

English K–6

Literacy

Interim Support
Document for Students
Experiencing Learning
Difficulties

Acknowledgements

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CONTENTS

Introduction	5
Section 1	8
Acquisition of Literacy Skills	10
Assessing	12
Programming	24
Monitoring	35
Teaching Strategies	42
Classroom Organisation	55
Planning	61
Section 2	67
Reading	68
Writing	87
Talking and Listening	98
Glossary of Terms	106
Further Reading	109
References	115
Appendices	
Appendix 1: Texts for Beginning Readers	117
Appendix 2: Texts for Older Readers	118
Appendix 3: Planning Sheets	122

INTRODUCTION

The most common area of difficulty that students with special needs are likely to encounter is in literacy acquisition ... Children who need additional support should be identified and provided with appropriate instruction early ... Unless students achieve a level of accuracy, fluency and automaticity in word recognition, they will have difficulty accessing meaning in print independently.

*(English K–6 Syllabus and Support Document, 1994,
Board of Studies NSW p 243)*

The purpose of this support document is to:

- provide teachers and support personnel with information to help meet the learning needs of students with learning difficulties in the key learning area of English
- provide detailed advice to assist teachers to develop programs that meet the individual learning needs of students who are experiencing difficulties in acquiring literacy skills.

Students with difficulties in learning are those who are not achieving the outcomes of English K–6 according to expectations. These students will experience difficulties for a range of reasons and with varying degrees of intensity and duration. Students who have learning difficulties may include those:

- with English as a second language background
- with a background in Aboriginal English
- from groups with low socioeconomic status
- with an intellectual disability
- with specific learning problems
- who have missed or changed schools frequently
- who have received inappropriate teaching for their learning needs
- with detected or undetected hearing or vision loss.

There are many reasons why students experience learning difficulties. For example, a student may have changed schools frequently; may not have been read to at home; or

may have difficulties with phonemic awareness for language, social and cultural reasons, including activities such as listening to and reciting nursery rhymes. Another student may have had chronic ear infections, missed many days at school due to family circumstances, or for other reasons did not receive a continuous sequenced reading program.

These students' individual learning needs should be addressed by effective intervention and teaching strategies. Language learning has a critical impact on a student's school life and frequently has implications for life outside school.

This support document should be used when the advice in the *English K–6 Syllabus and Support Document* does not meet the specific needs of students with learning difficulties. The document will enable teachers to develop further the suggestions in the 'English Learning Experiences', 'Dictionary of Classroom Practices' and 'Planning, Programming and Assessing' sections of the *English K–6 Syllabus and Support Document* (referred to in this document as *English K–6*).

Teaching students experiencing learning difficulties involves programs or intervention strategies that:

- are based on the expectation that each student will learn to read
- begin with what the student can do and build on the student's strengths
- involve regular individual assistance
- acknowledge and build on a student's first language experience
- provide daily opportunities to practise reading manageable texts
- recognise that not all children learn at the same rate and in the same way
- involve explicit teaching of areas of need identified through regular monitoring of progress
- develop students' enjoyment and confidence in English.

(adapted from *English K–6*, pp 243–246)

For teaching students with learning difficulties, the following should be noted:

- some of the outcomes stated in the English K–6 syllabus may need to be put into more detailed form for the purposes of programming
- a range of strategies may be required to support student learning
- different instructional methods may be required to assist students to achieve outcomes
- there are specific skills and strategies in English that are more difficult to acquire
- adaptations may need to be made for students from a language background other than English

- adaptations may also need to be made to learning experiences and teaching strategies in other Key Learning Areas.

Document structure

Section 1

Section 1 outlines support that can be provided to students with learning difficulties at a classroom and whole-school level in English. Areas discussed are:

- assessment
- programming
- monitoring
- teaching strategies
- classroom organisation
- whole-school planning.

Section 2

This section provides specific information to help select program content in the strands of:

- reading
- writing
- talking and listening.

SECTION 1

Acquisition of Literacy Skills	10
Assessing	12
Assessment in the Teaching and Learning Cycle	13
Step 1: Assessment	14
Step 2: Prepare and administer assessment device	16
Assessment Devices	17
Word recognition – high-frequency words	17
Conventions of print	18
Oral reading accuracy and fluency	19
Spoken language skills	21
Phonological awareness — letter–sound knowledge	22
Handwriting	23
Programming	24
Programming in the Teaching and Learning Cycle	24
Step 3: Sequence skills and knowledge	25
Step 4: Establish instructional objectives	27
Step 5: Design and/or select instructional materials/activities	28
Step 6: Implement program	32
Step 7: Evaluate program	34
Monitoring	35
Monitoring Student Progress	35
Monitoring Procedures	36
Word recognition — high-frequency words	36
Conventions of print	37
Punctuation	39
Oral reading accuracy and fluency	39
Spoken language skills	41

Teaching Strategies	42
Steps of Effective Instruction	42
Strategy Training	44
Adapting Instruction	47
Phases of Learning	51
Student Motivation	54
Classroom Organisation	55
Grouping Students for Instruction	55
Time Management	59
Seating Arrangements	59
Resources	60
Planning	61
Whole-school Commitment	61
Preventative Programs	62
Collaborative Problem Solving	63
Teacher-assistance Teams	64
Tutor Programs	65

ACQUISITION OF LITERACY SKILLS

For all students, it is important to find ways of providing literacy instruction to get their reading, writing and talking and listening underway quickly and successfully.

Delay in the acquisition of literacy skills, for whatever reason, can impede a student's intellectual growth. If the difficulty persists it can also affect a student's enthusiasm for reading, the motivation to persist in further literacy learning and a loss of confidence and enthusiasm.

What are the characteristics of effective preventative programs ?

Features of successful early literacy interventions are that:

- intervention occurs during early learning in the first and/or second years of schooling
- procedures are in place to identify students in need of additional assistance
- the content and strategies used are based on current research
- monitoring of student progress is ongoing
- the student receives intensive instruction and practice, ie on a daily basis
- instruction takes into account individual learning needs (this does not always require one-to-one instruction)
- professional help is obtained if necessary
- parents are informed of the different ways in which they can help at home.

Which students may have difficulties in the acquisition of literacy skills?

Those who may:

- have particular trouble in learning word-recognition skills
- need additional word-recognition training when they are beginning to learn to read
- have considerable difficulty with the visual and phonological processing components involved in word recognition
- need to develop skill in integrating the four processing systems when reading text, ie contextual, semantic, phonological and graphological
- not have achieved basic literacy competencies by the latter years of primary school
- not be achieving the outcomes of the regular classroom program

- have poor motivation and low self-esteem due to repeated failure over a number of years
- in some circumstances have other difficulties such as inappropriate behaviour.

Early intervention and a preventative approach are essential for success in literacy. Some older students who have not developed basic literacy skills will require intensive intervention and ongoing support.

What are the considerations in programming for older students with learning difficulties?

These students will require:

- programming that addresses specific needs, as there may be many 'gaps' in their English learning
- programming that focuses on the development of skills that students have not acquired and the maintenance of existing skills
- consideration of different syllabus outcomes from their peers, particularly when there is a great discrepancy between students' achievement of outcomes and that of their peers
- more instructional time to achieve outcomes
- different instructional input, ie a range of English learning experiences and teaching strategies
- consideration of the possible need for long-term, ongoing support
- alternative ways to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understandings
- high-interest, age-appropriate materials
- English learning experiences that they will be able to do.

What are the implications for the classroom teacher of older students?

The challenge for the classroom teacher is to:

- maintain student intellectual, social and emotional growth
- provide opportunities for students to work towards the achievement of outcomes in an age-appropriate way
- provide individualised programming in an effort to close the gap between the student and their peers (not necessarily one-to-one instruction)
- manage instruction efficiently to provide the time for all students to achieve outcomes
- adapt/modify English learning experiences
- provide support and/or adaptations where appropriate in other Key Learning Areas.

ASSESSING

Assessing is the process of collecting, analysing and recording information about student progress. An important purpose of assessment is to design appropriate teaching and learning programs for all students.

(English K-6 Syllabus and Support Document, 1994, Board of Studies NSW p 81)

Assessment processes should:

- be consistent with overall school goals and general policies
- arise from the every day learning experiences of students
- enhance the self-esteem and motivation of the individual student; personal achievement should not be presented in purely comparative and competitive terms
- recognise and value the diverse backgrounds and experiences of students.
- be based on the syllabus outcomes, and be closely linked to the syllabus content. (ibid, p 262)

Assessment can be:

- **formative**, in order to build a cumulative profile of student achievement
- **summative**, in order to make judgements about student achievement at certain points in the learning program.

Formative assessment can be used to:

- identify what students can do
- identify students at risk of or experiencing learning difficulties
- plan appropriate English learning experiences
- monitor student progress toward the achievement of instructional objectives and outcomes.

Summative assessment can be used to:

- evaluate teaching programs
- evaluate school programs.

Identification of students with learning difficulties

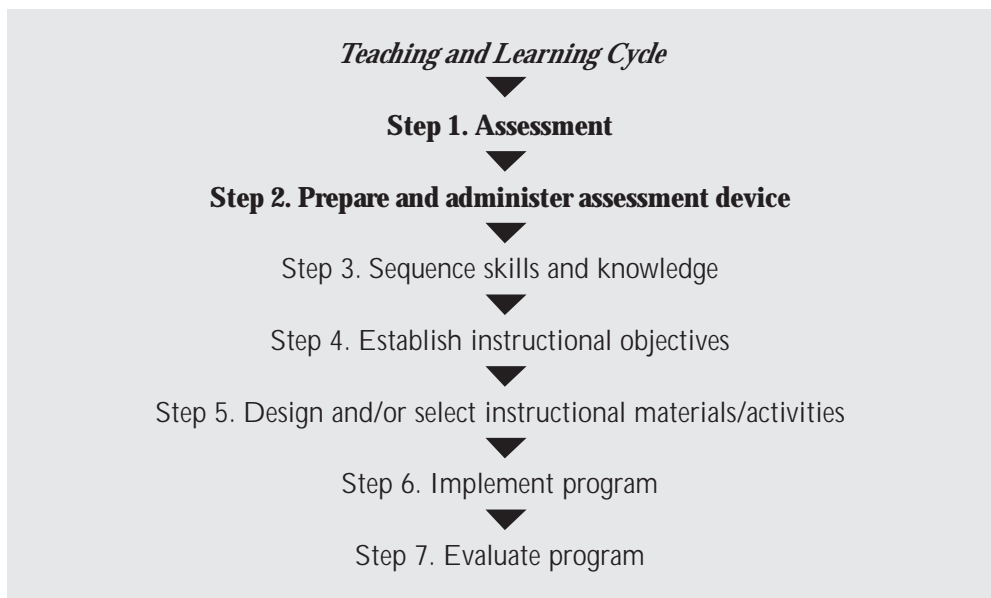
Identification of students at risk is particularly crucial in the early years for the prevention of difficulties in learning. It is also important to maintain procedures to identify problems in learning as students move through the English program.

Assessment in the Teaching and Learning Cycle

Assessment needs to be closely related to curriculum outcomes to answer the basic instructional questions:

- What do I teach?
- Where do I begin?

Steps 1 and 2 of the teaching and learning cycle relate to assessment, as shown below:



(Note: Steps 3 to 7 are discussed in the 'Programming' section of this document on p 24.)

Step 1: Assessment

Students experiencing difficulties in acquiring literacy skills will need support with the following essential elements:

- phonological awareness
- conventions of print
- letter/sound relationships
- spelling/sound relationships
- automatic recognition of sight words
- reading comprehension
- sentence and paragraph writing
- organisation of writing.

These elements will be the focus of student assessment.

Assessment procedures to check students' progress in these areas can be carried out routinely. These may be **formal** and **informal**.

The critical factor is that the content should relate to what the school or teacher sees as expected outcomes of the class curriculum.

Formal procedures include:

- teacher-constructed tests, ie curriculum-based assessment
- use of published tests, ie standardised and criterion-referenced tests.

Informal procedures include:

- systematic teacher observation
- analysis of work samples
- individual reading and writing conferences.

An ideal situation would be:

- the development of a school-based assessment founded on the content of the first two years of literacy acquisition in a school English program
- assessment that occurs early, then at regular intervals, eg it could take place at the beginning of Kindergarten, at the end of Term 2 Kindergarten and then again at the end of the same year
- regular assessment in the years following Kindergarten.

When identifying students with learning difficulties, teachers need to consider:

- the expectations of each stage of learning in English
- the literacy demands of the reading, writing, talking and listening outcomes
- what students should be able to do in order to achieve English outcomes
- when students can be expected to achieve outcomes
- assessment strategies that will determine if an outcome has been achieved
- planning learning experiences that will enable students to work towards achieving an outcome.

Teachers may have a clear expectation of what would be achieved in reading by students by, for example, the end of Term 2 Kindergarten. Teachers may select a reading outcome and determine the specific skills that students need to acquire to achieve the outcome.

Example

At Level 1 a student

- 1.10a Recognises that print has meaning
 - 1.10b Recognises the conventions of print
 - 1.10c Uses word-recognition skills
 - 1.10d Uses contextual knowledge
 - 1.10e Recognises letters and letter/sound correspondences
- (*English K-6* 1994, p 21)

Specific skills related to these outcomes could include:

1.10b Recognises the conventions of print

Given any book available in the classroom, the student will point to the front, the back, the title, a picture, a word and a letter and show which way to read (ie left to right and return sweep).

1.10c Uses word-recognition skills

Shown the word in a book or in isolation, the student will say the word orally. Words to include: mum, dad, school, is, can, the, play, and, my, friend, I, home, with, at, come.

1.10d Uses contextual knowledge

Shown a picture in a Storybox Level 1 book, the student will predict what he/she thinks the text will tell about the same page.

1.10e Recognises letters and letter/sound correspondences

Shown a letter in text or in isolation, the student will state the common sound from the following letters: *a, m, t, s, i, f, d, r, o, g*.

If teachers know clearly what they expect and when to expect it, then it is easy to assess and identify students who may be considered to be experiencing learning difficulties and requiring additional teacher support.

Step 2: Prepare and administer assessment device

This step will enable the teacher to decide what students already know and what they still need to be taught.

This assessment will also reveal whether students are lacking any prerequisite skills. Assessment at this point can also be used to group students for instruction.

When constructing a test, the teacher needs to consider the following:

- what **format** the test takes, ie oral or written, layout, scoring
- **how many examples of each skill** are required to assess:
 - if students have mastered the skill
 - the student's current level of performance
- what **specific examples** will be included
- on **how many days** should the assessment be given
- whether all or part of the assessment will be **timed**
- what **instructions** will be given to the students
- how the **assessment materials** will be presented, ie teacher, paper, tape, a peer, an aid
- whether the test is to be administered to an **individual student or group** of students
- whether the test will be used as a **pre/post measure** to enable evaluation of the program
- whether the test will be **readministered frequently** to monitor student progress.

Assessment involves:

- determining which outcomes are to be the focus for programming
- analysing the outcomes to determine the skills necessary to achieve each outcome, ie teaching steps
- sequencing these skills from easy to difficult
- establishing criterion for how well the student needs to perform each skill
- developing sample items for each skill
- determining when and how to administer the test and how to record the results
- deciding before giving the test what programming decisions will be made.

Sources of high-frequency words include:

- Salisbury Word List — a core vocabulary of 2000 words most frequently written by Adelaide children in Years 3–7
- Armidale Word Frequency List compiled from Kindergarten and Year 1 readers
- Dolch List containing 220 words
- Johnson's High Frequency Word List
- Bedrock Sight Vocabulary (Holdaway)
- words from texts that students are reading and writing.

Conventions of print

To assess students' knowledge of conventions of print a test can be constructed. Published tests can be used, or tests can be constructed individually.

The test in Figure 2 has been designed to be administered individually. The student is provided with a suitable text and they are asked questions by the teacher or support teacher related to the items on the test, eg:

'Point to the front of the book'

'Point to the back of the book'

'Point to where to start reading on this page'

'Now show me with your finger which direction to read'

The teacher records the student's responses to the test items and any other observations.

Conventions of print	Response	Comment
Front of book		
Print contains a message		
Where to start reading		
Left-to-right direction of print		
Return sweep for new line of print		
New page for end of print on a page		
Word-by-word matching		
First and last page		
Print is right way up		
Left page before right		
Full stop		
Question mark		
Upper case		
Lower case		
Concept of a letter		
Concept of a word		
First and last letter of a word		

Figure 2: Conventions of print

Oral reading accuracy and fluency

The following modified running record can be used to assess a student's oral reading accuracy and fluency.

The procedure involves the following steps:

- a. Student reads aloud from a text selected by the teacher.
- b. Teacher puts stroke for each error made and crosses out stroke if student self-corrects.
- c. Teacher works out accuracy level:

Example

number of words read	= 40
number of words incorrect and not self-corrected	= 3
number of words read correctly	= 37

Accuracy level is $37 \times 100/40 = 92.5\%$.

This text is thus at an instructional level for this student and would be suitable for guided reading activities.

d. Teacher works out fluency:

Fluency — number of correct words read per minute, ie 37 wpm.

e. Teacher analyses text-reading strategies used by the student.

Note: this method may not be appropriate to use with very early reading material where there is little text. In this situation the teacher can observe reading strategies and word-recognition skills.

Spoken language skills

Figure 3 shows a test that can be used for screening the skills involved in spoken language. This test can be used to identify general areas of difficulty that require more detailed assessment for programming or to identify students who may require referral to a language specialist or speech pathologist.

<p>Pragmatic Language Skills (use of language in a range of contexts)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No problem identified Poor nonverbal skills Difficulty with taking turns Poor topic maintenance Difficulty initiating a conversation <p>Expressive Language Skills (use of words, grammar and sentences)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No problem identified Limited content Word-finding difficulties Grammatical difficulties Difficulties with recounts <p>Receptive Language Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No problem identified Difficulty following directions Answers inappropriately in conversation Difficulty understanding concepts Poor listening skills/concentration <p>Articulation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No problem identified Conversational speech difficult to understand Patterns of errors evident Articulation errors evident <p>Comments</p> <p>Adapted from Department of School Education, Metropolitan West Region, <i>A Survival Package for the Primary Support Teacher Learning Difficulties</i>, Gillian Yeend (ed), 1994.</p>

Figure 3: Spoken language screening test

Phonological awareness — letter-sound knowledge

Figure 4 shows an example of a test for knowledge of single-letter sounds. This test is administered individually. The student is required to say the sound for each letter from a prepared sheet or from flashcards.

Letter	Student knowledge	Letter	Student knowledge
a		c	
m		b	
t		n	
s		k	
i		v	
f		e	
d		p	
r		w	
o		j	
g		y	
l		x	
h		qu	
u		z	

Figure 4: Single-letter sounds

Handwriting

Figure 5 shows an assessment for handwriting that focuses on posture, paper position and pencil grip and movement. This assessment can be conducted by observing individual students in a number of classroom writing tasks.

Handwriting skills	Comment
1. Posture	
feet flat on the floor	
bottom to back of seat	
forearms resting on desk at 90 degree angle	
body weight on non-writing arm	
paper stabilised with non-writing hand	
neck and shoulders relaxed	
2. Paper Position	
paper centred in front of body	
– left of midline for left-handed student	
– right of midline for right-handed student	
paper tilted	
– top to right for left-handed student	
– top to left for right-handed student	
3. Grip and Movement	
thumb and index finger controlling pencil	
pencil resting on middle finger	
heel of hand on writing surface	
majority of hand below writing line	
movement extensions from fingers, not wrist or shoulders	
pencil shaft close to index knuckle	
pencil shaft angled outside shoulder	
grip 1–3 cm from tip	

Figure 5: Handwriting

PROGRAMMING

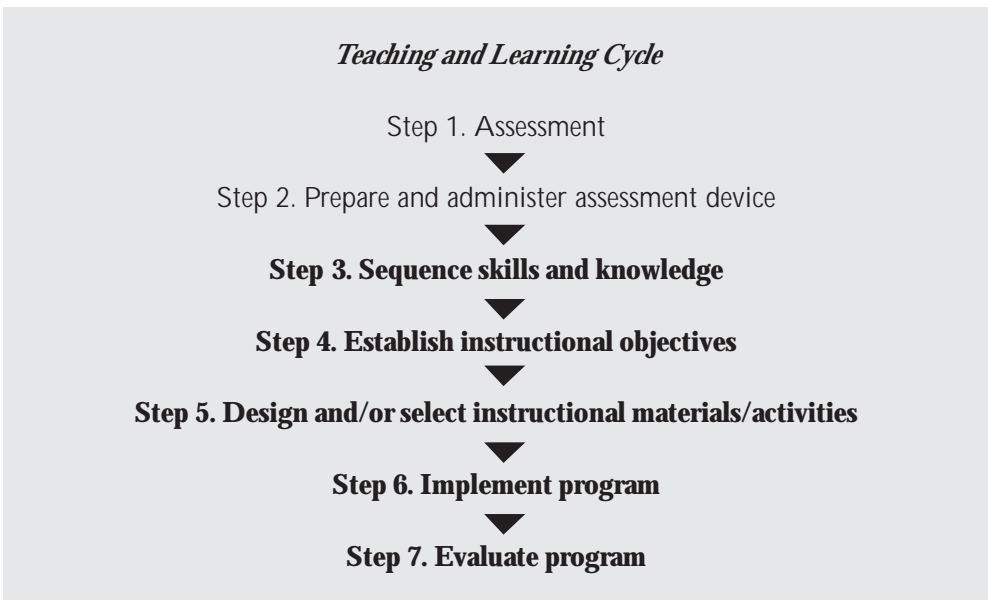
Programming is the process of selecting and sequencing teaching strategies and learning experiences for specific classes and individual students to achieve the outcomes of the syllabus. (*English K–6*, 1994, p 81).

The most important considerations for programming in English are:

1. The learning needs of the students.
2. The outcomes of the syllabus.
3. The sequencing of learning experiences to enable students to achieve the outcomes.
4. Planning for a variety of assessment strategies. (ibid, 1994, p 255)

Programming in the Teaching and Learning Cycle

Steps 3–7 of the teaching and learning cycle are outlined below.



Step 3: Sequence skills and knowledge

Outcomes provide guidance for teaching and learning. They can be used to:

- ensure scope, balance and sequence when programming learning experiences
- form the basis of planning teaching and learning experiences
- provide information to report upon student achievement.

Outcomes across the stages provide the full scope of the English program.

For students with difficulties in learning the teacher needs to:

- integrate content from the reading, writing, talking and listening strands
- ensure content is sequenced
- monitor progress carefully
- provide additional teaching and learning experiences to facilitate achievement of and movement to new outcomes.

Once the program focus has been determined it is necessary to:

- break the relevant outcomes into a sequence of manageable skills or teaching steps
- ensure the steps are from easy to difficult.

Some students with learning difficulties may require quite small teaching steps to assist in the acquisition of skills and knowledge.

Skill sequences may be ordered:

- **hierarchically**, where each skill consolidates previous learning and is a prerequisite to the next
- **logically**, where skills are not interrelated but where there is a logical reason for doing one before another.

Some simple rules when planning a sequence in which to teach content to students who are having difficulty learning are:

Break content into a series of skills or teaching steps

Example

Outcome 1.2: Interacts informally with teachers, peers and known adults in structured classroom activities dealing briefly with familiar topics. (*English K-6*, p 32)

One of the components of this outcome would be:

Taking turns in conversation with peer and adult.

The sequence of skills or teaching steps for this component could be:

- use appropriate nonverbal behaviour
- reply when someone says hello or asks question
- wait until other person is finished before speaking
- let the other person have a turn to talk
- ask a variety of questions
- make positive statements
- make negative statements.

For some students, these steps may need to be broken up into even smaller steps. For example, 'let the other person have a turn to talk' could include the following:

- say something about the topic
- listen while other person talks about the topic
- use appropriate nonverbal cues to show listening, ie nod head, smile
- respond appropriately with a question or statement.

Do not teach things that look alike and/or sound alike together

For example, if a student is having difficulty recalling the sounds for the letters that represent vowels, then it may be necessary to separate their teaching because some vowels can be difficult to discriminate from one another (ie, *a* and *u*).

Teach things that look and/or sound very different close together

For example, teach single letter sounds in the sequence, *a m t s i f d r o g l h u c b n k v e w j p y x q z*, because letters that look alike and sound alike are separated.

Teach things that are easiest first and then move to those that are more difficult

For example, oral comprehension before written comprehension, literal comprehension before inferential comprehension.

Teach things that are most useful first

For example, recognition of high-frequency irregular words such as *the* and *was* before irregular words that occur less frequently in text.

It is critical that all necessary skills have been identified, and that the steps from one skill to the next are neither too big nor too small. For students with learning difficulties it is essential that the steps are not too big.

Step 4: Establish instructional objectives

The skills or teaching steps can then be described in terms of instructional objectives. These instructional objectives are the short-term program goals for the student/s.

The program should be planned to match the instructional objectives so that as the students achieve mastery on an objective, they move to subsequent objectives and continue this process until the outcome is achieved.

The instructional objectives state:

- what the teacher wants the student to do
- how the teacher wants the student to demonstrate the skill
- how well the student should perform the skill.

Example

The student will read the text *Sing to the Moon* orally with at least 95% accuracy at 60 words per minute.

Instructional objectives can be used to decide when a student has mastered a particular skill and can move on to learn the next skill or step in the sequence.

Deciding how well a student should perform a particular skill can be determined by considering the following factors:

- **some skills are so essential** that a student should make no errors and 100% accuracy is required, eg recognition of single sounds
- assessing the performance of several students and identifying those who are doing well in the skill. Then, **compare their progress** on higher and lower skill levels, and make a judgement about what level needs to be obtained before going onto more difficult skills
- **varying the criteria** for a number of students on the sequence and seeing if any differences occur in the number of skills acquired, the student's fluency and whether they generalise and maintain their skills
- examining a student's **current level of performance** in the skill and using this as a criterion for the next skill in the hierarchy.

Assessment also needs to reflect the phases of learning, ie acquisition, fluency, maintenance and generalisation. The criterion set for how well a student will perform any given skill will vary with the phase of learning the student has reached.

That is, any assessment criterion may require that:

1. the student is 80–100% accurate (*acquisition*)
2. the student does it quickly, ie so many per minute/within so many minutes (*fluency*)
3. the student maintains this performance after 3, 7, 12, 18 etc days (*maintenance*)
4. the student recognises that the skill is required in a different situation and still performs it well (*generalisation*).

See the 'Teaching Strategies' section (p 42) of this document for further information on the phases of learning.

Step 5: Design and/or select instructional materials/activities

There are three program options available to the teacher:

Select an existing program

An existing program (ie commercially available or teacher-made) may be chosen. Such programs need to be carefully considered to ensure that they meet student learning needs and match the instructional objectives.

Adapt an existing program

It may be possible to adapt a program that comes close to meeting the needs of the student/s concerned. The program chosen needs to contain much of the content and cover the majority of instructional objectives to be useful and/or time saving.

Design a program

Designing a new program may be necessary if the other programming options are not suitable.

Designing a program involves:

- using curriculum-based assessment information to identify skills to be taught
- selecting activities and teaching strategies to achieve instructional objectives
- selecting and developing monitoring procedures.

The program planner, shown in Figure 6 (pp 30–31) can be used to design a weekly program for a small group or individual student. The program planner is for a period of one week to allow for daily program modifications according to student progress toward achieving instructional objectives.

Example

Students may have difficulty learning a letter combination introduced on Day 1 of the program so the teacher may decide to modify the program and provide additional practice for some or all of the students in the group.

The program planner includes the components:

- text reading
- conventions of print
- phonological awareness
- letter–sound knowledge
- high-frequency words
- comprehension
- writing.

The program has the following features:

- reading and writing skills can be taught concurrently to allow opportunities for students to practise and consolidate skills in different contexts for different purposes
- activities increase in difficulty from Day 1 to Day 5
- activities on Day 1 involve teacher presentation, modelling and explanation. Students are provided with guided practice activities until Day 5. Students then perform the skills independently and generalise them to other contexts
- the teacher can monitor student progress and modify the program according to student learning needs
- each daily lesson incorporates an activity from each component of the program
- the pace of each lesson can be brisk to ensure each component is covered and to encourage student attention and motivation
- review of previously learned skills can be incorporated into each lesson
- each group lesson can be approximately 10 to 20 minutes depending on the age, attention span of the students and the skills being taught
- groups not working directly with the teacher can be:
 - completing independent activities
 - working with a peer or volunteer tutor
 - working with another teacher
 - completing cooperative learning activities
- students can be given the opportunity to read texts at independent and/or instructional level **every day**. This can occur:
 - in small group activities
 - during independent reading activities
 - with peer or volunteer tutors
 - with parents/caregivers at home.

Weekly Program Planner for Small Group Focus

	Outcomes	Instructional Objectives				
Day	Text Reading	Conventions of Print	Phonological Awareness	High-frequency words	Comprehension	Writing
1	Shared reading	Revise known conventions of print. Teacher explanation of new convention/s in text.	Phonemic awareness activities. Review some known letter–sound correspondences. Introduce new letter–sound correspondences.	Revise some known high-frequency words. Introduce new words from text (no more than 5).	Oral questions about text — purpose of the text, predictions based on title, pictures, events. Retell main events using sequence cards.	Word meanings from text. Vocabulary activities related to these words. Trace and copy sentences.
2	Guided reading	Teacher explanation of conventions of print. Students identify in text.	Blending with new sound and known sound to read words.	Activities with new and some known words – match, select and read. Copy words from a model.	Retell text orally. Oral cloze.	Write sentence/s about a picture in the text given sentence beginnings.

table continues

	Outcomes	Instructional Objectives				
Day	Text Reading	Conventions of Print	Phonological Awareness	High-frequency words	Comprehension	Writing
3	Guided and independent reading. Monitor accuracy and fluency.		Make words with letter cards using new sound and known sounds. Read words.	Activities with words – practise recognition using games. Copy words from model	Sentence reconstruction activities. Written cloze.	Write sentences from given sentence beginnings.
4	Guided and independent reading.	Students identify, name and explain	Make words with letter cards and copy.	Activities with words – practise recognition using games. Write words from memory.	Sequence sentences to retell text. Written questions – sentence beginnings provided.	Write own sentence/s.
5	Independent reading.	Use in own reading.	Write and read words with new sound and known sounds. Word families.	Automatic recognition of new words. Write from memory.	Written questions – literal and/or inferential.	Use conventions of print, high-frequency words, and phonemically regular words with known sounds in own writing.

Figure 6: Adapted from Whipp J, (1991) *Guided Reading Years 2 to 6*

Step 6: Implement program

Once the program has been selected, adapted or designed, the teacher has to make decisions as to how it will be implemented. The sections in this document on 'Classroom organisation' (p 55) and 'Planning' (p 61) provide information on grouping students and using volunteers. The teacher also has to make decisions about how a small group or individual program for students with learning difficulties can be implemented as part of the whole English program.

Program implementation in English using only units of work will usually not be sufficient to meet the needs of students with learning difficulties. Students with learning difficulties will require programming and instruction for the initial acquisition of the skills, knowledge and understandings to achieve the outcomes the teacher has identified as a programming focus.

The implementation of programs for the initial acquisition of the skills and knowledge the teacher has identified can be carried out separately, but **concurrently**, with units of work. This method of program implementation does not require an individual program for each student but rather a consideration of individual learning needs when planning the English program.

In summary, the benefits of programming for the initial acquisition of skills and knowledge concurrently with units of work are:

- efficiency for the initial instruction of skills (ie acquisition and fluency phases of learning)
- meeting a diversity of learning needs
- utilising support personnel can be effective
- spending more time on identified areas that students find difficult to learn
- focusing the use of support personnel and tutors (volunteers or peers)
- matching students appropriately to text for guided and independent reading
- providing opportunities for the generalisation of skills rather than initial instruction
- allowing individualised assessment, programming and evaluation.

The English program can be implemented with a whole class, small group and individual focus as follows.

Whole-class focus in English and other Key Learning Areas

- building knowledge of field activities
- shared reading
- reading aloud to students
- modelled writing
- joint construction of text
- independent construction of text
- talking and listening activities
- introducing poems, songs and drama
- reviewing poems and rhymes
- viewing activities
- brainstorming activities.

Learning experiences can be planned using units of work and can be integrated in other key learning areas if possible.

Small-group focus in English

- shared reading
- guided reading
- responding to text activities
- word-recognition activities
- activities to develop phonological awareness
- language games
- spelling activities
- word processing
- text-sequencing activities
- joint construction of text activities
- oral and written cloze
- listening-post activities
- computer software programs.

Learning experiences can be planned to meet the diversity of learning needs of students in the classroom using an existing, adapted or teacher-designed program.

Individual focus in English

- independent reading
- individual reading and writing conferences
- contracts involving reading, writing and talking and listening activities
- sustained silent reading
- home reading
- independent writing
- handwriting
- spelling

Learning experiences can be planned to meet the diversity of learning needs of students in the classroom using an existing, adapted or teacher-designed program.

Step 7: Evaluate program

Evaluation refers to a judgement made about the overall effectiveness of the program being implemented. This is necessary to determine what modifications might need to be made to the program or what outcomes should be the next focus for programming.

Evaluation can determine whether:

- the student has achieved the target outcome(s)
- the skills were sequenced appropriately
- the teaching strategies were effective
- the monitoring procedures were appropriate
- the program was implemented effectively.

Information for evaluation can be obtained from:

- curriculum-based assessment
- criterion-referenced assessment
- systematic teacher observation
- analysis of work samples
- anecdotal information from other personnel and parents/caregivers
- interviews with other personnel and parents/caregivers
- surveys
- standardised tests.

MONITORING

Monitoring Student Progress

Monitoring involves systematic observation of students in order to monitor their progress toward their achievement of instructional objectives (short-term goals) and syllabus outcomes (long-term goals).

Monitoring should involve a combination of:

- observation
- formal testing, ie readministering curriculum based tests
- collection and analysis of work samples
- individual conferences
- anecdotal records.

Student progress can be monitored:

- during a lesson to check if students are learning what is being taught
- over a period of time to check if students are making adequate progress and achieving instructional objectives and outcomes.

It is not necessary to monitor formally all aspects of a student's progress in the English program.

For students with learning difficulties it is important to monitor in detail those aspects that the teacher has chosen as a focus for programming and instruction.

The method of detailed monitoring used for a program will depend on:

- the type of information to be monitored; and
- whether the instructional objective is to have a student acquire a behaviour or perform a behaviour with fluency.

Whatever method is chosen needs to be simple, manageable and time efficient.

In addition to selecting a method of monitoring, other decisions need to be made regarding:

- **how often** the behaviour or skill will be measured (every day, every second day, etc)
- **when** the behaviour or skill will be measured (at the beginning of the lesson, at the time the skill/behaviour would normally occur)

- **how much** of the behaviour or skill will be measured (the number of occurrences, the first minute of performance of the skill)
- how the information will be **recorded/displayed** (table, graph, tally).

Monitoring procedures

The examples on the following pages show formal procedures for systematically monitoring:

- word recognition — high-frequency words
- knowledge of conventions of print
- use of punctuation
- oral reading accuracy and fluency
- spoken language skills.

The procedures described can be used with individual students or groups of students. To assist the teacher in monitoring student progress the students, tutors or parents can be trained to use the procedures as a part of program implementation.

Word recognition — high-frequency words

In the example in Figure 7, the teacher is teaching recognition of high-frequency words. The student is just learning these words and so is in the acquisition phase of learning. The teacher is interested in whether the student is accurate in recognising each word. The teacher can set some criteria against which a judgement can be made about whether the student knows each word well enough to introduce new words.

Example of an instructional objective

When presented with a high-frequency word on a flashcard, the student will orally read the word correctly on three consecutive occasions.

Initially a small number of words is introduced (ie five words). The student practises recognition of each word through a variety of activities such as games and the match-to-sample technique. Once the student has achieved the criteria stated in the instructional objective (ie recognised the word on three consecutive occasions without teacher assistance) a new word is introduced and/or a previously taught word/s revised. The teacher can check the student's recognition of words each day. This can be done by the teacher or support personnel at the beginning of a small group lesson, by a trained peer or volunteer tutor during tutoring activities or by a parent/caregiver during a home program.

Date	5/11	6/11	7/11	8/11			
was							
in							
it			✓				
he			-	✓			
yes	-	✓	✓	✓			
said	-	✓		✓			
to	-		✓	✓			
I	✓	✓	✓				
the	✓	✓	✓				

Figure 7: Monitoring recognition of high-frequency words

- ✓ **correct**
 - **incorrect**

Conventions of print

In the example shown in Figure 8, the teacher is teaching students to recognise and use the conventions of print in text reading. Initially the teacher is interested in the student being able to identify and explain the conventions of print (acquisition phase of learning).

Example of an instructional objective

When given an unfamiliar text the student is able to demonstrate, with their finger, the direction to read left to right along a single line of print on three consecutive occasions.

The teacher can check the student's knowledge and/or use of the conventions of print each day. This can be done by the teacher or support personnel individually or during a small group lesson.

Date	4/3	5/3	6/3	7/3	8/3			
Page conventions								
left to right	-	✓	✓					
top to bottom	✓	✓	✓					
return sweep	-	-	✓	-				
Book conventions								
page by page	✓	✓	✓					
front to back	✓	✓	✓					
right side up	✓	✓	✓					
Concept of a word	-	-	✓	✓	✓			
Concept of a letter	-	-	✓	✓	✓			
Upper case	-	-	✓	✓	✓			
Lower case	-	-	✓	✓	✓			

- ✓ **correct**
- **incorrect**

Figure 8: Monitoring knowledge of conventions of print

Punctuation

In the example in Figure 9, the teacher is teaching students to use punctuation in writing. Initially the teacher is interested in the student using punctuation in teacher-set writing tasks (acquisition phase of learning).

Example of an instructional objective

When asked to write a statement the student correctly uses a capital letter and fullstop on three consecutive occasions (fluency).

The teacher can check the student's knowledge and use of punctuation during set daily writing tasks.

Date	8/8	9/8	10/8	11/8				
Use capitals								
begin a sentence	✓	✓	✓					
names	✓	✓	✓					
personal pronoun I	-	✓	✓					
Punctuation								
full stop	✓	✓						
question mark	-	✓						
exclamation mark								
commas								
inverted commas								

Figure 9: Monitoring use of punctuation in writing

- ✓ **correct**
- **incorrect**

Oral reading accuracy and fluency

In the example in Figure 10 the teacher wants to check how fluently a student is able to read texts currently being read in the classroom program. The teacher is interested in improving the student's fluency in reading, so is collecting information on rate of reading in terms of words read correctly per minute (fluency phase of learning) on a regular basis, ie at least twice a week.

Example of an instructional objective

Given a passage from the text *A Real City Kid*, the student will read orally at 60 words correct per minute with no more than two errors on three consecutive occasions.

	Date												
wpm													
80													
78													
76													
74													
72													
70													
68													
66													
64													
62													
60													
58													
56													
54													
52													
50													
48													
46													
42													
40													
38													
36													
34													
32													
30													
28													
26													
24													
22													
20													
18													
16													
14													
12													
10													
8													
6													
4													
2													
✓													
✗													

Figure 10: Monitoring oral reading accuracy and fluency

✓ number of words correct ✗ number of errors

Spoken language skills

In the example in Figure 11, the teacher is teaching the student pragmatic language skills. Initially the teacher wants the student to use the skills in the context of the classroom (acquisition phase of learning).

Example of an instructional objective

The student is able to carry out a three-part instruction given orally by the teacher on three consecutive occasions.

Date										
One-way communication										
express wants										
express opinions										
express feelings										
follow three-part instructions										
ask questions										
recount experiences										
sequence 3 events										
give instructions										
explain										
Two-way communication										
consider listener										
give a message										
participate in discussions										
make positive statements										
make negative statements										
Non-verbal communication										
use gestures										
use proximity										
use expression										
use facial expression										

Figure 11: Monitoring pragmatic language

- ✓ correct
- ✗ with teacher assistance

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Effective teaching strategies include:

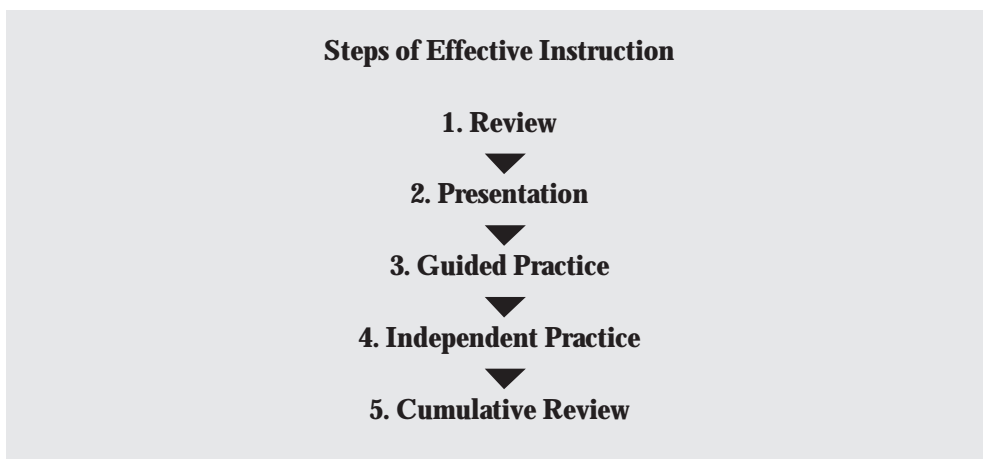
- assessing students to inform the teaching and learning program
- provision of clear explanation of the goals of the activity and what the student is to do
- demonstration and modelling of the required task and guided practice prior to independent practice
- sufficient guided practice to allow for successful performance followed similarly by independent practice
- use of prompts to assist students to acquire knowledge and attain success
- provision for positive comments and encouragement to the student along with helpful feedback about progress.

(adapted from *English K-6*, 1994, p 246)

Steps of Effective Instruction

Students with learning difficulties:

- require very clear, explicit explanation of new skills and concepts, through demonstration and modelling
- need sufficient guided and independent practice in order to learn and then remember and use skills/concepts.



1. Review

- Review of previously taught skills carried out at the beginning of the lesson ensures students have learned and remembered these skills.
- Going back over previous work provides additional practice and allows the teacher to note any problems.
- Correction and feedback can be provided immediately.
- If necessary, skills can be retaught, and/or different teaching strategies used.

2. Presentation

- New content is presented using a short statement of the purpose of the lesson and an overview of the lesson.
- A clear demonstration is provided of the skill(s)/concept(s) being taught.
- Clear and explicit step-by-step instructions need to be provided as students experiencing difficulties in learning will often learn a skill more easily if it is broken down into smaller, more manageable steps.
- Frequent checking of understanding is required and material needs to be presented at a lively pace to maintain student interest.

3. Guided practice

- The demonstration of new skills and concepts is followed by guided practice where the teacher guides or leads students through some examples of the skill/concept.
- Guided practice ensures that students attain success and do not practise errors.

4. Independent practice

- The aim of independent practice is to merge new information and skills with those already known.
- Students practise the skills in activities that require a minimum of direct assistance from the teacher.
- Homework activities can be used for the independent practice of skills.
- Students generalise skills across a range of contexts.

5. Cumulative review

- Frequent review of work covered allows the teacher to check that students have learnt and remembered previously taught skills/concepts.
- Cumulative reviews can take place on a weekly basis.
- Cumulative reviews can be in the form of tests, quick quizzes or oral questioning, individual/group conferences.
- Review can also be incorporated into homework activities.
- Material not learned or remembered needs to be practised further and/or presented in different ways.

Important aspects of this cycle for students with difficulties in learning are:

- small teaching steps
- guiding students during initial practice
- student practice after each step
- more time required at each step
- teacher expectations
- students' awareness of the purpose of the learning experience
- providing time for students to reflect on their learning.

Strategy Training

Strategy training aims to teach students **how to 'learn'** rather than teaching facts.

Strategy training can be used:

- when students find it difficult to remember or apply facts or sequences
- for any new complex task.

A strategy can:

- provide a prompt when a number of steps are required
- assist memory
- train thinking or processing skills, ie problem solving.

A strategy can be:

- general, eg self monitoring — being aware that a text is too difficult
- specific to one task, eg how to remember to spell the word 'receive' by using the spelling rule '*i* before *e* except after *c*'.

Strategies can be used with:

- a whole class
 - to introduce new topics in a structured and predictable manner, eg brainstorming, semantic web, fact tree
 - to provide students with a framework for performing a task, eg What do we know about ...? What do we want to find out about ...?
- groups
 - to support students with difficulties in learning to undertake work in the same content area, field, topic or theme as their peers, eg text reconstruction activities, written cloze
- individuals
 - to support students who have difficulties in general learning or learning in specific areas, eg word-picture matching, word-word matching, sentence matching.

Some examples of areas where strategies can be used include:

- *reading comprehension*

For example, story maps to provide a visual representation of the main features of a story (for more information see 'Dictionary of Classroom Practices', *English K-6*, 1994).

- *proofreading written text*

For example, teaching mnemonics to assist students recall what to check when proof reading, ie

- C – capitals
- O – overall appearance
- P – punctuation
- S – spelling

- *answering written comprehension questions*

For example, teaching students how to answer written comprehension questions:

1. Read the question slowly.
2. Underline the key words in the question.

3. Say the question in your own words (the teacher may need to model).
4. Find the part of the text that answers the question.
5. Check if another part of the text gives you more information.
6. Note down/underline all the parts of the text that will help you answer the question.
7. Write your answer.
8. Read the question again, then read your answer.

- *spelling phonemically regular words*

For example, teaching the following procedure for the student to use when unsure of the spelling of a word:

1. Say the word.
2. Say the word slowly.
3. 'Stretch' the word out.
4. Count the sounds in the word.
5. Are there any sound combinations?
6. Is there more than one spelling?
7. Any rules to help?
8. Write the 'best' attempt
9. Does it look right?
10. Try again?

Teaching students to use a strategy does not mean they will be able to use it independently.

Students need to be taught:

- **what** the strategy is
- **why** it is important
- **how** to perform the strategy
- **when** and **where** to use it
- **how** to tell if it worked.

They also require opportunities for guided and independent practice of the strategy and encouragement for using the strategy.

Strategies for spelling a word:

1. **Demonstrate** the strategy at least three times.
2. **Use ‘thinking out aloud’** while applying the strategy, eg ‘I want to spell the word ‘help’. First I will say the word out loud — ‘help’ — and then I will say it slowly — h...e...l...p — so I can hear each sound’.
3. **Discuss the value** of the strategy, eg ‘You can use this to help you work out how to spell words’.
4. **Work together with the students** as they apply the strategy to at least three similar tasks.
5. **Provide practice tasks** and examples that are not more difficult than the original examples.
6. **Allow students to collaborate** while using the strategy.
7. **Discuss other situations** in which the strategy could be used.

Adapting Instruction

When students are having difficulties with a specific task, skill or activities in a unit or work, the teacher can:

1. adapt materials and activities
2. adapt teaching procedure
3. adapt task requirements.

1. Adapting materials and activities

Clarify or shorten instructions

Instructions, oral or written, must be **clear and easy to understand**. Students experiencing language difficulties may become confused when the teacher uses long sentences, complex language structures and/or difficult vocabulary.

The teacher can:

- explain the purpose of the task
- build knowledge of the field topic to be studied
- explain any new or unfamiliar vocabulary
- give instructions in simple language
- give one instruction at a time
- ensure students can read and understand written instructions
- accompany written instructions with oral instructions
- have students repeat instructions
- give students the opportunity to ask questions about the activity.

Add prompts (hints or cues) to the learning task

Prompts or cues are additional aids that assist in obtaining a correct response from the student. They may be visual, verbal or physical. It is important that if any type of prompt is used it must eventually be withdrawn (preferably gradually) and the student must demonstrate that he/she can perform the task/skill independently.

The teacher can use:

- **visual prompts**

For example:

- a picture of a ball can be used to cue the student about the letter sound *b*
- a chart can be displayed in the classroom describing the steps involved in editing text
- a chart of high-frequency words can be displayed in the classroom
- provide cues in oral and written cloze such as initial letter, picture or word shape
- data banks of word family words, topic/theme words.

- **verbal prompts**

For example:

- if the student is having difficulty reading a word in text the teacher can prompt by asking 'What do you do when you come to a word you don't know?'
- alerting students when new or important information is going to be introduced 'Ready to think, we are going to learn something new!'

- **physical prompts**

For example:

- making important features of the activity more noticeable by underlining or circling key words

- guiding a student's hand to ensure that they select the correct alternative in match-to-sample activities
- placing a new or difficult task in the same place each time on a stencil.

Teach to specific student errors

The teacher may be able to identify a pattern in student errors that can become a focus for teaching.

For example, a student may consistently confuse the vowels *a* and *u* in text reading and this may become a teaching focus.

2. Adapting teaching procedures

Provide additional presentation of concepts, skills and information

The teacher can:

- explain information and demonstrate skills again
- give a simpler explanation and additional examples
- break the task into smaller steps
- establish mixed ability groups
- promote cooperative learning
- encourage peer tutoring/cross-aged tutoring.

Provide additional guided practice

The teacher can:

- provide the student with more opportunities to practise or apply a skill
- provide opportunities to practise the skills as soon as possible after the skill has been taught
- supervise the guided practice activity to ensure the student does not practise errors or forget how to perform the skill
- provide feedback to the student/s.

Feedback should:

- be immediate
- be positive
- emphasise correct responses
- be related to a specific aspect of a task
- be provided by a variety of people.

Make the consequences of successful performance more attractive

The teacher can:

- provide positive reinforcement for appropriate behaviours, eg stickers to reinforce correct reading of sight words
- inform students when they successfully perform the skill
- encourage students to monitor their own performance
- make students more aware of their own performance, eg graphs, charts
- consider implementing a system to encourage and acknowledge performance, ie stickers, merit cards
- reinforce approximations towards the mastery of a skill, eg writing own name — initially student traces name, then they copy their name, then they write their name without assistance.

Slow the pace of instruction

The teacher can:

- control the pace of instruction by keeping the task the same
- present less material in a lesson.

3. Adapt task requirements

Change the criteria for successful performance

The teacher can:

- allow students to attempt and complete fewer activities
- allow students more time to do activities.

Change task requirements

The teacher can:

- change the conditions under which the skill is to be performed, eg answer comprehension questions orally instead of writing a response
- change the presentation and format of the task, eg listen to a tape of a story instead of/before reading it orally
- provide picture, letter/sound clues for oral and written cloze activities.

Break the task down into smaller steps

The teacher can:

- break a complex task into smaller steps.

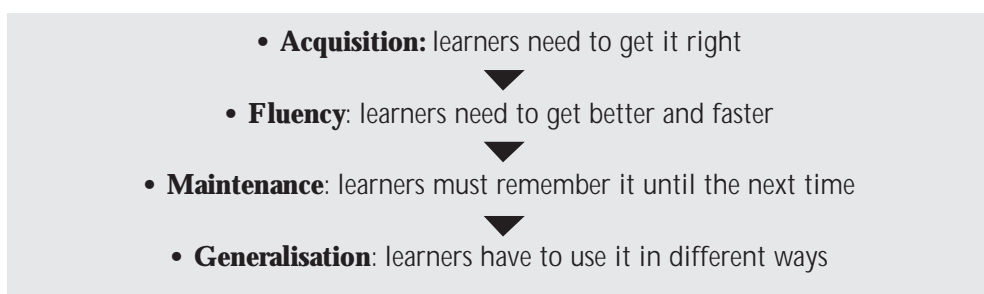
Provide a different task

The teacher can:

- substitute a similar but easier task, eg telling news in pairs and/or small groups rather than to the whole class
- substitute a prerequisite task, eg if a student is having difficulty reading consonant vowel consonant words (eg *can, him*) it may be because they do not know all the single sounds.

Phases of Learning

Learners undertaking a new task move through a series of phases:



The implications of these phases for teaching students with learning difficulties are as follows:

Acquisition phase of learning

In the acquisition phase:

- the student receives instruction on **how to perform** a particular skill, eg writing a sentence, recognition of high-frequency irregular words, recounting an event, using appropriate nonverbal cues in a conversation

- the student is not yet able to perform the skill and instruction focuses on **teaching the student the skill**
- the student requires many **opportunities to practise** the skill and be provided with feedback on whether he/she is correct or incorrect
- when teaching the skill, a **careful selection of examples** is required to avoid confusion, and examples that demonstrate exceptions should not be introduced.

Teaching strategies for the acquisition phase of learning include:

- building knowledge of the field activities
- shared reading
- modelling
- match-to-sample activities
- teaching concepts through examples
- reinforcing correct responses
- joint construction of text activities.

Fluency phase of learning

In the fluency phase:

- the student has learned the skill but **does not perform it quickly** and/or automatically, eg read high-frequency words quickly and without hesitation
- instruction focuses on helping the student to **perform the skill quickly**, ie fluently
- the student requires daily **opportunities and time to practise the skill** independently.

Teaching strategies for the fluency phase include:

- opportunities for guided practice prior to independent practice
- opportunities for daily independent practice, eg repeated reading
- quick pacing for responses
- reinforcing speed in accurate responses.

Maintenance phase of learning

In the maintenance phase:

- the student is able to perform the skill fluently but continued practice is required to ensure that the student is able to **maintain the level of proficiency**, eg the student is able to recognise without hesitation high-frequency words taught the previous week
- instruction focuses on **providing regular review** of previously learned skills.

Teaching strategies for the maintenance phase include:

- planned cumulative reviews
- over-learning, eg providing repeated opportunities to practise a skill after it has been initially learned
- teaching students strategies to aid recall, eg spelling rules
- practising new skills along with previously learned skills
- practising skills in context, eg practising word-recognition skills in text reading
- reading and retelling activities
- providing opportunities for students to share their learning.

Generalisation phase of learning

In the generalisation phase:

- the emphasis is on the student being able to **use skills in other contexts**, eg recognising high-frequency words without assistance when independently reading text
- the focus of instruction is to provide **opportunities for the student to use skills in other contexts**.

Teaching strategies for the generalisation phase include:

- planning opportunities for students to use skills in different contexts
- reinforcing the use of known skills in different contexts
- independent reading of texts
- independent construction of texts.

Student Motivation

Students who are experiencing difficulties in learning may:

- have no expectation of success
- have no experience of successful learning.

To encourage student motivation a teacher can:

- select learning experiences that enable the student to succeed
- provide students with success as a result of their effort
- make success observable, ie rewards, charts of progress.

Students may need:

- **a clear statement of the purpose of the task**
- **clear statements of teacher expectations of a task**, eg 'I want you to ...'
- **an observable way of knowing if they achieved an objective**, eg tick, counting, timing, graphing
- **immediate corrective, specific and positive feedback**, eg 'You didn't know that word so you re-read the sentence — very good.'
- **clear consequences that flow from performance**, eg 'You wrote in the missing words and completed the sentences so you get a sticker.'
- **opportunity to see small improvements**, eg 'You spelled nine words correctly today. That's better than yesterday.'
- **opportunity to reflect on their learning**, eg 'How did you know that sound? ... that word? ... that answer?'

CLASSROOM ORGANISATION

Classroom organisation issues that require consideration include:

- grouping students for instruction
- time management
- seating arrangements
- placement and availability of resources.

Grouping Students for Instruction

An important aspect of classroom organisation is grouping students for teaching and learning experiences. Teachers should choose the most appropriate arrangement according to student learning needs and the instructional objective/s.

Grouping arrangements can include:

- the whole class
- small groups
- individual student working with the teacher
- small groups, student directed
- cooperative learning
- tutoring
- students working independently.

Whole-class grouping

Whole-class grouping allows the teacher to work with a large number of students at one time.

This form of grouping:

- can be used for the **initial acquisition of a skill or concept**
- may also be used for explaining, teacher-directed discussions, large group brainstorming, demonstrations, questioning and checking for understanding, shared reading, reading aloud to students and sharing a circle.

This type of arrangement **does not facilitate** involvement and monitoring of all students, particularly those with learning difficulties.

Small groups

This form of grouping:

- can **vary according to the activity** and the learning needs of the students, eg homogenous grouping to teach specific skills in guided reading and joint construction of text, heterogenous grouping for particular spoken language activities such as news
- can be used to teach new skills and knowledge
- **allows for individualisation of instruction** as the teacher can spend time with students to cater for different learning needs
- allows the teacher to monitor student progress more closely.

When using small groups it is important:

- to ensure that students not working directly with the teacher are working on activities relevant to instructional objectives
- that students be taught the skills required for them to work independently.

Individual student working with teacher

This arrangement:

- represents the **most intensive type of classroom intervention**
- is sometimes used for initial skill acquisition, although it is used more frequently to check for understanding or to allay frustration in student learning
- allows the teacher to monitor student progress on an ongoing basis and allows for direct student instruction in a specific skill
- enables the teacher to provide individual assistance to those students who require additional teaching to learn specific skills.

Small groups, student-directed

This form of grouping:

- is used most often to reinforce or otherwise **provide additional practice in skills** or concepts introduced by the teacher
- provides the opportunity for students to practise skills independently while the teacher works with other students
- can also be useful in the development of social skills.

Suitable activities for this form of grouping include: choral reading, reader's theatre and multi voice recitation.

Cooperative learning

Cooperative learning involves students learning how to work together in a small group and how to learn from each other.

For cooperative learning to work:

- students need to work together to complete a task
- students should be responsible for each others learning
- students should be able to demonstrate what they have learned
- students should help each other to learn
- students should provide positive reinforcement to each other
- students need to learn how to cooperate
- students need the opportunity to discuss what they have learned and how well they have worked together.

Students with diverse abilities, backgrounds and experiences are encouraged to contribute to team goals and objectives and tasks.

This form of grouping:

- frees the teacher to work with other students
- is useful in the development of students' social skills
- requires time for the teacher to model and demonstrate the cooperative learning skills
- is **not a useful procedure for initial instruction** for skill acquisition but can be used for practice of skills previously introduced by the teacher.

Peer, cross-age or volunteer tutoring

This is when one individual (student or adult) with proficiency in a particular skill works with an individual student under the teacher's supervision.

When using tutoring, the teacher continues to assume responsibility for the management and instructional aspects of lessons.

This form of grouping:

- **allows for one-to-one interaction**, and the teacher can individualise activities
- **requires teacher time to train tutors**, prepare materials and monitor student progress.

Students working independently

This form of grouping:

- is most commonly used to **provide additional practice** in a skill or concept on which a student has already received teacher instruction
- provides the opportunity for individual student practice.

The teacher selects:

- the student's instructional objective
- the material or technology to be used
- the mode for assessing student mastery of the skill.

The student works independently of the teacher in completing the instructional task. Such tasks might involve:

- work sheets, instructional games, computer programs, tapes or programmed instructional materials, contracts, independent reading and writing activities.

Careful selection of materials is required to ensure they relate to the instructional objectives and are not just 'fill ins' while the teacher is working with other students.

Time Management

The use of time is an important consideration when implementing programs for students with learning difficulties. For these students 'academic engaged time' (ie time spent working directly on instructional objectives) needs to be maximised and carefully monitored. This is particularly important for older students where the gap in achievement relative to their peers may be large.

To maximise academic engaged time a teacher can consider the following:

- a well-organised classroom sets the stage for optimal student productivity, ie rules and procedures for activities
- students are working at an appropriate level of difficulty
- teaching goals and teacher expectations for student performance and success are clearly stated and understood by the student
- tutors who provide time for tutoring the individual student
- sufficient time is allocated to activities related to instructional objectives and instructional time is used efficiently
- students have frequent opportunities to respond under teacher supervision with ongoing and corrective feedback
- instructional support is provided for students to allow for the differences in the time required to achieve outcomes.

Instructional support can include:

- a school-based team of staff members who provide consultative assistance to a classroom teacher, ie teacher assistance teams
- a consulting teacher who provides indirect, consultative service to a classroom teacher
- a consulting teacher who spends some time in the classroom providing direct assistance to the students
- a tutor under teacher supervision, who spends some instructional time with students in the classroom
- a specialist teacher who provides instruction that directly supports general classroom instruction.

Seating Arrangements

Consideration should also be given to the use of the most appropriate seating arrangement for specific activities. Students perform better in different seating arrangements depending on the nature of the instructional task.

A teacher can consider the following factors when determining seating arrangements:

- students who are easily distracted should be placed where distractions are minimised
- in large group, teacher-directed instruction or practice, students can be seated facing the teacher with seats in a row or semicircle
- in small group teacher-directed instruction, students can be seated in a semi-circle facing the teacher
- desks can be placed in rows for independent work
- desks can be placed in groups for activities that require sharing of information and discussion
- all students should be seated so that they can see presentations or displays (ie blackboard or OHP)
- particular attention needs to be given to seating arrangements and classroom adaptations for students with physical and sensory disabilities.

Resources

Teacher time can be saved by organising resources as systematically as possible.

Ensure that resources are:

- accessible to all students
- diverse to cater for the full range of learning needs
- culturally inclusive
- gender inclusive
- age appropriate
- relevant to interest and experiences of students
- varied to include literary and factual texts
- high quality
- renewed regularly
- easily available
- placed appropriately in the classroom for ease of use
- used as part of daily routine.

(For additional information about suggested teaching strategies see the 'Dictionary of Classroom Practices' in the *English K-6 Syllabus and Support Document*.)

PLANNING

A school's commitment to literacy is evident in:

- school development plans — financial planning and staff development
- school organisational structures
- outcomes which are clearly defined in programs
- monitoring procedures that are in place to establish whether all students are progressing towards outcomes
- provision of assistance to students at risk
- acceptance that some students will require extra assistance
- classroom programs related to the needs of students.

(English K-6, 1994, p 250)

Some aspects that a school may consider in their planning include:

- whole-school commitment
- preventative programs
- collaborative problem solving
- teacher-assistance teams
- tutor programs
- parent participation.

Whole-school Commitment

The development and implementation of a school plan should reflect the commitment and involvement of the school community to ensure that all students acquire literacy skills.

The school plan could include the following:

- implementation of programs that focus on ensuring that all students develop essential word-recognition skills in the early years
- implementation of programs for students who require ongoing support
- identification of personnel requirements
- effective use of support personnel
- development and organisation of material resources
 - sufficient and appropriate reading material with a balance of literary and factual texts

- monitoring procedures and materials
- filing and storage of materials
- use of learning centres
- communication systems
 - early identification of students ‘at risk’ of failure to learn
 - between staff members regarding programs and student progress
 - reporting to parents and students
 - reporting to teachers
 - reporting to other schools
- records of outcome data
 - methods for collecting, coordinating, recording and communicating outcome data on a daily, weekly or annual basis
 - procedures to use this information for strategic planning
- evaluation procedures
 - class programs
 - school programs
- ongoing teacher training and development
- parent education programs.

Preventative Programs

A school may elect to set up a preventative program that provides procedures to ensure that all students begin to acquire early literacy skills. This can also involve the development of systems of support for students with long-term needs.

Research in this area provides some underlying principles for preventative programs:

- expectations of student progress, ie a belief that all students can learn
- provision of extensive opportunities for students to acquire literacy during the earliest stages of schooling
- early assessment against expected outcomes to identify students with problems
- instructional intervention at point of difficulty
- regular monitoring of student performance
- student success
- use of strategies proven to be effective with students with difficulties in learning
- flexible organisation to allow sufficient time and opportunity for learning.

Collaborative Problem Solving

Collaborative problem solving is a process used by professionals to identify and implement strategies to meet the learning needs of students.

Collaboration takes place to:

- identify and define the specific area of concern
- explore possible interventions and implement them
- evaluate interventions.

Collaborative problem solving in a school setting can have three main purposes:

- to prevent learning and behaviour problems
- to remediate learning and behaviour problems
- to coordinate instructional programs.

Collaboration involves:

- voluntary participation
- parity among participants
- mutual goals
- shared responsibility for participants in decision making
- sharing resources
- sharing accountability for outcomes.

Collaborative problem solving when functioning effectively can result in:

- sharing of expertise
- increased teacher skills
- early identification of learning problems
- prevention of learning problems
- shared ownership and accountability for outcomes
- more innovative and powerful solutions
- increased trust and respect
- sense of community.

Effective implementation of collaboration requires:

- active support from school administration
- time for teachers to collaborate

- acknowledgment of co-ownership of the problem
- confidentiality
- opportunity to reject solutions
- training of team members
- appropriate program administration and evaluation
- consideration of team composition.

Teacher-assistance Teams

In order to ensure confidence among staff to deal with students' individual needs, arrangements can be made to support individual members of staff. This can be achieved through the development and implementation of an in-school teacher-assistance team.

The teacher-assistance team is an example of school-based collaborative problem solving. The purpose of a teacher-assistance team is to provide a pool of ideas and resources to which any member of the teaching staff may have access in order to solve a classroom problem. Thus, the primary client of the team is the teacher, and the topic discussed is the teacher's concerns, actions and resource needs for one or more students.

The team can be temporary, forming upon need to assist individual teachers. Its composition and the number of times it meets will depend upon the needs of the teacher concerned.

The team may consist of the following personnel:

- two or three classroom teachers who have an interest and expertise in the area of learning difficulties, and a member of the executive
- other members can be coopted as needed, ie other teachers, school counsellor, guidance officer, parents, specialists, other professionals, eg multicultural, ESL and Aboriginal personnel, and government departments such as Department of Community Services.

For teacher-assistance teams to operate effectively:

- all members should have equal status
- all contributions should be respected
- decisions should be reached by consensus
- team purpose should be clear

- roles and responsibilities are to be clearly defined
- a range of relevant perspectives should be drawn on, eg Aboriginal, multicultural
- the agreed plan is to be confirmed by all participants
- copies of decisions made and actions planned should be circulated to all team members.

Team meetings should:

- have a structured allocation of time
- be conducted as a high-profile activity in the school
- begin and end on time
- be informal and collegial
- have a clear purpose
- record decisions and future action
- set a date for follow-up/progress meetings.

An important issue around the operation of teacher-assistance teams is how to find the time to meet. School situations will vary and it is important that each school develop solutions to the issue of time to meet its own needs. Some suggestions include:

- relief from face-to-face teaching time
- allocation of training and development funding to provide teacher release
- flexibility in allocation of playground duty.

Tutor Programs

When students require more consistent individualised instruction than classroom conditions allow, peer and adult tutoring can be used. Research indicates that the better the quality of the tutoring program, the better the student outcomes.

Quality in tutoring programs involves:

- directness of instructional input, ie one-to-one
- feedback to tutor and student being tutored
- prompts and reinforcement provided for student
- amount of structure in the activities.

Programs are effective when they use:

- parents/caregivers
- adult volunteers
- cross-age and same-age tutors.

Such programs have all been shown to be successful in improving student outcomes.

Tutoring programs are most effective when tutors are trained in:

- the principles of effective tutoring
- the skills to be used in the tutoring program
- building a positive interaction with the student being tutored
- avoiding the reinforcement of undesirable behaviours
- developing a systematic format for the activities.

Tutor programs are successful when:

- they are **valued by the school**
- they provide individual students with **daily** sessions
- **tutors are trained** to implement the program
- **feedback** is provided to class teacher, student and tutor.

SECTION 2

Reading	68
Conventions of Print	69
Structures of printed text	69
Functions of printed text	70
Terminology of printed text	71
Phonological Processing	71
Phonemic awareness	72
Knowledge of letter–sound correspondences	74
Blending	77
Visual (Graphological) Processing	78
Choice of Text	79
Reading Comprehension	81
Word recognition	82
Knowledge of language structures and features	83
Prior knowledge of text content	83
Comprehension strategies	84
Writing	87
Sentence Construction and Structure	87
Sentence Manipulation	88
Field Knowledge	89
Knowledge of Text Types	90
Planning to Write	91
Developing Writing	92
Aspects of Writing (Spelling/Handwriting)	94
Spelling	94
Handwriting	96
Talking and Listening	98
Spoken Language Development	98
Receptive Language Skills	100
Expressive Language Skills	102
Articulation	102
Pragmatic Language Skills	104

READING

As students engage with and enjoy a variety of texts, teachers should ensure that the following concepts are developed:

- print, like speech, communicates meaning
- spoken language can be written down
- language can be separated into words
- written language in English is organised according to certain conventions such as horizontal lines, spaces between words, direction from left to right
- written words in English are made up of a limited number of symbols, called letters, that have distinct shapes
- words can be identified by their appearance
- spoken words are made up of sounds that are represented in written words by letters and letter combinations.

(English K-6, 1994, pp 25-26)

Word recognition involves integration of four processing systems in order to gain meaning from print. These systems are:

- contextual
- semantic
- phonological
- visual (graphological).

The processing systems that are relatively hard for students with learning difficulties to integrate are the phonological and visual (graphological).

For students experiencing difficulties in learning, reading needs to focus on:

- conventions of print
- phonological processing
- graphological processing
- choice of text
- reading comprehension.

Conventions of Print

Students need to know:

- the structures of printed text
- the functions of printed text
- the terminology associated with printed text.

Structures of printed text

Students need to know the **directional rules** associated with printed text, ie where to start reading, which direction to follow, what to do at the end of a line and directionality within individual words. Some students will require considerable repetition and practice to learn and use these directional rules in their own reading.

To teach students directional rules, the teacher can:

- ensure all students can identify 'where to start reading' and 'which direction to go' when any printed text is involved in a classroom activity
- use prompts to identify where to start reading (and writing), eg star in left corner of name tags, flashcards, stencils, student books, classroom labels; asking individual students to come and point to where the teacher should start to read a story
- teach students where to go at the end of a line of print when there is only one line, or when there are two or more lines.

Note: to avoid confusion when initially teaching directionality, it is better to use text that has a conventional layout of print. Text that lays out print in a less conventional manner (ie text in bubbles or text arranged haphazardly on the page) can be introduced once students understand directionality and use it in independent reading.

Students need to be taught the **concept of a word and a letter**. Many students will require explicit instruction to learn these concepts, particularly those students who may have had little experience with text prior to coming to school.

Students can be taught that:

- words can be of varying lengths
- the spaces between words indicate that a new word is coming up
- words are made up of letters.

To teach students the concept of a word or letter the teacher can:

- have individual students point to each word as it is read aloud by the teacher
- have students match printed words on a flashcard to those in a printed sentence
- get students to clap each word in a printed sentence as it is read aloud by the teacher
- have students cut a printed sentence into individual words
- highlight words by writing each one in a different colour
- model the writing of the individual letters to make up a word.

Students need to be able to identify punctuation, understand its function in printed text and use punctuation in obtaining meaning from text. Students in the early stages of reading can be taught:

- fullstops
- capital letters and lower-case letters
- exclamation marks
- question marks
- quotation marks
- commas.

Later, students can be taught:

- paragraphs
- abbreviations
- apostrophes (possessive and plural)
- brackets.

Students with difficulties in learning will require explicit instruction in the identification and purpose of punctuation, as well as many opportunities to use punctuation to help obtain meaning from text in shared, guided and independent reading.

Functions of printed text

Students need to learn that print conveys a message and that the message can be read by others. This concept may require explicit instruction for some students, particularly those who have had little experience with text prior to school. It is also particularly important to monitor students to ensure that they do not become reliant only on pictorial clues or memorising text, rather than acquiring an understanding of how print functions and developing independent word-recognition skills.

Terminology of printed text

It is important that students understand the terminology associated with text. It should not be assumed that all students understand such terminology as front, back, cover, title, picture, top, bottom, next, first and last. An understanding of such terminology is particularly important in early reading instruction. Lack of explicit instruction and repetition may cause problems for some students.

Later in reading instruction, students can be taught terms such as index, table of contents, bibliography, references; the purposes of these sections; and how to use them to gain information from texts.

Phonological Processing

Phonological processing is a means of supporting students in building up word-recognition skills in order to gain meaning from print. Students need phonological awareness to be able to utilise the alphabetic principle effectively in reading and spelling.

(*English K-6*, 1994, p 220)

When focusing on phonological processing, it is important to consider that:

- acquisition of phonological processing skills is essential to successful reading; it is also a useful indicator of the development of reading skills
- training in phonemic awareness along with instruction in specific letter–sound relationships enhances growth in early word-reading skills
- older skilled and unskilled readers differ in phonological processing skills
- phonological skills are necessary for successful reading development, ie there is a close relationship between phonemic awareness and reading.

(Refer to 'Phonological Processing' in *English K-6*, pp 220–222)

Phonological processing involves:

- phonemic awareness
- knowledge of letter–sound correspondences
- blending.

Phonemic awareness

Phonemic awareness refers to a conscious awareness of the sounds (phonemes) in spoken words and the ability to manipulate them, eg a child is able to tell you that the word *cat* has three sounds and the first sound is *c*.

Phonemic awareness:

- complements reading and spelling
- helps students use what they know about letter–sound correspondences in reading and spelling.

The following suggestions can be used to develop phonemic awareness in young children who demonstrate difficulties:

- commence with easier activities and move to more difficult activities
- teach the later, more difficult skills of exchange and deletion in conjunction with reading and spelling instruction
- develop phonemic awareness through spelling instruction for older students who have difficulties with phonemic awareness.

Introducing phonemic awareness

Rhyming — the ability to recognise words that rhyme and then to produce words that rhyme with a given word.

Examples: ‘Do fish and dish rhyme?’

‘Do sit and fat rhyme?’

‘Tell me a word that rhymes with mat.’

Developing awareness of initial and final sounds

Alliteration — the ability to identify words that begin with the same sound (phoneme).

Examples: ‘Do sat and sip begin with the same sound?’

‘Do far and mat begin with the same sound?’

Isolation — the ability to say the phoneme and its position in the word.

Examples: 'Tell me a word that starts with the same sound as bag and bin.'

'What sound can you hear at the beginning of rocket?'

'What sound can you hear at the end of mat?'

'What sound can you hear in the middle of sit?'

Sequence of phonemes in words

Blending — involves joining extended units of continuous sound to form a whole word.

Example: 'Tell me what word these sounds make — mmmmaaattt (mat).'

Segmentation — the awareness that words are made up of one or more phonemes.

Examples: 'Stretch the word fat — f a t.'

'How many sounds can you hear in the word chip? — c h i p (three sounds)?'

Phonemic awareness skills to be taught in conjunction with reading and spelling

Exchange — involves replacing one phoneme with another phoneme to make a different word.

Examples: 'The word is wet. Take away the *e* and put in an *i*. What is the new word?'

'Make/write as many words as you can from *sat* by changing the beginning letter, ie *rat, fat, mat, pat.*'

Deletion — involves deleting a phoneme from a word to make a new word.

Examples: 'The word is *bin*. Now take away the *b*. What is the new word?'

'The word is *mend*. Now take away the *d*. What is the new word?'

'The word is *monkey*. Take away the *k*. What is the new word?'

(The above suggestions are adapted from Jardine & Goyen, 1994.)

Knowledge of letter–sound correspondences

Students need to be taught letter–sound correspondences to prepare them for sounding out words. When students sound out words they must produce the sound represented by each letter in the word, blend the sounds and then identify the word.

Instruction should include information about:

- single letters and letter combinations
- parts of words such as rimes, eg *all*
- parts of words such as onsets, eg *st-ar*
- letter strings, eg *-sh*, and *-tion*.

Effective instruction in letter–sound knowledge involves:

- clear and explicit instruction
- providing opportunities for students to use letter–sound knowledge for both word recognition and comprehension in text reading
- getting students to notice orthographic patterns in words and to use those patterns to recognise words
- development of automatic word-recognition skills so that students can devote their attention to comprehension and not working out individual words.

Students with difficulties in learning particularly benefit from the explicit teaching of letter–sound correspondences and blending. Explicit instruction involves:

- consideration of the order of introduction of letter–sound correspondences
- many opportunities to read words containing letter–sound correspondences in isolation and in context
- mastery before new letter–sound correspondences are introduced.

Guidelines for the order of introduction of letter–sound correspondences are as follows:

- introduce initially only the most common sound for the new letter
- separate letters that are visually or aurally similar, ie *b* and *d*, *n* and *m*

- introduce more useful letters before less useful letters, ie letters such as *a m s t* occur more often in words than the letters *x q z* and should be taught first
- introduce lower case letters before upper case letters.

Following these guidelines, a **suggested sequence** for the introduction of single letter–sound correspondences is as follows:

a m t s i f d r o g l h u c b n k v e w j p y x q z

Letter combinations can be introduced after students know the most common sounds for single consonants and vowels and can decode passages made up of regular words at a speed of about 20 words per minute. This rate of fluency indicates that students are not sounding out words and can read words as units, and will make decoding words that contain letter combinations easier.

Two factors can help determine the order in which letter combinations are introduced:

1. The number of words in which the letter combination appears and how frequently these words occur in text.

Example: the digraph *ph* appears in a large number of words, but many of these words do not commonly occur in early text. Therefore, *ph* would not be introduced as early as indicated by its frequency of occurrence.

2. The similarity of the sounds or visual appearance of letter combinations.

Examples: the following letter combinations should be separated in their introduction because they either sound similar and/or look similar:

- *sh* and *ch*
- *oa*, *oi*, *oo* and *ou*
- *ar* (arm), *ur* (fur) and *or* (sport).

Letter combinations representing the same sound (*ee* and *ea*, *ai* and *ay*, *ir* and *ur*, *oi* and *oy*, *au* and *aw*) need not be separated.

Based on these guidelines, **one possible** order for introducing letter combinations could be:

- | | |
|--------|---------|
| 1. th | 15. or |
| 2. er | 16. ay |
| 3. ing | 17. igh |
| 4. sh | 18. ou |
| 5. wh | 19. ir |
| 6. qu | 20. ur |
| 7. ol | 21. kn |
| 8. oa | 22. oi |
| 9. ar | 23. oy |
| 10. ea | 24. ph |
| 11. oo | 25. wr |
| 12. ee | 26. au |
| 13. ai | 27. aw |
| 14. ch | |

Effective letter–sound instruction helps students to develop word-recognition skills. This instruction should include:

- drawing their attention to the order of letters in words
- having them examine the common letter patterns through sounding out words (blending)
- showing the similarities between words.

As an interim step, rules can be useful in helping students see the patterns in words. Some rules, such as the ‘silent e rule’, point out common patterns in words. Rules are not useful enough to be taught as absolutes.

An alternative to teaching rules is using onsets and rimes:

- breaking down syllables into onsets (the part of the syllable before the vowel)
- rimes (the part of the syllable including the vowel onward) may be useful to help students process syllables.

Letter–sound correspondences are more consistent when looking at rimes than when letters are looked at in isolation. For example: *ea* taken alone stands for a number of sounds in different words. However, it is very regular in all rimes except *-ead* (*bread* and *bead*) and *-eaf* (*sheaf* and *deaf*).

Nearly 500 words can be derived from the following 37 rimes:

-ack	-ain	-ake	-ale	-all	-ame
-an	-ank	-ap	-ash	-at	-ate
-aw	-ay	-eat	-ell	-est	-ice
-ick	-ide	-ight	-ill	-in	-ine
-ing	-ink	-ip	-ir	-ock	-oke
-op	-or	-ore	-uck	-ug	-ump
-unk					

Students can be taught to compare an unknown word to known words and to use context to confirm their predictions.

Example: when encountering the word *stick* in the sentence 'The dog chased the stick', a student can be taught to compare it to the known word *pick* and say 'If p-ick is pick then st-ick is stick'.

This use of analogy can also be used when asking students to write words.

Blending

Blending is the combining of sounds into a word.

The easiest sounds to blend are those which are continuous such as *r, l, s, z, f, v, n, m, ng* and the vowel. Stop sounds such as *t, p, b, c,* are more difficult to blend particularly at the beginning of a word.

When blending it is important to stress the left-to-right direction of the letters in the word.

Examples

Teacher

'Listen to these sounds. I'm going to stretch them out, then I'll put them together fast to make a word 'SSSS ... aaaa ... mmmm'. The word is 'Sam'. Your turn.'

or

'Listen. 'fff ... uuu ... nnnn'. What is the word?'

Student

'Fun'

Teacher

Look at this word. We know the sounds for these letters. I'll say them as I point to them - SSSS ... aaaaa ... mmmm. I'm going to point faster and I'll slide the sounds together to make the word 'Sam'.

Let's do one together.

Both

mmmm ...aaaaa ...nnnnnn

A suggested sequence from easy to difficult for teaching blending is as follows:

1. modelling of oral blending (ie without using letters)
 - continuous sounds
 - stop sounds
2. consonant vowel consonant (CVC) words
 - continuous sounds
 - stop sounds
3. consonant consonant vowel consonant (CCVC) and consonant vowel consonant consonant (CVCC) words, eg slap, jump
4. words with long vowel sounds, eg mate
5. words with vowel digraphs, eg rain.

Visual (Graphological) Processing

The visual processing system gradually builds up detailed visual images of a growing number of words that it can process automatically, with the aid of the other processing systems. Accuracy, fluency and eventually automaticity in recognising individual sight words depend greatly upon the completeness and rapidity of visual memory of words.

In the early stages of reading, recognition of a number of commonly occurring (high-frequency) words allows a student to experience success while other word-recognition skills are being taught concurrently.

Students also need to be taught to recognise irregular words that are difficult to work out using the other processing systems. These include commonly occurring words such as *the, here, where*. In later reading development these include words that are exceptions to letter–sound correspondence rules, eg *break*, or contain uncommon letter patterns, eg *fuel, ceiling*.

Students with learning difficulties will usually require practice to remember words through the visual processing system.

This can be achieved using:

- copying activities using plastic letters, computers or handwriting
- match-to-sample activities (for further information refer to *English K–6*, ‘Dictionary of Classroom Practices’)
- games such as Concentration, Snap, Fish
- focus on word shape
- spelling and writing activities that involve reproduction of the word from memory
- opportunities to practise reading text containing words that have been the focus of instruction.

Choice of Text

The reading of a variety of literary and factual texts is of prime importance in any English program. This is because:

- it develops students’ interest in and desire to read text
- it develops an awareness of the social purpose and audience of texts
- it allows students to develop concepts about print and gives students practice in using words that are recognised automatically and words that require phonological processing.

The ultimate goal is that students become independent readers by the use of integrated reading strategies to get to the meaning of new text without assistance.

When planning the reading program it is important to ensure that students have many opportunities to read a variety of texts:

- at the instructional level (90–95% accuracy)
- at the independent level (95–100% accuracy).

The repetition of known words in these manageable texts will assist in word-recognition.

When choosing texts, teachers should consider certain features that influence text difficulty for students. Some aspects that require consideration are:

text content – field or subject matter of the text

- number of new words per page
- number of words that are in the student's sight vocabulary
- whether the words are repeated to enable practice
- whether the sentences are controlled (ie pattern repeated) and predictable
- total number of words

sentences – total number per page

- sentence pattern retained or not

pictures – portray text accurately or not

- provide additional information not conveyed in the written text

print layout – return sweep required

- number of lines per page
- print size.

Features of text that support students with difficulties in learning to read include:

- use of phonemically regular words in early stages
- use of repetition of words
- avoidance of excessive unknown sight words
- use of regular print and direction
- words with letter–sound correspondences that are known and those the student is learning
- text at instructional level for guided reading
- text at independent level to practise known skills and develop fluency
- high interest, appropriate age content.

Some texts have been designed to provide opportunities to practise known and newly learned word-recognition skills and conventions of print (see Appendix 1 for examples). If such texts are not available it is critically important that students have opportunities for repetition in other ways.

(See Appendix 2 for examples of titles suitable for older students who may be having difficulties learning to read).

As students begin reading it is important:

- to use more than one reading scheme for all experiences with text
- to ensure children have opportunities to generalise skills to other texts through shared and independent reading.

When matching individual students to text it is important to note that:

- text at an instructional level:
 - can be read with 90–95% accuracy by students
 - provides the teacher with opportunities to teach students new skills
 - provides students with opportunities to consolidate previously learned skill
- text at an independent reading level:
 - can be read with 95–100% accuracy by students
 - provides students with opportunities to read to develop fluency, practise known skills
 - provides students with opportunities to read for a variety of purposes
- text where the student is below 90% accuracy:
 - can be used during shared reading lessons for the teacher to model and explain reading skills and strategies
 - can be used during shared reading to build students' field knowledge.

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is an interactive process through which the reader uses:

- word recognition
- knowledge of language structures and features
- prior knowledge
- vocabulary knowledge
- strategies, eg finding main idea, clarifying, self-monitoring, and predicting to gain meaning from text.

Word recognition

Students will have great difficulty with recall and comprehension in reading unless they can process most of the words in a printed text instantly and without effort. 'Unless students achieve a level of accuracy, fluency and automaticity in word recognition they will have difficulty accessing meaning in text independently.' (*English K-6*, 1994, p 243)

Word recognition is a prerequisite to comprehension, but comprehension should not be delayed until word recognition is mastered. Comprehension can be commenced with listening comprehension and move to reading comprehension as students develop word-recognition skills.

Word recognition includes both accuracy and fluency. Automaticity in word recognition frees the student's working memory (short-term memory) to focus on the meaning of printed text. Students who are experiencing difficulties in learning to read may need assistance in developing word-recognition automaticity, ie fluency.

Word-recognition automaticity can be developed by:

- providing daily opportunities to read words in isolation and in texts
- developing a knowledge of letter–sound correspondences and blending to read words
- encouraging students to read more fluently and with expression
- re-reading the same passage in a text, ie 'Repeated Reading'
- developing automatic recognition of irregular words
- previewing the text prior to student reading, ie listen to teacher read, student pre-reads silently.

The following table provides a guide for determining oral-reading fluency rates for words in isolation and text reading. This guide can be used to determine fluency criteria for students' text reading and recognition of high-frequency words.

Oral Reading Rate Data Guide: Words Per Minute (wpm)

	Kinder–Year 2	Years 3–4	Years 5>
Words in isolation	25–30+ wpm correct 0–2 errors	30–45+ wpm correct 0–2 errors	45–50+ wpm correct 0–2 errors
Text reading	50–80+ wpm correct 0–3 errors	80–100+ wpm correct 0–3 errors	100–120+ wpm correct 0–3 errors

Adapted from Neal (1990)

Knowledge of language structures and features

The language of written texts can vary as a result of a number of factors, including:

- the social purpose of the text
- intended audience
- context of culture and context of situation (field, tenor and mode).

Some students may have difficulty comprehending written text if there is a difference between the student's language and the language of the text. This may be particularly the case for students with spoken language difficulties and/or students with English as a second language.

Prior knowledge of text content

Another prerequisite to comprehension is prior knowledge of the text content. A student who does not have knowledge and experience of the information about the field (subject matter) of text will have difficulty comprehending the text. A student's accuracy at comprehension will vary as the content of the text varies. This means that a student may easily comprehend familiar material but have difficulty with unfamiliar material (see 'Field knowledge' p 89)

It is established that:

- activation of relevant background knowledge prior to reading facilitates comprehension
- beginning readers and students having difficulties with reading often do not activate their prior knowledge

- prior knowledge provides a framework into which a reader can assimilate new information
- some students may not monitor their comprehension effectively because of an inadequate knowledge base.

To develop students' prior knowledge, a teacher can:

- use questioning to identify relevant prior knowledge
- build field knowledge of the text prior to reading through talking, listening, reading and writing activities
- focus discussion of a literary text on events and characters that are central to the story or that are central to the relationships between events in the text
- discuss pictures that illustrate the main events of the text
- focus questions in a factual text on the key ideas of the text
- encourage students to read and discuss texts related to the same field/topic.

The following points should be stressed:

- there is a strong link between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension
- there is a cyclical effect, ie a good start in vocabulary knowledge generates greater vocabulary knowledge
- when a number of unknown word meanings are encountered during reading, comprehension is impaired and this may have an adverse effect on the amount of reading consequently performed.

Three properties of vocabulary instruction have been found to be effective in increasing reading comprehension.

These involve:

- integration of words being taught with other knowledge
- repetition and sufficient practice to ensure that the student can quickly and easily remember the meaning of a word
- meaningful use of words being taught in a variety of contexts, eg sentence completion, word association activities.

Comprehension strategies

Some students also need to be taught how to go about comprehending written text. These students often do not monitor the meaning of text as they read; do not re-read text when it does not make sense; do not make inferences; do not self-question as

they read; or do not distinguish important from less important ideas in text. These students need to be taught how to use comprehension strategies.

Strategies for improving reading comprehension can involve:

- **basic skills strategies**, such as locating factual information, finding main ideas
- **metacognitive or learning strategies**, such as summarising, self-questioning, clarifying, predicting, reflecting.

Basic skills strategies include:

- **Literal Comprehension**
Literal comprehension is the simplest type of comprehension, where the answer is directly stated in the text.
- **Finding Main Ideas**
Finding main ideas in text involves being able to distinguish important from less important ideas and being able to recall them.
- **Inferential Comprehension**
Inferential comprehension requires knowledge of the relationships between two objects or events. Usually the relationship is not specified directly in the text. The reader has to either know the particular relationship or infer it from the information in the text.

Learning strategies involve training students to use comprehension strategies to help them to monitor their own behaviour while reading.

Strategy instruction can occur:

- **before reading text**
Instructional strategies before reading text might emphasise discussing the social purpose of the text, selecting important features of text, activating prior knowledge, the audience of the text, setting specific learning goals.

Example.

Predicting based on examining the title and other text features, developing semantic webs, discussing vocabulary, reading and discussing questions to be answered and brainstorming.

- **during text reading**

Strategies during text reading emphasise monitoring comprehension. This could involve clarifying and modifying ideas, summarising, elaborating and, for older students, taking notes.

Example

Asking students to monitor their own comprehension by seeking to clarify information, summarising sections of text, discussing and writing predictions and separating important from unimportant information.

- **after text reading**

Strategies after text reading emphasise constructing meaning from the text and extending learning by generalising to other contexts.

Example

Discussing the information in the text, categorising the information in the text, summarising, writing.

A strategy that has been found to assist in the comprehension of text is **reciprocal teaching**.

This procedure is designed to enable the teacher and student to change roles and teach others to answer questions. It is a form of cooperative learning where the teacher and students work collaboratively to achieve an understanding of the text. Reciprocal teaching is an example of a procedure designed to provide small groups of students with instruction in strategies that have been found to help students comprehend the text, ie questioning, summarising, clarifying and predicting.

For further information refer to Palinscar and Brown (1984).

WRITING

As students become proficient at writing they will develop an understanding of how to write a variety of texts for a range of social purposes in different contexts.

This will involve:

- becoming familiar with the structure and grammar of texts
- writing a variety of texts for different audiences
- consolidating movements and shapes of the NSW Foundation Style of handwriting
- considering direction and layout of print
- planning, drafting, redrafting, editing and publishing text
- using appropriate structure and grammar
- using strategies for spelling
- learning how to use punctuation accurately.

(adapted from *English K-6*, 1994, p 42)

Students with difficulties in learning to write may have difficulties with:

- **sentence construction and structure**
- **sentence manipulation**
- **field knowledge**
- **knowledge of text types**
- **planning their writing**
- **developing their writing**
- **aspects of writing (spelling/handwriting).**

Sentence Construction and Structure

Many students with learning difficulties have difficulties learning how to write both simple and complex sentences.

The following teaching steps can be used with students who are having difficulties learning to write a sentence. The teacher should ensure that activities used in the procedure are relevant and motivating for the student.

The teaching steps involve the following:

1. Select an activity or picture.
2. Students choose the sentence that tells the main thing about the picture/activity from two, then three, alternatives.
3. Students complete a sentence beginning that tells the main thing about a picture/activity.
4. Students write a sentence that tells the 'main thing' that happened in a picture or series of pictures/activities.
5. Students write sentences that tell the 'main thing' that happened in a series of pictures (two, then three, pictures/activities).
6. Students combine simple sentences to create complex sentences using conjunctions such as *and*, *but*.

At each step the teacher can:

- explain and review the features of a sentence, ie a sentence is a grammatical structure consisting of either one clause or several clauses. A written sentence will begin with a capital letter and end with a full stop, question mark or an exclamation mark. A clause is the message in the sentence and should contain a verb.
- explain and model writing using examples
- provide guided practice, ie joint construction
- provide opportunities for independent practice.

Students with learning difficulties will usually require more guided and independent practice to learn each skill and should not move to the next teaching step until they can confidently perform the skill without teacher assistance.

Sentence Manipulation

Once students have learned to write sentences they can be taught how to manipulate sentences. Sentence manipulation is an important aspect of writing if students are to control the flexibility of sentences. Sentence-manipulation activities can initially involve the use of word cards.

Sentence-manipulation activities can include:

- sentence expansion — extending existing sentences by building noun groups, adding phrases that provide information about how, when, where and why
- sentence reduction — reducing a long sentence by removing one word at a time, ensuring the sentence makes sense
- sentence transformation — transforming a sentence by changing one word at a time, eg a noun for a noun, a verb for a verb; singular to plural; changing tense
- sentence reconstruction — listing words and phrases on individual cards and using them for sentence creation and reconstruction
- sentence completion — providing sentence beginnings or endings for students to complete
- sentence modelling — using familiar sentence patterns from a shared text as the basis for the construction of more sentences
- sentence comparison — comparing sentences and discussing how they may be rearranged to be more interesting for different audiences
- sentence stems — changing a given sentence depending on the purpose of the text, eg recount, procedure.

Adapted from *First Steps Writing Resource Book*, Education Department of WA, 1994

Field Knowledge

Field knowledge may include technical or specialised language related to the content/subject matter. Teachers will need to provide opportunities for students to become familiar with technical or specialised language.

Students need to establish knowledge of the field so that they are prepared to participate in joint/collaborative and/or independent writing activities. A wide variety of resources should be used to establish this knowledge.

Building up knowledge of the field involves students becoming familiar with particular words, word groups and phrases associated with a particular field.

Students need to be explicitly taught how to research information using the steps in the 'information process'. These steps include: defining, locating, selecting, organising, presenting and assessing information. (For further information refer to *English K-6*, p 253.)

The teacher can assist in developing students' field knowledge by:

- acknowledging and building on the student's own knowledge and experience of the field/topic
- providing a range of written, spoken and visual sources including factual, literary and media texts, eg guest speakers, excursions, TV programs, videos, computer software, newspapers, magazines, diagrams, graphs, reference books
- providing opportunities for students to engage in reading, writing, talking and listening activities in all key learning areas
- demonstrating how to use dictionaries, encyclopedias and other information sources for explanations of technical terms.

Knowledge of Text Types

Teaching the social purpose, structure and grammar of text types will assist students who have difficulties in writing. Knowledge of text types enables students to be aware of some of the ways in which language is used for a variety of purposes in different contexts. As students become familiar with the structure and grammar of text types, they begin to understand the relationship between text, context and the language system.

The teacher can assist in developing knowledge of text types by:

- sharing readings of a variety of literary and factual texts
- providing opportunities for students to discuss the similarities and differences in the structure and grammar of text types
- pointing out the social purpose and intended audience of literary and factual texts
- displaying models of text types
- pointing out the structure of a text type
- encouraging students to participate in joint construction of text activities
- providing opportunities for students to explore the structure of text types in a variety of text reconstruction activities
- ensuring students are familiar with a text type structure and grammar before engaging in independent construction activities.

Planning to Write

Students may require teacher intervention and assistance when:

- planning
- drafting
- editing text.

Planning

The teacher can assist students to plan for writing by:

- modelling
- joint construction of text activities
- assisting students to identify what they already know about a topic and what they need to find out
- having students decide on the social purpose and audience for their writing
- teaching students how to select and order information from a variety of sources
- modelling and teaching skimming, scanning and notetaking
- teaching students how to sequence ideas according to the social purpose of the text
- using specific questions (who, what, when, where, which, how often, why) to assist in sequencing ideas
- reminding students about the structure and grammar of text types
- encouraging students to refer to models of text types.

Planning sheets can be used as a scaffold for students to plan their writing. Planning sheets can include:

- a picture or series of pictures
- structure of a particular text type
- who/what/when/why questions.

Some examples of planning sheets are provided in Appendix 3.

Drafting

The teacher can help students to draft their writing by:

- reminding them of the social purpose of the writing
- modelling drafting

- teaching them to present ideas in a logical and well-formed structure
- teaching them to make effective use of technical aids such as dictionaries and word processors
- pointing out the structure and grammar
- assisting them to organise their information
- encouraging them to re-read their writing.

Editing

The teacher can assist the student in revising and editing by:

- modelling proofreading
- encouraging them to proofread their own writing with a peer
- providing feedback to students on what they have corrected for themselves and what else may need attention
- reminding them how to use dictionaries and other reference books
- providing instruction to develop punctuation, spelling and handwriting skills
- ensuring that everything in a student's writing is correct for publishing
- modelling how to use a variety of information sources for additional information.

Developing Writing

Students with learning difficulties often do not produce quantity in their writing. In order to increase the quantity of writing it is necessary to develop student skills in:

- sentence structure, construction and manipulation
- knowledge of text-type structures
- spelling and handwriting
- planning and revising writing.

Some specific strategies for developing writing used concurrently with instruction in the skills previously identified are shown below. These strategies can be varied according to the age and maturity of the students and the text type or text form being taught.

Expanding an Idea

On an individual student worksheet, write two (or more) lines of a text.

Example

Yesterday I went to the beach.

(leave two lines)

I went swimming in the surf.

(leave two lines)

Teacher models completing the lines omitted to write a text.

Teacher provides guided practice.

Teacher gradually encourages independent use.

Teacher combines simple sentences.

Teacher edits.

Source: Westwood (1993)

Skeleton Writing

Provide the 'skeleton' outline for writing. The length will depend on the age and skills of the student.

Example

Last night I heard a strange noise outside my window.

I quietly climbed out of bed

To my surprise

Then I saw

I was lucky because

In the end

I will never

- Teacher reads the outline with the students
- Teacher and students discuss the writing
- Teacher writes vocabulary and/or phrases on the board
- Students write their own text by completing the sentences
- Students share stories

Source: Adapted from Westwood (1993)

Aspects of Writing (Spelling/Handwriting)

Students with difficulties in learning will require explicit instructions to develop skills in spelling and handwriting. Students may be preoccupied with the mechanical demands of text production (eg handwriting, spelling and punctuation), which may interfere with drafting, writing and/or revising texts.

Spelling

Learning to read and spell, particularly in the beginning stages, are far more closely related to auditory processing abilities than previously believed.

Teachers should consider that:

- unfamiliar words appear to require an analysis into their component sounds before an attempt can be made to write them. What has been written can then be checked for accuracy in terms of visual appearance
- familiar high-frequency words are written mainly from memory, but checked for visual appearance by the writer.

In spelling words, students need to learn to combine four separate but related strategies:

- knowledge of letters — letter–sound correspondences and their graphic representation
- knowledge of the spelling system — phoneme–grapheme relationships and phoneme segmentation
- lexical knowledge — recall of specific word spellings and the relationship between letter patterns and their phonemes
- meaning or morphemes.

Learning about spelling:

- reinforces knowledge about common letter sequences
- reinforces knowledge about spelling–sound relationships and may help children become aware of word parts
- enhances reading proficiency.

Systematic spelling instruction is required for those students who:

- experience difficulty in acquiring spelling skills through their daily reading and writing experiences
- experience difficulty in learning to spell words through incidental learning as they require time, practice and cumulative experience with letter patterns.

It should not be assumed that an accurate and fluent reader will learn spelling techniques from reading.

Some considerations when teaching children to spell words include:

- teach spelling skills concurrently with reading skills, ie if students are learning to read consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words they can also learn to write them
- develop phonological skills so that students can listen to the sounds and syllables in words and be able to represent these sounds with the appropriate letter/s and letter patterns
- teach students to write words by analogy, eg if students can write *tall* they can also write *fall*, *ball*, *small* by changing the initial sound
- build up a knowledge of letter strings that represent common sound units within words, such as *-ight*, *-tion*
- teach students structural analysis of words, eg prefixes and suffixes
- teach students strategies for checking the spellings of words, eg checking visual appearance, using dictionaries
- teach spelling rules to assist in writing 'difficult to remember' words
- use a Look-Cover-Write-Check strategy for students to learn irregular words where the letter sequence cannot be accurately determined by listening to the sounds in the word.

The following teaching steps can be used with students who find it difficult to hear and write the separate phonemes in regular words:

- begin with two and three letter words (eg *in*, *on*, *can*, *fat*)
- proceed to three and four letter words (eg *tin*, *ran*, *flat*, *plan*)
- introduce combinations (eg *ch*, *th*)
- verbal prompts (ie teacher instructions) and physical prompts (ie stretching the word and letter cards) can be gradually faded out.

The teaching steps involve:

1. The teacher says the word and the student repeats the word out aloud — 'The word is *can*. What is the word?'.
This allows the teacher to check that the student is saying all the sounds in the word correctly and also to help the student remember the word.
2. The teacher demonstrates 'stretching' the word out, ie saying the word slowly so that each phoneme is said separately.
'Let's stretch the word so we can hear all the sounds — c ... a ... n'.
The teacher can demonstrate by pulling their hands apart to demonstrate stretching.
3. The teacher suggests 'Your turn, stretch the word.' The student stretches the word out without assistance, saying each phoneme clearly.
4. The student then says each sound they can hear in the word in response to 'Tell me the sounds you hear in *can*'.
The student can touch a finger on their hand for each sound.
5. The student then makes the word with letter cards in response to 'Make the word with your letter cards.'
The student is encouraged to keep repeating the word in the 'stretched out' way as they find the correct letter cards.
6. 'Now write the word *can*.' The student then writes the word they have made with the letter cards.
The student is encouraged to say the sounds as they write the word.

Adapted from *First Spelling Parts 1 and 2* by Whipp, J (1992)

Handwriting

Handwriting can have an effect on a student's formulation of messages as well as spelling performance. Students who have not mastered the skill of handwriting are often unable to concentrate on writing. These skills should be taught so that they can be performed quickly and without hesitation.

Accuracy in handwriting can be developed by:

- carefully demonstrating strategies for correct performance (ie letter formation, pencil grip, posture), and
- extensive guided practice.

In the case of students who have practised incorrect usage of these strategies, the teacher may need to provide specific instruction and correction procedures and sufficient time for practice.

If students are reversing letters, provide a range of activities that focus on the correct letter formation:

- model letter formation on student's paper
- verbalise letter formation
- provide opportunities for practice using a variety of writing implements on a variety of paper
- provide feedback on student's performance
- encourage them to develop patterns to reinforce correct letter formation.

Some students may need to use alternative means to produce written text. These may include:

- using a scribe
- saying text onto tape to be transcribed
- using a typewriter or word processor.

TALKING AND LISTENING

Spoken language involves talking and listening. Talking and listening are learned through:

- interaction with others in a range of contexts
- interaction with others for a range of purposes
- students developing knowledge about the ways spoken texts are constructed
- modelling and joint construction activities.

Spoken language requires students to use receptive and expressive language skills to communicate and interact with others.

Spoken language will influence and be influenced by context. The context of culture and the context of situation influence the creation and interpretation of texts. Students need to develop pragmatic skills to enable them to know and use language appropriately according to different contexts.

Spoken Language Development

Common to most communication disorders is an overall delay in the development of speech, language or functional use of language.

Students who have a communication disorder affecting language skills are characterised by late onset and slow development of language.

There can be wide variations in the rate of acquisition of spoken language. Students may have difficulties because their language development is delayed or disordered.

A slow rate of acquisition indicates **delay**.

Variations from the normal order of acquisition indicate **disorder**.

Delayed language

This reflects slower than usual development, but following normal progression.

Example. a student aged six years may have skills normally associated with four-year-olds. This delay can be due to conditions such as hearing loss, glue ear (otitis media) or chronic illness.

Disordered language

This involves delay in speech development in the areas of:

- articulation (forming and producing specific sounds)
- phonological disorders (stringing sounds into words).

These disorders can affect language development in the following ways:

- differences in the rate of acquisition for skills within one aspect of language
- differences in the rate of acquisition among various aspects of language, eg demonstrate grammatical errors because of problems producing word endings such as plurals
- age-appropriate skills in one or more aspects with lags in acquisition of one or more other aspects of language, eg avoiding difficult words, which affects the diversity of words used.

Because of the disparity in rate of acquisition within and across various linguistic aspects the normal developmental sequence is disrupted.

When students come to school they need to learn to respond effectively to the demands of both the classroom and the wider community. They need to learn:

- the language of instruction
- to vary language according to the context, purpose and audience
- to use spoken language to interact effectively with peers and adults
- spoken language structures and linguistic features
- to use spoken language for problem solving, and exploring ideas and concepts
- the roles and relationships of the language users in the school community

- how to establish and maintain relationships with a variety of people
- how to ask a variety of questions.

Spoken language development norms indicate that children in typical environments master basic language structures between three and five years of age.

Any classroom may contain students whose language is delayed or disordered; who have had difficulty in hearing; whose first language is not English; whose previous experiences of spoken language have been restricted; and/or whose literacy experiences have been very limited.

These students need to be taught spoken language skills directly and systematically if they are to benefit from educational programming.

Students who require direct and systematic spoken language instruction:

- need many opportunities for instruction, guided and independent practice
- respond best when these are integrated into the daily classroom program in both planned and incidental situations
- benefit from the opportunity for collaboration, if required, between health professionals, teachers and support personnel in the development and implementation of programs.

Generally, students may have difficulties with:

- receptive language skills
- expressive language skills
- articulation
- pragmatic language skills.

Receptive Language Skills

Receptive language refers to the ability to understand what is heard and then respond accordingly.

Receptive language involves:

- paying attention to the person speaking
- understanding the words

- identifying and discriminating among people, places, objects and actions
- remembering the information and the directions
- following directions with correct sequencing of steps.

The teacher can assist students with receptive language difficulties by:

- assessing students' understanding of the vocabulary of concepts commonly used in the classroom, eg positional words — above, on top, under, below; temporal words — when, before, last week; size and quantity words — big, little; comparative words — bigger, taller
- encouraging students to ask for help if they haven't understood something
- obtaining students' attention before giving an instruction or information
 - minimise distractions
 - call students by name
 - use a consistent cue to indicate to students when to listen , eg hand-clap, bell
- breaking up long or more than two-part instructions
- giving instructions at the time they are to be carried out and in the context in which they are to be carried out
- building students' memory for directions and instructions by gradually increasing length and complexity
- checking for clarification and understanding after giving instructions or information, eg have the student repeat the instruction, have the student describe what they have to do
- guiding students through each step of instructions or directions, eg use cues such as 'What do you have to do next?' to help complete all steps of the instruction
- linking new information with previously learned information/skills, giving a purpose and providing an overview of what is to be covered
- using physical or verbal prompts paired with instruction, eg pictures, gestures
- providing sufficient time for students to process and act on verbally presented information
- consistently teaching students listening skills
 - ask students to listen for something specific, eg the main idea of a short statement/sentence, the details in a story, or to answer a given question
 - develop listening rules that are displayed on a chart and routinely discussed and reinforced
 - listening activities and games in pairs, groups, whole class
 - phonemic awareness activities.

Expressive Language Skills

Expressive language refers to the ability to formulate and use spoken language.

The teacher can assist students with difficulties in expressive language by:

- providing models of difficult spoken language structures, eg if a student uses incorrect tense 'I caught it', the teacher models 'You caught it, I caught it too'
- providing contexts for students to practise spoken language
- adding or expanding on relevant information to the sentences a student produces, eg student says 'It's hot', teacher says 'Yes, it's hot today. I like this kind of weather.'
- using classifying activities to assist word retrieval and vocabulary, eg sorting objects or pictures, naming items in a category, identifying which one doesn't belong
- playing games that involve concepts or opposites or similarities
- having students practise answering and asking *W/* (who, what, where, why) questions
- teaching students how to sequence their ideas in spoken text:
 - retelling well-known stories
 - retelling stories with picture cues
 - retelling information using story maps
 - using audio and/or video feedback
 - circling retelling of stories
 - cartooning
 - retelling familiar television programs.
- teaching students how to keep on the topic in recounts:
 - using visual cues such as pictures
 - allowing opportunity for rehearsal in pairs
 - providing a structure for spoken language situations, ie tell news in terms of who/what/where/why/when
 - verbal prompts
 - recount recent experiences in pairs/small groups/whole class.

Articulation

Articulation is another area of expressive language. It involves the production of the sounds, consonants and vowels of speech.

The acquisition of the articulation of sounds is gradual and sequential. Most children will develop speech sounds in the same order and at the same age as one another.

The majority of speech sounds are acquired and used regularly by the time a child reaches school age.

The clear production of speech sounds is particularly important in the development of phonemic awareness, blending letter–sound correspondences and spelling words. Difficulties can occur if a student cannot clearly articulate sounds when they are trying to blend them to work out a new word or to segment them to spell a word.

If a student is having difficulty with the articulation of sounds the teacher can discuss with the parents a possible referral to a speech pathologist for assessment.

General considerations for teachers assisting a student with an articulation problem:

- provide a good model in the pronunciation of speech sounds, particularly in phonemic awareness activities, when teaching letter–sound correspondences and spelling activities
- cue the rest of the class about the topic the child is talking about, ie in ‘News’ tell the class what the subject of the student’s news is to help with interpretation
- ask the student to ‘show’ or use gesture
- evaluate which sound(s) are not being used appropriately if a speech pathologist is not available, and choose one identified sound to focus on at a time
- make a special scrapbook to practise the sound
- use a mirror to check mouth and tongue positions when saying the sound
- provide feedback to the student for specifically using the target sound, eg ‘You said *k* really well. I liked the *k* you said then.’
- tell the student you do not understand and ask them to rephrase rather than repeat.

At each step it is important to practise until the student is comfortable with the target sound before moving to the next step, which will be more difficult.

Specific strategies to assist a student with an articulation problem:

- model the target sound in isolation and the student repeats it
- start with easier sounds for the student first and then use more difficult ones
- explain the position of tongue and mouth and the student can use a mirror if necessary
- combine the target sound with a vowel, eg *f – a, f – ee, f – oe*
- practise the target sound at the beginning, middle or end of a vowel, eg *ee – f, a – f*
- say the target sound in simple one syllable words, eg *fat, fun*. The target sound can be at the beginning or end of a word, eg *if, off, leaf*.
- practise with games until the student uses the sound easily

- gradually introduce more difficult words containing the target sound
- use the target sound in simple sentences, eg *the fat man, a funny bus*
- practise using games and rhymes. Gradually increase the difficulty of the sentences
- practise using the sound in short one minute sessions where the student talks for that time in conversation and tries to pronounce the sound correctly
- practise reading sentences with the target sound in it.

At each step it is important to practise until the student is comfortable with the target sound before moving to the next step that will be more difficult.

Pragmatic Language Skills

Pragmatics is knowing and using language appropriately in different contexts, eg being able to take on the roles and relationships of the speakers and listeners.

Some students may have difficulties:

- responding to a listener in a particular context and/or unable to understand the roles and relationships of language users, eg not adapting to different requirements of talking with peers in the playground and a teacher in the classroom
- determining mood structures, eg statements, commands, questions
- using modality, eg inappropriate use of terms such as *must, might, could, should, possibly, usually, always, never*
- initiating and maintaining a conversation or completing an interaction.

The teacher can assist students with difficulties in pragmatic language skills by:

- providing direct instruction and feedback on appropriate social behaviour in a range of contexts
- teaching students how to work in groups
 - provide rules for group work
 - model asking and answering questions
 - model turn-taking
 - demonstrate appropriate ways of interrupting
 - explaining and developing roles
 - conflict-resolution skills
 - provide opportunities for pair work prior to small group activities
- providing clear instructions and expectations
- emphasising the information that is important to learn

- modifying instructional language and ensuring students understand vocabulary
- allowing a longer pause time (wait time) to allow students to answer questions
- explaining purpose of an activity
- providing background information and discussion before expecting the student to discuss
- giving direct instructions rather than indirect
- emphasising metalinguistic skills – using thinking out aloud when explaining how to do a task or use a strategy
- supporting tasks presented orally with visual or other cues
- teaching meanings and uses of:
 - sarcasm, idioms, ambiguities, words with multiple meanings, slang
- teaching nonverbal skills
 - physical proximity
 - appropriate physical contacts
 - body posture
 - gestures
 - facial expressions
- teaching functional aspects of spoken language
 - requesting materials
 - requesting attention (teacher and peers)
 - greetings (variety of people and situations)
 - expressing feelings
 - asking questions
 - answering questions
 - giving information
 - making comments
- teaching conversational skills
 - maintaining a topic
 - indicating when they haven't understood
 - repairing a breakdown in communication
 - giving nonverbal feedback to speaker.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

articulation — involves the production of the sounds, consonants and vowels of speech.

assessment — the process of collecting, analysing and recording information about student progress.

blending — combining sounds (phonemes) into a word.

consonant blend — occurs when two or three consonants appear consecutively in a word and each consonant represents its most common sound. These blends can occur at the beginning of a word (eg *fl-flag, sw-swell, sc-scat, scr-scrap, str-strap*) or at the end of a word (eg *ft-left, lp-help, ct-fact, lts-belts, nks-banks*).

continuous sound — a sound that can be said for several seconds without distorting the sound (eg *a, f, s, m, n*). Words beginning with continuous sounds are easier for students to blend than words beginning with stop sounds.

conventions of print — involves structures of printed text (ie directional rules, concept of a word/letter, punctuation), functions of printed text (ie print conveys a message) and the terminology associated with printed text (ie front, back, cover, title).

cumulative review — frequent reviews of skills taught previously.

curriculum-based assessment — assessment of the skills taught in the classroom program. It can provide information for program planning and monitoring.

delayed language — reflects slower than usual development in language.

digraph — consists of two consecutive letters that represent one sound. There are vowel digraphs (eg *aw-lawn, ay-stay, ea-beat, ee-need*) and consonant digraphs (eg *ch-chip, kn-know, ph-phone, sh-shop*).

diphthong — consists of two consecutive vowels each of which contributes to the sound (eg *ou-cloud, oy-toy*).

disordered language — involves delay in speech development in the areas of articulation and phonological disorders.

evaluation — a judgement made on the basis of information collected through assessment.

expressive language — refers to the ability to formulate and use spoken language.

guided practice — where the teacher guides or leads students through examples of the skill/concept being taught.

high-frequency words — commonly occurring words in written text. They can be phonemically regular (eg *can, in, it*) or irregular (eg *the, there, where, said*).

independent practice — where students practise skills with a minimum of direct assistance from the teacher.

individualised programming — programming that takes into account individual learning needs but does not necessarily require an individual program.

instructional adaptations — where the teacher makes modifications to materials and activities, teaching procedures and/or task requirements.

instructional objective — a statement that describes the behaviour that the student is to achieve as a result of instruction. It should specify the target behaviour, the conditions under which the behaviour will be performed and the criteria for evaluation.

irregular word — a word in which one or more letters does not represent its most common sound (eg *was, the, there*).

monitoring — systematic observation of students to determine progress toward the achievement of instructional objectives and outcomes.

onset — the part of the syllable in a word before the vowel, eg *f* in *fun*, *th* in *thin*.

oral reading fluency — identification of words in a printed text instantly and without effort.

over-learning — providing repeated opportunities to practise a skill after it has been initially learned.

phases of learning — the series of phases a learner learning a new skill/concept moves through. The phases include; acquisition, fluency, maintenance and generalisation.

phonemic awareness — refers to the conscious awareness of the sounds (phonemes) in spoken words and the ability to manipulate them.

phonological processing — involves phonemic awareness, knowledge of letter–sound correspondences and blending.

pragmatic language — involves knowing and using language appropriately in context.

prompts — hints or cues that assist in obtaining a correct response from a student. They may be visual, verbal or physical.

receptive language — ability to understand what is heard and then to act on it.

reciprocal teaching — procedure designed to provide small group instruction in comprehension strategies.

regular word — any word in which each letter represents its most common sound (eg *mud, best, can*).

repeated reading — rereading of the same passage in a text until a specified rate of fluency is achieved.

rime — part of the syllable in a word from the vowel onward, eg *un* in *fun*, *ill* in *bill*.

stop sound — a stop sound can be said for only an instant (eg *b, d, h, g*). Words beginning with stop sounds are more difficult for students to blend than words beginning with continuous sounds.

tutoring — a more proficient person (tutor) working with an individual student under teacher supervision. The tutor may be a volunteer, parents, same age student (peer tutor) or older student (cross-age tutor).

visual (graphological) processing — visual memory of words.

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APPENDIX 1

Texts for Beginning Readers

Literary Texts

PM Starters, Thomas Nelson

New PM Story Books, Thomas Nelson

Red level

Yellow level

Blue level

Green level

Ready to Read, Lioncrest

3 non-text titles

76 titles equivalent to Reading Recovery, levels 1 to 26

Pumpkin Hollow Books, Troll Books

Fishy!

Shifting Sands

Pumpkin Hollow Party

James Wilfred Faunterloy

Dragons of the Dark

Bangers and Mash, Longman

24 titles

9 supplementary readers

Fitzroy Readers, Fitzroy Programs

50 titles— each text covers a basic sound and includes some high-frequency words

Factual Texts

PM Animal Facts and Machine Facts, Thomas Nelson

Pumpkin Hollow Books, Troll Books

Dance with Dolphins

Monty's Tale

Party Plans

Round and Round

Night Skies

APPENDIX 2

Texts for Older Readers

Literary Texts

Skinny Book Series, Angus and Robertson

38 titles, for example:

Bad Bold Ben

Tin Can Puppy

Santa Claws

Friday Card

Horribubble

He's Got to Go

Nora the Snorer

Tracey McBean's Stretching Machine

Henry's Reality Machine

Case of the Graveyard Ghost

Case of the Walkabout Clock

Zappers, Jacaranda Press

Series 1

The Dags Meet the Bad Beasts

Zero

The Warning

The Hold-Up

Zenn

Nibbles

The Outer Space Spy

Op-Shop

Please Call Me Bob!

The Body in the Bag

Series 2

Sunday the Thirteenth

Sunday the Thirteenth Return

Battle of the Bands

The Stones and the Shakes

The Boss Skateers

Punk Rocker from Hell

Jumpin' Jake and the Rip-Off
The Gipps Street Gang
What a Stinker
City to Surf

Jets Series, Harper Collins

54 titles, for example:

Rhyming Russell
Monty up to his Neck in Trouble
And Pigs Might Fly
Shadows on the Barn
Georgie and the Dragon
Private Eye of New York

New Trend Series, Longman Cheshire

Set A

Approach Trend Levels A,B,C
Vroom Vroom!
Night Cats
That Old Tin Can
Last Train
Red Surf

Set B

Trend Levels 1a & 1b
Hey, That's My Bike
I Bet You
It Happened on Saturday
Wild Dog
Go Home Kid
Cold at Five
A Face in the Water
Sudden Death

Set C

Trend Levels 1c to 3
White Lie
Watcher on the Wharf
A Real City Kid
Red Hot Mountain

If he Fell
A Real Hero
Kid Monkey

Paul Jennings Titles, Puffin Books

Paw Thing
The Cabbage Patch Fib
Round the Twist
Undone!
Unreal!
Uncanny!
Unbearabl!
Unmentionable!
Unbelievable!
Quirky Tales

Skyways, Collins

Seven levels each containing eight readers and two factual texts.

Literary texts for ESL

Sunshine, Rigby

Sunshine Three in Ones Pack I
Sunshine Three in Ones Pack II
Sunshine Three in Ones Pack III
Sunshine Three in Ones Pack IV
Sunshine Three in Ones Pack V
Sunshine Three in Ones Pack VI
Sunshine Three in Ones Pack VII
Sunshine Three in Ones Pack VIII

Factual Texts

New Trend Facts, Longman Chesire

Helicopters
Friends for Eyes
Fatal Flights
Genes

Out of this World
Whale Wonder
Sharks
Windsurfing
Drawing with Light
TV Behind the Screen
About the Heart
Vikings
Stargazing
Skydiving
Fantastic Pets
Rock Band on Tour
Bushrangers
The Eye
Flying High

Aussie Swag, Curriculum Corporation

For example:

Who's in the Sky?
Have a go!

Aussie Triumphs, Curriculum Corporation

For example:

Meteorology

APPENDIX 3

Narrative Planning Sheet

Orientation

Complication

Sequence of events

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Resolution

Comment

Explanation Planning Sheet

General statement

Explanation

Conclusion

RECOUNT PLANNING SHEET

When?	Where?	Who?	Why?	What?