

## Critical aspects of literacy development: K–10 continuum

The K–10 Literacy continuum (draft) maps the critical aspects necessary for the development of literacy for students from before school to Year 10. The aspects identified are:

- Reading texts
- Comprehension
- Aspects of writing
- Concepts about print
- Phonics
- Phonemic awareness
- Aspects of speaking
- Vocabulary knowledge.

The Best Start literacy assessment was developed around these critical aspects, and assesses kindergarten students on seven of the eight aspects. (Vocabulary knowledge can be assessed in an ongoing way in a range of classroom contexts).

Some early literacy skills such as phonics and phonemic awareness are more constrained than others, that is, they are learned quickly, mastered entirely, are interdependent and provide a necessary foundation for further literacy acquisition.

Other aspects such as comprehension and vocabulary knowledge are unconstrained, and continue to develop, grow and expand beyond the early years. (Paris 2005).

<b>Reading texts</b>	<i>involves recognising words automatically and reading in a phrased and fluent way to create meaning.</i> <i>As students progress through school, they learn to read and respond to longer, more complex and technical texts.</i>
<b>Comprehension</b>	<i>involves interpreting and responding to oral, aural, written and visual texts.</i> <i>As students progress through school, comprehension involves applying skills and strategies to understand texts for different contexts, purposes and audiences.</i>
<b>Aspects of writing</b>	<i>involves spelling, grammar and handwriting to create texts for specific purposes.</i> <i>As students progress through school, they produce a range of texts including a growing range of electronic, visual and auditory texts.</i>
<b>Concepts about print</b>	<i>involves understanding that print carries a message and there are conventions of print.</i> <i>As students progress through school, they develop understandings about the ways different texts and mediums are organised and how they can be accessed.</i>
<b>Phonics</b>	<i>involves making the connection between sounds and letters when reading and spelling.</i> Phonics is a constrained skill and needs to be mastered early.
<b>Phonemic awareness</b>	<i>involves hearing and manipulating sounds in spoken language.</i> Phonemic awareness is a constrained skill and needs to be mastered early.
<b>Aspects of speaking</b>	<i>involves communicating with others, verbalising thought processes and articulating sounds in words.</i> <i>As students progress through school, they develop understandings about how context, purpose and audience change the language of spoken text. Speaking organises student thinking and focuses ideas.</i>

<b>Vocabulary knowledge</b>	<p><i>involves understanding the meaning of spoken and written words and using words to create and understand oral and written texts.</i></p> <p><i>As students progress through school, continued development of vocabulary supports their learning as they read and understand more complex texts.</i></p>

## **Full version with research**

### **Reading texts:**

*involves recognising words automatically and reading in a phrased and fluent way to create meaning.*

There is a reciprocal relationship between fluency and comprehension. The need for instruction that helps students to achieve fluency is clear and unequivocal. (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001; National Reading Panel, 2000; Jenkins et al, 2003, Kuhn and Stahl, 2003; Meiers et al, 2006, Loudon et al, 2005)

*As students progress through school, the emphasis moves from learning to read to reading to learn.*

Adolescents need opportunities and help to read many and diverse types of texts to gain experience, build fluency and develop a range as readers. (Greenleaf et al 2000.)

### **Comprehension:**

*involves interpreting and responding to oral, aural, written and visual texts.*

Research consistently points to the direct relationship between comprehension instruction and success in learning.

(Durkin 1978–79, Taylor, 2000; Snow et al. 1998; Meiers et al 2006, Loudon et al, 2005)

*As students move through school, texts become longer, more complex and technical. Comprehension involves learning and knowing which strategies to apply in specific contexts.*

Teaching language knowledge and strategies that students use in reading helps build confidence and develops more effective readers. (Goodman and Marek, 1996).

### **Aspects of writing:**

*involves spelling, grammar and handwriting to create texts for specific purposes.*

Clay (1998) emphasises the reciprocity of early reading and writing. Almost every child learns to read print and write print at the same time.

(Clay, 1998, Meiers et al 2006)

*As students progress through school, they produce a whole range of texts including a growing range of electronic, visual and auditory texts.*

In the adolescent years, writing transforms from ‘knowledge –telling’ to ‘knowledge-transformation’ (Bereiter & Scardamalia 1987).

### **Concepts about print:**

*involves understanding that print carries a message and there are conventions of print.*

Concepts about print are strong predictors of the ease with which students will learn to read and write.

(Clay, 1998; Adams, 1990; Snow et al, 1998; Meiers, et al 2006)

*As students progress through school, they develop understandings about different ways to use and work with texts, and how texts achieve their purposes/they increasingly analyse texts at whole text, sentence and word levels and how they work in subject contexts.*

The texts students encounter in such fields as science, mathematics, and the social sciences require teachers to show, demonstrate, and make visible to students how literacy operates within the academic disciplines (Keene & Zimmermann, 1997; Tovani, 2000).

### **Phonics:**

*involves making the connection between sounds and letters when reading and spelling*

Evidence clearly shows that direct systematic instruction in phonics during the early years of schooling is an essential foundation for teaching children to read and spell.

(Coltheart, 2005; Center 2005, Loudon et al 2005)

Phonics is a constrained skill and needs to be mastered early.

**Phonemic awareness:**

*involves hearing and manipulating sounds in spoken language.*

By teaching students to manipulate sounds in language, it helps them to learn to read. By teaching children phonemic segmentation with letters, it helps them to spell.

(National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy, 2005; Yopp, 1992; Stanovich, 1993–4; Meiers et al 2006, Louden et al 2005)

Phonemic awareness is a constrained skill and needs to be mastered early.

**Aspects of speaking:**

*involves communicating with others, verbalising thought processes and articulating sounds in words.*

It is through speech that children learn to organise their thinking and focus their ideas. The neglect of oral language in the classroom will destroy that foundation and severely hinder the development of other aspects of language skills.

(Holbrook, 1983; Lyle, 1993)

*As students progress through school, they use speaking to develop deeper understanding of concepts and ideas.*

Discussion encourages students to grapple with their preconceived notions in the face of their peers' alternative ideas (Guzzetti, Snyder, Glass, & Gamas, 1993).

**Vocabulary knowledge:**

*involves understanding the meaning of spoken and written words and using words to create and understand oral and written texts.*

The connection between a strong vocabulary and comprehension is irrefutable. Students who read widely and understand how words represent concepts have a distinct advantage over students who know few words.

(Nagy, 2003; Anderson and Freebody, 1981)

*As students progress through school, vocabulary becomes subject specific and more technical and vocabulary knowledge supports students in a wide range of academic skills.*

Vocabulary knowledge assists students to read for meaning more efficiently and effectively (Goodman and Marek, 1996).