

E1048B

Education Support - Supporting Education

- 2 Developing literacy and oral language skills
- 2.1 Identify oral language, reading and writing skills

(2.1.1) Identify oral language, reading and writing skills

Oral language, reading and writing form the foundation of literacy. It comprises speech and articulation, and is different from language acquisition which includes receptive language and expressive language. As a young child, oral language develops first, before reading and writing.

Oral language allows a child to make connections between the written word and the spoken word. Like reading and writing, it is embedded in all curriculum areas.

Oral language is normally learnt progressively and naturally by the child by engaging with their family and environment. Reading and writing develop concurrently and normally require that the student displays readiness to learn, followed by more formal instruction and experiences to support the development of reading and writing skills. Each element is interlinked. Where students have problems with oral language they are likely to have problems with others areas related to literacy.

Reading is not the same as literacy; literacy encompasses reading, writing, and language (listening and thinking).

Kearns, p. 486

| Topic - 2 / 19



[https://res.doudinary.com/opencolleges/image/upload/v1473385124/o7pjxutcbdq2f8tggwpf.png]

This diagram shows the elements of emergent literacy. Emergent literacy describes the gradual, ongoing process of learning to understand and use language that begins at birth and continues through the early childhood years (i.e. through age eight). (Kearns, p. 485)

During this period, children first learn to use oral forms of language (listening and speaking) and then begin to explore and make sense of written forms (reading and writing).

Let's consider oral language skills development first, which is connected to cognitive skills development and includes speaking, listening, responding and thinking skills which are interdependent. These are components of the emerging literacy model.

Generally, the outcomes of oral language in a curriculum would include the development of:



| Topic -3 / 19

• effective listening skills to learn new information, ask questions and clarify information

- speaking skills to communicate effectively in a variety of situations
- speaking skills to express opinions, values and ideas.

Normally, language development progresses from simple to more complex. Speech (articulation and voice quality) is one area of oral language development and it is related to another area: language acquisition (receptive language and expressive language).

For a more detailed analysis, consider oral language skills in terms of components of a complex system that relates sounds to meanings and includes phonological, semantic, syntactic and pragmatic components which are explained further in the resource below.



Resource 5175

Young Children's Oral Language Development

Oral vocabulary development is an important foundation of literacy development. Children acquire an oral vocabulary incidentally through listening, thinking and recalling; vocabulary is also taught where meaning is explained and words are practiced and used by the student. Skills in using oral vocabulary are imbedded across the school curriculum and are useful for developing reading and writing skills.



| Topic - 4 / 19

Activity 56506

Oral language reading

Taking a 'Slice' of the Oral Language Pie: An Approach for Developing Oral Language Skills in Schools by Sue McCandlish 2012. [PDF]

- Consider the skills of oral language outlined in the model detailed in this reading.
- Match them to the instructional strategies the author describes.
- Think about

oral language

[https://app.box.com/shared/static/8ia9p450ww1zvdlzbujxmplriakg8m52]

across the entire curriculum. Can you add to these activities by giving examples in different subject areas of where oral language skills might be developed?

ACTIVITY 56506 **TYPE** Contribute

SCENARIO Oral language reading

As a foundation component of literacy, reading skills development is closely related to oral language development.

Reading skills develop from an awareness which comes before school, when children are exposed to literacy at a young age. For example, during story time, very young children can learn the connection between the spoken and written word in a picture book. This helps them to understand the purpose of print on a page and its purpose to convey meaning.

When you consider a young child's environment, it might be difficult for them not to be affected by the written and spoken word. The written word is ever present in their environment in the form of print (both hard and soft copy), including magazines, newspapers, web pages, signs in shops and advertising on billboards, flash cards, and posters on display at preschool or day care. It is not uncommon to see a toddler or preschooler with a tablet in hand reading an online book. Whatever the medium, there is a constant presence of the written word in a young child's environment.

Parents will notice the signs of their child's reading awareness when their young child starts noticing words and asking 'What's that word?' or 'How do I say that?' or 'This word says...'.



| Topic - 5 / 19

While readiness is an important factor when considering reading skills of a student, you should remember that students develop at different rates. Some children might start school able to read very well and for others it might be a long and difficult process.

Generally, a student with good reading skills will:

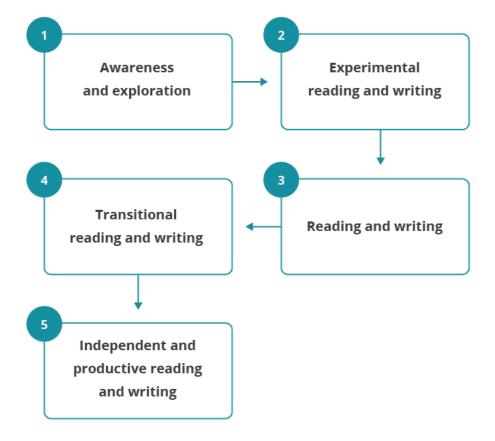
- be aware of the set of sounds made from vowels and consonants (phonemes) that comprise their language
- understand the use of the alphabet and use these skills fluently
- have a comprehensive oral vocabulary
- apply the rules of syntax and grammar
- relate the written word to their experiences.

Reading is a complex task and learning the skills of reading involves:

- code-breaking, where students learn about:
- translating symbols into meaning
- tracking words from left to right
- recognising sounds and sound blends
- recognising whole words, sentences and paragraphs
- comprehension, where students learn about:
- what the text means
- the concepts, facts or meanings being conveyed
- the purpose of the text.

The child normally develops a variety of reading skills and moves through these five phases of development starting with:





Reference: Kearns, p. 482 (redrawn)

Read more about these phases of development in Reading 1 (below).

Resource 5196

How Most Children Learn to Read



7 / 19 | Topic -



Reading 56507

Textbook: Stages in reading development

This content can be found in

Chapter 11

[https://os.opencolleges.edu.au/E1048B#/sub-topic/56546/2.2.3]

of Supporting Education - The Teaching Assistant's Handbook, 2nd Edition. Kearns, Karen © 2016 Cengage. ISBN: 9780170364379

Consider the goals for each phase in reading development and the skills that students will build on.

As you read this section of the text, focus on activities that you might supervise that would help a student develop the skill – e.g. in 'Phase 1: Awareness and Exploration, children can enjoy listening to and discussing storybooks'. In your text, what activities would support listening to and discussing storybooks?

Your responses might include reading the storybook with different voices or props to engage students, using questions to draw the students into the story plot, discussing what they like or disliked about the characters.

Note: It is important in your role of Teaching Assistant to know these phases well enough to be able to identify a student's stage of reading development.

ACTIVITY 56507 **TYPE** Reading

SCENARIO Textbook: Stages in reading development

Writing is another important component of emergent literacy. Generally, it follows on from the development of oral language and develops as reading skills develop. Writing, like reading and oral language, encompasses all areas of the curriculum.

Whether a kindergartner scrawls a couple of sentences or an eighth-grader prepares an advanced research report, composing text is a complex academic accomplishment. Because it brings many specialised skills together, writing has been thought of as falling at the top of the



| Topic - 8 / 19

language hierarchy (Johnson, 1993).

The skills required for writing are complex, diverse and interrelated with other areas of literacy.

Writing skills begin in the family context where young children observe adults writing notes, shopping lists or letters, filling in forms or sending emails or text messages. They might also observe older siblings completing homework or just writing for fun.

Parents and teachers introduce text by labelling artwork and drawings with captions or stories dictated by children.

By observation and often through play, young children become aware that symbols, such as letters, form words that convey meaning.

Toddlers and young children begin learning pre-writing skills by drawing and playing with chunky crayons, markers or chalk. They start developing some necessary fine motor skills for writing through play with blocks, toys, dough or finger painting. Parents and teachers introduce text by labelling artwork and drawings with captions or stories dictated by children. For some children, the writing process might start with seeing and making a connection with their name at the top of a page and tracing over it.

Some children begin school knowing a little about writing; however, through a structured curriculum that draws literacy skills together in a meaning experience, students move from early stages of writing to creating imaginative, informative and persuasive text structures in later years.

Handwriting and writing skills, unlike oral language, must be taught to the student, although not necessarily beginning in school.

In school, writing is taught as handwriting — or the mechanics of writing — and as writing, such as creating imaginative or factual texts.

With handwriting, skill development is structured from simple exercises to more complex.

During lessons for children in the early years at school, teachers give students:



• a model – for the correct letter formation (usually a textbook with templates to trace)

a procedure – for writing the letter correctly (usually demonstrating using an interactive

smart board or whiteboard)

• instructions – on pencil-grip and posture

an opportunity – to practice the correct form with guidance from the teacher.

It is important that the student learns correct letter formations and pencil grip first, so that relearning is not needed. Students who write with a poor pencil grip or poor posture might suffer

from cramping of the hand, slowness in writing in later grades, or other physical problems related

to poor posture.

Skill development in handwriting progresses from simple pre-writing exercises like tracing shapes and patterns from left to right across a page, and practising spacing between letters and words, to more elaborate shape and letter formations into primary school with the transition from script (printing) to cursive (running) writing.

Reading 56508

Textbook: The mechanics of writing

This content can be found in the

Supporting writing development chapter

[https://os.opencolleges.edu.au/E1048B#/sub-topic/56546/2.2.5]

of Supporting Education - The Teaching Assistant's Handbook, 2nd Edition. Kearns, Karen © 2016

Cengage. ISBN: 9780170364379

Read this section with a focus on the skill sets, including sensory-motor, visual-motor, and

cognitive skills, involved in writing.

ACTIVITY 56508 **TYPE** Reading

SCENARIO Textbook: The mechanics of writing

Open Colleges

Activity 56509

Developing handwriting skills

Take a pencil in the hand you do not normally write with. On a sheet of paper, write several lines as clearly as you can, from left to right across the page. How did you go? How was your posture and pencil grip with the other hand?

This exercise might help you understand the challenges young children have learning to write. It feels awkward and uncomfortable at first, but handwriting skills will develop normally with practice, corrective instruction and positive reinforcement.

ACTIVITY 56509 **TYPE** Contribute

SCENARIO Developing handwriting skills



11 / 19 | Topic -



Reading 56510

Textbook: Learning to write

This content can be found in the

Supporting writing development chapter

[https://os.opencolleges.edu.au/E1048B#/sub-topic/56546/2.2.5]

of Supporting Education - The Teaching Assistant's Handbook, 2nd Edition. Kearns, Karen © 2016 Cengage. ISBN: 9780170364379

Read the section 'Writing mechanics and the process of writing' with a focus on the skill sets including:

- sensory-motor
- visual-motor
- cognitive skills involved in writing.

In this table, Skills for successful writing, review the skills with reference to their diversity. A student developing writing skills needs to pull together a range of complex skills.

Can you list the skills?

Start with the fine motor skills required for handwriting, visual discrimination skills for distinguishing letters and words, and for writing words on a line, and language skills related to spelling, syntax and semantics. Add the skills required for creating an imaginative or informative text, skills in editing or reviewing their own work. It is no surprise that most people think writing is difficult!

ACTIVITY 56510 **TYPE** Reading

SCENARIO Textbook: Learning to write

Like most areas of literacy, writing is a complex task and comprises rules and strategies related to reading and visual discrimination (getting the right words on the page), fine motor skills (manipulating a pen or pencil) and language processing (thinking of what to write) to draw the written word into meaningful texts.



Where some children have learning disabilities in reading, related to dyslexia, some other children have dysgraphia, which is a learning disability that affects an individual's ability to handwrite. Some children with dyslexia also have dysgraphia.

What is dysgraphia?

View this video to learn more about identifying dysgraphia and areas where writing skill development is a challenge to some students.



[https://youtube.com/watch?v=b-3ezmP9XCo]

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Resource 5205

Understanding Dysgraphia



Further reading on Dysgraphia



Activity 56511

Accessing skills toward successful writing development

In this comprehensive piece, the author provides a detailed outline of the skills required for writing

[http://www.readingrockets.org/article/accessing-skills-toward-successful-writing-development] in two categories:

The mechanics of writing, including:

- understanding symbols of writing
- spelling
- using vocabulary
- grammar/syntax/semantics
- punctuation/capitalisation.

The writing process, including:

- acquiring knowledge
- retrieving knowledge
- planning text
- constructing text
- editing text
- managing or regulating entire writing process.

Ensure you read these sections:

- Writing a unique and complex undertaking
- Writing at developmental stages gives you an insight for skill development.



| Topic -14 / 19

ACTIVITY 56511 **TYPE** Resource

SCENARIO Accessing skills toward successful writing development

In this section you cover a lot of information about the skills children need to develop in oral language, reading and writing. These are all important components of literacy.

It is important in your role as a TA to take a holistic viewpoint of the student and consider skills interrelating with other skills, within an environment or context, and influenced by personal factors that make the child unique.



Reading 56512

Textbook: Development of writing skills

This content can be found in the

Supporting writing development chapter

[https://os.opencolleges.edu.au/E1048B#/sub-topic/56546/2.2.5]

of Supporting Education - The Teaching Assistant's Handbook, 2nd Edition. Kearns, Karen © 2016 Cengage. ISBN: 9780170364379

Read the section 'The knowledge and skills required to write' to develop a broader view of writing skills and how they develop concurrently with reading and oral language skills, read this section of your text. Consider, in general terms, how you would identify the skills a child might have in each phase of development. For example, if you observe a student's writing having spelling errors, would you correct these? What if the student was in Kindergarten? Or if the student was in year 5? It is important to be able to identify skills at each phase so that you can respond appropriately to students and support a positive learning environment.

ACTIVITY 56512 **TYPE** Reading

SCENARIO Textbook: Development of writing skills

So far we have covered points on the importance of oral language in the development of a child's



literacy skills. As an important precursor to reading and writing, as well as other literacy components, oral language is used for different purposes.

To be an effective oral communicator, other skills are also important including using voice and gestures appropriately, delivering the information logically and in an appropriate style for the audience and with accurate information to justify a point of view.

In Oral language in the early years of schooling (Halliday, 2003), several functions or uses of oral language are identified. These types of oral communication can help you understand the ways a child uses oral communication. The functions of oral language include:

- Instrumental where language expresses a need to get things done, e.g. 'I want to go home now'.
- Regulatory where language influences the behaviour, feeling or attitudes of others, e.g. You need to brush your teeth before bedtime'.
- Interactional where language is about getting on with others, e.g. 'Do you like bedtime stories?'
- **Personal** where language expresses a personal feeling, e.g. 'I like two bedtime stories every night!'
- **Heuristic** where language is used to seek more information or assist learning, e.g. 'Why is the moon out only some nights at bedtime?'
- Imaginative where language supports creative thoughts, play and games, e.g. 'Sometimes I like to make up my own stories and rhymes at bedtime, they're funny'.
- Representational where language is for communicating information, e.g. 'I can tell you a secret. I don't need a night light on when I sleep now! I'm a big boy'.

Adapted from Halliday, MAK 1969, Relevant models of Language, in 2003, The Language of Early Childhood, Continuum, London.

As a TA, you should be aware of the many uses of oral language and, in your interactions within the context of the school program, encourage the student to develop their skills covering a broad range of language uses such as in Halliday's model. In doing this, consider your interactions with students, questions you might ask them, verbal instructions you might provide, and how you would



engage with them and give feedback to students.

In later years in school, oral language use includes using voice appropriately, delivering a presentation or speech so that the information is logical and in an appropriate style for the audience, and with accurate information to justify a point of view. Students are instructed to use oral language in different ways, including to inform, entertain, persuade, explain and describe.

Reading is the connection for the reader between the spoken (oral language) and the written word (writing).

In basic terms, the purpose of reading might be for a person to have a literary experience or to acquire and use information.

A school curriculum, however, outlines many different contexts for reading instruction. In a school, reading is a skill practiced across the curriculum, and depending on the curriculum area and learning outcomes, reading may have a different purpose. The range of purposes for reading is almost infinite.

In a library lesson, a student might read for pleasure, for the literary experience where they become involved in imagined settings or scenarios through language, literary forms and concepts that bring the story to life in their mind.

In another lesson in the same library, the student might read with the purpose of understanding how something works or how something occurs naturally to learn information they need to communicate to the rest of their class.

A student might read a science journal for pleasure and read a literary piece to prepare an information report.

The purpose of reading cannot neatly be defined in terms of the type of text. A student, both as a reader and a writer, will learn to recognise the different purposes of texts.

As for reading, writing can be viewed with a purpose of providing a literary experience, a creative writing experience, or, in contrast, of conveying information or communicate a point of view.

Students learn about different text types, their purpose and the context for their use.

Some of the text types include:



Text types

Brochures Students present information in a one page flyer. Students present a range of theories on an issue and present a recommendation Discussion based on the evidence. Explanation Students explain how events occur or how things work. Exposition Students analyse a topic and present an argument to persuade a reader. Information Students provide information about a situation or event. report Narrative Students write creatively with the purpose to entertain a reader. Students express personal impressions for enjoyment of a reader. Poetry **Procedure** Students inform a reader about how to do something. Recount Students inform or entertain by retelling past events.

In an education support role, it is important for a TA to recognise the different purposes of oral language, reading and writing to better support the learning program of students at any stage. In the next section on processes, you will learn more details on how to provide support in these areas.



When you work with a class teacher on activities supporting oral language, reading and writing programs, it is important for the teacher and TA to have the same expectations of program outcomes, use the same terms and language in class with students when working through lessons, and follow the same processes when assisting students in these subject areas.

It is important that the students see the teacher and TA following the same procedures in class to avoid confusion of the methods for instruction. Methods may vary from class to class so if your role extends across a few different classes, be versatile and learn the language and processes of each class to ensure consistency with students.

To help you identify processes in these areas, you can:

- Review the class program with the teacher and discuss upcoming lessons.
- Discuss logistics with teacher regarding who you will work with and how to work with them.
- Discuss the teacher's expectations of you, your tasks and any particular roles you need to perform.
- Take notes or record how things are done in class in a journal.
- Observe students and get involved in the group activities.
- Observe a teacher giving lessons involving skill and knowledge development in oral language, reading and writing.

Communication and team work skills are important professional skills when working with teachers, or in fact in the school community.

Being able to discuss the way oral language, reading and writing are presented in a class in terms of what happens in a reading program, or the learning outcomes of a writing program, or perhaps what individual students are expected to achieve in any of these areas, will make your support efforts more valuable.

Processes for delivering an oral language, reading or writing program will vary from school to school and from one stage to another. Some schools select commercial programs, while others develop school-based programs in reading and writing. It is common for programs to run throughout a stage with the curriculum so this should allow you to become familiar with the



| Topic -19 / 19

individual programs over a school year as well as to see progression by students over a few years, from early years to later years.

Being able to identify the processes of teaching and learning in these areas, with assistance from a teacher, is important for helping you prepare for and provide educational support.

Understanding that there is a process for teaching a Year 3 class how to write a narrative, or understanding the process for supporting a group reading task, or helping a Year 6 class prepare for a debate, are all ways to provide the education support expected of a TA.



Resource 5211

Learning to read

Activity 56514

School A to Z website

Browse this website for other

useful references and information

[https://education.nsw.gov.au/parents-and-carers/learning/english/english-a-to-z-support-pages/reading-comprehensio n-skills]

you might add to your resource kit.

ACTIVITY 56514 **TYPE** Resource

SCENARIO School A to Z website

