# Section 7: Literacy across the curriculum

**Literacy is …**
**… the ability to use and manipulate language in all of its forms.**

**Literacy is Key to Learning**

Literacy skills give pupils access to some very important modes of learning and using those skills constructively and consistently in the context of learning boosts the levels of those skills. Unfortunately, the converse is also true. Poor literacy skills act as a barrier to learning and, as a consequence, pupils may seek to avoid exercising them. The consequence is that both the pupils' ability to learn and their literacy skills are limited.

Human beings do not learn only through language, but one of the defining characteristics of our species is that we are 'hard-wired' to learn language and then use that language to learn other things. The language conventions that have developed for use in this context are now very sophisticated.

**Students require systematic teaching and consolidation of their literacy skills.**
This is particularly important in a system where success is ultimately measured for the most part by an ability to demonstrate learning by writing clearly and concisely. If we accept the link between literacy and learning, and also that the main aim of all teachers is to promote learning, then it is clear that **all teachers must share the responsibility for developing pupils' literacy skills**. The responsibility is, however, not shared equally as certain literacy skills are developed more readily than others in the different subject areas.

**In order to develop Literacy at a whole school level:**
➢ Literacy skills need to be taught **systematically** and **consistently**.
➢ Pupils should be given regular opportunities to consolidate their literacy skills by using them purposefully in order to learn.
➢ **All teachers in a school must share the responsibility for developing literacy** and learning 'hand in hand'.
➢ Certain subject areas are better placed to develop certain literacy skills than others.

   If literacy and the development of literacy is to encompass "language in all of its forms", it is useful to think of its application across three strands:
➢ Learning through talk.
➢ Learning from text.
➢ Learning through writing.

Each area can be divided into three strands:

| Learning through talk | Using talk to clarify and present ideas |
| --- | --- |
| | Active listening to understand |
| | Talking and thinking together |

| Learning from text | Developing research and study skills |
| --- | --- |
| | Reading for meaning |
| | Understanding how texts work |

| Learning through writing | Using writing as a tool for thought |
| --- | --- |
| | Structuring and organising writing |
| | Developing clear and appropriate expression |

It is useful for teachers to consider each of these areas when planning how they will exploit opportunities to develop students' skills in reading, writing and speaking and listening.

*(Adapted from "Literacy & Learning", KS3 National Strategy, 2004)*

## Strategies for Teaching
### Learning Through Talk

| | |
|---|---|
| **Think Pair Share** | Think Pair Share depends largely on utilising the principle of "think" and "wait" time in order to improve the quality of students' processing of information and the responses produced.<br>It is a versatile system and can be adapted in a number of ways to suit different contexts.<br>STEPS<br>1. Teacher poses a problem or asks an open-ended question to which there may be a variety of answers.<br>2. Teacher gives the students 'think time' and directs them to think about the question.<br>3. Following the 'think time' students turn to face their Learning Partner and work together, sharing ideas, discussing, clarifying and challenging. (It may be useful at this point to introduce a structure to the talk such as: "A" talks first then "B" etc.)<br>4. The pair then share their ideas with another pair, or with the whole class. It is important that students need to be able to share their partner's ideas as well as their own. |
| **Modelling** | In any activity, be it speaking and listening, reading or writing, it is important to ensure that students can describe "what 'good' looks like". This can commonly be done through negotiation of success criteria supported by a model of a good (or bad) example of what students will do that allows them to bridge the gap from where they are in their learning to where they need to be.<br>Possible Strategies:<br>1. Show students some video footage of a good or bad group discussion and ask them to describe what went well or to consider what the participants should do better.<br>2. Teacher modelling: the teacher "performs" a model of what is expected of students before the students plan and create their piece.<br>3. Scaffolding: create a list of actual phrases that the teacher or other students will hear if a discussion or activity is being completed the way that is identified as "successful";<br>Note: it is important that students have a reference to the success criteria that they have created in order to be more independent in their learning, e.g. in their exercise books, on the board, flipchart paper etc. |
| **Group Roles** | A simple way to organise a group discussion. Prepare several cards that indicate what role each member of the group will play. It may be that you require a chairperson etc. OR…<br>De Bono's Thinking Hats: each student is given a "Hat" or card denoting the hat that determines the way they have to respond:<br>*The Six Thinking Hats at a glance:*<br>• **White** hat thinking identifies the facts and details of a topic<br>• **Black** hat thinking examines the problems associated with a topic |

- **Yellow** hat thinking focuses on the positive aspects of a topic
- **Red** hat thinking looks at a topic from the point of view of emotions and feelings
- **Green** hat thinking requires creativeness, imagination and lateral thinking about a topic
- **Blue** hat thinking focuses on reflection, metacognition (thinking about the thinking that is required), and the need to understand the big picture

**See below:**

| Hat | Explanation | De Bono says to think of… | Key Questions |
|---|---|---|---|
| White Hat | <ul><li>focuses directly on the available information</li><li>facts</li><li>neutral information</li><li>NOT argument or making suggestions</li></ul> | Blank paper<br>Computer printout | 1. What information do we have?<br><br>2. What information is missing?<br><br>3. How do we get the information we need? |
| Red hat | <ul><li>emotions</li><li>feeling</li><li>hunches</li><li>intuition</li><li>likes and dislikes</li></ul> | Fire and warmth | 1. What do you like about the idea?<br><br>2. How do you feel about this?<br><br>3. What don't you like about this? |
| Black Hat | <ul><li>most used of all the hats</li><li>concerned with truth and reality</li><li>hat of critical thinking</li><li>prevents us from making mistakes</li></ul> | Stern judge | 1. Will it work?<br><br>2. Does it fit?<br><br>3. What are the dangers and the problems? |
| Yellow Hat | <ul><li>benefits of an idea</li><li>yellow hat is full of hope- logical hat so the reason behind the hope must be given</li><li>seeks to find and show the benefits</li></ul> | Sunshine and optimism | 1. What are the benefits?<br><br>2. Why should it work? |
| Green Hat | <ul><li>'active' hat</li><li>used for creative thinking</li><li>concerned with proposals, suggestions, new ideas, new alternatives, new solutions and inventions</li><li>emphasis is on 'newness'</li></ul> | Grass, trees, vegetation and growth | Key questions should focus on:<br>1. Exploration of the ideas<br>2. Proposals and suggestions<br>3. Alternatives<br>4. New ideas<br>5. Provocations |
| Blue Hat | <ul><li>overview</li><li>the process control</li><li>above the thinking' looking down on the thinking</li><li>thinking *about* thinking!</li></ul> | Blue Sky (above everything)<br>Conductor of an orchestra | What sort of thinking is needed?<br>Where are we now?<br>What is the next step?<br>Where have we been? |

**Reference:** de Bono, Edward. (1992). *Teach Your Child How to Think*. London : Viking.

## Learning From Text

| "Active" Reading Strategies | Often referred to as "skimming" and "scanning", these are invaluable skills to any literate person. It is useful to distinguish these from detailed reading which is a separate skill requiring students to read deeply to find information or determine their own thoughts on a topic or subject. **It is imperative that all reading strategies are modelled for students before they attempt them.** |
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| | **Scanning**: looking for specific information, e.g. a name in a phone book etc |
| | **Skimming**: reading quickly to establish main points, possibly skipping over details in order to make other decisions about the text. |
| | **"Active" Reading Strategies:** |
| | **Underlining and highlighting** |
| | Pick out what you think are the most important parts of what you are reading. Do this with own copies of texts or on photocopies. |
| | If you are a visual learner, you'll find it helpful to use different colours to highlight different aspects of what you're reading. |
| | **Note key words** |
| | Record the main headings as you read. Use one or two keywords for each point. When you don't want to mark the text, keep a folder of notes you make while reading. |
| | **Questions** |
| | Before you start reading something like an article, a chapter or a whole book, prepare for your reading by noting down questions you want the material to answer. While you're reading, note down questions which the author raises. |
| | **Summaries** |
| | Pause after you've read a section of text. Then: |
| | 1. Put what you've read into your own words; |
| | 2. Skim through the text and check how accurate your summary is and |
| | 3. Fill in any gaps. |
| | Or, try some of these strategies for "active" reading: |
| | **Visualize**: Describe the images you see as the author describes them. Use the details from the text to create the "movie in your mind." |
| | **Clarify**: STOP AND PAY ATTENTION. Summarize/explain what you have read. This is a great place to stop and check whether you understand the text. Read on (and sometimes even reread) and your understanding may change and develop. When you find the answers to any questions you have had, note them in the text. |
| | **Question**: Ask questions about the text. What are you confused by? What is motivating the character(s)? Why are certain things happening? |
| | **Predict**: Try to figure out what will happen next and how the selection might end. Then read on to see how accurate your guesses are. |
| | **Connect**: Connect personally with what you are reading. Think of similarities between the descriptions in the selection and what you have personally experienced, seen, and heard or read about. Also, connect to anything you may have already read or seen in media (movies, news broadcasts, newspapers, magazines, Internet). |
| | **Evaluate**: Form opinions about what you've read, both while you're reading and after you've finished. Develop your own ideas about characters and events. Make a logical guess or come to a conclusion based from the story or text. |

| Graphic Organisers, D.A.R.T.S, Mind Maps etc | This is essentially, finding a way for students to record what they learn from a text as they experience it. It can take several forms, as suggested by the various titles but usually will take the form of, e.g. a KWL (What do I Know?, What do I Want to Know?, What have I Learned?) Grid, Concept Webs or spider diagrams, Venn Diagrams, Graphs (of tension for example) or even mind maps. All of these strategies allow students to organise their thoughts as they read and evidence the kind of reading strategy that they have used. DARTS (Directed Activities Related to Texts) are similar in that they are grounded in the text and the students' abilities to decode them for specific purposes.<br>In order to choose the correct "DARTS", ask yourself if you are:<br>• Helping pupils to see the structure of a text<br>• Helping pupils to select and interpret information<br>• Helping pupils to confront the range of information or to see the big picture<br>DARTS can take a variety of forms, such as: sequencing, cloze procedures or deletion, prediction, sub-headings (asking students to consider what the appropriate sub-heading would be for sections of text), transformation (turning one kind of text into another), text marking, card sort and summary. (the list could go on) |
|---|---|
| Shared and Guided Reading | **Shared Reading:**<br>The teacher leads the class in reading or chanting a text -- a book, poem, or message on a chart -- that is often enlarged for the whole class to see. Shared reading allows students to observe the reading process and to practice reading strategies or concepts in the safety of a group. The same enlarged text can be read and reread several times over a few days. Initially the teacher takes the lead, and then gradually pulls back as students progressively master the text.<br><br>**Guided Reading:**<br>The teacher guides small groups of students in reading short, carefully chosen texts in order to build independence, fluency, comprehension skills, and problem-solving strategies. The teacher often begins by introducing the text and modelling a particular strategy. Then students read to themselves in quiet voices as the teacher listens in, noting strategies and obstacles, and addressing these with individual students as needed. Students then discuss content, and share problem-solving strategies. Guided-reading materials usually become increasingly challenging and are often read more than once. The teacher regularly observes and assesses students' changing needs, and adjusts groupings accordingly. Guided reading allows a teacher to provide different levels of support, depending on the needs of the students. |

| Students creating The "Test" | Focusing on a specific objective, e.g. to read, understand and find information in a text or to infer or deduce meanings in a text or to identify where implied meanings exist and how they are communicated, students are provided with question stems to support them in framing their own questions for their peers to "test" their understanding of a specific reading skill, e.g.: |
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| | **Obj: to find, describe, select or retrieve information from a text:** |
| | • Find and copy.... |
| | • List.... |
| | • Give one reason.... |
| | • Choose.... |
| | • Give an example of.... |
| | • Select a word that shows....? |
| | • What....? |
| | • Where....? |
| | **Obj: to infer or deduce meaning in a text:** |
| | • How did....feel? |
| | • Why did....think/feel....? |
| | • Why is....important? |
| | • How do we know....? |
| | • What does this tell us about....is thinking/feeling? |
| | • Explain why/how.... |
| | • What suggests that....? |
| | • What makes us think that....? |
| | • Match feelings/thoughts to appropriate points in the story |
| | • The author makes...............appear....which two words or phrases show this. |
| | • Which two words or phrases show that the writer ...? |

**Analytical Word List**: It is important that students are aware of how to be analytical, if that is what is being asked of them. Sometimes a simple list of marker words to demonstrate this is useful:

➢ Suggests
➢ Implies
➢ gives us the impression that
➢ shows
➢ highlights
➢ Indicates
➢ Furthers
➢ emphasises

## Learning through Writing

| Writing for Audience and Purpose | No piece of writing should ever be attempted without particular consideration of who is being written for and what the writing is intended to "do". |
|---|---|
| | **Audience: who you are writing for?** |
| | This will dictate a number of things about the writing that is then done. How formal will it have to be and why? Are you writing for a real or imagined audience? What will their expectations be of the writing and what will it tell them about the writer? Are you, in fact, writing for the examiner? |
| | **Purpose: what is the writing intended to "do"?** |
| | There are a finite number of purposes of writing and most of them fall into one of these categories – writing to: |
| | <table><tr><td>• argue</td><td>• analyse</td><td>• Instruct</td></tr><tr><td>• persuade</td><td>• review</td><td>• Compare & Contrast</td></tr><tr><td>• advise</td><td>• comment</td><td>• Discuss</td></tr><tr><td>• inform</td><td>• imagine</td><td>• Recount</td></tr><tr><td>• explain</td><td>• explore</td><td>• Evaluate</td></tr><tr><td>• describe</td><td>• entertain</td><td>• Reflect</td></tr></table> |
| **Modelling** | As before, in any activity, be it speaking and listening, reading or writing, it is important to ensure that students can describe "what 'good' looks like". This can commonly be done through negotiation of success criteria supported by a model of a good (or bad) example of what students will do that allows them to bridge the gap from where they are in their learning to where they need to be. In writing this must be through a systematic approach to familiarising students with the particular genre or text type that they will be expected to produce. In this way, genre specific features can be reinforced by a number of teachers across the school, therefore consolidating the approach that students have to writing in those popular genres. Curriculum leaders or teachers of related subjects should collaborate regarding their understanding of genre specific features to ensure a consistency of experience for students. |
| **Writing Frames** | Writing frames act as a "scaffold" for writing and should only be used in more extreme circumstances to support students in their production of writing, or students' work can become uniform, removing individual creativity. Writing frames can take a variety of forms, from simple sentence stems with word lists to stimulate and structure students' writing to more complex grids that dictate what has to be included in each section of the text in production. |

| "Free" Writing | "Free" writing is essentially an activity in which students are given the opportunity to write freely, without fear of impunity, beyond potentially sharing their work with the class. "Free" writing works on the basis that writing is a kinaesthetic activity that students are more rarely engaged in because of the growth of electronic devices that require typing as opposed to penmanship.<br><br>Teachers should approach "free" writing creatively and cater it to their individual circumstances. It most commonly takes the form of a journal where students are given a specific amount of time in which they will write: about themselves, a story, a diary, reflections on learning or other experiences.<br><br>It can be a creative activity in which students have to respond creatively to a stimulus question related to the later content of the lesson or as a starter intended to provoke engagement. |
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### Observing Effective Literacy Teaching: Prompts Learning through talk
- ➢ Did the lesson exploit opportunities for pupils to learn through talk or were there missed opportunities?
- ➢ Did the teacher make clear the intended outcome for any speaking and listening activity and set clear time targets to encourage pace and application?

### Where pupils were asked to use talk to clarify and present ideas:
- ➢ did their response suggest that the teacher needed to model the kind of presentation required?
- ➢ was an appropriate context created for the activity? For example, was there sufficient thinking time? Did less-confident pupils have the chance to talk with a partner before presenting to a wider audience?
- ➢ did the teacher give clear feedback to pupils, not only on the content of their presentation but also on the effectiveness of the communication? Did the feedback include clear advice on how to improve?
- ➢ did the teacher promote the use of standard English as the form of language appropriate for presentations in class?

### Where pupils were required to listen for a sustained period:
- ➢ was the subject matter and style of presentation well matched to the pupils?
- ➢ was sufficient consideration given to the range of ability in the pupil group?
- ➢ was the talk/programme contextualised for pupils in such a way as to activate their prior knowledge?
- ➢ were they clear in advance about what they were listening for and how they might have to respond to what they had heard?
- ➢ was the listening scaffolded in any way, for instance, with a structured note sheet or some prompt questions?

### Where pupils were required to talk together in pairs or groups:
- ➢ was the grouping of the pupils appropriate for the task and its purpose?
- ➢ were they clear about the expectations for their behaviour during theactivity or did they need the support of some 'ground-rules'?

- were they clear about the type of speaking and listening required of them during the activity,
  e.g. speculating, evaluating, sharing ideas to solve a problem? Did this need clarifying or demonstrating by the teacher?
- were they clear about the particular roles they needed to fulfil in the pair/group, e.g. chairing, reporting, recording? Was there evidence that this needed clarifying or demonstrating by the teacher?
- were any reporting back activities organised to maximise participation while avoiding tedious repetition?
- were the groups supported by the teacher to ensure that most, if not all, reached a satisfactory outcome in the time allowed?

## Learning from text
- Did the lesson exploit opportunities for pupils to learn from text, or was there evidence of the 'retreat from the written word'?
- Did the teacher always read for the class or was there an expectation that pupils could and should engage with text for themselves?
- Were texts well chosen, both in terms of content and reading difficulty? Did the teacher take account of the fact that more-challenging texts can be used in the context of shared reading than when pupils are asked to read independently?
- Where a textbook was used, were pupils familiar with its conventions (e.g. page layout, symbols, structure), or did this need to be clarified for them?

## Where pupils were required to undertake research:
- did they demonstrate a range of appropriate reading strategies for the task (e.g. skimming, scanning), or did they need reminding of these?
- did they have effective ways of recording information to fulfil the purpose of the task, or did they need guidance/support with making notes?

## Where pupils were required to read closely for meaning:
- were they given a way into the text that would encourage close reading and help them overcome initial difficulties?
- was the activity set up to encourage active reading and inference and deduction, e.g. through the use of techniques such as sequencing, annotation, cloze?
- when questions were set on the text, were they likely to promote understanding or just the simple retrieval of information?
- were less-able or less-willing readers supported in the task?
- were they encouraged to question the text and consider it in relation to its degree of objectivity and the writer's intentions?

## Where pupils were reading a text as an example for their own writing:
- did the teacher help them to identify the features of the text that allowed it to fulfil its purpose, e.g. its structure and use of language?
- did the teacher encourage the use of the correct terms when referring to these features, e.g.
  topic sentence?
- did the teacher exploit effective strategies such as annotation during shared reading in order to show pupils how a particular type of text works?

## Learning through writing
- Did the teacher clearly establish both the purpose and intended readership of the writing?

- Was enough done to ensure that the pupils had something to say in their writing?
- Were pupils clear about what writing strategies were appropriate for the task, e.g. collaboration with a partner, drafting, proofreading?
- Did pupils have access to reference materials to support their writing?
- Did the teacher use steps from the teaching sequence for writing as appropriate?
- Was there evidence that pupils receive clear feedback on their strengths and on ways to improve, both during and after writing?

**Where pupils were using writing to capture and develop thoughts and ideas**:
- did they use an approach to writing that suited this purpose, allowing for adaptation, reflection and evaluation?
- did they have a repertoire of formats for this kind of writing, or did they need more support from the teacher through demonstration?
- were they able to use the outcomes of this kind of writing to support a further task, e.g. a spoken presentation or a more-formal piece of writing?

**Where pupils were required to write a longer piece**:
- did they know how to organise that particular type of writing or did this need to be taught explicitly, e.g. using the teaching sequence for writing?
- did the teacher make explicit reference to paragraphs and how they can be linked?
- were they supported with the process of selecting, prioritising and ordering material when they needed to incorporate information from a range of sources?
- were there strategies for supporting weaker writers with the task, e.g. a writing frame?

**When helping pupils to develop clear and appropriate expression**:
- did the teacher use strategies to encourage pupils to reflect on the clarity of their writing and alter it as necessary?
- were they encouraged to rehearse sentences orally before writing?
- were they encouraged to think about and engage in the choices which a writer must make in terms of vocabulary and sentence structure, e.g. through shared writing?
- were the constraints for making choices as a writer made explicit, e.g. the appropriate degree of formality?