

Literacy

Primary school



School Improvement
Build foundations



Government
of South Australia

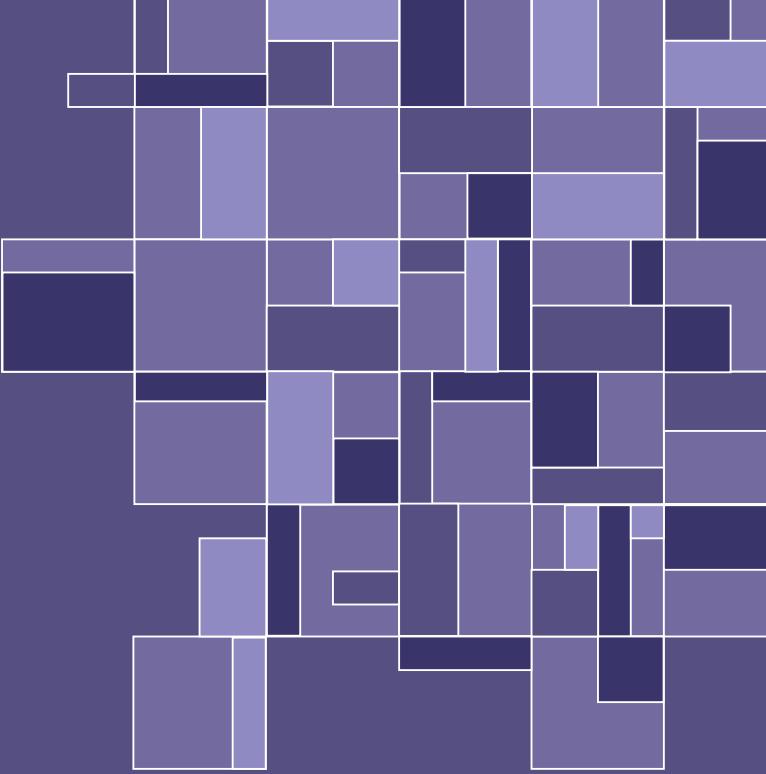
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Build foundations

These Literacy and Numeracy guidebooks have been developed to provide direction and support to schools at different stages on their improvement journey. The guidebooks support school improvement planning processes by providing leaders with a limited menu of evidence-informed Literacy and Numeracy practices aimed at improving learner growth and achievement.



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External links

- 1 **Australian Curriculum**
<https://tiny.cc/AustCurric>
- 2 **Teaching for Effective Learning framework**
<http://tiny.cc/TfELFramework>
- 3 **Australian Curriculum: English**
<https://tiny.cc/ACenglish>
- 4 **Australian Curriculum: Mathematics**
<https://tiny.cc/ACmaths>
- 5 **Best Advice papers: Literacy and numeracy**
<http://tiny.cc/BestAdviceNumLit>
- 6 **Literacy and Numeracy First**
<http://tiny.cc/LitNumFirst>
- 7 **GANTT chart**
<http://tiny.cc/GANTTchart>
- 8 **Best Advice literacy papers**
<http://tiny.cc/BestAdviceLit>
- 9 **Practical Guides literacy**
<http://tiny.cc/PracticalGuideLiteracy>
- 10 **Primary English Teaching Association Australia**
<http://www.petaa.edu.au/>
- 11 **Australian Literacy Educators' Association**
<https://www.alea.edu.au/>
- 12 **TfEL Compass**
<http://tiny.cc/TfELCompass>
- 13 **Learning Design**
<http://tiny.cc/LearningDesign>
- 14 **Formative assessment**
<http://tiny.cc/FormAssess>
- 15 **National Literacy Learning Progression**
<http://tiny.cc/LitLearnProgression>
- 16 **Language and Literacy Levels Across the Australian Curriculum: EALD**
<http://tiny.cc/LangLitACEALD>
- 17 **MiniLit**
<http://tiny.cc/MiniLit>
- 18 **MacqLit**
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- 19 **QuickSmart**
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- 21 **Barrier games**
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- 22 **Drama-based instruction**
<http://tiny.cc/DramaInstruct>
- 23 **SPELD SA**
<http://tiny.cc/SPELDphonicBooks>
- 24 **SMARTAR**
<http://tiny.cc/SMARTARGoal>
- 25 **Spelling: From beginnings to proficiency**
<http://tiny.cc/SpellBeginProf>
- 26 **Graphic organisers**
<http://tiny.cc/GraphicOrganisers>
- 27 **Story Box Library**
<https://storyboxlibrary.com.au/>
- 28 **Building better readers: Lori Oczkus and reciprocal teaching**
<http://tiny.cc/ReciprocalTeach>
- 29 **Anchor charts**
<http://tiny.cc/AnchorCharts>
- 30 **Oral language**
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<https://tiny.cc/BiTL>

Purpose and context

The Literacy and Numeracy guidebooks have been developed to provide direction and support to schools at different stages on their improvement journey. The guidebooks will support school improvement planning processes, providing leaders with a limited menu of evidence-informed, differentiated literacy and numeracy practices aimed at improving learner growth and achievement.

The [Australian Curriculum](#)¹ provides the content and standards for learning programs and the [Teaching for Effective Learning framework](#)² provides directions for pedagogy.

Literacy and numeracy are foundational aspects of learning. Every student's successful progress through school depends on their literacy and numeracy skills. Accordingly, they are essential aspects of every program of learning from the early years onwards, both through the content of [English](#)³ and [Mathematics](#)⁴ and through a focus on literacy and numeracy across the curriculum.

The Department's [Best Advice papers](#)⁵ in literacy and numeracy describe recommended practices for all students.

[Literacy and Numeracy First](#)⁶ provides strategies to accelerate the learning of different cohorts of students in primary schools. These strategies are also relevant to secondary schools.

The advice in these sets of resources should continue to inform the development of a school's literacy and numeracy program.

In particular, the Literacy and Numeracy First high-impact strategies should underpin all literacy and numeracy teaching. These are:

- targeted differentiated teaching
- clear learning intentions
- logical and intentional sequencing of the learning
- explicit teaching
- ongoing feedback.

The Guidebooks recommend even more differentiated advice – evidence-based literacy and numeracy strategies that have been tailored to schools' stage of improvement.

These strategies are not intended to represent the entire literacy and numeracy program in a school. However, these are strategies that should be prioritised by the school; these are the 'must-haves'. These are the strategies that evidence tells us will drive improved learning and achievement.



1. Key ideas to build foundations: overview

Actions for leaders

Focus	Strategies
Leaders establish a base for leading literacy improvement and prioritise improvement strategies in the site improvement plan	Audit classroom literacy practices and develop priorities to support the development of teachers' classroom practice. Ensure classroom teachers engage fully with the three strands of Australian Curriculum: English – language, literacy and literature. Identify students for whom intervention is urgent and put strategies in place to target and address their learning needs according to diagnostic data.

Actions for teachers

Across the whole-school, teachers work collaboratively to develop oral language practices, and routine, timetabled reading and writing programs in the context of the Australian Curriculum. Teachers work to know and understand the strengths and needs of the learners, paying attention to home language and literacy experiences, literacy data sets and tailor learning programs to meet specific learner needs.

Focus	Strategies
ORAL LANGUAGE Establish a foundation of oral language for learning	Teachers intentionally plan for oral language development, scaffolding the language required to access the curriculum.
READING Establish a reading program	Teachers explicitly teach the Big Six components of Reading, including a strong program of synthetic phonics. Teachers prioritise a daily, timetabled reading program to integrate the Big Six Components of Reading across the year levels.
WRITING Establish routines for writing	Teachers incorporate daily writing activities to enable learners to practise and build automaticity. Teachers explicitly teach at least two extended written texts per term to develop text, grammar and vocabulary knowledge.

2. Key ideas in details

Actions for leaders

Focus: leaders establish a base for leading literacy improvement and prioritise improvement strategies in the school improvement plan

Audit classroom literacy practices and develop priorities to support the development of teachers' classroom practice

The three focus areas for establishing effective literacy improvement are oral language, reading and writing. While advice for each of these areas is provided separately, it is essential that they are coordinated, integrated and firmly grounded in curriculum content. Sound literacy practices involve the explicit teaching of language to access the curriculum through oral language, print and multimodal based literacies.

Developing shared agreement about next steps for literacy improvement in all three areas is essential for 'buy in' across the school. That means starting from where the school is at and planning shared priorities for classroom practice that are manageable and achievable, to avoid innovation overload (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2015). These priorities should be collaboratively developed and recorded in a working document such as the site improvement plan (SIP), constantly revisited, discussed, annotated and reported against teaching teams.

To begin this whole-school literacy improvement process:

- use literacy data including the Phonics Screening Check, running records, PAT-R data, NAPLAN to broadly identify literacy learning needs across the school
- workshop priorities with the leadership team and staff and plan improvement in stages, ensuring manageable steps ([GANTT chart](#)⁷)
- identify current levels of teacher confidence and skill in implementing agreed classroom practices to address improvement (see the [Attachment 1](#) self-assessment tool)
- ensure staff have access to:
 - the Department's [Best Advice literacy papers](#)⁸ and [Practical Guides](#)⁹
 - membership to professional associations such as the [Primary English Teaching Association Australia](#)¹⁰ and the [Australian Literacy Educators' Association](#)¹¹ whose professional advice can be accessed through the lens of Department policy.

It is imperative for leaders to stress the importance of ensuring all students are motivated to learn. This is achieved by designing learning which includes processes and resources that are respectful, inclusive and relevant to culturally and linguistically diverse learners.

Ensure classroom teachers engage fully with the three strands of Australian Curriculum: English – language, literacy and literature

The English curriculum has a detailed focus on the development of language and literacy and an understanding of literature.

The [Australian Curriculum: English](#)³ aims to ensure that students:

'learn to listen to, read, view, speak, write, create and reflect on increasingly complex and sophisticated spoken, written and multimodal texts across a growing range of contexts with accuracy, fluency and purpose' (ACARA, 2018a).

To ensure that all teachers are fully engaging with the all three strands of the English curriculum:

- during professional development conversations and [teacher surveys](#)¹² about [learning design](#)¹³, [assessment](#)¹⁴, moderation and reporting, collate evidence that teachers understand and are able to integrate the three strands of Australian Curriculum: English. In particular, identify which teachers can support others to address the Language strand in the context of the Literature and Literacy strands
- identify what external expertise teachers need to deepen knowledge and more explicitly meet learners' needs
- put processes in place to support teachers to analyse Phonics Screening Check, running records, PAT-R data, NAPLAN and use the [National Literacy Learning Progression](#)¹⁵ to refine and target their teaching
- for EALD students ensure teachers receive appropriate training to collect data using the [Language and Literacy Levels Across the Australian Curriculum: EALD](#)¹⁶ students and use this data to target their teaching
- support teachers to design learning in Australian Curriculum: English to meet the needs of the learners based on the language and literacy data.

Identify students for whom intervention is urgent and put strategies in place to target and address their learning needs according to diagnostic data

For students with significant gaps in learning who are struggling to understand or engage in learning tasks, evidence-based, personalised and specialised instruction is recommended. Advice on learning intervention can be accessed in the Department's Best Advice paper [Intervention to address literacy and numeracy learning difficulties](#)⁵ (DECD, 2017a). Schools may elect to use commercial resources to supplement classroom learning such as [MiniLit](#)¹⁷, [MacqLit](#)¹⁸ or [QuickSmart](#)¹⁹ programs. The responsibility for monitoring learner progress and differentiating classroom activities lies with the teacher. Classroom teachers should be supported to:

- adapt learning in response to student progress in an assess-plan-teach-track-adjust cycle process (Alderton, 2015)
- use supporting documents such as the [National Literacy and Numeracy Learning Progressions](#)²⁰ (ACARA, 2018b) to refine and target teaching
- use diagnostic assessments for individual learners
- provide small group interventions on a needs basis for 10–15 minutes daily.

Actions for teachers

Across the school, teachers work collaboratively to build explicit literacy instruction. Explicit instruction is built around ‘high challenge, high support’ teaching and learning (Mariani, 1997). Rather than ‘dumbing down’ curriculum for students achieving below required levels, intellectual challenge is built into learning design and learning is carefully sequenced to develop the literacy capacity to complete classroom activities and tasks.

Focus: establish a foundation of oral language for learning

Oral language involves both speaking and listening. Equal attention should be paid to teaching students how to listen, making clear what active listening is and providing many opportunities to practise speaking and listening skills through classroom activities.

Learners from diverse backgrounds may bring additional languages and/or varieties or dialects of English that are different to the Standard Australian English (SAE) of the classroom. When establishing oral language practices, learners must be able to participate in whichever language they are most comfortable with and to be able to switch between languages when they are able. Teachers must make explicit the times when the learning intention is to learn new SAE language for example speaking formally at assembly, and when the intention is to access prior knowledge or develop shared understandings using home languages. In this way, all learners will be more able to participate in the learning.

Teachers intentionally plan for oral language development, scaffolding the language required to access the curriculum

It is vital to build the foundations of learning through oral language at every stage of schooling. Provide opportunities for social interactions that involve students in rich and increasingly complex conversations, so they:

- tune into the sounds of SAE language
- expand their vocabulary
- increase the complexity of the structures they use
- become language risk takers
- develop confidence in the ways they communicate
- clarify their thinking and deepen their understanding of their world.

Teach active listening

Develop active listening skills by giving tasks, such as listening for specific or key information; listening to answer specific questions; and listening to follow instructions. This can occur through:

- playing [barrier games²¹](#)
- retelling or acting out stories
- playing games which require active listening such as ‘Simon says’ or ‘whispers’
- aural cloze where students predict the last word in a sentence
- taking notes from oral input, eg podcast, reading aloud.

Allow wait time

Wait at least 3–5 seconds for students to respond when asking questions. This allows ‘thinking time’ for all students and is especially important for those who need additional time to process information before composing their answer. The acronym OWL (observe, wait, listen) has been successfully used to help remember the importance of giving children time to respond (Konza, Pond, Michael & Fried, 2010; Pepper & Weitzman, 2004).

Build on learner language

Use every opportunity to develop students’ communication skills. For example:

- elaborate on student’s language by adding new information
- extend the conversation through questioning, eg Can you tell me more about that? Who can add to that?
- reinforce SAE language through repetition
- when explicitly teaching SAE, use phrases such as ‘In school we say...’, ‘Mathematicians call that...’, ‘In science we say...’

- model self-talk and teach phrases that build other communication skills, such as 'I agree with what you say and I think...', 'I understand what you are saying, have you thought about...'
- teach students to take turns, make eye contact and keep appropriate social distance.

Use interactive drama-based activities

Build learner confidence, engagement and skill in oral activities while developing curriculum knowledge:

'Drama-based pedagogy can be integrated into numerous curricular areas. It can be used to

introduce a new concept or theme, check for knowledge, or extend your student's learning. It can be used to explore a character's motivations, infer a story's outcome, or illuminate facts and concepts. The instructional techniques emphasize the broader goals of problem-solving and creative thinking through the creation of a kinaesthetic, interactive experience' (Dawson, 2018).

This approach to learning provides excellent strategies to activate dialogue and help students understand how to take a role in an activity or task. A range of teaching strategies can be accessed on the [Drama-based instruction²²](#) website.

Focus: establish a reading program

As Maryanne Wolf points out in her book *Proust and the Squid: The story and science of the reading brain* (2007) humans were not born to read – we invented reading a few thousand years ago. 'Reading is one of the single most remarkable inventions in history', and it could only come about because of the human brain's extraordinary ability to make new connections among existing structures. The mental process involved in reading is complex and, in order to be successful, readers must learn to flexibly coordinate many strategies simultaneously.

Due to the complexity of learning to read, schools and classrooms must develop a rich reading culture that motivates students to learn. This includes the positive promotion of reading as a daily practice for learning and for pleasure. Teacher actions to set up positive conditions for a classroom reading program are:

- curate a class library so that students have access to a broad range of reading materials
- source resources that are inclusive and representative of the class linguistic and cultural make up as well as their personal interests
- involve students in curating the materials by re-sorting them into different categories at the end of each term
- allow students to choose the categories and create labels for the book baskets/boxes.

Teachers explicitly teach the Big Six Components of Reading, including a strong program of synthetic phonics

Phonological awareness

Phonological awareness is a broad term, referring to the ability to focus on the sounds of speech as distinct from its meaning. For detailed explanation, see the [Big Six Components of Reading⁸](#) (DECD, 2016) Best Advice paper.

Phonological skills develop in the order of:

- rhythm
- rhyme
- onset and rime
- phonemic awareness.

Phonemic awareness is a subset of phonological awareness. It is the ability to focus on the separate, individual sounds in words, the phonemes.

'Phonemes are the smallest unit of sound that make a difference to a word's meaning' (Armbruster, Lehr & Osborn, 2003, p.2).

It is important to teach sounds along with the letters of the alphabet because it helps children to see how phonemic awareness relates to their reading and writing.

Phonemic skills develop in the order of:

- isolation
- blending
- segmentation
- manipulation.

Understanding the hierarchy of phonemic skill development and how to teach each level by using examples in a logical sequence is very important, particularly for the students who have difficulty picking up these skills easily. Teachers should concentrate on blending and segmenting, as they are the most important phonemic skills for reading and spelling.

Phonological awareness strategies include:

- going on a sound walk and noticing all of the different sounds in the environment: birds, traffic, sirens, voices, etc
- playing games using environmental sounds, eg different materials in a tin such as rice, stones, etc. As you shake the tin, students guess which one they are hearing
- students listening to a sentence and counting the words in it
- matching picture cards of things that rhyme, eg hen, pen, ten
- finding the odd one out in 4 picture cards where 3 rhyme
- counting the sounds in words using counters and blank grids and adding a counter to the grid for each sound
- segmenting and blending the sounds in words
- supporting students whose first language or dialect do not contain the phonemes that exist in SAE.

Phonics

Phonics refers to the relationship between individual sounds (phonemes) and the letters that represent them (graphemes). A phoneme can be represented by a single letter, by two letters ('th' or 'ck'), by three letters ('igh' in the word high) and even by four letters ('ough' in the word although). Phonics is also the term often used to describe the teaching of letter-sound relationships.

The term 'synthetic' refers to the process of synthesising, or blending, individual sounds together.

All teachers of Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 need to implement a synthetic phonics program. Research has demonstrated synthetic phonics instruction that explicitly and systematically teaches alphabetic skills in the initial phase of beginning reading instruction is more effective and more efficient than other forms of phonics instruction (NICHD, 2000; DEST, 2005; Rose Review, 2006). Five and seven year follow-up studies have revealed that the superior effects of the synthetic approach do not diminish (Johnston & Watson, 2003, 2005).

Children should have opportunities to practise the phonics skills they are learning using decodable readers. Synthetic phonics programs support comprehension because systematic instruction helps children learn to identify words, increasing their ability to comprehend what they read and enabling them to move onto other literature.

Teacher actions to improve phonics knowledge include:

Early primary years

- teaching students to recognise, name and write the 26 letters of the alphabet in lower and upper case
- always distinguishing between the name of the letter and the sound it makes
- teaching letter-sound correspondences, using a sequence that introduces the most common sound for a new letter and selecting sequences that occur frequently
- separately teaching letters that look and sound alike (Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui et al, 2006)
- beginning with a few sounds that are continuous, such as /s/ and /m/ and the vowels, as they are easiest to blend
- supporting students to combine sounds into words using tactile resources such as magnetic letters
- simultaneously and explicitly teaching high frequency sight words, repeating opportunities to see and say the word together, and many opportunities to practise them in connected text
- providing practice with connected text composed of a high percentage of simple vc (vowel-consonant) and cvc words that the children know or can decode. [SPELD SA²³](#), Fitzroy Readers and the Dandelion series offer these for younger children, with SPELD SA's Talisman and Totem series targeting senior primary and junior secondary readers. For more information see the Department's Practical guide on [Decodable readers⁹](#) (pending publication).

- extending phonics instruction beyond single letter-sound correspondences to include more complex letter patterns: for example, double letters, consonant digraphs (for example, (th or ch), vowel digraphs (ea, ai, ou) and vowel consonant digraphs (aw, ay, oy) and other commonly occurring patterns (-igh, -ear).

Middle and upper primary years

As learning phonics is considered a constrained skill (ACARA, 2018c), it is expected that most students will have developed this skills set within the first few years of school. In the middle and upper primary stage of learning, students are expected to use 'grapheme-phoneme knowledge and blending skills to read continuous texts containing multisyllabic, complex and unfamiliar words quickly and accurately' (ACARA, 2018d).

However, this closed set of skills is large (Konza, 2018), and not every student develops at the same rate. When students have not yet mastered automaticity in word decoding skills, diagnostic assessments are necessary to identify the specific areas of need.

Teacher actions to accelerate letter-sound knowledge and decoding skills:

- write a program including aims and SMARTAR²⁴^a goals
- clarify the process to document progress, especially if it is to be implemented by learning support personnel (DECD, 2017a).

As reading progresses effective teachers will blend a variety of approaches to support individual students to continue to develop their reading skills. Phonics instruction can continue as an explicit element of a spelling program. As students move through phonetic and transitional stages (DECD, 2017b), they should be taught to use a wider range of strategies for spelling and word solving such as:

- orthographic knowledge – understanding which letter sequences are possible in English
- morphological knowledge – understanding the different parts of words that make meaning
- etymological knowledge – understanding how word origins can help to solve words
- visual knowledge – understanding that the look of a word supports spelling through visual memory (Adoniou, 2014).

See the Department's [Spelling: From beginnings to proficiency](#)²⁵ for further actions (DECD, 2011).

Vocabulary

Vocabulary is an important component of reading for meaning. When students know the meaning of a word, they are far more likely to be able to read it and make sense of it within a text. Students need to be continually developing a bank of new words they can understand and use in context (Derewianka & Jones, 2016). The greater a student's vocabulary, the easier it is for them to compare unknown words to known phonological or orthographic patterns, which helps them to say and remember the new words (Birch, 2015).

Teacher actions to support vocabulary development for all learners:

- be familiar with the 3 tiers of vocabulary:
 - tier 1: commonly known words
 - tier 2: essential for understanding across learning areas
 - tier 3: words critical for building conceptual knowledge

- be aware that students' social and cultural contexts can impact on the number or tier 1, 2 and 3 words they have in SAE
- explicitly teach vocabulary in context.

Early primary years

- model high quality language using a parallel approach where the sophisticated words are followed by a more common synonym
- to teach a word, define what it means in a way students can understand, students say the word out loud, show examples of the word through images and say it in different sentences, use the word in different ways over the next few days to provide repeated exposure
- pre-teach vocabulary which is core to the meaning of a text and read books several times to provide repeated exposure of new vocabulary
- tell stories that use elaborate language and support meaning through tone of voice, facial expression and gesture
- teach students to use contextual strategies to decipher meaning such as picture clues.

Middle primary years

Many of the early years strategies are relevant for all students but the following sequence for explicitly teaching new words will extend middle primary students.

- 1 Read aloud the sentence or mention where the students first met the word. Show students the word and ask them to say it aloud: 'Rudimentary'.
- 2 Ask students to repeat it several times. Brainstorm possible meanings with the group. Point out any parts of the word that might help with meaning, for example, a prefix or Greek or Latin root. Reread the sentence or refer again to the situation in which it was used to see if there are any contextual cues.
- 3 Explain the meaning explicitly through a student friendly definition and use of synonyms: 'Rudimentary means simple or very basic'.
- 4 Provide examples, emphasising the target word:
 - 'Ben found the test easy because all the questions were quite rudimentary'.
 - 'Bella speaks rudimentary German because she has only been learning it for three months'.
 - 'The pilot's final test was not rudimentary because it covered everything he had learned in three years of training'.

^a SMARTAR (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time considered, Agreed upon, Reviewed) goals

Further strategies to build vocabulary are:

- use graphic organisers, word lists, dictionaries, and tasks that required putting words into sentences both written and oral
- building a range of adjectives for describing across the curriculum, eg shapes and angles in mathematics, animals in science, etc
- finding synonyms and antonyms
- building word clines with verbs to build intensity and precision: tiptoe, walk, stomp, trudge
- sorting and categorising words, concepts and meanings.

Upper primary years

Build on to strategies used in early and middle primary years to develop more precise vocabulary within each learning area. Precision can be achieved by:

- keeping a vocabulary journal to record unknown words during reading routines for later investigation
- working from general meanings to more specific: 'throw' the ball – toss, lob, bowl, pitch, etc
- developing imagery through word choice: walk – stride, stroll, saunter
- developing subject specific technical vocabulary: author, illustrator, narrative, plot, theme, characterisation, etc.

Fluency

Fluency is not just the ability to read quickly. Rather, fluent reading is the ability to read with expression to enhance the meaning of a text—it is reading with appropriate phrasing, expression and pace. Fluent readers understand and make meaning of the text as they read. In less than one half-second students need to move from visual recognition to semantic activation, so that their own background knowledge, feelings, and deep reading skills (like inference and critical thinking) become part of a circuit, increasing their comprehension of the text and their ability to think in new and ever more analytical ways. All this occurs without conscious effort when all the component skills of reading are in place and it allows students to read accurately, quickly and with expression.

The core components of fluency are:

Accuracy – Accurate reading at appropriate speed is the ability to recognise a vast store of words immediately and in different contexts.

Prosody – 'Fluency in oral reading entails pronouncing the author's words, phrases and sentences with the right sounds, emphasis, rate of speed and intonation' (Birch, 2015, p.190).

This is referred to as understanding the 'prosody' of the language and enables readers to read with expression (for practical help see Rasinski, Yildirim & Nageldinger, 2011).

The three key focus areas for developing fluency are increasing students' knowledge of the conventions of written language, increasing students automaticity of reading strategies such as decoding, using contextual clues and structural clues, and explicitly teaching fluency within the reading routines (Birch, 2015). Teachers need to make the learning intentions clear when fluency is the goal of any reading routine.

When working with students to practise fluency, some points to remember are:

- use a familiar text that the student finds easy to read
- allow wait time for students to solve words independently
- if students omit or substitute words, but the meaning of the sentence still makes sense, ignore it and allow the students to continue reading.

Students need time to practise reading to develop fluency (Rasinski, Rupley & Nichols, 2008) with a range of texts. Teacher actions for building fluency are:

Early primary years

- repeated reading of the same text through modelled reading, choral reading, shared reading, guided and independent reading.

Middle primary years

- repeated reading, alongside an adult or audio CD or DVD
- readers theatre where students perform favourite texts, using character voices.

Upper primary years

- learning the conventions of reading poetry and reading it aloud
- reading song lyrics
- reading dialogues aloud
- rehearsing monologues aloud
- reading widely and independently every day
- writing and performing their own short script in readers theatre (Young & Rasinski, 2009).

Comprehension

Effective readers read for meaning and are engaged in comprehending or understanding a text. They actively use a range of strategies to engage in the problem solving and complex thinking required to fully understand a text. Teachers can support students to develop comprehension strategies by explicitly teaching them. This involves a description of the strategy, modelling and explanation of how, when and why it is used (Duke, Pearson, Strachan & Billman, 2011). Students need to use a repertoire of active comprehension strategies, such as prediction, connecting text content with their own experiences and knowledge, asking and answering questions about text meaning, visualisation or image construction of events in a text and summarising key points (DECD, 2016).

Comprehension strategies should be incorporated into work with texts, before, during and after reading. Some fundamental guidelines for teaching comprehension are:

Early primary years

- incorporate an 'I do', 'we do', 'you do' process to introduce new strategies
- always discuss a text prior to reading to activate prior knowledge and engage the students interest
- encourage students to use their prior knowledge to make predictions by asking questions, eg 'What might this text remind you of? Have seen anything like this before?'
- support students to use the context of the text to help them to solve unknown words
- include oral retell of texts in learning design.

Middle primary years

- once students are familiar with some comprehension strategies, use think-pair-share for activating prior knowledge and/or making predictions
- always discuss the purpose of a text and the purpose for reading
- use questioning to encourage talk about texts, eg How do the characters react to the problem in the story?
- use graphic organisers²⁶ to summarise texts.

Upper primary years

- use reading journals to respond to texts with comprehension strategies
- match students with a partner to pause for turn and talk during extended shared reading
- encourage students to use sticky notes to record comments or questions as they read independently.

For more information about developing specific reading skills, see the Department's [Best Advice Literacy papers](#)⁸ and [Practical Guides](#)⁹ on the Big Six Components of Reading.

Teachers prioritise a daily, timetabled reading program to integrate the Big Six Components of Reading across the year levels

Fluent readers use reading for a range of purposes such as following directions, reading others' experiences, finding information and keeping up to date with news and events. Teachers need to support students to see themselves as readers and to help them understand the many purposes for reading.

A comprehensive reading program will include a range of reading procedures (DETWA, 2004) to enable integration of the Big Six Components of Reading: oral language, phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. A reading program includes both explicit instruction and opportunities for students to read independently and respond to their reading.

Actions that integrate the Big Six Components of Reading into a comprehensive reading program are:

Reading to students

- engage learners daily in rich literature from picture books to class novels:
 - model fluent reading and the prosody of English language
 - teach new vocabulary
 - foster a love of books. *Story Box Library*²⁷ is an excellent resource for students to have extra opportunities to listen to reading.

Modelled reading

- share the cognitive processes and behaviours that good readers use to understand a text using 'think aloud' to make reading processes explicit. This can include:
 - how to blend sounds to solve words (phonics)
 - working out the meaning of new vocabulary from the context
 - reading fluently with expression guided by punctuation
 - apply comprehension strategies to interpret meaning
 - ask questions and discuss to clarify meaning (oral language).

Shared reading

- teacher led sessions where they:
 - choose a text for English and/or an integrated cross curricula unit
 - include choral reading of parts of a familiar text (oral language)
 - change the learning focus for each reading of the text
 - explicitly teach and/or model the Big Six Components of Reading (as above)
 - lead discussion about the text ensuring students have time for partner talk and extended responses (oral language)
 - follow with differentiated comprehension activities to respond to the text, such as entries in a personal reading journal, vocabulary or grammar activities using language from the text
 - for older more able readers, design explicit teaching of close reading of a text
 - engage learners with elements of theme, characterisation and other aspects of literature texts as described in the English curriculum
 - discuss author choices that communicate underlying cultural and social messages in a text to develop deep learning and comprehension.

Peer to peer

- design opportunities for students to read aloud to a peer and listen to a peer read to develop fluency
- set specific goals related to one of the Big Six Components of Reading
- as students progress and are able to manage this process, introduce to questioning strategies such as *reciprocal teaching*²⁸ (iMSE, 2016) to develop comprehension.

Guided reading

- support students to read in small groups
- choose a text which is a little beyond students' current ability
- focus on specific reading skills during guided reading related to one of the Big Six Components of Reading
- support students to ask questions and discuss the text extending oral language with question and response stems.

Independent reading

- provide daily opportunities to build stamina with independent reading:
 - provide a selection of familiar books at the appropriate level
 - as a class, create personalised book boxes to store independent reading materials.

Each of these reading procedures requires explicit modelling and clear expectations regarding routines and associated behaviours.

Teacher actions to establish conditions for learning to read are:

- co-design [anchor charts²⁹](#) to make clear the expectations of the routine
- model the expected behaviours
- have students' model inappropriate behaviours and discuss the implications for learning, eg for independent reading, students can model 'real' reading (when students are engaged in reading and focused on their reading goal) and 'fake' reading (when students are appearing to be reading but are not actually engaged)
- list the behaviours for each on a class anchor chart and refer to the chart at the beginning of each independent reading session
- time students' ability to sustain reading and set goals for building their stamina for independent reading.

Focus: establish routines for writing

Teachers incorporate daily writing activities to enable learners to practise and build automaticity

The processes of learning to write and becoming a writer require substantial effort. Learning to write is 'a complex process encompassing cognitive, physical, social and cultural dimensions' (Daffern, Mackenzie & Hemmings, 2017).

In addition to skills in oral language, writing requires well developed fine motor skills—the ability to use muscles in the fingers and hands; the attention to concentrate for periods of time; memory to generate ideas and remember what sounds look like to write letters and words; and the language to be able to express mood and meaning.

Knowledge of language and the way it changes according to context, from face to face talking to writing for a broad audience, is fundamental to becoming a writer. Teachers need to make explicit the language patterns required to meet the various purposes for writing across the curriculum.

'The differences between speech and writing help to explain why it is often not enough to just talk about a topic before a child writes about it. Talk helps to clarify ideas and content, but turning talk into writing involves much more. Writing is not the same as speech written down ... '(Gibbons, 2011)

Early primary years

For beginning writers, raise student awareness of the alphabetic principle – speech can be turned into print, print can be turned into speech, and that letters are used to represent sounds in the language. Explicitly teach the connections between the sounds in words and the letters that are used to represent those sounds:

- practise writing letters to match learning phonics: build from easy to hard: vc (vowel-consonant), cvc, ccvc, cvcc, long vowel words
- use multiple media to record writing (eg pencils, finger paints, crayons, textas) and activities such as tracing, filling in the blank (missing word) from a familiar sentence
- copy words and sentences from classroom resources such as alphabet charts and sight word cards
- scribe together sentences to accompany drawings
- create small books – scaffold to practise new learning (copy and finish a known sentence structure)

- support students to use their accumulating language knowledge to write about familiar and/or personal experiences and to develop their ability to construct simple sentences.

Middle primary years

Once students can write independently, they need many opportunities to write in the classroom to meet daily learning needs such as:

- jointly constructing anchor charts
- taking notes about a learning area topic
- completing graphic organisers to consolidate and summarise learning
- completing spelling tasks
- responding to reading
- personal journals
- letters to the principal or another teacher/class
- school newsletter articles
- scripts for assembly presentations
- posters to advertise school events.

These purposeful activities which support learning will also provide practise for learners and help them to build automaticity in their handwriting and keyboarding skills⁸.

Upper primary years

In addition to using writing with learning activities, upper primary students can use writing for community purposes:

- letters to the principal or the another teacher/class
- school newsletter articles
- scripts for assembly presentations.

These kinds of purposeful activities which support learning will also provide practise for learners and help them to build automaticity.

Teachers explicitly teach at least two extended written texts per term to develop text, grammar and vocabulary knowledge

As part of the [learning design¹³](#) process, consider the language demands of curriculum area tasks and intentionally plan to teach at least two genres per term which will enable students to shape and structure the content of the curriculum topic.

When explicitly teaching text types:

- clarify the social purpose and intended audience
- provide multiple models of the target genre
- teach the structure of the genre
- choose at least two specific language features at sentence level to enable students to develop complexity in their writing
- use mentor texts to model how authors use language for specific purposes
- model how to write the text using think alouds and joint constructions
- differentiate the writing process, so that more capable learners can write with less support while others are provided with small group workshops
- refer to resource list in this booklet for supporting texts.

Early primary years

Early exposure to text types will support students when they begin to construct learning area texts independently. Beginning writers can be introduced to common learning area genres and begin to understand how texts work through sequencing and jigsaw activities in preparation for writing:

- match word labels to features of diagrams
- cut up and re-assemble familiar texts such as poems, songs, procedures, reports
- sequence images from a familiar narrative and orally retell the story.

Middle primary years

Students must have opportunities to work with the full range of learning area text types, eg procedure, recount, information report, explanation, narrative, argument, review.

Teacher actions to develop range of written texts include:

- explore texts to show they are structured differently to meet different purposes
- compare text types and highlight the differences
- teach how sentences are constructed differently for different purposes
- build the content and vocabulary of the topic through oral language, and reading and viewing prior to writing.

Upper primary years

Students in upper primary may have a wide range of writing abilities. Differentiate the learning for students when they are learning to write learning area text types. Hold mini workshops for students who require more modelling and scaffolding while others work independently with learning support educators.

Focus on:

- clarifying the purpose for writing and audience/reader expectations
- sentence level structures and ensure students can write a range of complex sentences
- providing a variety of models of the target text type for students to rank according to quality
- jointly constructing the success criteria for writing by analysing features of a strong model text.

Actions to ensure that students are motivated and resilient writers:

- teach the metacognitive strategies of self-talk and self-monitoring
- think aloud during modelled writing to show how to make decisions about planning (What do I need to do next?), evaluating progress (Does that make sense?), reinforcing writing confidence (I really like that sentence) and developing persistence (I'm nearly finished!) (Harris, Graham & Mason, 2003)

More information about developing a culture of writing can be found in the Department's Best Advice paper [Considerations for teaching writing⁸](#) (pending publication).

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4. Resources

Resource	Notes
Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) (2016) Oral language³⁰ , Best Advice series	This Department Best Advice paper offers advice for leaders and practical classroom strategies for developing oral language.
Cameron S & Dempsey L (2016) <i>The Oral Language Book: Building foundations talk across the curriculum</i> , S&L Publishing	A practical book that supports teachers to include more oral language opportunities in the design of learning. Practical ideas to increase student interactions via peer and group activities.
Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) (2016) Vocabulary³¹ , Best Advice series	This Department Best Advice paper provides compelling reasons for explicitly teaching vocabulary and offers practical classroom strategies.
NSW Centre for Effective Reading (Middle Years) (nd) <i>Vocabulary: Selecting words to teach</i> , available at http://tiny.cc/VocabSelectWords	NSW Education & Communities (2018) <i>Vocabulary: Selecting words to teach¹²</i> , NSW Centre for Effective Reading, Middle Years, NSW Government
Edwards-Groves C, Anstey M & Bull G (2013) <i>Classroom Talk: Understanding dialogue, pedagogy and practice</i> , Sydney: Primary English Teaching Association Australia (PETAA)	This book describes the importance of classroom talk and illustrates how explicit teaching is not the same as direct, prescriptive instruction. Through classroom examples, it balances the theoretical and practical aspects of 'classroom talk'.
Department for Education (2018) Bringing it to life³² (BitL), <i>Leading Learning: Making the Australian Curriculum work for us</i>	The question strands in the BitL printables support teachers in planning questioning to extend student thinking.
Konza D, Pond L, Michael M & Fried L (2010) 'Implementing the big six: practical applications for the classroom', <i>Fogarty Learning Centre</i> , available at http://tiny.cc/ImpBig6	A series of documents that provide practical applications for implementing the Big Six Components of Reading in the classroom.

Resource

Notes

The [SPELD SA²³](#) (Specific Learning Difficulties Association of South Australia) website

This non-profit organisation provides advice and services including free resources for phonics support and decodable readers to support students with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia.

MyRead project of the Australian Association for the Teaching of English (AATE) and the Australian Literacy Educators' Association (ALEA), funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training, available at <http://tiny.cc/MyRead>

MyRead is based on the beliefs that:

- all students can be successful readers
- all teachers are teachers of reading
- teachers make a difference
- monitoring and assessment inform teaching and learning
- teachers need a repertoire of flexible practices.

[Story Box Library²⁷](#)

Story Box Library is an excellent resource for students to have extra opportunities to listen to reading.

Institute of Multi-Sensory Education (iMSE) (2016) 'Building better readers: Lori Oczkus and reciprocal teaching', *iMSE Journal*, available at <http://tiny.cc/ReciprocalTeach>

This webpage embeds three videos in which Lori Oczkus explains reciprocal teaching in the context of the research base.

We are Teachers (2018) [Anchor Charts 101: Why and how to use them²⁹](#)

An explanation of what an anchor chart is, tips on how to co create them with students and how to use them in the classroom.

EALD Hub: Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander English as an additional language or dialect learners

For further information, contact:
education.ealddhub@sa.gov.au or ph 8463 5989

The EALD Hub is an online action learning course for educators of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who are identified as EALD learners. It is focused on providing high-quality education to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and in particular, those students who have first languages other than Standard Australian English (SAE) and are learning SAE as an additional language or dialect.



Attachment 1: self-assessment of literacy teaching

Frequency:

- 1 I don't use this strategy.
- 2 I occasionally use this strategy.
- 3 I frequently use this strategy during a lesson or unit.
- 4 I consistently use this strategy during a lesson or unit.

Proficiency:

- 1 I don't understand this literacy strategy or how to implement it in my classroom.
- 2 I am hesitant about implementing this strategy and would benefit from seeing this practice in action.
- 3 I am confident that the way I implement this strategy supports improved student learning in my classroom.
- 4 I am extremely confident when implementing this strategy and believe my use of this strategy could serve as a model for others.

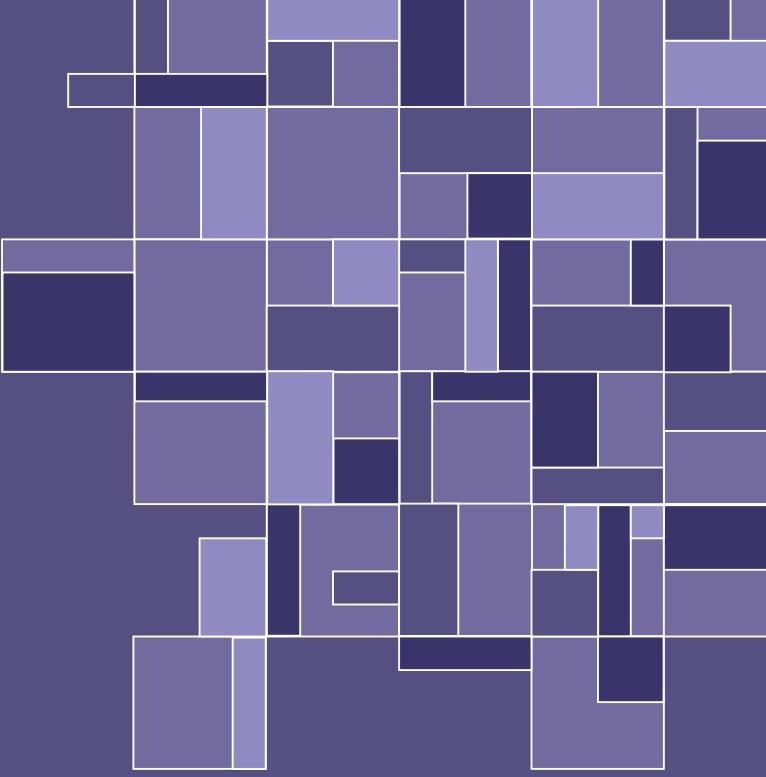
Literacy component	Self-assessment				Provide examples of teacher actions for self-ratings at Level 3 or above
Oral language					
I intentionally plan for oral language development, scaffolding the language required to access the curriculum	1 (Frequency)	2	3	4	
I prioritise a daily, timetabled reading program, integrating the Big Six Components of Reading	1 (Frequency)	2	3	4	

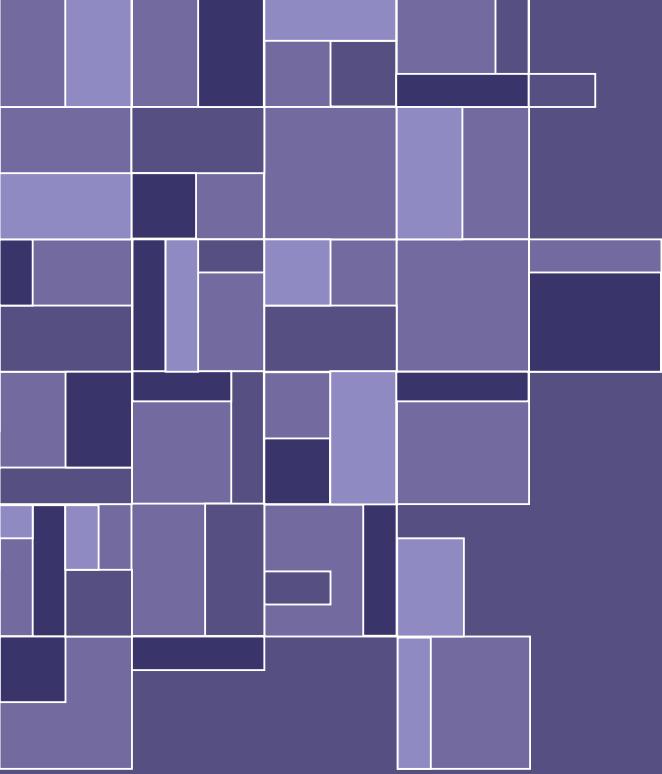
Literacy component	Self-assessment				Provide examples of teacher actions for self-ratings at Level 3 or above
Reading					
I explicitly teach the Big Six Components of Reading	1 (Frequency)	2	3	4	
	1 (Proficiency)	2	3	4	
As an R,1 or 2 teacher, my reading program includes teaching synthetic phonics and using decodable readers based on students needs.	1 (Frequency)	2	3	4	
	1 (Proficiency)	2	3	4	
Writing					
I incorporate daily writing activities to enable learners to practise and build automaticity	1 (Frequency)	2	3	4	
	1 (Proficiency)	2	3	4	
I explicitly teach at least two extended written texts per term to develop text, grammar and vocabulary knowledge	1 (Frequency)	2	3	4	
	1 (Proficiency)	2	3	4	
Australian Curriculum knowledge					
I explicitly teach all 3 strands of the Australian Curriculum: English	1 (Frequency)	2	3	4	
	1 (Proficiency)	2	3	4	

Adapted from Council of Chief State School Officers (2007) *Teacher Self-Assessment Tool for Content Area Literacy Support*, Washington, available at: <http://tiny.cc/SelfAssessLiteracy>



Notes





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