

Early Career Framework

Core Induction Programme

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- > Week 3: Literacy and learning

Week

3: Literacy and learning

Session Elements

- observe a colleague
- reflection
- discuss with a colleague

Learning Intentions for this session

You will learn that:

3.9 To access the curriculum, early literacy provides fundamental knowledge; reading comprises two elements: word reading and language comprehension; systematic synthetic phonics is the most effective approach for teaching pupils to decode.

3.10 Every teacher can improve pupils' literacy, including by explicitly teaching reading, writing and oral language skills specific to individual disciplines.

You will learn how to develop pupils' literacy, by:

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3m. Demonstrating a clear understanding of systematic synthetic phonics, particularly if teaching early reading and spelling.

3n. Supporting younger pupils to become fluent readers and to write fluently and legibly.

3o. Teaching unfamiliar vocabulary explicitly and planning for pupils to be repeatedly exposed to high-utility and high-frequency vocabulary in what is taught.

3p. Modelling reading comprehension by asking questions, making predictions, and summarising when reading.

3q. Promoting reading for pleasure (e.g. by using a range of whole class reading approaches and regularly reading high-quality texts to children).

3r. Modelling and requiring high-quality oral language, recognising that spoken language underpins the development of reading and writing (e.g. requiring pupils to respond to questions in full sentences, making use of relevant technical vocabulary).

3s. Teaching different forms of writing by modelling planning, drafting and editing.

Introduction

In this session, you will learn about or review your understanding of the foundations underpinning literacy development of pupils in England. An understanding of the foundations of literacy learning is key to teaching pupils of any age. No teacher can help their pupils to access or demonstrate learning without considering their literacy needs: every teacher is a literacy teacher.

You will need to read the Research and Practice Summary before speaking to and/or arranging to observe a colleague to consider an aspect of literacy development. There are many aspects of literacy development that you could choose to focus on, reflected in the learning intentions for this session. Choose one (or more, if you are more confident) that you would like to develop your understanding of for today's session, having looked back at the self-evaluation audit you completed at the start of this module. Reflect on your learning from this session ahead of your next mentor meeting and be prepared to discuss and identify possible next steps for your practice.

Research and Practice Summary

This reading will help you understand some of the theory behind this week's topic. We will start by introducing some of the key concepts (these are in bold). You will also see some suggestions of how to put these concepts into practice. **When using these concepts in your own practice you will need to take account of your pupils' characteristics, the context of your classroom and the nature of the material that you are teaching.**

Every teacher is a teacher of literacy

As you read this summary, consider your own pupils in your school.

You will also follow real-life examples from two other teachers. Imogen teaches Year 3 in a primary school in Greater Manchester. Tom is a teacher for children with language and communication needs in a special school in north London.

Children who have good written and spoken literacy skills are able to engage with their school's curriculum and experience success as a result. For these reasons, developing pupils' literacy is perhaps the most important aspect of education for schools to focus on.

The development of early literacy is especially important. This involves the development of two capabilities: word reading and language comprehension. Using systematic, synthetic phonics is the most effective way of developing decoding, which supports word reading. A wide range of approaches, including high quality discussion, will develop pupils' language capabilities.

Once pupils have mastered phonics and are able to accurately decode, the emphasis should shift towards developing reading fluency. Pupils at this stage in their development can be identified by listening to them read. They will be able to read accurately, but they will be slow and their reading will not sound like speech and may sound disjointed. Developing reading fluency is usually a priority for pupils in KS2 and for a smaller number of pupils in KS3. Developing reading fluency requires extensive practice, but teachers can support this by modelling fluent reading, providing feedback on fluency and providing opportunities for repeated reading with a focus on developing fluency.

In the past, it has been argued that teaching literacy skills is limited to English lessons. This is false. All subjects and teachers have the opportunity and responsibility to develop pupils' literacy capabilities. This does not mean teaching English during other subjects. Rather, it involves the development of disciplinary literacy, which is the development of reading, writing and oral language skills specific to each discipline.

To improve your pupils' literacy, you should:

- explicitly teach the reading, writing and oral language skills specific to the discipline or phase you work in (this includes writing in different genres, reading for interpretation, speaking collaboratively)
- deliberately plan the teaching of unfamiliar vocabulary (e.g. by playing word games, matching words with definitions, displaying key vocabulary on the wall)
- regularly expose your pupils to vocabulary which is high-utility and high-frequency and give them repeated practice (e.g. by using keyword tablemats and by modelling the vocabulary in your expositions)
- model for your pupils how they can plan, draft and edit different types of writing specific to your subject or phase (e.g. by 'live-writing' a model answer on the whiteboard or using a visualiser to 'live-model' the editing process)

Reading comprehension is a complex process involving word reading and language understanding. Word reading involves decoding or breaking down parts of a word by phoneme and blending these together to read the whole word. Reading comprehension means being able to read a section or an entire piece of text and understand its meaning. To make sense of a text, the reader draws on background knowledge, vocabulary, grammatical understanding and their ability to make inferences about meaning based on these.

To help you to develop your pupils' reading comprehension, you should:

- teach the skills of predicting, questioning, clarifying and summarising text (e.g. through live modelling or by allotting different 'reading for...' roles in group reading)
- 'think out loud' when reading to help pupils to internalise strategies to help when reading independently
- support pupil engagement and reading for pleasure (e.g. by reading with the whole class high-quality texts that you or they have chosen)

How Imogen teaches reading comprehension, Year 3

Imogen is working with a group of Year 3 pupils on reading comprehension, building on strategies she has previously introduced. She has split the group into 4, each with a defined role. Tahir is the questioner: he will generate comprehension questions from the page of text to ask to the rest of the group. Poppy is the summariser: she will sum up each

paragraph/page for the rest of the group précising the text. Sam is the clarifier: he will identify any vocabulary that needs to be defined. And Sarika is the predictor: her role is to predict the next action in the story. The pupils are all familiar with their roles, as this is a strategy that has been modelled for them regularly and the roles are swapped around; Imogen's role is to listen and provide direction if they struggle with any aspects. Today, Imogen is going to read the text aloud as the pupils take their roles; in this way, she will model how a fluent reader uses volume, tone, expression and modulation when they read – recognising that spoken language underpins the development of reading and writing.

This is likely to be effective because the pupils are familiar with this form of collaborative learning; Imogen has already spent time establishing and reinforcing routines, such as taking turns. The lesson develops pupils' capabilities in questioning, summarising, clarifying and predicting – collectively known as reading comprehension strategies. By allowing her pupils to practise these 4 strategies that good readers use automatically as they read and understand texts, Imogen supports pupils' ability to comprehend texts independently in the future. Because this is a habitual part of Imogen's teaching, her pupils are now familiar with all of the roles, although they may still find some harder than others. Modelling fluent reading also supports pupils' comprehension of the texts.

Oral language skills (or classroom talk) refer to the use of vocabulary and the quality of discussion by pupils as well as teachers. Encouraging pupils to use specific vocabulary and terminology during discussion in class helps to normalise and embed new words and improve the development of deep understanding. It broadens pupils' vocabularies and helps them to articulate high-level ideas. Spoken language underpins both reading and writing development. Because modelling and requiring high-quality pupil talk underpins the development of reading and writing, it positively affects academic attainment across the curriculum and children's social and emotional development.

To help develop quality oral language, you should:

- carefully consider how ground rules and pupil reflection can help build a supportive environment for talk (e.g. circle time is a good opportunity for developing such rules) — a useful rule to consider is the expectation that pupils respond in full sentences and use subject-specific vocabulary for certain activities
- also improve your pupils' skills in listening (e.g. by framing discussion where each person must respond to the previous speaker before making their own point)

Teaching vocabulary in a special school, in Tom's own words

“Some of my pupils are at the earliest stages of learning to talk. It's important for them to have basic vocabulary to get their needs met, such as being able to ask for 'more', or 'help', or 'toilet'. At dinner time, when Charlie wants more food, he may try to reach across the table and take some from another plate. I try to pre-empt this and say, 'Oh, Charlie wants more', showing him the 'more' sign (Makaton). I help him make the sign with his hands and encourage him to say 'more' before giving him another spoonful.”

For all children, learning to use words and signs to communicate is an important part of schooling. Certain key words, like those Tom mentioned, are prioritised to help pupils convey their wants and needs to others and reduce the need for them to use other behaviours to get what they want.

It is important in any context that key words that relate to core concepts are reinforced in different situations with different members of staff so that children learn the meaning and power of these words and the importance of mastering them. For many children, using a visual symbol or sign alongside a spoken word will be beneficial in reinforcing meaning and aiding understanding.

Self-Study Activities

Review: 10 mins

Read the Research and Practice Summary on literacy, including the 2 case studies featuring Imogen and Tom.

- Can you give examples from your teaching or where you have observed these aspects of literacy teaching? You can take a note of any you are unsure of to discuss later with your mentor.
- For each of the key concepts, think of them in terms of your own practice. (You might call to mind a particular pupil or a teaching strategy you like to use or one you have seen another teacher use.)

As you work through the activities in this week's self-directed study session and mentor meeting, aim to both sharpen and extend what you already do well and to build your skill and confidence in using practices which aren't yet a regular part of your teaching repertoire.

Plan: 10 mins

Think about one pupil or one small group of pupils that you teach. Think back over the last half term and consider the different ways in which you have supported their literacy. For example, you may have:

- read aloud high-quality texts
- insisted on them speaking in full sentences as a model for writing
- used worked examples or scaffolds to help improve the quality of their writing
- explicitly taught the specific curriculum vocabulary that you want them to use

Were they efficient approaches in terms of the time and effort spent and their impact?

Theory to Practice: 20 mins

Read through the examples outlined below of potential discussion or observation foci and consider which will be most beneficial for your development. You should bear in mind the ages and stages of development of your pupils as well as your own practice knowledge and skills at this point.

1. Discussion with a colleague

Identify a colleague to observe or talk to who will enable you to see and evaluate effective practice in this area. For example, this could be a literacy coordinator, an HLTA with special interest in literacy or someone in your own phase or department who has expertise in the area.

2. Observation or discussion

Choose an aspect of literacy outlined below and an area of focus for discussion and/or observation to carry out with this colleague prior to your mentor meeting. If it saves time for you and your colleague, you could conduct the conversation by email.

Learning intentions	Possible foci for observation or discussion
3m. Demonstrating a clear understanding of systematic synthetic phonics, particularly if teaching early reading and spelling.	<p>– What approach to teaching systematic synthetic phonics works best for you in your class? For example, teacher modelling of segmenting and blending orally and in writing.</p> <p>– How is systematic synthetic phonics used to support the teaching of spelling? For example, explicit use of</p>

phonics to support the teaching of spelling.

3o. Teaching unfamiliar vocabulary explicitly and planning for pupils to be repeatedly exposed to high-utility and high-frequency vocabulary in what is taught.

– Is vocabulary pre-taught to support understanding for all? For example, teaching vocabulary to specific groups of pupils prior to the lesson to support understanding for all.

– How is key technical vocabulary taught and understood in context? For example, use of images to support comprehension (visuals on Interactive White Board or wall displays).

3p. Modelling reading comprehension by asking questions, making predictions and summarising when reading.

– How does the teacher support pupils to summarise a text? For example, modelling identifying key events (so far, we have read that...).

– How does the teacher model asking questions of the text? For example, using question prompts to respond to the text (What do you like/ dislike about...? Why do you think...? What does this remind you of?)

3q. Promoting reading for pleasure (e.g. by using a range of whole-class reading approaches and regularly reading high-quality texts to children).

– How does the teacher engage pupils in reading a wide range of high-quality texts? For example, developing their own knowledge of children's literature and sharing their own interests with pupils.

– How does the school promote reading for pleasure? For example, through the development of reading buddies, book clubs and reading cafes with parents and pupils.

3r. Modelling and requiring high-quality oral language, recognising that spoken language underpins the development of reading and writing (e.g. requiring pupils to respond to questions in full sentences,

– How does the teacher encourage pupils to build on one another's responses? For example, use of ground rules to support the creation of a positive climate for constructive dialogue (I

making use of relevant technical vocabulary).

like what X said about this, and I would add... I understand the point that Y made, but I think...).

– To what extent do they use sentence stems to scaffold pupils' oral responses?
For example, use of key phrases to support pupils' responses to talk partner questions (I agree with... because... I understand what you are saying, but have you considered...?).

3s. Teaching different forms of writing by modelling, planning, drafting and editing.

– How does the teacher support pupils to plan for writing?
For example, use of planning frames to help structure different forms of writing. At what point does the teacher remove these scaffolds?

– How are pupils supported in editing and improving their writing?
For example, how are the success criteria shared? Is editing time built into the writing process? Do they use peer- or self-assessment during drafting and editing?

Next Steps: 5 mins

Bring any reflections recorded in your Learning Log from your observations and/or discussion with a colleague and be prepared to discuss with your mentor how you have developed your knowledge and understanding in relation to the learning intentions from this self-directed study session.



[Previous Week — 2: Prior knowledge, memory and misconceptions \(https://www.early-career-framework.education.gov.uk/ucl/ucl/2-understanding-teachers-as-role-models/2-engaging-pupils-in-learning/2-prior-knowledge-memory-and-misconceptions/\)](https://www.early-career-framework.education.gov.uk/ucl/ucl/2-understanding-teachers-as-role-models/2-engaging-pupils-in-learning/2-prior-knowledge-memory-and-misconceptions/)

[Next Week — 4: Consolidation of learning](#)



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