This guide is written for coordinators/consultants who have a role in the professional development of teachers of Accelerated Literacy. It consists of two parts.

- Guidelines for filling out each section of the lesson observation record sheet, with examples.
- Points to consider when observing lessons and when discussing the lesson with the teacher afterwards in order to provide support to the teacher to effectively implement the Accelerated Literacy strategies.

The guide will also provide teachers with an idea of what coordinators and consultants are looking for when they observe lessons and what matters they may raise in discussions after the lesson. Such knowledge will help any teachers to prepare their lessons and reflect on their performance, whether they are observed by a coordinator/consultant or not.

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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Contents

Introduction ................................................................. 1

The National Accelerated Literacy Program (NALP) ........................................... 3

Using the observation record sheet ..................................................................... 5
General information ............................................................................................. 6
Before the lesson ................................................................................................. 8
During the lesson ............................................................................................... 10
After the lesson ................................................................................................. 13

Accelerated literacy lesson support sheet .......................................................... 15

Providing support to teachers ............................................................................ 19
Low order literate orientation ............................................................................ 20
High order literate orientation ........................................................................... 22
Transformations .................................................................................................. 24
Spelling ................................................................................................................ 25
Writing .................................................................................................................. 26
Interactions with students ................................................................................... 27
After the lesson ................................................................................................... 28
Introduction
These notes are intended to provide support for coordinators/consultants in the process of observation and support. They consist of two parts.

1. Guidelines for filling out each section of the lesson observation record sheet, with examples.
2. Points to consider when observing lessons and when discussing the lesson with the teacher afterwards in order to provide support to the teacher to effectively implement the Accelerated Literacy strategies.

This guide is written for coordinators/consultants who have a role in the professional development of teachers of Accelerated Literacy. However, these notes might also provide teachers with an idea of what coordinators and consultants are looking for when they observe lessons and what matters they may raise in discussions after the lesson. Such knowledge will help teachers to prepare their lessons and reflect when they are finished, whether they are observed by a coordinator/consultant or not.

Sessions where coordinators/consultants observe teachers working in their classrooms are designed to provide support for the teacher in implementing the Accelerated Literacy teaching strategies. Such lessons also provide an opportunity for coordinators/consultants to learn from excellent teachers. Observation sessions are not intended to involve assessment or evaluation of that teacher’s work.
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.
Using the observation record sheet
The lesson observation sheet provides a framework for discussions between Accelerated Literacy coordinators/consultants and teachers. It is not meant to be an exhaustive checklist but rather to provide some points for engaging in dialogue with Accelerated Literacy teachers to improve literacy outcomes for all students.

The sheet is composed of the following sections.

1. General Information: name of teacher and details about the class.
2. Before the lesson: the goals for teacher and observer.
3. During the lesson: what happens in the lesson.
4. After the lesson: discussion and support.

A copy of the sheet for photocopying appears on pages 16 and 17.

General information

Rationale

The first part of the sheet provides space for the teacher’s name, date, text, school and year level. It is intended for record keeping as well as to assist the observer with background about the teacher, the class and the lesson itself. Lesson filmed is also for record keeping purposes.

The information about the number of professional development sessions completed is intended to provide information about the teacher’s participation in training for Accelerated Literacy.

The information about the total lessons taught to date provides information about where the observed lesson comes in a lesson sequence.

Guidelines

Enter the name of the teacher, the school and the text taught. Also enter the year level of the students, whether the lesson was filmed or not and the date of the observation.

Entering the information about professional development completed will guide an observer in providing feedback on particular strategies, as per below.

- For teachers who have participated in PD 1, support would be focused on implementing literate orientation strategies.
- For teachers who have participated in PD 1 and 2, support would be focused on transformations and spelling.
- For teachers who have completed all three PD sessions, or the Accelerated Literacy Intensive PD, support would be focused on implementing writing strategies.
There is no need to be rigid about this sequence, however. If a teacher who has completed all three PDs or the Intensive wants support with literate orientation, for example, you would provide it.

Enter the lesson number of the observed lesson in the overall sequence of lessons on a text. The time spent teaching a text sets up expectations about the lesson goals and emphases. For example, in lesson 1 in a teaching sequence more time may be spent on low order literate orientation than in lesson 25 in the sequence.

Different pupil/teacher interactions would also take place in lessons later in a teaching sequence compared with interactions earlier in a sequence. For example, earlier in a teaching sequence there may be more preformulation of questions while later in a sequence of lessons there may be little or no preformulation as students and teacher will have shared understandings about the text from previous lessons.

Later in a teaching sequence, writing sessions may play a much bigger part in lessons. There may be lessons where there is a short low order literate orientation followed by writing or a lesson entirely given over to revision of spelling learned from a text.

Example

1. General Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher: Mary Smith</th>
<th>Date: 23/11/06</th>
<th>Text: Why the Bear has a Stumpy Tail.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School: Eleanola State School</td>
<td>Year Level: 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development Completed:</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total lessons taught to date on this text: 15</td>
<td>Lesson filmed: Yes No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Before the lesson

Rationale

Before-lesson discussion puts teacher and observer at ease and establishes the collegial nature of the process. It allows shared goals to be established and the teacher and observer to clarify their roles.

If a teacher does not want to be observed then little can be achieved by insisting. Suggest team teaching where the teacher takes the part of the lesson she/he is most confident teaching. Offer to observe just part of the lesson.

Guidelines

Lesson goals

Many decisions teachers make in the course of a lesson will depend on their goals, particularly later in a lesson sequence. It is difficult to observe a lesson competently without knowing its purpose. An example of a lesson goal may be, to show how the author of *The Cay* foreshadowed what the book was going to be about by starting the narrative with a dramatic event.

If there are questions the teacher has about what to do in the lesson, discuss them too.
Support goals

Before the lesson, look at some Individual Level (IL) and Working Level (WL) observational reading results for the students in the class. Which students have made good progress? Which students have made limited progress? Why? Keep the students’ literacy learning and achievements central to the process so that you and the teacher approach the lesson as colleagues working towards a common educational purpose.

Ask about any Accelerated Literacy teaching strategies that they would like support with. For example, how to encourage students to participate in discussion. Teachers with long experience in the program and successful results may feel that they don’t need help, in which case a ‘support goal’ may be to observe highly successful teaching. There is the potential to learn more about how teachers use the program here with a view to filming lessons with this teacher or giving positive feedback.

Example

2. Before the lesson

| Lesson goals: To show how the author of The Cay foreshadowed what the book was going to be about by starting the narrative with a dramatic event. |
| Support goals: How to encourage students to participate in discussion. |

Additional issues related to lesson filming

If lessons are filmed then a time has to be found to watch and discuss them with the teacher. For such a discussion to be helpful, the coordinator/consultant needs time to watch the film beforehand so that the reflections on the lesson can be carefully considered and framed to be positive and helpful for the teacher.

The film remains the property of the teacher.
During the lesson

Rationale

This section of the support sheet concerns what happens in the lesson itself. It will be the observer’s responsibility to make perceptive and helpful observations about what is actually happening as the lesson is taught – to look past surface issues and perceive how the subject matter is presented and how the teacher interacts with the class to give them access to the information they need to be successful, literate students.

On the lesson support sheet itself, the left side is given to the timing of the lesson and a summary of the Accelerated Literacy teaching strategy itself. The right side is given over to what may appear to be a fairly basic checklist that identifies some points that may aid later discussion about the lesson. The points listed for discussion also allow observers to focus on what are actually some of the important features of Accelerated Literacy lessons that distinguish them from ‘just good teaching’.

The task of the observer in this part of the lesson support process is to look for how the teacher uses the Accelerated Literacy strategies they have been taught to use in PD sessions to achieve their teaching goals. Choose one or two points as a focus. Any more will cause overload and have limited usefulness.

Guidelines

Time

This column allows observers to record the time each part of the teaching sequence started so that it is easy to calculate how long was spent on each teaching strategy.

There is no ‘correct’ length of time that should be spent on each teaching strategy. Early in a sequence of lessons, there may be greater time spent on low order literate orientation, for example. Later in a teaching sequence, high order literate orientation or transformations may be omitted and extra time spent on spelling and writing. The time spent on each strategy becomes significant if the teacher is finding it difficult to teach writing because there is no time left in the lesson or if low order literate orientation is taking up half an hour every day.

If the lesson has been filmed, recording the time each strategy started helps the observer to locate significant parts of the tape easily. The time spent on each strategy in the teaching sequence will be related to the goals of the lesson.
Accelerated Literacy teaching strategy

This column has space for the observer to make short summary notes that relate to the development of the lesson. These notes will serve as a reminder of significant interactions within each part of the lesson.

When used in conjunction with the next column, ‘Progress of lesson’, the comments in the Accelerated Literacy strategy column provide pointers for later discussion. Note that the arrows shown in the example below illustrate the links between the two columns. There is not any requirement that observers cover the sheet in arrows.

Progress of lesson and comments

This part of the sheet is made up of some headings intended as focus points for coordinators/consultants observing a lesson. They suggest points that are important to Accelerated Literacy teaching but are by no means comprehensive.

The right column is intended for a brief comment about whether the point mentioned in the ‘progress of lesson’ occurred or not. The comment may be omitted or can be ‘yes’, ‘often’, ‘sometimes’, ‘good’ etc. The space can be left empty if no goals for the whole lesson were mentioned. It is suggested that negative comments are not used.

Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accelerated Literacy Strategy</th>
<th>Progress of Lesson</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time</strong></td>
<td><strong>Low order literate orientation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Clear goals articulated:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:25am</td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>For whole lesson. yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Short recap of previous lesson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Questions about why bear was out walking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Students offered many suggestions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Student gave extended explanation of ‘coming from the other direction’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30am</td>
<td>Read story to/with students</td>
<td>From common knowledge. yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>That provides cognitive challenge. often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Is pitched at age-appropriate level. yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:45am</td>
<td></td>
<td>Information taught:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>About the whole story (including illustrations).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>About a specific part of the story (or illustration). yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Story read fluently and expressively. yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interactions with students

The teacher’s interactions with students are instrumental in a student being able to participate as a competent member of the class. This section of the sheet is designed for use during the lesson to indicate the productive interactions with students or to identify where help is needed. Record the time at significant stages in the lesson to help you to find the interactions in the film later.

Because interactions with students are highly significant in teaching Accelerated Literacy lessons, space has been provided for brief comments about them. All observations that could be made are not included but there is space for ‘Other observations’.

Example

Interactions with students
(These interactions occur throughout the lesson and are not specifically linked to a teaching sequence strategy.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questioning that promotes student engagement and access</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Preformulation used where appropriate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Answers accepted positively and reformulated or reconceptualised.</td>
<td>often</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Lesson paced effectively to keep interest of students. | yes |
| Flexibility to include students with different abilities in the lesson. | yes |
| Consistently positive interactions with all students. |  |

Other observations: 12.05 pm particularly effective interaction with student who was hiding under a desk.
After the lesson

Rationale
The final part of the support sheet provides space for points for discussion following the lesson. Different contexts may call for slightly different procedures, depending on:

- if a film of the lesson was made
- if you are discussing the lesson immediately after it has been taught
- if you are discussing the lesson later on in the day or on another day.

However, while you may make various arrangements to discuss the lesson, always respond positively immediately afterwards.

Guidelines

What was the most positive outcome of the lesson?
This heading is intended to be a starting point for discussion after a lesson. There will be something in every lesson that was successful. Look for successful interactions with students, insightful teaching about the language choices in the text, successful outcomes for students where they have been able to achieve success in reading, writing, spelling etc. Ask the teacher to tell you how he/she felt the lesson went and what help he/she needed.

Were the goals of the lesson achieved?
The teacher and coordinator/consultant discussed the goals of the lesson previously. Now consider to what extent the goals were achieved and consider why they were or were not reached.

It is very seldom that any teacher achieves all he/she sets out to do in any lesson, so it is not a criticism to note that not all goals were achieved. Very valuable discussion can come out of asking teachers to talk about why they made decisions to spend more time on one part of a lesson than planned or why they changed direction during a lesson.

Flexibility to take advantage of important teaching ‘moments’ is part of good teaching. Understanding reasons why teachers make decisions in the flow of the lesson helps coordinators/consultants as they seek to understand how to develop Accelerated Literacy.
What one change could the teacher make in their next Accelerated Literacy lesson to make it more effective?

Choose one element of the lesson to support. For teachers new to the program, it could be questioning techniques or discussion about interpretations of the text or illustrations. For teachers who have been in the program longer, it could be how to relate spelling taught in the lesson to other spelling knowledge or how to engage students in writing effectively.

Example

4. After the lesson.

Were the goals of the lesson achieved?

Most of them were. Time spent on low order literate orientation took up more of the lesson than intended although the discussion that came out of it was excellent.

What was the most positive outcome of the lesson?

Highly effective verbal interactions with students (eg. 12.05 pm).

What one change could the teacher make in their next Accelerated Literacy lesson to make it more effective?

Refine focus of low order literate orientation to allow enough time for joint reconstructed writing.
Accelerated Literacy lesson support sheet
# Accelerated Literacy lesson support sheet

## 1. General Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Text:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School:</td>
<td>Year Level:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development Completed:</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total lessons taught to date on this text:</td>
<td>Lesson filmed: Yes No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 2. Before the lesson

**Lesson goals:**

**Support goals:**

## 3. During the lesson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accelerated Literacy Strategy</th>
<th>Progress of Lesson</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time</strong></td>
<td><strong>Low order literate orientation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Clear goals articulated:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• For whole lesson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• For low order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Discussion:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• From common knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• That provides cognitive challenge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Is pitched at age-appropriate level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Information taught:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• About the whole story (including illustrations).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• About a specific part of the story (or illustration).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Read story to/with students</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Story read fluently and expressively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>High order literate orientation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Focus on wording of the text</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Goal clearly articulated &amp; following from low order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Draws on common knowledge from other lessons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Identifies structure of text or refers to it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Links passage to whole story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Identifies appropriate language choices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Discusses the effect of language choices on readers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Age appropriate discussion of language choices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Relates language choices to lesson goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Transformations</strong></td>
<td><strong>Focus on text as a model for writing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Goal clearly articulated and linked to low and high order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Draws on common knowledge from this lesson and others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Writing focus:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Establishes a writing focus for transformation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Cuts text into segments purposefully.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Discusses writing potential of these segments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>And/or spelling focus:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Shifts to word identification activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Spelling

Focus on word analysis and decoding knowledge:
- Goal clearly articulated.
- Word chunked appropriately and explained clearly.
- Links made to previously taught spelling knowledge.
- Practice of known words and concepts built in.
- Discussion of etymology.
- Joint reconstructed writing carried out.

Writing

Using the techniques of good authors as models for students
(If writing goals have been articulated earlier in the lesson they will be reiterated here and put into practice.)

- Support for successful writing chosen appropriately.
  - Joint construction.
  - Independent writing.
  - Free composition.

- Students able to engage with understanding of writing techniques.

**Interactions with students**
(These interactions occur throughout the lesson and are not specifically linked to a teaching sequence strategy.)

Questioning that promotes student engagement and access.
- Preformulation used where appropriate.
- Answers accepted positively and reformulated or reconceptualised.

- Lesson paced effectively to keep interest of students.
- Flexibility to include students with different levels of understanding in the lesson.
- Consistently positive interactions with all students.
- Other observations.

4. After the lesson.

What was the most positive outcome of the lesson?

Were the goals of the lesson achieved?

What one change could the teacher make in the next Accelerated Literacy lesson to make it more effective?
Providing support to teachers
The following notes provide some advice to coordinators/consultants about what to look for when observing lessons and what to talk about in discussions with teachers after the lesson. Each Accelerated Literacy teaching strategy and each section of the observation record sheet is discussed.

**Low order literate orientation**

**Clear goals articulated**

**For whole lesson**

Students need to know that there is an educational purpose for the literacy lesson and they need to know what they have to do so that they can participate in the lesson appropriately.

Low order literate orientation is the beginning of involving students in the goals of the lesson. Consider whether the goal is appropriate for that lesson, for the book, and for the age of the students.

It is quite difficult to define a specific goal that is then carried through the lesson and to which all the teaching for that lesson is directed. The goal needs to be engaging, obviously worthwhile and educational. It needs to link to previous lessons, teaching sequences and strategies. And it needs to be leading somewhere.

**For low order**

As well as wider goals, there will be one specific to just that part of the lesson. Consider:

- that the goal should focus on what the class is going to learn or discuss about the text (and illustrations) for that low order literate orientation
- how this focus will contribute to the rest of the lesson.

**Discussion**

There will usually be questions and answers in low order literate orientation as they are part of the way teachers operate. Their significance for Accelerated Literacy is in how easily students can answer questions, the types of answers they give and the way the teacher responds to these answers.
From common knowledge

At least some of the questions a teacher asks will concern common knowledge about the text that has been discussed in previous lessons (how much possibility there is here depends on how long has been spent on the text). Common knowledge is a dynamic, growing, powerful tool that should be available to every child in the class. Therefore we should look for:

- the teacher reminding students of what they have learned previously
- students answering easily and at least some students being able to give extended answers
- common knowledge broadcast to all students through the teacher's reconceptualisation of answers.

That provides cognitive challenge

Questions will be about facts and information in the wording of the text but also watch for:

- questions that challenge students to read ‘between the lines’ and ‘behind the lines’ of the study passage or illustrations
- students that are able to draw inferences about characters' motivations
- students that can make judgments or give opinions about texts.

Is pitched at age-appropriate levels

Think of age-appropriate levels in relation to discussions as well as for book levels. While it is good to explain meanings or unfamiliar words or concepts, look for discussions that reflect the age of the students in the class.

Story read fluently and expressively

At the end of a low order literate orientation, teachers read the text or part of the text to students. As a teaching sequence develops, the students will often join in the reading or participate in some way with the teacher in reading. Look for fluent, expressive reading by the teacher even when students ‘read along’.

Chanting or shouting the text from memory is not helpful in teaching reading for meaning or in modelling and teaching reading aloud.
High order literate orientation

High order literate orientation always involves examining the language choices the author has made in the study text. To carry out high order literate orientation, the text needs to be visible to all students in the class. This can be achieved by using a big book, an overhead projector, a data projector or some other device that makes the text visible to everyone. The students need to be seated where they can see and participate easily.

Clear goals articulated

The goals that were laid out for the students in low order literate orientation need to be picked up in high order literate orientation and related to the wording of the text. Look for a statement of which language features will be the focus of the lesson and why.

Common knowledge drawn on

As in low order literate orientation, common knowledge about the text is the resource from which questions will be drawn. Look for evidence that common knowledge is the foundation on which the discussion about wording of the text is based.

Early in a teaching sequence, a teacher will cue students into the language choices the author has made and what readers can learn about writing techniques by studying these choices. Look for discussion that draws on previous work on language choices and their effect on readers.

Structure of text identified

To reach a writing goal, the teacher will identify the structure in the study passage and talk about the text so that students see the techniques an author used to construct it.

Look for talk about:
- orientation, complication, resolution in younger students' books
- the structure of the shorter passages from a longer text when studying books with older students.
Passage linked to the whole story
Where a shorter passage is studied from a longer text, the place of the passage and its contribution to the whole text needs to be discussed. Look for the teacher explaining the context of the passage during the lesson.

Appropriate language choices identified
Look for interactions that focus on the actual wording of the text. Students may underline the language features identified on their own copy of the text, on the overhead of the text or on the big book, but there will be some discussion of the actual words of the text central to high order literate orientation.

Effect of language choices discussed
Look for discussions about the emotional impact of language choices and any possible inferences. An effective teacher will encourage students to offer suggestions, accept them and relate them to the goal of the lesson.

As mentioned previously, look for discussion that is aimed at the age level of any students. The language choices identified need to be chosen for their potential to teach students critical literacy as well as word meanings and grammar. Look for how the teacher weaves the discussion about language choices into discussion about the lesson goals.
Transformations

To implement transformations, teachers use a ‘sentence maker’ or transformations board. The text is written on cardboard strips and placed on the board where it can be cut up and manipulated. Transformations have the potential to lead to spelling, word recognition and 1:1 correspondence activities as well as a writing focus. Both dimensions can be taught in the same lesson.

Clear goals articulated and linked to literate orientation

Look for a clear goal in the transformations related to the overall goal of the whole lesson as well as to the immediate activity. Because there are different directions this part of the lesson can take, students need to understand what the educational purpose of their activity is.

Common knowledge drawn on

Look for:
- drawing on understandings established earlier in the lesson as well as in previous lessons
- asking cognitively-demanding questions that relate to earlier conversation without preformulation (eg asking ‘why’ someone would use those words)
- restating questions if students cannot answer them.

Spelling focus

When the text has been cut up into single words, word recognition activities and 1:1 correspondence may be the focus of transformations. Look for the choice of activities and how effectively the students engage with them.

Writing focus

The teacher establishes a writing focus for transformations by purposefully cutting the text into segments.

The teacher cuts the text into paragraphs, sentences, phrases or words, depending on the goal of the activity. Look for:
- a clear outline of the structure of the text
- a discussion about the place of the transformations in the narrative
- clear reasons for segmenting the text
- a discussion about how writing techniques are exemplified in the wording of the text
- a discussion that includes turning words over and speculating on the effect they have on the text meaning.
Spelling

Spelling is the teaching sequence strategy where knowledge about English orthography can be taught. The analysis of words and spelling activities provide resources for students’ writing and for decoding when reading.

Clear goals articulated

Look for an explanation of what the educational purpose of the activity is, as well as for more specific descriptions of the words to be analysed.

Words chunked appropriately and explained clearly

Either the teacher will cut the words into appropriate chunks or the students will make suggestions for cutting the words into chunks. How chunking is carried out should depend on the understanding of the students. Either way, the reasons for cutting up words need to be part of the spelling discussion.

Links made to previously taught spelling knowledge

Whatever words are taught in spelling, there should be links made between it and the overall spelling knowledge appropriate for the students’ spelling stage and understanding. Each spelling session needs to have links made to other words with similar patterns or previous knowledge taught.

Practice of known words and concepts built in

Look for discussion that shows students drawing on spelling knowledge from other lessons. Students may be able to articulate why words are cut up in certain ways or offer other words with similar patterns.

Discussion of etymology

There may be some discussion of word origins, their history and reasons given for unusual spelling.

Joint reconstructed writing carried out

In lessons where joint reconstructed writing is carried out, look for:

- an explanation of the activity
- joint discussion of the word functions, their meanings and effect on readers
- discussion of letter formation and fluency with younger students.
Writing

Using the techniques of good authors as models for students

(If writing goals have been articulated earlier in the lesson they will be reiterated here and put into practice.)

Look for how students are able to carry out the writing tasks they are given. If they still need a lot of help to complete a task then perhaps they need different preparation for the task. Look at how teachers plan for and support the students that need most help in writing tasks.

Level of support for writing chosen appropriately

There are many possible directions writing activities can take, depending on the lesson goals.

Joint construction

Teacher and students work with a structure and technique taught from their reading to negotiate a story that appropriates that technique.

Independent writing

The word ‘independent’ refers to students working without support on a writing task. The task may follow joint construction and take the form of a workshop where students practise using the writing technique they have been learning. When students work independently, the quality of their work will depend on the quality of their preparation for the task.

Free composition

There will be occasions when students write an extended piece of text completely from their own resources. This is also ‘independent’ writing, but could also be called free writing or free composition to describe the task of planning and writing without support. A teacher may set a topic or criteria for writing for this task.
Interactions with students

The teacher’s interactions with students are instrumental in a student being able to participate as a competent member of the class. This section of the sheet is designed for use during the lesson to indicate the productive interactions with students or to identify where help is needed.

Questioning

One of the key indicators of students recognising educational ground rules and responding to display their understanding is their ability to answer questions. Look for:

- good decisions about when to preformulate
- effective preformulation that assists students to answer questions competently
- answers accepted in a positive and encouraging manner
- flexibility in taking a student’s answer and reformulating or restating it into an acceptable answer
- reconceptualisation that broadcasts common knowledge to the class and shows the students why that answer was important.

Lesson paced effectively to keep interest of students

Observe the teacher’s sensitivity to her/his students and the balance between persevering until a concept is taught and overloading students with too much information. Look for:

- sensitivity to the age and interest levels of the students
- command of the teaching strategies so that interest is maintained
- the ability to choose activities focused on literacy to change the pace of the lesson if necessary.

Students with different levels of understanding included in the lesson

In many classes, there are students that may have missed lessons, have less command of English or be finding things difficult for some reason. A major focus of Accelerated Literacy is providing these students with the support to participate in lessons as powerful learners. Look for how teachers seek to include all students in the lesson.
Consistently positive interactions with all students

Central to Accelerated Literacy teaching is the understanding that students and teachers are participating in socially constructed learning. Students who feel marginalised because of their behaviour do not participate effectively in lessons.

Look for how teachers:

- handle students who present as ‘difficult’, inattentive or otherwise uncooperative
- ensure their participation in lessons
- encourage and support them.

After the lesson

Were the goals of the lesson achieved?

Goals for lessons are seldom all achieved. This question is intended to be a query about what was achieved and why. Goals may not have been achieved because the teacher spent more time than anticipated teaching a point that was difficult for students. Extra time used like this would be entirely appropriate.

What was the most positive outcome of the lesson?

Look for a point in the lesson that achieved particularly good interactions with students or some other positive literacy outcome. Ask teachers what they felt about the lesson. What did they feel went well? What did they feel they needed help with?

What one change could the teacher make?

When supporting a teacher through lesson feedback, it is particularly important that the teacher is not overloaded with advice. Decide on one thing that will support the teacher in the next lesson. It could be something as simple as changing seating arrangements. It could be a suggestion for carrying out the questioning techniques or a discussion about reconceptualisation.
Practitioner Guide

This guide is written for coordinators/consultants who have a role in the professional development of teachers of Accelerated Literacy. It consists of two parts.

- Guidelines for filling out each section of the lesson observation record sheet, with examples.
- Points to consider when observing lessons and when discussing the lesson with the teacher afterwards in order to provide support to the teacher to effectively implement the Accelerated Literacy strategies.

The guide will also provide teachers with an idea of what coordinators and consultants are looking for when they observe lessons and what matters they may raise in discussions after the lesson. Such knowledge will help any teachers to prepare their lessons and reflect on their performance, whether they are observed by a coordinator/consultant or not.

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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