, most convincing, never, not only … but also, often, second, therefore, third, truly, typically |
| **Process/cause and effect**<br><br>• organizes information into a series of steps leading to a specific product or outcome | What process or subject is being explained?<br><br>What are the specific steps in the process, or what specific causal events occur?<br><br>What is the product or end result of the process, or what is the outcome of the causal events? | accordingly, as a result of, because, begins with, consequently, effect of, finally, first, for this reason, how, if … then, in order to, is caused by, leads/led to, may be due to, next, |

# THE READING PROCESS

"Reading in the junior grades is an interactive, problem-solving process, with the primary purpose of making meaning" (*Literacy for Learning*, p. 61). The process is not linear; it often requires the reader to go back and rethink, or to shift focus to a different strategy or step. The following chart shows some of the steps and strategies that proficient readers use before, during, and after reading.

## The Reading Process

| Before Reading | During Reading | During and After Reading |
|---|---|---|
| • Determine a purpose for reading.<br><br>• Decide on an appropriate reader's stance (for example, reading for pleasure or for information).<br><br>• Select an appropriate text.<br><br>• Preview the text (for example, by scanning the cover, title, organization, layout).<br><br>• Activate prior knowledge (for example, by recalling what you know about the text form, author, topic, similar texts). | • Use strategies to make meaning, such as:<br>  – making connections<br>  – determining important information<br>  – questioning<br>  – visualizing<br>  – summarizing<br>  – inferring<br>  – predicting<br>  – synthesizing<br>  – evaluating<br>  – monitoring and repairing understanding | • Assess, critique, and reflect on the text. |
| *Before reading, I ask myself:*<br><br>What do I already know?<br><br>What would I like to know?<br><br>What do I need to know?<br><br>I wonder if …?<br><br>What is my purpose for reading?<br><br>What do I need from this text?<br><br>What does this text require of me?<br><br>What strategies will I use to help me remember or keep track of my thinking? | *During reading, I think to myself:*<br><br>Does this make sense?<br><br>Hmm, I wonder…?<br><br>That reminds me of …<br><br>I think … because …<br><br>I still need answers to the question …<br><br>What is this author's intent?<br><br>Why am I feeling this way?<br><br>Does this information align with what I already know? | *During and after reading, I ask myself:*<br><br>Why did the author write this?<br><br>Whose voice is represented?<br><br>Whose voice is missing?<br><br>What do I know now that I didn't know before I read this?<br><br>If I had to tell someone about what I just read, what would I say?<br><br>How will I remember this information?<br><br>What will I do with this information?<br><br>Do I need to seek another perspective? |

# THE WRITING PROCESS

"Writing, in the junior grades, provides students with powerful opportunities to learn about themselves and their connections to the world. Through writing, students organize their thoughts, remember important information, solve problems, reflect on a widening range of perspectives, and learn how to communicate effectively for specific purposes and audiences" (*Literacy for Learning*, p. 79).

Proficient writers know how to approach the writing task in manageable steps. They understand that the writing process is similar to the reading process in that it is "recursive", meaning that the results of one step may require them to go back and repeat steps in order to refine their thinking and improve the final product. Revision, for example, may occur throughout the entire writing process, as writers rethink and revisit their work. Conferencing may also occur at various stages of the writing process, as writers collaborate with their peers and build on the rich ideas that are generated during the dialogue.

The following chart shows the steps in the recursive writing process. It is important to stress that writing is not a linear process. Revision, for example, occurs throughout the entire process.

## The Writing Process

| Prewriting | Drafting | Rethinking and Revising | Reflecting | Final Editing | Publishing |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| • Determine the purpose and audience.<br>• Generate ideas.<br>• Choose a text form. | • Organize the ideas.<br>• Develop an outline.<br>• Write a rough draft. | • Read the text for clarity and flow.<br>• Get feedback from others.<br>• Revise based on feedback. | • Compare the completed text to the initial purpose for writing.<br><br>• Compare your ideas now to those you started with. | • Proofread.<br><br>• Correct mechanical errors.<br><br>• Share the writing. | • Prepare the final copy in print, electronic, or other form.<br><br>• Share with others. |
| *Before writing, I ask:*<br>– What's my topic?<br>– Who's my audience?<br>– What is my purpose?<br>– What writing form/text features will I use?<br>– What do I already know about the topic?<br>– What information do I need?<br>– What literary techniques will best suit my purpose?<br>– What terminology is important for me to use in my writing? | *In the drafting stage, I might ask:*<br>– Do I have enough information?<br>– Is my opening strong enough?<br>– Where does this beginning lead me?<br>– What is the most important part in my writing?<br>– What am I really trying to say?<br>– Have I covered all the important points?<br>– Is this a good place to stop?<br>– Have I presented a balanced view of my topic?<br>– Have I used strong verbs and nouns? | *Once I have a draft, I might ask:*<br>– Do I have enough information?<br>– Do I have the right information for this audience?<br>– Do I need to think about this in a different way?<br>– What can I cut without hurting the whole?<br>– Does the opening grab the reader's attention?<br>– What techniques can I apply to my writing that I have seen effectively used in mentor texts?<br>– Does the sequencing make sense?<br>– Is the conclusion effective?<br>– Is the voice or tone right for the audience and topic?<br>– Do I leave the reader with unanswered questions? If yes, is that intentional and is it effective? | *To reflect on my writing, I ask:*<br>– What have I learned from writing this text?<br>– How can I improve next time?<br>– Will I include this sample in my writing portfolio?<br>– Have I achieved my goal?<br>– What does this writing mean to me?<br>– Will this writing have the desired effect on my intended audience? | *To polish the text, I ask:*<br>– Is the text as error-free as I can make it?<br>– Did I proofread the text more than once?<br>– Did I read it both silently and aloud?<br>– Did I use an editing checklist? | *To share the text with others, if appropriate, I ask:*<br>– Does this need to be published or shared?<br>– What publication mode would best suit this text? |

(Adapted from Fountas and Pinnell, 2001, and Spandel, 2005)

# STRATEGIES TO MAKE MEANING IN READING AND WRITING

The essential purpose of both reading and writing is to make meaning. Effective readers and writers use a range of strategies in a variety of combinations when interacting with text (Keene and Zimmerman, 1997).

- *Reading, writing, talking, listening, thinking, viewing, and representing are reciprocal literacy processes.*
- *Literacy instruction must be explicit and relevant to students' lives.*

Proficient readers and writers know how to select appropriate strategies and use them in combination to serve their particular purpose. They are able to think independently, and they use critical-literacy skills to recognize when they are being manipulated in a variety of media, to determine an author's intent, and to identify the techniques the author uses to achieve his or her purpose. Students need to learn to use a variety of strategies to support and enhance their critical literacy. These strategies (which are discussed below in more detail) include the following:

1. Determining the purpose and audience for writing
2. Determining a purpose and an appropriate stance for reading
3. Activating prior knowledge and schema for reading and writing
4. Generating ideas for writing
5. Making connections
6. Determining important information
7. Determining the key message when writing
8. Determining which writer's-craft techniques to apply
9. Establishing and identifying tone and voice when writing and reading
10. Questioning
11. Visualizing
12. Summarizing
13. Inferring
14. Predicting
15. Synthesizing
16. Evaluating
17. Monitoring and repairing understanding

Teachers must introduce these strategies one at a time by modelling the strategy and then providing students with ample time to practise. Teachers must also read students' written responses and discuss with them whether and how they have used strategies, to ensure that the use of strategies becomes integral to students' reading and writing processes.

Although students learn about the strategies one at a time, it is important for them to realize that these strategies are not meant to be used in isolation. "When students have a variety of strategies from which to choose, they have a better chance of comprehending challenging text on their own" (Tovani, 2000, p. 107).

Proficient language users realize that certain strategies will be more helpful than others for specific tasks, and that different texts and situations require different combinations of strategies. On the one hand, they may read a novel carefully, enjoying each detail of plot and setting. On the other hand, they may skim and scan electronic text quickly while browsing the Internet for a research project; when they find a website that contains pertinent information, they will extract only the details that are appropriate to their inquiry.

> "Explicit instruction in reading strategies – showing our thinking and the mental processes we go through when we read – gives students an idea of what thoughtful readers do. We explicitly teach reading comprehension strategies by demonstrating them for students before turning the task over to them."
>
> *(Harvey and Goudvis, 2000, p. 30)*

A discussion of the individual strategies follows.

## 1. DETERMINING THE PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE FOR WRITING

Proficient writers understand that selecting a text form for writing is determined by the writer's intent and the audience for whom the piece is written. The details, the vocabulary, and the format of the writing change depending on who the reader might be and what the author is trying to accomplish.

In a junior classroom, instruction in determining a purpose and audience for writing might involve having students:

- select appropriate resources to conduct a personal inquiry;
- engage in authentic writing, selecting an appropriate text form to achieve their purpose and adapting the style to suit their intended audience.

## 2. DETERMINING A PURPOSE AND AN APPROPRIATE STANCE FOR READING

Proficient readers decide on their purpose for reading and select a text that serves that purpose. They also approach the reading differently, depending on their purpose for reading. If they are doing research, they will assume a serious stance, select a resource that contains the information they need, and use appropriate tools (highlighter, stickies) as they skim and scan the resource, looking for significant facts.

If the reader is reading for pleasure, the stance is different. Readers are more relaxed and observant of the aesthetic value of what they are reading. Speed is not usually an issue, nor is remembering specific facts. The reader may wish to mark especially well-written or moving passages to share with peers at a later time.

In a junior classroom, instruction in determining a purpose and an appropriate stance for reading might involve having students:

- apply critical-literacy skills as they respond to a particular text;
- make intertextual connections, identifying purpose, audience, and style of the texts.

### 3. ACTIVATING PRIOR KNOWLEDGE AND SCHEMA FOR READING AND WRITING

*Prior knowledge* and *schema* refer to the knowledge and experiences that readers and writers bring to a text and draw on continually to construct meaning. Their previously acquired understanding of how various text forms work, of how words are constructed to change or alter their meaning, and of how phrases and sentences can be constructed for maximum effect helps students interpret texts and use language to communicate effectively.

> "Researchers have shown that plunging students into a book or a study without activating, assessing or enlarging their prior knowledge causes students to have difficulty reading the materials, which results in diminished learning."
>
> *(Robb, 2000, p. 117)*

Providing students with rich and frequent opportunities to activate their prior knowledge – before and during reading and writing – deepens their comprehension and their ability to construct new meaning. "The more we front-load students' knowledge of a text and help them become actively involved in constructing meaning prior to reading, the more engaged they are likely to be as they read the text" (Beers, 2003, p. 101).

In a junior classroom, instruction relating to activating prior knowledge might involve the following:

- Teachers encourage students to make connections to mentor texts (exemplary texts that they have previously experienced) and support their efforts to do so.

- Teachers model the process of activating prior knowledge by thinking aloud before reading or writing, during which time they may highlight aspects of the text that connect to other texts students have experienced.

- Teachers determine the amount of prior knowledge students need to proceed with a reading or writing task, and provide knowledge-building opportunities to expand the students' knowledge base (for example, teachers may pre-teach complex vocabulary before students begin reading a piece of writing that has difficult words).

APPLICATION IN APPENDIX

- Teachers may engage students in Quick Writes to activate their prior knowledge (see "Quick Writes" in the appendix.).

### 4. GENERATING IDEAS FOR WRITING

Proficient writers draw on their prior knowledge and experiences. They are observant and collect ideas for future reference.

A writers' notebook is an excellent way to keep such ideas together in one place that allows for revisiting and reflection. Other strategies for generating ideas for writing may include brainstorming, conferencing, sketching, quick writing, or story mapping. Once many ideas are generated, writers may select one topic with which to experiment.

### 5. Making Connections

Making connections is an intricate, ongoing process of interacting with the text. It involves making connections within the text to related ideas, and beyond the text to prior knowledge and other sources of information.

There are three types of connections that readers and writers make: text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world (Keene and Zimmerman, 1997; Harvey and Goudvis, 2000). These connections help readers to relate to characters, visualize, avoid boredom, listen to others, read actively, remember what they read, and ask questions (Tovani, 2000). They help writers to make sense of their own ideas and to communicate those ideas in a way that makes sense to their audience.

The following examples illustrate how making connections might be taught in a junior classroom:

- Teachers model how to mark the text while reading. Marking the text forces readers to make connections with the reading. Students might use highlighters, sticky notes, highlighting tape, jot-note strips, bookmarks, or other tools to mark the text (see "Coding the Text" and "Highlighting the Text" in the appendix).

**APPLICATION IN APPENDIX**

- Teachers show their students how to use mentor texts. These are well-written texts, previously read by the students, that they can refer to when they need to recall a literary device or text feature or remember how to apply a writing strategy.

- Teachers think aloud to model how to connect ideas between texts, using a variety of picture books, poems, and fiction and non-fiction reading materials on a related subject. For example, they might say: *That reminds me of …* or *Remember when …?*

### 6. Determining Important Information

Determining important information is all about understanding the purpose of the text and distinguishing between interesting and essential information. Non-fiction text, such as a history textbook or an Internet home page, can provide a good starting point for teaching how to select important information. Junior readers need to be explicitly taught about the text features and signal words that indicate important information to follow. Strategies that will help students learn to process and manage large amounts of text in a variety of formats include:

- skimming and scanning;

- examining text features, such as paragraphs, headings, subheadings, and italics, and recognizing signal words such as "in other words" and "for example", to locate important details;

- reading and creating maps, graphs, and charts that highlight important ideas;

- using organizational frameworks to convey information, such as cause and effect, comparison, sequencing, problem/solutions, and similarities/differences.

Some of the text features that students can learn to look for and draw upon to find important information include the following:

| | |
|---|---|
| – a biographical note about the author | – interesting facts or features |
| – footnotes | – graphs |
| – diagrams | – illustrations and/or captions |
| – focusing questions | – bolded terminology |
| – definitions | – text boxes |
| – sidebars | – marginal notes |

In a junior classroom, instruction in determining important information might involve the following:

- Teachers provide explicit instruction by modelling the strategies of overviewing and highlighting (Harvey, 1998). Overviewing is a way to skim and scan non-fiction text before reading. Students scan the text and highlight important points or key words. "The ability to overview eliminates the need for kids to read everything when searching for specific information. Overviewing represents an early entry in the effort to determine importance" (Harvey and Goudvis, 2000, p. 119).

- Teachers and students create non-fiction "convention posters" – that is, posters that explain a convention (e.g., the semi-colon: What is it? Why is it important? How is it used?) – using text features such as special fonts, cue words, and graphics to highlight important information.

- Teachers and students engage in class discussions about a shared text, circling key words, underlining, and writing in the margins of the page (Harvey and Goudvis, 2000, p. 132).

- Teachers think aloud as they read or write a text, saying things like, *This is really important …* and *So far, I have learned that …*

- Students engage in a Place Mat exercise, first thinking individually about a topic they have researched, and then reaching consensus within their small group about the most significant information to put in the centre of the group's place mat (see "Place Mat" in the appendix).

**APPLICATION IN APPENDIX** ⟫⟫

- In a brainstorming exercise, students write ideas on sticky notes (placing one point on each sticky note), and then categorize the ideas by putting the notes into piles with similar ideas. This eliminates duplication and also helps the students to see which ideas occurred most frequently, suggesting that these might be particularly important considerations (see "Brainstorming" in the appendix).

**APPLICATION IN APPENDIX** ⟫⟫

### 7. DETERMINING THE KEY MESSAGE WHEN WRITING

Effective writers check for clarity during the writing process, always referring back to their purpose for writing. They ask themselves some of the following questions:

- Is this piece of writing clearly conveying my message?

- Have I used the most effective vocabulary?

- Does my message come through early in my writing?

- Will my readers be able to articulate the key message?

### 8. DETERMINING WHICH WRITER'S-CRAFT TECHNIQUES TO APPLY

Considering the audience and purpose as well as the text form helps writers to determine what literary techniques and structures might be most appropriate. Effective writers understand that strong verbs and nouns enhance writing, as do literary techniques such as the use of metaphor, simile, and analogy. Experimenting with a variety of sentence and text structures, conferencing, and reading aloud for feedback enable writers to revise their work until they are happy with the sound and impact of their writing.

### 9. ESTABLISHING AND IDENTIFYING TONE AND VOICE WHEN WRITING AND READING

Writers must take care that the tone of their writing is appropriate to the purpose, the audience, and the genre within which they are writing. Writers also need to be aware of how their own voice is developing and being reflected in their writing. Is their voice coming across the way they intend it to be heard? Readers must be able to detect bias and recognize the author's intent, tone, and voice. Critical-literacy skills can help writers to develop the necessary awareness of their own voice and can help readers to avoid being unduly influenced by what they read.

### 10. QUESTIONING

*Students learn best when they are motivated and actively engaged in their learning.*

Literate learners pose questions before, during, and after reading and writing. As they consider these questions, they continually sift and sort their ideas and monitor their understanding in order to construct a deeper meaning from the text. Questioning helps make the thinking process explicit. It can also clarify the purposes for reading and writing, and can strengthen students' involvement in the text as they keep reading and writing to "satisfy their wondering" (Robb, 2000, p. 15).

In the junior grades, as students begin to develop their critical-literacy skills, they are able to ask more complex questions that dig deeper for meaning. They learn the difference between "thick" and "thin" questions and answers – that is, between answers that are found *in* the text and those that are found "between the lines" or beyond the text. "Thin" questions are easily answered by referring to what is written in the text. They require no deep understanding. "Thick" questions require the reader to think beyond

what is obvious in the text. They are usually open ended and may have more than one answer, or no clear answer at all. Such "thick" questions might include the following:

- What is this author's intent?

- Whose point of view is represented?

- Whose voice is missing?

- What am I feeling and why?

- What does this writing mean to me?

- Do I need to seek another perspective?

- What can I do to make things better?

- Is this information accurate?

- Does this presentation align with what I know or what I have read in other sources?

> "We must strive to create classrooms that celebrate passionate curiosity. Curiosity spawns questions. Questions are the master key to understanding. Questions clarify confusion. Questions stimulate research efforts. Questions propel us forward and take us deeper into reading."
>
> *(Harvey and Goudvis, 2000, p. 81)*

Questioning is central to metacognitive thinking and critical literacy, and additional questions similar to those listed here are suggested in the sections that focus on those skills (see pages 62 and 64).

The following are examples of how questioning might be taught in a junior classroom:

- Teachers model the questioning process before, during, and after reading, using a variety of fiction and non-fiction texts. (For sample questions, see "The Reading Process", on page 41.)

- Teachers model the questioning process during shared writing. (For sample questions, see "The Writing Process", on pages 42–43.)

**APPLICATION IN APPENDIX** ≫

- Teachers provide explicit instruction in the Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy (Raphael, 1982; 1986). (See "Question-Answer Relationship" in the appendix.)

- Teachers and students develop effective questions – differentiating between literal, inferential, and evaluative questions.

- Teachers model the importance of questioning to clarify and/or monitor understanding, using statements such as *I wonder …? How come …? Why …? I'm confused*.

## 11. VISUALIZING

Visualizing is the ability to create mental images in order to see the action of the text. Readers visualize as they read, and create pictures in their mind based on the author's writing. Writers create passages that evoke, for the reader, images that enhance and clarify the message or the information the writer is communicating.

The term *visualizing* also refers to other senses such as touch, hearing, and smell. It is not enough simply to suggest to students that they form visual images as they read or write. "It is … important to explicitly identify the use of visual strategies to create mental imagery as an essential part of reading. It helps readers to experience stories and other textual information and think about the content of the text" (Wilhelm, 2004, p. 57).

In a junior classroom, teaching visualizing might involve the following:

- Teachers provide students with engaging texts (fiction and non-fiction) that inspire students to create pictures in their minds.

- Teachers read aloud to students while thinking aloud about the mental images that the text creates in their own minds. Their comments might include: *I get a picture in my mind of …*; *I can see …*; *The movie in my head shows …*; *I visualize …*

- Students listen to a piece of music or a passage from a text and then describe or illustrate their visualizations.

- Students use a two-column note format to record their responses to a text, using headings such as the following:
  - "Quotation/passage from text" versus "Mental image"
  - "What is the text about?" versus "What I see"
  - "Words on the page" versus "My mental map of what happened"

- The teacher models how to create a piece of writing that stimulates the reader to visualize.

## 12. SUMMARIZING

"In summarizing a text, students are asked to apply a number of thinking processes in order to combine meanings, delete less important details, and condense the key messages to arrive at the essence of meaning. Junior students need a great deal of practice with the help of teacher modelling and guidance before they are able to apply these processes independently. Oral and visual summaries, concept maps, and frequent discussions with the teacher and other students enable junior learners to develop the skills and processes they need to summarize meaning in their reading" (*Literacy for Learning*, p. 70).

In writing, the ability to summarize can help students to clarify their own understanding and intent, and ensure that their message is clear and consistent.

Students might follow these steps to summarize a text passage:

1. Read for meaning.
2. Divide the reading into small parts.
3. Delete unimportant information.
4. Think of a word to describe each chunk.
5. Connect the words into a summary statement.

Following are some other examples of how summarizing might be taught in a junior classroom:

- Students record jot notes during an inquiry exercise and then synthesize these into a paragraph (see "Jot Notes" in the appendix).

- Students and the teacher create a mind map summarizing what they know about a topic (see "Mapping" in the appendix).

- Guided by the teacher, students use a KWL chart (Know, Want to Know, Learned) to organize their thinking about a new topic before and during a lesson, and to summarize their learning after the lesson (see "KWL" in the appendix).

### 13. INFERRING

Inferring is the ability to go beyond the literal text and read between the lines, to "determine a character's motivation and personality, to discover themes, and to identify main points in informational text" (Robb, 2000, p. 15). Beers (2003) states that the reader infers what the author implies and that the reader uses the implied information from the author, along with his or her internal text (all the reader's background knowledge and text experiences), to make an educated guess. The ability to draw inferences is essential for critical literacy, described later in this chapter.

Proficient readers actively draw on prior knowledge, make connections, and ask questions while creating an inference. "Because each person's experiences are different, the art of inferring takes the reader beyond the text to a place only he or she can go" (Keene and Zimmerman, 1997, p. 148). Picture books provide a context for explicitly teaching students how to draw inferences because the text and illustrations combine to provide clues for the reader.

The following examples illustrate how inferring might be taught in a junior classroom:

- Teachers model how to identify the difference between "prediction" and "inference".
- Teachers and students discuss what the main ideas might be in the text as they actively explore the plot and theme.
- Teachers model how to create notes about the text, using two columns headed "Facts" and "Inference".
- Teachers highlight specific passages where the author makes an implication that leads to an inference.
- Teachers show students how to code the text as they read, using codes such as: "I" for inference; "P" for prediction; "+" for an inference or prediction confirmed by the text; and "−" for an inference or prediction that is contradicted by the text

  (see "Coding the Text" in the appendix).

- Students use a graphic organizer such as "Somebody Wanted … But … So" to organize their thinking and draw inferences as they read (see "Somebody Wanted … But … So" in the appendix).

## 14. PREDICTING

"Through prediction, students bring their personal experiences, prior knowledge, and worldview to the text, both before and during reading. They may begin by considering the title, cover, key words, and a partial reading of the whole text, and then use reasoning and inquiry to predict what will come next. Prediction enables students to set and revise their assumptions about the text as they actively look for what they think will happen or, if their predictions are wrong, as they are surprised by new ideas or information that engage their interest and cause them to reconsider. Prediction involves students in combining details and impressions, making inferences, and coordinating information and ideas drawn from the text and from the way in which the text is presented" (*Literacy for Learning*, p. 69).

The following examples show what instruction in predicting might look like in a junior classroom:

- Students complete an anticipation guide or other graphic organizer before reading, and then check their accuracy after reading (see "Anticipation Guides" and "Think, Predict, Read, Connect" in the appendix).   **APPLICATION IN APPENDIX**

- Students predict what will happen next as they read.

- Teachers model predicting during a read-aloud.

## 15. SYNTHESIZING

Synthesizing is a higher-order thinking skill that involves bringing together and sorting through an accumulation of information and ideas about a text to arrive at an understanding of it. The understandings that emerge are new. When readers are actively synthesizing, they address questions such as the following:

- What does the information in the text mean to me?

- What information is useful to me, and how does it fit with what I already know?

- What am I taking away with me?

The following examples show how synthesizing might be taught in a junior classroom:

- Teachers tell a brief story and model a basic framework to help students begin to synthesize the information.

- Teachers guide their students in integrating new knowledge with prior knowledge in order to deepen their understanding of an idea, concept, or topic.

- Teachers model their own synthesizing process by thinking aloud, with statements such as *I have learned …* and *Now I understand …*

- Teachers model how to code the text as they read, using codes such as "SZ" for information that needs to be synthesized, or a light bulb to show where a new idea surfaces or where confusion is clarified (see "Coding the Text" in the appendix).   **APPLICATION IN APPENDIX**

- Students use a Venn diagram to sort and synthesize ideas before writing (see "Mapping" in the appendix).

- Students discuss how their thinking evolves as they summarize a piece of text and respond personally to it.

> "A true synthesis is achieved when a new perspective or thought is born out of the reading."
>
> *(Harvey and Goudvis, 2000, p. 144)*

- Students use a two-column note format to compare ideas or record their responses to a text, with headings such as the following:
  - "Direct quotation" versus "Personal response"
  - "Content" versus "Process"
  - "Facts from the text" versus "Responses"

Synthesizing is also discussed later in this chapter, under "Higher-Order Thinking".

## 16. EVALUATING

Evaluating is both a higher-order thinking skill and a strategy for making meaning. To evaluate is to assess something and then make a judgement about it (or assign a value to it) based on specific standards or criteria. Readers and writers need to be able to evaluate texts of all types in order to determine the suitability of the text for the intended purpose, to discern the reliability of the information, to uncover bias, and to be open to new thinking and points of view. The ability to evaluate is essential for critical literacy (described later in this chapter).

Following are some activities that provide opportunities for students to assess, critique, reflect on, and evaluate ideas and texts in the junior classroom (for details, see these items in the appendix):

- Four Corners

- Questioning the Author

- Ranking Ladder

- Value Line

For more information about evaluating, see "Higher-Order Thinking", later in this chapter.

## 17. MONITORING AND REPAIRING UNDERSTANDING

*Talk is the foundation for literacy.*

Strategic communicators actively monitor their understanding and use "fix-up" strategies when their understanding breaks down. Fix-up strategies help readers to repair comprehension, and help writers to rethink and revise their text. These strategies include the following (Tovani, 2000; Keene and Zimmerman, 1997; Harvey and Goudvis, 2000):

- rereading or reading ahead

- checking the meaning of key words

- visualizing (see strategy 11 in this section)

- stopping and thinking about what you have written or already read

- adjusting the pace – slowing down or speeding up – as appropriate

- noticing patterns in the text

- retelling what you've read or written

- checking your understanding or use of print conventions, such as headings, sidebars, and bolded text

The following examples illustrate what instruction in monitoring and repairing understanding might involve in a junior classroom:

- Teachers use think-aloud to model a variety of "fix-up" strategies, using statements such as *Does this make sense? Does that look right? Does that sound right?*

- Teachers model "click" or "clunk" as a way to self-monitor comprehension in a non-fiction text. As they read through a passage, they constantly ask themselves if the text makes sense. If it does not make sense, that's a "clunk", and they need to activate their fix-up strategies.

- Students and teachers engage in dialogue about the text during the reading or writing process – before, during, and after reading or writing.

## HIGHER-ORDER THINKING

Students need to develop the habits of mind that will equip them to be successful in the rapidly changing information age in which they live. They will need to think flexibly, creatively, and independently as they solve problems related to increasingly complex and unfamiliar scenarios. They will also need to develop a sense of responsibility, justice, and fairness, as well as curiosity about their world. Teachers need to teach students how to think about familiar topics in new ways, how to apply what they know to new situations, and how to be persistent even if the task is difficult.

Higher-order thinking skills play a large role in helping students mature as learners and communicators. All strategies for making meaning require some form of higher-order thinking. By using a range of thinking skills, students are able to draw more meaning from texts and apply their learning in more sophisticated ways. That is why a key goal of the junior literacy program is to expand thinking skills, including metacognitive and critical-literacy skills (see the Introduction in this volume).

*Critical-thinking and critical-literacy skills are the tools students need to develop into active, responsible participants in the global community.*

## Taxonomies of Higher-Order Thinking Skills

Several taxonomies (ways of classifying ideas and information) have been developed to describe higher-order thinking. In 1956, Bloom and Kathwold developed a taxonomy that divided thinking skills into six levels.

That original taxonomy was revised in 2001, in a text entitled *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing*, edited by Anderson and Krathwohl. The revised taxonomy involves two dimensions – the Knowledge Dimension and the Cognitive Process Dimension. The Knowledge Dimension consists of four kinds of knowledge: factual, conceptual, procedural, and metacognitive. The Cognitive Process Dimension comprises six categories, as illustrated in the following chart.

### A Taxonomy to Promote Higher-Order Thinking

| Learning level | Definition | What the student will do | Associated processes |
|---|---|---|---|
| CREATE | Combine elements to form a coherent or functional whole; reorganize elements into a new pattern or structure | Develop an alternative hypothesis; devise a procedure to accomplish a task; invent a product | Generating, planning, producing |
| EVALUATE | Judge the value of ideas, materials, or products | Detect inconsistencies within a process or product; judge the appropriateness of procedures and ideas to solve particular problems | Checking, critiquing |
| ANALYSE | Break down an idea into its constituent parts and determine how the parts are related to one another and to an overall structure | Differentiate between important and unimportant parts of presented material; determine how parts fit together; deconstruct presented materials to determine point of view and underlying intent | Differentiating, organizing, attributing |
| APPLY | Carry out a procedure to perform exercises or to solve problems | Apply previously learned information to familiar and unfamiliar tasks | Executing, implementing |
| UNDERSTAND | Construct meaning from instructional messages, including oral, written, and graphic communication | Change form of representation; find specific examples; categorize; summarize; draw logical conclusions; compare ideas; explain | Interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarizing, inferring, comparing, explaining |
| REMEMBER | Retrieve relevant knowledge from long-term memory | Recognize and recall information from long-term memory | Recognizing, recalling |

(Adapted from *Literacy for Learning*, p. 33)

Anderson and Krathwohl point out that "most authentic academic tasks require the coordinated use of several cognitive processes as well as several types of knowledge" (p. 89). An example of a process that cuts across many of the categories in the knowledge and cognitive process domains is critical thinking. To think critically about an issue involves both conceptual knowledge and the analysis and evaluation of different perspectives on the issue.

Teachers challenge students in the junior grades to engage in higher-order thinking at various levels as they perform tasks and activities involving reading, writing, viewing, representing, speaking, and listening. The following chart indicates the categories of knowledge and cognitive processes involved in the performance of various tasks.

## Application of the Revised Taxonomy

| Task | Knowledge Dimension/Cognitive Process Dimension |
|------|------------------------------------------------|
| Write a persuasive essay stating your opinion on … | Factual and procedural knowledge/Create |
| Describe the techniques that producers of commercials use to entice you to purchase their products. | Conceptual knowledge/Remember and understand |
| Explain what you learned about yourself as a writer after completing your report on … | Metacognitive knowledge/Analyse |
| Classify these rocks according to the following criteria … | Factual knowledge/Evaluate |
| Examine examples of mysteries and non-mysteries, then list the characteristics that describe most mysteries. | Conceptual knowledge/Understand |
| Design a brochure urging people to vote. | Procedural and conceptual knowledge/Create |

## Thinking Skills

Well-founded and widely accepted research (e.g., Langrehr, 1988, pp. v–vi) suggests that students need to develop the following skills in order to become proficient communicators.

*Focusing* involves directing one's attention to selected information. This can include:

- defining a problem;
- setting a goal to establish direction and purpose;
- articulating a vision;
- clarifying the task;
- identifying the question.

*Information gathering* involves acquiring relevant information and data. This can include:

- accessing prior knowledge;
- observing and obtaining information through the senses;
- questioning to obtain new information;
- identifying and acknowledging sources.

*Remembering* involves storing and/or retrieving information. This can include:

- encoding – storing information in long-term memory;
- recalling – retrieving information from long-term memory.

*Organizing* involves arranging relevant information, data, ideas, and evidence so they can be used more effectively. This can include:

- comparing to note similarities and differences;
- classifying to place information in groups by common attributes;
- ordering or sequencing entities according to a given criterion.

*Analysing* involves clarifying existing information such as data, ideas, or styles. This can include:

- identifying and distinguishing among attributes and components by determining characteristics or parts of something;
- identifying relationships and patterns by recognizing ways elements are related;
- detecting and understanding point of view, bias, inclusiveness, and perspective.

*Generating* involves using prior knowledge to add new information. This can include:

- inferring – reasoning beyond available information to fill in gaps and thinking carefully about conclusions drawn from statements read or heard;
- predicting – anticipating or forecasting future events;
- elaborating – using prior knowledge to add meaning to new information and to link it to existing structures;
- representing – adding new meaning by changing the form of information.

*Integrating* involves connecting and combining information. This can include:

- summarizing – abstracting information efficiently;
- restructuring – changing existing knowledge structures to incorporate new information.

*Synthesizing* involves integrating, connecting, and combining information. This can include:

• listing the main/key points;

• describing connections;

• making a generalization from specific information.

*Concluding* involves coming to a conclusion after processing the information. This can include:

• stating an opinion;

• selecting the best option;

• solving a problem;

• outlining a plan;

• articulating a decision.

*Evaluating* involves assessing the reasonableness and quality of a conclusion based on established criteria. This can include:

• establishing criteria for judging;

• verifying information – confirming the accuracy of claims;

• identifying errors;

• determining the validity, appropriateness, relevance, and/or impact of the conclusion;

• reflecting on the process of arriving at the conclusion;

• testing the hypothesis.

Learning these thinking skills will improve the kinds of questions that both teachers and students ask themselves and each other about the content they are studying. The skills need to be explicitly taught, practised, and applied in every subject area and throughout each grade. They are lifelong skills that will continue to develop and evolve as students use them. Cross-curricular examples include:

• Science – Students will: generalize and apply knowledge about the characteristics of rock specimens (Grade 4);

• Social Studies – Students will: point out the inferences and assumptions made regarding First Nations Peoples (Grade 6);

• Health – Students will: critically analyse the hidden messages about body image found in advertisements (Grades 5 and 6).

## Metacognitive Skills

Metacognition is the process of thinking about one's own thought processes. It is especially important in the junior grades as readers begin to deal with more complex texts and try to make sense of various written forms and genres in all subjects. According to Frank Serafini (2001, p. 130), research shows that "students who are more metacognitive about their reading processes … are more successful readers". Other educators support this view: "Good readers use metacognition to self-monitor their reading. Metacognition enables good readers to identify what they understand and what confuses them" (Robb, 2000, p. 135). Keene and Zimmerman (1997) firmly believe that metacognition is the foundation on which all reading comprehension strategies are built, and that each strategy is a variation of metacognition.

*• When students are encouraged to assess their own work and set their own goals, they take ownership of their learning.*

*• Metacognitive skills give students a growing awareness of themselves as learners and a greater degree of independence.*

Readers who engage in metacognition are aware of their own thinking processes and can adapt strategies to help them comprehend text. For example, when reading a confusing article, a strategic reader will go back and reread the section that is confusing and use appropriate strategies to clarify thinking. In this case, the reader may try to make meaning of the text by connecting the article to his or her own life, or by formulating questions to make sense of the text.

Just as proficient readers need to use metacognition when reading, so writers need to use metacognition when writing. Proficient writers are always thinking about their choice of words, literary techniques, audience, and purpose to determine whether their ideas are being communicated clearly. As they question and evaluate their writing, they apply the same strategies they use in reading. In other words, they read like a writer and write for their readers.

As individuals become more skilled in using metacognition, they gain greater insight into themselves as learners. They begin to understand what helps them to make meaning, and they become more adept at making appropriate decisions and adjusting to the demands of new situations. To equip students to succeed as learners at school and in life, teachers need to model metacognitive strategies, explicitly teach those strategies, and provide time and scaffolded support so that the strategies become automatic and a part of a student's way of thinking (Fountas and Pinnell, 2001).

Teachers model metacognitive vocabulary by thinking aloud as they engage students in reading and writing rich texts and in talking about their processes. They explicitly teach the vocabulary students need in order to use metacognition, and provide time to practise metacognitive dialogue. "Think-alouds provide struggling readers with a structure on which to build this dialogue; they learn to think about their reading and to monitor what they do and do not understand" (Beers, 2003, p. 122). Robb notes that "it takes a long time for a reader to develop metacognition strategies and move from knowing the names of repair strategies to accessing and using them as they read" (Robb, 2000, p. 152).

"Metacognitive questions ask readers to examine their thinking as they read so that they can become adept at noticing their own confusions and what they need to do to sort through the text" (Allen, 2002, p. 37). Metacognitive questions help writers in the same way. Effective metacognitive strategies and questions include the following:

- activating prior knowledge and connecting it with new information (*What do I already know about this topic/author/audience?*)

- intentionally selecting and applying thinking strategies (*Does this make sense? Does this look right? Does this sound right? What am I writing about? What is my main idea? What "voice" would best suit the audience?*)

- monitoring one's own learning (*Where did I get confused? What words are new to me? What information is important? Have I conveyed my message to the reader?*)

- evaluating one's own learning (*What did I learn from reading/writing this selection? What strategies did I use to help me understand what I read/wrote? What did I learn about my reading/writing?*)

To help students deepen their understanding, teachers can create anchor charts with prompting questions. Teachers can also work with students to create exemplars that demonstrate effective responses, and post these exemplars beside the anchor charts (see "Anchor Charts" in the appendix).

**APPLICATION IN APPENDIX**

Many examples of metacognitive questions appear in this chapter and throughout the guide (for example, see "The Reading Process" and "The Writing Process" charts on pages 41 and 43, respectively). The chart on page 62 summarizes some key metacognitive questions to encourage students to think about their thinking as they read, write, speak, and listen.

---

**Helping Students Think Through the Reading Process**

To help them think through the reading process, students can create a personal bookmark of prompting questions, such as those listed below. Students can also create focusing questions and keep them in their writing folder or notebook.

**My Reading Bookmark**

I was confused when …

Words new to me are …

When I read …, I thought about …

Questions I would ask if I were the teacher include …

Questions I would like to ask the author are …

## Questions to Promote Metacognitive Thinking During Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening

### Reading*

- ❑ What strategies do I use before I read or view? How do these help me understand the text?
- ❑ How do I activate my prior knowledge and experiences?
- ❑ How do I help myself recall information?
- ❑ Can I select the important details?
- ❑ Do I reread or review? When? Why?
- ❑ What can I do if I am confused?
- ❑ Do I connect my own experiences to what I read?
- ❑ When is it appropriate to skim or scan?
- ❑ How does it help me to skim or scan?
- ❑ Who is represented in this text?
- ❑ Whose voice is missing?
- ❑ Is the information current and accurate?
- ❑ Do I need to seek another perspective?
- ❑ What is the author's/creator's intent?
- ❑ What does this text mean to me?
- ❑ How do I figure out the meaning of the text?

### Writing**

- ❑ What strategies do I use before I write or represent my ideas? How do these help?
- ❑ How do I further develop my ideas to bring clarity to my work?
- ❑ How can I explain/represent clearly what I mean?
- ❑ Have I considered all points of view?
- ❑ Have I considered whether and how my own biases affect the writing?
- ❑ How can I use my reading experiences to enhance my work?
- ❑ What stops me from writing? Why?
- ❑ When I have difficulties writing, I …
- ❑ What technique will best convey my message?
- ❑ What do I do when I am stuck?
- ❑ Is my writing/representing current and accurate?
- ❑ Have I captured the attention of my audience?
- ❑ How has creating this piece of writing (and/or representation) changed the way I think?
- ❑ What did I learn about myself as a writer?

### Speaking

- ❑ What is my purpose?
- ❑ Who is the audience?
- ❑ Are my tone and vocabulary appropriate?
- ❑ Am I speaking with clarity?
- ❑ Is my pace appropriate?
- ❑ How can I use my voice for maximum effect?
- ❑ Am I using humour effectively?

### Listening

- ❑ What is the message?
- ❑ What questions can I ask?
- ❑ How does this connect with what I already know?
- ❑ Am I actively trying to understand the speaker's message, and am I assessing the ideas and information provided?
- ❑ What is the intent of the speaker?
- ❑ How am I reacting to the information and why?
- ❑ What does this information mean to me?

*Adapted from Robb, 2000.

**Adapted from Saskatchewan Education, 1998.

# Critical-Literacy Skills

> "Critical literacy is not a generic set of procedures – not simply an orthodoxy to be set in opposition to older orthodoxies – nor is it a set of new activities teachers can simply add and stir. What a critical perspective does offer teachers is a way to think about what it is students are learning to read and write, what they do with that reading and writing and what reading and writing do to them and their world. When such understandings inform teaching, they affect how teachers think of the literacy work of the classroom, the questions they ask and the tasks they set."
>
> *(Kamler and Comber, 1997, p. 1)*

The Expert Panel on Literacy in Grades 4 to 6 identified critical-literacy skills as essential for lifelong learning in the twenty-first century:

> Students today experience a constant stream of ideas and information – online, in print, and through electronic games and mass media. As they move into the junior grades, they encounter an ever-widening range of texts. They need skills to determine where to direct their attention and how to interpret messages and use them appropriately.
>
> Critical-literacy skills give students the tools they need to think more deeply about the texts they meet and the texts they create. They challenge the learner to look beyond the literal message, to read between the lines, to observe what is present and what is missing, and to reflect on the context and the way the author constructed the text to influence the reader. (*Literacy for Learning*, p. 9)

Critical literacy goes beyond conventional critical thinking because it asks students to question the authority of texts and to explore issues of bias, perspective, and social justice. In the multiliterate world of the twenty-first century, it is not sufficient simply to teach students how to read at a literal level. Students need to develop the ability to decipher critically the messages contained in texts, whether those messages were intentional or unintentional.

*Critical-thinking and critical-literacy skills are the tools students need to develop into active, responsible participants in the global community.*

Texts that engage students in deep thinking about societal values provide opportunities for rich dialogue and learning in the junior classroom. Sample texts may include posters, poetry, fiction, advertisements, newspaper articles, music, and informational texts. Picture books for mature readers have many layers of meaning and are ideal for teaching critical-literacy skills. Titles such as *Shin's Tricycle* by Tatsuharu Kodama (New York: Walker and Co., 1995), *One More Border to Cross* by William Kaplan with Shelley Tanaka (Toronto: Groundwood, 1998), and *Remember* by Toni Morrison (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2004) are exemplary books that promote discussion and inquiry.

Critical-literacy skills help students to determine the bias in a text by examining both what an author states explicitly and also what the author doesn't state. Students explore possible reasons for deliberate inclusions and omissions in order to determine the author's intent. To be successful and comfortable in exploring critical-literacy issues, students need exposure to inquiry and higher-order thinking skills and practice in using them.

Many of the questions that can help students to reflect critically as they read, write, and learn are the same as those given for promoting metacognitive thinking, in the chart on page 62. A few additional questions specific to critical thinking are as follows:

- What techniques did the author use to influence my thinking?

- Is this text presenting a balanced view of the issue?

- What is the author really trying to say?

- Do I need to consult another source of information?

- How would this text be different if …?

- Do I agree with this text?

- Does this information make sense to me?

- Is this information consistent with what I already know?

- What action do I need to take?

### Questions for Literature Study

To promote the development of critical-literacy skills in literature study, teachers can ask students:

- How might the story be different if it had been told by a different character?

- In what ways does the story reflect the views of the society?

- How would the story change if it were set during a different time period?

- Can you guess the author's own viewpoint from the writing? Give examples from the text.

- What makes this a classic or an award-winning book?

- What is the author's intent?

- What literary techniques has the author used to influence the reader?

The following lists some guiding principles for teaching critical literacy in the junior grades.

### Guiding Principles for Teaching Critical Literacy in the Junior Grades

- Critical analysis is an integral part of literacy learning.

- Critical literacy may be taught using the gradual-release-of-responsibility model, from think-alouds to shared, guided, and independent reading and writing.

- *All students* are capable of critically analysing and responding to texts.

- Teachers need to encourage students to become critical analysts and questioners of text.

- Texts are social constructions; they are never neutral.

- Critical analysis is negotiated *with* students.

- Critically literate individuals understand and can talk respectfully about the balance of power between the author and audience, and the relationships between their own ideas and the ideas of the author.

- Critical-literacy skills equip students to analyse and evaluate texts of all types – in print, audio-visual, graphical, and electronic media. Students learn to ask meaningful questions about the origin and purpose of the text, to explore other perspectives, to draw conclusions, and to take appropriate action.

# TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGIES

> "Tomorrow's citizens face greater reading demands than ever before. The written word is no longer restricted to paper form. Children of all ages are being bombarded with information from the Internet and other electronic forms of print. The 'E' generation needs to comprehend more than ever before."
>
> *(Tovani, 2000 p. 110)*

Students of all ages are affected by the rapid development and widespread use of information and communication technologies, such as word processors, e-mail, CD-ROMs, digital cameras, instant text messaging, hand-held games, multichannel television, and the Internet (Smolin and Lawless, 2003). The texts that students encounter on a daily basis are no longer limited to print forms. Many of the literacy skills that students have traditionally learned through print can easily be taught and applied using more advanced technologies. For example, as students search, explore, select, and scroll down a computer screen, they are practising skimming and scanning skills (Booth, 2001).

Attention to tools and technologies supports all four of the overarching goals of the junior literacy program (outlined in the Introduction to this volume), helping to equip students as independent, motivated, thoughtful, and strategic creators and users of texts of all types. For many students, including second-language learners and students with special learning needs, assistive technologies can promote independence and inspire motivation to engage in literacy learning. Examples of these technologies include: software for voice recognition, co-writing, translation, and graphic organizing; audio and visual aids; and electronic dictionaries.

Exposure to current technologies at school can also help to bridge the digital gap between students who have access to technology in their homes and those who do not. "Most students already have some experience with personal computers and electronic games before they reach the junior grades. Those who do not have access to current technologies outside the school are at a significant disadvantage. The school plays an important role in providing equitable access to the tools, information, and new forms of learning on which all students will increasingly rely as they advance through the grades and plan for their future beyond school" (*Literacy for Learning*, p. 24).

Instruction and practice in the use and evaluation of information and communication technologies help to equip students with a range of knowledge and skills, including how to:

- detect signs of fraud, misinformation, and illegal content when using the Internet or other electronic media;

- determine the accuracy and reliability of information;

- use text cues to navigate through software programs and on the Internet;

- interpret evolving languages, such as the jargon of instant messaging and text messaging;

- choose the right tool for the task, including word-processing and design software, and other electronic media, but also more basic tools when those are most appropriate for the situation.

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### Bridging the Digital Divide

Today's junior students are exposed to, and conversant with, a wide range of media and technologies. Effective literacy instruction builds on these skills and makes learning relevant to students living in the information age. Many students may be processing information in much more sophisticated ways outside of school than they do in the classroom. For example, they may:

- use e-mail and other forms of electronic text messaging;
- use animation and word-processing programs;
- read texts from pop culture, including the storylines and instructions for electronic games;
- use online search engines and CD-ROMs.

However, not all students have access to these tools and resources outside of school, and many of those who do are not using them effectively. This creates a "digital divide" in some classrooms. The term *digital divide* refers to the knowledge gap between those who do, and those who do not, have access to current digital and information technology. Teachers need to help bridge this gap by providing instruction and guidance in the effective use of these technologies, as well as opportunities for students to explore them in a purposeful way.

# DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES FOR LITERACY

A developmental continuum can be a helpful resource for planning instruction and observing student learning. It describes the key knowledge, skills, and behaviours that learners exhibit at various stages of literacy development. By plotting their students' current development on a developmental continuum, teachers will be better able to meet their students' immediate needs and plan for longer-term programming.

Knowing each student's phase of development and considering each student in relation to others in the class help teachers to provide a range of resources and instructional approaches to meet all needs. Teachers become more intentional about providing instruction at a level of complexity that is "just right" to challenge and support each student to move to the next step and/or stage.

Teachers determine a student's phase of development by observing that the student is exhibiting the key indicators of a phase. The key indicators describe conceptual understandings and the behaviours that students demonstrate when they have internalized those understandings. Most children will display behaviours from more than one phase at a time. "Developmental records show that children seldom progress in a neat and well-sequenced manner; instead they may remain in one phase for some length of time and move rapidly through other phases. Each child is a unique individual with different life experiences so that no two developmental pathways are the same" (Australian Government, n.d.).

Many school boards in Ontario now use one or more of the First Steps™ developmental continua. First Steps offers separate continua for reading, writing, and oral language. The overviews for those continua are reproduced on the following pages.*

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*Reprinted from *First Steps Reading Developmental Continuum* (1994), *First Steps Writing Developmental Continuum* (1994), and *First Steps Oral Language Developmental Continuum* (1994). These publications, including First Steps Professional Development, are available from Pearson Canada, 26 Prince Andrew Place, Don Mills, Ontario. E-mail: professionallearning@pearsoned.com.

# OVERVIEW OF READING DEVELOPMENTAL CONTINUUM

Teachers can identify a child's phase of development by observing that the child is exhibiting all the key indicators of a phase.

It should be noted, however, that most children will also display indicators from other phases.

## Phase 1: Role Play Reading

In this phase readers display reading-like behaviour as they reconstruct stories for themselves. They show a natural interest in books and the language of print.

### Key Indicators

- displays reading-like behaviour
  - holding the book the right way up
  - turning the pages appropriately
  - looking at words and pictures
  - using pictures to construct ideas
- realises that print carries a message but may read the writing differently each time, e.g. when 'reading' scribble to parents
- focuses on the meaning of a television program, story or other text viewed, listened to or 'read'. Responses reflect understanding.
- makes links to own experience when listening to or 'reading' books, e.g. points to illustration, saying 'My dog jumps up too.'
- uses pictorial and visual cues when watching television, listening to or 'reading' stories, i.e. talks about a television program, advertisement or picture in a magazine or book, relating it to own knowledge and experience
- recognises own name, or part of it, in print

### Major Teaching Emphases

- encourage discussion and praise critical and divergent thinking
- provide picture books with limited text that children can 'read' to themselves and others
- re-read favourite stories and rhymes
- share 'Big Books' with children incidentally modelling reading behaviours
- establish a language-rich environment, presenting print in natural and meaningful contexts
- read from an enlarged text (big book) so that children can follow the print as it is read
- read texts featuring rhyme, rhythm and repetition

As the opportunities arise:
- show that a written word is a unit of print with space either side
- talk about letters by name, relating initial letters to the sounds they represent
- show that print is written left to right and top to bottom
- relate spoken to written words in context
- draw attention to relationships between words and pictures
- demonstrate use of context cues to construct meaning

## Phase 2: Experimental Reading

In this phase readers use memory of familiar texts to match some spoken words and written words. They realise that print contains a constant message and begin pointing to words. They may comment on pictures, but seldom question written text.

### Key Indicators

- realises that print contains a constant message, i.e. that the words of a written story remain the same, but the words of an oral story may change
- is focused on expressing the meaning of a story rather than on reading words accurately
- uses prior knowledge of context and personal experience to make meaning, e.g. uses memory of a text to match spoken with written words
- recognises some personally significant words in context, e.g. in job roster, weather chart or books
- matches some spoken words with written words when reading a book or environmental print

### Major Teaching Emphases

- share with children times when you challenge or disagree with a text
- discuss instances of stereotyping in texts
- value and encourage both critical and empathetic responses from children, especially those that are different from your own
- before, during and after reading promote discussion that goes beyond the literal level
- provide opportunities for children to retell stories
- use environmental print purposefully each day
- select reading material that is predictable, familiar and has natural repetition
- discuss conventions of print informally when reading
- model reading strategies such as predicting words and reading-on
- involve children in oral cloze activities focusing on words
- talk about letters and words in context, pointing out distinctive features
- encourage children to explore letter-sound relationships

## Phase 3: Early Reading

In this phase readers may read unfamiliar texts slowly and deliberately as they focus on reading exactly what is on the page. Readers are beginning to reflect on their own strategies, e.g. for working out unknown words. They sometimes comment on and question texts.

### Key Indicators

- is beginning to read familiar texts confidently and can retell major content from visual and printed texts, e.g. language experience recounts, shared books, simple informational texts and children's television programs
- can identify and talk about a range of different text forms such as letters, lists, recipes, stories, newspaper and magazine articles, television dramas and documentaries
- demonstrates understanding that all texts, both narrative and informational, are written by authors who are expressing their own ideas
- may read word-by-word or line-by-line when reading an unfamiliar text, i.e. reading performance may be word centred. Fluency and expression become stilted as the child focuses on decoding
- uses picture cues and knowledge of context to check understanding of meaning
- has a bank of words which are recognised when encountered in different contexts, e.g. in a book, on the blackboard, in the environment or on a chart
- relies heavily on beginning letters and sounding-out for word identification (graphophonic strategies)

### Major Teaching Emphases

- ask readers about ideas and information they have found in books. Encourage a range of opinions and reactions, discuss stereotypes and generalisations
- provide opportunities for individual conferences where students discuss aspects of their reading
- provide opportunities for students to demonstrate understanding of a text
- encourage students to reflect on personal reading strategies
- model strategies such as substituting, re-reading, and self-correcting during shared reading sessions
- encourage use of personal experiences, knowledge of oral language patterns and text structure to help readers make meaning
- model strategies for attacking unknown words, e.g. identifying similar word beginnings, common word patterns, chunking parts of a word
- support the development of a basic sight vocabulary by:
  - selecting resources that use many of these words in a natural way
  - encouraging readers to re-read favourite books
  - scribing the students' own language and using this text to focus on basic sight words
  - developing class word banks containing topic words, high frequency words, linking words etc.

- foster children's enjoyment of reading, encouraging them to explore a variety of texts and take risks with confidence
- read to students every day and share your own enjoyment of reading
- encourage students to respond critically to texts they have read or viewed
- model reading behaviours and strategies for students to emulate

- encourage students to select their own books and read independently every day
- encourage students to share experiences related to reading and viewing
- talk to students about their reading and viewing
- provide opportunities for students to write every day for different purposes and audiences

## Phase 4: Transitional Reading

In this phase readers are beginning to integrate a variety of reading strategies. They are able to adapt their reading to different types of text. With teacher support they will comment on and criticise texts.

### Key Indicators

- shows an ability to construct meaning by integrating knowledge of:
  - text structure, e.g. letter, narrative, report, recount, procedure
  - text organisation, e.g. paragraphs, chapters, introduction, conclusion, contents, page, index
  - language features, e.g. descriptive language connectives such as because, therefore, if … then
  - subject-specific language, e.g. the language of reporting in science and the language of a journalistic report
- can retell and discuss own interpretation of texts read or viewed with others, providing information relating to plot and characterisation in narrative or to main ideas and supporting detail in informational text
- recognises that characters can be stereotyped in a text, e.g. a mother looking after children at home, while the father goes out to work or a prince rescuing a helpless maiden from an evil stepmother, and discusses how this could be changed
- selects appropriate material and adjusts reading strategies for different texts and different purposes, e.g. skimming to search for a specific fact; scanning for a key word
- is becoming efficient in using most of the following strategies for constructing meaning:
  - makes predictions and is able to substantiate them
  - self-corrects when reading

  - re-reads to clarify meaning
  - reads-on when encountering a difficult text
  - slows down when reading difficult texts
  - substitutes familiar words
  - uses knowledge of print conventions
- makes meaningful substitutions, i.e. replacement miscues are meaningful, e.g. 'cool' drink for 'cold' drink. The integration of the three cueing systems (semantic, syntactic and graphophonic) is developing
- has an increasing bank of sight words, including some difficult and subject-specific words, e.g. science, experiment, February, Christmas
- is becoming efficient in the use of the following word identification strategies for constructing meaning:
  - sounds-out to decode words
  - uses initial letters as a cue to decoding
  - uses knowledge of common letter patterns to decode words, e.g. th, tion, scious, ough
  - uses known parts of words to make sense of the whole word
  - uses blending to decode words, e.g. str-ing
  - uses word segmentation and syllabification to make sense of whole word

### Major Teaching Emphases

- create a climate which fosters critical thinking
- help students to be aware of the view of the world presented by an author and how this affects different people
- discuss with students the effect of texts on their own attitudes and perceptions
- ensure that students read a range of texts for a variety of purposes
- discuss the use of prior knowledge of:
  - the text topic
  - text structures
  - language appropriate for different text types
- provide opportunities for:
  - making comparisons with other texts
  - identifying the main issues in a text and providing supporting detail
  - identifying cause and effect and predicting outcomes
  - identifying character traits from textual cues
  - analysing plots
  - interpreting symbolic or metaphorical meaning
  - discussing concepts and vocabulary

  - extracting and organising information
- model and discuss
  - prediction and confirmation strategies
  - use of syntactic and semantic cues
  - use of picture cues
  - use of context cues
  - re-reading
  - reading-on
  - substituting words
- model and discuss word identification strategies:
  - use of graphophonic knowledge and 'sounding-out'
  - blending
  - letter and word patterns
  - sight words
  - using syllabification and segmentation
  - using knowledge of root words and word components

## Phase 5: Independent Reading

Reading is purposeful and automatic. Readers are only aware of reading strategies being employed when encountering difficult text or reading for a specific purpose. Readers have greater ability to make connections between what is current knowledge and what is new. They may challenge texts, drawing on evidence from their own experience.

### Key Indicators

- can recognise and discuss the elements and purpose of different text structures, e.g. reports, procedures, biographies, narratives, advertisements, dramas, documentaries
- reads and comprehends text that is abstract and removed from personal experience
- makes inferences based on implicit information drawn from a text and can provide justification for these inferences
- returns purposefully to make connections between widely separated sections of a text
- makes critical comparisons between texts
- can discuss an alternative reading of a text and offer possible reasons why a text may be interpreted differently by different readers or viewers

- uses a range of strategies automatically when constructing meaning from text
  - self-corrects
  - re-reads
  - reads-on
  - slows down
  - sub-vocalises
- uses word identification strategies appropriately and automatically when encountering an unknown word
  - knowledge of graphophonics
  - knowledge of word patterns
  - knowledge of word derivations, morphographs, prefixes, suffixes and syllabification

### Major Teaching Emphases

- teach students to:
  - articulate their reading difficulties
  - discuss the questions they asked of the text and any questions that weren't answered
  - discuss how they solved problems
  - select and use appropriate strategies when reading for different purposes
- praise and encourage students when they show evidence of critical reading, listening and responding sensitively to their comments
- teach students to identify and comment on different points of view in texts
- establish a language-rich environment presenting print in natural and meaningful contexts

- provide opportunities for students to examine, analyse and discuss narrative and expository texts
- teach students to:
  - analyse topics/questions
  - generate self-questions
  - select appropriate texts and compile reference lists
  - summarise and take notes
  - organise responses for reporting
  - compile bibliographies
- develop the student's ability to read from a writer's viewpoint and to write from a reader's viewpoint

# Overview of Writing Developmental Continuum

Teachers can identify a child's phase of development by observing that the child is exhibiting all the key indicators of that phase.

It should be noted, however, that most children will also display indicators from other phases.

## Phase 1: Role Play Writing

Children are beginning to come to terms with a new aspect of language, that of written symbols. They experiment with marks on paper with the intention of communicating a message or emulating adult writing.

### Key Indicators
**The Writer:**
- assigns a message to own symbols
- understands that writing and drawing are different, e.g. points to words while 'reading'
- is aware that print carries a message
- uses known letters or approximations of letters to represent written language
- shows beginning awareness of directionality; i.e. points to where print begins

### Major Teaching Emphases

- demonstrate the connection between oral and written language
- demonstrate that written messages remain constant
- demonstrate that writing communicates a message
- focus on the way print works (print concepts and conventions)
- demonstrate that writing is purposeful and has an intended audience
- use correct terminology for letters, sounds, words
- encourage children to experiment with writing

## Phase 2: Experimental Writing

Children are aware that speech can be written down and that written messages remain constant. They understand the left to right organisation of print and experiment with writing letters and words.

### Key Indicators
**The Writer:**
- reads back own writing
- attempts familiar forms of writing, e.g. lists, letters, recounts, stories, messages
- writes using simplified oral language structures, e.g. 'I brt loles'
- uses writing to convey meaning
- realises that print contains a constant message
- uses left to right and top to bottom orientation of print
- demonstrates one-to-one correspondence between written and spoken word
- relies heavily on the most obvious sounds of a word
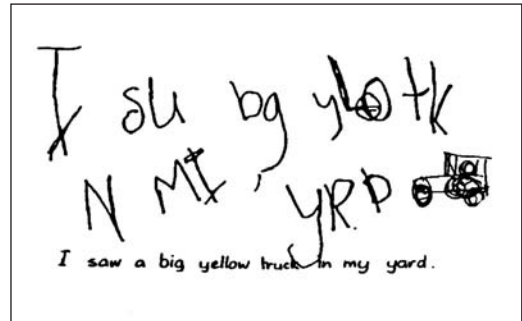
### Major Teaching Emphases

- model brief, imaginative and factual texts and explain the purpose and intended audience
- help children build lists of high-frequency words from their reading and writing
- demonstrate the one-to-one correspondence of written and spoken words
- discuss how writing can be used to communicate over time and distance
- encourage children to talk about their experiences
- help children understand how written texts are composed in sentences
- help children develop a stable concept of a word
- help children relate written symbols to the sounds they represent
- talk about letters, words and sentences

## Phase 3: Early Writing

Children write about topics which are personally significant. They are beginning to consider audience needs. They have a sense of sentence but may only be able to deal with one or two elements of writing at one time, e.g. spelling but not punctuation.

### Key Indicators
**The Writer:**
- uses a small range of familiar text forms
- chooses topics that are personally significant
- uses basic sentence structures and varies sentence beginnings
- can explain in context some of the purposes of using writing, e.g. shopping list or telephone messages as a memory aid
- experiments with words drawn from language experience activities, literature, media and oral language of peers and others
- begins to develop editing skills
- attempts to use some punctuation
- talks with others to plan and revise own writing

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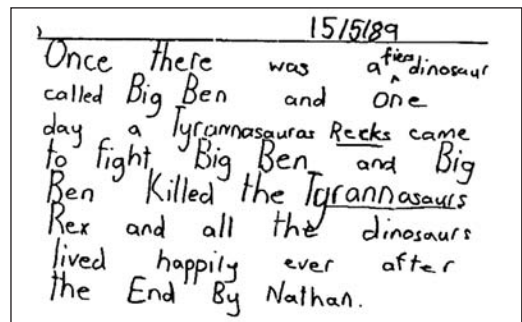
## At all phases:

- model good English language use
- model writing every day
- encourage students to reflect on their understandings, gradually building a complete picture of written language structures
- ensure that students have opportunities to write for a variety of audiences and purposes
- encourage students to share their writing experiences

## Major Teaching Emphases

- develop an awareness that writing is purposeful
- talk about the differences between oral and written language
- read, write and discuss a range of different forms of writing for different purposes and audiences
- teach planning and revision strategies
- show how sentences are linked to form a cohesive paragraph
- show how paragraphs are linked to form a whole text
- teach strategies for learning to spell new words
- continue to help children develop word banks using topic or theme words
- discuss the selection of words to enhance meaning
- model the use of appropriate linking words
- introduce a proof-reading guide and encourage children to use it

## Phase 4: Conventional Writing

Writers are familiar with most aspects of the writing process and are able to select forms to suit different purposes. Their control of structure, punctuation and spelling may vary according to the complexity of the writing task.



the First Boomerang

### Key Indicators
**The Writer:**
- uses text forms to suit purpose and audience
- can explain why some text forms may be more appropriate than others to achieve a specific purpose
- writes a range of text forms including stories, reports, procedures and expositions
- uses a variety of simple, compound and extended sentences
- groups sentences containing related information into paragraphs
- is beginning to select vocabulary according to the demands of audience and purpose, e.g. uses subject-specific vocabulary
- uses proof-reading guide or checklist to edit own or peers' writing
- punctuates simple sentences correctly
- uses a range of strategies for planning, revising and publishing own written texts
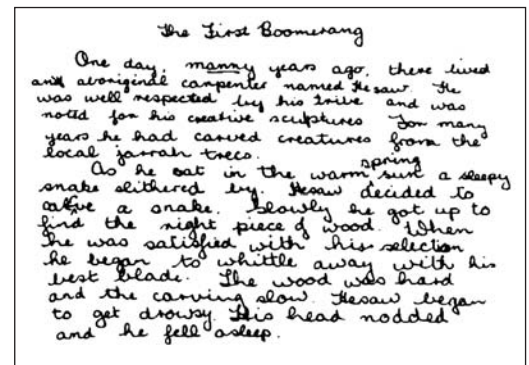
## Major Teaching Emphases

- teach children to plan and write both narrative and informational texts
- help children to adapt their writing to suit the intended purpose and to explore alternative ways of expressing ideas
- discuss linguistic features of basic text types
- teach children appropriate use of organisational markers such as topic sentences, paragraphs and headings
- show different ways of linking paragraphs to form a whole text
- encourage the use of a variety of linking words
- encourage children to take responsibility for their own learning
- teach revising, editing and proof-reading skills
- discuss and foster 'personal voice' and individual style in writing
- teach children the conventions of language (punctuation, grammar and spelling) in context

## Phase 5: Proficient Writing

Writers have developed a personal style of writing and are able to manipulate forms of writing to suit their purposes. They have control over spelling and punctuation. They choose from a large vocabulary and their writing is cohesive, coherent and satisfying.



Our Heritage

### Key Indicators
**The Writer:**
- selects text forms to suit purpose and audience, demonstrating control over most essential elements
- can explain the goals in writing a text and indicate the extent to which they were achieved
- writes to define, clarify and develop ideas and express creativity, e.g. stories, poems, reports, arguments
- writes a topic sentence and includes relevant information to develop a cohesive paragraph
- organises paragraphs logically to form a cohesive text
- uses a variety of simple, compound and complex sentences appropriate to text form
- uses a wide range of words that clearly and precisely convey meaning in a particular form
- edits own writing during and after composing
- demonstrates accurate use of punctuation
- takes notes, selects and synthesises relevant information and plans text sequence.
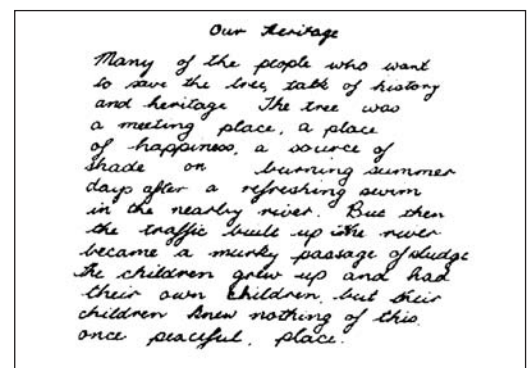
## Major Teaching Emphases

- provide opportunities for students to analyse, evaluate and structure an extensive variety of forms of text, both narrative and informational
- discuss the specific effect of context, audience and purpose on written texts
- extend students' knowledge of correct use of writing conventions
- teach students to analyse mass media
- discuss and foster a sense of 'personal voice', e.g. individual style, tone, rhythm, vocabulary
- extend the students' range of planning and revision strategies
- encourage students to use writing to reflect on and monitor their own learning
- encourage students to read as writers and write as readers

# Overview of Oral Language Developmental Continuum

Teachers can identify a child's phase of development by observing that the child is exhibiting all the key indicators of a phase.

It should be noted, however, that most children will also display indicators from other phases.

## Phase 1: Beginning Language

## Phase 2: Early Language

In this phase children's use of language becomes more refined and extended. It is used to satisfy simple social needs and to gain control of objects, people and knowledge in the environment.

> Ch: *I know where my Grandma lives*
> T: *Where?*
> Ch: *(points)*
> T: *When did you last see your Grandma?*
> Ch: *A long time ago.*

### Key Indicators

**The child:**

- uses own grammar style which is an approximation of adult grammar – overgeneralisations are common, e.g.
  - plurals — sheeps for sheep
  - verbs — goed for went
  - auxiliary verbs — I did run fast
- is beginning to develop awareness of listener needs and begins to provide feedback information when introducing new topic, e.g. Nanna, I went shopping. Look at this.
- gives simple descriptions of past events
- shows an interest in explanations of how and why

### Major Teaching Emphases

- focus on language structures and patterns through songs, chants, rhymes and stories
- develop children's ability to adjust their language to suit particular purposes, audiences and situations
- encourage children to tell stories, recount experiences, describe ideas, events and objects, report information and role play characters and situations
- develop and extend children's use of vocabulary in different contexts
- help children to give and receive simple explanations, information and instructions

## Phase 3: Exploratory Language

In this phase, children already know a great deal about language. They use language competently and include most grammatical patterns. They know that language can be used to express meaning and share experiences with others.

> Ch1: *Good morning everyone. Um, when I went to my Grandma's I saw a light brown rabbit hop into the bush.*
> T: *Where is your Grandma's house?*
> Ch1: *They're called Dowling Flats.*
> Ch2: *Our house has a flat roof.*
> Ch1: *No, not the roof. It's a building.*

### Key Indicators

**The child:**

- has grasped most grammatical rules but may still overgeneralise, e.g.
  - tenses — swimmed for swam, keept for kept
  - plurals — mouses for mice
  - pronouns — they put the book in there
- contributes appropriately to classroom interactions, showing or expressing puzzlement if something is not understood
- adapts language for social control, requests and for seeking information
- includes when, who, where, what in recounts
- uses language to explain, enquire and compare

### Major Teaching Emphases

- focus on language structures and patterns through songs, chants, rhymes and stories
- provide opportunities to develop language through small-group and large-group interaction
- help children to learn through speaking and listening, e.g. formulating ideas, classifying, comparing, giving and receiving instructions and explanations
- provide opportunities to retell stories
- assist children to recount experiences, within and outside school
- encourage children to talk about reading and writing experiences
- incorporate collaborative and exploratory activities in all curriculum areas

## Phase 4: Emergent Language for Learning

In this phase, children use language effectively to satisfy social and communicative needs. They also display considerable skill in responding to and using language to satisfy the demands of formal learning.

> *I'm going to tell you about yesterday when we went to the zoo. We went in the conservation room and I held a llama skin in the feeling boxes and Mrs Smith pressed the button, um, and it showed us a picture of llamas and I had a race with, um a tortoise and I won because I was faster, and …*

### Key Indicators

**The speaker/listener:**

- judges whether a sentence is grammatically correct and adapts accordingly
- uses tone, volume, pace, intonation pattern and gesture to enhance meaning
- takes into account audience and purpose when speaking
- can sustain a conversation with a variety of audiences, e.g. teacher, peers, parents
- develops specific vocabulary to suit different purposes, e.g. language for description, classification, comparison, argument
- shows evidence of language cohesion;
  - (a) narrative logical, sequenced retells
  - (b) recounts sequenced by time order
  - (c) conversation sustained, on topic
- uses language to predict and recall
- uses language to interact with peers, e.g. collaborative activities

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- provide models of correct English
- ensure that students encounter a range of purposes, audiences and situations that challenge them to use language in many different ways
- allow time to practise the sounds, rhythms, words and structures of language

- make links between oral and written language
- encourage students to respond to a range of oral and visual treats
- value the processes of group interaction

## Major Teaching Emphases

- provide opportunities to listen and respond to stories, songs and poems
- develop the language necessary to express an understanding of narrative structure, e.g. giving logical, sequenced retells; describing setting, characters and events; or incorporating literary language
- assist students to use different styles of language to suit a range of audiences and purposes
- include collaborative and exploratory activities that encourage children to predict, hypothesise and make comparisons

- promote language that allows children to discuss and express opinions related to topics, issues and interests
- introduce subject-specific vocabulary through oral, written and reading activities
- develop students' ability to ask and answer questions as a strategy for solving problems
- help students present factual information clearly and logically

## Phase 5: Consolidated Language for Learning

In this phase, children use a variety of language forms and manipulate language to suit a range of situations. They also understand how listening, speaking, reading and writing complement each other as tools for learning.

*Well, I think it was last Sunday and it was raining cats and dogs so for once my Dad let me bring my parrot, Cocka, inside, and he let her out. I just patted her neck because she doesn't fly about much, um, only when she gets mad with you. And then she started dancing with my Mum by moving up and down …*

### Key Indicators
**The speaker/listener:**

- communicates effectively by sharing ideas, offering advice, opinion and information and reacting to the contributions of others
- recognises that language is adapted to meet different social, situational and educational needs, e.g. the language of reporting is different from the language of interviewing or story-telling
- demonstrates the ability to develop a topic in curriculum-related situations, e.g. reporting, describing, comparing

- interprets text from own point of view – expresses opinions, draws conclusions
- uses appropriately specialised vocabulary and structures in a variety of situations, e.g. discussions, reports, modified debates
- continues to develop reason and logic, by attempting to draw conclusions, make inferences, justify and explain statements; asking questions and seeking confirmation
- listens to evaluate, draw inferences and make judgements

### Major Teaching Emphases

- help students to present factual information in a clear and logical way
- help students to discuss increasingly complex issues taking others' views into consideration
- help students to asses and interpret arguments and opinions
- implement activities that require students to present ideas, experiences and understandings in all curriculum areas
- help students to use specialised vocabulary

- include small-group and whole-group activities that focus on joint sharing, problem-solving, negotiation and consensus
- help students to talk to and respond to wider audiences using a variety of language styles
- help students to summarise main ideas
- help students to express and justify own opinions

## Phase 6: Extended Language for Learning

In this phase speakers/listeners continue to extend and refine their understandings and use of language. Language is manipulated and adapted to suit a range of situations and purposes.

*… I generally had a good time and I'm sure everyone else did as well, but I certainly did find some things difficult at Pioneer World, particularly having to wear a hat and not being allowed to talk unless spoken to. A few things occurred there that we had a good laugh about …*

### Key Indicators
**The speaker/listener:**

- selects and sustains language and style appropriate to purpose, context and audience e.g. formal, informal talk
- effectively interprets whether a message has been understood
- summarises main ideas from written or spoken texts using succinct language
- draws conclusions from, makes inferences based on and evaluates written and oral text and is able to listen and respond to an alternative perspective

- describes events, objects and concepts outside immediate experience, e.g. world news
- uses language to express independent, critical thinking
- uses oral language to formulate hypotheses, criticise, evaluate, plan and to influence the thinking of others
- deals with abstract ideas using concrete examples

### Major Teaching Emphases

- structure experiences that challenge students to select and use different styles of language to suit a range of audiences and purposes
- help students to develop proficient speaking and listening skills that focus on clear speech, and a logical and sequential expression of ideas and understandings
- promote the use of subject-specific vocabulary
- include activities and resources that encourage students to reflect on the aesthetic features of language

- involve the students in planning presentations, e.g. to the class, school assembly
- structure activities to enable students to interpret, summarise or evaluate a range of texts
- help students to develop language for independent, critical thinking
- provide opportunities for students to use language to persuade, surprise, entertain or amuse others
- help students to give and respond to increasingly complex explanations and instructions

# 3 PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE LITERACY INSTRUCTION

# INTRODUCTION

The principles of effective literacy instruction discussed in this chapter highlight the following key topics:

1. the contribution that current research on literacy instruction can make to program design and literacy instruction;

2. the importance of differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all learners;

3. the importance of recognizing the social nature of language, building a community of learners, and encouraging accountable talk;

4. the importance of teaching concepts and processes that will enable students to transfer their learning to new and increasingly complex situations.

# EFFECTIVE LITERACY INSTRUCTION IS RESEARCH BASED

Over many decades, theorists and researchers have studied ways to improve teaching in order to enhance student learning. Effective literacy teachers explore relevant theories and embrace recognized research in order to provide the most productive learning environment and the best instructional practices for their students.

This section briefly describes the following concepts, which are highlighted in the research and professional literature on learning:

- brain-compatible learning
- higher-order thinking
- zones of cognitive development
- scaffolding and the gradual release of responsibility

## Brain-Compatible Learning

Brain-compatible learning, also known as brain-based learning, is an area of research that strives to connect what teachers know about how students learn with what medical researchers know about how the brain works. Although this is still an evolving field, it provides important insights that support the effectiveness of certain teaching strategies and approaches. The chart on page 77 summarizes some of the key insights from current research.

## Insights from Research on Brain-Compatible Learning

| What the Research Says | What Teachers Can Do |
| --- | --- |
| Eighty per cent of what we learn and remember comes to us in a visual format. | Use graphic organizers and visual aids in teaching, and demonstrate how they help students with their thinking. |
| The brain is a pattern seeker. | Teach students how to recognize patterns in language, and show how these patterns can help them. |
| The brain can handle only a limited amount of new information at a time. | Scaffold the learning by chunking knowledge and skills into manageable bits. |
| New learning needs to be hooked into prior knowledge. | Activate or build on prior knowledge before learning begins. Model for students how to make connections to what they already know. |
| Stress and fear shut down learning. | Give timely, positive feedback. Provide an environment in which students feel comfortable taking risks. |
| Movement stimulates the brain. | Include physical movement and involve students in hands-on activities. Limit lessons to five to ten minutes in length followed by purposeful, active practice. |
| Without challenge there is no learning. | Structure tasks to include a challenge. Teach to develop higher-order thinking skills, critical-literacy skills, and habits of mind such as persistence. |

Teachers who are aware of these findings about brain-compatible learning create student-centred classroom environments that are orderly, flexible, supportive, and inclusive and that encourage risk taking. They understand that students must feel confident in their abilities and must approach all learning with a positive attitude and an open mind that equips them to believe, "Yes I can!"

To prepare the way for new learning, teachers provide their students with concrete, hands-on experiences that involve inquiry and experimentation and that draw on the students' prior knowledge and experiences. They foster a learning environment where students are able to solve real problems, formulate opinions, create hypotheses, and develop a schema for language and literacy (a framework for understanding oral and written language and for acquiring new language skills and vocabulary).

Effective literacy teachers understand the importance of using non-linguistic representations of knowledge. They provide students with cues and questions at various levels and enable students to use a variety of graphic organizers to summarize their learning. They also make certain that they reinforce effort and provide recognition on an ongoing basis. They ensure that students receive appropriate, specific, and timely feedback that allows them to set goals and make continual progress.

## Higher-Order Thinking

Research has shown that effective literacy instruction emphasizes higher-order thinking. Cunningham and Allington (1999) highlight the importance of creating classrooms where students discuss, summarize, evaluate, and compare ideas and information throughout their reading and writing experiences.

Anderson and Krathwohl's taxonomy of higher-order thinking (described in Chapter 2, "Knowledge and Skills Required for Literacy", p. 56) provides a framework for planning instruction that moves students beyond basic comprehension to points where they are able to use ideas and information in practical, creative, and critical ways. Students need opportunities to develop skills at all six levels of thinking described in the taxonomy, and they also need instruction that develops their metacognitive and critical-literacy skills, as well as the habits of mind necessary to be proficient and literate communicators.

Critical-literacy skills help students become informed consumers and users of information. Through classroom experiences with diverse texts of all types, students build an understanding of techniques that the information industries use in order to persuade and inform, as well as, in some cases, to deceive and manipulate their audiences.

For more information on higher-order thinking, metacognition, and critical literacy, see pages 55 to 64 in Chapter 2, "Knowledge and Skills Required for Literacy".

**APPLICATIONS IN APPENDIX** ⟫⟫

Many additional skill-building strategies and tools that help to build thinking skills are described in the appendix. See the following examples:

- Anticipation Guides
- Brainstorming
- Coding the Text
- Cubing
- Double-Entry Journal
- Focusing Questions
- Four Corners
- Graffiti
- KWL
- Literature Circles
- Mapping
- Questioning the Author
- Ranking Ladder
- Somebody Wanted … But … So
- Think-Aloud
- Think, Predict, Read, Connect (TPRC)
- Value Line
- Walkabout

## Zones of Cognitive Development

The theory of zones of cognitive development was put forward by Lev Vygotsky, a Russian theorist whose work on the nature of language and thought became influential in North America in the 1970s. Vygotsky used the term "zone of proximal development"

to refer to the zone, just beyond the student's independent level of achievement, where learning can occur with the support of a knowledgeable teacher. He described it as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 860).

Based on this theory, when planning instruction teachers need to determine what each student already knows (the student's zone of actual development) and, from that assessment, determine what the student needs to learn next (the zone of proximal development). As teachers plan, they consider how they will work within their students' zones of proximal development to maximize learning.

When students are able to demonstrate their new learning independently, they have reached a new zone of actual development. Once students reach this zone, they are ready to be introduced to new learning. The process is *cyclical* in the sense that new learning always begins in the zone of proximal development; it is *developmental* in the sense that each newly acquired concept or skill advances the student towards greater understanding and proficiency in reading, writing, and oral/visual communication.

> "The teaching/learning process is a complex phenomenon. Everything counts – every word, thought, action and association – and the degree [to which] you (the teacher) orchestrate the environment, the presentation, and the design is the degree to which learning occurs."
>
> *(Lozanov, as discussed in DePorter, Reardon and Singer-Nourie, 1999, p. 3)*

The following chart illustrates Vygotsky's zones of cognitive development, and identifies how teachers and students share responsibility in the learning process.

## Learning in the Zone of Proximal Development

| Zone of Actual Development | Zone of Proximal Development | | New Zone of Actual Development |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Student Responsibility* | *Teacher Responsibility* | *Joint Responsibility* | *Student Responsibility* |
| | ***Gradual Release of Responsibility to the Student*** → | | |
| • This is what the student can already do on his/her own.<br>• New learning is not occurring in this zone.<br>• It is important to assess students *before* teaching to determine their knowledge and skills in this zone. | • A teacher, peer, or other support person helps the student to acquire new learning. | • The student makes the transition from relying on the teacher's help to applying the learning independently. | • The student internalizes the new learning and works independently. |

## Scaffolding and the Gradual Release of Responsibility

Building on Vygotsky's theory of the zone of proximal development, researchers have developed the concepts of scaffolding and gradual release of responsibility.

The term *scaffolding* is a metaphor to describe the process of supporting students as they build new knowledge and skills. It involves breaking the knowledge and skills into small steps, modelling the steps, providing support as students learn the steps, and then gradually shifting responsibility to the students to apply the knowledge and skills independently.

> "It [scaffolding] may be the single most important approach to teaching that makes a difference in how well learners succeed."
>
> *(Strickland, Ganske, and Monroe, 2002, p. 48)*

Scaffolds may involve the use of tools (such as cue cards, analogies, resources, templates, guides, and models), or techniques (such as a compelling task, guidance on cognitive and social skills, or a teacher's think-aloud).

Research indicates that scaffolding is helpful in all new learning situations. It is also useful in situations when students are unable to complete a task independently but could succeed with help from the teacher.

Before scaffolding can begin, teachers need to assess their students' background knowledge and develop a comfortable working rapport with the class. Teachers should be aware that scaffolding is meant to be a temporary strategy to support new learning, not a long-term strategy, and that individual students may need different types of scaffolded support. New learning should always be scaffolded as the teacher works towards gradually releasing responsibility for and control of the relevant knowledge and skills to the students.

Jeffrey Wilhelm (2001, p. 14) describes how teachers can use think-aloud strategies to support new learning and gradually release responsibility to the student. He offers a four-step model for passing strategic expertise to students:

1. Modelling of the strategy (Teacher Does/Students Watch)

2. Apprenticeship of use (Teacher Does/Students Help)

3. Scaffolding strategy use (Students Do/Teacher Helps)

4. Independent use (Students Do/Teacher Watches)

This model aims to ensure that all students will learn by providing instruction that is developmentally appropriate. Wilhelm notes that if students are not progressing, the instruction has not been appropriate (see the chart "Roles for the Teacher and Students in the Key Instructional Approaches", on page 91).

Carol Ann Tomlinson (1999a, p. 3) offers a model that she calls "the equalizer" to illustrate ways to adjust instruction in order to meet the needs of all students (see "Using 'The Equalizer' to Plan Differentiated Instruction", on page 85).

Rosenshine and Meister (1992) describe six ways of providing scaffolded support to help students develop higher-order thinking skills. They are:

- presenting a new cognitive strategy

- regulating difficulty during guided practice

- varying the context for practice

- providing feedback

- increasing student responsibility

- providing opportunities for independent practice

*By gradually releasing responsibility for learning to students, teachers help students improve the quality of their lives.*

## EFFECTIVE LITERACY INSTRUCTION IS DIFFERENTIATED

"Every child is entitled to the promise of a teacher's enthusiasm, time, and energy. All children are entitled to teachers who will do everything in their power to help them realize their potential every day."

*(Tomlinson, 1999a, p. 5)*

Tomlinson (1995) states that there are four characteristics that mould teaching and learning in an effective differentiated classroom:

1. Instruction is concept based and principle driven. All students have the opportunity to explore and apply the key concepts of the subject being studied. All students come to understand the key principles on which the study is based. Such instruction enables struggling learners to grasp and use powerful ideas and, at the same time, encourages advanced learners to expand their understanding and application of the key concepts and principles. Such instruction stresses understanding or sense making rather than retention and regurgitation of fragmented bits of information. Whereas a "coverage-based" curriculum may cause a teacher to feel compelled to see that all students do the same work, concept-based and principle-driven instruction invites teachers to provide varied learning options. All students thus have the opportunity to explore meaningful ideas through a variety of avenues and approaches.

> **Effective literacy instruction in a differentiated classroom:**
> - is concept focused and principle driven;
> - is based on ongoing assessment;
> - allows for flexible groupings of students;
> - involves students in making choices and setting goals for their learning.

2. Ongoing assessment of student readiness and growth are built into the curriculum. Teachers do not assume that all students need a given task or segment of study, but continuously assess student readiness and interest. They provide support when students need additional instruction and guidance, and extend student exploration when indications are that a student or group of students is ready to move ahead.

3. Flexible grouping is consistently used. In a differentiated class, students work in many patterns. Sometimes they work alone, sometimes in pairs, sometimes in groups. Some tasks are readiness based, others interest based or constructed to match learning style. Still others may be a combination of readiness, interest, and learning style. In a differentiated classroom, whole-group instruction may also be used to introduce new ideas or to share learning outcomes.

4. Students are active explorers, with teachers guiding the exploration. Because varied activities often occur simultaneously in a differentiated classroom, the teacher works more as a guide or facilitator of learning than as a dispenser of information. As in a large family, students must learn to be responsible for their own work. Not only does such student centredness give students more ownership of their learning; it also facilitates the important adolescent learning goal of growing independence in thought, planning, and evaluation. Implicit in such instruction are (1) goal-setting shared by the teacher and the student based on the student's readiness, interest, and learning profile, and (2) assessment predicated on the student's growth and goal attainment.

Effective literacy teachers know that they must begin their instruction where their students *are*, rather than where they should be. They realize that all students learn at different rates, bring different skills and background knowledge to the classroom, have different strengths and interests, and learn in different ways. Effective literacy teachers create opportunities for all students to learn, and set high yet attainable targets for them, working "diligently to ensure that struggling, advanced and in-between students work harder than they meant to; achieve more than they thought they could; and come to believe that learning involves effort, risk, and personal triumph" (Tomlinson, 1999a, p. 2).

Planning for differentiated instruction requires the teacher to develop a detailed understanding of each student's readiness, interests, and modes of learning (learning profile). The teacher must also consider the curriculum content, instructional approaches (processes), student products and performances, and the learning environment, in the light of student strengths and needs in order to select the most appropriate means of curriculum delivery.

> "Knowing the learners and consciously and strategically planning to address their styles, intelligences, and learning preferences will increase the chances of engaging them and offering a variety of ways to learn."
>
> *(Gregory and Chapman, 2002, p. 35)*

## Focusing on the Student

In planning how best to promote student success, teachers need to know where their students are in order to move them to where they need to go next. Teachers get this information through ongoing assessment and observation.

When students are ready for new learning, teachers develop learning opportunities that are just beyond the students' current reach (see "Zones of Cognitive Development", on page 78). Through explicit instruction, guidance, and modelling, they help the students to progress along a continuum of learning towards independence.

Effective teachers use the students' interests to "hook" them into pursuing doable and authentic tasks. They also strive to understand their students' preferred modes of learning.

A student's preferred mode of learning is influenced by many factors, including his or her individual learning style, intelligences, gender, and culture (Tomlinson, 1999a; Gregory and Chapman, 2002). Understanding the student's mode of learning enables teachers to discover how students learn best. With this information, teachers can teach to the strengths of the students. Teachers can also share strategies to help students progress in areas where they need support.

Teachers find out about their students' preferred modes of learning through a range of formal and informal assessment strategies and tools, such as conferences, surveys, and reading logs. Assessing students' readiness before learning and their progress during learning can help teachers choose from a range of instructional approaches, choices, and scaffolds, selecting those that are most appropriate to meet the varying needs, interests, and abilities of their students (Hall, 2004, p. 3). For more information about determining students' learning strengths and needs, see page 21 of Chapter 1, "The Junior Learner", in this volume.

> "Differentiating instruction means creating multiple paths so that students of different abilities, interests or learning needs experience equally appropriate ways to absorb, use, develop, and present concepts as a part of the daily learning process. It allows students to take greater responsibility and owner- ship for their own learning, and provides opportunities for peer, teacher and cooperative learning."
>
> *(Theroux, 2004, p. 1)*

## Focusing on the Curriculum

Differentiated instruction does not involve changing the concepts or goals of the curriculum. Rather, it involves creating an equitable environment in which all students are able to reach their potential and achieve the goals. To create this equitable environ- ment, teachers consider ways to differentiate the content, instructional approaches, student products and performances, and evaluation to allow all students to learn and succeed. Teachers need to have high expectations for all students and at the same time set targets for performance.

### Curriculum Content

Differentiated content does not mean a "watered-down" curriculum for any student. When selecting content, teachers begin with the curriculum expectations, addressing the overall expectations and the most fundamental concepts and skills that their students need to learn. They find ways to provide the essential information and practice that will enable all students to acquire the same key information.

Teachers can differentiate the curriculum content in many ways, including the following:

- Use many texts of all types, suited to different reading levels.
- Provide time for accountable talk.

- Allow students to demonstrate learning in a variety of ways.

- Reteach, if necessary.

- Give more time.

- Provide graphic organizers and anchor charts. See "Anchor Charts" in the appendix.

- Allow use of students' first languages to capture their thinking.

- Encourage students to "go deeper" into a topic.

- Use a KWL organizer to begin learning, and design lessons around what students want to know. See "KWL" in the appendix.

- Target a variety of learning styles and multiple intelligences.

- Give "think time" to students.

## Instructional Approaches (Processes)

According to Tomlinson, the process of learning starts when students begin to apply skills and concepts. To differentiate the learning process/activities, teachers look at alternative ways and means to scaffold learning. Some students may require structure and "chunking" of large tasks, while others are able to succeed with a more open-ended approach.

Teachers can differentiate their instructional approaches in many ways, including the following:

- Develop tasks at varying degrees of difficulty (but addressing the same goals).

- Group students in various ways.

- Use a variety of teaching strategies.

- Chunk large tasks for some and leave the process open for others.

- Create "experts" in the classroom.

- Allow students to create tasks or participate in creating them.

- Provide a variety of ways for students to demonstrate learning.

- Create rich tasks that are multilayered.

## Student Products and Performance

Teachers who value and support differentiated learning realize that all students must have multiple opportunities to demonstrate what they have learned. To do this, students must have clear guidelines about what will be assessed.

As well, assignments must be designed so that products and performances allow students to demonstrate achievement of the curriculum expectations. Well-designed tasks will include checkpoints for students to see how they are doing, and should assess both the process and the end result. When performances are in the form of a test, the test needs to focus on a demonstration of learning rather than rote memorization.

> "What is moderately challenging and motivating for one learner may offer far too little challenge (and therefore motivation) for a classmate. The same task just may be too stressful for yet another classmate. Learning tasks must be adjusted to each student's appropriate learning zone."
>
> *(Tomlinson, 1999a, p. 3)*

Teachers can differentiate products and performances in many ways, including the following:

- Provide multi-levelled tasks and materials.
- Create and use rubrics.
- Chunk tasks and use mini-lessons to share ideas for each component.
- Allow for a number of ways for students to demonstrate their learning.
- Pair students to enable them to support one another in completing tasks.
- Allow students to create their own investigations.
- Provide opportunities for students to complete tasks independently or in a small group.
- Provide a range of tasks. (Note: Differentiated tasks must target the same expectations.)

For ways to differentiate the performance tasks, see the chart "Performance Tasks for Multiple Intelligences" in the appendix.

APPLICATION IN APPENDIX

## Using "The Equalizer" to Plan Differentiated Instruction

Tomlinson (1999a) has created an effective model, called "The Equalizer", to guide differentiated instruction (see the chart on page 87). The Equalizer identifies a variety of instructional accommodations to challenge students at different levels of readiness. It offers a way to visualize the concept of differentiation and to consider ways to create a differentiated activity.

The Equalizer consists of nine components of classroom instruction and learning. Each component is a continuum, drawn to look like one of the sliding volume controls one might see on an audio mixer or receiver. Each continuum, from left to right, indicates increasing degrees of challenge. Learners who are advanced or at a higher level of readiness will generally be more appropriately challenged towards the right side of the continuum.

The Equalizer helps teachers to pinpoint a starting point for their students, based on the students' readiness. Following are the nine components of instruction, and the beginning and end points on the continuum for each component:

1. Information or ideas are *foundational* when they are basic, straightforward, or close to what is already known. They are *transformational* if they cause students to stretch, bend, or modify the idea beyond the way it was presented in class or in the textbook.

2. Representations of ideas are *concrete* if they are tangible, can be physically manipulated, or deal with specific events. They are *abstract* if they focus more on meanings, implications, or principles.

3. Resources to solve a problem are *simple* if they deal with one or few events or meanings, perhaps in a big-picture way. They are *complex* if they deal with multiple events or meanings, perhaps in a more detailed way.

4. Directions to a solution have *fewer facets* if they require one (or few) steps, actions, or applications. They have *more facets* when they require a greater number of steps, actions, or applications.

5. Applications or insights may require *smaller leaps* by asking students to apply ideas in settings relatively like those they have already mastered, or to make connections among comfortable and familiar ideas. They may require *greater leaps* if they call for putting ideas to work in unfamiliar settings or making connections among widely different fields or ideas.

6. Solutions and approaches are *more structured* when students require relatively more guidance to complete them or are given fewer options. They are *more open* when they involve relatively greater improvisation or decision making for students to complete them.

7. Problems in research and in products are *clearly defined* when the steps and methods for solving them are easily evident, when all variables are relevant to the solution, and when there is a right answer. They are *fuzzy* when the problem itself is not clearly defined, the method for solving it is ambiguous, irrelevant variables are mixed with relevant ones, and there is no right answer.

8. Tasks are *less independent* when the planning, design, and other considerations are largely prescribed and modelled by the teacher. They become *more independent* as the student takes more responsibility for planning, designing, monitoring, establishing criteria for success, and other considerations.

9. "Pace of study and thought typically need to be relatively *slower* to enable additional practice or to allow greater depth of study, or relatively *quicker* to enable brisk exploration of the essentials or to eliminate practice that is redundant for a given learner" (Tomlinson, 2004b; italics added).

## The Equalizer

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Information/Ideas** | Foundational | Transformational |
| **Representations** | Concrete | Abstract |
| **Resources** | Simple | Complex |
| **Directions** | Fewer Facets | More Facets |
| **Applications** | Smaller Leaps | Greater Leaps |
| **Solutions** | More Structured | More Open |
| **Problems** | Clearly Defined | Fuzzy |
| **Tasks** | Less Independent | More Independent |
| **Pace** | Slower | Quicker |
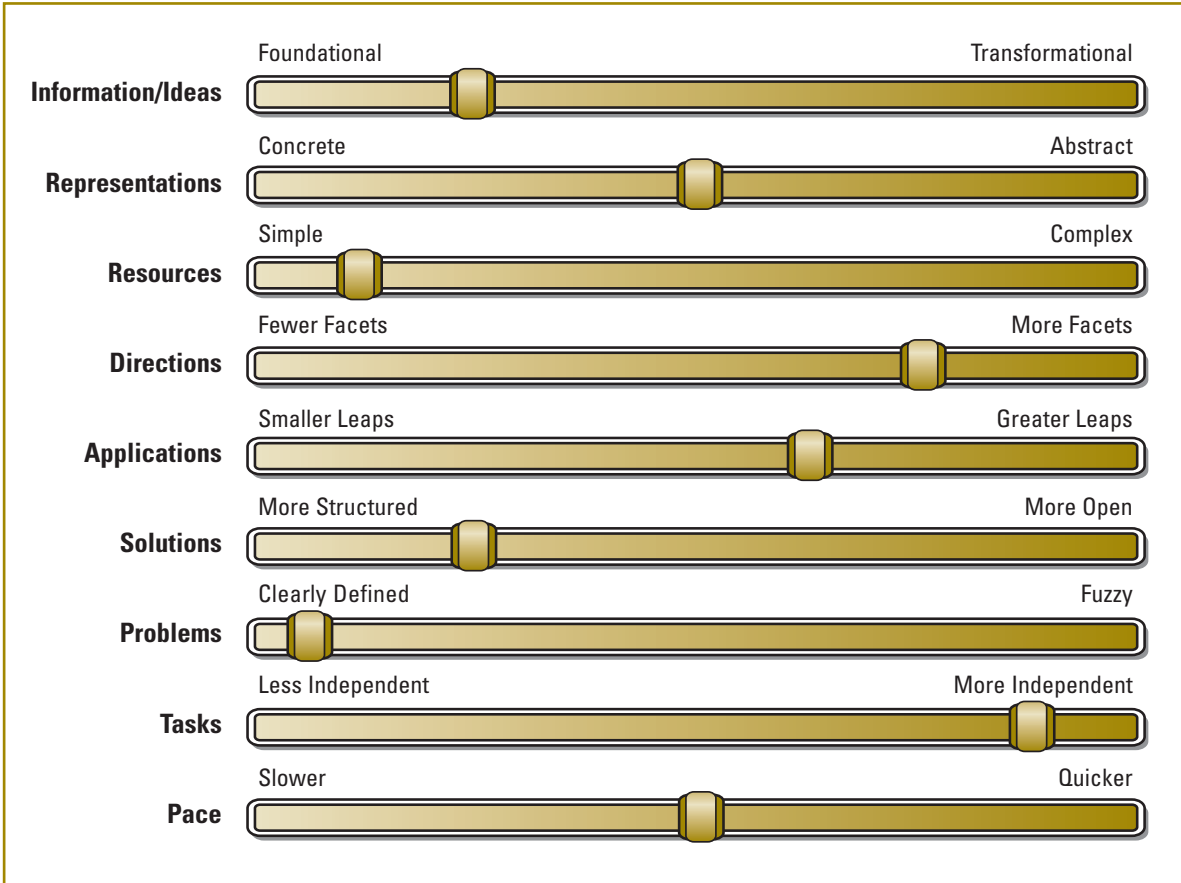
(Source: Adapted from Tomlinson, 1999a, pp. 121–122)

## Strategies and Tools for Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction is inclusive by nature; that is, most of the strategies that teachers use to differentiate the learning are intended to span all abilities. However, some strategies work particularly well for students who are currently struggling, while others may best suit those who are ready for enriched learning opportunities. Differentiating instruction for these students helps them to engage in the learning and reach their potential with increased satisfaction and decreased frustration.

> "Adjusting the nature of instruction to include strategies that make learning easier for children is appropriate for all learners. It is essential for those who are experiencing difficulty."
>
> *(Strickland, Ganske, and Monroe, 2002, p. 47)*

Struggling learners often require more guided practice and support from the teacher before they attempt tasks independently. As Strickland, Ganske, and Monroe observe, "Struggling learners, in particular, need guided instruction that helps to make assigned tasks transparent to them. They don't function well in classrooms where there is a heavy emphasis on merely giving assignments and little emphasis on techniques such as modelling and coaching" (2002, p. 47).

Like all learners, these students benefit from instruction and activities that tap into their interests and preferred learning styles, and that allow for some choice. Keeping in mind that modelling and coaching are keys to success, teachers may find the following strategies, which are described in the appendix, particularly beneficial for struggling learners:

- Contracts

- Independent Projects

- Learning Buddies

Another beneficial strategy, Collaborative Learning, is described later in this chapter (see page 96).

Learners who need enrichment benefit from differentiation that provides challenging tasks and materials that target their gifts and talents. These tasks are often multilayered, requiring the students to think critically as they hypothesize, investigate, and solve problems. Gifted and talented students enjoy the opportunity to choose activities that are significant to them. This freedom to choose should also be reflected in the products or performances they are asked to create or perform to demonstrate their learning. Often teachers merely provide *extra* work when what students need is *different* work that allows for deeper learning.

Keeping in mind the students' learning strengths, and the motivating power of choice, teachers may find the following strategies, described in the appendix, particularly beneficial for students who require enrichment:

- Contracts

- Curriculum Compacting

- Independent Projects

- Literature Circles

- Tiered Assignments
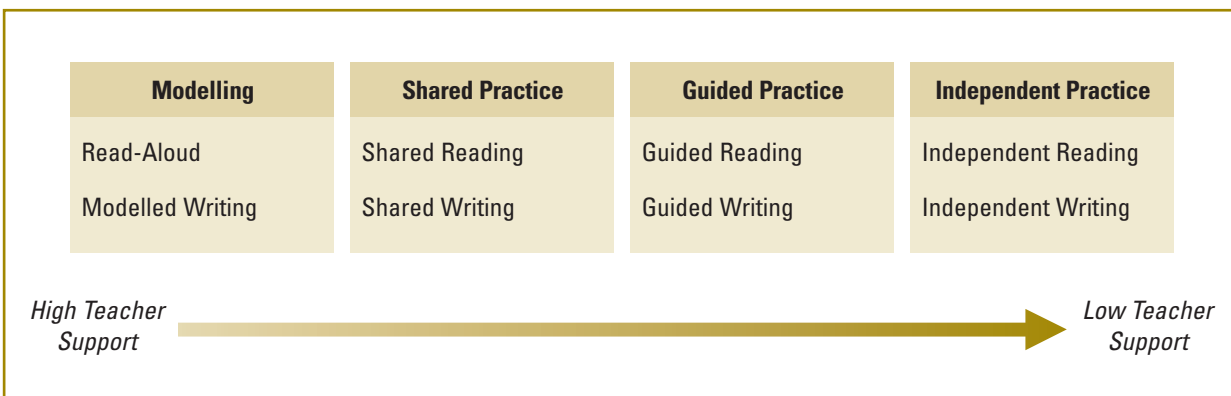
## Choosing Instructional Approaches

"Good teachers demonstrate how to apply a range of strategies. They do not simply assign and assess work. Teaching involves 'showing' and 'demonstrating' (Allington and Cunningham, 2002)."

*(Literacy for Learning, p. 39)*

Teachers select instructional approaches based on information obtained from assessments. Then through planned and purposeful literacy instruction, they help their students to develop the knowledge and skills they need to become strategic, motivated, and independent learners. The principles of scaffolding and gradually releasing responsibility to the student give teachers a way to think about how best to match their instructional approaches to the students' current development, with the aim of preparing the students to use their new knowledge and skills independently (Wilhelm, 2001).

Although teachers use many different instructional approaches and tactics with their students, the present guide highlights four key approaches that teachers can use, separately and in combination, to move students towards independence in the classroom: modelling (including read-aloud and modelled writing); shared practice; guided practice; and independent practice. The following chart shows that these four approaches provide a range of options for scaffolding new learning and gradually releasing responsibility to the students.

## Key Instructional Approaches for an Effective Literacy Program

| Modelling | Shared Practice | Guided Practice | Independent Practice |
|---|---|---|---|
| Read-Aloud | Shared Reading | Guided Reading | Independent Reading |
| Modelled Writing | Shared Writing | Guided Writing | Independent Writing |

*High Teacher Support* →→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→ *Low Teacher Support*

Teachers do not necessarily use the key instructional approaches in a linear fashion, always starting with modelling; rather, they select the approach that matches the students' learning needs for the specific lesson or task. During any of these approaches, the teacher might interrupt the reading or writing activity to offer explicit instruction or a mini-lesson on an important concept (see "The Importance of Explicit Instruction", on page 90).

Following is a brief overview of the key instructional approaches.

**Modelling:** The teacher shows how an experienced reader or writer reads a text or performs a writing task. For example, in a read-aloud activity, the teacher demonstrates expressive, fluent reading, and might think aloud at certain points to demonstrate how an effective reader determines the meaning of unfamiliar words, monitors comprehension, or uses other strategies for making meaning. A read-aloud or modelled-writing exercise can be a highly effective way to introduce a new strategy or a text that is beyond the students' current ability.

**Shared Practice:** The teacher and students work together on a reading or writing activity. If the students already have a sense of what the appropriate strategies look like and sound like, a shared reading or writing exercise can provide an opportunity to discuss the strategies and use them with the teacher's active involvement. It is also an ideal time to provide explicit instruction about the strategies and behaviours of successful readers and writers because the teaching is accompanied by hands-on learning.

**Guided Practice:** The students have an opportunity to apply new concepts, skills, or strategies previously taught during read-aloud, modelled writing, and shared reading and writing sessions, thus moving closer to independence. At this stage, the teacher is still actively engaged with the students – conferring, providing feedback, and intervening as required. The students share their thinking processes with the teacher and each other in order to consolidate their understanding. Students can practise the reading or writing strategy in pairs and interact in small flexible groupings. Accountable talk is an essential component at this stage of learning. Guided practice sessions provide opportunities for students to reflect on themselves as learners and help to build their metacognitive skills.

**Independent Practice:** This occurs after the students have had ample time to practise a new strategy with support from both the teacher and one another. While gradually giving the students more responsibility for their learning, the teacher still provides support and feedback as needed. The students receive individual feedback and praise for their successes in applying the strategy and in demonstrating their understanding to the teacher and to one another. Accountable talk remains a key component at this stage of learning.

*Explicit feedback given immediately after assessment leads to improved levels of student achievement.*

Following independent practice, students are ready to apply their learning to a new genre, format, or situation. As students are faced with more challenging situations, they reflect and draw on prior learning and effectively apply the strategy to a new situation. At this stage, the teacher does an assessment of the learning demonstrated in each student's work and helps the student to set new goals.

The chart on page 91 describes the roles of the teacher and students in each of the four key instructional approaches, showing how teachers might use the approaches in combination to release responsibility gradually to their students. Wilhelm calls this "passing strategic expertise to students" (Wilhelm, 2001, p. 14).

## The Importance of Explicit Instruction

Explicit instruction refers to the clear, direct, and purposeful teaching of specific knowledge, skills, and strategies. It is usually a part of both modelling and shared practice, but it can also occur as a planned or spontaneous part of a guided or independent activity – whenever the teacher sees a need to introduce or clarify a concept.

**Differentiated Instruction**

To learn more about differentiated instruction, read *Education for All: The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy and Numeracy Instruction for Students With Special Education Needs, Kindergarten to Grade 6, 2005*, published by the Ontario Ministry of Education.

Beers (2003) emphasizes the importance of explicit instruction for helping students to develop as readers, writers, and speakers. She notes that explicit instruction takes the guesswork out of what teachers want students to learn. Strategies, skills, and concepts are taught explicitly and directly. Explicit instruction helps students to understand that effective readers and writers consciously plan the strategies they need to enhance understanding and communicate ideas effectively.

## Roles for the Teacher and Students in the Key Instructional Approaches

| Instructional Approach | Teacher's Role | Students' Role | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *MODELLING* | **Teacher Does**<br><br>This involves:<br>• identifying the specific strategy<br>• explaining why students are learning the strategy, and when and where they will use it<br>• showing how to do it<br>• thinking aloud while demonstrating | **Students Watch**<br><br>This involves:<br>• listening<br>• observing<br>• thinking<br>• making connections | *STUDENT'S ZONE OF PROXIMAL DEVELOPMENT* |
| *SHARED PRACTICE* | **Teacher Does**<br><br>This involves:<br>• thinking aloud<br>• modelling<br>• leading the discussion<br>• explaining<br>• involving students | **Students Participate**<br><br>This involves:<br>• listening and participating<br>• identifying where and when the strategy could be used<br>• attempting the new learning | |
| *GUIDED PRACTICE*<br>*(usually in small groups)* | **Teacher Structures and Supports (as needed)**<br><br>This involves:<br>• observing<br>• scaffolding<br>• clarifying<br>• giving feedback<br>• encouraging | **Students Practise**<br><br>This involves:<br>• using the strategy<br>• thinking aloud and talking about the strategy<br>• solving problems<br>• correcting<br>• critically analysing the achievement | |
| *INDEPENDENT PRACTICE AND APPLICATION* | **Teacher Watches**<br><br>This involves:<br>• observing and monitoring<br>• conferring<br>• assessing<br>• setting goals<br>• providing opportunities for independent practice and application<br>• planning additional support and future instruction | **Students Do**<br><br>This involves:<br>• using the strategy independently<br>• applying the learning<br>• directing own activity<br>• thinking aloud to demonstrate understanding<br>• assessing own work<br>• reflecting | *ZONE OF ACTUAL DEVELOPMENT* |

Explicit instruction can take the form of mini-lessons – short, focused lessons on a specific skill or strategy. In these lessons, teachers focus on one or two key strategies or skills that students need to know. Repeatedly and over time, the teacher instructs students through direct modelling and support. At times, the teacher highlights these concepts and skills for students by expressing them aloud.

## EFFECTIVE LITERACY INSTRUCTION IS COLLABORATIVE

"Literacy thrives in a mutually supportive community of learners. Effective literacy instruction for junior learners is highly collaborative, with plentiful opportunities for genuine discussion and interaction among students and between the student and teacher. Collaborative learning invites students to make choices, derive pleasure from their learning, take risks, practise and refine their literacy and learning strategies, and develop independence. It provides a safe and positive environment for students to engage in the social interactions that are so important to this age group, and to explore the social nature of language and literacy."

*(Literacy for Learning, p. 28)*

Collaboration *among educators* plays an important role in strengthening literacy instruction. As professionals, we recognize that our colleagues – ESL teachers, special education teachers, teacher-librarians, computer specialists, consultants, and grade partners – have a wealth of expertise that can help us meet the needs of our students. Collaboration with our peers becomes a valued teaching practice.

This team approach, combining professional talent, knowledge, and insight, not only improves learning opportunities for students but also assists in bringing teachers to their full potential in achieving student success.

The main focus of this section, however, is on enhancing literacy instruction by promoting collaboration *among students* and *between students and teacher*. To create a productive community of learners, teachers carefully consider the following in their planning and in their daily interactions with students:

"We need to set up our classrooms so that students are able to achieve both academically and socially and also acquire the life skills necessary to become thoughtful, contributing members of our democratic society."

*(Routman, 2000, p. 537)*

- the importance of talk

- the social and emotional environment

- collaborative learning

- student groupings

- routines to support learning

## The Importance of Talk

Because junior students are generally social by nature, they enjoy sitting with others and sharing experiences. Teachers capitalize on this in the junior grades by providing multiple opportunities to engage in accountable talk. Talk not only promotes intellectual development, it also helps students to develop a sense of community and instils a sense of belonging (Cole, 2003). Throughout the junior grades, students learn to use talk to solve problems, refine their thinking, connect to the ideas of others, and get along with others.

Talk is the "major motor of intellectual development" (Calkins, 2001). Talking with others and sharing ideas is fundamental to learning, but not all talk sustains learning. For talk to promote learning, students need to be accountable for what they say and how they listen. They need explicit instruction in oral communication strategies, and opportunities to practise, so that they are equipped to interpret what others are saying, ask relevant questions, and engage in debate or respectful dialogue.

> ### Involving Second-Language Learners in Classroom Talk
>
> It is important to include second-language learners in oral-communication activities, whatever their current stage of language acquisition. Collaborative learning activities in small supportive groups provide comfortable opportunities for second-language learners to participate. This helps them to experience a sense of belonging and to build confidence in their ability to learn and think in English.

Students need to develop the ability to disagree in an agreeable way, keep an open mind yet continue to be independent thinkers, solve problems cooperatively, and reach consensus. These important interpersonal skills can all be developed through literacy learning. To help students improve these skills, teachers can model accountable talk and then post anchor charts in the classroom that describe procedures and guidelines for appropriate behaviour. See, for example, "Listening to and Learning From My Peers" in the appendix.

**APPLICATION IN APPENDIX**

Fountas and Pinnell (2001) focus on oral language as the foundation for development in reading and writing. It is through talk that students learn a new skill or concept, clarify their understanding, and develop an appreciation and understanding of other points of view. Through discussion, students are able to articulate what they believe, listen to the beliefs of others, take in new information, modify their beliefs, or strengthen them by clarifying their rationale and support. Engaging in rich dialogue helps students to come to new understandings and develop their reasoning ability.

Because accountable talk requires students to observe the rules of reason and logic, it encourages them to speak, listen, read, write, and think critically. Practice in critical thinking helps students develop as critical learners, make thoughtful decisions about their learning, and take responsibility for it.

Teachers who understand the value of accountable talk provide time throughout the day for students to interact with their peers. To facilitate this interaction, they organize the classroom so that students can easily converse with one another without having to move their desks or speak loudly. Creating small groups of desks or having small groups of students sitting around a table facilitates participation in conversation. Small-group settings encourage students to share and clarify their thoughts, opinions, and ideas – ultimately leading the students to a deeper understanding.

Many of the skill-building activities and tools in the appendix promote accountable talk. For example, see the following topics:

- Book Talks
- Carousel
- Four Corners
- Graffiti
- "I" Message
- Inside-Outside Circle
- Jigsaw
- Listening To and Learning From My Peers
- Literature Circles
- Place Mat
- Questioning the Author
- Ranking Ladder
- Retell, Relate, Reflect
- Say Something
- Tea Party
- Think/Timed-Pair-Share
- Value Line
- Walkabout

For more information about oral communication as a foundation for literacy learning, see page 31 of Chapter 2, "Knowledge and Skills Required for Literacy".

## The Social and Emotional Environment

"The research on how the brain thinks and the emergence of knowledge regarding intelligence, creativity, and learning styles all argue that social interaction is critical in the development of intelligent behaviour."

*(Bennett and Rolheiser, 2001, p. 143)*

When students feel supported and respected by their teachers and peers, they are more likely to welcome new tasks and challenges with confidence. In *Reading With Meaning* (2002), Miller suggests that, by establishing bonds and relationships early in September, the teacher lays the foundation for a caring and respectful learning community throughout the year.

It is important for students to bond not only with the teacher but also with each other. This bonding requires time – for students to get to know one another, to discover each other's strengths, and to value each other's differences.

To create an inclusive and respectful environment, teachers set and model clear expectations for appropriate behaviour. They require students to demonstrate respect for themselves, others, and their surroundings; to value their own knowledge and experiences and those of all their classmates; to listen attentively; and to be helpful and encouraging to one another.

When problems arise, teachers respond immediately, either by speaking privately to those involved or by facilitating a discussion between or among those involved (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003, p. 13.25). By helping students to learn acceptable behaviour and positive ways of relating to one another, teachers reinforce a sense of community and responsibility that facilitates teaching and learning (for example, by allowing teachers to hold uninterrupted discussions or conferences with individuals or small groups).

One way to foster mutual respect and inclusion in the classroom is to create classroom agreements. Gibbs (2001) suggests four specific agreements that can be made with students to encourage a sense of inclusiveness and mutual respect in the classroom: attentive listening; appreciation/no put-downs; the right to pass (that is, to decline to participate or to share personal information during discussions); and mutual respect.

To encourage inclusiveness and mutual respect, the teacher may do the following:

- Invite students to share with their classmates their personal preferences for reading materials and/or their thoughts and opinions on books (for example, through book talks, author's chair sessions, or literature circles).

- Offer students opportunities to share their written work with their classmates at various stages of the writing process (for example, through an author's chair session).

- Offer differentiated instruction to respond to a variety of strengths and needs (for example, small groups, groups with memberships that change according to need).

- Ensure that the classroom literacy resources are culturally diverse enough to represent the broad community (for example, they should include material in the students' first languages and a wide variety of books, newspapers, and music).

- Ensure that the class literacy resources reflect different interests, including gender-related interests (for example, comic books, manuals, magazines, and Internet websites, in addition to traditional texts).

- Ensure that the class literacy resources reflect students' personal situations (for example, stories or articles about children coping with disabilities, illness, divorce, death in the family).

- Create visual displays to reinforce positive messages about living and working together (for example, photo collages, inspiring quotations, and anchor charts that summarize class agreements and routines).

For related information, see "Personal Identity", page 17 in Chapter 1, "The Junior Learner".

**APPLICATIONS IN APPENDIX** ⟩⟩⟩ Many of the skill-building activities and tools in the appendices of this volume aim to encourage a positive social and emotional environment. For specific activities to promote self-esteem and mutual respect, see the following topics in the appendix:

- Car Wash

- Extended Name Tags

- "I" Message

- Listening To and Learning From My Peers

## Collaborative Learning

A key strategy for building a learning community is to incorporate collaborative learning into daily activities. Collaborative learning (also called cooperative learning) is an instructional approach that requires students of varying abilities to work together in small groups or teams to solve a problem, complete a project, or achieve a common goal. The teacher may assign each group or team member a specific responsibility that is essential to the successful completion of the task.

"Both theoretical and demonstration research … confirms the effectiveness of cooperative group learning…. Studies on achievement show that cooperative learning results in significantly higher achievement and retention in contrast to competitive, individualistic learning and teacher-centered, whole class instruction."

*(Gibbs, 2001, p. 159)*

Extensive research has revealed that students learn more effectively through collaborative learning than through individual, competitive, or teacher-centred approaches (Gibbs, 2001, p. 159). From the moment humans are born, they learn through social interaction with the people around them. Through communication with others, they solidify, deepen, and extend their thinking. Humans are social beings, and their brains grow in a social environment.

The major advantages of collaborative learning are the increased levels of achievement and retention that occur when students are concerned about one another's learning, and talk through their problems. Through this approach, students develop respect and empathy for others and the ability to work as part of a team. These are very important life skills.

Collaborative learning does not replace good teaching; it usually follows it. When it is well managed, collaborative learning can be a powerful way to motivate students and provide them with peer support as they engage in inquiry, debriefing, and the consolidation of skills, concepts, and strategies. It also provides the teacher with a way to differentiate instruction by structuring groups and tasks in a variety of ways.

Simply putting students into groups, however, will not, in itself, improve student achievement. Teachers who use collaborative learning successfully carefully analyse the successes and challenges that individual students encounter while working in groups, and respond with strategic shifts in their teaching to ensure that all students succeed as collaborative learners.

According to Johnson and Johnson (1999), teachers should explicitly incorporate the following five elements into collaborative learning opportunities:

1. **Individual accountability / personal responsibility:** Each group member is held responsible for his or her own learning, as well as for the learning of the other group members. In the end, each member is held responsible for the outcome. Each student is held accountable as a productive member of the group, and cannot easily opt out or "hitchhike" along the way. When teachers ignore this element of collaborative learning, they increase the likelihood that students will be unable to work effectively in groups, and student achievement is likely to decline. Students must understand the expectation that they will learn together, and then demonstrate their individual mastery of the material.

2. **Positive interdependence:** The group must establish a common goal that is both clear and meaningful, and all members must make a commitment to its successful achievement. Johnson and Johnson cite other types of positive interdependence, but identify having a common goal as the most important type for the success of a group.

3. **Use of collaborative skills:** It is vital to teach students collaborative skills in school, as many students may not learn them elsewhere. Students who work together effectively and efficiently are able to accomplish far more than those who do not. Depending on the specific needs of the students in the class and the purpose of a lesson, teachers may choose to explicitly teach social, communication, or critical-thinking skills as part of a collaborative lesson (see the Sample Lesson at the end of this chapter). Only after students have successfully demonstrated that they have internalized a skill does the teacher introduce a new one. This process allows for the scaffolding of skills over the course of the year.

4. **Face-to-face interaction and positive feedback:** The teacher ensures that the physical set-up of groups encourages students to work together and to communicate effectively. Because of their close proximity, students are able both to listen with their ears and to "read" body language with their eyes. They can pick up on tone of voice, choice of words, and the subtleties of posture and gestures. In this way, they develop their ability both to interpret and to communicate meaning. The teacher also encourages students to applaud the successes and efforts of each group member.

5. **Processing of the group effort and the results:** At the end of each collaborative learning lesson, students need time to discuss, describe, and reflect on the academic and collaborative success of the group, its individual members, and the whole class. To ensure continued improvement over time, the students and teacher set new goals to be addressed in future collaborative sessions. To practise this element of collaborative learning successfully, the groups may need to continue working together over several days or weeks, or even for a full school year.

Many of the skill-building activities and tools in the appendix are designed to promote collaborative learning. See the following topics:

- Book Talks
- Brainstorming
- Carousel
- Four Corners
- Graffiti
- Jigsaw
- Learning Buddies
- Listening To and Learning From My Peers

- Literature Circles
- Place Mat
- Ranking Ladder
- Roundtable
- Study Guide Project
- Tea Party
- Value Line
- Walkabout

## Student Groupings

> "Students need opportunities to experience collaborative learning in flexible and dynamic groupings. These groupings evolve and vary in size and composition as required by the task and the needs of all the students. Teachers continually assess their students to determine the groupings that will best meet their needs. A mixture of whole-class, small-group, paired, and individual learning is ideal. Groups can be heterogeneous (mixed) or homogeneous (similar or the same), and can be organized according to needs, interests, abilities, first languages, components of a task, or other considerations. It is *not* productive to stream students into static groupings, as these groupings limit the interaction and feedback that [are] essential for the development of effective communicators and literacy learners."
>
> *(Literacy for Learning, p. 40)*

### Group Size

Teachers determine the size of student groups on the basis of the complexity of the task being assigned, assessment data, and the past experience of the students with collaborative work. If, for example, the goal is to have the students share their thinking, then pairs of students would be an efficient and effective grouping. If, on the other hand, the goal is to evaluate material or solve a problem, groups of three or four would be good choices.

The size of a group can have a significant impact on the learning of its members. According to Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (2001), groups with more than five members are less effective than smaller groups. If students have had little experience with working in groups, it is essential that they begin working in pairs and work their way up to larger groups over time.

> "A … classroom that succeeds cannot be one in which the teacher teaches the whole class all the time nor can it be one in which children are assigned to static reading groups…. Instruction that treats them all the same or that arbitrarily divides them into three groups will not meet their diverse needs."
>
> *(Allington and Cunningham, 2003, p. 239)*

## Group Formation

When arranging students into groups, teachers consider a variety of criteria to maximize the learning experience for all participants. These criteria include the strengths, skills, ability levels, needs, interests, and backgrounds of each student. Teachers acquire this information from their assessments.

At times it is useful to group students of similar ability together in homogeneous groupings (for example, when the students are practising a particular skill that involves using a text independently); in general, however, heterogeneous groupings are a better choice. Differences make collaborative learning powerful and help students to appreciate the kinds of differences they will encounter in groups throughout school and life. The weakest group that a teacher can put together is one in which everyone thinks the same way.

> "Students of low ability actually perform worse when they are placed in homogeneous groups with students of low ability – as opposed to students of low ability placed in heterogeneous groups."
>
> *(Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock, 2001, p. 87)*

## Group Duration

Johnson and Johnson (1999) identified three types of collaborative learning groups:

1. **Informal groups.** These can be created on the spot and usually last for no more than a few minutes during class time. See the descriptions of groups for Think/Timed-Pair-Share or Inside-Outside Circle in the appendix.

APPLICATIONS IN APPENDIX

2. **Formal groups.** These are designed to last for longer periods of time, such as several days or weeks. The learning opportunities provided must be carefully designed by the teacher to incorporate the five basic elements described above under "Collaborative Learning" (pages 97–98).

3. **Base groups.** These may last for a term or the full school year. An example of the base-group approach is Tribes Learning Communities (TLC), created by Jeanne Gibbs (see Gibbs, 2001), which explicitly supports teachers through the process of creating a safe and respectful learning environment for all students. Developing group cohesiveness takes time, but when students realize that they will be spending long periods of time together, they work hard to develop the collaborative skills required to achieve success as a group.

# Routines to Support Learning

Clearly established rules and routines enable teachers to maximize the time available for effective instruction and practice and to minimize interruptions. Teachers begin explicit instruction in, and modelling of, these rules and routines in September and continuously reinforce them throughout the year. It is important to keep in mind, however, that rules and routines are most successful over the long term if students are involved in establishing them.

Routines based on established expectations of classroom behaviour help students to know what to expect and what is expected of them, so that they are able to focus on learning. Routines encourage students to take an active role in the learning community, to exercise their choices responsibly, to manage time effectively, and to move forward in addressing their goals.

Routines may be established for a wide range of classroom activities, but it is important for the expectations for behaviour to be similar in all routines. Students are more likely to meet expectations when the routines are simple, logical, and reasonable.

Teachers and students can work together to develop routines for general activities such as sharpening pencils, taking washroom breaks, and using computers. They can also develop routines for a variety of literacy activities, such as writing in reading-response journals during independent reading sessions, submitting work, scheduling conferences, and exchanging their books.

## Consistency of Routines Across Subjects and Grades

*Professional collaboration and ongoing learning help teachers develop a deeper, broader, more reflective understanding of effective instruction.*

When all teachers of the junior grades in a school establish and use similar routines, students quickly learn what is expected of them. Consistency across subjects and grades expands students' sense of comfort, builds their self-assurance, and promotes an environment where they feel comfortable taking risks in their learning.

Teachers use explicit instruction and modelling to convey their expectations for working collaboratively and sharing the classroom space. These include expectations for:

- using and maintaining classroom and school resources (such as anchor charts, word walls, book displays, reference books, sign-out systems for classroom resources and the school library);

- organizing and maintaining the students' own work spaces, storage spaces, and surroundings;

- meeting for whole-group and small-group instruction, discussions, and conferences (for example, read-alouds, guided reading, peer editing);

- engaging in accountable talk (when to talk, how to speak and listen with respect, where to meet for discussion, acceptable noise levels);

- behaving respectfully (for example, not disrupting others while working independently; respecting rules and routines);

- participating in various instructional activities (for example, what to do during independent reading or guided reading);

- finding a quiet space to work;

- keeping track of homework assignments and submitting finished work;

- solving problems.

Routines help the teacher and students to use time effectively, including transitional times at the beginning and end of the school day and between activities. For example, students might use transitional times to engage in meaningful literacy tasks such as the following:

- recording a strategy learned during a reading or writing lesson or a content-area activity (for example, making predictions, asking questions, identifying points that need clarification, reflecting on themselves as readers or writers)

- recording ideas or questions about their writing in a writer's notebook

- recording pertinent information in their agendas (for example, homework, assignments, things to do)

Teachers can help students to follow routines by:

- setting clear expectations;

- consistently reinforcing the expectations (for example, with anchor charts and constructive feedback);

- using praise to reinforce self-managing behaviour;

- teaching students how to help each other.

## Structuring Collaborative Learning Lessons

Collaborative learning requires deliberate planning, explicit teaching, and multiple opportunities to practise, in order for students to have successful experiences. The gradual-release-of-responsibility model, which includes teacher modelling, followed by shared and guided practice, and leading to independent participation, ensures that students clearly understand what is expected of them during collaborative learning sessions. The Sample Lesson at the end of this chapter demonstrates how teachers can use collaborative learning to enhance academic learning.

### Teaching Social, Communication, or Critical-Thinking Skills

**The following steps will support the implementation of skills as part of a collaborative learning lesson:**

1. Choose one skill.

| Social Skills | Communication Skills | Critical-Thinking Skills |
|---|---|---|
| • getting into groups<br>• bringing necessary materials<br>• staying with group until task is done<br>• greeting others<br>• introducing oneself and/or others<br>• calling your members by name<br>• waiting patiently<br>• saying "Goodbye"<br>• saying "Thank you"<br>• apologizing or accepting apologies | • attentive listening<br>• asking for help or giving help<br>• asking questions or responding to questions<br>• giving instructions or following instructions<br>• disagreeing politely or responding to disagreement<br>• talking in quiet voices<br>• giving praise or responding to praise<br>• encouraging others to participate<br>• resolving conflict | • planning<br>• making suggestions or responding to suggestions<br>• asking for reasons or giving reasons<br>• paraphrasing to show understanding<br>• asking for feedback or giving feedback<br>• checking accuracy<br>• checking understanding<br>• persuading others<br>• summarizing<br>• compromising<br>• reflecting on experience |

*Teaching Social, Communication, or Critical-Thinking Skills – Continued*

2. Use a T-Chart to discuss what the skill will look like and sound like. For example,:

| Attentive Listening | |
|---|---|
| Actions | Words |
| • One person talks at a time.<br>• Listeners look at the speaker.<br>• Listeners try to be aware of their own listening.<br>• Listeners acknowledge the message *and* the messenger.<br>• Listeners nod heads to signal understanding or agreement.<br>• Listeners try to "see with their ears, hear with their eyes".<br>• Listeners are silent and attentive. | • One voice only, silence/listening from others<br>• Listeners ask probing questions and paraphrase ideas, e.g.:<br>  – "What do you mean by …?"<br>  – "To build on your idea …"<br>  – "That is very interesting, Zera. James, what is your opinion?" |

3. Model the skill. Ask for student volunteers to help model the skill. Show both "yes" and "no" examples of the skill.

4. Practise the skill before using it in the collaborative groups. Role play scenarios as a whole class and present both "yes" and "no" examples.

5. Practise and apply the skill in established collaborative groups. Some teachers find it useful to rotate students through specific roles that complement the collaborative skill being learned. For example, the roles for attentive listening might be:

| *ENCOURAGER* | • "draws out" the reluctant student<br>• attempts to motivate the team<br>• encourages all members to participate<br>• shows appreciation through positive comments after people have spoken |
|---|---|
| *PARAPHRASER* | • checks for understanding<br>• clarifies ideas |
| *GATEKEEPER* | • equalizes participation<br>• shuts the gate for one and opens it for another |
| *RECORDER* | • writes down group decisions and answers<br>• makes sure things get recorded |

6. Process group implementation of the skill (see the "Collaborative Learning Group Assessment" form, on pages 113–114, at the end of the Sample Lesson).

7. Once the skill is mastered, introduce a new skill.

8. Repeat the cycle.

# EFFECTIVE LITERACY INSTRUCTION LEADS TO LEARNING THAT IS TRANSFERABLE AND ENDURING

Literacy skills are *transferable* in that they help students to learn in all areas of the curriculum throughout their school years. Literacy skills are *enduring* in that they are important life skills that will help students to succeed personally and professionally throughout their lives.

## Integrating Literacy Learning Across the Curriculum

"Literacy knowledge and skills are best developed in all areas of the curriculum by a consistent combination of intensive instruction, teachable moments, and student practice."

(Ontario Ministry of Education, 2002b, p. 5)

Students use literacy strategies and skills in all subject areas at school. In the junior grades the literacy demands increase dramatically. Students are expected to read and write more independently and more often, to read longer and more difficult texts in different subject areas, and to assume more responsibility for independent study and learning. They are asked to remember more information; to explore, summarize, and interpret meaning in every subject area; and to make meaningful connections across the curriculum. They are also exposed to more specialized concepts and technical terms. Each discipline has its own "embedded literacy" – frequently used text forms, conventions, and vocabulary that are specific to the subject area. It is important for students to become familiar with the forms of expression particular to a discipline and also with any special knowledge required to read their content-area textbooks and reference materials.

The challenges and opportunities presented by these increasing literacy demands are best met by integrating literacy instruction across the curriculum. Effective teachers make explicit how language learning applies to other curriculum areas. Their long-term planning is deliberate and thoughtful, so that what they are teaching in language is taught in a timely way in order to support what students will need to be able to do in other subjects.

Teachers of all subjects need to participate in literacy instruction. In classrooms where more than one teacher is responsible for instruction, it is essential that teachers meet regularly to plan integrated, cross-curricular instruction and activities that promote the systematic development of literacy skills. This involves:

- purposefully connecting reading, writing, talking, listening, and thinking;

- teaching literacy strategies and skills in all subjects;

- offering authentic cross-curricular learning experiences that connect to students' lives and to the wider world;

- providing time for students to integrate and practise new knowledge and skills in all subjects;

- encouraging students to think critically and reflect metacognitively in all subjects;
- using tools and technologies in meaningful ways to support literacy learning in all subjects;
- working with other teachers to develop a whole-school approach to literacy.

## Relevant and Authentic Literacy Instruction

Effective teachers understand that, in order for learning to be enduring, it must be meaningful and relevant to students. Instruction needs to be centred on authentic learning experiences, engaging students in activities that have meaning and substance, and that promote wonder and inquiry. Students need to see the value in what they are learning and understand how it applies to their lives.

When students see that they are writing or reading for a real purpose, they are more likely to be fully and actively engaged. For example, in a persuasive writing lesson, students may be asked to write a letter relating to a real concern they have, in order to bring about a desired change.

Students need to understand that what they are learning in their language classes is applicable to new and increasingly complex situations in all subject areas, both in school and outside of school. For example, the skills required to write a procedure can be used in science and art classes and also when students are learning to bake a cake at a friend's house. When students learn how to take point-form notes in language class, this skill will be relevant not just in history class this year but also in ten years' time, when they are listening to a university lecture.

*Authentic literacy experiences help students develop skills and attitudes that will serve them throughout their lives and improve the quality of their lives.*

## Literacy Instruction, Inquiry Skills, and the Independent Learner

An integrated approach to literacy instruction allows students to practise their skills in a variety of contexts. Literacy learning becomes relevant and transferable – both to other subjects in the classroom and to the students' continuously changing and information-driven world.

Knowledge is rapidly expanding and changing; it is impossible to keep up with the flood of new information. We cannot teach students all that they will need to know in the future, when they go out into the world as responsible citizens. We do not know at this moment what knowledge and skills they will require. It is, however, possible to give students the tools to acquire and apply the necessary knowledge and skills. This can be done by building on their natural curiosity and their desire and ability to question and learn.

Fountas and Pinnell describe two kinds of inquiry: "information seeking, which involves seeking clarification, explanation, justification, or confirmation", and "wondering, which involves others in reflecting, predicting, exploring, and considering possibilities".

*(Fountas and Pinnell, 2001, p. 260)*

Students who have strong inquiry skills will be able to find whatever information they need in order to achieve their goals. Regardless of the format the information is packaged in, they will be able to apply their inquiry and thinking skills in order to find and process what they need and respond constructively.

Explicit teaching of the inquiry process is part of the curriculum in most subjects. In addition, teachers can model the process of inquiry for students. As they work to improve their own practice, teachers can share with students the purpose of the inquiry, the method, and the ongoing thinking and learning. The teacher's example will provide a useful reference for students as they pursue their own inquiries.

Literacy learning both depends on and encourages the development of inquiry skills. Inquiry helps students to see and set real purposes for reading, writing, talking, listening, viewing, and representing. Students use inquiry to refine their reading and writing skills, and become better "meaning makers". As they search for answers in a text, question the purpose and audience for a piece of writing, and engage in rich discussions and share their personal insights with their peers, students strengthen their ability to interpret texts and to form, refine, and articulate their own views. In this way, they develop into competent, independent learners and problem solvers equipped to achieve their learning goals and meet the challenges of the future.

"Through their investigations, students learn a wide range of invaluable skills that will serve them well in future school and life experiences."

*(Fountas and Pinnell, 2001, p. 429)*

# Planning Checklist for Effective Literacy Instruction

The following strategies should assist teachers when planning literacy instruction for all learners but especially those whose readiness is low in relation to the general skills and specific goals the teacher has identified.

## Assessment for Learning:

❑ Have I assessed student readiness?

❑ Have I assessed student interests?

❑ Have I assessed student learner profiles, considering multiple intelligences and learning styles?

❑ Does my assessment inform my instruction?

❑ Is my assessment fair and equitable?

## Content:

❑ Have I identified the main ideas or concepts that I want students to understand at the end of this lesson/unit?

❑ Are the Ontario curriculum expectations addressed?

❑ Have I planned for collaboration and co-teaching?

❑ Have I sought students' input into the planning process and considered their lives outside of the school context?

❑ Have I considered antiracist issues and gender issues?

## Process:

❑ Have I considered readiness, interest, and learner profiles, including diverse life experiences?

❑ Have I planned for students to access their schema?

❑ Have I considered cross-curricular links?

❑ Have I included support staff?

❑ Have I built in opportunities for independent work?

❑ Have I scaffolded new learning?

❑ Have I planned for practice and feedback throughout the lesson/unit?

❑ Does my process allow for flexible grouping?

❑ Do my work spaces allow students to work in groups, pairs, or independently?

*(continued)*

*Planning Checklist for Effective Literacy Instruction – Continued*

❑ Have I allowed for differentiation based on interest? Ability? Learner profile?

❑ Have I allowed enough time to explore materials, reflect, and share learnings?

❑ Are there a variety of instructional strategies, reading and writing activities, and hands-on investigations?

❑ Have I included graphic organizers?

❑ Are there sufficient interesting, useful, and varied resources to support this unit?

❑ Have I considered multiple intelligences when planning learner opportunities?

❑ Do my planned activities reflect the "lifelong learnings" – the essential concepts – I want my students to attain and retain?

❑ Have I posted reference points around the classroom?

❑ Are students comfortable and familiar with transition routines and group work?

❑ Have I established respect for the diverse needs and paths of discovery for all students in my class?

❑ Do I have a balance of teacher-guided, student-guided, compulsory, and differentiated activities?

❑ Have I allowed for independent projects?

❑ Have I planned on using a taxonomy of higher-order thinking for critical questioning and thinking?

❑ Have I created contracts that allow for goal setting and time management?

**PRODUCTS:**

❑ Have I provided clear expectations of the culminating task?

❑ Does the culminating task reflect student readiness, interest, and learner profiles?

❑ Have I built in self-assessment checklists and feedback loops that students can access while creating the final product?

❑ Are products varied in means of expression, difficulty/complexity, and evaluation?

❑ Have I considered student choice?

❑ Have I considered possible extensions?

❑ Have I provided opportunities for student input?

❑ Have I considered the needs of all of my students?

# Sample Lesson – Applying Literacy Skills to Content Area Subjects (Grade 4: Provinces and Territories of Canada)

These activities may take up to five days to complete

## PURPOSE OF THE LESSON

The lesson illustrates that:

- skills and strategies learned in language classes are transferable to other content areas and also to situations outside of school;
- accountable talk is critical to the development of literacy skills and supports learning in all subject areas. The collaborative learning structures used in this lesson involve accountable talk, allowing students to build on the ideas of others and deepen their learning.

## CONTENT AREA FOCUS

To help students gain knowledge of the provinces and territories of Canada.

## CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

From *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1–8: Language*, select expectations that relate to:

- speaking for a variety of purposes;
- reading for a variety of purposes;
- writing for a variety of purposes.

From *The Ontario Curriculum: Social Studies, Grades 1 to 6; History and Geography, Grades 7 and 8, 2004*, p. 41 (Canada and World Connections strand, Grade 4):

- name and locate the various physical regions, provinces, and territories of Canada and identify the chief natural resources of each.

## PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

Before this lesson, students need opportunities to learn and engage in the following:

- Rallyrobin (see appendix)
- Graffiti (see appendix)
- Asking and answering simple and complex questions
- Round Robin (see appendix)
- Whip Around (see appendix)
- Using the inquiry process
- Formulating questions for inquiry

## ASSESSMENT

- Rallyrobin (see appendix): Circulate to hear the students' thoughts.
- Graffiti (see appendix): Collect the graffiti sheets to assess students' prior knowledge of the provinces and territories of Canada. (Assign each student a different coloured pencil or marker and ask students to write their name beside their comment.)
- Circulate to observe and coach students as they complete their research and prepare for their presentation.
- Observe Inside-Outside Circle (see appendix).

- Observe group processing (on a daily basis) to assess how group members work together and process their information.
- Assess how each student uses his or her social skills in presentations and whole-group activities.
- Review students' journal entries to determine what students have learned each day and over time and if they have met the curriculum expectations for this series of lessons.

## MATERIALS/TEACHER PREPARATION

- thirteen pieces of chart paper, with the name of a different province or territory written in the centre of each sheet
- additional chart paper to create a T-chart
- Four-column chart (Fact/Question/Search/Learning), one per group on 11" x 17" paper
- Research organizer (text structure template) – two copies maximum per student
- Reflection journals
- Resources related to the provinces and territories of Canada

## MODIFICATIONS AND ACCOMMODATIONS

- To assist ESL learners, make dual-language anchor charts
- Make available resources at various levels of complexity, including many picture resources and dual-language books.

## INSTRUCTION

### DAY 1

- Present students with the following goals for this task:
  - Academic goal: to gain knowledge of the provinces and territories of Canada by using an inquiry process
  - Social goal: attentive listening (Attentive listening is essential to accountable talk. Students need to learn the skills that will ensure that their talk is accountable. See "Teaching Social, Communication, and Critical-Thinking Skills", pages 102–103.)
- To discuss the social goal, create a T-chart with the class. Ask the questions, "What does this social goal look like?" "What does this social goal sound like?" Tell the class that they are going to assess their progress towards this goal each day – independently, as a group, and/or as a whole class.
- Students, working in pairs, do a Rallyrobin warm-up activity. Partners take turns telling each other the name of one of the provinces or territories of Canada.
- Have the whole class brainstorm the names of the provinces and territories. Record the names on chart paper.
- Divide the class into thirteen groups, with two or three students per group, for Graffiti. Ensure that each group contains a heterogeneous mix of strengths. Cluster desks/tables to support the group sizes. At each cluster, post a piece of chart paper with the name of a province or territory written in the centre. Give each student in the group a different-coloured marker. Following the Graffiti procedure (described in the appendix), ask each student to record information about the province or territory named on the sheet before rotating to a different sheet to do the same. Have students do this for each sheet, recording their name beside their information.

- Students return to their original sheet and read the information, eliminating duplications.
- Graffiti sheets are posted around the room, and students are given time to walk about and read the information.
- The class is called together for a debriefing of the process. Pose the questions: "How do we know what information is accurate? Which information is fact and which information is opinion?"
- Debrief on the effectiveness of Rallyrobin and Graffiti.

## DAY 2

- Students return to their original group positions,
- Distribute a four-column chart to each group. Instruct the students to work in groups to complete each column in the chart, as follows:
  – **Fact** – "Using the information recorded on the chart paper, decide what is *fact* and what is *opinion*. Record those pieces of information that you agree are fact in the first column."
  – **Question** – "Record any information that you believe is opinion, or that you think might be either a fact or opinion, in the second column. *Record it in the form of a question*. Also record in the second column any questions you may have about the province or territory and that you think may be of interest to your peers."
  – **Search** (When students have completed the first two columns) – "Brainstorm the different ways you could go about finding the answers to the questions in column two. What primary and secondary resources could you consult?"
  – **Learning** (This column is left empty until the end of this task.)
- Tell students that they are going to conduct a class survey to narrow down the questions each group has recorded in the Question column to those that are of most interest to their peers. Have each group develop a tally chart, recording the questions (complex questions only) raised by their group and leaving space to tally the number of "votes" each question receives in the survey. Tell students that the questions that get the most votes on their tally chart are the ones that their group will pursue. No group will have more than two questions to answer. When students have completed their tally sheets, conduct the survey, determine the questions on each tally chart that are of most interest to the class as a whole, and then ensure that each group knows which question(s) it is to answer.
- Distribute one research organizer sheet to each student for each question the group is required to answer. Have students record their assigned question in the appropriate box of each organizer. Ask students to brainstorm, as a group, the key words they need to know to conduct their research effectively and to answer the questions posed. Tell students that they are welcome to add key words as they progress through their research.
- Debrief on the effectiveness of the organizer.

## DAY 3

- Review the research process. Tell students that they will conduct their research individually. Remind them to refer to the resource listed in the Search column of their Fact/Question/Search/Learning chart as they begin their research. Advise students to jot down key points on sticky notes as they learn them in their research, and then to stick the notes onto their research organizers in the appropriate category. Give students 20 to 30 minutes to conduct and organize their research. Encourage students who finish their research before the time is up to find additional interesting facts about the question being researched, to research another

question on their group's Fact/Question/Search/Learning chart, or to help others conduct their research.

- Following the research period, have students report their findings to their group, using the following procedure. Each student shares with the group, in his or her own words, the answers he or she has found. Other group members ask clarifying questions to ensure that the answer is thorough. The process is repeated until the group and/or the teacher feel that each group member has thoroughly answered the assigned questions.

- Debrief on the effectiveness of the research process.

## DAY 4

- Have the groups, drawing on the individual strengths of each member, develop an interesting way to present their research to the class. Tell the groups to include in their presentation the information from the Fact column of their Fact/Question/Search/Learning chart, as well as their research questions and answers.

- Give students time to create and practise their presentations.

- Have a conference with each group to ensure the appropriateness of their plan.

## DAY 5

- Have each group present its information.

- Students return to their groups to jot down their accumulated understandings on sticky notes, one idea per note. Use the Round Robin tactic to have groups eliminate duplications within the group.

- Post the information on the chart in the appropriate column.

- Have each presenting group, as the "experts" on that province or territory, facilitate the large-group discussion about the information that is posted in the Learning column of the group's Fact/Question/Search/Learning chart.

- The question is, *What has the class learned about this province/territory from this presentation?* Then, using the Whip Around tactic, allow each group a turn to share an idea from one of its sticky notes. Tell the students that ideas may not be repeated, so they must listen attentively. As each idea is shared, have the "expert" group sort it into one of three categories – "Fact", "Opinion", or "Not Sure" – in the group's Learning column. Also have the group members give their reasons for the category chosen.

- Ask students to independently reflect on and write about their new learnings in their journal.

**Reflection:** Groups reflect on how well they accomplished their social and academic goals. (Students might use the Collaborative Learning Group Assessment form that follows.)

The teacher reflects on how successful students were in using the inquiry process and in working collaboratively.

# Collaborative Learning Group Assessment

Date: _____

| Group Members | Roles |
|---|---|
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

Today's Group Goal:

_____
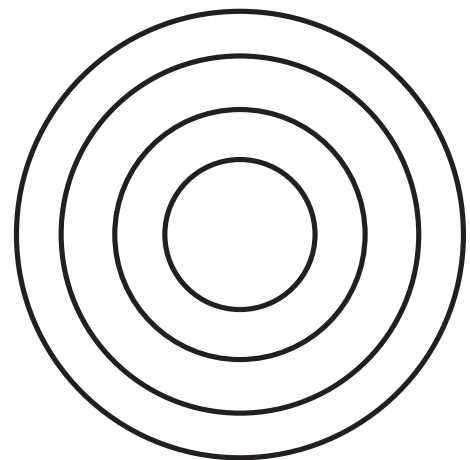
_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

*(continued)*

*Collaborative Learning Group Assessment – Continued*

Were you successful in meeting your group goal?

Check the appropriate box on the rating scale below.

|  | Not Often | Sometimes | In Most Cases | In All Cases |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. We made certain that all group members understood the task. |  |  |  |  |
| 2. All group members used the time wisely. |  |  |  |  |
| 3. We respectfully listened to all group members. |  |  |  |  |
| 4. We shared the work fairly with the whole group. |  |  |  |  |
| 5. All group members helped to complete the task. |  |  |  |  |
| 6. When we disagreed, we settled our differences respectfully and we reached consensus. Everyone supported the decision. |  |  |  |  |

# APPENDIX

# INTRODUCTION

This section describes some practical skill-building strategies and tools that teachers can use in the junior classroom to help their students develop as strategic, motivated, and independent readers, writers, talkers, listeners, and thinkers in all subjects. It is a gathering place for practical strategies suggested throughout this volume. The topics are organized alphabetically for quick reference.

When using this chapter, remember that the activities themselves are not the goal; they are parts of a carefully considered whole, aimed at preparing students to become successful communicators. Effective instruction begins with a clear understanding of the learning goals (expressed in the lesson plan as content focus and curriculum expectations), and the specific learning needs of the students. With these as the driving force, teachers then choose skill-building strategies and tools that will give students practice or support in what they need to know and be able to do.

# SKILL-BUILDING STRATEGIES AND TOOLS

## ANCHOR CHARTS

Anchor charts outline procedures or processes. They provide a quick reference that can help students to develop independence in the classroom. For example, an anchor chart might describe the stages of the writing process, the procedures and roles for literature circles, examples of capitalization, parts of speech, or reading/thinking strategies.

Anchor charts are generated by the teacher and students, and are posted where the students can see them while they work. They are open ended so that students or teachers can expand on them, as required. Anchor charts are useful as a tool for synthesizing ideas or demonstrating learning. The accompanying list, "When to Abandon a Book", is an example of an anchor chart.

---

**When to Abandon a Book**

- The book is too easy.

- I don't understand the story/information.

- I find it boring.

- I can't relate to the characters.

- The vocabulary is too difficult.

- The font is too small.

- The story didn't hook me.

- I don't like the author's style.

- I am uncomfortable with the author's style.

---

## ANTICIPATION GUIDES

Anticipation guides are graphic organizers that help students to activate their prior knowledge on a topic, concept, theme, genre, author, or other point of interest. The framing of the statements on the anticipation guide stimulates interest and provides a purpose for reading. An anticipation guide consists of a number of written statements that support or challenge student beliefs and experiences about the topic of study and that are tied to a selected text. Students read and react to the sentences, indicating on the paper whether they agree or disagree with the statements. Anticipation guides are particularly useful in identifying misconceptions before a student reads the text. After reading the text, students revisit the anticipation guide and reread each statement and their "before reading" response. Then they consider any relevant evidence from the text that supports or refutes the statement and, based on this information, they complete the "after reading" response. During the discussion after reading, the teacher goes through each statement and poses questions such as the following: *"Has your opinion changed after reading the text? Why or why not? Where did the text deepen your understanding about the topic, genre, theme, or other point of interest?"*

Following are two examples of anticipation guides. Example 1 is for the novel *The Breadwinner*, by Deborah Ellis (Toronto: Groundwood, 2002). This book is about a young girl and her family struggling to survive under the Taliban rule in Afghanistan. Example 2 uses a slightly different format. This one is for a non-fiction book, *What's Your Opinion?*, by Jill Eggleton (Toronto: Thomson-Nelson, 2001), which addresses points of view.

### *Sample Anticipation Guides*

### Example 1: "The Breadwinner"

| Before Reading | Statements | After Reading |
|---|---|---|
| Agree/Disagree | People who don't live in a country have no right to interfere with events in that country. | Agree/Disagree |
| Agree/Disagree | Might is always right. | Agree/Disagree |
| Agree/Disagree | Mean people eventually get what they deserve. | Agree/Disagree |
| Agree/Disagree | Children should obey adults. | Agree/Disagree |
| Agree/Disagree | Whenever there is a disagreement, majority opinion should rule. | Agree/Disagree |

### Example 2: "What's Your Opinion?"

For each statement, write "A" if you agree or "D" if you disagree.

| Before Reading | Statements | After Reading | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | You | Author |
| | It is not a crime to enter someone's house without permission. | | |
| | Parents should encourage their children to leave home at an early age. | | |
| | Parents should always supervise their children when the children are participating in dangerous activities. | | |
| | It is never okay to lie about who you are. | | |
| | Borrowing things without permission is okay. | | |
| | People should have the right to post "No Trespassing" signs. | | |

## BOOK TALKS

Book talks (see Fountas and Pinnell, 2001, p. 120) are a great way for students to share their thoughts and feelings about a text. They provide students with opportunities to learn about a new author or text form, share critical insights about a text, read and discuss a particularly interesting passage, or introduce their peers to one of their own favourite texts.

Teachers should begin by demonstrating a book talk for their students. They then deconstruct the talk with the students. As a group, they identify what constitutes a good talk, as well as the procedure for doing a talk. Once these ideas have been charted, anchor charts are posted to ensure that students are equipped to succeed with their own book talks.

### *Sample Anchor Chart*

| How to Give a Book Talk |
|---|
| • Look at everyone. |
| • Use your voice to hold the attention of the audience. |
| • Talk about the characters, theme, problem, or main points. |
| • Share relevant, thought-provoking insights or information. |
| • Share a small excerpt or relevant illustration. |
| • Share something that surprised you. |
| • Spark an interest in the book. |

(Adapted from Fountas and Pinnell, 2001, p. 121)

## BRAINSTORMING

Brainstorming is a powerful way to generate ideas and encourage collaboration and creative thinking. The teacher asks the students to think of ideas about a specific topic. All ideas are accepted without judgement. Anything goes – especially different, original, and crazy ideas. The more ideas, the better. Students are encouraged to piggyback off each other's ideas.

Several activities and tools in this appendix include a brainstorming component. For examples, see "Graffiti" and "Ranking Ladder".

Brainstorming ideas can be recorded as a mindmap or web, with the topic or focusing question in the centre.

*Sample Brainstorming Web*
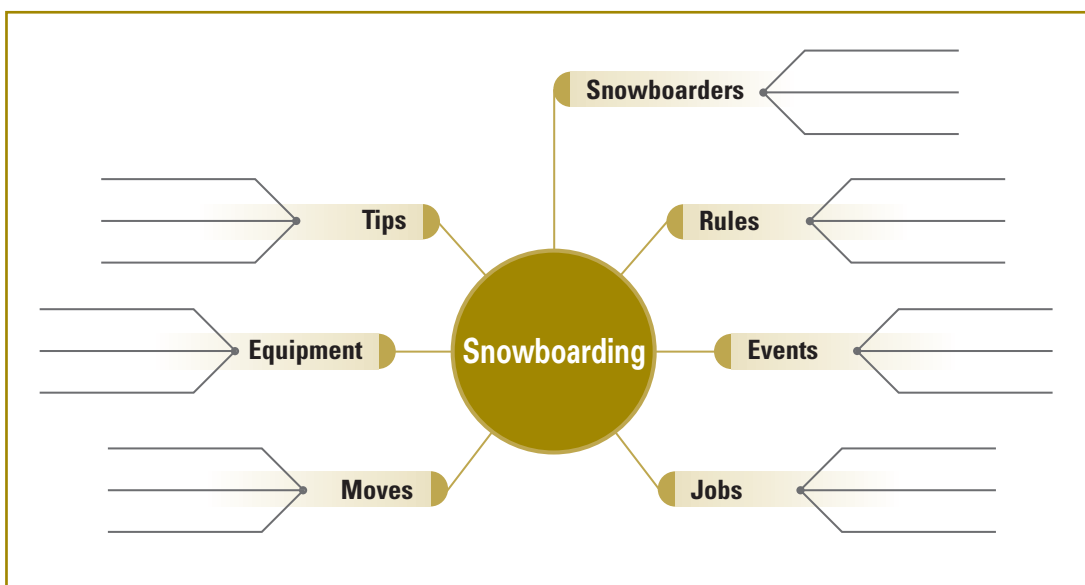


## CAR WASH

"The Car Wash" (Gibbs, 2001) is a wonderful self-esteem builder that can be used both early in the school year, to help the students get to know each other, and repeatedly throughout the year.

Invite the students to line up in pairs facing each other. One student at a time will start to pass through the line of peers, walking slowly and pausing between each pair of students. The students in the line will offer him or her one compliment (e.g., *"Your writing made me laugh"*; *"I really like your artwork"*).

Every student has a turn to "get washed". The time it takes is well worth the good feeling the students have after the activity is completed!

## CAROUSEL

"Carousel" is a way to exchange ideas among small groups and promote collaborative learning. Students work in groups. One student in each group remains in place as a designated speaker for the group, while the other members of the group rotate to each of the other groups, on signal from the teacher, to listen to the other designated speakers. This occurs in a rotational sequence with all the groups in the class. Carousel is highly effective in the content areas as a way for students to demonstrate their understanding and share information.

## CODING THE TEXT

Coding (or marking) the text helps readers to hold onto their thinking and actively engage with the text. Students work individually and then share in groups. The teacher models how to code the text and discusses with the class why it is important to code or mark the text during reading. (Also see "Highlighting the Text" in this appendix.)

**Method**

1. Create a set of symbols with the class for coding the text. For example, the class might create codes to indicate one or more of the following:
   – what they are wondering about
   – what is difficult or confusing
   – what is important to remember
   – significant words
   – what confirms what they know
   – what is contradictory to what they have learned or read before

   See the sample symbols chart (on the following page) for some examples. The symbols used in a particular lesson would depend on the focus of that lesson.

2. Post the symbols on an anchor chart, for future reference.

3. Before the task, model how to code text, using an overhead projector.

4. Invite the students to read and code a piece of text.

5. Form groups of four or five so that students can discuss their understanding of the text.

*Sample Symbols for Coding the Text*

| Making Connections | | |
|---|---|---|
| **T-S** | = | Text-to-self connections |
| **T-T** | = | Text-to-text connections |
| **T-W** | = | Text-to-world connections |

| Determining Important Ideas | | |
|---|---|---|
| **L** | = | Learned something new |
| ***** | = | Interesting or important information in the text |
| **Aha!** | = | Learnings for life |

| Questioning the Text | | |
|---|---|---|
| **C** | = | Confused about the text |
| ☼ | = | Clear about the text |
| **?** | = | See the reader's question on a sticky note or bookmark |

| Inferring and Predicting | | |
|---|---|---|
| **I** | = | Inference (see the reader's explanation on a sticky note) |
| **P** | = | Prediction |
| **+** | = | Inference or prediction is confirmed by the text |
| **–** | = | Inference or prediction is contradicted by the text |

| Synthesizing | | |
|---|---|---|
| **SZ** | = | Synthesize |
| 💡 | = | New idea surfaces; confusion is clarified |

| Monitoring Comprehension | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Huh?** | = | I just don't understand anymore! |

## CONTRACTS

Contracts give students some freedom and choices about how they will complete independent tasks. They encourage goal setting and time management. Through a contract, the student agrees to design and complete work according to the teacher's specifications. While all students work with the same concepts and skills, the expectations and tasks vary. After students have had practice in working with contracts, they begin to participate in creating the contracts. Eventually, they move towards the independent level of creating their own contracts.

On the following pages are two sample poetry contracts. A student would select one contract. Sample 1 involves less sophisticated tasks. For example, the directions to accompany "How to Eat a Poem" (Sample 1) ask the students to read it, illustrate it, summarize what it says, and write about what it means. The directions that accompany "Unfolding Bud" (Sample 2) ask the students to read it, paraphrase it, and explain what it helps the reader understand about the poet. The other boxes in this sample contract also have slightly different tasks. Teachers may create contracts of four, six, eight, or more boxes, depending on the complexity of the task and the time allocated for completion.

In this example, differentiation occurs on a variety of levels. Although students are completing similar activities, the contract allows the text to be at an appropriate reading level, and tasks are assigned that are challenging yet doable by the students.

# Poetry Contract (Sample 1)

Contract with _____
<br>*(Student name)*

Title of Unit/Task: _____

Due Date: _____

Product/Presentation Goal: _____

Time Management Commitment: _____
_____

Process Commitment: _____
_____
_____

Signed: _____

Task Requirements:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Create a rhyming wheel.**<br><br>Use the words from language and word study as a way to get started. | **Write about you.**<br><br>Use good descriptive words in a poem that helps us know and understand something important about you. |
| **Interpret**<br><br>"How to Eat a Poem" by Eve Merriam*<br>• Read it.<br>• Illustrate it.<br>• Summarize it.<br>• Write about what it means.<br><br>*From Rose H. Agree, *How to Eat a Poem and Other Morsels* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967) | **Computer Art**<br><br>Use clip art to illustrate a simile, a metaphor, or an analogy either on our class list or created by you. |

**Reflection:** _____

**Next Steps:** _____

# Poetry Contract (Sample 2)

Contract with _____
                        (Student name)

Title of Unit/Task: _____

Due Date: _____

Product/Presentation Goal: _____

Time Management Commitment: _____
_____

Process Commitment: _____
_____
_____

Signed: _____

Task Requirements:

| Create a rhyming wheel. | Write about you. |
|---|---|
| Use the words from language and word study and the dictionary as a way to get started. | Use good description, figurative language, and images to write a poem that helps us understand something important about you. |
| **Interpret**<br><br>"Unfolding Bud" by Naoshi Koriyama*<br>• Read it.<br>• Paraphrase it.<br>• Explain what it helps you to understand about the poet.<br><br>*From *Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle … and Other Modern Verse*, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, and Hugh Smith (Richmond Hill: Scholastic, 1968) | **Computer Art**<br><br>Use clip art to illustrate a simile, a metaphor, and an analogy you create. |

**Reflection:** _____

**Next Steps:** _____

## CUBING

Gregory and Chapman (2002) describe an instructional technique called "Cubing" that helps students think at various levels by encouraging discussion about a topic from six points of view. On each side of the cube is an instruction associated with one of the six levels of thinking (see "Higher-Order Thinking", page 55 in Chapter 2, "Knowledge and Skills Required for Literacy"). Students roll the cube and respond according to the "prompt" on the face of the cube.

The following shows a plan for constructing a cube.

*Cubing (Template)*
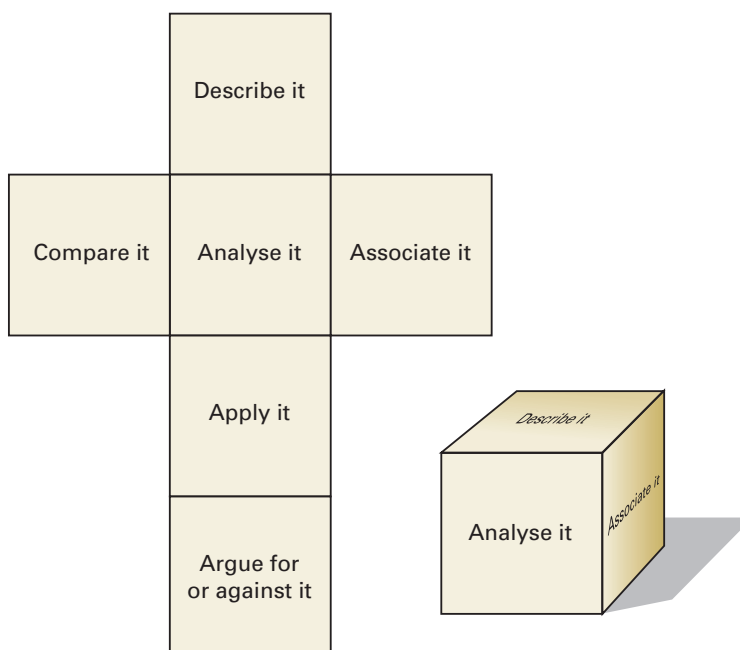


## CURRICULUM COMPACTING

When students demonstrate proficiency with the skills and concepts identified in the curriculum expectations, teachers may choose to do some curriculum compacting. To begin, students are given a pre-test to determine their proficiency with the skill or concept. With this data, teachers decide whether the students will need differentiated instruction. This does not mean that the student moves ahead of the rest of the class; rather, the student is given an opportunity to explore the skill or concept in greater depth or breadth. This strategy allows students to accelerate their learning, enrich their own knowledge base, and share their learning with the class.

Curriculum compacting can be accomplished in a variety of ways. For example, see "Independent Projects" and "Tiered Assignments" in this appendix.

## DOUBLE-ENTRY JOURNAL

The double-entry journal format (also called two-column note form) provides a metacognitive opportunity for students to reflect on their personal connections to the text. Students can do this activity before, during, and after reading to monitor and summarize their understanding. To use a double-entry journal effectively, students need modelled, guided, and independent practice that focuses on summarizing and identifying significant aspects of text.

The double-entry journal is a page divided into two columns with headings such as "Idea", "Reflection/Reaction", and so on. When using the journal, students read a text or complete an activity and then jot down significant moments, ideas, quotations, or concepts in the left-hand column. Either during or after reading, students write their response or connection in the right-hand column. These writings can then be used to initiate discussions with peers and the teacher. The sample that follows illustrates possible student responses in a double-entry journal in different subject areas.

*Sample Double-Entry Journal*

| Ideas/Concepts/Discoveries | Reflection/Reaction |
|---|---|
| I noticed that when I mixed six drops of blue with ten drops of yellow, I got green. | This reminds me of the time I was colouring a map and accidentally mixed blue and yellow markers. I got green then, too. I wonder how many inventions happened by accident. |
| I built my structure using triangle shapes for supports. Johnny used X shapes, and his structure broke when we put the brick on it. | I've seen pictures of bridges around the world, and the side supports are all triangle shapes. I wonder if this is the strongest shape for supports? |
| In today's reading, I learned that Native peoples migrated to Canada. They were following herds of animals that were scarce because the ice was covering their food. | This is like the article I read about why birds migrate south in the winter. The snow and ice come and make it hard for them to find food, just like it was hard for the Native people. |

## EXTENDED NAME TAGS

"Extended Name Tags" (Gibbs, 2001) is a great activity to use early in the school year or in preparation for a change in groupings.

**Method**

Distribute a card or name tag and ask students to do the following (see template):

1. Write your name in the centre.

2. In the upper left corner, write your favourite place in the world.

3. In the lower left corner, write the name of a person who taught you something important.

4. In the lower right corner, write the month when you had three great days in a row.

5. In the upper right corner, write three things you are good at.

6. Under your name, write the quality you most admire in other people.

When the students have completed their name tags, instruct them to do the following:

7. Form a small group of two or three.

8. Decide in your small group what corner to discuss and who will go first, second, or third.

9. Take one minute each to talk about the corner. (The teacher might need to give a signal at one, two, or three minutes.)

10. Allow two or three minutes (in total) for triads or pairs to make a statement of appreciation about each person's contribution. "*I liked it when …*" or "*I admired how you said …*"

After each student has completed a turn and the student's group has responded, ask the students to form new triads or pairs and repeat the process. After a few groups have met, bring all the students together in a circle to share something that they learned about another person.

*Extended Name Tag (Template)*

| | |
|---|---|
| Your favourite place | Three things you're good at |
| **Your Name** | |
| The quality you most admire in others | |
| A person who taught you something important | A month with three great days in a row |

## FOCUSING QUESTIONS

A focusing question guides the search for meaning. It provides a lens to focus the students' thinking about a lesson or unit of study. An effective focusing question is open ended and thought provoking. It engages the students in higher-order thinking and leads to enduring understanding about the subject or the learning process. Focusing questions can be posed by the teacher or formulated by the students (see "Questioning", pages 49–50 in Chapter 2, "Knowledge and Skills Required for Literacy").

## FOUR CORNERS

"Four Corners" is a collaborative learning activity that gets students thinking about different points of view, and engages them in dialogue with others who have the same or differing viewpoints.

**Method**

1. Label the four corners of the classroom with four points of view (for example, "Agree", "Strongly Agree", "Disagree", and "Strongly Disagree").

2. Pose a question to the whole class.

3. Invite each student to go to the corner that best reflects his or her opinion about the question. Ask the students to share the reason for their choice with others in their corner – possibly in smaller subgroups to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to be heard and to let the group reach consensus. Tell them to be ready to share the opinion of their group with the rest of the class.

For a similar activity, see "Value Line" in this appendix.

## GRAFFITI

"Graffiti" is a collaborative activity that provides students with opportunities to brainstorm ideas, express their opinions and understanding about a topic, and make connections to their prior knowledge and experiences. Students work in groups to generate and record their ideas on chart paper. The strategy provides a safe environment for sharing information. It also allows students to build on the ideas of others.

**Method**

1. Before the lesson, decide how many groups there will be for the activity and then set up that number of chart pages around the room. On each chart page, write a topic related to the assigned reading or writing task.

2. During the lesson, send each group to a chart page and tell them to quickly record all their thoughts about the topic. This might include examples, definitions, patterns, and/or drawings. Tell them not to take the time to read what other people have written.

3. After a short interval (two minutes) direct the students to rotate to the next chart page. Continue this process until everyone has been at each piece of paper.

4. Assign one group to each of the chart pages and tell them to do the following:
   – Read the information on the chart.
   – Cluster the related ideas.
   – Eliminate duplication.
   – Reach a consensus about the main points that clearly represent the small group's thinking about the original question/statement.
   – Appoint a spokesperson to share the main points with the whole group.

## HIGHLIGHTING THE TEXT

Highlighting the text (see also "Coding the Text" in this appendix) is a technique that actively engages a reader in making connections with the reading. Students may use highlighters, sticky notes, highlighting tape, jot-note strips, bookmarks, or other aids to highlight the text. Tovani (2000) suggests that highlighting is one of the easiest ways for students to interact with the text and make connections with what they are reading. For example:

• Look carefully at the first and last line of each paragraph.

• Highlight only necessary words and phrases.

• Differentiate between interesting and important.

• Make notes in the margin to remember significant information.

• Pay attention to the text features that signal importance.

• When finished, ensure that less than half the paragraph is highlighted.

## "I" MESSAGE

The "'I' Message" (Gibbs, 2001) helps students to engage in accountable talk by providing them with an alternative way to express their anger in more socially appropriate ways.

**Method**

1. Explain to the students that everyone has the right to get upset or angry at times. However, there are ways to express it that do not erode the self-esteem of a peer.

2. Pose a real-life scenario for the students (e.g., name-calling, spreading gossip, excluding a classmate).

3. Ask the students to provide unacceptable statements that are typically expressed in such a situation.

4. Model how you can turn these judgemental statements into an "I" statement. For example:
   - An unacceptable statement might be: *"You idiot! You spilled all of our blue paint and now we can't finish!"*
   - An acceptable "I" statement might be: *"I feel upset that you spilled our blue paint."*

5. Continue to practise and reinforce "I" messages.

## INDEPENDENT PROJECTS

Independent projects are important for both struggling learners and those needing to enhance the depth and breadth of their learning. Because they give students the freedom to choose, independent projects can be a strong motivator.

For **students needing to enhance the depth and breadth of their learning**, independent study allows for in-depth exploration of a topic of particular interest. Teachers may help the students to plan their objectives or develop their process for investigation. These students are still developing as strategic literacy learners, and so it is important to assess their current knowledge and skills, to determine the next steps for learning, and to establish feedback checkpoints. Independent projects should enable the students to explore the breadth, depth, and scope of a topic, and so the topics should be global in nature (for example, human rights, heroes, globalization, power relationships, or change over time).

For **struggling learners**, teachers will need to provide scaffolded support – for example, to help plan the objective and develop a process for investigating the topic. Establishing frameworks and checkpoints and providing ongoing feedback will help to ensure that struggling students succeed. In addition, students should be encouraged to select a product or performance task that best reflects their learning strengths and style.

The topic "Performance Tasks for Multiple Intelligences", later in this appendix, lists a sampling of performance tasks that are suited to particular learning strengths or multiple intelligences of students. These tasks can form the basis for independent classroom work or more formal projects. All of the tasks may require intentional teaching as well as guided, modelled, or scaffolded support – especially for struggling learners. (For more on multiple intelligences, see pages 22–23 in Chapter 1, "The Junior Learner".)

## INSIDE-OUTSIDE CIRCLE

"Inside-Outside Circle" (see Bennett, 2001) offers opportunities for students to engage in accountable talk and experience a variety of ideas and perspectives. Every student gets a chance to speak with and listen to different people. There is no time spent waiting. It is a very effective way to share learning in the content areas.

**Method**

1. Direct students to find a partner and number themselves One or Two.

2. Direct all Number Ones to stand in a circle facing out. Have Number Twos stand facing their partner.

3. Pose a question and provide "think time".

4. Have Partner One share his or her answer or solution with Partner Two and then signal when he or she is finished by saying *"Pass"*. Partner Two paraphrases what Partner One said, and then adds his or her own response, which Partner One then paraphrases to complete the turn.

5. Rotate the outside circle one person to the left or right.

6. *Either* direct new partners to share responses *or* pose a new question. Repeat the process (steps 4 to 6).

## JIGSAW

"Jigsaw" is a collaborative learning activity that gives students the opportunity to learn about a topic and then share their learning with others. It is an effective way to process large chunks of text in a short time.

**Method**

1. Determine the topic of study and identify four different subtopics or things to learn about that topic.

2. Arrange the students into home groups of four. Assign a number to each student, from one to four.

3. Direct all the students with the same number (for example, all the fours) to leave their home group and join together to form an expert group. Assign a different subtopic to each of the expert groups, and direct them to work together to learn everything they can about their specific assignment.

4. When the expert groups have completed their work, have the students return to their home groups and then share what they learned. In this way, everyone in the home group builds a complete picture of the topic of study from the individual pieces contributed by each member – as though they were putting together a jigsaw puzzle.

## JOT NOTES

Jot notes are quick summary notes that students write to record essential information while they are reading, thinking, or engaging in a planning or brainstorming activity. They are usually written in list form, and capture the ideas in as few words as possible.

## KWL (KNOW, WANT TO KNOW, LEARNED)

"KWL" (Ogle, 1986) involves students in reflecting before, during, and after a lesson or new topic – either individually or in a group – and provides them with a simple graphic organizer to record their thinking. It helps students to draw on their prior knowledge before reading; to mine the text for specific information during reading; and to summarize their learning after reading.

The graphic organizer can be as simple as three columns on a flipchart page or chalkboard, or a blank piece of paper folded in three. The recorder can be a teacher or a student.

### KWL Sample Chart

| What I **Know** | What I **Want** to Learn | What I **Learned** |
|---|---|---|
| | | |

### Method

1. Before students read a selected text (or conduct an experiment, or research a topic), the teacher instructs them to do the following:

   – Think about what you already know about the topic, and record these ideas in column one (What I **Know**). Start by brainstorming, and then group the ideas into categories.

   – Consider what you want to learn about the topic, and record these ideas or questions in column two (What I **Want** to Learn). Keep these questions in mind as you read.

2. During reading, students keep track of what they are learning from the text – for example, by highlighting or coding the text, or by taking notes.

3. After reading, students record their new learning in column three (What I **Learned**).

## LEARNING BUDDIES

Learning buddies can benefit all students, but are particularly effective for struggling learners. Students are assigned a learning buddy to help them with problem solving, comprehension, organization of thinking, and vocabulary development. Learning buddies should be at different levels of understanding to allow for the sharing of diverse opinions and knowledge. After instruction, students meet with their learning buddies to discuss, reflect upon, or relate to what was read, written, presented, or demonstrated. For example, after a shared writing of a recount, students orally retell a personal experience to a learning buddy before moving into guided or independent writing.

## LISTENING TO AND LEARNING FROM MY PEERS

Accountable talk is an important part of literacy learning in the junior classroom. A key aspect of accountable talk is attentive listening. The following sample anchor chart can be used to help students become more effective listeners and collaborative learners. It illustrates how students can be held accountable for completing a task, staying on topic, and listening to and building upon the ideas of their peers. They are also accountable for giving evidence from the text to support their opinions.

*Listening To and Learning From My Peers (Sample Anchor Chart)*

| Actions | Words |
|---|---|
| • sitting knees to knees and toes to toes<br>• talking one at a time<br>• watching the speaker<br>• staying on topic<br>• setting goals<br>• seeking input from a partner or group<br>• offering opinions in a respectful way<br>• expressing ideas and thoughts<br>• nodding in agreement<br>• smiling to encourage others<br>• writing ideas<br>• maintaining focused concentration | • "I like the way you …"<br>• "We can build on _____'s idea by …"<br>• "Can you explain your …?"<br>• "I think _____ is saying …"<br>• "I agree with _____ because …"<br>• "That's a great idea, _____!"<br>• "Could you help me understand …?" |

## LITERATURE CIRCLES

Literature circles are small discussion groups that meet regularly to share group members' views, ideas, and understanding of a text. Literature circles encourage students to develop deeper understanding and an appreciation for the opinions of others. A typical circle has five or six student members who have all read the same text but are not necessarily at the same reading level. The actual groupings will depend on the nature of the task and the learning needs of the students. The students take complete ownership of their learning, while the teacher acts as the facilitator. To maximize discussions, the group assigns a role to each member. Following are some possible roles (adapted from Daniels, 2001):

- **Summarizer** – provides a clear, well-organized summary of the text, with a focus on key details, characters, events, or timelines.

- **Connector** – describes how the text connects to his or her own life (text to self), to other texts (text to text), and to the world (text to world).

- **Literary Luminary** – selects key passages from the text to read aloud, and discusses why those passages are important.

- **Illustrator** – creates an interesting picture, graphic organizer, or other visual to illustrate something important from the text.
- **Vocabulary Enricher** – identifies and interprets key words and figurative language in the text.
- **Discussion Director** – guides the group discussion by posing relevant and interesting questions, and encourages all members to contribute equally to the discussion.

The following is a checklist that students can use to monitor their discussion etiquette during a literature circle. For other tips on promoting effective discussions, see "Listening To and Learning From My Peers" in this appendix.
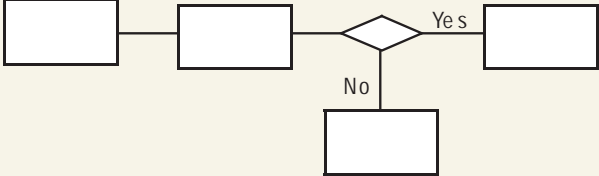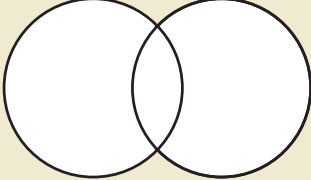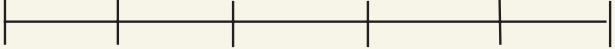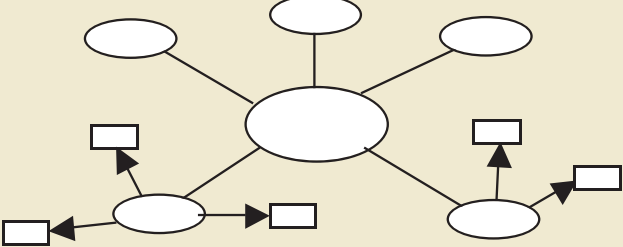
*Literature Circles – Discussion Etiquette Checklist*

| Student Name: _____ | |
| --- | --- |
| **During Literature Circles, I practise the following important etiquette:** | **Examples of my behaviour:** |
| ❑ I attend to the topic. | |
| ❑ I participate actively in the group. | |
| ❑ I listen carefully. | |
| ❑ I ask questions. | |
| ❑ I connect my ideas to the comments of others. | |
| ❑ I allow all members of the group to participate. | |
| ❑ I am constructive when I disagree. | |
| ❑ I support opinions with evidence. | |

My goal(s) are: _____
_____

Actions to reach my goals are: _____
_____

## MAPPING

Displaying ideas graphically is a strategy that students can use in any subject area to help organize their thinking. The following are some examples of ways to map or graphically organize their ideas.

### *Types of Mapping*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Flow Chart:** To show the steps in a process | |
| **Venn Diagram:** To compare and contrast ideas; to group and sort | |
| **Timeline:** To show a chronology or sequence | |
| **Web** or **Story Map:** To show the connections and relationships among ideas | |

## Getting to Know You

Dear _____

I would like to know more about you. Please read each statement and think about yourself and what you like to do. Check all the items that describe you.

| | Statement | 😊 |
|---|---|---|
| **Verbal/Linguistic** | I enjoy reading | |
| | I enjoy writing | |
| | I like to complete crosswords and play games like Scrabble. | |
| | I like to take part in debates and/or discussions. | |
| | I keep a diary or journal. | |
| | I like telling stories. | |
| **Logical/Mathematical** | I like to work in an organized way. | |
| | I am interested in mathematics and/or science. | |
| | I enjoy brain teasers and games like Jeopardy™, Clue™, or chess. | |
| | I like to ask questions about how things work or why things are. | |
| | I work best if I have an agenda or timetable. | |
| | I like to invent things. | |
| **Visual/Spatial** | I enjoy solving visual puzzles. | |
| | I read maps, charts, and graphs easily. | |
| | I remember things best by seeing them. | |
| | When I read or write, I see pictures in my head. | |
| | I like to draw or create art pieces. | |
| | I like to doodle. | |
| **Bodily/Kinesthetic** | I prefer to be physically involved rather than sitting and watching. | |
| | I find it hard to sit for long periods of time. | |
| | I enjoy building and designing. | |
| | I learn best by moving, touching, or acting out information. | |
| | I'm good at most sports. | |
| | I would rather show someone how to do something than tell them in words. | |

*(continued)*

| Statement | ☺ |
|---|---|
| **Musical/Rhythmic** | |
| I often play music when I am working or relaxing. | |
| I can easily remember things presented musically. | |
| I sometimes make up rhymes to help remember something. | |
| It's easy for me to follow the beat of music. | |
| I know the tunes to many different songs. | |
| I take music lessons outside of school. | |
| **Interpersonal** | |
| I really enjoy working with other people. | |
| I enjoy sharing my feelings and ideas with others. | |
| I prefer group activities. | |
| My friends often choose me to be the leader. | |
| I like to teach others. | |
| I like to be with others, not by myself. | |
| **Intrapersonal** | |
| I like to be alone to play or work on my hobbies, interests, or projects. | |
| I work best when I can set my own pace. | |
| I set goals for myself so I can improve. | |
| When I get an idea, I think through how I want to develop the idea. | |
| I keep a personal journal or diary to record my thoughts. | |
| I am curious and ask a lot of questions. | |
| **Naturalist** | |
| I prefer the outdoors to the indoors. | |
| I learn best when I go on field trips. | |
| I enjoy learning about the environment or science. | |
| I have a collection of rocks or shells. | |
| I can name different types of insects or animals. | |
| I like to bird watch. | |

## Personal Profile

Name: _____

1. Check off each statement that applies to you.

2. Use the score sheet to draw your personal profile on a bar graph.

### Verbal/Linguistic

❑ I enjoy talking on the telephone.

❑ I enjoy keeping a journal and/or writing stories and articles.

❑ I like to complete crossword puzzles and other word games.

❑ I like to go to the library and/or the bookstore to get new books.

❑ I would rather spend my personal time reading than watching television.

❑ I understand more by hearing someone read or listening to the radio than by watching television or movies.

❑ Whenever I see a sign or billboard, I have to take the time to read it.

❑ I am often told that I express my ideas and thoughts quite effectively.

### Logical/Mathematical

❑ Problem solving has always been easy for me.

❑ I love to identify, create, and sort things into categories or lists.

❑ I can easily add, subtract, multiply, and divide numbers in my head.

❑ I enjoy brain-teasers and games that require logical thinking, such as mysteries.

❑ My mind is always searching for patterns or an order to things that makes sense.

❑ Ideas put into a graph or a chart are easier for me to follow.

❑ Checkers and chess are two of my favourite board games.

❑ I am good at estimation.

### Visual/Spatial

❑ I often find myself doodling during class activities or when I am on the phone.

❑ I love to draw and paint during my personal time.

❑ I have a good sense of direction.

❑ When I read, I can see the story happening in my head.

❑ I understand colour combinations and which colours work well together.

❑ Geometry is easier for me than other kinds of math.

❑ I like solving jigsaws, mazes, and other visual puzzles.

❑ I like creating cartoon strips.

### Bodily/Kinesthetic

❑ I like to move, tap, or fidget when sitting.

❑ I like to do things in class that I can get out of my seat to do.

❑ I am good at most sports.

❑ I like to use tools to make things.

❑ I am always curious about how things work and sometimes take things apart to find out.

❑ I would rather show someone how to do something than explain it in words.

❑ I live a healthy lifestyle.

❑ I participate in extreme sports, such as snowboarding, kayaking, and/or mountain biking.

*(continued)*

## Musical/Rhythmic

- ❑ I often hum to myself while I am working or walking.
- ❑ I like to make up songs and/or tunes.
- ❑ I have music lessons outside of school and enjoy it.
- ❑ I know the tunes to many different songs.
- ❑ People often tell me that I have a pleasant singing voice.
- ❑ I often listen to music during my spare time.
- ❑ I work better when I listen to music.
- ❑ It is easy for me to follow the beat of music.

## Interpersonal

- ❑ I enjoy talking to people.
- ❑ I think of myself as a leader, rather than as a follower, when I am with my friends.
- ❑ My friends often come to me for advice.
- ❑ I prefer team sports rather than individual sports.
- ❑ I like to spend my spare time with my friends rather than alone.
- ❑ I like to do group projects and activities in class.
- ❑ I enjoy teaching others.
- ❑ I usually talk over my personal problems with friends.

## Intrapersonal

- ❑ I am often told that I am a quiet and/or shy person.
- ❑ I am curious and ask a lot of questions.
- ❑ I know my strengths and weaknesses.
- ❑ I have no problem sharing my feelings or opinion.
- ❑ I keep a personal journal or diary to record my thoughts.
- ❑ Some people say that I am strong-willed and independent.
- ❑ I know what I want and try to get it.
- ❑ When I have a personal problem, I like to figure out how to solve it on my own.

## Naturalist

- ❑ I notice similarities and differences in trees, flowers, and other things in nature.
- ❑ I learn best by going on field trips.
- ❑ I like to bird watch.
- ❑ I am good at forecasting the weather.
- ❑ I can name different types of insects and animals.
- ❑ I love learning about the stars, the planets, and the universe.
- ❑ I have a collection of rocks and/or shells.
- ❑ I care about the environment, so I am involved in conservation projects.

## Multiple Intelligences – Score Sheet

Name: _____

Follow these steps to draw a bar graph that shows a picture of the different ways you like to learn:

1. Complete the survey on pages ____.

2. Count the number of check marks under each heading on the survey. (For example, how many items did you check for Verbal/Linguistic?)

3. Colour that number of boxes in the correct column on the chart below.

| | Verbal/ Linguistic | Logical/ Mathematical | Visual/ Spatial | Bodily/ Kinesthetic | Musical/ Rhythmic | Inter-personal | Intra-personal | Naturalist | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | | | | | | | | | 8 |
| 7 | | | | | | | | | 7 |
| 6 | | | | | | | | | 6 |
| 5 | | | | | | | | | 5 |
| 4 | | | | | | | | | 4 |
| 3 | | | | | | | | | 3 |
| 2 | | | | | | | | | 2 |
| 1 | | | | | | | | | 1 |

# Performance Tasks for Multiple Intelligences

## Verbal/Linguistic

- prepare a report
- write a play, essay, or poem
- conduct an interview
- give directions
- create a magazine
- create a collection

## Logical/Mathematical

- describe a sequence or product
- analyse and critically assess a text
- classify, rank, or compare items
- interpret evidence
- create a puzzle or game
- create a timeline or matrix

## Visual/Spatial

- create a game or film
- draw a picture to represent something
- create a mural or display
- make a diagram
- paint or design a poster
- design a graphic

## Bodily/Kinesthetic

- create a role-play
- construct a model or representation
- develop a mime
- create a tableau
- work through a simulation
- create actions for a song or other text

## Musical/Rhythmic

- compose a rap song or cheer
- create a jingle to teach others
- listen and respond to musical selections
- write a poem
- create a soundscape
- select music or songs for a purpose
- write a choral reading

## Interpersonal

- work with a partner or group to organize a field trip
- solve a problem with a partner or group
- conduct a survey or interview
- dialogue about a topic
- contribute to a jigsaw or other collaborative activity

## Intrapersonal

- think about and plan something
- write in a journal
- review or visualize a way to do something
- set goals
- reflect on an idea, event, or process
- propose an independent learning task

## Naturalist

- conduct an experiment
- categorize materials or ideas
- write a text inspired by nature
- adapt materials to a new use
- connect/compare ideas to natural phenomena
- examine materials and find connections

(Adapted from Gregory and Chapman, 2002; and Bosch, 1997–2004)

## PLACE MAT

"Place Mat" is a collaborative learning activity that gives students an opportunity to share their ideas and learn from each other in a small-group setting.

**Method**

1. Decide on a question or topic for the students to address.

2. Organize the students into groups of four, and give each group a piece of chart paper.

3. Direct each group to draw a circle or square in the centre of the paper and then divide the remaining area of the paper into equal sections, with one section for each group member.

4. Ask the students to think about the chosen topic and then silently write about it in their own area of the chart paper for several minutes.

5. After several minutes, signal the students to stop. Instruct them to discuss the ideas on the place mat with their group – looking for common elements. The group must reach consensus and record the most important points in the centre of the place mat.

6. Each group shares its work with the other groups.

*Place Mat (Template)*
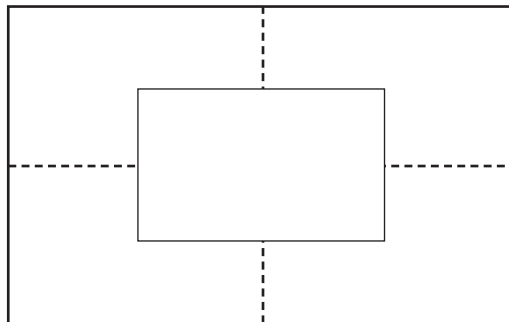


## QUESTION-ANSWER RELATIONSHIP (QAR)

"Question-Answer Relationship (QAR)" is a strategy developed by Taffy Raphael to help students identify and answer different types of questions (Raphael, 1982; 1986). Four types of questions are involved:

- **"Right-there" questions** use words taken directly from the text. Answers can be found in one place in the text – usually in a single sentence.

- **"Think-and-search" questions** require students to search through an entire passage to find the information that applies, and to make connections in order to formulate an answer.

- **"Author-and-you" questions** require students to read the text in order to understand the questions; however, the answers are found "beyond the text", requiring students to make connections to prior knowledge and experiences.

- **"On-my-own" questions** can be answered from the students' prior knowledge and experiences; they do not require reading the text.

The first two types of questions are text-based, meaning that the answers can be found in the text. The second two types of questions are knowledge-based, meaning that the answers reside with the student.

QAR can be used before, during, and after reading. Students use it to find evidence in the text and to draw conclusions and make inferences based on explicit and implied information. This strategy can help all students use texts more efficiently to find answers and make meaning. Struggling readers, in particular, can benefit from understanding that not all answers are found in the text.

For more information on QAR, see the English Language Arts Home Page, Greece Central School district, at www.greece.K12.us; also see www.somers.k12.ny.us/intranet/reading/qar.html.

## QUESTIONING THE AUTHOR

"Questioning the Author" (Beers, 2003) is a strategy to promote critical-literacy skills for reading. It involves students in small groups of five or fewer.

**Method**

1. Determine the objectives of the lesson.

2. Select a text and determine how to take a critical stance when reading the text.

3. Prepare possible prompts for specific places in the text. For example, consider prompts such as the following to help students extend their thinking, develop their ideas, and sustain discussion:
   – What is the author's intent?
   – What is the author talking about?
   – Does this make sense in light of what we already know?
   – How does this connect with what we have read before?
   – What does the author mean here?
   – Why is the author telling us this now?
   – Whose perspective is presented?
   – Whose voice is absent?
   – How is this writing making me feel, and why?

4. Prepare a template, such as the following, for each student to use during the lesson.

*Questioning the Author (Template)*

| The question | The author says | I say | So |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |

## QUICK WRITES

A "Quick Write" is a first-draft response to a piece of writing, or a prompt (Rief, 2003). It is quick, usually taking only two or three minutes, and its purpose is to generate ideas, activate prior knowledge, and get words on paper. To set up the Quick Write, the teacher may give students a prompt, read the first few paragraphs of a powerful piece of writing, or ask them to find a phrase or sentence in their writer's journal that they find inspiring. Quick Writes stimulate the flow of ideas in the reader and writer and help develop fluency.

## RALLYROBIN

In pairs, students take turns sharing ideas orally. Like tennis players, they toss their ideas back and forth without repeating the same ideas. The teacher predetermines the timeframe for each rally so that all students have a balanced opportunity to contribute. (Also see "Think/Timed-Pair-Share", later in this appendix.)

## RANKING LADDER

"Ranking Ladder" is a higher-order thinking activity that can be done in small or large groups. It engages students in freely generating ideas or solutions to a problem and then ranking their solutions. It helps students to develop the skill of prioritizing.

**Method**

1. The teacher poses a problem.

2. The students work in groups to brainstorm all the possible solutions, deferring judgement about the value of the solutions at this point in the process.

3. The students are asked to narrow down their choices to a maximum of seven ideas and then rank them from first choice to last on a ranking ladder

4. The teacher randomly picks someone from each group to share their top two or three ideas with the rest of the class.

### RETELL, RELATE, REFLECT

Retelling, relating, and reflecting are reading-comprehension activities that help students develop different levels or types of communication and thinking abilities (Schwartz and Bone, 1995). Students *retell* a story in their own words, *relate* what they have read in the story to their own experiences and background knowledge, and *reflect* on the meaning of the story and the effect it had on them. Each step requires a higher-level skill than the previous one.

### ROUND ROBIN

Students each take a turn sharing their ideas in their group, one at a time, going in one direction, in a circle. Students have the right to pass (not to share).

### ROUNDTABLE

Students work in groups of four. Each group has only one pencil and one copy of a handout/paper that will be rotated from person to person. It could be a story being written by the group, or it could be following directions to solve a mystery or create a drawing. Each student writes and then passes the paper and pencil to the next student. This continues until the task has been completed or the specified time is up.

### SAY SOMETHING

"Say Something" (Beers, 2003) offers opportunities for students to engage in accountable talk and deepen their understanding through predicting, questioning, inferring, responding, and making connections.

**Method**

1. Prepare an anchor chart (or charts) listing some prompts. (See sample charts, below.)

2. Direct students to find a partner and number themselves One or Two.

3. Read or provide an interesting, thought-provoking text for the students, in chunks of three to five paragraphs.

4. Ask students to choose a sentence starter from the anchor chart.

5. Provide "think time" for students to formulate their response.

6. Direct Partner One to begin sharing. When Partner One is finished, Partner Two begins.

7. Observe pairs in discussion. When talk has subsided, chunk the next section for them to read.

*"Say Something" Stem Starters (Sample Anchor Charts)*

**Predicting**

- I predict that …
- My guess is …
- From the author's clues, I think that _____ will happen.
- I think that …
- Having read other books by this author, I think the next thing that will happen is …

**Questioning**

- Whose point of view is missing?
- Did you find _____ confusing?
- What would happen if …?
- Who is …?
- How do these characters relate to …?
- Do you agree/disagree with …?
- What is the author's intent?

**Inferring**

- This makes me think that …
- I think the author is really saying …
- At first I thought _____, but now I think …
- I think I understand what the author was getting at when (s)he wrote …

**Responding**

- This book is good because …
- I like/don't like the part where …
- My favourite part so far is …
- So far, I really love/dislike …
- This part is difficult because …
- How am I feeling, and why?

**Making Connections**

- Does this information align with what I know?
- This reminds me of …
- This part is like …
- The character, _____, is like _____ because …
- This is similar to/different from …
- I can relate to this character because …
- I have had a similar experience when …

## Somebody Wanted … But … So

This instructional strategy can help students to draw inferences and make connections during their reading.

**Method**

1. Select an article, event, or story to read that requires students to draw inferences and make connections.

2. Help students to complete the graphic organizer. (See the following completed example.)

*Somebody Wanted … But … So (Sample Organizer)*

| Somebody | Wanted | But | So |
|----------|--------|-----|-----|
| The Canadian government | To protect the country against attack (and were influenced by the prejudices of the time) | They didn't know who might be an enemy | They put Japanese Canadians into internment camps |
| Japanese families | To be free | They were taken by force to internment camps | They lost their homes and jobs and freedom |
| Survivors of the Japanese internment camps | An apology and compensation | The government took a long time to act | Many people who lived through that hard time died before they could hear the apology |

## Study Guide Project

A study guide is a practical tool to help readers understand a subject, concept, text, activity, or event. Students can demonstrate their understanding of a subject by creating their own study guide, either independently or as a group project. Following is a small-group activity for developing a study guide.

**Method**

As a whole class, students:

1. Examine published study guides, looking for what makes each one effective for its purpose.

2. Identify the elements of an effective study guide and post these on an anchor chart for future reference. For example, responses might include:

   – Concise and clear explanations

   – Easy-to-read type

   – Bold headings

   – Simple diagrams

- Easy vocabulary
- Good organization
- Humour
- Interesting information
- Focusing questions
- Charts
- Tips for remembering

Then the students work in groups of four, as follows, to create a study guide on a topic chosen by the group.

3. As a group, decide which topic headings you want to include in your study guide, using the Study Guide Planning Form. (See the chart below.) Assign one topic heading (or more) to each group member.

4. Work individually to investigate your topic heading. If you find information that would fit another heading, share it with the person investigating that topic heading.

5. After completing the research, meet as a group to share information and come to a consensus about what information to include in the guide.

6. Organize the topics and subtopics into a table of contents, and design a page format. Assign a page (or pages) of the guide to be completed by each student.

7. Work individually to draft your page(s) of the guide.

8. Work in pairs to edit and revise the written work, organize the completed pages, and design a cover page, table of contents, and glossary, if needed.

### *Study Guide Planning Form*

Study Guide Subject: _____

Topics for Research:

| **Topic** | **Assigned to** |
|---|---|
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| Topic and subtopics: | Topic and subtopics: |
| | |
| Topic and subtopics: | Topic and subtopics: |
| | |

## TEA PARTY

"Tea Party" is a pre-reading activity that helps students activate their prior knowledge and engage with a text (see Beers, 2003, pp. 94-101). The activity is like a tea party in that the students talk in pairs, sharing snippets of information, and then circulate to others in the room to try to piece together a broader understanding of the subject or text.

**Method**

1. Before the lesson, preview the text and select several interesting snippets – key phrases or sentences. Choose enough interesting snippets for half the class (for example, fourteen phrases for twenty-eight students). Write the snippets in a list, make two copies, and cut the lists into strips, with one snippet per strip. In this way, each snippet will be considered by two students.

2. During the lesson, distribute one snippet to each student. Direct the students to work independently as they read their snippet to themselves and then think about what that phrase or sentence means to them. For example, a student might think about how that phrase connects to his or her own experiences (text to self); how it connects to something else she or he has read, seen, or heard (text to text); or how it relates to the community, current events, or the world (text to world).

3. Direct students to mingle, pairing up with one other student at a time, to share their snippets and the connections they have identified. Signal to let the students know when they should move on to another partner. Generally, students should work with six to eight partners for a total of about eight minutes.

4. When the time for mingling has ended, ask students to reconsider their connections on the basis of their discussions with others and to revise their thinking, if appropriate. Invite students to present their revised thoughts to the class.


## THINK-ALOUD

A think-aloud is a strategy for demonstrating the thought processes involved in accomplishing a task, such as reading, writing, or problem solving. The teacher thinks aloud while modelling the task and stops at strategic points to demonstrate important literacy skills, such as making connections, determining important ideas, inferring, and monitoring comprehension.

Think-alouds help to make the reading and writing processes overt and enable students to hear and see what good readers and writers do. As a think-aloud strategy is introduced, explicitly taught, and practised, teachers create anchor charts with sentence stems to help students clarify, question, or connect their way through a text or task.

> "[A] think-aloud of reading is creating a record, either through writing or talking aloud, of the strategic decision-making and interpretative processes of going through a text, reporting everything the reader is aware of, noticing, doing, seeing, feeling, asking, and understanding as she reads. A think-aloud involves talking about the reading strategies you are using and the content of the piece you are reading."
>
> *(Wilhelm, 2001, p. 19)*

### *Think-Aloud Sentence Stems*

| Making Connections | Determining Important Ideas |
|---|---|
| • This reminds me of … <br> • I know another … <br> • I've read another … <br> • I remember when … | • I think this is important because … <br> • The change in font size leads me to believe that … <br> • I need to remember … |
| **Questioning the Text** | **Visualizing** |
| • What would happen if …? <br> • Who is …? <br> • Do you agree/disagree with …? <br> • I wonder if …? <br> • Can this be right? | • This description really helped me see … <br> • I could/couldn't really imagine … <br> • When I close my eyes, I see … |
| **Predicting** | **Inferring** |
| • I predict that … <br> • My guess is … <br> • From the author's clues, I think that … will happen. <br> • Having read other books by this author, I think the next thing that will happen is … | • This makes me think that … <br> • I think the author is really saying … <br> • At first I thought … but now I think … <br> • This clue leads me to believe that … <br> • After reading this chapter/page, I suspect … |
| **Synthesizing** | **Monitoring Understanding** |
| • To sum this up, I would say … <br> • This new information has helped me to … <br> • I used to think … but now I know … | • I don't understand this word/part. I need to reread … <br> • Maybe I could skip over … and come back to … <br> • Maybe if I slow down, I can … |

## THINK, PREDICT, READ, CONNECT (TPRC)

When students have a focus for reading, their comprehension and retention improve. TPRC is a useful strategy to introduce a new topic or concept in any subject area.

**Method**

1. Distribute a template such as the one below.

2. Have students **think** about all that they know about a general topic (e.g., stringed instruments), and list everything they know on the template. Allow six to eight minutes.

3. Indicate the specific topic of study (e.g., violins).

4. Have students **predict** what they might find in the reading.

5. Instruct students to **read** the selection and place a star on their list beside information that actually appears in the reading.

6. Have students work in pairs to **connect** what they knew before reading with what they learned during reading.

*Think, Predict, Read, Connect (TPRC Template)*

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**Think, Predict, Read, Connect**

General Topic: _____

Specific Topic: _____

---

What do you **Think** you know about the general topic before reading the text?

---

What do you **Predict** about the specific topic before reading the text?

As you **Read** the text, look for the items you listed above, and place a star beside each item that you found in the reading. Add other important information you learned as you read.

---

**Connect** what you knew before with what you learned.

---

**Reflect** on what you think and how you feel about what you read.

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## THINK/TIMED-PAIR-SHARE

"Think/Timed-Pair-Share" is a tactic for organizing paired discussions. The addition of thinking time before each student shares with his or her partner and the option of dialogue time after each turn make this a safe activity for students. Partners have time to think, rehearse, and debrief before sharing with the larger group.

**Method**

1. Organize students into pairs, then pose a question.

2. Ask the students to think about a response.

3. Ask each pair to take turns sharing their thinking with their partner. Each partner speaks for one minute, without interruption.

4. After each one-minute turn, the partners may engage in a dialogue for an additional minute about the ideas shared.

## TIERED ASSIGNMENTS

Sometimes learners need opportunities to explore a topic in more depth and/or breadth. By offering tiered assignments, teachers can accommodate the needs of all students in the classroom. "Teachers use tiered activities so [that] … students focus on essential under-standings and skills at different levels of complexity, abstractness and open-endedness. By keeping the focus of the activity the same, but providing routes of access at varying degrees of difficulty, the teacher maximizes the likelihood that (1) each student comes away with pivotal skills and understandings and (2) each student is appropriately challenged" (Tomlinson, 1999a, p. 83).

For related information, see "Independent Projects", earlier in this appendix.

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**Example of a Tiered Assignment**

All students in a Grade 5 classroom are asked to use the Internet to learn more about weather. They have been provided with a variety of websites. Students are also directed to find other appropriate websites. They are then asked to use the information gained from the websites to complete different tasks.

**Option 1:** Prepare a bulletin for a weather alert.

**Option 2:** Collect data on a weather phenomenon and write and present a weather report.

**Option 3:** Write a rebuttal article supporting or opposing Canada's support for victims of disastrous weather outside of Canada.

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## Total Physical Response (TPR)

"TPR" is a very effective strategy for the early stages of second-language learning. With the TPR method, the teacher says a single action word or phrase, such as "jump" or "point to your eye", and then demonstrates the action. At first, students will only be able to follow the command. Gradually they will repeat the word and copy the action. Teachers can also write a series of actions for students. For example:

> **Getting Up**
>
> • I'm waking up.
>
> • I'm rubbing my eyes.
>
> • I'm yawning.
>
> • I'm stretching.

(Source: Asher, 2003)

## Value Line

This activity targets oral language and encourages students to offer opinions, listen to opposing views, keep an open mind, and make decisions.

**Method**

1. Draw a line on the floor using string or masking tape. Label one end with "Strongly Support", the other end with "Strongly Oppose", and the middle with "Not Sure".

2. Pose a question or issue for the students to consider (for example: *Should schools instal soft-drink vending machines?*). Ask students to reflect on the question to determine "where they stand" – strongly support, strongly oppose, or not sure.

3. Direct students to move to the appropriate place on the line and share their ideas with their peer group.

4. Once the groups have had a chance to hear everyone's views and reasons, have the students share with the other two groups.

For a similar activity, see "Four Corners", earlier in this appendix.

## WALKABOUT

A walkabout can refer to either of the following:

- A group of students, or all students in the class, walk around the classroom looking at the displays of student work or other information.

- The class is divided into small groups. Each group sends at least one member off to see what the other groups in the class are doing. This person comes back and reports his or her findings. The group then decides if they can use the new information to support their thinking.

## WHIP AROUND

In an organized manner, the teacher sweeps his or her hand around the room, giving each student a chance to participate. During the hand sweep, the teacher pauses in front of each student, indicating whose turn it is to share.

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