

A LITERACY PRACTICES GUIDE

Years 2 to 4

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	The focus in this first section of the instrument is on the development of quality oral language structures and patterns, the explicit teaching of the codes and conventions of oral language, and the development of listening skills.	Not observed	Some evidence	Ample evidence
	Explores a range of spoken texts according to the school scope and sequence, ensuring exposure to multi-modal texts.			
	Provides opportunities for individual, small group and whole group interactions e.g. class meetings, collaborative problem solving, circle groups.			
	Explicitly teaches the codes and conventions of oral language.			
	Explicitly teaches the codes and conventions of active listening.			
	Explores the differences between written and spoken texts.			
	Practise short conversations to highlight a particular skill or convention.			
	Creates a classroom climate that promotes the expression of ideas and opinions.			
	Collaboratively develops criteria sheets for oral presentations.			
	Encourages informal peer and self assessment.			
Comments:				

THE TEACHING OF READING	The focus here is on the consolidation of decoding (code breaking) and fluency skills. The explicit modeling of the active comprehension strategies is vital.	Not observed	Some evidence	Ample evidence
	Ensures modeled, guided and independent reading occurs.			
	Groups students for guided and independent reading at instructional level.			
	Uses a range of literary and non-literary texts according to school scope and sequence.			
	Explicitly teach decoding via the graphophonic, semantic and syntactic cuing systems.			
	Regularly monitors fluency and decoding skills through analysis of running records.			
	Articulates clear purposes for reading, using before, during and after reading strategies.			
	Activates prior knowledge of content, layout, vocabulary, etc.			
	Explicitly teaches vocabulary including strategies to decipher unknown words.			
	Uses graphic organizers, mind maps, etc across subject areas.			
	Explicitly teaches all levels of comprehension : literal (on the page), inferential (between the lines), appreciative/evaluative (in the heart), cultural/critical (in the head)			
	Models active comprehension strategies e.g. summarizing, visualizing, predicting.			
	Uses “read-alouds” and “think-alouds” to model aspects of reading.			
	Models good oral reading for performance purposes and stresses the importance of fluency,			
Continually monitors progress to inform future teaching.				
Comments:				

THE TEACHING OF WRITING	The focus in this third section is on the “craft” as well as the composition of writing. Students should be exposed to, and develop knowledge and skills relating to a range of texts. They should also be explicitly taught the skills of written English.	Not observed	Some evidence	Ample evidence
	Composes a range of texts according to the school scope and sequence.			
	Explicitly teaches all aspects of written English in meaningful daily sessions by giving short topics e.g. relating to sentence beginnings, aspects of grammar.			
	Models writing daily for a range of purposes and teaching points.			
	Explicitly teaches the writing process.			
	Emphasizes audience and purpose.			
	Displays charts or reference materials that relate to the writing process, vocabulary, text structures etc.			
	Ensures student use of class dictionaries, thesauruses or glossaries for reference.			
	Displays student work corrected.			
	Introduces the use of criteria sheets for published work.			
Comments:				

THE TEACHING OF SPELLING	The focus of section four is on the explicit teaching of the spelling knowledges with an emphasis on the consolidation of basic phonological knowledge	Not observed	Some evidence	Ample evidence
	Explicitly teaches phonological awareness where necessary.			
	Explicitly teaches phonological, visual, morphemic and etymological knowledges according to the school program and students’ needs.			
	Focuses on the consolidation of phonological knowledge.			
	Develops a “no excuses” word list.			
	Introduces the use of a Student Spelling Log/Journal.			
	Displays word webs and vocabulary for reference.			
	Explores words e.g. word of the week.			
	Expects some self corrections and proof reading.			
	Uses a range of assessment techniques.			
Comments:				

Assessment Tools:

- Checklists
- Work samples, such as Running Records, writing samples, dictations, proofreading tests, dated and analysed.
- Standardised tests e.g. Pat r, Neale, IPI

Student portfolios are well organised with dated samples and criteria sheets where relevant.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT	Students in this transition phase of learning should participate in a language rich environment. They should be explicitly taught and supported to develop literacy skills that they may apply to increasingly complex and demanding texts. The classroom climate should encourage them to view themselves as successful speakers, readers and writers.	Not observed	Some evidence	Ample evidence
	Ensures classroom teaching is culturally responsive.			
	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.			
	Saturates the classroom with charts, texts and work samples that reinforce explicit teaching.			
	Displays students' work samples attractively and caption displays.			
	Collaboratively develop reference charts with students and display for student use.			
	Establishes a class library that contains a range of literary and non- literary books, magazines, newspapers and digital texts.			
	Displays information for parents/ community members in an attractive way, in a prominent place and encourage perusal.			
	Provides opportunities for family/ community engagement e.g. buddy system, community partnerships, family reading nights etc.			
	Comments:			

Assessment

The school assessment plan articulates universal common assessment of all students to enable monitoring of progress, as well as identifying those with difficulties. Moderation occurs across and within year or cohort levels. A range of formative and summative techniques is used to assess learning and inform programs.

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
	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.			
	Intervention resources are tailored to the needs and interests of students.			
	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:				

