A LITERACY PRACTICES GUIDE

Prep to Year 1

This guide provides a means for Principals to check on those literacy practices that are seen to be important in the improvement of literacy learning.

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The PALL* Leadership for Learning Framework rests on research findings that particular leadership actions are closely linked to improved literacy learning and student achievement. The literacy model in the project **"The Big Six"** was presented by Deslea Konza. The "Big Six" was based on research relating to "The Big Five" plus one: oral language experiences.

This **Literacy Practices Guide** has been developed *by* Sandra Easey and Pam Pearson to support principals and schools. It is based on the concept of a Literacy Practices Guide developed by Deslea Konza from Edith Cowan University in association with Greg Robson, Keith Newton and Paul Woodley.

This Guide provides a focus for obtaining qualitative data about the literacy practices happening across the school in the areas of:

      Literacy Instruction in: Oral Language, Reading, Writing and Spelling
      Classroom Environment
      Intervention Practices.

There are a number of ways to use the guide: by ticking to indicate whether an action has not been observed, whether there is some evidence of the action in practice or whether there is ample evidence of the action in practice in the school.

For example:
      (i)   Principals could complete all sections or selected sections themselves.
      (ii)   Leadership Teams could complete all sections or selected sections.
      (iii)   Teachers in cohorts could complete all or selected sections.
      (iv)   Teachers could use all or some sections as a tool for mentoring and coaching.

Once responses have been gathered, Principals could analyse their own results against those of teachers, results from combined teams could be compared, results from particular staff sectors e.g. para-professionals /professionals and so on. Where consonance occurs or gaps or differences in the findings are identified, discussions employing the techniques of Disciplined Dialogue can be arranged.

      i.e. What are we seeing here?
          Why do we think this is so?
          What, if anything, do we need to do about it?

THE TEACHING OF ORAL LANGUAGE	All students come from a background rich in experiences and language. For some, however, school may be their first encounter with the formal register of Standard Australian English. The focus in this first section of the instrument is on the development of quality oral language structures, the patterns of Standard Australian English and active listening.	Not observed	Some evidence	Ample evidence
	Builds upon, model and explore registers of language, in particular casual and formal registers, using a range of sentence patterns e.g. SPIOL.			
	Provides opportunities for whole group, small group and individual interactions e.g. class meetings, collaborative problem solving, circle groups.			
	Models Standard Australian English in classroom interactions.			
	Explicitly teaches purposeful interactions e.g. turn taking, borrowing equipment and the words and body language to accompany these.			
	Uses a variety of songs, rhymes, riddles and sentence innovations to explore patterns of language.			
	Organises classroom space to include a number of "play-based" areas that encourage language use e.g. shops, dress up.			
	Creates a classroom climate that encourages expressions of ideas, opinions and role-play.			
	Models the concept that oral language can be written down.			
	Explores issues that arise in the classroom and playground via e.g. discussion circles to practise the language of negotiation, problem solving etc.			
	Ensures exposure to a range of multi-media spoken texts			
	Comments:			

THE TEACHING OF READING	The focus here is on developing the skills of decoding written language through constant modeled and guided reading of, and exposure to, a wide range of quality picture books, digital texts and stories. The explicit teaching of the three cueing systems is vital i.e. graphophonic, syntactic, semantic.	Not observed	Some evidence	Ample evidence
	Introduces a range of books and text types to develop concepts about print (parts of a book, directionality, message in words as well as pictures).			
	Models a wide range of purposes for reading and makes these explicit.			
	Models good oral reading (prosody - phrasing, fluency, expression, varied volume).			
	Explains text parts – title, author, words, illustrations.			
	Explicitly teaches phonological awareness.			
	Teaches phonemic awareness in context.			
	Constructs words with magnetic letters using onset/rime patterns.			
	Explicitly teaches sight words.			
	Models and teaches graphophonic, syntactic and semantic cueing systems.			
	Explicitly teaches vocabulary.			
	Uses "read-alouds" or "think-alouds" as a way of modeling levels of comprehension			
	Uses a variety of levels of oral questioning during shared, guided and independent reading.			
	Continually monitors progress, e.g. by using Running Records, regularly to inform future teaching.			
	Comments:			

THE TEACHING OF WRITING	The focus in this third section recognizes that the development of writing progresses through a number of stages. This development should be closely monitored. A focus on the explicit teaching of the conventions of writing and phonics should become increasingly evident in student work samples.	Not observed	Some evidence	Ample evidence
	Models a wide range of purposes for writing.			
	Encourages risk taking and celebrate students' attempts, including role play writing.			
	Draws attention to and model use of environmental print.			
	Engages in regular group or shared writing activities that models audience, purpose and textual features including correct skills and techniques e.g. grammar, spelling This can correlate with handwriting by modeling correct formation and format.			
	Establishes classroom writing centres that provide opportunities for writing (including a range of writing tools).			
	Displays group compositions and encourage.			
	Displays alphabet charts in appropriate script on wall and on desks.			
	Provides experiences that encourage students to want to write.			
	Displays student work with corrections where necessary			
	Comments:			

THE TEACHING OF SPELLING	The focus of section four is on the explicit teaching of phonological awareness, letter/sound knowledge and high-frequency sight words.	Not observed	Some evidence	Ample evidence
	Provides incidental and then more formal instruction of writing patterns and letter formations leading to automaticity.			
	Explicitly teaches phonological awareness.			
	Explicitly teaches phonemic awareness.			
	Incidentally then explicitly teaches letter- sound relations as per school program.			
	Builds up word walls with students - based on patterns and word families			
	Displays high frequency sight words for reference			
	Models aspects of spelling using "think-alouds" to raise awareness e.g. consonants, simple blends, some diagraphs, simple contractions.			
	Uses a range of assessment techniques.			
	Comments:			

Assessment Tools:
- Dated work samples
- Anecdotal notes
- Concepts about Print screeners
- Running records
- Phonological awareness assessments
- Receptive vocabulary tests
- Oral language screeners
- Alphabet checklists

Evidence of data gathering recorded on the Diagnostic Net or Early Learning Record.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT	The focus of this section acknowledges that students in these early learning years should participate in a print rich, language rich environment. The climate for learning should be encouraging, engaging and support play based inquiry.	Not observed	Some evidence	Ample evidence
	Ensure classroom teaching is culturally responsive.			
	Organises space to accommodate role play areas, imaginative play, construction, quiet learning areas etc			
	Ensures classroom layout supports whole group, small group and independent instruction and literacy learning			
	Makes explicit teaching evident and highly specific in areas needing improvement			
	Differentiates instruction through e.g. needs grouping, flexible grouping etc			
	Creates a print- rich environment with labeled resources, calendar, weather chart etc			
	Ensures resources for independent reading and writing are matched to ability.			
	Displays and caption children's work.			
	Displays a picture alphabet in appropriate print script.			
	Makes sets of magnetic/ plastic letters available for students' use.			
	Incorporates information and communication technology in the literacy program.			
	Displays information for parents/ community members in an attractive way, in a prominent place and encourage perusal.			
	Designs an aesthetically pleasing, colourful environment.			
	Provides opportunities for family/ community engagement e.g. buddy system, community partnerships, family reading nights etc.			
	Comments:			

ASSESSMENT:

Formative common assessments are used to identify difficulties early and to monitor progress. There is a focus on prevention and early intervention through identification of 'at risk' students.

INTERVENTION ACTIONS	The PALL Project uses a wave analogy to identify intervention phases. *Wave 1* involves the deliberate acts schools take to ensure most students can participate productively in the general classroom curriculum as described above. *Wave 2* applies to those students unable to achieve the goals of the classroom curriculum who need specialised assistance in the form of scaffolded learning or specialized direct teaching. *Wave 3* comprises students with specific needs who require highly focused individualized intervention. This will always be a minority of students.	Not observed	Some evidence	Ample evidence Some evidence
	Wave 2: A systematic approach to intervention is in place, common goals are understood and appropriate pedagogy implemented.			
	Explicit teaching is evident in all classes and is highly specific in areas needing improvement.			
	Diagnostic assessment is used to identify specific needs of students and target accurately areas of difficulty. Additional assessments are used when required to pinpoint difficulties.			
	Interventions are appropriate to needs and supplement but do not replace core instruction.			
	Regular, ongoing monitoring occurs.			
	Duration of interventions is short term (8-20) weeks.			
	An 'add-on' rather than deficit approach is part of the classroom ethos			
	Wave 3: A team approach is evident in assessing individual student needs.			
	Regular monitoring to check progress and adjust programs is evident			
	Data analysis continues to form the basis for program decision making, including formative, diagnostic and qualitative data.			
	Correct procedures for specialist referral are known and implemented.			
	Caregivers are kept informed and their input is welcomed			
	Comments:			