

EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM CIRCLE



CONTACT INFORMATION

For further information, please go to TDSBweb and see Program Coordinator, English/Literacy under **Contact Us**.



Language

is the most powerful tool learners have for developing ideas and insights, for giving shape to their experiences, and for making sense of their world and their possibilities in it. All classrooms are centers of inquiry, where learners use language creatively and critically and come to understand why language and literacy are so central to their lives. The Toronto District School Board identifies the development of literacy as a priority, and is committed to providing the support necessary for all learners to attain their highest level of literacy at each stage of their education. The TDSB values the learning of literacy skills through a second language, for example, the French Immersion and Extended French programs. The TDSB prepares learners for the literacy demands they will face throughout their lives, as citizens, workers, and individuals who derive personal satisfaction from full participation in society. The development of literacy skills in all subject areas enables learners to become reflective, articulate, literate individuals who use language effectively for learning, communicating and thinking.

(Taken from TDSB Literacy Foundation Statement P.003 CUR)

A Learning Environment that Supports Literacy

- Classrooms are purposefully arranged to provide spaces for whole class, small group, individualized and differentiated learning.
- Students' interests are made visible in the classroom environment and the environment "echoes" with student voices (e.g., student message boards, layered writing, student questions, student-generated and chosen materials displayed, exemplars of student work in evidence, anchor charts, artifacts of student learning).
- Teachers use appropriate modifications to the expectations as well as the appropriate accommodations to teaching and learning strategies (e.g. strategic use of students' home languages) to develop students' competency in the English curriculum.
- Teachers use a range of materials that respect the cultural, racial, linguistic, socio-economic, gender and sexual identities of students.
- Classroom culture encourages inclusion, risk-taking and questioning; literacy both supports and becomes the product of higher order, critical thinking.



- Digital technology and media texts are integrated into learning experiences to enhance students' opportunities to communicate to real audiences for authentic purposes.
- Daily blocks of 100 minutes are maintained for literacy, including focused time for each strand (oral, reading, writing and media), and integration of the strands where appropriate.
- Every classroom has a library, which includes graphic texts/versions, books, current magazines, a variety of genres, digital texts and leveled texts, balance of fiction and non-fiction, maps and globes.
- Teachers incorporate literacy skills and strategies in their teaching in every subject, so students can succeed in reading and writing the text forms essential to the subject.
- Learning goals and success criteria are co-created and revisited to foster continued growth and development.

Literacy for the 21st Century

A literate person has the ability to read and interpret print and non-print texts, as well as color, sound, movement and visual representations. The digital world is highly literacy dependent, requiring students to have access to multiple strategies that extend beyond paper and print texts.

Being literate in contemporary society includes the critical use of print and spoken language in addition to the visual language of film, television, and advertising in both digital and non-digital environments. It also means being able to use an array of technologies to gather reliable information and to communicate effectively to others as well as to construct and represent meaning, ideas, and concepts. 21st century literacy includes the use of literacy for social change and humanitarian purposes.



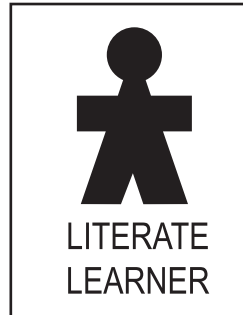
AN EVOLVING VIEW: FOUR ROLES OF A LITERATE LEARNER

Meaning Maker

Uses prior knowledge and personal and/or world experiences to construct and communicate meaning while reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing and representing. The literate learner is a 'text participant', forming and communicating their own interpretation in light of their own knowledge and potential.

Text User

Understands that purpose and audience help to determine the way text is constructed: form, format, medium, structure, tone, the degree of formality, and sequence of components. The literate learner uses this knowledge and a variety of thinking processes to read, listen, and view, as well as to write, speak and represent ideas.



Luke and Freebody, 1990

Code User

Recognizes and uses the features and structures of written, visual, and multi-modal texts, including the alphabet, sounds in words, phonemic awareness, phonics, spelling, conventions, sentence structure, text organization, and graphics, as well as other visual and non-visual cues to break the "code" of texts.

Text Analyzer

Understands that texts are not neutral; that they represent particular views, beliefs, values and other perspectives to serve different interests; that other views and perspectives may be missing; that the design and messages of texts can be interpreted, critiqued, challenged and alternatives considered. The literate learner decides what to think now, considers possibilities and when to take action.

READING

The Language and English curriculum focuses on developing the knowledge and skills that will enable students to become effective readers. An effective reader is one who not only grasps the ideas communicated in text but is able to apply them in new contexts. To do this, the reader must be able to think clearly, creatively, and critically about the ideas and information encountered in texts in order to understand, analyze and absorb them and to recognize their relevance in other contexts. Students can develop the skills necessary to become effective readers by applying a range of comprehension strategies as they read and by reading a wide variety of texts. It is also important that they read a range of materials that illustrate the many uses of writing. By reading widely, students will develop a richer vocabulary and become more attuned to the conventions of written language. Reading various kinds of texts in all areas of the curriculum will also help students to discover what interests them most to pursue and develop their interests and abilities.

(OC, English Grades 9-10, 2007)

COMPONENT

Reading Strategies

Reading is a complex process that involves the application of various strategies before, during and after reading. Effective readers apply strategies to understand texts at all points in the reading process.

Before reading: students identify the purpose of the reading activity; activate their prior knowledge about the topic; preview the features of the text.

During reading: students may use sources of information (e.g., clues from context or from their understanding of language structures and/or letter-sound relationships) to help them solve unfamiliar words; apply comprehension strategies to help them make meaning of the text (e.g., predicting, visualizing, questioning, drawing inferences, identifying main ideas, summarizing, and monitoring and revising their understanding.)

After reading: students may analyze, synthesize, make connections, evaluate, and use other critical and creative thinking skills to achieve a deeper understanding of the material they have read.

DESCRIPTOR

Teacher Action:

- explicitly teach and model the reading strategies students need to understand the fiction and non-fiction texts they are reading.
- introduce new strategies in ways that are appropriate to students' grade level and level of language development (see modelled, shared guided reading).
- help build the necessary background knowledge for students whose life experiences may not have provided them with the information they need to understand the text.
- model using a "think aloud" strategy to enable students to understand how a reading strategy is used to help make sense of the text.
- give students regular opportunities to reflect on the effectiveness of the reading strategies they are using, and to set goals for improvement.

READING CONTINUED ►

MEDIA

COMPONENT

Understanding Media Text

Students construct meaning through a combination of several media languages (images, sounds, graphics, words) to understand the influence of mass media on their lives.

Understanding Media Forms

Students will understand that each form creates meaning differently, using specific vocabulary and techniques.

Creating a Media Text

Students use codes and conventions to create a media text.

Reflecting on Media Literacy Skills

Students reflect and monitor their learning.

DESCRIPTOR

Teacher Action:

- provide explicit opportunities to read, view, listen and deconstruct a variety of media texts
- provide many opportunities to read, view and listen to a variety of media texts across all subject areas
- provide opportunities for students to observe, talk and analyze the way the media forms are used in daily life
- use frameworks such as the Key Concepts and the Media Triangle to support students' understanding of media texts
- create opportunities for students to sort, classify and compare different media texts
- use media content that reflects various cultures and customs
- provide students with opportunities to communicate their thinking either orally or in writing in their home language.

Teacher Action:

- ensure that students have opportunities to sort, classify and compare different media forms such as films, e-mail, DVD, food packaging, t-shirt designs, etc.
- provide multiple examples of media texts that share the same form to understand how the codes combine to make meaning
- use diagrams, pictures, manipulatives and gestures to clarify vocabulary that may be new to English Language Learners
- prepare students to make informed and critical judgments about the nature of media, the techniques used and the impact of these techniques through explicit instruction.

Teacher Action:

- design opportunities to create media products or simulations of media products
- provide feedback on the construction and creation of media products
- coach students to identify an appropriate form to suit the purpose and audience for a media text they plan to create.

Teacher Action:

- encourage students to use a media log to track their interactions with media
- assist students to identify the strategies they find most helpful in making sense of and creating media texts.



Accountable Talk

Accountable talk refers to an extended, intentional consideration of a topic, which stimulates higher-order thinking, helping students to learn, reflect on their learning and communicate their knowledge and understanding. When students engage in accountable talk (Allen, 2002), they do the following:

- focus on the topic and purpose of discussion
- attend to the listener's needs and what others are saying
- seriously respond to and build on what others have said
- Give evidence to support their point of view and help each other to reach a common understanding, and share responsibility for learning of the whole group.

(A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4 to 6, Volume One, Page 32, 2006)

Accountable talk enables students to gain insight into how others apply strategies and solve problems. Through the structures of accountable talk, students become aware of their own and others' perspectives, and also become aware of the language structures and conventions they use while speaking to others in a structured way.

(Ontario Curriculum: English, 11-12)

Formal or Scripted Talk

Formal or scripted talk is used to communicate a fully developed, rehearsed presentation to an audience. This may include debates, presentations, speeches, reports, sharing of learning, storytelling and drama. All these oral language forms may be presented spontaneously or taken to a fully developed, polished presentation. Formal or scripted talk includes attention to diction, devices and vocal strategies, and use of non-verbal cues and audio-visual aids.

Reflecting on Oral Communication Skills and Strategies

Through structured processes of reflecting on their oral communication experiences, students develop the ability to describe and explain the strategies they found most helpful before, during and after listening and speaking. They evaluate their strengths and weaknesses in oral communication to help identify the steps they can take to improve their skills (*OC English, 11-12*). Students develop these metacognitive skills in conversation with their teacher and peers. They also identify how their skills as viewers, representers, readers and writers help them improve their oral communication skills. (*O.C. Lang, p.60*)

The goal of explicit strategy instruction is to help students become flexible thinkers across a wide range of learning situations. Some students, particularly those who struggle, do not realize that there are many different ways to build, maintain, and enrich understanding. Teachers should provide guided and independent practise in the use of accountable talk, by giving students opportunities to:

- examine and clarify challenging concepts
- “talk through” processes and strategies teachers have modified
- review and analyze important information and ideas
- revisit and revise ideas
- resolve problems and recognize different points of view
- extend understanding of texts read, written and viewed.

(A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4 to 6, Volume 4)

Teacher Action:

- intentionally teach and model the skills of accountable talk, and provide frequent opportunities for students to observe the thinking of their peers
- engage students in developing and using critical thinking skills to identify multiple perspectives and to analyze texts for their purpose, message and possible bias
- model and promote inquiry through accountable talk as an essential means of learning
- provide scaffolds in order for English language learners to activate and build on prior knowledge e.g. sentence frames, mind maps and key subject vocabulary
- guide and support students in listening to a variety of oral texts for specific purposes.

Teacher Action:

- guide and support students as they develop understanding and skills in presenting a range of scripted/rehearsed forms (e.g., speeches, oral reports, dialogues)
- allow students opportunities to access a variety of media sources to view and examine models of formal talk by speakers from a range of cultural/linguistic texts
- explicitly teach processes and strategies to help students listen with purpose and to understand forms of formal talk in the classroom
- support students as they deconstruct and analyze the opinions and perspectives expressed through formal talk, and the techniques and styles of the forms used
- model and explicitly teach the use of words, phrases, terminology, and a variety of stylistic devices that effectively communicate meaning and engage audiences
- through peer and self-reflection, guide students as they develop listening skills, and to express and examine their responses to the style and content of formal talk they engage in as an audience.

Teacher Action:

- give students regular opportunities to reflect on their oral communication experiences, individually and in small groups, using oral, print and electronic form
- involve students actively in the use and development of self assessments (checklists, rubrics, video and audio recording)
- design student conferences in which students discuss their personal or class literacy learning goal
- provide regular feedback to students (including strengths and next steps, in oral and written form) based on the students' stated goals for improvement.

Modelled Reading

When students are introduced to a new reading strategy, the teacher explicitly and intentionally models for students how to use it as part of the reading process. How the teacher models the strategy is based on assessment information about the students and the type of text that is being used to demonstrate the strategy. Modelling of the strategy is usually followed by a discussion or activity so the teacher can ensure that the students are able to apply the strategy to construct meanings as they read. Modelled reading can take place in the format of a whole group or small group setting. The purpose of modelled reading is to help students become strategic readers to stimulate the imagination, and help students develop an ear for the vocabulary and structures of language and print.

Shared Reading

Shared reading is a step along the continuum of support for students as they develop confidence reading new texts. It may be offered to the whole class or a small group of students. Text selection is based on the needs indicated in assessment data. The text is always strategically chosen by the teacher as appropriate to the grade level, curriculum expectations and student needs. In shared reading, all students must be able to see the text that is being read. The text should be at a reading level that is slightly more difficult than students can read independently. During shared reading, students gradually assume more responsibility for the reading as their skill level and confidence increases.

Guided Reading

In guided reading, students are taught in small groups based on their similar learning needs as indicated by assessment data. Guided reading supports these students as they read, talk, think, and question their way through a text. The teacher plans a guided reading lesson using information gained from previous assessments (e.g., during shared reading and informal observations or reading conferences) and from formal assessments. The teacher differentiates reading instruction for this small group of students based on their similar reading behaviors, like interests, or similar instructional needs. Texts are chosen to most closely correspond with students' zone of proximal development. The small group structure gives the teacher an opportunity to meet individual needs.

Independent Reading

Independent reading is a strategically organized activity in Language and English classrooms which engages students' thinking before, during and after reading. During independent reading, students self-select a fiction or non-fiction text to read that is at their independent level of reading (i.e., the student knows 95% of the words in the text). Teachers make clear to the students the purpose and goals of the independent reading activity. While they read, students independently practise the skills and strategies introduced in large and small-group instruction. The teacher monitors the students as they read and provides explicit descriptive feedback.

Teacher Action:

- select a text that is slightly beyond what the students can read on their own
- use modelled reading to introduce a new reading strategy; provide an opportunity to orally deconstruct the text
- start the modelling process by conducting either a read-aloud (e.g., a poem, story, non-fiction or media text) or think-aloud (e.g., browsing an informational text, pointing out specific content or text features), as appropriate to text type
- model expressive and fluent reading for students
- choose a variety of text forms to model the strategy (including media texts) and be explicit about how the strategy can be adapted to understand different text types
- demonstrate how a fluent reader would apply the specific strategy when reading a text
- explicitly develop the use of comprehension and metacognition strategies by reflecting on strategies used.

Teacher Action:

- determine and explicitly teach the prior knowledge that students will need to understand the text, the focus of teaching, big idea or essential question
- present a text on screen, chart, or in a big-book format to the whole class or small group
- read the text while the students join in reading aloud
- provide students with essential demonstrations of how reading works and what readers do to construct meaning (e.g. use a think aloud to demonstrate the use of context to predict the meaning of words)
- teach students strategies to read certain parts of the text orally or silently
- provide opportunities for students to respond to text in a variety of ways
- ensure that activities accommodate the various learning needs and styles of students.

Teacher Action:

- determine when guided reading is developmentally appropriate
- meet with two to four guided reading groups daily
- provide the students with a brief introduction and the purpose for reading that will focus on reading strategies modelled during read aloud and shared reading
- plan the lesson to include intentional word study and vocabulary of the chosen text
- ask questions of the small groups which engage students in critical and higher-order thinking to increase awareness of text features, conventions, vocabulary and meaning
- complete an in-depth assessment during guided reading in order to provide feedback to the students to help them improve their learning and determine next steps
- praise students' successful use of strategies and offer specific feedback that consolidates students' previous learning or extends their understanding of the text.

Teacher Action:

- make resources available in the classroom library or course materials that are at a variety of reading levels
- assist students in self-selecting books at the appropriate independent reading level
- make the purpose and the goals of the independent reading time clear to all students
- put in place response methods that make students accountable for their reading time and demonstrate the meaning they are making while reading
- provide mini-lessons on time management, book selection and record keeping
- observe and record the reading behaviors of individual students and the reading and comprehension strategies that they are using or not yet using
- observe the responses made by students to the texts being read and use their observations of student behavior to capitalize on teachable moments
- conduct reading conferences with individual students
- analyze students' reading proficiency (e.g., conduct a miscue analysis or running record) engage students in book talks, book clubs, and literature circles after the reading
- provide opportunities for students to share their reading responses to the texts with their classmates.

COMPONENT

DESCRIPTOR

Modelled Writing

The teacher demonstrates out loud how a writer thinks when producing writing, and explicitly models aspects of the writing process. This reveals the thinking, processing and problem-solving which are part of their writing. In a modelled writing lesson, the teacher demonstrates one specific aspect of writing to the whole class. The text produced during the lesson is usually based on a situation or experience with which the students are familiar, so that they can relate to the context of the writing. By observing this process, students learn that even proficient writers make mistakes, and that all work can be reused or edited. Finished products should be displayed at eye level to allow students to read and reread the text.

Teacher Action:

- demonstrate, in each lesson, an actual writing experience from a range of grade-appropriate text forms, including media texts
- design modelled writing lessons that make the writing process explicit, using a think aloud to show the process real writers use when they write, including:
 - keeping an audience in mind, thinking aloud about vocabulary choice and sentence structure and syntax
 - ways of generating ideas and incorporating new information, rejecting or modifying ideas and details
 - processes and strategies for planning, drafting, revising, editing, polishing and publishing a piece of writing to make the writing clear, precise, effective and powerful
 - demonstrating that trial and error is an accepted strategy when choosing words and language
- provides opportunities to deconstruct a variety of text forms, including media forms such as commercials and podcasts
- create a classroom environment in which everyone in the class can participate and learn from the demonstration
- meet observed and assessed needs by giving explicit, focused demonstrations of real writing
- demonstrate and value the risk taking that often makes writing effective

Shared Writing

In shared writing, the teacher collaborates with the students to construct a piece of writing. This provides an authentic writing experience as the classroom community shares the writing together. It enables the teacher to support and scaffold young or struggling writers. Shared writing explicitly provides opportunities for planning, drafting revising, editing and publishing. The teacher observes students' understanding of writing during the mini-lesson and, based on these observations or on current knowledge of students' needs, works with a small group in a shared writing session during independent writing time.

Teacher Action:

- give a mini-lesson explicitly teaching the key learning. Mini-lessons include:
 - strategies for representing meaning using written language
 - reviewing/extending a writing skill or strategy
 - writing a new genre or format (e.g., a report or recount; a journal), making links to other subjects explicit
- share the writing and suggest ideas and explain possibilities of ideas and language
- actively seek input from students on the shared piece of writing and reflect on the production and process
- respond to student suggestions and note how they are contributing to the piece of writing
- make ongoing observations and assessments of students' progress

Guided Writing

The teacher gathers together a small group of writers and provides them with explicit teaching based on their needs as determined through observation or writing conferences. This model enables teachers to provide support to small groups who need help before they can write texts independently.

Teacher Action:

- revisit key learning from the mini-lesson
- guide, support and provide descriptive feedback to the group
- review the success criteria/mentor texts and exemplars
- suggest and explain possibilities for their writing in terms of word choice, structure and organization, clarity and coherence
- teach the writer's craft, strategies and skills
- make ongoing observations and assess students' progress

Independent Writing

Students complete the writing themselves based on the knowledge and skills they have learned during the modelled, shared and guided lessons, and using the feedback they have received from their teacher and their peers.

Teacher Action:

- encourage students to produce a variety of self-selected texts, including media texts such as podcasts or video clip. (Teachers may provide students with checklists and charts so that they can see and track the range and variety of forms they are producing over time)
- confer with students and provide descriptive feedback based on success criteria; provide opportunities for students to confer with each other on their writing, with specific "look-fors" to make the peer feedback effective
- provide support to students individually and in small groups as they try new strategies they have learned
- explain, respond, coach and re-teach writing skills and strategies when necessary
- support students as they develop and refine their skills in self-assessment, encourage goal-setting and checking oneself against the goal
- observe student progress and use the information when planning

Writing Process

The writing process, explicitly taught, demonstrates for students and helps them mirror how writers write. The stages of writing process move from pre-writing (idea generation) through drafting, revising, editing and publishing of written work. It is a recursive rather than a linear process, with opportunities for students to confer with the teacher and peers at all stages of the process. As with "real" writing, the writing process gives ownership to the writer for their ideas, for audience and purpose of the writing.

Teacher Action:

- provide regular opportunities for students to write on self-selected topics and genres/forms for real purposes
- give students tools that enable them to record and track the forms and genres they write over time
- provide mini-lessons on aspects of writing to support students' needs, based on on-going assessment
- confer regularly with students about their writing goals, and provide opportunities for them to confer with other students in meaningful ways
- explicitly teach students (e.g., model, give mini-lesson) how to revise and edit their work according to success criteria
- give students opportunities to "go public", sharing their writing with a variety of audiences
- assess effectiveness of students' use of the writing process during writing time and through the products of writing

WRITING CONTINUED ►

COMPONENT

DESCRIPTOR

Independent Writing

Writing to learn tools and activities (e.g., quick writes, placemat, listen/view-write) are used strategically and on an on-going basis during learning time to enable students to capture and represent their thinking as learning takes place. Writing-to-learn activities are important to support learning in all subject areas, and are valuable assessment-as-learning tools.

Teacher Action:

- explicitly teach (e.g., model, give mini-lessons) writing-to-learn tools and activities
- give students on-going feedback on their use of the writing-to-learn tools; help students reflect on the positive impact those tools have on their learning
- give students opportunities to collaborate when using writing-to-learn tools
- guide students toward independent use of writing-to-learn strategies that match the learning needs of each subject and learning situation (e.g., studying for a test; learning from a video; summarizing content discussed in a group).

ORAL COMMUNICATION

"Listening and speaking are essential skills for social interaction at home, at school, and in the community. The Oral Communication strand focuses on identification and development of the skills and strategies effective listeners and speakers use to understand and interact with others. It also emphasizes the use of higher-order thinking skills to stimulate students' interest and engage them in their own learning...All students can benefit from opportunities to improve their listening and response skills to refine their ideas and their ability to express them."

The Ontario Curriculum—English, Grades 11 and 12, 2007

COMPONENT

DESCRIPTOR

Informal or Unrehearsed Talk

Informal or unrehearsed talk refers to the conversations which occur spontaneously throughout the learning day in small and large groups. This kind of talk, along with listening skills required in order to engage with the speaker, allow students to communicate and explore feelings and ideas, including: expressing opinions, identifying and solving problems, expressing and clarifying thoughts and feelings; comparing and sharing experiences; asking questions; generating ideas; and connecting their learning to their own and others' experiences. For some students, the notion that learning involves talk is unfamiliar, and talk that supports learning must be explicitly taught and modelled.

*(Adapted from The Ontario Curriculum, Language 1-8, 2006
English 9-10 and English 11-12, 2007)*

Teacher Action:

- establish a climate of respect and support for the students' interactions through talk and listening, both in whole group and small group settings
- take into account that there are differences in the norms and conventions associated with oral communication in different cultures
- model and bring attention to thoughtful and respectful use of oral language informally used in the classroom
- model and explicitly teach the "think about" process, to help students make meaning of texts they read
- provide culturally rich texts and resources, including media texts, for students to examine and discuss
- plan frequent opportunities for students to hear and 'absorb' the sound of languages appropriate to different audiences and situations
- explicitly teach listening for different purposes
- intentionally model explicit listening strategies that vary according to social settings (such as peer talk in groups, responses to presentations and read-alouds)
- explicitly model and teach how to interpret non-verbal cues that add meaning to the oral communication
- give students opportunities to demonstrate and practise a variety of listening and speaking skills in a variety of contexts
- give English Language Learners opportunities to talk about ideas and feelings in their first language as a foundation for more formal talk related to learning.



ORAL COMMUNICATION CONTINUED ►