



Literacy Development in the Primary Classroom:

Six Key Components



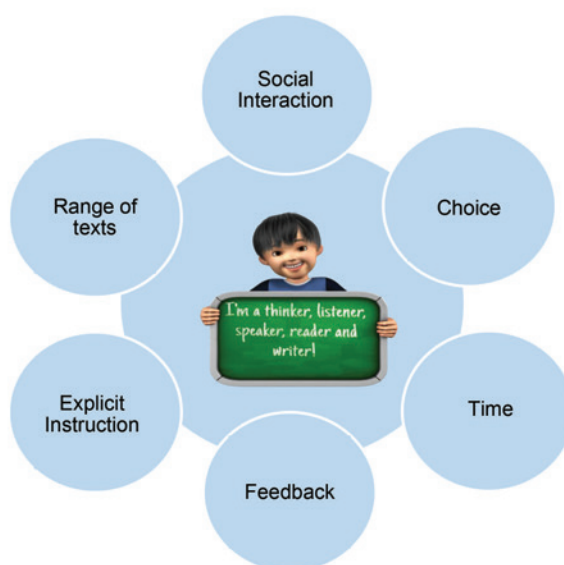
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Please cite as: PDST, *Literacy Development in the Primary Classroom, Six Key Components*, Dublin, 2020

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Introduction

Recently, there has been a shift in the understanding of what it means to be literate. Research suggests that literacy should be understood as a dynamic term that is constantly evolving and becoming literate can be considered a lifelong process (Perkins et al., 2011). To ensure that children are equipped with the literacy skills essential for modern life, schools must become learning environments where effective literacy instruction is actively embraced (Morrow and Gambrell, 2019). Ultimately, in line with the Primary Language Curriculum (PLC, 2019), teachers are now required to support children on their journey as they develop as communicators, readers, writers and thinkers. As teachers, we are tasked with:

- enabling children to fully engage with and enjoy a wide range of **relevant and meaningful** linguistic and communicative experiences with peers and adults
- promoting a **positive disposition** towards communication and language and fostering within children a lifelong interest in and a love of language and learning for personal enjoyment and enrichment
- encouraging children to **engage personally** with and **think critically** about a broad range of spoken, gesticulated, written and multimodal texts.

Primary Language Curriculum (2019) p.13

The PLC (2019), as evidenced above, provides an understanding of what the children should achieve across their literacy learning life in primary school. However, in this manual, we explore the **how** and it is intended to support teachers in providing research-based effective literacy instruction for the children in their classrooms. This manual provides a balance of discussion to encourage reflection on current practice and classroom-based recommendations to explore on the ground in any context.

Informed by an exploration of literacy instruction best practices, nationally and internationally (Kennedy and Shiel 2019; Shanahan, 2019; Hattie and Clarke, 2018; Morrow and Gambrell, 2019) this manual is structured around six key components of effective literacy teaching and learning:

1. Feedback

Effective feedback requires the teacher, the child and their peers to provide meaningful and appropriate information that will support progression or continuous improvement in children's literacy learning. Feedback is linked to clear learning intentions and clear guidance on what success will look like. It builds on what the child has already achieved and pushes them to persist at the edge of their own ability. Rich feedback occurs in the moment, when the child has time to act and requires a safe, caring classroom environment where mistakes are valued as learning opportunities.

2. Social Interaction

Optimal learning takes place in classrooms where all children, together with the teacher, feel a sense of belonging to a community of learners. Members of this community know each others' strengths and interests and are confident in taking risks and making mistakes. There is rich teacher/child and child/child(ren) interaction, discussion and collaboration. This dialogic teaching and learning harnesses the power of talk to stimulate and extend children's thinking. It is grounded in research on the relationship between language, learning, thinking and understanding. The teacher is a facilitator of learning who values different perspectives and learns alongside the children.

3. Choice

Genuine choice allows children the control to direct their own learning and greatly increases motivation and engagement with literacy activities. As well as giving children choices in what to read, speak about and write we can support children in making their choices. This develops their sense of agency and their creativity. Furthermore, they become more independent and empowered in making all the decisions that follow on from that choice.

4. Range of Texts

Children should have the opportunity to access, discuss, read, think critically about and create a wide variety of texts, including spoken, print, multimodal and electronic formats. Working with a wide variety of text types gives them the opportunity to develop their critical thinking, identify the author's purpose and voice and develop their own personal interpretations across a range of topics, perspectives and text types.

5. Time





Extensive and effective literacy practice requires time and provides the opportunity for children to consolidate the skills and strategies that teachers aim to develop. If we want children to develop their competencies as communicators, readers and writers then we need to afford them the time to communicate, read and write for extended periods in class every day. We also need to allow thinking time or wait time for children to consider their thoughts and formulate considered and extensive responses.

6. Explicit Instruction


As children are engaged in literacy practice the teacher will notice areas of success and areas of need which emerge. A teacher may observe, for example, that the children need to develop their fluency in reading and will decide to provide instruction using Readers' Theatre. Similarly, a number of children may require techniques to enhance writing quality and style and a teacher will decide to support this development through The Writers' Workshop. Instruction requires a deliberate, structured, focused and balanced approach to improving literacy skills in response to the needs of the children.

It is agreed across the research that these components will support us in the development of rich, active, engaging and meaningful literacy learning experiences for our children. Crucially, this will support the children in fulfilling their potential as readers and writers in Irish classrooms.

This manual is divided into six sections and built around the above six components. Essentially, while there are clear interconnections across the different components (e.g. it is challenging to separate meaningful feedback from explicit instruction), each section could be read like an individual chapter. Each section will follow the structure as outlined below:

<p>Thinking about my practice- This symbol appears at the beginning of each of the six key chapters. It provides questions and prompts for teachers to consider in order to reflect on their current practice in relation to the area in focus. These have been adapted from DES Looking at Our Schools 2016: A Quality Framework for Primary Schools and the Digital Learning Framework for Primary Schools (2016)</p>	
<p>The Exploration- This subsection explores research and best practice around the component addressed in the chapter and discusses the relevance for effective literacy learning. Moreover, this part of each section illustrates potential learning experiences for the classroom.</p>	
<p>Chapter recommended read- This symbol appears in the manual at the end of each chapter. It highlights one or more key text(s) that will further expand on the key ideas presented in the chapter.</p>	<p>Key Text</p> 
<p>Recommended read- This symbol appears throughout the manual where a text is suggested for further exploration of a particular subsection.</p>	
<p>What can I do tomorrow? - This symbol appears at the end of each chapter. It provides suggestions on what teachers might do immediately to start implementing the ideas outlined in their own classrooms.</p>	

Feedback

Thinking about my practice	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What does feedback mean to me? Do I consider strengths, areas for improvement and strategies to achieve improvement?• When do I provide feedback to children?• How comfortable are the children in my class with making mistakes and treating them as learning opportunities?• How do I support children to assess their own learning through self-assessment and peer assessment?• How regularly do I share success criteria with the children in my classroom? <p>(Adapted from Looking at Our Schools, 2016)</p>

Feedback is information about the task that fills the gap between what is understood and what is aimed to be understood.

(Hattie & Clarke, 2018, p.3)

Feedback is an integral part of teaching and learning. Feedback can be given by teachers, peers or children themselves on their own learning. As teachers, it is essential to understand what evidence based feedback is if we are to unlock the greatest possible benefits for the children in our schools. When used effectively, feedback is proven to improve learner outcomes, motivation and engagement.

The greatest motivational benefits will come from focusing feedback on:

- the qualities of the child's work, and not in comparison with others

- specific ways in which the child's work could be improved
- improvements that the child has made in comparison to earlier work

(Hattie & Clarke, 2018)

Features of effective feedback

Feedback links directly with explicit instruction and assessment. It is an ongoing process of

- goal setting
- gathering evidence about where a child is at in relation to the goal/s
- providing instruction that makes clear the next steps in the learning

Feedback should help the child to answer one of the following key questions:

- Where am I going?
- How am I going?
- Where to next?

(Hattie & Timperley, 2007)

Sharing Learning Intentions

Research identifies sharing learning intentions as a fundamental requirement for both learning and feedback (Sadler, 1989). Without it, children will have no idea how they will be assessed and their task becomes a matter of finding out or guessing what the teacher wants them to do (Hattie & Clarke, 2018).

Questions to help me focus as a teacher:

- *What do I want them to learn (not do - an important distinction)?*
- *How do I articulate that, what would be a good way of learning it?*
- *What do I think a range of excellent finished products would look like?*

(Hattie & Clarke, p.53, 2018)

Learning Intentions can be either **closed** (based on constrained skills which have a definite right or wrong and have set rules to follow e.g. grammar or punctuation) or **open** (based on unconstrained skills where there tends to be a menu of options to choose from rather than specific compulsory ones e.g. persuasive writing, story starters).

Learning Intentions should be **credible** and **decontextualised**.

Credible: The learning intention needs to reflect what is actually taught and learnt for that lesson/series of lessons.

Decontextualised: If the context is not central to the skill, it should not be included (e.g. *learning how to write a recipe for fairy cakes* is not a transferable learning intention, whereas *learning how to write a step by step procedure/instructions* is transferable) (Hattie & Clarke, 2018).

Success Criteria

The success criteria are simply a breakdown of the learning intention and provide a benchmark for quality. Feedback should be based on the learning intention and its related success criteria.

Success criteria that are co-constructed with the children tend to lead to greater understanding and internalising. Depending on whether or not the learning intention is open or closed, the suggested criteria could include **compulsory elements** and/or a **menu** of possible inclusions.

Example of a closed learning intention with compulsory success criteria:

We are learning to: use inverted commas

Success criteria:

- start each new person's speech on a new line
- put speech marks before and after speech
- put full stops, exclamation marks etc. before the final speech mark

Example of an open learning intention with a menu of possible success criteria:

We are learning to: write a story which uses suspense

Choose from:

- show not tell (e.g. *'The hair on the back of her neck stood up.'* rather than *'She was scared.'*)
- short sentences to build suspense (e.g. *'It crept towards me. Slowly. Menacingly.'*)
- keep some things secret or unrevealed (e.g. *'She could hear something scratching.'*)
- place any characters in scary settings (e.g. *alone/in the dark*).

Examples from Hattie & Clarke (2018)

Praise and how teacher talk affects children’s learning

Praise the students and make them feel welcomed to your class and worthwhile as learners, but if you wish to make a major difference to learning, leave praise out of feedback about learning.

(Hattie, p.121, 2012)

Praise has no impact on improving the task or the work in hand. Furthermore, a culture of tokenistic rewards has been shown by research to have a negative impact on agency and persistence (Gambrell, 2011). While praise is very important for building warm relationships with children, it should be separated from feedback about work. Children need personalised feedback which allows them to measure themselves against their previous achievements. As teachers we are concerned not just with giving feedback to children but with teaching them to provide feedback. We want to develop safe, caring classroom environments where children become literate and strategic over time. The things we say as teachers have powerful consequences for how children learn and how they view themselves as learners. Peter Johnson, in his book *Choice Words* (2004), says:

Much more important is noticing—and helping the students notice—what they are doing well, particularly the leading edge of what is going well. This leading edge is where the student has reached beyond herself, stretching what she knows just beyond its limit, producing something that is partly correct. This is the launching pad for new learning.

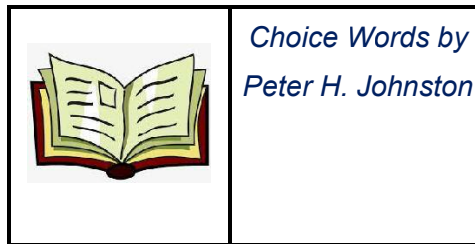
(Johnson, 2004, p.13)

Johnson (2004) outlines examples of teachers’ talk and its significance in influencing children’s learning across five categories. These are highlighted in the table below.

The language of influence in teaching

Noticing and Naming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Did anyone notice...? ● I see you know how to spell the beginning of that word..... ● Remember the first week when we had to really work at walking quietly? Well now you are doing it automatically. ● You know what I heard you doing just now? Putting yourself in her place. You may not have realised it. You said ‘will she ever shut up?’, which is what Zinny is thinking. ● What are you noticing? Any other patterns or things that surprise you?
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Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What a talented poet you are! ● I wonder if as a writer you are ready for this? ● What are you doing as a writer today? ● That's not like you!
Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How did you figure that out? ● How are you planning to go about this? ● Where are you going with this piece of writing? ● Which part are you sure about and which part are you not sure about? ● Why?
Flexibility and Transfer (Generalising)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● One of the things people do when they start a story is think of what they know. Mathematicians do this too.....Let's try it. ● How else..? ● That's like... ● What if...? ● Using laughter and playful language (e.g. stopping inappropriate behaviour by saying "Have you no shame, sir!")
Knowing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Let's see if I've got this right (then summarise children's extended comments) ● Any questions? Let's start with these (Teacher writes them on a chart). ● Silence or 'wait time'. ● Thanks for straightening me out ● That's an interesting way of looking at it. I hadn't thought about it that way. I'll have to think about it some more. ● How do you know? ● How could we check? ● Would you agree with that? ● Is that an observation or conjecture?

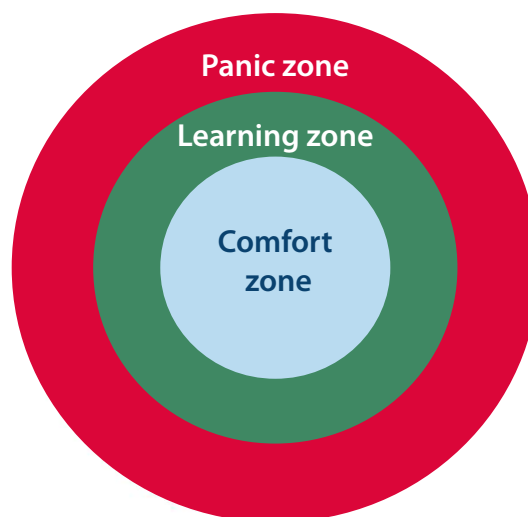


Timing



Praise based feedback often occurs after a lesson or series of lessons. Feedback that occurs 'after the event', even if it is focused on filling the gap, has little positive effect because the learner has little time to act. Research suggests that feedback is most effective when children have an opportunity to act on that feedback – time to act. Swathes of 'after-the-event' written feedback is neither efficient nor effective. As Dylan William says, feedback like this is often the equivalent of telling an unsuccessful comedian that they need to be funnier or telling a person abseiling how to correct their descent on the bus back from the cliff face.

Appropriate Challenge



Reinforcing the 'Goldilocks' principle - not too hard, not too easy - can be done by using Hattie & Clarke's (2018) zones (i.e. comfort zone, learning zone and panic zone). By encouraging children to aim for the learning zone (appropriate challenge), rather than the panic zone or comfort zone, they try out more challenging tasks. Children often have the willingness to undertake tasks if they

are engaging and based on their own interests, if they have a good sense of what it means to be successful and know what to do when they get stuck. Lomas et al. (2017) extend the 'Goldilocks' principle to include 'not too hard, not too easy, and not too boring.' Children's voice is essential here so that they are free to communicate which zone they feel they are operating in during a particular task so that the teacher can provide the supports or extensions necessary.


Celebrate Error

Feedback is most effective when children do not have mastery. Errors invite opportunity and should be seen as such in the classroom (Hattie, 2012). Learning follows mistakes (Hattie & Clarke, 2018). Using the success criteria, children could be asked to identify and share their '**marvellous mistakes**' with others in order to discuss the process they went through to rectify the mistake.

Develop Growth Mindsets

Dweck (2017), drawing on new information we have about the brain and research on motivation, proposed the notion of a growth mindset. She outlined two core mindsets: a fixed mindset which is the belief that your abilities cannot be changed and a growth mindset which is the belief that you can develop your intelligence through effort, input and the use of learning strategies. Brain research has confirmed that our intelligence is not fixed but has the capacity to grow and develop new pathways between neurons the more it is used. Once these new pathways are established, the learning becomes automatic.

Children need to understand that learning new things will require some struggle and persistence and that this develops their intelligence. Therefore, we must challenge the notion that a child's current performance predicts future success. Children who develop the capacity to say to themselves 'I haven't got it yet (but I will get there)', to ask questions, to get others to show them, to learn from mistakes and to persevere are displaying growth mindsets. An excellent resource for classroom lessons which promote growth mindsets is Clarke and Muncaster (2017) Growth Mindset Lessons.

	<p><i>Mindset</i> by Dr. Carol S. Dweck</p>	<p><i>Growth Mindset Lessons: Every Child a Learner</i> By Katherine Muncaster & Shirley Clarke</p>
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Peer and Self-Assessment

Peer and Self-assessment are essential components of Assessment for Learning. These help children to identify where they are at currently in their learning and what next steps they should take. This enables children to take greater responsibility for their own learning. Children can use a range of strategies when thinking about what they have learned and use success criteria to make judgements about their learning or each other's learning. The self-assessment process recognises the role of the teacher as facilitator of children's learning and the central role the child occupies in the assessment process. Peer feedback and assessment develops a community of learners in which the children work together to support each other's learning. The teacher models and guides children through the language and questioning involved with self and peer assessment in a supportive environment so that children will become familiar with the process and become active agents in their own learning. Over time, they are better able to think about what they learned and what is confusing them. This helps them to set personal goals and to work towards these goals as a group or individually.

How can I help children to peer and self-assess?



Children need **time** to develop assessment skills. The adult plays a key role by spending time with them individually, in pairs or in groups;

- Modelling the application of success criteria: teachers can model for the children how to use the success criteria with anonymous examples of work. Then support and scaffold children using the criteria to assess their own work. Teachers can encourage children to identify areas of success initially and when they become confident in this move on to identify where the criteria have not been met, and what steps they need to take next.
- Providing opportunities for children to discuss and/or justify their self-assessment

- Using prompts, for example; What did you do when...? I wonder what would have happened if...? I wonder how we could...? What was easy about this work? What did you learn from that? What would help you to do better? What would you do differently? The teacher guides children's thinking and builds an ethos of learning to learn.

Learning to self and peer assess is not a one-off event. It must be a regular, reliable and embedded practice in the classroom. Teachers need to provide ongoing support for self-assessment. The table below offers a range of ideas for introducing peer and self-assessment routines in the classroom.

Peer and Self-Assessment Strategies

Learning Intentions and Success Criteria	Check understanding
<p>We Are Learning To (WALT)</p> <p>Listen to a story being read aloud and retell the main points in the correct sequence.</p> <p>What I'm Looking For (WILF) (co-constructed with the children)</p> <p>We will be able to identify who is in the story.</p> <p>We will describe what happened to the main characters</p> <p>We will draw the last scene of the story</p>	<p>3, 2, 1</p> <p>3 things I've learned</p> <p>2 questions I have</p> <p>1 insight I've had</p> <p>Thumbs up, I've got it!</p> <p>Thumbs sideways, I'm confused!</p> <p>Thumbs down, I need help!</p> <p>Sunny - I'm clear </p> <p>Cloudy- I'm unclear </p>


<p>Learning Logs</p> <p>Children reflect on what they have learned in the lesson and then respond to no more than three of the following prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Today I learned... - I was surprised by... - The most useful thing I will take from this is... - I was interested in... - What I liked most about this lesson is... - One thing I'm not sure about is... - The main thing I want to find out more about is... - After this session I feel... - I might have gotten more from this if... <p>(Dylan Wiliam, 2011)</p>	<p>Peer Feedback</p> <p>TAG</p> <p>Tell something you like Ask a question Give a suggestion</p> <p>WWW What Worked Well EBI Even Better If</p> <p>2 Stars and a Wish</p> <p>2 items I noticed you did well 1 thing I feel will extend your learning</p>
<p>Tweet or use Padlet to document my key learning</p> <p>At the end of lesson/period of learning on a topic children write the most significant thing they learned in the lesson. They will complete the message in the form of a tweet in 140 characters or less and include an overall hashtag to convey their key learning #selfassessment</p>	<p>Exit Cards</p> <p>Index cards are provided so children write and submit answers to prompts such as: What was the most important thing you learned today? What questions do you still have? The teacher collects and adapts instruction according to the feedback.</p>

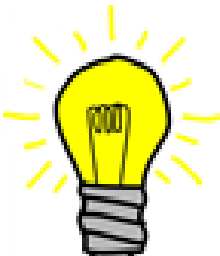
Rubrics Reading, Writing and Oral Language Rubrics are available on www.pdst.ie/literacy .	Checklists Child self-assessment and peer-assessment checklists are available on www.pdst.ie . Checklists can also be designed using the curriculum learning outcomes and progression steps. Children and teachers can discuss the content of the checklist and develop a shared understanding of the learning intentions so the success criteria can be identified.
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10 Things to Remember about Effective Feedback


- 1.** Linked to an appropriately challenging and **specific goal/learning intention**
- 2.** The learner understands the **success criteria**
- 3.** Focuses on the **task, process or self-regulation** rather than the ego
- 4.** Uses a variety of prompts and cues to help children think about their mistakes and errors
- 5. Effectively timed** - occurs during learning while there is time to act on it!
- 6. Specific and clear**
- 7.** Offers **strategies** rather than solutions (nudge children towards the correct answer)
- 8. Challenges**- requires actions and is achievable
- 9.** Normalises and **celebrates error** - children need to know the classroom is a **safe space** to make mistakes.
- 10.** When we grade/give marks children often don't go beyond the grade. There is a **negative** link between **external rewards** and task performance.

(Collated from the research of Hattie and Timperley, 2009; Stobart, 2014; Hattie & Clarke, 2018; William, 2012; Johnson, 2012; Chappuis, 2012; Absolum, 2006; Fisher & Frey, 2012)

<p>Key Text</p> 	<p>Visible Learning Feedback by John Hattie & Shirley Clarke</p>
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What can I do tomorrow?	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Share learning intentions with my class and co-construct success criteria based on this.● Provide feedback when children have time to act on the feedback.● Try out a self-assessment strategy like 3,2,1● Celebrate errors in my classroom.

Social Interaction

Thinking about my practice	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What opportunities do I create for children to work collaboratively in my classroom?• How regularly do children contribute their opinions and experiences to class discussion with confidence and respect for the opinions of others?• How conscious am I of the role of open ended questions to stimulate discussion? <p>(Adapted from Looking at Our Schools, 2016)</p>

Social interaction consists of teacher/child and child/child(ren) conversations during a range of learning experiences. Motivated readers and writers emerge when opportunities to use language and interact with others in discussions on a range of printed, spoken, visual and digital texts is encouraged. Crucially, the classroom culture and environment nurtured by the teacher are key for the child's success. Children benefit from an environment that allows them to feel confident in taking risks, in sharing texts, in responding openly to texts and in working collaboratively with each other. Moreover, research suggests that there is a positive correlation between classrooms that are supportive of collaboration, social interaction and language development and the cognition, motivation and reading comprehension of children (Shanahan, 2019; Guthrie et al., 2007).

A Dialogic Space

The Five Key Principles of a Dialogic Classroom

Alexander (2010) highlights the importance of developing our classrooms and schools as dialogic spaces. Dialogic teaching and learning harnesses the power of talk to stimulate and extend children's thinking. It pays as much attention to the teacher's talk as to the children's. It is

grounded in research on the relationship between language, learning, thinking and understanding.

Alexander (2010) emphasises five key principles:


- Collective- addressing learning together
- Reciprocal- listening and sharing ideas, considering other viewpoints
- Supportive- articulating ideas freely without fear or embarrassment
- Cumulative- building on each other's ideas, chaining them into coherent lines of thought
- Purposeful- planned and structured with specific goals

What this sounds like in a classroom

Below are a number of the responses from children from Scoil Iosogáin, Buncrana and St. Peter's NS, Dungourney. These provide insights into what this might sound like in a classroom when children are working in this particular way. Note what they say about their learning environment and working together to construct meaning.

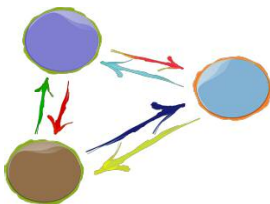


The role of the teacher in developing a dialogic classroom

	
Enter as learners themselves	Shift from the right answer to interpretations
Promote the sharing of ideas	Afford wait time to children
Nurture empathy and kindness	Teach children to ask 'why?'
Create a culture where ideas are challenged, tested and refined in a respectful manner	Make time for open ended questions and encourage inquiry

(Ontario, 2013; Reznitskaya, 2012; NCCA, 2008)

Social Interaction and Reading Lessons



Below are some activities that could be used to encourage social interaction in your classroom:

Say Something	Children are organised into twos/threes and take turns reading aloud for the others in their group. While reading, they pause occasionally to “say something” about what they’re reading (e.g. how they feel about a character). The other group members offer a response and a different child continues.
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<p>Save the Last Word for Me</p>	<p>Having read a piece of text, children take a piece of card and copy a passage they liked on one side. On the other side, the children write why they liked the passage. After this, the children are put into groups. At this point, each person reads their passage for the others and the children discuss the text. In the end, the child who wrote the passage reads out their reasons for choosing that passage, giving them the last word.</p>
<p>Dialogue Journals</p>	<p>This is a written exchange between individual children and the teacher on a weekly basis. Simply put, a child is set up with a copybook or notebook and carries out a written conversation with the teacher over time, sharing ideas and feelings about books.</p>
<p>Think, Pair, Share</p>	<p>Firstly, pose a question or make an open-ended statement for the children to think about (e.g. What makes a good writer?). Secondly, give the children an opportunity to think about the question. Thirdly, encourage the children to work in pairs to discuss their thoughts. Finally, ask the pairs to give feedback to the whole class about what they have learned.</p>
<p>Authors' Chair</p>	<p>We could create a time and place in our classroom for writers who wish to share their writing with an audience. It is an opportunity for the writer to receive positive feedback from other children.</p>
<p>Placemat</p>	<p>Divide the class into groups of four or five and provide each group with a placemat: Ask each group member to record their own independent responses within their allotted space in one of the outside sections. Provide time for each child in the group to share his or her recorded responses with the group without discussion or debate from the other children. Ask groups to decide, collectively, on the five most important responses and record them in the centre of the placemat—it is important that all group members agree on the top five items. Finally, get groups to give feedback to the whole class.</p>

Literature Circles	Literature Circles are small groups of children who meet to discuss a piece of literature which they have chosen. Each member of the circle is assigned a role which helps guide the discussion. You will find more information on how to set up literature circles in your classroom at http://www.readwritethink.org .
Informal discussions on reading and writing	<p>Ask children to talk about the plot, characters, theme, author’s style and how the texts made them feel. Beers (2003) provides some prompts for teachers and we have included the prompts relevant to plot below. It is suggested that in the beginning, children sometimes need help framing their comments and you may need to provide them with these language scaffolds.</p> <p>Questions to encourage a personal response to the text:</p> <p><i>What are your first thoughts on this text? What in the text caused those thoughts?</i></p> <p><i>What emotions or feelings did you have while reading the text? Identify parts that caused those feelings.</i></p> <p><i>What confused you or surprised you in the text?</i></p> <p><i>If you could talk to the author what questions or comments would you have?</i></p>
Collaborative answering of questions	Choose a piece of text for the children to read and then ask them to answer the questions collaboratively. It should be agreed that children will not move onto answer the next question until they reach some kind of consensus. This approach can also be a more useful way to work with traditional textbooks with passages followed by comprehension questions.

(Beers, 2003; Morretta and Ambrosini, 2000; ReadWriteThink.org)


Bloom's Taxonomy of Questions

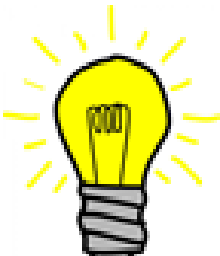
Below is an adapted representation of Bloom's Taxonomy. It could prove a supportive tool in the movement from lower-order to higher-order questioning in the classroom. Higher-order questions are more conducive to the development of a classroom rich in social interaction.

<p>Knowledge Recall facts and basic concepts</p>	<p><i>Who __?</i> <i>Where __?</i> <i>When __?</i> <i>What is __?</i> <i>Name __</i> <i>List __</i></p>
<p>Understanding Explain ideas or concepts</p>	<p><i>Tell me in your own words __</i> <i>What was the most important part so far?</i> <i>What is the main idea of __?</i> <i>From whose point of view is this section told?</i> <i>Give an instance in which __</i></p>
<p>Application Use information in new contexts</p>	<p><i>Could this have happened in/if __?</i> <i>From the information, can you give me a set of instructions?</i> <i>Why is __ significant?</i> <i>What questions would you ask of __?</i></p>
<p>Analysis Separate the whole into parts</p>	<p><i>What evidence is there for __?</i> <i>Compare and contrast __</i> <i>Discuss the importance of __</i> <i>What are the similarities/differences between __?</i> <i>What can you infer?</i></p>
<p>Synthesis Combine ideas to form a new whole</p>	<p><i>Can you see a possible solution to __?</i> <i>What ideas can you add to __?</i> <i>What might happen if __?</i> <i>How would you design a new __?</i> <i>What conclusions can you draw?</i></p>


<p>Evaluating Justify a stance or position</p>	<p><i>What makes this an effective piece of writing?</i> <i>What is the most significant part of the text? Why?</i> <i>I wonder why the writer decided to ___?</i> <i>Verify the claims of the author.</i> <i>How reliable is this author?</i> <i>What do you think about ___?</i> <i>Do you agree that ___? Explain.</i></p>
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(Teachthought, 2017)

<p>Key Text</p> 	<p><i>When Kids Can't Read What Teachers Can Do</i> <i>by Kyleene Beers</i></p>
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What can I do tomorrow?	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make a big deal of not knowing something as a teacher.• Increase wait time after asking a question.• Try out one of the social interaction activities.• Show the children a slide from the Thunks presentation below and engage with their responses: https://www.slideshare.net/colinspanos/thunks-23491435

Choice

Thinking about my practice	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What choices do I provide for my children in their literacy learning?• How do I empower children to make their own choices when reading, writing or speaking?• How do I embrace the attitudes, interests, dispositions and experiences of the children? <p>(Adapted from Looking at Our Schools, 2016)</p>

Giving children genuine choice and the control to direct their learning has a positive impact not only on their motivation but also on their creativity, agency, and self-concept (Turner & Paris, 1995). When children can choose tasks and texts they are interested in, they expend more effort learning and understanding the material (Schiefele, 1991, as cited by Turner & Paris, 1995, p.664). As teachers, it is important to consider how we can **provide opportunities for children to make choices about their learning** and also how we can teach children **how to make choices about their learning**.

Strategies for the selection of writing topics

Choosing what to write is an important part of the writing process. The teacher's role is to provide children with strategies for generating and selecting their own topics and ideas, not to feed or give the children topics. Children who are fed topics, story starters, lead sentences, even opening paragraphs as a steady diet for three or four years, rightfully panic when topics have to come from them (Graves 1983). The following are a selection of strategies which can be used to help empower children to make choices about what they are writing.

Getting started by association

This is a simple method of quickly generating a list of potential writing topics.

Start by putting one word on the board. For example, *ice*. Under *ice*, we'll make a list of words and phrases that we associate with ice.

Now choose something from the first list and write it at the top of a second column. For example, *polar bear*.

This quick exercise gives you a list of 20 topics, but for good measure we can create a third column. Again, choose something to put at the top and go!

Now we have a list of thirty potential writing topics to choose from.

(Harrison & Edmondson, 2013)

<u>Water</u>	<u>Sea</u>	<u>Beach</u>
Drink	Beach	Sandcastles
River	Jellyfish	Waves
Sea	Summer holidays	Sun cream
Lake	Travel Overseas	Ice cream
Rainfall	Ships	Lifeguards
Flood	Snorkelling	Rockpools
Swimming pool	Mermaids	Sun bathing
Splashing	Sharks	Sun glasses
Fish	Octopus	Surfing

Expert lists

Model creating an expert list. This is a list of topics, places, people, etc. that you know a lot about, and therefore you may enjoy writing about. Model making your own list for the children;

“Sometimes, good writers aren’t sure what to write about. It helps them to make a list of topics.

One thing that can help writers is to think of things they are experts at. Do you know what that means? Today I’m going to make an expert list. It will be a list of things, people, or places that I know a lot about. Hmmm...”

Children can create their own list to use when they are searching for something to write about.

They can also add to it over time. (Geiger, 2013)

Sample ideas

Draw four images on a page

1. favourite person
2. a special place you like to go
3. a food you love to eat
4. something you like to do

Write the letters of your name in a column. For each letter, write one thing that you know about or one thing you know how to do that begins with each letter.

List 5 things you love and 5 things you dislike.

Drawing ideas from text

Teachers can model the drawing of ideas from texts which children have experienced. The teacher might say something such as;

Today I want you to help me with my writing. When we read Owl Moon it gave me a great idea for a text that I want to write. Sometimes books will do that, they will give us an idea that we can work on as writers. In this book, Jane shares a special experience she had with her dad. I want to write about my own special experience, the first time I saw the sea. I was six years old and it was the first time my family ever went to the beach. I thought about this a lot last night and what I wanted to write. It was a very special experience.

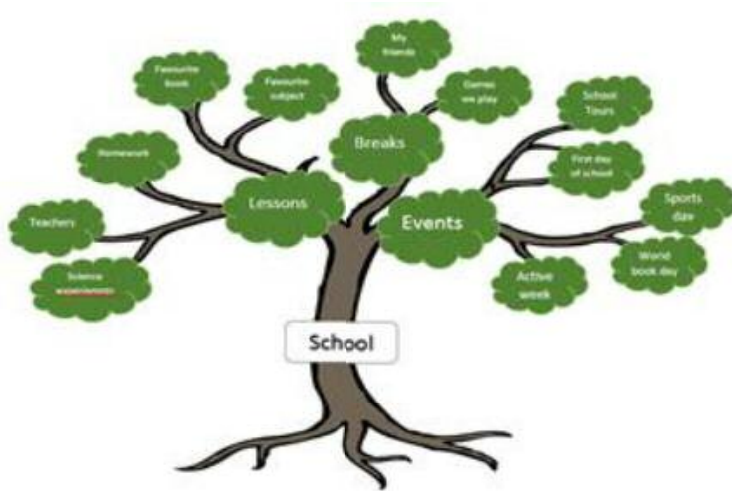
Class chart of shared experiences

Children are eager to write about themselves and what they know. One way to support this process is by creating a class chart of shared experiences that may be turned into writing pieces. Each time the class studies a new theme, goes on an outing, discusses an important issue, celebrates an event we can list the items on a “Things to write about” chart. When the chart is full, it can be cut into individual lines and left in a writing area, or in an ‘Ideas Bag’ that children can draw from if they need an idea. As genres are introduced we can vary the chart titles, for example, “Things we can do”, “Things we know about”, etc. (Jamison, 2007)

Things to write about

Facts on Minibeasts
What causes a volcano
Moving to a new house
My favourite book
A trip to Italy
Getting the green flag
Why it is important to be active
A blizzard

Topic Tree



Sometimes children select topics that are too broad for focused writing. A topic tree (or similar graphic organiser) can help children split one topic into a series of smaller, more focused sub-topics. We can then choose from one of these subtopics, being mindful of our intended audience. (Jamison, 2007)

Pre-writing discussion

Having emergent and early writers pre-tell what they are going to write about helps them rehearse their ideas and enables them to focus more attention on getting them down on paper. Even among proficient writers, telling a story out loud can help organise thoughts. Pre-writing discussions can help a reluctant writer to get inspiration from another child. For example, if a child is going to write about getting a new dog, another child may be inspired to write about their cat.

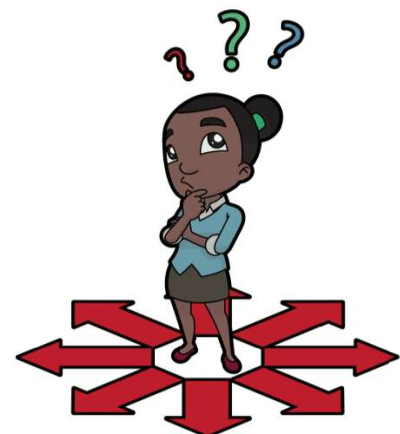
Teachers can model this process for children;

I really like John's idea to write about his holiday in Spain. I went on holidays in France last year...maybe I could write about that.

(Jamison, 2007)

Choosing what to read

Struggling readers often make poor choices about texts to read for pleasure, most often selecting books that are too difficult. These children need help in learning how to choose appropriate reading materials. Autonomy is supported when children acquire strategies for choosing books they can read, finding interesting books and acquiring books for personal ownership (Gambrell



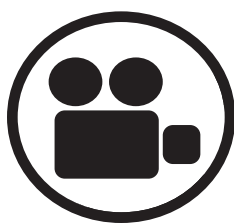
2011). The following are some suggestions to help facilitate agency among children in choosing what to read.

<p>Read and Tease</p>	<p>Many times the story we begin reading aloud to children in class is the story they will want to read at home, or to read on their own once we've finished reading it in class. Reluctant readers are less reluctant to read if you have read the first chapter or two aloud to them. Stopping at a particularly interesting point may motivate children to continue reading themselves. Similarly, having regular "Booktalks" in your class can tempt children to read books you think they will enjoy. A booktalk is more of an oral advertisement of a book than a summary.</p>
<p>Create a Book Jacket Bulletin Board</p>	<p>Put copies of book jackets on a notice board. Allow children time to examine them and to write their predictions of what will happen in the book on sticky notes stuck around the book jacket. After a while, read the predictions and discuss them with the class.</p>
<p>Take your children to the school/local library</p>	<p>Trips to the library indicate the value we give to reading. They provide all children the opportunity to explore the wide world of texts and exercise agency in their development as readers.</p>
<p>Create a 'Good Books Box'</p>	<p>Until you are comfortable with authors, genres and interests, it can be hard to find a 'good' book. The level of choice in a library can be overwhelming for some children and we may need to narrow that choice. This is the idea of 'bounded choice' and it can be achieved in many different ways. For example, a good books box of high quality literature which you feel your children may enjoy can create a manageable level of choice for children.</p>

<p>Know your children's interests</p>	<p>Quick chats with children about their interests, hobbies and reading preferences can help teachers ascertain what books, authors or genres may be best to engage them in the reading process. It may also inform teachers on how best to provide a suitable bounded-choice for reluctant readers.</p>
<p>Talk about the authors</p>	<p>Talk to children about different authors. Providing interesting information on an author can generate further interest in their books and encourage children to seek out more works by particular authors.</p>
<p>Book Sells</p>	<p>Children will often place high value on recommendations by their peers. Providing a forum where children can tell others about their favourite books and recommend or advertise them to their peers provides further meaningful choice for children.</p>
<p>5-finger rule</p>	<p>Teachers can model for children how to discern if a book is at an appropriate difficulty level for them, using the 5-finger rule. The teacher models reading the first two pages of a very difficult book and counts a finger each time he/she comes to a word/phrase that he/she doesn't understand or finds confusing. If we get to 5 fingers then "I am not really able to read this book without help yet, so I'm going to choose a different book". This approach can be modelled for children and help them make appropriate book selections.</p>

Ways to find a book to read	Encourage the children in your class to use different headings to guide their decisions on the book that they would like to read next. Perhaps, they could use this as a checklist: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• From a series• Award-winning• Recommended by a friend• Off your <i>To-Read List</i> Let the children decide on other suggestions through discussion.
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(Miller and Sharp, 2018; Beers, 2003)

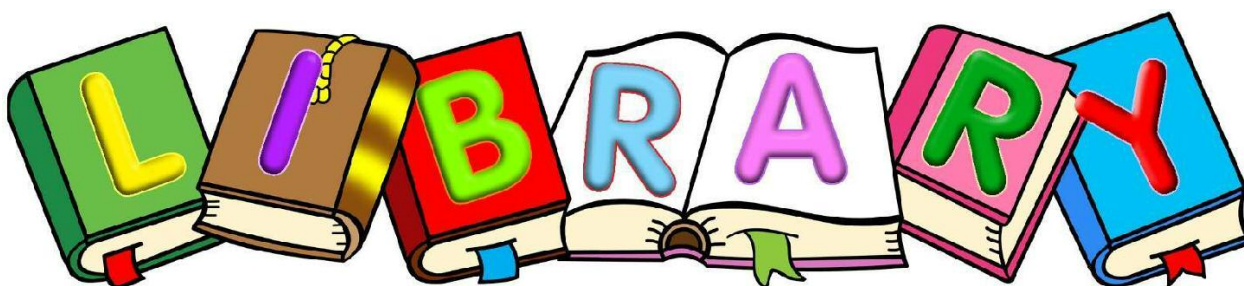


[Book of the Week Video](#)

<https://vimeo.com/433589059>

Class Library

Coghlan (2008) describes libraries in schools as “the Cinderella of the education system: dusty, dismal and unappreciated.” However, when used to their full potential the classroom library can be an invaluable resource to foster a love of literature. The following are some suggestions for how best to utilise your library.



Child's Voice

Ask children what they would like in the library, ask how they would like to organise the library, what furniture should be there, ask children to bring in books for the library that they think others would enjoy, make time and space for children's recommendations, book swaps, book sells, etc.

Diversity

Fiction, information books, picture books, short stories, joke books, graphic novels, puzzle books, magazines, poetry and comics can all be included in the library. Children can have access to a range of genres to meet a variety of interests, a variety of abilities, with characters and content reflecting different people, cultures, genders and experiences.

Ever-evolving

The class library can be ever-evolving and constantly changing. New books can be added regularly, and the teacher can use this as an opportunity to generate interest and excitement around the library. Reading an extract from a new book, a review of a new book or hearing a child's review of a book can draw children's attention to the ever-evolving library.

Aesthetically Pleasing

The library can be a friendly, welcoming and inviting space to visit, for both children and teachers. Teachers can aim to create a comfortable space to browse for texts, to read for pleasure or to read to find information of assistance. The position, the furniture, the layout and the displays can all contribute to an aesthetically pleasing library.

Value

All of our actions in relation to the classroom library display the value that we assign it and that we assign to reading.

Your Local Library

The following services are available for free in many local libraries across the country:

- Class visits to the library branch – arranged locally in advance
- Teachers can avail of “block loans” (up to 40 items for extended loan period) on their teacher's library card.
- Presentations to teachers/children/parents

- A range of relevant resources including class novel sets, resource materials, curriculum support materials and online learning resources
- Library programmes and initiatives including summer reading programmes and visiting author events
- The local studies department of your library service can provide access to a wide range of historical material about your local area, including maps, photographs, documents and information.
- The Borrow Box and RB Digital apps provide access to audiobooks and magazines for your tablet and/or smartphone.

Visit <https://www.librariesireland.ie/> for more information.




[Libraries Ireland Video](https://vimeo.com/433589808)

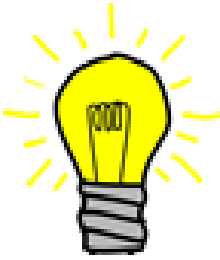
<https://vimeo.com/433589808>

Offering choice


It is important for teachers to consider what kind of choices children can make about their reading, writing and speaking. These choices can be expanded beyond simply choosing what to read, write or speak about. The following are a sample of choices which could be provided for children to help develop their sense ownership of the process;

- What to read/write/speak about?
- How long will I spend reading/writing/speaking?
- How much will I read/write today?
- Where will I read/write/speak?
- How will I respond to reading/writing/speaking? (orally, in writing, by drawing, two stars & a wish...)
- Will I read aloud to the class, read silently, read to a partner?
- What materials will I use to write?
- How will I present my writing?
- Will I share my writing?
- How will I share my writing? (e.g. Author's Chair, publish online, hang it on the wall...)
- What sort of voice, gesture or props could I use when speaking?

<p>Key Text</p> 	<p><i>Game Changer! Book Access for All Kids</i> by Donalyn Miller and Colby Sharp</p>
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What can I do tomorrow?	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask my class what we could do with our library to make it even better.• Try a read aloud, read and tease, book jacket bulletin board or a book-sell to create interest in a book.• Share with children, a useful strategy when selecting a writing topic.• When next engaging in a reading activity, give children the choice of reading aloud, reading silently or reading in pairs.

Range of Texts

Thinking about my practice	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What types of texts do I explore with the children in my classroom?• Do I afford the children the opportunities to bring texts of personal interest into the learning environment?• Are there opportunities in my classroom for children to create a variety of different texts?• How often do I make use of digital texts in my classroom?• How regularly do children use a range of texts to source, critique, and manage information and reflect on their learning? <p style="text-align: right;">(Adapted from Digital Learning Framework, 2016)</p>

The Primary Language Curriculum defines text;

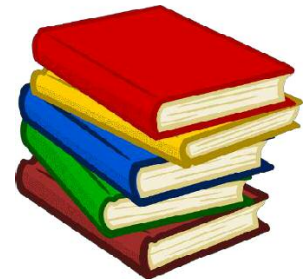
'Text' includes all products of language use: oral, gesture, sign, written, Braille, visual, tactile, electronic and digital.

In order to support child choice, harness motivation and create an environment where children are supported to engage in rich discussions and write about rich language experiences, they must have access to and experience of a range of texts (Shanahan, 2019).

Literacy includes the capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate various forms of communication including spoken language, printed text, broadcast media, and digital media.

(DES, 2011, p. 8)

One of the aims of the Primary Language Curriculum is to encourage children to engage personally with and think critically about a broad range of spoken, gesticulated, written and multimodal texts.



Multimodal Text

Multimodal texts include the combination of a variety of forms of communication such as print text, digital text, visual images, audio (e.g., a performance or event) and spoken word. In this definition, 'multimodal' is not synonymous with 'digital'.

For example:

- A video is an example of a multimodal text as information may be communicated through dialogue, music and imagery.
- A webpage may be an example of a multimodal text as information may be communicated through images, video, audio and print.
- A drama or a play is an example of a multimodal text as information is communicated through dialogue, tone, facial expressions, gesture, props, etc.
- A map may be an example of a multimodal text as information may be communicated through print, symbols, number or colour.

Working with multimodal texts may require children to draw on a wider range of knowledge, skills and strategies in order to make meaning from the text. Exposure to a wide range of multimodal texts allows us the opportunity to teach and guide the children to navigate these texts.

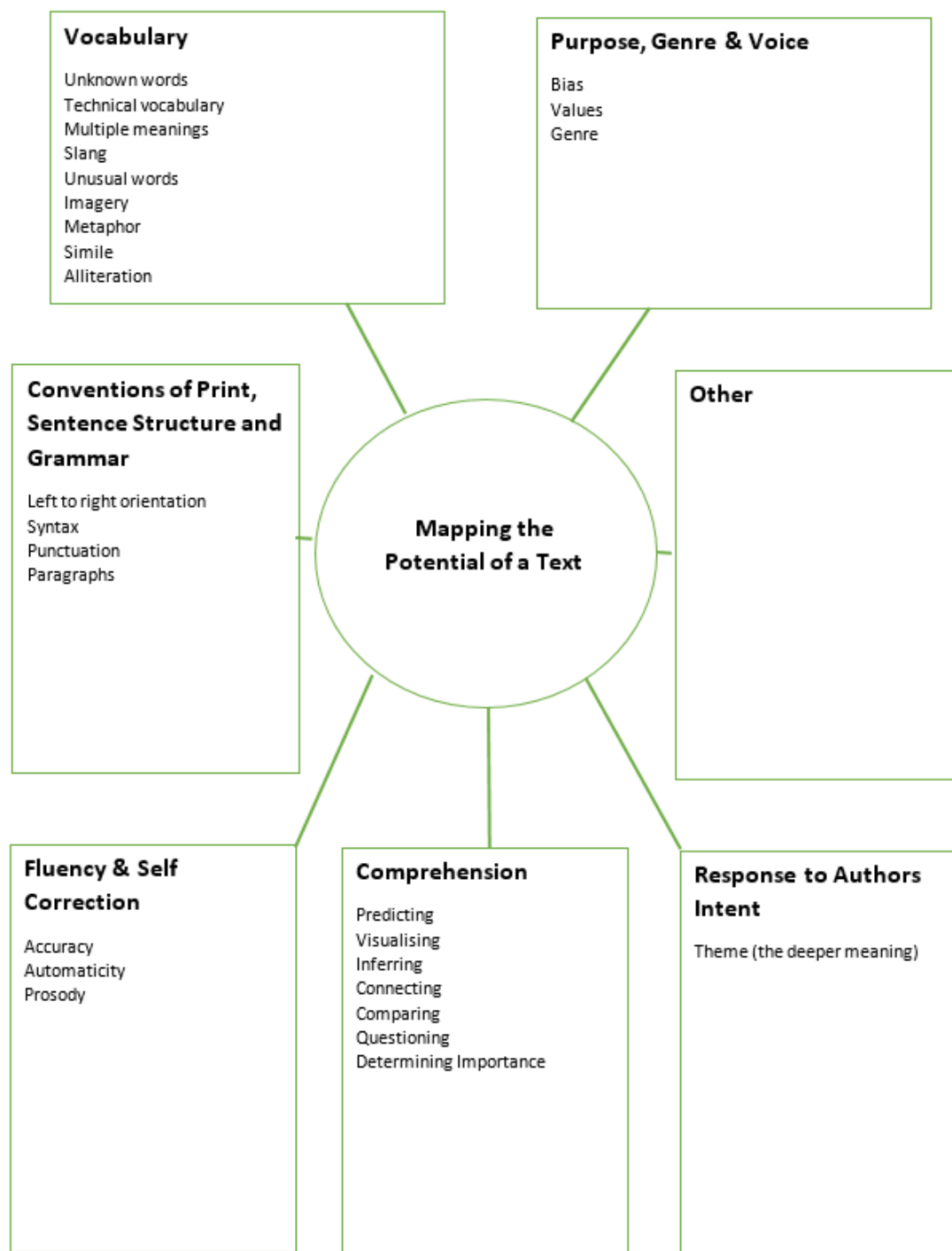
There is a wide variety of texts we could provide for children to engage with and think critically about. For example;

Novels	Poetry	Websites
Picture books	Podcasts	Videos
Magazines	Photographs	Mime

Each type of text provides its own unique opportunities for exploration with children which may go beyond the opportunities afforded by a written text. For example, listening to a podcast affords the opportunity to explore expression and intonation. Poetry provides opportunities to engage with the deeper meaning of a text while also exploring poetry techniques.

Exploring the Text Potential

For the teacher, being familiar with the texts you are using is essential (Tennent et al. 2017). As teachers we need to read the text and know the text and ensure it will provide sufficiently challenging teaching and learning opportunities. When we know the text and the potential it affords, we can make decisions around which reading approach this text lends itself to. When considering the potential of a text, it is important to consider the Learning Outcomes from the Primary Language Curriculum. Below, you will find a prompt guide for mapping the text potential and many of the labels in this guide can be found in the Learning Outcomes of the PLC. This diagram is intended as an aid when planning your teaching; it is not a checklist. There is no need to write something in every box. It is a supportive guide to help you to decide if the selected text offers opportunities to the children in your class.



Adapted from “Guiding Readers-Layers of Meaning” by Tennent et al. (2016)

A Wide Variety of Text

For teachers searching for different forms of texts to engage the children, the following table provides a selection of links to explore.

Name	Link
Book Recommendations	
Children's Books Ireland	www.childrensbooksireland.com/
LoveReading4Kids	http://www.lovereadings4kids.co.uk
various hashtags including; #kidslit #childrensnovels #mgfiction	www.twitter.com
Time.com 100 Best Children's Books	http://time.com/100-best-childrens-books/
Newbery Medal winners	http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/newberymedal/newberyhonors/newberymedal
Caldecott medal winners	http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/caldecottmedal/caldecottwinners/caldecottmedal
Notable children's books	http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/notalists/nobcb
Poetry	
Poetry Ireland	https://www.poetryireland.ie/education/
Poetry Class	www.poetryclass.net

Fun with Words	http://www.fun-with-words.com/tong_example.html
Shakespeare Online	www.shakespeare-online.com
Video	
Literacy Shed	https://www.literacyshed.com/
Great Big Story	https://www.greatbigstory.com
Fis Film Festival	http://fisfilmproject.ie/
YouTube	www.youtube.com
News2day	https://www.rte.ie/news/player/news2day/
Podcasts	
Story Pirates, By Gimlet (Available for free on iTunes)	https://www.gimletmedia.com/story-pirates
Bedtime FM Storytime	https://bedtime.fm/storytime
Science Podcast for Kids	http://www.sciencepodcastforkids.com/
Stories Podcast	http://storiespodcast.com/
Magazines	
National Geographic	https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/

Local/National Newspapers	https://www.firstnews.co.uk/
rbdigital.com (Available for free through your local library)	https://rbdigital.com/
Pictures	
Google Images	https://images.google.com/
Creative Commons	https://creativecommons.org/
Online Stories	
Storynory	https://www.storynory.com
Storyline Online	www.storylineonline.net
Magic Keys	http://www.magickeys.com/books/

Online Books	
EPIC books	https://www.getepic.com
Oxford Owl	https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk
World Book Online	https://www.scoilnet.ie/scoilnet-services/world-book/



Creating Multimodal Text

Children often think that writing is what they do in school and that the other kinds of digital composing and communication they engage in outside of school is something else (Purcell, Buchanan, & Friedrich, 2013). The reality is that every time children create a text message, send a gif on WhatsApp, create a snapchat, or write a blog post they are engaging in the writing process and creating text, often a multimodal text.

Designing digital compositions calls on children to think across modes of representation that can include text, as well as images, sounds and music in ways that transcend paper-and-pencil products (Harrison and Dwyer, 2014). We can consider each mode of communication in a multimodal text as an additional 'layer'. Children may have to engage with multiple layers to create the final product, for example, while they will be engaging with the content of their text, consideration will also be given to other modes of communication, for example;

- Will I use images, and if so which images, how many and where will they be?
- Will I use sound, such as narration, backing music or one-off effects?
- Will I create a video or use an existing video to illustrate a point?
- What tools will I use to create a multimodal/digital text? Will I use Powerpoint, Adobe Spark, Book Creator, iMovie or a combination?

(Godhe & Lindström 2014)

Tips for creating multimodal text in the classroom


- Communicate to children the value of both writing and designing multimodal compositions. Try to create a **dialogic space** where we are all becoming multimodal designers and will learn and develop together as we compose with digital tools and media.
- In a writers workshop we encourage children to think of themselves as writers. When composing multimodal texts we can **encourage children to think of themselves as designers**. Children will have modal preferences and talents which can be pursued in the context of creating multimodal texts.
- When beginning to compose multimodal texts, consider which modes of communication will be used. It may help to start with a combination of two to three modes, such as text, images or sound. Further modes such as video, or audio narration could be explored once children


have developed an understanding of other modes. **Keep it simple** at the beginning and allow compositions to develop naturally in complexity.

- When initially working on multimodal composition, use a **topic** that children are already learning about and have an interest in. This can allow attention to focus on the craft of multimodal composition. For example, looking at the design of an already studied poem, can allow for discussion on design and presentation such as an accompanying image, image placement, font style, colour and size, audio narration.
- Expand **mini-lessons** about the author's craft to include the craft of multimodal composition. For example, based on observations, the teacher may decide to teach a mini-lesson on how to safely search for and save images.
- Consider how we can **scaffold** the learning of a new skill for children. When introducing a new composing skill or technical tool, think about how to constrain the larger composing task so that children are able to focus attention on the new thing to play with and learn. For example, providing children with a partially completed product to enhance with media allows them to focus on how the new mode enriches the existing piece.
- **Small guided composition groups** afford the teacher the opportunity to coach children in the digital literacy skills they require to complete their composition as the need arises. The teacher can provide guidance to children or act as co-learner as they collaboratively use the digital skills required to add to their multimodal composition. For example, learning how to record audio narration in a particular app.
- As children learn additional digital skills as part of multimodal composition, they can act as **experts** and help other children use and learn these skills as the need arises. For example, a child who has previously learned how to insert an image into a composition, can assist other children who now require this particular skill for a composition.


- Consider the idea of **remixing**. Using peers' pieces as mentor texts, children can remix new drafts, building on and learning from the work of others. For example, children collaborating on Google Docs, children adding text or audio to an existing presentation or to an image. Using the coding software 'Scratch', children can download the projects of others from the online scratch community and remix them to create something different.
- Provide children with opportunities to **share** and publish their creations. There are many ways this can be achieved such as school websites, class blogs, and even 'designer's chairs'. This is similar to an author's chair, where children can share their work with peers and ask for feedback or advice on their composition.
- **Avoid relying on writing first, multimedia second**. Some children may prefer to write out the text or script of a piece first, while others may prefer to start with an image or a video and build on that. There is no one way to start composing a multimedia text and each person may have a different way they prefer to begin the process.
- While it is important to understand the basics of the tools children are going to be using to create their multimodal compositions, it may be impossible to become an expert in every facet of the tool. **Don't wait to become an expert before you start**, instead try to foster a culture in the classroom where everyone is sharing their expertise as they try to figure out how to use different tools to achieve their aims.
- Explore creating multimodal text with a **variety of tools** (for example, Powerpoint, Book Creator, iMovie, Adobe Spark, etc). Each tool offers different pathways and options for composing a multimodal text. Some compositions can draw on a variety of tools, such as creating a movie or an image to put in an ebook or powerpoint.

(Adapted from Dalton 2012, Dalton 2014 & Harrison et al. 2010)

<p>Key Text</p> 	<p><i>Using Technology to Improve Reading and Learning</i> by Colin Harrison, Bernadette Dwyer & Jill Costek</p>
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What can I do tomorrow?	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Explore a video (for example, from literacy shed) with your class. What features does it have which you can draw the classes attention to?● Explore a multimodal text with a class (for example a magazine or picture book) and lead a discussion on what methods of communication the author uses to convey a message. Are there pictures, illustrations, diagrams, different fonts?● Allow children to create a multimodal text on a topic, for example, using Powerpoint, Scratch, Book Creator or even a poster.

Time

Thinking about my practice	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How much time do I give to children in my class to read?• How much time do I give to children in my class to write?• How much time do I give children to talk about texts?• How much time do I afford children to consider answers to questions?• How often do I encourage the children to formulate their own questions? <p>(Adapted from Looking at Our Schools, 2016)</p>

The following extract, from a Richard Allington article, emphasises the importance of time spent reading and writing in the development of reading and writing skills. He warns of the dangers of children engaging in other “stuff” and asks us to consider the percentage of the day that we dedicate to children engaging in reading and writing.



TIME

These teachers maintained a “reading and writing versus stuff” ratio that was far better balanced than is typically found in elementary classrooms. In other words, these teachers routinely had children actually reading and writing for as much as half of the school day — around a 50/50 ratio of reading and writing to stuff (stuff is all the other things teachers have children do instead of reading and writing). In typical classrooms it is not unusual to find that children read and write for as little as 10% of the day (30 minutes of reading and writing activity in a 300-minute — five-hour — school day). In many classrooms, a 90-minute “reading block” produces only 10 to 15 minutes of actual reading — that is, less than 20% of the allocated reading time is spent reading. Worse, many classrooms devote only 20 minutes of the entire school day — less than 10% — to actual reading (including reading in science, social studies, math, and other subjects). When stuff dominates instructional time, warning flags should go up. This is true even when the activity, in some form, has been shown to be useful. For example, research supports activating students’ background knowledge before reading and holding discussions after reading. But spending most of a 90-minute reading block on building background knowledge seems an unlikely strategy for improving reading proficiencies. Three to five minutes of this activity would be sufficient. There is also a lot of stuff going on in less effective classrooms that is not supported by reliable evidence for any amount of use (e.g., going through test-preparation workbooks, copying vocabulary definitions from a dictionary, completing after-reading comprehension worksheets). Extensive reading is critical to the development of reading proficiency. Extensive practice provides the opportunity for students to consolidate the skills and strategies teachers often work so hard to develop. The exemplary elementary teachers we studied recognized this critical aspect of instructional planning. Their students did more guided reading, more independent reading, more social studies and science reading than students in less effective classrooms. But the teachers’ instructional planning involved much more than simply allocating lots of time for reading and writing.

(An extract from Allington, R. 2002. What I’ve Learned about Effective Reading Instruction)

Children's Rights to Read (ILA, 2018)

Time is also acknowledged as one of the fundamental rights (number 7) in the International Literacy Association's (ILA) 'Children's Right to Read'. Significantly, it could be argued that it is also at the heart of all the other rights too.

INTERNATIONAL
LITERACY
ASSOCIATION

Children's Rights to Read

1. Children have the **basic human right** to read.
2. Children have the right to **access** texts in print and digital formats.
3. Children have the right to **choose** what they read.
4. Children have the right to read texts that **mirror** their experiences and languages, provide **windows** into the lives of others, and open **doors** into our diverse world.
5. Children have the right to read for **pleasure**.
6. Children have the right to **supportive** reading environments with knowledgeable literacy partners.
7. Children have the right to extended **time** set aside for reading.
8. Children have the right to **share** what they learn through reading by collaborating with others locally and globally.
9. Children have the right to read as a springboard for other forms of **communication**, such as writing, speaking, and visually representing.
10. Children have the right to benefit from the financial and material resources of governments, agencies, and organizations that **support** reading and reading instruction.

The Writing for Pleasure Manifesto

Young (2018) collaborated with a number of other educators to produce the following manifesto. He hopes to work towards creating conditions in classrooms that promote writing as a pleasurable experience. The goal of this manifesto is to promote a love of writing in schools which will be continued into children's personal and working lives long after they leave. Below, we have included ten of the key suggestions.

- 1. Develop a community of writers**
- 2. Consider every child a writer**
- 3. Read, share and talk about writing**
- 4. Create purposeful and authentic writing projects**
- 5. Explicitly teach the writing processes**
- 6. Scaffold new learning and set writing goals**
- 7. Give opportunities to write everyday**
- 8. Become a writer-teacher**
- 9. Encourage pupil conferencing**
- 10. Nurture a culture of both reading and writing for pleasure**


Think Time

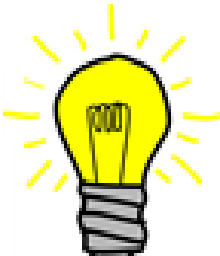
When engaging with children in the classroom it is crucial to allow time to think, to clarify thoughts and to formulate answers. On average, teachers only wait between 0.7 and 1.4 seconds after asking a question (Stahl, 1994). The length of think-time should depend on the complexity of the question. By providing 3 seconds or more wait time (Rowe, 1972) found that:

- the length and correctness of children responses increases
- the number of "I don't know" and no answer responses decreases
- the number of volunteered, appropriate answers by larger numbers of children greatly increases
- the scores of children on academic achievement tests tend to increase


The research also shows that using wait/think time in this way benefits teachers too because:

- questioning strategies tend to be more varied and flexible
- they decrease the quantity and increase the quality and variety of their questions
- they ask additional questions that require more complex information processing and higher-level thinking on the part of children

<p>Key Text</p> 	<p><i>Reading Instruction That Works: The Case for Balanced Teaching</i> by Michael Pressley & Richard L. Allington</p>
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What can I do tomorrow?	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Allow the children to read for pleasure for ten minutes after break. Maybe they could move and find a comfortable place away from their desk?● Link up with another teacher and bring your class to read with the children in their room.● Write while the children are writing and share your creation.● Pause for three seconds after asking a question, before looking for an answer.● Start a real and meaningful writing project (e.g. writing letters to favourite authors).

Explicit Instruction

Thinking about my practice	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How high are the levels of interest and participation during reading & writing lessons?• How willing are children to take risks in their reading and writing?• Do the children in my class have a sense of ownership of their work, take pride in it, and take responsibility for improving it?• As a teacher, do I make the link between reading and writing explicit for children? Do I use texts we've read to draw the children's attention to how a writer crafts a piece of writing?• How often do the children in my class see me reading and writing, and in what contexts? <p>(Adapted from Looking at Our Schools, 2016)</p>

High quality instruction in literacy must reflect the highly complex nature of literacy development. Explicit instruction in literacy may provide learners with the foundational skills and strategies to succeed in Oral Language, Reading and Writing. It may also emerge from the teacher's observations of the children's performance as they are engaged in oral language, reading and writing practice and use assessment data to notice areas of success and areas of need which emerge for their unique group of learners. Instruction requires a deliberate, structured, focused and balanced approach to improving literacy skills in response to the needs of the children.

Some of the areas which require explicit instruction include:

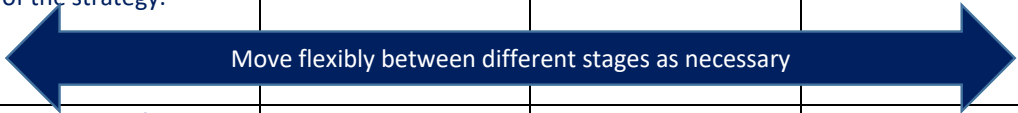
Vocabulary	Phonological Awareness	Phonics
Comprehension	Fluency	Conventions of Print
Spelling and Word Study	Handwriting	Genres
Sentence Structure and Grammar	Social Conventions	Listening and Attention

Please see PDST Literacy website for other publications which address some of these areas. For the purposes of this manual we will look at explicit instruction in some areas of reading and writing.

The Gradual Release of Responsibility

The Gradual Release of Responsibility (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) is an instructional model for the development of reading, writing, and oral language strategies. *“During each stage of the model, teachers should be explicit in their instruction and feedback. For example, during the first phase, teachers should provide clear explanations and modelling for a specific skill or strategy. As responsibility is gradually released, feedback to children should be specific and understandable”*

(Morrow & Gambrell, 2019)

Modelling	Sharing	Guiding	Applying
The teacher demonstrates the strategy by modelling its correct use for children. This involves the teacher pausing to ‘think aloud’ about why the strategy is being used, when to use it, how to use it and modelling the appropriate language and thought processes of the strategy.	The teacher continues to demonstrate the strategy being taught, but now invites children to contribute their thoughts, ideas and suggestions as the strategy is used.	The teacher provides scaffolds and feedback for children as they use the strategy.	The teacher provides support and encouragement as children use the strategy independently.
 <p>Move flexibly between different stages as necessary</p>			
Teacher has full responsibility for use of the strategy.	Teacher shares the responsibility for using the strategy with the children	Children begin to assume responsibility for using the strategy, with scaffolding from the teacher.	Children take responsibility for using the strategy.
The children are engaged and watching the teacher model the strategy.	The children actively take part in the process by contributing their ideas as they begin to practice use of the strategy.	The children work using the strategy with scaffolding provided by the teacher where necessary. Children may also receive feedback on their use of the strategy from the teacher or peers.	The children work independently to apply the strategy in context across the curriculum.

It is important to remember that this is not necessarily a linear process, and teachers will choose which stage is appropriate based on their observations of children applying a particular skill or

strategy. Effective teaching and learning in literacy includes several kinds of experiences for guided and independent practice from which teachers can select, depending on the needs and stages of development of the children.

Rich and Varied Reading Experiences

The following are a selection of rich and varied reading experiences which can support reading development in a number of the areas outlined at the beginning of this chapter.

Read Aloud

The International Literacy Association (2018) cites reading aloud as one of the most powerful instructional activities to help children develop as readers at all class levels. The instructional benefits include the development of oral language, vocabulary, listening comprehension, story schema and cognitive ability. Read Alouds also promote a love of reading and develop social interactions. An effective Read Aloud is more than just reading; it requires thoughtful preparation by the teacher in order to be familiar with and have a deep understanding of the text which should be read with expression, excitement and assurance. Read Alouds can be **interactive** with the teacher stopping to model their thinking and inviting participation from the learners, pushing them to give deeper level responses to text. The selection of the text is a key factor for success and consideration should be given to a balance of fiction and non-fiction and different lengths and formats (e.g. novels, poetry, newspaper articles etc.). Most importantly, texts should serve as what Rudine Sims Bishop (1990) calls mirrors, windows and doors so that children see themselves as well as those different to themselves reflected in stories.

Read Alouds can serve a number of purposes, including the promotion of enjoyment, language development, development of content knowledge and the development of specific reading skills. (McCaffrey & Hisrich, 2017).

Teachers as Readers

Bowers and Davis (2013) highlight that teachers modelling the reading of children's books and sharing this interest with children can enhance the levels of reading enjoyment in classrooms. However, regularly, one of the greatest challenges to nurturing a love of reading in and around schools, and developing an extensive library for children, is the lack of knowledge that teachers themselves have of children's fiction. Therefore, a key recommendation is that the best route to creating a book rich environment in your classroom begins with picking up a children's book and

immersing yourself in the wonderful world of children’s literature. As a reader, maybe there is an argument for alternating between adult’s and children’s books and you’ll never be short of a recommendation for a child struggling to pick out a book.

Tips for Reading Aloud

<p>The Beginning & The End</p> <p>The way we speak our first line should be sensational. The aim is to grab our audience immediately and never let them go. Try to slowly d-r-a-g out the last line. A slow finish is an absolutely delicious experience. Both teller and listeners find themselves in a state of bliss.</p>	<p>Our Voice</p> <p>We can do much with our voice to keep listeners engaged. We can be loud or soft. We can be fast or slow. We can be high or low. And we can.... pause.</p>
<p>Our Eyes</p> <p>The eyes are the window to the soul. We can widen them, narrow them, use them to “think” with, to be “shocked” with, to be “scared” with, to “listen” with, to be “happy” with, to show fright with, and so on.</p>	<p>Pay attention to the words</p> <p>Authors hope we’ll carry out their intentions faithfully by letting their words instruct us. Simple words like ‘whispered’, ‘jumped’, ‘smiled’ instruct us in what to do with our voices when reading certain sentences.</p>
<p>The Text</p> <p>Be familiar with the text you will be reading aloud. Enjoy the text that you will be reading.</p>	<p>Our Bodies</p> <p>Be mindful of what our body position, facial expressions and gestures are telling the audience.</p>
<p>Have Fun!</p>	

Adapted from <https://memfox.com/>



[Read Aloud Video](https://vimeo.com/433588030)

<https://vimeo.com/433588030>

Critical Thinking and Book Talk (CT&BT)

CT&BT encourages children to become critical thinkers. The approach is about fostering thinkers, speakers and readers who enjoy reading, and discussion and dialogue about books. In advance of a session the teacher should have carefully read the book, noting prior knowledge the children may draw on, the themes, vocabulary, type of text (fact, fiction, fable, narrative etc.), writing features and how the pictures convey some of the meaning in the story (through the use of colour, framing etc.). Teachers should also prepare some contributions or comments they could possibly make as a group member or to push children's thinking.

The CT&BT Process:

- Timetable a session once a week when little disruption is likely.
- Possibly record the session.
- Have children sitting in a circle in a quiet place and the teacher joining them.
- Introduce the book (title, endpapers, blurb).
- Read the story slowly and ensure that the children are able to clearly see the pictures.
- Close the book and allow the children the time to process what they've heard and seen.
- Revise the speaking and listening rules.
- Maybe pose a question: What do you think the author wants to tell us? WAIT! Alternatively, go straight to picking a volunteer to speak. This speaker decides in which direction the discussion should move.
- Pass the tip or other speaking object as a means of recognising the speaker. As a teacher, participate in the discussion when the microphone or tip comes your way. At this point, you might respond to the input of a child or ask a provocative, higher-order question.
- When a full circle has been completed and it is back to the first speaker again, the circle can be repeated or the teacher might generate responses from the group by asking children to put their hands up to speak.
- Note that children have the right to pass and not to speak
- At the end of the session, affirm the children by reminding them of some of their wonderful ideas. In addition, praise the qualities you wish to enforce – listening well, thinking before speaking, speaking clearly and so on.
- Ongoing assessment of CT&BT over a number of sessions could include noting which children have and have not made contributions, the quality of the contributions made (original or thoughtful responses, repeating another contribution heard or off topic) and the language the children used to express their thoughts. Also note which books captured the

children's interest and which did not. Sessions may also be recorded and analysed. These notes will help to decide what scaffolds or explicit teaching is required to develop the quality of the sessions as they progress.

Moving Forward with Critical Thinking and Book Talk

Support Material
<p>It is important to note that the above process is adapted from the Primary Language Curriculum CT&BT Support Material (p.4-14) at the below link: https://curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/6d96e2e8-e230-4c9c-b729-e0a61a6d7ff0/OLTOB-PLC-Support-Materials.pdf</p>
Recommended Picturebooks
<p>Dr Mary Roche provides lists of high quality picturebooks in her book, Developing Children's Critical Thinking Through Picturebooks: A guide for primary and early year children and teachers.</p> <p>In addition, a number of recommendations are also available on the websites below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• NCCA Primary Language Curriculum Toolkit suggestions by Dr Mary Roche- https://curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/6d96e2e8-e230-4c9c-b729-e0a61a6d7ff0/OLTOB-PLC-Support-Materials.pdf (p. 15 - 23)• Center for Philosophy for Children- https://depts.washington.edu/nwcenter/resources/questions-library/• Teaching Children Philosophy- http://www.teachingchildrenphilosophy.org/BookModule/BookModule• High quality picturebooks for cross-curricular planning https://padlet.com/p0077346/PictureBookPlan
Picturebook Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Useful resources for picturebook enthusiasts https://padlet.com/marygtroche/usefulresources

- Why picturebooks matter
<http://mattobin.blogspot.ie/2015/06/why-picturebooks-matter.html>



[Critical Thinking and Book Talk Video](https://vimeo.com/344576957)

<https://vimeo.com/344576957>

Close Reading

Close reading is the thoughtful critical analysis of a text. Through re-reading, the reader focuses on significant details of the text in order to develop a deep, precise understanding of the text’s structure, style and meanings. Each re-reading of the text should accomplish a separate purpose, where the teacher provides a guiding question for children to answer collaboratively in groups. All readings focus on the text’s meaning. For a close reading approach to be successful, teachers need to select high quality texts that are worth reading and re-reading.

Reading	Purpose	Questions
First Reading	Allow the reader to determine what a text says.	What is happening in the text? What is the story of the text? What is the subject of this text?
Second Reading	Allow the reader to determine how a text works and what the author was up to (craft and structure). Questions may also clarify confusions.	What is confusing about this text? Are there any words or phrases we’re not sure about? What did the author do to achieve...? How did the author organise the text?

		What literary devices were used, and how effective were they?
Third Reading	Allow the reader to evaluate the quality and value of the text (and to connect the text to other texts and the reader's own life).	<p>What is the overall message in the text?</p> <p>Is there a lesson or advice the author is trying to give us?</p> <p>What does this text mean?</p> <p>What does this text say to me about my life and my world?</p>

(Adapted from Tennent et al., 2016)

Tips for Close Reading

Short Passages	Complex Texts
<p>When engaging with a close reading approach it is not necessary to use a particularly lengthy text. A short text, or passage from a text, poem, etc. can often lend itself better to a close reading approach.</p>	<p>It is crucial to the process to use complex texts, which lend themselves to multiple readings. The texts may often be above the independent reading level of the children.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Limited Frontloading</p> <p>Close reading lends itself to limited frontloading and pre-teaching. While teachers consistently set a purpose for reading, they do not engage in lengthy conversations about the meaning of the text or what children should expect to find in the text in advance of the reading. While some frontloading may occur (e.g. certain words in the text that children may need in order to gain access to the deeper meaning), there are two principles which apply; (1) that frontloading not remove the need to read the text, and (2) that frontloading not take readers away from the text to their own experiences too soon.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Annotation</p> <p>During close reading children should be encouraged to make annotations on the text to assist their understanding. Children might underline, circle, and write margin notes, identifying key words or phrases, questions, points of confusion, etc. Children’s annotations can be used formatively (e.g. if a teacher observes that children are marking the same section/word in a text as causing confusion, it can inform the teacher as to what to model or address during a think-aloud going forward). In this way teachers can integrate modelling into the close reading lesson.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Repeated Readings</p> <p>Children will read and reread the text several times. When children reread the text, they may have more background knowledge from the previous readings and their conversations, so they understand more each time. How deeply children think about the ideas in text does matter.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Text-Dependent Questions</p> <p>The questions which teachers ask should require children to find and use evidence from the text. While children will use their background knowledge and schema to help make sense of the text, it is important that the text itself remains the focus.</p>

(Adapted from Fisher & Frey, 2012)



[Close Reading Video](https://vimeo.com/344576957)

<https://vimeo.com/344576957>

Six Step approach to Guided Reading

In Guided Reading the teacher has an explicit reading role, to point out the relevant features in text and ensure the children have the strategies to cope with them. In Guided Reading, the teacher can provide guidance that can meet the needs of the whole group.

(Guided Reading, Key Stage 2. Hobsbaum, A, Gamble, N & Reedy, D, 2002, p. 4)

Typically, the following are evident in Guided Reading sessions:

- The teacher works with 4-6 children in each group.
- Children are grouped according to similarities in reading development and instructional reading levels.
- The teacher introduces strategies and concepts to support independent reading.
- Every child reads independently and is supported individually by the teacher.
- Emphasis is on strategic problem solving.

Steps to Guided Reading	Possible Timing	Possible Focus
1. Text Introduction	3-5 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell the children what the learning focus of the lesson will be. • Orientate children to the text by reading the title and giving a brief overview drawing particular attention to the features that relate to the learning focus and to any pictures or illustrations • If it is a longer text continued from a previous lesson, children could be asked to discuss what they remember from the previous reading in pairs. • ‘Debug’ the text. Here the teacher identifies language structures, vocabulary or pronunciation that might trip the reader up and briefly addresses them (it is important to leave enough challenges for the readers to problem solve themselves so not everything should be explained).

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children may be supported to formulate questions they might have.
<p>2. Strategy Check</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recall and consolidate the strategies in focus (e.g. declunking or rereading). One focus may last for a number of lessons. • Prompt children to articulate what strategies they will use if they become stuck while reading.
<p>3. Independent Reading</p>	<p>5-7 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children read the text with a particular focus on the strategies discussed. • Children read independently (silently or whisper reading) at their own pace. • The teacher ‘listens in’ to each child in turn, asking them to read aloud from where they are in the text, then monitoring and supporting where necessary. • With younger children and at lower levels, it is important to ‘listen in’ to each child at each session. At higher levels the teacher may just focus on one or two children at each session. • Teacher makes observational notes as the children are reading on how the child has searched for information or used strategies to make meaning and problem-solve the text.

<p>4. Returning to the Text</p>	<p>5-7 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight examples of successful problem-solving (e.g. <i>I liked the way Mary broke down the word 'reproachfully' by taking away the -fully and then reading back to figure out that it was to do with the mother being cross. Let's go back and look at that word on p.68).</i> • Revisit strategies (and highlight examples of their use) and vocabulary. • Use questioning to ensure understanding (see Bloom's taxonomy of questions). The children may frame further questions for each other. • Take children back to specific parts of the text to reinforce a particular aspect that they may have found difficult.
<p>5. Response to the Text</p>		<p>Children respond to the text:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · give opinions · ask questions · do a follow up activity
<p>6. Re-reading the Text</p>		<p>Can be completed in class or at home</p>

(Adapted from Bodman and Franklin, 2014)



[Guided Reading using a Multimodal Text Video](https://vimeo.com/314352579)

<https://vimeo.com/314352579>

Reading Fluency

Fluency is the ability to read aloud with expression, demonstrating an understanding of the author's message (First Steps Reading Resource Book, 2004). Fluency is a key element of successful reading and is essential for comprehension. Rasinski (2006) defines Reading Fluency as the ability to read the words in a text with sufficient accuracy, automaticity, and prosody to lead to good comprehension:

Accuracy in word recognition refers to a reader's ability to read the words in a text without error in pronunciation.

Automaticity refers to the ability of proficient readers to read the words in a text correctly and effortlessly so that they may use their finite cognitive resources to attend to meaning while reading.

Prosody refers to the ability of readers to render a text with appropriate expression and phrasing to reflect the semantic and syntactic content of the passage. Fluent oral reading should simply sound like natural speech (Young & Rasinski, 2009).

Explicit fluency instruction is an essential component of reading instruction. Five elements of effective fluency instruction identified include:

1. Modelling of fluent reading
2. Development of sight vocabulary
3. Opportunities to apply word identification skills
4. Increasing amount of reading by offering plenty of practice opportunities
5. Focusing on expressive reading with appropriate phrasing.

(Doherty, 2012)

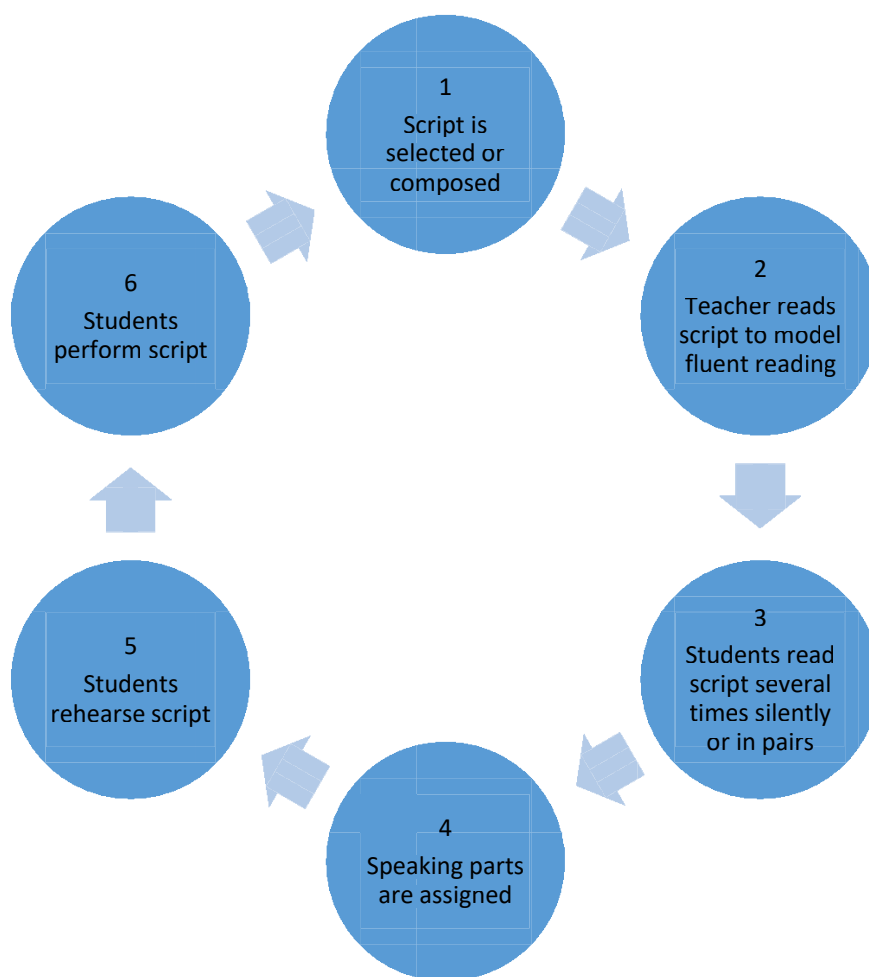
Readers' Theatre

Readers' Theatre provides a practice opportunity for children. It is an authentic and entertaining activity that helps children improve their word recognition, fluency, and comprehension. It requires no props, costumes, or scenery unless the teacher and children want to include them. Readers' Theatre is an oral activity in which children read scripts or stories (after practising reading their particular part and gaining assistance as necessary with vocabulary, phrasing, expressiveness, etc.) Each child takes the part of one of the characters or narrator. There is no need for an actual production of a play. The goal of this strategy is to help children with their fluency and

comprehension by allowing them rehearsal time to practice reading with expression and prosody, the opportunity to read and reread for meaning, and the ability to focus on word meanings (Rasinski, 2006).

Readers' Theatre Procedure

Doherty (2012) in *Focus on Fluency* sets out an overview of how to introduce Readers' Theatre into a classroom.



Scripts for Readers' Theatre

There are a number of online repositories of scripts for children and information on Readers' Theatre:

- <http://www.readwritethink.org/resources/resource-print.html?id=172> (link to a Readers' Theatre instruction plan)
- <http://www.aaronshp.com/rt/RTE.html>

- <http://www.fictionteachers.com/classroomtheater/theater.html>
- https://coachlottes.weebly.com/uploads/9/9/1/3/9913501/readtheatr_selfeval.doc (link to a self-assessment document which can be adapted for use by children)
- http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/printouts/30698_rubric.pdf (link with a sample Readers' Theatre rubric)

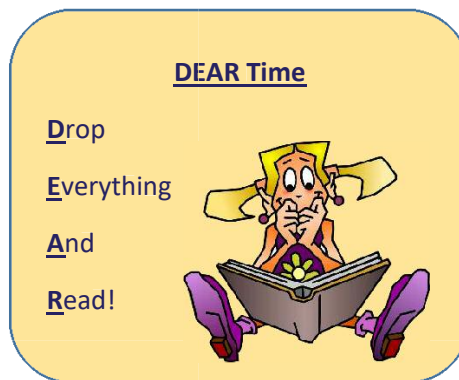


[Readers Theatre Video](https://vimeo.com/60095622)

<https://vimeo.com/60095622>

Independent Reading

We need to provide children a choice of texts which they can read at an independent level and give them the time to read for extended periods (Kennedy et al. 2012). We have seen already that affording children choice in their reading materials fosters motivation and engagement with reading. We have also seen, if children are to become readers, we need to give them time to read. By including daily time for independent reading in our classroom routines, we are giving children a chance to practise being readers as well as signalling the value and purpose we assign to reading. Teachers and other adults in the classroom should also read independently at this time as it gives a powerful example to children about the importance of reading as a daily practice.



Rich and Varied Writing Experiences

The following writing instruction recommendations are adapted from Calkins (2013) and Kennedy and Shiel (2019):

Explicitly teach writing

Writing requires explicit instruction and ample opportunity for practice. Instruction matters—and this includes instruction in spelling and conventions as well as in the qualities and strategies of good writing. As teachers, we need to acknowledge the developmental nature and complexity of writing. It takes time to develop and reach maturity, depth and sophistication in writing. Pinpoint each child's stage of development to identify an entry point to instruction.

Recognise the links across the PLC and other curricular areas

Combine the teaching of the forms of language - oral language, reading and writing - rather than teaching them in isolation or separately. They are reciprocal processes and can support and strengthen each other. For example, children may discover the same genres in oral language, reading and writing.

Avail of opportunities to link oral language, reading and writing within the disciplines (e.g. History, Geography, Science, Art, Physical Education). Aspects of language that can be taught in these contexts include vocabulary and word choice, comprehension skills, knowledge of genre, and writing processes.

Motivate children to write

Develop the motivational aspects of writing alongside the cognitive and metacognitive aspects. Motivation is important at each stage of the writing process (planning, translating, revising). Put conditions in place to enhance motivation to write and agency by providing children with opportunities to:

- choose their own topics
- engage in writing across a range of genres and disciplines on topics of personal interest and curiosity
- collaborate at various stages of the process
- build confidence and sense of self-efficacy as it is linked to level of effort and engagement in writing

- set and achieve goals with an optimal level of challenge

Act as a writing role model

Writing with or alongside the children and sharing the writing you do in your life outside school communicates powerful messages:

- Writing is important to me.
- I'm also trying to improve my writing.
- I'm in it for the long haul.
- Writing is an activity I find challenging, but I'm willing to work hard at it because I find it meaningful.
- Writing gives me pleasure – it's fun!

Fletcher (2017)

Putting children at the heart of writing development



Calkins (1994) highlights the importance of putting the children at the heart of writing development. She claims that a number of elements are essential when teachers aim to ensure effective writing instruction and support children to reach their potential as writers.

Writers need to...

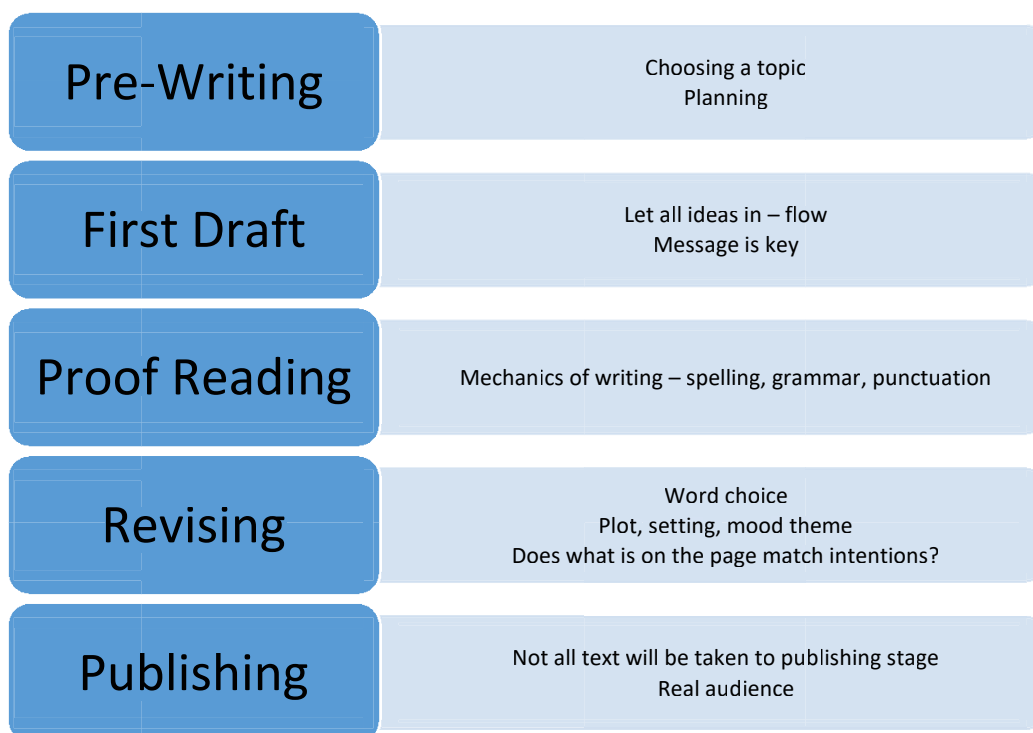
Spend time writing	Almost every day, every child in primary school needs between fifty and sixty minutes for writing instruction and writing. Provide time daily for children to engage in the act of composing text. Without daily time to write, children are unlikely to develop writing to the level required for success in school and in life. Provision of adequate time supports children in discovering their own 'voice' and unique way of putting words on paper.
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<p>Write for real</p>	<p>Writers deserve to write for real, to write the kinds of texts that they see in the world—nonfiction chapter books, persuasive letters, stories, lab reports, reviews, poems—and to write for an audience of readers, not just for the teacher’s red pen. Young writers need to be immersed in a listening and storytelling culture where their voices are valued and heard. Children will become better writing partners and better writers if they are encouraged to contribute their stories, opinions, thoughts, and ideas to a community of writers. Encourage children to publish in print, digital and multimodal forms and share their writing with both children and adults.</p>
<p>Choose</p>	<p>Writers write to put meaning onto the page. Young people will especially invest themselves in their writing if they write about subjects that are important to them. The easiest way to support investment in writing is to teach children to choose their own topics most of the time (See section above on Choice).</p>
<p>Read</p>	<p>For children to write well, they need opportunities to read and to hear texts read, and to read as insiders, studying what other authors have done that they too could try. As teachers, we can use high-quality literature to underpin and support lessons. Exploring a range of mentor texts helps children to identify each author’s particular style and use of genre, and emulate these techniques in their own writing.</p>
<p>Share</p>	<p>Respond to children’s writing often. Response can be in the form of a daily share session. Audience is a powerful motivator for children. Set the tone and establish a climate of respect for each writer. The process of responding to writers should be modelled by the teacher. Conferencing daily with children provides a useful opportunity to respond to writers as they are engaged in the act of writing.</p>

Have clear goals and frequent feedback	Children need to hear ways their writing is getting better and to know what their next steps might be. Use a range of summative and formative assessment practices to inform feedback to children. Put the emphasis on the content and form of the writing. Communicate that spelling, grammar and punctuation can be addressed when proof-reading.
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The Writing Process

All children need the opportunity and instruction to cycle through the writing process as they write. For all writers, young and old, writing is a complex process. It involves tasks/stages during which the writer chooses topics to write about, plans ideas, translates ideas into a first draft, and reviews what has been written. For 50 years now (Murray, 1968), it has been clear in research that engaging writers in the process of writing is as fundamental to writers as the scientific method is to scientists. Writers collect, organise, draft, edit and revise before finally publishing a piece of text. Bloggers sometimes go through the writing process in a day, when we tweet we go through the process in a minute and novelists might stretch the process over many years (Calkins & Ehrenworth, 2016). It is worth noting that the writing process is not always a linear process as writers move backwards and forwards through the stages in order to publish a piece of text and not all texts will be taken to the publishing stage.

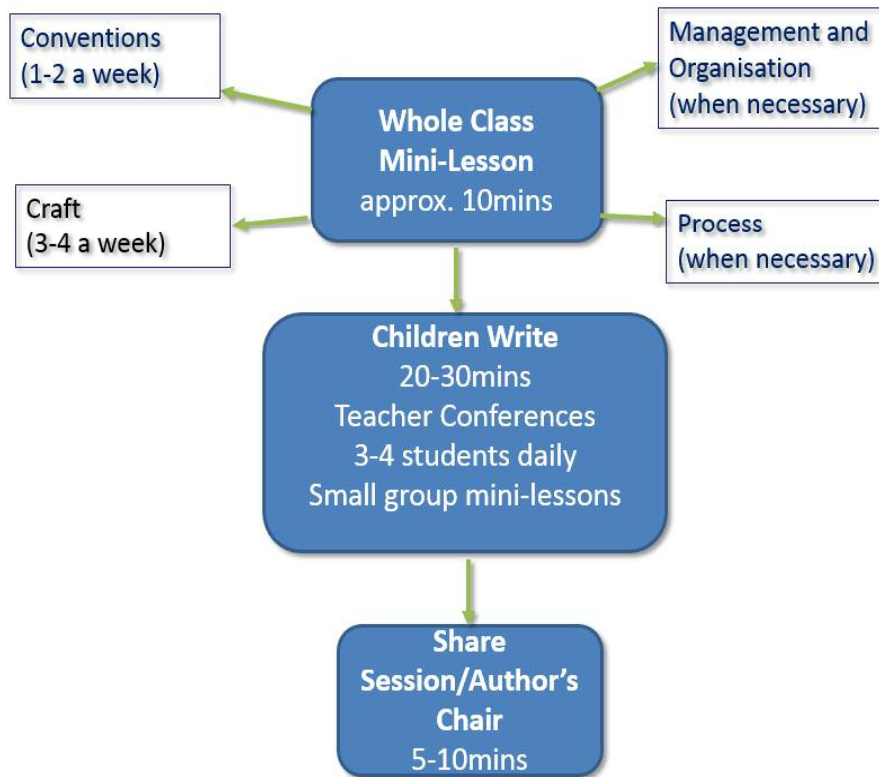


The Writers' Workshop

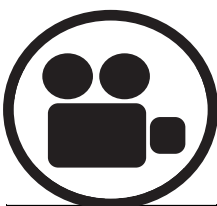
Because writers are continually planning and revising as they write, researchers recommend a process approach to the teaching of writing. This approach views writing as a set of behaviours which can be taught, learned, discussed and developed. It emphasises the importance of thinking, inquiring, imagining, creating, communicating and exploring language through writing and gives equal attention to processes of writing and the written product. This process approach to writing is the basis of a Writers' Workshop. Many teachers use Writers' Workshop as an instructional approach for the teaching of writing as it is regarded in research as including all of the essentials of effective writing instruction. It should be conducted daily within a balanced literacy framework.

There are three distinct parts of the writing workshop; the whole class mini- lesson, independent writing and the share session.

Literacy Development in the Primary Classroom: Six Key Components



A brief description of each of the sections of the Writers' Workshop is outlined below.



[Writers' Workshop Video](https://vimeo.com/381176155)

<https://vimeo.com/381176155>

	<p>Support Material ENGLISH WRITING Stage 1 and Stage 2</p> <p>The Writing Workshop</p> <p>LEARNING OUTCOMES Students develop concepts, understandings and skills in: - Planning - Organisation and structure - Drafting - Editing - Proofreading and revising - Publishing - Reflecting on their writing</p> <p>Why a Writing Workshop? For all writers, writing and editing is a complex process. It involves thoughtful planning which the writer chooses before to write about, plans ideas, translates ideas into a first draft, and revises what has been written.</p> <p>Children need repeated, explicit demonstrations of the processes involved in writing, with plenty of opportunities to practise and experience. Planning for and leading the processes with well-structured aspects of writing is essential for children to develop into independent, self-regulated writers who can easily draw on needed information from long-term memory. Communicating to children that the most important part of writing is the sharing of their thoughts and ideas and that focused skills such as grammar, spelling and punctuation can be dealt with when editing and publishing can reduce their anxiety and increase children's confidence and sense of self-efficacy.</p> <p>Because writers are constantly planning and revising as they write, researchers recommend a process approach to the teaching of writing. This approach views writing as a set of behaviours which can be taught, learned, discussed and developed. It emphasises the importance of thinking, organising, creating, communicating and exploring language through writing and gives equal attention to processes of writing and the written product. The Writing Workshop is an instructional framework which teachers can use to support children as writers.</p>	<p>The Writing Workshop Support Material in The Primary Language Curriculum Toolkit (Curriculumonline.ie)</p>
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The Whole Class Mini-Lesson

The Writers' Workshop begins with a whole class mini- lesson. The agenda for whole class and small group mini-lessons should be driven by the children (Kissel et al, 2013). They are **based on the children's wants and/or needs**. Children's wants and needs can be determined by analysing children's text and/or conferencing with children. The teacher's role is to identify the areas and determine whether it forms a whole class or small group mini-lesson.

As you can see above the mini-lesson can take many forms:

- **Management and organisation** (when necessary): Teaching the routine of the Writers' Workshop (e.g., the structure of the Writers' Workshop, how to use writing folders, rules for conferences and how to respond within a share session).
- **Process** (when necessary): Teaching the steps in the writing process (e.g., choosing a topic, drafting, revising, editing and publishing).
- **Conventions** (1-2 times a week): Teaching skills to improve the readability and fluency of the piece (e.g., grammar, spelling, punctuation and sentence structure).
- **Craft** (3-4 times a week): Teaching a technique to enhance writing quality/style (e.g., using details, strong introduction and crafting an effective title). Recording key ideas on an anchor chart and displaying in the classroom provides a visual reminder for children.

Mini-lessons may follow the **Gradual Release of Responsibility Model**:

- Teacher explains and shares the focus of learning with the children. Teacher can show examples from texts already encountered or read.
- Teacher thinks aloud/demonstrates (modelling).
- Guided practice in pairs or small groups
- Independent practice (e.g. *If you are starting your story perhaps think about an effective story starter.*)

Young writers need to know that the books they read are written by people - authors who, like them, went through some sort of process to publish the work children are reading. Children also must know that authors, in the process of creating their work ask questions such as:

- Who is my audience?
- What is my topic?
- How do I feel when I read this? How do I want my readers to feel when they read a specific piece of my writing?
- How should I begin?

- How should I end?
- What should readers learn from this?

Independent Writing

The second stage of the Writers' Workshop is Independent Writing. Choice is key to this stage and children need support in making choices (see chapter on choice). The role of the teacher during independent writing varies from conducting conferences or small group mini-lessons.

- **Conferencing** is a key part of writers' workshops as it is one of the main ways children receive feedback on their writing. Effective feedback is critical (see chapter on Feedback). Conferences are short (approx. 5 minutes) and teachers should aim to conference with 3-4 children daily. A good conference involves 80% child talk and 20% teacher talk. The teacher's job is to nudge details from the writer, to understand what the writer is trying to do and to continue to encourage children as writers. It is essentially a conversation between two writers. During conferences, teachers also use this one-to-one time to note specific concerns or areas of expertise for individual children. This will enable the teacher to provide differentiated instruction during future conferences and plan content for small-group mini-lessons. In this way, the teacher provides support in response to children's particular needs. At the end of independent writing time, it is important that children are given a few minutes to read over what they have written and encouraged to fix-up any errors they notice. This provides teachers with insights into children's level of awareness of errors and their capacity to self-correct. It can also feed forward into future mini-lessons.
- **Small group mini-lessons** are a form of differentiated instruction to support children's needs. Therefore, the children are grouped based on their needs. The lesson generally uses the Gradual Release of Responsibility and should be short, focused and explicit so that the children are fully aware of the focus of learning of the mini-lesson.

Share Sessions

During the share session, one child sits on the author's chair or a designated area in the classroom, explains the purpose of the sharing to the class and reads his/ her writing aloud to the class. This is a natural opportunity for children to transfer fluency skills learned in the reading

workshop by reading to their audience with appropriate rate, pitch, and expression. Children in the class listen for details, ask questions and state what they like about the piece of writing. The share session creates opportunities for teachers to model appropriate language structures in response to the writing, and for children to develop their vocabulary and oral language. The share session also provides the writer with positive feedback from a real, attentive and appreciative audience and increases children’s confidence and motivation to write. When the author sits in the author’s chair he/she must tell the other authors in the room the kind of response he/she prefers/needs. The role of the audience is huge. The table below documents some of the possible share sessions.

Writing Share Sessions

Type of share	What advice the author looks for from peers
Content Share	Ideas or suggestions on how the content could be amended, added to or clarified.
Craft Share	Craft techniques which may be used to improve a draft or further convey a message.
Process Share	Suggestions to support the author at different stages of the writing process, and ideas on how to proceed.
Progress Share	Author may reflect on their progress as a writer, and get advice for setting new goals.


Adapted from Kissel et al. (2013)

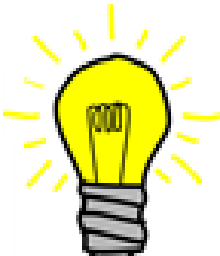
To conclude the workshop, the teacher and children may reflect on the mini-lesson and set goals for the next workshop.

Writing about Text

Shanahan (2019) discusses the relationship between reading and writing, highlighting the central role that writing about texts can have on the development of reading comprehension. As potential alternatives to reading a piece of text and answering assigned questions, he proposes the following:

- Read texts, study the key elements of the genre and allow children to try and replicate themselves.
- Write summaries of texts, determining key ideas and details.
- Write an analysis or critique of the text and evaluate the text's quality or value.
- Write a synthesis of a number of texts, identifying and integrating the key information.

<p>Key Texts</p> 	<p><i>Guiding Readers-Layers of Meaning</i> by Wayne Tennent, David Reedy, Angela Hobsbaum & Nikki Gamble</p>	<p><i>The Writing Teacher's Companion: Embracing Choice, Voice, Purpose & Play</i> by Ralph Fletcher</p>	<p><i>Developing Children's Critical Thinking through Picturebooks: A Guide for Primary & Early Years Students and Teachers</i> by Mary Roche</p>	<p><i>Focus on Fluency</i> By Curriculum Development Unit, Mary Immaculate College</p>
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What can I do tomorrow?	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read a picture book or chapter from a novel and map out its potential for reading or writing instruction.• Pick up a children's book and begin to read for pleasure.• Read aloud from your favourite books for children.• Experiment with a Close Reading session in your class.• Participate in the same writing lesson as the children and share with the classroom. Ask for feedback!

Closing Thoughts

This manual was designed to help teachers deepen their understanding of current theory around best practice in literacy instruction and to support that understanding with practical suggestions as to what this might look like in the classroom. It is hoped that this will empower teachers to be confident in using their professional judgement to select the most appropriate learning experiences for their own unique contexts.

A best practice classroom puts the child at the heart of the learning. So rather than ‘delivering’ or ‘covering’ content we start with what the children know and can do now. In collaboration with them and through feedback we decide where they need to go next. How we get them there involves engaging with their interests, developing their sense of agency, trusting them and having a democratic and interactive classroom culture where mistakes are valued and all voices are heard. It also involves explicit teaching across a wide range of areas and differentiated instruction in response to need. As teachers, we are not ‘teaching writing’ or ‘teaching reading’ we are developing communicators, thinkers, readers and writers. In short, we are striving to engage and motivate children on their life-long literacy journey.

Six fundamental components for best practice in literacy instruction were outlined:

1. Feedback
2. Social Interaction
3. Choice
4. Range of Texts
5. Time
6. Explicit Instruction

The PDST hopes that this manual will encourage teachers to explore the six fundamental components of literacy instruction in depth and use them to guide the development of rich, meaningful and authentic learning experiences. Ultimately, when used to explore pedagogy, this manual can help teachers to develop a vision of what they would like literacy development to look like, feel like and sound like in their classrooms. This teacher vision is crucial in ensuring that continuous improvement in literacy is attained for all children (Morrow & Gambrell, 2019).

Over to you!

1. **Write your personal vision statement as a teacher of literacy.** What is it you want your children to know, believe, feel, be able to do? What would your ideal classroom look like?


2. **From your engagement with this manual, either alone or with colleagues, consider:**

- What affirms aspects of your current practice?
- What interested you the most?
- Did what was presented here fit with your current understanding of literacy instruction? Why?/Why not?
- How well do you know the children's interests, talents and strengths? How well do they know each other's?
- What made you think?
- What resonated most with you in your teaching context?
- What did you find problematic or puzzling?
- What readings would you like to start with?
- What is achievable immediately in your context?
- What needs further scaffolds, supports or resources to achieve?
- What questions do you have?

3. **Next steps for your class or your school using The Five Fives Model:**

- Five minutes- What immediate first steps can you take?
- Five days- What short-term actions can you take in the next week to kick start or plan change?
- Five weeks- What actions or follow-up meetings/discussions can you plan for in the next half-term?
- Five months- What follow-up and follow-through activities do you need to plan to ensure that the change is sustained?
- Five years- What might change look like in five years?

(Rees, 2018)

<p>Key Text</p> 	<p><i>Best Practices in Literacy Instruction</i> edited by Lesley Mandel Morrow & Linda B. Gambrell</p>
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The PDST is funded by the Teacher Education Section (TES) of the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and is managed by Dublin West Education Centre