

# Programming

Teaching and learning activities focused on one text in a literature-based literacy program can take anything from five weeks to a term to complete. Preparation requires thinking across three time scales:

- Planning how to use the whole text, which happens before the start of the term.
- Sequencing the teaching and learning activities for each focus passage, to take the class from Close Reading through Transformations to Writing.
- Programming those activities into a weekly timetable.

The advantage of planning a literature-based literacy program is that most of the hard work is done at the beginning of the term, and we then have five to ten weeks of explicit teaching ready to jump into. Planning is most effectively and efficiently done in professional learning teams, where talk around the text helps to clarify what the text is doing and therefore what learning goals are possible. Working collaboratively also helps to ease the planning load.

We have already covered all aspects of term planning previously in this book. We have discussed how to:

- Select an engaging age-appropriate text (see Chapter 2).
- Identify focus passages from within the text for close study (see Chapter 2).
- Carry out a text analysis for each focus passage (see Chapter 3).
- From the text analysis, identify the learning goals for reading, spelling and writing (outlined as the teaching sequence has been unpacked in each chapter).

Additional guidance is provided in this chapter.

Of course literature-focused activities are the core of our explicit teaching in literacy, but they need consolidation. They are supplemented by regular practice of reading, writing and spelling in the class literacy block. This chapter concludes with an explanation of how this explicit teaching fits with other literacy activities in the classroom.

## PLANNING FOR THE FOCUS PASSAGE

If our topic is a picture book, we're likely to work with several pages, each page representing a small focus passage. If it's a short story or novel, we select one to three focus passages for the term. (When we, and our students, are new to the teaching sequence, we all begin slowly and cover fewer focus passages. As we familiarise ourselves with the sequence, we pick up the pace.)

In all cases we're moving from the broad passage in Close Reading, and breaking down the passage into smaller bits as we identify useful literate goals at sentence level and within sentences. We suggest planning for each focus passage in turn so that we can track the little cycles of Close Reading to Transformations to Spelling to Text Reconstruction to Writing. In Chapter 10 ('Short Writes and Supported Writing') we provided examples of this type of planning for *Big rain coming* and *Nails*. A blank focus passage planner can also be found at the back of the book (Appendix 3).

The process begins with the first focus passage we've identified for Close Reading. Through text analysis we identify how the passage is structured and label it. We examine each sentence within the passage to see if it offers any useful teaching points, and if it does we plan a Transformation for each point. We follow the first Transformation right through to Short Writes, before we move to the next Transformation. We follow that second Transformation through to Short Writes and so on. Once we've accumulated learning from a series of Short Writes, we're ready for Supported Writing using the structure labels during our initial text analysis and from Close Reading with students.

This is just to give an idea of the cyclical nature of the process. Every passage and every student are different. Competent spellers won't need to focus on the Spelling stage after Transformations if they are already working independently with spelling activities.

Teachers in the early years are likely to plan several of these cycles across a number of short passages. Teachers in the middle and upper primary years are likely to plan one, two or three across the term.

## PLANNING FOR THE WEEK

As a guide, explicit literature-focused teaching takes up to one hour a day, and we suggest planning four days per week for it. Flexible Friday provides time for assessments, word study, grammar lessons and finishing off work. When teachers are new to the teaching sequence, they should be mindful that it takes time to build up common knowledge and work towards writing, but with each new text the sequence takes less time because we have less to say.

We build literate knowledge as a thread that we follow from Close Reading through to Writing. So we can't advise, for example, that Book Orientation is scheduled for Monday, Close Reading for Tuesday and so on. It all depends.

Working backwards, we can't teach Supported Writing before Short Writes. We can't teach Short Writes before Transformations. We can't teach Transformations before Close Reading. And Book Orientation begins everything. There's no point in leaping ahead. During each lesson we're checking for handover of learning from the previous lesson, and if the students need revision of that particular stage, then our teaching will slow down.

Week 1 of our explicit teaching sequence for a particular text is going to first address Book Orientation and Close Reading. We might get to Transformations, but we might not. If we're teaching in a remote Indigenous school, with all students speaking English as a second or third language, Book Orientation and Close Reading might take two weeks. If we're in an upper primary mainstream class with speakers of English as a first language, we might be working in Transformations by the end of Week 1. The important message is that we have a clear direction for our teaching and take as long as it takes for our students, step by step. It is up to the teacher to decide when to move on.

Figure 12.1 (next page) shows how the explicit activities expand as knowledge about the text develops, by comparing teaching plans for weeks 1 and 4.

All the explicit teaching time during Week 1 in this teacher's class is dedicated to Book Orientation. In Week 4 the Book Orientation work continues, but most of the activity is focused on Transformations and Spelling. By Week 4 the teacher does a quick revision of the focus passage in Close Reading on Monday, and then concentrates on the other stages.

Activities increase over time so that students gradually accumulate knowledge about the text, both decoding/encoding and meaning-making, to take with them into Writing. As the class achieves one learning goal, they can move on to the next.

Class: Year T/1 Text: Big Rain Coming		Week:1 Teaching focus: Introduction and explicit teaching of Book Orientation concepts			Term:
Strategy Sequence	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Lesson learning Goal	Introduce a new text that will help us improve our reading and writing. Know why the author wrote the text.	Know the names for the parts of the book and their purpose (job)	Know why KG wrote a story about waiting for an important event.	Understand the structure of the book (planned in the days of the week)	Know how KG organised the story. Know why the illustrator included a pattern.
Book Orientation Goal	(as above)	(as above)	(as above)	(as above)	(as above)
Book Orientation ↓	Intro concept of a narrative and social purposes Intro text features (title/author/illustrator) Tell the story according to the stages, using pictures Focus on feelings of suspense and anticipation as a reader	Check for handover from Mon. Revise key text features (title/author/illustrator) Discuss purpose of others: Front cover and back cover (associated features), imprint page, dedication, biographies etc	Determine handover of concepts from Mon/Tues Focus on the role and power of the weather in the lives of Old Stephen and the children, and its depiction in illustrations	Handover of concepts from Mon/Tues/Wed Focus on staging of the story using days of the week	Look for handover from all concepts taught Emphasis on the stages- their purpose and content Focus on pattern: creation of suspense and anticipation with repetition of <i>but</i> and <i>still</i>
Read story to class		Read story to class	Read story to class	Read story to class	
Close Reading					
Transformations					
Scaffolded Spelling and Joint Reconstruction					
Short Writes and Supported Writing					

Class:		Week:			Term:
Text:					
Teaching focus:					
Sequence	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Book Orientation	Revise location and purpose of orientation. Revise content of the first sentence of orientation using illustrations: Setting-sun, characters –Old Stephen+others, event coming-dark clouds spreading	Revise info contained in orientation, visual cues and inference understanding. Look for handover of setting understandings and inferences	Revise info contained in orientation, visual cues and inference understandings. Look for handover of character understandings and inferences	Revise info contained in orientation, visual cues and inference understandings. Look for handover of coming event understandings and inferences	
Read story to/with class					
Close Reading	Revision of structure of orientation, using labels (in BB) students attach Practise reading: Invite individuals to read orientation according to structure	Revise structure/purpose with labels (jumble labels, students attach on text only) Practise reading: Invite individuals to read orientation according to structure.	Revise structure/Practise reading: Invite individuals to read orientation according to structure. (give out labels and read text)	Revise structure/Practise reading: Invite individuals to read orientation according to structure (Give out labels and read text. One child to read Stephen's words)	
Transformations	Sentence 1: Revise meaning chunks of first sentence of orientation by cutting text. Cut- On Sunday afternoon/ Old Stephen/nodded/to the dark clouds spreading in the south./ Discuss specific word choice Cut- Sunday/afternoon Discuss use of Sunday/afternoon/ as time marker. Cut-Old/Stephen Discuss use of Old/Stephen as proper name.	Revise meaning chunks of first sentence by giving out chunks and students build up the sentence. Take away/Or challenge students to: On Sunday afternoon, in the south-revise function(what info is missing) Take away afternoon, dark, to revise word function.	Revise meaning chunks and specific word choice of first sentence by giving out some chunks and some individual words. Students build up the sentence. On Sunday/ afternoon/Old Stephen/nodded/ to the clouds /dark/spreading/in the south./ Look for handover of time marker, name, action, extra info(expansions)	Revise meaning chunks and specific word choice of first sentence by giving out mostly individual words. Students build up the sentence. On Sunday/ afternoon/Old /Stephen/nodded/ to the /clouds /dark/spreading/in the /south./ Look for handover of time marker, name, action, extra info(expansions)	Repeat if required.
Spelling and Text Reconstruction	(Assess words out of context in preparation for spelling) Whole class game-Your pile my pile	(Assess words out of context in preparation for spelling) Whole class game-over the bridge etc	Group 1- Teach <i>d/ark</i> Try <i>mark, park</i> Test chunking of all words. Begin/add to chunking lists  Group 2-??? Word recognition games.	Group 1- Teach <i>S/un d/ay, s/south, spr/read/ing</i> Try <i>bun, fun, pay, lay</i> Try <i>mouth</i> Try <i>spr/read, h/ead, br/read</i> Test chunking of all words. Begin/add to chunking lists Group 2- ??? Word recognition games.	Text reconstruction of the first sentence of the orientation. (Joint and independent, depending on ability)

Figure 12.1 Planning for Big rain coming in Week 1 and Week 4

Class Week: 1		Term:			
Text: Nails by Paul Jennings		Teaching focus: Building suspense			
Sequence	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>Book Orientation</b>	Read chapters 1-6, focusing on inferential meanings	Read rest of story, focusing on inferential meanings			Talk about the stages of a narrative: talk through where stages begin and end
<b>Read story to/with class</b>					
<b>Close Reading</b>		Close reading of 1 <sup>st</sup> passage, up to <i>Staring, Watching, Hiding</i>	Revision of Close Reading passage. Highlight in different colours the scary thing, and Lehman's reactions		
<b>Transformations</b>			Transformation of 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> sentences. Focus on word order and word choice	Revision of transformation of 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> sentences.	Quick revision: expect handover of author's intent.
<b>Spelling and Text Reconstruction (TR)</b>	Continue to work on spelling words from previous text. TR of final sentence from previous text		Spelling from 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> sentences: w/alk/ed; thr/ough; w/ater;	Spelling from 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> sentences: w/alk/ed; thr/ough; w/at/er  TR of 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> sentences	Build lists of words with similar patterns: <i>alk; ough; one; ing</i>
<b>Short Writes and Supported Writing</b>			Make a list of other settings where a scary thing might appear.	1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> sentences joint constructn, then students choose from brainstormed list	

Figure 12.2 Planning for *Nails* in Week 1

The timetable in Figure 12.2 (previous page) shows that on Monday the teacher begins with Book Orientation, and reads chapters 1 to 6 with all the students. It is too early in the teaching sequence to take spelling words from the text, so the teacher continues with Spelling and Text Reconstruction from the previous text. On Tuesday, once she has read the rest of the book, she begins Close Reading on the first focus passage. On Wednesday, the students are able to read the passage fluently enough that she can begin the first Transformation lesson, and begin work on Spelling and Text Reconstruction from this passage. For a bit of light relief, the class begins to think about other scary settings on Wednesday too.

This class is moving quite quickly through the sequence. In other contexts the teacher might take four lessons just to read the story, because she has to explain important vocabulary and inferences. She might have to repeat the Close Reading several times to attain fluent reading. In that case, there might be no Transformations, Spelling and Writing activities at all this week.

Despite the initial response from most teachers being ‘How can you study one text for a *whole* term?’, in our experience teachers run out of time and never cover everything they’ve planned. The end of term is a good time to come to a conclusion, wherever we’ve reached in the teaching sequence, and then plan to begin fresh with a new text in the next term.

## THE LITERACY BLOCK IN CONTEXT

The presence of a literacy block in primary class programs, often up to two hours per day, highlights the importance of language and literacy instruction and practice in the primary curriculum. We suggest, as a guide, that the explicit teaching component of the literacy block takes about one hour, while the remainder is dedicated to consolidation activities.

We challenge some approaches to the literacy block that make it difficult for students, particularly marginalised students, to make sense of the activities and their purpose. A couple of observations are presented below for consideration.

### The relationship of the literacy block to the learning areas

The Australian Curriculum describes eight learning areas. The literacy block is not the ninth. Rather, it is intrinsic to and embedded in each learning area.

When our students are involved in reading, talking, writing and spelling, they are reading something related to learning area content, writing something related to learning area content and so on. We don’t want them to think that literacy activities are random tasks. A literature-based literacy program is part of the learning area of English (although, depending on the texts we select, there will be links to other learning areas).

As an alternative, the literacy block could also involve a science, history or health focus, with target text types related to the content of those learning areas (see Parkin & Harper, 2018, *Teaching with Intent*).

### The literacy block is not a line of silos

The National Reading Panel in the US identified five components of literacy as essential for successful reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension strategies (National Reading Panel, 2000). Some experts add oral language to the list to make the Big Six (Konza, 2014).

When it comes to teachers applying the principle of these essential components in the classroom, we sometimes see planning and programming for separate, unrelated activities (see Cox et al., 2019). The

risk is that phonemic awareness activities may be taught separately from phonics, and separately from reading and writing activities. Oral language activities may be different again. Comprehension may be taught as though it makes up only one sixth of literacy skills, as if each component of literacy is in its own silo. In this scenario students must take bits from each teaching silo, combine them together and emerge as literate beings.

In a literature-based literacy program, it is the explicit teaching around the text that acts as an anchor for the literacy block. The explicit teaching sequence might take up to an hour, with the rest of the two-hour block devoted to consolidation and practice, bringing together all the essential components of literacy and language.

## CONSOLIDATING AND PRACTISING LITERACY SKILLS

Consolidation and practice of essential literacy skills (reading, writing, spelling and oral language) needs to take place every day if our students are going to gain automaticity and fluency in reading and writing. Figure 12.3 below provides one example of a teacher's literacy block program.

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9.00–10.00	Explicit literature-based teaching and learning with focus text Book Orientation, Close Study, Transformations, Spelling, Writing				Grammar lesson
10.00 –10.20	Spelling/ handwriting	Spelling/ handwriting	Spelling/ handwriting	Spelling/ handwriting	Word study
10.20 –10.40	Group reading	Joint or independent writing	Group reading	Joint or independent writing	Independent writing
10.40 –10.50	Independent reading/ listening to stories	Independent reading/ listening to stories	Independent reading/ listening to stories	Independent reading/ listening to stories	Role play, story retell
10.50 –11.00	Sharing time: What have we learned today? Did we reach our goals?				

Figure 12.3 Sample weekly plan for a literacy block

The 9.00–10.00 timeslot represents the teaching sequence that is the purpose of this book. It represents an hour of learning, four days a week. The activities within that hour vary, depending on the progress our class is making through the stages for a particular text.

In this literacy block, the teacher has divided the consolidation hour into 20-minute sections. Some points to think about in planning each section are provided below.

### Consolidating spelling and handwriting

In this space, the teacher and students work on analogous spelling. That is, the teacher works with phonetic and early transitional spellers on word families (onsets, rimes, digraphs, letters), while late transitional and competent spellers work on their spelling contracts. Spelling practice has to be systematic and intentional: students have to be learning something, not just filling in time.

In the early years, handwriting is part of every spelling lesson. We have to spend time making sure pencil grip and letter formation are correct from an early age, and insist on legibility. We don't accept capital letters in the middle of words, for example, otherwise some other teacher has to remediate our teaching shortfalls later on. If we're teaching cursive script, we use our spelling words to do so.

## Group reading

This is the time when teachers organise guided reading groups, and there is plenty of information for teachers on this topic (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012). As much as possible we aim to include learning from our explicit lesson in guided reading. For example, with younger students this might involve looking at book features (role of cover, blurb, frontispiece, front to back); knowing that the title of the book tells us about the main character or the problem in the book; making meaning out of illustrations; reading high-frequency words; decoding unfamiliar words; learning how to do a run-up for a word they don't know; and of course working towards fluent reading. With older students we might be looking at how the author uses weather to create atmosphere; reviewing how the character develops across the book; or studying how dialogue shows us the relationship between characters.

While texts selected for the teaching sequence are as close to age-appropriate as possible, texts selected for group reading should be close to students' independent reading age. They could be readers selected to help consolidate understanding of decoding, or high-interest books that students discuss together.

Once again we challenge teachers to be intentional with pedagogy. What is our learning goal? How have we made links to prior learning? How are we moving towards independence in reading?

## Moving towards independent writing

There is a body of literature that talks about the need for fluent writing, and students need to develop stamina, both mental and physical, to write for a sustained time (for example, Ritchey et al., 2016). The problem with independent writing time as a path to fluent writing is that it can be high-risk for students who lack confidence in writing.

When we set aside time for independent writing, we have to think about the level of challenge for our students, and therefore the level of support they need. Without an appropriate level of support we observe avoidance behaviours: students who engage in social activity, have to blow their nose frequently or need to spend 20 minutes sharpening their pencils to a fine point instead of writing; students who write the same story every time with words they know how to spell comfortably; or students who constantly queue to get spelling words from the teacher.

Eventually the intended outcome of this teaching sequence is that our students can write extended texts independently and with control. However, we can't just set an independent writing task at the end of the teaching sequence and trust we'll get good outcomes. For this to happen, it's crucial that we transition well from the explicit, highly scaffolded teaching described in this book. Ensuring successful transition is the subject of the final chapter.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**There's a lot to think about in planning to use this teaching sequence. I feel a little overwhelmed. How do other teachers do it?**

Ideally this will be a whole-school planning exercise, undertaken with your school's full support. Collaborating with your professional learning team, you will be able to draw on the collective expertise