

These notes have been prepared by Wendy Cowey, xx, xx, and will form the basis of a booklet on Early Childhood Teaching for NALP, which will be available during 2007.

## Introduction

These notes provide suggestions for Accelerated Literacy teachers working with students aged three to seven years.

These students include:

Age	Name of school year	State or Territory
3 – 4 years	Preschool CPC Kindergarten	NT, Qld SA WA
5 years	Transition Reception Pre Primary Year 1 Prep Kindergarten	NT SA WA Qld Vic ACT, NSW
6 – 7 years	Year 1 and 2  Year 2 and 3	NT, SA, WA, Vic ACT, NSW Qld

[In these notes the NT names will be used.]

The notes are intended to supplement, not replace, the other Accelerated Literacy teaching resources, including teaching notes on specific books. They provide extra information about teaching Accelerated Literacy to students in the early childhood years. Each teaching strategy is discussed separately and in three parts, Preschool, Transition and Years 1 and 2.

## Literate Orientation

This strategy is crucial as a point of departure for lessons providing a context for teachers to explain what the lesson is about and to model the literate approach the teacher wants to take to the lesson.

### Low Order Literate Orientation

#### Preparation checklist

Big Book (preferably laminated) or overhead projector transparencies of the book so that all students in a class can see the text and its illustrations.

Goals for the sequence of lessons about the study text that covers:

Goals for the lesson

Goals that include 'concepts about print' (Marie Clay)

## Purpose

Low Order Literate Orientation provides a context for negotiating a literate discussion of the meaning of the story and the effect it has on readers. In Low Order Literate Orientation sessions, teachers model how they interpret illustrations and stories. Students are encouraged to participate in the discussion from the first lesson.

## Preschool

### Special Considerations

Students aged three and four years and attending preschool are energetic, curious and bring with them considerable knowledge about their own culture based on all the interactions they have had with members of their families. If interactions around books in the company of adults have not been part of their culture then preschool is particularly important as a context for learning about why people read books; what fun they are, what we learn from them, how they work, and so on.

We do not expect preschool students to be able to read independently but we do expect that they learn to talk about stories and to interpret, discuss and enjoy them. Low Order Literate Orientation on a wide selection of illustrated children's books is the part of the teaching sequence that is particularly powerful for this age group. Play with peers and teacher directed play is important and appropriate for this age group, as is learning about books and enjoying their stories in a social context.

### Choice of book/ Time spent on book

Choose books that allow students to engage with and enjoy language. The time the teacher and students spend with books must be perceived to be fun as well as challenging and highly desirable. Students should see that the time they spend in talking about books is important learning and that the teacher enjoys it and values their contributions.

All the books on the Accelerated Literacy book list for the years Transition to Year 2 are suitable for reading to preschool students. Books that have been read to students in the preschool years can still be taught again in Transition, Years 1 and 2.

As well as using some books for intensive study, read other books for fun, for information, as examples of a particular type of book or for their links to the book that is part of the more intensive study. Books that are not on the Accelerated Literacy book list that are also suitable for Preschool age students are the 'Hairy McLary' books (by Lyndley Dodd), nursery rhyme books and other books with rhyme. New texts for intensive study can be chosen every week to 2 weeks.

### Teaching points

An AL lesson with preschool students may take between 15 – 30 minutes on average. The teacher negotiates a discussion that engages students in an age appropriate discussion as literate people. It will be similar to the conversation that a parent has with a child when reading to them at home, with the teacher aiming to stimulate thought about characters' thoughts, feelings and motivations as well as teaching how to make inferences from the wording of the story as well as its illustrations. The discussion can include noticing features of the illustrations but will go beyond simply naming objects and characters to a deeper, cultural discussion about why characters act the way they do.

As you discuss the illustrations try not to be long winded. If the students have a short attention span, come back to the book several times during the day. Continue any discussion about the illustrations and story for as long as possible but use a variety of related activities to keep a focus on literacy learning.

When you first introduce the text invite your indigenous teaching assistant to tell the story in their first language. Ensure that after this the lessons are in English. Encourage your teaching assistant to watch this procedure and once they are confident invite her/him to take plan with you then teach a part of the session.

Encourage students to talk about the story. Do not correct their language though; accept their answer and show that you understood the answer through your reconceptualisation of it.

Model basic concepts about print as you read and discuss the story.

Read the story each day to show that the words of each story stay the same.

Point to the words as you read them and explain how you know where to start reading. ('We always start to read the words from here,' while pointing to the word on the top left hand side of the left page). These conventions can be pointed out in the course of enjoying the story.

Ask students to help you find where to read, what direction to read, help you find the words and so on

Don't do all these things at once but do them regularly.

### Teaching themes

There can be a range of books that teachers read and reread and others that are the central focus of teaching themes. Tailor play activities to suit e.g. 'Fancy That!' Make chicken eggs out of play dough; make a big shed and act out the story.

Create a world out of their preschool environment that is supported by the literate text that you study. This 'world' not only supports the text, it is also powerful force in developing oral language. Children can engage in 'natural language' learning because they have had the English resources needed to engage in discourses around a text modelled through Low Order Literate Orientation.

### Supporting activities

Dramatic activities: play acting, clothes to dress up, puppets, plastic figures and other props can all be used to encourage students to 'play' the story with peers, with the teacher or helpers, by themselves.

Art activities: murals, craft activities, painting, drawing can all be used to revisit and discuss the story, its events and their order.

Play boxes – setting up concrete play materials- i.e. hungry caterpillar, plastic food, puppet.

Puppet play act of books. (Folkman's are a great supplier: see below for address)

Set up an attractive reading corner where children's favourite books are always available.

Draw large pictures of characters and attach speech bubbles or labels. Fill in speech bubbles to show what characters may be thinking.

Provide children with the opportunity to respond to stories through drawing, drama or puppets.

Provide opportunities for children to arrange pictures from a story in sequence, encouraging them to justify the logic of their sequence.

## Transition

### Special considerations

Transition is the year that children start formal schooling (in Australia). In mainstream education, parents have the strong expectation that their children will learn to read when they start school and we also expect these mainstream outcomes for AL students. Low Order Literate Orientation for Transition students will therefore focus on goals for lessons based on the skills they need to learn to read.

Another important consideration for Transition age students is related to cognitive overload. Students not only have to know about very basic concepts about print, they also have to learn to recognise and write letters, words and sentences, all processes that have the potential to be stressful for young students. Stress makes learning more difficult and so for these students each stage of the teaching sequence is carefully planned around teaching literacy skills in the context of social interaction around a carefully chosen book. The literate mind-set to the text, that will support students with the meaning of the text and thus make it more predictable, is an important goal for Low Order Literate Orientation.

The most powerful goal for Low Order Literate Orientation is to teach students to use every cue to meaning available in the illustrations of the study text effectively.

### Choice of book/ Time spent on book

In Transition, more time may be spent on the intensive study of one book than in Preschool because of the time you will spend on other parts of the teaching sequence. As detailed in the notes that accompany the Accelerated Literacy booklist, there are two main types of books that may be the focus of a teaching cycle in Transition.

First, some books will be interesting, engaging stories for young children, with rich illustrations and language. 'The Bear's Lunch' by Pamela Allen is one such book. These books are important to teaching AL because the language is the language of books but is written to be fun for young children. There are often parts of the story that repeat so that children can 'join in'. This language is highly predictable but is also literate. These books, however, are often too complex for beginning readers to read independently and only the repeating parts of these books or short segments of the story are used in the teaching cycle. Second, other books are written specifically for students who are just learning to read. 'The Wishing Well' and other stories in 'Mouse Tales' by Arnold Lobel are examples of this type of book. The wording of these stories is short, predictable and linguistically simple to encourage young readers to read and practice their emerging skills. The illustrations of the book contain much of the complexity and nuances of meaning that is expressed in the wording of text for older students.

Books of both types should be taught to Transition students. More complex texts are important to teach students how 'book language' and literate discussion work. Linguistically simple, shorter books need to be taught to give students opportunities to read whole books and practice their decoding skills.

Time spent on one book could vary between two weeks to a term depending on teaching goals and the students' interest and enjoyment. Where one book is used over time, read many other books to the class as part of an everyday routine that is fun through the sharing

of stories, draws links between similar stories, and increases students knowledge of how the language of stories works.

### Teaching points

Discussion about the story, its illustrations and wording and how they relate to the characters, their motivations and feelings and the plot are a crucial element of Low Order Literate Orientation for Transition.

The understanding built up through this discussion support students to use prediction skills that make the complex task of analysing words likely to be more successful.

Before the lesson, decide the 'angle' you are going to use to discuss the story.

Early in the teaching sequence you will discuss all the illustrations and outline the whole story but quickly move to more focused discussion. For example, early sessions on 'The Wishing Well' by Arnold Lobel would outline the whole story but there is no point in going through that same discussion every day.

One lesson later in the series of lessons could be about the information contained in the orientation to the story. The author only tells us that it is about 'a mouse' and 'a wishing well'. What is the work we have to as readers to interpret those words in relation to the illustrations?

Another lesson could be about the complication. The well says 'ouch' when the mouse throws her first penny into it and makes her first wish. What does the word 'ouch' imply about the well, the likelihood of the mouse having her wish granted as well as its relationship to other stories of this type? There is a vast resource of cultural knowledge that experienced readers access when they read. This is also our resource for teaching interesting and powerful lessons.

During the lesson there will be specific teaching points that relate to the story and teaching points that relate to the reading process.

Use every opportunity to discuss how a reader thinks, eg. How a reader uses the illustrations to predict meaning. How the meaning helps a reader work out the words of the text. How the structure of the story helps a reader know what to expect.

### Teaching themes/ Supporting activities

As for Preschool with the understanding that art activities related to the text would be carried out in art lessons, not in the literacy lesson.

## Years 1 and 2

### Special considerations

These students will still be developing and consolidating literacy skills. They need careful consistent monitoring and support to become automatic decoders and competent spellers and writers. We want them to be able to understand reading texts and to interpret them as critical readers.

In Low Order Literate Orientation these young readers still need meaning prediction support. Their books may have few illustrations and more text. The illustrations may be artistic.

interpretations of the text and make greater demands on the reader who may expect them to be literal interpretations of the text.

Low Order Literate Orientation is important for these readers as they have to cope with more complex texts and more linguistically demanding text with fewer illustrations.

### **Choice of book/ Time spent on book**

Books for Year 1 and 2 may be books that were read to Preschool children and had Low Order Literate Orientation carried out on them at that time. Students then have some familiarity with the books that can be a resource for teaching them to read that book independently. Examples of books that may have been taught at Preschool level are 'The Bear's Lunch' by Pamela Allen and 'The Doorbell Rang' by Pat Hutchins.

Books with predictable vocabulary that builds on earlier text are the Arnold Lobel books such as 'Mouse Soup' and the 'Frog and Toad' series of books. These books are highly supportive of readers in Year 1 and 2, particularly when the 'Mouse Tales' have been used in Transition.

The Happy Family series of books are also highly supportive reading for students early in Year 2. They are fun, well illustrated, but also have longer text appropriate for developing reading skills based on slightly more complex structures. Similarities across the series create expectations in readers that make each book easier to read.

Time spent on each book will depend on the complexity of the story and the language. It may be as short as two weeks or as long as a term, depending on these issues as well as on the individual class.

### **Teaching points**

Again, all efforts in teaching early childhood students of this age are directed towards teaching reading skills. Effective Low Order Literate Orientation reduces mental overload for young learners and allows them to practice their developing skills.

Important knowledge for Year 1 and 2 includes:

An outline of the story and its structure, eg. who the characters are, what their context is, where the complication begins, who it involves, what they do about the problem or problems they have encountered, how the problems are resolved.

The explicit use and teaching of the metalanguage to do with narrative writing is important here.

Plan to ask questions that challenge students to make inferences about the illustrations and wording of the story. These inferences should be drawn from previous sessions on the book.

Use preformulation when necessary to cue students in to possible answers to questions and broadcast common knowledge through reconceptualisation.

### **Teaching themes/ Supporting activities**

Themes across the curriculum can be taught to link the story to a wider base of knowledge about the story.

Activities based on themes can be particularly supportive for students from ESL backgrounds as they situate the story in culture and provide additional understanding of unfamiliar contexts.

Additional activities should support the literacy program, not replace it.

### Resources (for all year levels)

Folkman Puppets, supplied by Elizabeth Richards Pty Ltd

2/34 Prime Drive

Seven Hills 21 47

Ph: 02 9838 0865

Fa: 02 9838 0302

*Kesco Educational Kesco Educational Pty Ltd*

*7 Grosvenor Place*

*Brookvale*

*NSW 2100*

*Australia*

*Telephone 1300 139 974*

*Fax 1300 139 954*

'Rosie's Walk' magnetic story

'Who Sank the Boat' magnetic story

Billy goats gruff magnetic story

Tape and book Alexanders outing

*JUDIUS Pty Ltd*

*P.O Box 316*

*Rosebery NSW 1445*

**02) 9557 5144**

*(Sydney metro area)*

Little Red Hen felt set

3 Billy goats gruff felt set

Very Hungry Caterpillar board game

Caterpillar/butterfly reversible puppet