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Glossary ....................................................... GL.1
The past ten years have seen tremendous change worldwide in the teaching of literacy and numeracy. Countries like England, the United States, and Australia have developed and put into practice large-scale, research-based initiatives to improve instructional and assessment practices, instructional leadership skills, and accountability in the areas of reading and mathematics.

The Ontario Ministry of Education introduced its Early Reading Strategy in 2001 and its Early Math Strategy in 2002. Under these strategies, elementary schools in the province are required to participate in a regular cycle of assessment, target setting, and improvement planning. These practices, combined with effective instruction, have been shown by research to be key factors in improving the achievement levels of students.

In June 2002, the ministry convened two expert panels – one on early reading and one on early math – to report on effective instructional practices in these two important areas. The panels’ reports were released in February 2003. This reference guide, which is based on the findings of and advice set out in The Report of the Expert Panel on Early Reading in Ontario, contains information derived from research on instructional and assessment practices and supports that have proved to be effective in improving student achievement in reading. (A similar guide is being produced under the Early Math Strategy.) Teachers and other educators charged with improving the reading skills of young children are strongly encouraged to use this guide in conjunction with the expert panel’s report.

This reference guide builds on the strengths that exist in Ontario’s education system. It seeks to develop increased capacity at the school level, where children are taught, to sustain improvement in early reading.

A broad consensus now exists among researchers and educators on the knowledge and skills children need in order to read, the experiences that influence the development of reading abilities, and the basic components of effective reading instruction. But for many teachers, both new and experienced, there continues to be a gap
between theory and practice. How can current research about learning to read be brought to life in the classroom? What practical applications can best help teachers meet their commitment to give every child the gift of literacy?

*A Guide to Effective Instruction in Reading: Kindergarten to Grade 3* is designed to answer those questions by providing teachers with practical strategies informed by current research and practice. It has been developed by a team of reading experts – highly experienced teachers, consultants, and administrators from across the province – who came together for the purpose of gathering evidence-based information, resources, materials, and supports related to effective practices in reading instruction. The guide is intended to help classroom teachers and other educators as they work to enhance the reading development of children in Kindergarten to Grade 3.

A similar reference guide, reflecting research and effective practices in reading instruction in the French language, has been developed for educators in Ontario’s French-language schools.
The Importance of Early Reading Success

Evidence continues to mount that early success in reading is the key to long-term success in school and in lifelong learning, and that early intervention when reading problems arise is essential if long-term problems are to be avoided.¹

Children who successfully learn to read in the early primary years of school are well prepared to read for learning and for pleasure in the years to come. On the other hand, children who struggle with reading in Grades 1 to 3 are at a serious disadvantage. Academically, they have a much harder time keeping up with their peers, and they increasingly fall behind in other subjects. They are far more likely to suffer low self-esteem, and in their teen years they are more likely to leave school before acquiring the skills they need to succeed in society and in the workplace.

All teachers recognize that success in school and throughout life depends in large part on the ability to read. For teachers of very young children, this understanding is accompanied by both a personal and a professional commitment to early reading success for all children.

The Ontario Context

Newcomers to Ontario from countries other than Canada now represent almost 25 per cent of Ontario's population, with 18 per cent of the population speaking neither English nor French as a first language. In some school boards, more than seventy-five home languages and dialects are represented among the student population. While this diversity in student background is not in itself an obstacle to reading achievement, it does have implications for early reading instruction. Teachers need to ensure that their instructional approaches and classroom practices reflect the needs of the changing population.

Four Beliefs Underlying the Development of This Guide

The following principles or “beliefs”, which guided the work of the Expert Panel on Early Reading, are reflected in this reference guide.

Belief 1: Reading instruction should be based on the evidence of sound research that has been verified by classroom practice.

Although individual research papers and programs may propose a variety of practices, there is broad consensus in the scientific community about the key components of effective reading instruction. The research is also clear in showing that effective reading instruction compensates for risk factors that might otherwise prevent children from becoming successful readers.

*The material in this reference guide is informed by this research and by the experience of expert classroom educators.*

Belief 2: Early success in reading is critical for children.

Reading success is the foundation for achievement throughout the school years. There is a critical window of opportunity from the ages of four to seven for children to learn to read. Research on early reading difficulties is very clear: children who continue to experience reading difficulties in Grade 3 seldom catch up later. It makes sense to recognize problems early in order to avoid escalating problems later.

*This reference guide offers advice, tools, and instructional strategies that will help educators identify and address the reading needs of young students.*

Belief 3: The teacher is the key to a child’s success in learning to read.

According to research, the ability of teachers to deliver effective reading instruction is the most powerful factor in determining how well children learn to read. It is essential to recognize the critical role teachers play in preventing reading difficulties and to provide teachers at all grade levels with the best and most up-to-date knowledge and skills to teach reading and to promote literacy. This understanding can help to ensure that teachers are not mere consumers of packaged products or programs, but informed and critical thinkers who are able to make wise choices that consider the needs of the children and accomplish the goals of effective reading instruction.

*The goal of this reference guide is the enhancement of teachers’ knowledge and skills in the area of reading instruction.*
Belief 4: In order to succeed in the classroom, teachers need the cooperation and support of instructional leaders at the school and board levels who value and provide ongoing professional development.

Effective early reading instruction does not happen in isolation. It involves not only primary classroom teachers, but all levels of the educational system. Each partner plays a significant role in creating the conditions that teachers need to provide effective instruction and that children need to learn to the best of their ability.

The contributions that educators at all levels can make to improve student learning and to sustain the drive for improvement are described in Part 1 of this guide.

The Organization and Features of This Guide

This guide has two parts. Part 1, “Improving Student Achievement in Reading”, will be of interest to all educators who are collaborating to implement the Early Reading Strategy and, in particular, improvements to early reading instruction. This group includes classroom teachers, lead literacy teachers, principals, superintendents, and board support or resource staff. Part 2, “Effective Reading Instruction”, will be of particular interest to classroom teachers of Kindergarten through Grade 3.

Part 1, which comprises the chapter entitled “Achieving and Sustaining Improvement”, provides a framework for school improvement and discusses those elements that have proved effective in achieving and sustaining improvement. The framework is followed by a brief discussion of target setting and improvement planning. Part 1 also discusses the contributions to effective reading instruction that can be made by the various members of the “reading improvement team”, placing emphasis on the importance of collaboration and continuous professional development as well as data gathering and target setting. Since primary schools throughout Ontario are assigning lead literacy teachers to model and promote effective reading instruction, the guide discusses the potential role and contributions of lead teachers. Finally, Part 1 provides information about developing and sustaining the professional learning communities and the vital home and community connections that promote and support effective reading instruction.

Part 2, “Effective Reading Instruction”, which comprises Chapters 2 through 13, is the heart of this reference guide. It offers strategies, suggestions, and resources that teachers will turn to again and again for guidance as they teach young children to read, improving their own skills and helping their students develop and improve their reading skills. Part 2 begins with an overview of effective reading instruction.
It goes on to discuss oral language and reading; the four key instructional strategies (read-alouds, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading); reading comprehension; phonemic awareness, phonics, and word study; and the roles of writing and technology in reading instruction. Part 2 also includes sections on effective practices in the important areas of assessment and classroom organization.

Sample lessons are provided in each of the chapters that deal with particular instructional strategies and approaches. Each lesson illustrates a practical application of the instructional strategies described in the chapter, and provides a model for conducting an entire lesson (or a series of minilessons) based on a particular strategy. It is hoped that teachers will find the sample lessons helpful for purposes of planning or simply as a source for new ideas and approaches.

A glossary of the terms used in A Guide to Effective Instruction in Reading, Kindergarten to Grade 3 is provided at the end of the document.
Achieving and Sustaining Improvement

Chapter Contents

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“Ultimately, your leadership in a culture of change will be judged as effective or ineffective not by who you are as a leader but by what leadership you produce in others.”

(Fullan, 2001, p. 137)

This chapter of *A Guide to Effective Instruction in Reading, Kindergarten to Grade 3* will be of interest to classroom teachers, lead teachers, principals, superintendents, and board support or resource staff who are collaborating to improve early reading instruction. It describes what research has revealed about the methods used by schools and the roles undertaken by educators at various levels that have proved particularly effective in creating and sustaining improvement in early reading achievement.

The Ministry of Education recognizes that assigning roles in schools and school boards is the responsibility of district school boards. The following discussion provides boards with a framework within which they may plan for school improvement, and descriptions of roles they may find useful in supporting and aligning individuals’ efforts within their organizations. This framework and the descriptions of roles follow closely the advice found in the Expert Panel reports on early reading and early math (Expert Panel on Early Reading in Ontario, 2003; Expert Panel on Early Math in Ontario, 2003).

**A Framework for School Improvement**

Improvement is achieved and sustained by the continuous, conscious efforts of educators to assess their students’ progress, identify areas for improvement, determine the instructional strategies to pursue in light of assessment data, implement those strategies, measure whether the strategies have been successful in addressing students’ needs, and plan the next step in the instructional process.

Educators striving to achieve the complex goal of “success for all students” understand that the best results are achieved through a whole-school approach. A whole-school
approach ensures “high expectations of student achievement, engaged learning time, and focused teaching that maximizes learning within each student’s ‘zone of proximal development’ (Vygotsky, 1978)” (Hill and Crévola, 1997, p. 2). Leadership, the committed involvement of a wide range of partners, and support at all levels are key factors in achieving and sustaining improvement in student learning. Superintendents, board-level support and resource staff, principals, lead teachers, classroom teachers, support staff, and the community all play important roles in establishing the school’s priorities, culture, and climate.

Professional learning is another vital element in achieving and sustaining improvement. A career-long cycle of learning, practising, reflecting, and sharing ensures that educators are continuously acquiring the knowledge and skills that allow them to promote effective instructional practices. This kind of professional learning simultaneously encourages the development and maintenance of a culture of improvement, professional collaboration, and group ownership. The ability to sustain improvement is enhanced when strong leadership from knowledgeable curriculum leaders, a team approach to improving teaching and learning, and high expectations are part of the cycle of professional learning.

The following factors are also critical to achieving and sustaining improvement in student performance:

- a commitment to excellence;
- a strong sense of responsibility for student success;
- an ability to set goals and priorities, work within defined timelines, and make flexible plans;
- an awareness of and preparedness for the challenges of the change process.

In their 1997 paper “The Literacy Challenge in Australian Primary Schools”, Peter Hill and Carmel Crévola developed a framework that sets out the key factors needed to achieve and sustain improvement in learning. That framework is reproduced below. The factors set out in Hill and Crévola’s framework can be applied to early reading instruction as follows:

- **Beliefs and understandings**
  - *Every child can learn to read.*
  - *Effective teaching that targets student needs maximizes opportunities for student learning.*
  - *Educators take responsibility for the success of their students.*

These beliefs and understandings reside at the centre of all successful plans for improving student achievement in early reading. Educators who share these beliefs know that all students can achieve success in reading, and they find ways
to provide structured, effective reading instruction for all students, including those who experience difficulties. School and board administrators who share these beliefs allocate time, resources, and staffing to reading programs and to professional learning activities that focus on effective reading instruction. Educators at all levels recognize that high standards are achieved through knowledge-building, practice, and professional discussions based on research – research found in the professional literature as well as that conducted within the school and the board themselves. Finally, educators at all levels hold themselves accountable for the improvement of student learning.

- **Leadership and coordination**
  - *Educational leaders are well-informed about the components of an effective early reading program.*
  - *A school-level plan provides the road map for improvement in early reading teaching and learning. Once developed, it is reviewed regularly and adjusted as necessary.*
  - *Professional learning activities are directly linked to the school improvement plan.*
  - *School and board administrators as well as classroom teachers participate in professional learning activities.*
In schools that successfully bring about and sustain improvement, the principal, lead teacher, and professional learning teams work collaboratively. The principal ensures, through careful planning, that appropriate supports are in place to improve the teaching and learning of reading. The challenging expectations established through goal- and target-setting activities are shared with staff and parents. Plans are reassessed at regular intervals throughout the cycle and adjusted as necessary. (Leadership and other roles are discussed in more detail later in this chapter.)

- **School and class organization**
  - *Literacy is the most important facet of learning.*
  - *School and class organization is based on the learning needs of students.*

Schools that are effective in improving student achievement in early reading ensure that teaching and learning time is maximized in each school day. When the school day is structured to provide large, uninterrupted blocks of time for literacy-related activities (“literacy blocks”), the learning needs of students become the focus. Effective timetabling can ensure that non-teaching activities such as announcements and the collection of forms do not interrupt the literacy block. Classroom routines and organization are also important, as literacy activities require large- and small-group teaching areas, learning activity areas, a classroom library, and storage for resources and materials (e.g., book bins).

- **Professional learning teams**
  - *A school environment that promotes professional collaboration, cohesiveness, and consistency contributes to a successful literacy program.*
  - *Time spent transforming research-based knowledge into effective classroom practice is time well spent.*
  - *By analysing student achievement data, professional learning teams can focus instruction and track school improvement.*

Effective schools promote the development of a school-based community of learners as a basis for ongoing professional dialogue and collaboration. Depending on the school’s size, there are one or more professional learning teams who investigate new research on the improvement of instructional practices; apply evidence-based teaching and assessment methods, such as those described in this guide, in the classroom; and gather and interpret assessment data. The team benefits from the diversity of expertise provided by its members, who may include the principal, a lead literacy teacher, other classroom teachers, support staff, and teacher-librarians. Team members become proficient at asking questions, finding answers, considering trends in student achievement data, and reflecting on current instructional practices in the school. (Professional learning communities are discussed in more detail later in this chapter.)
• Classroom teaching strategies
  – *The success of an effective reading program depends on the selection and development of expert teachers in reading instruction.*
  – *Effective instruction is based on the learning needs of students, as identified through a variety of assessments.*
  – *In an effective reading program, students are provided with authentic and motivating learning opportunities.*

Effective schools have clear expectations for classroom teachers, lead teachers, and support staff. These expectations include ensuring the maximum amount of teaching and learning time in the classroom and a daily literacy block. Teachers have a thorough knowledge of how children learn to read and of the best approaches to teaching reading. They help students develop their reading abilities by engaging them in read-alouds and shared, guided, and independent reading activities. As teachers refine their skills in reading instruction, as well as their expertise in applying and interpreting the results of a variety of assessment strategies, they are able to meet students’ individual learning needs through the use of a range of planned strategies and resources.

• Standards and targets
  – *Realistic goal setting and appropriate monitoring and support lead to school improvement and improved student learning.*

Effective schools base their school improvement plans for early reading on their students’ levels of achievement in reading and on the practices they know to be effective in teaching children to read. Goal setting for improved student achievement and the monitoring of progress towards that goal provide staff the means by which to focus their efforts on the school’s priorities and to promote continuous efforts to improve student learning. The target-setting process engages schools in gathering and evaluating data about student learning generated at the classroom level as well as through the province-wide assessments administered by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO). The goals or improvement targets are described in relation to the provincial standard (see glossary) for student achievement in reading.

• Monitoring and assessment
  – *Assessment guides instruction, at the level of both the school and the classroom.*

Effective assessment can have a dramatic impact on student learning. Teachers recognize that different assessment strategies generate different information, and they understand that it is important to build a repertoire of assessment strategies to use in the classroom. Effective teachers consider and apply the appropriate strategy to learn about the effect of their instruction and the depth of student learning. Examination of school-, board-, and province-wide assessment data motivates and directs change in instructional practices.
• Intervention and special assistance
  – *Early intervention is crucial to ensure future success in reading.*
For all students, reading success in the early years is a predictor of future academic success. Therefore, effective schools put supports in place for struggling readers and writers in the primary grades. Principals and professional learning teams determine and establish a variety of appropriate assistance systems (e.g., small-group support, one-on-one intervention) for their students. Teachers monitor student success and conduct regular assessments, knowing that these practices are essential to ensuring steady student progress.

• Home, school, and community partnerships
  – *The home and the community play important roles in supporting literacy instruction in the school.*
  – *Communication with the home can contribute greatly to student success.*
Regular communication among school, home, and community, with the student as the focus, creates important partnerships that support and help sustain improvement. A variety of forms of communication are necessary. Teachers can discuss effective reading strategies with parents to help them better understand how their children learn and to give them new ways to encourage and help their children when they read with them at home. Parents who understand what is being taught in the classroom today, and how it is being taught, are in a better position to assist in their children’s growth and learning. In addition, newsletters sent home by the school can outline opportunities for parents to help their children learn to read. School-community partnerships in support of literacy instruction can also involve volunteers, whose assistance can be both helpful and inspiring to young readers.

**Target Setting and Improvement Planning**
Setting measurable targets for achievement has been a central feature of successful efforts to improve student achievement on a wide scale in Canada, the United States, England, and Australia. Target setting engages teachers, administrators, school boards, and members of the broader school community as active and vital participants in the improvement process.

Ontario has established a provincial standard for reading achievement for all primary students, regardless of their background, school, or community – namely, to demonstrate knowledge and skills in reading at level 3 or higher in every grade. Effective teachers know that different children need different kinds of help to achieve the provincial standard. They set challenging but realistic goals in partnership with the students, their parents, and the school literacy team, and carefully plan their instruction to meet those goals.
The target-setting process begins when teachers and administrators gather and analyse relevant data about students in their schools. This analysis enables teachers and the school to identify areas in which improvement is needed and to establish meaningful, specific, and realistic goals for future achievement.

Realistic target setting depends on the following:

- **effective data management** – By gathering and analysing student assessment data, teachers and administrators ensure that their improvement strategies are based on a correct understanding of students’ levels of achievement. Analysis of reliable assessment data also helps them identify how classroom instruction and assessment practices have affected student performance.

- **teamwork across grades** – Laying the groundwork for reading achievement in Grade 3 begins in Kindergarten and continues through Grades 1 and 2 to Grade 3. Schools are more likely to achieve and sustain a high level of achievement if they promote cross-grade collaboration and a collegial approach.

The main source of information about student achievement is classroom-based assessment and evaluation. Teachers base their assessment and evaluation of student work on the achievement chart published in the Ministry of Education’s curriculum policy document *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1–8: Language, 1997* or on the expectations outlined in the curriculum policy document *The Kindergarten Program, 1998*, as appropriate. Improvement planning is always driven by the comparison between students’ achievement and the expectations of the Ontario curriculum, combined with the estimated impact of instructional strategies. However, teachers can also put classroom-based data into a broader context and apply it to their improvement planning by:

- sharing classroom assessment results across grade levels, within the primary division and within the school;
- using board-wide assessment results, when available, to analyse their students’ progress in relation to that of students in other board schools that have similar – or very different – characteristics;
- learning to understand and interpret the assessment information gathered by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), which tracks province-wide trends and patterns of improvement.

This reference guide contains a chapter on assessment strategies for classroom teachers (see Chapter 12: Assessment).

Boards and schools have improvement plans, which they update annually. A school’s improvement targets and its plans for achieving them form a central part of the school’s overall improvement plan.
The Pace of Implementation of Effective Reading Instruction

The successful adoption of new teaching practices depends on:

- the priority given to the initiative;
- the background knowledge, teaching experience, and skill levels of the educators.

When early reading is made a priority, educators are encouraged to apportion time to learning, planning, assessment, and instruction. Indeed, the more attention that is paid to these functions, the more quickly the initiative can be implemented. With respect to background knowledge, experience, and skills, teachers who have experience delivering the kind of effective reading instruction set out in this reference guide may be able to fully implement these methods and strategies within a relatively short period of time. Those who do not have this experience may require considerably more time to reach the stage where they are able to consistently apply their new knowledge and skills in the classroom environment.

Working Together to Improve Reading Instruction

Within the school, classroom teachers have the strongest influence on the development of students’ reading skills. In schools that are successful in improving student achievement, teachers and administrators act as a team to provide focus and support for classroom teachers to develop their professional expertise. In addition to classroom teachers, lead teachers, principals, centrally assigned staff, and superintendents can all make distinct contributions towards implementing and sustaining effective reading instruction practices. Working together, these individuals can plan the kind of professional development that will result in advancing the learning goals set for students. As well, they collaborate with parents and other community members in defining, implementing, and reviewing school improvement plans. Each partner plays a different role in working to improve reading instruction, as described below.

Classroom Teachers

Classroom teachers can improve their instructional effectiveness, and begin to take on leadership roles in the effort to improve students’ reading skills, by:

- incorporating the research-informed teaching strategies described in this reference guide into their instructional practices,
- collaborating with the principal to develop clear, measurable goals for their professional development – goals that focus on effective reading instruction and student achievement in reading;
• identifying their own learning needs and seeking out related learning opportunities, ensuring that their learning plans are related to the needs of their students as identified through an analysis of classroom and school assessment results;
• working cooperatively in professional learning teams to incorporate into their classroom practices new teaching and assessment strategies that are informed by research;
• staying informed about current research related to effective reading instruction;
• sharing their knowledge and experiences with other educators in their own and neighbouring schools;
• participating in regular reviews of professional development plans that are informed by evidence of what is and what is not working to improve student performance;
• accepting opportunities to work on board committees and to lead in-service workshops.

Lead Literacy Teachers

The term *lead teacher* is relatively new in Ontario, but it is widely used in jurisdictions that have implemented plans for improving student performance in particular areas, most commonly the areas of literacy and mathematics. Lead teachers are classroom teachers who have acquired, or are acquiring, advanced knowledge and skills in the targeted subject areas. Many district school boards have established an analogous role for teachers who, for example, head up particular board initiatives (e.g., a "literacy lead") or serve as the key contact within a school for a particular area (e.g., a "curriculum lead").

The Ministry of Education uses the term *lead literacy teacher* to refer to a classroom teacher who has been selected to receive intensive training under the ministry’s literacy initiative. This training focuses on, among other things, effective instruction, effective assessment, and effective uses of school assessment data. Some examples of the kinds of roles and responsibilities lead teachers may take on in their school are listed below. It is important to note that the role and responsibilities of lead teachers are determined by the school board and by the assignments made by the principal.

By using the resources they have available to them, boards can extend and support the lead teacher's role, and the responsibilities associated with it, to meet the board's specific needs. (Appendix 1-1 provides three examples of how school boards in Ontario are defining and supporting the role of lead teacher, and of the responsibilities they
are assigning to that role.) Boards may involve lead teachers in some or all of the following:

- promoting professional development in the area of literacy, modelling effective instructional strategies, and mentoring/coaching teachers;
- demonstrating how effective literacy strategies can be used across the curriculum in all subject areas;
- assisting with team and individual program planning related to effective reading instruction. The lead literacy teacher’s timetable may include a regular block of time to meet with colleagues for program planning;
- working with staff to identify, select, and organize reading resources for the school. Although the lead teacher may facilitate this process, all primary teachers should be involved in deciding what resources to purchase, keeping in mind current research and board and ministry directives. The lead teacher may also work with others in the primary division to organize, store, and develop a sign-out procedure for shared resources, and to monitor the use of resources. Some schools keep literacy resources on specific library shelves; others keep them in bins in the classroom used by their lead teacher;
- helping to establish the level of reading materials used in the primary division (e.g., sets of books for guided reading, books for home reading programs). Primary teachers find it helpful to have the appropriate grade level clearly marked on reading resources;
- working with the principal and colleagues to schedule uninterrupted blocks of classroom time for reading instruction and related activities;
- helping colleagues plan the activities for the literacy block;
- demonstrating for classroom teachers how to use instructional time effectively. The lead teacher may also demonstrate how a classroom teacher can monitor time on task and suggest ways to capitalize on every opportunity to review literacy skills – for example, as the class lines up to exit the room, moves through the hallway, or prepares to quiet down in the gym;
- supporting the administration in planning the use of release time for primary staff during the school day that is to be dedicated to improving literacy instruction;
- connecting with the parents of primary students through presentations at school council meetings, regular early-literacy newsletters, and Kindergarten orientation sessions and other information meetings;
- providing parents with strategies for home review and practice of literacy skills and encouraging and training parents to be effective school volunteers;
- encouraging and supporting other teachers in reviewing student work, interpreting assessment results, analysing students’ strengths and needs, setting goals, and focusing appropriate instructional strategies on the areas of student needs;
• assisting teachers with the administration of assessment tools, the interpretation of assessment results for their individual classes, and subsequent program planning;
• meeting with an individual teacher to discuss results of assessments for that teacher’s class and to help plan future programming and strategies;
• engaging in reflective discussions with other teachers about current instructional practice, with a view to improving it.

The role of the lead teacher may vary from board to board and school to school. Each board, working with its school administrators, needs to determine how it wants to handle the assignment of lead teachers, and of any board-level personnel designated to support the early reading initiative, in its schools.

Experience in other jurisdictions indicates that lead teachers’ difficulties in settling into their new role and any misgivings on the part of school staff about the initiative are minimized when the lead teachers are selected carefully, when they have credibility with and the trust of their colleagues, and when they receive the support of administration at both the school and board levels. The likelihood of success is further enhanced when the lead literacy teacher’s role is developed in consultation with administrators and staff and when expectations are realistic in relation to available time and resources.

Lead teachers themselves can contribute to the success of the initiative by recognizing that change may be difficult, by encouraging colleagues to take regular but manageable steps in implementing new strategies in their reading instruction, by being supportive of colleagues as they attempt new practices, and by celebrating effective practices and student successes with them.

**Principals**

The role of principals in implementing successful early reading strategies in their schools is primarily one of leadership – to establish a focus on early reading in their school communities. They do this in many ways. As curriculum leaders, they communicate and emphasize fundamental beliefs and understandings about the importance of success in early reading, as well as board and school goals for improvement in early reading. They also use their leadership to help align the “success factors” that are partly or entirely within their control – time, resources, personnel, practices, and plans – so that they support the goals of improvement in students’ reading.

> “… the moral imperative of the principal involves leading deep cultural change that mobilizes the passion and commitment of teachers, parents, and others to improve the learning of all students, including closing the achievement gap.”

(Fullan, 2003, p. 41)
Principals can lead whole-school literacy team initiatives by means of some or all of the following:

- distributing leadership for literacy initiatives and encouraging the development of in-school leaders;
- developing, in collaboration with staff, clear, measurable goals for professional learning that are aligned with the school’s goals for improving the level of student achievement;
- incorporating current knowledge derived from research on reading instruction, such as the information provided in this guide, into staff professional learning activities, and participating in these activities with staff. This level of involvement promotes consistency in the interpretation of information and demonstrates the value placed on professional learning;
- enhancing their own literacy leadership capacity by participating in professional learning activities with their peers and with superintendents;
- coordinating the provision of internal and external supports, including training and other learning opportunities, in keeping with the school’s goals for improving the level of student achievement;
- ascertaining the needs of staff and students and allocating the appropriate funds, human resources, and time for in-school teacher learning;
- promoting in-school as well as area- and board-wide literacy partnerships and learning teams;
- promoting an atmosphere of trust in which teachers feel comfortable experimenting with new instructional practices that are informed by research and sharing their knowledge;
- identifying and encouraging exemplary practices and leadership by school staff, providing consistent, constructive, and supportive feedback on improvement efforts, and encouraging reflection;
- monitoring and regularly reviewing with staff the implementation process for their schools’ literacy improvement and professional learning plans;
- structuring their schools’ timetables to provide uninterrupted blocks of time for literacy instruction;
- promoting creative use of in-school release time for grade-level and cross-grade planning and focused discussions among teachers about student work and about the steps required to address areas of need;
- using, and ensuring that others use, assessment results as the basis for instructional, structural, and resource-allocation decisions;
- supporting the lead teacher and establishing priorities for the role;
• choosing topics for literacy meetings that support the school’s and the board’s literacy learning priorities;

• observing classes regularly and offering teachers encouragement and constructive advice about their professional learning.

**Centrally Assigned Staff**

Staff assigned centrally by a board to serve the schools of the board can contribute to system-wide literacy objectives through some or all of the following:

• collaborating with superintendents and principals to develop clear, measurable goals for professional learning that focus on reading instruction and student achievement;

• staying informed about current research in reading instruction;

• participating in professional learning activities that strengthen their knowledge of reading instruction and their skills in mentoring, coaching, modelling, and leadership;

• creating and delivering professional learning activities at the board and school levels using the material in this guide;

• supporting school teams in the development of professional learning and school improvement plans;

• developing literacy support documents and recommending appropriate resources and materials for effective reading instruction and professional learning;

• working with lead literacy teachers to model effective reading instruction practices in classrooms;

• identifying and supporting individual teachers’ needs;

• reviewing the board’s professional learning plan in collaboration with superintendents and principals, focusing on classroom practices and board-wide professional learning activities that will strengthen student performance.

**Superintendents**

Superintendents can contribute to the improvement of early reading skills through some or all of the following:

• developing, in collaboration with principals and central support staff, clear, measurable goals for professional learning that focus on reading instruction and student achievement;

• staying informed about and disseminating current research on effective reading instruction practices;
• sustaining their boards’ leadership capacity in the area of literacy instruction by participating in training with peers that strengthens their own understanding of reading instruction. This level of involvement promotes consistency in the interpretation of information and demonstrates the value the administration places on professional development;

• coordinating internal and external supports, training, and professional learning networks at the board level;

• ascertaining the needs of staff and students and allocating the appropriate funds for human resources and time for board-wide teacher-principal-school learning teams;

• promoting a culture in which superintendents and principals share their knowledge of and experience with research-based methods and coaching and mentoring;

• recognizing leadership abilities among school staff in classrooms and schools that practise effective literacy instruction;

• monitoring and regularly reviewing the implementation process for school- and board-level professional learning plans, noting improvements in student reading achievement and classroom instructional practices.

**Professional Learning**

**The Purpose and Benefits of Professional Learning Communities**

Schools that have been effective in improving students’ reading skills are typically schools that also promote a culture of lifelong learning among teachers, administrators, and other education professionals in the school. They have created "professional learning communities".

Active professional learning communities usually emerge in schools when principals and teachers work together as a team to develop a comprehensive professional learning plan. Since the ultimate objective of the professional learning plan is to improve student learning, the plan is linked directly to an interpretation of the results of student reading assessments – in other words, students’ needs inform the professional learning needs of teachers. In addition, the professional learning plan is aligned with curriculum expectations, assessment strategies, the school’s overall improvement plan, and the board’s improvement plan and literacy goals. Consistency among the various plans provides support for educators at all levels of the system as

"Learning is continuous and self-renewing. All learners incorporate new information into what they already know; so knowledge builds. In a learning community, everyone is expected to keep on learning but also to contribute to others’ learning."

(Lyons and Pinnell, 2001, p. 170)
they work together to bridge the gap between current student performance and the 
goals they set for reading improvement. Finally, a good professional learning plan is 
flexible. Flexibility allows the participants to make adjustments to the plan as imple-
mentation proceeds and as staff or school changes occur.

**Professional Learning Community Activities**

Schools and boards that have active professional learning communities engage in 
the following kinds of activities, often combining more than one. Using a variety of 
types of professional learning activities acknowledges the fact that teachers – like 
students – learn in different ways, values the diversity of teachers’ prior knowledge, 
and allows teachers to make choices that best suit their needs. When designing a 
professional learning plan, staff may also wish to include activities that can be 
implemented jointly with other schools or with staff from other sites.

**Peer coaching**

Peer coaching offers teachers an opportunity to work together in planning activities, 
to visit each other’s classes, to discuss the teaching and learning that occurs there, to 
share ideas, and to help each other solve problems (Beavers, 2001).

**Study groups**

Study groups are made up of educators (teachers, principals, central support staff, 
etc.) who wish to share ideas and to study professional resources or current research 
about reading instruction. Generally, study groups consist of five or six people who 
meet regularly to establish common goals, discuss readings on practices and 
research, share lesson plans, exchange ideas, develop collaborative units, and apply 
what is learned to improving students’ learning (Beavers, 2001). Members of study 
groups can also work together to develop particular lessons, use those lessons in their 
classrooms, share their observations, and make improvements. In some cases, teach-
ers may want to visit one another’s classrooms to see how lessons are “played out” in 
other classes. The lessons that are developed can then be documented and shared 
with other teachers.

**Team teaching**

Team teaching provides opportunities for joint planning, joint instruction, feedback, 
and discussion. As equal partners, team teachers benefit from an environment of col-
laboration, experimentation, peer inquiry, and examination of classroom instruction 
(Sandholtz, 2000).
Mentoring
Mentor teachers are experienced educators who consistently apply effective strategies to teach reading in their own classrooms. They act as role models to teachers who are seeking support in adopting new teaching approaches. Mentor teachers model effective practices, share information and expertise, encourage reflection about teaching practices, and offer support to others.

Reflective practice
"Reflective practice" refers to a four-stage activity in which teachers, working with a partner or in a small group, reflect on their instructional and assessment practices. Reflective practice begins in the classroom, where teachers apply a "stop, look, and question" approach in order to examine their practices and to learn to differentiate their teaching from their students' learning. Teachers then collect, examine, and reflect on their observations of student learning and meet with their colleagues to discuss their findings, review assessment data, and consider possible explanations for students' learning behaviours and achievement levels. On the basis of their reflection and discussions, teachers modify their teaching strategies or introduce new strategies as necessary to meet students' needs. Reflective practice helps educators avoid making assumptions about student learning on the basis of appearances (Rodgers, 2002).

Home and Community Connections
"Family involvement in a child's education is a more important factor in student success than family income or education."

(International Reading Association, 2002, p. 2)

The focus of formal literacy instruction is the school, but literacy itself is a community value. Parents, teachers, and children are all partners in the learning process. Countless studies over the years have clearly shown that children do better at school when parents are actively involved in their education (Epstein, 1991; Henderson, 1988; Henderson and Berla, 1994). Children whose parents take an interest in their learning are more likely to talk about what they learn at school, develop positive attitudes towards learning, and seek their parents’ help.
Encouraging Parental Involvement

Family involvement improves students' attitudes towards learning, their self-esteem, and their level of achievement. Successful home-school partnerships help parents to become engaged with their children's learning. Teachers can discuss effective reading strategies with parents, who can then better understand how their children learn and become more confident in helping their children learn to read. Furthermore, parents who understand what their children are taught in reading classrooms today, and why, are in a better position to assist in their children's growth and learning. In addition, children are not subjected to confusing messages when their parents and their teacher share a common approach to reading. Finally, opening channels of communication with parents sends the message to children that reading is highly valued both at school and at home.

Parents are a child's first and most influential teachers. The best time for children to start learning to read is long before Kindergarten. As studies have shown, children who are read to several times a day between the ages of two and three do substantially better in Kindergarten than those whose parents do not read to them as often (Statistics Canada, 1999).

A good source of tips for parents is the Ministry of Education's booklet Helping Your Child Learn to Read: A Parent's Guide, which is available on the ministry's website, at www.edu.gov.on.ca.

In working with parents and community members, effective educators take responsibility for:

- motivating and inspiring others by sharing their vision of teaching and learning;
- creating opportunities for students to share their learning with their classmates, their parents, and the community;
- inviting parents and community members to share their knowledge and skills in supporting classroom and school activities (Ontario College of Teachers, 1999).
Developing Home-School Partnerships

When educators are supportive, responsive, and welcoming, they encourage parents to become partners in their child’s education. There are several ways to build home-school partnerships and increase parental involvement. Some suggestions include:

- determining the child’s prior home experience with reading;
- working and communicating effectively with families through informal conversations, home visits, and parent-teacher conferences;
- being sensitive to the individual circumstances of parents and families;
- suggesting activities for parents, such as games that allow children to practise and to experience success in reading;
- helping parents understand what is taught in today’s reading classroom and why (e.g. by sending home a brief description of the concepts and strategies involved in each new reading unit);
- sharing with parents their knowledge, informed by current research, about how children learn to read and about best practices in reading instruction;
- providing parents with information about their children’s progress on an ongoing basis;
- preparing take-home reading kits that may include activities, books, and software focused on a particular topic;
- hosting a family literacy event, emphasizing reading activities that can be enjoyed by the whole family;
- providing and promoting the Ministry of Education’s publication Helping Your Child Learn to Read: A Parent’s Guide;
- involving libraries and bookstores by asking them to promote reading for young children;
- developing and promoting an appreciation of the cultural values and heritages of all members of the school community;
- responding promptly and constructively to parents’ concerns, either by telephone or by e-mail;
- inviting parents’ feedback on the teacher’s observations, assessments, and documentation of their child’s reading behaviours;
- promoting a philosophy of teamwork with peers, administrators, and family and community members;
- engaging parents in helping, on a volunteer basis, with reading-related activities at the school, and drawing on any special talents and knowledge they might have...
that could benefit student learning. (This suggestion involves assessing school and classroom needs that could be met by parent volunteers, determining the roles they could play, and prioritizing needs and setting goals for parental involvement.);
• engaging parents, through school councils, in planning and decision-making activities related to home-school partnerships.
Appendix I-1: Three Approaches to the Assignment of Lead Literacy Teachers and Other Literacy Support Personnel

The following three approaches are being used by some school boards in Ontario to define the roles and responsibilities of the lead literacy teachers in their schools and the board-level staff who have been assigned to support the early reading initiative.

Approach 1: At Targeted Schools, In-School Half-Time Release for Lead Literacy Teacher

At each targeted school, the board gives the lead literacy teacher a minimum half-time assignment, during which the lead teacher has no classroom responsibilities. The lead teacher uses his or her release time in the following ways:

- participating in monthly in-service training for all lead literacy teachers within the district, and sharing the information acquired at those sessions with teachers and administrators at the targeted schools. Since the lead literacy teacher’s role is built into the staffing complement, the board does not incur additional release time costs for board-level workshops;
- planning for school workshops, modelling lessons for colleagues, and mentoring/coaching colleagues;
- selecting, ordering, and maintaining appropriate reading resources for the targeted schools;
- meeting with and assisting teachers in planning literacy programs, from daily lessons to weekly or monthly plans;
- discussing the effectiveness of various purchased resources with staff, and hosting “make and take” sessions to help primary staff develop and share materials for classroom use;
- developing and adapting materials;
- organizing resources into a lending library, and organizing levelled books for guided reading and home reading programs;
- helping teachers schedule uninterrupted blocks of time for reading activities/instruction;
- working with the administration in the planning and effective use of release time for primary staff;
- encouraging staff to take ownership of the school’s literacy plan;
- where appropriate, making connections with parents, the school council, and community agencies;
- coordinating literacy training for parent and community volunteers (e.g., strategies to support literacy learning);
- helping organize the collection and interpretation of assessment data.

Approach 2: In-School Part-Time Release for Lead Literacy Teacher in All Schools

Each school in the board has a lead literacy teacher who is released from classroom duties for a minimum of one half-day each week. The lead teacher uses his or her release time in the following ways:

- participating in monthly in-service training for all lead literacy teachers within the district, and sharing the information acquired at those sessions within their schools. All lead literacy teachers in the board have at least one commonly scheduled half-day per month for regularly scheduled training. Since the lead literacy teachers’ role is built into the staffing complement, the board does not incur additional release time costs for board-level workshops;
• organizing and leading professional development at in-school literacy meetings;
• mentoring and coaching primary teachers in effective literacy instruction – for example, by inviting primary teachers to observe the lead teacher in his or her own classroom or by teaching demonstration lessons in various classrooms;
• coordinating the development of strategies to support literacy learning and coordinating literacy training for parent and community volunteers;
• meeting with a group of primary teachers during a half-day release or during planning time to prepare effective literacy lessons;
• selecting and organizing resources.

Approach 3: School-Based Lead Literacy Teacher Plus Centrally Assigned Board Support Staff

Each school in the board has a lead literacy teacher who receives support from centrally assigned staff, coordinators, or resource teachers. The jurisdiction may be divided into a number of school areas, with support staff assigned to cover the schools in that area (e.g., 10 to 16 schools). Each support staff member has a home base at a school or at the school board office. The centrally assigned support staff members are responsible for the following:
• defining, developing, and implementing board-level literacy initiatives;
• presenting board-level workshops on literacy topics;
• providing in-class modelling of effective reading instruction for primary teachers;
• sharing information about effective literacy resources;
• developing and delivering parent/community presentations and workshops;
• providing training in the use of various assessment tools.

In this approach, the lead literacy teacher in each school retains his or her primary classroom responsibilities, but is released from classroom duties a minimum of one half-day a month to participate in board-level training. The board assumes the responsibility for supply coverage and for the training resources and materials. Because the lead teachers in this approach have the support of centrally assigned staff, their lead literacy responsibilities are not as extensive as those in other approaches. They are as follows:
• organizing and leading professional development of colleagues at the regular literacy meetings held in their schools, and sharing information from the monthly board-level in-service sessions with their colleagues at these meetings;
• modelling effective literacy strategies from their own classroom for other primary teachers who are released from their classroom duties or who are on their planning time.
References


2. Overview of Effective Instruction

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An effective reading program is complex and multi-faceted. It engages students in the reading process and ensures that they develop and apply reading strategies that enable them to read a variety of books with understanding, skill, and confidence. It encourages students to think about reading, and to respond to and reflect on what they have read. It takes time, and requires teachers to consistently reinforce student learning and reading strategies throughout each of the primary school years.

This overview introduces the essential components of an effective reading program, each of which forms the subject of a later chapter in this guide. Among these essential components are the four key instructional strategies – read-alouds, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading. Other essential components are the development of students’ oral language skills; an instructional focus on comprehension in reading and on the development of skills and strategies to support comprehension; the development of students’ phonemic awareness, their knowledge of phonics, and their ability to decode (i.e., sound out – see glossary) and understand the meaning of unknown words; and the application of all of these skills and strategies, and all of this knowledge and awareness, to reading.

Before introducing these components, however, this overview first examines the understandings teachers must have to successfully deliver an effective reading program. Teachers need to understand the goals of reading instruction, the stages of development readers pass through, the strategies used by proficient readers, and the knowledge and skills students require in order to become proficient readers. These understandings will guide teachers in establishing goals, planning programs, delivering instruction, and assessing student progress in ways that address the needs of all students.

“Literacy is not for the fortunate few. It is the right of every child. Teaching children to read is not the responsibility of a chosen few. It is the responsibility of every teacher, every administrator and every parent.”

(Bouchard and Sutton, 2001, p. 3)
The Goals of Reading Instruction

Reading instruction has three main goals for student achievement:

- **Comprehension** is the ability to understand, reflect on, and learn from text. To ensure that students develop comprehension skills, effective reading instruction builds on their prior knowledge and experience, expands their language skills (e.g., vocabulary development, phonemic awareness), and promotes the development of their higher-level thinking skills.

- **Fluency** is the ability to identify words accurately and to read text with ease, pace, and automaticity (fast, accurate, and effortless identification of words). Fluency results when students reread comfortable (just-right, not-too-difficult) texts about familiar subjects for authentic purposes. Texts for readers in the early stages of learning to read contain mostly familiar, high-frequency words, so that students encounter few unfamiliar words. As they develop fluency, students improve their ability to read with proper phrasing, thus gaining more of the text’s meaning.

- **Motivation to read** is the essential element for actively engaging students in the reading process. Students need to be immersed in a literacy-rich environment, filled with appealing books, poems, pictures, charts, and other resources that capture their interest and entice them to read for information and pleasure. Students need to see themselves as successful readers.

The Stages of Reading Development

All children come to school with their own unique understanding of language, an accumulation of prior knowledge, and a wide range of differing experiences with books and texts. Teachers recognize and make accommodations for the differences among students in the classroom by ensuring that the reading program is comprehensive. A comprehensive program helps students develop their oral language skills, their comprehension skills, their phonemic awareness, their understanding of phonics, and their ability to apply that knowledge. It provides opportunities for students to be read to, to read with others, to read independently, and to respond to texts in group discussions, during individual reading conferences with teachers, and in writing.

Teacher planning is the first step in the development of an effective reading program. During the planning process, special consideration must be given to the range of developmental stages of readers: emergent, early, and fluent.
Emergent readers imitate and practise the reading process by acting out beginning reading behaviours and by pretending to read. They become familiar with words and letters, and learn that some words rhyme or sound the same at the beginning or the end. They begin to understand concepts of print, and they learn that spoken words can be written down in a way that allows the words to be read and understood by others. Success in early reading hinges on these foundational understandings. Much of this learning can take place in the home if parents and other caregivers read often to children and provide them with books for exploration and play.

Primary teachers can best support emergent readers by:

- reading to them often;
- providing them with opportunities to share their ideas and responses to texts in a variety of ways;
- explicitly teaching foundational skills such as phonemic awareness;
- using alphabet, rhyming, and pattern books as instructional texts.

These approaches will help all students learn to read, but they are particularly important for children who come to school with little or no knowledge of books and who have not yet developed the foundational skills described above.

The books students are exposed to at this level should contain a variety of supports, such as stories that are relevant to young readers, repetitive and predictable text, illustrations, large print, and predictable placement of text. Teachers should provide students with many opportunities to explore texts independently, to retell stories, to create or repeat rhymes, and to internalize new learning.

Early readers begin to pay attention to the details of print and know that printed letters and words represent the sounds and words of oral language. They begin to understand how the forty-four sounds in the English language translate into letters and letter clusters. They understand most concepts of print. They learn how to substitute letters to make new words and how to break words into individual letters or sounds. The development of basic decoding and problem-solving skills and the acquisition of high-frequency words give meaning to their early reading efforts and support the development of fluency. Children at the early reading stage also rely on pictures, initial consonants, and other cues to support their reading and comprehension. Books selected for these students should encourage them to activate their prior knowledge (e.g., deal with familiar situations), extend their vocabulary, introduce them to more

“... Readers will often pick up a book and approximate reading by holding it the right way, stopping the reading while they turn the page and finishing the story exactly on the last page. Such imitation is not without value. Through this, children learn that texts give readers cues to reading, that print on the page matches certain words, that pictures support the story, that books are read from front to back, that text flows from left to right and that reading is an authentic activity. When children ‘read’ books in this way, they are preparing themselves to become readers.”
(Booth and Rowsell, 2002, p. 39)

“Reading must always be viewed as a meaning-making process; it is not just decoding.”
(Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Child and Family Program, 1998, p. 70)
complex language structures, and encourage them to apply a variety of learned reading strategies.

**Fluent readers** identify words with greater skill and ease, and they begin to apply more complex comprehension strategies. They have a more extensive “bank” of sight words, and they have refined their decoding skills so that they can focus more on meaning and less on deciphering words. They have learned to integrate the three cueing systems to make sense of text. (The three cueing systems are described later in this chapter. See also Chapter 6: Guided Reading.)

In this stage, students need many opportunities to read a variety of interesting texts in order to improve their ability to read words quickly and effortlessly. With extensive reading practice, they continue to develop a level of fluency that enables them to read with increasing enjoyment and understanding. The texts they read are longer and they contain more complex concepts, illustrations, and layouts. These texts encourage and allow students to apply the reading strategies they have learned, and are designed for independent reading and discussion.

While the instructional focus in the early years is on learning to read, over time it shifts to an increased emphasis on applying comprehension and higher-level thinking skills. To make this shift, students need help in becoming deliberate and reflective readers. They require explicit instruction in how to develop the comprehension and thinking skills that will enable them to locate and remember important information from the text. They also need help in integrating this information with their prior knowledge in order to build on their learning and deepen their understanding.

The ease and speed with which students progress from one stage to the next depends on several factors, including the following:

- exposure to a rich language environment in the preschool years, with plenty of storytelling, conversation, books, and encouragement to ask and answer questions
- the quality and quantity of reading instruction in the early school years
- focused early intervention for those who are at risk of reading failure
- ongoing support from their families and community

Although some children learn to read at an early age with little formal instruction, most require explicit, planned instruction to crack the complex code of written language and to become as fluent in reading as in speaking.

The teacher considers the expectations of the curriculum, the needs of the students, and the level of teacher support students require to read a particular text. This level of support depends on the students’ familiarity with the genre and its features and on the students’ literacy experiences. To teach reading, teachers use a balance of modelling, direct instruction, guided instruction, and facilitation of students’ independent learning and practice. Students often require a high level of teacher support.
when being introduced to new strategies and concepts. As the teacher models the strategies and concepts, and as students work to put them into practice, students move towards independence. This shift of responsibility from teacher to student requires consistent monitoring and assessment to ensure student success.

The Behaviours of Proficient Readers

The following chart lists some behaviours of proficient readers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comprehension Skills*</th>
<th>Word-Solving Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proficient readers:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Proficient readers:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• activate relevant prior knowledge (or “schema” — see glossary) before, during, and after reading to monitor their reading/comprehension and to help “fill in the blanks”;</td>
<td>• use semantic (meaning) cues:†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ask appropriate questions before, during, and after the reading lesson;</td>
<td>– use illustrations from the text to predict words;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• use their schema to make connections between what they already know and new information in the text;</td>
<td>– use their prior knowledge as an aid in reading;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• determine the most important ideas and themes in the text;</td>
<td>– use the context and common sense to predict unfamiliar words;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• draw references, information, and inferences from the text;</td>
<td>• use syntactic (structural) cues:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• synthesize and retell what they have read;</td>
<td>– use their knowledge of how English works to predict and read some words;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• have and use strategies to repair comprehension when it breaks down and to seek clarification;</td>
<td>– use the structure of the sentence to predict words;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• create sensory images of the text before, during, and after reading;</td>
<td>• use graphophonic (visual) cues:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• recognize that learning and understanding involve continuous thinking, reasoning, and questioning (i.e., metacognitive skills);</td>
<td>– analyse words from left to right;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• engage with and respond to the text (e.g., show excitement over the unexpected, express concern for a character, express interest in new information).</td>
<td>– use their existing knowledge of words to read unknown words;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The text in the “Comprehension Skills” column is adapted from *Mosaic of Thought: Teaching Comprehension in a Reader’s Workshop* by Ellin Oliver Keene and Susan Zimmerman. Copyright © 1997 by Ellin Oliver Keene and Susan Zimmerman. Published by Heinemann, a division of Reed Elsevier, Inc., Portsmouth, NH.

† The three cueing systems referred to in the “Word-Solving Skills” column are discussed later in this chapter.
The Knowledge and Skills Required for Reading

The knowledge and skills that students need to develop and use in order to read with comprehension and fluency are not isolated elements taught in a lock-step sequence, but interrelated components that support and build on each other in the context of a supportive learning environment.

- **Oral language skills.** Through experience with listening and speaking, children build the vocabulary, semantic knowledge (awareness of meaning), and syntactic knowledge (awareness of language structure) that form a foundation for reading and writing. Children with strong oral language skills are solidly prepared for reading. Some students come to school from language-impoverished backgrounds; others come from families in which the home language is different from the language of instruction. In both these cases, students require instruction to increase their oral English-language abilities so that they are well-prepared to learn to read.

  Oral language and its relationship to reading is the subject of Chapter 3 of this guide.

- **Ability to activate prior knowledge and experience.** Research on the early stages of learning indicates that children begin to make sense of their world at a very young age. In Ontario, students enter school with a variety of background experiences, and from many countries and cultures, so their prior knowledge and experiences may differ considerably from those of their classmates and teachers. Teachers need to be aware of these differences in order to provide appropriate instruction and engage all students in learning to read. They also need to encourage students to activate their prior knowledge and experience when reading, to help predict words and content and to make connections between what they already know – from their own experiences, from other texts, and from their general knowledge of the world – and what they are reading.

- **Understanding of concepts of print.** When children first encounter print, they are not aware that the symbols on the page represent spoken language or that these symbols convey meaning. By observing experienced readers who draw their attention to print, children develop an understanding of concepts like directionality (knowing that English-language text is read from left to right and from top to bottom), differences between letters and words (words are made of letters, and there are spaces between words), awareness of capitalization and punctuation, diacritic signs (for example, accents in French), and common characteristics of books (such as the front/back, title, and author).
• **Phonemic awareness.** Phonemic awareness is the understanding that the words we say are made up of individual sounds (phonemes). Children who have phonemic awareness can hear, identify, and manipulate the sounds in oral language. They are therefore well prepared to match letters to sounds in order to decode words in print and to spell. Research has confirmed that phonemic awareness helps students learn to read by providing a crucial foundation for word identification; without it, they continue to have reading difficulties. Phonemic awareness can be taught, and the teacher’s role in the development of phonemic awareness is essential for many students.

• **Understanding of letter-sound relationships.** Phonics instruction teaches students the relationships between the letters (graphemes) of written language and the individual sounds (phonemes) of spoken language. Research has shown that systematic and explicit phonics instruction is an effective way to develop student’s ability to identify words in print (National Reading Panel, 2000, p. 9).

• **Vocabulary.** Children need a broad vocabulary of words that they understand and can use correctly to label their knowledge and experiences. The breadth and depth of a child’s vocabulary provide the foundation for decoding and comprehension skills. Oral vocabulary refers to words we use in speaking or recognize in listening. Reading vocabulary (or sight vocabulary) refers to words we recognize or use in print. It is a tremendous challenge for students to read words that are not already part of their oral vocabulary. Therefore, teachers must ensure that students are exposed to new oral vocabulary through discussions, through listening to and watching media works, and through listening to a wide variety of texts read to them. Teachers must also, of course, model and teach strategies for reading words and ensure that students are exposed to new reading vocabulary in a variety of books and other written texts. In addition, research has shown that some reading vocabulary must be taught directly.

• **Ability to use the three cueing systems.** Effective readers use three main cueing systems to construct meaning from print: semantic, syntactic, and graphophonic. *Semantic* (or meaning) cues come from a reader’s prior knowledge of reading and words, as well as from illustrations in a text. *Syntactic* (structural) cues come from a reader’s knowledge of language patterns and structure, especially the patterns and structure of oral language. *Graphophonic* (visual) cues come from a
reader’s knowledge of the relationship between letters seen in print and the sounds heard in oral language. These three cueing systems are discussed in more detail in Chapter 6: Guided Reading.

• **Ability to use comprehension and metacognitive strategies.** Students must be taught the skills they require to comprehend new words and information and also the skills they require to reflect on what they know and what they need to know. Metacognition, or “thinking about thinking,” plays a significant role in comprehension and in the acquisition of knowledge. Studies show that improvements in learning follow explicit instruction in the use of metacognitive strategies (Scruggs, Mastropieri, Monson, and Jorgenson, 1985, pp. 181–185).

Teachers should model the metacognitive process by thinking out loud (conducting “think-alouds”) during read-alouds, shared reading, and other opportune teaching moments. When teachers describe their thinking processes, students learn the questions they need to ask themselves about their own thinking processes to further their learning, and the vocabulary they need to ask themselves these questions.

Effective metacognitive strategies include the following:

- activating one’s own prior knowledge and connecting it with new information (e.g., asking “What do I already know about this?”);
- intentionally selecting and applying thinking strategies (e.g., asking “Does this make sense?” “Does this look or sound right?”);
- monitoring one’s own learning (e.g., asking “How well am I doing?” “What information is important?”);
- evaluating one’s own learning (e.g., asking “What did I learn?” “How well did I do?” “Is there something I didn’t understand?” “Do I need to ask for help?”).

Comprehension and metacognitive strategies are discussed throughout the four chapters of this guide that deal with the key instructional strategies, as well as in Chapter 8: Reading Comprehension.

• **Ability to apply higher-order thinking skills.** By applying higher-order thinking skills, students are able to draw more meaning from what they read and apply their learning in more sophisticated ways. Although higher-order thinking skills alone do not make a child an effective reader, they are essential for reading effectively. Students need to have opportunities to analyse and criticize the information,
concepts, plots, characters, and themes outlined in books, and their own understanding of them. Through analysis and critical thinking, students form opinions and add substance to their thinking processes.

Teachers promote higher-order thinking skills by ensuring that students have the following knowledge and skills in place:

- prior knowledge of a given subject
- understanding of the text’s meaning
- problem-solving skills
- skills in analysing information (e.g., the ability to explain, compare, infer)
- skills in synthesizing information (e.g., the ability to relate, predict, draw conclusions)
- skills for evaluating information (e.g., the ability to make choices, verify evidence, assess value)

(Adapted from Bloom and Kathwold, 1956)

**Four Key Instructional Strategies**

The four key instructional strategies in an effective reading program are read-alouds, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading. As noted earlier, each is the subject of a chapter later in this guide. These strategies enable the teacher to scaffold student learning by modelling reading strategies, modelling the thinking process through think-alouds, sharing reading experiences and responses to material read, coaching and guiding students in their application of strategies, and providing students with opportunities to read independently, asking questions, practising strategies, and expressing their responses to the material read.

The teacher embeds in read-aloud, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading lessons a variety of planned opportunities for students to develop their oral language skills, strategies and skills that support comprehension, their phonemic awareness, their knowledge of phonics, and their ability to decode and understand the meaning of unknown words. The teacher must be careful not to overemphasize one skill, strategy, or kind of knowledge at the expense of the others, since none of them is sufficient on its own. Each plays a significant role in a complex interactive process that supports learning for all readers.
The four key instructional strategies can be summarized as follows:

Read-Alouds:
- occur daily;
- involve the teacher selecting a book that is beyond what students can read on their own and reading it to them;
- promote a love of reading, stimulate the imagination, and help students develop an ear for the vocabulary and structures of language in print;
- allow the teacher to introduce new reading strategies, and to model or demonstrate them by thinking aloud.

Shared Reading:
- occurs daily or several times a week;
- involves the teacher selecting a chart, big book, or other large-print text to read with students, encouraging them to join in the reading when they feel comfortable doing so. Initially, students will join in at familiar, repetitive parts of the text;
- allows the teacher to model reading strategies;
- provides students with essential demonstrations of how reading works and what readers do to construct meaning;
- teaches students strategies for decoding unknown words and for constructing meaning from the text;
- allows students to see themselves as readers. They will feel comfortable and experience fluency when joining in the reading of familiar, repetitive text;
- provides students with a safe, non-threatening environment in which to practise new and familiar reading strategies.

Guided Reading:
- occurs regularly during the school week;
- involves the teacher selecting appropriate texts (those that students can read with 90–95 per cent accuracy) to be read quietly, but aloud, by students in small guided reading groups, with the teacher offering support as necessary;
- offers students an opportunity to use and practise their reading skills;
- allows the teacher to monitor individual students’ progress. The teacher may need to prompt students to apply their knowledge of reading
strategies when difficulties arise, provide further support, or regroup students according to their needs;

• further allows the teacher to praise students’ successful use of strategies and to offer specific feedback that consolidates students’ previous learning or extends their understanding of the text.

**Independent Reading:**

- occurs daily;
- involves students reading texts that they have selected themselves with the teacher’s guidance, while the teacher observes and holds reading conferences with individual students;
- allows students to choose a text from specific book bins or other specific collections of familiar and unfamiliar resources that have been carefully preselected by the teacher as being in the range of “just-right” books for the students’ reading abilities (that is, books that students can read with 95–100 per cent accuracy and comprehension);
- allows students to choose texts that interest them, thereby demonstrating to them that reading can be a source of pleasure and information;
- allows students to practise the behaviours of proficient readers and to develop fluency by reading just-right books;
- allows students to engage in conversations with their peers about the books they have read;
- allows the teacher to gather information about students’ independent reading behaviours.

**Instructional Approaches**

Teaching students to read requires thorough planning, the setting of clear goals, and explicit instruction in reading strategies and skills. In addition, instruction should occur, wherever possible, within the context of authentic learning experiences.

Some of the most important instructional approaches are outlined in the chart below. Teachers are encouraged to integrate these approaches in undertaking the four key instructional strategies described in the previous section of this chapter.

> “... Having clear goals is one of the most important steps I can take to more effective teaching.”

(Taberski, 2000, p. 9)
### Modelling
- Demonstrating skills and strategies needed to become competent readers
- Demonstrating the kinds of behaviour expected from students
- Displaying joy in and enthusiasm for reading
- Modelling think-alouds and reflection (i.e., metacognitive behaviours and strategies)

### Scaffolding
- Building on prior learning to teach new tasks
- Providing the bridges between previous lessons and experiences and new work
- Providing students with opportunities to explore and perform newly and previously taught tasks
- Ensuring that the material chosen is appropriate to the reading task

### Coaching and guiding
- Providing clues and prompts, and helping students apply learned strategies
- Helping students think through activities and reflect on their learning and their thinking processes
- Encouraging students to formulate questions to extend their learning and to problem-solve

### Encouraging risk-taking and exploration
- Modelling risk-taking and trial-and-error methods for students so that they understand that new learning involves a period of uncertainty and that making errors is part of the learning process
- Demonstrating how learning can occur from making an error
- Providing students with opportunities to explore new ideas and learning

### Assessing and evaluating student progress and reflecting on one's own practice
- Assessing and evaluating in a thoughtful way students’ application of the reading process – in particular, their use of reading strategies – and their level of achievement
- Providing students with specific feedback
- Reflecting on the appropriateness and effectiveness of one’s own program planning and practice, and of the assessment strategies and tools being used

### Thinking aloud
- Articulating thoughts so that the thoughts, and the thinking process, become apparent to students
- Talking through a process while demonstrating it
- Encouraging students to think aloud to assist the development of their learning

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Teaching Within Students’ Zone of Proximal Development

In planning reading instruction, teachers need to consider the individual needs of each child in the classroom. In doing so, they may wish to keep in mind the concept of the zone of proximal development, advanced by social development theorist L.S. Vygotsky (1896–1934). In terms of reading, the zone of proximal development is the area between a reader’s independent reading level and the level he or she has the potential to achieve with adult support. When students receive support within their zone of proximal development, their new learning is significant. Once they have internalized this learning, they move on to a new independent level.

Opportunities to work in a student’s zone of proximal development frequently occur in guided reading, where the teacher provides students with texts that they cannot yet read independently, but that they can read with a limited amount of teacher support. Similar opportunities occur during read-alouds and shared reading, but the teacher has to provide more support during these lessons, since the texts selected are more difficult than those used in guided reading. Teachers fine-tune the level of support they offer individual students according to the difficulty of the text.

Learning to Read Within Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone of actual development</th>
<th>Zone of proximal development</th>
<th>New zone of actual development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read-alouds</td>
<td>Shared and guided reading</td>
<td>Independent reading</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Teacher models a new reading strategy, using a think-aloud process.*

*Teacher and students discuss and use the new reading strategy together.*

*Teacher prompts students to apply the new strategy to their reading, and then to identify the various strategies they used to read the text.*

*Student reads independently, having internalized the strategies, thought processes, and understandings required for his or her current reading level.*

*Student reads independently at a higher level, having internalized the strategies, thought processes, and higher-level understandings required to read at the new level.*

---

Zone of Proximal Development:

“... the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.”

(Vygotsky, 1978, p. 860)
**Selecting Instructional Texts**

The selection of appropriate texts is one of the most important aspects of reading instruction. The text must be appropriate for the reading level of students, for the instructional strategy being used [e.g., just right for independent reading, but slightly above the reader’s comfort level for guided reading], and for the reading strategy being taught. In addition, teachers must ensure that students at all stages of reading development are exposed to a wide range of genres, texts of varying lengths, and a variety of environmental print.

Teachers need to plan ahead in selecting instructional texts, determining which texts to use for which purposes in the week ahead and ensuring that these texts are available and located in appropriate places in the classroom.

There is an extensive discussion of text selection in Chapter 6: Guided Reading, under the heading “Resources for Guided Reading”. Although the discussion focuses on texts for guided reading lessons, it offers valuable information for selecting texts for read-alouds, shared reading, and independent reading as well. It includes the following topics: inappropriate kinds of texts, text difficulty, common supportive features in texts for young readers, the kinds of knowledge and skills that texts for young readers should support, levelled texts and their organization within the classroom, and additional considerations in selecting appropriate texts.

Immediately below, the features and benefits of factual and fictional texts are discussed. This guide uses the word “factual” to describe the wide range of non-fiction texts that are appropriate for young readers. (Teachers will have seen factual texts referred to as “informational” and “expository”.) It uses “fictional” to describe works of fiction for young readers. (These works are often described as “narrative” texts.) The various features of factual and fictional texts offer teachers many opportunities to engage students in the pleasure of reading, in learning about a variety of texts, and in learning the purposes for reading them.

Teachers of young readers often rely heavily on fictional texts, but students who are learning to read need to be exposed to, and to read, a wide range of genres.

**The Features and Benefits of Factual Texts**

Factual texts inform, explain, and offer opinions, enhancing readers’ knowledge and understanding of a subject or topic. Teachers need to help students understand the purposes for reading various factual texts, the ways in which the various features of factual texts enhance their purpose, and the kinds of reading strategies to use to comprehend factual texts.
In fictional texts (discussed below), the reader begins at page 1 and reads to the end of the story because of the sequential structure of a story. By contrast, the reader of a factual text can often skim and scan relevant sections, using text features such as subtitles, headings, and diagrams to locate specific information. Teachers need to model for students how to read the same factual text for different purposes at different times. Throughout the remainder of their school years and as adults, students will be required to read many forms of factual texts for authentic purposes. It is

### Teachers can use factual texts to teach the following features:

- tables of contents
- indexes
- diagrams, charts, graphs, flow charts, and other graphics
- lists, including various forms of “bullets”
- labels
- captions
- chapter titles
- headings, subheadings
- paragraph indentation
- sidebars
- content-specific vocabulary
- glossaries
- epilogues
- appendices
- references, bibliographies

### From factual texts, students learn to:

- read to locate specific information;
- follow procedures;
- recount factual events;
- investigate and research information;
- skim and scan data;
- understand explanations;
- understand an author’s purpose;
- develop opinions on issues;
- make informed decisions;
- develop study skills;
- organize knowledge;
- select data;
- solve problems;
- become familiar with content-specific vocabulary;
- interpret diagrams, charts, graphs, flow charts, and other graphics.

### Types of Factual Texts

- biographies
- autobiographies
- memoirs
- diaries/journals
- rules, directions, instructions
- questionnaires, surveys
- letters
- brochures
- guide books
- manuals
- dictionaries
- encyclopedias and other reference texts
- announcements
- catalogues
- contracts
- reports
- newspaper articles
- magazine articles
- interviews
- editorials
- reviews
- speeches
- menus
- recipes
- maps
- atlases
- calendars
- charts
- diagrams
- websites
- lists
- captions
- labels
- advertisements
- other environmental print

In fictional texts (discussed below), the reader begins at page 1 and reads to the end of the story because of the sequential structure of a story. By contrast, the reader of a factual text can often skim and scan relevant sections, using text features such as subtitles, headings, and diagrams to locate specific information. Teachers need to model for students how to read the same factual text for different purposes at different times. Throughout the remainder of their school years and as adults, students will be required to read many forms of factual texts for authentic purposes. It is
therefore important to prepare them for this work early on by teaching the features of factual texts and by modelling the necessary reading strategies for obtaining information from them.

**The Features and Benefits of Fictional Texts**

Fictional texts engage readers’ imaginations and emotions, providing them with pleasure and insights into human nature. The structure of fictional texts is often referred to as story structure, as fictional texts generally feature settings, characters, plots, initiating events or problems, subsequent events, and final events or resolutions.

### Types of Fictional Texts

- folktales
- fairytales
- myths
- legends
- tall tales
- fables
- realistic fiction
- science fiction
- historical fiction
- humorous fiction
- fantasy
- horror stories
- poetry*
- pattern books
- comics*
- short stories in books or magazines

*Poetry and comics can deal with factual as well as fictional material.

**Setting High Expectations for All Students**

To address the strengths and needs of all students and to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to become successful readers, teachers may need to adjust the pace and intensity of their instructional practice and the level of challenge in the materials used. Interventions, when needed, must be early and based on research about high-quality teaching. They require a focus on the same foundational skills and effective instructional practice, but with adaptations.
At the beginning of the school year, teachers should determine, through assessment and observation, which students are experiencing reading difficulties, and in which specific areas. These assessments and observations will help teachers make appropriate decisions in planning and programming for these students.

**Adapting Reading Instruction (Using Adaptations and Extensions)**

One of the primary goals of education is to ensure that all students learn to read and write. While it is understood that children will demonstrate varying levels of proficiency, they *all* have the right to learn to read. Teachers must continually ask themselves “How can I adapt my program to meet the needs of all students?” The answer to this question lies in a variety of strategies, techniques, and activities that make it easier for students to acquire, manipulate, store, and retrieve information.

A small number of students need adaptations such as those listed below to participate successfully in certain specific activities:

- allowing the student extra time to complete tasks, including those that are the subject of assessments
- providing information to the student both orally and in writing
- ensuring a quiet working environment, adjusting the pace of instruction, and providing the student with additional opportunities to practise strategies
- providing the student with assistive devices, such as a computer, a tape recorder, or a word processor
- reducing or altering classroom assignments so that the student can complete them in school, without missing other activities
- allowing the student to complete tasks or present information in alternative ways (e.g., through taped or scribed answers, demonstrations, dramatizations, role playing)
- enhancing communication with the student’s parents/guardians to enlist their support in helping the student learn to read (e.g., by using a communication book)

**Teaching Reading to English-as-a-Second Language/English-Literacy-Development (ESL/ELD) Students**

Many children enter English-language schools in Ontario speaking a first language other than English, or speaking non-standard English. Teachers need to adapt their programs to suit the needs of these students as they develop English-language skills.

As with other students who may experience reading difficulties, ESL/ELD students are best served by explicit, systematic instruction of reading strategies, the development of their phonemic awareness, instruction in phonics, and word study activities.
All students, including those who are learning English, learn better, academically and socially, when they interact and engage in the learning process with their peers. ESL/ELD students who are functioning at a level that is significantly below that of their classmates may be gradually overcoming disadvantages arising from disrupted schooling or limited access to schooling in their country of origin. With focused reading instruction, they can generally make steady gains and eventually achieve at grade level. However, teachers need to carefully monitor these students and take a flexible approach to their instruction to ensure that their needs are being addressed.
A Framework for Effective Early Reading Instruction

The Goals of Reading Instruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comprehension</th>
<th>Fluency</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Children who become proficient readers:
- comprehend what they are reading;
- read fluently;
- have a strong motivation to read.

The Knowledge and Skills Students Need for Proficiency in Reading

- Oral language skills
- Ability to activate prior knowledge and experience
- Understanding of concepts of print
- Phonemic awareness
- Understanding of letter-sound relationships
- Vocabulary
- Ability to use the three cueing systems
- Ability to use comprehension and metacognitive strategies
- Ability to apply higher-order thinking skills

Teaching Practices That Support Early Reading Achievement

- Balance of direct instruction, guided instruction, independent learning, and student practice
- Large-group, small-group, and individual instruction; discussion and collaboration
- Variety of assessment and evaluation techniques that inform program planning and instruction
- Integration of phonics and word study into reading, writing, and oral language
- Uninterrupted literacy block each day
- Parental and community involvement
- High-quality literature and levelled texts
- Variety of genres (both factual and fictional texts) and electronic media
- Authentic and motivating literacy experiences and learning activities
- Interventions for students who are at risk of not learning to read
- Supportive classroom culture and an environment that promotes higher-order thinking skills
- Guidance, coaching, and feedback for students
- Effective classroom organization and management

Assessment, Evaluation, Reporting, Target Setting, Improvement Planning

- Classroom level
- School level
- Board level
- Provincial level

Four Key Instructional Approaches

- Read-alouds
- Shared reading
- Guided reading
- Independent reading

Overview of Effective Instruction 2.21
References


“In schools, talk is sometimes valued and sometimes avoided, but – and this is surprising – talk is rarely taught. . . Yet talk, like reading and writing, is a major motor – I could even say the major motor – of intellectual development.”

(McCormick Calkins, 2001, p. 226)

The foundations of oral language development are laid from infancy through early childhood (ages 0 to 6) as children interact and communicate – first non-verbally and then verbally – with adults and other children at home, in the community, and at school (McCain and Mustard, 1999). Throughout the school day, students explore concepts and construct meaning by talking and listening to each other, to the teacher, and to visitors in the classroom. Through oral language activities, students learn the language system and use it to understand and express ideas and information, to interpret the ideas of others, and to give and follow directions.

As children develop oral language skills, they learn about:

- verbal aspects of language (e.g., how words work, how words are combined to convey ideas and information, and how certain expressions and idioms are linked to actions, objects, or relationships);
- mechanical aspects of language (e.g., how speech sounds and phonemes are produced, and how they are used to form words and combinations of words);
- non-verbal aspects of language (e.g., how facial expressions, intonation, pitch, and gestures can affect meaning).

(Adapted from Tarasoff, 1995, p. 48)

Talk supports the thinking process. By providing opportunities for oral language development, teachers encourage students to develop higher-order thinking skills. To ensure that all students strengthen their oral language skills and find their voice in the classroom, teachers should provide opportunities for them to participate in a variety of oral language activities. Teachers can give students the opportunity to talk
about their thinking during small-group activities that focus on problem solving, interactive activities in various learning areas, and sharing activities such as the morning message.

Students whose first language is not the language of instruction may need more time, additional support, and more frequent opportunities than other students to participate in either small-group or large-group oral discussions. Approaches such as using think/pair/share, posing open-ended questions, having students participate in cooperative group learning, and using visual supports can facilitate their involvement.

The Relationship Between Oral Language and Reading

Development in any one area of communication – reading, writing, or oral communication – is inextricably linked to development in the others. The fact that oral language – both speaking and listening – is an integral part of early literacy is recognized in the Ontario curriculum. The Language section of The Kindergarten Program includes expectations in Oral Communication as well as in Reading and Writing, and the language curriculum document for Grades 1–8 outlines required knowledge and skills in three strands – Reading, Writing, and Oral and Visual Communication [Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1997, 1998]. The knowledge and skills outlined in these three strands are intertwined and interdependent.

Oral language underpins all reading strategies and activities. Strong oral language skills enable students to express their responses to texts they have read. Reading activities often begin with a book talk or picture walk and end with a discussion of students’ responses to reading. Each of the four key instructional approaches to reading – read-alouds, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading – provides opportunities for oral language instruction and practice [see pages 3.18–3.20]. Other key areas of early reading instruction, such as phonemic/phonological awareness and word study, are also grounded in oral language [see Chapter 9: Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, and Word Study].

Oral language skills are critical for effective reading: students need these skills before they can develop reading and writing skills. For example, when students understand the structures of oral language, they can anticipate similar structures when they are reading – in other words, they are able to use syntactic cues to check that what they are reading "sounds right" [see Chapter 2: Overview of Effective Instruction and Chapter 6: Guided Reading]. A student who is familiar with the conventions of oral language [e.g., who knows that a sentence that begins with the word “why” is likely a question or who is able to use linking words such as because, so, or and in conversation] can use these understandings as cues to decode and understand written text.
For all these reasons, an important part of effective reading instruction is to develop oral language skills at every opportunity, not only through activities related directly to reading but also through other language-based activities (e.g., barrier games), and in various areas of the curriculum.

The Oral Language Continuum

Just as students learn to read at different ages, they learn to use oral language effectively at different ages and at different rates. For language instruction to be effective, teachers need to understand the stages of oral language development. It is helpful to view students’ oral language development as occurring along a continuum. As students progress along the continuum, teachers provide them with changing learning opportunities that reinforce learned skills and foster the development of new ones. Teachers need to recognize the changing abilities and needs of students so that they can adjust activities to reflect those abilities and needs.

“Orally tested vocabulary at the end of first grade is a significant predictor of reading comprehension ten years later.”
(Cunningham and Stanovich, 1997, pp. 934-935)
A popular continuum is the First Steps® Oral Language Developmental Continuum, which provides detailed information on characteristics of oral language development through eight phases of development, from "Beginning Language" to "Advanced Language Use". Appendix 3-1 reproduces the indicators for Phases 2 to 5, which apply to the range of abilities that may be demonstrated by students in Kindergarten to Grade 3. The continuum outlines the norms for oral language development in four areas: speech development, language of social interaction, language and literacy, and language and thinking.

An understanding of children’s oral language development is particularly important when working with Kindergarten children, who are in the process of developing a range of cognitive and language skills that are critical to reading. For example, when children play, they make what are known as “mental transformations”, that is, they use one object to stand for another – a plastic banana may become a telephone or a cardboard box may become a bear cave. These mental transformations are the beginnings of abstract thinking, when children “develop the capacity to work with a wide range of abstractions, including alphabetic symbols” (Owocki, 1996, p. 11 [emphasis added]). Opportunities to talk about their thinking at this stage are therefore very important. Kindergarten programs should be rich in play-based, language-oriented activities and resources that are relevant to the lives of young children and that provide opportunities for thinking, problem solving, and exploration. Throughout the primary grades, drama, music, visual arts, and media works are particularly effective in furthering the development of students’ oral communication, literacy, and thinking skills. Dramatic role playing, for example, gives students opportunities to explore language and ways of interacting with others, as well as providing a context rich in imaginative possibilities.

In Grade 1 and beyond, as students develop both their oral language skills and their ability to work independently, the teacher provides opportunities for increasingly complex language activities, such as student-led small-group discussions about texts read at home or at school.

The following chart shows how talking supports reading as students progress along the oral language continuum.
As noted in this chart, younger students think primarily through talk. "According to Vygotsky, children use talk to organize their thinking and to help them work their way through difficult tasks. As they grow older, these external processes develop into internal mental functions. Vygotsky hypothesizes that self-talk ... 'should be regarded as the transitional form between external and internal speech.' It is a necessary part of children's development" (Owocki, 1996, p. 51). Discussing texts aloud with peers provides a transition for students as they internalize their thinking processes.

### Initial Assessment and Planning

To develop and extend their oral communication skills, students need to participate in conversation, at their own level, about various subjects across the curriculum. To assess the level of students' oral language skills, the teacher uses a variety of tools and strategies. He or she listens to students talk and observes students as they interact during activities such as oral presentations, story retellings, discussions, and group work. In assessing students' needs and abilities, the teacher must be aware of cultural expectations and behaviours that may influence their performance.

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(McCormick Calkins, 2001, p. 227)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At first ...</th>
<th>Later ...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Students talk about the texts that the teacher reads aloud.</td>
<td>- Students talk about the texts they read independently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Students’ talk is scaffolded by the teacher.</td>
<td>- Students’ talk is student-led.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Students talk about the texts they have just heard or read in school.</td>
<td>- Students talk about the texts they read at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Students’ thinking happens primarily through talk.</td>
<td>- Students’ thinking and idea-building happen through talking and writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Reading is interspersed with talk (often after every few pages).</td>
<td>- The talk comes after a longer chunk of reading or at the end of the text. This means readers do more synthesizing and summarizing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Students’ talk continuously roams among many assorted points.</td>
<td>- Students’ talk eventually lingers over, probes, and develops an extended idea or two.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**During oral language activities, students can respond in a variety of ways that match their learning styles and ability. At the same time, these activities provide teachers with ways to assess comprehension when there is no single correct answer and a diversity of responses is expected and valued.**
Students use oral language for a number of purposes. A teacher may observe and assess a student using language to do the following:

- **Self-maintain:** The student communicates needs and wants [e.g., the student may say, “I need a quiet place to read.”].
- **Give directions:** The student gives directions to others [e.g., while at the home centre with a partner, the student may say, “Why don’t you read a book to the baby while I cook dinner?”].
- **Report on past and present experiences:** The student relates, compares, and analyses events, processes, and information or reflects on experiences [e.g., in a literature circle, the student may say, “I read another book by Robert Munsch and it was a funny book too.”].
- **Reason:** The student explains a process, identifies problems and solutions, justifies judgments, and draws conclusions [e.g., during a guided reading lesson, the student may say, “I wasn’t sure what that word was, so I read the rest of the sentence and came back to it. Then I figured it out.”].
- **Predict:** The student anticipates what might happen, identifies potential problems and possible solutions, and predicts the consequences of actions [e.g., when engaged in a read-aloud of the book *Name Calling* [see Sample Lesson 1 in Chapter 4: Read-Alouds], the student might say, “I think the principal is going to give both the girls detentions because they are both in trouble.”].
- **Project:** The student uses projection to try to understand the feelings and reactions of others [e.g., when engaged at the blocks centre, the student might say, “Zenobia’s mad because Nyasha won’t share the blocks.”]. The student may also use projection to remember past experiences or envision new ones [e.g., the student may say, “If I am a teacher one day, I think I will be good at it because I like to read.”].
- **Imagine:** The student creates imaginary situations that may have a basis in real life or that may be pure fantasy [e.g., the student may say, “I am the teacher. Read this chart while I point to the words.”].

(Adapted from Toronto Board of Education, 1980, p. 1)

“Knowledge about typical patterns of children’s play and literacy development helps teachers make predictions about where children are likely to go next in their thinking. Anticipating children’s next steps makes it possible to plan meaningful and challenging instruction.”

(Owocki, 1996, p. 6)
Having observed and assessed students using language in different activities and for a variety of purposes, the teacher plans learning opportunities that will best meet each student’s oral language needs. The teacher selects vocabulary, language structures (i.e., grammar and syntax), and strategies that also match curriculum expectations. He or she models selected language structures, and/or strategies, using visual cues (e.g., charts) as appropriate. For example, the teacher may focus on teaching students that dialogue involves both talking and listening, and may model both activities for the class. To reinforce the modelled behaviour, the teacher may post charts that remind students of the framework for effective speaking and listening. Students receive guidance and support from the teacher as they practise selected oral language structures and/or strategies. Later, the teacher provides opportunities for students to practise these strategies more independently during a variety of learning situations (e.g., discussions, sharing sessions, brainstorming sessions, problem-solving opportunities, and short debates).

While it is important for all students to engage in complex, large-group discussions that provide them with models of the way others think, it is also important to plan opportunities for them to practise their oral language skills in smaller, more homogeneous groups. For example, before reading a new story to the class, the teacher can ask students to form pairs or triads to share the personal background knowledge that each brings to the topic. In both large- and small-group activities, teachers should encourage students to share their ideas and comments.

**Integrating Diverse Backgrounds**

Many of the students in Ontario classrooms come from families whose first language is not the language of instruction. As the Expert Panel on Early Reading in Ontario noted, “With immigrants representing almost 25 per cent of Ontario’s population, there is rich cultural diversity in many of the province’s classrooms. In some large urban school boards there are 75 or more different home languages and dialects spoken by the students” (Expert Panel on Early Reading, 2003, p. 1). Teachers need to ensure that classroom activities and resources reflect and respect the range of knowledge and cultural experience of students in the province. Teachers can plan for a wide variety of classroom activities, field trips, and visitors, and use a range of media to provide rich oral language experiences for all students.
“We need to respect the diversity, culture, and language of our students’ families. By valuing students’ language, experiences, and background – for example, by encouraging them to tell the stories of their lives, whether through dictation, writing, illustration, or dramatization – we blur the boundaries between home and school and make school part of life as a place for relevant learning.”

(Routman, 2000, p. 20)

Many children come from families and/or cultures with rich oral traditions that involve storytelling, the retelling of family histories, and a love of proverbs, parables, songs, and rhymes. In the classroom, teachers can encourage these students to share aspects of their oral tradition with the class.

When parents talk with their children about an experience, they help shape the way their children respond to the experience and the knowledge they gain from it, and they help expand their children’s store of concepts and related vocabulary. These benefits occur equally when parents speak to their children in their first language. The skills and knowledge developed in the first language are transferred to and benefit the student’s learning of English.

Research indicates that students benefit academically, socially, and emotionally when they are encouraged to develop and/or maintain proficiency in their first language while they are learning English. For most students, language skills and conceptual knowledge are readily transferable from one language to another. The first language provides a foundation for developing proficiency in additional languages, serves as a basis for emotional development, and provides a vital link with the student’s family and cultural background.

A strong foundation in their first language can help ESL students to:

• develop mental flexibility;
• develop problem-solving skills;
• communicate with family members;
• experience a sense of cultural stability and continuity;
• understand cultural and family values.

(Ontario Ministry of Education, 2001, p. 7)

“We [ESL/ELD students] need to be given time to develop their skills in English before their achievement can be assessed according to the criteria used for other students.”

(Ontario Ministry of Education, 2001, p. 6)
Developing and Extending Oral Language Skills

Roles and Responsibilities in Oral Language Instruction

The roles and responsibilities of the teacher and of students in developing and extending oral language skills are summarized in the following chart.

### Roles and Responsibilities of Teacher and Students in Building Oral Language Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The teacher:</th>
<th>Students:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• teaches frameworks (step-by-step procedures – see glossary) for various</td>
<td>• learn modelled procedures, skills, and strategies and practise them in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>types of oral interactions, including discussions, questioning,</td>
<td>order to participate effectively in discussions, questioning, brainstorming,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brainstorming, interviewing, story retelling, giving oral responses</td>
<td>interviewing, story retelling, giving oral responses to reading, book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to reading, book talks, conferences, and small-group work. The teacher</td>
<td>talks, conferences, and small-group work;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>models and teaches the procedures, skills, and strategies needed to</td>
<td>• participate in “active listening”;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participate actively in these interactions;</td>
<td>• listen and speak respectfully to others;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• teaches and promotes “active listening”;</td>
<td>• lead discussions or participate in discussions led by other students;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• teaches students how to speak and listen to one another respectfully;</td>
<td>• use language to express ideas, reflect on understandings, and explain,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• teaches students how to engage in effective student-led discussions</td>
<td>compare, predict, interpret, summarize, and analyse thoughts and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for a variety of purposes;</td>
<td>information;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• teaches and models language used for different purposes (e.g., to</td>
<td>• explicitly and implicitly teaches vocabulary;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>express ideas, reflect on understandings, and explain, compare,</td>
<td>• models correct oral language structures and grammar;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>predict, interpret, summarize, and analyse thoughts and information);</td>
<td>• models how to use tone, volume, and expression to enhance meaning;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• explicitly and implicitly teaches vocabulary;</td>
<td>• fosters a safe, supportive environment that encourages students to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• models correct oral language structures and grammar;</td>
<td>take risks and participate to the best of their ability;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• models how to use tone, volume, and expression to enhance meaning;</td>
<td>• provides time for focused, meaningful student talk;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• fosters a safe, supportive environment that encourages students to take</td>
<td>• provides prompts, cues, and sentence starters to encourage and guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>risks;</td>
<td>students’ participation in oral language activities;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• provides time for focused, meaningful student talk;</td>
<td>• develop their understanding of the importance of effective speech and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• provides prompts, cues, and sentence starters to encourage and guide</td>
<td>develop the confidence to participate in oral language activities;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students’ participation in oral language activities;</td>
<td>(continued)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Creating an Environment That Supports Oral Language Development

As a foundation for effective oral language instruction, the teacher needs to:
• be aware of the stages of oral language development, particularly among Kindergarten students;
• understand that oral language (both speaking and listening) lays the foundation for reading development;
• understand the value of practising speaking and listening for the oral language development of all students, particularly those who are learning English as a second language.

Drawing on these fundamental understandings, the teacher creates an environment that encourages positive and varied oral interactions among all students and that supports and enriches the oral language activities related to reading instruction. For example, the teacher:
• plans situations where talk is used for many different purposes;
• encourages all students to participate in dialogue and contribute to conversations;
• sets a cooperative, positive classroom tone for discussion;
• models, and expects students to show, respect for other people and other ideas;
• plans for regular conversations with individual children (e.g., in a reading conference);
• helps students make connections between oral language and reading (e.g., asks “Does that sound right?”);
• makes cross-curricular links (e.g., teaches vocabulary from other subject areas);
• makes ongoing observations and assessments of students’ progress.

Students:
• use the modelled language structures and the prompts and questions provided by the teacher to reflect on and talk about their thinking and what they have read and learned;
• understand the relationship between oral language and reading;
• understand that oral language skills apply across the curriculum.

“Shared conversations provide lots of experience in collaborative problem solving because the students know they are responsible for the effective social and intellectual functioning of their group. Usually, there is total participation and engagement, and everyone is successful. Students listen to and respect divergent thinking. Observers are always surprised that students are so engaged, responsible, and independent.”

(Routman, 2000, p. 173)
• provides opportunities for students to share information that is relevant and interesting to them (e.g., asks students to share ideas, in small groups, about items they have brought from home);

• helps students understand the conventions of oral discussion, working with them to create frameworks for effective listening and speaking, and posting those frameworks on charts in the classroom;

• posts frameworks outlining the procedures for various activities (e.g., how to engage in dialogue during a literature circle);

• documents oral discussions in a variety of ways (e.g., on charts) so that the main points of the discussion can be revisited and added to;

• provides opportunities for whole-class discussions in which every student has an opportunity to participate;

• in addition to planning whole-class discussions, promotes cooperative learning activities, including paired and small-group activities and think/pair/share sessions;

• organizes the classroom so that all students can see and hear the speaker (e.g., organizes students in a circle or semicircle).

In conjunction with the approaches listed above, the teacher incorporates practices and activities related more specifically to reading. For example, the teacher:

• tells stories to students and provides many opportunities for them to retell the stories orally, using props such as puppets, costumes, story maps, and felt boards;

• uses the illustrations in a picture book to walk through the story with students, developing their background knowledge (schema) and vocabulary related to the topic of the text;

• talks about the illustrations, tables, charts, and diagrams in factual texts to show how they explain, reinforce, or reconstruct information from the text;

• schedules book talks, reading conferences, and literature circles, as appropriate for the developmental needs of individual students or the group, at predictable times each week.

“One of the reasons students love literature conversations is because students get to be heard. When we teachers do most of the talking, we silence the voices of our students. In typical whole-class teacher-led discussions, the same ‘stars’ (and the teacher) dominate. In student-led literature conversations, the ‘stars’ (including the teacher) learn to take their turn talking and to listen more to others. The ‘quiet’ students begin to discover their voices.”

(Routman, 2000, p. 172)
Exploring and expressing ideas orally supports the development of thinking skills and the acquisition of new concepts. Teachers can use the following techniques to encourage students to express their ideas orally:

- **Acknowledge** the student’s use of previously taught language structures.
  - “I notice that you’re using words from this morning’s read-aloud.”

- **Support** students as they try out an oral language strategy, structure, or framework.
  - “As a listener, remember it’s your job to ask questions when today’s special person has finished telling her news.”

- **Reaffirm** vocabulary the student has used.
  - “You’re right. The way you’ve used that word in a sentence makes sense.”

- **Introduce** new vocabulary informally.
  - “I ate corn on the cob last night. I had to pull off the husk before I cooked the corn.”

- **Ask** students for clarification, elaboration, or justification.
  - “What made you think that the story was going to turn out that way?”

- **Challenge** students’ thinking.
  - “It doesn’t say that in the book. How did you know?”

- **Prompt** ways to retell. Offer prompts that encourage students to identify, label, describe, and summarize.
  - “Tell the story of the three little pigs from the wolf’s point of view.”

- **Guide** students to make connections. Ask questions that encourage students to compare, contrast, and apply information and ideas.
  - “Did the information that you read match what you already knew about wolves?”
  - “How are those two characters the same/different?”

- **Lead** students to reflect on an experience, helping them to question, wonder, and infer.
  - “I wonder why . . .?”
  - “Why do you think that happened?”
  - “I wonder what would happen if . . .?”

(Adapted from Toronto District School Board, 2002, p. 8)
**Strengthening Oral Language Skills Through Barrier Games**

Children’s oral language skills can be strengthened through activities that are not directly related to reading, such as barrier games. Barrier games can be completed successfully only if the players give precise and explicit instructions and listen attentively. Because they cannot see each other, pairs of students engaged in a barrier game cannot use gestures or similar aids to comprehension. They must express themselves clearly using decontextualized language. Practice in using language precisely and in understanding decontextualized language helps students develop skills needed for learning to read.

Generally, each barrier game involves two students. A “barrier” is placed between the students so that neither can see what the other is doing. One student describes the elements of a task orally so that the student on the other side of the barrier can complete the actions. At the end of the game, the barrier is removed and the results are checked for accuracy. Students not only enjoy the games but also learn the importance of using accurate and specific language to achieve a desired effect.

Barrier games are easy to set up and can accommodate a wide range of formats and materials. Each type of game must be modelled repeatedly by the teacher before students can be expected to play independently. Different barrier games can serve different purposes:

- A student describes the steps in the construction or creation of an image or a design (i.e., building a tower of blocks, joining dots on a grid to make a picture). His or her partner follows the directions to create or construct the item. This game develops skills in describing and following sequential steps.

- A student selects from a set of objects (e.g., animals) one specific object (e.g., a tiger) that his or her partner is describing. Both students need an identical set of objects. This activity develops skills in describing and understanding the description of an object.

- A student places objects in specific positions (e.g., on a map or grid) and instructs his or her partner to do the same. This game helps students develop skills in using and understanding positional language.

Appendix 3-2 describes some additional types of barrier games.
The Importance of Stories for Oral Language Development

Storytelling

Through storytelling, students develop a sense of how words are put together to form sentences. They become familiar with language patterns and phrases often found in books (e.g., “Once upon a time ...”), which they will then be able to recognize when they read stories, and to apply when they write their own stories. Storytelling facilitates, encourages, and enhances the development of speaking and listening skills. It also fosters the development of creativity and imagination. Storytelling relies on the language that students already use and can understand. Students relate to a story by drawing on their own understanding of language and experiences.

To introduce students to the process of telling stories, the teacher initially models the practice. He or she then plans specific opportunities for students to:

- relate personal experiences;
- tell tall tales;
- tell jokes;
- recite poetry;
- sequence pictures that tell a story, and share the story with classmates;
- tell a story using a wordless book;
- use oral story starters (i.e., “The cat stretched out with a yawn ...”) to create an original story;
- use a talking stick to take turns adding to a story.

Story Retelling

Story retelling can be fairly simple in Kindergarten. The activity becomes increasingly complex as students become familiar with the process and are exposed to more intricate stories. Initially, teachers model how to retell stories and then invite students to participate in retelling activities in the course of read-alouds and shared reading (see the last section in this chapter). Prompts or props should be available to help guide students through the process of retelling a story they have heard or read. For example, teachers can post charts reminding students of the framework for retelling a story. Picture sequences, story maps, or semantic webs (see glossary) may also be

“Story is a basic way of organizing our human experiences, a framework for learning. We search for our own stories in the stories of others.”
(Booth, 1994, p. 31)

“Dramatic retelling is more than fun – it facilitates learning. When children participate in dramatic retelling, they transform their understandings from one sign system (oral language) to another (dramatic movement, written language, gestures, pantomime). To do so, they must reorganize, rethink, and repackage their ideas about what they have read.”
(Owocki, 1996, p. 36)
used as prompts to help students retell a story. Teachers can encourage students to explore different ways of retelling stories (e.g., dramatic retelling, retelling using pictures drawn by the student).

**Oral Responses to Reading**

Students develop their reading, thinking, and oral language skills by talking about their responses to texts they have read or heard and by listening to other students do the same. By guiding discussion and using specific prompts (see the following chart), teachers can encourage students to respond orally to a text in a number of ways. Each of the four kinds of responses summarized in the chart below draws on and develops particular skills. Students can **retell** the story, sharing their understanding of the text; **relate** the story to their personal knowledge and experiences; **reflect** on how the story affected them; and **review** to explore the role of different elements of the story and techniques used in the text. All four types of responses help to develop comprehension, encourage discussion, and develop higher-order thinking skills.

### Four Ways of Responding Orally to Reading

| Retell the story, or significant parts of the story, in your own words:  
| • to re-experience the story;  
| • to recall vocabulary, ideas, information, and concepts;  
| • to synthesize ideas from the story.  
| **Prompts for retelling:**  
| • This story is about …  
| • I enjoyed the part where …  
| • I noticed that …  
| • This is what I remember from the story …  
| 
| Relate characters, places, events, and ideas from the text:  
| • to your life;  
| • to other things you know;  
| • to other books you have read.  
| **Prompts for making connections:**  
| • I remember when I …  
| • That reminds me of …  
| • It was different from …  
| • I read another book that also …  
| 
| Reflect on how you were affected by the text:  
| • to examine the feelings the story aroused;  
| • to explore questions and ideas raised by the story.  
| **Prompts for thinking and wondering:**  
| • I wonder if …  
| • I wonder why …  
| • I felt …  
| • I can picture …  
| • I realize …  
| • I was surprised …  
| • I didn’t understand …  
| 
| Review elements of the text and the techniques used by the author to explore:  
| • what made you feel the way you do;  
| • what helped you to understand the story.  
| **Prompts for critical thinking:**  
| • The author is trying to …  
| • One of the main characters …  
| • The problem at the beginning …  
| • How does the …

Appendix 3-3, "Activities for Responding to Texts", suggests specific activities the teacher can organize to encourage students to discuss their responses to reading.
Oral Language in a Comprehensive Early Reading Program

The four instructional strategies that form the basis of an effective and comprehensive reading program were introduced in Chapter 2: Overview of Effective Instruction, and will be dealt with individually in later chapters [see Chapters 4–7]. Each of these approaches – read-alouds, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading – provides ample and varied opportunities for students to use and extend their oral language skills, both in the application of the reading and comprehension strategies they learn and in the reading activities in which they participate. Within each approach, teachers offer a similar level of support for oral language and thinking as they do for reading. Over time, there is a gradual release of teacher support: initially, the teacher models his or her thinking and engages the whole group in oral discussions about their thinking, then provides opportunities for practice in small groups, and finally encourages students to engage in independent reflection and in student-led discussions [McCormick Calkins, 2001].

Read-Alouds

Texts carefully chosen and read aloud by the teacher provide opportunities for students to hear rich language and complex language structures. The teacher reads fluently and expressively, using variations in tone to help convey the meaning of the text. During the lesson, the teacher “thinks aloud”, modelling comprehension strategies used by proficient readers. Through oral descriptions of his or her thinking process, the teacher can show students how to decode words and how to make connections to other texts, as well as to background knowledge and experiences. In addition, the teacher can show students how to monitor their understanding of the text and use strategies [e.g., rereading a section of the text] to correct identified gaps in understanding. While reading aloud or orally reflecting on the text, the teacher can also show students how to ponder [e.g., by asking “I wonder if ...”, “I wonder how ...”]. Through this activity readers are encouraged to think beyond the text and to find a match between what they wonder and what the author wrote. As students at all developmental levels talk about the books that the teacher has read aloud, they form their own interpretations of and connections to the texts.

Read-alouds provide opportunities for students to listen to the teacher as he or she:

• talks about books;
• poses questions;
• makes predictions;
• makes inferences;
• draws on background knowledge and experiences to make connections to the text.
Read-alouds present opportunities for teachers to model reading strategies for students and for students to develop their listening skills. However, it is also important that teachers include students in the discussions, encouraging them to participate and ask questions.

**Shared Reading**

During shared reading lessons, students talk about reading strategies with the teacher. By asking relevant questions and helping to guide discussions, the teacher supports the transition from teacher modelling to students’ active participation within the supportive environment of the shared reading group. As texts become more complex, teachers model and encourage students to practise new strategies. Students discuss comprehension strategies and decoding strategies in the context of the specific text. Discussions encourage students to access their background knowledge about a topic. Teachers can use prompts (e.g., “This book reminded me of ...”) to encourage students to make connections to other books and to their own life experience.

Oral language activities during shared reading lessons include:

- discussions that occur before, during, and after the readings;
- picture walks;
- making predictions;
- brainstorming;
- posing questions;
- reading stories or factual texts aloud and/or orally retelling the stories or reiterating the information in a factual text.

**Guided Reading**

During guided reading lessons with students at both early and fluent reading levels, the teacher introduces the reading selection orally, identifies the purpose for the reading, and helps students access their prior knowledge about a topic before they begin to read. Through before-reading activities such as picture and/or book walks, during which students preview a sample of the text, students are encouraged to think about and discuss what the text will be about. (See Appendix 3-4 for examples of picture walks.) Following the reading, students use metacognitive strategies to reflect on and discuss the thinking processes they used to read and understand the text.

Oral language activities during guided reading lessons include:

- picture and/or book walks;
- making predictions;
- posing questions;
• brainstorming;
• reading stories or factual texts aloud and/or orally retelling the stories or reiterating the information in a factual text;
• having students think about and describe what they did as they read the book.

**Independent Reading**

After reading texts independently, students converse with each other informally about the meaning of the texts they have read and about decoding strategies that they have tried. They recommend interesting new books to each other and often read together.

The teacher provides time for unstructured discussions about books read independently. Book talks and literature circles afford opportunities for fluent readers to listen to and extend each other’s understanding of texts read independently. Participants can discuss character development, examine the significance of setting or plot, assume roles (e.g., ask questions from a character’s point of view), and so on. Students can also be assigned particular roles in the discussion (see Appendix 7-4 in Chapter 7: Independent Reading for a discussion of role cards). Although the discussions are student-led, the teacher monitors and guides students to help them elaborate on their thinking.

Oral language activities during independent reading sessions include:

• book talks;
• think/pair/share;
• posing questions;
• using listening areas (e.g., listening to taped stories);
• sharing ideas about texts (in both planned activities and informal situations);
• literature circle discussions.
Appendix 3-1: An Oral Language Developmental Continuum*

The First Steps® Oral Language Developmental Continuum describes language and literacy behaviours within the area of speech development (i.e., the rules that govern speech) and three kinds of talk:

- language of social interaction, which is the language we use to converse, discuss, brainstorm, cooperatively devise frameworks, and so on;
- language and literacy, which refers to the language we use to tell news, relate stories, describe events or people, give instructions, and so on;
- language and thinking, which refers to the language we use to clarify thoughts, analyse information, identify similarities and differences, form conclusions, solve problems, and so on.

This appendix lists the indicators for Phases 2 to 5, inclusive, of the First Steps® continuum. Key indicators are highlighted in boldface type. A child is considered to be working in a particular phase when he or she displays all the key indicators of that phase. The child may, at the same time, also exhibit indicators from other phases.


First Steps Oral Language Developmental Continuum (1994), including First Steps Professional Development, is available from Pearson Canada, 26 Prince Andrew Place, Don Mills, Ontario. E-mail: professionallearning@pearsoned.com.
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Language and Literacy Behaviours

• judges whether a sentence is grammatically correct and adapts accordingly

• has grasped most grammatical rules but may still overgeneralize, e.g.
  - verbs: sleeped for slept
  - plurals: mouses for mice

• is beginning to use some complex grammatical connectives to sustain a topic, e.g.
  - because, if, after

• uses cognitive verbs, e.g.
  - think, like, want, etc. to express thoughts, wishes, dreams

• uses slang and jargon with peers

Language of Social Interaction

• uses tone, volume, pace, intonation pattern and gesture to enhance meaning

• takes into account audience and purpose when speaking

• can sustain a conversation with a variety of audiences, e.g. teacher, peers, parents

• takes conversational turns as speaker and listener

• responds to classroom expectations of polite behaviour, e.g.
  - Could you pass me . . . , I'm sorry.

• Waits for turn before speaking

• participates in group discussions

• distinguishes between language used in different situations, e.g. “home language”, “classroom language” and “playground language”

Language and Literacy

• develops specific vocabulary to suit different purposes, e.g. language for description, classification, comparison, argument

• shows evidence of language cohesion:
  - (a) narrative logical, sequenced retells
  - (b) recounts sequenced by time order
  - (c) conversation sustained, on topic

• includes when, who, where, what in recounts

PHASE 4: Emergent Language for Learning

• shows a knowledge of story structure by describing, comparing or contrasting, setting, characters, events, conclusion, etc. in narrative texts

• uses language to express grammatical forms encountered in narrative texts, e.g.
  - Once upon a time . . . , . . . and they lived happily ever after

• engages in more elaborate role play of characters or events encountered in stories

Language and Thinking

• uses language to predict and recall

• uses language to interact with peers, e.g. collaborative activities

• demonstrates abstract thinking by using verbs of cognition to express thoughts, hypotheses, wishes, e.g.
  - I wonder, hope, understand, think, believe, wish

• uses language to describe similarities and differences

• uses language to categorise objects, people, places, events, etc.

• uses language to discuss cause and effect

• uses language to reason and argue

• is beginning to distinguish between language forms and language meanings, e.g.
  - Pull your socks up means Improve your behaviour

• is beginning to understand humour in jokes and riddles

• follows instructions, e.g. classroom routines, relaying messages

• plans and gives instructions in a variety of situations, formal and informal, e.g. classroom routines, peer teaching

• questions to clarify or gain further information

• explains cause and effect, e.g.
  - She fell off the bar because she was trying a somersault for the first time, then her hand slipped

• follows instructions that include two or three elements

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Appendix 3-2: Sample Barrier Games

Barrier games usually involve two students. The barrier is set up in a way that prevents participants from seeing each other’s materials and actions. Barriers can be made from a variety of materials, such as a piece of cardboard or an inverted file folder.

Sample barrier game activities include:

**Describing an object:** Student A selects a small object and describes it to Student B. Student B must guess what the object is. A bag with a variety of objects could be made available and students could take turns selecting an item and describing it to their partner.

**Drawing an object:** Student A describes a picture or illustration (without identifying the object represented in the illustration) to Student B. Student B draws the object based on the information received from Student A. When the drawing is complete, the barrier is removed and the two pictures are compared. Sample pictures that could be used include the following:

![Sample pictures](image)

**Reading a series of directions:** A set of directions is printed on index cards. Student A reads the directions to Student B, who completes the actions described. Sample directions might be:

"Take a blue block, a red block, and two green blocks. Place the red block next to the blue block. Place one green block on top of the red block. Place one green block on top of the blue block."


**Following a road map:** Students A and B are given identical road maps. Student A charts a course on the map and gives directions for Student B to trace the same course. A road map might look like the following:
Appendix 3-3: Activities for Responding to Texts

Say Something: Two students share the reading of a text. One student begins reading aloud and chooses the first place to stop. At this point, both students discuss the text – connections they have to the text, their predictions, their opinions or impressions of the text, and so on. The other student reads the next portion of text, and the partners again discuss the text when the student stops reading. This process continues until the story is completed.

Sketch to Stretch: After listening to or reading a story, students quickly draw a sketch that represents what the story means to them. Each student shows his or her sketch to the group and explains the interpretation of the text that it represents. The students talk about the different ideas the members of the group had about the same text.

Save the Last Word for Me: Each student in a small group selects three or four quotes from the book the group is reading (younger children may choose interesting, confusing, or creative pictures from the text). Students write each quote on one side of an index card and, on the reverse, record what they would like to say about this quote. In a small circle, a student reads one of his or her quotes but does not share the reason for selecting it. The other students discuss why they think this quote is significant. When the discussion is over, the student who chose the quote gives his or her reason for choosing it, thus having the last word.

(Adapted from Harste, Short, and Burke, 1998, p. 528)
Appendix 3-4: Picture Walks

Picture walks are oral discussions that help students make sense of an unfamiliar text prior to reading it. As students examine a sample of the text’s illustrations or graphics to predict the story line and specific vocabulary, for example, and to discuss background knowledge relevant to the text, the groundwork is laid for reading comprehension.

Two approaches to picture walks are described below. The first encourages a relatively unstructured or informal discussion. The second uses a graphic organizer to organize the discussion and record its results. Over time, students can return to the graphic organizer (GO) chart and review or add to the points listed.

A. Picture Walk Discussion

The teacher shows students the cover of a book and, together, they predict what the book will be about. They leaf through the book together, discussing the pictures and possible story line. Sentence structure and vocabulary are modelled by the teacher informally.

This activity allows students to anticipate vocabulary and make connections to their prior knowledge and experiences and to other related books.

B. GO Chart for Picture Walk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictions</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Understandings</th>
<th>Connections</th>
<th>What will make this book easy/hard to understand?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What we think the book might be about</td>
<td>Words that might be in the book</td>
<td>What we know about the book</td>
<td>What the book reminds us of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


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Read-alouds provide rich opportunities for literacy development. They also play a significant role in developing a child’s love of reading, as the experience of listening to others read well is a highly motivating factor in the pursuit of becoming a good reader. Often, during an initial read-aloud session, the teacher uses a think-aloud process (see glossary; also discussed below) to introduce various reading strategies. It is important that read-alouds occur daily, using a variety of texts that cover a range of subjects, as read-alouds model both the “how” and the “why” of reading. Read-alouds can take place in a variety of contexts – as part of the literacy block, for example – and as a way of integrating literacy development across the curriculum. Reading strategies modelled by the teacher during read-alouds should be reinforced during shared and/or guided reading sessions.

Read-alouds enable the teacher to introduce students to a variety of genres, forms of texts (e.g., graphic forms such as tables and charts), and uses of text fonts (e.g., italics for emphasis). As teachers read aloud, they engage students in predicting story lines by using information from the cover and title of the book and from their knowledge of other books by the same author. Read-alouds enable teachers to demonstrate connections between the text being read and other texts or life experiences. It is important for teachers to facilitate students’ linking of their prior knowledge with new information encountered in the text through discussions before, during, and after the reading session.

Preparing For and Conducting a Read-Aloud Session

Read-aloud sessions involve three phases – before, during, and after the reading itself. (Lessons in the other key instructional approaches – guided, shared, and independent reading – also consist of before, during, and after phases.) The teacher must prepare for each phase.
Before
The teacher prepares the class by setting the stage for understanding the text. The teacher may:
• introduce the title, illustrations, author, and illustrator;
• encourage students to make and discuss predictions about the content of the text;
• present specialized vocabulary and new concepts;
• introduce unfamiliar text features;

During
The teacher models reading strategies, using a think-aloud process, to demonstrate various characteristics of a fluent reader. The teacher may:
• read with expression, intonation, and enthusiasm;
• adjust the pace to fit the text;

After
The teacher helps students extend their learning and comprehension. The teacher may encourage students to:
• connect the text with their background knowledge and related experiences;
• apply their learning (e.g., by retelling/relating the story in another form);

The first step is to determine the purpose and focus of the session. The selection of the text is important, as it sets the stage for students’ engagement and for possible teaching points. In general, texts selected for read-alouds should be at the “difficult” level – that is, they should be texts that students would read with less than 90 per cent accuracy. (Levels of difficulty of texts are discussed in Chapter 6: Guided Reading.)

At preselected points during the read-aloud, the teacher may stop reading to think aloud, to make connections to other stories read, or to ask a question about the text. This modelling of the thought processes used by proficient readers requires specific and thoughtful planning by the teacher. Verbalizing the thinking process can help reinforce students’ understanding of the strategies that good readers use to construct meaning by demonstrating how to infer, question, predict, and connect the text with their prior knowledge. Teachers should be careful, however, not to stop too many times during a read-aloud session, as frequent stops may interrupt the flow of the text for students and, therefore, interfere with their comprehension and enjoyment of it. Teachers can read a text aloud without any follow-up activities or they can follow the reading with various learning activities, including rereading the text later.

The following table provides suggestions for how to conduct a read-aloud, and the table on page 4.5 outlines some sample learning activities for students for before, during, and after read-alouds.

Suggestions for Conducting a Read-Aloud

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before</th>
<th>During</th>
<th>After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teacher prepares the class by setting the stage for understanding the text. The teacher may:</td>
<td>The teacher models reading strategies, using a think-aloud process, to demonstrate various characteristics of a fluent reader. The teacher may:</td>
<td>The teacher helps students extend their learning and comprehension. The teacher may encourage students to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• introduce the title, illustrations, author, and illustrator;</td>
<td>• read with expression, intonation, and enthusiasm;</td>
<td>• connect the text with their background knowledge and related experiences;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• encourage students to make and discuss predictions about the content of the text;</td>
<td>• adjust the pace to fit the text;</td>
<td>• apply their learning (e.g., by retelling/relating the story in another form);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• present specialized vocabulary and new concepts;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• introduce unfamiliar text features;</td>
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(continued)
### Suggestions for Conducting a Read-Aloud (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before</th>
<th>During</th>
<th>After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• discuss aspects of the text’s format, such as the table of contents, glossary, and index; • help students connect their background knowledge and related experiences to the topic of the text; • encourage students to ask questions about the text that may be answered when the text is read.</td>
<td>• connect the text to materials read before or to related experiences (e.g., “This reminds me of ...”, “It makes me think of ...”, “I read another book where ...”); • make inferences and predictions.</td>
<td>• reinforce their comprehension skills and strategies (e.g., by making inferences based on the text); • discuss story elements and patterns (see glossary); • discuss any questions they may have about the text; • expand on the ideas of other students; • reflect on their new understandings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Sample Read-Aloud Activities for Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before</th>
<th>During</th>
<th>After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Brainstorm and use a KWL chart (see glossary) to categorize what they know and what they want to know. • Make predictions based on the front cover, title, table of contents, and pictures. • Ask questions. The teacher models how to formulate questions that may be answered during the read-aloud. • Discuss content-specific vocabulary.</td>
<td>• Stop and think. The teacher models how to monitor one’s own understanding (e.g., recall details and confirm events), how to adjust one’s reading if one loses track of the meaning, and various other reading strategies. • Think aloud. The teacher models how to formulate questions about events and characters in the text, and encourages students to ask such questions.</td>
<td>• Discuss their responses to the text, including any connections they have made between the text and their own experiences, other texts, and their knowledge of the world. • Identify various elements of the text. • Retell the story – orally, in writing, or by drawing it. • Map the story. • Change the form of the story (e.g., retell it in the form of a comic strip, tableau, play, or picture book). • Record responses to the story in a response journal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teaching Reading Strategies Through Think-Alouds

In the think-aloud process, the teacher models reading strategies – that is, the teacher says aloud to the students what he or she is thinking in order to make meaning of the text. The teacher carefully plans for think-alouds prior to the read-aloud lesson (Appendix 4-1 contains a Read-Aloud/Think-Aloud Planning Sheet). While preparing for the session, the teacher may wish to consider the following guiding questions:

- What do I want students to understand about the strategies that I will model?
- What are two or three places in the text where it would be best to model these strategies?
- What visual cues should I highlight during the reading and think-alouds?
- How can I help students create mental images that will help them connect their new learning to their prior knowledge?

Think-alouds give students a framework and a common vocabulary for thinking and talking about books.

“We also read aloud to demonstrate to our children and to mentor them in the habits, values, and strategies of proficient readers, and to help them experience the bounties of thoughtful, reflective reading.”

(McCormick Calkins, 2001, p. 56)
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Revisiting Texts

Often the text chosen for a read-aloud lesson is revisited for different purposes. For example, the teacher may read the text aloud again to help students recall certain details, confirm the date and time of an event, or acquire a deeper understanding of the text. Revisiting texts is a valuable process, as it allows the teacher to model reading strategies that promote comprehension and lead to higher-order thinking (see Bloom’s taxonomy in Chapter 8: Reading Comprehension). A variety of texts, such as morning messages (see glossary), letters, brochures, environmental print, magazines, and books, can be revisited. The teacher can also use a text for a read-aloud lesson and then use it again for shared reading.
Sample Read-Aloud Lesson 1: Grades 1–2


**OVERVIEW OF THE TEXT:** The story is about the repercussions that occur when two young girls call each other names. It points out to students how name-calling can escalate, and it provides students with an opportunity to infer how the school principal will resolve the conflict.

**CONTEXT:** This lesson encourages students to develop their comprehension strategies and to express their thoughts about the text.* Students have had previous experience with each of the strategies to be used. These strategies have been modelled by the teacher one at a time and are now being scaffolded so that students can start to use them independently.

**TIME FRAME**
- 4–5 days
- 20 minutes a day, depending on interest in the discussion

**MATERIALS**
- a graphic organizer for recording students’ predictions of both story and vocabulary, their understandings and interpretations of the story, and the connections they make after the story has been read. (This type of graphic organizer is described in Benson and Cummins, 2000.)

**ADAPTATION AND EXTENSION OPPORTUNITIES**
- Students are asked open-ended questions that allow a range of responses, all of which should be accepted but some of which should be used as opportunities for scaffolding or for encouraging students to extend their understanding.
- The book reflects experiences that many students can relate to, and therefore may encourage students to draw on their personal experiences to help them understand the story.

**ONTARIO CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS**

*Students will:*

**Social Studies: Heritage and Citizenship**
- recognize and describe consequences of events and actions that affect their lives (Grade 1);

**Health and Physical Safety: Healthy Living**
- describe exploitative behaviours (e.g., abusive behaviours, bullying, inappropriate touching) and the feelings associated with them (Grade 1);
- describe types of verbal and physical violence (e.g., name-calling, kicking, hitting) (Grade 2);

**Language: Reading**
- read a variety of simple written materials for different purposes (Grades 1 and 2);
- use their knowledge and experience to understand what they read (Grade 1);
- use a variety of reading strategies to understand a piece of writing (Grade 2);

* Note that read-aloud sessions may serve a variety of purposes and that they do not all need to be developed to the extent indicated in this and the following lesson.
• retell a simple story in proper sequence and recall information in it accurately (Grade 1);
• retell a story in proper sequence, identify the main idea and the characters, and discuss some aspects of the story (Grade 2).

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES
• During discussions, many opportunities will be provided for students to demonstrate their understandings. Responses will be recorded on the graphic organizer. (The responses should be initialled to indicate the name of the contributor, for later analysis. The teacher should keep anecdotal records [see Chapter 12: Assessment] of his or her observations about these responses.)

REFLECTIONS FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHER
Students:
• Am I "thinking about my thinking" throughout this lesson?
• Am I understanding the text? Are there comprehension strategies that I can use to understand it better?
• What thoughts can I share with the class? (Time constraints will not allow all students’ thoughts to be shared and recorded.)

Teacher:
• What strategies are students using?
• What strategies need to be reinforced?
• What connections are students making with the events in the story and with other texts?
• What other books would be of interest to these students?

PROCEDURE
Day 1
Before Reading
The teacher:
• reads the title with students and asks them what they think the book will be about, and then records their predictions on the chart. Beside each prediction, the teacher prints the initials of the student who offered it, as a reminder for later recording of formative assessment data. The teacher encourages students to use their knowledge of the term “name-calling” as a basis for their predictions;
• asks students if they have any knowledge of the Canadian author Itah Sadu;
• shows them the cover illustration and asks them if it gives them more clues about the characters and about what might happen in the story;
• records any vocabulary words that students predict will appear in the story;
• selects and records on the graphic organizer some words that he or she wants the student to be aware of as they listen to the story.
During Reading

The teacher:
- reads the book aloud, with appropriate fluency and expression;
- ensures that all students have a chance to see the pictures, as the pictures will help them understand the story;
- occasionally models think-alouds that lead to deeper understandings, making specific connections to the text (e.g., “When I went to school this happened to my friends and me. We all went running to the office to tell on Timothy because he called my friend Madison a mean name. Our principal told us . . . ”).

After Reading
- The teacher records students’ responses to the text under the heading “I Noticed”. This activity encourages students to deepen their understandings about characters’ feelings and actions, about the setting, and about the problem and solution. To stimulate responses, the teacher suggests that students discuss the following:
  - how Cindy felt when Jennifer called her a bad name
  - that Cindy also wanted to call Jennifer a bad name
  - that many of Cindy’s friends wanted to hurt Jennifer too
  - that Maxine wasn’t very popular
  - that Jennifer and Cindy became friends at the end of the story and the problem was solved

Day 2

Retelling
- Using the pictures, the teacher invites students to retell the story to refresh their memory of the text. When appropriate, the teacher inserts significant vocabulary from the text, if it is not used in the retelling.
Oral Discussion

The teacher engages students in an oral discussion of the book, posing questions such as the following:
- What did you think of Jennifer at the beginning of the book? (She was mean, etc.)
- How did Cindy choose to solve the problem? (She wanted to call Jennifer a bad name too and got her whole group of friends to go along with her to hurt Jennifer.)
- What did you think of Cindy’s actions (plans) to hurt Jennifer? (Have a brief discussion about conflict resolution; for example, “If someone called you a bad name or maybe pushed you, should you call that person a name too or push the person back?” Discuss how two wrongs don’t make a right.)
- How else could Cindy have solved her problem?
- What was the most important message or lesson in this story (e.g., not to make fun of people and their differences, to get along with each other, and not to call each other names)?
- How could you use the author’s message in your life?

Day 3

The teacher:
- may reread the text or a portion of it as a review;
- records students’ personal interpretations of the text under the heading “I Wonder ...”.

Day 4

- The teacher records under the heading “This Reminds Me ...” the connections students make between the text and their own feelings and experiences (text-to-self), other texts (text-to-text), and their knowledge of the world (text-to-world). Examples could include the following:
  - text-to-self: “Once my sister called me a bad name and it really hurt my feelings a lot.”
  - text-to-text: Students may recall another story, *Christopher, Please Clean Up Your Room!*, written by the same author.

Day 5

- The teacher asks each student or small group of students to choose a retelling activity from a list of options, including, for example, doing a dramatic retelling, creating a new book cover, or performing a readers’ theatre.

OVERVIEW OF THE TEXT: This fictional text is about a street where all the houses are exactly the same. When Mr. Plumbean paints his house a different colour, his neighbours are shocked.

CONTEXT: Students will have had previous experience visualizing scenes and actions from a story, and they will understand that their imagination is an important element in comprehending text. This lesson will reinforce and extend these experiences and understandings.

TIME FRAME
• 3 days
• 15-20 minutes a day (drawing pictures will require additional time)

OTHER MATERIALS
• paper
• markers, pencil crayons, or crayons

ADAPTATION AND EXTENSION OPPORTUNITIES
• Students who are reluctant to draw on paper may use the computer.
• Various extensions can be found in the "After Reading" section of "Day 3".

ONTARIO CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS
Students will:
Language: Reading, Grade 3
• express clear responses to written materials, relating the ideas in them to their own knowledge and experience;
• begin to develop their own opinions by considering some ideas from various written materials;
• identify and restate the main idea in a piece of writing, and cite supporting details;
• identify and describe some elements of stories (e.g., plot, central idea, characters, setting);
• begin to make inferences while reading;

Language: Oral and Visual Communication, Grade 3
• retell stories, demonstrating an understanding of basic story structure and including information about characters, action, and story ending;
• contribute ideas appropriate to the topic in group discussion and listen to the ideas of others;
The Arts: Visual Arts, Grade 3

- identify and explain the specific choices they made in planning, producing, and displaying their own artwork.

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- During the “think/pair/share” before-reading activity on Day 1, the teacher observes students’ ability to contribute ideas and to listen to the ideas of their partners. The teacher uses these observations in anecdotal notes and in formative assessments and feedback.
- While students work in cooperative learning groups after reading on Day 2, the teacher observes their ability to relate their pictures clearly to the significant event in the story that the picture is based on, expressing their thoughts, feelings, and/or personal experiences.

REFLECTIONS FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHER

Students:
- Why was I able to create pictures of this text in my mind? How did the story help me create those pictures?
- What was the main idea of this story?

Teacher:
- How successful was this lesson?
- Were my goals achieved?
- What could I change to improve this lesson next time?
- How will I plan for the next steps in student learning?

PROCEDURE

Day 1

Before Reading

The teacher:
- writes the title The Big Orange Splot on chart paper;
- tells students that he or she will be reading aloud a book entitled The Big Orange Splot;
- asks students to suggest what the book may be about, based on the title;
- has students “think/pair/share” their predictions;
- tells the class that he or she will be reading the book aloud without showing any of the pictures;
- encourages students to visualize the action words being read aloud to them and the events in the story.

During Reading

The teacher:
- reads the book aloud, placing appropriate emphasis on descriptive language;
- stops reading at the point where the neighbour comes over to visit Mr. Plumbean, and thinks aloud as follows: “I wonder why the neighbour is coming over. I wonder if he’s angry about the
way Mr. Plumbean’s house looks. If he’s not angry, I wonder if he likes what Mr. Plumbean did with his house”;
• invites responses to these questions;
• at points throughout the story, reminds students to use their imagination: “Remember to visualize what is being read to you.” “What do you see in your mind?” “Close your eyes if it helps you see the action.”

**After Reading**
*The teacher:*
• has students work in groups of four or five;
• asks each student to select one significant event from the story to depict in a drawing;
• asks students to share their drawing within their group and to explain it.

### Examples of Students’ Drawings

![Image of student drawings]

**Day 2**

**Before Reading**
*The teacher:*
• has students form a large circle around the room, holding up their pictures in the proper sequence of the story. (There will be students who have drawn pictures of the same scene.);
• facilitates a group retelling of the story;
• tells the class that he or she will be reading the book aloud once again, this time *showing the pictures*;
• encourages students to consider the pictures they drew and compare them to the illustrator's version.

**During Reading**
The teacher reads the story without interruptions.

**After Reading (Optional)**
• Students discuss their illustrations in learning groups. The teacher asks questions such as the following:
  - Why did you select that event to draw, and why is that event important to the story?
  - How does your drawing compare with the illustrator's version?
  - Were you surprised by anything in the illustrator's version?

---

**Day 3**

**Before Reading**
*The teacher:*
• tells the class that he or she will be reading the book aloud, showing the pictures once again;
• encourages students to make connections between the story and experiences they may have had or books they may have read that involve issues such as peer pressure;
• asks students to think about a time when they were in a situation where they felt that they had to conform to peer pressure (e.g., wanting to wear name-brand clothes and shoes, or not wanting to eat their lunch in front of others because it was different from others' lunches);
• encourages students to discuss the situations in the story that deal with issues of peer pressure and personal choice.

**During Reading**
The teacher thinks aloud at the first occasion in the story when the neighbours get together, asking "When someone is different from others, is this a bad thing? Why would people be angry about it?"

**After Reading (Optional)**
• The teacher may want to consider some of the following activities:
  - The class discusses peer pressure.
  - Groups of students each develop a tableau of a situation that involves peer pressure.
  - Students consider the question "Can peer pressure be a good thing?" in groups or as a class.
APPENDIX 4-I: Read-Aloud/Think-Aloud Planning Sheet

Book Title: ________________________________

Author: ________________________________

Focus of the Think-Aloud: ________________________________

The Ontario Curriculum expectations addressed in this lesson are:

1. _______________________________________
2. _______________________________________
3. _______________________________________
4. _______________________________________

Before (book introduction/pre-reading strategies):

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

During:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

After (discussion):

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
References


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Shared reading is an interactive approach to the teaching of reading that promotes the development of new skills and consolidates those previously taught. During shared reading, the teacher provides instruction to the whole class by reading a text that all students can see, using an overhead, a big book, a chart, or a poster. The teacher reads the text to the students, inviting them to join in at key instructional moments. The same text can be revisited several times for a variety of instructional purposes.

The shared reading approach originated in Don Holdaway’s work with primary students in New Zealand public schools in the late 1970s. Holdaway observed that the children who came to school best prepared to learn to read had been consistently read to at home and had had many opportunities to practise their emerging skills. He developed a teaching approach that replicates and builds on supportive early years literacy activities like the bedtime story (Holdaway, 1979).

**The Frequency of Shared Reading**

Shared reading lessons should occur during the literacy block (see glossary) and/or while other subjects are being taught:

- daily in Kindergarten and Grade 1;
- at least two to three times a week in Grades 2 and 3.

**The Focus of Shared Reading**

Like read-alouds, shared reading lessons focus on specific strategies related to comprehension and word solving. The following chart sets out the knowledge and skills that emergent, early, and fluent readers will acquire through shared reading experiences.

“In shared reading, skills are learned in the context of meaningful familiar text. The children are actually engaged with the text and reading. They are tackling the text with a problem solving attitude and learning or using skills: they are not practising skills in isolation. An important purpose of shared reading is the explicit demonstration of reading strategies and the articulation of what those strategies are.”

(Hornsby, 2000, pp. 29–30)
### Knowledge and Skills Acquired Through Shared Reading Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge/Skill</th>
<th>Emergent readers (introduction)</th>
<th>Early readers (introduction and consolidation)</th>
<th>Fluent readers (consolidation and review)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Concepts of print** | Students learn the following concepts of print:  
  - that print contains a message  
  - the starting point for reading a text  
  - the directionality of reading (from left to right, from top to bottom)  
  - where to go after reaching the end of a line (return sweep)  
  - the concept of a letter  
  - the concept of a word | Students learn or consolidate learning of the following concepts of print:  
  - the shapes and orientation of individual letters such as d, b, g, p  
  - that print contains a message  
  - where to go after reaching the end of a line (return sweep) | Students review the following concept of print:  
  - that print contains a message |
| **Elements of text**  | Students learn how to use the following elements of text:  
  - information on the front of the book  
  - illustrations  
  - punctuation  
  - capital letters  
  - bolding, italics, underlining | Students learn or consolidate their understanding of how to use the following elements of text:  
  - various ways text can be arranged on a page (e.g., how to follow print around an illustration)  
  - tables of contents  
  - glossary  
  - headings  
  - captions and labels  
  - index  
  - punctuation  
  - bolding, italics, underlining | Students consolidate previous learning by reviewing and practising how to use various elements of text. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge/Skill</th>
<th>Emergent readers (introduction)</th>
<th>Early readers (introduction and consolidation)</th>
<th>Fluent readers (consolidation and review)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Cueing systems** and other reading strategies | Students learn how to use the following cues and strategies:  
• meaning (semantic) cues  
• structural (syntactic) cues  
• visual (graphophonic cues)  
• self-monitoring strategies (e.g., asking themselves questions about the text to check their accuracy and understanding)  
• strategies to access prior knowledge (e.g., asking themselves if the text reminds them of anything) | Students learn and or consolidate learning about how to use the following cues and strategies:  
• meaning (semantic) cues  
• structural (syntactic) cues  
• visual (graphophonic cues)  
• self-monitoring strategies (e.g., asking themselves questions about the text to check their accuracy and understanding)  
• self-correcting strategies (e.g., rereading and cross-checking to confirm understanding)  
• strategies to locate information (e.g., reading ahead)  
• strategies to access prior knowledge (e.g., asking themselves if the text reminds them of anything) | Students consolidate learning about how to use the following cues and strategies:  
• meaning (semantic) cues  
• structural (syntactic) cues  
• visual (graphophonic cues)  
• self-monitoring strategies (e.g., asking themselves questions about the text to check their accuracy and understanding)  
• self-correcting strategies (e.g., rereading and cross-checking to confirm understanding)  
• strategies to locate information (e.g., reading ahead, checking graphic elements such as charts and sidebars)  
• strategies to access prior knowledge (e.g., asking themselves if the text reminds them of anything) |
| **Fluency** | Students learn how to improve their fluency:  
• by imitating the phrasing of someone who reads well  
• by reading with expression | Students continue to improve their fluency:  
• by imitating and practising proper phrasing  
• by reading with expression | Students continue to improve their fluency:  
• by using proper phrasing  
• by reading with expression |

*Cueing systems are discussed in Chapter 2: Overview of Effective Instruction, and in Chapter 6: Guided Reading. See the glossary as well.*
Roles and Responsibilities in Shared Reading

The roles and responsibilities of both teacher and students in shared reading are set out in the chart below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roles and Responsibilities of Teacher and Students in Shared Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The teacher:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• selects a variety of high-quality texts that all children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can see (e.g., big books, charts), that contain correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>language usage and structures, that contain an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appropriate development of ideas, and that appeal to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>young readers;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• promotes development of listening and reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comprehension skills;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• teaches effective reading strategies and skills;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• fosters development of problem-solving skills as they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apply to reading;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• reinforces students’ understanding of concepts of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>print and letter-sound relationships;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• reviews patterns of reading that are familiar to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students, and explores new ones;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• teaches vocabulary;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• introduces new genres;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• highlights text features that are specific to the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>genre being read;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• makes cross-curricular links to other subject areas;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• demonstrates how reading strategies are applied in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>authentic reading situations;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• makes ongoing observations and assessments of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students’ progress;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• selects texts for future shared reading lessons that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>will address students’ needs as identified by assessment data.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“As you and your students read poems, chants, or stories from enlarged text, you can invite students to revisit the text for different purposes, one of which is to learn about letters or words. This brief attention to the way letters and words work in the author’s construction of a message gives children new insight to bring to their independent reading and writing of text.”

(Fountas and Pinnell, 1996, p. 170)
Resources for Shared Reading

The texts selected for shared reading should appeal to and engage all students. In the early primary grades, some texts will contain repetitive phrases or follow repetitive patterns. Many of the poems, songs, and rhymes will be familiar to students. Students will therefore find it easy to predict the words in and the content of these texts. A broad selection of well-crafted texts ensures a rich variety of teaching and learning experiences that challenge students’ thinking and invite collaboration in understanding the meaning of the text.

The following resources are useful for shared reading lessons and should be used at various times:

- big books (K–3)
- repetitive-pattern books
- texts taken from core reading materials (e.g., anthologies)
- graphs, charts, and maps
- word walls
- samples of environmental print
- poetry, songs
- text written on overheads or charts (e.g., a morning message)

Shared reading lessons offer teachers an opportunity to read from both factual and fictional texts in a wide range of genres, inviting students to see, hear, and discuss the differences among these texts. Through exposure to a range of texts, students come to realize that texts have different forms and are read for different purposes. These experiences encourage students to be open to a variety of cross-curricular reading materials. Factual texts enrich students’ knowledge of a subject or topic, help them build subject-specific vocabulary, introduce them to a variety of text features, and improve their visual literacy. Fictional texts engage readers’ imaginations and emotions. (Factual and fictional texts are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2: Overview of Effective Instruction.)
### Factual texts

Factual texts should be selected from a variety of genres and topics across the curriculum and should have the following characteristics:

- features that allow the teacher to address curriculum expectations
- features that allow the teacher to teach selected decoding and comprehension strategies
- a “difficult” reading level (i.e., texts that most students would read at an accuracy and comprehension rate of less than 90 per cent without teacher support)
- developmentally appropriate topics
- topics that will interest and appeal to students
- topics that represent various cultures (e.g., discussing festivals, food, dress)
- text-specific and age-appropriate vocabulary
- a layout that is clear, well organized, and internally consistent
- well-defined headings and subheadings
- clearly defined text features
- clearly labelled diagrams
- captions that identify or explain illustrations, charts, etc.

### Fictional texts

Fictional texts should be selected from a variety of genres and topics and should have the following characteristics:

- features that allow the teacher to address curriculum expectations
- features that allow the teacher to teach selected decoding and comprehension strategies
- a “difficult” reading level (i.e., texts that most students would read at an accuracy and comprehension rate of less than 90 per cent without teacher support)
- developmentally appropriate topics
- topics that will interest and appeal to students
- authentic stories with strong plots, well-developed characters, and interesting, well-structured storylines
- representations of various cultures
- predictable and repetitive patterns (for early primary students)
- captivating language
- effective and grade-appropriate vocabulary

---

“The benefits of including nonfiction books in the K–2 literacy program are considerable. Children find the real-world topics ... interesting and accessible. ... The introduction of nonfiction reading and writing in the early years also builds a foundation for later learning in the content areas and for lifelong learning.”

(Parkes, 2000, p. 85)
The Shared Reading Lesson

The teaching of a shared reading lesson for emergent and early readers usually takes place over two or more days; for fluent readers, it may extend over only a day or two. It includes the following steps:

1. selecting a teaching point
2. selecting a text to match the teaching point
3. creating a plan that involves noting specific areas of the text at which to stop and focus on (highlight) certain words, sounds, features, etc.
4. introducing the text to students
5. teaching and modelling reading for students, inviting them to join in
6. revisiting the text and the teaching/learning strategy (e.g., at a second or third session)
7. making the text available to students to reread and/or to respond to independently

When the teacher first introduces a text, he or she provides maximum support by reading most of the text while encouraging students to make predictions, follow along “with their eyes”, and join in when they are ready. The teacher models reading for students and supports them in their understanding of the text.

Some students will listen and join in only during the reading of repetitive or pattern texts. Others will listen and watch as the teacher points to the words and reads. A few may predict what will happen next and verbalize the story. All will be acting and feeling like readers. As the text is revisited following the initial session, students will take more responsibility for the reading and require less teacher support.

During subsequent readings, the teacher focuses on teaching points and/or reading strategies that are based on the instructional needs of the students. The teacher looks to previous assessments and close observations made during the initial reading to guide his or her decision making.

The level of teacher support required will vary according to the complexity of the text, students’ familiarity with the genre, and students’ knowledge of the topic, the vocabulary involved, and the strategies required to comprehend the text. As students become more familiar with a text during rereadings, they learn to apply increasingly complex skills and gain confidence in their reading abilities. Rather than practising...
skills in isolation, they are able to engage in problem solving using meaningful, familiar texts.

By posting familiar songs, poems, and chants on charts in the classroom, the teacher gives students the advantage of seeing texts before they are read. Students are often able to begin problem solving before the first shared reading experience.

Shared reading lessons support all students, at all reading levels. Each student participates in the reading and discussion at his or her individual level of ability, and benefits from listening to and learning from others. The teacher structures shared reading activities based on the selected reading strategy, the type of text, students’ prior knowledge, and students’ range of skills. The instructional focus for shared reading can change throughout the week with each reading of the text.

**Activities to Follow the Lesson**

Following the shared reading lesson, the teacher can have students reread the text using the big book or chart or small, individual copies of the text. The teacher can also have students respond independently to the text by:

- completing graphic organizers (e.g., sequence charts, character maps, story webs; see glossary);
- developing lists of word families or rhyming words that are related to words in the text;
- using magnetic letters to make and break words;
- creating a picture sequence of the story;
- developing and performing a readers’ theatre (see glossary) based on the text;
- engaging in other drama and role-play activities based on the text;
- discussing information or events in the text (e.g., saying whether they agree or disagree);
- retelling the story orally or in writing;
- doing a text reconstruction (see glossary);
- writing their responses to the text.

Some students will benefit from listening to an audiotape of the book in the classroom listening area as they work on their response.

“Pre-instruction of vocabulary in reading lessons can have significant effects on learning outcomes . . .”

(National Reading Panel, 2000, p. 4.25)
Teaching Points

In addition to the three sample lessons at the end of this chapter, the following table may assist teachers in preparing shared reading lessons.

### Teaching Points for Emergent, Early, and Fluent Readers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent readers</th>
<th>Early readers</th>
<th>Fluent readers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergent readers need to know:</td>
<td>Early readers need to know:</td>
<td>Fluent readers need to know:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• that reading can be a source of pleasure and information;</td>
<td>• that reading can be a source of pleasure and information;</td>
<td>• that reading can be a source of pleasure and information;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• that the text conveys a message;</td>
<td>• that text conveys a meaning;</td>
<td>• that factual texts differ from fictional texts;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• that the words in a text that convey a specific message never change (i.e., the written words that say “I can go to school” never change);</td>
<td>• that factual texts differ from fictional texts;</td>
<td>• that what they learn in shared reading activities can be applied to solve reading problems;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• that pictures convey meanings that support the printed message;</td>
<td>• that the same message and the same words can be written in different print sizes and styles;</td>
<td>• that different genres have different text features (e.g., labels in factual texts);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• that written language is “talk” written down;</td>
<td>• that different texts can have different purposes;</td>
<td>• how to use a range of strategies to construct meaning (e.g., to make predictions and later confirm or reject them);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• that certain high-frequency words appear repeatedly in texts;</td>
<td>• how to apply effective word-solving strategies;</td>
<td>• how to use the three cueing systems (semantic, syntactic, graphophonic) when they encounter unfamiliar words, and how to confirm their prediction of those words;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the difference between a letter, a word, and a sentence;</td>
<td>• how to monitor their understanding as they read;</td>
<td>• how to identify the main idea and supporting details in a text;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• letter recognition;</td>
<td>• how to formulate questions about the text;</td>
<td>• how to use the text to support opinions, judgements, decisions, and generalizations;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• print directionality.</td>
<td>• how to reread and read ahead to confirm or reject their understanding;</td>
<td>• how to determine the meaning of figurative language;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• how to use the three cueing systems (semantic, syntactic, graphophonic) when they encounter unfamiliar words, and how to confirm their prediction of those words;</td>
<td>• how to use graphic organizers to enhance their understanding of a text.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Toronto District School Board, 2000, pp. 2–10)
Once a strategy or concept has been introduced and taught in shared reading, it can be applied in other lessons, including guided reading and independent reading lessons.

**Schedule for Shared Reading**

The teacher may choose to divide a weekly schedule for shared reading into three sections, as the following sample schedule indicates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Sample Weekly Schedule for Shared Reading</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day 1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introducing the text</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• engages students in pre-reading activities;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• reads the text to students for the first time;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• holds a follow-up discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Instructional Focus**

The focus of instruction may change, depending on whether it is the initial reading of the text or a subsequent reading. The structure and content of the resource being used may also influence the focus of the lesson (i.e., whether it is a rhyme, song, poem, story, factual text, or other type of text).

* Adapted from *Mosaic of Thought: Teaching Comprehension in a Reader’s Workshop* by Ellin Oliver Keene and Susan Zimmerman. Copyright © 1997 by Ellin Oliver Keene and Susan Zimmerman. Published by Heinemann, a division of Reed Elsevier, Inc., Portsmouth, NH.
### Instructional Focus for Shared Reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before</th>
<th>During</th>
<th>After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teacher:</td>
<td>The teacher:</td>
<td>The teacher:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• decides which word-solving and/or comprehension strategies to reinforce (see Chapter 8: Reading Comprehension for a full discussion of reading comprehension strategies);</td>
<td>• reads the text while students follow the print;</td>
<td>• guides students through a discussion of the text’s content;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• activates students’ background knowledge and sets a purpose for reading;</td>
<td>• encourages students to join in the reading when they are ready to do so. Emergent readers usually chime in during the reading of repetitive-pattern text;</td>
<td>• identifies difficult areas in the text and explains problem-solving strategies that can be used to decode words and comprehend meaning;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• introduces the book by commenting on the title, illustrations, author, and/or illustrator;</td>
<td>• encourages students to read along as the teacher tracks the reading of the text for them by sweeping a pointer under clusters of words, indicating how to read with proper phrasing and fluency.</td>
<td>• has students reread the text to practise strategies and skills that will reinforce their learning;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• invites students to predict the content of the text from the title, pictures, and charts (i.e., conduct a picture walk);</td>
<td></td>
<td>• revisits the text with students for different purposes on subsequent days, always starting with a familiar rereading of the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• records students’ predictions on a chart (optional);</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• introduces new concepts;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• teaches new vocabulary, unfamiliar text features, and/or formatting (e.g., table of contents, glossary, index).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Assessment

Shared reading activities provide the teacher with opportunities to assess the development of students’ reading skills by using the following assessment strategies.

- **Direct observation:** Does the student use appropriate strategies to decode unfamiliar vocabulary? Does the student demonstrate understanding of the text? Is the student able to extend the meaning of the text? Does the student recognize high-frequency words? Does the student read with phrasing and expression?

> “Teachers serve as guides so that children know how to engage in purposeful self direction.”

(Askew and Fountas, as quoted in Parkes, 2000, p. 25)
• **Assessment of student’s responses to questions:** How relevant are the student’s responses to questions? What information did the student learn from the text? What did the student comprehend?

• **Assessment of student’s ability to retell a story:** Does the student retell in sequence? Does the student provide details to support the story’s main idea or the theme of the text? Does the student exhibit understanding that extends beyond the text? Does the student make connections between the text and his or her personal experience, other texts, and the world in general?

• **Assessment of student’s knowledge about the concepts of print:** Does the student understand the function of the title? of punctuation? of capital letters? Does the student know that print "reads" in a certain direction?

• **Reading conferences:** What are the student’s strengths? What challenges the student? What goals should the student set for improvement?

• **Student self-assessments:** Does the student assess his or her needs appropriately? Questions to elicit self-assessment could include the following: “What did you do well?” “What did you find difficult?” “How did you solve your problem?” “In what areas do you need help?”

In conducting these assessments, teachers may use a variety of tools, including checklists, recording sheets or cards, charts, logs, surveys, and sticky notes. (For detailed information about the strategies and tools referred to above, see Chapter 12: Assessment.)

“Shared reading builds self-esteem and a sense of community as it leads children into literacy. When children feel good about themselves and recognize that they are valued members of the classroom, it is easier for them to learn to read and write, and they develop a love of learning, as well. Literacy learning, self-confidence, caring for each other and the love of learning go hand in hand.”

(Fisher and Fisher Medvic, 2000, p. 13)

OVERVIEW OF THE TEXT: Little Bo Peep looks for her sheep in locations where other nursery rhymes have taken place, such as “up the hill”, from the “Jack and Jill” rhyme. Repeating patterns in the book (e.g., the phrase “Where are my sheep?”) support the developing reader.

CONTEXT: This lesson (or series of lessons) is meant to be used as part of a unit on nursery rhymes. Students have had previous experience with the “Little Bo Peep”, “Little Boy Blue”, and “Jack and Jill” rhymes. The focus of this lesson is on using sound and language patterns to read. Charts or posters of familiar nursery rhymes are posted around the room.

Students understand the question mark from previous shared-reading minilessons, and they are familiar with the strategy of making text-to-text connections.

PURPOSE: Students learn about concepts of print, text features (bold font), and patterns in the text (repetitive words and phrases). They practise comprehension strategies and learn how to use syntactic cues to predict vocabulary. In the last session, they create a response to the text.

TIME FRAME
• 1 week or 5 days
• 10–15 minutes per day, more on the last day

MATERIALS
• big-book version of the text
• individual small copies of the text
• pointer
• materials for book making
• sticky notes

ONTARIO CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS
*Students will:*
• demonstrate understanding of a variety of written materials that are read to them;
• use language to connect new experiences with what they already know;
• use language patterns and sound patterns to identify words and to predict the next word.

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES
*The teacher observes and notes:*
• the relevance and quality of student responses;
• students’ ability to use appropriate strategies to read unfamiliar words;

* Iris Zammit’s *Little Bo Peep* is also used in Sample Lesson 1: Kindergarten, in Chapter 9: Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, and Word Study. That lesson focuses on teaching high-frequency words in a shared reading context. The two lessons together illustrate how the same book may lend itself to various instructional purposes.
• students’ ability to recognize sounds, repeat patterns, and join in the reading;
• students’ ability to read the familiar parts of the story.

REFLECTIONS FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHER

Students:
• What does this story remind me of?
• What helped me to read this story?
• What did I learn that will help me be a better reader?

Teacher:
• How easy or difficult was this book for the class? What are students ready to learn next?
  What strategies do they need to have reinforced or scaffolded? What could be taught in small groups?
• Did students use their prior knowledge? Did they make appropriate connections to the text?
• Were students able to use context or meaning to identify high-frequency words in the cloze task described in Day 4?

Note: The teacher’s responses to these questions should be recorded with other assessment data for these students.

PROCEDURE

Day 1

Before
The teacher introduces the book, discusses the cover with the students, and reads the title.

During
Using the big book, the teacher reads, encouraging students to join in the reading of the repeating pattern, “No sheep, Where are my sheep?”

The purposes of the reading on Day 1 are for enjoyment and to encourage students to notice the repeating patterns and join in.

After
The teacher leads students in a brief discussion of their reactions to the book.

Day 2

Before
The teacher rereads the text, encouraging students to join in.

During
The teacher introduces an oral cloze procedure, using sticky notes to cover some key high-frequency words in the text (e.g., up, the, my). Students reread the text as an oral cloze exercise, saying the words when they reach the sticky notes. They discuss why they chose a specific word (e.g., “It sounded right.” “I knew the pattern.” “It made sense.” “I remember the word.”). They
may also brainstorm other words that could fit. When the sticky note is removed, they use their knowledge of letters to confirm their answers.

After
The class rereads the book with all of the sticky notes removed.

Day 3

Before
The class rereads the entire book together with little support from the teacher. The teacher may turn the pages to focus the reading or may ask a student to turn the pages. A pointer (or small cane to represent a staff) may be used to direct the flow of the reading and encourage students to read with phrasing and fluency.

During
The main rereading task for Day 3 is to go through the book, having students focus on the pictures and on making text-to-text connections, reminding themselves of familiar nursery rhymes (e.g., the phrase “she looked down the well” on page 9 will remind students of “Jack and Jill”).

After
This session finishes with a rereading of the complete book.

Day 4

Before
The teacher encourages students to remember the places where Bo Peep looked for her sheep.

During
The class rereads the book. Returning to the beginning of the book, the teacher points out that on each page a different word is bolded in the phrase, “Where are my sheep?” The teacher talks to students about how their voices should change when reading the bolded words. They practise reading the phrase on each page, so that by page 14 they are reading the whole phrase in a loud voice.

After
The book is reread in its entirety with the appropriate emphasis. The teacher makes note of those students who are now reading along and those who are confused or who are having difficulty with the repetitive pattern.

Day 5

Before
The teacher leads the class in a discussion about the places Bo Peep looked for her sheep and other places the sheep may have hidden. The teacher tells students that they will each be creating a page for a class book on Little Bo Peep, and that they need to indicate through their pictures and their captions or labels the places where Bo Peep looked so that other readers will understand the story.
During
Each student is given a large sheet of paper to create his or her own page. (Students may be asked to form small groups and to complete their pages, one group at a time, at the visual arts centre, while the other students engage in different activities. Organized this way, the task will take a few days for all students to complete.) Students can create their pages using markers, construction paper, wallpaper samples, fabric, crayons, etc., from the visual arts area. Specific students may be asked to print the title page or the introductory pages for the class book. The teacher walks around the classroom and observes the individual students, providing support as required. These samples of individual students’ work will be used by the teacher as part of his or her ongoing assessment of students (see Chapter 12: Assessment).

After
When the class book is completed, students celebrate their learning by reading their own contributions and then sharing the book in its entirety with interested adults and other classes in the school.

OVERVIEW OF THE TEXT: This poem is told from the point of view of a young boy who is watching two drops of rain slide down a windowpane. He imagines the two raindrops are racing to reach the bottom of the glass.

CONTEXT: Through the daily reading of poetry, students have a repertoire of familiar poems that they enjoy hearing and chanting. Although the students have had many “oral experiences” with respect to this poem (e.g., may have heard it read several times, may have chanted or recited it), this will be the first time they have seen the text.

PURPOSE: Students will apply what they know about print and about word-solving strategies. They will be introduced to the way readers use imagery as a comprehension strategy to read between the lines and beyond the text.

The lesson has been designed to engage students in problem-solving strategies and to develop in them an understanding that reading is a meaning-making process. Therefore, for the first read, the children will be invited to read the text silently as the teacher reads it aloud and guides the reading by pointing to phrases in each line.

TIME FRAME
• 4 days

MATERIALS
• two versions of the poem written on chart paper, one to be used for class reading and the other to be cut up into stanzas
• markers
• chart paper
• a large T-chart
• a pointer
• paper for drawing story sequences

ADAPTATION AND EXTENSION OPPORTUNITIES
• Most of the questions are open-ended to allow a diversity of responses from students with a variety of ability levels. Whole-class, think/pair/share, and individual-response activities will allow individual students to participate to the best of their abilities.
• The word-concept activity on Day 3 allows all students to participate. For the more basic concepts, the more fluent readers will receive a review and others will be challenged. For the more challenging concepts, only the more capable students will answer, but the experience and exposure will prepare other students for future work in this area.
ONTARIO CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

Students will:

Reading
• read a variety of simple written materials for different purposes;
• express clear responses to written materials, relating the ideas in them (thoughts, feelings, experiences) to their own knowledge and experience;
• understand the vocabulary and language structures appropriate for these grade levels;
• reread all or parts of a written piece to clarify their understanding of its meaning;
• express their thoughts and feelings about a story;
• use phonics as an aid in learning new words;

Oral and Visual Communication
• listen and react to stories and recount personal experiences.

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The teacher observes and notes:
• the quality and focus of students' responses;
• students' ability to read familiar passages, applying cueing systems in an integrated way;
• students' ability to express their understanding of the text.

REFLECTIONS FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHER

Students:
• What strategies helped me read this poem?
• What words and phrases helped me create pictures of the poem in my mind?

Teacher:
• How did students respond to questions about the text?
• What patterns were observed? What went well? What needs improvement?

Note: The teacher's responses to these questions should be recorded with other assessment data for these students.

PROCEDURE

Day 1

Before
The teacher:
• posts the chart paper with the poem written on it in the classroom;
• refrains from giving clues or prompts, such as the title;
• quietly acknowledges identification of the poem by a student or students and asks the others what they think and why they think the poem is "Waiting at the Window";
• establishes that the purpose of the shared reading activity is to find out if the words on the chart paper match the poem the students know.
During

The teacher:
- invites students to read along as he or she reads aloud in a natural tone and at a natural pace, pointing to phrases and chunks of words with a sweeping motion to guide the reading;
- asks the students to share what they learned during the reading (e.g., their ideas about the poem, words or phrases recognized, words repeated) and to identify words or phrases on the chart;
- asks students to discuss the main idea of the poem and to find words or phrases in the text that support their answers.

After

The teacher:
- has students think/pair/share their ideas;
- discusses and records two or three ideas on a T-chart with columns labelled “What We Think” and “What We Learned/Know”.

Day 2

Before

The teacher:
- reads the ideas recorded in the “What We Think” and “What We Learned/Know” columns of the T-chart;
- sets the purpose of rereading the poem as learning more about John and James.

During

The teacher:
- invites students to join in reading the poem out loud;
- asks, “What do you know about John and James?” and “What are they doing in the poem?”, and adds the responses to the T-chart;
- introduces the concept of visual imagery, explaining that effective readers often see pictures in their minds as they read;
- invites students to close their eyes as the poem is read to them;
- asks, “What did you see in your mind as the poem was read?”;
- invites students to share details of their images, asking them to point to the part of the poem that caused them to think of that image.

After

The teacher:
- has students work with partners or in triads to create drawings that show the story sequence (the progress of John and James down the window-pane);
- asks students to share their drawings (e.g., has one pair or triad share their drawings with another pair or triad).
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Sample Story Sequence for “Waiting at the Window”

Day 3
Before
The teacher:
• selects appropriate teaching points based on assessment data. Some choices are outlined below. (See Chapter 9: Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, and Word Study.);
• reviews with students the concept of a word, letter-sound associations, recognition of high-frequency words, and the ing ending;
• sets the purpose of the rereading as finding out more about the words in the poem.

During
The teacher:
• asks the class to reread the poem together;
To review the concept of a word, the teacher:
• asks, “Who can find a word they know in the poem?” and then invites students to come to the chart one at a time, frame the word with their hands, and read the word.

To review letter-sound association, the teacher:
• asks, “Who can find two words that begin with the same sound?” and then invites students to come to the chart one at a time, frame two words, and read them;
• asks, “Who can find two words that end with the same sound?” and repeats the steps above (e.g., if the words John, on, and rain are chosen, the teacher comments that these three words end with the sound /n/. The teacher identifies the letter n as the letter that corresponds to that sound.);
• asks students to listen for the sound of the letter (e.g., /n/) at the end of the words as they say each pair of words aloud.

Note: Students are learning to listen for the sounds at the beginning and the ending of words, and are starting to develop the ability to recognize letter-sound associations independently.

To review recognition of high-frequency words, the teacher:
• asks, “Who can find the word is?” and then invites a student to find the word in the chart, frame it with his or her hands, and say it aloud (In this poem, other high-frequency words that could be selected are I, has, and to.);
• asks, “Who has a word they’d like to read?” and then invites two or three students to select a word and read it aloud.

Note: The above activities take only a few minutes and can become part of most shared reading experiences.

To review the -ing ending, the teacher:
• asks students to find the word waiting in the poem, writes the word on a chart, and points out its ing ending;
• asks students to find other ing words in the poem, lists these words, reads the list, underlining the ending of each word, and then has students read the list;
• asks students to suggest other ing words, not found in the poem, and repeats the above steps;
• has students work with a partner to create their own list of ing words by finding them in books they are reading or on classroom charts.

After reading
The teacher:
• rereads the poem with students, reminding them to be aware of the word-solving strategies they have just reviewed.
Day 4

Before
The teacher:
• prepares for a problem-solving activity by covering up the chart-paper copy of the poem that the class has been using;
• takes the second chart-paper copy of the poem (see "Materials"), cuts it up into the thirteen stanzas of the poem, and scatters the stanzas on the floor in the meeting area before inviting the students into the area.

During
The teacher:
• invites students to put the poem together;
• may guide students by asking, "Which stanza (verse, section) comes first?" and "How do you know?";
• has the class read the first stanza together, and places it in a pocket chart;
• asks, "What are you looking for in the next stanza?" and then has the class recite the second stanza, exercising patience and giving students time to find it;
• asks, once it has been found, "How do you know this fits here?"
• repeats the process for the rest of the poem, guiding students as needed.

After
The teacher:
• has students form pairs or triads, and provides each group with a stanza of the poem to read aloud;
• uncovers the complete chart-paper copy of the poem and has the class read the whole poem together.
Sample Shared Reading Lesson 3: Grade 2


**OVERVIEW OF THE TEXT:** This factual text outlines the characteristics of each region on a mountainside. The regions have different temperatures, plants, and wildlife.

**CONTEXT:** Factual texts have been read to students on several occasions. They have participated in other shared readings of factual texts and are aware of the differences between factual and fictional texts.

**PURPOSE:** This text provides students with an opportunity to apply and reinforce their knowledge of text features and to learn how to locate information in a text.

This lesson encourages students to make predictions and ask questions about the content. They will learn to draw on information from the title, cover, table of contents, and illustrations. They will use a graphic organizer to clarify their thinking and to understand how information in a text is organized.

**TIME FRAME**
- 5 days
- 20-minute lessons

**MATERIALS**
- big-book version of the text
- individual small copies of the text
- sticky notes
- chart paper
- markers
- an information grid for each student (see page 5.30)
- a large sheet of craft paper for every two to three students
- word cards
- glue

**ADAPTATION AND EXTENSION OPPORTUNITIES**
- The activities designed to generate predictions and questions are open-ended to allow for a range of responses from students with a variety of ability levels. Activities such as rereading the prediction and question charts and modifying predictions will provide students with additional time to think and consolidate their understanding.
- Reorganizing the same information into a graphic organizer, sorting the characteristics of different regions on the mountainside, and labelling a mountain diagram will help students clarify their thinking.
- The use of teacher/student-generated texts could enhance student understanding of the published text.
- Rereading the text and working with small chunks of the text each day will help students deepen their understanding of the content.
• Structuring whole-class and partner work will encourage the full participation of all students.
• The lessons could be extended by explaining compound words, skimming the text with students to identify the compound words, and making a list with students of the compound words and their two separate parts.

ONTARIO CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

Students will:

Reading
• express clear responses to written materials, relating the ideas in them (thoughts, feelings, experiences) to their own knowledge and experience;
• read a variety of simple written materials for different purposes;
• restate information in a short non-fiction text in their own words;
• identify characteristics of different forms of written materials;

Oral and Visual Communications
• talk about information and ideas in non-fiction materials, and relate them to personal experience.

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The teacher observes and notes students' ability to:
• make predictions and provide supporting details for their predictions;
• reflect on information provided in texts and change their predictions when necessary on the basis of that information;
• identify text features and the functions of these features;
• restate information learned from a text.

REFLECTIONS FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHER

Students:
• In a response journal, list what you already knew about mountains, what you learned about mountains from this text, and what you would still like to know.
• In a learning log, list the new text features you encountered in this book.

Teacher:
• What skills and strategies did students learn? How well did they apply these skills and strategies?
• How did the instructional strategies used enable student learning? What improvements can be made? What next steps should be planned?
• Was the text selection appropriate for the purpose?

Note: The teacher's responses to these questions should be recorded with other assessment data for these students.
PROCEDURE

Day 1

Before

The teacher:

• conceals the front cover of the book by covering it with sticky notes;
• tells students that a book cover gives them lots of information, that today he or she will show them the cover a little at a time, and that they are to look for clues that will help them know what the book is about;
• reveals one small section of the cover at a time, leaving the title area for last;
• encourages students to predict what the book is about from what they see and to modify their predictions as they see more of the picture;
• encourages students to further modify their predictions about the book’s content by revealing the words “the Mountain” first, then “Going Up”, and finally “National Geographic”;
• records the predictions on a chart.

During

The teacher:

• reads the title page;
• asks students to check the predictions on the chart;
• reads the table of contents and asks students to check their predictions again;
• asks students to describe the purpose of the contents page;
• turns to the glossary on page 24, reads the list of words, and asks students to discuss why these words were selected to be placed in this section;
• turns to page 3 and explains that this introduction page gives general information about the text;
• reads and discusses the information found on the introduction page;
• asks students to use the table of contents to select the topic they would like to read about;
• asks students to generate one or two questions about the selected section and records their questions on a chart;
• turns to the selected section, comments on the illustration, section title, and sidebar illustration;
• comments on the significance of specific text features;
• reads the text, pointing to phrases and chunks of words as he or she models the reading process, inviting students to join in to the extent that they are comfortable doing so;
• if the section has labels, discusses the purpose of the labels.

After

The teacher:

• has students read the questions written on the chart and discuss whether their questions were answered.
Day 2

Before
The teacher:
• reviews the prediction chart created on Day 1 with students and asks them to add to, eliminate, or modify their predictions where necessary, discussing the reason for the changes.

During
The teacher:
• reviews the table of contents with students, asking them to select the topic they would like to read;
• asks students to generate questions about the section and records the questions on the chart begun on Day 1;
• turns to the section and proceeds as on Day 1;
• repeats the same procedure with two or three other sections.

After
The teacher:
• has students read their questions and discuss whether their questions were answered.

Day 3

Before
The teacher:
• asks students to silently reread the prediction and to add to, eliminate, or modify their predictions where necessary, discussing the reasons for these changes;
• completes the reading of any section not read on the previous days, repeating the procedure outlined on Day 1;
• sets the purpose of today’s lesson as finding out how the information contained in the text and in the illustrations helps the reader.

During
The teacher:
• invites students to join in reading a pre-selected section of the text;
• asks students what information they learned;
• asks questions such as “Where is the base of the mountain?” “Where is that information contained?” “In the text?” “In the photo?” “Somewhere else?”, and explains that some information comes from photos, some from text, some from both, and some from inside our heads;
• discusses how the information in the photos matches the information in the text;
• asks students to summarize the information in this section (e.g., location, temperature, plants, animals).
After
The teacher:
• discusses the fact that the same type of information was found in each section;
• introduces the following grid as a graphic organizer and has students fill in a few items (to be completed on Day 4).

**Going Up the Mountain**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mountain Section</th>
<th>Where on the mountain? (location)</th>
<th>How warm/ cold? (weather)</th>
<th>What grows there? (plants)</th>
<th>What animals live there?</th>
<th>What birds live there?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Base of the mountain</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain forest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above the timberline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above the snowline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Day 4**

Before
The teacher:
• sets the purpose of today’s lesson as completing the information on the graphic organizer;

During
The teacher:
• reads the text, section by section, with students and asks them to review and complete the graphic organizer.

After
The teacher:
• invites students to review the information found in the glossary;
• discusses with students where they have seen other glossaries;
• discusses with students the purpose of a glossary.
Day 5

Before
The teacher:
• invites students to be “text critics”: to look at the layout and text features of each page and to think about the author’s purpose in choosing each text feature and about the kind of information each feature provides.

During
The teacher:
• reviews the entire text with students, examining specific features and their purpose, as described in the following points:
  – has students examine the cover and discuss the information it provides;
  – turns to the title page and asks why the author has used a photo of the top of the mountain on this page and whether it is one mountain;
  – turns to pages 4–5, points out the sidebar, and asks why a section of it is framed in bright green and why the chapter heading is bright green;
  – turns to page 6 and asks why labels are used, why there is a green circle around the rabbit, and what the effect of the circle around the rabbit is;
  – continues discussing the layout and the use of text features and colour on each page.

After
The teacher:
• has the class work in pairs, with each pair drawing an outline of the mountain on craft paper, labelling its different regions, and colouring the different regions different colours;
• asks students to think about what they have learned about each region, record the information on word cards, and glue the cards in the appropriate region on their pictures of the mountain, suggesting that the graphic organizer they began on Day 3 will help them;
• asks the partners to share, compare, and discuss their diagram with another twosome.
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"In guided reading, the teacher helps the children to use strategies they already know so that they are able to read an unfamiliar text independently with success."

(Hornsby, 2000, p. 30)

In guided reading, the teacher supports a small group of students as they talk, read, and think their way through a carefully selected text, using, practising, and consolidating effective reading strategies.

Guided reading groups usually consist of four to six students who have been taught the same reading strategies (during earlier read-aloud and shared reading lessons) and who are able to read texts of a similar level with support. During a guided reading lesson, the teacher helps students consolidate the strategies they have learned, provides opportunities for students to apply the strategies as they read, supports them in applying the strategies correctly, and teaches the strategies again where necessary.

“... Guided reading is a way to help children understand how reading works and learn techniques to figure out words and comprehend texts that are just a little too challenging for them to read without support.”

(Taberski, 2000, p. 96)
Guided Reading in Kindergarten

Because guided reading involves students reading a text with a minimal amount of teacher support, a decision about whether to use guided reading in Kindergarten should be based on the learning behaviours, strengths, and needs of individual students. When students are able to demonstrate an understanding of print concepts and knowledge of letters and sounds and to recognize some sight words, they are ready to participate in guided reading groups. Therefore, guided reading may not be appropriate for emergent readers, who are still developing these skills. (Kindergarten teachers may wish to read the whole of this chapter before making this determination.)

Emergent readers require many shared reading opportunities where they can learn reading strategies in context. Guided reading lessons, when taught in Kindergarten, should be shorter in duration than those taught in later primary grades. They could be conducted on a one-to-one basis or with two or, at most, three students during independent reading time.

The Teacher’s Role in Guided Reading

In the course of the guided reading lesson, the teacher monitors students’ use of reading strategies and uses questions and prompts to encourage students to work out difficult words and to obtain meaning from unfamiliar text. Guided reading provides a way for teachers to:

- support readers in learning to think as they read;
- support students as they apply recently learned skills and strategies in manageable increments;
- support students as they consolidate previously learned skills;
- support students who are experiencing difficulty in word solving;
- observe students’ reading behaviours;
- identify students’ strengths and areas of difficulty in order to better plan the direction of future instruction.

“It is important that once guided reading becomes a part of the Kindergarten day for some children, shared reading does not stop…. In fact, shared reading needs to continue through the grades for all children.”

(Saunders-Smith, 2002, p. 87)

“Guided repeated oral reading and repeated reading provide students with practice that substantially improves word recognition, fluency, and – to a lesser extent – reading comprehension. They appear to do so, however, in the context of an overall reading program, not as standalone interventions.”

(National Reading Panel, 2000, p. 3.20)
Guided reading provides the teacher with an opportunity to work within what Vygotsky (1978) refers to as the child’s zone of proximal development. [Vygotsky’s theory is discussed in Chapter 2: Overview of Effective Instruction.] During guided reading, students are introduced to a book that contains just enough challenges that they cannot quite read it independently, but they are able to read it successfully with the support given them by the teacher. The book itself must also be supportive, containing many features with which the student is already familiar (e.g., high-frequency words, a familiar topic, a distinct pattern). In fact, the success of a guided reading lesson depends in large part on the use of books that are carefully selected to match each student’s instructional level and needs. (Resources for guided reading are discussed in more detail later in this chapter.)

**The Benefits of Guided Reading**

Guided reading challenges readers to successfully interpret and comprehend new text and provides a bridge to independent reading. It gives students opportunities to:

- practise, refine, and consolidate previously taught reading strategies;
- apply their growing knowledge of conventions of print;
- apply their knowledge of letter-sound relationships to authentic texts;
- extend the development of their vocabulary;
- use the comprehension strategies they have learned (see Chapter: 8 Reading Comprehension, for a full discussion of comprehension strategies);
- develop independence and confidence in reading;
- develop higher-order thinking skills;
- make connections between their prior knowledge and information/events in the text;
- read a wide variety of texts, both factual and fictional;
- problem-solve while reading for meaning.

**“Effective Reading” Versus “Accurate Reading”**

Guided reading emphasizes effective reading, which has frequently been confused with accurate reading.

Accuracy relates to the ability to recognize words, but it is only one aspect of effective reading. The foundation of effective reading is comprehension, an interactive process of constructing meaning. The following example illustrates the difference between accuracy and comprehension – and why both are critical for effective reading.
The sentence in the text is:
Little Red Riding Hood ran to the house, opened the door, and peeked in.

Student One reads:
Little Red Riding Hood ran to the horse, opened the door, and peeked in.

Student Two reads:
Little Red Riding Hood ran to the cabin, opened the door, and peeked in.

Student One’s response indicates some accuracy in word recognition – only the letter r in the word horse differs from the word printed in the text. However, this response doesn’t make sense in the context of the sentence. It shows that the student is not focusing on meaning or does not understand what he or she is reading. Student Two’s response is not accurate, in that the letters in the word cabin do not resemble the letters in the word house, but the word cabin does make sense in the context of the sentence. Student Two is constructing meaning and, therefore, demonstrating a critical aspect of effective reading – comprehension. However, neither student is reading effectively.

It is important for the teacher to be able to recognize and assess the different indicators of a student’s effectiveness in reading – accuracy, fluency, and evidence of comprehension, such as the ability to make predictions and connections.

**Guided Reading Versus Shared Reading**

There are four important distinctions between shared reading and guided reading, as outlined in the following chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shared Reading</th>
<th>Guided Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The teacher carefully chooses a text that has many reading challenges, but ones that the group is ready to master.</td>
<td>• The teacher carefully chooses a text that has many familiar reading supports and only a few challenges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The text is considered “difficult” (i.e., one that students would likely read with less than 90 per cent accuracy on their own), but one that can be read successfully with support from the teacher.</td>
<td>• The text is at the students’ instructional level (i.e., one that can usually be read by students in a guided reading group with 90–95 per cent accuracy). (Slight variations may occur with different assessment tools – PM Benchmarks, Developmental Reading Assessment, etc.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Focus on the Three Cueing Systems

As noted earlier, guided reading allows students, with support from the teacher, to review, consolidate, and demonstrate their ability to use a repertoire of reading strategies. Prominent among these strategies are the three cueing systems.

Three Cueing Systems

These three cueing systems are important sources of information that can be categorized as follows:

- **Semantic** or meaning cues come from the student’s own experiences. Children who have heard many stories read to them come to understand that reading makes sense. When this knowledge is brought to the independent reading of a book, it allows students to predict words and to self-correct when they misread a word, replacing one that does not make sense with one that does. Books for emergent and early readers are constructed so that readers can use the pictures, which are **Pictures and other illustrations are considered semantic or meaning cues because they help the reader predict the content of the text.**

- **Syntactic** Does this sound right?

- **Graphophonic** Does this look right?

“Beginning readers benefit from an awareness of a wide range of sources of information and reading strategies that they might use to make sense of print. Reading instruction that focuses exclusively on only one of the cueing systems disadvantages children by restricting the information they have access to in their reading.”

(Peterson, 2002, p. 9)
another kind of semantic cue, to help them predict the content or story line of the text and the vocabulary that will be found in the text. What they read should match their predictions. Students must learn to ask themselves, for example, “Does this make sense?”

- **Syntactic** or **structural cues** come from the student’s knowledge of correct oral language structures. Young readers learn that written text is “talk written down”; they learn to predict text, including word order, prepositions, connecting words, and so on. Knowledge of oral language structures helps readers predict text and determine when they have misread. Students must learn to ask themselves, for example, “Does this sound right?”

- **Graphophonic** or **visual cues** come from the student’s developing knowledge of letter-sound relationships and of how letters are formed into words. As children develop an understanding of letter-sound relationships, they are able to look at words and compare what they think the word may be to the letters that make up that word. Students must learn to ask themselves, for example, “Does this look right?”

 Fluent readers use all three cueing systems to read texts, combining them to predict, to confirm, and to cross-check when they are uncertain. An over-reliance on any one system creates problems for readers. Analysis of a running record will help the teacher ascertain which cueing systems a student is using consistently and which strategies need to be taught or reinforced. Readers can be encouraged to use one cueing system to cross-check what they have read using another cueing system; for example, after sounding out a word, they can ask themselves whether it makes sense in the context of the story they are reading. If they have used their knowledge of the topic to predict and read a word, they can check the letters to see if the letters match those they hear in the spoken word. It is the ability to combine the cueing systems that creates a strong and fluent reader who can decode and comprehend a text.

 Teachers can try the following questions and prompts to help students use and eventually internalize their use of the three cueing systems.
Sample Questions and Prompts to Promote Students' Use of the Three Cueing Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semantic</th>
<th>Syntactic</th>
<th>Graphophonic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What do we know about this topic already?</td>
<td>• When I covered up this word in the text, how did you know what word would be appropriate?</td>
<td>• What were the rhyming words in this story?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What do we need to know?</td>
<td>• When I was reading and left out a word, how did you know what word was in the text?</td>
<td>• What word do you see within that bigger word? (Prompt students to look for the root word in a word with a prefix or suffix, or for the two words that make up a compound word.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What would help us understand this text?</td>
<td>• Have you heard that phrase/language (e.g., Once upon a time ...) before?</td>
<td>• What is the first letter (or last letter) of the word?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Why are we reading this book?</td>
<td></td>
<td>• What sound does that letter (or combination of letters) make?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What other books have we read on this topic?</td>
<td></td>
<td>• What other words start with that letter and would fit into this sentence?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What is going to happen next? What predictions can you make about this text?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What could have happened before this story? What could happen after?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Show where in the text it says that. Show where the author indicated that.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Guided Reading Groups

Children are grouped for guided reading based on their instructional level and/or the specific learning goals set for them, but the composition of a guided reading group will change as students' needs change. Each group is fluid and dynamic. Change is based on the teacher's observations and assessments of individual students.

Early in the year, teachers complete a variety of diagnostic assessments, including running records, assessments of students' knowledge of sound/symbol relations, and attitude and interest surveys, so that students can be grouped according to their needs and interests. Guided reading begins, therefore, only after the teacher has gathered and analysed this assessment data.

In the course of the school year, guided reading groups change as individual needs within the group change. The teacher's decisions related to group composition are based on ongoing assessments.
Group size depends on the number of children who need to spend time working on a particular skill or text. Too large a group makes it difficult to meet the specific needs of individual students. Guided reading could take the form of a one-to-one session with the teacher, particularly, as noted earlier, with students who are ready for guided reading in Kindergarten.

**Guided Reading Groups Versus Traditional Reading Groups**

In guided reading, students in the group read aloud but quietly. They read as individuals (not in unison), but all students in the group read at the same time. While students are reading, the teacher monitors individual progress and lends support as needed.

Guided reading groups are not the same as traditional reading groups. In traditional reading groups, children take turns reading the text aloud, round-robin style. This approach offers limited opportunities for instruction or learning. It can also be stressful, particularly for students who are experiencing reading difficulties. In addition, students who have not yet had a turn anticipate the passage they are going to read and so do not attend to the reading of others. Those who have completed their turn tend to think about their performance rather than listen to others. Traditional reading groups support neither comprehension nor fluency. Current research on effective reading instruction strongly favours the guided reading approach over the traditional one.

The following chart compares the two approaches.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In guided reading groups:</th>
<th>In traditional reading groups:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Students are grouped according to their specific instructional needs, which have been determined from running records and other assessment data.</td>
<td>• Students are usually grouped according to general reading ability instead of specific instructional needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The text is carefully chosen to match the specific skills or abilities that need to be addressed. Long texts are broken down into short sections to target specific skills.</td>
<td>• Students progress through a predetermined selection, collection, or sequence of texts. The material does not generally target specific skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The teacher has scaffolded specific reading strategies prior to the guided reading lesson (by modelling them in read-alouds and reinforcing them in shared reading lessons).</td>
<td>• Because the text has not been selected for the specific needs of a small group, relevant, necessary skills may not have been modelled or taught prior to the reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The teacher introduces the text; students then read it aloud but quietly as they practise previously learned skills.</td>
<td>• Students take turns reading the text aloud (one line, one paragraph, or one page at a time). Because students take turns, the group as a whole reads less text than a guided reading group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In guided reading groups:

- The setting is comfortable and secure, supporting the development of skills.
- Students interact with the text as they read the whole text or a passage.
- Problem-solving and higher-order thinking skills are enhanced as students think about their own reading.
- The grouping is flexible, changing as students master skills or demonstrate a need for more assistance.
- Assessment is based on observation of individual students and on evidence gathered from regular, ongoing assessments using tools such as running records.

In traditional reading groups:

- Students who are experiencing difficulty with reading tend to find the process stressful. In addition, students focus on their own performance, and therefore tend not to listen to the reading of others.
- The focus is on the mechanics of reading. The teacher will generally “tell the word” when a student experiences difficulty, rather than support the student’s attempts to problem-solve by applying learned reading strategies.
- Skills are developed through post-reading activities, often using a worksheet format, a process that does not support the scaffolding of comprehension and fluency skills.
- The membership of the group remains static.
- Assessment is based primarily on observation of individual students reading preselected materials. It generally does not involve regular, ongoing assessments using tools such as running records.

Resources for Guided Reading

One of the most important factors in the success of a guided reading session is the selection of appropriate texts for students in the guided reading group.

Some texts for early readers, such as basal readers and texts based on phonemic elements, are not appropriate for guided reading, for the following reasons:

- Basal readers use the same words over and over, adding a few new words to create slightly more difficult texts. Because vocabulary is emphasized over meaning, basal readers have been criticized for resulting in texts in which language is not natural, making it difficult for readers to use their knowledge of sentence structure (syntactical cues) and their predictions about the text to help them read.
- Books for beginning readers that are based on phonemic elements make use of onset-and-rime patterns (see glossary), which can be helpful for early readers. However, they have been criticized for creating text that has little meaning (e.g., *Dan the man can fan. Can Dan fan?*). If the text lacks meaning, it will fail to capture students’ interest and it will not promote a lifelong love of reading.
To develop good reading skills and a love of reading, students need to be exposed to real stories and other authentic texts on a variety of topics and in a variety of genres. They also need to apply their developing range of reading skills and strategies to increasingly difficult texts.

**Level of Text Difficulty**

Levels of text difficulty can be defined by the degree of accuracy with which a student can read and understand the text (see the box on this page).

A “difficult” text is one that would be read with less than 90 per cent accuracy – that is, the student would make more than 10 errors in reading 100 words. An appropriate text for guided reading, one that is within the student’s zone of proximal development, is an “instructional” text – one that can be read with approximately 90–95 per cent accuracy. For a group of students, the teacher should aim for a text at the higher end of that range – that is, one that can be read with 92–96 per cent accuracy. An easy or “independent”-level text is one that can be read at approximately 95–100 per cent accuracy.

To better understand relative text difficulty in guided reading instruction, teachers may wish to think of a book that they would read themselves. If errors were made on 7 of every 100 words read, the book would be very difficult to read fluently and to understand. Once comprehension breaks down, there is no point in continuing. The same text would be easier to understand if someone sat with the reader and explained some of the difficult vocabulary or helped the reader understand the context of the story and, therefore, anticipate some of the vocabulary. This book would then be in the reader’s zone of proximal development – the level at which a text can successfully be read with support. What could have been a difficult text is now much easier to read and understand.

Students require many reading opportunities within their zone of proximal development, knowing that the teacher is there to model, demonstrate, and offer support when the text becomes difficult.

**Supportive Features in Texts**

As readers, children make decisions when they choose to read a book. If they are reading for enjoyment, they may look for a book that is easy – one that they can read quite effortlessly, with few, if any, sections that are difficult to understand and with little unfamiliar vocabulary. Because the book contains many familiar aspects or “supports”, they are able to work through the difficult sections.
In a guided reading lesson, the teacher highlights these supports and reminds students to look for them in the text. The teacher also supplies the required background knowledge, and notes and explains in advance relevant text features, such as complex vocabulary or unfamiliar elements (e.g., subheadings). In providing this information, the teacher encourages students to stretch beyond their previous limitations and experiment with and apply newly learned strategies.

Books that are appropriate for young readers share common features. These common features become more sophisticated and the text becomes increasingly difficult as readers master a variety of reading strategies and are able to apply these strategies independently.

### Common Supportive Features in Texts for Young Readers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent readers</th>
<th>Early readers</th>
<th>Fluent readers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Texts appropriate for emergent readers have the following supportive features in common:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Texts appropriate for early readers have the following supportive features in common:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Fluent readers, who are encouraged to read a wider, more challenging range of texts, require supportive features to help them understand what they are reading. These supportive features include the following:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• repetitive text/sentence patterns for readers in the early stages, becoming less repetitive in texts for more experienced readers, with some words predictable from the pictures</td>
<td>• familiar situations, to which children can bring background knowledge</td>
<td>• the layout or organization of text on the page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• illustrations that carry a story</td>
<td>• repetitive sentence patterns</td>
<td>• “hooks” that attract the reader’s interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• language that is very similar to oral language</td>
<td>• extended use of high-frequency words</td>
<td>• detailed, labelled illustrations (e.g., of a process described in the text) in factual texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• use of high-frequency words</td>
<td>• an introduction to variety in syntax and sentence structure</td>
<td>• charts or graphs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• use of familiar situations</td>
<td>• illustrations that are integral to the text, but that may be placed on the page in varying ways</td>
<td>• dialogue that specifies which character is talking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• a consistent format, in which the print is clearly separated from the illustrations, the print is in a consistent position on the page, and the spaces between the words are obvious</td>
<td>• simple chart or graphs</td>
<td>• book and chapter leads that draw readers into the text as readers apply different strategies to understand the story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• a story line that is relevant to the reader</td>
<td>• a text format that gradually changes in complexity (e.g., more words/lines on the page, text placed on the page in varying ways)</td>
<td>• a table of contents and chapter titles that help readers to understand the text</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Texts selected for fluent readers should allow and encourage these readers to use the knowledge and skills they have acquired, for example:

- using and interpreting the three cueing systems appropriately and effectively to decode text;
  
  Fluent readers use all three cueing systems as cross-checks to enhance their comprehension of the text.

- using their prior knowledge to construct meaning;
  
  Fluent readers know that the text has to make sense. They use their own prior knowledge and information they may encounter in the text to make predictions about the text.

- using details in illustrations to construct meaning;
  
  Illustrations in texts for fluent readers are more detailed than those in texts for emergent and early readers. Some illustrations provide details that are not included in the text, but that are critical clues for full comprehension.

- using punctuation correctly to enhance meaning;

- using text features (e.g., index, glossary, table of contents) to build a better understanding of the story or of the information in the text;

- using visual text features (e.g., bold type, italics) to interpret and comprehend texts;
  
  Features such as bold type help students recognize key words and put the emphasis in the correct place, which enhances fluency.

- applying strategic comprehension skills;
  
  Good readers are able to make connections between the story or information they are reading and their own lives, other texts they have read, and general knowledge they have acquired. They are able to use these connections to make inferences, synthesize their knowledge, and draw conclusions.

- self-monitoring their reading;
  
  Fluent readers are able to listen to their own reading and make changes as necessary when their interpretation of words or meaning does not seem to be correct. They are able to self-correct as they read, both vocally and silently (before reading a word or phrase aloud).

- using analogies to decode unfamiliar words;
  
  Fluent readers use their knowledge of known words (e.g., and) to read a new word (e.g., stand), and they use their knowledge of two words (what and by) to read a new word (e.g., why).

- reading for a variety of purposes.
  
  Fluent readers choose to read independently to enjoy texts, to learn from texts, to gather ideas for their writing, etc.

It is important to remember that although students need time daily to read texts that are easy, they should not only be reading books that are at their level of reading comfort. They need to be exposed throughout their day to a range of texts that include a variety of supports for different purposes.

“. . . Readers benefit from teaching that helps them understand how to identify and understand the features of texts that are different or more sophisticated than those they are already familiar with.”

(Szymusiak and Sibberson, 2001, p. 17)
Levelled Texts

Levelled texts are particularly valuable for guided reading. Levelled texts are books for developing readers that have been categorized along a continuum of complexity (typically represented by a lettering or numbering system). The level of a book is determined on the basis of its characteristics and text features.

A common levelling system for classroom teachers was developed by Irene C. Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell and first published in their book *Guided Reading: Good First Teaching for All Children* (1996). Since then, other detailed lists of levelled books have become available. The purpose of these lists is to provide teachers with titles of trade books that are readily available. Once the level of a book has been established, the teacher can better match the book to students’ reading abilities.

Because the success of a guided reading session depends so much on the selection of a text that has a blend of supportive features and challenges for the reader, teachers should develop a solid understanding of the criteria that are applied to determine different levels of books and the text features that fulfil these criteria. This understanding will help teachers better match readers and texts.

Teachers may wish to establish the level of many books in the classroom so that students can be directed to texts that are appropriate for them. The appropriate level for each student depends on the student’s current reading strategies and how the student applies these strategies independently (for independent reading) or with the support of the teacher (for guided reading).

Single copies of levelled books are suitable for independent reading, but multiple copies (four to six) of books intended for use in guided reading should be collected to make guided reading sets.

It is most efficient for teachers in a school to pool their resources and organize a book room, so that a wide range of texts is available for loan when needed for small groups or for individual students.
Organizing Levelled Materials for Guided Reading

Staff in the primary division of a school make numerous decisions about the texts that students will be reading in guided and independent situations. Sorting texts by level can facilitate those decisions. Many books that already exist on classroom shelves, in cupboards, or in book bins can be sorted to maximize their use. Often teachers (sometimes joined by parent volunteers) hold what they call a “levelling party”, where stacks of books are sorted.

The following steps will help schools sort books appropriately and put together levelled sets and browsing boxes:

- Use the levelling system provided by the publisher as a guide. (Publishers use a variety of levelling systems, but most can provide the school or school board with the equivalent Fountas and Pinell ranking for sets of books the school or board has purchased.) Sort sets of books by title and by level.

- Make guided reading sets by finding texts that exist in four to six copies and placing all copies of each title in a sealed bag or other container.

- Texts that exist in only a few copies may be assigned to browsing boxes for independent reading.

- For books that are not part of a series, make two piles – books that are hard to read and books that are easy to read. Then sort each of these piles into two piles – books that are hard to read and books that are easy to read. Follow this procedure a few times. Although some books in these piles may be out of place, the sorting process will have made it easier to find the appropriate level of text later, when it is needed.

- Collect multiple copies of the same book. Look the titles of these books up in either Irene C. Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell’s Matching Books to Readers: Using Leveled Books in Guided Reading (1999) or the same authors’ Guided Reading: Good First Teaching for All Children (1996) to try to locate the reading level. Mark these levels on the texts for future reference. Make guided reading bags for the books of which there are four to six copies, and put the rest of the books in browsing boxes for independent reading.

- For books that are not included in the two resources referred to above, it is suggested that the teacher find very similar books that have been levelled and carefully compare the difficulty of the texts before assigning a level.

- Make a staff decision about where to place the collection of books. It is suggested that a central storage area be allocated and an easy and functional method determined for signing out the books. Classroom teachers will temporarily need sets of books for guided reading groups, copies of books for students to read independently that can be placed in a levelled browsing box, and copies of books that are sorted by genre, by author, and by topic.
Readers at various phases or stages of reading development require texts that are appropriate to their reading skills and strategies. For this reason, books used in guided reading lessons are not usually made available to students for independent reading until they have been introduced by the teacher in a guided reading lesson and placed in the students' browsing boxes.

A **browsing box** is a container (file holder, plastic basket, resealable bag, empty cereal box) that holds a variety of texts to be read independently by an individual student or by members of a guided reading group. The browsing box holds multiple copies of books read during group sessions, familiar shared-reading books, books that are of particular interest to the students in the group, and books that are easy for the individual student or members of the group to read so that they can practise the strategies they have been taught. The purpose of the browsing box is to make these books easily available so that they will be read frequently.
Other Factors to Consider

In addition to the reading level, other factors should be considered when selecting appropriate texts for individual students' instructional levels and for the classroom collection. Fountas and Pinnell* suggest the following considerations:

• enjoyment, meaning, and connection to children's lives
  When students have opportunities to read about events and characters that are familiar to them, they are able to bring prior knowledge to the text. They are therefore better able to predict vocabulary, know when what they are reading makes sense, make connections between the text and their own lives, and enjoy reading. These criteria are critical in establishing a foundation for comprehension.

• multicultural representation
  Students should see themselves and their experiences, as well as the experiences of society at large, in texts. They should also be exposed to non-biased material that depicts many races and cultures.

• breadth
  The collection of books should include a variety of texts in many genres. Students need to learn how various texts work and how to access information presented in a range of formats.

• depth
  The collection should be comprehensive, including many texts at every level. This range allows the teacher to choose books that are of interest to individual students or small groups of students. Students can often read a more complex text when the topic is one that they wish to learn more about or that they find particularly interesting. They benefit from reading many books that help them solidify the concepts they are learning.

• links to curriculum expectations
  The book collection should include a selection of texts, factual and fictional, that relate to grade-level curriculum expectations for all subjects. Exposure to this material will help students further consolidate their learning about the various

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*From Guided Reading: Good First Teaching for All Children by Irene C. Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell, pp. 107–112. Copyright © 1996 by Irene C. Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell. Published by Heinemann, a division of Reed Elsevier, Inc., Portsmouth, NH.
Topics and events covered by the curriculum. (The features and benefits of factual and fictional texts are discussed in detail in Chapter 2: Overview of Effective Instruction.)

- Links across the collection
  Students can learn to make connections among texts easily when they are exposed to familiar characters or themes. Characters such as Mrs. Wishy-Washy or Nate the Great entice them into reading new texts about the same characters.

- Variety of genres
  Texts that are at an instructional or "just-right" level should cover a range of genres. Through exposure to both factual and fictional texts at an early age, students develop an appreciation for a variety of genres and understand the value of each genre. They also learn that they can choose texts that are interesting to them to read independently.

- Illustrations
  Texts should contain attractive, clear illustrations that help bring the text alive, so that students learn that information in the illustrations is often explicitly tied to an accurate understanding of the text. Illustrations are a powerful aid to reading comprehension for the beginning reader.

- Length
  The length of texts should vary, although for emergent readers texts should usually be easy and short. Students whose reading skills are developing should not be reading books that are all the same length (e.g., not all short books that can be read quickly nor all chapter books that can be read over time). The collection of texts at each reading level should include books in a variety of lengths.

- Format
  Format refers to the way the book is laid out – design, text type, illustrations, size, etc. In books for emergent readers, the text is placed on the page in a manner that enables the reader to track the print easily. At higher reading levels, the text may be set in various ways and in various places on the page, and the reader must be able to understand the order in which the words are to be read. By thoughtfully exposing students to a range of formats, the teacher presents them with opportunities to learn about different ways to read texts.

"The more connections that can be made to a specific word, the better it seems to be learned....Having students encounter vocabulary words often and in various ways can have a significant effect....A large portion of vocabulary items should be derived from content learning materials." (National Reading Panel, 2000, pp. 4.25)

Appropriate texts can be selected from:

- Cross-curricular informational texts, if suitable
- Book, topic, or author requests from students, if suitable
- Favourite poems, if suitable

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The following graphic summarizes the considerations involved in selecting appropriate texts for young readers.

### The Guided Reading Lesson

As with the other components of effective reading instruction, a guided reading lesson consists of three phases: before, during, and after. Each phase needs careful consideration. Understanding the responsibilities of both teacher and student during each phase is critical to determining the appropriate balance between the amount of support offered by the teacher and the amount of independence extended to the reader.

#### Before

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The teacher:</th>
<th>Students:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• selects an appropriate text – one that is supportive but that includes a few reading challenges;</td>
<td>• engage in a conversation about what they think the text will be about;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• refers to the teacher’s guide if one accompanies the book, for suggestions, but makes instructional decisions that are tailored to each group of students;</td>
<td>• think about and discuss the relevant knowledge and reading strategies they bring to the text (e.g., prior knowledge, word-solving strategies);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• prepares an introduction to the text that will help students approach it with some background knowledge and with an idea of some of the words that they will find in it (See Appendix 6-1 for a Sample Reading Lesson Planner for guided reading. Although the sample is for a Grade 3 lesson, it can be adapted for other grade levels.);</td>
<td>• think about and discuss the strategies that could make the text easier to read and understand;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• ask questions about the content of the text, based on the teacher’s introduction (These questions will give the teacher an opportunity to help students develop comprehension strategies and understand the purpose for reading.);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(continued)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Before (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The teacher:</th>
<th>Students:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>briefly introduces the story or information in the text, keeping in mind</td>
<td>express their expectations about the text and make predictions about the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the meaning, language, and visual information in the text and the</td>
<td>vocabulary that may be contained in the text;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge, experience, and skills of the readers;</td>
<td>take a picture walk (see glossary);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reviews one or two reading strategies that have already been taught and</td>
<td>make connections to stories or information contained in other texts and to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that can be applied to the text;</td>
<td>their own prior knowledge and experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leaves some information for students to discover through their reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e.g., students should be excited about reading to the end of a story to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>find out the conclusion);</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>provides explicit vocabulary instruction.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### During

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The teacher:</th>
<th>Students:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>listens in as students read the text/sections of the text;</td>
<td>read the text to themselves, quietly but aloud;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>observes the behaviours of each student and notes whether and how well</td>
<td>independently apply word-solving and comprehension strategies previously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the student is applying previously taught reading strategies;</td>
<td>taught;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acknowledges students’ attempts at independent problem solving;</td>
<td>request help in problem solving when they encounter difficulties;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assists students who are encountering difficulties (e.g., does not just</td>
<td>jot down their questions or comments (where appropriate) for discussion</td>
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<td>“give the word” but rather helps students by scaffolding their learning</td>
<td>after the reading.</td>
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<td>as needed, supporting their use of the strategies that have been taught,</td>
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<td>and encouraging them to apply these strategies independently);</td>
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<td>records observations of the strategies that individual students are using</td>
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<td>to help in future planning/next steps. (See Appendices 6-2 to 6-5 for</td>
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<tr>
<td>suggestions on how to set up a system for tracking student progress in</td>
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<tr>
<td>guided reading, including templates for anecdotal records and other</td>
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<td>tracking sheets. See also the example of a completed anecdotal record at</td>
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<td>the end of Sample Lesson 1 [p. 6.30].)</td>
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The teacher:

- engages students in a discussion about the content of the text first, thereby emphasizing the importance of comprehension;
- invites personal responses from students;
- revisits with students some of their individual points of confusion, guiding them in problem solving (e.g., says “Look at the picture of the frog” rather than “Look at the pictures”);
- redirects students to the text for one or two teaching points (e.g., discussing word-solving of new vocabulary, using picture cues for support);
- assesses students’ understanding of what they have read;
- may engage students in extending their understanding of the text through such activities as drama, writing, or more reading;
- encourages self-reflection (e.g., asks “What did you do well?” “What did you learn?”).

Students:

- talk about the story or the information in the text;
- check their predictions about the text and offer personal responses to the story or information;
- check their understanding of the text;
- share their independent problem-solving strategies with their peers;
- reread the story independently, quietly or to a partner;
- may engage in activities that involve extending their understanding of the text, such as creating a drama based on the text or writing about the text in their response journals (see “Activities for the Rest of the Class” on page 6.24 for suggestions);
- self-reflect (e.g., ask “What did I do well?” “What was hard for me?” “What did I learn?”).

The following charts – Models 1, 2, and 3 – suggest three possible ways teachers could structure guided reading lessons during a one-week period. In each case, students are divided into groups,* based on assessment data, as follows:

Group A: students who are experiencing significant reading difficulties related to specific concepts and skills

Group B: students who are experiencing some reading difficulties related to specific concepts and skills

Group C: students who are experiencing a general level of success in reading related to specific concepts and skills

Group D: students who are experiencing a high level of success related to specific concepts and skills, and who therefore require additional challenges or extensions (see “Running Records” in Chapter 12: Assessment)

In classes with a large number of students, it may be necessary to have up to five or six flexible reading groups (four to six students in each) at any given time.

*Note: The groups are labelled A–D for demonstration purposes only. A teacher would not name or label guided reading groups in the classroom.
While teachers are monitoring and supporting students in guided reading groups, they are also monitoring the rest of the class, which is engaged in predetermined literacy-based activities, and ensuring that students are on task. Suggestions for activities for the rest of the class follow model 3 below. Note that guided reading lessons generally follow one after the other during the literacy block, but in some cases it may be possible to split them up and conduct other activities in between.

**Model 1**

In model 1, the teacher sees three groups per day. The length of lessons will vary from grade to grade [e.g., in a Grade 1 setting, each group could be seen for approximately 15–20 minutes per day; in a Grade 3 setting, groups could be seen for up to 30 minutes, depending on student needs].

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Other activities / Monitoring rest of class

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Monitoring rest of class

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**Model 2**

In model 2, the teacher works with three groups and sees them for varying amounts of time throughout the week. Note that the teacher sees Group A more frequently, perhaps helping it work through a text that is longer and more complex than the group is used to.

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Monitoring rest of class

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Model 3

In model 3, the teacher blocks a long period for guided reading into the weekly timetable. The teacher works with all three guided reading groups for each of three days per week and confers with individual students about their independent reading the other two days. (Independent reading is the subject of the next chapter of this guide.)

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<td>B</td>
<td>small-group or individual reading conferences</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>small-group or individual reading conferences</td>
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<td>small-group or individual reading conferences</td>
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Activities for the Rest of the Class

While the teacher is working on guided reading with a small group or with individual students, it is important that the rest of the class be engaged in appropriate literacy activities that can be carried out without direct support from the teacher.

From the beginning of the school year, the teacher plans activities that help students learn to work independently. *The teacher ensures that routines are established before he or she begins working with individual students or groups, supervising and redirecting behaviour so that students are eventually able to work on their own quietly and productively.* The teacher notes successes, appropriate behaviours, and behaviours or routines that need to be taught again. Initially, the time allotted for independent activities is short. Gradually sessions lengthen, as students become better able to work without direct teacher assistance. When time is built into the end of a session for sharing experiences, questions, and new learning, the number of interruptions is reduced.
Routines can be set up to allow students to address situations such as the following:

- What do you do when you are finished?
- Where do you get new supplies?
- What do you do when someone is bothering you?
- Who can help you (e.g., a learning buddy, a volunteer)?
- What can help you (e.g., a chart, the word wall)?
- What do you do if you feel ill or require a washroom break?

Once students have a repertoire of activities that have been modelled and practised, they are able to work on their own. This situation could occur within a couple of weeks or not for several weeks, depending on the students’ previous experience with working on their own.

Choices for independent activities can be posted on a chart or listed on a tracking sheet that is accessible to students. Teachers may set up learning areas that provide opportunities for students to:

- revisit text by:
  - rereading guided reading books that have been placed in the browsing box;
  - carrying out a text reconstruction (see glossary);
- reinforce their understanding of high-frequency words encountered during the word study lesson and while reading the guided reading text by:
  - reading the room – that is, using a word wand to read print posted on charts and walls around the room;
  - making words with magnetic letters or with acetate letters projected from an overhead projector;
  - using word masks (see glossary) to locate words in other familiar texts (e.g., big books, charts);
  - recording specific words in personal dictionaries;
  - reconstructing sentences, poems, and other texts using a pocket chart (see glossary);
  - finding known words in a newspaper and highlighting them;
  - sorting a set of words in a variety of ways;
  - playing word games (e.g., Snap, Bingo, Lotto, Scrabble);

Tip for Teachers
Keep sticky notes handy and use them to record appropriate student actions/behaviours and actions/behaviours that raise concerns. Keep the sticky-note records on a clipboard or in a binder for later discussion with individual students.

Setting the Tone
The classroom is a task-oriented environment. Everyone has a job to do.
• engage in independent writing by:
  – writing letters to favourite authors;
  – developing character webs (see glossary);
  – writing in a response journal;
  – producing a written retell/relate/reflect (one or all of these steps);
  – extending a story by writing or creating new endings for it or writing it from another point of view;
• develop their oral language skills by orally retelling a story read previously:
  – using puppets or responding to prompts provided earlier by the teacher (e.g., on a chart);
  – with a partner;
  – using a story map/graphic organizer developed as a prompt;
• read a variety of books (from the book corner), listing the titles in their reading log;
• practise the reading skills learned during read-alouds and shared reading by:
  – using manipulations (e.g., a Slinky, an elastic band) to orally “stretch” words and break them into phonemes, to enhance their phonemic awareness;
  – working with word tiles or pocket charts to develop their understanding of phonics;
  – playing word games to enhance their recognition of high-frequency words.
Sample Guided Reading Lesson 1: Kindergarten (Emergent Readers)

ISBN 1553480589.

OVERVIEW OF THE TEXT: This highly patterned text tells readers the various colours of maple leaves, and it has a surprise ending.

PURPOSE: This lesson provides an opportunity for students to recognize and read predictable sentence patterns.

TIME FRAME
• 1 day
• 10 minutes

MATERIALS
• a copy of the text for each student in the group
• samples of maple leaves, if available

ONTARIO CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS (KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM)

*Students will:*

Language
• demonstrate awareness of some conventions of written materials;
• use language patterns and sound patterns to identify words and to predict the next word;

Personal and Social Development
• express their own thoughts and share experiences.

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES
The teacher observes, and notes students’ ability to:
• apply their knowledge of print concepts;
• use initial consonants to predict or confirm vocabulary;
• use background knowledge to predict the words in a text.

(An example of a completed anecdotal record is provided at the end of this sample lesson.)

REFLECTIONS FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHER

Students:
• What strategies did I use to read this text?
• What surprised me in this text?
Teacher:
• What strategies is this student able/almost able to apply independently?
• What independent reading books will enhance this student's reading abilities?

Note: The teacher's responses to these questions should be recorded with other assessment data for this group.

PROCEDURE
Before reading
The teacher looks at a student's diagnostic assessment, analyses the student's strengths as a reader, and chooses a strategy the student appears ready to apply independently (in this case, recognizing and reading a predictable sentence pattern). A text is selected (in this case, A Maple Leaf), based on this information and on the interests or background knowledge of the student. The teacher determines, on the basis of collected data, whether other students are also ready to apply this strategy. (At this developmental reading stage, the teacher can introduce the book to an individual student or to a small group of two or possibly three students.)

The teacher's observations and collected data indicate that two students can independently read the high-frequency words is, a, and on.

The text, A Maple Leaf, is selected because:
• the book contains these high-frequency words, and one other, here;
• the text employs predictable sentence structures;
• the students can both recognize and name colours, but cannot yet read all of the words for colours;
• the students are familiar with maple leaves because the theme “changing colours of leaves” was introduced to the class previously.

Challenges for students in this text will be as follows:
• reading the word here;
• recognizing the colours of the leaves depicted in the book, and inserting the word for that colour into the sentence while reading;
• cross-checking to see if the word they read starts with the correct initial letter;
• reading a single non-repetitive sentence at the end of the story.

Before-reading discussion
The teacher uses the cover of the book and a small assortment of fall leaves to engage the students in a discussion about their own background knowledge of fall leaves. Shapes and colours are noted and talked about. The students are guided into creating a mental image of the variety of maple leaves so that they feel very familiar with the topic prior to the reading.

Introduction of the text
The students are given individual copies of the book and are asked not to open them until told to do so. The teacher reads the title and asks what the students think the book may be about. This brief activity helps students anticipate concepts and vocabulary that they may encounter.

The teacher guides the discussion to the idea that a maple leaf comes from a maple tree (tree is a word in the text). The teacher also reads the names of the author and the photographer, and a brief discussion about the way the book has been illustrated follows.
The students are asked to open the book, turn to the title page, and read the title of the book with the teacher. The teacher again reads the names of the author and the photographer, and then proceeds as follows.

Teacher: "Let's turn to pages 2 and 3. Here is a tree. What kind of tree is it?"
Student: "It's a maple tree."
Teacher: "Yes, here is a maple tree. ... Let's turn the page. What is here? What colour is it?"
The teacher continues the picture walk for a few more pages, and then asks the students to check the letters of one of the colour words to see if it "looks right" (an independent reading strategy).

During reading
The teacher tells the students that there is a surprise at the end of the book. They are invited to read the whole book (independently) to find out what the surprise is. The students read quietly but not silently, so that the teacher can intervene with a strategy if difficulties arise. In particular, the teacher listens for evidence of the effective use of reading strategies when the students are challenged by a word or when they self-correct an error. If a student tries to read the last page by following the familiar pattern established in the previous pages, he or she is asked to "point" and read. One-to-one matching of words in the text to words read should help the student identify the error.

While the students are reading, the teacher notes observations about their progress on a Guided Reading Anecdotal Record sheet (see Appendix 6-3). An example of a completed anecdotal record follows this sample lesson.

After reading
The teacher engages the students in a discussion about what they have read and any difficulties they may have encountered. The students are encouraged to share strategies that helped them in their reading.

The book is now made available for these two students to reread by being placed in their individual or group browsing boxes. During a subsequent lesson, the teacher may choose to revisit the text and discuss the high-frequency words encountered in the text, perhaps also asking the students to point to (using a pointer) and read words on the classroom walls, while looking for the high-frequency words from the text.

After-reading activities
• The teacher may choose to introduce the students to a brief onset-and-rime activity involving the word red, providing the magnetic letters r, e, d, b, and f so that the students can make and then record the words red, bed, and fed. The same activity can be done with the word tree.
• The teacher may ask the students to make a leaf-print book by placing paper over leaves and rubbing gently on the paper with wax crayons. The students can then print the words for the colour of each leaf on the page.
Example of a Completed Anecdotal Record for Sample Guided Reading Lesson 1

Student name(s): Belinda and Max

Date: Nov. 15 Text read: A Maple Leaf

Focus: Reading predictable sentence patterns

Observations:
Belinda – Consistently leaves out “a”. Will work on this during interactive writing and shared reading.
Max – Understood the pattern and read accurately.
Appropriate choice of text for this group; both students used appropriate strategies to decode unfamiliar words.
Next text should contain simple, but slightly more complex, repetitive sentence patterns.
Sample Guided Reading Lesson 2: Grade 1 (Early Readers)

TEXT: The Three Little Pigs by Sarah Prince (Markham, ON: Scholastic Canada, 2001). ISBN 077910627X.

OVERVIEW OF THE TEXT: This retelling of the traditional tale of the three pigs uses a modern setting.

PURPOSE: This lesson provides students with an opportunity to use background knowledge to predict and read new text.

TIME FRAME
• two guided reading sessions and some independent practice
• approximately 10–15 minutes per session

MATERIALS
• a copy of the text for each student in the group

ONTARIO CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS (GRADE 1)

Students will:
• use their knowledge and experience to understand what they read;
• use their knowledge of sentence structure in speech to understand written sentences;
• use pictures and illustrations to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words.

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES
The teacher observes and makes notes as follows:
• listens to the before-reading discussion and notes each student’s ability to make logical predictions about the story line and vocabulary;
• looks for evidence that students who are unfamiliar with the tale’s traditional dialogue understand the language in the book, and draws students’ attention to the wolf’s words and the pigs’ words;
• listens to the individual readings of the text and notes the problem-solving strategies used by each student;
• listens to the after-reading discussion to ensure that each student is able to comprehend the text, and engages students in a discussion about the strategies used to read complex, unfamiliar text.

REFLECTIONS FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHER

Students:
• What strategies did I use when I encountered challenges in the text?
• Which strategies worked best?

Teacher:
• What strategies were used by individual students as they read unfamiliar text? What strategies were used consistently and effectively? What strategies need to be taught again or reinforced so that the students can apply them independently?
• What made this text appropriate for this group? Did some students have difficulty with it? Do they require an easier text? Are any of the students able to read this text easily and, therefore, do they require a more complex text?
• What would be good choices for next readings for these students?
• Should changes be made to group composition at this time?

*Note:* The teacher's responses to these questions should be recorded with other assessment data for this group.

**Before reading**
The teacher ensures that students in this group:
• know many of the high-frequency words that appear in the text;
• have strategies for decoding unfamiliar words;
• are beginning to read with phrasing and fluency.

**Before-reading discussion**
The teacher shows students other versions of *The Three Little Pigs* and explains that there are many versions of the story. The teacher further explains that, when a traditional tale is retold, the storyteller and the illustrator often make changes to the story or pictures to make the story seem new, but that the main events of the story and some of the same vocabulary are found in most or all versions. The teacher talks about phrases that are associated with the traditional tale, such as "I'll huff and I'll puff till I blow your house down!".

**Introduction of the text**
The teacher shows students the cover of the book and page 3, focusing attention on how the wolf and the pigs are dressed.

The teacher asks, "Where does the original story take place? Where does this story take place? What does the picture tell us about where the pigs' houses are? What do you think the wolf will do to these houses?"

The teacher invites students to do an independent picture walk of the complete text.

**During reading**
Following the picture walk, the teacher asks students to read the book to themselves (quietly, but aloud), a few pages at a time. The number of pages should be determined on the basis of how difficult the text is likely to be for the particular group of readers.

The teacher observes the students reading and is prepared to intervene with a strategy if difficulties arise (e.g., suggest that students look at the picture, read ahead, point to words as they read to match them one-to-one, read the initial letter). In particular, the teacher listens for evidence of the effective use of reading strategies when students are challenged by a word or when they self-correct an error.

While students are reading, the teacher also notes observations about their progress on a Guided Reading Anecdotal Record sheet (see Appendix 6-3).
After reading
The teacher discusses the story with students to ensure that they understood it. He or she offers praise for appropriate reading behaviours. The teacher selects a reading strategy to reinforce, based on the observed needs of the students. The text is made available in individual or group browsing boxes for rereadings.

During a subsequent session with the group, the teacher may briefly take up a different strategy to reinforce. The choice could include:

- comprehension strategies, reinforced by discussing how the pigs got rid of the wolf, how safe the pigs' houses were, or how smart the wolf was;
- graphophonic cues, reinforced by engaging students in make-and-break activities (see glossary), using the rimes uff, in, or ig;
- semantic cues, reinforced by focusing on grammatical features, such as the adjectives little, big, and bad, or the past tense, as in huffed, puffed, and blew;
- all three cueing systems, reinforced by engaging students in a cloze activity (e.g., covering key words with sticky notes and asking students to use the cueing systems to guess at the covered words).

After-reading activities
The teacher may engage students in any of the following activities:

- working in a group to prepare and perform a readers' theatre of the text;
- rereading and comparing this and other versions of the story;
- preparing a list of words that start with a letter or sound frequently found in the text, such as ch, or reading words posted around the room to locate words that begin with that letter or sound;
- writing a retell of what happened to the pigs, in a small group, with a partner, or as an individual activity;
- writing reflections about their reading in their response journals (if appropriate).
Sample Guided Reading Lesson 3: Grade 3 (Fluent Readers)

TEXTS:

OVERVIEW OF THE TEXT: “Investigating Plants” is a factual text that demonstrates three different ways of organizing and presenting information: procedures (experiments), categories (a classification chart), and definitions (a glossary).

CONTEXT: This text is most appropriate for use during a study of plants or prior to another unit of study that will require knowledge of procedural writing.

PURPOSE: This lesson provides an opportunity for students to locate and understand key information using three different types of factual text.

TIME FRAME
- 2 days
- 15-20 minutes per day

MATERIALS
- one copy of the text for each student in the group
- a chart containing the following specific vocabulary: stalks, chlorophyll, nutrients, deciduous, classification, transparent, coniferous, carbon dioxide
- sticky notes

ONTARIO CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS (GRADE 3)

Students will:

Reading
- use conventions of written materials to help them understand and use the materials;
- distinguish between fact and fiction;
- use their knowledge of the organization and characteristics of different forms of writing as a guide before and during reading;
- use a variety of strategies to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words;
- understand frequently used specialized terms in different subject areas;

Science and Technology
- classify plants according to visible characteristics;
- ask questions about and identify some needs of plants, and explore possible answers to these questions and ways of meeting these needs.
ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES
The teacher observes and makes notes as follows:
• listens to each student’s responses to before-, during-, and after-reading questions and discussions, asking himself or herself:
  - What is the student’s understanding of the purpose and features of text that sets out procedures, categorizes information, and defines words or phrases?
  - How well could the student determine the meaning of the words investigate and experiment?
• records responses to questions asked directly of students (e.g., “How did the bolded text help you make sense of the text?”)
• notes any difficulties encountered by students as they read the text
• notes strategies used by students to decode unfamiliar words.

REFLECTIONS FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHER
Students:
• How well did I understand the purpose and features of the procedural text? The classification chart? The glossary?
• Could I conduct the experiment now?
• Did I understand all of the words?

Teacher:
• How well did students understand the concepts introduced?
• How well did each student from this group read? Was the text too difficult/easy for any of these students? What would be a good choice for the next text?
• What other text samples of procedures, categories, and definitions can be made available to students? Are there appropriate examples in the classroom collection?
• Should changes be made to group composition at this time?

Note: The teacher’s responses to these questions should be recorded with other assessment data for this group.

PROCEDURE
Day 1
Before reading
The teacher asks students to think of other experiments they have done and asks, “What was the purpose of the experiment? What steps were followed? What questions were asked?”

The teacher focuses the discussion on the following points:
• Experiments are designed to answer questions.
• Experiments follow a common procedure.

The teacher may record responses on chart paper so that each step can be highlighted.

During the reading, the teacher asks students to read the “Reading Tip” on page 74 of the text, and explains that it was written by the author to help them better understand how to read this type of information.
The teacher further explains that, as they read the text, they will be asked to write the action words on sticky notes, and that these words will focus their attention on the different parts of the procedure.

The teacher asks students:
• to read the title out loud and to discuss the meaning of the word investigate;
• how the activities of investigating and experimenting are alike;
• to identify text features such as headings, bolded text, and coloured/highlighted sections;
• to predict what they think this investigation will be about;
• to explain why it is important to list the materials needed for the investigation at the beginning of the experiment;
• to explain why the phrases coniferous trees and deciduous trees are bolded;
• to locate coniferous and deciduous in the glossary on page 79 of the text;
• to explain the purpose of a glossary;
• to look at the ”Leaf Classification” chart on page 78 of the text and to describe the kind of information it provides.

During reading
Students read pages 74 to 77 to themselves, quietly but aloud, and stop to write the action words on sticky notes as they read.

After reading
The teacher asks students:
• to refer to their sticky notes and discuss the action words they found in the text (Students can take turns listing these words on chart paper.);
• to say how many experiments they read about;
• to explain how finding the action words helped them sort out the different parts of the procedure;
• to explain the different parts of the procedure, and to identify each part by drawing lines between the parts or by numbering them;
• to identify the action words used for each part of the procedure, and to circle these words;
• to say if they have seen these words before (The teacher could remind students of other procedures in Science and Technology, Mathematics, Arts, etc.);
• to say whether the bolded text helped them understand the information, and, if so, how.

After-reading activity
Students work within their group to conduct experiments, while the teacher works with the next guided reading group.

Day 2

Before reading
The teacher reviews with students the information about experiments that they learned on Day 1 of the guided reading lesson. He or she asks students to talk about the text supports (e.g., bolded text, important action words, format) that helped them understand the information. The teacher then explains that information can be organized using a number of different formats, and that formatting helps readers better understand different types of information.
During reading
The teacher:
• asks students to turn to page 78 of the text and read the title on that page;
• tells students that the format of today's text is different from the format of the information they read on Day 1, which involved two experiments, and notes that today’s reading is not about experiments;
• asks students what the title says about the format of today’s text;
• asks students to discuss the word classification, and further asks what we do when we classify information (e.g., set it out into different categories, identify differences);
• asks why a chart format is well suited for a classification (e.g., the visual organization makes it easy to pick out individual pieces of information, columns and rows facilitate comparisons);
• asks students to read page 78 quietly, but not silently;
• asks students to look at page 79, prompting them through questioning to note how a glossary is different from a classification chart (e.g., a glossary has no lines, is set out in two columns, and has text but no pictures);
• discusses how the glossary's format lends itself well to the purpose of defining or explaining words or phrases (e.g., in a glossary, as in a dictionary, information is generally read from one column to the next column; glossaries have no need for lines or other aspects of the chart format, as the purpose of a glossary is not to compare different pieces of information);
• asks students to read page 79 quietly, but not silently.

After reading
The teacher discusses the factual information on pages 78 and 79 with students to ensure that they have understood it. The teacher then asks students to share their strategies for reading text from these two pages: “When working with factual information, do we need to read line by line, left to right across the page, or can we move from one section of a chart to another or from one page to another to retrieve information?” “What strategies helped you read challenging words?” “What did you find interesting/different/easy/difficult about reading text set out in these formats, instead of reading text in a story?”

After-reading activities
• Students can develop their own classification charts related to a theme/unit previously studied. When the task is complete, they are invited to share their charts with other members of their group as a follow-up activity.
• Students can write their reflections or responses in their response journals.
Appendix 6-I: Sample Reading Lesson Planner – Guided Reading, Grade 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text: ___________________________</th>
<th>Author: ___________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genre: __________________________</td>
<td>Source: __________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LESSON OBJECTIVE / READING STRATEGY:**

**CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS**
Grade 3 Language curriculum expectations addressed/modelled in this lesson are as follows: (Place a checkmark beside the expectations that will be addressed in this lesson.)

*Students will:*
- read aloud, speaking clearly and with expression;
- express clear responses to written materials, relating the ideas in them to their own knowledge and experiences and to ideas in other materials that they have read;
- understand the vocabulary and language structure appropriate for this grade level;
- identify and restate the main idea in a piece of writing, and cite supporting details;
- identify and describe some elements of stories;
- distinguish between fact and fiction;
- begin to make inferences while reading;
- begin to develop their own opinions by considering some ideas from various written materials;
- identify and describe different forms of writing;
- use their knowledge of the organization and characteristics of different forms of writing as a guide before and during reading;
- use punctuation to help them understand what they read;
- identify various conventions of formal text and use them to find information.

**TEACHING NOTES**

**Before reading:** Introducing the text (How will I activate students’ prior knowledge? How will I prepare students for the lesson objective?)

**During reading:** Focusing on student’s application of strategies (Do students understand the text? Are they applying strategies appropriately?)

**After reading:** Providing follow-up discussion and/or activities (What activities will engage students in reflecting on the text? On their use of strategies?)
Appendix 6-2: Sample System for Tracking Student Progress in Guided Reading

Materials needed:
- one 8 1⁄2” x 14” file folder
- one large (e.g., 4” x 6”) index card per student
- one Guided Reading Anecdotal Record sheet (see Appendix 6-3) per student

Setting up the folder
1. Label each index card with a student’s name on the bottom right-hand corner.
2. Glue a Guided Reading Anecdotal Record sheet onto the back of each card.
3. Tape the cards into the file folder alphabetically, so that student names are showing.
4. Label each card with the headings, “Strengths”, “Needs”, and “Next Steps”.

Because guided reading groups are fluid and will change over time, keep separate index cards to record the names of students in the group, dates of group sessions, and materials read. The focus of the reading experience will be noted on the Reading Lesson Planner (see Appendix 6-1).

Procedure
When meeting with students in a guided reading session, flip to the appropriate student card and record (in point form) any relevant observations, including changes in reading behaviour. At the end of the guided reading session, reflect on these observations and plan next teaching or reteaching points (which can be the focus of upcoming sessions, group lessons, or individual teaching).
**Appendix 6-3: Sample Guided Reading Anecdotal Record Sheet**

The Guided Reading Anecdotal Record is used to record observations about how well students are meeting expectations, using reading strategies, and comprehending text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student name(s):</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>Text read:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

6.40  
A Guide to Effective Instruction in Reading, Kindergarten to Grade 3
Appendix 6-4: Tracking Sheet for Class Book Levels

This sheet provides a “snapshot” of students’ reading levels as of a specific date. It can be used as a benchmark against which to measure the student progress or for planning future instruction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDENT NAME</th>
<th>BOOK LEVEL</th>
<th>DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Appendix 6-5: Record of Individual Reading Progress

This sheet tracks the reading level progress of an individual student.

Student: ___________________________  Grade/Class: ________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book Level</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Insert the text levels (e.g., B–I) appropriate for students in the class, starting from the bottom of the chart and moving up.
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During an independent reading session, students practise reading texts that are at a “just-right” level (one that allows students to read with 95–100 per cent accuracy), applying reading strategies that have been modelled and taught. The teacher observes and records students’ reading behaviour, then uses this information to guide instruction. Independent reading is supported by minilessons taught before the reading begins, and by students’ reflection on and discussion of their reading after the reading session ends. Purposeful and planned independent reading is therefore teacher-supported, while allowing students opportunities to work independently.

Texts are carefully selected – some by the teacher, others by students, with teacher support – to ensure that each child has a successful independent reading experience. The choice of text is generally based on students’ independent reading levels and interests. A strong interest in a subject area and background knowledge of a particular text or topic motivate students to read more complex texts than they would otherwise choose. During minilessons, students can be taught appropriate methods for selecting their own independent reading materials. Just-right books generally include levelled texts in the four to six levels immediately below the student’s instructional level. (See Chapter 6: Guided Reading for more information on levelled texts.) Within this range, students are able to construct meaning by independently applying problem-solving and reading strategies that the teacher has modelled and taught. Independent reading therefore involves a transfer of responsibility for student learning from teacher to student.

When planning independent reading lessons, teachers schedule time before and after reading for individual reflection and/or peer or group discussion. During the reading, the teacher observes, listens, and gathers information about individual students’ reading behaviours. The data gathered help teachers determine whether students are comprehending texts read independently or whether they require further support.
Independent Reading Versus Silent, Sustained Reading

Independent reading is sometimes referred to as silent, sustained reading (also known as DEAR – “drop everything and read” – and USSR – “uninterrupted silent, sustained reading”), but there are important differences between the two. As the following chart indicates, the differences revolve around the before and after activities and the teacher observation and assessment activities (described above and in the chart below). These activities, which provide substantial additional value to the student’s reading experience, are an integral part of independent reading, but not necessarily of silent, sustained reading.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Reading</th>
<th>Silent, Sustained Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is an opportunity to increase the time students spend reading.</td>
<td>It is an opportunity to increase the time students spend reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before reading, the teacher provides book talks and/or minilessons on book selection and reading strategies.</td>
<td>There is no before-reading activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students select just-right texts with teacher guidance.</td>
<td>Students generally select texts independently, but may receive some teacher guidance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It usually takes place at planned times during the literacy block, but can also take place at other times during the day.</td>
<td>It can be planned to take place at any time during the day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students keep records of the books they read, reflect on their reading, and confer with others about their reading. (Because Kindergarten and early Grade 1 students read a great many books, they are not likely to record all books read.)</td>
<td>Students keep records of the books they read.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher observes individual students’ reading behaviours, confers with students about their reading, and keeps records of these observations and conferences.</td>
<td>The teacher signals the time for reading to begin and end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students may read on their own or with a partner. The teacher confers with students about their book choices.</td>
<td>Students read on their own. The teacher often sits and reads as a model for students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The room may be active, as students and teacher reflect on and discuss the books students are reading.</td>
<td>The room is quiet.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Responsibilities in Independent Reading

During independent reading, **all students should have the opportunity to read good-quality material and should be actively engaged in the application of reading strategies. Students should learn that taking ownership of and responsibility for one’s reading are key steps in becoming successful readers.**

“Children learning to read are active agents, initiating and assuming responsibility for their learning. They continually integrate new findings into their framework of knowledge about language and texts, replacing what no longer works with revised theories and fresh information.”

(Taberski, 2000, p. 3)

Much of the teacher’s active role in preparing students for independent reading takes place during read-alouds, shared reading, guided reading, and the minilessons that precede independent reading. In these lessons, the teacher explicitly and systematically teaches and scaffolds reading strategies that are appropriate to the students’ developmental reading stages so that students are prepared to integrate these strategies into their reading and apply them independently.

When students have internalized a range of strategies and can apply them independently to new texts, and when they know what makes a book just right for their own developmental reading needs, they are able to make wise choices for their own reading. They learn how to find books of interest to them that are not too challenging (so that they can understand the story or message), but not so easy as to be devoid of opportunities to learn.

When independent reading is effective, students’ reading skills are reinforced, they develop confidence in their ability to read, and they enjoy reading.

The responsibilities of both teacher and students in independent reading are set out in the chart below.

### Responsibilities of Teacher and Students in Independent Reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>The teacher:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Students:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• provides time for daily independent reading;</td>
<td>• choose, independently or with the teacher’s assistance, texts of personal interest from a variety of sources;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• plans independent reading sessions that include time for the teacher to model strategies and for students to read, reflect on the text, and discuss it;</td>
<td>• read independently or with a partner for a sustained period of time;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
## Resources for Independent Reading

Resources for independent reading should include a variety of materials:

- **just-right books**, which students can read easily because the challenges in the books match the students’ level of skills development
- **familiar books**, which the teacher has previously introduced in read-alouds, shared reading, and/or guided reading, or which a student may have read or heard read before

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The teacher:</th>
<th>Students:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>scaffolds student learning of reading strategies prior to independent reading (by modelling and teaching them and offering students opportunities to practise them in read-alouds, shared reading, and guided reading);</td>
<td>create visual images of the text they are reading (e.g., of characters, setting, details described) to enhance their comprehension of the text;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reinforces students’ independent application of reading strategies (e.g., by encouraging them, prompting them) before, during, and after the reading session;</td>
<td>learn to recognize when what they are reading makes sense and when they need to apply a reading strategy to overcome obstacles to comprehension;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teaches book selection skills;</td>
<td>practise applying problem-solving and other reading strategies independently (e.g., make predictions and inferences, read ahead, reread, look for cues);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stays informed about students’ reading abilities and about the books in the classroom (both group and individual students’ collections), and is therefore able to select a range of just-right materials from which students can choose books to read independently;</td>
<td>build their knowledge base of language structures and vocabulary;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>provides students with a comprehensive collection of just-right reading materials that represent a variety of genres and topics;</td>
<td>in consultation with the teacher, set goals for their reading, establish a plan for reaching their goals, and determine the people who can help them reach their goals (see Appendix 7-8 for a sample Reading Goals Sheet for students).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>motivates students and promotes the joy of reading;</td>
<td>helps students build confidence as readers;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helps students build confidence as readers;</td>
<td>encourages independent problem solving by students;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>checks students’ comprehension of texts read;</td>
<td>checks students’ comprehension of texts read;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helps students set and meet goals for their reading (during individual conferences conducted during independent reading sessions).</td>
<td>helps students set and meet goals for their reading (during individual conferences conducted during independent reading sessions).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
books on subjects or by authors that are of particular interest to individual readers, which allow students to activate background knowledge that will help them make sense of the text

song books, lyrics, or poems

books that a particular group of students is familiar with from earlier encounters, and that have been stored in the students’ browsing boxes

wall charts and other environmental print in the classroom, which may include texts or excerpts from texts with which students are familiar from earlier encounters and which students can use in a “read the walls” activity (see glossary)

book and tape/CD sets located in the listening area

sets of books, which partners or small groups can use to read a text together

newspapers and magazines

texts created by students in earlier class writing activities

The classroom collection of texts for independent reading should be as varied and wide-ranging as possible. Students need daily opportunities to read books that are appropriate to their reading level, that represent a variety of genres and topics, and that are interesting and personally relevant.

**Topic-related book areas**

The collection should include a comprehensive selection of levelled and non-levelled reading materials, with as many texts as possible prominently displayed. As the preceding list indicates, the collection should include books that have been previously read to, with, and by students during read-aloud, shared reading, and guided reading sessions. In addition, it may contain books donated, temporarily or permanently, to the collection by students or the teacher.

“It is pointless to spend time selecting something to read if we never ‘read’ what we’ve selected.”

(Chambers, 1996, p. 5)
In Kindergarten, students should be taught that reading has an important function in our lives. The Kindergarten classroom collection should therefore include texts that represent authentic purposes for reading. Suitable literacy resources can be incorporated into various learning areas of the classroom (e.g., grocery store areas, post office areas). Such areas provide students with opportunities to role-play reading functions and to experiment with and practise their developing reading strategies. (See “The Classroom Environment”, later in this chapter, for examples of Kindergarten learning areas and literacy resources suitable for them.)

The teacher should know the classroom collection for independent reading well, so that he or she can ensure that the text chosen for or by each student for independent reading matches the student’s reading abilities, as determined by observation and ongoing assessments. As student reading abilities evolve over the school year, the teacher will want to add more difficult texts to the collection and remove those that have become too easy. Observation of student reading behaviours will help the teacher identify familiar favourites that could remain part of the collection throughout the year.

“The Independent Reading Lesson

Planning the Lesson

The teacher’s plan for an independent reading lesson includes the following components:

• **a book talk** (optional)
  The teacher introduces one or two sample texts to students. This talk serves to pique students’ interest in reading a book, a series of books, books by a specific author, books on a special topic, or books of a certain type or genre. The book talk generally takes one or two minutes.

• **a minilesson**
  The teacher teaches and models a specific reading strategy. (See Appendix 7-1 for the kinds of data to be reviewed when planning a minilesson, and Appendix 7-2 for sample topics.) Students are asked to work with the strategy during the day’s independent reading time, if the strategy is relevant to the book they are reading.

• **independent reading and reading conferences**
  While students read on their own or with a partner, the teacher may conduct reading conferences with individual students. This one-to-one time allows the teacher to ask questions about the student’s reading, listen to a passage being

“Like everything else to do with reading, the way we learn best how to select confidently is to do it for ourselves, while an already confident, trusted reader is nearby to show how it is done and give help when needed”

(Chambers, 1996, p. 5)
read, support the application of the strategy introduced during the minilesson, and discuss the student’s goals for reading. (See Appendices 7-9 and 7-10 for sample reading conference records.)

- **time for students to share their thoughts**
  Following their independent reading, students share their thoughts about what they have read. These thoughts may be directed by the teacher through the use of focused questions, if necessary or desired. Students may wish to talk about what helped them with their reading, the challenges they encountered, or the story line, characters, and scenes from the book. They may also wish to recommend specific texts to other students.

- **time for students to reflect and respond**
  The teacher includes opportunities for reflection in the independent reading session. Initially, the teacher needs to explicitly teach students how to reflect on their reading. A chart may be used to prompt students with key questions. (See list of sample questions below.) If students have the appropriate writing skills, their reflections and their responses to prompts may be written on reading response sheets [see Appendix 7-7] or in response journals, listed on a chart, or incorporated into a graphic organizer. This activity is intended to encourage students to make connections, to think about their level of comprehension, to summarize their understandings, to evaluate their learning, and to recognize their abilities as readers.

  Activities such as literature circles [see Appendices 7-3, 7-4, and 7-5] provide students with opportunities for reflection during the course of the reading activity, as well as after it.

  By sharing their thoughts about and responses to texts, and by asking and answering questions about what they have read, students acquire a deeper understanding of their own thinking processes, their own reading skills, and the text they have been reading.

  See also the later section in this chapter entitled "Engaging Students in Responding to the Texts They Have Read".

**Questions to ask readers following the independent reading of a book:**

- What did you learn from reading the book?
- What strategy helped you understand the book?
- What did you learn about yourself as a reader?
- Did this book remind you of anything?
- Did your knowledge about this subject change?
- Were your predictions right?
- What made this book hard? What made it easy?
- Why did you pick this book?
- Would you recommend it? To whom? Why?
Building Independence in Students

Teacher support is necessary in independent reading to help students apply reading strategies and follow established routines connected with independent reading. Over time, however, students learn to apply reading strategies and follow routines independently. As a result, they take on more responsibility for many reading-related activities (e.g., choosing appropriate reading materials). It is important, however, that the teacher plan for the explicit instruction of strategies and routines while continually assessing students’ progress towards independence.

The following chart sets out a step-by-step approach to the explicit instruction of strategies and routines. Note that this teaching occurs throughout effective reading instruction – during read-alouds, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading.

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In the course of various reading lessons, the teacher scans the classroom and deter-
mines those strategies and routines that are being consistently followed, those that 
require further instruction, and those that should be added.

The teacher may also wish to consider the following questions about routines:
• What will students do when they have completed all assigned tasks?
• When the teacher is working with a guided reading group, how will students out-
side the group receive support if necessary?
• When students run out of materials (e.g., pencils, paper), how will they obtain the 
items they need?

As routines for situations such as these are explicitly taught and modelled, and as 
students practise them, students gradually learn to take ownership of their learning 
environment, which allows the teacher to maximize instructional time.

Teaching Book-Selection Skills

Teaching book-selection skills is an essential part of the independent reading lesson. 
In most instances, students should be reading just-right books that provide reading 
challenges but that students are able to read and understand with an accuracy rate of 
approximately 95–100 per cent. Students require explicit instruction in choosing just-
right books, in applying reading strategies that will help them understand challenging 
texts, and in knowing when to abandon a book (discussed below).

In order for a book to be just right, students should be able to read most of the words 
on a page. Teachers can provide students with easy-to-remember rules to guide them 
in identifying texts that are too difficult – for example, the “Three-Finger Rule” 
(Allington, 2001, p. 52). Students read the first one or two pages of a 
text and hold up one finger for each word they cannot read. If they 
raise three fingers, the text is probably too difficult and they should 
choose another one.

In determining if a book is just right, students can also ask themselves 
the following questions:
• Am I interested in the topic?
• Have I read a book by this author before? If so, was that book 
just right?
• Is the print in the book just right, too small, or too big?
• Is the number of words on a page just right? Are there too few or 
too many words on the page?

Student Book Selection
When I choose a book, I can:
➜ look at the cover and the pictures to see if the book 
interests me;
➜ look at the back cover for more information;
➜ look for books by an author 
I already know and like;
➜ read a book in a series that 
I like;
➜ follow book recommendations 
from my teacher and friends;
➜ read the first few sentences 
to see if I like the style and 
the story/information.
Teachers can provide students with additional options for appropriate reading materials by displaying books that students have read, enjoyed, and recommended. By displaying student recommendations, the teacher allows the reader to share his or her reflections about a book with other students and motivates other students to read the recommended books.

Students can also recommend books to their peers during student book talks. From as early as Kindergarten, students can recommend favourite books by showing a favourite page, reading a favourite passage, describing a special character, or showing interesting or beautiful illustrations to the class or to a small group.

Early and fluent readers can develop and maintain a list of topics that they are interested in or authors that they would like to read, to help them make appropriate book choices in the future. With time, this list could grow to include a broader range of topics and genres. The teacher can model this process by developing, from student recommendations, a similar list for read-aloud selections.

For students who have difficulty choosing just-right books for themselves, even after explicit instruction and the kinds of encouragement described above, teacher intervention may be required. The teacher can recommend books in the just-right zone of difficulty by authors that the teacher knows the student is familiar with or has enjoyed reading, in genres that the teacher knows the student likes, or on topics that the teacher knows the student is interested in. These recommendations may occur during an individual reading conference with the student. The teacher can prepare for the conference by having a few books ready to offer the student.

**Helping Students Learn When to Abandon a Book**

Students need to learn that it can be appropriate to abandon a book when the book is too hard, too easy, or not interesting. The teacher can guide students' reflections on texts read aloud to them, discussing the criteria for abandoning a book and explicitly teaching students to apply the criteria to their own reading. Teachers should allow for some movement in the classroom during independent reading time, so that students have opportunities to abandon books and select alternatives.

Occasionally, students may choose to persevere with difficult texts because they are interested in the books or motivated to improve their reading skills. For these students, additional assistance may be provided by the teacher during individual conferences,
or by a partner who is reading the same book. Students should understand that they may have to reread a difficult text several times, at a slower pace, to understand it, and that they need to apply known reading strategies as well, checking their understanding by accessing prior knowledge, and examining text features, visual cues, etc.

Teaching Students to Monitor Their Comprehension

Students need to be explicitly taught how to monitor their own understanding of a text before they can comprehend the text independently. The teacher may demonstrate strategies during an interactive read-aloud, asking questions such as, “Does this make sense?” “How does this compare to what we already know about this topic?” “Does this sound right?” Students can also be taught to develop higher-level thinking skills – how to discover information that is not explicitly stated in the text (e.g., how to make inferences) and how to ask questions that may or may not be answered in the text but that encourage creative thinking (e.g., brainstorm, use lateral thinking techniques).

Engaging Students in Responding to the Texts They Have Read

(See Appendices 7-6, 7-7, 7-8, 7-9, and 7-10 for a sample reading log, a sample reading response sheet, a sample reading goals sheet, and sample independent reading conference sheets.)

There are many ways to engage students in responding to the texts they read. Some readers will want to share their thoughts with others. Discussions related to books should be planned to take place on a regular basis, as they engage students in thinking through their understanding of plot, characters, and/or topic and in making connections between their own prior knowledge and experience and the story or information in the text, thereby deepening their understanding of it. The teacher should explicitly teach and model skills related to book discussions, and guide students as they develop and practise these skills.

The following activities effectively engage students in responding to texts:

- **a book buzz**
  Students are encouraged to think about their reading while they read independently and record their thoughts. They may use sticky notes, a journal, or note paper. After reading, they are asked to “buzz” or share their ideas with a partner or small group (e.g., explain what they found interesting, what they found surprising).

- **writing their responses**
  Writing their response to a text on a response sheet or in a response journal encourages students to reflect on new learnings and difficulties encountered. For the teacher, the sheet/journal offers a record of
the student’s responses to texts read, insight into how well the student is doing, and topics for future conferences with the student.

• **literature circles**

(See Appendices 7-3, 7-4, and 7-5 for a detailed procedure and additional resources; see also the sample lesson at the end of the chapter.)

Literature circles, a combination of independent reading and co-operative learning, offer small groups of fluent readers the opportunity to engage in conversations with their peers for the purpose of deepening their understanding of texts and sharing their interpretations. (Literature circles are not appropriate for emergent and early readers.) When students are involved in literature circles, their focus is on comprehension and higher-level thinking.

Literature circles require a great deal of teacher support at the start, but with careful planning and explicit instruction these groups can function independently. The teacher selects several texts that will be of interest to students and that will allow them to apply comprehension strategies independently. The strategies on which students are to focus can be introduced just before the literature circle session or during earlier read-aloud or shared reading sessions.

In the primary grades, all the students in the literature circle generally read the same book. As students become more skilled, however, they may be encouraged to read and discuss different books by the same author or books that are based on a common topic but that are of different genres. The focus of the discussion can then be on the style of the author, differences in genres, comparisons of the organization of the texts, etc.

Students may also respond to texts by:

• sharing reading strategies;
• recommending books they enjoyed reading;
• talking about new insights they acquired as readers;
• sharing new information learned from a book;
• discussing challenges they encountered while reading;
• discussing the notes they made during reading to keep track of their thoughts and questions;
• developing a K-W-L chart (see glossary and Chapter 10: The Role of Writing in Reading Instruction);
• creating Venn diagrams to compare characters, types of texts, etc. (see glossary and Chapter 10: The Role of Writing in Reading Instruction);

“Collins (1986) reported that higher-achieving students spent approximately 70 per cent of their instructional time reading passages and discussing or responding to questions about the material they read. By way of contrast, the lower-achieving readers spent roughly half as much time on these activities (57 per cent), with word identification drill, letter-sound activities, and spelling and penmanship activities occupying large blocks of lesson time.”

(Allington, 2001, p. 25)
• developing graphic organizers or mind maps to represent a story and/or the student’s thoughts about a story (see glossary and Chapter 10: The Role of Writing in Reading Instruction);
• recording vocabulary and expressions they wish to remember on a response sheet or in a response journal;
• mapping out a story and including characters, main idea, setting, plot, problem, solution, etc.

The Classroom Environment

The teacher carefully plans the classroom environment for independent reading. A well-planned, well-organized area sets the tone for a relaxed, productive independent reading program highlights the importance of this activity, and provides for a variety of independent reading experiences.

In planning the classroom environment, the teacher should consider:
• organizing the classroom so that students can find a space that is conducive to reading (e.g., by adding plants, reading lights, cushions, a rocking chair, or another comfortable chair for reading);
• organizing books by placing them in bins according to specific criteria;
• providing empty cereal boxes, file holders, or bags that can be hung on the back of students’ chairs to hold books that students want to read/reread or are currently reading;
• displaying books with the cover showing (e.g., on the chalk ledge, on an A-frame book stand) to catch students’ interest;
• displaying student-recommended reading materials in a special place in the classroom;
• setting up displays or book bins containing new books that students may find interesting and that they can read successfully;
• providing props for retelling a favourite story, such as puppets, miniature character props (e.g., finger puppets), materials for story mapping, a felt board, etc.

Reading time is maximized by ensuring that students are able to easily find books that will require them to practise their newly acquired reading strategies.
In effective classrooms, teachers categorize books for independent reading in different ways: according to reading levels, genres, themes, authors, etc. Levelled book bins can be organized with colour codes to help students gain easy access to and easily return books that are at their independent reading level. The teacher ensures that the books in the bins are changed regularly and that they offer many themes to engage the interest of students.

Theme-related book bins encourage students to explore special interests. Theme bins can hold cross-curricular material in areas such as social studies, science, and mathematics (e.g., under categories such as pioneers, plants, counting). The teacher ensures that the books range in complexity to meet the varying needs of the students in the classroom. Students will bring a degree of background knowledge and understanding to these books, since the themes are the subjects of other classroom activities. The teacher can change the bins’ contents as curriculum themes shift.

Presentation of materials is important too, as it can motivate students to want to read. Books that are organized and displayed in an attractive manner invite students to read them. By displaying books around and throughout the classroom, teachers show students the important place books occupy in our lives.

As noted earlier, Kindergarten classrooms require a variety of texts that represent authentic purposes for reading. The following chart lists a variety of print-based resources that can be placed in various locations in the Kindergarten classroom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blocks Area</th>
<th>Home Area</th>
<th>Water Table Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>books about buildings, castles, or vehicles</td>
<td>magazines and picture books that can be read to dolls</td>
<td>books about the beach, creatures that live in the water, and things that sink or float</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pictures with various items labelled (e.g., buildings, castles, vehicles)</td>
<td>pictures with various items labelled (e.g., stoves, phones, tables)</td>
<td>pictures with various items labelled (e.g., boats, buoys, tire tubes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>traffic signs that students can hold and use in play (see photo on next page)</td>
<td>examples of shopping lists on the refrigerator, and a clipboard and paper for student-made lists</td>
<td>travel guides and maps that discuss or show bodies of water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>car magazines, car advertisements, and catalogues and flyers about cars</td>
<td>a whiteboard or magnetic board with letters that students can use to write messages</td>
<td>a chart paper that poses a Question of the Day (e.g., How many cups of water will it take to fill up the blue tub?)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dramatic Play Area

- visuals that show students where to return used items
- items that students can use to role-play, such as menus, telephone directories, an eye chart from a doctor’s office, grocery lists, grocery store price lists, poison/warning signs, school maps

Sand Table Area

- visuals that show students where to return used items
- books on sand-related subjects, such as tunnels, beaches, animal habitats in sand, sand castles, sand farms
- props that students can use to retell familiar stories (e.g., “The Gingerbread Man”, “Little Red Riding Hood”)
- road signs for sand table “streets”

Assessment

During independent reading, the teacher observes students as they work through a text, problem-solving and applying strategies independently. The teacher should focus on data related to student self-assessment, learning about each student’s reading skills through observation and conferencing, and determining the strategies students need to learn next.

The teacher could ask himself or herself the following questions to help determine the extent of student learning:

- Does the student make appropriate book choices?
- Does the student know what makes a book hard or easy for him or her to read?
- What is the student interested in? Is he or she able to find books independently or does he or she need some suggestions?
- Does the student adjust his or her pace according to the difficulty of the book?
- Does the student reread?
- Does the student understand what he or she has read?
- Does the student read a range of authors, genres, and formats (e.g., charts and tables as well as books)?
- Does the student over-use or under-use specific strategies?
The following tools will help the teacher collect assessment data on each student’s independent reading skills:

- records of focused teacher observations, often related to specific curriculum expectations (anecdotal records)
- running records
- the student’s retell activities
- the student’s portfolio
- the student’s response sheets/journals
- records of reading conferences with the student (see Appendices 7-9 and 7-10)
- a reading continuum that tracks the development of the student’s reading skills and indicates the expectations the student has met
TEXT: Students select a book from a small collection of the Encyclopedia Brown mysteries by Donald J. Sobal (New York: Random House Children's Books [various years]).

OVERVIEW OF THE TEXT: Encyclopedia Brown is a highly intelligent ten-year-old detective who becomes involved in the investigation of a variety of mysteries. Students are motivated to read books in this series because:
- they are often familiar with the characters and the series;
- the chapters are short and the text is well spaced;
- the books contain appealing illustrations;
- the stories are humorous.

CONTEXT: In literature circles, as described in Appendix 7-3, each student usually takes on a different role (Summarizer, Connector, Questioner, etc.). Before students are able to work with different roles, however, they must first understand what each role involves. This lesson introduces students to the Summarizer role by having the teacher model the Summarizer role and then having all the students in the literature circle play the Summarizer. In a subsequent lesson, all students could play a different role, choosing a different book from the Encyclopedia Brown series. This introductory process, which will take some time, should continue until students understand what is required of them in each role. Only then will they be able to successfully play different roles in a literature circle.

Note that the Summarizer role in this lesson has been adapted from the Summarizer role envisaged by Daniels (2002, p. 111).

Note also that the approach outlined in this lesson is only one example of how students could be introduced to reading "roles". The teacher could, for example, model various roles during read-alouds.

PURPOSE: This lesson provides an opportunity for students to practise locating the main idea/event and supporting details in a story.

TIME FRAME
- 35-minute sessions (3-4 days apart)
- the number of sessions depends on the number of pages students read between sessions

MATERIALS
- a small collection of the Encyclopedia Brown books, from which students will choose one book
- one copy of the selected book for each group member
- sticky notes
- Summarizer role cards (See the sample provided at the end of this lesson.)
- “To Do” list for students to follow
ONTARIO CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS (GRADE 3)

Students will:
- read a variety of fiction and non-fiction materials for different purposes;
- read independently, using a variety of reading strategies;
- express clear responses to written materials, relating the ideas in them to their own knowledge and experience and to ideas in other materials that they have read;
- identify and restate the main idea in a piece of writing, and cite supporting details;
- use familiar vocabulary and the context to determine the meaning of a passage containing unfamiliar words.

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The teacher:
- observes students' reading behaviours during independent reading sessions and afterwards, as students share their responses with one another;
- collects the notes students have made on their role cards;
- maintains records of his or her reading conferences with individual students.

REFLECTIONS FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHER

Students:
- What do I already know about this character/series/author?
- Does my reading make sense?
- Is there something I don't understand?
- Do I need to ask for help?
- What information is important and will help me understand the story?
- What key details should I make a note of as I read?
- What is the main idea?
- What steps lead to the main idea/event and/or develop the plot?

Teacher:
- What do my observations tell me about individual students' strengths and areas of need?
- How well are individual students able to comprehend the text selected? Identify key information? Which students require additional support? Reteaching?
- Is the book selected representative of the independent reading level of the students in the group?

Note: The teacher's responses to these questions should be recorded with other assessment data for this group.
Day 1

Before

The teacher selects a short section of one of the Encyclopedia Brown books to use during the minilesson to model note taking related to the main idea/event and supporting details.

1. Book talk: Working with a small group of students, the teacher begins with a one- to two-minute book talk about the Encyclopedia Brown series. Students then look at the book covers, titles, etc., and decide which text they will read. (Sufficient time should be allocated to this step.)

2. Minilesson (seven to eight minutes):
   • The teacher reads the section of the book he or she has preselected to students. Using a think-aloud approach, he or she demonstrates the use of sticky notes for writing down key information and the placement of the notes at appropriate locations in the book. The teacher demonstrates self-questioning while looking for specific information about the main idea/event and supporting details.
   • When the teacher has finished reading the short selection (a few pages), he or she continues to think aloud, demonstrating reflection about the ideas written on the sticky notes. The teacher also demonstrates decision making about what is important to explain the main idea/event and what may be less important.
   • The teacher takes the sticky notes that contain important information and transfers them from the book to the appropriate section of his or her Summarizer role card.

3. Preparation for reading (five minutes):
   • The teacher distributes sticky notes and Summarizer role cards to students.
   • The teacher reminds students that they will be looking for specific information about the main idea/event and supporting details.
   • Students scan their copies of the book they have selected. They examine the text, chapter titles, and illustrations. Together they discuss and decide how much of the book they will read in preparation for the next session (in three to four days).

During and after

1. Students read independently for ten to fifteen minutes, depending on the time available, reflecting on what they are reading, jotting down notes about the main idea/event and supporting details on their sticky notes, and sticking these notes into their book.

2. Students continue to reflect on their reading and make decisions about the information they will transfer from their sticky notes to their role cards.

3. Students transfer notes that contain important information to their Summarizer role cards.

The teacher may hold reading conferences with individual students during this time, work with another literature circle, or work with a guided reading group.
Day 2

Before, during, and after

The teacher has prepared a “To Do” list on chart paper, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“To Do” List</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Discuss information that you were able to locate about the story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Compare your notes about the events/plot line of the story. How are your understandings of the events/plot line different? How are they similar?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Decide on the amount of text to be read for next time (in three days).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Read independently.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. The teacher meets briefly with the group (one to two minutes) to review its assignment and to ensure that students are on task, then moves on to work with another literature circle or a guided reading group.

2. Students follow the “To Do” list prepared by the teacher.

As they follow the “To Do” list, students reflect on their reading and make decisions about the information they note on their sticky notes and role cards. They have additional opportunities for reflection during the discussion.

If students are unable to complete their reading in the time remaining in the session, the teacher determines whether they will complete it at home or during the next scheduled independent reading session.

Alternative “after” activity

Students complete an event map (see Chapter 10: The Role of Writing in Reading Instruction).

Day 3, etc.

The following extensions could be used during additional literature circle sessions.

Students could:
- compare the writing style of this author with the styles of other familiar authors;
- discuss the believability of Encyclopedia Brown and/or other characters in the books;
- discuss how the author introduced the problem in the story.
Summarizer

In your role as Summarizer, you will search for the main idea/event in the story. List the main idea/event, other important information, and supporting details below.

Main Idea/Event:

Other Important Information/Supporting Details:
Appendix 7-I: Data-Gathering Checklist for Planning Minilessons

- Look for patterns in students’ strengths and needs in reading conference records.
- Observe students during sharing sessions, and analyse anecdotal records of these observations.
- Review students’ response sheets/journals for evidence of their comprehension abilities.
- Observe students’ reading behaviours during guided reading.
- Observe students’ reading behaviours during literature circles, readers’ theatre, and other activities.
- Review attitudinal surveys to learn about students’ interests and goals.
- Ensure that you are addressing the appropriate expectations in the *Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1–8: Language*. 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Checklist Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Look for patterns in students’ strengths and needs in reading conference records.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observe students during sharing sessions, and analyse anecdotal records of these observations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review students’ response sheets/journals for evidence of their comprehension abilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observe students’ reading behaviours during guided reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observe students’ reading behaviours during literature circles, readers’ theatre, and other activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review attitudinal surveys to learn about students’ interests and goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure that you are addressing the appropriate expectations in the <em>Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1–8: Language</em>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 7-2: Sample Topics for Minilessons

- Using text features such as punctuation, bolding, italics, etc., as aids to comprehension
- Reading with phrasing to improve fluency
- Finding the main idea in a text
- Determining the sequence of events in a text
- Visualizing descriptions and events in a text
- Making/confirming predictions about a text
- Making/confirming inferences about a text
- Finding evidence to support predictions, inferences, etc.
- Summarizing important events or key information in a text
- Using reading strategies (e.g., checking letter-sound relationships, reviewing the context) to problem-solve new words
- Making connections to self, other texts, and the world to acquire a deep understanding of a text
- Self-monitoring comprehension
- Using sticky notes to record thinking while reading
Appendix 7-3: Literature Circles Procedure

Literature circle groups should be kept small (no more than four or five students). The teacher determines when each student is ready to participate in a group.

The teacher chooses a book or a small selection of books. He or she may introduce the book (or books) to students in a brief “book talk”. If there is more than one book, students are given sufficient time to review them. They are encouraged to take the time to look carefully through all the books before making their choice.

Once students have selected a book, the group decides how much of the book they will read during the first session (e.g., if the next meeting of the group is in three days, how much of the book should we read before the next session?) All members of the group are expected to read the selection and be prepared to discuss it at the group’s next meeting. They should be ready to talk about their general impressions at that meeting, as well as to lead a discussion about a specific aspect of the book.

To maintain an active and focused discussion, participants are generally assigned specific roles: the Connector, the Questioner, the Word Finder, the Illustrator, etc. (These role names are from Daniels, 2002, 107–122. See Appendices 7-4 and 7-5 for additional suggestions. Note that all roles and all literature circles should focus on helping students meet the expectations in the Ontario Curriculum.)

Students are asked to think about their role as they read the book and to collect information specifically related to the role. To help in their reflection and information gathering, students are asked to take notes as they read, using sticky notes that they can attach in the margins of their books, or jotting their notes in their response journals or on response sheets. Note taking should be modelled by the teacher and students should be guided in note taking until the teacher has ascertained that students have acquired the necessary skills to take notes independently.

The lesson in this chapter of the guide indicates how to introduce students to the various roles.

Appendix 7-4 contains sample role cards to guide teachers and students as they begin to work with literature circles. In time, as readers’ skills evolve, the teacher should encourage students to move beyond relying on their printed notes to using the notes as supports to prompt discussion, not as the end result of their thinking.

For the rest of the time period, students read the text independently and note their thoughts and questions. At a predetermined time a few days later, group members meet again and discuss their responses, referring to the notes they made while they were reading.

As noted above, Appendix 7-4 contains sample literature circle role cards. Appendix 7-5 contains a sample literature circle planning sheet for teachers.
Appendix 7-4: Sample Literature Circle Role Cards*

**Connector**

You will look for connections between the book and your own thoughts, feelings, and experiences, other books, and your current knowledge of the world.

Some connections I have made:

**Questioner**

You will write down a few questions that you have about this section of the reading. Questions can be about a word, a character, events that happen, etc.

Some questions I have:

**Literary Luminary**

You will locate a few special sections or quotations in the story for your group to discuss. Explain why you have picked each one.

Page:

Reason for picking:

Discussion plan:

**Summarizer**

You will write a brief summary of today’s reading assignment. Include the main idea and other important information.

Summary:

Main idea and other important points:

*Adapted from Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in the Book Clubs and Reading Groups by Harvey Daniels. Copyright © 2002, with permission of Stenhouse Publishers, distributed in Canada by Pembroke Publishers.*
You will research a topic related to today’s reading—for example, you may want to look for information about the author, the geography or history of the book’s setting, etc.

**Topic:**

**Research:**

---

You will look for important, unfamiliar, and interesting words in the text. Look up definitions.

1. Page: _____ Word: __________________________
   Definition: __________________________

2. Page: _____ Word: __________________________
   Definition: __________________________

   Definition: __________________________

   Definition: __________________________
### Appendix 7-5: Sample Planning Sheet for Literature Circles

#### Literature Circles: Teacher’s Planning Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book(s)</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Students’ Names**

| 1.      |           |
| 2.      |           |
| 3.      |           |
| 4.      |           |

**Students’ Roles** (e.g., Connector, Questioner, Literary Luminary, Illustrator, Summarizer, Researcher)

**Assignments**

1st Session

2nd Session

3rd Session

4th Session

---

*Note: Role names are from *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in the Book Clubs and Reading Groups* by Harvey Daniels. Copyright © 2002, with permission of Stenhouse Publishers, distributed in Canada by Pembroke Publishers.*
### Student’s Independent Reading Log

1. **Title:** 
   
   **Author:** 
   
   **Genre:**  
   **Date Started:**  
   **Date Ended:**  

2. **Title:** 
   
   **Author:** 
   
   **Genre:**  
   **Date Started:**  
   **Date Ended:**  

3. **Title:** 
   
   **Author:** 
   
   **Genre:**  
   **Date Started:**  
   **Date Ended:**  

4. **Title:** 
   
   **Author:** 
   
   **Genre:**  
   **Date Started:**  
   **Date Ended:**  

5. **Title:** 
   
   **Author:** 
   
   **Genre:**  
   **Date Started:**  
   **Date Ended:**  

6. **Title:** 
   
   **Author:** 
   
   **Genre:**  
   **Date Started:**  
   **Date Ended:** 
## My Reading Response Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>__________________________</th>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>__________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title:</td>
<td>__________________________</td>
<td>Author:</td>
<td>__________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this text, I learned . . .

Here are some new words that I read . . .

I really enjoyed . . .

I had difficulty with . . .

My reading strategies were . . .

Other books about this topic are . . .  
| __________________________ | __________________________ |
| __________________________ | __________________________ |
| __________________________ | __________________________ |
Appendix 7-8: Sample Reading Goals Sheet

My Reading Goals for: ____________________________  (month/term/year)

| Name: ____________________________ | Date: ____________________________ |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>____________________________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>____________________________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>____________________________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is my plan for reaching these goals:

These are the people who can help me with my goals:

__________________________________________  ____________________________

__________________________________________  ____________________________
## Individual Reading Conference Record

| Name: _____________________________________________________________________ | Date: __________________________ |
| Title: ____________________________________________________________________ | **Is this book/text:**  
  □ Hard?  □ Just right?  □ Easy? |

### Comprehension
What is this book/text about? Tell me why this is a good choice for you.

### Ability to Make Connections
Did you know something about this topic before you started to read the book? What?

### Application of Reading Strategies
Read aloud a part of the book you really liked. How well did you understand the book?  
In today’s minilesson, we looked at . . . Have you tried this strategy today?

### Other
Do you have questions for me?
## Individual Reading Conference Record

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: ____________________________</th>
<th>Date: ____________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Title: ____________________________ | Is this book/text:  
  - Hard?  
  - Just right?  
  - Easy? |

### Goals
What are your goals for this text?

### Comprehension
What is this book/text about? Tell me why this is a good choice for you.

### Ability to Make Connections (text to text, text to self)
Did you know something about this topic before you started to read the book? What?

- Is this text like another you have read? How?

### Application of Reading Strategies
Read aloud a part of the book you really liked. How well did you understand the book? Which reading strategies are working for you?

- In today’s minilesson, we looked at . . . Have you tried this strategy today?

### Other
Do you have questions for me?

- What else can I help you with?
- What do you plan to read next?
- Here are some titles of books by the same author/books on the same topic, etc.
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Reading Comprehension

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Reading comprehension – the process of making sense of text – is a complex, multifaceted activity that calls on the reader’s thinking and problem-solving skills. Thoughtful readers interact with text by retrieving prior knowledge and experience as they read and by comparing and contrasting what they already know with what they are reading to discover the author’s intended message. They monitor their own reading: they know when they understand what they are reading and when they do not, and they recognize why comprehension breaks down. “They can identify when and why the meaning of the text is unclear to them and can use a variety of strategies to solve comprehension problems or deepen their understanding of a text” (Keene and Zimmerman, 1997, p. 22).

**Reading Comprehension Strategies**

“Proficient readers are metacognitive readers. They think about their own thinking during reading. In examining the thinking of proficient readers, researchers have identified approximately 7 thinking strategies consistently used by effective readers. These include:

- Activating prior knowledge before, during and after reading
- Determining the most important ideas
- Asking questions of themselves, the author and the texts
- Visualizing and creating other sensory images
- Inferring
- Synthesizing, and
- Using ‘fix-up’ strategies to repair comprehension.”

(Keene and Zimmerman, 1997, pp. 22–23)

A brief discussion of each of these strategies follows.

“Reading is the construction of meaning. Comprehending is not a product of reading, it is the process. The child is continuously making sense of the world; when reading, he is making sense of text.

“Comprehension begins before reading as readers make predictions and anticipate the text, and continues after reading as they use their experience and extend it.”

(Fountas and Pinnell, 1996, p. 156)
Activating prior knowledge and making connections before, during, and after reading: Students need to be explicitly taught to use their prior knowledge, or schema, to help them understand a text. This means that they think of all the things they know, the places they have been to, or the experiences they have had related to a topic. "When you use your schema, it helps you use what you know to better understand and interact with the text" (Miller, 2002, p. 57).

In teaching students how to make connections, teachers should choose a text carefully to ensure it is appropriate to the demonstration of the strategy and should review the text in advance to plan how they will use it in the lesson.

Students need to be explicitly taught to make text-to-text connections, text-to-self connections, and text-to-world connections. Students need to learn to ask themselves, “What book have I already read or movie have I seen that relates to this text? What is similar between my experiences and the experiences presented in this book? What knowledge do I have that relates to the information in the text?”

Many young children love to share their thinking and knowledge with the teacher. In a busy classroom this is difficult to orchestrate, but students can be encouraged to turn to the person beside them and share their thoughts. Some connections may also be shared with the entire class and recorded on a chart. When appropriate, small groups may be formed to record in pictures, mind maps, or words and sentences the connections group members have made to the text. Eventually, children will internalize the process and learn to record their own connections to a text, sharing their thinking orally or in a response journal, as appropriate.

Determining the most important ideas: When reading a non-fiction text, children are often distracted by interesting pieces of information and so fail to recognize the key ideas contained in the text. Students are better able to determine key ideas in a factual text when they know that the approach to reading factual texts differs from the approach to reading fiction. Teachers must take time during read-alouds and shared reading sessions to teach students to identify specific features of factual texts, such as subheadings and bold font, and use them to recognize the key ideas or themes in the text. Being able to determine the most important ideas in a text enables students to respond to questions and to synthesize their ideas about the text.

Asking questions of themselves, the author, and the text: Readers ask questions to clarify meaning, to speculate on what may happen next, to locate text features, or to try to understand the thinking of characters in the story.

Students need to learn to ask questions throughout the reading of the text – before, during, and after reading. As this strategy is modelled by the teacher, and as children participate in the process, the questions may be recorded and identified as B (before),
D (during), and A (after). Students will see that some questions need to be asked at each stage of the reading, while others are asked at one stage but not at another. This in turn will help them see that, as we read and find answers to some questions, new questions come into our minds. Some questions may have no single answer but may simply help us think more deeply about the text.

**Visualizing and creating other sensory images:** "When readers create mental images, they engage with text in ways that make it personal and memorable to them alone. Anchored in prior knowledge, images come from the emotions and all five senses, enhancing understanding and immersing the reader in rich detail" (Miller, 2002, p. 77).

When introducing visualization as a strategy, the teacher should choose a text that is rich in the kind of imagery that will evoke mental pictures in the minds of the young readers. The teacher should model for students how the text connects to his or her own background experiences (schema) and describe the mental pictures it evokes. This will allow students to see the process that proficient readers engage in while reading. The teacher should encourage students to share their own mental pictures with the group and then ask groups of students to think about and discuss their personal connections. Gradually, students integrate this strategy into their own reading process when reading independently.

**Inferring:** "When readers infer, they use their prior knowledge and textual clues to draw conclusions and form unique interpretations of text" (Miller, 2002, p. 107). Many of the ideas or interpretations a reader develops during reading are not directly stated in the text but are inferred by the reader. Illustrations often allow the reader of a text to make inferences about the character or the setting by adding some information that is not in the print portion of the text. (An example is the Caldecott Award–winning book *Officer Buckle and Gloria* (Rathman, 1995), where the illustrations are an integral part of the story and are critical to understanding the humour of the text.

Teachers need to model for students the use of schema, text and/or picture clues, and rereading to help them understand particular words, or interpret passages where meaning is implicit rather than explicit.

**Synthesizing:** Synthesizing involves bringing together and sorting through an accumulation of information and ideas about a text to arrive at an understanding of it. When students retell a story, they are synthesizing by identifying and relating only the details necessary to understand the story.
In applying the strategy, readers use the answers to questions they have asked and inferences and analyses they have made before, during, and after reading. They may also draw on personal reflections or personal inferences prompted by the text.

The teacher should first model this process for students in large groups, then have students practise it in small groups, first with teacher guidance and later on their own, before encouraging them to use the strategy independently.

Using “fix-up” strategies to repair comprehension: Readers must monitor their own reading to ensure that what they are reading makes sense. It is essential for students to know that reading is a meaning-making activity and that there are strategies they can use independently to repair their reading when comprehension breaks down. These include strategies such as rereading, reading ahead, reviewing what they have read before, asking a peer, or cross-checking. Teachers should explicitly teach these strategies to students, model their use in think-alouds, and encourage students to practise them during group and independent reading activities.

These reading comprehension strategies should be taught explicitly and separately over a period of time. As students practise the strategies, they come to think differently as they read, realizing that reading for meaning requires them to become engaged with the text and to interact thoughtfully with it.

Teaching Reading Comprehension Strategies

Instructional Approaches

- Explicit Instruction
- Scaffolding
- Coaching
- Reflecting
- Guiding
- Modelling
- Thinking aloud
- Guiding
- Reflecting
- Coaching
- Modelling
- Scaffolding
- Explicit Instruction

Sample “Fix-up” Strategies

- Reread the sentence.
- Check attempts by asking questions using the three cueing systems.
- Seek help from a learning buddy.
Roles and Responsibilities in Reading Comprehension Instruction

The roles and responsibilities of both teacher and students in reading comprehension are set out in the chart below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The teacher:</th>
<th>Students:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• models, through think-alouds, the strategies that proficient readers use</td>
<td>• actively pursue meaning in the reading process;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>when they read;</td>
<td>• access prior experience and knowledge (schema) relevant to the text, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• provides and/or builds on background information and helps students</td>
<td>link new information to prior knowledge;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relate prior knowledge (schema) to the new reading text;</td>
<td>• make predictions about the text;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• revisits and reinforces previously taught comprehension strategies in</td>
<td>• interact with the text by asking questions about it as they read;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>authentic ways;</td>
<td>• read silently or subvocalize, as required;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• teaches a specific comprehension strategy explicitly and systematically</td>
<td>• create mental images about the text while reading;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>throughout a series of reading lessons;</td>
<td>• know when what they are reading makes sense;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• uses the text as a vehicle to introduce new words and figurative</td>
<td>• figure out unknown words using semantic cues;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>language and explore their meaning;</td>
<td>• identify difficult areas in the text (e.g., use sticky notes to mark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• teaches a wide range of text features and reviews text features</td>
<td>“hot spots”);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>previously taught;</td>
<td>• use a variety of strategies to determine the meaning of new words,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• prompts students to select and use appropriate strategies for handling</td>
<td>text features, and figurative language, and seek clarification when</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confusions while reading, and models the process for them;</td>
<td>needed;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• discusses with students how strategies and/or new information introduced</td>
<td>• use “fix-up” strategies such as rereading, reading ahead, reviewing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prior to reading can be applied when reading the text, and models the</td>
<td>what they have read before, asking a peer, or cross-checking;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>process for them;</td>
<td>• determine/locate the important ideas and key information and events in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• discusses with students how they were able to apply comprehension</td>
<td>the reading passage;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strategies independently;</td>
<td>• draw conclusions and inferences based on the text;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• uses graphic organizers to help students highlight key information;</td>
<td>• listen to responses, comments, and decisions of peers and incorporate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• observes students’ use of comprehension strategies and records</td>
<td>them into their own thinking about the text when appropriate;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>observations in anecdotal notes;</td>
<td>• retell the story or parts of the story;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• analyses information about individual students’ use of comprehension</td>
<td>• summarize, analyse, and synthesize information from the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strategies in oral and written situations;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• monitors students’ successes and needs and uses this key information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to set goals for future instruction.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reading Comprehension 8.7
As instruction proceeds, teachers should follow a “gradual release of responsibility” model (Pearson and Gallagher, 1983), transferring increasing responsibility to the students. Teachers need to ensure that each step of the process is supported and that students are prepared for each phase as it occurs.

**Gradual Release of Responsibility Model**

1. The teacher models the strategy and explains it to students.

2. The teacher guides the students in the application of the strategy and gradually moves the responsibility to the students.

3. Students practise applying the strategy, and the teacher provides feedback.

4. Students apply the strategy independently.

In this process, teachers begin by demonstrating the strategies through modelling and/or thinking aloud. Subsequent use of coaching and instruction will help students consolidate the strategies.

**Comprehension Strategies and the Developmental Stages of Reading**

Reading comprehension strategies such as the following may be taught, modelled, and practised at each developmental stage of reading. Strategies from an earlier stage should be reviewed and used at the higher levels. The earlier strategies may form the foundation for the more complex ones that are introduced at later stages, or may simply be applied to more complex texts.

**Sample Sequence for Introducing Reading Comprehension Strategies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent Readers</th>
<th>Early Readers</th>
<th>Fluent Readers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - previewing to identify topic, purpose, important elements, including:  
  - scanning (e.g., picture walk)  
  - looking for and identifying text features (e.g., pictures, diagrams, titles)  
  - making predictions about content (e.g., imagining or visualizing what might happen) | - previewing to identify topic, purpose, important elements, including:  
  - scanning (a line or paragraph)  
  - examining text features (e.g., subtitles, captions, graphs, diagrams, pictures)  
  - making predictions (e.g., imagining or visualizing what might happen) | - previewing to identify topic, purpose, important elements, including:  
  - scanning for information  
  - examining more complex text features  
  - making predictions |

All strategies need to be modelled and explained repeatedly before students apply them independently to their reading practice.
Sample Sequence for Introducing Reading Comprehension Strategies (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent Readers</th>
<th>Early Readers</th>
<th>Fluent Readers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• vocabulary development (e.g., to learn meanings of new words and extend vocabulary)</td>
<td>• further vocabulary development (e.g., to learn meaning of new words and understand simple figurative language)</td>
<td>• using and understanding more complex figurative language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• activating prior knowledge about topics, ideas, language, including:</td>
<td>• activating prior knowledge about topics, ideas, language, including:</td>
<td>• activating prior knowledge about topics, ideas, language, including:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– brainstorming about a topic</td>
<td>– brainstorming about a topic</td>
<td>– brainstorming about a topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– reviewing vocabulary</td>
<td>– reviewing vocabulary</td>
<td>– reviewing vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• monitoring understanding, including:</td>
<td>• monitoring understanding and thinking, including:</td>
<td>• monitoring understanding and thinking (e.g., by revisiting portions of the text)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– using “fix-up” strategies (e.g., reading ahead, rereading, reviewing what has been read before, asking a peer, cross-checking)</td>
<td>– using “fix-up” strategies</td>
<td>• providing evidence (details) for responses to text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– asking questions</td>
<td>– asking questions</td>
<td>• identifying cause and effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– creating pictures in their minds based on the story</td>
<td>– integrating cueing systems (semantic, syntactic, graphophonic)*</td>
<td>• using descriptions in the text to create visual images</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• making simple inferences (e.g., about characters’ feelings)</td>
<td>• making inferences</td>
<td>• making generalizations, judgements, and decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• making links to self (e.g., “I have a dog, too.”) and to background knowledge</td>
<td>• creating visual images in their minds of what they are reading</td>
<td>• analysing, comparing, and evaluating information and writer’s style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• noting details and sequence of events and using the information (e.g., to describe, retell)</td>
<td>• sequencing</td>
<td>• asking questions that may go beyond the text</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Cueing systems are discussed in Chapter 2: Overview of Effective Instruction, and in Chapter 6: Guided Reading. See the glossary as well.

The teaching of comprehension strategies and skills may focus initially on whole-group direct instruction. Students may then apply these strategies and skills in teacher-guided small groups using instructional-level texts, and later during reading activities such as literature circles, readers’ theatre, or other types of responses to a text they have read.

“... reading educators often describe teaching comprehension strategies as ‘going over’ the strategies with students. Effectively teaching comprehension strategies requires more than ‘going over’ these ideas; it requires direct instruction: explaining, demonstrating, guiding, practising, and reflecting.”

(Allen and McLaughlin, 2002, p. 20)
Steps in the Teaching Process

The following outline describes the steps involved in teaching a reading comprehension strategy.

- The teacher selects a text that is appropriate for the specific reading comprehension strategy being taught (e.g., developing schema, making predictions, examining text features, identifying the main idea).
- The teacher models the comprehension strategy (for the whole class) using a think-aloud approach. The teacher explains the specific comprehension strategy and how it works, or elicits this information from students. It is important to identify the strategy so that students will know the correct terminology (e.g., predicting, inferring).
- The teacher coaches students in the application of the strategy (during shared or guided reading).
- The teacher provides opportunities (and scaffolded support) for students to practise the comprehension strategy (during independent reading).
- The teacher encourages students to reflect on their application of the strategy, as developmentally appropriate (e.g., in a discussion with the teacher, in a reflection journal);
- The teacher reflects on students’ ability to apply the strategy and uses this information for future planning.

Whole-group instruction is appropriate for the initial steps in the process – modelling and explaining. Whole-group instruction provides students with a sense of community. As well, when students share their diverse responses, all students develop a better understanding of the material being taught.

Whole-group direct instruction is followed by small-group guided instruction. During small-group guided instruction, the teacher:

- reviews one or a few previously taught strategies from read-alouds and shared reading lessons;
- coaches students in the application of the newly taught strategy during shared reading of a selected text;
- supports students in their application of this strategy during guided reading;
- supports student reflection about how this strategy helps them construct meaning from the text;
- encourages student use of this strategy in other literacy situations (e.g., to assist learning in other subject areas).
The teacher then provides opportunities for students to practise strategies during independent reading (which may include small-group discussion and activities). During this part of the process, the teacher observes strategies used by students and reflects on individual students’ ability to apply these comprehension strategies independently. This information guides the teacher in planning for future instruction and in determining the level of support required to build comprehension for individual students.

**Vocabulary Development**

Students learn various “word-solving” techniques to discover the meaning of unfamiliar words and phrases (see Chapter 2, p. 2.7, Chapter 5, p. 5.12, and Chapter 9, p. 9.20). However, genuine comprehension of a text may be difficult to achieve if students must constantly stop reading to “look up” or “solve” new words. Particularly for emergent and early readers, comprehension is enhanced when teachers provide explicit instruction in new vocabulary related to a particular theme prior to reading a text. With factual texts especially (but not exclusively), teachers need to introduce new vocabulary through “before reading” activities. These previously taught words then become part of the prior knowledge that students activate as they begin to engage with a text as readers. Teachers also need to provide students with opportunities during and after reading to review new words and use them in different contexts.

In vocabulary development, therefore, as in most areas of learning, the teacher’s role is twofold: (1) to teach students (directly and indirectly) how words look and sound, what they mean, and how they are used, and (2) to teach and model the process of learning new words so that students may become increasingly independent in their

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**Vocabulary Development**

- Vocabulary should be taught both directly and indirectly.
- Repetition and multiple exposures to vocabulary items are important.
- Learning in rich contexts is valuable for vocabulary learning.
- Vocabulary tasks should be restructured when necessary.
- Vocabulary learning should entail active engagement in learning tasks.
- Computer technology can be used to help teach vocabulary.
- Vocabulary can be acquired through incidental learning.
- How vocabulary is assessed and evaluated can have differential effects on instruction.
- Dependence on a single vocabulary instruction method will not result in optimal learning.

(National Reading Panel, 2000, p. 4-27)
vocabulary development. Although the "modelling" aspect of instruction is not always explicit in the outline below, teachers need to consciously talk about each step in the teaching/learning process as it occurs, to ensure that students develop an understanding of the learning techniques being used and how to apply them. Modelling would also include using new words when talking to students.

Vocabulary should be taught both directly and indirectly during reading instruction. Vocabulary instruction includes:

- introduction of specific vocabulary from new texts;
- explicit teaching of new vocabulary, prior to a lesson (e.g., modelling and explaining, providing synonyms);
- repetition and multiple exposures, formal and informal, to the vocabulary;
- informal exposure to new words through reading;
- instruction in how to use context to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words;
- use of word charts or other environmental print.

### Steps in the Teaching Process

The following outline describes the steps involved in the explicit teaching of new vocabulary:

- The teacher identifies a number of words in the text selected for the reading lesson that are important for understanding the selection, but that are not explained in the text.
- The teacher teaches the new words during the "before reading" stage of the lesson (e.g., by modelling their use in sentences, explaining, engaging students in word-solving activities).

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"... a most effective way to produce large-scale vocabulary growth is through an activity that is all too often interrupted in the process of reading instruction: Reading. ... One's understanding of a word's meanings arises gradually as the word is encountered in more and more contexts. Although the probability of learning a word from just one exposure is quite low, given an average amount of reading, a child would learn about 800 to 1,200 words a year reasonably well ... (Nagy, Anderson, and Herman, 1987, p. 262). This is about three to four times the number of words often taught each year as vocabulary words."

(Weaver, 2002, p. 57)
• The teacher draws attention to the new vocabulary in the "during reading" stage, using a think-aloud process. New vocabulary may be written on chart paper and posted for easy access and review.
• The teacher provides opportunities for students to practise using the new words orally and in their writing in the "after reading" stage.
• The teacher encourages students to reflect on their learning.
• The teacher reflects on students’ ability to apply new learning in other contexts and uses this information for future planning.

Teaching Students How to Monitor Their Understanding

Monitoring understanding is a process that requires students to listen to themselves when they are reading to ensure that what they are reading makes sense. They should be shown how to use a variety of strategies to check their comprehension. For example, at various points in their reading, they might ask themselves questions, retell or paraphrase the story or argument, activate prior knowledge, and visualize, and then use a range of “fix-up” strategies to try to correct misreadings or misunderstandings.

Modelling the application of comprehension strategies through self-talk (“thinking aloud”) is an effective way to teach students how to monitor their own comprehension. Think-alouds may be used in whole-class, small-group, and individual instruction. The diagram that follows outlines how thinking aloud can be used to model the process of self-monitoring during reading. [See also Chapter 4: Read-Alouds.]
Teaching Students How to Use an Enquiry Approach to Reading

Teachers have long known that one of their roles in helping students understand texts is to ask them questions about what they have read. Research now confirms (Raphael, 1984) that when readers ask themselves questions before, during, and after reading, deeper comprehension and a more thoughtful reading of the text follow.

Both the teacher and the students play a role in the application of the "asking questions" strategy. Initially, the teacher asks questions about the text for various purposes, with students providing the answers. In asking questions, the teacher models for students how to use an enquiry approach both to understand the text and to learn from it in various ways. As students begin to generate their own questions before, during, and after reading, they strengthen their ability to read effectively and independently and learn to think critically and creatively about what they read.

Developing Higher-Order Thinking Skills Through Questioning

Through a variety of questions (such as those listed in Appendices 8-6a and 8-6b), students can understand the content of different types of texts. As well, through effective questioning by the teacher, students can be encouraged to achieve higher levels of comprehension and thinking. The table below shows the different levels of thinking skills (from least complex to most complex), defines each, and provides sample verbs for use in questioning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thinking Skills</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Sample Verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Student recalls or recognizes information, ideas, and principles in the approximate form in which they were learned.</td>
<td>write, say, list, tell, name, define, choose, recite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>Student translates, comprehends, or interprets information based on prior learning.</td>
<td>summarize, explain, describe, paraphrase, find</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>Student selects, transfers, and uses data and principles to complete a problem or task with a minimum of direction.</td>
<td>use, solve, demonstrate, apply, construct, show, model, simulate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Student distinguishes, classifies, and relates the assumptions, hypotheses, evidence, or structure of a statement or question.</td>
<td>analyse, categorize, compare, contrast, classify, sort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>Student originates, integrates, and combines ideas into a product, plan, or proposal that is new to him or her.</td>
<td>create, design, develop, plan, predict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Student appraises, assesses, or critiques on the basis of specific standards and criteria.</td>
<td>recommend, evaluate, critique, justify, judge, decide, defend</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: See Appendix 8-6c for sample questions related to each level of thinking skills.
The taxonomy functions more or less as a hierarchy, with the exception of the two highest levels, “Synthesis” and “Evaluation”. Both rely on “Analysis” and may function at similar levels of difficulty. Synthesis requires rearranging information in a new way, while evaluation requires a comparison to a standard, followed by a judgement.

Bloom’s taxonomy may be used in conjunction with the “3 R’s” framework ("Retell, Relate, Reflect" [Schwartz and Bone, 1995]; see the table on pp. 8.16–8.17) to support and enhance student comprehension and higher-order thinking.

In general, activities associated with “Retelling” tend to correspond to Bloom’s “Knowledge” and “Comprehension” categories. “Relating” activities are generally consistent with Bloom’s “Application” and “Analysis” categories, and “Reflecting” generally correlates with Bloom’s “Synthesis” and “Evaluation” categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bloom’s Taxonomy</th>
<th>The 3 R’s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge, Comprehension</td>
<td>Retelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application, Analysis</td>
<td>Relating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis, Evaluation</td>
<td>Reflecting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When engaging in comprehension-enhancing activities associated with the 3 R’s, students must be able to generate their own questions. The following table links the 3 R’s – retelling, relating, and reflecting – to the categories of knowledge and skills identified in the achievement chart in the language curriculum document (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1997, p. 9) and to various specific skills outlined in the curriculum expectations for the Reading strand. The table also lists sample questions students might ask that will help them develop and demonstrate the specified skills and achieve different levels of reading comprehension.
### Sample Student Questions Based on the 3 R’s

#### Retell

**Reasoning/Communication**
- **Retell:** restate in own words; rephrase  
  - What did the author tell us?
- **Identify**
  - What happened?
  - When did it happen?
  - Where did it happen?
- **Describe**
  - How did it happen?
  - What else did I notice?
- **Interpret**
  - What does it mean?
- **Express thoughts**
  - What do I know about ...?
- **Use context**
  - What information from the text can help me understand ...?

- **Distinguish between fact and fiction**
  - Is this real or make-believe?
  - What words should I use when I retell the story to make it clear that this is make-believe?

**Organization of Ideas**
- Organize ideas; arrange in sequence  
  - What happened first? What happened next?

**Application of Conventions**
- Use knowledge of word order, sentence structure, grammar, and text structure to locate and understand information  
  - When I retell the story, what verb tense will I use?
  - What verb tense was used most in the story?
  - What does this tell me about when the action took place?

#### Relate

**Reasoning/Communication**
- Connect to personal experience  
  - What experiences have I had that this reminds me of?
  - What did I already know about ...?
  - How does this text connect with what I already know?
  - How does this relate to ...?
- **Express thoughts and feelings**
  - What do I think of ...?
  - How does this make me feel ...?
- **Develop own opinions**
  - Do I agree with ...?
  - How do I feel about ...?
- **Infer**
  - If I know ... and ... from the story, what does that tell me about ...?
- **Explain**
  - What do I know about what happened in this part of the story?

- **Interpret**
  - Could that sentence mean that ...?
- **Distinguish between fact and fiction**
  - How do I know if this is real or make-believe?
  - Have I read another story like this before?
- **Rephrase**
  - How could I say this in my own words?

**Organization of Ideas**
- Organize ideas; arrange in sequence  
  - Can I visualize the order of events in this story?

**Application of Conventions**
- Use knowledge of word order, sentence structure, grammar, and text structure to locate and understand information  
  - What do I already know about words that might be used at the start of a narrative?
  - What do I already know about words that would be found in a procedure?
Sample Student Questions Based on the 3 R’s (cont.)

Reflect
Reasoning/Communication
- Predict
  - What else might happen?
  - What if . . . ?
  - I wonder if . . . ?
- Suggest
  - What if this character had . . . ?
- Explain
  - Can I explain why?
- Express thoughts and feelings
  - What questions do I have about . . . ?
  - What do I want to find out about . . . ?
- Develop own opinions
  - Would I have done the same thing as the author, illustrator, or characters?
- Interpret
  - What strategies did I use to make sense of the story?
- Infer
  - How did I know that . . . ?
  - What other stories have I read that would help me understand . . . ?
- Distinguish between fact and fiction
  - Is this story real or make-believe? What clues help me to decide?

Organization of Ideas
- Organize ideas; arrange in sequence
  - How would the story come out if the events had occurred in a different order?

Application of Conventions
- Use knowledge of word order, sentence structure, grammar, and text structure to locate and understand information
  - What does it mean when:
    - quotation marks are used?
    - a word is written using a capital letter?
    - a sentence starts with a verb?

Note: See Appendices 8-6d and 8-6e for additional sample questions.

Instructional Tools and Activities

Teachers may use a variety of tools and activities to help students understand texts and to support the teaching of reading comprehension strategies. Some sample tools and activities for use before, during, and after reading are described below:

- **Mind maps.** These help the reader to activate prior knowledge about an author or a topic, or to organize ideas from the text after reading. The use of mind maps can be especially helpful to students who are not ready for paragraph writing but who can express their thinking using key words [see Appendix 8-1].

- **Anticipation (or prediction) guides.** These may be used to motivate students, to help them activate their prior knowledge, and to help them start thinking about what they are going to read. The teacher creates a number of statements that will stimulate discussion about issues in a text. As a class, students discuss each statement and note how many students agree or disagree with it. During and after reading, students look for evidence to support or refute the statements in order to confirm or modify their original responses [see Appendix 8-2 for an example].
• **Examining text features.** The teacher helps students to recognize and name the text features that occur in factual and fictional texts and explore the characteristics of various genres (see Appendix 8-3). In a class discussion, students identify the information provided for the reader by various text features (e.g., title, pictures, labels, captions, maps, charts, diagrams).

• **Directed reading/thinking activities.** This strategy involves the three processes of predicting, reading, and confirming predictions or opinions. The text may be "chunked" into manageable portions of a few pages. Students preview the portion of text and note important text elements, especially how the illustrations help to tell the story. They make predictions about what they think will happen, then read the assigned pages and discuss the accuracy of their predictions. The process is then repeated for the next assigned portion of text (see Appendix 8-4).

• **Graphic organizers.** These may be used before, during, and/or after the reading lesson to give students a framework for categorizing and recording key information. (See Appendix 8-5: T-charts and the appendix to Chapter 10: The Role of Writing in Reading Instruction for samples. For an example of the use of an organizer in the context of a lesson, see Sample Lesson 1 in Chapter 4: Read-Alouds.)

• **Word sorts based on vocabulary in texts.** Word sorts help students to sort vocabulary terms into various categories and to recognize key concepts in the text. Teachers or students may determine the categories for the word sorts, but open sorts encourage students to find more than one way to classify the words.

• **Readers’ theatre.** A narrator and a number of readers read and dramatize a rehearsed story or a story adaptation for an audience. The readers demonstrate their understanding of the story through their dramatic portrayal of their roles. Typically, in readers' theatre, a small group of students would read a role in the play in unison (choral reading).

• **Radio reading.** This activity incorporates the strategies of asking questions and retelling. One student (the “radio announcer”) reads a selected passage of reasonable length. Other students (the “radio audience”) listen carefully. The announcer, upon completion, asks, “What did I read?” The students assist one another in retelling as much information as possible.

OVERVIEW OF THE TEXT: The theme of the song is the meaning of friendship as depicted in the relationship of a young boy and an old man.

CONTEXT: This is the first time students have seen this text, although they have read songs in chart form on several occasions. The students have already been made aware of the importance of questions. Over the past few weeks they have been generating questions and know the difference between closed and open-ended questions.

PURPOSE: This lesson emphasizes the skills of generating questions and inferring as part of monitoring comprehension. Students gather information from the illustrations, from the text, and from background information and prior knowledge to develop their own questions and to make inferences.

TIME FRAME
• 3 days*
• daily group lesson in addition to independent activities

MATERIALS
• a big book called *Talk to Me*
• sticky notes
• one sheet of paper to hide the title
• chart paper
• markers
• an information grid for each student
• a large sheet of craft paper for every 2–3 students
• word cards
• glue

ADAPTATIONS AND EXTENSIONS
• The strategy of formulating questions is open-ended and allows for a range of responses from all ability levels. Strategies such as building and rereading the question chart over several days and explaining how answers were figured out give students added time to think and consolidate their understanding. Consequently, there is no need in this lesson for specific adaptations and extensions.

*Shared reading lessons often extend over five days. However, the lesson presented here focuses only on reading comprehension and is taught over the course of three days. Teachers may wish to add lessons for Days 4 and 5, based on the same text, that focus on phonics/phonemic awareness and word study.
ONTARIO CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS (GRADES 1 AND 2)

Students will:

Reading
• use their knowledge and experience to understand what they read (Grade 1);
• use a variety of reading strategies to understand a piece of writing (e.g., reread, predict content, ask questions) (Grade 2);
• express clear responses to written materials, relating the ideas in them (thoughts, feelings, experiences) to their own knowledge and experience (Grades 1 and 2);

Oral and Visual Communication
• ask questions about their immediate environment and offer personal opinions (Grade 1);
• present ideas in speech in a coherent sequence (Grade 1);
• listen to discussions on familiar topics and ask relevant questions (Grade 2).

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES
The teacher observes and notes students' ability to:
• formulate their own questions about the story;
• respond to the questions, giving evidence from the story;
• draw inferences from the text.

REFLECTIONS FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHER
Students:
• How does asking questions help me to understand what I am reading?
• How did I know the answers that weren't in the song?

Teacher:
• What did the students learn about asking questions?
• Were students able to see that they had inferred some of their answers?
• What would have helped students to ask more questions or deeper questions?

PROCEDURE

Day 1

Before Reading

The teacher:
• talks to students about the way effective readers ask questions before, during, and after reading. The teacher shows students the cover of the book with the title hidden and asks if they have any questions about the book;
• records students’ questions under the heading “Before Reading” on a chart titled “Our Questions”. The teacher may want to add one or two questions. For example:
  – I notice that the boy’s eyes are turned down. His mouth is drooping, and he is standing so still and quietly. I think the boy is unhappy. Why is the boy so unhappy?
  – The man seems pleased to see the boy. Why has the boy come to see the man?

• uncovers and reads the title, then asks for more questions and records them;
• explains that as he or she reads this book, students should think about the questions that occur to them.

During Reading
The teacher:
• sings or reads the complete text on the first reading;
• starting again, sings or reads pages 2 to 5, then invites questions from the group. Some questions might be:
  – How did the window get broken? Why are two of the boys running away?
  – Why is the one boy staying? Who is the older man? How are Mom and Dad feeling? Why?
• records the questions on the chart under the heading “During Reading”;
• continues singing/reading the book to page 11, then elicits and records students’ questions;
• sings/reads the book to the end, then elicits and records students’ questions;
• together with the students, rereads the questions on the chart and encourages students to explain what made them ask their questions.

After Reading
The teacher:
• asks if students have any other questions now that they have finished reading the text, then records questions under the heading “After Reading”;
• invites students to sing or mouth the words, or to whisper the words as he or she reads/sings and points to phrases to guide the reading.

Day 2
Before Reading
The teacher:
• rereads the question chart created on Day 1, and reminds students that thoughtful readers ask questions before, during, and after reading;
• asks the students to think quietly about whether they know the answers to any of the questions now, and to raise their hand if they do;
• asks the students to give their answers;
• encourages the students to explain how they thought out their answers.
During Reading

The teacher:
- together with students, rereads/sings the complete text;
- asks students if they have the answer to any more of the questions, and invites them to explain how they thought out their answers. (Now that students have a deeper understanding of the text, they will have inferred some of the answers);
- points out to students that some of their answers were not stated explicitly in the text, but came from the ideas and pictures they formed in their heads based on the clues and the pictures in the text. When the understanding comes from the ideas and pictures they have formed in their heads, it is called "inferring".

After Reading

The teacher:
- divides the class into two groups, and has the groups alternate singing one page at a time.

Day 3

The teacher:
- rereads the complete text with the students, without interruption;
- has students work with a partner to act out a conversation that the boy and the old man might have about the problem;
- asks some students to share their dramatizations;
- points out that some of their dialogue came directly from the text - for example, "So you need a friend," or "So your Mom and Dad are mad..." - but that other parts of the dialogue were created inside their heads. They created these ideas to help them interpret what was going on in the story;
- reminds the students that thoughtful readers use not only the information from the text and the pictures, but also the ideas and pictures they formed in their heads to help them understand or interpret the text.

OVERVIEW OF THE TEXT: The story follows the life of Ba, a young Vietnamese girl, who collects a lotus seed from the imperial garden of her emperor to serve as a memento of a time in her childhood. She takes the seed with her when she moves to a new country, and to a new life.

CONTEXT: A group of students in a Grade 3 class is gathered together to reinforce the comprehension strategy of asking questions. The teacher has modelled the strategy many times during read-aloud sessions and has scaffolded the learning for the class by asking similar questions as part of the whole-class discussion.

PURPOSE: The teacher’s purpose in this lesson is to scaffold the strategy of asking questions about the text to aid students in understanding the text at a deeper level.

TIME FRAME
• 1 day
• 15–20-minute lesson followed by student reading of the text

MATERIALS
• A copy of “The Lotus Seed” is required for each member of the group.

ADAPTATIONS AND EXTENSIONS
• Students will be grouped on the basis of similar needs, so no adaptations are required.

ONTARIO CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS (GRADE 3)
Students will:
Reading
• begin to make inferences while reading;
• use familiar vocabulary and the context to determine the meaning of a passage containing unfamiliar words;

Oral and Visual Communication
• listen to discussion and ask questions to clarify meaning.

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES
• Observe the comprehension skills/strategies students use and the kinds of questions they formulate.
• Record any relevant data in anecdotal notes.
REFLECTIONS FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHER

Students:
• Did the questioning strategy help me to understand the text?
• What did I learn about myself as a reader?
• What information (e.g., about lotus seeds) did I learn from reading the text?

Teacher:
• Were students able to think and ask questions at a deeper level?
• What comprehension strategies were students applying well?
• What comprehension strategies require further teaching?

PROCEDURE

Day 1

Before Reading
The teacher:
• introduces the text by modelling questions about the title. For example:
  – What is a lotus seed?
  – I wonder if this is what a lotus flower looks like. (Refer to the illustration on page 101.)
  – I wonder what is so important about a lotus seed.
  – In what country does a lotus plant grow?
• discusses the pictures on pages 100 and 101 in relation to the title;
• encourages students to formulate questions based on the two illustrations. It may be necessary to prompt students with questions such as the following:
  – What do the pictures tell us about lotus seeds or lotus plants?
  – What is the illustrator showing us about the character on page 100?
  – How is this character feeling?
  – What does the clothing tell us about the character on page 100?
  – Who is in the garden of lotus flowers?
  – What is her relationship to the character on page 100?
• asks students to look at the illustrations on pages 102 and 103 and think of independent questions about the pictures that will help them understand the text;
• after giving students a few moments to reflect independently, asks them to share their questions;
• following a detailed discussion of their questions, indicates to students that there are some words in this story that are not English words, but that they can infer the meaning of the words from the context (e.g., “the ao dai she wore that day”).

During Reading
The teacher:
• asks students to read pages 100, 102, and 103 quietly to themselves;
• uses questions such as the following to lead an open-ended discussion on the text:
  – How did the questions you asked before reading help you to understand the text? Did they help you to read some of the new or challenging words?
– Did any of the questions we had about the text before reading get answered in the text?
– What questions do you have now?

• asks students to find the Vietnamese words in the text and discuss how they were able to infer their meaning;
• asks students to complete the reading of the text independently at their desks or in a quiet spot in the classroom;
• instructs students to use the same format of asking questions that they used before reading to help them understand the text;
• instructs students to record questions, difficult words, and so on, on sticky notes.

After Reading

The teacher:

• asks students to discuss the questions they recorded on sticky notes and to consider whether the answers were revealed explicitly in the conclusion of the story or whether students were able to infer the answers from clues in the story;
• brings the group together at another time to discuss any questions that may have occurred to them since they first read the text.
Appendix 8-I: Sample Mind Map

Mind maps are a useful way of summarizing prior knowledge or information from reading. Both text and pictures can be used. This is an example of a Grade 2 mind map used to summarize information that students have read about animals.
Appendix 8-2: Anticipation Guide

An anticipation (or prediction) guide is a pre-reading strategy that stimulates students' prior knowledge and encourages them to make predictions. The teacher prepares from five to eight statements related to the main ideas in the preselected reading. Students think about the statements and decide whether they agree or disagree, on the basis of their own knowledge. This is followed by whole-class or small-group discussion, which enables students to share the reasons for their responses. Students (or the teacher) read the material to confirm predictions. The following is a sample of an anticipation guide based on the story Christopher, Please Clean Up Your Room! by Itah Sadu (Richmond Hill, ON: Scholastic Canada, 1993).

**ANTICIPATION GUIDE**

*Christopher, Please Clean Up Your Room!*

By Itah Sadu

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children should be able to keep their rooms any way they want.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents should take away privileges if a child has a messy room.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A messy room is unhealthy.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We should always keep our rooms organized and clean.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing chores and errands for your parents will help you grow up to be a good person.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 8-3: Characteristics of Different Types of Texts/Genres

The following table lists characteristics of different types of texts and genres. Teachers should provide explicit instruction about the purpose and features or characteristics of these and other genres before, during, and/or after reading. This information will support students’ reading comprehension, text selection, and attempts to write new texts using the same model.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative</th>
<th>Poem</th>
<th>Recount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
<td>□ entertains, engages, provides an escape to a different world/time/setting</td>
<td>□ expresses/activates thoughts, feelings, or imaginings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Characteristics</strong></td>
<td>□ progresses sequentially</td>
<td>□ is written in verse, either formal or informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ has defined characters</td>
<td>□ may follow a specific rhythm or pattern; may rhyme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ may contain dialogue</td>
<td>□ is expressive; makes use of descriptive, emotive, and/or figurative language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ usually uses the past tense</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ may use descriptive language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ usually has a defined setting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ describes a storyline, plot, or problem that is usually resolved by the end of the story</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Report</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Letter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
<td>□ provides an organized, factual record of information</td>
<td>□ explains an experience or occurrence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Characteristics</strong></td>
<td>□ uses precise, subject-specific language</td>
<td>□ explains a cause-and-effect relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ uses an impersonal, objective tone</td>
<td>□ progresses sequentially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ usually includes a definition, classification, description, or summary of the topic</td>
<td>□ uses the timeless present tense and an impersonal, objective tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ uses the timeless present tense</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ follows a specific organizational pattern</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td>Persuasive Text</td>
<td>Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
<td>□ presents an argument or point of view</td>
<td>□ provides an evaluation or judgement of a text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ gives instructions or tells how to do something</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Characteristics</strong></td>
<td>□ begins with a position statement or thesis</td>
<td>□ tells what a book or text is about; lists features and summarizes events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ progresses sequentially; organizes information in logical, step-by-step order</td>
<td>□ includes main idea and supporting details</td>
<td>□ uses the past tense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ has mainly factual content presented in an objective manner</td>
<td>□ uses a logical approach to persuade</td>
<td>□ tells what was liked/disliked about the book or text; may include personal feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ uses words that relate to time: first, then, later, before, etc.</td>
<td>□ may include comparison-contrast and/or information from research</td>
<td>□ provides reasons for the evaluation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 8-4: Directed Thinking Activity

A directed thinking activity is an opportunity for teachers to guide students in making predictions about an unfamiliar text. Students make predictions and then confirm, modify, or reject these predictions after the student or the teacher reads the material. The predictions are based on aspects of the text such as title, cover, pictures, and/or sentences. The following is an example of a directed thinking activity based on the story *Brave Irene* by William Steig (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1986). The teacher reads the title, shows the cover, and reads the first page.

**Directed Thinking Activity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prediction</th>
<th>Confirm, modify, or reject</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irene will take the dress to the duchess for her mother.</td>
<td>Confirm</td>
<td>Irene slipped out with the big box with the dress in it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene will have a hard time getting to the duchess because of the storm.</td>
<td>Confirm</td>
<td>She sat in the snow in pain; she didn’t know if she could go on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene will get lost in the storm.</td>
<td>Confirm</td>
<td>She was in the middle of nowhere – lost.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene will not get the dress to the duchess in time for the ball.</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>The duchess wore the gown at the ball.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 8-5: T-charts

### Similarities between two stories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book 1:</th>
<th>Book 2:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Strengths of main character

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Weaknesses of main character</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Problems faced by main character

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Solutions to problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>How the experience affected characters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Characteristics of main character

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of main character</th>
<th>Evidence from text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Decision to be made by a character

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 8-6: Questions That Support Reading Comprehension

8-6a General Questions About Texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before Reading</th>
<th>During Reading</th>
<th>After Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ What do you think this book will be about?</td>
<td>□ What is important?</td>
<td>□ What did you learn about the book or about yourself as a reader?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ What words or phrases might be in this book?</td>
<td>□ Do you notice a pattern?</td>
<td>□ What important facts could you tell someone?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ What do you already know about this topic?</td>
<td>□ Who is telling the story?</td>
<td>□ Can you tell me, in your own words, what happened?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ What do you predict will be in this book?</td>
<td>□ What do you think this word means?</td>
<td>□ Does this remind you of anything?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ Are your predictions correct?</td>
<td>□ Have you read other books on this topic?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ How does the author show us what the character is like?</td>
<td>□ What character did you find the most interesting? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ Where does this story take place?</td>
<td>□ How did we know what the author was thinking?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ Can you visualize this part of the story?</td>
<td>□ Why is this important?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ Do you want to change your prediction now that you know that . . . ?</td>
<td>□ What do you still want to know about this topic?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ Is the story making sense?</td>
<td>□ What evidence supports that idea?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ Where did you find this information?</td>
<td>□ What are some interesting facts about this?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8-6b After Reading: Questions About Fictional and Factual Texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fictional</th>
<th>Factual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ What did you notice about the events in the story?</td>
<td>□ How is the information organized?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ What was the problem that arose in the story?</td>
<td>□ What are some interesting facts about this topic?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ What was the solution to the problem?</td>
<td>□ Where did you find this information?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Describe the setting of the story.</td>
<td>□ What evidence supports this information?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ What was the main idea of the story? How does the author tell us?</td>
<td>□ What does ... mean?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ What do we know about the characters?</td>
<td>□ What do you still want to know about this topic?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ How would you describe the characters?</td>
<td>□ What does this graphic tell us?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Who is telling the story?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Knowledge
- What happened in the story?
- What colour was the ...?
- How big was the ...?
- Who brought the ...?
- What did ... wear?

### Comprehension
- What does this mean?
- What did you find out?
- How would you describe the characters, setting, plot?
- How does the author show what the characters are like?
- Retell the story in your own words.

### Application
- What do you know now that you did not know before reading the story?
- Does the title match the story?
- What would a map of the area/setting look like?
- What would ... wear to school?
- What would ... want to eat for lunch?

### Analysis
- Can you sort and classify the different ... in this story?
- Compare characters. How are they alike? How are they different?

### Synthesis
- List all of the different ... in this story. Make up a chart showing each according to category.
- What happened in the story that caused the ...?

### Evaluation
- What would be another good title for this book? Why?
- Retell the story as a poem.
- How might this story have turned out differently if the setting were changed? If one character were changed?
- Describe how Character X felt about ... Do you think he/she was influenced to feel that way? Why?
- Decide which character is the nicest. Which is the most clever? Why?
- Which was your favourite part? Why?
- What would you say to the author about this book? Why?
- Why do you think the character did that?
- How would you defend the character’s actions?
- What was the most important event? Why?
- Why was it important for that event to occur?
- What would you do in the same situation as this character? Why?
- Was that a good idea or a bad one? Why?
- Would you recommend this book to someone else? Why?
### 8-6d Questions to Help Students Make Connections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text to Text</th>
<th>Text to Self</th>
<th>Text to World</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ Does this remind you of another book?</td>
<td>□ How would you solve this problem?</td>
<td>□ Does this remind you of something that happened in the news?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ How is this book like/different from another book by the same author?</td>
<td>□ What images come to mind when you think about …?</td>
<td>□ Is this the same as … (a real-life situation/event)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Is the vocabulary in this book like that in another book?</td>
<td>□ What would you do in the same situation?</td>
<td>□ Has this ever happened before? Where? When?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Have you read about a setting like this before?</td>
<td>□ Is this like something that has happened to you?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Do you know of another book with the same theme? Which one?</td>
<td>□ Have you ever experienced this?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Do the illustrations remind you of another book?</td>
<td>□ How did this make you feel?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Can you think of another book in the same genre?</td>
<td>□ Have you ever felt this way?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ Would you ever do this?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ Do you agree with what the character did? Why?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 8-6e Questions to Promote Metacognitive Development

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ What problem-solving strategies did you use?</td>
<td>□ Why did you decide that?</td>
<td>□ Why did you decide that?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Were you reading effectively? How do you know?</td>
<td>□ Does this make sense?</td>
<td>□ Does this make sense?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ What did you learn about …?</td>
<td>□ Did you know something about this topic before reading the book?</td>
<td>□ Did you know something about this topic before reading the book?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ What do you think about …?</td>
<td>□ Does it fit in with what you already know about …?</td>
<td>□ Does it fit in with what you already know about …?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ What tells you that is so?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


9.

Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, and Word Study

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The Purpose of Instruction in Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, and Word Study

Research has shown that instruction and practice in phonemic awareness, phonics, and word study, offered within the context of a comprehensive reading program, improve students’ ability to identify words and decode texts (National Reading Panel, 2000). This instruction helps children become effective readers, but it is considered to be only part of an effective reading program.

Instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, and word study is not an end in itself. The skills acquired through such instruction are important not for themselves but for the role they play in helping students learn to read and write. Through instruction in the three areas, students develop skills in identifying sounds, matching sounds and letters, identifying patterns among letters and within words, identifying the function of root words, prefixes, and suffixes, and recognizing high-frequency words. By applying these skills, students can become both independent and strategic readers.

“All children need instruction, but some children need substantial amounts of truly high-quality teaching to learn to read and write alongside their peers. What all children need, and some need more of, is models, explanations and demonstrations of how reading is accomplished.” (Allington and Cunningham, 1996, p. 45)

An Overview of the Three Areas of Instruction

Phonemic awareness refers to the ability to focus on and manipulate the individual sounds, or phonemes (see glossary), in spoken words (National Reading Panel, 2000, p. 2.1). Instruction in phonemic awareness involves teaching students to hear, identify, and manipulate phonemes in syllables and words. Through instruction and practice, a student can, for example, identify that both shoe and go consist of two phonemes (although the words are composed of a different number of letters), or identify the three phonemes in the word dog and be able to manipulate these sounds to produce new words such as log or jog. With phonemic awareness, students can also string together individual sounds to form words or break words up into their constituent sounds.
Phonemic awareness is part of a broader cluster of skills that constitute phonological awareness. Phonological awareness refers to the ability to focus on and manipulate not only phonemes, but larger spoken units such as syllables and words. Phonological awareness activities include segmenting sentences into words, segmenting words into syllables, and blending syllables to make new words.

Phonics builds on the foundations of phonemic awareness, helping students to connect the sounds they hear with the print they see on the page in order to make meaning. Phonics instruction focuses on the relationship between letters, or graphemes (see glossary), in written language, and sounds, or phonemes, in spoken language. It involves teaching students how to use their knowledge of letter-sound relationships to read and spell words. As the Expert Panel on Early Reading in Ontario (2003, p. 17) notes, “In both the English and French writing systems, one letter may not necessarily represent one single sound, and so it is important that children receive systematic and explicit instruction about correspondences between the speech sounds and individual letters and groups of letters”.

Word study gives students the opportunity to practise high-frequency words so that they can recognize them automatically, thus increasing the fluency of their reading. They also learn word-solving strategies that they can use to read partially familiar or unfamiliar words (Expert Panel on Early Reading, 2003, p. 23). Word study provides students with opportunities to problem-solve while engaging in word manipulation, discovery, and play (e.g., looking for patterns in words).

Teachers need to help students become proficient word solvers who use skills developed through instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, and word study to read and write fluently. Instruction and practice in phonemic awareness, phonics, and word study should be systematic and explicit and should be linked to authentic literacy activities. For example, encountering words repeatedly in a range of reading activities (hearing them read aloud, reading the words with the teacher, and reading in a supported or independent activity) helps students build a bank of sight words (see glossary) that they can draw upon when using word-solving strategies to read new words. Students who have a solid reading vocabulary can focus on thinking and problem-solving strategies rather than having to concentrate constantly on solving words.

**The Emphasis of Instruction Over Time**

In the context of an effective reading program, instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, and/or word study should occur daily in the primary classroom. The emphasis given to each area will change over time as students progress through the stages of reading development. The pace of change will vary, depending on students’ needs.
For example, teachers devote more time to phonemic awareness in Kindergarten reading programs than in the later primary grades, where students spend more time on word study. Students at risk for reading difficulties may continue to need phonemic awareness and phonics instruction throughout the primary grades.

Instruction must be strategic and based on students' prior knowledge, so they can gradually apply knowledge and skills competently and confidently. Incremental instruction begins with teacher modelling, followed by shared and guided practice, and culminates in independent application.

**Planning Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, and Word Study Instruction**

In planning their approaches to instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, and word study, teachers need to be aware of students’ stages of reading development. Emergent readers, for example, need focused instruction and practice to promote phonemic awareness. With an understanding of each student’s level of reading development, the teacher can determine when it is appropriate to introduce new approaches and activities or to change the pace of instruction.

To support the acquisition and maintenance of skills in phonemic awareness, phonics, and word study, teachers should:

- base initial instruction on diagnostic assessment;
- understand that knowledge of letter-sound relationships develops over several years. Previously taught letter sounds should be reviewed, and instruction should continue based on diagnostic assessment of the current abilities of students;
• proceed with explicit and systematic instruction but modify the approach or the pace based on formative assessment of reading and writing. In phonics instruction, for example, the number of letter sounds introduced during a lesson should depend on the students’ grasp of the letter sounds introduced earlier;
• incorporate into the reading program daily opportunities for students to use chants, rhymes, songs, and sound play;
• create a print-rich environment with a wide variety of print resources (e.g., books, magazines, dictionaries, catalogues, chart stories, word lists);
• provide various activities that focus on learning high-frequency words;
• provide opportunities for students to identify, manipulate, and sequence letters of the alphabet, using games, songs, books, puzzles, tactile letters, and so on;
• provide opportunities for students to manipulate letters within words;
• create a word wall displaying high-frequency words that have been taught;
• encourage students to discuss ways to decode or solve new words;
• share assessment data from the end of the school year with next year’s teacher.

The following chart illustrates sample phonemic awareness, phonics, and word study activities and resources appropriate for each of the stages of reading development. Teachers should ensure that activities are linked to meaningful literacy activities during shared, guided, and/or independent reading.

### Activities and Resources for Each Stage of Reading Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent</th>
<th>Early</th>
<th>Fluent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• phonemic awareness activities such as rhyming, clapping rhythms, listening to sounds in words, manipulating sounds</td>
<td>• phonemic awareness activities such as rhyming and blending, segmenting, and manipulating syllables and sounds</td>
<td>• manipulating increasingly more complex words and phonemes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• alphabet activities (e.g., recognition and recall)</td>
<td>• activities focusing on letter-sound relationships with more complex letter sounds</td>
<td>• activities focusing on increasingly complex phonetic sounds (e.g., digraphs, diphthongs)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Observable Student Behaviours

The following behaviours give evidence of student progress in phonemic awareness, phonics, and word study. Students:

- demonstrate knowledge of letters and sounds and the relationship between the two;
- recognize familiar spelling or letter patterns;
- use the word wall to assist with reading and writing tasks;
- try to solve unfamiliar words in the texts they read by using a variety of word-solving strategies;
- understand that they are applying phonemic awareness skills, phonics, and word-solving strategies in reading and writing activities.

(continued)
### Activities and Resources for Each Stage of Reading Development (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent</th>
<th>Early</th>
<th>Fluent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• activities focusing on the most common letter-sound relationships</td>
<td>• introducing appropriate high-frequency words (e.g., <em>when, where</em>)</td>
<td>• introducing appropriate high-frequency words (e.g., <em>their/there</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• introducing appropriate high-frequency words (e.g., <em>and, the</em>)</td>
<td>• adding familiar high-frequency word to an interactive word wall</td>
<td>• adding familiar high-frequency words to an interactive word wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• adding familiar high-frequency words, beginning with students’ names, to an interactive word wall</td>
<td>• reinforcing previously learned high-frequency words</td>
<td>• reinforcing previously learned high-frequency words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• blending sounds to make simple words, while using letters to demonstrate the relationship between sounds and letters (e.g., adding magnetic letters to a board as each sound in a word is spoken)</td>
<td>• word-making activities (e.g., using magnetic letters to form high-frequency words)</td>
<td>• word-making activities with more complex words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• chanting, singing action songs, using finger plays (e.g., Tom Thumb)</td>
<td>• manipulating onsets and rimes (see glossary)</td>
<td>• activities focusing on complex rimes (e.g., -ought)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• environmental print in the classroom</td>
<td></td>
<td>• activities focusing on homonyms, synonyms, antonyms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Phonemic Awareness

The importance of phonemic awareness in an early reading program is clear. Studies have found that “phonemic awareness measured at the beginning of Kindergarten is one of the two best predictors [along with letter knowledge] of how well children will learn to read” (National Reading Panel, 2000, pp. 2.10 and 2.11).

Instruction in phonemic awareness can help develop a number of skills. Teachers can teach students how to isolate, identify, categorize, blend, segment, and delete phonemes (Appendix 9-2 includes a description of these skills). Within the context of an early reading program, the two most important skills are segmenting and blending, as they contribute most directly to reading development (National Reading Panel, 2000, p. 2.21). Segmenting phonemes involves isolating the individual sounds in a syllable or word.
Blending phonemes involves bringing individual sounds together to form a syllable or word. Practice in segmenting and blending phonemes helps students apply these skills to segment and blend words or syllables when reading and writing.

In order for phonemic awareness to be an effective part of an early reading program, it must be combined with letter instruction. By teaching students how to match sounds to letters in order to form syllables and words, and by providing ample opportunities to practise this skill, teachers help students make connections between phonemic awareness and reading.

A number of teaching practices have been shown to be effective in promoting phonemic awareness:

• using letters, rather than strictly oral approaches, when teaching children how to manipulate phonemes;
• focusing on one or two skills (especially blending and segmenting) rather than touching on a wide variety of skills;
• teaching phonemic awareness in small groups, as opposed to large groups or one-to-one;
• providing explicit instruction to help students apply phonemic awareness skills in reading and writing.

A student’s level of phonemic awareness can be assessed using specific inventories or assessments [see Appendix 9-2], through informal checks, and by observing students. The teacher uses the assessment data to plan programs that match students’ needs.
Emergent readers find it easier to manipulate words and syllables than to manipulate phonemes (National Reading Panel, 2000, p. 2.10). For this reason, instruction and practice in phonemic awareness should begin with phonological awareness activities such as word and syllable segmentation and blending.

**Word Segmentation and Blending**

In Kindergarten, some students are able to distinguish separate words within a sentence. For others, the teacher introduces the notion of words through activities such as the following:

- Students clap and count out the number of words in sentences from a shared reading text, in a line from a favourite poem or nursery rhyme, or in a morning message or written directions to the class.

- The teacher makes up simple sentences of one-syllable words and the students tap or clap out the words.
  - “School is fun.”  (3)
  - “The car is huge.”  (4)
  - “Raj has a red bike.”  (5)

- The teacher or students point to each word in sentences on charts or in big books.

- Students use word masks (see glossary) to isolate individual words on a chart or in a big book.

- Students move coloured blocks or other markers forward for each word they hear in a sentence.

(National Reading Panel, 2000, p. 2.11)
**Syllable Segmentation and Blending**

To provide practice in segmenting words into syllables (e.g., tiger = ti-ger [2]), and blending together given syllables to form a word (di-no-saur [3] = dinosaur), teachers can organize the following activities:

- Using one coloured block for each syllable, the student moves the blocks as each syllable of a word is spoken. The activity begins with compound words (e.g., oat-meal), then moves to other two- or three-syllable words (spi-der, bi-cy-cle).
- Students blend two or three syllables together and say the word. Using one coloured block for each syllable, students push the blocks together as they say the word.
- Students clap, tap, or jump out syllables in words (e.g., they clap twice for mon-key, jump three times for ba-na-na). They can start with their own names and then use words from book titles, from favourite songs, poems, or stories, or from morning messages or labels in the classroom.

**Sound Segmentation, Blending, and Manipulation**

Students can learn to recognize the sequence of individual sounds in words by:

- identifying where a sound is heard in a word (i.e., at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of the word);
- determining whether a particular sound occurs in a given word and, if it does, where it occurs within the word;
- blending individual sounds to form a word (e.g., b-˘i-t* = bit) as they simultaneously move the corresponding magnetic letters into place. (Students can also practise blending sounds during interactive or shared writing activities with the teacher.);
- segmenting and counting the number of phonemes in a word (e.g., cat = c-a˘-t);
- manipulating phonemes within words to form new words. Phonemes can be added (e.g., to change ice to rice), deleted (e.g., to change late to ate), transposed (e.g., to change pot to top), or substituted (e.g., to change book to cook);
- “stretching” words. Teachers can demonstrate how to stretch the sounds of a word using props such as an elastic or a Slinky toy.

---

* In this section, the individual letters separated by hyphens represent the sound, not the name, of the letters, and the symbols ˘ and ¯ are used to indicate short and long vowel sounds, respectively. The word coat, for example, is represented as c-˘o-˘. 

Phonemic awareness instruction does not need to consume long periods of time to be effective. [Studies have found that] programs lasting less than 20 hours were more effective than longer programs. Single sessions lasted 25 minutes on average.”  
(National Reading Panel, 2000, p. 2.6)
The following activities enable students to practise segmenting, blending, and manipulating sounds:

- The teacher says a word and asks students, “What sound did you hear first? What sound did you hear last, at the end of the word?”
- Students search the classroom for objects whose name begins or ends with a given sound.
- The teacher selects pairs of words, some of which begin with the same sound and some of which do not (e.g., note / no; ball / kite). The teacher says a pair of words and asks students, “Do these two words start with the same sound?”
- The teacher selects pairs of words, some of which end with the same sound and some of which do not (e.g., leap / mop; pet / bus). The teacher says a pair of words and asks students, “Do these two words end with the same sound?”
- Students blend individual sounds together to make a word (s-i˘-t = sit; t-a˘-p = tap). Using an object such as a block or a penny to represent each phoneme, students push the objects together as they say each sound.
- The teacher says a word. He or she asks students to isolate the sound at the beginning of the word and then delete that sound to make another word (e.g., ball becomes all; late becomes ate). The teacher picks another word and has students repeat the activity, this time focusing on the final sound in the word (e.g., seat becomes sea; beet becomes bee).
- The teacher reinforces word families (e.g., -og words, -ump words) by asking students to change the onset to make a new word (e.g., dog becomes fog; bump becomes jump). Magnetic letters, pocket charts, or letter cards can be used for this activity.
- Students substitute or swap sounds within words to make new words. They can substitute the sound of the initial or final consonant or the vowel, as shown by the following examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial consonants</th>
<th>book</th>
<th>cook</th>
<th>look</th>
<th>took</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Final consonants</td>
<td>fit</td>
<td>fin</td>
<td>fill</td>
<td>fib</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vowel sounds</td>
<td>pat</td>
<td>pet</td>
<td>pit</td>
<td>pot</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Phonics**

In phonemic awareness instruction, the emphasis is on helping students recognize and manipulate sounds. In phonics, the focus shifts to recognizing the relationship between letters and sounds. Although they overlap, phonics and phonemic awareness are distinct instructional areas. The following chart illustrates the fundamental differences between phonemic awareness and phonics.
### How Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Differ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phonemic Awareness</th>
<th>Phonics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focuses on auditory awareness</td>
<td>Focuses on visual and auditory discrimination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is speech-based (listening and speaking)</td>
<td>Is print-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonemes (sounds) to graphemes (letters)</td>
<td>Graphemes (letters) to phonemes (sounds)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Successful instruction in phonics depends on planning an effective sequence for teaching letter-sound relationships and ensuring that the full array of letter-sound relationships is included over the course of instruction. It is also critical to provide varied opportunities for practice through interesting and relevant reading and writing applications.**

“Programs that focus too much on the teaching of letter-sound relationships and not enough on putting them to use are unlikely to be very effective. In implementing systematic phonics instruction, educators must keep the **end in mind** and ensure that children understand the purpose of learning letter-sounds and are able to apply their skills in their daily reading and writing activities.”

(National Reading Panel, 2000, p. 2.135)

### Teaching Letter-Sound Relationships Sequentially

Teachers need to introduce the range of letter-sound relationships in a sequential manner and provide students with time to learn, practise, and master each letter sound. Instruction begins with the most common and easily discerned letter-sound relationships and progresses to more complex letter or spelling patterns, including syllables and larger chunks of words.
When planning instruction, teachers should begin with letters:

- that appear most frequently in print;
- that are most useful to children when they are writing;
- that do not look or sound alike;
- whose sound can be elongated either in isolation or within words for easy identification (e.g., s, m, r, f, n, h, v, w);
- that can be put together easily to create words.

Over time, students become familiar with letter-sound correspondences such as those shown in the following chart, which range from simple to more complex.

---

**Letter-Sound Correspondences, From Simple to More Complex**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Correspondence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>as in <em>can</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a,</td>
<td>as in <em>tap</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i,</td>
<td>as in <em>sit</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a–e,*</td>
<td>as in <em>ate</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>as in <em>good</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o,</td>
<td>as in <em>hop</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>l</td>
<td></td>
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<td>n</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>h</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u,</td>
<td>as in <em>sun</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c,</td>
<td>as in <em>can</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o–e,</td>
<td>as in <em>rope</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c,</td>
<td>as in <em>city</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e,</td>
<td>as in <em>ten</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u–e,</td>
<td>as in <em>use</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>v</td>
<td></td>
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<td>w</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>j</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>i–e,</td>
<td>as in <em>five</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>ee</td>
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<td>ea</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>y,</td>
<td>as in <em>yes</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a,</td>
<td>as in <em>father</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y,</td>
<td>as in <em>my</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>z</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g,</td>
<td>as in <em>gym</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>th,</td>
<td>as in <em>there</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>ch</td>
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<td>sh</td>
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<td>wh</td>
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<td>ph</td>
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<td>qu</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>th,</td>
<td>as in <em>think</em></td>
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<td>ou</td>
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* A vowel followed by a dash and an e indicates the long sound for that vowel in a word where there is a letter between the initial vowel and the final e (e.g., i–e, as in *ice*, *like*; a–e, as in *ape*, *make*).
A component of phonics instruction is teaching how letters are formed. This type of instruction helps to reinforce students’ memory for letter-sound relationships. Students need opportunities to apply their knowledge of letter formation and letter-sound relationships in interesting and relevant reading and writing activities. For example, students can practise recognizing and printing individual letters and letter combinations and saying the sounds they represent by reading and/or printing signs and labels in the classroom and during shared reading activities with big books.

**Teaching the Full Array of Letter-Sound Correspondences**

Teachers should ensure that a phonics program includes systematic and explicit instruction in the full array of letter-sound correspondences. This includes the letter-sound correspondences associated with:

- individual consonants;
- individual vowels (short and long vowel sounds);
- vowel and consonant digraphs (e.g., *oi*, *ea*, *ou*, *sh*, *ch*, *th*);
- blends of letter sounds such as those commonly found at the beginning of words (e.g., *st*, *sm*, *bl*, *pr*) or in final stems or rimes (e.g., *-ack*, *-end*, *-ill*, *-op*).

Vowel digraph spelling patterns (*oi*, *oy*, *ea*) are harder for students to learn, so instruction in these patterns tends to occur in the later primary grades. Diagnostic assessment will indicate which letter-sound relationships need to be explicitly taught to groups or individual students.

A thorough understanding of all letter-sound relationships promotes accuracy and fluency in reading. In English there are about 44 speech sounds or phonemes; in many
cases, a sound can be represented by different graphemes or by a combination of graphemes. The long *i* sound, for example, may be represented by *I, eye, aye, igh, i–e.* It is therefore important that students receive systematic and explicit instruction about correspondences between each speech sound and the individual letters and groups of letters that can represent that sound.

However, teaching letter-sound correspondences is not enough: students need practise applying this knowledge in both reading and writing activities. Shared reading sessions, in particular, provide many opportunities for phonics instruction and practice. Phonics instruction is most effective when it occurs as a component of a reading lesson, as this provides students with a relevant context for their learning.

### Helping Students Recognize Patterns in a Printed Text

Research suggests that the brain makes sense of the world by recognizing and constructing patterns. Printed texts consist of many visual patterns within sentences and words and among letters. Students need numerous opportunities to learn how to identify similarities and differences in the structure of texts, sentences, words, and letters. Students need to be able to recognize such similarities and differences if they are to become fluent and flexible in their use of visual information.

A student who has the ability to find patterns in printed text is able to call upon a variety of problem-solving strategies. Teachers can structure learning activities to help students learn strategies for detecting visual patterns, and encourage them to seek out patterns independently. The teacher may draw students’ attention to visual characteristics of sentences, letters, and words within a text during shared reading experiences (see Sample Lesson 1, page 9.23). These characteristics can be reinforced in guided and independent reading opportunities.

The following sample activities are designed to help students find visual patterns in printed text.

- Ask students to locate long and short words in big books, stories written on charts, classroom messages, or wall charts. This activity develops the awareness that print is organized into clusters of letters called words and that there are spaces between these letter clusters.

- Ask students to locate words that are the same. For example, using a word mask or pointer, students locate and match specific words as they read the material posted on the walls of the classroom ("reading the walls"). Through this activity, students practise the ability to see clusters of letters that are the same and others that are different. Students also develop the understanding that some words are repeated frequently. Many of these words will be high-frequency words. (Note that identifying these words is not the purpose at this time.)

> “Brain research … suggests that the brain is a pattern detector, not a rule applier, and that, while we look at single letters, we are looking at them considering all letter patterns we know.”

(Allington and Cunningham, 1996, p. 49)
• Ask students to locate, in a shared reading text, pairs of words that have the same first letter. For each pair of words that has the same first letter, draw students’ attention to the letter, name the letter, and have students listen for the beginning sound as you say the two words aloud. Repeat with each pair of words selected.

• Ask students to locate, in a shared reading text, pairs of words that begin with the same initial cluster of letters (e.g., three/throw; street/strap). Repeat the above procedure.

• Ask students to locate, in a shared reading text, pairs of words that have the same final letter. Draw students’ attention to the final letter, name the letter, and have students listen for the ending sound as you say the two words aloud.

• Ask students to locate, in a shared reading text, pairs of words that end with the same letter cluster (e.g., not/hot; last/fast). Point out the letter cluster in each word and have students listen for the rhyming part. Invite students to suggest other words that end with the same rime. Make a list of these words. Invite students to listen for the rhyming part as you read the words aloud and underline or highlight the ending in each word.

• Teach students to blend the first letter of the word (the onset) with the rime. Using concrete materials, teach students to manipulate parts of familiar words in order to construct other words (e.g., m-ake, r-ake, t-ake). The blending of onsets and rimes requires students to put together two discrete groups of sounds to form recognizable words. Students learn how to apply this knowledge when reading and spelling new words in shared reading and shared writing.

• Word sorts: Have students work independently to sort and classify words according to various features (e.g., words with the same number of letters, words that are the same, words that begin the same, words with the same final letter).

• Letter sorts: Have students work independently to sort and classify letters according to various features (e.g., letters with circles, letters with straight sticks, letters with hooks, tall letters, short letters).

**Word Study**

Instruction in word study promotes the automatic recognition of high-frequency words. It also teaches students, and provides them with opportunities to practise, word-solving strategies that enable them to decode unfamiliar words quickly. These strategies are modelled and reinforced by the teacher in authentic reading experiences. The ability to draw on a bank of sight words while using word-solving strategies to read new words greatly enhances both accuracy and fluency in reading.

Effective instruction in this area involves providing a combination of reading experiences, oral language opportunities (using chants,
Strategies for Teaching High-Frequency Words

To become fluent readers, students need to develop the ability to recognize automatically the words most commonly used in print. These high-frequency words include articles (a, the), pronouns (you, me), prepositions (to, at, from), conjunctions (and, but), and common verbs (be, have), as well as various other frequently encountered words.

The strategies for teaching high-frequency words, which are usually abstract words, are different from those for teaching other, more vivid and engaging words. Unlike words such as ball and dinosaur, for example, which are meaningful to students and therefore easily remembered, abstract words such as have or what have no concrete meaning for them and are therefore harder to remember in isolation. However, these abstract words often provide the key to the meaning of a sentence. Students therefore learn high-frequency words best when they encounter them in the context of sentences or phrases that they find interesting and relevant – that is, when they are motivated to use context and their knowledge of syntax to solve them. Shared reading lessons, in particular, can provide excellent opportunities to teach high-frequency words (see Sample Lesson 1 on page 9.23).

Students at every stage of reading development benefit from frequent review of words they have learned previously.

Teachers may find it useful to develop, in collaboration with other teachers at their school, lists of high-frequency words, from the simplest and most frequently encountered to the more complex and less common. The selection should be based on the texts that are most often used in the classroom and in the school. Such lists will aid teachers in focusing on the vocabulary that students will encounter most often in the texts they read in guided and independent reading sessions.

Teachers need to expose students regularly to high-frequency words and give them plenty of opportunities to practise reading these words in meaningful contexts and using them in chants, rhymes, and songs or in word games. With sufficient opportunity for practice, students will soon develop the ability to recognize instantly a large proportion of the words they will encounter repeatedly in books.

Word Walls

The purpose of a word wall is to help build automatic word recognition, reinforce the learning of high-frequency words, and support written language. A word wall is developed in the classroom over the course of the school year to provide students with a constant, easily accessible reference to the high-frequency words they are learning. In Kindergarten, children’s names can be among the first words listed on
the word wall. The words on the wall should be grouped alphabetically, and can be printed on different coloured backgrounds depending on their level of difficulty or on their word family. As a tool for supporting reading and writing, word walls should be used across the curriculum.

For a word wall to be as effective as possible, teachers should:

• add new words to the wall on a regular basis;
• add words gradually – one or two new words per week in Kindergarten, and between three and five new words per week in Grades 1–3;
• use the words on the wall in a variety of activities and contexts;
• ensure that the words are used in authentic reading experiences;
• provide opportunities for students to practise these words through cheers or chants and through writing opportunities;
• position the word wall so that all students can see it clearly (e.g., ensure that it is not placed too high and that nothing obstructs it);
• change or remove words as they become very familiar to students.

Words that have been removed from the word wall can be added to a personal word box or a personal dictionary for those few students who still need to access them.

Using Word Charts to Promote Word Recognition

Students’ growing ability to recognize words and to understand how they are formed is also supported in the classroom through the use of word charts. Whereas a word wall is intended specifically to reinforce learning of high-frequency words over the course of the year, word charts can serve a variety of different purposes at different times. Familiar words of various sorts (e.g., instructional terms, words for text elements) and theme words related to specific topics can be reinforced through the use of word charts posted throughout the classroom. Charts can focus on thematic groupings of words from a text (e.g., words related to topics such as “winter” or “plants”),
on particular categories of words (e.g., compound words; words for shapes or numbers), or on words that are used for particular purposes (e.g., to avoid overused words). Word-study charts can also illustrate relationships between words (e.g., synonyms and antonyms) or focus on spelling rules (e.g., doubling the consonant before an ing or ed ending; rules for forming contractions). The following chart summarizes ideas for various kinds of word charts that can be posted in the classroom.

**Ideas for Word Charts**

- **Text elements** (e.g., title, illustration, caption, graph, chapter)
- **Overused words and alternatives** (e.g., for said, use stated or replied; for nice, use exciting or terrific)
- **Words used in instruction and assessment** (e.g., reflect, choose, select, compare)
- **Compound words** (e.g., airport, oatmeal, teapot)
- **Colours** (e.g., red, white, black, turquoise, lavender)
- **Adjectives** (e.g., huge, beautiful, kind)
- **Adverbs** (e.g., slowly, faster, cautiously, diligently)
- **Words expressing feelings** (e.g., angry, sad, frustrated, delighted)
- **Prefixes and suffixes** (e.g., re-, un-, dis-; -ed, -ing, -ful)
- **Homophones** (e.g., ate, eight; their, there; dear, deer)
- **Contractions** (e.g., don’t, isn’t, can’t)
- **Words used in other curricular areas** (e.g., from Social Studies: pioneers, traditions; from Science: environment, extinction)
- **Antonyms** (e.g., fast-slow, before-after, top-bottom)
- **Abbreviations** (e.g., Apt., St.)
- **Numbers** (e.g., one, three, seven, twenty-five)

**Examples of Word Charts**

**Words to Use Instead of “Said”**

- replied
- shouted
- screamed
- yelled
- told
- whispered
- stated
- muttered

**Words That Mean “Big”**

- large
- enormous
- gigantic
- huge
- mammoth
**Instructional and Assessment Terms**

As noted above, word charts can also be used to reinforce instructional words associated with the assignment and assessment of tasks across the curriculum (e.g., describe, retell, list). If students do not understand these words, they will not understand the requirements of specific tasks or the criteria for assessment of these tasks. Teachers should use word study lessons to systematically teach students instructional words, including words that relate to higher-level thinking tasks (e.g., compare, evaluate). Teachers should incorporate the language of assessment in everyday activities, so that it becomes familiar to students. Teachers can post grade-appropriate assessment words — such as those for a Grade 3 class shown in the figure below — on charts in the classroom to reinforce students’ awareness of these terms.

![Assessment Words, Grade 3](image)

**Word-Solving Strategies and Word Study**

Instruction to help students develop and apply word-solving strategies draws and builds on their growing understanding of letter-sound relationships and their ability to recognize patterns in print. It guides students in combining these skills with comprehension strategies that rely on context and meaning to decode unfamiliar words encountered in the texts they read. Word-solving strategies combine the use of graphophonic cues and semantic and syntactic cues (see glossary and Chapter 6: Guided Reading) to promote word recognition and comprehension.

When students come to an unfamiliar word, they need to pause and take a few moments to think about the word, trying out word-solving strategies that have been modelled by the teacher. During read-alouds and shared reading, the teacher will have

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**Word-Solving Strategies Students Can Use**

If I come to a tricky word, I can:

- look at the beginning letters to predict what the word might be;
- think about what word would make sense;
- look at the picture for clues;
- search for any parts of the word that I may already know;
- sound out the word slowly;
- reread the beginning of the sentence to see what makes sense;
- skip the word and read on for clues.
used a think-aloud process to model questions students can ask themselves when trying to solve words. When the teacher notices that students are having difficulty with unfamiliar words, he or she can offer prompts to encourage them to use word-solving strategies. The following lists suggest some questions and prompts teachers can use in such situations. By offering such support, teachers encourage students to develop their own questioning skills that can help them read unfamiliar words.

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**To help students solve words, the teacher can say:**

- What is this word like? Does it look like another word that you know?
- Look at the picture. What word would make sense?
- Look at the first letters. How does the word start? Do you know a word that starts with those letters?
- Try sounding out the word, starting at the beginning and saying each sound.
- Is there a letter in the word that might stand for more than one sound?
- Go back and reread the first part of the sentence to see what word would make sense.
- Skip the word and go on. Then come back to the word when you have read the sentence.

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**To help students notice errors and correct them, the teacher can say:**

- There was a tricky word in the line you just read. Do you know which one?
- The word you said *made sense* in the sentence, but have another look at it. Does it *look* right? [*Note: The student might have read the word “forest” for the word “woods” in the text.*]
- The word you said *sounded* right in the sentence, but have another look at it. Does it *look* right? [*Note: The student might have read “he has” for “he had” in the text.*]
- That is how the word begins. Now check the last part.
- Did that word make sense? Try again.

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As these prompts illustrate, when trying to solve words, students can:

- identify whole words and parts of words (e.g., root words, prefixes, and suffixes; component words of compound words);
- use known words to help them read unknown words ("reading by analogy") (e.g., “Does this word look like any other word I know?”);
- look for letter patterns in words;
- sound out words;
- use meaning, context, and text elements such as illustrations and headings to help them predict the correct word.
Various word study activities can help improve students’ ability to solve words (see the chart on pages 9.6–9.7 outlining activities for emergent, early, and fluent readers). Word-making activities that involve manipulating onsets and rimes or adding prefixes and suffixes help students learn spelling rules and patterns and problem-solve unfamiliar words. It is also important to provide students with activities that help them think about the meaning of words. Students need practice identifying and learning the meaning of root words, or morphemes (the smallest meaningful unit in a word), and learning how prefixes and suffixes change the meaning of words. Finally, even in the early grades, teachers can enhance students’ ability to grasp the meaning of words by introducing them to basic information about the origins of words and the various kinds of connections between words.

**Assessment**

Teachers use diagnostic assessment to assess the level of students’ phonemic awareness and their phonics and word study skills. Because the emphasis given to these three areas of instruction depends on students’ reading ability, it is also important that teachers assess the level of students’ reading development. Following careful diagnostic assessment, teachers can plan approaches and activities for small-group and whole-group instruction that are suited to students’ ability and needs.

Teachers can gather valuable diagnostic information by observing students and using tools that measure student ability in the following areas:

- identification and manipulation of phonemes;
- letter recognition;
- letter-sound recognition;
- identification of high-frequency words;
- use of word-solving strategies;
- spelling (i.e., the ability to apply phonemic awareness and phonetic strategies);
- writing.

Initial instruction is based on assessment in these areas. To ensure that instruction continues to be effective, teachers use formative assessment to monitor student learning.
Sample Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, and Word Study Lesson 1: Kindergarten (Emergent Readers)


**OVERVIEW OF THE TEXT:** Little Bo Peep looks for her sheep in locations where other nursery rhymes have taken place, such as “up the hill”, from the Jack and Jill rhyme. Repeating patterns in the book (e.g., the phrase “Where are my sheep?”) support the developing reader.

**CONTEXT:** The intent of this lesson is to show how teachers can embed instruction and practice in word-solving strategies (here, the recognition of high-frequency words) within shared reading and how doing so provides students with a context in which to learn these strategies. The activities combine instruction and practice in using two cueing systems, syntactic and graphophonic (see Chapter 6: Guided Reading).

**PURPOSE:** The highly predictable patterns in the text allow teachers to teach word-solving strategies to emergent readers. The focus of Day 1 is on reading for enjoyment. On Day 2, students predict high-frequency words based on syntactic cues, using their knowledge of letter-sound relationships to confirm their predictions. The activities on Day 3 reinforce the high-frequency words studied on Day 2. On Day 4, students’ knowledge of these words is further reinforced as they use the words in a slightly different context.

**TIME FRAME**
- 4 days
- 15 minutes per day

**MATERIALS**
- big-book version of *Little Bo Peep*
- chart stand and paper
- sticky notes cut up into appropriate sizes or removable correction tape
- magnetic letters and board
- markers in different colours
- cardboard
- pocket chart

**ADAPTATION AND EXTENSION OPPORTUNITIES**
- This text will not make sense to students who do not have prior knowledge of common nursery rhymes or who are having difficulty accessing that knowledge. Some students may require support in accessing specific background knowledge relevant to the story, while others may need opportunities to learn more about nursery rhymes.
- Charts of nursery rhymes, posted around the room, may provide additional supports for students.
- The teacher can extend the lesson by a day, asking students to draw a picture illustrating their favourite scene in the story and to add a caption that may include some of the high-frequency words they have learned.

* This text is also used in Sample Lesson 1 in Chapter 5: Shared Reading, but for different purposes.
ONTARIO CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

Children will:

Oral Communication

• listen and respond to others in a variety of contexts;
• listen and respond orally to language patterns in stories and poems (e.g., join in when the teacher reads repeated parts of a story; echo words and phrases; make up chants with the teacher);
• demonstrate awareness of individual sounds and sound patterns in language;

Reading

• listen to stories, poems, and non-fiction materials for enjoyment and information;
• demonstrate awareness of some conventions of written materials (e.g., text is written from left to right; words have spaces between them; words are spelled with upper- and lowercase letters);
• identify most of the letters of the alphabet and demonstrate understanding that letters represent sounds and that written words convey meaning (e.g., read short labels, familiar signs; use phonics to recognize words);
• demonstrate understanding of a story by making predictions (e.g., anticipating what might happen next; filling in the next word during collaborative reading);

Writing

• write simple messages using a combination of pictures, symbols, letters, phonetic spellings, and familiar words.

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The teacher may:

• listen to students and observe their behaviour, recording relevant data;
• note which children do not respond or do not attend to the lesson;
• note which children contribute to the discussion;
• note children’s ability to make accurate predictions that demonstrate an understanding of the story and record anecdotal data for future reference;
• note children’s ability to read the text orally, identifying which word-solving strategies they are using;
• note which children are able to predict the high-frequency words in the text.

REFLECTIONS FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHER

Students

• Did I understand the story?
• Can I find any of the words I learned in this lesson on the word charts in the classroom?
Teacher

- Are the children able to read the high-frequency words practised in this lesson when they encounter them in other texts?
- Did the children successfully complete the sentence-making activity on Day 4, showing that they understood the text?
- What do students' oral responses and reading strategies used in this lesson reveal about the next steps needed to help them improve their knowledge of high-frequency words?

PROCEDURE

**Day 1**

**Before**
The teacher shows the children the cover of the book, reads the title, and asks the children to predict what the book will be about.

**During**
The teacher reads the book to the children. The purpose is for the children to enjoy the pictures and the story.

**After**
The teacher engages the children in a discussion of the story and the illustrations. To guide the discussion, the teacher asks questions such as the following:
- **What nursery rhymes were you reminded of when you looked at the pictures?**
- **What is your favourite nursery rhyme?**
- **Do you know other nursery rhymes that were not in the story?**

**Day 2**

**Before**
The teacher reads the text and invites children to join in as they are ready, expecting that most will join in on the repeated refrain of “No sheep.”

**During**
The purpose of the lesson is for the children to predict high-frequency words. The teacher takes a moment to place correction tape or sticky notes (“word masks”) over two or three high-frequency words that he or she selected before the lesson began. The words chosen will depend on the needs of the class as assessed by the teacher through observation of the children’s ability to read previously taught words. The teacher may choose a range of words to reflect the diverse needs of the class. For example, some children might be learning to and the, while others are learning from and them.

The teacher:
- rereads the book, pausing at each hidden word and asking the children to predict what word would make sense;
- asks the children what letters they would expect to see if their predictions were correct (e.g., if they predicted the, they would expect to see th);
writes the children's predictions on the word mask;
• reveals the word under the mask, asks the children if it matches one of their predictions, and reads the full, correct sentence.

After
The teacher rereads the entire text, and children join in as they feel able. The teacher observes the children's ability to read the words that were the focus of the lesson.

Day 3

Before
The teacher rereads the text, encouraging children to join in.

During
The teacher:
• reminds the children of the high-frequency words that they focused on during Day 2;
• lists these words on a chart;
• using magnetic letters on a cookie sheet, metal lid, or other magnetic board, spells one of the words, then scrambles the letters and asks the children to rebuild the word (“make and break”).

After
The teacher puts the same letters used in the make-and-break activity into a resealable bag and places it in the word study area for independent practice. The word study centre should also include paper and pencils or markers so students can record the words they make.

Day 4

Before
The children read the book aloud together with no support, or minimal support, from the teacher.

During
The children engage in a pocket-chart activity. The teacher chooses a sentence from the text that includes the high-frequency words that have been taught earlier in the lesson and prints the words from that sentence on individual cardboard word cards. To ensure that they stand out, the high-frequency words can be printed in a different colour than that used for the other words in the sentence. The children are asked to reassemble the sentence on a pocket chart, placing the words in the correct order. The children may need the support of the text to complete the task and/or may wish to use the text to check the sentence when it is completed. Once the activity has been successfully completed, the teacher puts the high-frequency words on the word wall so the children will be able to review them and access them for independent reading or writing.

After
Children can reassemble these sentences as an independent activity.

OVERVIEW OF THE TEXT: This poem compares the wind to a horse that takes the reader on a wild winter ride. The poem includes a variety of verbs that end in ed or ing.

CONTEXT: Students have read the poem earlier for enjoyment. Once they have reread the poem, they have the opportunity to use vocabulary from it to develop their understanding of rules for adding the suffixes ed and ing to action words.

TIME FRAME
• 2 days
• 20 minutes each day

MATERIALS
• a copy of the poem that all students can see
• chart paper
• index cards
• markers

ADAPTATION AND EXTENSION OPPORTUNITIES
• Any text (poem or narrative) with multiple examples of words ending in ed and ing can be used.
• This lesson plan can be adapted to be incorporated in a guided reading follow-up lesson.
• Rather than asking students to identify the rule(s) for adding the ed and ing suffixes to the verbs in this poem or in another text, the teacher can provide students with a rule or rules for adding these suffixes and ask students to find words that follow these rules.
• As an extension, teachers could use a different text to focus on rules not evident from the verbs in "The North Wind" (e.g., dropping the e when adding ing: tickle/tickling).

ONTARIO CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS
Writing
Students will:
• use and spell correctly the vocabulary appropriate for this grade level;
• use phonics and memorized spelling rules (e.g., some verbs ending with a consonant double the consonant before ed or ing: stop/stopped, signal/signalling) to increase accuracy in spelling.

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES
The teacher observes and notes:
• students’ ability to find patterns among words ending in ed and ing;
• students’ ability to use patterns among words ending in ed and ing to identify a rule or rules for adding these suffixes;
• students’ ability to discuss the rules or explain their thinking to classmates;
• students’ ability to apply the rules in practice.
REFLECTIONS FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHER

Students
• Am I able to use in my writing the rule(s) I have learned for adding ed and ing?
• How can I use my understanding of the ed and ing endings to help me solve new words?

Teacher
• Are students demonstrating an understanding of the rules for adding these suffixes in their writing?
• What other poems or brief texts can be used to expand the activity?

PROCEDURE

Day 1

Before
The teacher:
• tells students they will be rereading the poem “The North Wind” (it has been previously read by the class for enjoyment);
• copies the poem onto a chart or an overhead transparency so that all students are able to see it;
• informs the class that the poem contains many words ending in ed and ing and asks students to listen carefully for these words.

During
The teacher and the students reread the poem together without interruption.

After
The teacher:
• asks the students to identify words in the poem that end in ed and ing and lists them on chart paper;
• asks the students to review the words on the chart and identify those in which the ed and ing are suffixes that have been added to action words;
• circles the action words on the chart;
• has students form cooperative learning groups;
• provides each group with blank index cards and asks a recorder to write on the cards those words that are circled on the chart (one word per card);
• instructs the groups to sort the word cards to reflect patterns for adding the suffixes and to discuss among themselves how they sorted the words;
• asks group leaders to explain to the class why their group sorted the words the way they did.
Before
The teacher:
• displays an empty T-chart and informs the class that the chart will be filled out with some of the words from the poem to illustrate a rule for adding the suffixes *ed* and *ing*.

During
The teacher:
• asks students to read the poem “The North Wind” together;
• refers to the poem to fill in the left side of the T-chart with words that drop the final *e* before adding the suffix (e.g., *exhilarated*) and the right side with verbs that end in *ed* or *ing* but do not drop the final *e* before the suffix.

After
The teacher:
• asks students to return to their cooperative learning groups and identify the rule for adding the suffix to the words on the left side of the T-chart;
• asks groups to share their rule with the rest of the class;
• records the rule on a wall chart for future reference;
• provides the opportunity for students to demonstrate their understanding of the rule by practising applying it to other words.
Appendix 9-1: Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, and Word Study Activities and Approaches, Kindergarten to Grade 3

The following chart shows appropriate activities and approaches to be used in phonemic awareness, phonics, and word study lessons in Kindergarten, Grade 1, and Grades 2 and 3.

### Phonemic Awareness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kindergarten</th>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2 and 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students listen to and recite nursery rhymes.</td>
<td>Students listen to and recite nursery rhymes.</td>
<td>Note: Assessment of phonics and word study skills and knowledge may reveal that some students still need support and practice to develop their phonemic awareness. Teachers can refer to the Kindergarten and Grade 1 columns for activities appropriate for such students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students play games and sing songs that require sounds to be manipulated.</td>
<td>Students play games and solve riddles that require sounds to be manipulated.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students listen to or read stories that focus on alliteration, rhyme, and the sounds of language.</td>
<td>Students listen to and sing songs that play with language.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers model sound segmentation during shared reading lessons.</td>
<td>Students listen to or read stories that focus on alliteration, rhyme, and the sounds of language.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers model sound segmentation during shared reading and writing lessons.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Phonics (Letter-Sound Relationships)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kindergarten</th>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2 and 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers set aside time each day to quickly review letter sounds that were previously taught.</td>
<td>Teachers ensure that letter sounds taught in Kindergarten are regularly reviewed in Grade 1.</td>
<td>Note: Assessment of students’ knowledge of letter-sound relationships may reveal that some students still need support in indentifying letters that match the approximately 44 phonemes in English, particularly for the more complex associations (e.g., -ought).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students engage in various meaningful oral and multi-sensory activities that reinforce their understanding of letters and associated sounds.</td>
<td>Students engage in various meaningful oral and multi-sensory activities that reinforce their understanding of increasingly complex letter sounds.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In boards that offer Junior Kindergarten, teachers begin instruction in letter-sound relationships in Junior Kindergarten no later than January and continue through Senior Kindergarten and into Grade 1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Word Wall

### Kindergarten
- In September and October, the teacher focuses on the names of students, adding a new name daily to the word wall.
- To promote vocabulary development and recognition of high-frequency words, teachers add to the word wall high-frequency words used in shared reading and writing lessons.
- Teachers encourage students to use the word wall when writing.
- Students engage in various games and activities that reinforce the words from the word wall.

### Grades 1 – 3
- Words are introduced, reviewed, and added to the word wall each week.
- Teachers add to the word wall the high-frequency and confusing words (e.g., homophones such as to/two) encountered in students’ reading and writing.
- Word patterns (e.g., rimes or word families) are reinforced.
- Students use the word wall when writing.
- Students engage in various games, chants, and activities that reinforce the words from the word wall.

## Word Study

### Kindergarten
- Teachers introduce students to a number of the most common and useful consonant and vowel sounds and encourage them to manipulate and blend these letters and sounds to make words.
- Teachers plan a variety of large-group, small-group, and individual activities.
- Students engage in activities in which they manipulate the letters of the alphabet to form words.
- Teachers provide opportunities for students to develop their oral vocabulary.

### Grades 1 – 3
- Students practise phonics and spelling rules in shared and guided reading activities.
- Students engage in word-making activities.
- Students sort and analyse words.
- Students learn how to put the letters taught in phonics together to form words.
### Application and Practice in Meaningful, Authentic Contexts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kindergarten</th>
<th>Grades 1 – 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Teachers read from a variety of texts to expose students to word play in an enjoyable way.</td>
<td>- Teachers continue to read from a variety of enjoyable texts that demonstrate word play.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Teachers demonstrate, by thinking aloud, how readers apply their knowledge of and skills in phonics and word study to gain meaning from text.</td>
<td>- Teachers continue to demonstrate, by thinking aloud, how readers apply their knowledge of and skills in phonics and word study to gain meaning from texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- During shared reading, teachers provide students with opportunities to develop and practise the reading behaviours that have been modelled.</td>
<td>- During shared reading, teachers provide students with opportunities to develop and practise the reading behaviours that have been modelled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Some students who are ready for guided reading practise word-solving strategies during guided reading sessions.</td>
<td>- During guided reading, students work at their instructional level to problem-solve words independently or with support from the teacher, who scaffolds students’ earlier learning as needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Teachers organize independent reading opportunities to provide students with an enjoyable and authentic context in which to apply their knowledge about words.</td>
<td>- Teachers organize independent reading opportunities that provide students with an enjoyable and authentic context in which to apply their knowledge of words.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Toronto Catholic District School Board, 2000)
## Appendix 9-2: Phonemic Awareness Inventory

This chart can be used to assess students’ phonemic awareness. Teachers can observe students during instruction and practice in phonemic awareness to assess their level of skill.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task/Skill</th>
<th>Not yet developed</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Acquired</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• isolating phonemes, which requires recognizing individual sounds in words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– The teacher can ask, “What is the first sound in <em>paste</em>?”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• identifying phonemes, which requires recognizing common sounds in different words</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– The teacher can ask, “What <em>sound</em> is the same in <em>bike</em>, <em>boy</em>, and <em>bell</em>?”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• categorizing phonemes, which requires recognizing the word with the odd sound in a sequence of three or four words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– The teacher can ask, “Which word does not belong: <em>bus</em>, <em>bun</em>, <em>rug</em>?”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• blending phonemes, which requires listening to a sequence of sounds spoken separately and combining them to form a recognizable word</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– The teacher can ask, “What word is made up of the sounds <em>s-k-u-</em>?”</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• segmenting phonemes, which requires breaking a word into its sounds by tapping out or counting the sounds or by repositioning a marker as the student pronounces each sound</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>– The teacher can ask, “How many sounds are there in <em>ship</em>?” [sh-i˘-p]</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• deleting phonemes, which requires recognizing what word remains when a specified phoneme is removed</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>– The teacher can ask, “What is <em>smile</em> without the /s/?” [teacher makes the ‘s’ sound]</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• manipulating onsets and rimes, which requires isolating the rime and adding new onsets to create different words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– The teacher can print <em>cat</em>, then change the onset and print <em>hat</em> and ask, “What is the new word?”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comments:**

(Based on National Reading Panel, 2000, pp. 2.2 and 2.3)
References


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  Instructional Strategies .................................................. 10.5
  Suggested Writing Activities for Before, During, and
  After Reading ............................................................... 10.7
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How Does Writing Support Reading?

An understanding of the interrelatedness of reading and writing helps us recognize how writing can support students’ development as readers.

“There is a synergy between reading and writing. Reading inspires and excites children about the possibilities awaiting them as writers and acquaints them with the structure of text and books and the conventions of written language. Writing allows them to use what they’ve gleaned from reading as they craft their own stories, poems, and factual texts. And because of their writing efforts, children approach written text with a heightened awareness and understanding of print, text, and genre.”

(Taberski, 2000, p. 176)

A variety of studies support the view that linking reading and writing is beneficial to students. Pikulski (1994) and Tierney and Shanahan (1991) have observed that teaching reading and writing together enhances students’ thinking and learning. Novick states that:

“When reading and writing are taught together in the context of meaningful activities, children are required to use a higher level of thinking than when either process is taught alone.”

(Novick, 1998, p. 48)

For this reason, classroom instruction should develop and enhance a reciprocal relationship between reading and writing. As students read, they increase their knowledge about writing, and as they write, they increase their knowledge about letter sounds and experiment with emerging concepts about syntax, style, and vocabulary, all of which then make reading easier (Spiegal, 1998, p. 118).
Clearly, reading and writing are mutually supportive. Nevertheless, it is helpful to list some specific ways in which writing supports reading. Writing activities related to reading provide opportunities for students to consolidate reading skills and to deepen their understanding of what they have read. Writing is a reflective and interactive process. As students write, they think about the ideas they are recording.

Certain very basic skills that students use to decipher print are reinforced through writing. For example, writing helps students to:

- develop the understanding that print is oral language that is written down;
- recognize that print carries meaning;
- learn how letters represent spoken sounds and words;
- develop understandings about concepts of print such as directionality (e.g., left to right) and of one-to-one correspondence (i.e., of the word on the page to the word spoken when reading);
- realize that word order and sentence structure are related.

Beyond simply reinforcing students’ ability to identify letters and words and understand how they are related to each other within sentences, writing also plays an important role as students use various comprehension strategies to clarify and deepen their understanding of texts. For example, writing activities are useful as students:

- reflect on prior knowledge and past experience;
- become familiar with different ways of organizing and presenting ideas in different types of texts;
- make connections between the text and themselves, other texts, and their knowledge of the world;
- make and confirm predictions and inferences;
- ask questions and explore answers;
- identify, clarify, and record ideas and patterns;
- reflect on texts and respond to them analytically, critically, and creatively.

It should be noted that this chapter focuses on writing as it supports reading instruction; it is not intended to examine the teaching of writing per se.
Using Writing in Reading Instruction

Writing should be an integral part of reading activities. In many activities – whether read-alouds, shared reading, guided reading, or independent reading – writing activities can enhance the components of the reading framework.

Teachers can include opportunities for writing in a comprehensive reading program in a number of ways. For example, high-frequency words may be heard in a read-aloud, written by the teacher in modelled writing, read by the teacher and students in shared reading, and used in the group writing of a shared story. As words are introduced in many different ways, students understand their meaning and recognize them visually, gradually developing the ability to read and write these words independently.

Suggested Writing Activities for Use With the Four Key Instructional Strategies

Read-Alouds
The teacher can:

- list ideas or create a mind map on a theme or topic from the text or about story elements
- record predictions about the text
- list possible questions (from brainstorming) based on the cover, title, etc.
- develop a K-W-L chart
- list words from the text that are good substitutes for overused words
- model writing a response to the text
- model writing a new text in the genre or style of the text read

Shared Reading
The teacher and students can:

- chart what readers noticed about a text
- chart lyrics or poems that the class sang or read, for future rereading
- write a text innovation (see glossary) based on the text and using vocabulary from the text
- develop graphic organizers to record main and supporting ideas, character traits, story elements, and so on
- develop a K-W-L chart
• develop a T-chart, e.g.,

| What you expected | What you found |

• list features of various text forms

**Guided Reading**

With the support of the teacher, students can:

• track character traits using a graphic organizer or a journal
• use sticky notes to identify new vocabulary words, or list them on a word chart
• record strategies used to solve new words or to solve a comprehension problem
• record in a reading or learning journal: connections made, inferences made, key evidence supporting inferences, any questions that have come to mind
• use a two-column chart to track questions about the text and to record the answers, when they are discovered
• develop a K-W-L chart
• create a map or web of the main ideas and supporting details
• develop a “who/what/where/when/why (or how)” chart

**Independent Reading**

Students can:

• write a summary of a text read
• list recommended books
• write recommendations about books for other students (e.g., on a sticky note posted on the corner of the book)
• create an event map for the story
• extend the story and/or rewrite the ending
• write a book review
• rewrite the book from a different perspective
• reorganize information from the book on a grid/graphic organizer
• create a mind map or semantic web to outline the story
• write a response to a text in a reading journal
• retell, analyse, or summarize information from the text in writing
• write a new text in the same form or genre as a text read (e.g., a procedure, a report, a recount)

*Note: These strategies should be modelled by the teacher in connection with different forms of text.*

*“Teachers encourage children to connect reading and writing with their own knowledge and understanding and help children to become aware of how much they already know about reading and writing.”*  
(Novick, 1998, p. 73)
Suggested Writing Activities for Before, During, and After Reading

**Before Reading**
Writing activities before reading (e.g., word webs or K-W-L charts) help students anticipate what they will be reading and make predictions about what they will find – not only about the words they will encounter, but also about the ideas.

Shared writing is most frequently used before reading; however, students who are more fluent readers may independently write an anticipation guide or fill in a K-W-L chart before reading the text.

To help students develop an interest in stories before the reading begins, teachers can use several writing-related activities to stimulate discussion about the characters, situations, and plot of the story. For example:
- Show the cover of the book and have students create and record questions about the story.
- Read aloud the first sentence of the book. Then ask students one by one to add a sentence. Record the sentences.

**During Reading**
Having students write during reading requires them to think about the text and reflect on their own reactions to what they are reading.

Teachers model responding while reading, using prompts or sentence starters such as:
- I wonder why ...
- This reminds me of ...
- Now I understand ...
- I think ...
- I’m confused about ...

Students then write their own responses during guided practice.

The *first reading* of a text should generally be uninterrupted, but students can stop in mid-story to write brief comments (“jot notes”) on sticky notes. When they finish reading, they can record their thinking in more detail in a reading journal.

Several writing-related activities can be used to give students practice with strategies that fluent readers regularly use. For example, they can:
- highlight pertinent information;
- check previous predictions and make new predictions;
• create mental pictures of material being read;
• place sticky notes in the book at unfamiliar words, difficult sections, or favourite parts.

**After Reading**

Having students write responses after reading gives them opportunities to demonstrate the use of higher-order thinking skills. Students revisit the text in order to:

• make connections;
• make inferences;
• determine important ideas;
• determine the author's purpose and values;
• determine the type of text.

They can do so by:

• highlighting their favourite part;
• making connections to their own lives, the world at large, and other texts;
• summarizing key themes and ideas.

Extension activities could include:

• rewriting a story from a different point of view;
• writing out an interview with a character;
• writing a diary entry for one of the characters in the text;
• organizing information from the text into a graphic organizer.

Teachers should limit the use of activities that:

• simply require students to recall information, rather than relate or reflect on what they have read;
• require only decoding;
• involve only use of student knowledge of language structure (grammar);
• do not engage students in focusing on the meaning of what they have read.

For samples of written responses to reading, teachers may wish to refer to *The Ontario Curriculum – Exemplars, Grades 1–8: Reading* (2000).
Written Responses to Reading

As children write, they synthesize what they have learned from their reading. But before they can be expected to produce written responses independently, they require explicit teaching, teacher modelling, oral rehearsal, and guided practice (guided writing, small group or individual) that is developmentally appropriate. Emergent readers need first to become comfortable responding to text through oral retellings, story dictation, and dramatic retellings, and through a combination of drawing and writing, as well as through written responses. Classroom discussions can help students learn how to reflect on their reading and organize their thoughts about what they have read before putting their responses in writing. Students can record their reflections in a response journal, and the teacher can then write responses to those entries. The teacher’s responses can often enhance and extend the student’s understanding of the text.

Text Types

When reading various genres, teachers highlight for students the characteristics, formats, and purposes of different types of texts. Such text forms may include the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Texts</th>
<th>Types of Texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>poems</td>
<td>songs and chants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>folk tales</td>
<td>how-to books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fairy tales</td>
<td>newspaper ads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>picture books</td>
<td>recipes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nursery rhymes</td>
<td>maps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pattern books</td>
<td>brochures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>letters</td>
<td>articles from children’s magazines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diaries and journals</td>
<td>reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explanations</td>
<td>lists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>procedures</td>
<td>scripts (e.g., readers’ theatre)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mysteries</td>
<td>recounts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Response activities allow children to develop insights into other worlds, to notice and accumulate new words and language patterns, to learn to discuss ideas from texts with confidence, to analyze and form generalizations from texts, to apply new learning to their lives and to become members of a literacy community.”

(Booth and Rowsell, 2002, p. 37)

To help consolidate and clarify students’ understanding of the forms of texts, teachers can provide writing activities based on the forms students have encountered through reading. Practice using these forms in their own writing can, in turn, improve students’
ability to recognize the forms and identify their purpose and function during subsequent reading experiences.

Using Visual Representations (Graphic Organizers) in Reading Instruction

The use of visual tools such as graphic organizers assists reading comprehension by encouraging students to represent information and knowledge in different ways. (The ability to represent text visually and to interpret visual representations is sometimes referred to as “visual literacy.”) Visual representations can be used before, during, and after reading and/or writing. Graphic organizers can be used to help activate prior knowledge, organize ideas and information, and demonstrate knowledge and understandings. Students may use graphic organizers to respond to reading or to help organize ideas and make a plan before writing a response to reading. Common graphic organizers include Venn diagrams, concept maps, webs, story maps, tables, and charts (see the samples in Appendix 10-1). Some types of graphic organizers and their characteristics and purposes are listed in the chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graphic Organizers</th>
<th>Characteristics:</th>
<th>Purpose:</th>
<th>Sample types:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Hierarchical       | • are generally linear  
                   | • show main and sub-components | • to describe a hierarchical relationship | • main idea map or web  
                   |                   | • character pyramid | |
| Conceptual         | • are generally non-linear  
                   | • show related elements | • to describe a concept or theme  
                   |                   | • to show relationships | • concept web  
                   |                   |                   | • event map  
                   |                   |                   | • Venn diagram  
                   |                   |                   | • vocabulary map or web | |
| Sequential         | • are linear  
                   | • show events in order – chronological or logical  
                   | • have defined beginning and end | • to describe a chain of events | • story sequence chart | |
| Cyclical           | • have no defined beginning or end  
                   | • show one event leading to next  
                   | • are generally used for “circle stories” (e.g., “There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly”) | • to list sequence of events in one specific order/direction | • circle map |
Assessment

To monitor and assess students’ written responses to reading, teachers should use a variety of assessment tools. These could include teacher observation, anecdotal records, observation checklists, conferences, rubrics, and portfolios, as appropriate to the developmental needs of the student.

As teachers make anecdotal comments, create checklists, assess portfolios, and use rubrics for assessment, they may wish to consider the following questions:

Does the student’s written response to reading:

- show an understanding of the text?
- provide evidence from the text to support personal judgements and opinions?
- show the ability to make connections to the student’s own experience, other texts, and the world at large?
- show an ability to identify and clearly state the intended message of the text?
- show an understanding of the vocabulary and language structures in the text?
- show an ability to apply the language conventions for the grade level?

The teacher will want to ensure that assessments focus on reading comprehension rather than on writing ability. Where the quality of a student’s writing significantly detracts from his or her ability to demonstrate understanding, the teacher may wish to consider adjusting the method of assessment – for example, by having the student respond orally or through drawing, to clarify his or her level of comprehension.
Appendix 10-I: Sample Graphic Organizers

10-1a: Character Pyramid

Main Character

Characteristics of Main Character

Evidence of Characteristics From Text
10-1c: Map or Web (Vocabulary, Concept, Main Idea and Supporting Details)
Who was involved?

When did the event take place?

Where did the event take place?

Why did the event happen?

What might happen next?

How did it happen?

EVENT

What happened?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who</th>
<th>What</th>
<th>Where</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Why (or How)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>
### K-W-L Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I <strong>K</strong>now</th>
<th>What I <strong>W</strong>ant to Find Out</th>
<th>What I <strong>L</strong>earned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>
10-Ig: Story Sequence Chart

Beginning

Middle

End
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I expected</th>
<th>What I learned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10-1j: Main and Supporting Ideas Map

Main Idea

Supporting Idea

Supporting Idea

Supporting Idea
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paragraph ____</th>
<th>Page ____</th>
<th>Paragraph ____</th>
<th>Page ____</th>
<th>Paragraph ____</th>
<th>Page ____</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main Idea</strong></td>
<td><strong>Main Idea</strong></td>
<td><strong>Main Idea</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Idea or Fact:</td>
<td>Supporting Idea or Fact:</td>
<td>Supporting Idea or Fact:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Idea or Fact:</td>
<td>Supporting Idea or Fact:</td>
<td>Supporting Idea or Fact:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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The Role of Technology in Reading Instruction

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The Role of Technology in Reading Instruction

“To become fully literate in today’s world, students must become proficient in the new literacies of ICT [Information and Communication Technology]. Therefore, literacy educators have a responsibility to effectively integrate these technologies into the literacy curriculum in order to prepare students for the literacy future they deserve.”

(International Reading Association, 2001, p. 2)

Information Technology in Education

Information technology is becoming increasingly important in our society. Developments in this field have revolutionized a wide range of knowledge-based industries and occupations, including medicine, banking, communications, transportation, and education, to name only a few. We need to ensure that young people’s education includes ample opportunities to learn about the present and potential uses of information technology in order to equip them to function well and thrive in today’s and tomorrow’s world.

“While reading, writing, listening, and speaking … [are] paramount, today’s student must be able to decipher meaning and express ideas through a range of media. A literate person must not only excel in reading and writing text, but must also be able to listen and speak, and read and write fluently through text, images, motion video, charts and graphs, and hypertext across a range of media.”

(NCREL, 2001, Today’s Basics section)

Information technology can be an effective instructional tool, helping students learn in all areas of the curriculum, including literacy development. Educators have been investigating the role of information technology in instruction since the early 1970s. Just as an education without touching a book seems inconceivable, so now the preparation of students for future success without the use of computers does not seem feasible.

“Certainly, as a result of technology, there are different sorts of literacy practices employed today than there were twenty years ago.”

(Booth and Rowsell, 2002, p. 75)

“Technology not only changes how people learn, it affects what they need to learn as well.”

(NCREL, 2001, Technology and Learning section)
In considering how to use information technology in the reading program, teachers may find it helpful to focus initially on the following three areas:

1) telecommunications capabilities;
2) features of electronic texts;
3) computer software.

**Telecommunications in Reading Instruction**

The telecommunications capabilities of computer technology can play a key role in the reading program. At a very young age, many students have already become familiar with such capabilities as e-mail, teleconferencing, and the Internet. Use of these tools in the classroom introduces students to a global community of learners through a variety of highly motivational activities. For example, students can:

- send and receive authentic, personally relevant, real-time messages;
- gain ready access to information and news about events occurring in real time;
- communicate with peers (and others) at a distance;
- participate in collaborative projects that offer authentic experiences in reading and writing.

Through these and other uses of telecommunications, students can acquire knowledge and practise skills that contribute significantly to their development as readers.

Telecommunications technology can be integrated into the reading program in a variety of ways. Reading aloud an e-mail message from peers from afar can be the starting point of many literacy opportunities. Other e-pal examples include communicating with senior citizens, authors, and subject experts. Each time an e-mail message is received, learning experiences for read-alouds, shared reading, and independent reading abound. These can provide a stimulus for further research and authentic communication.
Shared reading can be accommodated through the use of an overhead or data projector. These become powerful tools in sharing the text and familiarizing students with features of electronic texts (e.g., hyperlinks, buttons, navigation bars). Guided reading sessions can often benefit from telecommunication activities before reading to activate prior knowledge and after reading to extend new learning. For example, when reading a text on the Asian New Year, students can explore various children’s websites and create a picture photo album. Some publishers of reading programs provide related information for students on their websites.

**Reminder:** When introducing telecommunications activities into the reading program (or any other curriculum area), teachers should be aware of the need for both *equity* and *student safety*. As the International Reading Association (2001, p. 3) recommends, teachers should make every effort to:

a) provide equal access to technology to every student in the classroom, and

b) ensure child safety in classroom Internet use.

Teachers should familiarize themselves with their school board’s policy on Internet use.

**Features of Electronic Texts**

Onscreen and online reading is an important component of literacy, and students are expected to make more and more sophisticated use of complex information technologies. Indeed, today’s primary students will do much of their reading, as students and as working adults, online and/or onscreen. As computers have become increasingly prevalent in our everyday lives, concepts of print have evolved to include the features of onscreen/online text. These include toolbars, navigational bars, hypertext, hyperlinks, drop-down menus, form fields, buttons, scrolling, multiple screens, frames, animation, audio, and search engines. Clearly, reading instruction needs to help students understand and interact with these and other features of electronic texts. Students’ ability to read many different types of texts, including electronic texts, provides a foundation for the development of other learning skills, such as the ability to locate information from a wide range of media and to synthesize that information and use it to solve problems.
Computer Software in Reading Instruction

Computer-based instruction in the classroom reading program can provide students with exciting and highly motivating opportunities to explore both reading and writing. For example, various software programs allow students to interact with text through listening and speaking activities and a variety of multimedia experiences. The following table identifies software applications that are available at no cost to teachers through the Ministry of Education OSAPAC (Ontario Software Acquisition Program Advisory Committee) project. These programs can be offered at the computer learning area in the classroom to individual students or to small groups of two or three.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Applications</th>
<th>Skill Development</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Suggestions for Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A to Zap!</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>K–1</td>
<td>Learning area: individual or pair activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simulation; open-ended activities and games</td>
<td>Alphabet recognition</td>
<td>K–1</td>
<td>Learning area: individual or pair activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ABCircus</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>K–1</td>
<td>Learning area: individual or pair activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drill and practice; game; exploration</td>
<td>Alphabet recognition; letter discrimination; recognition of upper- and lower-case letters; matching lower- and upper-case letters</td>
<td></td>
<td>Learning area: individual or pair activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bailey’s Book House</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>K–1</td>
<td>Learning area: review and practice of letter knowledge; independent or pair activities; writing to support reading; review of concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multimedia; exploration; question and answer; divergent and convergent thinking; creative design</td>
<td>Recognition of letter names; upper- and lower-case letters; sounds; rhyming words; matching words; word position; text</td>
<td>K–1</td>
<td>Learning area: review and practice of letter knowledge; independent or pair activities; writing to support reading; review of concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Cat Came Back</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>K–1</td>
<td>Learning area: independent reading; reading with a partner; recording student reading; writing to support reading; singing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book on CD-ROM; exploration; read-aloud; animation; interactive capabilities; music</td>
<td>Reading; vocabulary building</td>
<td>K–1</td>
<td>Learning area: independent reading; reading with a partner; recording student reading; writing to support reading; singing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DISCIS series</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>K–3</td>
<td>Learning area: independent reading; reading with a partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books on CD-ROM (e.g., Aesop’s Fables; Mud Puddle; Northern Lights: The Soccer Trail; A Promise Is a Promise; Scary Poems for Rotten Kids; A Tree Through the Seasons; The Paper Bag Princess); hypertext, graphics</td>
<td>Reading; vocabulary development; fluency; comprehension</td>
<td>K–3</td>
<td>Learning area: independent reading; reading with a partner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Canada’s SchoolNet  
http://www.schoolnet.ca/  
Ontario Software Acquisition Program Advisory Committee  
http://www.osapac.org/
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Applications</th>
<th>Skill Development</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Suggestions for Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interactive Reading Journey</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drill and practice</td>
<td>Phonemic awareness; letter sounds; word families; sight words</td>
<td>K–1</td>
<td>Learning area: review and practice of letter knowledge; independent or pair activities; review of concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kid Pix</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multimedia</td>
<td>Letter sounds; word families; sight words; upper- and lowercase letters; matching words with pictures</td>
<td>K–3</td>
<td>Learning area: review and practice of letter knowledge; independent or pair activities; writing to support reading; review of concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Let's Start Learning!</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drill and practice</td>
<td>Building of skills with letters, numbers, shapes, and patterns through interactive play; songs; rhyme</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Learning area: review and practice of letter knowledge; independent or pair activities; review of concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>My First Incredible, Amazing Dictionary</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>Introduction of more than 1000 words and their meanings through spoken words, 3000 sound effects, and animation</td>
<td>K–1</td>
<td>Learning area: core of a unit of study; introduction to a unit of study; follow-up to a unit of study; independent study; cooperative study by 2 or 3 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>P.B. Bear's Birthday Party</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book on CD-ROM; hypertext</td>
<td>Reading; vocabulary development; words are highlighted as story is read aloud</td>
<td>K–1</td>
<td>Learning area: core of a unit of study; introduction to a unit of study; follow-up to a unit of study; independent study; cooperative study by 2 or 3 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reader Rabbit 1 and Deluxe</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drill and practice; tutorial; sequenced stories</td>
<td>Word recognition, spelling patterns; phonics skills; phonemic awareness; vocabulary development; sorting; matching</td>
<td>K–1</td>
<td>Learning area: review of concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reader Rabbit 2 and Deluxe</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drill and practice; sequenced stories; recorded text</td>
<td>Recognition of speech and letter patterns; beginning and ending sounds or blend words; vowel sounds; word recognition; vocabulary building; fluency</td>
<td>1–3</td>
<td>Learning area: review of concepts; enrichment for younger students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Benefits to Students

Students will benefit from the following features of some of these programs:

- The computer reads the story aloud.
- Hypertext capabilities provide an interactive medium.
- Words are highlighted as text is read.
- Students can point and click on objects for further exploration.
- Applications can provide immediate feedback.
- Animation, vivid colour, and audio engage students' interest.

Software Descriptions

What follows is a more detailed look at various types of software applications with suggestions for how they might be integrated into the reading program. Note that some software applications combine a number of different modes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Applications</th>
<th>Skill Development</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Suggestions for Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reader Rabbit 3 and Deluxe</td>
<td>Analysis, sentence building; recognition of parts of speech, sentences, and phrases</td>
<td>2–4</td>
<td>Learning area: review of concepts; enrichment for younger students; writing to support reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sitting on the Farm</td>
<td>Reading; vocabulary building</td>
<td>K–1</td>
<td>Learning area: independent reading; reading with a partner; recording student reading; writing to support reading; singing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Way</td>
<td>Awareness of grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and other common conventions of style, form, and presentation</td>
<td>3+</td>
<td>Learning area: independent activity; enrichment activity for younger students; reinforcement activity for 3+; diagnostic assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Application</td>
<td>Function</td>
<td>Example</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
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<td>---------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative activity</td>
<td>• encourages development of creativity</td>
<td>• Students draw a picture of their favourite character(s) using drawing tools in Kid Pix or ClarisWorks.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstration/ presentation</td>
<td>• can be used to present a concept or theme or develop a presentation</td>
<td>• Each student designs one slide about himself or herself using a Kid Pix slide show or MS PowerPoint. Teacher shows slide show during an open house event.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drill and practice</td>
<td>• allows practice of concepts already learned by students; should be used judiciously and only in direct relation to learning that has occurred in the classroom</td>
<td>• Students review and practise letter recognition using Let’s Start Learning!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education game</td>
<td>• presents drill and practice in game format; should be used judiciously and only in direct relation to learning that has occurred in the classroom</td>
<td>• Students match lower- and upper-case letters using ABCircus.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>• through a designed environment, provides opportunities for students to select and explore various strategies and/or activities</td>
<td>• Teacher plans a “treasure hunt” list of items that students have to explore and locate in books on CD-ROM such as Sitting on the Farm or The Cat Came Back.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided practice</td>
<td>• includes tips or other support mechanisms for students as they learn or review concepts</td>
<td>• Students select words that rhyme using Bailey’s Book House. Software gives feedback to students as they practise word-recognition skills.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>• provides web access to a variety of resources: online books, reference materials, educational games, levelled texts, texts in a variety of genres (narrative, expository, poetry, songs), online libraries, magazines, journals, etc.</td>
<td>• Teacher pre-selects interactive websites that relate to a unit of study for students to explore. (Teachers should refer to their school board’s policy on Internet use.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multimedia presentation</td>
<td>• provides opportunities for listening, speaking, viewing, writing, etc.</td>
<td>• Each student works on a multimedia presentation about his or her favourite zoo animal using HyperStudio.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>• requires students to develop strategies for solving problems</td>
<td>• Students read Aesop’s Fables on CD-ROM and discuss the moral of their favourite fable and how it relates to their everyday lives.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Software Applications and Their Use in Reading Instruction (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Application</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reference</strong></td>
<td>• includes materials such as dictionaries, thesauri, encyclopedias, etc.</td>
<td>• Students look up words to check for meaning, definitions, and spelling. <em>My First Incredible, Amazing Dictionary</em> makes this activity engaging through sound effects and animation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Simulation</strong></td>
<td>• creates or re-creates a world or environment that functions in a realistic manner</td>
<td>• Students explore CD-ROMs that simulate being on a farm, space shuttle, or airplane.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Testing</strong></td>
<td>• tests, scores, and records student responses</td>
<td>• Students match shapes or complete patterns using Let’s Start Learning!, and the program records student’s results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tool</strong></td>
<td>• can be used for specific purposes such as word processing, desktop publishing, developing databases, spreadsheets, etc.</td>
<td>• Students write a response to a book using word-processing software.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tutorial</strong></td>
<td>• presents new concepts through text, illustrations, speech, descriptions, questions and answers, etc.</td>
<td>• Students view how sentences are built and put together through examples given in <em>Reader Rabbit</em> series.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Evaluating Software**

Software and computer-based activities should support current teaching and learning and be directly linked to classroom instruction, ongoing assessment, and students’ specific strengths and areas of need. The questions given in Appendix 11-1 may be helpful to teachers in evaluating software for use in the reading program.
Teachers’ Computer Literacy: Recommendations From the International Reading Association

The International Reading Association supports the thoughtful, systematic integration of Internet and other information technologies into the literacy curriculum, as needed and appropriate. It also recognizes that the proper use of these technologies can be a challenge. To help teachers develop and maintain the necessary skills and expertise in this rapidly evolving field, it recommends that they:

• take advantage of professional development opportunities in technologies;
• explore instructional strategies and resources developed by other teachers and posted on the Internet;
• regularly read professional publications to stay current on research and practical ideas for using technology to improve students’ literacy learning;
• join professional electronic mailing lists to exchange insights about effective instructional strategies.

(International Reading Association, 2001, p. 3)
## Appendix II-I: Software Evaluation Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions to Ask When Evaluating Software</th>
<th>Not Applicable</th>
<th>Weak</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Strong</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does the software have educational value? (e.g., Does it promote student learning?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does it support the curriculum expectations addressed in the reading program?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there an adequate focus on key aspects of language (e.g., syntax, graphophonics)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the software provide an appropriate amount of information? (e.g., Is information overwhelming? Too simple?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>How strong are the motivational factors? (e.g., Will the software hold students’ attention throughout a lesson? Is much use made of colour, brightness, sound, graphics?)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the software easy to use? (e.g., Does it include navigation bars? An instructional manual?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the software interactive?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How well does the software accommodate individual student responses? (e.g., Is it adaptable? Does it allow for different choices?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the software give students the opportunity to correct errors?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there a focus on a variety of learning styles (e.g., recognition, recall, comprehension)?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the software accommodate diversity? (e.g., Are content and methods appropriate and/or adaptable to different levels of student ability? Are content and language gender-neutral/inclusive?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>How good is the sound quality?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>How good is the graphics quality?</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the software allow students to work in pairs or small groups as well as individually?</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


OSAPAC [Ontario Software Acquisition Program Advisory Committee].

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Assessment

“Because reading takes place inside the head, the process is not directly observable. Yet, assessment of this hidden process must occur in order to make appropriate programming decisions, adapt learning experiences and improve student performance.”

(Toronto District School Board, 2000a, p. 201)

Assessment is the systematic gathering, recording, and analysis of information about a student’s work. Its purpose is to provide feedback to the teacher and others responsible for reading programs – feedback that can be used to improve those programs and tailor them to the individual student’s needs. Analysis of assessment data can provide the teacher with a clear understanding of the skills and strategies a student uses when reading, as well as those the student is ready to learn next. Assessment links teaching to student needs in a continuous cycle of assessment, teaching, and reassessment (see the Planning Cycle diagram in Chapter 13: Planning and Classroom Organization, page 13.4).

As the following chart indicates, there is a clear distinction between assessment and evaluation. The teacher assesses a student’s progress throughout the term, using a variety of strategies and tools. The teacher evaluates or makes a judgement about a student’s progress, usually at the end of a term, basing the evaluation on the student’s best, most consistent work or performance.
Three Categories of Assessment

Assessment is typically divided into three broad categories:

- **Diagnostic assessment** occurs at the beginning of a school year, term, or unit (or as needed for an individual student). It is undertaken to identify the level of a student’s prior learning so that appropriate instruction can be provided. It enables the teacher to select appropriate learning experiences to address the needs of individuals or groups. Examples of diagnostic assessments include assessments of students’ knowledge of letter-sound relationships and analyses of attitude/interest surveys and running records or miscue analyses (see glossary).

- **Formative assessment** occurs throughout the school year. It allows teachers to track the progress of individual students on an ongoing basis and provides them with regular feedback on the effectiveness of their instructional strategies. Formative assessment helps teachers make programming decisions based on individual

---

“Assessment begins with what students know; the evidence for what they know is in what they can do.”

(Fountas and Pinnell, 1996, p. 75)
or group demonstrations of learning. Examples of formative assessments include portfolio reviews and analyses of checklists, anecdotal records, and running records.

- **Summative assessment** occurs at the end of a learning module or a specific time period. It provides teachers and others with additional information they need to evaluate (make judgements about) student achievement and program effectiveness. Examples of summative assessments include individual reading conferences, portfolio reviews, and assessments of student performance on culminating tasks.

Many of the examples mentioned above are discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

The three types of assessment are compared in the chart below.

---

### Three Types of Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diagnostic assessment:</th>
<th>Formative assessment:</th>
<th>Summative assessment:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• occurs before teaching;</td>
<td>• occurs during teaching;</td>
<td>• occurs after teaching;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• provides baseline data;</td>
<td>• provides ongoing information for teachers and students about students’ progress, and for teachers about the effectiveness of their instruction;</td>
<td>• provides information for teachers, students, and parents about students’ progress and achievement;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• identifies students’ strengths and needs prior to instruction;</td>
<td>• identifies areas of students’ progress;</td>
<td>• measures students’ achievements in relation to the curriculum expectations;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• allows teachers to tailor their instruction to individual students’ needs;</td>
<td>• allows teachers to monitor each student’s learning progress, and to reflect on and adjust their teaching program as necessary;</td>
<td>• allows teachers to measure student learning and to determine the effectiveness of their teaching program;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• informs initial planning and teaching decisions (e.g., a teacher selects students for initial guided reading groups on the basis of common needs, as identified by diagnostic assessment).</td>
<td>• informs decisions about adapting instruction to meet the needs of individual students.</td>
<td>• helps teachers make appropriate decisions about further programming and about grouping students for further instruction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

“Teachers must assess children’s learning on an ongoing basis, taking into account both the process of learning and the results achieved. The data gathered on each child should be reliable and valid; that is, they should reflect actual abilities, record progress made over a period of time, and measure children’s achievement in relation to the learning expectations.”

Purposes of Assessment

Assessment is the key to good teaching. Ongoing assessment provides teachers of reading with information on which to base their instructional and grouping decisions, as well as decisions about providing special instructional support or extra challenges for individual students. With reliable assessment information, teachers can build on the knowledge, skills, and experiences that students bring to the classroom, determine the level at which to begin instruction and how quickly to proceed, identify gaps in students’ oral language and specific reading skills, and identify the need for program adaptations for students who are experiencing difficulty.

Assessment of students’ reading skills is also useful in measuring long-term progress, particularly of students with atypical learning patterns. At times, it may seem that a student is not making progress, but the application of good assessment strategies and tools will reveal growth over time.

Assessments help the teacher answer the following questions:

• Does the student understand the meaning of the text?
• Does the student use effective word-solving and comprehension strategies on increasingly difficult texts?
• Does the student use effective word-solving and comprehension strategies on various forms of texts?
• Does the student read fluently and with appropriate phrasing?
• Does the student adjust reading strategies on the basis of the text form?
• Does the student connect the story to his or her own experiences?
• Is instruction meeting the student’s changing needs?
• Is instruction changing the student’s reading behaviours? Is it facilitating the student’s rapid and smooth development into an effective and enthusiastic reader?

A well-planned literacy classroom provides the teacher with many opportunities to observe and assess students as they read and respond to a variety of texts. The focus of this chapter is the assessment of students’ reading skills, but it should be noted that observations and assessments of students’ oral language and writing skills also provide significant insight into their reading behaviours.
**Assessment Strategies and Tools**

The remainder of the chapter describes a variety of assessment strategies and tools. In this document, strategies are the *means* by which the teacher assesses students’ progress (e.g., by observing students’ reading behaviours, reviewing their responses to texts, analysing samples of their writing, reviewing their reading portfolios), and tools are what the teacher uses to record and/or to categorize his or her observations (e.g., checklists, anecdotal records, running records, rubrics). With appropriate analysis, the information gathered through the application of these strategies and tools enables the teacher to make informed instructional decisions for individual students.

All of the strategies involve observing students’ reading behaviours and their ability to comprehend texts, and recording these observations for later review and analysis. The teacher should plan to conduct these observation-based assessments on a regular basis, but he or she should also be prepared to take advantage of the opportunities to observe students that occur spontaneously during the course of a school day. Both planned and spontaneous assessments can take place at various times during the day. For example, observations can be made during instructional time (“direct observations”) or during reading conferences with individual students. The observation strategies can also vary. For example, they can be based on a student’s retelling of a story or on a student’s oral, written, or other (e.g., visual, dramatic) response to a text.
To ensure that the teacher’s observations provide useful assessment information, the teacher must do more than make mental notes of the reading behaviours observed. The observations must be recorded in a systematic way and analysed to determine trends, areas of strength and areas in need of improvement, and the reading strategies that should be taught next. [Teachers may not have an opportunity to record observations made during spontaneous, or unplanned, assessments until the end of the day.] Various recording sheets are described later in this chapter, and samples of assessment tools, including templates, are provided in the appendices. Note that these are samples only. Teachers may wish to design their own recording forms to fit the particular focus of their programs and the particular needs of their students.

**Direct Observation in a Variety of Situations**

Direct observation offers the following benefits. It:

- provides descriptive information about the student’s progress;
- allows the student to demonstrate knowledge in a broad range of settings;
- provides information that offers a useful comparison to data collected through other kinds of assessments.

Direct observation should be systematic and should occur regularly, and observations must be recorded for later reflection and analysis.

To be most effective, direct observation strategies should:

- be planned and ongoing, yet flexible enough to include spontaneous observations and records of noteworthy behaviour;
- be related to skills and strategies that have been taught;
- be purposeful, in that they are focused on one or two behaviours at a time and on specific students (individual students, small groups, or large groups);
- be applied in a variety of settings throughout the day and week, both during the literacy block and during instruction in other subjects;
- be applied when the teacher is interacting with students as a participant or observing them as a spectator;
- be repeated, to see if particular reading behaviours recur (too much value should not be placed on one-time occurrences.)

Teachers have many opportunities to directly observe and assess students’ progress in reading during read-aloud, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading sessions. Teachers can use these opportunities to note all of the strategies students are using to decode unfamiliar words and to understand the text. These observations can be used for diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments.
The following chart provides some examples of the kinds of questions teachers can ask themselves while observing students’ reading behaviours during each of the four types of instructional sessions. The questions are based on the expectations set out in the Ministry of Education documents *The Kindergarten Program* (K) and *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1–8: Language* (OCL). The questions listed are taken from the overall expectations for Kindergarten and Grades 1 and 2. Teachers may find it helpful, in using this strategy, to be guided by the overall expectations, which describe in general terms the knowledge and skills students are expected to demonstrate by year-end. They might also keep in mind the general objectives for and approaches to reading instruction that are described in the introductions of the two curriculum documents and in the introduction to the Reading strand of the language document. Using this material as a guide will help teachers ensure that their observation-based assessment strategies cover all the reading knowledge and skills described in the specific expectations for the students’ grade.

**Observing and Assessing Students’ Reading Behaviours During Instructional Sessions**

**Read-Alouds**
The teacher engages students in an interactive read-aloud session. Can students:

- communicate effectively by listening and speaking (K)?
- demonstrate understanding of a variety of written materials that are read to them (K)?
- express clear responses to written materials, relating the ideas in them to their own knowledge and experience (OCL)?

**Shared Reading**
Students read with the teacher and peers in a shared reading experience. Can students:

- demonstrate understanding of a variety of written materials that are read to them (K)?
- make sense of simple written materials, using reading strategies that are appropriate for beginners (K)?
- express clear responses to written materials, relating the ideas in them to their own knowledge and experience (OCL)?

**Guided Reading**
Students read books aloud, but quietly, in the supportive environment of a guided reading lesson. Can students:

- make sense of simple written materials, using reading strategies that are appropriate for beginners (K)?
- read a variety of simple written materials for different purposes (OCL)?
- read independently, using reading strategies appropriate for this grade level (OCL)?
- express clear responses to written materials, relating the ideas in them to their own knowledge and experience (OCL)?

(continued)
### Observing and Assessing Students’ Reading Behaviours During Instructional Sessions (cont.)

#### Independent Reading

Students read books independently. Can students:

- make sense of simple written materials, using reading strategies that are appropriate for beginners (K)?
- read a variety of simple written materials for different purposes (OCL)?
- independently select stories and other reading materials by a variety of authors (OCL)?
- read aloud in a way that communicates the meaning (OCL)?
- read independently, using reading strategies appropriate for this grade level (OCL)?
- express clear responses to written materials, relating the ideas in them to their own knowledge and experience (OCL)?

In addition to observations made during instructional sessions, teachers will have spontaneous and informal opportunities during reading and reading-related activities to observe students’ understanding and application of word-solving and comprehension strategies. Since these informal opportunities often involve books that the student has chosen to read independently, the teacher can use these occasions to form a picture of the student as a reader and to suggest other appropriate texts. (The teacher might also confirm for the student that his or her reading choices are appropriate.) The teacher may ask the student a variety of questions such as the following: “Why did you choose this book?” “Tell me what the book is about so far.” “What do you predict will happen next in the book?” “Is this book easy, just right, or hard for you?”

In recording both formal and informal observations, the teacher should strive to:

- be objective, describing exactly what happened without adding a personal opinion or reaction;
- be factual and brief, writing down the date, time, setting, behaviour observed, and, if appropriate, the exact language used by the student;
- be specific in noting strategies used or specific knowledge demonstrated;
- avoid using judgemental words;
- record information as soon as possible after the observation;
- note positive achievements as well as matters of concern;
- use a variety of recording tools, such as anecdotal records and checklists. Anecdotal records for direct observations can take a number of forms. Some are described on pages 12.20–12.23. Appendix 12-1 contains a sample template for one kind of anecdotal record. Checklists can be devised by the teacher to suit the focus of the observation.

“Exploring a text’s meaning in greater depth is an opportunity to observe children’s comprehension, but our primary purpose in asking them to discuss or write about it is not to assess, but to broaden their understanding.”

(Taberski, 2000, p. 163)
Reading Conferences

(Note that the formal reading conference described here is not appropriate for Kindergarten students/emergent readers.)

Reading conferences are planned discussions with individual students about their reading. They offer teachers opportunities to get to know their students as readers and to monitor their students’ reading progress. Teachers are able to identify students’ strengths and the challenges they face, and to help individual students set specific goals in their reading. Pertinent observations are recorded in dated anecdotal-record format, in a reading record book, or on a template made specifically for reading conference records, such as the ones in Appendices 12-2 [Sample Reading Interview Record Sheet] and 12-3 [Sample Reading Conference Record Sheet].

Reading conferences offer the following benefits. They allow the teacher to:

• give the student an opportunity to discuss and respond to the books he or she is reading;
• offer specific suggestions for improvement;
• help the student select appropriate reading materials;
• encourage a love of reading in the student;
• help the student set goals for his or her reading;
• plan future instruction.

Several reading conferences can be scheduled each week to occur during independent reading sessions and other reading-related activities. The teacher can select two to three students with whom to hold a reading conference each day. The conferences should be kept brief and focused. It is helpful if the teacher models a reading conference for students early in the year, so that they become familiar with the process and know what to expect.

Some suggestions for conducting a reading conference are as follows:

• Begin by asking the student to talk about what he or she is currently reading. The student may be asked to show the teacher a reading log or a reading record, such as the sample in Appendix 12-4.
• Ask open-ended questions [examples are listed below] that are intended to expand the student’s thinking about the text he or she is reading and thereby enrich the discussion.
• Encourage the student to ask questions about the text or to share any problems encountered.
• Invite the student to read a part of the text aloud, both to observe the student’s reading behaviours and to assess the appropriateness of the text for the student’s reading level.

• Discuss the reading with the student and offer feedback.

• Emphasize what the student is doing well.

• Give suggestions for improvement (e.g., trying different strategies), suggest other and/or more appropriate texts for the student to read, and help the student set at least one new goal for his or her reading. Teachers of Grade 3 students may wish to encourage them to conduct a self-assessment of their reading skills on a regular basis. Appendix 12-5 contains a Sample Student’s Reading Self-Assessment Sheet for Grade 3 students.

By asking open-ended questions that invite the student to think about and discuss a book in different ways, the teacher gathers information about the extent of the student’s understanding of the book. Open-ended questions can lead the student to:

• retell the story;

• explain why things happened as they did in the story;

• explain what he or she thinks will happen next in the story, and why;

• make connections between the text and his or her personal experiences or other books;

• express an opinion about a character, event, or other information in the text;

• suggest changes for the ending of the story;

• say whether he or she found the book enjoyable, and why;

• explain whether he or she learned something new from the book;

• suggest where more information on a topic discussed in the book can be found.

Notes taken during the reading conference provide the teacher with information about the student’s interests and attitude towards reading, the reading strategies the student used, and the extent of the student’s comprehension of the text. The teacher regularly reviews his or her conference notes to assess the information, looking for patterns in students’ strengths and needs. This analysis and consideration of the assessment data is helpful in planning subsequent programming (e.g., to determine the focus of shared reading instruction for the following week) and in temporarily grouping students for specific instruction.
**Phonemic Awareness Tasks**

Observing students as they perform phonemic awareness tasks provides the teacher with information on their ability to hear and manipulate sounds – that is, their ability to isolate, identify, categorize, blend, segment, and delete phonemes in words and to manipulate onsets and rimes. Observations should be noted on an ongoing basis during a variety of classroom activities. Chapter 9: Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, and Word Study offers examples of suitable classroom activities. Observations can be noted in anecdotal-record format or on a checklist for later analysis. See also Appendix 9-2 (in Chapter 9) for a Phonemic Awareness Inventory chart.

Anecdotal records and checklists (see pages 12.20–12.24) are useful tools for recording observations of students’ levels of phonemic awareness. Standardized assessment tools are available for use as required with students who are experiencing specific difficulties with phonemic awareness. Examples include the Rosner Test of Auditory Analysis (Rosner, 1975) and the Yopp-Singer Test of Phoneme Segmentation (Yopp, 1995). These standardized tools can be used for diagnostic assessments.

**Letter Identification and Letter-Sound Relationship Tasks**

Students’ ability to identify letters and letter-sound relationships should be assessed regularly and systematically to allow the teacher to determine the letters and letter sounds students can identify and use independently and those that they need to be explicitly taught. The strategy involves observing individual students as they perform certain tasks; for example, the teacher can name a letter and ask the student to locate it in a text, or point to a letter and ask the student to name it. The teacher tracks the letters and/or letter-sound correspondences that each student knows.

The teacher should assess students’ knowledge of the names of the letters and of the sounds the letters make and their ability to identify words that start with a particular letter. Students’ ability to apply their knowledge of letter-sound relationships when reading or writing also constitutes valid assessment data that teachers should record.

Some students quickly understand the concept of letter-sound association and require minimal explicit instruction. Others will need explicit instruction both in letter-sound relationships and in their application to reading and writing tasks. It is recommended that students first be taught the letters in their names and the letters that occur most frequently in books for students in the emergent and early reader stages (see “Tips for Teachers” on this page and also the chart titled “Letter-Sound Correspondences, From Simple to More Complex” on p. 9.13 of Chapter 9: Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, and Word Study).

**Tip for Teachers**

It may be useful to help students learn the following letters first – they are the consonants that students will encounter most frequently in print. Students can use their knowledge of these letters to solve words and check their reading and to identify the initial consonants of words.

s  m  b  h  t
f  c  r  p  l
Anecdotal records and checklists (see pages 12.20–12.24) are useful tools for recording observations of students’ ability to identify and use letter-sound relationships. See the specific suggestion in “Checklists”, on page 12.24, for recording observations of a student’s developing awareness of letter-sound relationships.

**Students’ Retelling of Texts**

A student’s retelling of a story or other text gives the teacher an opportunity to assess the student’s understanding of the text. The student is asked to retell the text orally, to use props or puppets to dramatize an oral retelling, or to retell the story in writing or in a graphic format [e.g., a story map]. The teacher may prompt the student if necessary. Students may be asked to retell texts as part of a reading conference (described above) or in other settings.

Observations should be noted in anecdotal records or on a checklist, or compared to the criteria in a rubric. See pages 12.20–12.26 for a discussion of these tools, and see the appendices for samples. (Appendix 12-1 contains a sample template for one kind of anecdotal record; Appendix 12-6, two Sample Retelling Checklists; and Appendix 12-7, a Sample Oral Retelling Rubric suitable for a Grade 1 student.)

**Students’ Responses to Texts**

A student’s responses to the material he or she has read allow the teacher to assess the extent of the student’s understanding of the material and the connections or inferences the student makes while reading. The teacher can assess students’ oral responses and, when appropriate, their written or other interpretive responses. Students can be asked to provide responses to the texts they are reading in a variety of settings – for example, during read-aloud, shared reading, guided reading, or independent reading sessions, and during activities related to other subject areas. Retellings, discussed above, are a form of response, in that they reveal a student’s understanding of a text. Teachers can also assess a student’s response to a text as part of a reading conference (described above). The strategy should be used on an ongoing basis.

Assessments of students’ responses to material read should follow the teaching and modelling of comprehension strategies, especially those involving higher-level thinking skills [e.g., making inferences] (see Chapter 8: Reading Comprehension, page 8.14). In addition, the teacher should ask open-ended questions that invite a range of responses, such as those listed under “Reading Conferences”, above. Observations should be recorded in anecdotal records, which can take a number of forms. Some are described starting on page 12.20, and Appendix 12-1 contains a sample template for one kind of anecdotal record.

“In examining student responses, a teacher can speculate on the ways in which [students’] reading proficiency has been influenced by previous reading instruction. The kinds of information the interview reveals, along with teacher observation, can be used to design appropriate reading experiences for each student.”

(Booth and Rowsell, 2002, p. 103)
The following sample indicates that the student has made a connection between the book being responded to, called *Something From Nothing*, and a previously read book called *The Mitten*.

![Sample Response]

See also sample 2 under “Samples of Students’ Writing”, below, which is a response to a text.

Note that caution should be used in assessing students’ written responses to texts, as students’ reading and writing skills may develop at different paces. Some good readers may not be able to express their ideas clearly in writing. As with all of the assessment strategies described in this guide, assessments of students’ written responses to texts provide only part of the picture of the development of students’ reading skills.

**Samples of Students’ Writing**

Students’ writing reveals a great deal about their growing knowledge of reading. A reciprocal relationship exists between reading and writing, and what a student learns in one area, he or she applies in the other. For example, when a student has learned a new high-frequency word in reading (with the aid of appropriate word study instruction), he or she should soon be able to use that word accurately in writing. Analysing various samples of students’ writing – from labels on emergent readers’ drawings to early and fluent readers’ written responses to texts – can provide insight into the knowledge and the concepts students have mastered.

Students’ writing can convey information such as the following. It can:
- reflect the student’s understandings of how written language is structured;
- indicate whether the student understands that print conveys a message;
- indicate whether the student is aware of grade-appropriate concepts of print (e.g., the left-to-right directionality of text);
• provide a record of the high-frequency words the student uses appropriately and those he or she is attempting to use;
• provide evidence of the student’s knowledge of subject-specific vocabulary;
• demonstrate the student’s understanding of and ability to use literary concepts and the structures found in stories (i.e., beginning, middle, end);
• demonstrate the student’s ability to appropriately apply letters or letter clusters to write new words (e.g., by spelling castle as csl, the student reveals that he or she is aware of sounds, recognizes certain letter-sound correspondences, and distinguishes sounds in the initial, medial, and final position);
• provide evidence of the student’s awareness of the descriptive language found in books;
• demonstrate the student’s understanding of the elements and characteristics of fictional texts (e.g., characters, setting, plot/problem and resolution) and the features of factual texts (e.g., labels, headings).

Samples of students’ writing should be analysed routinely and the teacher’s observations should be recorded in anecdotal records, which can take a number of forms. Some are described starting on page 12.20.

The following samples illustrate the kinds of observations a teacher could make in analysing students’ writing.

**Sample 1:**
When an emergent reader prints a label on a drawing, or even prints his or her own name, he or she may demonstrate knowledge of some or all of the following:

• that print carries a message
• the left-to-right directionality of print
• letter-sound relationships
• letter sequences
• upper- and lower-case letters
• the orientation of print (i.e., that letters are not printed upside down or backwards)
• the organization of ideas (e.g., placement of the name to indicate authorship)

The kinds of observations the teacher could make about a sample of writing such as a label on a drawing are shown at the top of the facing page.
Sample 2:
Sample 2 is a student’s written response to a text he or she has read. Some of the observations the teacher could make are shown on the sample; others follow the sample.

Student demonstrates a range of independent comprehension strategies, using codes to indicate strategies used: “I noticed” (smiling face), text-to-text connections (T.T.), and asking questions (?)..

Student demonstrates ability to make connections, noting similar characteristics between:
- Niasha and Rough Face Girl;
- bad heart of Myanara and the sisters in The Rough Face Girl.

Student recognizes high-frequency word “me”.

Student has formed several letters correctly.

Student appears to recognize smaller word in larger word.

Letter reversal (“s”) – common at this developmental stage.

Needs help forming letter “e”.

Student demonstrates comprehension – reflects on story line and wonders why mother was not referred to in the story.
The sample also reveals the following information about the student’s reading knowledge and the strategies the student has mastered. The student:

- understands the purpose of joining words *(because)* and uses them appropriately;
- understands that sentences with the same purpose can begin in different ways *(I noticed ..., My connection is ...)*;
- knows relatively complex letter-sound relationships *(gh, au)*;
- understands and uses appropriate word endings;
- understands and uses an apostrophe in contractions *(wasn’t)*.

**Reading Portfolios**

Individual students’ reading portfolios are an important source of classroom assessment information. As the graphic below indicates, the portfolios can contain a wide variety of the students’ work related to reading – everything from lists of books they want to read to written responses to books read. Together, these items provide useful information about each student’s reading skills, the strategies used by the student, and the student’s ability to comprehend what is read. As the student regularly adds material to the portfolio (over the course of a unit, a term, or a year), the student, his or her parents, and the teacher can observe and reflect on the student’s progress over time.

“Reflections are the most critical components of the portfolio process, because in doing them students develop metacognition; they think about their own learning and, ideally, identify their own strengths and areas for growth.”

(Bower and Rolheiser, 2000, p. 48)
Teachers should teach and model for students the skills they will need to select work for their reading portfolios, to evaluate their learning on the basis of the selected work, and to set goals for future learning on the basis of their self-evaluations. The criteria for selecting work for portfolios could include the following:

- best efforts
- favorite pieces
- the first try at something new
- examples of growth or improvement
- examples related to different kinds/genres of texts
- a record of goals set and achieved

Students can use any of the following to store their work:

- manila folders
- two-pocket folders
- ring binders
- boxes (including cereal boxes)
- hanging folders

Each item placed in the portfolio should be dated. (The teacher should teach students how to date their work, perhaps using a date stamp.)

Each item placed in the portfolio should also have attached to it a label that contains the student’s reflections on his or her work. The routine for making and attaching these reflections should also be taught when reading portfolios are introduced. When the teacher reviews the portfolio, he or she initials the student’s comments to indicate monitoring of the portfolio’s contents. The teacher also records his or her observations about each work sample on a label and attaches it to the sample.

The teacher holds regular portfolio conferences (at least once a term) with each student. Conferences to discuss specific concerns with individual students can also be held at other times. During the conference, the teacher asks the student about his or her reading goals, as reflected in the work in the portfolio. The teacher also asks the student to establish future goals. The following questions are suggested to guide students in their goal-setting:

- What are you going to read next? Are you going to try a different genre?
- Of which item are you most proud? Why?
- Which item shows new learning for you? Tell me about it.
- What did you learn about yourself as a reader?

(Adapted from Thames Valley District School Board, 2002, p. 55)
Appendix 12-8 contains a Sample Reading Portfolio Checklist for teachers to use in helping the student maintain a well-rounded portfolio. Appendix 12-5 contains a Sample Student’s Reading Self-Assessment Sheet for Grade 3 students, one of the many items that could go into a student’s reading portfolio.

**Anecdotal Records**

Anecdotal records are a useful way for teachers to record their observations of students’ reading behaviours. This form of record is particularly helpful, for example, for recording direct observations in a variety of settings and observations made during reading conferences [both discussed above]. Anecdotal records are used, for example, to document students’ attitudes towards reading and the strategies [e.g., cueing systems] they use, overuse, or neglect. They can also be used to record students’ progress towards achieving curriculum expectations. Anecdotal records should be compiled throughout the year for all students, with the teacher selecting two or three students to observe at a time.

Anecdotal records can be made on sticky notes, index cards, templates (see the sample “at-a-glance” observation records below), on audiotapes, or in a binder or teacher’s journal.

A template devised for recording specific, planned observations can be a particularly helpful anecdotal record tool. Following are three samples of “at-a-glance” observation records made on templates, one each for Kindergarten, Grade 2, and Grade 3. This form is designed to allow the teacher to tell “at a glance” which students he or

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**Many assessment strategies and tools can be used to assess reading. Teachers need to familiarize themselves with a range of strategies and tools in order to choose the one most appropriate to the task.**

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(Adapted from Toronto District School Board, 2000b, pp. 6–10)
she has observed for a particular activity or focus, and which he or she still needs to observe. Ideally, the form would have space for every student in the class, but it can also be designed, as the samples here were, with spaces for a smaller number of students. (The teacher would run off as many copies as necessary for the entire class.) Filling in the “Activity/Focus or Context”, “Date/Time”, and “Expectations” boxes and typing in the students’ names ahead of time is helpful. A sample template is provided in Appendix 12-1, but teachers may wish to design their own forms.

**Sample “At-a-Glance” Observation Record: Kindergarten**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity/Focus or Context:</th>
<th>Date/Time:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent reading: book handling skills</td>
<td>Week of October 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Expectations:** Language

Students will:
- demonstrate awareness of some conventions of written materials;
- identify some features of books and other written materials, and use these features to help them understand the printed text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Taylor (JK)</th>
<th>Sinthuja (SK)</th>
<th>Tyrone (JK)</th>
<th>Myles (SK)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>– started at back of book</td>
<td>– “read” to her learning buddy and asked questions based on the book</td>
<td>– told the story using the illustrations</td>
<td>– did not show much interest in the first book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– skipped pages</td>
<td></td>
<td>– turned pages appropriately</td>
<td>– switched books and browsed through the new book with interest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brandon (JK)</th>
<th>Nakika (JK)</th>
<th>Quincy (SK)</th>
<th>Conan (SK)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>– demonstrated ability to apply many concepts of print</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>– appears to be ready for a formal reading assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Activity/Focus or Context:**
Read-aloud session (*Name Calling*): comprehension, as demonstrated through the creation of class graphic organizer

**Expectations:** Language

Students will:
- use a variety of reading strategies to understand a piece of writing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Flora</th>
<th>Sojourner</th>
<th>Miguel</th>
<th>Yen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>logically anticipated</td>
<td>knew other books by this author</td>
<td>predicted vocabulary appropriate to the</td>
<td>made somewhat relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>purpose of story from the</td>
<td></td>
<td>topic discussed: teasing, trouble,</td>
<td>vocabulary predictions, but</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>title</td>
<td></td>
<td>hurt feelings</td>
<td>not of a high level:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>used cover illustration</td>
<td>used this prior knowledge to predict</td>
<td></td>
<td>stupid, dummy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to predict characters</td>
<td>that the book would be in a narrative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>format and that the characters would be</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“interesting”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanif</td>
<td>predicted that the girls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>would call each other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bad names, and that the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>name-calling would</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>create a problem that</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the girls would have</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to solve</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample “At-a-Glance” Observation Record: Grade 2
**Activity/Focus or Context:**
Independent reading: comprehension

**Date/Time:**
Week of March 4

**Expectations:** Language

Students will:
- read a variety of fiction and non-fiction materials for different purposes;
- read independently, using a variety of reading strategies;
- express clear responses to written materials, relating the ideas in them to their own knowledge and experiences and to ideas in other materials that they have read.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T.K.</th>
<th>Mike</th>
<th>Sophia</th>
<th>Brenna</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>used sticky notes to indicate text-to-text connections</td>
<td>enjoying new factual text on fishing</td>
<td>made a good connection between “The Lotus Seed” and her friend’s grandmother who is coming to visit from China</td>
<td>said that her book added to her background knowledge about spiders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reading mainly fiction texts</td>
<td>used information in the book to create an accurate web as a text response</td>
<td></td>
<td>enjoying factual text; identified the need to use different reading strategies for it: “I had to read slower and think about what I was reading.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jay</th>
<th>Jackie</th>
<th>Shital</th>
<th>Blayne</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Checklists

Checklists are used when observing students’ reading behaviours during discussions and when analysing their written work. Ready-made checklists [e.g., those provided by school boards and publishers] are useful guides. However, because checklists focus on specific behaviours, they should be developed, or the ready-made ones adapted, by the classroom teacher for each specific use. The behaviours observed should be related to material that has been taught and should focus on skills that have been acquired, rather than on ongoing development. The following examples are located in the appendices to this chapter: a Sample Reading Portfolio Checklist [Appendix 12-8] and two Sample Retelling Checklists [Appendix 12-6].

Checklists can also be designed as tracking sheets that are used to collect information about a student in a cumulative way throughout the year. These checklists would track a student’s progress as he or she develops new skills and applies newly learned strategies. For example, a reading developmental continuum can be used as a continuous checklist [see Appendix 12-9; reading developmental continua are discussed later in this section]. Similarly, the chart in Chapter 9 entitled “Letter-Sound Correspondences, From Simple to More Complex” [page 9.13] could easily be adapted to form such a tracking sheet.

Because checklists have a narrow focus, they are used to supplement other assessment data.

Students’ Records of Their Independent Reading

Students can be asked to record their responses to texts read independently using the following tools:

- a reading log, or a reading record sheet provided to the student by the teacher on a regular basis, to be used by the student to record books read independently (see Appendix 12-4 for a sample in which the genre is listed along with the author and title of each book).

- a notebook in which the student records a list of the books he or she has read, providing the title, author, and genre of each book, and whether he or she found each book to be easy, difficult, or just right. The student might also record a note about his or her interest in the text.

- a response journal [fluent readers only] in which the student records his or her reactions to texts read independently, the connections and inferences made, and reflections on the texts, and in which the teacher responds [in the journal format] to the student’s comments in a way that extends the student’s learning. To ensure that the student receives the teacher’s comments in a timely fashion [i.e., the next day], students are asked to submit their response journals regularly, on a certain
day of the week or once every other week. Submissions can be staggered so that all students do not submit their journals on the same day.

Students’ response journals provide the following benefits. They:

- require the student to engage in a dialogue about the books he or she is reading;
- provide the teacher with an excellent opportunity to extend the student’s understanding of texts read, suggest strategies that may help the student overcome difficulties he or she had with a text, and recommend other texts written by a favourite author of the student, other books in a series, other books in a genre the student likes, or books in a genre the student is currently not reading.

**Reading Developmental Continua**

Appendix 12-9 contains a reading developmental continuum – a chart for tracking the development of a student’s reading skills over time. Reading developmental continua can be used over the entire Kindergarten to Grade 3 period. They:

- indicate whether the student is demonstrating the characteristic behaviours of the various stages in a beginning reader’s development (emergent, early, and fluent);
- show which strategies the student is using and which strategies the student needs to be taught.

A student’s reading developmental continuum can be reviewed at the end of a term for the purpose of a summative assessment. It can also be passed on to the student’s next teacher, to be used at the beginning of the year for diagnostic purposes and for program planning.

**Rubrics**

Rubrics are scoring scales that can be used when assessing student work in response to a specific task or at the end of a unit or term. A rubric sets out specific, observable criteria (related to selected curriculum expectations addressed in the task) in the four categories of knowledge and skills outlined in the curriculum documents. (For the Grade 1–8 language curriculum, the four categories are reasoning, communication, organization of ideas, and application of language conventions.) The rubric also provides descriptions of student performance for each of the criteria at each of the four levels of achievement.

Rubrics convey information to students most effectively when they are accompanied by exemplars. These samples of student work make the levels of achievement real for students.

Rubrics are most effective as assessment tools under the following conditions:

- when used selectively, for appropriate tasks
- when developed by the teacher and shared with students, so that students know what is expected of them
• when examples are provided at each achievement level and when teacher and students analyse the examples together
• when students use the rubric to guide their work as they perform the task

See Appendix 12-7 for a Sample Oral Retelling Rubric (Grade 1).

Exemplars

Exemplars are samples of student work, completed in response to a particular task, that are carefully chosen to illustrate performance at each of the four levels of achievement. In 2000, the Ministry of Education published *The Ontario Curriculum – Exemplars, Grades 1–8: Reading*, which contains task descriptions for end-of-year tasks, rubrics, and samples of student work at each level of achievement for each of the tasks. The anchor papers published by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) for Grade 3 teachers are also a form of exemplars.

Used along with rubrics, exemplars provide a guide for assessing students’ work in relation to selected curriculum expectations, and promote consistency in assessment. Exemplars can also be used to provide students with clear examples of work at each level of achievement, to help them improve their learning.

Teachers can use the ministry and EQAO exemplars as a guide to developing their own exemplars based on specific tasks to use with their students at various times during the year.

Reading Attitude and Interest Inventories

Maintaining an inventory of individual students’ attitudes towards reading and their reading interests helps the teacher understand the kinds of books and topics those students enjoy. The teacher can then make these kinds of texts available for students, choose texts appropriate for guided reading, and help students expand the range of texts they select for independent reading.

Attitude and interest inventories are conducted at the beginning of the year for early and fluent readers, and during the year as needed for students at all stages of reading development. The inventories are based on interview sheets developed or adapted by the teacher to reflect the backgrounds, reading development stages, and needs of the students in the class. Appendix 12-10 contains a Sample Reading Attitudes and Interests Interview Sheet.
Observation Surveys

Marie Clay, in *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* (2002), developed a survey that teachers can use at any time in the year to gather information about the literacy behaviours of a student. The survey is a diagnostic tool, to be used as needed with individual students. Information from the survey is used to develop a more effective program for the student involved.

Clay’s survey consists of the teacher observing the student as he or she performs six tasks, called Letter Identification, Concepts About Print, Word Test, Writing Vocabulary, Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words, and Text Reading. These tasks test a student’s ability to identify letters, knowledge of concepts of print, ability to identify high-frequency words, ability to write known words, knowledge of and/or ability to apply letter-sound relationships, and other reading skills. Some tasks are assigned to students individually; others can be assigned to small groups. The teacher analyses the cumulative data from all of the tasks to assess the student’s level of development.

For more information about Clay’s survey, consult her book (see the reference list at the end of this chapter).

Running Records

Running records were developed by Marie Clay in 1985 (see Clay’s *Running Records for Classroom Teachers*, 2000, for her most recent text on the subject). They are used by teachers to record what individual students in Kindergarten to Grade 3 say and do while reading a text aloud. Clay devised the record forms; a series of symbols for recording accuracies, errors, assistance provided by the teacher, and self-corrections; and a means of calculating a student’s reading accuracy and self-correction rates. Running records provide objective and reliable data that teachers can use to assess a student’s ability to read a text: What does the student know? How does the student apply his or her knowledge of words, sounds, and letters when reading a text? Which cues and strategies does he or she pay attention to? Which ones does he or she neglect?

Teachers can use the information gathered in running records to:

- guide their teaching;
- determine the appropriate level of text for the student;
- build a cumulative record of the student’s progress through increasingly difficult texts, from the student’s earliest efforts (which may involve the student’s “inventing” the text for a book that he or she cannot yet read), until the student is a skilled silent reader;
- evaluate the student’s achievement in reading.
Appendix 12-11 contains detailed information about using running records as an assessment tool, including administering the assessment, taking notes about observed reading behaviours, calculating the student’s errors, self-corrections, and “accuracy rate”, and analysing the running record. Teachers who are not familiar with running records will need to practise using them. Appendix 12-11 also includes some tips for teachers who are learning to use this assessment tool.
Appendix 12-I: Sample Template for an Anecdotal Record*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity/Focus or Context:</th>
<th>Date/Time:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Expectations:**

* See pages 12.20–12.23 for an explanation and examples of how to use this template.
Appendix I2-2: Sample Reading Interview Record Sheet

Individual Reading Interview

1. Do you read at home?

2. Does someone read to you? When? How often?

3. Do you have books of your own?

4. What is your favourite book?

5. Do you visit the library?

6. Do you like reading? Why/why not?

7. What is reading?

8. Why do people read?

9. When you’re reading and you come to a word you don’t know, what do you do?

10. What makes reading easy/difficult for you?

11. Who do you think the good readers in your class are?

12. How do you know they are good readers?

13. How do people get to be good readers?

(Adapted from Blanche, 1999, p. 29)
Appendix 12-3: Sample Reading Conference Record Sheet (Grades 2 and 3)

The teacher completes the record sheet during the conference. This sample assumes that the student has been asked to bring to the conference a book that he or she has read or is reading now.

READING CONFERENCE RECORD SHEET

Name: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

Title: ____________________________________________

Author: __________________________________________ Genre: ___________________________

Why did you choose this book?
_________________________________________________________

How difficult was this book for you? □ Hard? □ Easy □ Just Right

Read a part of the book aloud.
_________________________________________________________

Tell me what you remember from this book/what connections you have made between the story/content of the book and your own experiences.
_________________________________________________________

Let’s discuss your strengths and what you need to work on.

Strengths: ______________________________________________

_________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________

Goals: ______________________________________________

_________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________

Adapted from Reading Essentials: The Specifics You Need to Teach Reading Well by Regie Routman. Copyright © 2003 by Regie Routman. Published by Heinemann, a division of Reed Elsevier, Inc., Portsmouth, NH.
Appendix 12-4: Sample Student’s Reading Record

The teacher can devise a colour-coding scheme for the various genres and have students use a coloured pen or marker to indicate the genre of their book on this form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MY READING RECORD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name: __________________________ Week: __________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MONDAY</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title: __________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author: __________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Genre:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TUESDAY</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title: __________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author: __________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Genre:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WEDNESDAY</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title: __________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author: __________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Genre:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>THURSDAY</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title: __________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author: __________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Genre:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FRIDAY</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title: __________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author: __________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Genre:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Taberski, 2000, p. 184)
# MY MONTHLY READING SELF-ASSESSMENT SHEET

**Name:** ___________________________  **Date:** ___________________________

This is the total number of books I read this month: ______

I read these genres of books this month:

1. ________________________________  3. ________________________________
2. ________________________________  4. ________________________________

My favourite book was ________________________________

It was my favourite for these reasons:

1. ________________________________
2. ________________________________
3. ________________________________
4. ________________________________

In the future, I plan to read these books:

1. ________________________________  3. ________________________________
2. ________________________________  4. ________________________________

I learned these things from books this month:

1. ________________________________
2. ________________________________
3. ________________________________
4. ________________________________

I am using these strategies to make sense of my reading:

1. ________________________________  3. ________________________________
2. ________________________________  4. ________________________________
## Appendix 12-6: Sample Retelling Checklists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria for Retelling</th>
<th>Unassisted</th>
<th>Assisted</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Includes main characters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Includes some secondary characters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Includes time and place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequences events correctly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Includes supporting details</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Includes all elements of story</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifies problem in story</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>States how problem was solved</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses language of story</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interprets author's message</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows awareness of audience by using a clear, expressive voice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Thames Valley District School Board, 2002. Adapted by the board from *Taking Running Records, Grades 1–3* by Mary Shea. Published by Scholastic Professional Books, a division of Scholastic Inc. Copyright © 2000 by Mary Shea. Used by permission.)

### FOR FICTIONAL TEXTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria for Retelling</th>
<th>Unassisted</th>
<th>Assisted</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identifies topic of text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarizes main idea</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses new vocabulary from text in the retell</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequences information logically</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interprets charts, tables, and pictures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connects information in text to real-life applications</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### FOR FACTUAL TEXTS
# Appendix I2-7: Sample Oral Retelling Rubric (Grade 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasoning</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orally retells story, with extensive teacher support, but covers few major points.</td>
<td>Orally retells story, but needs some teacher prompts/support or to revisit the book and its illustrations to cover major points.</td>
<td>Orally retells story, covering most major points with little/no prompting.</td>
<td>Orally retells story, covering major points without prompting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses narrative structure in a very limited way, describing few elements (e.g., plot, setting, characters) of story.</td>
<td>Uses a simple narrative structure, describing some elements (e.g., plot, setting, characters) of story.</td>
<td>Uses narrative structure appropriately, describing most elements (e.g., plot, setting, characters) of story.</td>
<td>Uses narrative structure effectively, describing all/almost all of the elements (e.g., plot, setting, characters) of story.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expresses story line incompletely, providing few details.</td>
<td>Expresses story line with some omissions, providing some details.</td>
<td>Expresses story line clearly, providing many details.</td>
<td>Expresses story line confidently, providing extensive details.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes few/no connections between own experiences and story.</td>
<td>Makes some simple connections between own experiences and story.</td>
<td>Makes connections between own experiences and story.</td>
<td>Makes specific connections between own experiences and story, and makes inferences about story to create a personal interpretation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization of Ideas</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shows little ability to order ideas/information from story.</td>
<td>Orders some ideas/information from story in a simple sequence.</td>
<td>Orders most ideas/information from story in a coherent sequence.</td>
<td>Orders ideas/information from story in a concise and logical sequence.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeats a few time words (e.g., and, then) to order ideas/information from story.</td>
<td>Uses time words simply (e.g., The next day ...) to order ideas/information from story.</td>
<td>Uses time words appropriately (e.g., At night ...) to order ideas/information from story.</td>
<td>Uses time words skilfully/creatively (e.g., When it was dark ...) to order ideas/information from story.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application of Language Conventions</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uses few/no linking words to connect ideas/information in the retelling.</td>
<td>Uses some simple linking words to connect ideas/information in the retelling.</td>
<td>Uses appropriate linking words to connect ideas/information in the retelling.</td>
<td>Uses complex linking words to connect ideas/information in the retelling.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses phrases/very simple sentence structures to express story.</td>
<td>Uses simple sentence structures to express story.</td>
<td>Uses some variety of sentence structures to express story.</td>
<td>Uses a variety of sentence structures to express story.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Toronto District School Board, 2002.)
Appendix I2-8: Sample Reading Portfolio Checklist

Copyright restrictions apply. To view this material, please consult the printed Guide.
## Appendix I2-9: Sample Reading Developmental Continuum

Name: ____________________________

### EMERGENT STAGE

**Characteristics**
The student demonstrates:

- high expectations of books;
- knowledge of a wide range of “book language”;
- awareness that message is carried and preserved by print;
- fluency in oral “reading”;
- strong desire to record messages.

**Attitude/Values**
The student:

- sees reading as a source of pleasure;
- chooses to browse and “read” independently.

**Knowledge About Reading (Concepts Learned)**
The student knows that:

- print conveys a message (i.e., in addition to the message conveyed by pictures);
- Student locates print by pointing.
- in English, print is read from left to right, and from top to bottom of the page;
- Student points from left to right.
- pictures convey meaning that supports and/or enhances the meaning conveyed by the printed message;
- Student can explain the relationship between picture and text.

### EARLY STAGE

**Characteristics**
The student demonstrates:

- awareness that reading is a source of pleasure and information;
- slow, deliberate, oral reading characterized by finger pointing and reading word by word;
- active use of self-correction strategies;
- recognition of an increasing number of personally interesting and high-frequency words;
- emerging competence in writing.

**Attitude/Values**
The student:

- sees reading as a source of pleasure;
- chooses to read a range of texts (e.g., easy, difficult, different genres, wall charts);
- requests opportunities to read orally.

**Knowledge About Reading (Concepts Learned)**
The student knows that:

- reading always has to convey meaning;
- Student uses observable fix-up strategies to ensure that he/she is grasping the meaning accurately.
- Student retells stories in a way that conveys their meaning.
- upper- and lower-case letters have specific forms and functions in text;
- Student demonstrates understanding that upper-case letters are used for the first word in a sentence and for proper names.
- Student identifies the need for and uses upper- and lower-case letters in personal writing when appropriate.

### FLUENT STAGE

**Characteristics**
The student demonstrates:

- awareness that reading is a source of pleasure and information;
- reduced obvious use of eye-voice-ear link in oral reading (i.e., reads more smoothly, without obviously listening to him- or herself read);
- gradual transition from oral to silent reading (i.e., a slow rate of silent reading);
- deeper level of understanding;
- continuing development of writing skills, including in the various features and forms experienced in reading.

**Attitude/Values**
The student:

- values reading as a source of pleasure and information;
- reports highly satisfying reading experiences;
- engages in reading for longer periods of time;
- uses books as resources from which to obtain new information.

**Knowledge About Reading (Concepts Learned)**
The student knows that:

- reading requires the reader to understand/interpret the text’s meaning:
  - Student self-corrects miscues that disrupt reading and/or alter meaning.
- the transition from oral reading to independent, silent reading occurs gradually;
  - Student reads “silently” with slight vocalization (i.e., may whisper words).
- punctuation and upper-case letters have functions that contribute to the meaning of a text;
  - Student reads the text aloud accurately and effectively.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMERGENT STAGE</th>
<th>EARLY STAGE</th>
<th>FLUENT STAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge About Reading (Concepts Learned) (cont.)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student knows that:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ print messages make sense;</td>
<td>✓ punctuation contributes to the meaning of a text;</td>
<td>✓ practice increases fluency, develops a memory for language structures, and builds a bank of sight vocabulary;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Student “reads” text in a way that conveys its meaning, using word substitutions that convey the meaning.</td>
<td>✓ Student maintains an understanding of the meaning when a sentence extends beyond one line of text.</td>
<td>✓ Student reads more difficult texts independently with fewer appeals for help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ “book language” is different from oral language;</td>
<td>✓ the same message and the same words can be written in different print sizes and styles;</td>
<td>✓ factual text is different from fictional text;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Student incorporates language from text in retelling.</td>
<td>✓ Student recognizes the visual similarities and differences among print styles.</td>
<td>✓ Student selects factual texts to find information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ words have boundaries and are separated by white space;</td>
<td>✓ text can be organized in a variety of ways and can perform different functions;</td>
<td>✓ Student uses authors’ signals (e.g., bold-face type, italics, captions, headings) to gather significant information from texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Student points to words in a line of familiar text.</td>
<td>✓ Student can identify a variety of print forms and experiments with them in personal writing.</td>
<td>✓ the table of contents and the index help the reader locate specific information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Student locates a word in a line of familiar text.</td>
<td>✓ words in a text are read on a one-to-one basis (one word is read for each word in the text, and the meaning of the word read must match the meaning of the word in the text);</td>
<td>✓ Student uses the table of contents and index to locate information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ words have individual visual features;</td>
<td>✓ Student points to words one at a time as he or she reads them aloud in a slow, deliberate way.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Student makes spontaneous comments about word features.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ a range of high-frequency words appears in each text.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Student recognizes a few high-frequency words in context.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Strategies Used in Reading

The student:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMERGENT STAGE</th>
<th>EARLY STAGE</th>
<th>FLUENT STAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ uses his or her memory of a text to &quot;read&quot; familiar text independently (i.e., to produce &quot;reading-like&quot; behaviour);</td>
<td>□ uses reading strategies to understand text; □ demonstrates concrete and some abstract thinking in his or her responses to a text;</td>
<td>□ uses a range of reading strategies to understand text; □ Student demonstrates an understanding of concrete meaning and an increasing degree of understanding of abstract meaning in his or her responses to a text, supporting these responses with information/ideas from the text and by making connections between the text and his or her personal experiences;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ uses his or her memory of a text to &quot;read&quot; in a way that closely approximates the page-by-page placement of text;</td>
<td>□ supports his or her responses with information/ideas in the text and by making connections between the text and his or her personal experiences;</td>
<td>□ extends his or her interpretations and insights through discussion; □ Student acknowledges and can produce differing interpretations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ uses pictures to facilitate the construction of meaning; □ Student stops to check his or her reading of a word by looking at a related picture for help with the meaning.</td>
<td>□ reads factual texts to obtain information;</td>
<td>□ uses a variety of strategies to process text independently, rapidly, and efficiently; □ Student reads more difficult text with fewer appeals for help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ uses self-monitoring strategies to understand text. □ Student substitutes more appropriate words for words &quot;read&quot; that do not make sense.</td>
<td>□ uses knowledge of an increasing number of high-frequency words to understand the text;</td>
<td>□ Student reads silently at or below the rate of speech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ uses a variety of word-solving strategies (i.e., strategies to decode and determine the pronunciation of words); □ Student uses initial and final consonants to determine word. □ Student substitutes initial consonants to form rhyming words. □ Student makes analogies to known words (e.g., uses knowledge of Sue and and to solve the word sand).</td>
<td>□ uses a range of word-solving strategies; □ Student uses analogy and existing knowledge of words to solve unknown words. □ Student uses text surrounding unknown words to help determine their meaning. □ Student modifies initial predictions in light of new information in text.</td>
<td>□ uses a rate and style of reading that suits the purpose for reading and the nature of the materials; □ Student adjusts the rate of reading to note main ideas and details or locate information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ uses parts of known words and inflectional endings to solve unfamiliar words.</td>
<td>□ uses meaning as the ultimate check for his or her interpretations of a text; □ Student detects miscues that alter the meaning, searches for additional information in text to check interpretation, and attempts to self-correct misinterpretations.</td>
<td>□ uses a rate and style of reading that suits the purpose for reading and the nature of the materials; □ Student adjusts the rate of reading to note main ideas and details or locate information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ previews text to facilitate understanding (e.g., to predict story line); □ surveys layout of text (e.g., its length, structure, and headings, and the information contained in illustrations) to learn more about the text prior to reading it.</td>
<td>□ extends his or her interpretations and insights through discussion; □ Student acknowledges and can produce differing interpretations.</td>
<td>□ uses a variety of strategies to process text independently, rapidly, and efficiently; □ Student reads more difficult text with fewer appeals for help.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Assessment**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMERGENT STAGE</th>
<th>EARLY STAGE</th>
<th>FLUENT STAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Connections Made Between Reading and Writing

The student demonstrates awareness that:

- what is learned in reading can be used in writing;
- “book language” can be used in personal writing;
- the features and ideas in a text can be used in personal writing.

- reading provides opportunities to learn about writing;
- ideas, forms, punctuation, and language that appear in text can be used in personal writing.

- reading can be a resource for writing.
- Student uses characters, setting, story line’s problem/resolution, dialogue (in narratives) in own writing.
- Student uses a variety of text forms for informational writing (lists, rules, procedures, informational paragraph).
- Student uses knowledge of words seen in texts to increasingly employ spelling conventions in own writing.

(Adapted from Toronto District School Board, 2000b, Appendix 67)
Appendix I2-10: Sample Reading Attitudes and Interests Interview Sheet

Student’s Name: ____________________________ Grade: _____ Date: ____________

What kind of books do you like to read?

________________________________________________________________________

Do you read at home? What do you read?

________________________________________________________________________

Do you like to listen to stories? Do you have favourite stories?

________________________________________________________________________

Who reads to you? When do these people read to you?

________________________________________________________________________

Are you a good reader? How do you know?

________________________________________________________________________

How did you learn to read?

________________________________________________________________________

What happens in your head when you read?

________________________________________________________________________

What do you do when you come to a word you don’t know?

________________________________________________________________________
Appendix I2-II: Running Records

This appendix contains the following information:

- tips for teachers who are learning to take running records
- guidelines for taking a running record
- guidelines for recording observations on a standard running record sheet
- guidelines for analysing a running record
- advice on assessing the reading behaviours of students who are not yet reading level-1 texts

Learning to Take Running Records: Tips for Teachers

- **Attend a workshop.**
  Look for workshops, including ones offered by your board, and online courses.

- **Find a mentor.**
  Work with a teacher who is experienced in taking running records until you are comfortable with the process.

- **Practise first with younger students.**
  Until you develop confidence, try to use running records with Grade 1 or early Grade 2 students who are average readers. Skilled readers will be too fast for the beginning record-taker, and readers who experience difficulties may require complex coding that challenges the novice recorder’s ability to record all the details.

- **Avoid using a tape recorder.**
  Although taping a student’s reading may give you confidence, this confidence is usually misplaced. Important visual information (e.g., pointing, mouthing of sounds, looking at pictures for cues) is not picked up by a tape recorder. Try to take running records without it. You will develop confidence in time.

- **Avoid using preprinted scripts.**
  Some publishers of books for young readers and other organizations offer preprinted one-page scripts for teachers to use in taking running records. These scripts resemble the running record sheet on page 12.45, but with the book’s text reproduced line by line. While some teachers find it easier to use a preprinted script than a blank form, there is often not enough room on one page to record all the reading behaviours a student can demonstrate. Scripts also tend to encourage teachers to record only errors and correct responses, and neglect all the reading “work” the student is demonstrating. Finally, if you rely on scripts, you may be reluctant to take advantage of the wide variety of material the students are reading independently upon which a running record may be taken spontaneously. Suitable material may include both fictional and factual texts.

Taking a Running Record

1. The student sits beside the teacher, who tells the student the title of the story and then asks him or her to read the book.

2. The book selected should be difficult enough that the student has to work to read the text, but not so hard that the reading process breaks down. (If the teacher decides during the assessment that the book is very difficult for the student, the book should be read to or shared with the child and another book should be selected to assess the student’s skills at a later time.)

- If the running record is being taken to determine the progress of students in guided reading groups or to choose specific teaching areas on which to focus, the book should be a seen text – that is, one that the student has read once or twice previously.
The guided reading selection of the previous day is a frequent choice. The teacher's analysis will focus on whether the student can read it accurately and with comprehension.

- If the running record is being taken as a part of a standardized assessment, the text should be unseen – that is, one that the student has not read before. In this case, the teacher's analysis will focus on how well the student independently applies new learning [e.g., reading strategies].

- In either case, the teacher should read only the title of the book and recite the names of the characters, and then allow the student to read. Ideally, the selection should be between 150 and 200 words. (If the text is longer than 150–200 words, the teacher may choose to stop taking the running record but allow the student to finish reading the selection, so that the student does not come to see reading as a pointless task.) Since many books for early readers contain fewer than 150 words, the teacher should take running records and draw conclusions based on having the student read more than one book.

3. While the student reads the book, the teacher records the student's behaviours on a blank piece of paper or on a running record template. In each case, standard recording symbols should be used. [See "Recording Symbols for Running Records", page 12.44, and "Recording Observations", page 12.47.] With a few exceptions [explained in "Recording Observations"], the teacher must not intervene during the reading, maintaining the role of neutral observer so that the student's independent reading process is recorded.

4. The teacher notes at the bottom of the record sheet how the reading sounded. [Was it phrased? Did the student point and read in a staccato way? Were there long pauses? Was the reading fluent? etc.]

5. After the student completes the reading, the teacher may choose to follow up with two or three teaching points. Generally, at least one point is positive, highlighting for the student a successful reading behaviour that should be repeated. The teacher may also wish to address one or two difficulties the student experienced, briefly describing ways the student could handle such problems in future.

6. The teacher tallies the student's errors and self-corrections as recorded in the columns on the record sheet. [See "Calculating Errors and Self-Corrections", page 12.48.]

7. The teacher then calculates the accuracy rate and identifies the book as being at an easy, instructional, or difficult level for this student at this time.

8. The teacher calculates and records the self-correction ratio. [See "Calculating Errors and Self-Corrections".]

9. The teacher then analyses the running record by looking at each error, including the self-corrected ones, and asking why the student may have made that particular error and what he or she did to correct the error. [See "Analysing the Running Record", page 12.51.]

10. The teacher completes the front of the running record sheet or makes notes on the template or other recording sheet used. The teacher then uses the information from this assessment to make teaching decisions about future guided reading lessons, emphases in shared reading lessons, and so on.
# RECORDING SYMBOLS FOR RUNNING RECORDS

The recording symbols are used as follows:

- **[What the student says]**
- **[What the text says]**
- **[Where applicable, what the teacher says]**
- **[Student’s non-verbal behaviour, e.g., appeal for help]**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading Behaviour</th>
<th>Symbol*</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Scoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accurate Reading</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓</td>
<td>no error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>as fast as</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substitution</td>
<td>[word said]</td>
<td>[word in text]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>father</td>
<td>fast</td>
<td>1 error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omission</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>[word in text]</td>
<td>1 error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>–</td>
<td>run</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insertion</td>
<td>[word inserted]</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1 error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>very</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Told</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>[word in text]</td>
<td>1 error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try that again</td>
<td>TTA</td>
<td>[TTA]</td>
<td>1 error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-correction</td>
<td>SC</td>
<td>father</td>
<td>SC SC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fast</td>
<td>fast</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition</td>
<td>R + subscript number for number of times</td>
<td>R₃</td>
<td>no error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ R ✓</td>
<td>no error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A [word in text]</td>
<td>no error</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* These symbols are explained in “Recording Observations”, p. 12.47.

(Adapted from Thames Valley District School Board, 2002)
**RUNNING RECORD RECORDING SHEET**

Name ____________________________ Date ________________

- **Familiar Text**
- **Unfamiliar Text**

Book Title ____________________________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Words</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Accuracy</th>
<th>Self-Correction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt;&gt;&gt;&gt;&gt;&gt;&gt;&gt;</td>
<td>&gt;&gt;&gt;&gt;&gt;</td>
<td>&gt;&gt;&gt;&gt;&gt;&gt;&gt;</td>
<td>&gt;&gt;&gt;&gt;(asterisk)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Cues Used:**
  - Meaning ____________________________
  - Structure ____________________________
  - Visual ____________________________

- **Strategies Used:**
  - Monitoring ____________________________
  - Cross-checking ____________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
<td>SC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
<td>M S V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SC</td>
<td>M S V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
<td>SC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E M S V</td>
<td>SC M S V</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recording Observations

It is important that running records be recorded carefully, using consistent symbols, so that colleagues can compare them.

- Observations are recorded by line of text. When the student starts to read a new line of text, the teacher starts recording his or her observations on a new line.
- Mark all words read correctly with a check mark (e.g., ✔✔✔).
- A horizontal line is used to separate the words as read by the student from the actual words in the text. The text is always on the bottom. A vertical line separates attempts.

Recording Errors

- A substitution is recorded exactly as read, with the correct text written below.

  steps
  stairs

  If the student makes a series of attempts, each is recorded.

  for  fit  fox  1 error
  fix

- An omission is marked with a dash.

  --
  big

- An insertion is indicated by recording the word the student inserted over a dash.

  big --

- If the student is told a word by the teacher because he or she does not know a word and is therefore unable to or refuses to continue, the teacher records a “told” (T), which is an error. The teacher must not give hints or teach at this point. The teacher should wait three seconds before telling the word.

  h-h
  house  T

- If the student becomes completely confused and is unable to get back on track, the teacher may say “try that again”, and indicate where the student is to begin again. The record of the confused efforts is marked with square brackets and the code TTA. This counts as one error. Below the record of the student’s confusion, the teacher records the student’s next attempt. This time the errors or self-corrections are counted separately. TTA should not be used frequently or to try to stop a student from making repeated errors.

  ✔ crawled a c-r-e --
  baby cried and cried. Then
  here spurge where e-vary-
  he splashed water everywhere. TTA

  ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔

  ✔ ✔ ✔ --
  everywhere. T

Recording Reading Behaviours

That Are Not Errors

- A self-correction (SC) is recorded when the student corrects a previous error. [Note that “SC” is recorded when the student reads the word correctly; the correct word need not be written in.]

  for  fit  SC
  fix

If the student makes a series of approximations, each is recorded. Note that if the student is successful, there is no error.

  f-  f-o  for  SC
• A repetition [recorded as an R] is not an error. The student may repeat words for a variety of reasons, such as confirming a previous attempt. If the student repeats a word or a phrase several times, the teacher records the number of repetitions with a subscript number [e.g., $R_3$]. If the student repeats a phrase or group of words, the teacher records this rerun with an arrow that points to the word to which the student returns. It is possible that in a rerun a student will repeat more than one line or even go back a page.

In the example below, the student repeated the first word two times.

\[ \sqrt{R_2} \quad \sqrt{\text{we}} \]

In the example below, the student repeated the three words after the arrow.

\[ \sqrt{\text{for fit}} \quad \sqrt{\text{fix}} \quad R \]

In the example below, the student repeated block and black.

\[ \sqrt{\text{block}} \quad \sqrt{\text{black}} \quad R \]

In the example below, the student self-corrected as part of a repeat (i.e., read we as went, read the next two words correctly, and then went back to we, read it correctly, and continued reading).

\[ \sqrt{\text{went SC fit}} \quad \sqrt{\text{fix}} \quad R \]

• A student’s verbal appeal for help [A] is answered by the teacher with “You try it” [Y]. Both the appeal and the teacher’s “You try it” are recorded. The appeal and response are not recorded as errors.

\[ \sqrt{A} \quad \text{No error} \]

\[ \sqrt{Y} \]

If the student is still unable to solve the word and appeals again, the teacher may say the word [a “told” – see above] and record an error.

\[ \text{mouses} \quad \text{A} \quad \text{T} \quad 1 \text{ error} \]

\[ \text{mice} \quad \text{T} \]

Calculating Errors and Self-Corrections

Calculating the Number of Errors

Count the number of errors in a line of text. Record the total (tally the errors) in the Error (E) column.

• Each uncorrected substitution, omission, insertion, or “told” is an error.

• If the student makes multiple attempts to read a word, these attempts are scored as one error.

• If the student makes one or more attempts to read a word and finally reads it correctly, there is no error.

• Since each insertion is counted as one error, there can be more errors than words on a line.

• If an entire line or sentence is omitted, each omitted word is counted as an error.

• If an entire page is omitted, no errors are counted, but these words should be deducted from the running total.

• If the student makes an error repeatedly throughout the text (e.g., substituting the for a), the error is counted each time.

• However, if the student substitutes a proper noun (e.g., Jack for John) repeatedly, the error is counted only once. Subsequent repetitions of the error are coded but not counted.
• If the teacher needs to say “try that again”, the student’s initial confusion is counted as one error.

• If the student pronounces one word as if it were two words [e.g., in/to], the error is considered a pronunciation error, not a reading error, and it is not counted. Similarly, mispronunciations that may be due to speech difficulties, accents, and dialects [e.g., wif for with, dis for this] are not counted as errors.

• Contractions are counted as one error.

I am or I’m

I’m or I am

• If the student tries to decode by segmenting a word (sounding it out), the attempt is counted as an error only if the student does not blend the sounds and say the actual word. (In recording this error, use lower-case letters separated by dashes to denote the segments as sounded out by the student.)

C-a-t 1 error

C-a-t 1 error

C-a-t 1 error

C-a-t 1 error

Similarly, if the child spells the word but then does not say the word, it is counted as an error. [Use upper case letters with dashes to denote spelling.]

C-A-T 1 error

C-A-T 1 error

C-A-T 1 error

C-A-T 1 error

If there are two ways to interpret an answer, choose the interpretation that results in fewer errors. For example, the text reads “and the bear walked and walked” but the student says, “and the bear walked and walked and walked.”

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\checkmark \checkmark \checkmark \\
\text{walked and walked}
\end{array}
\]

2 errors

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\checkmark \checkmark \checkmark \\
\text{walked and walked}
\end{array}
\]

no errors

Calculating the Number of Self-Corrections

Count the number of self-corrections in a line of text. Record the total [tally the self-corrections] in the Self-Corrections (SC) column.

Calculating Reading Accuracy Rates and Self-Correction Ratios

To calculate the reading accuracy rate:

1. Count the total number of words [“running words” or RWs] in the book. For example, 154.
2. Divide the total number of words by the number of errors (Es) the student made. For example, 154 words ÷ 11 Es = 14.
3. Establish the ratio of errors to total words.

In this example, the student made 1 error in 14 words. The ratio of errors to total words is therefore 1:14.
4. Taking the ratio, determine the percentage of the reading that was accurate by checking the Running Records Calculation Chart [see page 12.50]. In the example given, 1:14 represents a 93% accuracy rate.
To calculate the self-correction ratio:

1. Total the number of errors and self-corrections the student made (Es + SCs). For example, 11 Es + 4 SCs = 15. (Note that for the purposes of calculating this ratio, self-corrections are counted both as errors, which the student subsequently self-corrected, and as self-corrections.)

2. Divide this total by the total number of self-corrections. Using the same example, 15 ÷ 4 SCs = 4 (using rounding). In this example, the student made 1 self-correction for every 4 errors. The ratio of self-corrections to total errors and self-corrections is therefore 1:4.

### RUNNING RECORDS CALCULATIONS CHART FOR READING ACCURACY RATE AND SELF-CORRECTION RATIO

1. Count the running words (RWs); e.g., 154.
2. Divide the number or RWs by the number of errors (Es) made (RWs ÷ Es); e.g., 154 ÷ 11 = 14.
3. Establish the ratio of errors to running words; e.g., 1 in 14 or 1:14.
4. Determine the percentage of the reading that was accurate by checking the calculation chart; e.g., 1:14 = 93% accuracy.
5. Total the number of errors and self-corrections (SCs) made (Es + SCs); e.g., 11 + 4 = 15.
6. Divide this total by the number of SCs to establish the ratio of SCs to Es; e.g., 15 ÷ 4 = 4 (rounded). The self-correction ratio is therefore 1 in 4 or 1:4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ERROR RATIO</th>
<th>ACCURACY RATE (%)</th>
<th>LEVEL OF TEXT DIFFICULTY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:200</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>EASY (95–100% correct)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:100</td>
<td>99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:50</td>
<td>98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:35</td>
<td>97</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:25</td>
<td>96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:20</td>
<td>95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:17</td>
<td>94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:14</td>
<td>93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:12.5</td>
<td>92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:11.75</td>
<td>91</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:10</td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:9</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>INSTRUCTIONAL (90–94% correct)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:8</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:7</td>
<td>85.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:6</td>
<td>83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:5</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:4</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:3</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:2</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A student who is reading a text at this level of accuracy can read other texts at this level independently. The teacher has ample opportunity to observe the student’s independent processing of the text.

Texts being read at this level of accuracy are suitable for guided reading. In that context, the teacher can observe and assist the student as he or she independently applies reading strategies.

Texts being read at this level of accuracy are not suitable for guided or independent reading. They may be suitable for shared reading.
Analysing the Running Record

Running records can show teachers behaviours that the reader is using successfully to comprehend the text, as well as those that inhibit a fluent reading of the text or that indicate a lack of comprehension. While running records will reveal some knowledge of how well most students have comprehended the text, teachers should ask students questions after the record has been taken to ensure that the information on the student’s level of comprehension is reliable.

Examples of the behaviours running records can reveal include whether the student:

- repeats words or phrases in order to self-correct [i.e., knows what the word is];
- rereads a phrase to acquire additional information [i.e., doesn’t know the word], to attempt a new word again, or to confirm that he or she read the word accurately;
- attempts a word before appealing for assistance or appeals to the teacher before trying a word;
- frequently becomes confused and unable to continue, requiring the teacher to tell him or her a word and record a “told” (see page 12.47);
- makes comments about the story that indicate an interest in and understanding of it;
- frequently checks the pictures for assistance or confirmation of his or her understanding;
- efficiently or inefficiently uses the sounding-out strategy to decode new words;
- points at words or phrases with a finger;
- reads in a phrased and fluent manner;
- uses appropriate intonation and expression;
- neglects or pays obvious attention to punctuation.

Examining a student’s reading behaviours also provides the teacher with insight into the reader’s thinking processes. In trying to determine what the material says, the student uses, primarily, three sources of information provided by the text itself. These are the three cueing systems: semantic [meaning] cues, syntactic [structural] cues, and graphophonic [visual] cues (see glossary; see also Chapter 6: Guided Reading for a full discussion of the three cueing systems).
The teacher should look at every error in the running record and ask, “What led the student to make that error?” For each error, the teacher should consider the following questions:

1. Does the error have a semantic (meaning) basis? Does the error make sense? Does the story line support the error? Does the illustration support the error? Did the student bring a different meaning from his own experience to the text?  Consider the following examples:

   - ball
   - football
   - or
   - Daddy
   - Papa

2. Did the structure, syntax, or grammar of the sentence up to the point of error support the error? Does this student frequently make this kind of structural, syntactical, or grammatical error? Consider the following examples:

   - said
   - shouted
   - or
   - runned
   - ran

3. Does the error have a graphophonic (visual) basis? Does it look right? Could visual cues have triggered, or do they support, the error?  For example, did the student respond to the initial letter, the size of the word, an ending, a reversed word, and so on? Consider the following examples:

   - at
   - to
   - or
   - went
   - want
   - or
   - died
   - tied

The recording sheet should have an “analysis” column that is divided into two sub-columns (“Errors” or “E” and “Self-Corrections” or “SC” [see page 12.45]).  Beside each error, in the E column of the recording sheet, the teacher should write the letters M S V to represent the three cueing systems: M [meaning/semantic], S [structure/syntactic], and V [visual/graphophonic]. If the student’s error may have derived from one or more of these kinds of cues, the teacher circles the appropriate letter or letters.  In determining the influence of the cueing systems, it is important to consider the text only up to the point where the student made the error.  Although the teacher knows what comes next in the text, the student may not.

**Example 1:**

   - said
   - M S V
   - shouted

   In example 1, said makes sense in the story, sounds right structurally, and starts with the same letter as the correct word.  The student may have used all three sources of information.

**Example 2** [picture-supported response]:

   - slept
   - M S V
   - yawned

   In example 2, slept matches the picture of a yawning child with closed eyes, lying down.  The word therefore makes sense.  It sounds right in the sentence, but because there is no visual similarity between the words slept and yawned, the word slept does not look right.  The student appears to have overlooked the visual cue.

**Example 3:**

   - went
   - M S V
   - we

   In example 3, went does not make sense in the sentence, nor does it sound right syntactically.  It did however, appear to look right to the student who is just learning high-frequency words.
Next, the teacher should look at the self-corrections. The teacher should first analyze the original error, and then ask what cueing systems the student appears to have used to correct the error. The cue or cues used by the student are recorded in the “Self-Correction” or SC column of the recording sheet (see page 12.45). Note that in the following examples, the E column analyses from the above examples are shown as well as the SC column analyses.

Example 4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>slept</th>
<th>SC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yawed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In example 4, when self-correcting, the student continued to use the meaning and structural cues but also recognized the visual cues (probably initial and final consonants).

Example 5:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>went</th>
<th>SC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>we</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In example 5, the student appears to have paid attention to visual cues (both words begin with w-e) but makes an error [went] that does not have meaning within the context of the sentence and that does not fit the structure of the sentence. After reading further and taking into account the meaning and structure cues, the student realized that went did not make sense [M] or sound right [S], and self-corrected the error.

The next step is to consider the pattern of responses. During the analysis of running records, the teacher should not spend much time on individual errors, but instead should look for patterns, sources of information neglected, and so on, as follows:

- Does the student use two or three cues (sources of information) together? Consider the following example:
  
  house
  
  home

- Does the student cross-check an attempt by using other kinds of cues? Consider the following example:
  
  black
  
  blue
  
  [looks at picture]

- Does the student tend to rely primarily on one kind of cue? For example, does the student sound out and accept words that are meaningless or that may not be real words? Does the student make up text using pictures (meaning cues) to provide information about the story?

- If the teacher totals the number of errors and self-corrected errors that depend on each type of cue (e.g., How many times was M used? S? V?), is there a balance? Does the student tend to rely on one cueing system? Does the student tend to depend on M and S cues when he or she makes an error, and V cues to self-correct (or the reverse)?

At the top of the running record sheet, the teacher summarizes what he or she has learned from the analysis. The teacher then uses this information to determine future instructional practices. The goal is to help each student develop effective reading behaviours and reading skills and become a fluent reader.
Assessing the Reading Behaviours of Students Who Are Not Yet Reading Level-1 Texts by the End of Kindergarten or the Beginning of Grade 1

When young children are asked to read a book, they may invent the text completely. In these cases, for the purpose of taking a running record, the teacher can note “invented text” on the running record sheet and then record the invention. Did the student use full sentences? Correct grammar? Create a pattern? Label or give captions to the pictures?

Students who are unable to maintain the pattern in a simple level-1 or level-A patterned book can have very different understandings of text and the reading process. The teacher’s observations may need to be more extensive than those recorded for a more experienced reader, to ensure that teaching addresses these students’ needs.

If a student is unable to read a level-1 or level-A patterned book, the teacher should try the following:

1. Select a new level-1 or level-A patterned book. Read the first two pages, then ask the student to finish reading the book. Observe and record the student’s attempts.
   - Did the student hold the pattern for the rest of the book? If so, this student is probably aware that text is constant and predictable and is ready to learn about matching words in text with spoken words, high-frequency words, and so on.
   - Did the student hold the pattern briefly, then begin to invent text? (If so, see step 2.)
   - Did the student note the pattern at all? (If not, see step 2.)

2. If the student did not note the pattern or was unable to hold the pattern through the entire book, select a new book and read the entire book to the student. Then ask the student to read the book.
   - Did the student hold the pattern for the entire book? With support and more experiences with patterned books, the student will become ready to learn about matching words in text with spoken words, high-frequency words, and so on.
   - Did the student hold the pattern briefly, then begin to invent text? (If so, see step 3.)
   - Did the student note the pattern at all? (If not, see step 3.)

3. If the student did not note the pattern or was unable to hold the pattern through the entire book, ask the student to draw a picture and to dictate a story to accompany it. After writing down and reading the student’s story, ask the student to read his or her own story.
   - Did the student repeat the story correctly? (If so, the student has some understanding that text is constant.)
   - Did the student invent a new story or change the original one?

The information gleaned from this assessment can be used to guide and plan future literacy activities for the individual student.

By analysing the reading behaviours of several students at this level, teachers can glean information that will help them plan new instruction for the whole class or a small group (e.g., for shared reading).
References


Planning and Classroom Organization

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Many people share the responsibility for ensuring that children learn to read, but teachers in the primary grades have the responsibility for providing the systematic instruction that lays the foundation for students to become proficient and lifelong readers. To be effective, this instruction has to be carefully planned and supported by appropriate classroom organization.

The teacher sets the stage for effective reading instruction by:

• planning a reading program that meets the needs of all students;
• setting up the classroom to accommodate a variety of literacy activities;
• creating a schedule that reserves a substantial block of time for literacy instruction and activities;
• designing a variety of whole-class, small-group, and individual literacy activities;
• implementing appropriate modes of classroom management to accommodate a range of learning styles and needs;
• establishing clear routines to ensure an efficient, smooth-running classroom;
• developing a classroom atmosphere that is conducive to language learning.

Planning an Effective Reading Program

Learning to read is a complex, multi-layered process in which students acquire a broad range of skills and knowledge. To ensure that all students learn these skills and become competent, confident readers, teachers need to take the time to plan an effective reading program. Effective instruction requires that planning, teaching, assessing, and evaluating be closely linked and interdependent.
The Planning Cycle

Planning an effective reading program is a fluid, cyclical process. Throughout this process, it is important to bear in mind that assessment drives instruction.

The planning process begins with the teacher selecting curriculum expectations and clustering them in a logical way. Although most of these expectations will be drawn from the language curriculum, the teacher will also integrate expectations from other curricular areas (e.g., social studies), as appropriate. The teacher assesses students’ skills and knowledge (diagnostic assessment) and determines what they already know, and what they need to learn to meet the selected expectations. The teacher then plans and implements appropriate learning experiences to foster the development of all students and to help them achieve the expectations. As learning experiences are implemented, the teacher gathers relevant information to evaluate their effectiveness (formative assessment) and continually adapts the teaching plan in response to these findings. Plans are changed when students need an accelerated program or review. Finally, the teacher evaluates students’ levels of achievement in relation to the selected curriculum expectations, using summative assessment data.

(Adapted from Toronto District School Board, 2000, pp. 64–75)
Program Planning

Program planning entails generating three kinds of plans: long-term, short-term, and daily/weekly plans.

- **Long-term plans** provide a general road map for the entire school year. The teacher sorts curriculum expectations according to their level of difficulty (i.e., determines which are foundational and which build on previously taught skills) or by clusters of language expectations that relate also to cross-curricular expectations. Many expectations are addressed throughout the year on a continuous basis, but others are addressed at a specific time. The teacher determines what knowledge and skills students will need in order to achieve these expectations and maps out the sequence in which these skills will be taught over the course of the year.

- **Short-term plans** are generally for periods of three to four weeks, and may provide the framework for a unit of study. They build on long-term plans, integrating curriculum expectations with specific instructional strategies and learning activities. Timelines are created, and methods of and tools for assessment and evaluation are developed.

- **Daily/weekly plans** describe the literacy activities that will occur over the course of a week or during a single day. They build on short-term plans, specifying the approaches and activities chosen to meet instructional goals.

Students are the focus of all program planning. Both short-term and daily/weekly plans are subject to adaptation in response to the results of ongoing assessment of students’ needs and teacher reflection on the effectiveness of instructional practices.

The following chart outlines procedures for developing the three types of plans.

---

**Guiding Questions for Teachers**

**Planning Literacy Activities**

- What are the applicable curriculum expectations?
- What are the present levels of students’ achievement in relation to the expectations?
- What instructional strategies and learning activities will help students achieve the expectations?
- What data can be gathered to indicate whether students have learned what they are expected to know and to be able to do?

---

**Planning Tips for Teachers**

- By working with a colleague, teachers can provide guidance and support for each other.
- It can be helpful to participate in team planning with teachers from other grade levels.
- Because daily/weekly plans are relatively consistent, teachers can save time by developing a template, photocopying it, and using it for planning. The template can be shared with other teachers.
### How to Develop the Three Types of Plans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Long-term plans</strong></th>
<th><strong>Short-term plans</strong></th>
<th><strong>Weekly and daily plans</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To develop long-term plans, teachers:</td>
<td>To develop short-term plans, teachers:</td>
<td>To develop weekly and daily plans, teachers:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• schedule board- and ministry-mandated assessments (e.g., reading benchmark assessments, EQAO assessment);</td>
<td>• integrate the curriculum expectations with instructional strategies most appropriate for students;</td>
<td>• describe appropriate instructional strategies and activities in detail, using the short-term plan as a guide;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• choose expectations for the school term, integrating expectations from all strands of the language curriculum and language-related expectations from other curricular areas;</td>
<td>• ensure that diagnostic and formative assessment data are reflected in the short-term plans;</td>
<td>• specify the direct instruction and independent/group activities to be implemented before, during, and after a lesson;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• choose and sequence learning skills to be addressed;</td>
<td>• outline pertinent instructional strategies and resources, and indicate appropriate groupings of students and organization of time and space;</td>
<td>• modify instructional strategies and activities in response to the results of ongoing assessment;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• indicate broad resources, timelines, and methods of assessment and evaluation;</td>
<td>• determine how achievement of the expectations will be assessed (summative assessment);</td>
<td>• plan for the integration of the key instructional strategies (read-alouds and shared, guided, and independent reading), including instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, word study, and reading comprehension;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• project a series of planning cycles for topics, themes, or units of study to be addressed through the course of the year.</td>
<td>• maintain continuity with long-term plans, but modify instructional strategies as necessary in response to formative assessment data.</td>
<td>• assess literacy knowledge in the context of the authentic literacy activities chosen for the day or week.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Addressing Curriculum Expectations

In planning an effective reading program, teachers must include expectations from all three strands of the Ontario language curriculum – Reading, Writing, and Oral and Visual Communication. Although these strands are treated separately in the Ontario curriculum documents, the knowledge and skills they outline are taught in an integrated and interdependent manner in the classroom. For example, having students write a response about a book they have read integrates knowledge and skills from the Reading and Writing strands. Similarly, inviting students to discuss the elements of a factual text (e.g., charts, diagrams, captions, headings) during a shared reading lesson combines knowledge and skills outlined in the Reading strand with those described in the Oral and Visual Communication strand.
In addition to integrating expectations from the three strands of the language curriculum, the teacher can also integrate expectations from other subject areas into the reading program. Doing so demonstrates to students that language skills are fundamental to all areas of the curriculum. It also enables the teacher to address curriculum expectations more efficiently and appropriately. For example, by selecting for a read-aloud a book on a topic covered in the social studies curriculum, the teacher can cover expectations in both the language and social studies curricula. Teachers need to be familiar with the expectations in the curriculum documents for all subjects so that they can integrate expectations in effective ways for instructional purposes.

**Effective Planning for All Students**

All students do not learn at the same pace. Some may have difficulty meeting curriculum expectations; for those students, teachers need to provide expanded learning opportunities, more time, or targeted interventions. Other students may be working beyond the expectations for their grade; they too require programs that meet their unique learning needs.

### Elements of an Effective Reading Program

*When planning an effective reading program, teachers:*

- believe that all students can learn to read;
- set high expectations for achievement for all students;
- recognize that students have different learning styles;
- understand the stages of language and literacy development and their implications for students’ instructional needs;
- understand the stages of English literacy development and their implications for the instructional needs of ESL/ELD students;
- make program decisions based on students’ strengths and areas of need;
- support new learning by building on students’ prior knowledge and experience;
- explain instructions clearly, using visual supports when necessary;
- make adjustments to instruction in response to continual, systematic observation of each student;
- choose appropriate assessment strategies to identify the specific needs of all students;
- plan appropriate supports and early interventions for students who experience reading difficulties;
- maximize time and opportunities for reading;
- ensure that reading opportunities are varied and purposeful;
- ensure that time-frames are flexible, so that all students can complete reading activities;
- provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways (e.g., using computers, audio and video cassettes, visual supports, concrete materials);
- keep interruptions to a minimum.
The goal of effective program planning is to provide instruction that meets the needs of all students and enables students to achieve the curriculum expectations to the best of their abilities. An effective plan:

- ensures a high quality education for all students;
- ensures that the language and learning needs of all students are addressed in the classroom;
- provides opportunities for all students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills;
- includes appropriate adjustments to teaching strategies, learning opportunities, and assessment methods to address the needs of English as a Second Language (ESL) and English Literacy Development (ELD) students, students struggling with reading difficulties, and gifted students.

Teachers can enhance the effectiveness of a reading program plan by sharing ideas, successes, and challenges with colleagues. Reserving time in staff meetings for discussions of planning promotes professional growth and can result in an improved whole-school approach to planning reading programs. Once they have been formulated, plans should be shared with all partners in learning.

Classroom Set-up

The physical layout of a classroom can support learning. When teachers carefully plan and set up the classroom, the space reflects their professional understanding of how children learn. For example, while whole-class instruction is suitable for specific purposes (e.g., read-alouds), students also benefit from small-group and individual instruction and practice. The classroom should have spaces that can accommodate all of these approaches. (See Appendices 13-1, 13-2, and 13-3 for sample floor plans for Kindergarten, Grade 1, and Grade 2–3 classrooms.)

In addition to setting up the classroom to accommodate different groupings of students, teachers need to consider how to integrate a broad range of literacy materials in the room. A classroom should be full of materials that promote literacy – books on display, student work on the walls, environmental print, charts, and so on. Teachers should think about the best ways to incorporate such materials within the room to support literacy instruction and practice. For example, a word wall is highly useful in helping students learn high-frequency words and supporting written language. However, it is of limited use if it is placed where students cannot see it when they are engaged in word study activities.
Teachers are encouraged to evaluate the effectiveness of their classroom layout throughout the year and to make changes as needed. Changes in student behaviour or work habits may suggest that the existing arrangements are no longer working well. In addition, pressures may arise that are beyond the teacher’s control: the arrival of winter and winter clothing, or an increase in the number of students in the class, may reduce available space. Class discussions about the use of space can generate some excellent ideas.

All primary classrooms should be arranged as a collection of learning areas that can accommodate a variety of activities, including large- and small-group activities, discussions and conferences, and individual work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Classroom Learning Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A primary classroom should include the following learning areas:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• a large meeting space for the whole class, equipped with:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a stand for charts, stories, the morning message, and pocket charts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- pointers and word wands for tracking print and locating high-frequency words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a workboard showing a range of literacy activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a sign-in system for activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a small chalkboard or whiteboard for shared writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• an area for students to meet in small groups with the teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• quiet areas where individuals or small groups of students can work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• a classroom library area where a wide variety of reading materials are available, including:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- books appropriate for read-alouds and student browsing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- shared reading material such as big books, charts, and posters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- levelled and non-levelled texts for guided or independent reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• an area that has a range of reading response materials, including:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- paper of different sizes and colours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- pencils, markers, and crayons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- staplers, stamp pads, and stamps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- word wands or pointers for locating high-frequency words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- dictionaries, thesauri, and pictionarys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- props for story retellings, such as puppets and costumes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• learning areas reserved for literacy activities:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- reading area(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- writing area(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- alphabet and/or word study area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- listening area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• other learning areas where literacy can be incorporated (e.g., in Kindergarten and Grade 1: blocks area, sand table, science or social studies area)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When considering how best to organize the classroom, teachers may wish to ask themselves the following questions.

**Classroom Organization Questionnaire**

**Books and Reading Materials**
- How will books and other reading materials be organized (e.g., browsing boxes, levelled book bins, portfolios)? Will I use baskets? Cereal boxes? Small crates? Bins?
- How can I create space to display books face out?
- What type of reading materials will students have access to during reading time (e.g., big books, class-made materials), and how will I display these?

**Meeting Areas**
- When and where will I meet with individuals and small groups for literature circles, guided reading groups, minilessons, and conferences?
- How can I set up an area that will provide opportunities for conversations with and among students?
- Where will students have the opportunity to share what they are reading with others?

**Classroom Library**
- Will the classroom library/book collection be located in one area of the room or be divided into sections in different parts of the room?

**Reading Corners**
- Where will students be able to read? How can I arrange the room to create comfortable spaces for quiet reading?
- Will students have room to read with friends (“buddy reading”)?

**Record Keeping**
- How will students keep a record of their own reading throughout the year (e.g., folders, journals, cards)? Where will these records be located?
- How and where will I keep records of students’ reading and our conversations about reading?

A Print-Rich Environment: The Importance of Wall Displays

Wall displays can include word walls and word charts (see Chapter 9: Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, and Word Study); stories, poems, or songs on charts; thematic displays; daily messages; and samples of students’ work. Such items are more than decorative; they play an important instructional role in the primary classroom. Wall displays contribute to learning by emphasizing specific literacy skills and content area information. They reinforce skills and information learned previously, provide support for students practising their reading and writing skills, and provide meaningful, relevant items for students engaging in reading-the-room activities.

To ensure that each student feels a sense of ownership in the classroom, all students should see their contributions on display. The teacher may wish to create a display of all students’ work from a particular activity. For example, after a read-aloud of a narrative, the teacher could display all of the students’ mind maps or drawings depicting the problem or solution in the story. More commonly, however, the teacher selects samples from a variety of activities and ensures that each student’s work is represented. Including samples of work by every student reflects the diversity of the students themselves, illustrates the scope of their interests and abilities, and ensures that they see themselves as valued members of the group.

Charts created by students and/or teachers are relevant teaching/learning aids. Material created in the classroom is meaningful to students and, if it is created by students themselves, demonstrates that their thinking and contributions are valued. Familiar songs, poems, and chants can be scribed on charts by the teacher and/or by students. Charts that are scribed by the teacher can be used for shared reading, partner reading, or reading-the-room activities. Charts written by students can be used for the same activities.
but the experience of recording these familiar materials can improve visual tracking skills, promote recognition of high-frequency words, and develop spelling vocabulary. Having students produce charts independently can also provide teachers with authentic assessment opportunities.

Wall displays affect the environment in the classroom and send clear signals to students about what is important. As discussed above, displays of material produced by the teacher and/or students are relevant to students, promote inclusiveness, and encourage students to take pride in their work. Displays of commercially produced material are more polished but do not necessarily promote a sense of inclusiveness and belonging. In addition, they may be less meaningful to students and therefore may not engage them as effectively. Students are more likely to use charts that they helped create and that are not simply “wallpaper.” It is highly recommended that samples of student work and charts prepared by teachers and/or students predominate in the classroom.

When reflecting on the material posted in the classroom, teachers should consider the following questions:

• Is there a mix of student artwork and writing that reflects the work of all students?

• Do commercially produced materials predominate, or is there an emphasis on material produced by the teacher and/or the students?

• Does the material make all students feel at home (e.g., are there a few multilingual signs or displays reflecting a range of cultural experiences)?

Creating Timetables for Literacy Instruction

Effective reading instruction in the primary grades requires thoughtful organization of time. Whenever possible, schedules should allocate an uninterrupted block of time for literacy instruction and activities (“literacy block”). Time for gym, computer labs, announcements and assemblies, and other activities should, if possible, be scheduled outside the literacy block. The literacy block provides time for direct instruction, guided instruction, independent learning, and student practice, and includes a range of whole-class, small-group, and individual activities. Some additional time may be
set aside outside the literacy block so that teachers can provide support for students who are experiencing reading difficulties. Although they need additional instruction, such students also need to feel that they are part of the class and to share literacy experiences with their classmates.

Studies of how children learn indicate that a timetable should be as consistent and predictable as possible throughout the year. It also needs to take into account the developmental needs of students (e.g., how long they can sit and concentrate). Teachers should watch for evidence that the timetable requires adjustments. Careful analysis of current classroom activities is useful in evaluating the effectiveness of the timetable.

In addition to scheduling activities specifically during the literacy block, teachers carefully plan for the daily integration of reading into all curricular areas. For example, during a Kindergarten mathematics lesson, the teacher may read aloud from a numbers book. Such an activity would constitute a read-aloud in the literacy timetable. In a similar way, the literacy block itself can be used for cross-curricular activities. For example, using a book on mammals for a shared reading lesson during the literacy block could reinforce learning in science.

**Kindergarten**

“To foster the language development necessary for literacy, Kindergarten programs should be rich in language-oriented activities and resources that are relevant to the lives of young children and that provide opportunities for thinking, problem solving, and experimenting. Drama, music, visual arts, and media texts play an important role in furthering children’s development of communication and literacy skills” (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1998, p. 5). Effective timetabling that allocates time for direct instruction and independent application throughout the day, week, month, and year contributes to this goal of enhancing language and literary development.

Kindergarten timetables include a significant block of time for literacy-related activities. Ideally, 45–60 minutes daily is recommended for half-day classes and 90–120 minutes for full-day classes. In organizing literacy timetables for Kindergarten classrooms, the teacher should:

- allocate time for focused instruction;
- include adequate time for reading activities for large groups, small groups, and individual students;
- recognize the developmental needs (e.g., attention span) of the children when allocating time for focused instruction and activities;
• designate time for daily demonstrations of reading and writing;
• include time for activities at classroom centres in which literacy is embedded (e.g., at the home centre, children could read or create a shopping list; at the block centre, children could draw and label a plan for a building);
• schedule a mix of quiet and more active activities;
• recognize that children progress at different rates, and schedule a full range of learning experiences that address the needs of all students;
• schedule time for children to self-select activities.

See Appendices 13-4 and 13-5 for sample literacy timetables at the Kindergarten level.

**Grades 1–3**

Timetabling requirements change with the maturity and ability of students. In Grade 3, for example, the duration of guided and independent reading lessons is longer than in Grade 1. Each shared reading experience may also be longer in Grade 3, but such activities may occur less frequently than in Grade 1.

In Grades 1–3, timetables:
• provide a substantial block of time during which students are immersed in a reading and writing program. All aspects of effective reading instruction are to be included in the literacy block;
• integrate reading instruction into cross-curricular areas, using a variety of genres;
• allocate time for large-group, small-group, and individual activities.

The following chart is a sample guide to the frequency and duration of the components of a comprehensive literacy program for Grade 1 students. [See Appendices 13-6 and 13-7 for sample timetables.]
### Frequency and Duration of Program Components, Grade 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oral language</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read-aloud</td>
<td>2 to 3 sessions per day</td>
<td>20–30 minutes per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared reading</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>15–20 minutes per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided reading</td>
<td>3 to 5 times per week for each group (2 to 3 texts per week)</td>
<td>10–15 minutes per session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent reading</td>
<td>Twice daily</td>
<td>10–15 minutes per session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared/interactive writing</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>15–20 minutes per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided/independent writing</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>30 minutes per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonemic awareness, phonics, and/or word study activities</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>Integrated into all aspects of the reading and writing program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Toronto District School Board, 2000, p. 3-6)

The following chart is a sample guide to the frequency and duration of the components of a comprehensive literacy program for Grade 2 and/or Grade 3 students. (See Appendices 13-6, 13-8, and 13-9 for sample timetables.)

### Frequency and Duration of Program Components, Grade 2 or 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read-aloud</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>20–30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared reading</td>
<td>Regularly</td>
<td>15–20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided reading</td>
<td>2 to 3 times per week (1 text per week)</td>
<td>15–20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent reading</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>15–20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modelled or shared writing</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>10–15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided/independent writing</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>35–40 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonics and word study activities</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>Integrated into all aspects of the reading and writing program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Toronto District School Board, 2000, p. 3-6)
Student Groupings

An effective reading program includes whole-class and small-group instruction as well as large-group, small-group, and individual activities. In an effective program plan, there is a balance of all of these groupings.

In planning for a variety of groupings in the daily literacy block, teachers need to consider what size group is most suitable for each activity. For example, while a whole-class grouping can be effective for a read-aloud or a shared writing lesson, small groups may be more appropriate for phonemic awareness instruction and activities.

Clearly, group size can change with each activity, but it may also change for different stages of the same activity. When planning a particular activity, teachers need to consider whether the same size of group and mix of students is appropriate for the “before”, “during”, and “after” stages of the activity. For example, a whole-class shared reading session or book talk might precede small-group reading of the same text.

Another consideration when planning student groupings is the mix of students that is most effective for a particular activity. For example, the members of a guided reading group should have similar instructional needs. Groups formed to address a specific skill (e.g., for extra practice in phonics) should also include students with similar instructional needs. However, a group of students at different levels of ability might be more appropriate for a small-group activity such as responding through an art or drama activity to a text read aloud by the teacher or for learning-centre activities such as independent writing at a writing centre. A range of abilities may also be evident in groups that are based on shared interests (e.g., creating a readers' theatre).

Choosing group activities and assigning students to groups require careful consideration of learning objectives and the needs of individual students. Teachers:

- assess the needs and individual learning style of each student;
- organize flexible, temporary groups for a variety of literacy activities and allow for change as needed;
- design a variety of cooperative, interactive activities that encourage students to share ideas with others;
- plan for mixed-ability groupings so that students learn from one another;
- make provisions for students to choose their own groups, where appropriate;
• plan groupings based on interests as well as needs so that students have opportunities to work on self-selected activities;
• plan flexible, dynamic groupings for guided reading that reflect the current needs of the students.

Data collected from a variety of ongoing assessment strategies will reflect student progress and indicate whether different types of group activities are needed or whether the mix of students in a particular group should be changed.

In planning specific group activities, teachers should ask themselves the following questions:
• What is the purpose of the group?
• What size group would facilitate interaction and learning?
• What seating arrangement would facilitate student learning?
• Have I planned a variety of groupings for today’s literacy block?

See Chapter 6: Guided Reading for further discussion of small-group activities.

Models of Organization for Literacy Activities

In order for small-group and individual instruction and activities to be successfully implemented during the literacy block, teachers need to develop a system to coordinate possible activities. An organizational system serves multiple functions: a rotation system shows teachers which students are engaged in a particular activity and indicates to students what their next activity will be. It can also provide a range of choices for students who self-select activities.

Teachers can use a number of organizational models. Their choice will be determined to some extent by the needs of students and the nature of the activities. Depending on the system adopted, students can be assigned to groups, select their own groups, or work independently. The teacher may assign activities or provide students with a combination of assigned and free-choice activities. Regardless of the model adopted, an effective organizational system will guide students smoothly through a range of small-group literacy activities.

Rotation System

A teacher using a rotation system sets up a specific number of literacy activities (usually five or six) that are designed to meet the needs of students, as identified in the assessment data. Groups, assigned by the teacher, are made up of students at different levels of ability. Group membership is subject to change over the course of the year in response to ongoing assessment of the needs of students. The teacher assigns
each group an initial activity. The groups rotate through the other assigned activities over a predetermined period of time. The rotation ensures that all students participate in each activity for a specified time.

Several organizational tools can be used to help coordinate rotation systems.

- **Rotation wheel**: Students are organized into flexible groups that will rotate through a number of activities. Each group’s members are listed on a sheet of paper of a different colour. On the rotation wheel, moveable arrows, colour-coded to the colours of the groups, point to the activity to which each group is assigned. The wheel is rotated after a set period of time, and students move to their next indicated activity.

- **Rotation workboard**: Students are divided into groups, and each group is assigned a number of activities during the literacy block. The members of each group are listed on a card, which is placed on the rotation workboard alongside a series of activity cards (cards marked with a symbol identifying an activity), which tell students their assigned activities. Free-choice activities may be included in the series (represented by a special symbol, such as a star), to be selected by students from a number of activities depicted around the edge of the board. At the end of the day, the groups’ name cards are moved one place, giving students a new set of activities for the next day. At the end of the week, the teacher changes the literacy activity cards, and may also change the membership of the groups.

- **Rotation pocket planner**: Students are divided into groups, each of which will engage in two or three activities during the literacy block. The teacher uses a pocket chart to indicate the activities assigned to each group. Each day the set of activities changes. The membership of groups may change as well, depending on the needs of individual students.
**Self-Selection System**

The teacher provides students with a selection of activities. Students choose their activities independently, forming temporary groups based on shared interests. When a student is ready to move to another activity, he or she will make a new selection and move to a new grouping of students who have selected the same activity. The teacher may use a variety of planning boards, including pocket charts and task-management boards, to track where students are working and to regulate the number of students working on the same activity at the same time. Students are not expected to complete all the activities posted on the planning board.

A pocket chart can be used to track the number of students engaged in a particular activity.

(North York Board of Education, 1983, p. 71)

**Assigned Versus Free-Choice Activities**

The teacher selects a number of literacy activities and designates them as either assigned or free-choice activities, according to the grade level and the needs and interests of the students. The teacher may decide to assign a specific activity to a student who will not voluntarily engage in that activity. The teacher can select from activities such as those in the following chart.
Teachers balance assigned and free-choice activities in different ways, which may include the following:

- The teacher designates the specific assigned literacy activities for the week. One week these activities may be: reading several books from individual or group browsing boxes; participating in a make-and-break activity (see glossary); writing an entry in a reading response journal; and retelling a story using puppets, a flannel board, or a story map. Each day, the students complete two of the assigned activities and select one or two free-choice activities from items listed on the classroom “Free-Choice Literacy Activities Chart.” The following week, the teacher selects different assigned activities.

- The teacher posts a large chart entitled “Things to Do During Reading Time.” The chart lists familiar literacy activities that students are able to complete independently. A red clothespin is clipped next to the assigned activities for the day. After completing the assigned activities, students independently select their free-choice activities from the other ideas listed on the chart.

The rotation workboard described on page 13.18 is another effective way of coordinating assigned and free-choice activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suitable Assigned / Free-Choice Reading Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Listening station activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pocket chart activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Phonics and word study activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reading (browsing through) picture books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Responding to reading (in writing or orally)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reading around the room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Readers’ theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reading material from a browsing box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reading from poetry boxes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rereading big books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Retelling stories using puppets, flannel board,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or story map</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sequencing text through pictures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Singing or reading songs and chants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Practising printing/cursive writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pictionary activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Using reading software</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Using a Workshop Approach to Reading Instruction

Some teachers choose to use a workshop approach to organize their reading and/or writing instruction during the literacy block. It can be an effective way to engage students, particularly those in the later primary grades, in a variety of literacy activities.

Reading workshops begin and end with whole-class meetings. The workshop begins with the teacher or students giving a book talk about a book they are reading or have read. The book talk is followed by a minilesson with the whole class. Topics may include how to choose an appropriate book to read, why to reject a book, comprehension strategies, techniques for reading a factual text, and so on.

Following the minilesson, some students engage in small-group activities while others engage in individual activities. During the allotted time, students may engage in a combination of the following activities:

- reading quietly/independently;
- responding to reading in a response journal;
- participating in a guided reading group;
- preparing for a literacy study by reading a predetermined text or selection of text;
- participating in a small literature-study group.

While students are engaged in these activities, the Grade 2 or 3 teacher may:

- confer quietly with students;
- lead reading conferences with individuals or small groups of students;
- teach a guided reading group;
- facilitate a literature study group;
- support struggling readers.

(Adapted from Baltas and Shafer, 1996, p. 71)

Once the activities are completed, the class again meets together so students can share their learning with each other.
The Importance of Routines in the Classroom

A primary goal of planning and classroom organization is to maximize the time available for effective instruction. Clearly established classroom routines contribute to this goal by minimizing non-instructional time and keeping interruptions to a minimum. A classroom operates more efficiently if everyone understands the appropriate behaviour associated with various classroom activities. Once these routines have been established, the teacher can devote more time to effective instruction and less to directing and supervising students engaged in common classroom activities.

Teachers can establish routines for a wide range of activities in the classroom, including general activities such as sharpening pencils, taking washroom breaks, or using computers. Teachers can also teach students routines for a variety of literacy activities. These may include selecting a book from a browsing box, writing an entry in a response journal, reading with a partner, playing a barrier game, or practising making and breaking words with magnetic letters in a word study area.

Well-established routines make both teaching and learning easier. An orderly classroom environment with familiar routines maximizes learning opportunities for students. When students understand the expected behaviour associated with choosing an appropriate text for independent reading in the quiet reading area of the classroom, for example, they are able to engage in a meaningful literacy activity without the teacher’s direct guidance or participation. The teacher is then free to work with a guided reading group or with other students who are engaged in small-group or individual activities that require teacher instruction or support. Once students are familiar with a range of routines, the teacher has more flexibility in planning and implementing a mix of individual, small-group, and whole-class instruction.

Establishing Classroom Routines

Classroom routines are established early in the school year, before small-group activities begin. Establishing routines requires making students aware of clear, specific expectations for their behaviour when they engage in a particular activity. Focusing on one activity at a time, the teacher explains the activity and models the expected behaviour. He or she then allows students time to practise the routine.

Some Routine Classroom Activities

- **General Routines**
  - sharpening pencils
  - taking washroom breaks
  - tidying learning areas
  - using computers

- **Routines Connected With Literacy Activities**
  - selecting a book from a browsing box
  - writing an entry in a response journal
  - reading with a partner
  - playing a barrier game
  - working on phonemic awareness / phonics using concrete materials
and provides ongoing feedback to convey to students what they are doing well and what needs to be improved. Time invested to introduce, model, and allow students to practise routines will pay off in the form of a smooth-running classroom.

The following chart suggests steps teachers can use to teach students the routine for a particular activity.

### Steps for Establishing a Routine

- Begin early in the school year.
- Introduce one activity at a time.
- Discuss the purpose of the activity and the expected behaviour associated with it.
- Set high standards of behaviour for all students.
- Model the activity for the whole class and explain what is taking place and why.
- Repeat the description of the expected behaviour after modelling the activity.
- Ask a student to demonstrate the activity for the class. Provide specific feedback explaining how the student fulfilled the expectations and, if necessary, making suggestions for improvement.
- Repeat this process two or three times.
- Ask a small group of students to practise the routine; provide specific feedback. When appropriate, ask a larger group to practise the routine; provide feedback. Finally, when appropriate, ask the whole class to practise the routine; provide feedback.
- Post charts reminding students of the standards of behaviour for the activity.

The teacher can use similar steps to teach students routines for using various areas of the classroom. To familiarize students with the routine for a specific area, teachers can:

- open new learning areas one at a time;
- discuss with students and record on a chart the purpose and procedures for each area;
- demonstrate the routine for each area with the whole group;
- demonstrate the use and storage of materials for each area;
- establish a tracking system to regulate movement from one area to another;
- teach students appropriate behaviours for transition from one area to another.
Regardless of the activity, teachers can help students learn to follow routines by:

- setting clear expectations, explaining them thoroughly, and providing constructive feedback to students practising the routines;
- using praise to reinforce self-managing behaviour;
- teaching students how to help each other.

When the teacher is involved in small-group instruction, he or she may not be immediately available to respond to a student working on another task or in another area of the classroom. To ensure that all students get the help they need and that the classroom continues to run smoothly, regardless of the range of activities taking place, the teacher may wish to consider the following suggestions.

- Organize materials carefully and ensure that they are accessible to all students and that students know how to use and return them.
- Show students how to maintain their own assessment records (e.g., portfolios, response journals, writing folders).
- Rotate responsibilities for certain classroom activities among individual students or groups of students. These responsibilities may include maintaining supplies, tidying learning areas, helping students who have been absent, checking attendance, and orienting new students.
- Use learning buddies and adult volunteers to assist other students while small-group instruction is occurring (e.g., reinforcing classroom routines, responding to problems).
- Show students what to do if difficulties arise.

**Creating a Positive Classroom Atmosphere**

A positive classroom atmosphere is one that fosters a sense of security and confidence in students, allows them to feel comfortable about sharing their knowledge, and contributes to successful learning. In addition to effective classroom routines, several other factors also contribute to a comfortable and positive atmosphere. Two elements that are crucial in fostering such an atmosphere are:

- respectful relationships among students and between students and adults, and
- productive, cooperative behaviour on the part of all members of the classroom community.
To foster a safe, positive community in which students support and appreciate one another and feel they are valued participants, the teacher needs to set out clear expectations for relationships and behaviour within the classroom. Students may not like everyone in the class, but they are expected to work cooperatively with all their peers. Students need to understand that the contributions of all members of the classroom community are to be respected. Students are expected to listen attentively, be helpful, and encourage each other with positive comments.

Teachers help students learn acceptable behaviour and positive ways of relating to each other. For example, to show students how to listen attentively, teachers can:

- model respect for the opinions of all students by listening attentively and expecting students to do the same;
- invite a diversity of responses;
- provide specific, relevant feedback that encourages rather than criticizes;
- help to clarify and extend student responses, and connect one response to another where possible. When students realize they can learn from each other, the idea of attentive listening becomes meaningful, and not simply a rule to be followed.

Teachers should gauge the atmosphere in the classroom on an ongoing basis. Periodically they may see problems in student behaviour or in the ways students relate to each other or to adults in the classroom. To resolve such problems, the teacher may wish to facilitate a discussion among those students and/or adults who are experiencing difficulties. Alternatively, private discussions with individual students may be a more appropriate remedy.

**How Atmosphere Affects Learning**

Studies have shown that emotions affect both long-term and short-term memory. “When we are emotionally upset, we experience difficulty thinking straight…. Continued emotional upset can create deficits in a child’s intellectual abilities, crippling the capacity to learn” (Lyons, 2003, p. 68). In contrast, positive emotions fostered by a secure, supportive classroom environment help promote learning.

All learners are powerfully influenced by expectations. To help create a positive and motivating atmosphere for literacy learning, teachers should expect that all students will become successful readers and should convey these high expectations to students.

In a classroom with a positive atmosphere, students are encouraged to:

- listen to others with empathy and understanding;

  *Students need an atmosphere of trust and respect before they feel free to share their ideas and knowledge openly and to take risks in the learning process.*
• engage in the questioning process that encourages reflective thinking;

   *When students know that it is important to ask questions, to help others answer their questions, and to reflect on their learning, they are more willing to engage in higher-order thinking, which can lead to more effective reading and insightful writing.*

• take risks;

   *When students feel confident and secure, they are eager to explore, experiment, and think.*

• demonstrate persistence;

   *By being encouraged to continue to work on a problem despite an unsuccessful first attempt, students learn how to be creative, confident problem solvers.*

• share their personal thoughts and reflections;

   *Such sharing, encouraged by activities such as literature circles, helps support cooperative learning and fosters understanding and respect for the point of view of other students.*

• demonstrate metacognitive skills as they discuss and come to understand their own thinking processes;

   *Students are encouraged to become more aware of how they are thinking and to broaden their ideas as they discuss them with others.*

• apply their knowledge to real-life situations and tasks;

   *Relevant contexts (e.g., writing to an Internet penpal, reading the school newsletter) make learning meaningful and purposeful. When children have meaningful learning experiences, they become self-motivated and take ownership of their learning.*

• feel relaxed and have fun learning.

   *In a classroom where humour plays an important role and is free of sarcasm, students will be more relaxed, and learning will be fun.*

**Valuing Differences**

A safe, inviting classroom offers frequent opportunities for students to interact with their classmates, with other students and personnel from the school, and with people from the community. Other teachers, administrators, reading buddies, parent volunteers, resource staff, teaching assistants, luncheon supervisors, daycare staff, custodians, crossing guards, local merchants, grandparents, and community helpers can be invited to share with the class in a variety of ways. A literacy program that clearly values contributions from people of all ages and from a variety of racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds reinforces respect and appreciation for all. The sense of community grows, and all children feel valued and develop a sense of belonging.
To encourage and reinforce this sense of community and belonging during the literacy block, the teacher can:

- invite all students to share the stories connected to personal items (e.g., books, photographs, heirlooms) that are important to them and their families;
- ensure that literacy resources are culturally diverse and representative of the broad community;
- ensure that literacy resources appeal to both boys and girls;
- respond to all students with respect;
- expect all students to meet with success;
- allocate time for all students to share their thoughts and opinions on books they have read (e.g., literature circles, book-sharing time).

It is important that teachers allocate time for sharing and collaborative activities within the literacy block. By doing so, teachers help students understand the value of collaboration and teamwork, expose students to different perspectives and thinking processes, and encourage students to explore ideas and information through interaction with their peers. Teachers should draw on the knowledge of students from different cultural backgrounds to expand the background knowledge of all students in the classroom. Such exposure helps students develop their understanding of points of view as they read texts, enabling them to become critical readers.

**Classroom Agreements**

Classroom agreements are sets of expectations for behaviour and interactions in the classroom that are developed by teachers in close collaboration with students. Because cooperative behaviour and respectful interactions are two keys to establishing a positive atmosphere in the classroom, it is crucial that all students understand and accept these expectations. Acceptance and adherence occur more easily if students see the expectations as agreements and not rules. Students should be invited to discuss and help shape each agreement. Once consensus has been reached, the teacher may wish to create and post a chart such as the following to remind students of the agreement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>We cooperate.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>How It Looks</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Everybody is working together. | “Would you like a turn?” | Happy  
Safe  
Proud |
Classroom agreements focus on the social aspects of learning and encourage students to understand their own roles in making learning a rewarding experience for all members of the class. Although classroom agreements can apply to all interactions in the classroom, they are particularly important to the success of collaborative activities, which are a key component of an effective reading program. Such activities cannot work if students are not prepared to listen attentively, respond respectfully, and help each other learn. Moreover, during small-group activities, students often have to manage their own behaviour, as the teacher’s attention may be focused elsewhere in the classroom. The success of these activities depends not only on students’ familiarity with routines, as discussed in the preceding section, but also on students’ attitudes and their behaviour in interacting with other students. This is where the classroom agreement comes in. Classroom agreements mark a shift in responsibility: rather than managing the behaviour of students, teachers expect students to manage their own behaviour and that of the group (Gibbs, 1995, p. 74).

Sample Classroom Agreement Chart

Respect All People and Things

- I keep my hands and feet to myself.
- I speak only positive, helpful words to others.
- I take care of all things.
- I don’t hurt others on the outside or inside.
Appendix 13-I: Sample Classroom Floor Plan, Kindergarten

(Toronto District School Board, 2000, p. 2-0)
Appendix 13-2: Sample Classroom Floor Plan, Grade 1

(Toronto District School Board, 2000, p. 3-0)
Appendix I3-3: Sample Classroom Floor Plan, Grade 2 or 3

(Toronto District School Board, 2000, p. 4-0)
Appendix I3-4: Annotated Sample Timetable, Kindergarten (Half Days)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DURATION</th>
<th>DAILY ACTIVITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 15 minutes | Independent reading and writing  
• entry routines  
• finding name card and signing in on chart paper  
• reading self-selected material from browsing bins on carpet area  
• writing recounts, perhaps in a journal (Senior Kindergarten)  
• morning message (reading or writing) |
| 20 minutes | Reading/writing  
• shared reading, read-aloud, or shared/modelled writing  
• calendar time  
• chanting, poem, daily sentences  
• minilesson  
• this time may be used to introduce some of the activities students can choose later as independent activities |
| 60 minutes | Individual activities/small-group instruction with teacher  
• an activity board is used by students to choose an activity and by the teacher to track students  
• Sample activity board  
• all activities have been introduced previously by the teacher, so students are familiar with the routines for each  
• students may indicate their choice of activity by clipping a clothes peg showing their name onto an activity on the board  
• literacy is a component of all activities, as students read, write, and/or communicate with one another |

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DURATION DAILY ACTIVITY

Individual activities/small-group instruction with teacher (cont.):

- paper, pencils, crayons, and clipboards are provided for various activities
- environmental print will be found at each activity
- the teacher can gather small groups together for various purposes, including:
  - shared/interactive/guided writing
  - shared/guided reading
  - word-manipulation activities (e.g., using magnetic letters, sentence strips, or word cubes)
  - introduction of a new activity
- individual conferencing can occur during this time

15 minutes
Whole-class sharing

- revisits main teaching focus
- student-sharing opportunity (e.g., reading, drama presentation)
- read-aloud of a picture book that reinforces the theme of the day

20 minutes
Mathematics

- whole-class introductory activity
- independent practice as students work on the activity
- whole-class reflection and connecting

30 minutes
Gross motor

- gymnasium or outdoor activities (e.g., cooperative games)

(Adapted from Boucher, Dye, and Reid, 2003, pp. 26–27)

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# Appendix I3-5: Annotated Sample Timetable, Kindergarten (Full Days)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>DAILY ACTIVITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:45–9:10</td>
<td>Entry routines, sign in, and independent reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:10–9:35</td>
<td><strong>Circle time</strong>&lt;br&gt;• teachers choose from the following activities: daily agenda, shared writing (e.g., daily news, special person of the day), shared reading (e.g., poem, chant, or song), student sharing (e.g., Visiting Bear,* sharing groups/triads), phonological/phonemic awareness song/game, interactive writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:35–10:30</td>
<td><strong>Activity time</strong>&lt;br&gt;• children choose from activities at a variety of centres (e.g., sand, water, art, blocks, puppets, listening, writing, math, science table, book corner)&lt;br&gt;• teachers may draw together a small group of students to focus on particular learning expectations (e.g., math lesson, science focus, interactive writing, guided reading for students who are ready, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30–10:45</td>
<td>Snack/recess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45–11:30</td>
<td><strong>Reading and writing time</strong>&lt;br&gt;• read-aloud or shared reading&lt;br&gt;• follow-up discussion to make connections to students’ lives&lt;br&gt;• reading response activity, which could include large-group activities (e.g., art, independent writing, math or science extension) or small-group activities (e.g., at literacy centres); response activities allow students an opportunity to demonstrate an understanding of what has been read (retell, relate, reflect, review)&lt;br&gt;• library, learning buddies, or computer time could occur in this block</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30–11:45</td>
<td>Student sharing of response activities, clean up, and preparation for lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:45–12:45</td>
<td>Lunch and recess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:45–1:00</td>
<td><strong>Circle time</strong>&lt;br&gt;• includes any of the following types of activities: calendar, shared writing, shared reading (often a poem, song, or chant dealing with science or mathematics), graphing activity, interactive writing activity dealing with science or math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00–1:30</td>
<td><strong>Mathematics</strong>&lt;br&gt;• whole-class introductory activity&lt;br&gt;• independent practice as students work on the activity&lt;br&gt;• whole-class reflection and connecting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The Visiting Bear is a classroom teddy bear that goes home with a different child each night. The host child, with the help of his or her family, writes a journal entry or creates a piece of art describing the bear’s activities with the family. The next day the child can share with the class what the bear “did”.

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**A Guide to Effective Instruction in Reading, Kindergarten to Grade 3**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>DAILY ACTIVITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:30–2:15</td>
<td><strong>Activity time or large-group activity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• teachers may choose to have a second activity time (often exclusively supporting math or science expectations) or a large-group extension activity that supports integrated learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• library, learning buddies, or computer time could occur in this block</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:15–2:30</td>
<td>Snack/recess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30–2:45</td>
<td>Students prepare backpacks, including take-home books, take-home kits, and notes/announcements. Music can be included as an activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:45–3:30</td>
<td><strong>Gym/outdoor activities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• includes scheduled physical education in the gym or quality physical activity in the classroom or outside on the playground</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Thames Valley District School Board, 2002, Introductory Section)
## Appendix I3-6: Sample Literacy Block Organization, Grades 1–3*
(for daily 90-minute block)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DURATION</th>
<th>DAILY ACTIVITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>• Select large-group activity from:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- read-aloud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- shared reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- shared writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>• Guided reading** (2 small groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Independent tasks for other students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 minutes</td>
<td>• Reflection and discussion activity related to reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>• Phonemic awareness / phonics / word study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>• Writing workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 minutes</td>
<td>• Reflection and discussion activity related to writing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Reading components may be integrated into cross-curricular activities (e.g., planning a read-aloud on a science or technology theme, or planning shared reading and oral problem-solving of a math problem).

** Additional guided reading groups may be planned at other times of the day, while students are engaged in independent activities in other subject areas.

(Adapted from York Catholic District School Board, 1999, p. 34)
## Appendix I3-7: Sample Literacy Block Timetable, Grade 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DURATION</th>
<th>DAILY ACTIVITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td><strong>Read-aloud/think-aloud</strong> (daily)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• book selected for specific teaching purpose (e.g., oral language and vocabulary development, phonemic awareness, writer’s craft)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• modelling of reading comprehension strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 minutes</td>
<td><strong>Word study</strong> (daily)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• word wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• working with words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• letter-sound correspondence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• phonemic awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 minutes</td>
<td><strong>Shared/guided reading</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• shared reading: Monday, 20 minutes; Tuesday–Friday, 5–10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• guided reading: 2 groups per day, every day. Students not involved in guided reading instruction work at literacy centres (the teacher uses a task-management board to direct students).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>Recess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td><strong>Independent reading</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• teacher involved in assessment (e.g., observation, running records, conferencing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td><strong>Writing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• modelled, shared, interactive writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• independent writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• conferencing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• sharing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from timetables provided by Toronto Catholic District School Board)
### Appendix I3-8: Sample Literacy Block Timetable, Grade 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DURATION</th>
<th>DAILY ACTIVITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 10 minutes| **Settling in: children’s “book browse”**  
• attendance, announcements, etc. |
| 15 minutes| **Writing focus**  
• daily message (shared writing)  
• word study |
| 60 minutes| **Reading focus**  
Can include:  
• read-aloud  
• shared reading  
• guided reading  
• conferences  
• independent reading  
*On Fridays:* The teacher conducts conferences with individual students she/he did not see earlier in the week and any student requesting a conference. Students work independently or in small groups on literacy activities based on the weekly needs inventory (e.g., word study, personal reading lists, shared viewing, shared talk, drama, art, media). |
| 15 minutes| Recess |
| 45 minutes| **Writing focus**  
Can include:  
• modelled, shared, and/or interactive writing  
• independent writing  
• guided writing  
• conferences  
• sharing/reflecting  
*On Fridays:* The teacher conducts conferences with individual students she/he did not see earlier in the week and any student requesting a conference. Students begin, continue, or complete writing activities (e.g., journals, projects, writing folders, response or learning logs). |

(Adapted from Toronto District School Board, 2001, pp. 2–6)
## Appendix I3-9: Sample Literacy Block Timetable, Grade 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DURATION</th>
<th>DAILY ACTIVITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 15 minutes | **Read-aloud/think-aloud**  
- book selected for specific teaching purpose (e.g., oral language and vocabulary development, writer’s craft)  
- modelling of reading comprehension strategies |
| 60 minutes | **Writing/word study**  
- direct instruction through minilessons, which may include modelled writing, shared writing, or word study (e.g., word wall, working with words, structural analysis, word sorts)  
- independent student writing: a balance between teacher-selected and student-selected topics/genres (teacher can conference with individual students or small groups)  
- sharing/reflection |
| 15 minutes | Recess |
| 15 minutes | **Shared reading**  
- one text per week (first reading on Monday)  
- embed word study in lessons  
- re-reading and follow-up activities on Tuesday to Friday |
| 35 minutes | **Reading**  
- guided reading (teacher directed – 2 to 3 different groups per day)  
- independent reading: teacher involved in assessment (conferencing, observation, running records, etc.)*  
- literacy centres  
- reading response |

* In the course of the year, Grade 3 students generally become ready to work with literature circles. At that point, the teacher may wish to include literature circles as part of independent reading instruction for one or more small groups.

(Adapted from timetables provided by Toronto Catholic District School Board)
References

Toronto: Scholastic Professional Books.

Markham, ON: Scholastic Canada.

Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.


Toronto: Author.


Thames Valley District School Board. (2002). *Balanced literacy in the primary classroom.*
London, ON: Author.


Aurora, ON: Author.
accuracy rate. The percentage of a text that a student is able to read accurately. Accuracy rates are calculated during the analysis of running records.

achievement level. The level at which a student is achieving the Ontario curriculum expectations for his or her grade level. The Ministry of Education document The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1–8: Language provides an achievement chart that describes student performance at four levels of achievement in four categories of knowledge and skills: reasoning, communication, organization of ideas, and application of language conventions. Teachers are expected to base their assessment and evaluation of students’ work on these four levels of achievement. Level 3 is defined as the provincial standard.

adaptations. Changes made to a teaching strategy or to a generally assigned task to ensure that all students are able to participate. Examples include asking open-ended questions, working with small chunks of text, having students work with partners, and allowing students to respond in a variety of ways (e.g., by drawing, orally, in writing). See also extensions.

alphabetic principle. The principle that each sound in spoken language corresponds to a letter or a combination of letters.

anecdotal record. A written description made by the teacher of observed student demonstrations of knowledge and skills. Anecdotal records should reflect only observed behaviours, not opinions or personal interpretations. They may be running accounts of what students say and do during a particular activity, or records of specific behaviours. Students should be observed in a variety of situations over time. Consistent record taking helps to reveal patterns of student development.

assessment. The ongoing, systematic gathering, recording, and analysis of information about a student’s achievement, using a variety of strategies and tools. Its intent is to provide feedback to the teacher that can be used to improve programming. Assessment should be authentic – that is, based on classroom programs. Peer assessment, the giving and receiving of feedback among students, can also play an important role in the learning process. See also diagnostic assessment, formative assessment, and summative assessment.

at risk. A term that refers to students who are at risk of not meeting the curriculum expectations for their grade level.

barrier games. An instructional activity used to develop and/or assess students’ oral language skills. Students work in pairs, giving instructions to and receiving instructions from each other while unable to see what the other is doing. The
goal of the activity is to develop in students the abilities to use oral language precisely and clearly and to understand and act on oral instructions.

**baseline data.** Information that is used as a starting point for tracking student performance. This information is collected specifically for the purpose of determining a student’s current abilities so that improvement strategies can be planned and implemented. Assessment data gathered after a teaching strategy has been implemented is compared to baseline data for the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of the strategy.

**benchmark.** A standard by which achievement and performance are measured. Benchmarks may be established in specific areas so that teachers, parents, and students can assess student achievement against them.

**Bloom’s taxonomy.** A classification of educational objectives in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, developed in the 1950s by a group of researchers headed by Benjamin Bloom of the University of Chicago. In the cognitive domain, Bloom’s taxonomy describes a hierarchy of thinking skills, with knowledge as the foundational skill, followed by comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

**book language.** Language that beginning readers may not have encountered in their daily lives, but that is used in books (e.g., phrases such as *once upon a time* ...; old-fashioned words such as *bonnet*; figurative language such as *a blanket of snow*).

**book room.** An area of the school, often located near the primary and junior classrooms or the library, where reading instruction resources and materials such as sets of *levelled texts* and big books are catalogued and stored.

**browsing box.** A container (e.g., file folder, plastic basket, resealable bag, empty cereal box) that holds a variety of texts to be read independently by individual students or by members of *guided reading* groups. Browsing boxes for individual students could contain books the students have chosen to read, as well as a selection of *just-right books* that have been chosen with guidance from the teacher and from which the students can select texts. Browsing boxes for guided reading groups could contain multiple copies of books read in the group, books that are familiar from *shared reading* sessions, books that are of particular interest to the students in the group, and just-right books.

**capacity building.** The promotion and development of continuous professional learning within a group, school, or board for the purpose of improving student achievement. Educators participate in ongoing knowledge- and skill-building activities, and share their newly acquired knowledge and skills with colleagues through networking, coaching, and mentoring activities. Both the individual growth that results and the improved capacity of the group, school, or board have a positive effect on classroom instruction.

**character map or web.** A graphic organizer that students draw to show the traits of a character in a story. Character maps or webs can also be used to show the development of a character throughout a story.

**chart story.** A text composed orally by students and the teacher, or by the teacher alone, and transcribed onto a chart for instructional purposes.

**cloze procedure.** An instructional strategy in which the teacher produces a text in which some words have been deleted and asks students to suggest suitable words to insert in the blank spaces. The strategy can be used to assess reading comprehension as well as to develop and strengthen students’ comprehension skills.

**collaborative learning.** (Also called “cooperative learning”.) An instructional approach in which the teacher has students of varying abilities and interests work together in small groups
or teams to solve a problem, complete a project, or achieve a common goal. The teacher often assigns each group or team member a specific responsibility that is essential to the successful completion of the task.

**comprehension.** The ability to understand; in reading, the process of making sense of text. To understand or draw meaning from a written text, readers must interact with it, combining information from their personal experience and background knowledge (schema) with the information they derive from the text itself through the application of **reading strategies**.

**comprehension strategies.** (Comprehension strategies and word-solving strategies are both **reading strategies**.) Strategies that readers consciously use to make sense of text. Some strategies are used primarily to help identify and understand at a basic level the words and sentences that make up the text. Others are useful for understanding subtleties or complexities or to achieve a more comprehensive or deeper understanding of the text.

**concepts of print.** Concepts related to the way language is conveyed in print. Print concepts include directionality (English-language text is read from left to right and from top to bottom), the difference between letters and words (letters are symbols that represent sounds, words are made up of letters, and there are spaces between words), the use of capitalization and punctuation, and the common characteristics of books (title, author, front/back).

**constructing meaning.** (Also called “meaning-making.”) Using one’s knowledge of letter-sound relationships, one’s personal schema, language cues (see **cuing systems**), and other comprehension strategies (e.g., predicting, checking ahead to confirm predictions, monitoring reading for sense) to construct meaning from a text.

**cooperative learning.** See collaborative learning.

**cross-checking.** The use of different sources of information (e.g., the three cueing systems) to confirm reading accuracy and/or comprehension.

**cuing systems.** Three kinds of cues, or clues, that effective readers use in combination to construct meaning from print. Semantic (meaning) cues help the reader guess or predict meaning on the basis of context (including illustrations) and prior knowledge. Syntactic (structural) cues allow the reader to use his or her knowledge of language patterns and grammatical structure to make sense of text. Graphophonic (visual) cues allow the reader to use his or her knowledge of letter-sound relationships to decode words.

**decode.** In reading, the ability to use knowledge of letter-sound relationships to sound out unfamiliar words.

**diagnostic assessment.** Assessment that is undertaken to identify a student’s prior learning so that appropriate instruction can be provided. It occurs at the beginning of a school year, term, or unit, or as needed. See also formative assessment and summative assessment.

**digraph.** Two consecutive letters that represent one sound (e.g., th, ie).

**diphthong.** A speech sound formed by two consecutive vowels in one syllable, in which the articulation begins with one vowel and moves to another (e.g., ou in out, oi in soil).

**early stage of reading development.** The stage at which students begin to pay attention to the details of print and know that printed letters and words represent the sounds and words of oral language. Preceded by the emergent stage and followed by the fluent stage. Early readers begin to understand how the sounds of the English language translate into letters and letter clusters.
They understand most concepts of print. They learn how to substitute letters to make new words and how to break words into individual letters or sounds. The acquisition of basic decoding and problem-solving skills and familiarity with high-frequency words support the development of comprehension and fluency. Students at this stage also rely on initial consonants, pictures, and other cues to support their reading and comprehension.

**ELD.** See *English literacy development*; see also *English as a second language*.

**elements of a story.** The characteristic aspects of a work of fiction (e.g., plot, characters, setting, theme). See also *elements of texts*.

**elements of texts.** (Also called “text features”.) The characteristic features of printed text (e.g., front matter, illustrations, table of contents, headings and subheadings in a book; headlines, columns in an article). Elements of texts may also include characteristics of different text types or genres such as the use of dialogue, rhyme, a specific format (e.g., letter format), figurative language, sequential order, alphabetical order (e.g., a glossary), and so on. See also *elements of a story*.

**emergent stage of reading development.** The stage at which students imitate and practise the reading process by acting out beginning reading behaviours and by pretending to read. Followed by the *early stage* and then the *fluent stage*. Emergent readers become familiar with words and letters, and learn that some words rhyme or sound the same at the beginning or end. They begin to understand concepts of print, and they learn that spoken words can be written down in a way that allows the words to be read and understood by others.

**English as a second language (ESL).** A program of instruction for students who speak a variant of English that differs from standard English, and who need help to improve their skills in reading, writing, and oral communication. See also *English literacy development*.

**environmental print.** Printed material that students see in the world around them. Examples include street signs and other signs, including signs in the school and classroom; advertisements; and labels on food packaging and other items. The teacher can create environmental print for the classroom (e.g., *word charts*) to support and enhance all levels of the reading program.

**ESL.** See *English as a second language*; see also *English literacy development*.

**evaluation.** A judgement made at a specific, planned time about the level of a student’s achievement, on the basis of assessment data. Evaluation involves assigning a level, grade, or mark. Evaluation of student achievement is based on the student’s best and most consistent performance. See also *assessment*.

**exemplars.** Samples of student work that are chosen to illustrate performance at each of the four *achievement levels*. In 2000, the Ministry of Education published *The Ontario Curriculum – Exemplars, Grades 1–8: Reading*, which contains task descriptions for end-of-year tasks, *rubrics*, and samples of student work at each level of achievement for each of the tasks. Exemplars help students understand the quality of work that is expected of them for a particular kind of task, and they provide teachers with examples that can help them assess their own students’ work. Exemplars promote consistency in assessment.

**expectations.** The knowledge and skills that students are expected to learn and to demonstrate by the end of every grade or course, as outlined in the Ontario curriculum documents for the various subject areas.
**explicit teaching.** Clear, direct, purposeful teaching of specific knowledge/skills/strategies. In explicit teaching, the teacher explains what a strategy (for example) is, why it is used, and when to use it, models how to use it, guides and coaches students as they practise it (e.g., in *shared reading* and then in *guided reading* sessions), and then asks them to demonstrate their learning independently.

**extensions.** Changes made to a teaching strategy or to a generally assigned task to ensure that, as students grasp the new learning, they will continue to be challenged and have opportunities to extend their learning. Having students practise a newly learned strategy using a different text from the one they used to learn the strategy is one example of an extension. See also *adaptations*.

**factual texts.** For the purposes of this guide, the wide range of non-fiction texts appropriate for young readers. Teachers will have seen factual texts also referred to as “informational texts” and “expository texts”. See also *fictional texts*.

**fictional texts.** For the purposes of this guide, works of fiction for young readers. Works of fiction are often referred to as “narrative texts”. See also *factual texts*.

**fix-up strategies.** Reading strategies used to repair a breakdown of comprehension (e.g., rereading a passage to clarify meaning, reading ahead, considering how the meaning of the text matches up with *prior knowledge*).

**flexible groupings.** Groupings of students who need to work on a particular strategy, skill, or story (generally four to six students for *guided reading* groups). Teachers change the group composition when one or more of the students makes significant gains or demonstrates acquisition of the strategy or skill for which the group was formed, or to accommodate specific needs or interests.

**fluency.** The ability to read text accurately and with ease.

**fluent stage of reading development.** The stage at which students identify words with greater skill and ease, and begin to apply more complex comprehension strategies. Preceded by the *emergent stage* and the *early stage*. Fluent readers have a more extensive bank of sight words, and they have refined their decoding skills so that they can focus more on meaning and less on deciphering words. They have learned to integrate the three *cuing systems* to make sense of text.

**formative assessment.** *Assessment* that tracks individual students' progress on an ongoing basis and provides teachers with regular feedback on the effectiveness of their instructional strategies. Formative assessment occurs throughout the school year, and it helps teachers make programming decisions based on individual or group progress. See also *diagnostic assessment* and *summative assessment*.

**framework.** For the purposes of this document, a step-by-step guide prepared by the teacher with the students to help them perform an activity, process, or procedure (e.g., give an oral presentation, participate in a book conference, perform various classroom routines). An oral presentation framework might provide prompts such as “Stand in one spot / Speak loudly and clearly / Look at my audience / Tell my story in order”. Frameworks are often posted in the classroom for students’ reference.

**gradual release/transfer of responsibility.** During *explicit teaching* of new information, strategies, and skills, and while modelling strategies, skills, and behaviours, the teacher provides students with maximum support. As students begin to apply the new learning, the teacher provides guidance and offers feedback as necessary.
As students internalize the learning, skills, strategies, and behaviours (e.g., during shared and then guided reading sessions), the teacher gradually provides less and less support and students assume more and more responsibility. Finally, the release or transfer of responsibility is complete and the student is able to work independently.

**grapheme.** The smallest part of written language that represents a phoneme in the spelling of a word. A grapheme may be just one letter, such as b, d, f, p, or s; or a combination of letters, such as ch, sh, th, ck, ea, igh, ough.

**graphic organizer.** A visual framework that helps the learner organize ideas and make connections between them. Graphic organizers can be prepared by the teacher or by students. Graphic organizers include, for example, mind maps, event maps or webs, character webs or pyramids, story sequence charts, T-charts, main and supporting ideas charts or maps, and Venn diagrams.

**graphophonic cues.** Visual cues in the text that help readers decode the text, drawing on their knowledge of letter-sound relationships, letter patterns and word families, sight words, and so on. See also cueing systems.

**guided reading.** A key instructional strategy in which the teacher works with a small group of students who have comparable reading skills. The teacher selects an appropriate text (one that students can read with 90–95 per cent accuracy), reviews it with the lesson and the reading levels/skills of the group members in mind, and introduces it to the group in a manner appropriate to their skills. Students then read the book quietly, but aloud, while the teacher offers support as necessary. The composition of a guided reading group changes as a result of the teacher’s observation and assessment of individuals in it.

**high-frequency words.** Words that occur frequently in texts for beginning readers. High-frequency words are taught and posted on word walls in classrooms so that beginning readers can become familiar with them and add them to their bank of sight words.

**higher-order thinking skills.** Thinking that goes beyond the recall of basic facts and enables students to solve problems, understand and use concepts of some complexity, and achieve a deeper level of understanding of texts. Examples of these skills include comparing, investigating, analysing, experimenting, evaluating, synthesizing, and creating.

**independent reading.** A key instructional strategy in which students read just-right texts that they have selected themselves with the teacher’s guidance. The teacher observes and records individual students’ reading choices and, as much as possible, their reading behaviours, then uses this information to guide future instruction. Independent reading may be preceded by a minilesson and followed by students’ reflection on and discussion of their reading.

**individualized instruction.** Programming that the teacher has planned and developed to suit the strengths and needs of individual students.

**interactive process.** Reading is considered an interactive process, because it requires readers to actively use information from their personal schema, as well as information from the words in the text and from the application of comprehension strategies, in order to comprehend the text.

**just-right books.** Books that a student can read with a high rate of accuracy and comprehension. Just-right books can be used for independent reading in class, for take-home reading, and for reading with a buddy. These are books that a student can read without support from the teacher, making few errors and experiencing little frustration. Students should be given many opportunities to read material at the just-right level so that they can develop confidence and fluency and experience the pleasure of reading.
**K-W-L chart.** A chart with three columns for students to list what they **Know** about a topic, what they **Want** to know about it, and, after reading or instruction, what they have **Learned** or would still like to learn about it.

**Label.** A word or words that describe an object or element in an illustration (e.g., the word *giraffe* written underneath a picture of that animal).

**Lead literacy teacher.** A teacher who has acquired, or is acquiring, specialist skills in literacy instruction and whom boards may involve in working collaboratively with his or her colleagues to help them deepen their understanding of the reading process and extend their repertoire of instructional strategies.

**Learning log.** A student’s written record of and reflection on his or her learning. See also **response journal**.

**Learning team/community.** An in-school team, consisting primarily of the principal and teachers, that works to improve student achievement. A reading learning team would begin by developing a learning plan for its own members that is linked directly to student reading results and that is aligned with curriculum expectations, assessment strategies, the school improvement plan, board plans, and literacy goals. Planned, collaborative learning opportunities enable team members to acquire the research-based knowledge and skills that enable them to deliver effective instruction and achieve system goals. Professional learning communities can involve **peer coaching**, team teaching, and mentoring activities, as well as **study groups**.

**Letter-sound relationships.** The relationship between the letters (graphemes) of written language and the individual sounds (phonemes) of spoken language. A thorough understanding of all letter-sound relationships promotes accuracy and fluency in reading. See also **phonics**.

**Levelled texts.** Books for developing readers that have been classified according to level of difficulty, typically represented by a lettering or numbering system. Levelled texts allow teachers to select appropriate texts for instruction and allow both students and teachers to select appropriate texts for **independent reading**.

**Literacy.** The ability to read and write at a level that allows one to competently deal with information related to the demands of the workplace and day-to-day life. The goals of literacy instruction include the ability to understand texts and the ability to clearly express ideas through writing.

**Literacy block.** A block of time scheduled daily by the classroom teacher for literacy instruction or activities. Teachers are encouraged to schedule literacy blocks to ensure that sufficient time is dedicated to language instruction and activities. Literacy blocks should not include the time required for administrative matters, transitions from one component of the program to another, and attendance-taking, but should focus solely on literacy instruction and activities.

**Literacy-focused activities.** Activities that consolidate students’ literacy learning. For example, rather than colouring pictures related to a text, students could be asked to draw pictures of sequential events in the text.

**Literacy plan.** A plan developed by school staff (principal and teachers), sometimes in collaboration with centrally assigned board staff, to improve teachers’ instructional knowledge and practices with the ultimate goal of improving student achievement in literacy. Literacy plans are aligned with the Ministry of Education documents *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1–8, Language* and/or *The Kindergarten Program* and the school’s and board’s improvement plans, and they are based on collected data related to current and past student achievement in literacy.
literature circles. Discussion groups that allow students to engage in conversations with a small number of their peers for the purpose of deepening their understandings of texts and sharing their interpretations. Literature circles offer students opportunities to focus on comprehension of a text and higher-level thinking.

make-and-break activity. A learning activity in which a student forms a word using letter tiles, magnetic letters, or cardboard letters, and then scrambles the letters of the word. The student then puts the letters back together to form the word. Make and break gives students the opportunity to pay attention to individual letters as well as words and to consider the order and combination of letters in words.

masking words. Hiding individual words in a text from students by covering them with a sticky note or a piece of cardboard. Masking words can also involve covering text around a word with a piece of cardboard in which a hole has been cut to expose the word. See also word mask.

meaning-making. See constructing meaning.

metacognition. Consciousness of one’s own thinking processes. Metacognitive strategies, which can be used to monitor, control, and improve one’s thinking and learning processes, include the following in the context of reading: applying reading strategies consciously, understanding why a particular strategy should be used, identifying gaps in comprehension and using fix-up strategies to remedy them, detecting contradictions between prior knowledge and the text being read.

mind map. A graphic representation of information that is intended to help clarify meaning. In making a mind map, students summarize information from a text and organize it by listing, sorting, or sequencing it, or by linking information and/or ideas. Mind maps help students understand the relative importance of individual points and the way in which these points relate to one another.

miscue. In reading, an incorrect, inappropriate, or unexpected response by a reader to a text (e.g., omitting a word, stumbling over a word, misinterpreting a word, substituting a word, using an inappropriate strategy to understand a word). See also miscue analysis.

miscue analysis. A form of diagnostic assessment in which a student reads a passage aloud and the teacher either marks the student’s miscues on a copy of the passage or counts and tallies the miscues for later analysis and for planning future instruction.

modelling. The teacher demonstrates a task or strategy to students, so that they can learn how to do it by copying the model. When modelling includes thinking aloud, students become aware of the processes needed to perform a task or implement a strategy.

morning message. A written message posted in the classroom that contains an announcement, a piece of news, or information related to the day’s events. The morning message provides students with a daily opportunity for shared reading. If the teacher writes the message with students, he or she has the opportunity to model writing and to provide the students with opportunities for shared or interactive writing.

morpheme. The smallest meaningful unit in a word (e.g., pre, read, ing). One word can contain more than one morpheme.

needs assessment. An assessment made to identify the needs of an individual student before instruction begins, and on which planning, future instruction, and future assessments will be based.

onset. The consonant or consonants that occur before a vowel in a syllable (e.g., the g in gain, the fr in fright). See also rime.

onset-and-rime patterns. The repetition of the same rime, with changing onsets (e.g., cake, rake, make, lake, fake, bake) to create “word families”.

morning message. A written message posted in the classroom that contains an announcement, a piece of news, or information related to the day’s events. The morning message provides students with a daily opportunity for shared reading. If the teacher writes the message with students, he or she has the opportunity to model writing and to provide the students with opportunities for shared or interactive writing.
**pattern book.** A book for beginning readers that repeats words, phrases, and/or sentences. The repetition helps young readers learn to read.

**peer coaching.** A form of teaching in which one person uses modelling, guidance, discussion, and encouragement to help a peer learn effective practice. In peer coaching in schools, teachers work together to plan instruction and other classroom activities, visit each other's classes to observe and offer comments and/or suggestions about instruction and student learning, share ideas, and help each other solve problems and learn new teaching methods.

**performance level.** See achievement level.

**phoneme.** The smallest part of spoken language that makes the meaning of one word different from that of another. English has about 44 phonemes. A few words, such as a or oh, have only one phoneme, but most words have more. If has two phonemes (i-f), check has three phonemes (ch-ê-k), and stop has four phonemes (s-t-ô-p). A phoneme may be represented by more than one letter (e.g., ch in check).

**phonemic awareness.** The ability to hear, identify, and manipulate phonemes in spoken words. See also phonological awareness.

**phonics.** The study of letter-sound relationships.

**phonological awareness.** The ability to focus on and manipulate not only phonemes, but also larger spoken units such as syllables and words. Phonological awareness activities can also involve rhymes and onsets and rimes. See also phonemic awareness.

**picture cues.** Illustrations that match the text closely enough that a reader can refer to the illustration for help if he or she has difficulty with an unknown word or needs help in understanding the text.

**picture walk.** A pre-reading activity in which students review the pictures and other graphic material [e.g., charts] in a text, as well as picture titles and captions, to predict the content of the text.

**pocket chart.** A large piece of stiff fabric or cardboard that has rows of pockets for words, which are also written on cardboard. Pocket charts can be hung on the wall and used for a variety of activities related to reading [e.g., to create lists of rhyming words, for onset and rime activities, to reconstruct text].

**pragmatics.** The understanding that language is influenced by the context in which it is used. For example, a sentence can have different meanings depending on the situation in which it is used or, if spoken, the tone of voice in which it is said. It could be a mere statement, an affirmation, a warning, a promise, or a threat.

**pre-teaching activities.** A variety of activities that teach foundational concepts, new vocabulary, or other knowledge that students require before a reading lesson begins. Pre-teaching activities are designed to motivate students, to entice them to want to read or listen to a text.

**print awareness.** Awareness that letters and numbers convey meaning, and that written language follows certain conventions [e.g., words are separated by spaces].

**prior knowledge.** The knowledge that a student has acquired to date and that he or she brings to a text and draws on to understand the text. Students learn new concepts by relating them to their prior knowledge and experience. See also schema.

**provincial standard.** Level 3 of the four levels of achievement, as defined in the Ontario curriculum documents for the various subjects; the level at which students are expected to achieve. The *Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1–8: Language* states that level 3 "identifies a high level of achievement."
Parents of students achieving at level 3 in a particular grade can be confident that their children will be prepared for work at the next grade” (p. 5). See also achievement levels.

**read-alouds.** A key instructional strategy in which the teacher selects a book that is beyond what students can read on their own and reads it aloud to the class to promote a love of reading, to improve students’ level of comprehension, to build students’ knowledge of vocabulary and language structures, to expose students to correct pronunciation, and to demonstrate reading strategies.

**readers’ theatre.** An instructional activity in which students adopt the roles of different characters and of a narrator to read a text, or develop scripts based on familiar texts, practise reading their parts, and then present their rehearsed reading to others.

**reading conference.** Planned discussions with individual students about their reading. Reading conferences offer teachers opportunities to get to know their students as readers and to monitor their students’ reading progress. Teachers are able to identify and discuss individual students’ reading preferences and the strengths and challenges they face, and to help these students select books and set specific goals for their reading. Reading conferences also help teachers plan future instruction, based on identified needs.

**reading developmental continuum.** A continuum of skills development in reading, usually in the form of a chart or list, which generally begins with concepts of print and similar foundational skills and progresses to higher-level skills, such as the ability to analyse a text critically.

**reading journal.** See response journal.

**reading log.** See reading record.

**reading portfolio.** A folder or other container that holds a selection of a student’s work related to reading, produced over the course of a term or year. The selection can include a range of items, such as lists of books the student has read, story maps, and written responses to texts, that reflect the student’s typical work and best efforts and together show the student’s learning progress over time.

**reading record.** (Also called “reading log”.) A list students keep of the books they have read. A reading record lists authors and titles, and can also include information such as genres and the dates on which the books were read.

**reading strategies.** A combination of word-solving strategies and comprehension strategies.

**reading the room/walls.** An instructional activity in which students use pointers or word wands to read environmental print in the classroom (generally print that is familiar to them, such as the morning message, poems or songs transcribed onto charts, shared reading material written on charts, and word-wall words), or play letter and word games, such as letter or sight-word hunts (e.g., find all the m’s or the’ s in the room).

**reciprocal teaching.** An instructional activity in which students take turns being the teacher for a pair or small group of their peers. Their role as teacher is to clarify, to ask questions, to ask for predictions, etc.

**reflective practice.** A four-stage activity in which teachers, working with a partner or in a small group, reflect on their instructional and assessment practices. It begins in class, where teachers “stop, look, and question” their practices, and learn to differentiate their teaching from their students’ learning. Teachers also collect, examine, and reflect on their observations of student learning and objective assessment data (i.e., they avoid making assumptions), discuss their findings with their colleagues, and devise new teaching strategies to meet students’ needs.
response journal. (Also called “reading journal”.) The notebook or journal in which a student collects his or her written observations and reflections about texts read, as well as related diagrams, definitions, lists, explanations, descriptions, predictions, findings, and conclusions. Response journals also contain teachers’ responses, provided within a set time frame, to the student’s observations, reflections, and so on.

retell, relate, reflect. Reading comprehension activities that reveal and/or help students develop different levels/types of communication and thinking abilities (Schwartz and Bone, 1995). Students retell a story in their own words, relate what they have read in the story to their own experiences and background knowledge, and reflect on the meaning of the story and the effect it had on them. Each step requires a higher-level skill than the previous one.

rhyme. Rhymes result when words or word endings have the same or similar sounds (e.g., in poetry).

rime. The part of a syllable that contains the vowel and all that follows it (e.g., -one in bone and tone). A rime is smaller than a syllable but larger than a phoneme. (See also onset.)

rubric. A scoring scale in chart form, often developed in connection with a performance task, that provides a set of criteria related to expectations addressed in the task and describes student performance at each of the four levels of achievement. Rubrics are used to assess and evaluate students’ work and to help students understand what is expected of them.

running record. A method of recording, scoring, and analysing the reading behaviour of individual students in Kindergarten to Grade 3, first developed by Marie Clay. Running records are taken as the teacher observes a student reading aloud. Analysis of a running record gives the teacher information to assess the student’s level of reading achievement, to help the student choose appropriate reading material, and to guide future instruction.

scaffolding. An instructional technique in which the teacher breaks a reading strategy into small steps, models the steps, provides support as students learn the strategy, and then gradually shifts responsibility for applying the strategy independently to the students. Scaffolding allows students to build on their prior knowledge and modify their current understandings; where prior knowledge is lacking, modelled and shared experiences bridge the gap.

schema. The body of knowledge and system of beliefs with which one approaches, interprets, and responds to new information and experiences. Each person has a unique schema, based on his or her own prior knowledge and experiences. A person’s schema changes and develops with the acquisition of new information and experiences.

school improvement plan. A plan developed by school staff (principal, teachers, support staff) in conjunction with parents (through the school council) and, often, school board staff, to improve student learning, usually in a specific area such as reading or mathematics. Effective school improvement plans set specific, measurable targets. See also target setting.

self-assessment. A student’s assessment of his or her own progress in developing the knowledge and skills set out in the curriculum expectations.

semantic cues. Semantic (meaning) cues help readers guess or predict the meaning of text on the basis of context and prior knowledge. Semantic cues may include illustrations in the text. See also cueing systems.

semantics. The study of meaning in language, including the meaning of words, phrases, and sentences.
semantic web. A graphic representation of information that is used to list and sort data and sequence and/or link thoughts and ideas in order to clarify meaning in a related text.

sequence chart. A graphic organizer that is used to depict the sequence or order of steps in a process, events in a story, and so on. Sequence charts can help students identify cause-and-effect relationships.

shared reading. A key instructional strategy in which the teacher reads from large books or other texts that all students can see and follow [e.g., slides/transparencies projected onto a screen/wall, commercially published and class-made big books, pocket and other types of charts, posters, murals]. The text is read several times, first by the teacher, and then with students, who join in the reading when they feel comfortable doing so, at key instructional points, or when the text is repeated.

sight words. Words that a student recognizes on sight and is able to read easily, without having to sound them out. Students are able to read more fluently as their bank of sight words grows. See also high-frequency words.

story map or web. A graphic representation of certain elements of a story [e.g., the beginning, middle, and end; the five Ws — who, what, where, when, and why; the title, characters, setting, problem, and solution; the sequence of events].

story elements. See elements of a story.

story patterns. The way stories are constructed. Children’s stories often unfold in predictable ways [e.g., the main character faces a problem; the character tries to resolve the problem; complications ensue; the problem is successfully resolved]. Familiarity with story patterns helps students make predictions about new texts and can heighten their interest in reading.

study groups. Groups of educators (teachers, principals, support staff, etc.) who meet regularly to share ideas and study professional resources or current research, with the goal of improving student achievement in a particular area. Study groups generally consist of five or six people who establish common goals, discuss their reading, exchange ideas, share lesson plans, and develop collaborative work units.

summative assessment. Assessment that occurs at the end of a learning module or a specific time period, and that is based on work in which the student is expected to demonstrate the knowledge and skills accumulated during that period of time. Summative assessments provide teachers with additional information (additional to that obtained from a variety of assessments conducted earlier) to evaluate student achievement and program effectiveness. Examples include portfolio reviews and assessments of student performance on culminating tasks.

syllable. The smallest part of a word that includes a vowel. Watermelon has four syllables: wa-ter-mel-on.

syntactic cues. Syntactic (structural) cues help readers make sense of text by using their knowledge of language patterns and grammatical structure. They help readers predict text and detect when they have misread (i.e., because the word does not sound right to the reader). See also cueing systems.

syntax. The way words and phrases are used and combined to form sentences, and the grammatical relationships between them.

T-chart. A chart that has been divided into two columns, so that the divider looks like the letter T. T-charts are used to compare and contrast information and to analyze similarities and differences.
target. In the context of Ontario’s Early Reading Strategy, the percentage of students who will meet the provincial standard for reading, as established by the school improvement team and the board. Each target is an informed prediction, given the focused efforts of staff, parents, and students themselves.

target setting. In the context of Ontario’s Early Reading Strategy, target setting is a key part of the school improvement plan process, which is a continuous cycle that consists of the following steps: gathering appropriate information about student achievement and the school’s demographic context, analysing the information, setting clear and measurable targets, using collected data and the achievement targets to guide planning and programming for students, and reporting the results achieved.

text features. See elements of texts.

text innovation. A teacher- or student-created text that is based on a previously read and studied text. Text innovation provides students with additional exposure to the high-frequency words used in the text being re-created, and it can also provide a model or structure on which to base the creation of other texts.

text reconstruction. A reading comprehension activity in which the teacher prints parts of a text on strips of paper and mixes them up. Students are asked to re-establish the correct order, thereby reconstructing the text.

think-alouds. A process in which the teacher models the recognition of language cues and the application of reading strategies by expressing his or her thought processes out loud while reading to students.

think, pair, share. In the context of reading, an activity in which students think about a text, then discuss it with a partner (i.e., as a pair), and finally share their ideas with the class.

Venn diagram. A graphic organizer that allows students to represent visually the similarities and differences between story elements, characters, and so on. A Venn diagram consists of two or more overlapping circles, with shared characteristics listed where the circles overlap.

visual literacy. The ability to represent text visually and to interpret visual representations.

whole-part-whole. An instructional approach in which an idea, concept, or text is presented to learners as follows: beginning with an overview of the whole, then proceeding to an analysis of the component parts, and finally linking the component parts to reformulate the whole. Shared reading is an example of this approach: the whole text is read, the teacher helps students consider and/or analyse the various parts or aspects of the text, and then the whole text is read again.

whole-school approach. An approach in which all members of a school community (staff, students, and parents) work together, drawing on their different perspectives and responsibilities, to achieve common goals.

word charts. Charts that have been created by the teacher with the students and posted throughout the classroom for a variety of purposes, such as listing instructional or assessment terms, grouping words related to specific topics (across the curriculum), listing word elements (e.g., prefixes and suffixes), classes of words (e.g., nouns, adjectives), or synonyms for commonly used words.

word mask. A device, usually made from paper or cardboard, that is used during reading to frame or highlight a specific word. See also masking words.

word-solving strategies. Any of a variety of strategies that help students read a word, such as decoding the word (see decode), using their knowledge of certain words to read unfamiliar
words, or combining their knowledge of letter-sound relationships with clues from an illustration to predict the word.

**word study.** An instructional activity in which students practise recognizing high-frequency words and learn word-solving strategies.

**word wall.** A list of words, grouped alphabetically and prominently displayed in the classroom, that teachers use to help students become familiar with high-frequency words.

**Selected Sources**


North Central Regional Educational Laboratory. *Glossary of education terms and acronyms.* http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/misc/glossary.htm


