This guide is to be used as a reference source by teachers as they implement the Accelerated Literacy Program after attending professional development sessions on the program. It describes each Accelerated Literacy strategy in turn, discussing preparation, the teaching practices that are appropriate, what should be taught and issues related to effective use of the strategy, and provides examples using selected texts.

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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The teaching sequence
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Accelerated Literacy teaching
Background

The value of teaching routines

The Accelerated Literacy teaching cycle consists of a cluster of literacy teaching strategies that, when taught for 60–90 minutes each day, constitute a teaching routine.

This booklet describes each Accelerated Literacy strategy in turn. It is intended for use by teachers as they implement the Accelerated Literacy Program after attending professional development sessions on the program.

As Courtney Cazden points out, ‘one benefit of a clear consistent activity structure is that it allows participants to attend to content rather than procedure … If students can be socialized into a set of activity structures that become familiar and predictable, yet flexibly open for improvisations at the moment and for evolution over time, management problems and transition times can be minimized; then both teacher and students can give their attention less to choreographing the activity and more to the academic content.’ (Cazden 2001: 101)

The familiar routines of Accelerated Literacy also provide support and predictability for students with low attendance. The teaching cycle diagram below illustrates the strategies used by Accelerated Literacy teachers.
The cycle in the diagram consists of four teaching strategies that are usually, but not always, followed sequentially during an Accelerated Literacy lesson. The strategies are intended to be used by teachers as tools or resources for teaching students to be fully participating members of a literate society – ‘full members, not just with access, but also with a zest for participating and an instinct to exercise agency’ (Freebody, 2004, p. 4). The strategies are structured ‘yet flexibly open for improvisations at the moment and for evolution over time’ (Cazden 2001: 101). Ideally, teachers will have clear goals for lessons, individually and collectively, that will be achieved with the help of these strategies.

**Text Selection**

While not represented on the diagram, text selection is a crucial element of Accelerated Literacy teaching. The following criteria should be considered in selecting a text.

- It should be written in literate language – that is, the language of books, not the everyday vernacular or oral language that assumes the speaker and listener share a context.
- It should be chosen because it is age-appropriate for the majority of a class, or close to age-appropriate.
- It should have the potential to be enjoyed by students, so that they feel motivated to read and can experience the excitement of learning that reading offers.

Part of a teacher’s preparation of the text for a teaching cycle involves the teacher reading it carefully and analytically. The teacher will then select texts, or passages from texts, to teach students how to read and write like successful students. The teacher will decide on writing techniques to teach and at the same time, consider what students will need to know to learn to use the techniques. That is, what ‘ground rules’ of English students will need to learn to use in order to read the text with comprehension and write like this author.

The Accelerated Literacy booklist of books used successfully in the program can guide teachers new to the program. In addition, there are teaching notes available for some of the books on this list.
Literate orientation

A foundation for successful reading

Low Order
Shows the possibilities for enjoyment of this text. Establishes literate mindsets in students as teachers ‘loan their consciousness’ about what it means.

High Order
Examination of the actual language choices that create the meaning in a text.

Literate orientation is the starting point in an Accelerated Literacy lesson. It is the beginning of a teaching-learning cycle through which shared common knowledge (or intersubjectivity) about a text is negotiated between students and teacher. It is a key site for teaching about the ‘ground rules’ of literacy as they apply to the study text.

Through literate orientation teacher and students discuss the study text, its illustrations and wording. This detailed understanding of the text reduces the mental overload that can result from the demands of reading unfamiliar text and provides support for students to read beyond their individual level of achievement. The shared understanding or common knowledge (intersubjectivity) negotiated through the literate orientation discussion provides a rich resource for the rest of the literacy lesson.
Discussion in literate orientation is very focused, however, and provides a model for students in how literate readers interpret texts. It starts as a pre-reading strategy largely directed by the teacher and develops into a rich and interesting discussion about possible interpretations of the text and its illustrations that includes comprehension and critical literacy. It is a strategy that extends across a series of lessons where it also gives the teacher an opportunity to explain the orientation he/she will take to the lesson.

To carry out literate orientation, the teacher needs to be very familiar with a text. This familiarity includes not only knowing the main events in a story but also their themes, character motivations, and possible literate interpretations such as identifying the language techniques authors employ to achieve their goals.

Asking students questions that they can answer successfully is an important part of teaching them to operate as members of literate discourse. For more detailed information about the questioning strategies used in Accelerated Literacy see the NALP website, http://www.nalp.edu.au

There are two dimensions to literate orientation shown on the teaching cycle diagram: low order literate orientation and high order literate orientation.
Low order literate orientation

Overview

Low order literate orientation is carried out on all levels of texts and their illustrations, from those with illustrations meant for younger readers to texts without illustrations (including novels written for secondary students). In low order literate orientation, the teacher ‘points the students’ brains’ or suggests a ‘mind set’ to the text by modelling a literate interpretation of the text. Early in the teaching cycle it is carried out before the teacher reads the text to students or before the student reads the text. Later in the teaching cycle, it serves to define the focus of each lesson and each part of the lesson.

Low order literate orientation provides the foundation on which a lesson is built. Where students have low literacy levels or come from different cultural backgrounds, the strategy begins the process of building the common knowledge about the text that brings meaning to the words. It allows students to listen to and read the text with a high level of comprehension.

Low order literate orientation may be carried out at several levels:

- what the lesson is going to be about (ie what you hope to achieve overall)
- the purpose of the low order literate orientation
- where this lesson fits with the overall goals for the unit of work.
Low order literate orientation on books with illustrations

Preparation

Make sure all students can see the text of the book. It can be enlarged or projected onto a screen.

Teaching

Starting with the cover, begin a discussion about how the illustrations bring the story to life and show students what fun, interest and support can be drawn from looking at them.

A challenge for teachers starting to use this strategy is to tell students about how to look at the illustrations and what is important in them, rather than asking questions. Questions come when there is some shared knowledge established to provide answers.

For example, in lesson one on ‘The Lion and the Mouse’, a teacher might tell the students, ‘This story is about a tiny little mouse who helps a big strong lion.’ In lesson two, then, the teacher can ask, ‘Who can remember who this story was about? The lion was big and strong, wasn’t it? What do we know about the size of the mouse?’

In preparing for low order literate orientation, read the story carefully as you examine the illustrations and consider the following points as possible topics for discussion.

- The context for the story: this includes the setting, the characters and an overview of what’s happening.
- The theme of the story, the type of story (eg folk tale, fairy story, fable), the purpose of this type of story in literate culture (eg why people read and enjoy this type of story).
- Identify how the illustrations in the story expand, qualify or extend the text content. Authors of books for younger students can choose simpler wording that is easier for less experienced readers to decode by using illustrations to do some of the descriptive work.
• Look for how the illustrations influence readers’ feelings towards characters. (eg do we identify positively with a happy smiling character? Do we feel that a mouse with ragged clothes deserves good luck? Are the settings for the characters dark and sombre and thus threatening, or are they bright and positive?)
• Consider the motivations the characters might have for the ways they behave. (eg what feelings are portrayed in their facial expressions, postures or positions? What power relationships are implied by the positions of characters in illustrations?)
• Identify the plot structure (orientation, complication, resolution, coda) and how this structure may be reflected in differences in the illustrations.
• Identify wording in the story that could be problematic for a class because of its complexity, the concepts it implies, its unfamiliarity, and its difference from spoken language. Then look for how the illustrations can help you bring this language into the low order literate orientation discussion (eg the word playfully: the mouse wanted to have fun, it wanted to play so it ran playfully over the lion’s back’).
• Discuss what readers have to attend to in the illustrations if they are to make inferences about the characters’ behaviour or motives.
• Work out how you can manage the discussion around the illustrations to model the inferences and interpretations a literate person takes from such illustrations while still keeping the students interested and engaged.
• Consider how to continue the discussion about the text over time to allow handover of the literate discussion to the students.

From all the possible approaches to the discussion you have at your disposal, narrow the discussion to a focus that will be carried into the rest of the lesson. For example, in ‘The Lion and the Mouse’, a first lesson might give an overview of the whole story, returning to a focus on the setting and the circumstances the mouse found herself in when she ran over the lion’s back intending to play, not annoy the lion. A subsequent lesson would then pick up on the lion’s decision to let the mouse go, another on the lion’s amusement at the thought that the mouse might be able to help him, and so on.
Low order literate orientation on books without illustrations

Teaching

Books without illustrations are generally longer and more complex than those with illustrations because the words do all the work the pictures do in illustrated books. Because of the length and complexity of books for older students, they cannot always be read in one lesson. It is important, then, for teachers to read the text to the class over a period of time, aiming to read the whole story as quickly as possible. Not all possible topics or angles need to be dealt with at the beginning of the lesson. Some of them will be referred to before reading the text to the class and others will be dealt with at the beginning of each strategy to keep the purpose of each task linked to the overall lesson goals.

Low order literate orientation for books without illustrations needs to be planned carefully to avoid overloading students with information. The teacher needs to read the book carefully right through before planning lessons.

Early in a teaching sequence, low order literate orientation will involve a brief overview of the whole story as well as a summary of the focus for the lesson. This type of low order literate orientation will take up to 20 minutes (although it could be longer in the first lesson on a book). Later, a finer focus is more appropriate.

Points that a teacher could consider when planning low order literate orientation for a lesson include the following.

- The passage of text to be studied. Consider how the text you want to study relates to the whole story and to the teaching goals. These teaching goals need to be made clear to students.
- The structure of the whole plot as well as the structure of the study passage. (Is the study passage part of the orientation of the whole story? If not, where does it fit? What is the structure of the study passage?)
- The writing techniques the author has employed to achieve the effect you want to study. (Make this information available to students.)
- Inferences implicit in the language of the text that students may not recognise.
- The purpose of the story. (Does this type of story have a moral or ideological purpose? Is it meant to amuse, scare, excite or inform? Who is telling the story? How is the reader positioned by the writer?)
- How to model and approach the discussion about how readers interpret texts. (How do readers make judgments about characters' behaviour? How do they evaluate the possibilities for making meaning from the text?)
Immediately following low order literate orientation, either:

- read the text to the class;
- read it with the class; or
- have the class read some of the text while you read the rest.

Where you read together, do not slow down or let the joint reading deteriorate into chanting the words. Always read expressively and fluently.

Issues

- Low order literate orientation is not simply going through a book asking students to predict what they think will happen or what they think the book is about.
- Low order literate orientation is the beginning point in a teaching sequence in which students learn to take a literate orientation to a text. This process cannot be left to chance.
- It is easy to let this part of the lesson turn into a question and answer session that becomes little more than ‘busy work’. A competent low order literate orientation involves taking a stance or mindset towards the text that engages students cognitively. As work on a text progresses, try to think of discussion that doesn’t just involve recalling facts but that challenges students to interpret and infer from the illustrations and wording.
- Film can be used to add to the richness and variety of low order literate orientation, particularly with longer novels. The insights students gain from watching a film of the book give them a detailed overview of the plot, the motivations and emotions of the characters and the setting. The differences between the film and the wording of the book can also make for interesting discussion.
High order literate orientation

Overview

High order literate orientation shifts the students’ focus to a closer examination of the author’s wording. In high order literate orientation, the teacher systematically shows students how to attend closely to the author’s wording and the way it constructs meaning. Students speculate on the effect of the words and the possible reasons why a writer may have used them and not others. It also allows the teacher to model how literate readers do the work writers expect of them (e.g., make inferences, interpret actions, make connections, and recognise foreshadowing and other writing techniques). Authors expect readers to suspend disbelief and accept the world they create with their words and illustrations as a possible world in which characters can think, act, exist, and feel. Interpreting this world through the wording of the story becomes a shared or negotiated activity through high order literate orientation.

Preparation

To implement this strategy all students must be able to see the wording of the study passage by using a laminated big book or a projector (overhead or data) that projects the text onto a screen or whiteboard. Older students may be given their own copy of the text.

To further focus the students’ attention on the wording under consideration, teachers may ask students to underline the targeted words with a whiteboard marker. This works well on a laminated big book. Where an overhead projector transparency is used, mark the transparency itself or mark the projected text on the whiteboard itself. Where students have their own copy of the text, they can underline the relevant parts themselves. The important feature of the exercise is to make sure that each student knows which words are under discussion.

The teacher will have decided on the focus of the lesson and the language features important to that focus. For example, one focus could be to show how Tim Winton uses the weather to create atmosphere in *Lockie Leonard* – *Human Torpedo*.

Books for younger students have less complex language features than books for older students, but finding and discussing the actual wording the author uses is central to high order literate orientation at all levels.
During low order literate orientation, the teacher will have laid down the foundations of the common knowledge that will be a resource for high order literate orientation. When asking questions which will lead students to identify the wording you wish to discuss, draw on the preparation you have done. For example, if you have talked about the little mouse running playfully over the lion’s back and down over his head to the ground, you can ask about how the mouse ran when she was playing. You can also ask where she ran, what path over the lion did she take? Students have this knowledge or at least it has been introduced during low order literate orientation and from having the story read to them.

**Teaching**

During high order literate orientation, discuss the following.

- The wording of the text.
  - What wording and grammatical choices the author has made and possible reasons why.
  - What effect the author’s words have on readers.
  - What inferences can be drawn from the wording.
  - What words the author uses to structure the text.
- How the author uses language to construct the plot.
  - Does the author use a simple orientation, complication, resolution structure (usually in books for younger students)?
  - Alternatively, does the author interest readers in the story by describing a dramatic event first? (A strategy often used in books for older children.)
- How the theme of the story is realised through the language the author uses. For example, in the story ‘Blueback’ by Tim Winton, the author describes the death of an injured tiger shark that moves readers to consider the environmental damage done by a ruthless abalone fisherman.
- How particular language choices made by the author work to position a reader/writer/character.
  - How does the author describe characters positively so that readers will identify with them and approve of them.
  - How does the author persuade readers to identify with and approve or disapprove of actions taken by characters central to a plot?
Issues

Enough time needs to be spent on studying a passage of text for all students to be able to join in the discussion. To establish this level of intersubjectivity, the teacher needs to study the same passage of text over more than one lesson. The challenge for the teacher, then, is to keep the discussion interesting and engaging.

Variations can be introduced to high order literate orientation to keep students’ interest and engagement in examining, analysing and discussing the text.

- Cover some of the text of the story so that the ‘skeleton’ of the story is shown but the expansions and colourful or descriptive language are hidden. Uncover these words as the students predict them.
- Have the text written on a sheet of paper or whiteboard with words missing. Choose one category of word to omit (eg adjectives). Ask students to write them in as they predict the missing words or help the teacher write them in.
- Give older students a copy of the study text. Outline the part of the text to read and ask groups of students to formulate questions to ask the other students in the class.

Ask cognitively challenging questions about the study passage as students gain in reading competence (eg questions that require the students to make inferences, make judgments and evaluate the characters’ actions and motivations). Make sure that you explain how good readers are able to answer such questions by making decisions about the meaning in the text based on the wording of the text.
Transformations

Overview

Transformations is an activity designed to change students’ orientation to the study text from that of a reader looking for meaning to the more analytic viewpoint of a writer learning how the author of the text used a writer’s techniques to achieve a purpose.

Shared understanding grows and develops around the text. Both teacher and students learn from each other.

The focus of teaching now shifts to include new understanding, e.g. how an author thinks to choose words to achieve different purposes.

Preparation

In the transformations activity, teachers take short passages from a text being studied and transfer them to cardboard strips. Having the text written out on cardboard strips provides conditions for it to be cut up into meaning chunks or single words and manipulated. The strips are then placed on ledges on a board made for the purpose. All students need to be able to see the board clearly and access it easily to help the teacher cut the words off as required.
Transformations provide flexibility for teachers to take different approaches to the text for a number of purposes. Transformations can be used to show the effect on readers of language choices, including particular words, phrases, clauses and paragraphs.

- Transformations can be used to show the effect on readers of the author’s choice of word order. To discuss word order, parts of the text can be removed then replaced and discussed so that the effect of that particular wording can be observed clearly.
- Transformations can be used as a context for discussing use of punctuation (eg full stops, exclamation marks, speech marks). Here the punctuation would be separated from the words and cut out.
- Transformations can be used by teachers of beginning readers to teach word recognition skills and 1:1 correspondence. In these instances the text would be cut into single words.

Teaching

Transformations are not simply a repeat of high order literate orientation with cutting out substituting for underlining parts of the text. However, some of the meaning chunks will replicate the high order literate orientation which in turn will draw on resources introduced in low order literate orientation (eg the word *playfully* from ‘The Lion and the Mouse’). The passages below are taken from the transcripts of ‘The Lion and the Mouse’ that accompany the first professional development session.
Low order literate orientation | High order literate orientation | Transformations (second day)

**Strategies**

The idea that the mouse only intended to play with the lion, not annoy it, is introduced.  
Next, the teacher asked the students to predict the word *playfully* and when they couldn’t, she told them how the mouse ran.  
The next day, the word *playfully* was so well known the students called it out before a question was asked. The teacher also drew students’ attention to the word’s appearance (*play/fully*).

**Teacher/Student Interaction**

**T:** …and it’s (the mouse) just come over to play and it sees the lion lying there and it thought, ‘Oh, I know what I will do. I (will) run over its back. That will be a good game.’

Following that explanation, the story was read to the students, including: *One day a lion was resting when a little mouse, who lived nearby, ran playfully over his back and down over his head to the ground.*

**T:** …then it doesn’t just say he ran over his back, it tells us something really important. It tells us how the mouse ran. It wasn’t trying to be a nuisance to the lion. He didn’t want to bother the lion so he ran *playfully*. Can anyone see the word *playfully*?

**S:** Yes.

**T:** You. Can you? Alright, can you do *playfully*. See, if the mouse was just playing it means he wasn’t trying to bother the lion, he was just playing.

**T:** What was the thing that the mouse actually did?

**S:** *Ran*.

**T:** Do you want to do (cut off from the other words) *ran*? You are all ready with *playfully*, aren’t you? The thing that he did was just *ran*. Which one is *ran*? Yes. Now all of these other people: are you ready?

**S:** *Playfully* (all children)

**T:** What does *playfully* tell us?

**S:** *Over his back* (one child responds).

**T:** *Playfully* tells us how he *ran* doesn’t it. He didn’t run naughtily over his back, he didn’t run happily, he ran *playfully*. He was just playing. Well done. Good. Everybody just look at *playfully*. If I just cover that up, it just says play.
The Transformations strategy provides an important context for building intersubjectivity (or common knowledge) with the class about how a writer uses writing techniques in the study text. The ability to read a passage of text and understand it at a critical or inferential level is a rich resource for writing as well as high level comprehension. Both dimensions are important in transformations.

In addition, transformations has an important role in preparing students, particularly younger age groups, for spelling activities. Playing games that lead to word recognition and 1:1 correspondence are crucial activities for students who are learning about the difference between words and letters.

Such games can include those below:

- Cut a passage (about a sentence long) into single words. Separate the words so that there is a small space between them. Ask individual students to come and read the passage, pointing to the words as they read (1:1 correspondence, word recognition). This activity can also be carried out with a tutor, or a teacher and individual students. It has great potential to tune traumatised students into reading.
  - Mix up the word order in the study passage (about a sentence at a time). Read the words. Appear shocked at the ridiculous sentence. Ask a student or several students to sort out the word order to the way it was in the book. Have the book nearby to refer to if needed.
  - Leave the word order as it should be but turn over a word that you would like to discuss. The word turned over should be chosen for the following reasons:
    ○ Taking the word out leaves a meaningful piece of text (eg The mouse ran). The sentence makes sense without playfully. Turning playfully over allows further discussion of the work that word does in the sentence.
    ○ Taking the word out makes the text meaningless. Restoring the word to its proper place then allows discussion about the work the word does in the text.
    ○ Taking the word out changes the meaning of the text. The different meanings can be compared and contrasted.
- Word recognition games allow teachers to identify words students know out of context. They encourage students to look for initial letters, final letters or patterns to recognise words.
The success of the transformations strategy in a lesson depends upon the teacher having a clear focus for the lesson. This focus will have been identified in low order literate orientation, and the wording that achieves that focus will have been established in high order literate orientation. Transformations takes that focus to an even more analytic level, particularly in texts for older students.

For example, in ‘The Lion and the Mouse’, the mouse was identified as coming over to play in low order literate orientation. The word playfully was underlined in high order literate orientation, then cut off in transformations. In the example given above, the focus was on spelling, on the appearance of the word. Further development in the next lesson would involve discussion as to why an author tells how something happened. If we know the mouse was being playful, then we know that she had no malice towards the lion. She hadn’t thought of being annoying and therefore she does not deserve to die. In folk tales, characters have to be shown as deserving of mercy or not deserving.

Transformations is a powerful literacy teaching strategy that can be used at class level or with individuals. It allows close text analysis as well as word analysis and engages even the lowest achieving students.
The spelling strategies employed in Accelerated Literacy teaching are carried out with words from the study text, usually from a transformations exercise. The words are chosen from transformations so that the expectation is that the majority of students can read the words out of context. The certainty supplied by knowing what a word is (without the overload caused by sometimes ineffective decoding strategies) gives a student the confidence to visualise the word and break it up into letter patterns.

Fundamental to the teaching of spelling is that teachers themselves understand the system of English spelling. Without that understanding, they do not have a clear idea about the knowledge they seek to teach. Where teachers do not have a background understanding of the origins and history of English spelling, there are books available and Internet sites that can be used as a resource.

Some examples are:

- [http://www.etymonline.com](http://www.etymonline.com)
Teaching

With younger students, the emphasis is on the way spelling patterns work in English. With older students who have developed negative mindsets and ineffective strategies, the emphasis is on developing an effective orientation to spelling. The following progressive steps apply to students with negative mindsets to spelling.

- Use words that students can recognise out of context.
- Direct and consolidate a shift away from negative strategies (e.g., letter copying, phonic spelling) to more effective successful spelling strategies. Show students how to segment words (e.g., *m/ouse*).
- Demonstrate that there is a commonality between words based on visual patterning. (Initially, links must be established between two already known patterns.)
- Expand students’ repertoire of known visual pattern relations (e.g., make charts, individual lists of discovered commonalities from reading). Initially emphasise ‘taught’ words, not ‘spontaneous’ additions.
- Foster the ability to generate and find words with similar patterns. Do this simultaneously with previous step when appropriate (e.g., ‘you know *m/ouse* do you think you could write *h/ouse*).
- Establish an ability to analyse words without available reference models. (e.g., How would we best break up this word to remember it? e.g., dreams > *dr/eam/s* Can we find some other words with any of these patterns? e.g., *dr/ip cr/eam*.)

Joint reconstructed writing

Joint reconstructed writing provides a context for successful writing for students with little or no previous experience of literate writing in school. This strategy forms a link with the writing strategies in that students and teacher work together to reconstruct the text the way the author wrote it. They also discuss the author’s possible thinking when making particular language choices in the text. They use the actual words of the text. The activity reduces cognitive overload for students as they work through the reconstruction as they use the author’s wording, and they know how to spell the words.
Writing

Overview

Writing strategies provide the context for learning how to employ the writing techniques used by all authors.

Writing activities are based on the premise that the intensive analysis and discussion of the text that has taken place through the teaching routine provides students with literate resources for writing. Students also bring to the study their own resources from their lives, their culture and other reading. Through the study of the writing techniques in study texts, students are able to utilise the rich resources used by all authors. They are able to model their writing on the writing of expert authors.

For writing activities to be successful as an Accelerated Literacy teaching strategy, common knowledge within a classroom has to be carefully monitored and exploited. As each lesson cycles through over time, the knowledge about a text that is important in the development of successfully literate students is carefully discussed and made important through the preformulation and reconceptualisation of the questions that are part of classroom discourse.
Teaching

Writing activities can follow either transformations, spelling or joint reconstructed writing. Writing activities capitalise on students’ ability to read like writers. Careful preparation is needed before attempting writing activities. To ensure the success of writing activities, students and teacher need to share common knowledge about:

- the writing techniques that are part of every author’s ‘toolbox’
- how to make decisions about when to use these techniques
- how to make appropriate language choices to apply the appropriate technique to their own writing.

Writing activities must be planned from the beginning of a teaching cycle and worked towards from the literate orientation stage. Where there is a writing goal for a series of lessons, students need know what it is. We teach students to read texts that demonstrate specific writing techniques. Some examples are below.

- How and why authors describe characters’ physical features, and what they achieve by describing them from positive and negative viewpoints (eg Boggis, Bunce and Bean in *Fantastic Mr Fox* by Roald Dahl).
- How and why authors describe characters’ feelings (eg Miss Pebble and the ghost of Ned Kelly in ‘Spooks Incorporated’ by Paul Jennings)
- How and why authors describe settings. How they develop atmosphere that is inviting or frightening or melancholy. When is this a good strategy to use?
- How and why authors make their writing suspenseful. When is this strategy appropriate?

These are just some of the understandings about writing that students can use to make their writing literate and engaging. A teaching cycle that includes writing needs the following:

- An overall focus or goal that is articulated from the first lesson.
- Workshop activities that provide practice in the techniques students need to achieve the goal. Workshop activities can be planned around paragraphs, sentences or phrases.
- Longer writing activities that provide an opportunity for students to use the techniques they have practised during workshop activities.
- Opportunities to freely compose writing that allows students to practise their developing skills.
Workshop activities

There is a range of possibilities for writing workshop activities in Accelerated Literacy teaching. Each may be carried out with varying levels of support.

Teaching a writing technique as a workshop activity follows transformations and joint reconstructed writing. For all writing workshops, the structure of the text must be made clear right from the literate orientation stage. The structure then becomes the writing plan that helps students organise their writing.

Joint construction (high support)

Joint construction involves the teacher and students working together to create a new piece of writing that uses the study text as a model. The teacher will do the actual handwriting although the students can help with parts of it where they can.

In preparation for joint construction, teachers should consider possible scenarios and wording that they can use to make suggestions and ensure that an appropriate text is created. The teacher’s part in the joint construction is to think aloud as if she/he is an author preparing to compose a text using the writing technique that is the focus of the study and, at the same time, to encourage the students to join her/him in the exercise. The teacher will accept students’ suggestions or modify them as necessary.

More than one joint construction can be carried out to practise a writing technique. Over a series of lessons, joint construction can be used to construct short class books for early childhood students.

Independent writing (medium support)

Following joint construction, students can put into practice individually the writing technique they have been learning about. If the modelling of the technique has been adequate then students will be able to attempt ‘their own’ writing without additional help. Where there are students that still need help, the teacher can carry out another joint construction with a smaller group while the rest of the class continues on their own.
Independent writing (low support)
Workshop activities can also include the students carrying out writing tasks based on a writing technique where they are given criteria to write to. Particularly following a joint construction and some practice, as above, students can be asked to have another try. For example, if the students have modelled their writing on writing a scary description of a character (as in the description of Ned Kelly in ‘Spooks Incorporated’), they could carry out one workshop as a joint construction, one where they write a description of another scary character, and, at another time, a description of a happy character, or one based on another quality such as miserable or naughty.

Free composition (no support)
Free composition applies to writing that students do without any support at all. This writing includes tasks that are given with criteria to be met but which are not immediately based on a model text. This could be for an assessment task, or such writing as journal writing or letters.

Free composition also applies to occasions when students are just allowed to write on a topic of their own choice. Analysing student writing allows teachers to observe which techniques from workshops have been appropriated into the students’ own repertoires of writing strategies.
This final representation of the Accelerated Literacy teaching cycle illustrates the development of literate resources across a lesson sequence. Over time, the common knowledge shared by all students and the teacher (labelled 'literate resources' in the diagram and underpinning the strategies) consists of all the low order literate orientation, high order literate orientation and transformations discussions over time as well as the spelling knowledge, the spelling practice, the joint reconstructed writing and joint construction writing work that has been carried out. This common knowledge also includes the knowledge gained from previous lessons and previous study texts. It is rich and interesting and provides a productive resource for writing. This shared understanding about the lesson goals and common purpose for writing is critical if the most marginalised students in the class are to experience success.
References
Cazden, C 2001, Classroom Discourse: The language of teaching and learning, Heinemann, New Hampshire


Wertsch, J 1985, Vygotsky and the social formation of mind, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts
This guide is to be used as a reference source by teachers as they implement the Accelerated Literacy Program after attending professional development sessions on the program. It describes each Accelerated Literacy strategy in turn, discussing preparation, the teaching practices that are appropriate, what should be taught and issues related to effective use of the strategy, and provides examples using selected texts.

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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