Practitioner Guide

This guide is about using the assessment data collected through observational reading tests, comprehension assessment and writing assessment.

The guide:
- provides background information on the nature of assessment
- discusses how the collected assessment data may be evaluated and used in the classroom to influence future individual student and whole class teaching
- provides the materials and guidelines for workshop activities to practise and discuss the analysis of assessment data.

Guides

- The guides have been written for teachers who have attended professional development in teaching Accelerated Literacy. The notes presume some understanding about how to teach the program.
- For a detailed explanation of how to implement the teaching sequence, please refer to the teachers’ handouts from the professional development sessions. Additionally, you could refer to http://www.nalp.edu.au

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Introduction
Assessment is about measuring student achievement and includes the processes and procedures we use to gather that information. These processes and procedures – detailing who should be tested and how often, and how the tests should be administered and marked – can be found in Assessing literacy development.

‘Evaluation’ is the term given to the process whereby we give significance to the information collected by using it for the purposes of decision making. To do this, we have to be able to interpret it. Our ability to make good decisions is a function both of the quality of the information provided, and of our ability to interpret it. The more systematic and reliable the data collection, the more useful it is in decision making.

Within the NALP, student learning is assessed, data is collected and the results evaluated to judge how effective and efficient Accelerated Literacy is in improving literacy outcomes of marginalised students. This data is also used:

- for system/sector wide accountability purposes
- to inform classroom practice and planning
- to reflect on self-development (i.e. teachers’ needs in terms of professional learning within the NALP).

This booklet talks about how the collected data may be evaluated and used in the classroom.
Using this guide
Individual use

The book can be used to look at examples of how to use a range of assessment data and provides background information about assessment.

Types of assessment

- Observational reading
  - What can be observed
    - Individual Level assessment
  - Examples
    - Working Level assessment

- Comprehension assessment
  - Example

- Using a rubric to assess writing
  - Example

Analysis of the data

Using the data for planning

Background information

- Principles of assessment
- Uses of formative, diagnostic and summative assessment
## Workshop use

### Observational reading tests
- Working in small groups discuss how AL teaching can be planned to remedy student problems in Example 1. See analysis on pages 16–19.
- In report back include information on pages 20–22.

### Comprehension assessment
- Work individually to mark Jenny’s response sheet. See page 27*.
- Work in small groups to identify her problems.
- In report back include information on pages 29–30.
- Discuss in small groups how AL teaching can be planned to remedy student problems. In report back include information on pages 31–35.

### Writing assessment
- **Example 1**
  - In small group use a rubric to assess the sample. See Appendix.
  - In report back include information on pages 43–48.
- In small groups discuss how AL teaching can be planned to remedy student problems.
- In report back include information on page 49.
- **Example 2**
  - In small group use a rubric to assess the sample. See Appendix.
  - In report back include information on page 51.
- In small groups discuss how AL teaching can be planned to remedy student problems.
- In report back include information on page 52.

*Use tables for marking and analysing *The Accident* in the ToRCH Teacher Manual.
The National Accelerated Literacy Program (NALP)
Teaching the sequence

The National Accelerated Literacy Program consists of a cycle of interrelated activities based on a sequence beginning with literate orientation and focused on one selected text. The text may vary from a short, illustrated story written for early childhood students to several carefully selected passages from a longer book intended for older students.

Teachers spend, on average, an hour and a half a day teaching Accelerated Literacy. The total number of weeks spent on a text across a sequence of consecutive lessons will vary according to the age of the students and the complexity of the text.

Low and high order literate orientation are carried out before reading. The other strategies use the students’ fluent reading of and common knowledge about a text as teaching resources for extending their literacy competence. Further information on the teaching sequence can be found at http://www.nalp.edu.au.
Observational reading tests
As its name suggests, an observational reading test involves more than simply recording how students attempt to decode words and get meaning from a passage or text. It requires teachers to observe behaviours exhibited by the students when confronted with the task.

Marking an observational reading record (for instances of words read incorrectly, words added, words left out, repetitions and self-corrections) provides only some of the information that a teacher relies on to make judgments about a student’s reading development. By observing how a student approaches the reading task and listening carefully to his or her performance, teachers can gather additional information about a student’s reading.

In essence, there are three types of observational reading tests:

- Individual Level (IL)
- Working Level (WL)
- informal working level.

Details on how to administer each of these observational reading tests are provided in the booklet, *Assessing literacy development*.

An instructional level has been achieved when a student reads a text with 90-95% accuracy. It is important to note that this level of reading accuracy is not an indication of reading fluency. Students may read a text at over 90% accuracy but their reading may lack fluency. When a student reads a text at between 90-95% accuracy, he or she is likely to make greatest progress on this text: it is not too difficult and not too easy.

Teachers are expected to closely examine the results of IL testing for their students most at risk and to look for patterns across a number of ILs. Looking for patterns allows teachers to identify particular areas of weakness across a number of students and thus better target their teaching. It is highly likely that the majority of at-risk students will display the same patterns in their ILs, so that the teacher can identify the needs of groups of students instead of planning individual education intervention programs.

The theory of teaching and learning on which the NALP is built suggests that learning is socially constructed between student and teacher, and between student and student/s. Therefore the needs of individual students can be catered for in a group/class setting where learning can most efficiently be transacted.
What can be observed

Making brief notes about each of the following types of observations can help teachers to develop a fuller understanding of how their students are working to get meaning from text.

**How the student phrases his or her reading, and if he or she pays attention to punctuation**

This provides information about how well the student comprehends the passage. Repetitions are often the result of the student needing to adjust his or her phrasing so that their reading makes sense to them. In general, repetition is positive reading behaviour but this is not the case when it is used repeatedly. When punctuation is ignored the student rarely comprehends what he or she has read, despite the fact that they may have been taught to ‘read with expression.’

**The rate at which the passage is read**

This may also say something about how a student comprehends. Slow and laborious, though accurate, reading may signal lack of comprehension, as indeed can speedy reading where punctuation is ignored. The rate at which a passage is read can relate to a student’s ability to predict, their capacity for automatic recognition of words, their understanding of sentence structure and their understanding of the purposes of punctuation. However, this is not to suggest that students who read at an even pace understand everything they read. Teachers need to use this information in conjunction with other observations to help construct a clearer picture of their students’ decoding and meaning making strategies.

**How troublesome words are dealt with**

Does the student rely on the relationships between individual letters/sounds or clusters of letters to break up and then read troublesome words? Is the word segmented left to right? If not, what other strategies are being used? Does the student leave the word out initially, read on to try to establish meaning, and then return to read part, or all, of the sentence?
Tone of voice and inflection
Both are barometers for how confidently, or otherwise, students undertake the reading task. They can indicate uncertainty, particularly when students encounter unfamiliar words or struggle to maintain comprehension. Equally, they can point to fluency and confidence with the reading task.

Glancing at the teacher
Students who lack confidence in their reading ability frequently look to the teacher for confirmation and affirmation. The teacher’s reaction tells them if they should continue in the same vein or make adjustments. In this way they are relying on someone, other than themselves, to monitor and guide their efforts. Students who continue to use this strategy will have difficulty making the transition to independent readers. They do not develop other more productive strategies which enable them to tackle the reading task for themselves. Look for examples of the student’s ability to self-correct and when it happens.

1:1 correspondence
If the student uses his or her finger to point to the words being read, does the finger point to the words as they are read or is the finger moving at a different rate, reaching the end of the page before or after the student finishes reading? Such behaviour could indicate that memory is the only reading strategy being used. This would suggest that the student is unclear about the concept of ‘word’.

The student’s ability to monitor his or her own understanding
Is the student making adjustments to how he or she reads (eg self-correction/repetition) in an effort to maintain meaning? Will he or she leave out a word, read on and then come back to re-read that part of the sentence later? Does the tone of voice and rate of delivery suggest that the student is trying to maintain meaning, ie monitoring his or her own understanding?

Looking at pictures/illustrations
Younger readers often refer to illustrations to help them read and, indeed, pictures in books for young children are designed to do just this. Illustrations in books for older students may not provide the same degree of assistance and can often lead fragile readers away from the text and into the illustrator’s interpretation of the text.
Example 1

Individual Level assessment

Background

What follows below is a copy of an IL reading observational test for a 15-year-old female student on a text which was judged to be at about a Year 6 level. The text is *Rowan of Rin* by Emily Rodda.

This text was one of a number of texts used in the pilot program that preceded the introduction of the NALP and was used for assessing ILs until the end of 2005. The process of collecting and analysing the information remains the same for the original assessment texts and those which have superseded them, such as PM Benchmark Kit 2, *Thunderfish* and *Predator’s Gold*.

Unfortunately, no additional information was recorded, only the errors made while reading. Even the nature of self-corrections was not documented. Despite these shortcomings, the information collected over one short reading session is sufficient to make judgments about how this student attempts to make meaning from text.

The observational reading record shows that, although the student reads at over 90% accuracy, she still has a lot to learn about how narrative is constructed and how it works in western culture, and how to use all the cueing systems available to her for monitoring her reading.
The sample

**sc** = self-correction. Not an error  
Words in **grey** = words read instead of the correct word below  
Total number of words = 237  
Number of errors = 15 (proper noun Annad 1 error only)  
Number of self-corrections = 6  
% accuracy = 93.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>work</th>
<th>streams</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One morning the people of Rin woke to find that the stream</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>flood</strong></td>
<td><strong>sc</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that flowed down the Mountain and through their village</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>sc</strong></td>
<td><strong>flew</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>had slowed to a trickle. By nightfall even that small flow had stopped.</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>mine</strong></td>
<td><strong>ideal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The mill wheel lay idle. There was no water to turn its heavy blades.</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The bukshah drinking pool on the other side of the village was still.</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No bubbling stream was stirring it into life and keeping it topped up to the brim.</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>then</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There was no change on the second day, or the third.</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By the fourth day the water in the pool was thick and brown.</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>sc</strong></td>
<td><strong>sc</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The bukshah shook their heavy heads and pawed the ground</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>when they went to drink in the morning and the evening.</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
And five days the pool was so shallow that even little Annad, who was only five years old, could touch the bottom with her hand without getting her sleeve wet. And still the stream failed to flow.

On the evening of the sixth day the worried people met in the market square to talk. ‘The bukshah could not drink at all today,’ said Lann, the oldest person in the village, and once the greatest fighter. ‘If we do not act soon, they will die.’

‘Not Star,’ whispered Annad to her brother, who was the keeper of the bukshah. ‘Star will not die, though, will she, Rowan?’ Because you will give Star water from our well.’
Analysis

The errors made by the student are detailed in the grid below. ‘Meaning’ includes both syntactic and semantic information and ‘Decoding’ refers to the student’s abilities to use visual cues to help read, or help her monitor her reading – often seen through repetition and self-correction.

Asking the question ‘Why did the student say that?’ is useful in trying to gain insight into a student’s reading strategies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error</th>
<th>Meaning maintained</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>work/ woke</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>The decoding error loses the meaning of the actual text. Three letters of the word have been attended to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>streams/ stream</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>Meaning and structure maintained but not enough attention paid to final letter of word.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flood/ flowed</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>Streams (previous error) can flood so both the meaning and structure contribute to this error. Visual attention given to first three and last letters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flew/ flow</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>Attention to first two and last letters of word.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mine/mill</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>Meaning and structure maintained despite the error. Nothing in the text so far suggests that the wheel should be a mill wheel. Attention to the first two letters of word only.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ideal/idle</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>Used all the letters of the word but rearranged them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>then/third</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>Only the first two letters of the word attended to. ‘The then’ instead of ‘the third’ is syntactically unacceptable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and/ Annad</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>Attention to the first two and last letters of word.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>word/ worried</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>Attention to first three and last letters of word.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Combination</td>
<td>Attended to (y) / Not Attended to (n)</td>
<td>Explanation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>day/today</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>The student is likely to have read <em>all day</em> – a commonly occurring collocation in the English language – and as such was attending to meaning and structure. Visual focus is on last three letters of word.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>valley/village</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>Both meaning and structure contributed to this error. Attended to the first letter, middle two and one other letter. Words very similar visually.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>don’t/not</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>This is a commonly occurring oral language pattern. It made sense within a few words but not in the text overall. Student attempting to make meaning but not the meaning of the actual text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>start/Star</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>Attention on the first three letters of the word.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thought/though</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>Visually similar words but meaning of text changed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>when/will</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>Attention paid only to initial letter of word.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

y = attended to  
n = not attended to
Meaning

The student read the passage at about 93.6% accuracy, which is an instructional level. All but one of her errors involved decoding problems with the middle letters of words. She always used letters from the actual words of the text to arrive at a real word (not a nonsense word) as she read. Although the words she decoded were incorrect, they made some sense and she persisted reading right to the end of the passage.

Her knowledge of English language sentence structure allowed her, in some instances, to substitute like for like (e.g. a noun for a noun – valley for village, mine for mill) which helped her to continue reading, as these substitutions did not detract from the meaning.

The student self-corrected on six occasions (1:39 words) and attempted to re-read when she was monitoring her reading, although she did not always arrive at the correct word.

She was prepared to continue reading even when there was a breakdown in comprehension, as is evident by the errors in the last few sentences in the last paragraph.
Decoding

Most of this student’s errors resulted from decoding, although she was attending to several letters in many of the words. Her self-corrections show that she was able to correct several errors by paying attention to visual cues. She depended on visual similarity to read several words (eg valley instead of village, thought instead of though).

[Note: Although the student self-corrected on six occasions, the original error was not recorded on five of these occasions, making it impossible to analyse. A vital piece of information was thus lost. Recording errors which are later self-corrected is especially important with older readers (this student is 15 years of age) as much of the language processing that takes place with such students happens ‘in head’ and is thus not available for teachers to observe.]

Summary

This student could read this text at an instructional level and could recognise and read 92% words of this upper primary level text easily. This student’s weak point is related to decoding, although she did decide on real English words not nonsense words when attempting to use the letters. She appeared to attempt to make sense of the text, although not the sense of the actual text from the passage.

This passage is at an appropriate level of difficulty to be used as an instructional text for this student.
What the analysis offers in terms of planning

Focus 1 – spelling

Student need
The student needs both to investigate patterns in the English language spelling system and to read unknown words to use as a ‘monitoring device’ to ensure that semantic, syntactic and visual cues all work together and arrive at the same answer. At the moment, this student’s only decoding or visual strategy is to rely on the identification of initial sounds or letter clusters.

Planning solution
A focus on letter clusters at initial, medial and final positions in words is critical if such students are to develop the capacity to check their reading and read previously unencountered words. Work on etymology and word-building would be useful to develop knowledge about root words from which others can be built.

Focus 2 – text meaning

Student need
Recognition of linkages within the text enables the student to understand that information provided early in the text is likely to have significance at a later stage. Experienced readers know to read for these linkages, some of which may be inferred, but inexperienced readers do not. In the passage from Rowan of Rin, experienced readers know what to make of information such as the stream slowing to a trickle, the water in the pool being thick and brown, and the bukshah shaking their heads and pawing the ground. Inexperienced readers may have to get to the words If we do not act soon they will die to realise the import of the situation. A clear understanding of the meaning of the text and the significance of experience related in it will allow the student to monitor decoding decisions and check that they make sense.

Planning solution
Explicit teaching (including demonstrations to show how writers lay a trail of clues for readers to follow) is necessary if students are to appreciate this dimension of writing. Teachers can return to this aspect again and again during low order literate orientation which starts each lesson. This five to 10-minute opportunity allows for discussion about connections across text, unveiling inferences and sharing and building common knowledge.

In addition, high order literate orientation provides an opportunity to focus on the meaning of words in context and to identify decoding strategies in advance of the independent reading task.
Focus 3 – syntax at the level of word order

Student need

What was the student thinking when she read ‘…the word people met’ (instead of the worried people met)? She has substituted a noun for an adjective and did not pick up her mistake (or if she did, the observer saw no evidence of it). What was she expecting to read when she started to read ‘Start will not die thought when she?’ Knowledge of word order might have led her to expect that someone would be doing the thinking, so that after the word ‘thought’ she might have expected to encounter a name/noun (Jonn/a man) of some sort.

Planning solution

Transformations provide opportunities for students to have a closer look at a number of things. Not only can they look at authors’ language choices but they can also focus on word order in sentences. Word order in English is generally fairly prescriptive, although some authors manipulate it for particular affect.

Discussion around language functions at transformations level allows students to focus on this pattern but this needs to be built up from a position of meaning-making. It also allows the reader to make the connections across text. Every word in the sentence below has a reason for being there. Every word connects to something mentioned previously in the text or is brought to the text from the reader’s experience.

On the evening of the sixth day / the worried people / met / in the market square / to talk.

Discussion point 1 – the motivation for the meeting. This brings together all of the information read up to this point. Once this has been determined, the next step would be to show how the patterns of wordings relate to this motivation.

Discussion point 2 – why the sixth evening? This indicates the escalation of the problem. Presumably the village people have been waiting for the situation to right itself and now, realising this is not going to happen, they are going to have to intervene. But how?

Discussion point 3 – why were they worried? Water is the lifeblood of any community. Were they going to have to move?
Discussion point 4 – why did they meet? This is part of the democratic process. People living in a community have common interests and come together to discuss them.

Discussion point 5 – why the market square? This is the traditional meeting place, the place that was big enough so that all could attend the meeting.

Text analysis:

On the evening of the sixth day (circumstance of time/prepositional phrase)  
the worried people (the noun group)  
mee to talk (verb group)  
in the market square (circumstance of place/prepositional phrase)  

The core elements of this sentence are the noun group and the verb group. Look at the relationship between these core elements and the prepositional phrases. Usually the circumstances of time and place/prepositional phrases, tend to go before and/or after these core elements. Manipulating sentences such as this on the transformations board can make English language word order patterns apparent.
Example 2
Working Level assessment

In addition to IL observational reading tests, both formal and informal WL assessment help to answer the questions ‘Are students learning what the teacher is teaching?’ and ‘Do they understand the meaning of the text?’ Each WL assessment provides an opportunity for an analysis similar to that of the IL analysis above.

The fact that WL testing occurs at frequent intervals throughout each term allows the teacher to make greater use of their diagnostic potential and to have the results feed quickly into the teaching and planning cycle. This allows teachers to ‘target’ particular parts of the AL teaching sequence for special attention or raises teachers’ awareness of the interdependence of each strategy in the teaching sequence and how each must be used to make the necessary connections for the student.

All observational reading tests, but particularly WLs, make it clear that not everything which is taught is learnt, a fact we teachers often overlook. But frequent and systematic use of WLs will allow teachers to address points of confusion and misunderstanding in a timely fashion, allowing them to build on work done and use that as a springboard to the next passage for study, or the next text.

The Principles of assessment (see page 54) set out the guidelines for how teachers should collect and use information about their students’ learning.

WL observational reading tests manage to bring a number of these principles together.

For teachers, they provide:

- vital information about what their students are learning and the strategies they are using
- a numeric value of student reading accuracy on a piece of text studied intensively
- information about which text to study next.
For students, they:

- provide opportunities for ongoing feedback to students so that they understand the purposes of assessment and are better placed to monitor their own learning
- provide the opportunity to affirm productive reading strategies used by the student
- allow for conversations around student errors (eg lack of attention to structure, visual cues, punctuation)
- allow students to ‘notice’ – to pay close attention to the results of their assessment – so that they become aware of ‘the gap’ between what they read and what was on the page
- allow students who may be struggling to engage in the assessment process to be read to by the teacher. In this way, the situation can be de-stressed and the teacher can model fluent reading using appropriate intonation, and also involve students in a retell and discussion of an aspect of the passage
- allow students one-to-one time with the teacher where necessary.

Most of all, WL assessment provides teachers with information about how students are currently reading and if they are learning what has been taught, allowing them to realise the potential of the Zone of Proximal Development. It also allows them to match errors to particular stages of the teaching sequence where misconceptions which lead to such errors can be addressed. In this way assessment and teaching become indivisible.
Comprehension assessment
Teachers informally assess reading comprehension in a number of ways. Junior primary students may draw pictures in response to texts read in class, or they may order a series of pictures or (together with the teacher) draw a story map depicting the important events and characters in a story.

For those students who have an individual reading level of grade 4 or above, their reading comprehension is formally tested using the Tests of Reading Comprehension (ToRCH) produced by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).

Information on choosing a suitable ToRCH test, administering it, converting raw scores to scale scores and relating these to stanines is provided in the booklet, *Assessing literacy development*. Teachers will find that both the *ToRCH Teacher Manual*, and *Teaching and Learning with ToRCH* will help them to better analyse the significance of raw test data, in order to look behind the results for implications for teaching and learning.

**Example**

**Background**

Jenny is a Year 9 student and this is her second ToRCH test. She was tested along with several of her friends, some of whom were doing a different test. Jenny’s orientation to the test was fairly positive, although the same could not be said of some of her friends, and Jenny could not be seen to be trying too hard.

It would be interesting to re-test Jenny at a later stage but under different conditions so that peer pressure could be minimised. Jenny’s class teacher felt that she was possibly more capable than the test result implied.

Take a few moments to mark Jenny’s answer sheet for *The Accident* using pp 108 – 111 of the *ToRCH Teacher Manual*. 
The Accident  

Jenny Year 9 ToRCH test

The passage you have just read describes an incident which occurred while a group of children were out riding their bikes. Justice wanted to ________ surprise ________ the boys in the story by ________ doing a stunt ________. However, she failed to do this because ________ she fell off her bike ________. We know this didn’t ________ hurt her ________ because she was going to pick up her bike and ________ do it again ________.

At the beginning of the passage Justice was feeling happy and very confident about what she planned to do as she laughed and talked to herself. She stopped talking so she could ________ could concentrate ________.

While speeding down the last hill towards the boys Justice kept her eyes on the spot where ________ she planned to do the stunt ________. She had to keep her feet perfectly still in order to ________ not fall off ________.

When the boys gathered at the bottom of the hill, they realised that Thomas wasn’t ________ behind them ________, so they turned to ________ see Justice ________. Thomas and the boys were puzzled because they didn’t know ________ what she was doing ________.

Suddenly, the boys moved their bikes. Justice thought this was to enable her to ________ do her stunt ________. Actually, they were moving them because ________ a car was coming ________. The boys tried to warn Justice of this by ________ waving her to the side ________.

Justice lost speed because ________ cause she talking ________. She then moved her feet on to the ________ handle bars ________, ready to make the bike ________ go in circles ________.

At this point ________ the car ________ startled her, causing her to ________ fall off ________ and ________ hurt herself ________.

Due to the ________ wind ________ Justice had not heard the approaching car. The car ________ saw ________ the bike but by ruining her performance it wrecked her hopes and dreams.

Justice was ________ helped up ________ by Levi. He was really puzzled as he didn’t understand what ________ she was trying to do ________.

Despite the shock she experienced Justice was fortunate not to have suffered serious injury.
Looking for patterns and irregularities

Once the test has been marked, the raw score can be converted to a scale score (ToRCH) using the appropriate norm table. Teachers should draw a horizontal line through the scale score (ToRCH) vertical axis. They can then circle each of the elements the student answered correctly in the test on this summary sheet (ToRCH Teacher Manual pages 69-80).

Teachers should expect to see that almost all of the elements answered correctly are located below this horizontal line, indicating that they fall within the expected level of performance of that student. Should the pattern be otherwise (so that an inordinate number of questions above the line are answered correctly) then this would be atypical and teachers would need to further investigate the reason for this. It may be that the test is too easy for the student, resulting in lack of engagement and consequent lack of attention. Whatever the reason, atypical results should alert the teacher that further action needs to be taken.

Analysis

You will notice that not all of the student’s answers match the range suggested in the ToRCH Score key. The answers suggested are only indicative and teachers are expected to make professional judgments as to whether students’ answers suggest that they understand the meaning in the text. The ToRCH tests are not tests of spelling or grammar so neither should be a factor when marking a student answer sheet.

Answers to items 7 and 12 in Jenny’s test didn’t quite fit into the acceptable answers category but were still judged to be correct in terms of ‘understanding the meaning in the text’.

Using the pattern of response sheet for The Accident, it is possible to plot which questions Jenny answered correctly and which she did not and then assess if her responses were what would be expected or atypical.

Teaching and Learning with ToRCH (Helen Lamont) provides an additional resource to help teachers look for response patterns in ToRCH tests. It offers opportunities to categorise the kinds of reading errors students make. This makes possible the sort of analysis below.
Patterns within Jenny’s errors

Jenny Yr 9 ToRCH test

The Accident
ToRCH scale score 59.1 (+ or – 3.4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incorrect items/ Correct item</th>
<th>Type of error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 4 / Question 21</td>
<td>hurt her / deter her / saw / did not hit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inferences: simple explicit inferences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 9</td>
<td>behind them / looking at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directly stated: embedded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 15</td>
<td>cause she talking / there was less of an incline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directly stated: across text</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using page 78 of *Teaching and Learning with ToRCH*, we can see that all of Jenny’s errors fall into the locate, interpret and infer category, as do all of the items in this test.

The errors Jenny made were related to information that was:

- directly stated across a text (the student needed to connect ideas separated in the text or connect different parts of the text)
- embedded within a text (the student needed to locate information when it was not prominent or to identify relevant detail from a number of apparently competing answers)
- inferred through simple and explicit references (the student needed to identify a detail that could be inferred from a relatively simple and relatively explicit reference in the text).

Jenny tended to answer questions 4 and 21 from commonsense rather than refer to the text for guidance. Both of Jenny’s answers make sense but she is not completely aware that for this kind of test you need to look for the answers in the text, not consider what might make sense. This may be due to the fact that she was insufficiently prepared for the test or that she simply lacks experience with this kind of testing in general. This is an important aspect of test-giving. The ToRCH test is a test of reading comprehension; it is not testing what students know about doing tests.
What the analysis offers in terms of planning

For Jenny

Using the ToRCH Teacher Manual (pages 37-41) and Teaching and Learning with ToRCH (page 10) as diagnostic tools, it is possible to identify the kinds of reading skills, knowledge and understandings that Jenny needs to develop further.

- The ability to provide a main point or detail of a story given explicit references.
- The ability to connect ideas separated in a text.
- The ability to locate information embedded in a text when it is not prominent or when a choice has to be made between a number of competing alternatives.
- The ability to connect pronouns to previously stated nouns.
- The ability to link singular pronoun to singular noun reference item (same with plural).
- The consciousness of how inflection can determine meaning (inner reading), punctuation and phrasing.

For general planning

Teachers would be well advised to attend to page 37 in the ToRCH Teacher Manual which documents the kinds of reading skills, knowledge and understandings that students need to have in order to address the ToRCH tests. If the texts used in the ToRCH tests are representative of the kinds of reading texts students encounter during their time at school, then the skills, understandings and knowledge dot-pointed on this page can be taken to be generic skills critical to reading comprehension per se.

In line with the principles of assessment (see page 54), allowing students the opportunity to talk about, and practise, ToRCH-type tests is to be encouraged, so that students come to understand what is being tested and what they need to bring to the exercise. It is important that teachers use the diagnostic potential of the ToRCH tests and apply the information provided to helping students comprehend whole text. Providing students with short texts and comprehension questions relating to them can only guarantee that students are provided with practice in reading short texts and accompanying comprehension questions. There is no guarantee that doing so will lead to enhanced comprehension of whole narrative text. It is much better, then, to cultivate such skills, knowledge and understandings within the context of the text being studied.

Starting every Accelerated Literacy lesson with a reason for reading is critical and provides the first step towards fostering comprehension. It is also critical that students understand what the focus of the lesson will be, how the lesson is likely to unfold and what their part in it is.
The ability to connect ideas separated in a text.

During low order literate orientation, students’ attention needs to be drawn to the structure and linkages within narrative text and how such texts tend to be staged in predictable ways. They need to have their attention drawn to how the structure contributes to presenting the story as a coherent whole, where each stage of the text builds on the previous one and contributes to the one that follows. Encouraging students to visualise settings, characters and events helps students create the ‘possible world’ of the text being studied so that it comes to be ‘a real world’, one where people and events are connected through relationships and common goals. This needs to be repeatedly alluded to as teacher and students work through the text, and should form part of the multiple low order orientation opportunities made possible as each new stage of the book, or chapter, or new passage for study is encountered. It is always important to explain the significance and contribution of a passage to a chapter, and a chapter to the overall story. In this way the interdependence of each element of the book and the whole can be demonstrated.

The notion of ‘constructedness’ of narrative and its staging can also be addressed in transformations when students are encouraged to think like a writer. The choice of passage for study will certainly have been made on the basis of its significance to the story as a whole, and this provides an opportunity to consider not only language choices that authors make but also how they stage connections within the story. Students’ attention to referencing can also be highlighted during high order orientation and again at transformations level. If students cannot unpack the referencing system, they can very quickly become lost in a story and may fail to pick up on the linkages the author is making.

The issue of connecting ideas across the text will become very real for students when they are preparing for writing. Being able to make and establish connections is at the heart of any narrative and, as students think through their story and make decisions about language choices, they will also have to consider how best to connect ideas across their text. (For example, when characters have been developed early in a text, highlighting particular characteristics, the reader will expect them to act and react in ways consistent with these characteristics when faced with adversity or when they have to take action.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student needs identified in ToRCH</th>
<th>How the Accelerated Literacy teaching sequence can be used to address this need.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The ability to connect pronouns to previously stated nouns.</td>
<td>This relates to the previous issue, one of connections across text. This particular problem can best be addressed when students can view the written text, so that teachers have the opportunity to physically show the linkages across sentences and paragraphs and explain them to students. This is easily done during high order orientation when teachers can use the overhead projector and a copy of text to track characters or other participants from sentence to sentence (eg how Peter becomes he and things belonging to Peter become his). The issue of tracking pronouns to nouns is significant for second language speakers, not just in reading but also in writing, where they tend to overuse nouns in an attempt to keep their text coherent. The effect on the reader, though, is generally a negative one, not something an aspiring writer would want. Transformations level can provide the opportunity to look at the effect of the overuse of nouns, instead of using the appropriate pronouns, and to consider why writers tend not to do it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ability to link singular pronoun to singular noun reference item (same with plural).</td>
<td>Once again, high order orientation provides the first opportunity for students to get to grips with this issue and to cross the oral/ written language divide, particularly in Kriol-speaking regions where ‘he’ is used generically in oral language to mean ‘he’ or ‘her’ and sometimes ‘them’. What can be used, and assumed, in shared contexts cannot be assumed when the written word has to create the context. This issue also relates to the use of possessive pronouns. Further discussion on this can ideally take place at transformations level and again when students prepare to write. There is also the possibility that it could be addressed during an editing phase.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student needs identified in ToRCH</td>
<td>How the Accelerated Literacy teaching sequence can be used to address this need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consciousness of how inflection can determine meaning (inner reading)</td>
<td>Inflection is often determined by attending closely to punctuation. Phrasing is also important to help build fluency and thus comprehension. Teachers can initially model this when the passage for study is placed on the overhead projector and read to students just after a low order literate orientation, and in preparation for high order literate orientation. During high order orientation, students will have their attention drawn to specific punctuation marks and this work can be reinforced during the multiple opportunities for choral reading of the study passage. At transformations level, students and teachers have a real opportunity to discuss the significance of punctuation and its place in the English language system and to experiment with different placings, or the removal, of punctuation marks. This conversation can be further developed into how this affects our ‘in head’ reading of the passage. Discussion about a number of things is worthwhile: how good readers ‘read to themselves but in their head’; how they hear the words without having to speak them aloud; about how writers have to consider how they want their words to be read. Punctuation is yet another means authors use to achieve this end.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Comprehension assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student needs identified in ToRCH</th>
<th>How the Accelerated Literacy teaching sequence can be used to address this need.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The ability to locate information embedded in a text – when it is not prominent or when a choice has to be made between a number of competing alternatives. The ability to provide a main point or detail of a story given explicit references.</td>
<td>For students to be able to find information embedded in a text, they need to have an approximate idea of where to look to find the detail they need to extract. For non-narrative text, they need to be taught the significance of titles, headings, subheadings, captions accompanying visuals and tables, graphs and diagrams as navigational tools in helping locate specific information. When reading narrative text, students need to be taught how to monitor their understanding. If there has been a significant breakdown in understanding then there is a distinct possibility that the student has overlooked a critical piece of information. To prevent this, students need to be encouraged to adopt an active and literate mindset towards reading so that they expect what they read to make sense. Teachers can model this, particularly when they are reading chapters of the study novel to students. They can ‘think aloud’ at particular parts of a chapter where it is essential to round up all the information to date and ponder about its significance. For example, in <em>Bridge to Terabithia</em> it is critical to the understanding of the story that the reader is clear which of Jess’s younger sisters he has a strong affection for. For example, a teacher could say: ‘I think I’ve got a bit confused between Joyce Ann and May Belle. Kids with two names like this always confuse me and I can’t remember which one of these sisters Jess liked. I’ll have to go back and read that bit again.’ Having read the novel several times, teachers are in a position to anticipate where they need to extract the kinds of embedded detail which may become significant as the story progresses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student needs identified in ToRCH</td>
<td>How the Accelerated Literacy teaching sequence can be used to address this need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(continued) The ability to locate information embedded in a text – when it is not prominent or when a choice has to be made between a number of competing alternatives. The ability to provide a main point or detail of a story given explicit references.</td>
<td>The same thing may be done after reading a passage or chapter when the teacher pauses to reflect on why the author adds a detail or a character reflection that does not quite fit in with what went before. Near the end of Chapter 1 in <em>Bridge to Terabithia</em>, the teacher could wonder why Katherine Paterson wrote, <em>He thought later how peculiar it was that here was probably the biggest thing in his life, and he had shrugged it off as nothing. ‘I wonder what the big thing will be. It doesn’t seem to fit in with anything else in the chapter.’</em> In this way, teachers demonstrate to students that authors rarely write about something which is not significant to the story. It may not be possible to show students the links right at that point but, by the end of the book, all the clues along the way add up to create a satisfying conclusion. Choosing between competing alternatives in narrative is an option frequently encountered at the end of chapters, or at the end of identifiable sections of a book. It frequently requires readers to predict a likely alternative built on their experiences with literate texts. When students encounter familiar themes, text structures, action, interaction and reaction patterns in their reading, they are then in a position to start predicting what is likely to happen, or what is the most likely alternative when there is more than one possibility. This experience comes about not only through exposure to multiple texts but when the teacher points to ‘what is significant’. Teachers need to ‘notice’ for their students. Students who have had little experience with literate text are not in a position to judge what needs to be attended to, unless their teacher points it out to them. To do this, teachers need to move beyond the ritual of transiting the stages in the Accelerated Literacy teaching sequence. They need to constantly ask themselves, ‘How do I know what I know about how books work?’ Bringing this consciousness to the planning of each stage of the teaching sequence, and teaching these understandings, is a critical factor in bringing about accelerated learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Writing assessment
In keeping with the principles of assessment (see page 54), teachers are asked to collect samples of student writing over a period of time and range of writing tasks.

It is critical that teachers also collect contextual information about the nature of the task and the degree of support offered to students before writing. The Assessing literacy development booklet provides proformas which teachers might find useful to detail this contextual information. The proforma can then be attached to the sample of writing. Either version of the form may be used.

Samples of student writing can be used for summative assessment purposes, when, for example, they want to compare a student’s independent writing before the instructional period with what he or she can produce at the end. To do this, teachers need to compare ‘like with like’ – tricky, as the results of assessment may be somewhat influenced by the nature of the writing task. Teachers need to ensure that the writing task, pre- and post-instruction, is similar.

All writing samples provide valuable information about student writing development, particularly when they are accompanied by contextual information. This then allows them to be viewed not just for summative purposes, but for diagnostic and formative purposes. This information can then be used to plot student writing development on state and territory assessment documents. In fact, once student writing has been analysed, it can be used to plot writing development on any one of a number of documents.

**Issues to be considered**

- Teachers need to detail contextual information for the writing sample.
- Samples of writing need to be collected from both students’ ‘workshop writing’ and ‘free composition’.
  - ‘Workshop writing’ may be short and demonstrate a student’s ability to employ a writing strategy that has been taught in Accelerated Literacy lessons. This heavily scaffolded writing nevertheless illustrates the student’s ability to apply the lesson he/she has been taught.
  - ‘Free composition’ sessions should also be planned so that students have regular opportunities to write from the resources they have internalised from lessons. Where free composition is required, the instruction to the students might simply be to write an adventure story, considering what they have learned about writing exciting stories from the book they have recently studied.
• Teachers need to collect a number of pieces of writing over the entire instructional period.
• Writing samples need to be 'leveled' throughout the year. This is crucial if the information is to be used for formative and diagnostic purposes, and meet State and Territory requirements.
• Very short pieces of writing, or the writing of only particular text stages, can be problematic to level, although they are still useful for monitoring student writing development. It is important for teachers to provide opportunities for students to write whole narratives regularly.
• The nature of the writing task can limit student achievement. Students who are only asked to write recounts are automatically curtailed from achieving at a higher level.
• Teachers need to be explicit about the nature of the writing task so that students are clear about what is required of them.
• Whenever possible, work samples should be assessed in 'moderation groups', in an effort to make consistent judgments.

**Analysing writing samples**

When teachers have contextual information about the writing task and the conditions under which it was created (including how much support was given to the student before writing), they are in a position to start the assessment process. There are a number of things to consider.

• Does the student writing meet the demands of the writing task?
• How well does the writing sample meet those demands?
• Where is the gap between what a student can currently do and what you want him/her to be able to do? (This is the information that can be used in lesson planning.)

The focus of everything that has been written thus far is analysis. If we only deal at the level of ‘impressions’ when assessing student work, then we may lose the opportunity to help students improve their writing. In effect, this means that we also lose the opportunity to evaluate – to make decisions for future lessons based on our analysis of how well students are currently writing.

One of the easiest ways to analyse student writing is to use a rubric. Rubrics are usually presented as grids which:

- clearly communicate standards
- help teachers clarify what students need to achieve
- set down precise criteria
- are a powerful motivational tool.
Rubrics support both teachers and students by making explicit ‘what counts’ and how work will be judged. In this way information which was formerly invisible to students becomes visible, so that they are in a better position to understand what is required for the successful completion of a task. Teachers are in a position to use information gained by using rubrics for assessment purposes and also for planning.

In relation to the NALP, narrative writing is what needs to be assessed. Some States and Territories produce rubrics to help teachers assess narrative writing and other rubrics can also be downloaded for consideration. Links to some of these sites are as follows:


One rubric which has proven to be extremely useful in the assessment of narrative writing was developed by Dr Mary Macken-Horarik (formerly of the University of Canberra, now at the University of New England). A copy of this rubric appears in Assessing literacy development and has been used to assess the writing sample in the pages that follow.

Teachers will sometimes need to make decisions about which aspects of a rubric to focus on, eg when assessing workshop writing which may focus on only one text stage or writer’s technique rather than a whole narrative. In such instances, it would be inappropriate to use all of the aspects of any narrative rubric.

Teachers will prefer some rubrics to others. Some emphasise the features of text structure, while others may have a stronger focus on text conventions. No matter which rubric is selected, they all provide an opportunity for analysis which might otherwise be lost if no rubric was used.
Example 1
Upper primary

Background
Context – Free composition
Upper primary male student
Study texts had included *Dingo Stories*

The sample
The sample has been typed to include original use of lower and upper case, spelling and punctuation.

*ON MoNday I went UP The hill and I see a big egg but The egg was cracking*
*and The Mother Eagle Landed in She Nest and The Mother Eagle was chasing Me down The hill and I got My camera.*
*Then The baby Eagle was Training for fly but the Mother Eagle WeNT Look. For Food and I WenT back home and The NeXT morning I went back up The hill but The Eagle was where and I Fill Sad but I see The baby Eagle was got hunting and my dad Shoot the Mother Eagle Then dad said son we got to make a Eagle Stew and I Felt Sad. Then I said to dad you ShooT MY Friend and I went back To bed, The end.*
Analysis

Step 1

Ask yourself these questions.

- Does this text work overall to engage the reader? If so, how is this achieved?
- Is the narrative structure evident?

Orientation
ON MoNday I went UP The hill and I see a big egg but The egg was cracking and The Mother Eagle Landed in She Nest

Complication
and The Mother Eagle was chasing Me down The hill and I got My camera.

Resolution
Then The baby Eagle was Training for fly but the Mother Eagle WeNT Look For Food and I WenT back home

Re-orientation
nowhere feel and The NeXT morning I went back up The hill but The Eagle was where and I Fill Sad but I gone see The baby Eagle was got hunting

Complication
and my dad Shoot the Mother Eagle Then dad said son we got to make a Eagle Stew and I Felt Sad.

Resolution
Then I said to dad you ShooT MY Friend and I went back To bed.

Step 2

Using a narrative rubric, identify the presence/absence of narrative elements in the student writing sample and make judgments about how successfully these elements have been integrated into the story (see one analysis below using a rubric for narrative writing).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Register Variables</th>
<th>Low range texts</th>
<th>Mid range texts</th>
<th>High range texts</th>
<th>What the student can do/points to consider in further planning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plot</td>
<td>Too many or too few activity sequences for plot development</td>
<td>Activity sequences packaged appropriate to plot ✓</td>
<td>Activity sequences used to point up significance of plot</td>
<td>Could have used opportunities to further develop the relationship between Mother Eagle and her baby. It is there already through the feeding and protective behaviour of Mother. Otherwise activity sequences appropriate – not too much or too little happening. Engaging readers interpersonally starts at low order literate orientation to the whole text and then again at low order before each passage is studied. Deciding on the focus for each text/passage studied will determine low order discussion and language choices for high order. Can we develop relationships between animal characters through action sequences alone or does their appearance in literate texts open up other options? Building tension around the death of Mother Eagle would also provide greater opportunities for interpersonal engagement. Needs to learn about resources to build tension by delaying action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Register Variables</td>
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<td>High range texts</td>
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<td>--------------------</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character -isation</td>
<td>Generalised participants</td>
<td>Specific participants</td>
<td>Individualised participants</td>
<td><em>I, Dad, Mother Eagle and baby Eagle.</em> Works well, no further embellishment required. Characters developed through their actions. Reliant on readers knowing something about eagle behaviour. Authors use both direct and indirect means to build characters – in this instance, mainly indirect. This discussion may start at low order literate orientation to the whole text, and then again at low order for each passage studied. It also provides the focus for language choices at high order literate orientation. Further work at transformations level could provide opportunities to experiment with more direct means for characterisation and its effect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>Limited range of circumstances of time and place</td>
<td>Unambiguous creation of circumstances relevant to setting</td>
<td>Evocative use of circumstances to build up significance of setting</td>
<td>Links to signposting – circumstances of time and place used to highlight story sequence too. <em>One Monday, up the hill, next morning, back home.</em> Student could learn not to embed these so often but to use them powerfully to mark theme – right at the beginning of sentences to signal significance to reader. Definitely discussion and experimentation at transformations level with future texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Register Variables</td>
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<td>High range texts</td>
<td>What the student can do/points to consider in further planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘World creating’ vocabulary</td>
<td>General vocabulary</td>
<td>Vocabulary appropriate to ‘possible world’</td>
<td>Use of discriminating and evocative vocabulary</td>
<td><em>Eagle, hill, nest, learning to fly, food-hunting, egg was cracking.</em> Vocabulary appropriate but needs work on word building relating to significance of vocabulary choice to build images for reader. This work can be particularly highlighted at transformations level with the text being studied. Developing the vocabulary of ESL students is paramount to their writing development. Teachers may choose to use the spelling stage of the Accelerated Literacy teaching sequence for word study – the roots of words, word building activities (e.g. using <em>clines</em> to develop vocabulary around emotion, description, etc.) so that characters have emotional opportunities beyond ‘sad’ (as in this text). This work can be undertaken using any text being studied.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Development in tenor of narrative**

| Motivation of characters | Flat treatment of characters and events | (Limited) focus on characters’ needs and motives | Animated and sustained treatment of needs and motives | Main characters’ needs and motivations are revealed through their actions. The Mother/baby, Father/son combination allows us to read beyond the text because we know about family roles and obligations. This knowledge gives the characters substance. Authors use this familial bonding continuously to help with characterisation and when creating interactions between family members. This student may know this, or may have used this strategy at an unconscious level. Whatever the case, discussion of such aspects starts at low level orientation to the passage being studied, and can be revisited at transformations level under the banner of author’s techniques. |

<p>| | | | | |
| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Register Variables</th>
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<th>High range texts</th>
<th>What the student can do/points to consider in further planning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Point(s) of view</td>
<td>Presentation of limited range of viewpoints</td>
<td>Introduction of range of viewpoints relevant to plot</td>
<td>Careful management of viewpoints important to plot</td>
<td>The only explicit viewpoint in the story is that of <em>I</em>. We get access to his emotions through the use of the words <em>sad</em> and <em>friend</em>. The viewpoint of the other characters is embedded in their actions, both Mother Eagle and Dad having an outlook on life dictated by the need to provide for their young. The point of view of the baby Eagle is absent altogether. This works to highlight the fact that at such a young age the baby Eagle is oblivious to the dangers around him/her. Most narratives deal with the point of view of a limited number of characters. Providing for a range of viewpoints may detract from a story, so this element has to be carefully considered as it can make or break a narrative. Points of view can be brought out in low order orientation with consideration of ‘whose point of view’ the story is told from. This automatically impacts on the information we are privy to as readers, and is a powerful authorial device. The success or otherwise of the whole text may depend on this author decision. The discussion on this starts at low order orientation and needs to be woven through each stage of the Accelerated Literacy teaching sequence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
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<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literary devices</td>
<td>Little or no use of literary devices to build humour, suspense or point</td>
<td>Experimenting with literary devices to build humour, suspense or narrative point</td>
<td>Sophisticated use of literary devices to underscore humour, suspense or narrative point</td>
<td>No real evidence of this except that during the story the Eagle is transformed from food to cherished creature. In most literate texts, particularly those for younger readers, animals are not food items but characters in their own right. Some of them talk and we sometimes know how they think and feel. In this story, the use of animals has a leaning towards how they are used in literature. This characterisation of animals in literature could be built on through selection of subsequent texts – <em>Rosie the Hen</em>, <em>The Wishing Well</em>, <em>Fantastic Mr Fox</em>, etc. Bringing animals to life in narrative relies on our ability to transcend the day to day. Having animals stand as ‘symbols’ for particular traits or attributes is also common in literate texts. The use of simile and metaphor enhances this possibility and both are important for image-building. A focus at both high order orientation and transformations will reveal literary devices such as these, and others, providing an opportunity to consider their function and to experiment with other possibilities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Development in written mode**

<p>| Sign-posting | Limited use of sign-posting to guide reader through each stage of narrative | Adequate use of sign-posting to guide reader through each stage of narrative | Interesting and varied use of sign-posting to guide reader through each stage of narrative | Most signalling is done by circumstances of place or time. Time degenerates from <em>On Monday</em>, to <em>the next morning</em>, to <em>then</em>. A greater focus on use of marked theme in terms of circumstances of time would be useful. This could be pointed out at high order orientation and then further discussion at transformations level would ensue along with opportunities to experiment with the passage being studied. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Mid range texts</th>
<th>High range texts</th>
<th>What the student can do/points to consider in further planning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sentence logic</td>
<td>Loosely co-ordinated single-clause sentences</td>
<td>Integrating clauses within the sentence</td>
<td>Use of compound and complex sentences to interrelate events</td>
<td>Most of the sentences are more than one clause long. In some instances this detracts from the story. How clauses are integrated within the sentence is important to the effect the writer wants to achieve. Simple additive connections mid-sentence are not always effective. Once again, this is a workshop opportunity at transformations level, allowing students to look at the effect created by arranging the elements of a sentence in a number of ways, or by reducing long sentences to a series of shorter ones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linking and expanding messages</td>
<td>Use of a limited range of mostly additive connectives to link messages</td>
<td>Use of a range of temporal and causal connectives to link messages</td>
<td>Use of a full range of logical connectives to link messages</td>
<td>These are limited to <em>and, but and then</em>. This limitation has serious consequences for what is otherwise a moving story. Connectives within sentences and between sentences need to be differentiated. This work could form the basis for several workshops at transformations level using the text being studied. Preparation for this work would start at high order orientation with a focus on the connectives in the passage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>Ambiguous or faulty reference to participants</td>
<td>Accurate presentation and tracking of participants</td>
<td>Control of a wide range of referential ties to participants</td>
<td>There are no problems for the reader in tracing participants in this story. However, characters are identified only by one label (eg the Eagle always remains <em>the Eagle</em>). The writer has not attempted other ways of referring to her – <em>fierce defender of her young</em>, etc. Referencing is often difficult for students who use English as a second language and so this student has done a good job. Once again, this is something that can be raised and experimented with at transformations level with the discussion focusing on why it might be done and its effect.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What the analysis provides in terms of planning

Now you know what your student can do and what you would factor into your planning for the next passage or text to be studied intensively in class.

Provide feedback to the student on those things which he or she did well and on those which appealed to you as a reader.

For instance, the ‘Points of view’ element in the story seems at first glance to present a very limited range of viewpoints, as least as expressed through thoughts and feelings. The boy felt sad on a few occasions and thought of the Eagle as a friend. However, this limited coverage of points of view did not seem to detract from the story. Why was that? On a second reading, it became obvious that the viewpoints of the Mother Eagle and Dad could not be accessed through their thoughts and feelings but through their actions, and by virtue of their familial roles. Mother Eagle’s point of view was that her life was dedicated to protecting and feeding her offspring. Dad’s priorities were very similar – he wanted to feed his offspring. Unfortunately for the Eagle, in Dad’s mind, eagles equal food. Their points of view were embedded in their actions. Had their points of view been much more obvious and direct, it would have detracted from, rather than contributed to, the story.

When using rubrics, it is important to realise that not all of the marking has to be in the high range for a narrative to be successful. Teachers have to make ongoing professional judgments about the balance between the elements of narrative and the needs of the story. Really successful narratives depend on ‘gaps’. Not all aspects of story need to be written about to their fullest extent. If this were to happen then many stories would become intensely tedious and fail to engage the reader.

For instance, as readers, we feel as sad as the boy on the death of the Mother Eagle, not just because she was a majestic bird, but because it probably means that her unprotected baby will fall prey to an animal or other bird. The narrative leaves that element as a ‘gap’. As readers, we can work out the inevitability of the situation. We do not need the writer to detail it for us.
Example 2
Junior primary

Background
Contextual – Free writing
Female student in the upper stage of junior primary

The sample

In the weekend we went to the river and we found a snake egg.
Analysis

Using rubrics with junior primary texts has more limited value, but this does not make analysis of student writing impossible.

What can this student do?

- Write a recount comprising a simple sentence connecting two events in time.
- Consign meaning to the written word.
- Write comprehensibly.
- Write on the oral side of the mode continuum.
- Has 1:1 correspondence therefore understands word, and space between words (snacegg – she may think it is one word from hearing it pronounced in a particular way).
- Understand the idea of a sentence. She may just have learnt about full stops (the one at the end of this sentence seems to have been given great significance) and there is a capital letter to start the sentence (there is a suggestion that the ‘in’ may have been added later, perhaps in response to teacher direction).
- Write legibly and seems to have control over the handwriting process. She can write on lines, letters are well formed in the main but there is a mix of upper and lower case letters in some instances. This may turn out to be a handwriting issue as well.
- Spell using some conventional elements.
- Invent spelling for other words.
What the analysis provides in terms of planning

This student needs multiple opportunities to have read to her, and to read, literate texts and to have the significant features of narrative structure and language pointed out to her using the Accelerated Literacy teaching sequence.

At the present time, her writing is used to document personal experience, which she undoubtedly shares with her classmates, but not necessarily with the reader. Her writing has features of oral language, and is in fact an oral recount written down. As readers we do not get to know who we are. Nor do we know which weekend, what river, what the snake egg looked like, how the finders came across it, how they felt when they came across it, and what they did with it. All of this might make it a more interesting recount, but for it to be transformed to narrative there would need to be a ‘disruption of the normal’ state of affairs. This may have been the case. Coming across a snake egg may not be a normal occurrence but the recount does not tell us, and so loses the opportunity to engage readers.

Using quality literate texts, teachers can appropriate the Accelerated Literacy teaching sequence to teach junior primary students the kinds of literacy skills they need to progress at school.

Junior primary teachers also need to be vigilant in assessing and evaluating student progress on the basis of data collected. They may even use other assessment opportunities to assess the development of particular skills which relate to the reading and writing process. Whatever the case, their assessment and evaluation needs to be as systematic as that of all other teachers in the NALP and they should not rely on the ‘developmental process’ to indicate reading or writing readiness. Vygotsky (1978) contends that true learning only happens ahead of development. Allowing students to ‘work at their own pace’ allows, at best, for practice opportunities but does not involve them in learning opportunities.
Principles of assessment
The collecting of assessment information about student achievement is guided in all Australian educational settings by a series of principles which appear in the Curriculum Framework documents of all States and Territories. Outlined below, these principles relate to what is regarded as acceptable assessment practice. Additional information on how each relates to NALP is provided.

**Valid**

Assessment should relate to particular learning outcomes. Students should only be assessed on what has been taught and what is valued most within the education context.

It is for this reason that great value is attached to WL testing and to other procedures like the word recognition and spelling checklist and, if applicable, the early reader checklist. Each of these allows for assessment of texts, or passages of text, which have been worked on intensively in class. Teachers are then in a position to make decisions about the ‘fine tuning’ of future lessons.

**Reliable**

All assessment of the same kind should be carried out in the same way and under the same conditions with each student. This extends to the collection and recording of results.

This is critical, and details of how all NALP assessment practices should be carried out are provided in *Assessing literacy development*. There are a number of reasons why testing needs to be carried out in the same way across the program. One is so we can compare an individual student’s early observational records with his/her latest record to measure gains. A second is to enable us to compare the results of several children to make decisions about texts used and groupings. A third relates to our ability to confidently evaluate the success of the NALP. If we do not feel confident that we are comparing ‘like with like’, then the data collected is of little use to either teacher or system/sector.
Fair

Assessment should allow students multiple opportunities, over a range of tasks, to demonstrate achievement. No student should be penalised because of gender, race, language background or disability.

Only if assessment practices are implemented regularly can students be given multiple opportunities to demonstrate achievement. Assessment for teaching and learning needs to happen at regular intervals throughout the term and the NALP assessment schedule allows for assessment over a range of tasks – decoding, word recognition, comprehension, spelling, workshop and whole-text composition.

When assessment becomes part of the regular classroom routine, the expectation is that all students will participate. It is not acceptable for teachers to make decisions about who will or will not participate in testing. It is natural that teachers should wish to protect low-performing students from what they perceive as an unpleasant experience. However, failure to collect accurate information about what a student can do may compound the disadvantage for that student. In the same way that doctors do not treat a patient without first collecting information and forming a diagnosis, teachers should see assessment as providing opportunities to diagnose dysfunctional reading and writing strategies with a view to intervention and accelerating learning for students.

Explicit

Students should be informed of the purpose of assessment, including what is to be assessed and what criteria are being used to measure performance. In addition, they should know what the assessment information will be used for. Assessment information should be used to report clearly and succinctly to parents about the strengths and weaknesses of their children.

Knowing the purpose of assessment is critical, otherwise assessment may become another ‘unfathomable practice’ in the eyes of students – a ritual enacted for no apparent reason. In the way that every Accelerated Literacy lesson should start with the teacher explaining to the class what they will be doing today and why, every assessment should start with an explanation of the purpose of the assessment. As well as reporting to parents, teachers can use assessment to inform students of their progress and redefine goals.
Principles of assessment

Educative

Assessment should make a positive contribution to student learning by facilitating both lesson planning and the design of units of study. It is best undertaken in an ongoing rather than a sporadic way.

Everything that has been written about assessment in the NALP complies with this principle. It is only when we get an accurate picture of what students can already do that we are in a position to plot a course towards age appropriate reading and writing. It is only by using assessment for diagnostic purposes that we gain insight into how students work to gain meaning from text, what strategies they use to spell, what they understand about the purposes of narrative and how this can be realised through both text staging and language choices.

By collecting assessment information in an ongoing way, teachers can make the necessary adjustments day by day and week by week to ensure outcomes for students. It is important to remember that assessment information does not always require paper and pencil testing. Teachers make adjustments to their instructional programs in the light of conversations and observations too.

Authentic and comprehensive

Assessment should be carried out over a range of tasks and over a period of time and should include all assessment types.

Assessment within the NALP happens throughout the period of instruction. Ideally, this period of instruction would coincide with the school year but in many instances it does not, due to student absence or transience. For this reason, it is important that teachers assess students over the range of tasks detailed in Assessing literacy development. In the same way that students do not need to know all their letters to be able to read, they do not need to be fluent readers before they can write. It is important that assessment of reading and writing happen concurrently and start from the time the student enters the NALP.
Self-monitoring

Students should be encouraged to monitor their own progress towards particular outcomes. They should be made aware of the standards or criteria for assessment so that they know what is expected of them.

Students need to know what is ‘good enough’ to meet the standard required of them and teachers need to ensure that students are aware of high teacher expectations. Much of the information on standards and criteria which appears in State and Territory curriculum documents will need to be unpacked for students. Knowing about what is required to meet the standard and then monitoring their own learning towards that standard will involve students at a meta level, when they have to think about learning. When this happens, students become more active learners in the pursuit of better outcomes. No-one opts for less when they know what they have to do to get more and teachers can use the results of assessment processes to help students monitor their progress.
Using assessment
Using assessment

Formative

The opportunities for assessment present themselves on a daily basis in classrooms across Australia, providing authentic information about how students are progressing and what they can do or understand. This is assessment used for formative purposes, to inform teaching and learning. Generally, it includes a range of assessments which allow for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data.

Information collected can encompass everything from notes, jotted down on envelopes and transferred into teachers’ record books, to observational reading records of students’ WL achievement, to draft writing samples, to conversations with students around the text being studied. It is not the type of the assessment that makes it formative, it is the teacher’s analysis and use of it for teaching and planning.

Despite the fact that many of the assessment procedures used for formative purposes do not have the same status (in the eyes of the public) as standardised testing, they provide the ‘bread and butter’ of decision-making for the classroom teacher. Because of this, measures of student achievement need to be collected systematically and at regular intervals, so that the information provided can be evaluated and then fed into the planning and teaching cycle.

Assessment procedures for formative purposes allow teachers to constantly view what has actually been learnt in light of what has been taught. In this way, teachers can be responsive to the outcomes of week-by-week instruction, allowing them to make adjustments and fine tune as and when required. This option is not open to teachers who rely on the products of summative assessment to evaluate the success of their instructional program.

Diagnostic

All forms of assessment have a diagnostic potential and in this way can be used for formative evaluation. By careful and regular analysis of student work samples and tests, it is possible to identify what students can do, what strategies they use to ‘do it’, what kinds of errors they make and then consider what this might mean for planning and teaching. Making the time to analyse student assessments can assist teachers to diagnose areas of difficulty and target these using the Accelerated Literacy teaching sequence. Failure to activate the diagnostic potential of assessment may result in the loss of valuable instructional opportunities for students who are already marginalised and at risk of not developing age-appropriate literacy skills.
All of the assessment procedures within the NALP provide teachers with opportunities for analysis. In order to accelerate the learning of at-risk students, teachers have to be prepared to put time into analysing assessment data. They need to get a clear picture of how students are attempting to get meaning from text if they are to intervene and replace dysfunctional strategies with more productive ones. Identifying points of confusion is critical if the learning of ‘failing’ students is to be turned around. Something as significant and important as this cannot be achieved without some investment of time and thought. However, as with everything else, the more practice teachers get at analysing the results of assessment, the more readily they identify the patterns that emerge. Armed with this information they are then in a position to evaluate how to use the Accelerated Literacy Teaching Sequence as a tool to both intervene and accelerate learning.

**Summative**

Summative assessment ‘sums up’ the learning which has happened as a result of participation in an instructional program. It is usually ‘a point in time’ assessment, or series of assessment procedures, and is done before the instructional program begins, and again at its conclusion. The results collected are used to judge the success of the teaching program and/or to compare a student’s learning at two points in time.

Summative assessment allows plotting of trends in individual students, particular cohorts of students, entire schools and schools across a system. Teachers use assessment for summative purposes when they make comparisons between the initial achievement level of a student, as represented by baseline data collected when that student enters the program, and the achievement of the same student at the end of the program. To do this, the same assessment procedures need to be implemented pre- and post-instruction.

Systems and sectors use the summative assessment data when they evaluate the success of particular teaching and learning programs.

The NALP Individual Reading Observation Tests (IL) and ToRCH provide data for summative purposes but that does not preclude their use for diagnostic and formative purposes too.
Storage of data

Data for IL and ToRCH tests need to be entered on the NALP database. However, schools also need to set up systems to store all evidence of student assessment. This includes all IL and WL observational tests, ToRCH test materials, completed answer sheets, pattern of response sheets, norm information, word recognition and spelling checklists, early reader checklists (if applicable) and samples of student writing (complete with information about the context in which they were created).

Teachers may choose to store a range of other information about a student’s reading and writing development but if the only copy of a student’s work is the original, and it is sent home with the student, then a valuable opportunity is lost to both analyse and track student development over time.

Translating test data into a numeric value is critical for entering it on a database, but the same data can be put to use in many more ways by teachers who choose to look beyond its numeric value.
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Appendix
### Rubric for narrative writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Register Variables</th>
<th>Low range texts</th>
<th>Mid range texts</th>
<th>High range texts</th>
<th>What the student can do/points to consider in further planning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development in field of narrative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plot</strong></td>
<td>Too many or too few activity sequences for plot development</td>
<td>Activity sequences packed appropriate to plot</td>
<td>Activity sequences used to point up significance of plot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Characterisation</strong></td>
<td>Generalised participants</td>
<td>Specific participants</td>
<td>Individualised participants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Setting</strong></td>
<td>Limited range of circumstances of time and place</td>
<td>Unambiguous creation of circumstances relevant to setting</td>
<td>Evocative use of circumstances to build up significance of setting</td>
<td></td>
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<td>-------------------</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘World creating’ vocabulary</td>
<td>General vocabulary</td>
<td>Vocabulary appropriate to ‘possible world’</td>
<td>Use of discriminating and evocative vocabulary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Development in tenor of narrative**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation of characters</th>
<th>Flat treatment of characters and events</th>
<th>(Limited) focus on characters’ needs and motives</th>
<th>Animated and sustained treatment of needs and motives</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Point(s) of view</td>
<td>Presentation of limited range of viewpoints</td>
<td>Introduction of range of viewpoints relevant to plot</td>
<td>Careful management of viewpoints important to plot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literary devices</td>
<td>Little or no use of literary devices to build humour, suspense or point</td>
<td>Experimenting with literary devices to build humour, suspense or narrative point</td>
<td>Sophisticated use of literary devices to underscore humour, suspense or narrative point</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Development in written mode</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sign-posting</td>
<td>Limited use of sign-posting to guide reader through each stage of narrative</td>
<td>Adequate use of sign-posting to guide reader through each stage of narrative</td>
<td>Interesting and varied use of sign-posting to guide reader through each stage of narrative</td>
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<td>Sentence logic</td>
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Practitioner Guide

This guide is about using the assessment data collected through observational reading tests, comprehension assessment and writing assessment.

The guide:
- provides background information on the nature of assessment
- discusses how the collected assessment data may be evaluated and used in the classroom to influence future individual student and whole class teaching
- provides the materials and guidelines for workshop activities to practise and discuss the analysis of assessment data.

Guides

- The guides have been written for teachers who have attended professional development in teaching Accelerated Literacy. The notes presume some understanding about how to teach the program.
- For a detailed explanation of how to implement the teaching sequence, please refer to the teachers’ handouts from the professional development sessions. Additionally, you could refer to http://www.nalp.edu.au

Effective use of assessment data

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