

The Accelerated Literacy Teaching Sequence

These notes prepared by Wendy Cowey formed the basis of the Practitioner Guide on the Accelerated Literacy Teaching Sequence.

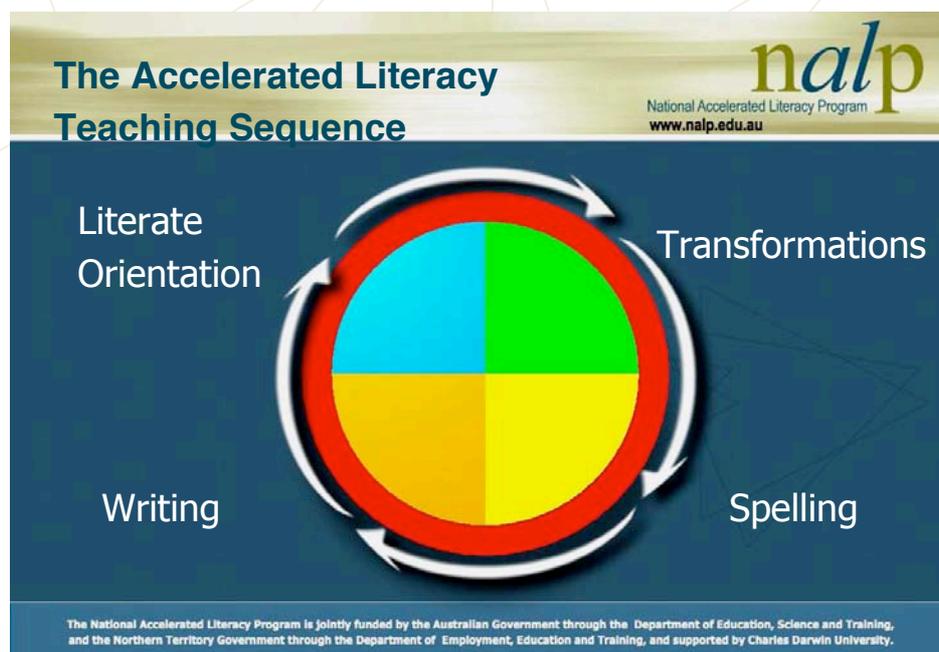
The value of teaching routines

The Accelerated Literacy teaching sequence consists of a cluster of literacy teaching strategies that, taught each day for 60 – 90 minutes, constitute a teaching routine. These routines are a key feature of Accelerated Literacy teaching. The value of a teaching routine such as the one used in Accelerated Literacy teaching is discussed by Courtney Cazden:

'One benefit of a clear consistent activity structure is that it allows participants to attend to content rather than procedure...

If students can be socialised into a set of activity structures that become familiar and predictable, yet flexibly open for improvisations at the moment and for evolution over time, management problems and transition times can be minimised; then both teacher and students can give their attention less to choreographing the activity and more to the academic content.' Cazden 2001: 101

For students with low attendance, too, the familiar routines of Accelerated Literacy provide support and predictability. The teaching sequence diagram illustrating the strategies used by Accelerated Literacy teachers is shown below.



The sequence represented in the diagram above consists of four teaching strategies that are usually, but not always, followed sequentially during an Accelerated Literacy lesson. The strategies are intended to be used by teachers as tools or resources for teaching students to be fully participating members of a literate society: “full members, not just with access, but also with a zest for participating and an instinct to exercise agency” (Freebody, 2004, p. 4). The strategies are structured, “yet flexibly open for improvisations at the moment and for evolution over time” (Cazden 2001: 101). Ideally teachers will have clear goals for lessons both individually and collectively, that the teaching strategies will help them achieve.

Text Selection

While not represented on the diagram, text selection is a crucial element of Accelerated Literacy teaching. The following criteria should be considered in selecting a text.

- It should be written in literate language, that is, the language of books, not the everyday vernacular or oral language that assumes the speaker and listener share a context.
- It should be chosen because it is age appropriate for the majority of a class, or close to age appropriate.
- It should have the potential to be enjoyed by students so that they feel motivated to read and can experience the excitement of learning that reading offers.

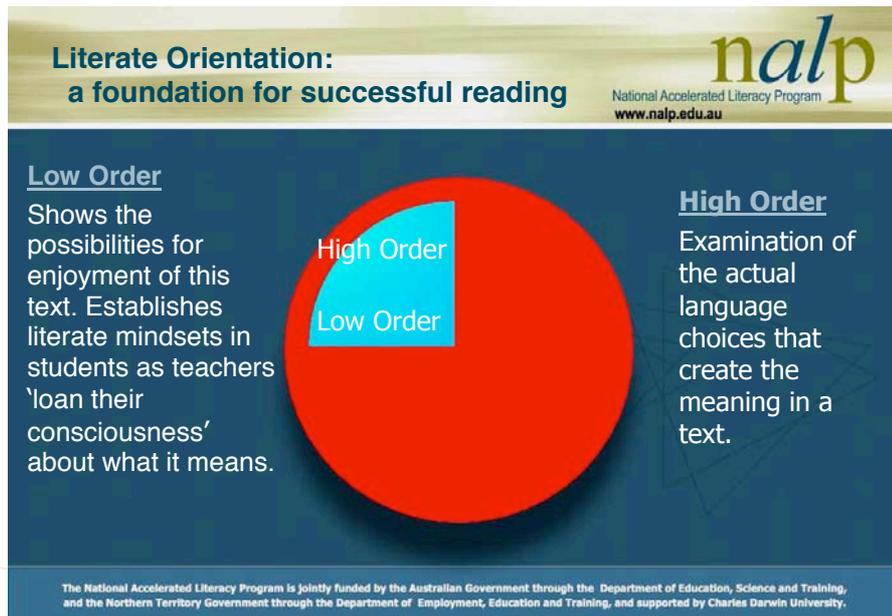
Part of a teacher’s preparation of the text for a teaching sequence involves the teacher reading it carefully and analytically. That is, the teacher will select texts or passages from texts to teach students about how to read and write like successful students. The teacher will decide on writing techniques to teach and at the same time, consider what students will need to know to learn to use these techniques eg. what ‘ground rules’ of the subject English will students need to control to read the text with comprehension and to write like this author?

The Accelerated Literacy booklist of books used successfully in the program can guide teachers new to the program. There are teaching notes available with suggestions for teaching that go with some of the books on this list.

Teaching Accelerated Literacy

The following notes describe each Accelerated Literacy strategy in turn and are intended for teachers to use as they implement the Accelerated Literacy program.

Literate Orientation



Description

Literate Orientation is the starting point in an Accelerated Literacy lesson. It is the beginning of a teaching learning sequence through which shared common knowledge (or intersubjectivity) about a text is negotiated between students and teacher. It is a key site for teaching about the 'ground rules' of literacy as they apply to the study text.

Through literate orientation teacher and students discuss the study text, its illustrations, wording and their meaning. This detailed understanding of the text reduces the mental overload that can result from the demands of reading unfamiliar text and provides support for students to read beyond their individual level of achievement. The shared understanding or common knowledge (intersubjectivity) negotiated through the literate orientation discussion is a rich resource for the rest of the literacy lesson.

Discussion in literate orientation is very focused, however, and provides a model for students in how literate readers interpret texts. It starts as a pre reading strategy largely led and directed by the teacher and develops into a rich and interesting discussion about possible interpretations of the text and its illustrations that includes comprehension and critical literacy. It is a strategy that extends across a series of lessons about a text and is revisited to some extent in all lessons where it also gives the teacher an opportunity to explain the orientation he/she will take to the lesson.

To carry out literate orientation the teacher needs to be very familiar with a text. This familiarity includes not only knowing the main events in a story but also considering texts to the level of their themes, characters' motivations, and possible literate interpretations such as identifying the language techniques authors employ to achieve their goals.

Asking students to answer questions so that they can answer successfully is an important part of teaching them to operate as members of literate discourse. There is a separate sheet that provides some details about the questioning strategies used in Accelerated Literacy.

There are two dimensions to literate orientation shown on the teaching sequence diagram: Low Order Literate Orientation and High Order Literate Orientation.

Low Order Literate Orientation

Overview

Low Order Literate Orientation is carried out on all levels of texts from those with illustrations meant for younger readers to all texts without illustrations including novels written for secondary students. In Low Order Literate Orientation the teacher 'points the students' brains' or suggests a 'mind set' to the text by modelling a literate interpretation of the text including its illustrations. Early in the teaching sequence it is carried out before the teacher reads the text to students or before the student reads the text. Later in the teaching sequence it serves to define the focus of each lesson and each part of the lesson.

Low Order Literate Orientation provides the foundation on which a lesson is built. Where students have low literacy levels or come from different cultural backgrounds, the strategy begins the process of building the common knowledge about the text that brings meaning to the words. It allows students to listen to and read the text with a high level of comprehension.

Low Order Literate Orientation may be carried out at several levels:

- What the lesson is going to be about, eg, what do you hope to achieve overall?
- The purpose of the Low Order Literate Orientation
- Where this lesson fits with the overall goals for the unit of work

Low Order Literate Orientation on books with illustrations

Preparation

Make sure all students can see the text of the book. It can be enlarged or projected onto a screen.

Teaching

Starting with the cover, begin a discussion about the illustrations that bring- the story to life and shows students what fun, interest and support can be drawn from looking at them.

A challenge for teachers starting to use this strategy is to tell students about how to look at the illustrations and what is important in them, rather than asking questions. Questions come when there is some shared knowledge established to provide answers.

For example, in lesson one on 'The Lion and the Mouse' a teacher might tell the students, 'This story is about a tiny little mouse who helps a big strong lion.' In lesson two then, the teacher can then ask, 'Who can remember who this story was about? The lion was big and strong, wasn't it? What do we know about the size of the mouse?'

In preparing for Low Order Literate Orientation read the story carefully as you examine the illustrations and consider the following points as possible topics for discussion:

- The context for the story: this includes the setting, the characters and an overview of what's happening.
- The theme of the story, the type of story (eg. folk tale, fairy story, fable), the purpose of this type of story in literate culture (eg. why do people read and enjoy this type of story).
- Identify how the illustrations in the story expand, qualify or extend the text content. Authors of books for younger students can choose simpler wording that is easier for less experienced readers to decode by using illustrations to do some of the descriptive work.

- Look for how the illustrations influence readers' feelings towards characters (eg. do we identify positively with a happy smiling character, do we feel that a mouse with ragged clothes deserves good luck, are the settings for the characters dark and sombre and thus threatening or are they bright and positive).
- Consider the motivations the characters might have had for the way they behave (eg. what feelings are portrayed in their facial expressions and postures, or positions; what power relationships are implied by the positions of characters in illustrations).
- Identify the plot structure (orientation, complication, resolution, coda) and look for how this structure is illustrated.
- Identify wording in the story that could be problematic for a class because of its complexity, the concepts it implies, its unfamiliarity, its difference from spoken language. Then look for how the illustrations can help you bring this language into the Low Order Literate Orientation discussion (eg. 'the mouse wanted to have fun, it wanted to play so it ran playfully over the lion's back').
- Discuss what it is in the illustrations readers have to attend to if they are to make inferences about the characters' behaviour or motives.
- Work out how you can manage the discussion around the illustrations to model the inferences and interpretations a literate person takes from such illustrations while still keeping the students interested and engaged.
- Consider how to continue the discussion about the text over time to allow handover of the literate discussion to the students.

From all the possible approaches to the discussion you have at your disposal, narrow the discussion to a focus that will be carried into the rest of the lesson. For example, in the Lion and the Mouse, a first lesson might give an overview of the whole story, returning to a focus on the setting and the circumstances the mouse found herself in when she ran over the lion's back, intending to play, not annoy the lion. Subsequent lessons would then pick up on the lion's decision to let the mouse go, another on the lion's amusement at the thought that the mouse might be able to help him and so on.

Low Order Literate Orientation on books without illustrations

Books without illustrations are generally longer and more complex than those with illustrations – the words have to do all the work the pictures did in illustrated books. Because of the length and complexity of books for older students they cannot always be read to students in one lesson. It is important then for teachers to read the text to the class over a period of time, aiming to read the whole story as quickly as possible.

Not all possible topics or angles need to be dealt with at the beginning of the lesson. Some of them will be made before reading the text to the class and others will occur at the beginning of each strategy to keep the purpose of each task linked to the overall lesson goals.

Low Order Literate Orientation for books without illustrations needs to be planned carefully to avoid overloading students with information. The teacher needs to read the book carefully right through before planning lessons.

Early in a teaching sequence Low Order Literate Orientation will involve a brief overview of the whole story as well as a focus for the lesson. This type of Low Order Literate Orientation will take up to twenty minutes although it could be longer in the first lesson on a book. Later, a finer focus is more appropriate.

Points that a teacher could consider when planning Low Order Literate Orientation for a lesson include:

- The passage of text to be used in the lesson: this amount will depend on where the lesson fits in the series of lessons. Consider how the text you want to study relates to the whole story. All teaching goals need to be made clear to students.
- Identify the structure of the whole plot as well as the structure of the study passage (is the study passage part of the orientation of the whole story or where does it fit; what is the structure of the study passage)
- Be clear about the writing techniques the author has employed to achieve the effect you want to study. Make this information available to students.
- Consider inferences implicit in the language of the text that students may not recognise.
- Identify the purpose of the story. Does this type of story have a moral purpose, is it meant to amuse, scare, excite or inform. Identify the ideology behind it. Who is telling the story? How is the reader positioned by the writer?
- Decide how you will model and approach the discussion about how readers interpret texts (eg. how do readers make judgements about characters' behaviour; how do they evaluate the possibilities for making meaning from the text.)

Immediately following Low Order Literate Orientation either:

- read the text to the class,
- read it with the class.
- or have the class read some of the text while you read the rest.

Where you read together, do not slow down or let the joint reading deteriorate into chanting the words. Always read expressively and fluently.

Other issues

- Low Order Literate Orientation is not simply going through a book asking students to predict what they think will happen or what they think the book is about.
- Low Order Literate Orientation is the beginning point in a teaching sequence in which students learn to take a literate orientation to a text and this process cannot be left to chance.
- It is easy to let this part of the lesson turn into a question and answer session that becomes little more than 'busy work'. A competent Low Order Literate Orientation has a focus that involves taking a stance or mindset towards the text that engages students cognitively. As work on a text progresses try to think of discussion that involves not just recalling facts but that challenges students to interpret and infer from the illustrations and wording.
- Film can be used to add to the richness and variety of Low Order Literate Orientation, particularly with longer novels. The insights students gain from watching a film of the book give them a detailed overview of the plot, the motivations and emotions of the characters and the setting. The differences between the film and the wording of the book can also make for interesting discussion.

High Order Literate Orientation

Overview

High Order Literate Orientation shifts the students' focus on the text to a close examination of the author's wording. In High Order Literate Orientation the teacher systematically shows students how to attend closely to the author's wording of the text and how it constructs meaning. Discussion of the actual wording of the text allows students to speculate on the effect of the words and the possible reasons why a writer may have used these words and not others. It also allows the teacher to model how literate readers do the work writers expect of them eg. to make inferences, to interpret actions, to make connections, to recognise foreshadowing and other writing techniques. Authors expect writers to suspend disbelief and accept the world they create with their words and illustrations as a possible world in which characters can think, act, exist, and feel. Interpreting this world through the wording of the story becomes a shared or negotiated activity through High Order Literate Orientation.

Preparation

To implement this strategy all students must be able to see the wording of the study passage by using:

- A projector (overhead or data) that projects the text onto a screen or whiteboard
- As well, older students may be given their own copy of the text.

To further focus the students' attention on the wording under consideration, teachers may ask students to underline the targeted words with a whiteboard marker. This works well on a laminated big book. Where an overhead projector transparency is used, mark the transparency itself or mark the projected text on the whiteboard itself. Where students have their own copy of the text they can underline the relevant parts of the text themselves. The important feature of the exercise is to make sure that each student knows which words are under discussion.

- The teacher will have decided on the focus of the lesson and the language features important to that focus eg. one focus could be to show how Tim Winton uses the weather to create atmosphere in 'Lockie Leonard – Human Torpedo'.
- Books for younger students have less complex language features than books for older students but finding and discussing the actual wording the author uses is central to High Order Literate Orientation at all levels.
- During Low Order Literate Orientation the teacher will have laid down the foundations of the common knowledge that will be a resource for High Order Literate Orientation. While asking questions to identify wording to discuss, draw on the preparation you have done, eg. if you have talked about the little mouse running playfully over the lion's back and down over his head to the ground, you can ask about how the mouse ran when she was playing. You can also ask where she ran, what path over the lion did she take? Students have this knowledge or at least it has been introduced during Low Order Literate Orientation and from having the story read to them.

Teaching: During High Order Literate Orientation discuss:

- The wording of the text:
 - What wording and grammatical choices the author has made and possible reasons why
 - What effect the author's words have on readers
 - What inferences can be drawn from the wording
 - What words the author uses to structure the text
- How the author uses language to construct the plot, eg.

- Does the author use a simple orientation, complication, resolution structure (usually in books for younger students), or,
- Does the author interest readers in the story by describing a dramatic event first? (A strategy often used in books for older children.)
- How the theme of the story is realised through the language the author uses. For example, in the story 'Blueback' by Tim Winton, the author describes the death of an injured tiger shark that moves readers to consider the environmental damage done by a ruthless abalone fisherman.
- How particular language choices made by the author work to position a reader/writer/character.
 - How does an author describe characters positively so that readers will identify with them and approve of them or,
 - How does an author persuade readers to identify with and approve or disapprove of actions taken by characters central to a plot?

Issues

Enough time needs to be spent on studying a passage of text for all students to be able to join in the discussion. To establish this level of intersubjectivity, the teacher needs to study the same passage of text over more than one lesson. The challenge for the teacher then, is to keep the discussion interesting and engaging.

Variations that can be introduced to High Order Literate Orientation to keep students' interest and engagement in examining, analysing and discussing the text include:

- Cover some of the text of the story so that the 'skeleton' of the story is shown but the expansions and colourful or descriptive language is hidden. Uncover these words as the students predict them.
- Have the text written on a sheet of paper or whiteboard with words missing. Choose one category of word to omit eg. adjectives, or other descriptive words. Ask students to write them in as they predict the missing words or help the teacher write them in.
- Give older students a copy of the study text. Outline the part of the text to read and ask groups of students to formulate questions to ask the other students in the class.

Ask cognitively challenging questions about the study passage as students gain in reading competence, eg. questions that require the students to make inferences, make judgements and evaluate the characters' actions and motivations. Make sure that you explain how good readers make these decisions about the meaning that can be derived from the wording of the text.

Transformations



Transformations

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Shared understanding grows and develops around the text. Both teacher and students learn from each other

The focus of teaching now shifts to include new understanding eg. how an author thinks to choose words to achieve different purposes

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Explanation

'Transformations' is an activity designed to change students' orientation to the study text from that of a reader looking for meaning from the text to the more analytic viewpoint of a writer learning how the author of the text used a writer's techniques to achieve a purpose.

Preparation

In the Transformations activity teachers take short passages from a text and transfer them to cardboard strips. Having the text written out on cardboard strips provides conditions for it to be cut up into meaning chunks or single words and manipulated. The strips are then placed on ledges on a board made for the purpose. All students need to be able to see the board clearly and to be able to access it easily to help the teacher cut the words off as required.

Transformations provide flexibility for teachers to take different approaches to the text for a number of purposes, eg:

- Transformations can be used to show the effect on readers of particular language choices including words, phrases, clauses, and paragraphs.
- Transformations can be used to show the effect on readers of the author's choice of word order. To discuss word order parts of the text can be removed then replaced and discussed so that the effect of that particular wording can be observed clearly.
- Transformations can be used by as a context for discussing use of punctuation eg. full stops, exclamation marks, speech marks etc. Here the punctuation would be separated out from the words and cut out.
- Transformations can be used by teachers of beginning readers to teach word recognition skills and 1:1 correspondence. In these instances the text would be cut into single words.

Teaching

Transformations are not simply a repeat of High Order Literate Orientation with cutting out substituting for underlining parts of the text, although some of the meaning chunks will replicate the High Order Literate Orientation which in turn will draw on resources introduced in Low Order Literate Orientation, eg. target word 'playfully' from 'The Lion and the Mouse' by Patricia Scott. (The passages below are taken from the transcripts of 'The Lion and the Mouse' that accompanies the first professional development session.)

Low Order Literate Orientation	High Order Literate Orientation	Transformations (2 nd day)
The idea that the mouse only intended to play with the lion, not annoy it, is introduced.	Next, the teacher asked the students to predict the word playfully and when they couldn't, she told them how the mouse ran.	The next day the word playfully was so well known the students called it out before a question was asked. The teacher also drew students' attention to the word's appearance (play/fully)
<p>'...and its (the mouse) just come over to play and it sees the lion lying there and it thought Oh, I know what I will do I run over its back that will be a good game ...'</p> <p>Following that explanation, the story was read to the students including 'One day a lion was resting when a little mouse, who lived nearby, ran playfully over it his back and down over his head to the ground.'</p>	<p>'...then it doesn't just say he ran over his back, it tells us something really important, it tells us how the mouse ran. It wasn't trying to be a nuisance to the lion he didn't want to bother the lion so he ran playfully. Can anyone see the word playfully. (about four children respond) You. Can you. Alright can you do playfully. See if the mouse was just playing it means he wasn't trying to bother the lion, he was just playing.'</p>	<p>'What was the thing that the mouse actually did? Ran (most children respond). Do you want to do (cut off from the other words) ran. You are already with playfully aren't you. The thing that he did was just ran. Which one is ran? Yes. Now all of these other people are you ready? Playfully (all children)</p> <p>What does playfully tell us? Over his back (one child responds)</p> <p>Playfully tells us how he ran doesn't it. He didn't run naughtily over his back, he didn't run happily, he ran playfully he was just playing. Well done. Good. Everybody just look at playfully if I just cover that up it just says play.</p>

The Transformations strategy provides an important context for building intersubjectivity (or common knowledge) with the class about how a writer uses writing techniques in the study text. The ability to read a passage of text and understand it at a critical or inferential level is a rich resource for writing as well as high level comprehension. Both dimensions are important in Transformations.

In addition, Transformations has an important role in preparing students, particularly younger age groups, for spelling activities. The potential for playing games that lead to word recognition and 1:1 correspondence are crucial activities for students who are learning about the difference between words and letters.

Such games include:

- Cutting a passage (about a sentence long) into single words. Separate the words so that there is a small space between them. Ask individual students to come and read the passage, pointing to the words as they read (1:1 correspondence, word recognition). This activity can also be carried out with a tutor or teacher and individual students. It has great potential to tune very traumatized students into reading.

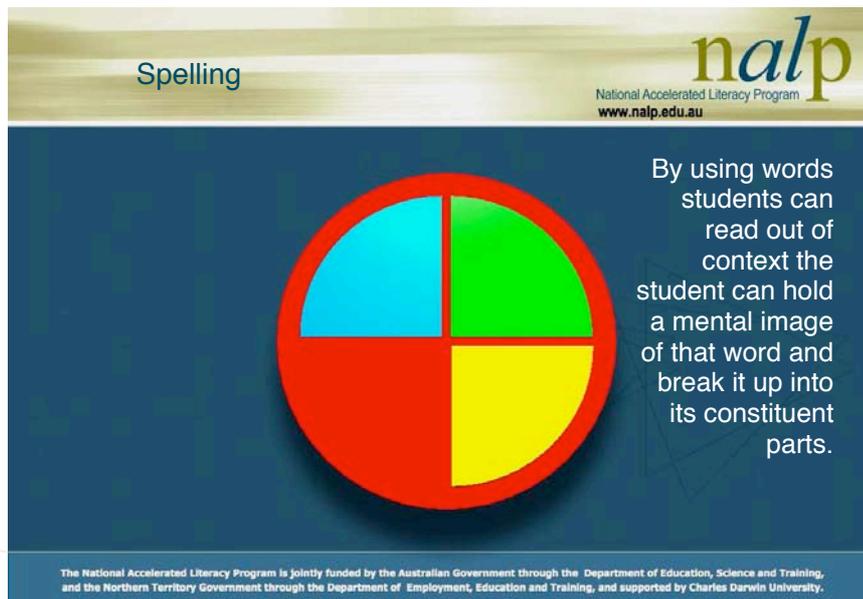
- Mixing up the word order in the study passage (about a sentence at a time). Read the words. Appear shocked at the ridiculous sentence. Ask a student or several students to sort out the word order to the way it was in the book. Have the book nearby to refer to if needed.
- Leave the word order as it should be but turn over a word that you would like to discuss. The word turned over should be chosen for the following reasons:
 - Taking the word out leaves a meaningful piece of text eg. The mouse ran (playfully). The sentence makes sense without 'playfully'. Turning 'playfully' over allows further discussion of the work that word does in the sentence.
 - Taking the word out, or changing the word order, changes the meaning of the text. The different meanings can be compared and contrasted, eg.
 - Taking the word out makes the text meaningless. Restoring the word to its proper place then allows discussion about the work the word does in the text.
- Word recognition games such as tic-tac-toe allow teachers to identify words students know out of context. They encourage students to look for initial letters, final letters or patterns to recognize words.

The success of the Transformations strategy in a lesson depends upon the teacher having a clear direction for the lesson that started in the Low Order Literate Orientation where the teacher explained the focus of the lesson. This focus will have been identified in Low Order Literate Orientation, the wording that achieves that focus will have been established in High Order Literate Orientation and then Transformations picks that focus up and takes it to an even more analytic level, particularly in texts for older students.

For example, in 'The Lion and the Mouse' text used above, the mouse was identified as 'coming over to play' in Low Order Literate Orientation, the word 'playfully' was underlined in High Order Literate Orientation, then cut off in Transformations. In the example given above, the focus was on spelling, on the appearance of the word, a further development in the next lesson would be to discuss why an author tells how something happened. If we know the mouse was being playful then it had no malice towards the lion. She hadn't thought of being annoying and therefore she does not deserve to die. In folk tales, characters have to be shown as deserving of mercy or not deserving.

Transformations are powerful literacy teaching strategies that can be used at class level or with individuals. They allow close text analysis as well as word analysis and engage even the lowest achieving students.

Spelling



Spelling

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By using words students can read out of context the student can hold a mental image of that word and break it up into its constituent parts.

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Explanation

The spelling strategies employed in Accelerated Literacy teaching are carried out with words from the study text, usually from a Transformation. The words are chosen from Transformations so that the expectation is that the majority of students can read the words out of context. The certainty supplied by knowing what a word is without the overload caused by sometimes ineffective decoding strategies, provides the context for a student having the confidence to visualise the word and break it up into its letter patterns.

Fundamental to the teaching of spelling is that teachers themselves understand the system of English spelling. Without that understanding they do not have a clear idea about the knowledge they seek to teach. Where teachers do not have a background understanding of the origins and history of English spelling there are books available and internet sites that can be used as a resource.

Teaching

With younger students the emphasis in spelling is to teach children how spelling patterns work in English. With older students who have developed negative mindsets and ineffective strategies the emphasis is on developing an effective orientation to spelling. The following progressive steps apply to students with negative mindsets to spelling.

Using words that students can recognise out of context, teachers:

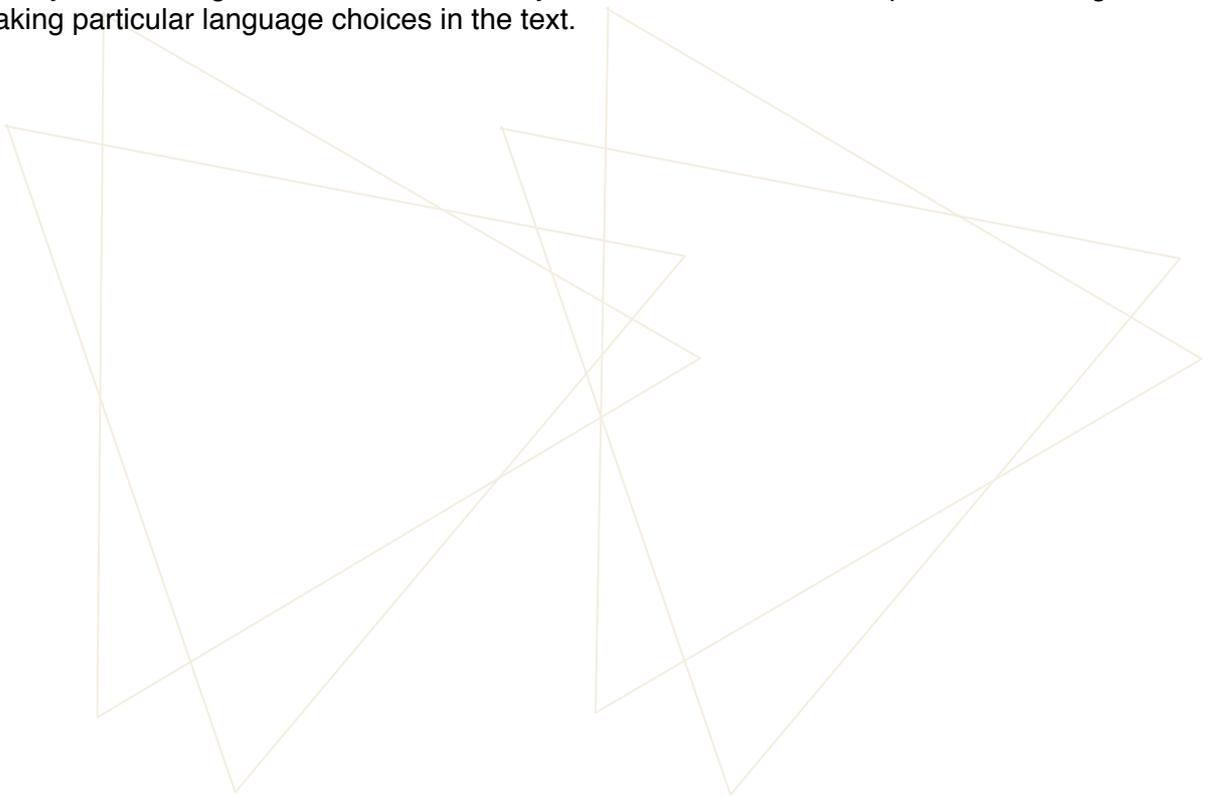
- Direct and consolidate a shift away from negative strategies to more effective successful spelling strategies – (eg. letter copying, phonic spelling) Show students how to segment words – tell them directly – eg. m/ouse.
- Demonstrate that there is a commonality between words based on **visual patterning** – (initially links must be established between two **already known** patterns)
- Expand students' repertoire of known visual pattern relations – (eg. make charts, individual lists of discovered commonalities from reading – initially emphasise 'taught' words not 'spontaneous' additions)

- Foster the ability to both generate and find words with similar patterns – (do this simultaneously with previous step – “you know m/ouse do you think you could write h/ouse)
- Establish an ability to analyse words without available reference models – (how would we best break up this word to remember it eg. dreams > dr/eam/s – also – can we find some other words with any of these patterns – eg. dr/ip cr/eam etc)

Additional notes on spelling are attached as an Appendix.

Joint Reconstructed Writing

Joint Reconstructed Writing provides a context for successful writing for students with little or no previous experience of literate writing in school. This strategy forms a link with the writing strategies in that students and teacher work together to reconstruct the text the way the author wrote it. They use the actual words of the text. The activity reduces cognitive overload for students as they can use the author’s wording, they know how to spell these words and as they work through the reconstruction they also discuss the author’s possible thinking in making particular language choices in the text.



Writing

Writing strategies provide the context for learning how to employ the writing techniques used by all authors

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Explanation

Writing activities are based on the premise that the intensive analysis and discussion of the text that has taken place through the teaching routine provides students with literate resources for writing. Students also bring to the study their own resources from their lives, their culture and other reading. Through the study of the writing techniques in study techniques, students are able to utilise the rich resources used by all authors: they are able to model their writing on the writing of expert authors.

For writing activities to be successful as an Accelerated Literacy teaching strategy, common knowledge within a classroom has to be carefully monitored and exploited. As each lesson cycles through over time, the knowledge about a text that is important in the development of successfully literate students is carefully discussed and made important through the reformulation and reconceptualisation of the questions that are part of classroom discourse.

Teaching

Writing activities can follow either Transformations, or Spelling, and Joint Reconstructed Writing.

Writing activities capitalise on students' ability to read like writers. Careful preparation is needed before attempting writing activities. Before writing activities will be successful, students and teacher need common knowledge about:

- The writing techniques that are part of every author's 'toolbox'
- How to make decisions about when to use these techniques
- How to make appropriate language choices to apply the appropriate technique to their own writing.

Writing activities must be planned from the beginning of a teaching sequence and worked towards from the Literate Orientation stage. Where there is a writing goal for a series of lessons students need know what it is.

We teach students to read texts that demonstrate specific writing techniques. These techniques can be, for example:

- How and why authors describe characters physical features – what they achieve by describing them from positive and negative viewpoints (eg. Boggis, Bunce and Bean in 'Fantastic Mr Fox' by Roald Dahl).
- When authors describe characters' appearances, and when they describe their feelings (eg. Miss Pebble and the ghost of Ned Kelly in 'Spooks Incorporated' by Paul Jennings)
- How and why authors describe setting in text. How they develop atmosphere that is inviting or frightening or melancholy. When is this a good strategy to use?
- How and why authors make their writing suspenseful. When is this strategy appropriate?

These are just some of the understandings about writing students can use to make their writing literate and engaging.

A teaching sequence that includes writing needs:

- An overall focus or goal that is articulated from the first lesson in the series
- Workshop activities that provide practice in the techniques children need to achieve the goal. Workshop activities can be planned around paragraphs, sentences or phrases.
- Longer writing activities that provide an opportunity for students to use the techniques they have practised in the workshop activities.
- Opportunities to freely compose writing that allows students to practice their developing skills.

Workshop activities

There is a range of possibilities for writing workshop activities in Accelerated Literacy teaching. Each may be carried out with varying levels of support.

Teaching a writing technique as a workshop activity follows Transformations and joint reconstructed writing. Note that for all writing workshops make clear the structure of the text from the literate orientation stage. The structure then becomes the writing plan that helps students organise their writing.

- **Joint construction (high support)**

Joint construction involves the teacher and students working together to create a new piece of writing that uses the study text as a model. The teacher will do the actual handwriting although the students can help with parts of it where they can.

In preparation for joint construction teachers should consider possible scenarios and wording that they can use to make suggestions and ensure that an appropriate text is created. The teacher's part in the joint construction is to think aloud as if she/ he is an author preparing to compose a text to achieve the writing technique that is the focus of the study and at the same time, to encourage the students to join her/him in the exercise. The teacher will accept students' suggestions or modify them as necessary.

More than one joint construction can be carried out to practice a writing technique. Joint construction can also be used to construct short class books for early childhood students when they can be carried out over several lessons.

- **Independent writing (medium support)**

Following joint construction, students can put into practice individually the writing technique they have been learning about. If the modelling of the technique has been adequate then students will be able to attempt to do 'their own' writing without additional help. Where there are students that still need help the teacher can carry out another joint construction with a smaller group while the rest of the class continue on their own.

Independent writing (low support)

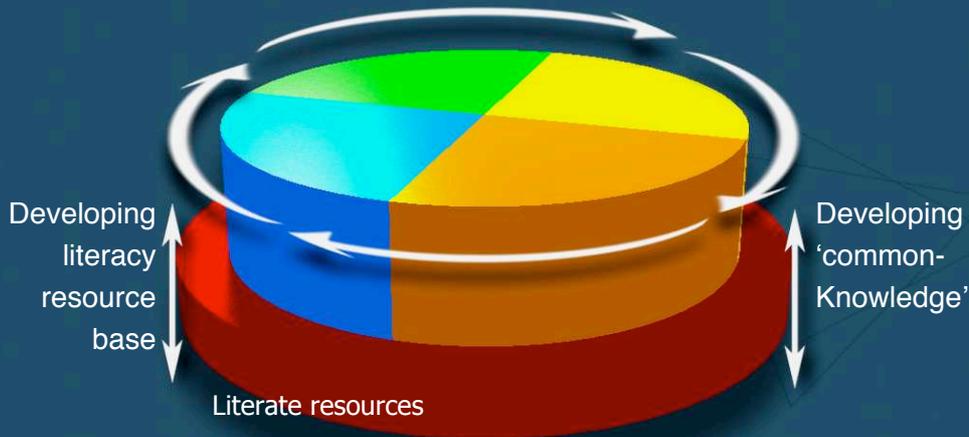
Workshop activities can also include the students carrying out writing tasks based on a writing technique where they are given criteria to write to. Particularly following a joint construction and some practice, as above, students can be asked to have another try. For example, if the students have modelled writing on writing a scary description of a character as in the description of Ned Kelly in *Spooks Incorporated* by Paul Jennings, they could carry out one workshop as a joint construction, one where they write a description of another scary character, and, at another time, a description of a happy character, or one based on another quality such as miserable, naughty, etc.

Free composition (no support)

Free composition applies to writing that students do without any support at all. This writing includes tasks that are given with criteria to be met that are not immediately based on a model text. This could be for an assessment task, or such writing as journal writing, letters etc.

As well, free composition applies to occasions when students are just allowed to write on a topic of their own choice. Reading this writing done by students allows teachers to observe which techniques from workshops has been appropriated into the students' own repertoires of writing strategies.

Foundation for literacy teaching and learning



The National Accelerated Literacy Program is jointly funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Education, Science and Training, and the Northern Territory Government through the Department of Employment, Education and Training, and supported by Charles Darwin University.

Exploiting common knowledge

The final representation of the Accelerated Literacy teaching sequence illustrates the development of literate resources that develops across a lesson sequence. Over time, the common knowledge shared by all students and the teacher (shown in red, under pinning the strategies) consists of all the Low Order Literate Orientation, High Order Literate Orientation and Transformations discussion over time as well as the spelling knowledge, the spelling practice, the joint reconstructed writing and joint construction writing work that has been carried out. This common knowledge also includes that from previous lessons and previous study texts. It is rich and interesting and when taken seriously is a rich resource for writing. Without this shared understanding about the lesson goals and common purpose for writing, no activities will be successful for the most marginalised students in the class.

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