

# K-12 Literacy

## Literacy Framework



**Calgary Board  
of Education**



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### Notes |

- 1| The Literacy Framework is intended for CBE employees, and as such, may link to resource materials available on Insite, the CBE’s staff-facing intranet.
- 2| The use of the term “student(s)” within the Literacy Framework encompasses all learners within CBE, including Kindergarten children. The terms “student(s)” and “learner(s)” are used synonymously.



## A Shift: The Quarter Turn

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*I suddenly knew I was looking at it from the wrong angle and I gave the cloth in my hand a quarter turn. Immediately I saw a beautiful and coherent golden pattern...In wonder the pattern had emerged to be seen in all its beauty by those who could learn to make the quarter turn.*

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—Helen M. Luke, *Such Stuff as Dreams are Made On: The Autobiography and Journals of Helen M. Luke*

The fabric of the 2016-2021 Literacy Strategy continues to be woven throughout this framework. The learning and work of the past is acknowledged, valued, and built upon here. Examples building on these strengths are evident in the creation and use of the English Language Arts Assessment and Reporting Guides (Calgary Board of Education, n.d.) and in that high-impact strategies continue to be addressed here and noted in School Development Plan data. And yet, essential changes are needed too. Through experiences, research, and evidence-based practices and interventions, we are able to see things with greater clarity. This is a time of opportunity to both close gaps and elevate successes for learners, educators, and administration within the Calgary Board of Education. As we realign as a system and a society emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, our timing is ideal to lift up our deepened understanding and shift, to make a quarter turn; to stand on our solid foundations, while beginning to move forward in a new direction.

## Outcome

Alberta Education (2017) defines literacy as *the ability, confidence and willingness to engage with language to acquire, construct and communicate meaning in all aspects of daily living*. Language is explained as a socially and culturally constructed system of communication.

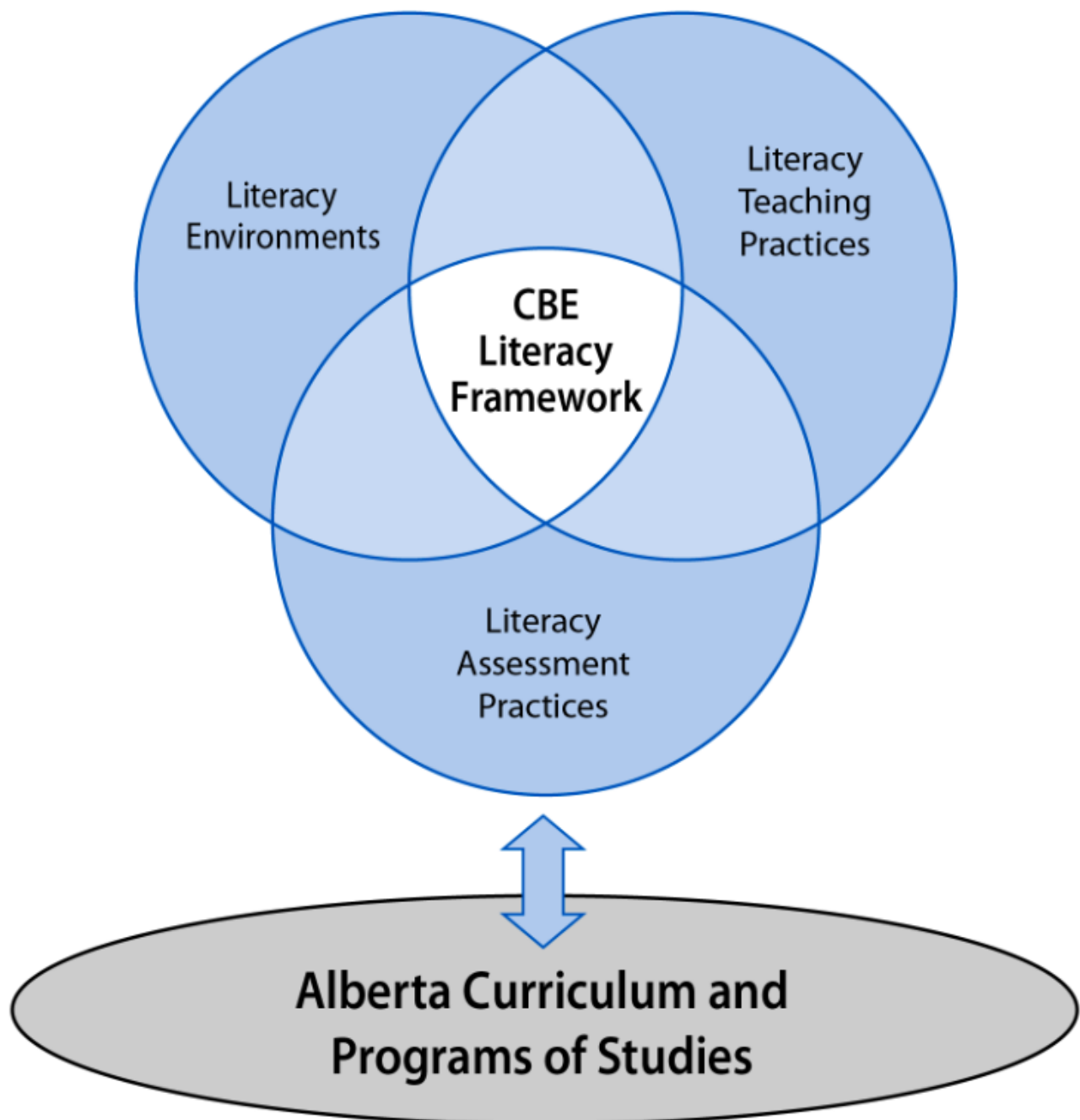
Literacy is a lifelong process that is essential to successful learning and living. Diverse literacy opportunities and teaching expertise increase equity for each learner by enabling individuals to reach their full potential, achieve a better quality of life, and contribute to their communities. Literacy is a means to discover and make meaning of an increasingly complex and evolving world. Learners need the confidence and habits of mind to acquire, create, connect and communicate information in a variety of contexts, going beyond the basic skills of reading and writing (Alberta Regional Consortia, 2017).

A focus on literacy throughout all disciplines is an important way to allow learners to develop and demonstrate deep conceptual understandings, think creatively and critically, and generate new ideas and knowledge. It is imperative that learners “be able to critically evaluate sources of information and to recognize ways in which what they learn calls them to live ethically and productively” (Hartwell et al., 2020, p. 29).

By developing professional capacity through this framework, we work towards achieving the key outcome from the CBE Education Plan, “Students achieve excellence in literacy”. Achieving excellence is focused on supporting every learner to realize their full potential, and prioritizing professional learning and well-being of employees.

## Essential Elements

The essential elements (environment, teaching practices, and assessment practices) and considerations for implementation within this document were chosen in line with enduring literacy research that focuses on improving learner achievement in literacy for all disciplines. Research that connects to the essential elements is identified throughout the document and in the references section. This document is written for many stakeholders within the CBE: from teachers who are integrating literacy approaches into their practice, to school leaders who are guiding School Development Plans, to system leaders who are creating coherence. Further information such as specific assessments, exemplars, and recommended resources will be developed on the CBE Insite pages.



# Essential Elements

## Literacy Environments

Literacy environments are inclusive spaces where students are able to access communities of learning that create equity through learning spaces, routines, instructional materials, and the understanding and development of literacy identities. Thoughtful decisions are made around multimodal resources and the inviting nature of physical space. It is essential that the environment creates a sense of belonging that is inclusive of educators, students, families, and communities. Educators will acknowledge social and cultural identities and curate their resources to ensure they are bias free, culturally responsive, and based on student voice and need (International Literacy Association, 2019).

## Literacy Teaching Practices

Commitment to research-informed, explicit, and systematic literacy practice is supported through collaboration of educators. The focus on best practices in both foundational and higher-level literacy skills move learners towards the transfer of understanding across disciplines and experiences building upon the literacies and strengths already inherent in all learners. Responsive teaching practices create equitable learning opportunities and ensure that all students are engaged in meaningful, joyful, and challenging work that leads to becoming self-determining readers, writers, and thinkers (Routman, 2018).

## Literacy Assessment Practices

Assessment includes a continuous cycle of instruction, gathering evidence from a variety of sources, interpreting that evidence and making adjustments to teaching practice. Teachers support students in an active pursuit of learning, developing self-understanding and participating in decision-making. The purpose of assessment is to improve student learning (Calgary Board of Education, n.d.).

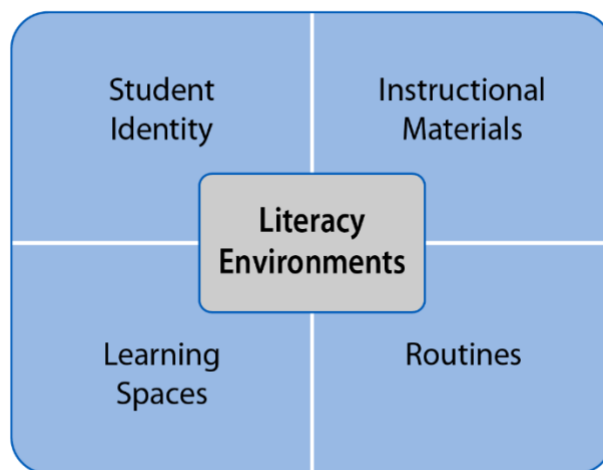
# Literacy Environment

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*Human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them.*

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—Lev Vygotsky, *Mind in Society*



## Learning Spaces

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*Refers to the design and general organization of the physical or virtual learning space. The ultimate goal as educators is to create an inclusive, equitable place that fosters inquiry, dialogue, and sharing of ideas as well as quiet areas for work and reflection. Learning spaces are responsive and intentionally designed as well as welcoming, accessible, and reflective of the interests and backgrounds, languages, and cultures of all learners.*

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### Considerations for Implementation

- Varied learning space arrangements within the classroom or other areas in the school
- Spaces that allow for lively and respectful dialogue
- Consistent and purposeful access to outdoor learning space
- Easy access to a variety of organized learning materials and responsive spaces
- Purposeful access to technology tools, such as Google and SMART Learning Suite

## Routines

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*Daily routines make learning environments feel safe and build trusting relationships created around connection. Routines allow teachers to spend more time on meaningful instruction and build community in the classroom. Honigsfeld and Dodge (n.d.) call routines “the deliberate procedures that teachers establish in their classroom to develop community and offer structure to their learners. Routines are individual and shared habits within a classroom community” (para. 4).*

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## Considerations for Implementation

- Greet and recognize learners as individuals each day
- Literacy expectations, instructions, and purposes for work are clearly conveyed for all learners
- Post daily/class schedule and learning intentions
- Repeated opportunities for learners to practice and consolidate literacy skills and knowledge during class time
- Clear and consistent expectations during independent, small group and large group instruction
- Ensure celebrations and sharing times are included
- Ensure meaningful daily reading and writing tasks in all content areas
- Strategic, **flexible groupings** that create equitable opportunities for connection and target students' specific learning needs

## Instructional Materials

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*Instructional materials need to be thoughtfully evaluated to meet the needs of the learners and the learning goals. Learners need access to resources that include a range of modalities, levels, formats, topics, perspectives, and diverse text types. Materials need to be culturally responsive texts that incorporate First Nations, Métis, and Inuit knowledge systems, languages, and histories. The materials need to provide choice and offer opportunities for learners to see themselves and others in positive representations.*

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## Considerations for Implementation

- Instruction and learning are documented and supported in intentional ways such as word/sound walls, anchor charts, concept maps, sentence frames, graphic organizers, clear criteria, and targets
- Culturally diverse texts that provide “windows” into the experiences of others and “mirrors” into students' own experiences (Bishop, 1990)
- Support phonics instruction with a variety of texts including **decodable texts**
- Variety of inviting writing materials
- Open access to inclusive, linguistically diverse, and inviting texts
- Intentional and purposeful use of technologies that support literacy practices and represent learning

## Student Identity

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*Each learner comes to school with a variety of literacies and with funds of knowledge and personal interests from which to build on. Recognizing each learner's identity as a reader and a writer is an essential foundational piece in growing both individual and community depth and breadth of knowledge and understanding through literacy. As knowledge, curiosity, and interest grow, it allows for conversations and expanding each learner's reading and writing selves.*

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## Considerations for Implementation

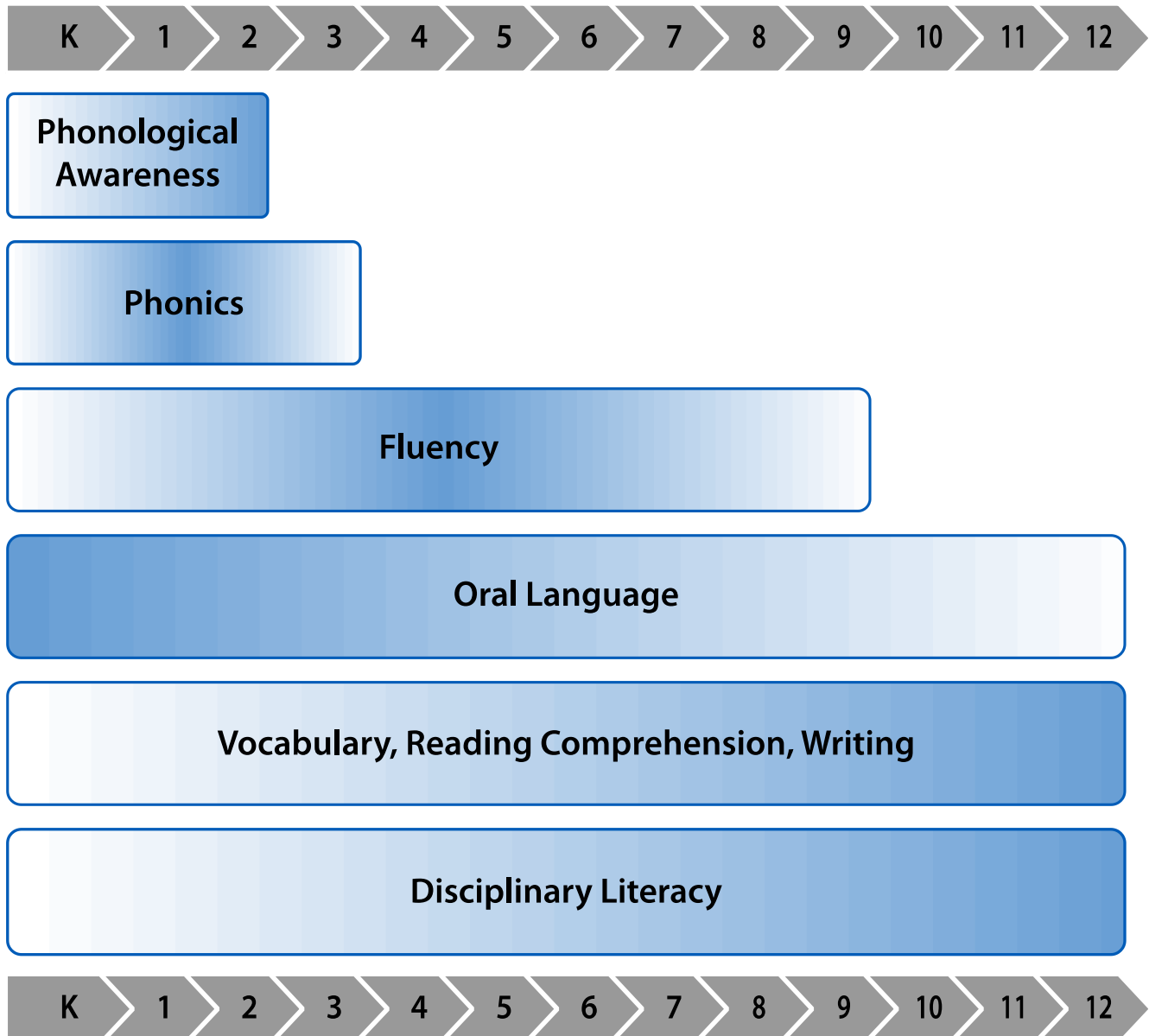
- Allow for learner engagement both with ideas and with others
- Completing and referring to learner reading and writing interest inventories
- Support the creation of positive interpersonal relationships
- Engage learners in goal setting, self-assessment, and/or reflection
- Value and strengthen home-school-community literacy relationships
- Honour student voice and choice
- Encourage structured perspective taking
- Book talks to build reader identities

# Literacy Teaching Practices

*The greatest influence on student progression in learning is having highly expert, inspired, and passionate teachers and school leaders working together to maximize the effect of their teaching on all students in their care.*

—John Hattie, *What Works Best in Education: The Politics of Collaborative Expertise*

## Instructional Emphasis | K-12





# Oral Language

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*Oral language skills are involved in virtually every aspect of a learner's school day. From socializing with peers at drop-off, to understanding instructions from educators and participating in classroom activities, oral language skills are at the centre of every interaction and profoundly impact success in school (Foorman et al., 2015; Ladd et al., 2012; Rubin et al., 2012, as cited by Bardell & Archibal, 2020).*

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Moats (2020) defined oral language as encompassing phonological skills, syntax, morphological skills, pragmatics and semantics. The acquisition of these skills often begins at a young age, before learners begin focusing on print-based concepts. In this document, the term oral language includes the understanding and use of receptive and expressive language, and its connection to background knowledge as a means of communication. Although oral language is often inherent, it continues to evolve as students are supported in a variety of learning experiences. To support the understanding of this terminology, each of these language components are defined as follows:

- Morphology refers to morphemes, the smallest units of meaning in language, such as the “ed” in walked tells us it is something that happened in the past, and how they are combined to form words.
- Semantics refers to the meaning of words and phrases, including vocabulary knowledge.
- Syntax, sometimes simply referred to as grammar, is the set of rules that dictate the ways in which words and phrases can be combined into sentences and paragraphs. It is essential to use correct syntax in order to communicate messages that are meaningful and easy to understand.
- Pragmatic refers to the social use of language. This includes a variety of social norms regarding how to participate in communication including how to take turns in a conversation, interact in a group, maintain personal space, and use appropriate behaviour with different communication partners or in different settings.
- Phonology and Phonological Skills have been addressed under the Reading section.

## Considerations for Implementation

- Think-Pair-Share
- Discussion and questioning
- **Dialogic discussion**
- Provide wait time
- Culturally responsive non-verbal communication
- Model and explain complex vocabulary and syntax within classroom discussions and read alouds
- Opportunities for reciprocal teaching
- Ask and encourage open-ended questions

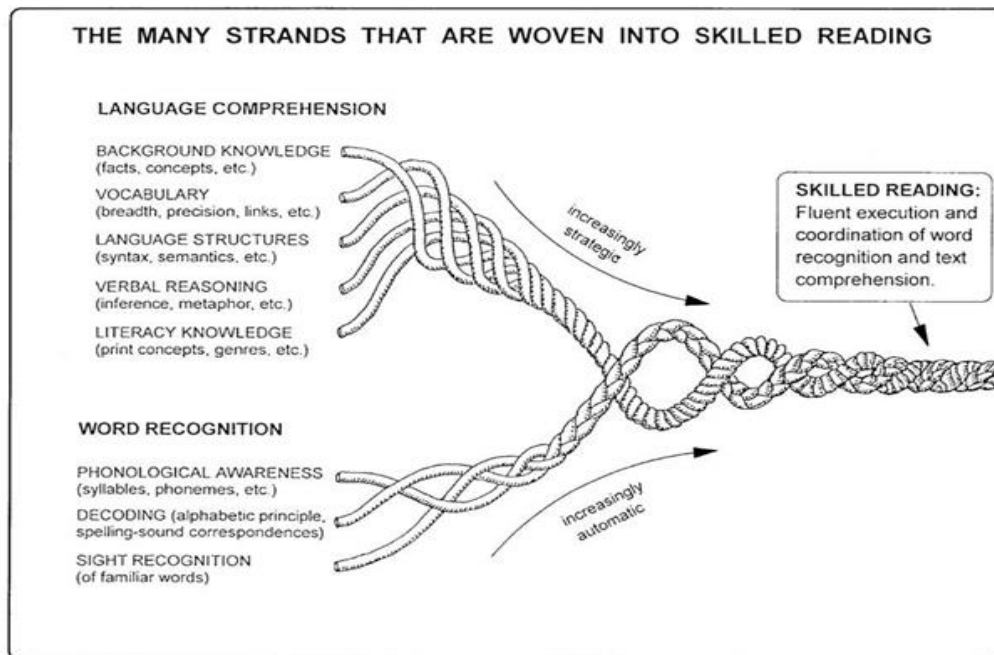
# Reading

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*Reading is a multifaceted process that allows for making meaning from print. Unlike seeing, hearing and speaking, reading is not something humans do naturally. Wolf (2007) states, “We human beings were never born to read; we invented reading and then had to teach it to every new generation. Each new reader comes to reading with a ‘fresh’ brain - one that is programmed to speak, see, and think, but not to read” (p. 3). Scarborough’s Reading Rope explains how reading is acquired in more detail. This model depicts two strands, language comprehension and word recognition. Within each strand, individual skills are broken into threads that define the strands. The model provides a visual reminder of the complex components for reading and the skills that need to weave together for a learner to become a skilled reader.*

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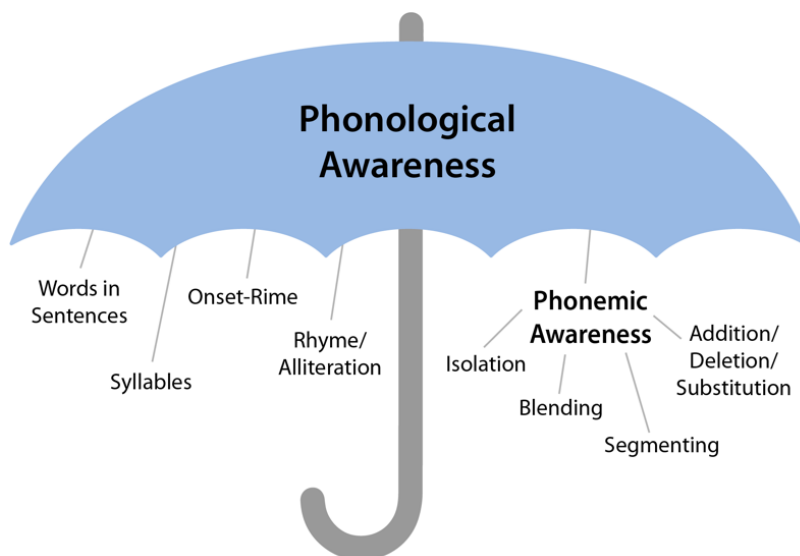
## Scarborough's Reading Rope



Note. The image, used with permission from the author, first appeared in Scarborough, H. S. (2001). Connecting early language and literacy to later reading (dis)abilities: Evidence, theory, and practice. In S. Neuman & D. Dickinson (Eds.), Handbook for research in early literacy (pp. 97-110). Guilford Press.

## Phonological Awareness

*Phonological awareness refers to the ability to identify, think about, and manipulate the sounds in words. It is an oral language set of skills and includes syllabic structure, onset-rime and phonemic awareness. Phonological awareness is a pre-print ability that enables learners to make sense of print and leads to becoming better readers and spellers. Research says phonological awareness helps with learning and remembering words. Phonological awareness is an umbrella term that includes awareness of words, phonemes (sounds), and of larger word units (Reading Rockets, 2020).*



## Syllables

As learners are developing awareness of sounds, explicit instruction is needed about words as units of pronunciation, not merely letter sequences. As learners begin reading, they can chunk longer words into manageable parts. Moats and Tolman (n.d) remind us that, “Familiarity with syllable patterns helps learners to read longer words accurately and fluently and to solve spelling problems” (para 3).

## Onset and Rime

An onset is the initial consonant or consonant cluster of a one-syllable word. A rime is the vowel and any consonants that follow the onset. In the word “mat,” /m/ is the onset and /at/ is the rime. Rimes are word parts that refer to a spelling pattern, and rimes will often rhyme. They are the sound similarities in words. Often teachers instruct using rimes (sometimes referred to as word families) and primarily teach as visual letter sequences rather than teaching that the visual similarities represent sound similarities. Learners need to hear the onset and rime in words so they can segment into these parts. This phonological skill may support learners to see the predictability in words when reading and writing.

## Rhyme

Rhyming is an early phonological awareness skill. Detecting rhyme requires a child to hear sounds within words. Having learners generate rhyming words is an opportunity for them to work with words that have common sound patterns and often similar spellings.

## Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness is the ability to notice, think about, and work with individual sounds in spoken words. Before children learn to read print, they need to become aware of how the sounds (phonemes) in words work. Phonemic awareness is a subcategory of phonological awareness. The focus of phonemic awareness is narrow – identifying, segmenting, blending and manipulating the individual sounds in words. Phonemic awareness is not phonics.

## Considerations for Implementation

- Daily opportunities for learners to use and reuse the language to explore spoken language
- Opportunities to connect phonological awareness knowledge & skills to home language
- Precise modelling of letter sounds by the teacher
- Design tasks to include such experiences as, singing songs, tongue twisters, poetry, games, read alouds, **dialogic discussions**, repeated readings, gross motor connections
- Recognizing which words in a set of words begin with the same sound
- Isolating and saying the first or last sound in a word
- Combining, or blending the separate sounds in a word to say the word
- Breaking, or segmenting a word into its separate sounds
- Lesson design includes gradual release of responsibility with opportunities to practice and review as needed

## Phonics

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*Phonics instruction teaches learners how to connect letters onto corresponding speech sounds – graphemes (letters) to phonemes (sounds). Preferred phonics instruction devotes intentional time to providing learners with tasks to apply these skills to real reading and writing experiences. There is a strong connection between phonics and comprehension. Systematic and explicit phonics instruction significantly improves word recognition, spelling and reading comprehension. Phonics is not simple or intuitive; these foundational skills are complex and need to be explicitly taught.*

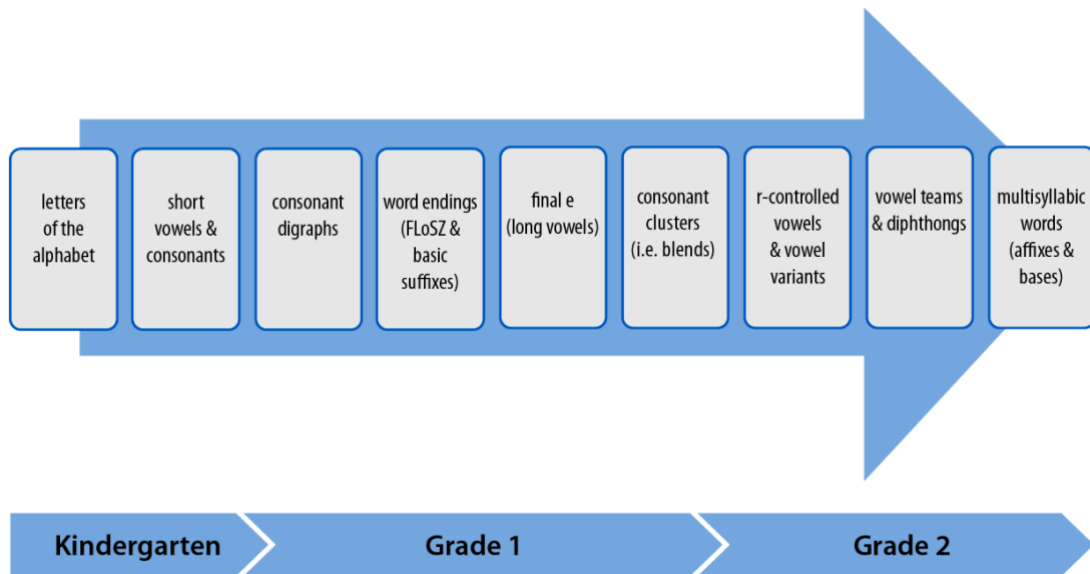
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## Considerations for Implementation

Phonics instruction meets the decoding needs of early readers and can be an intervention for older learners:

- Daily explicit instruction and application of alphabetic principle of creating sound/symbol connections
- Hands-on materials for learner to use, such as **Elkonin (sound) boxes** or letter tiles
- Opportunity to read **decodable text** as part of each phonics lesson design
- Reading and spelling of disciplinary vocabulary using syllables when reading multisyllabic words
- Use of visuals such as **sound walls**
- Use of a clear scope and sequence that includes the following progression of skills:

### Typical Scope and Sequence



Adapted from A Fresh Look at Phonics: Common Causes of Failure and 7 Ingredients for Success (p. 40), by W. Blevins, 2017, Corwin.

## Fluency

*Reading fluency refers to the ability to read text aloud with sufficient speed, accuracy, and expression (prosody). Reading fluency is made up of two components – automaticity in word recognition and expression in oral reading that reflects the meaning of the text. Reading fluency is the bridge between decoding and reading comprehension and matters because it is an essential element of proficient and meaningful reading. While fluency is important to both oral and silent reading, research suggests that oral reading practice and instruction are most effective for fluency development (Rasinski, 2012, 2014; National Reading Panel, 2000; Shanahan, 2015).*

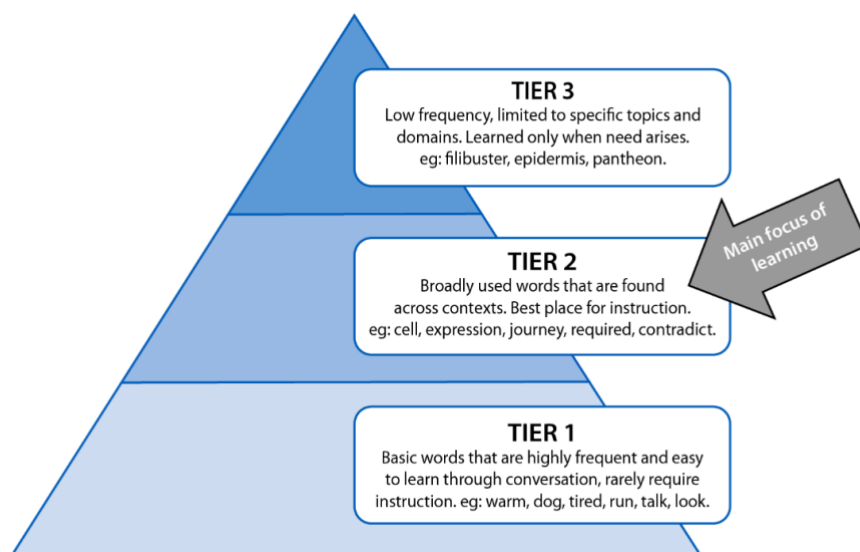
## Considerations for Implementation

- Model fluent reading, using both examples and non-examples, while reading grade level text
- Provide assisted reading through paired, choral, and echo reading; listening to text through such things as text-to-speech technologies or audiobooks
- Read and re-read pieces complex grade level content area text together to ensure equitable access to grade level content for all students
- Wide and varied reading practice: re-reading of complex texts, independent reading, and performance reading such as rehearsed scripts, poetry, songs, or speeches.

## Vocabulary

*Vocabulary is the knowledge of words and word meanings. Nearly 100 years of theory and research support the position that acquiring a substantial vocabulary is essential to equitable opportunities for meaningful reading comprehension and to success in school overall (Ganske & Graves, 2014). As learners begin to read, vocabulary from the text is mapped onto the oral vocabulary that individuals bring from their background knowledge and the content being read. Having a deep understanding of the letter-sound correspondences also support learning new written vocabulary, especially when the words are already, or become, part of one's oral vocabulary. Oral vocabulary is key to weaving together spoken and written forms; reading vocabulary is crucial to the comprehension of a skilled reader (National Reading Panel, 2000).*

### Three Tiers of Vocabulary Development



Adapted from Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction, by M. L. Beck, M. G. McKeown, and L. Kucan, 2013, Guilford Press.

### Considerations for Implementation

Key Components of a Comprehensive Vocabulary Program	
Components	Teaching Practices
Provide rich and varied language experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read alouds of complex texts with direct explanations of words</li> <li>Independent reading of a variety of authors, formats, and genres</li> <li>Provide time for meaningful classroom discussion</li> <li>Use models to demonstrate elaborated vocabulary through writing</li> </ul>
Foster word consciousness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stock the classroom with engaging, diverse books</li> <li>Engage in word play through games and discussion</li> <li>Provide lessons on word choice when writing</li> <li>Flood the classroom with words related to the topic</li> </ul>
Teach word-learning strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Study word parts to unlock meaning (prefixes, suffixes, roots)</li> <li>Make connections to learners' first language if appropriate</li> <li>Build relational sets through the use of routines such as word sorts, <b>word ladders</b>, concept maps, <b>word matrixes</b>, affix walls</li> <li>Use context to infer word meanings and provide access to reference tools</li> </ul>
Teach individual words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intentionally choose words to teach, with a focus on tier 2 words</li> <li>Explain, generate definitions, and use words in speech and writing</li> <li>Use of <b>Frustration Models</b>, semantic word sorts or collaborative class charts</li> </ul>

## Reading Comprehension

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*Reading comprehension is an active and complex process achieved using many instructional approaches that equip students to organize and analyze knowledge while building connections through reading to self, others and the world. Effective reading comprehension includes the act of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning while engaging in intentional problem solving and critical thinking. Supporting learners in reading comprehension is "fundamental in moving from surface to deep knowledge and transfer" (Fisher, Frey & Hattie, 2016, p. 56). A focus on comprehension supports students to become integrative readers, rather than strategic ones. (Fisher, Frey, & Hattie, 2016).*

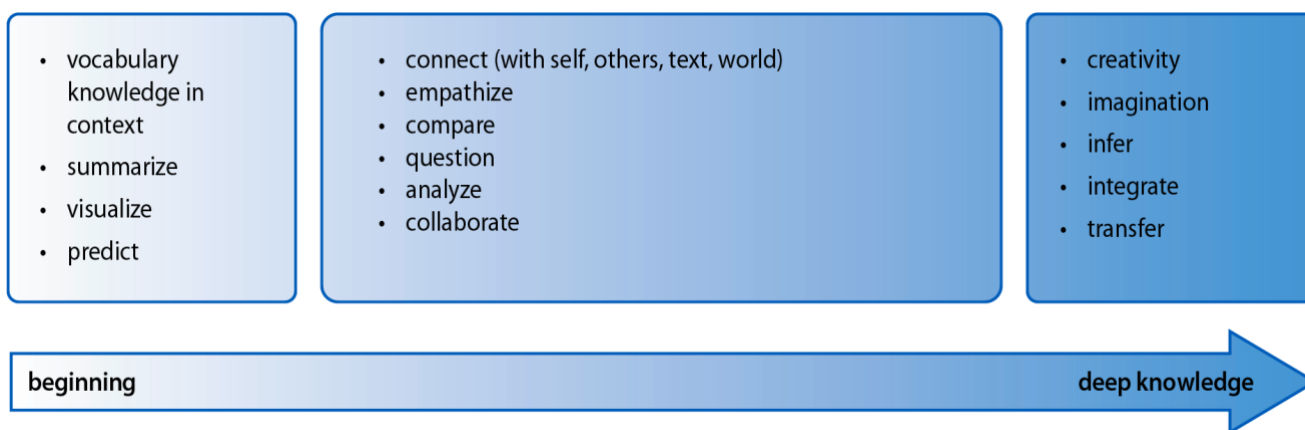
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### Considerations for Implementation

- Activate and build background knowledge by using pre-reading provocations and connections
- Re-tell, question and summarize during and after reading
- Annotate texts with connections, wonderings, paraphrases/summary of main points
- Provide many opportunities for learners to discuss texts and ideas before, during, and after reading: think alouds, partner reading, **reciprocal teaching**, jigsaw, think/pair/share, **Socratic seminars**
- Use of digital tools, such as Jamboard or Google Docs to collaboratively share thinking and make connection around text that has been read
- Concept and story mapping

### Moving to Deep Reading Comprehension

When learners are developing their reading comprehension, there are many skills that need to be applied simultaneously; as they apply effective reading strategies, they will move from surface reading to "deep knowledge and transfer" (Fisher, Frey & Hattie, 2016, p.56). In the visual below, the skills related to beginning reading through to deep knowledge have been placed on a continuum to show a progression that learners may follow.



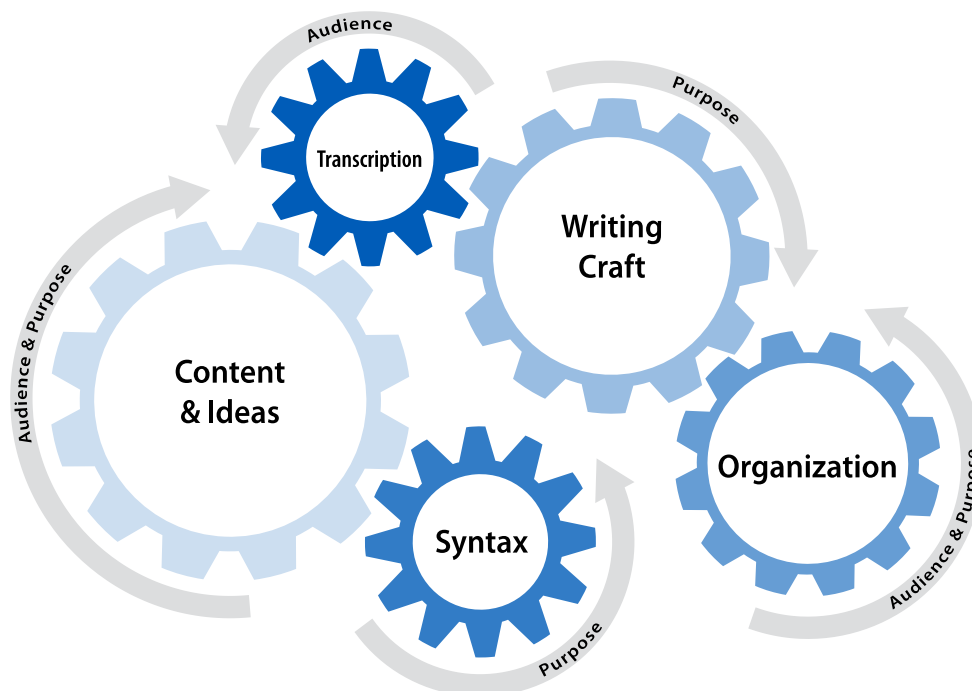
# Writing

*Writing is an unconstrained literacy skill used to accomplish a variety of outcomes within the school setting and beyond. It is a multimodal process we can use to tell stories, create imagined worlds, explore who we are, combat loneliness, and chronicle our learning and experiences. Writing is an indispensable tool for learning and communicating. We use it to gather, preserve and transmit ideas and information. The permanence of writing makes ideas we are studying readily available for review and evaluation. Its explicitness encourages establishing connection between these ideas, and its active nature fosters the exploration of unexamined assumptions (Graham & Harris, 2019). Writing is a way to make our thinking visible, deepen comprehension, and perhaps, make misconceptions observable. Its recursive nature allows writers to reflect, revise, and improve their thinking in critical and collaborative ways.*

Components of Writing	Beginning	Intermediate	Experienced
Content and Ideas	Drawing, dictation, topic selection, personal narrative	Writing process, topic selection, fact gathering, brainstorming	Curating ideas, literary critique and analysis, control/awareness of biases and perspectives
Organization	Use chronological markers, sort and organize information, simple sequential or transitional vocabulary	Paragraph structures, form and structure, linking /transitional words and phrases	Patterns of organization, text structures, genre studies, linking form to purpose
Writing Craft	Focus on task, author's voice, word choice	Sense of audience, purpose in writing, figurative language, developing semantic choices	Literary devices, refining purpose, disciplinary vocabulary
Syntax	Connect oral and written grammar and sentence structure, word order, verb tense	Sentence elaboration parts of speech, grammar, purposeful application of sentence types	Using syntactical structures to support purpose, deriving literary meanings by analyzing syntax
Transcription	Scribbles, colouring, shape and letter formation, pencil grip, sounds/symbol connection	Fluency in letter formation, stamina building, keyboarding	Fluency in digital and manual transcription, sketch noting, note taking skills

Adapted from *The Writing Rope: The Strands that are Woven into Skilled Writing*. J. Sedita, 2019, (<https://284ivp1abr6435y6t219n54e-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Article-The-Strands-That-Are-Woven-Into-Skilled-Writing.pdf>).

## Components of Writing



### Considerations for Implementation

Daily structured and supported writing times, where learners write for real purposes and audiences through strategies such as:

- Interactive writing
- Direct and explicit instruction on purposeful planning
- Using graphic organizers or genre structures
- **Loose parts**
- Explicit use of **mentor texts**
- Structured writing lessons
- Self-selected writing times
- Writing within content areas
- Explicitly building reciprocal reading-writing connections
- Response journals
- Digital resources, such as Google Docs, for peer and teacher feedback, revising and editing

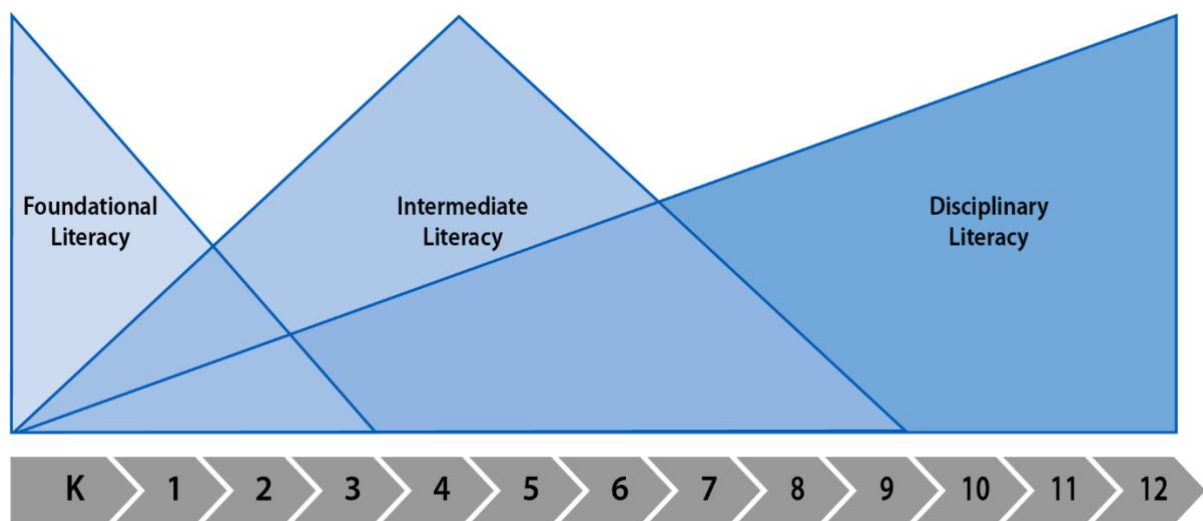


# Disciplinary Literacy

*Disciplinary Literacy emphasizes the knowledge and abilities possessed by those who create, communicate, and use knowledge within disciplines. It emphasizes the nuanced differences in the ways that experts engage in the work of that discipline. This is fundamental to improving learners' ability to engage in discipline-specific learning, as each discipline differs in its foundational purposes, specialized genres, symbolic artifacts, traditions of communication, evaluation standards of quality and precision, and use of language. Disciplinary Literacy allows learners to grasp the ways literacy is used within a specific discipline to create, disseminate, and critique information (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012; Rehnein, et al., 2018). Teaching practices used to support disciplinary literacy are discipline specific; disciplinary literacy does not mean applying outcomes from English Language Arts to other disciplines.*

*Every teacher is a teacher of the literacies within their disciplines.*

## Emphasis of Literacies K-12



Adapted from *Disciplinary Literacy: Exemplary Processes and Promising Practices*, by C. L. Dobbs, J. Ippolito, and M. Charner-Laird, in E. Ortlieb, S. Grote-Garcia, J. Cassidy & E. H. Cheek Jr (Eds.), *What's hot in literacy: Exemplar Models of Effective Practice* (Vol. 11, pp. 17-31). Copyright 2020 by Emerald Publishing Limited.10.1108/S2048-0458202011

## Considerations for Implementation

Planning (Fink, L., 2014):

- What technical language do adult practitioners use in a discipline or field?
- What big questions do leaders and learners ask in the discipline or field?
- What processes are used for making new knowledge or for sharing advances in the discipline or field?
- Where is the current “edge” of knowledge making in the discipline or field?
- What are the habits of mind we would see in a highly skilled practitioner of the discipline or field?

Framework (Wilder, 2016):

1. Design Disciplinary Inquiry and Tasks

- Frame learning through essential disciplinary questions that guide authentic inquiry concerning issues that impact students' lives.
- Assign challenging disciplinary tasks to provide students with both a reason to investigate texts and a means of applying their thinking.

2. Select Appropriate Disciplinary Texts

- Each discipline values certain kinds of texts (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012). If we apply a broadened definition of text as an “object intentionally imbued with meaning” (Draper & Siebert, 2010, p. 28), we can expand the ways in which learners use texts as tools for thinking.

Therefore, selected texts:

- May include a wide variety of multimodal primary and secondary source texts (podcasts, news stories, videos, graphs, tables, images, etc.)
- Should align with the discipline.
- Function as tools for literate thinking and participation in the discipline.

3. Scaffold Disciplinary Practice

- Teach students to use disciplinary literacy strategies in history to call attention to the interpretive nature of historical text and the importance of identifying sources and bias.
- Demonstrate how to read across specific texts providing students with a model of literate disciplinary reasoning. For example, in mathematics model for students how to gain accurate information from tables and graphs to justify their solutions to real-world problems.
- Pay attention to student interaction with texts and respond to fallacies in thinking. For example, watch for students who attempt to read a science text in the same way as other literature, ignoring vital information contained in illustrations and other images.

# Literacy Assessment Practices

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*It is only through assessment that we can discover whether the instructional activities in which we engaged our students resulted in the intended learning. Assessment really is the bridge between teaching and learning.*

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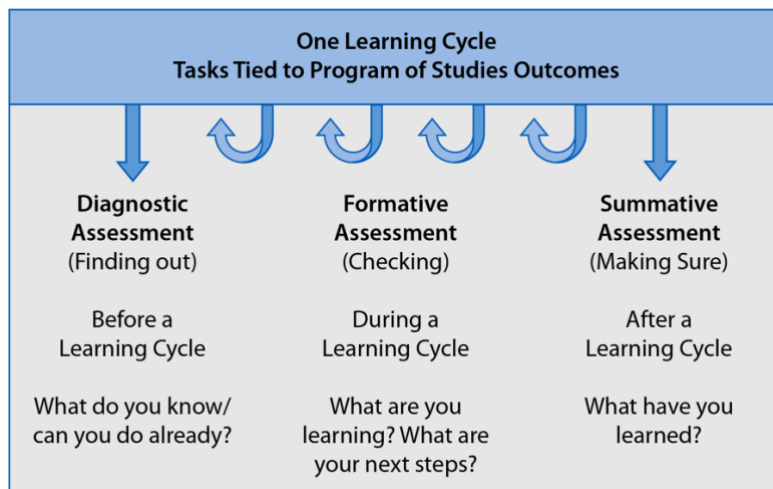
—Dylan William, *Assessment: The Bridge Between Teaching and Learning*

## Assessment and Reporting in CBE

CBE’s foundational assessment guidelines are outlined in [Assessment and Reporting in the CBE](#). It states that the primary purpose of assessment is to improve student learning. Five guiding principles are central to all assessment and reporting policies and practices.

- Assessment practices are fair, transparent and equitable for all learners.
- Assessment makes explicit connections to the intended learning goals.
- Assessment is ongoing and embedded throughout cycles of learning.
- Learners are actively involved in the assessment process.
- Assessment information shared with learners and families is clear and meaningful.

### The Process of Assessment and Reporting



## Diagnostic Assessment

Diagnostic assessments allow teachers to gather information to determine learner readiness to engage in content and to monitor progress. These assessments can include the use of universal screeners and teacher-designed assessments that are typically connected to the intended learning goals. Teachers use the valuable information from diagnostic assessments to plan instruction and future assessments that are differentiated and personalized, and work with students to set appropriate learning goals. Diagnostic assessments are low-stake assessments, and the results are not used in the determination of report card grades or to make recommendations for course enrolment.

Diagnostic assessments for literacy often include teacher-designed and commercially prepared diagnostic or screening tools such as spelling inventories, informal reading inventories, word lists, or phonemic

awareness assessments. Schools consider validity, alignment, reliability and potential bias when choosing to utilize commercially and externally available screeners. When using a universal screener (either optional or mandatory) teachers exercise professional judgement and follow protocols directed by each tool.

## Formative Assessment

Formative assessment occurs frequently and on an ongoing basis during instruction while learners are still gaining knowledge and practicing skills. Formative assessment is always connected to the intended learning goal and may include informal and/or formal tasks that are embedded as a seamless part of the learning cycle. Teachers use the information gathered to monitor learner progress so they can provide timely, specific and actionable feedback, scaffold next steps, and differentiate instruction to meet learner needs. Formative assessment includes opportunities for self- and peer-assessment where learners use the information to monitor their own progress, adjust learning approaches, reflect on their learning and set individual goals for learning.

## Summative Assessment

Summative assessment can take many forms and occurs at or near the end of a learning cycle once learners have engaged in cycles of formative assessment. The use of CBE's High Quality Summative Assessment resources ([K-9, 10-12, Modified Programming](#)) support teachers in employing research-based summative assessment practices. Teachers consider the outcomes being assessed and determine how to gather data that accurately and fairly represents what each learner knows and can do. Teachers may also use information from summative assessments to inform further instruction when learners do not demonstrate mastery of the outcomes. Summative assessment information is used to determine levels of achievement and to ensure report card information is as accurate and fair as possible.

## Common Assessments

Designing and administering common assessments are a school-based decision. These assessments are developed and administered in a given timeframe by teachers in a grade level / course or across grade levels / courses in a particular subject area to determine if learners are mastering the intended learning outcomes. Teachers analyze data collaboratively and plan next steps to ensure a continual focus on improving learning. The use of common assessments for diagnostic, formative or summative purposes provides consistency and facilitates ongoing adjustments to planning and Professional Learning Community (PLC) work.

# Glossary

(**bolded** words throughout the document indicate a definition has been provided in the glossary)

**Decodable texts** - A variety of texts are needed during early reading instruction. Decodable texts are one type of books. Decodable texts are used to follow a phonics lesson. These texts include the following criteria, comprehensible (vocabulary is understandable), instructive (the majority of the words must be decodable based on the phonics previously taught), engaging and “worth revisiting and talking about” (Blevins, 2016, pp. 154-158).

**Dialogic discussion** - uses “the power of talk to stimulate and extend pupils’ thinking and advance their learning and understanding. It helps the teacher more precisely to diagnose pupils’ needs, frame their learning tasks and assess their progress. It empowers the learner for lifelong learning and active citizenship” (Alexander, 2010).

**Elkonin boxes** - build phonological awareness skills by segmenting words into individual sounds, or phonemes. To use Elkonin **boxes**, a learner listens to a word and moves a token into a **box** for each sound or phoneme.

**Flexible grouping** – Grouping learners according to shared instructional needs and abilities and regrouping as learners’ instructional needs change. Group needs and allocated instructional time may vary among groups.

**Fruyer Model**- represents vocabulary through multiple means. It is a four-square model that defines the word, describes essential characteristics of the concept, provides examples, and non-examples. Engaging learners’ thinking in each of these four components, promotes a deep understanding of vocabulary (Fruyer Model, n.d.).

**Loose parts** - Natural or synthetic items that can be carried, mixed, remixed, ordered, connected, disconnected and used in a variety of ways other than what was intended to create, deepen and/or represent knowledge and thinking in a multimodal context (Stockman, 2021).

**Mentor texts** – are pieces of writing whose idea(s), structure(s), or written craft can be used to inspire a learner to write something original (Meier, 2010).

**Multimodal** - refers to print and digital based texts that utilize more than one mode, where photography, painting, poetry [music] and mathematics can be examples of different modes (Serafini, 2015, pp. 412-413).

**Reciprocal teaching** - is a contemporary application of Vygotsky's theories; it is used to improve learners' ability to learn to be actively involved and monitor their comprehension as they read. Usually used during small group reading instruction. Teachers model, then help students learn to guide group discussions using four strategies: summarizing, question generating, clarifying, and predicting (National Council of Teachers of English, 2021).

**Socratic Seminars** - teach learners how to conduct focused conversation, how to use effective habits of discussion and how to explain their ideas by supporting them with evidence.

**Sound walls** – a visual teaching tool that is set up according to the articulation of speech sounds, building speech to print connections through visual and auditory anchors (Dahlgren, n.d.).

**Word ladders** - a learning task that teaches vocabulary. Learners are given clues to build words. E.g., \_ \_ \_ \_ “these twinkle in the sky” \_ \_ \_ “people drive these” (Blevins, 2016).

**Word matrix** - is a tool designed to assist in vocabulary and writing instruction. “Students organize words by their connotative charge on one axis, placing words with more negative connotations to the left and more positive connotations to the right. On another axis, students organize that same list based on their levels of relative register, from informal to formal. Students also have the option of providing a brief statement that justifies their placement of a word at a specific point on the matrix” (National Council of Teachers of English, 2021).

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