

Teaching Reading in the Early Grades

A Teacher's Handbook

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Department of Education

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Letter from the Director-General, Education

Dear Teacher

You have the exciting task of ensuring that all our children read. Fortunately a broad consensus now exists regarding the essential knowledge and skills that children need in order to read and on the basic components of reading instruction. Every teacher should be aware of these.

Teaching Reading in the Early Grades: A Teacher's Handbook, has therefore been developed to assist teachers in Grades R–6. It highlights the importance of the core elements of teaching **Reading and Writing** including:

- Shared Reading and Writing
- Guided Reading and Writing
- Independent Reading and Writing Activities
- Word-Level and Sentence-Level Work

These core elements are emphasized to remind you that adequate attention and time must be dedicated to the teaching of these elements which are the basis for the acquisition of basic Reading and Writing skills.

A Reading and Writing Focus Time (a dedicated hour from your daily allocated Literacy/Languages Learning Programme) is essential to ensure that these aspects are covered alongside Listening and Speaking Skills, the teaching of Handwriting, Expressive Writing and Teaching Additional Languages.

I trust that you will give life to the Handbook by valuing it and using it as a teaching resource. It will have served its purpose if

- It helps you to become a better, more motivated teacher, and
- It helps our children to read better!

I wish you everything of the best in this important work.



MR DUNCAN HINDLE
Director-General
Date:





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Unit 1: Introducing the Handbook

This Teacher's Handbook will help you to teach reading and writing. The aim is for every one of your learners to become skilled in reading and writing, and to enjoy being literate.

In this Unit you will learn:

- What are the **core elements** (main aspects) of the Literacy and Languages Learning programmes for the Foundation Phase and the Intermediate Phase?
- **How much time** should be allocated for Literacy and Languages Learning programmes?
- What is the **Reading and Writing Focus Time**?

How is language learning organized?

In the Foundation Phase, the programme is called the **Literacy Learning Programme**. The main focus here is to give children the foundations of reading, writing, and basic literacy.

In the Intermediate Phase, the programme is called the **Languages Learning Programme**. The main focus here is to develop the basic literacy that children learned in the earlier phase – together with their thinking skills.

The second phase builds on the first one. So the Languages Learning Programme (Intermediate Phase) cannot succeed unless the Literacy Learning Programme (Foundation Phase) has been covered correctly. Teachers of the two phases need to work together, and be aware of what teachers in the other phase are doing. That is why the two programmes are dealt with together in this Handbook.



How much time should be allocated for Literacy and Languages Learning on the timetable?

The table below shows the amount of classroom time which should be allocated for the Literacy Learning Programme in the Foundation Phase, and the Languages Learning Programme in the Intermediate Phase:

Table 1: Time allocation for Literacy/Language Learning Programme

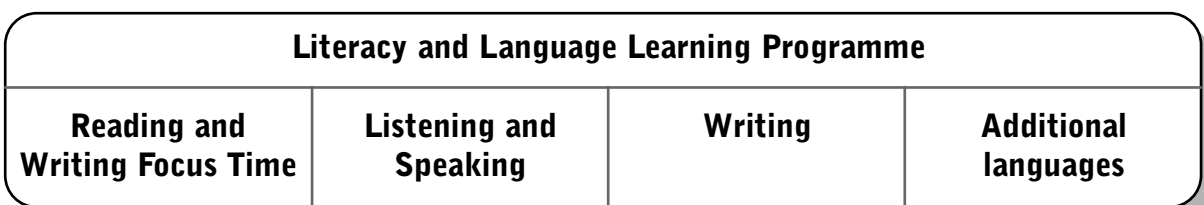
Grade	Time allocation per day	Total per week
Foundation Phase		
Grades R to 2	1 hour 50 minutes	9 hours 10 minutes
Grade 3	2 hours	10 hours
Intermediate Phase		
Grades 4 to 6	1 hour 30 minutes	7 hours 30 minutes

What are the core elements of the Literacy and Languages learning programmes?

The main areas are the same in both the Literacy Learning Programme and the Languages Learning Programme. The diagram below gives a list of these main areas: Reading and Writing Focus Time, Listening and Speaking, Writing and Additional Language. Together, they are the **core elements** of the programmes. The focus of this Handbook is the Reading and Writing Focus Time, which is dedicated to the development of Reading and Writing skills.

These elements will enable teachers to plan an effective Literacy/Languages Learning Programme.

Diagram 1: The core elements of the Literacy/Languages-learning programme



What is the Reading and Writing Focus Time?

The **Reading and Writing Focus Time** will help you to ensure that you are teaching basic literacy skills, and reinforcing these skills regularly.

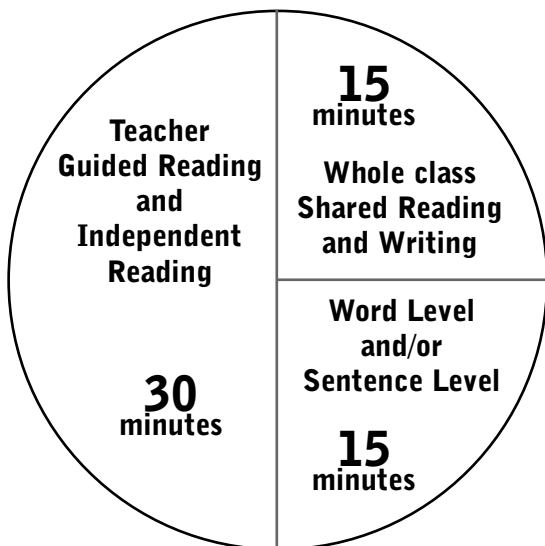
Every day, you should dedicate one hour of the school day to the **Reading and Writing Focus Time**. It is suggested that the one hour should be taken from the Literacy/Languages Learning Programme. During this time, you systematically teach the learners to become effective readers and writers.

However, being able to read fluently depends on a number of different skills. There is a close link between developing reading skills and developing other language skills – such as writing, spelling and sentence work.

You can use the **Reading and Writing Focus Time** to teach:

- Shared reading
- Shared writing activities
- Word-level and sentence-level work
- Guided reading and writing
- Independent reading and writing activities

Diagram 2: Elements of the Reading and Writing Focus Time



Let's look at each activity in detail.

These components are not taught in isolation but are combined or **integrated**.

Reading and Writing Focus Time Activities

During these activities, you work with the whole class. You give your learners instructions, and you let them practise a range of language skills to develop their reading.

It is a good idea to link the different activities in themes where possible. For instance, **Shared Writing** can grow out of a **Shared Reading** text and it can provide the basis for another writing task.

In **Word-Level and Sentence-Level work**, you will focus on aspects of language that come up in the Shared Reading and Writing sessions. For example:

- Phonics
- Spelling
- Vocabulary development
- Grammar/sentence work
- Punctuation

Guided Reading and Writing, and Independent Reading and Writing

During this part of the **Reading and Writing Focus Time**, you can work with a small group of learners, and guide them to develop their reading and writing skills. While you work with the group, the rest of the class can get on with Independent Reading and Writing activities. So sometimes there are whole class teaching and learning activities, and at other times work is organized in smaller groups.

The tight structure and time allocated to **Reading and Writing Focus Time** ensures that each component is short, focused and interesting to the learners.

We suggest that the **Reading and Writing Focus Time** is implemented across the school. Learners soon learn the routine, and they comfortably adapt to the organisation of time. As learners advance from one grade to the next, they move into familiar patterns of learning, which helps them to adjust to the next grade more easily. The "new" teacher is free to focus on teaching and learning without having to establish completely new routines each year.

Listening and Speaking

This Handbook focuses on the **reading** component of literacy. However, in addition to reading, other skills which are part of literacy are **listening, speaking, and writing**.

Learners come to school already able to listen and speak. Listening and speaking are important communication skills in the development of thinking, reading and writing. Still, it is important also to teach learners specifically how to listen and to speak.

Listening and speaking play an important role in the **Reading and Writing Strategy**, both for Home Language and Additional Languages.

Writing and Handwriting

Handwriting means the legible formation of letters, words, and numbers. In the Foundation Phase, slightly more time is allocated to Handwriting, whilst in the Intermediate Phase more time is given to **Writing** as an expressive, creative activity.

Languages: Learning Outcomes (LOs)

The Learning Outcomes of the Languages Learning Area underpin the Reading and Writing Focus time.

The Learning Outcomes for both Home and Additional Languages can be planned and taught effectively in the Reading and Writing Focus Time.

Table 2: Languages Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcome 1(L01)	Listening
Learning Outcome 2(L02)	Speaking
Learning Outcome 3(L03)	Reading and Viewing
Learning Outcome 4(L04)	Writing
Learning Outcome 5(L05)	Thinking and Reasoning
Learning Outcome 6(L06)	Language Structure and Use

Conclusion

This Unit has given you an outline of the similarities and differences between the Literacy programme and the Languages Learning programme. Both of these programmes deal with language development, but in the Foundation Phase there is a greater emphasis on basic literacy, and in the Intermediate Phase there is greater emphasis on Language Learning.

This Unit has also dealt with the **time allocated** on the timetable for the Literacy and Languages Learning programmes, the core components and the Languages Learning Outcomes.

Reading and Writing Focus Time is especially important. For this, set aside one hour each day to teach reading skills and related language skills.



Unit 2: Teaching Reading

INTRODUCTION

In this Unit you will know:

1. How to plan for the Reading and Writing Focus Time?
2. What reading strategies do you teach your learners?
3. What are the stages of reading development?
4. What are the components of reading?

How to plan for the Reading and Writing Focus Time?

When a learner enters school it is the teacher's role and responsibility to provide, plan and teach an effective reading programme that will enable the learner to become a skilful reader.

Every teacher should strive to teach and model these activities in the Reading and Writing Focus Time by:

- acting as a model reader for the learners in Shared and Guided Reading Sessions
- teaching learners to apply reading strategies when they are not sure about the text (e.g. re-reading, reading ahead, using pictures)
- providing a rich and varied literacy environment that includes interesting reading material, displays and engaging multimedia resources (e.g. audio, video and overheads) that reflects the cultural diversity of the school and community
- providing opportunities for discussion, teamwork and other social interaction that make reading interesting and fun
- using effective practices for engaging learners in large groups (Whole Class Shared Reading and Writing Sessions), small groups (Guided Reading and Writing Sessions) and individual instruction (Independent Reading)
- using reflective practice, observation and a variety of assessment strategies to identify each learner's needs and provide differentiated instruction.


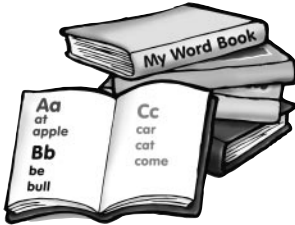

What does a skilful reader do?

Skilful readers make meaning when they read. To make meaning they need general knowledge, knowledge of language, and knowledge of letters and letter sounds. They also need to read fluently enough so that they do not forget the beginning of a sentence when they get to the end of it, that is the way they can make meaning of the sentence.

Skilful readers use different strategies when they read. Teachers can help readers to develop these skills by doing specific exercises.

The table that follows suggests some reading processes that teachers should teach.




Table 2: What reading processes are used by a skilful reader?

<p>Before reading</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reads the title; • Looks at the contents page and index pages; • Reads the sub-headings and chapter titles; • Reads the short description of the contents, usually printed on the back cover; • Looks at the illustrations. <p>The skilful reader uses this information to predict ("guess ahead") what the text is about.</p>
<p>During reading</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reads a range of words "on sight" without needing to break them into syllables and letters. • Keeps checking that the meaning of the text is clear. • Gets a general idea of the meaning of an unfamiliar word by reading the sentence or paragraph where it is, or by breaking the word down into sounds or syllables.
<p>After reading</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links the content of the text to his or her own ideas, experiences or opinions. • Remembers new words and their meanings when seeing them again in other contexts.

What are the stages of reading development?

Table 3 suggests that there are six stages of development. Ideally, learners will develop their reading skills gradually from "pre-reader", Stage 1, and all the way to Stage 6 during the first two years of school.

Table 3: The stages of reading development

Stage 1: The "pre-reader"	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holds books and turns pages correctly; • Recognises the beginning and end of book; • Listens and responds to stories; • Interprets pictures; • Pretends to read; • Knows some letters; • Shows interest in print when they see it in the world around them.
Stage 2: The emergent reader	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses pictures to tell stories; • Knows some sounds (phonemes) and the letters that make the sounds; • Knows that the print for European and African languages runs from left to right and from top to bottom; • Joins in with the teacher or reader when reading familiar books; • Recognises some words, e.g. their name; • Reads some print in the environment; • Reads familiar books with word patterns.
Stage 3: The early reader	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knows most letter sounds and names; • Recognises some common words; • Can retell an age-appropriate story; • Uses pictures to make meaning; • Can read 70% of words correctly in a familiar text at their level; • Reads aloud when reading to self; • Still reads word by word – not yet fluent; • Reads early readers and picture books with pattern and repetition and rhyme in Home Language and Additional Languages.

Stage 4: The developing reader



- Uses pictures to make meaning;
- Uses knowledge of sentence structure;
- Uses phonics (makes loud sounds) to decode words;
- Combines words into phrases rather than reading word for word;
- Retells beginning, middle and end of story with some details;
- Has basic sight word vocabulary of at least 50 words, and both recognizes the word **and** knows the meaning of the word;
- Begins to apply punctuation to reading;
- Begins to read silently;
- Corrects self after making an error;
- Reads longer books, as long as the text is easy enough and the book has large print.

Stage 5: The early fluent reader



- Uses different "cueing" systems, such as phonics (sounding out), language knowledge (familiar sentence structures), and general knowledge in order to make meaning;
- Recognises most familiar words on sight (approximately 200 words);
- Reads fluently at least 60 words per minute
- Uses punctuation to enhance comprehension – stops at all full stops;
- Begins to understand implied meaning;
- Reads texts with longer, more complex sentence structures;
- Demonstrates a developing knowledge of story elements, such as the plot, the characters, and the resolution of a problem;
- Reads silently for extended periods;
- Uses reference materials, with guidance;
- Reads books with chapters that have smaller print.

Stage 6: The independent reader

- Uses "cueing" systems (phonic, language and general knowledge) unconsciously, having integrated them into his or her general approach to new texts;
- Reads fluently at least 60 or more words per minute
- Understands books with unfamiliar settings;
- Reads and understands implied meanings;
- Reads longer and more advanced books, books with chapters – fiction and non-fiction;
- Uses reference books independently.

The usefulness of the stages of reading

These stages given above provide practical guidelines that you can apply when you want to see what stage your learners have reached in their reading development, and what knowledge, skills and strategies they need to learn or practise.

The stages are also useful in assessing the performance of individual learners so that a learner's reading skills can be further developed, without reference to grade levels. For example, struggling readers in Grade 5 may be at Stage 3, and strong readers in Grade 3 may be at Stage 5. But by the end of Grade 6 all learners should be Independent Readers.

What are the five components of teaching reading?

Most reading experts agree that there are five main components to the teaching of reading. They are:

- | | |
|--------------|--------------------|
| Component 1: | Phonemic awareness |
| Component 2: | Word recognition |
| | - Sight words |
| | - Phonics |
| Component 3: | Comprehension |
| Component 4: | Vocabulary |
| Component 5: | Fluency |

Each of these components needs to be taught explicitly, and practised in context on a daily basis. Let's look at these components in more detail:

Component 1: Phonemic awareness

Phonemic awareness is the ability to notice, think about, and work with individual sounds in spoken words. Before children learn to read print, they need to become aware of how sounds in words work. They need to understand that words are made up of speech sounds or phonemes.

Phonemes are the smallest parts of sound in a spoken word. For example in the word "hat", the letter **h** represents the **sound huh**.

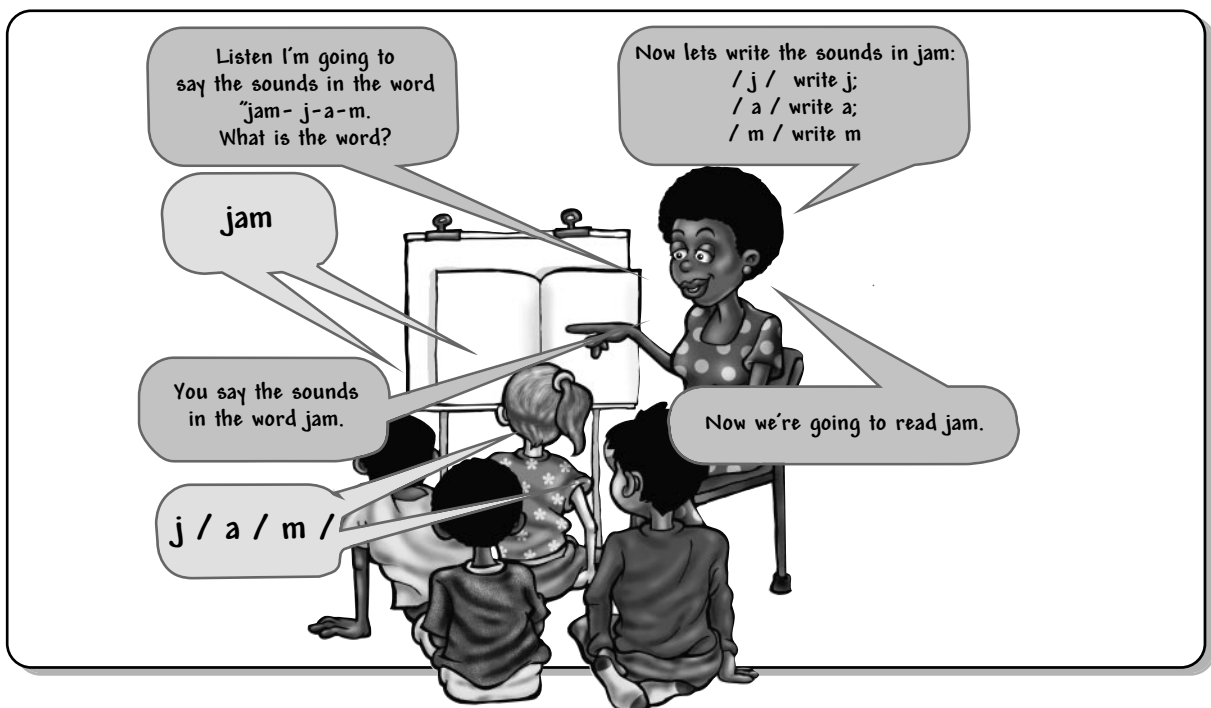
Learners instinctively "know" about phonemes, otherwise they would not be able to speak or understand speech. When they learn to read and write, they need to become aware of these units of language – they need to know the sounds (phonemes) within each word.

They also need to become aware that each sound can be written as a letter or group of letters. For example, they learn that the "buh" sound is written as "b". This link between the sound and letter is called **phonics**.

What activities develop phonemic awareness?

Phonemic awareness can be developed through the use of poems, songs and rhymes. The explicit "sounding out" of words can be practised during Word-level and Sentence-level time.

You can teach your learners to manipulate phonemes (speech sounds) by engaging in activities such as this one:



Phonics Sight words

Component 2: "Word recognition"

Word recognition refers to the skills that readers need in order to read unknown words. The two main elements involved in word recognition are **phonics** and **sight words**.

Phonics

Phonics means decoding a word by breaking it down into units (syllables and letters). Phonics instruction teaches children the relationship between the letters of written language and individual sounds of spoken language. Knowing this relationship between spoken sounds and letters teaches children to read and write words.

The purpose of phonics instruction is to give the learner tools so that he or she can easily decode the words. They may not understand the words they are 'reading', especially if they are in an unfamiliar language. However, phonics instruction is an important building block in the teaching of reading and writing – which is making and understanding meaning. When you put together phonics (ability to decode the words) and vocabulary (knowledge of what the words mean), then you are on your way to being able to construct meaning.

In indigenous African languages, as well as Afrikaans, there is a nearly direct correspondence between the alphabetical letters and the sounds they represent. The names and the sounds of the letters are generally the same, and letter sounds do not vary depending on what other letters are near it. Therefore, it is easier to teach phonemic awareness and phonics in these languages than it is in the English language.

In the English language, there are 26 letters of the alphabet, there are 44 phonemes (sounds) and 120 graphemes (letters and combinations of letters). These variations explain why the teaching of phonemic awareness and phonics takes so much longer in English than in African languages. In English, for example, the sequence of letters "ough" can sound differently depending on whether they are used in "ought" or "through" for example. This does not happen in African languages or Afrikaans.

In English, learners must understand that each letter has a name, but it may have a number of different sounds. For example, the **a** stands for different sounds in the words **cat**, **car** and **cake**.

Sight words

Sight words (or "look and say" words) involve the learner in recognising a word by its shape, length and other features.

There is a strong argument for teaching sight words in English. Many of the most common words (sometimes known as "high-frequency words") have irregular sound-to-letter relationships. Examples like **this, because, you, me, and, was** show that they cannot be decoded according to phonic rules or principles. For example, "was" really sounds like "wuz", and therefore just has to be recognized by sight – it cannot be decoded. But according to experts, some 90% of English words can be totally or at least partially decoded, so decoding is quite important.

Component 3: Comprehension

As a teacher of reading, you need to keep a close check on whether learners are simply "barking at print" or whether they are really understanding and interpreting what they are reading.

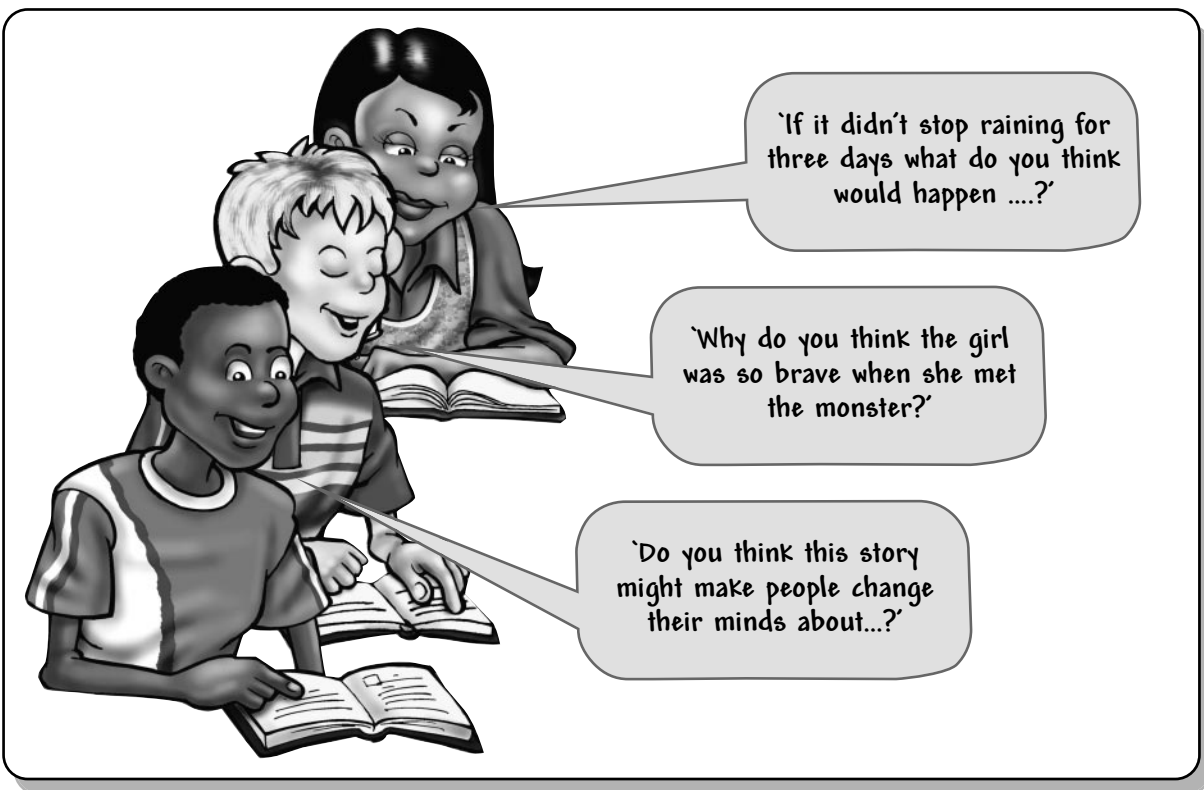
Comprehension (understanding) has to be developed from the very start. It cannot be left until the learners are able to break words down into their components or until they can read a certain number of sight words.

Ways of developing comprehension

- **Activate the reader's prior knowledge:** In the Foundation Phase, you encourage the learner to activate his or her prior knowledge whenever they read a new text. Once learners reach the Intermediate Phase, they should be encouraged to activate prior knowledge for themselves.
- **Read aloud to learners:** All effective independent readers use their knowledge of the language and their own understanding of the world to make meaning from texts. Teachers should build up this knowledge. Reading aloud to learners, and then discussing the meaning, the learners' impressions, having them guess ahead, are all good ways of doing this.
- **Help learners to use clues and illustrations in and around the text:**
 - These clues include what is written on the cover, the paragraph or chapter headings, sub-headings and words in bold, the contents page, the index.
 - Draw attention to the illustrations, photographs, tables, graphs and cartoons that may appear on the page. These are usually very important to help the reader make meaning.
- **Develop the reader's decoding skills:** Learners need to de-code unfamiliar or difficult words because most new texts contain new words. Encourage learners to sound out just the beginning part of the word to see if a familiar word springs to mind.

- **Develop fluency:** If they can read fluently, learners can work out the meaning of a word by reading the whole phrase or sentence, rather than painstakingly decoding, word by word. Fluent readers also read quickly enough to remember the beginning of a sentence before they get to the end of it.
- **Increase vocabulary:** Learners develop their vocabulary by reading and by listening to someone else reading to them. The more words they know, the easier it is for them to work out the meanings of words from their contexts. Teachers can read aloud from a variety of texts such as stories, newspaper articles or information books.
- **Develop learners' ability to apply high-order thinking skills like analysing, evaluating and interpreting:** The best way to develop these skills in your learners is to ask the kind of questions that get them to think about and process information using these high-order skills. Even Grade R and Grade 1 learners are capable of developing higher-order thinking skills.

Here are some examples of the kinds of questions that engage learners in high-order thinking:



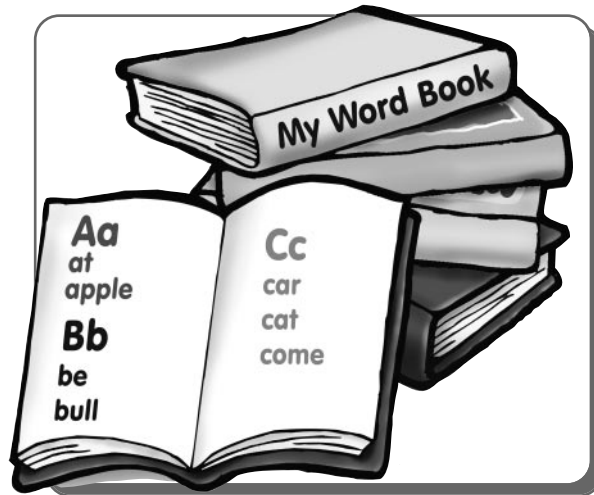
The idea is to use the stories they read, tell and listen to as the basis for thinking activities: expressing their own opinions, drawing conclusions based on the information provided in the text, summarising the text, providing a different ending, etc.

Component 4: Vocabulary

To develop as readers, learners need to have knowledge and understanding of a wide range of words. Knowing many words will help with **fluency** (see Component 5 below) as well as the comprehension of text. Some vocabulary can be learned incidentally from the context of the text that the learner is reading, but there is also a need to teach vocabulary in a planned, deliberate way.

How do you teach vocabulary?

- Make sure your learners read regularly or listen to texts that **interest** them. This will motivate them to try to work out meanings from contexts. If a child is lucky enough to come from a home where reading happens often, that child will most probably know many more words (that is, have a bigger vocabulary) than another child who doesn't hear reading in the home.
- Read aloud to learners at least once a week for 30 minutes. Readers at all levels benefit from being read to. This introduces them to vocabulary they may not be able to read on their own. Stop on odd or new words every now and then, and explain the words.
- Have a regular independent reading time. If learners come across a word many times in different texts, they will become familiar with the word, and there is a greater chance that they will remember it.
- Each time you have sessions on Reading Aloud, Shared and Guided Reading and Writing, you can explicitly teach at least 6 to 8 new words from the text.
- For explicit vocabulary instruction, you need to:
 - Explain or demonstrate the meaning of the word. This could be a simple definition, an action, a picture, or a translation;
 - Give examples of the word in a sentence;
 - Encourage learners to use the word orally (by saying it aloud) in sentences of their own;
 - Display the new words and the meanings of the words on a word wall or a chart;
 - Give the new words to learners to take home to review for homework;
 - Make sure that you follow up on this activity so that learners can practise using their new words.
- Arrange for each learner to have a personal wordbook. Each page of the wordbook is for a different letter of the alphabet. Every time a new word is taught, the learners write the word into their wordbook on the correct page. Learners can also "collect" words as they read, after the teacher reads aloud to them or when they are writing. They may also need to draw a tiny picture, or write a short sentence, explanation or translation to remind themselves of the meaning. As an independent writing activity towards the middle of the year, they can make a second column on the right and re-write their words in the right column, in alphabetical order.



Component 5: Fluency

Fluency in reading means the ability to read texts smoothly, accurately and with understanding. Fluency is a key indicator of comprehension. If the learners are reading just one word at a time, without fluency, it probably means that they also have problems in understanding the text.

How can you help learners to develop fluency?

Deciding whether or not a learner is a fluent reader is discussed later in this Handbook. Basically, the only way for learners to become fluent readers is by reading a lot! The more they read, the more fluent they will become. Here are some suggestions for developing fluency:

- Allow learners to re-read texts a few times. This is the most obvious way of enabling them to become familiar with the text and to increase their fluency.
- From Grade 2 onwards, explain to the learners about fluency. Motivate them to practise reading so that they become fluent readers and will be able to read texts in other Learning Areas also.
- Have as many reading materials as possible in the classroom.
- Have Independent Reading time each day as part of the Reading and Writing Focus Time.
- During Guided Group Reading and Independent Activity Time, allow the learners to choose a book that is familiar or one that is suited to their reading level.
- Explain the importance of silent reading. Demonstrate how you read silently: whisper the words of the text and follow the words with your finger. Tell learners that, when they are confident at "whisper reading", they can start to read without speaking, just "saying the words in their minds".
- If you think that learners are ready for silent reading, organise lots of opportunities for them to practise it.
- Textbooks of other learning areas are good source materials for reading activities.

Conclusion

This Unit has given an overview of the main components of teaching reading: the '**Big Five**' of reading:

- **phonemic awareness,**
- **word recognition** (including phonics and sight words),
- **comprehension,**
- **vocabulary** and
- **fluency.**

Planning for the Reading and Writing Focus Time, reading strategies and the stages of reading development.

Shared Reading and Other and Reading Strategies

INTRODUCTION

In a Shared Reading session, the teacher reads with the class or group, using a large Story Book that has big, bold print. Learners follow the text, joining in when they are able to do so. This method works well in multilingual classes. The learners become highly motivated, learn more sight words, read with greater comprehension, and are better able to repeat simple language structures.

Reading strategies are ways of solving problems that the learners may come across while reading. For example, they might not know the meaning of a word, or they might find a section of the text difficult to understand. When these situations arise, learners should have a strategy for knowing what to do.

During Shared Reading sessions, you may find it appropriate and convenient to model a range of reading strategies for the learners, showing them what to do, for example, to decode unfamiliar words.

In this Unit, you will find out:

- What is Shared Reading?
- What are the other Reading Strategies?
- How to teach these Reading Strategies?
- How to manage your class during the Reading and Writing focus time?

What is Shared Reading?

Shared Reading is usually done with the whole class. In the Shared Reading lesson, learners share the reading task with the teacher, and gradually take over the task of reading.

This kind of lesson should take place in a relaxed learning environment. You should encourage guessing and risk-taking, accepting all attempts from learners and using their responses to promote further learning. The learners should see that errors help us to build on what we know. Praise learners for trying.

A supportive learning environment helps the weaker members of the class to operate as readers. This reading session exposes all learners to a range of reading strategies that they can use independently in the future. Shared Reading lessons need to be very carefully planned and presented.



Shared Reading



What are you teaching learners about reading?

During Shared Reading, you are teaching learners the following:

- why we read certain kinds of texts;
- how we read this kind of text;
- the expression and intonation (tone of voice) suited to this text;
- how we respond to this text;
- the text level, word-level or sentence-level features that are in this text.

Shared Reading can be used for the following reasons:

- It can be used with any age or ability group, grade level;
- It allows for, but does not demand, active participation;
- It allows good literature and rich language to be used in an early-reading programme;
- It extends learners' sight and listening vocabularies;
- It allows for direct instruction in short, clearly focused lessons, including the teaching of many interesting things:
 - **rhyme** (sounds that match, e.g. "Green beans"),
 - **rhythm** ("music" of the words),
 - **alliteration** (words using the same letter, e.g. "Lucky Lebo"),
 - **phonics** (sounds).

- Shared Reading can be fun! Encourage your group to participate in the reading. They can clap, or dance, or stamp, or sing, or suggest other words. Here are some suggestions:
 - While you are reading, choose a word and ask the group to think of any other words that rhyme. For example, if you read the word "mean", they can call out words like "lean" or "keen" or "bean".
 - Ask the group to clap every time they hear the letter "**L**", e.g. "**L**ively **L**ulu loves her **l**ollies".
 - Ask them to suggest alliteration, e.g. "**m**agic **m**oments **m**ake **m**e **m**erry".
 - Ask them to sing the "music" of words, e.g. "*Does anyone know the tune of these words:*
 - "*Jan Pierewiet, Jan Pierewiet, Jan Pierewiet, staan stil ...*"
 - "*Bana ba sekolo, bana ba sekolo, etlang sekolong, etlang sekolong...*"
 - "*Imithi igoba kahle, ithi, ithi, Kwanyakaz'amahlamvu, kanje, kanje...*"

Texts for Shared Reading

Choose a text that is above the independent reading level of the majority of learners in the class. You will help learners to understand the text by reading it aloud, and then encouraging discussion.

Here are some of the different kinds of texts that can be used:

- Big Books;
- Enlarged texts of the following:
 - stories
 - learners' own writing
 - magazines and newspapers
 - poems
 - songs
 - non-fiction materials (factual texts)
 - advertisements
 - pamphlets

Copies of the same text are sometimes available. These can be used after the Shared Reading sessions.

The text you choose should be clear enough for the whole class to see easily. You can also present materials on overhead projector transparencies, data projectors and interactive white boards.

How long should a Shared Reading lesson be?

Lessons should last between 15 and 20 minutes in the Foundation Phase. In the Intermediate Phase they can be as long as 30 minutes, and these sessions can be time-tabled every day.

How do I plan Shared Reading Lessons?

You can plan a Shared Reading lesson by following these steps:

- **Select a text.** Decide how many Shared Reading sessions there will be, using this text. Often two, three or four sessions can be planned per text, depending on what you decide to do with each text.
- **Select a teaching focus.** You could focus on phonics, a language feature, a print "convention" (such as the use of speech bubbles), etc. These will provide you with the teaching focus for sessions two and three in your series of lessons.
- **Plan your lessons carefully.** Think of questions that will focus learners' attention on key aspects of the text.
- **Keep your lessons short,** well-paced (not too slow, and not too fast) and enjoyable.

What follows are four suggestions for a sequence of Shared Reading lessons:

Shared Reading – Session One

- Seat your learners so that they can all see the text clearly.
- Motivate the learners by using a general introduction related to the content of the text.
- Ask them questions on what they already know about the topic or context of the story.
- Examine the cover information on the book, pointing out the title, the author's name, and any other useful text (e.g. the "blurb", which is promoting the text).
- Model good oral reading for the learners, running the pointer under the text as you read.
- Pause and ask questions about the text. Invite your learners to predict what will happen next.
- Accept all responses from the learners positively. Praise the learners by making comments such as "I liked the way you used your voice to show that the giant was angry!" (refers to , "Jack and the Beanstalk")
- If learners join in the reading, let them, but do not insist that they all do so. Slight pauses often encourage this participation. Some learners will be at the listening level of participation.
- At the end of the reading, invite personal responses to the text. Ask learners to comment on the story content, the story ending, or what they found to be the funniest or saddest part of the story.

Shared Reading – Session Two

- Use the same text as before. Read the text again. Invite the learners to join in where they can.
- Once again, run the pointer under the text. With learners who can read a bit, invite a learner to do this as you and the class read together.
- Encourage further discussion of the illustrations or interesting phrases in the text by asking questions or pointing out features in the text.
- Invite learners to experiment with expression and intonation as they read; this means they will change their voices to suit the text.
- Point out aspects within the text that you have chosen as the lesson focus. These may include:
 - analysis and discussion of the content through questioning and finding the text to support responses;
 - discussing the illustrations;
 - explaining and defining new words and locating them in other parts of the text;
 - checking on the meanings of words.

Shared Reading – Session Three

- For some learners, two readings may be sufficient for them to read the text independently, but for others a further session may be needed.
- Follow the steps outlined in *Session Two* above, and extend the focus to suit the needs of the class or group.
- If possible, make smaller versions of the text available for all the learners to use during independent reading time. Let them use pointers as well.

Shared Reading – Session Four

You may wish to use the text even more by planning other activities based on it. Here are some suggestions:

- Dramatise the story. Let the learners act out the roles in the story, e.g. a cross person, a happy person.
- If you are good at drawing, you could illustrate a favourite part of the story. Then add text to the illustration before displaying it on the classroom wall.
- In Grade R and Grade 1, make flashcards of key vocabulary and match cards to words in the enlarged text.
- Make sentence strips of the text. Match these with sentences in the Shared Reading text used.
- Hand out sentence strips to learners and ask them to sequence them.
- Complete a story-frame summary of the text.
- Create a new story in the Shared Writing lesson. Base it on the Shared Reading text and use the new text in Shared Reading sessions.

Here is a summary of what you can do in a Shared Reading Session

- Read to – and with – the whole class.
- Help learners to use their own knowledge, relevant to the text being read, by engaging them in discussion.
- Demonstrate reading behaviour (especially to Foundation Phase learners). Demonstrate by showing how to read expressively, reading from left to right, or dealing with unfamiliar words.
- Practise word recognition skills such as phonics, sight words, context clues and structural analysis in the context of real texts.
- Identify and discuss sentence structure and punctuation within the context of real texts.
- Model and teach a variety of reading strategies.
- Promote comprehension through differentiated questioning and discussion.

How can I get more help in using Shared Reading in my classroom?

- Read the teaching manual that accompanies the reading scheme used at your school – especially if the scheme includes Big Books.
- Plan a series of lessons with a colleague.
- Where possible, teach a series of Shared Reading with a colleague watching. After school, discuss your lessons.
- Reflect on your own teaching, and think about ways to improve your teaching.
- Spend some time teaching reading strategies (see page 25). These strategies will help to build up the confidence of your learners and allow them to become independent readers as quickly as possible.

Other reading strategies

Word Attack Skills (How to work out the meaning of an unfamiliar word)

In the early stages of learning to read, a simple **"five-finger"** strategy will assist learners in using a range of word-attack skills.

Thumb:
Leave the word out and read to the end of the sentence.

First finger:
Look at the pictures and headings.

Second finger:
Ask yourself if there are any parts of the word that you recognize.

Third finger:
Sound the word out.

Little finger:
Ask your teacher what the word means.

Now teach your learners to check the meaning they arrive at by asking the following questions:

- Does it sound right?
- Does it make sense?

In order to drill reading strategies, use a particular strategy for the day. Let the learners practise it during the Reading and Writing Focus Time , then choose another one to focus on the next day. Keep changing strategies until your learners can confidently use them in a flexible way.

Comprehension (How to make meaning)

You can teach your learners to monitor their own understanding of a text. Here are the steps for learners to follow:

- When the text does not make sense, stop and re-read the sentence or paragraph.
- Try to link the problem sentence to what you have already read.
- Ask yourself what you already know about the topic. Think what the sentence could mean.
- Read on, and check whether what you read now makes sense.
- Check the meanings of words by using a dictionary or ask for help.

Read Aloud

In Read Aloud (s) the teacher reads to the whole class or to a small group, using material that is at the listening comprehension level of the learners. The content may focus on a topic related to a curriculum expectation in another learning area, such as Mathematics, Natural Sciences or Social Sciences.

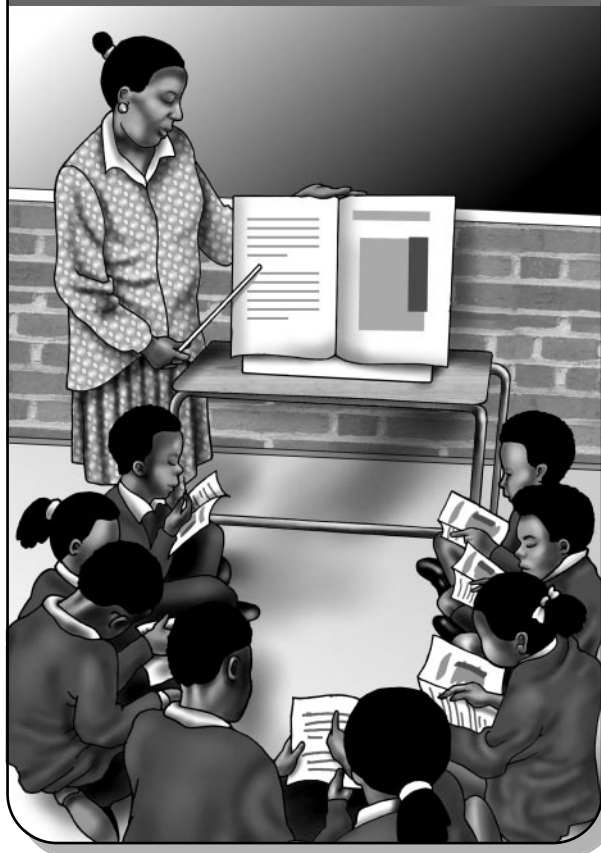
Reading aloud to learners helps them to develop a love of good literature, motivation to read on their own and familiarity with a variety of genres, including non-fiction.

It provides them with new vocabulary, exposes them to a variety of literature and contributes to their oral and written language development. Reading aloud should occur every day in the early stage of reading instruction to stimulate the children's interest in books and reading.

Group Guided Reading

Group Guided Reading is a teacher directed activity. It involves using carefully selected books at the learner's instructional level for example the use of a Graded Reading Scheme. The teacher supports a small group of learners as they talk, read and think their way through a text.

Group Guided Reading



Learners can be grouped for guided reading by reading ability or specific needs for example learners having barriers to reading. The groups are fluid and changes according to the teacher's observations and assessments.

Guided reading provides opportunities to integrate learner's growing knowledge of the conventions of print, letter-sound relationships and other foundational skills in context. Through modeling and instruction, guided reading enables teachers to extend the learner's vocabulary development and knowledge and use of comprehension strategies.

Guided reading gives the teacher the opportunity to observe reading behaviours, identify areas of need and allow learners to develop more independence and confidence as they practice and consolidate reading behaviours and skills.

Guided reading provides the bridge to independent reading.

Independent Reading

Independent reading is a purposeful planned activity. Learners choose their own books (Reading corner, 100 Storybooks, library) according to their interest and ability. Learners should be guided to choose texts that they can read with a high degree of success.

Emergent readers should be encouraged to use the independent reading time to practice reading short predictable stories as well as books that have been read in the Shared and Guided Reading sessions.

Independent reading should be followed by discussion and dialogue with the teacher and peers.

The teacher should always be observing, listening and gathering information about learner's reading behaviour during independent reading sessions.



How do I manage my class during the Reading and Writing Focus Time?

During the **Reading and Writing Focus Time**, set aside half an hour for Guided Reading and Independent Reading and Writing activities. You can work with one group of learners, while the other groups work on independent tasks that have either a reading or a writing focus. These tasks need to be carefully planned. Have all the materials ready before the lesson begins.

Managing the learners while they work independently

It is important to establish routines and codes of behaviour in your classroom. Let the learners help to make the rules – you and the class can write them during a Shared Writing session.

Here are some tips for maintaining order and getting everyone into the classroom routines required:

- **Give each group a name.** Charts displaying the names of learners who will be working together are also useful. Write the learners' names on flashcards so they can easily be moved from one chart to the next, as the composition of the groups changes.
- **Use task boards** to help manage a series of activities while you are working with individual groups. Use a large sheet of laminated cardboard, or a whiteboard or chalkboard, as a task board. Make symbols for the activities to be completed and make sure all the learners understand what they mean.
- **Give each group a number of tasks to do**, either individually or in groups. At the beginning of an independent activity time, 'read' the task board to the learners and check that all the learners know what their tasks are for the whole thirty-minute session.

Specimen: Task Board

Yellow Group: Work with teacher

Red Group: Work with word puzzles

Blue Group: Write daily news and weather

Green Group: Write your own story beginning: "When my parents left home for work I....."

What do the other learners do while you work with a guided reading group?

Throughout the week, learners should be engaged in a range of stimulating independent reading and writing activities. The list of possible activities is endless.

You need to plan independent learning activities for the various ability groups in the class. To begin with, look at the focus of the teaching each week. Plan activities that will consolidate the skills and strategies taught in Reading and Writing Focus Time lessons. Include activities that promote recreational reading.

For example, you can combine two ability groups, working together in 'study buddy' pairs for paired reading activities.

Here are some more hints for planning and organising reading activities:

- Start with activities that are easy to prepare. See what works for you and your learners.
- Use the task board to help learners move quickly from one activity to the next. Insist that groups leave the boxes neat and tidy.

- Keep at least two trays or shallow boxes in the classroom, one for finished work and one for unfinished work. Show learners how to store their work in them.
- A useful organisational strategy is to plan activities for the groups and store these in attractive boxes, ready for use, for example:
 - **A Word Power Box** will have phonic and word level word games and activities in the box.
 - **An Author's and Illustrator's Box** can contain simple poems or stories for the learners to illustrate with their own drawings. This activity may last a few weeks. Booklets containing a series of illustrations could be used as a stimulus for independent writing of text for the given illustrations.
 - **A Readers' Theatre Box** can contain scripts for a group to practise reading together. The final activity could be 'radio presentation' to the class.
 - **A Readers' Treasure Box** can have a range of reading material from the 'real world' with work-cards to guide learners through the activities.
 - **A Poetry Box** can have a range of poems printed and attractively illustrated for the learners to read. Let the learners copy favourite words, lines or stanzas, or whole poems, into a personal poetry book.
 - **A Literature Circle Box** can contain a range of books, comics, magazines etc. that can be read and discussed by the learners.
 - **A Theme Box** can contain theme-related activities from a variety of Learning Areas.
 - **A Listening Box** can contain a read-along tape and book with a tape recorder for a group to use.

Note: In all the boxes, material can be easily changed to suit the level of the group. Groups in your class will each have a turn to use the boxes you choose to use each week. Instructions for activities can be explained orally. Written instructions can also be included in the boxes.

Tips to motivate learners to read books

- Make a chart entitled **Bookworm's Menu of the Week**. Divide the chart into three sections and label these **Starters, Main Course and Desserts**. Laminate the chart. Make loose flashcards of the titles of books available in the Book Corner. Place a number of these under the 'menu' headings. At the beginning of the week, discuss the books on the menu and ask your learners to read the books. At the end of the week, give comments to 'Bookworm' on his or her choices.
- Encourage learners to design **book jackets** for their favourite books. Display them in the Reading Corner, advertising books that are great reads
- Design **'booking' forms** for learners to fill in and to reserve a time when they can read popular books.

- Let the learners write comments about books, or recommend books that their peers should read. Display their **comment-sheets** in the Reading Corner for everyone to read.

Name:

I liked the book.....
.....
.....

The best part was
.....
.....

I think
will like it too.

Name: Sphiwe

I like the book about cars.

I learned about the oldest car.

I think Mpho will also like this book.

Name: Maria

Jamela's Dress is a super book.

I think Janice will really like it!

- If possible, have a place for **'listening books'**. These are books that are each accompanied by an audiotape or a DVD. The learners can listen to them during Independent Reading time.
- Read books** from the **Reading Corner** aloud to your learners every day. Choose books that learners can read themselves, but do not complete the story. The learners will then be motivated to finish the story for themselves.
- Encourage your learners to bring in their **own books** from home to share with their peer groups. Have a special place for these books that are 'on short-term loan' to the class.
- Keep a **notebook** in the reading corner in which learners can record favourite words or phrases used by authors. They write their names alongside the entries. The learners can refer to the notebook when they are doing written work.
- Design a **record-sheet** of the titles of favourite books that have been shared during reading time. Do the same with favourite authors and illustrators.
- Prepare a special **Reading Corner display** that features books by a popular author. For example, you could focus on Nikki Daly's books (*Jamela's Dress; Yebo Jamela; Charlie's House; Not so fast, Songololo* etc.) If possible, invite local authors to visit your class.
- Display the **learners' own writing** in the Book Corner. Celebrate home made books, which are tremendous sources of inspiration for writing.
- Make **story-boxes** using old shoeboxes. Put in items or pictures that can be used to re-tell a story. For example, make a basic flannel or felt background and cut out characters and objects relating to the story. These can be placed on the background as the learner tells the story. Puppets of story characters work well, too.
- Plan activities that will engage the learners in discussing the **characters** from a book. Let them use plasticine or play-dough to mould the characters – this can also stimulate discussion.



Independent writing activities

- Establish a Writing Centre in your classroom. In the Centre, keep sheets of paper of various colours, sizes and shapes, and a range of different writing tools, such as felt-tip pens, pencils and crayons, for the learners to use. If you are fortunate, you may have a computer in the Centre for learners to use. Include a few age-appropriate dictionaries.
- In shoeboxes, ice-cream tubs or plastic bottles, store rulers, scissors, pencils, crayons, erasers, glue sticks, a stapler and spare staples. Label each box. You may wish to set up "stationery sets" for each group in the class. If you are well organized, you will be able to quickly hand out stationery during independent reading time.
- Have a box of examples of different forms of writing, such as a friendly letter, a list, a play-script, a story or a paragraph. These will serve as examples for learners' own writing. The examples can be enlarged and used in Shared Writing time, and for reference when writing.
- Have a set of "editing" cards for each type of writing done during the year. On the cards, print questions relating to planning a piece of writing, for example, "What am I writing?" "Why am I writing this?" "Who will read this?"
- You can also include a set of cards for learners to use after they have completed a piece of writing. For example, cards with questions such as "Have I started each sentence with a capital letter?" "Have I used capital letters for names of places or people?" Spelling-check cards can also be useful. Make and display a list of words that are often wrongly spelled by your class, or words that will be used frequently in a particular type of writing.
- Provide scrap paper for learners to use when they try to spell an unfamiliar word. Encourage them to try different spellings of a word, especially in English, where learners need to develop a sense of words "looking right". Call these attempts "have-a-go" words.

Support for Learners with Reading Difficulties

INTRODUCTION

The foundations of good reading are the same for all learners. All readers, regardless of their age, gender or ability need to develop the motivation to read, comprehension and fluency.

Children who experience reading difficulties are no exception. Learners with reading difficulties should be identified as early as possible and appropriate support must be implemented.

In this Unit we find out:

1. How to support learners who have Reading difficulties?

How to help young readers who are struggling?

- **Try to diagnose reading difficulties early.** Do diagnostic tests every month in the first year of school. In the second year, test every term.
- **Deal with reading problems promptly.** The longer you wait, the more the child will fall behind.
- **Increase reading practice at the correct level.** Find texts or whole books suited to the child's reading level, even if this means borrowing books from another teacher or writing out your own reading cards.
- **Read every single day.** Arrange for the learner to read to someone every single day at home or at school, even if it is only two sentences. Use parents, peers, older children, retired teachers, neighbours or anyone else who will help by listening to a child read. Allow the learner to take books home to read, especially high-interest books.
- **Work with the learner at least twice a week.** Listen to the learner reading a text at the correct level. Use praise to motivate him or her. Make this an enjoyable experience. Talk about the text with him/her.
- **Phonics.** Try to revise all the phonics done so far. Do this quite quickly and systematically. This can be done before or after school and during Guided Reading.
- **Sight words.** Provide a word list of the first 20 sight words. Mark off two or three for the learners to learn to read and write each week. Try to get the co-operation of parents or a caregiver to help the learner with this.

How to help older readers who are struggling beyond Grade 3

- **Be sensitive to struggling readers who are older.** Explain that everyone has different strengths. Even if their reading is weak, they are still valued in the classroom.
- Have a **one-on-one time** with struggling readers at least twice a week. During this time, **listen to them read** a text at the correct level and give positive feedback. Praise any progress. Use interesting texts. These may be homemade (by you), graded readers from another class or texts you have re-written, for example, simplified sports reports.
- In the one-to-one session, you could use **the learners' own stories and words**. Let them tell you something, and write it down. Then give it to the learner to read for homework. This is called "language experience" learning.
- If a child is younger than 11 years, **revise their phonics**. Go through a phonemic awareness and phonics programme again, quickly and efficiently. Give homework and get the child to work on this every day so that they "catch up".
- Ask a Foundation Phase teacher if you can use their phonics programme. Adapt activities that are too babyish and work privately so that the learner is not ashamed.
- If the learner is older than 11 years, focus on teaching **words that are meaningful to them**. Every day, ask them which words they want to learn to read. Write these words in a reading notebook for the learner to take home and learn.
- Provide a **word list of the first 20 sight words** for the Reading Notebook. Mark off two or three for the learners to learn to read **and write** each week.
- When these are memorised, move onto the next 20 words, and so on. Try to get a parent or caregiver (grandmother, older sister) to help the learner practise these words.
- Sometimes, focus on words which the learner sees in **different learning areas**. Write five words into their notebook. At home, learners can copy the words and draw a picture for each.

Reading remediation



Assessing Reading

INTRODUCTION

Reading assessments must be well planned so that the teacher is able to help each learner achieve his or her full potential in reading. Reading assessments help the teacher to determine the learner's developmental stage of reading.

Reading assessments inform the teacher on how to plan differentiated reading instruction either in large groups, small groups or individual level depending on the learner's need.

In this Unit we find out:

- Why and how should we assess reading?
- How do we use "cloze" tests and checklists?
- Can we use assessment for diagnostic purposes?

Why do we assess reading?

We need to assess reading for the following reasons:

- to assess the progress that learners have made;
- to find out if our reading programme is at the correct level for our intended learners;
- to find out which learners are struggling with reading, and which reading skills (phonic, word recognition and comprehension) they are struggling with.

What do you do with reading results?

The information that you obtain from assessment can help you to **evaluate your literacy resources**. You may need to obtain the following:

- a new reading programme, for example, a programme that includes "Big Books";
- more graded readers for reading practice;
- a phonics programme to add to your language programme;
- reading books at different levels, for example, simpler books or materials for learners to read;
- more culturally appropriate books.

The assessment information can also help you to **evaluate what the learners do during the Reading and Writing Focus Time**. You may need to:

- spend more time being a "model" in Shared Reading;
- spend more time developing specific reading skills in Shared Reading or in Word and Sentence Level work;
- spend more time with specific learners in Guided Reading time;
- give learners more time to practise reading in Independent Reading and Writing;
- introduce a reading homework programme for additional practice;
- introduce an intervention programme for learners who have barriers to learning.

The assessment information can also help you to **evaluate your general approach** to teaching reading. For example, you may need to:

- introduce or add new methods of developing reading skills;
- increase the pace of your teaching.

Tests to find reading levels

Reading "levelling" tests are short, general tests to assess the reading levels of the class. Use these tests to:

- assess reading levels at the beginning of the year;
- place learners in groups for Guided Reading;
- identify learners who have difficulties;
- check that the textbook/readers in your classroom are at the correct level.

There are different types of levelling tests that can be used.

Error count tests

Follow this process:

- Choose a text of approximately 100 words at the grade level.
- Call a learner to your desk and listen to him or her read.
- Count the errors and missed full stops.

Interpret the results as follows:

- Learners making **fewer than five errors** are reading at their comfortable grade level and may soon need more challenging texts.
- Learners making **between 5 and 10 errors** are reading below grade level and need more practice.
- Learners making **more than 10 errors** need help. (See the diagnostic tests below.)

Test type 2: "Cloze" Procedure

In "Cloze" tests, the teacher usually leaves blanks in the text, and asks the reader to fill them in. The scores from these tests can help you to assess learners' reading comprehension, writing ability, listening ability, and speaking ability. The results of these tests will help you to organize learners into groups of similar language ability.

Here is an example of a "cloze" test:

Example: Fill in the blanks. Use an appropriate verb tense and correct word order. Base your answer on the words in brackets.

Rose and Ronald (know) each other for six months. They (fall) in love the moment they met. At first Rose's mother (not-like) Ronald because she (think) he was lazy. Now she (think) he is wonderful because he (repair) her television set.

Cloze tests are appropriate for Grade 3 and upwards. Here is one way to develop a cloze test for your own class:

- Choose a reading text of between 30 and 50 words at the grade level.
- Copy the text onto the chalkboard, or provide a worksheet.
- Keep the first few sentences complete to help learners to get a sense of the topic.
- Erase every seventh word.
- Learners re-write the text, filling in the missing words.
- The score is the number of meaningful words filled in correctly. (Note: As long as the word makes sense, it is not incorrect.)
- The results of this test will help you to organise learners into groups of similar language ability.

Test type 3: Observing reading behaviour

Watching your learners while they read is one of the best ways of assessing learners and "matching" them to texts while they read in class. You can do this observation during Guided Reading each week.

Every reader reads a text at one of three levels (from the strongest to the weakest):

- 1 **independent level,**
- 2 **instructional level,** or
- 3 **frustrational level.**

We will look at each level in turn.

1. Independent level

When readers can read a text without any difficulty in decoding or understanding it, they are reading at an **independent level**. You will see the following "reading behaviour" in the child:

- reads orally in a rhythmical, expressive manner;
- observes punctuation;
- has a relaxed reading posture;
- does not use finger-pointing;
- reads silently during silent reading without vocalisation;
- displays no anxiety.

Independent readers need no additional support at this level. However, they will need to move on to more challenging texts soon.

2. Instructional level

When readers can read a text fairly easily, making only one or two errors – self-correcting at times but understanding most of the content – they are reading at an **instructional level**. These learners will display the following reading behaviours:

- Oral reading is mostly smooth;
- Observes most punctuation;
- Stumbles or stops at a few words only;
- Re-reads parts of the text, or sometimes self-corrects (which shows he/she is reading with understanding);
- May use finger-pointing;

- May whisper when doing silent reading;
- May be a little nervous.

This reading behaviour shows that the learner is challenged by the text, and still needs support and instruction from the teacher.

Use texts at the learners' instructional level for Shared or Guided Reading. With Guided Reading, ensure that all learners in the group are reading at the same instructional level.

If a learner finishes reading long before or after the other members of the group, then you may need to move him or her to a higher group or a lower group. There should not be more than one minute between the first and last member in the group completing the reading.

3. Frustrational level

When readers read a text without understanding, or make a number of errors, or read the words correctly but with no understanding, they are operating at a **frustrational level**. They will probably display one or more of the following reading behaviours:

- Unnatural head and lip movements;
- Voice too loud or too soft;
- Poor reading posture;
- Frequent finger-pointing;
- Vocalises in silent reading;
- Shows no interest in the text;
- Word-by-word reading;
- Signs of fatigue such as rubbing eyes;
- Makes comments that are not relevant to the text;
- Asks to leave the room;
- Tense hands, swallows, dry mouth, and, possibly, tears.

If a reader shows any of these signs, it is essential to remove the text from the child, and provide easier material. If you use texts at the wrong level – which **frustrates** them – this may make them disillusioned, frustrated, and disruptive. The child will certainly not learn to read at this level. You need to spend more Guided Reading time with these learners and provide simpler texts for reading practice.

Test type 4: Diagnostic tests

These are tests that show which reading skills and strategies learners are using or not using. You may not need to test learners who are already reading well in their grade, so you may choose to do diagnostic testing with only a few learners.

Diagnostic tests results will help you:

- to make wise choices when planning your lessons;
- to get a better understanding of the problems of learners who are **below the expected grade level**, and how to help them;
- to decide on ways to intervene to make improvements;
- to reach a "summative" score for the learner's achievements at the end of the month or term.

Diagnostic tests can help you in three main ways:

- 1 To test **fluency and vocabulary**: Is the learner reading smoothly and confidently?
- 2 To test **comprehension**: Is the learner reading for meaning? Does the learner understand what he/she is reading?
- 3 To test **word recognition**:
 - **Phonics**: What phonic knowledge is used when reading? Are phonic cues being used? What phonic knowledge do you need to teach the learner?
 - **Sight words**: Are high-frequency or very common words recognised on sight?

Diagnostic tests using cloze procedures

Cloze tests (explained in previous pages) can also be used to tell you if a particular reading skill needs work. They can be useful in diagnosing the following three problems:

Problem 1: *Lack of language knowledge and fluency*

Leave out particular parts of speech like prepositions, verbs or adjectives, e.g.

He knocked _____ the door.

Problem 2: *A lack of vocabulary, comprehension and fluency*

Leave out some content words or nouns, e.g.

He was driving a c _ _ .

Problem 3: *Lack of word recognition skills*

- Leave out high-frequency **sight words**. e.g. in, at, the, said, etc.
- Leave out words but keep the **initial letter** for sounding out, e.g.

It was br _ _ _ in colour.

Diagnostic tests: Using reading checklists

Reading checklists can be used to pinpoint each individual reader's progress, as well as areas of weakness. After the "pre-reader" level, there are five levels of reading, and there is a different checklist for each level:

- Checklist for **emergent** readers
- Checklist for **early level** readers
- Checklist for **developing level** readers
- Checklist for **transitional** readers
- Checklist for **independent** level readers

Each time you test your learners, you will need five pieces of reading texts – one at each level. Learners in one class will probably be at different reading levels.

The checklists are an easy way to keep a record of your teaching goals for each grade level. You can test reading levels of each learner at specific times:

- Half-way through Grade 1;
- At the end of Grade 1;
- Half-way through Grade 2;
- At the end of Grade 2.

When to use checklists

Follow this checklist procedure. Spend about ten minutes per learner:

- Half-way through Grade 1, start checking the reading levels of each learner in the class. Start all learners with Example 1 below (for **emergent readers**), and tick the reader's skills in each category. Then fill in the Summative Assessment box at the end of the example.
- Each learner will have his or her own checklist. Fill in the name of the learner in the top right-hand corner.
- Ask the learner to read the text aloud. Mark the **fluency** section of the checklist.
- Ask the learner 2 or 3 oral questions about the text they have just read. Mark the **comprehension** section of the checklist.
- Point to a few words or letters in the text. Ask the learner to identify certain sounds or letters. Mark the **phonics** section of the checklist.
- Point to 3 or 5 common or **sight words** in the text in a random order. Ask the learner to read them. Mark the sight words section of the checklist.
- Then complete the **Summative Assessment** box for each learner.
- If the reading test was too easy for a learner, then test him/her again on the next level of checklist (for **early level** readers). Keep testing until you find the right level for each learner. Some learners will stay on level 1, while others may move up to level 3!
- Test all the learners in the class again, at the end of Grade 1 (and repeat the tests in Grade 2).

Once you know exactly the levels of all the learners, you will be able to organise the best level of text for Shared Reading sessions and Independent Reading sessions.

Examples of checklists

The following pages show checklists for each level of reading development. (This is also known as the "Reading Continuum".)

Example 1: Checklist for emergent level readers

Emergent level					
Learner's name:		Tests			
Pre-Reading Skills		Date	Date	Date	Date
Give the learner a text at the correct level. Observe him/her read a few pages. Ask: What is in this picture?	Holds the book the right way.				
	Knows where to start reading.				
	Reads from left to right.				
	Can say what is in the picture.				
Word recognition					
Phonics Point to some letters in the text. Ask: What is the name of this letter? What sound does it make? Is it a capital or a small letter?	Can say the <i>names</i> of some letters in the text, if the language allows this.				
	Can say the <i>sounds</i> of single letters in the text.				
	Can say if a letter is upper or lower case.				
Point to a word. Ask: What is the beginning sound?	Can identify both the sound and letter at the beginning of a word.				
Sight words Show 3 names. Learner must pick his/her own. Point to the sight words in the text.	Can pick own name from a list of names.				
	Can read most sight words in the text.				
Comprehension					
Answers factual questions about the text. Ask 2–3 simple questions, e.g. Who is this?	Can answer factual questions about the text.				

Summative Assessment List (for emergent level readers)

Name of learner:

Reading Assessment Standards	Some attained	Many attained	Most attained	All attained
Test 1 Date:				
Test 2 Date:				
Test 3 Date:				
Test 4 Date:				

All skills have been attained. Graduated to "early level" tests.

Date:

Example 2: Checklist for early level readers

Early level					
Learner's name:		Tests			
Pre-Reading Skills		Date	Date	Date	Date
Give the learner a text at the correct level. Observe him/her read a few pages. Ask: What is happening in this picture?	Has early reading skills: Holds the book correctly, knows where to start reading etc.				
	Can say what is happening in the pictures.				
Comprehension					
Ask 2–3 questions e.g. Who is in the story? Why do you think he went to town? Tell me if this is true or false: <i>The dog was naughty.</i>	Answers a factual question and an inferential (thinking) question about the text.				
	Answers a <i>true or false</i> question about the text.				

Word recognition		Date	Date	Date	Date
Phonics Point to 2–3 words. Ask: What is the sound at the beginning of this word? What is the sound at the end of the word? Point to a word containing a blend. Ask: What is this sound? Point to a word Ask: Read this word?	Can identify the sound at the <i>beginning</i> of a word in the text.				
	Can identify the sound at the <i>end</i> of a word in the text.				
	Can read two letter <i>blends</i> e.g. <i>bl, pr</i> .				
	Can read <i>diagraphs</i> (two letters making one new sound) e.g. <i>th, ph, xh</i> .				
Sight words Point to 3–4 sight words in the text.	Can read the sight words in the text.				
	Can read labels on the classroom wall.				
Fluency					
Give the learner a familiar text.	Can read most of the words in a familiar text.				
Reading habits					
Observe the learners during Independent Reading.	Reads silently with supervision.				
	Reads signs, looks at books.				

Summative Assessment List (for early level readers)

Name of learner:				
Reading Assessment Standards	Some attained	Many attained	Most attained	All attained
Test 1 Date:				
Test 2 Date:				
Test 3 Date:				
Test 4 Date:				
All skills have been attained. Graduated to "developing level" tests.				
Date:				

Example 3: Checklist for "developing level" readers

Developing level					
Learner's name:		Tests			
Comprehension		Date	Date	Date	Date
Ask: What is happening in this picture? How is it different from this picture?	Can say what is happening in a picture and can compare pictures.				
Ask 2–3 questions e.g. What is the story about? Why did he go to town?	Answers a factual and an inferential (thinking) question about the text.				
Tell me if this is true or false: <i>The dog was naughty.</i>	Answers a <i>true or false</i> question about the text.				
Who is the 'main character' in the story?	Can identify the main characters in the text.				
Word recognition					
Point to 2–3 words. Ask: How many syllables are there in this word? What word does it rhyme with? Point to a word containing a 3-letter blend. Ask: What is this sound? Point to a word with a vowel diagraph.	Can break a word into syllables.				
	Can recognise rhyming words in the text.				
	Can read three letter blends e.g. <i>str</i> .				
	Can read vowel diagraphs e.g. <i>oa</i> , if language allows this.				
	Can split a word into beginning and ending, if language allows this.				
Sight words Show a word list. Have learners read 4 or 5 words. Or point to the sight words in the texts.	Can read most sight words.				

Fluency		Date	Date	Date	Date
Give the learner a familiar text. Ask: What is the title? Observe him/her read a few pages. If the learner knows all the words, provide a slightly more difficult text so that you can observe how he/she tackles unknown words.	Reads the title.				
	Can read most of the words.				
	Pauses at the end of sentences.				
	Responds to some punctuation e.g. commas.				
	Is beginning to self-correct.				
Reading habits					
Observe the learners during Independent Reading.	Reads silently.				
	Reads instructions, invitations and other simple text types.				

Summative Assessment List (for developing level readers)

Name of learner:				
Reading Assessment Standards	Some attained	Many attained	Most attained	All attained
Test 1 Date:				
Test 2 Date:				
Test 3 Date:				
Test 4 Date:				
All skills have been attained. Graduated to "transitional level" tests. Date:				

Example 4: Checklist for transitional level readers

Transitional level					
Learner's name:		Tests			
Fluency		Date	Date	Date	Date
<p>Give the learner a familiar text. Observe him/her read a few pages. <i>If the learner knows all the words, provide a slightly more difficult text so that you can observe how he/she tackles unknown words.</i></p>	Reads familiar texts accurately.				
	Reads with appropriate expression.				
	Reads fluently and at a good pace, e.g. 30 words per minute (one word each 2 seconds).				
	Reads with few hesitations.				
	Pauses at the end of sentences.				
	Uses punctuation effectively.				
	Self-corrects if something doesn't sound right.				
Comprehension					
Ask: Is this fiction or non-fiction? (true facts)	Can read and identify fiction or non-fiction texts?				
Ask: Who is the 'main character' in the story?	Can identify main characters.				
Ask: What happened in the story?	Can describe plot very simply.				
Ask: Why do you think he went to town?	Answers an inferential question about the text.				
Ask: Did he see a tree, a dog or a ship?	Answers a multiple-choice question about the text.				
Word recognition					
<p>Ask: What is a suffix/prefix? Can you point to a word with a suffix/prefix? Point to the sight words in the text for the learner to read.</p>	Can recognise prefixes in the text.				
	Can recognise prefixes, if the language allows this.				
	Can read a range of common words on sight.				

Reading habits

Observe the learners during Independent Reading.	Reads grade-level texts independently.				
	Reads silently for an extended time.				
	Reads for pleasure.				
	Can use a dictionary for meaning of words.				

Summative Assessment List (for transitional level readers)

Name of learner:

Reading Assessment Standards	Some attained	Many attained	Most attained	All attained
Test 1 Date:				
Test 2 Date:				
Test 3 Date:				
Test 4 Date:				

All skills have been attained. Graduated to "independent level" tests.

Date:

Example 5: Checklist for independent level readers

Independent level					
Learner's name:		Tests			
Fluency		Date	Date	Date	Date
Give the learner a text at the correct level. Observe him/her read a few pages. <i>If the learner knows all the words, provide a slightly more difficult text so that you can observe how he/she tackles unknown words.</i>	Reads accurately.				
	Reads fluently and at a good pace, e.g. 60 words per minute (one word each second).				
	Reads with no hesitations.				
	Pauses at the end of sentences and responds to all punctuation.				
	Self-corrects when it doesn't make sense.				
Comprehension					
Ask: What type of text is this?	Can derive from text whether it is a: biography, story, newspaper article etc.				
	Can point out text features such as headings, captions, and labels.				
Ask: What is happening in this illustration?	Can say what is happening in a variety of illustrations e.g. a map, graph or photograph.				
Ask: What is the main idea in the text?	Can explain main idea of text (what it is about).				
Ask: Why did the boy run away?	Answers complex questions about the text including <i>why</i> questions.				
Ask: Did the boy run to school or church or the shop?	Answers multiple-choice questions about the text.				
Ask: What do you think the author wants us to feel? Why do you think so?	Can give an opinion about the ideas in the text and justify this.				

Word recognition

Point to common words in the text.

Can read a large range of common words on sight.

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Reading habits

Observe the learners during Independent Reading.
Give the learner an unfamiliar text or encyclopaedia to read from for a few seconds.

Reads silently.

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Reads unfamiliar texts confidently.

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Reads a range of text e.g. newspapers, non-fiction books, novels, textbooks.

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Reads for pleasure.

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Can use reference books e.g. an encyclopaedia.

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Summative Assessment List (for independent level readers)

Name of learner:

Reading Assessment Standards

Some attained

Many attained

Most attained

All attained

Test 1 Date:

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Test 2 Date:

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Test 3 Date:

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Test 4 Date:

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All skills have been attained.

Date:

Conclusion

Assessing reading should be continuous, formative and ongoing. It can happen formally and informally as you observe learners during the **Reading and Writing Focus Time**. On a day-to-day basis, develop learners' reading skills by responding to their needs as soon as you are aware of them.

However, sometimes more formal summative reading assessment is necessary. You will need to do formal assessment when you are organising or "levelling" learners into Guided Reading groups, or to diagnose learners who have reading difficulties.

The results of **Reading Assessment** will enable you to keep parents informed about the progress their child is making, and to see if the assessment standards for the grade have been reached.

However, the main purpose of Reading Assessment is to use the information to help the learners to develop into fluent readers so that they can enjoy their reading.





Support for Teachers

INTRODUCTION

There is no single instructional reading strategy or programme that is effective for all learners. That is why teachers are advised to understand the importance of improving their professional knowledge individually and within a team and most importantly view themselves as lifelong, reflective learners.

Teachers should seek out opportunities to expand their knowledge by participating in peer coaching, mentorships, professional reading circles, networking opportunities with colleagues and literacy workshops and conferences.

Most effective professional development happens in schools, during the school day with peers, Literacy Support Teacher, Principal, District officials, Parents and the wider Community.

In this Unit we find out:

1. What support structures can be made available to teachers?

Support from the principal

Effective principals should be dedicated to making literacy a school priority by:

- developing capacity among teachers to become Literacy Support teachers.
- consolidating and extending the leadership skills of experienced teachers so that they can support their colleagues.
- developing a school literacy plan.
- optimizing school and classroom timetable (Reading and Writing Focus time).
- providing adequate interventions to support learners experiencing barriers to reading.
- monitoring the progress of learners in special programmes who are at risk of not learning to read.
- promoting home/school/community partnerships.
- encouraging parents and caregivers to support their children's learning in meaningful ways (eg. through family reading, letter writing and storytelling).
- affirming the ongoing development of the learner's home language.
- providing parents and caregivers with access to reading material that their children can use at home.
- setting targets that improve learner literacy achievement.
- celebrating and observing literacy events such as "World Book Day", Library Week, Readathon Week etc.

Support from the literacy support teacher

Schools may appoint a Literacy Support Teacher who should be able to support teachers with various Reading interventions.

The main responsibilities for Literacy Support teacher should include:

- extensive knowledge of effective reading practice.
- observing, coaching and mentoring other teachers.
- managing resources.
- modelling effective reading strategies.
- managing the Reading and Writing Focus Time.
- supporting the principal in scheduling professional literacy support programmes.

Support from district officials

The role of District Officials is to:

- facilitate a system-wide commitment to early literacy.
- establish policies that support effective literacy instruction.
- support principals to recognise and articulate what their schools should accomplish in the area of reading instruction and learner achievement
- create a climate of accountability for improvement in literacy results.
- establish a focus on reading at the district level.
- build groups of teachers at a cluster level who have acquired strong instructional knowledge in reading as well as coaching and mentoring.
- form professional teams focussed on leadership for literacy.
- design school literacy plans.
- supervise the acquisition of reading resources.

Support from parents and the community

- Inform parents about their involvement in encouraging and promoting reading at home eg. supervising homework and reading
- Invite parents to participate in the Reading Activities eg Readathon Week, "Reading mums and dads," and Library Week.
- Establish a volunteer parent group who could provide valuable support by reading aloud to learners and helping learners to practise sight words and letter sounds.
- For learners whose home language is not the Language of Learning and Teaching(LoLT) invite parent volunteers who speak the home language of these learners to help them understand the LoLT better.

Conclusion

Enabling all teachers to teach reading effectively is a collaborative effort and that involves a whole-school approach to reading inspired by the Principal, district officials, parents and the wider community.





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