Practitioner Guide

The National Accelerated Literacy Program is jointly funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, and the Northern Territory Government through the Department of Education and Training, and supported by Charles Darwin University.

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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Working with individual students

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National Accelerated Literacy Program
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Introduction
The research that generated the early development of the Accelerated Literacy teaching sequence was conducted in a one-to-one teaching environment at the University of Canberra. In this situation, it was possible to monitor the response of individual students to the developing teaching strategies. Because parents were also involved in the teaching program, they too could see changes in their child’s approach to learning: in most cases, a rapid development of literacy skills.

Students who appeared unable to learn to read at more than a snail’s pace while their peers learned rapidly, suddenly made impressive progress. Their achievements were usually reflected by improvement in other areas of schooling and an increase in self-esteem. Parents also often noted improved behaviour at school and at home. The success of the program could be attributed to its supportive nature as well as a design that reduced stress levels while acknowledging students’ natural capabilities. From this early research, the theories and principles underlying the Accelerated Literacy teaching sequence were successfully brought together for practice in classroom settings. Therefore, the same sequence and strategies used in the classroom can be applied in a one-to-one teaching situation, where they can be tailored to meet the needs of the individual student.
Using this guide
Advantages of one-to-one teaching
Lists the advantages for both the student and the teacher

Target students
Explains which students will benefit from one-to-one teaching

Guidelines for teachers when teaching one-to-one
Provides guidance in adapting the Accelerated Literacy teaching strategies when teaching in a one-to-one context. Readers could enhance their appreciation of the examples provided by viewing the video clips referred to in the text.

Student one reading
Rosie’s walk
View a clip on the Practitioner Support DVD

Student two reading
The Mouse-Deer and the Crocodile
View a clip on the Practitioner Support DVD

Student three reading
The Barrumbi Kids
View a clip on the Practitioner Support DVD
The National Accelerated Literacy Program (NALP)
The National Accelerated Literacy Program (NALP) 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.
The culture of the classroom
The culture of the classroom

Assessment

One-to-one teaching allows the teacher to focus on particular difficulties encountered by the student by reinforcing the correct use of strategies while moving through the Accelerated Literacy teaching sequence.

The comprehensive testing program within Accelerated Literacy (which gives a measure of students’ reading levels at both an individual and a working level) has the added advantage of acting as a diagnostic tool. This is because the method of scoring for the tests was originally based on miscue analysis, a detailed form of analysis that highlights strategies used by each reader, showing how these strategies are used and thus enabling teachers to diagnose particular problems. Consequently, it is possible for the teacher to monitor a student’s ability to use productive strategies and to adjust teaching to maximise the effectiveness of these.

Pacing

One-to-one teaching also allows the teacher to pace the teaching sequence to suit the individual student, so that the student engages productively with the teacher at all times. This is particularly important when common knowledge of a text is being established, as the building of common knowledge is essential for preparing the student for a task. Effective preparation reduces stress, enabling the student to engage with the discourse in a more productive way and answer questions more successfully. This in itself has the effect of further reducing anxiety levels.

Cultural orientation

Much has been written about students’ acquisition of language and the connection between language and the understanding of how to use it. Initially, students learn a particular language within their own cultural community (Mercer, 2000). If cultural understandings and language differ vastly from that used in the classroom, difficulties and misunderstandings can easily arise. The disadvantaged are the students whose social and cultural positions and experiences do not accord with the experiences teachers expect students to bring to the classroom (Delpit, 1988). Where a mismatch is found between what they ‘bring from home’ and what school requires from them, students are often unable to understand the educational purpose of classroom tasks and are therefore excluded from participating effectively in lessons (Bennett, 2007). Therefore, explicit teaching should accommodate students who come from a cultural orientation that differs from that which predominates in schools. This needs to include the teaching of classroom ‘ground rules’ (Edwards & Mercer, 1987; Cowey, 2006) that are often bound up with the culture of school life and invisible to students who have not been prepared for the school environment.
Advantages of one-to-one teaching

**Student/teacher inter-subjectivity**

Mercer (2000) considers that ‘language provides us with a means for thinking together, for jointly creating knowledge and understanding’. However, he also warns against misunderstandings that can arise through the many ambiguities within the English language and the consequent risks we take in negotiation. To avoid such misunderstandings a high level of inter-subjectivity needs to be built between teacher and student, as occurs in the spiralling progression of literate orientation in the Accelerated Literacy teaching sequence. Where little inter-subjectivity is shared between teacher and student, difficulties quickly arise. In a one-to-one situation, it is possible for these issues and other particular misunderstandings of the individual student to be effectively assessed and addressed.

**Stress reduction**

A major problem for students with low literacy is stress and its effect on learning. Anxiety or stress can affect memory systems, causing an overload of information. Students who experience overload often resort to dysfunctional strategies that cause confusion and further stress. The consistent yet flexible teaching strategies within the Accelerated Literacy pedagogy are designed to minimise the chance of overload of information. In addition, the program’s monitoring procedures are also used as diagnostic tools, so students who are not using strategies effectively or who are struggling in class are soon identified. If subsequent misunderstandings are not addressed, the cycle of learning can be severely affected. However, short periods of one-to-one teaching can sort out misunderstandings, reaffirm important strategies and accelerate progress.

**Advantages for teachers**

There are also advantages for teachers who make or find time to teach the Accelerated Literacy strategies one-to-one. The teaching experience gives the teacher an opportunity to fine-tune their use of the strategies and explore the teaching sequence without overload or the distractions that often occur in a classroom situation. In addition, the teacher can observe at firsthand how a supportive methodology can reduce a student’s stress, giving the student an opportunity to learn to use language collaboratively to advance his or her literacy skills. For teachers new to the teaching sequence, it is a valuable and rewarding experience to see how a student with literacy difficulties responds to the pedagogy of Accelerated Literacy.
Target students
It is expected that students targeted by teachers for intensive one-to-one teaching will come under one of the following categories:

- Students new to the school and with no experience of Accelerated Literacy.
- Students who show little or no improvement in working levels.
- Students who misunderstand strategies or do not use them effectively.

Students who do not make progress may have difficulty tuning into the language of the classroom and therefore have little understanding of the expectations of the teacher. If this occurs, the resulting confusion and misunderstandings can compound feelings of stress, which leads to cognitive overload. Cognitive overload occurs when students have too much information to process and too little background knowledge into which they can integrate new information.

In the Accelerated Literacy classroom, students’ knowledge of a text increases over a series of lessons, through low order to high order literate orientation. Over this time, information is taken into long-term memory, from where it can be recalled. As the teaching sequence progresses, new information is added, expanding students’ understanding of the text. When teachers recap from a previous lesson, they reactivate information stored in long-term memory. This happens to varying degrees between individuals within a group every time a previous conversation is recalled (Mercer, 2000). Students experiencing difficulties, however, will recall less and become further confused if the new information makes no sense to them, thus compounding their problems.

Although the explicit and recursive nature of the Accelerated Literacy teaching program minimises these difficulties, there are many students who could benefit from one-to-one teaching where personal needs are addressed while all aspects of the teaching sequence are made explicit.

Clearly, all students benefit from positive feedback and from being given pointers that can accelerate their progress. Therefore, a two-to-three minute teaching opportunity after informal Accelerated Literacy testing of a student’s working level can offer even the best student valuable information and confirm positive strategies.

Students making little or no progress are usually the first to be chosen for a period of intensive one-to-one teaching. If a current classroom text is used to provide the basis for teaching in a one-to-one session, the teaching can also prepare a less confident student for work in class so he or she becomes more able to participate in lessons. For maximum benefit, the session should occur before the class lesson, possibly the previous day. If a number of sessions are required, working one-to-one for 10 to 15 mins approximately three times a week over a one or two week period, should assist the struggling student to take on positive strategies.
Guidelines for teachers when teaching one-to-one
A primary aim of Accelerated Literacy is to foster successful, independent learning through supportive and explicit teaching. This in turn builds confidence, allowing students to participate more actively in the learning process. After literate orientation, emerging independent readers should be able to monitor their own reading by using meaning and elements of grapho-phonic information to self-correct.

Strategies used by teachers implementing the Accelerated Literacy pedagogy one-to-one can be observed on the Practitioner Support DVD, which shows a teacher working with Student one (early years), Student two (Year 3/4) and Student three (Year 6). The examples given below come from transcripts of these lessons.

The principles behind one-to-one teaching remain the same whether the student is K-level or in high school. Discussion in these notes focuses on the teaching sequence up to and including spelling.

In one-to-one teaching, it is essential that the guidelines given below be followed if students are to work independently.

- Explain clearly to the student what you are going to ask them to do.
- Never ask the student to do something they cannot do. The student must be well prepared for the task.
- Where the task is to read, ensure that the student has been prepared for reading with thorough literate orientation. Even if this has been given in class, a re-orientation should be given as preparation for reading, except where reading is for a test.
- During reading, or when the student is completing a task, the teacher should sit beside and slightly behind the student.
- Let the student handle the book/reading material.
- Let the student turn the pages.
- During the student’s reading, do not respond to appeals for approval. Give no praise, not even a discreet nod, while the student is reading.
- Do not make eye contact while the student reads.
- Praise the student after the task is completed. Specific praise will reinforce positive behaviours (eg ‘I liked the way you went back and self-corrected this sentence when you knew it didn’t make sense.’)
- If a student experiences extreme difficulties and is unable to complete a task, it should be assumed that the preparation for the task was insufficient.
Working with a beginning reader or non-reader

The session begins with an informal Working Level (WL) test using the book or passage worked on in class.

The teacher gives a literate re-orientation before the student is asked to read. Using the phrase ‘Do you remember...?’ can prompt the student to recall characters and events.

In the Accelerated Literacy program, the beginning reader at first relies heavily on meaning and memory to ‘read’. As the reader becomes familiar with the text, she or he is more able to take note of features of individual words, such as first letters. This can occur when memory of the text becomes automatic. Once automaticity is achieved, stress levels are reduced, allowing space in short-term memory to be freed up for new information to be absorbed. At this early stage, memory of text and, most importantly, its associated meanings can be exploited. Literate orientation teaches students much about a text, including its explicit and implied meanings and how to take part in discussions concerning these meanings. This process builds common understandings (or inter-subjectivity) between all participants in the classroom, or between teacher and student in a one-to-one situation.

Student one ‘reading’ Rosie’s Walk

Student one clearly uses her memory to ‘read’ the text. She is word-perfect. The teacher asks her to use her finger to point to the words. Student one does this at first, demonstrating her extremely fragile understanding of one-to-one correspondence. Then, instead of pointing, she looks only at the illustrations to remind herself of the words in the text. The teacher, not wanting to interrupt and aware that Student one is focused on meaning, allows this to continue for two more pages. However, because the teacher wanted another check on Student one’s one-to-one correspondence, and knew the final page has a few more words, she then asked Student one to use her finger again. Apart from the last word on that page, all words were of one syllable. This may have helped Student one point to the right words as she ‘read’.

During her reading, Student one appeals to the teacher for approval. Because of this persistent behaviour, it can be assumed that the people who normally listen to Student one read respond with signs of approval. These signs, however small and well meaning, are enough to provide a distraction for the student. The student is showing that she is at least as keen to gain approval as she is to ‘read’. The teacher’s response is to ignore the appeals, to look only at the text and to offer praise when the reading task is finished.
Use of transformations to teach word recognition, one-to-one correspondence

The beginning or struggling reader who, like Student one, relies on illustrations and memory of the text to ‘read’, provides the teacher with a resource that can be exploited. An older student might be similarly familiar with two or three sentences from a much longer text or extract. Text from a literate source ‘read’ in this way, where the student is also familiar with context and language associated with the context through previous literate orientation, can be used to teach more about the construction of sentences and features of words including phonetic knowledge.

In Student one’s case, a good class low order literate orientation would already have provided her with a deep understanding of Rosie’s Walk and the context of the story. As well as knowing exactly where Rosie went, the low order orientation would have made her aware of the motives and intentions of the fox and the risks unknowingly taken by Rosie on her pre-dinner walk.

At this stage, it is likely that Student one would have a good understanding of the language used by the teacher when the class teacher and students explored the meanings in the story. She may also have begun to take on some of that language for herself. In this way, the well-known text became a resource within a meaningful context that could be used to teach Student one word recognition, one-to-one correspondence and features of words, especially knowledge of first letters. The ideal tool for such teaching is the transformations.

Guidelines for teaching transformations in one-to-one situations

- The student must be able to read the transformations and understand the meaning and the context.
- The text must be close to the student and clearly visible. A book should be open at the page showing the transformations.
- The student must be able to check answers/words from the familiar context. At the same time, the teacher must be able to monitor the support required by the student.
- Give the student time and space to answer your questions.
- Let the student turn the pages.
- During the student’s reading, do not respond to appeals for approval.
- Do not make eye contact while the student reads.
- Remember that unnecessary praise is an interruption.
Example

Here Student one and the teacher are working on word recognition and one-to-one correspondence using the first sentence of Rosie’s Walk (ie Rosie the hen went for a walk). Because Student one knows the first sentence really well, the teacher doesn’t ask her to read it again, but instead to read the first and last words. This prepares Student one for the next task.

T: Now, if we come back to this page, do you know what this word is? (Points to first word)
S: Rosie
T: How about that one? (Points to last word)
S: Walk
T: Aah! Now, I’ve got these words from that page on these cards. I’ll turn them over and see if you know them.

Note the student knew the words in context and that the teacher did not praise excessively. Student one gave her answers with great confidence, so did not need to seek reassurance.

Continuing work on word recognition and one-to-one correspondence, the teacher produced the cards with single words from that first sentence. The first card she gave Student one was Rosie. Student one knew this word immediately. The second card was for. Expecting the second word in the sentence, Student one looked at it quickly and said the, not sounding very convinced. The teacher indicated the sentence in the book and suggested Student one match the word on the card with the appropriate word in the sentence. She had to give Student one very explicit instructions. The following extract shows how Student one discovered that she could work out the word for herself – a small step towards becoming an independent learner.

T: Well, can you see it along here? (Indicates open book)
S: Rosie the ... (Hesitates)
T: Can you see it on here? (Points to sentence in book)
S: (Points to words in book) Rosie the ... (Looks confused, realising that ‘the’ and ‘for’ don’t match)
T: It doesn’t look like that does it? (Pointing to ‘for’ on card and ‘the’ in book) Keep going then ... Rosie the ...
S: Hen went for a walk.
T: So which one was it? (Points to words) Rosie the hen went for a walk.
S: (Points to ‘for’ in the book)
T: OK, so what’s that word? (Indicating the card)
S: Rosie the hen went for
T: Good work. You’ve got two now. What about this one?
S: Rosie the (Said with emphasis and confidence, smiles broadly, does not appeal)
T: Oh, you are just so good.
Once Student one understood how to ‘play the game’, she worked out the words ‘walk’, ‘went’ and ‘a’, each time reading the sentence up to and including the word.

The last card, ‘hen’, confused her. She tried the (possibly noting letters h and e), then went (possibly noting e & n), then in desperation tried for. The teacher did not say, ‘No’ or indicate that Student one was giving wrong answers. She responded by modelling how student one could work out the answer,

T: You watch again while I read it. (Points to words in book) Rosie the hen went for a walk. (Points to the ‘hen’ card)
S: It’s that one. (Points to ‘hen’ in the book)
T: Yes, now I wonder what that one is.
S: Rosie the hen.
T: Terrific. You are so clever.

With the support of the sentence in the book, Student one was able to work out words for herself. The teacher gave her procedural support where necessary, but did not tell Student one the answers. Student one gained confidence during the short session. She moved on from checking the teacher’s facial reactions to see if answers were correct, to confidently solving her own problems.

Planning the next session:

In a follow-up session, the transformations should be revisited. Again, the book should be open at the relevant page. After reading the sentence, Student one could be asked to cut off Rosie’s name, what kind of bird/animal she was and what she did. As in class, a word could be turned over and worked out. Attention could then be drawn to first letters and their sound in the word. Some of this work may involve revising and confirming class activities, but the extra teaching and practice will help Student one transfer information into her long-term memory. Playing ‘your pile, my pile’ after this, Student one may well recognise some words without checking the book. She could arrange the words back into the sentence while the teacher notes how much support she needs from the sentence in the book.

These sessions, which could take as little as five to six minutes, would reinforce strategies taught in class, overcome any misunderstandings and give the young student added confidence. The great advantage of the one-to-one situation is that the teaching can directly address each student’s particular needs.
Guidelines for teachers

Working with a low-achieving student

WL tests identify some students who, for a variety of reasons, appear to be failing to respond to class teaching. However, because of the recursive nature of the Accelerated Literacy teaching sequence, these students invariably take on more information than they realise. The information may not be easily accessible and the situation can easily be exacerbated by stress caused by cognitive overload. Students under this level of stress may present as anxious and withdrawn or may give up and become disruptive. Frequently, it is face-saving to not try at all rather than try and fail. However, this situation should not occur when the supportive teaching sequence of Accelerated Literacy is used effectively.

Low order literate orientation

For students who are experiencing difficulties in the classroom, one-to-one teaching can reactivate stored knowledge while providing a supportive environment that provides no threat and therefore reduces stress levels. Where the text has been taught in class over a series of lessons, low order literate orientation should present information, recapping necessary knowledge. Questions that involve providing information and asking the student if it is correct will tap into any prior knowledge that student has assimilated and can be shared with the teacher, eg ‘That mouse-deer was very tricky, wasn’t she?’.

Preformulated questions should be structured to remind the student of the language necessary to convey meanings associated with the text. The student’s answer should be followed by a reconceptualisation that confirms, expands or elaborates where appropriate and helps the student retain the language, conveying the information to long-term memory.

One such student, Student two, can be seen on the DVD working with the teacher. The following discussion is linked to that session. At the beginning of the videoed session, Student two seemed shy, retiring and very stressed. She appeared either reluctant or unable to participate. However, over the course of the one-to-one session, she made it clear that she knew more than might have been expected. The extended low order re-orientation provided her with access to the appropriate discourse, giving her the opportunity to participate in the dialogue, even though her answers at this stage were very brief.

Example

The video extracts have been chosen to show the level of orientation needed to engage Student two even though this text had been taught in the classroom over a number of lessons.
Student two’s answers to the teacher’s questions (a low order literate orientation on *The Mouse-Deer and the Crocodile*) were all very brief, giving no real indication of how well she understood the text. In providing some extended reconceptualisations, the teacher gave Student two not only an explanation, but models of the language that carried the appropriate meanings. Sharing the meaning of language patterns and structures (such as ‘One hot afternoon’) laid the foundation for high order literate orientation.

The teacher began this session by outlining the task and reassuring Student two. As promised, the questions had accessible answers. The use of ‘Do you remember...?’ gave the student the chance to accept that there were things she didn’t remember (in which case, the teacher would provide an answer).

**T:** So, what I want to do this afternoon is to do some reading of this book with you. Will you do that for me? It’s OK, I’ll only ask you to do things you can do. (Sensing student’s stress) OK, nothing hard. OK, do you remember what this book is called?

**S:** The Mouse-Deer and the Crocodile.

**T:** That’s right, yes. That Mouse-Deer was very tricky, wasn’t she? Do you remember what she’s doing in this picture? What’s she doing?

**S:** Drinking water.

**T:** Oh that’s right.

It is expected that Student two’s answers will be very short. The teacher expands answers to bring Student two into the conversation, reminding her what she already knows. This gives Student two access to the language needed for the sharing of common knowledge in this context. Note in the extract that follows that, while shared understandings are being established, the teacher is doing most of the talking.

The ‘why’ question that follows requires an explanation that the teacher does not expect Student two to supply, so after a very brief pause she answers it herself, providing a reconceptualisation that explains why the mouse-deer is drinking. (‘It’s a hot afternoon, isn’t it? And she gets thirsty and she goes to get a drink of water.’) Importantly, this reconceptualisation also gives Student two exposure to language choices that she might use on a future occasion.

This information would have been previously given by the class teacher to Student two during low level literate orientation. If the teacher was working with a student who had not seen the book before, the first session would start from the very beginning of the teaching sequence and discussion would include preformulated questions. The ‘hot afternoon’ would have formed the basis of a preformulation that could have been said in this way:
In this part of Indonesia where the little mouse-deer lives, it’s often very hot. Like on a hot day here the morning might be cooler, but in the afternoon when the sun is shining strongly it can be very hot. So on this afternoon when the little mouse-deer was feeling very hot and thirsty, she went down to the river. Why did she go there? Can you see her in the picture?

Student two confirmed she already had this knowledge by answering that the mouse-deer was drinking water. So after the teacher had given a reconceptualisation, she asked Student two a safe question, ‘And who’s waiting in the water?’ This was followed by more rhetorical questioning, allowing the teacher to bring in expressions from the text (most notably lunged forward).

T: Oh that’s right. Why does she want to do that? It’s a hot afternoon, isn’t it? And she gets thirsty and she goes to get a drink of water. And who’s waiting in the water?

S: Crocodile.

T: And does she see him? Does she see the crocodile? No? Why not? Do you remember why not? She was looking the wrong way, wasn’t she? And then – oh no, look – what happened? What happened? (Short pause) What did the crocodile do? (Short pause) The crocodile lunged forward and what did he catch?

S: Foot.

T: That’s right. The mouse-deer’s foot. Look, she looks a bit surprised, but she’s not calling out, is she? But she’s not saying, ‘Oh, oh, oh. Help, help, help’, is she? She’s just trying not to look as if anything has happened. And her foot is hurting more and more, more and more. And she pretends that the crocodile has got a root of the mangroves, doesn’t she? (That he) hasn’t got her foot at all. And the crocodile is thinking, ‘Something’s wrong here, Mouse-Deer wouldn’t laugh if her foot was in my mouth. I must have made a mistake, but she is still standing beside me. I can catch her now.’ So what does he do?

S: Opens his mouth.

T: And what does she do when he opens his mouth? (Short pause) What does the mouse-deer do?

S: Ran.

T: Well done. Good work. She goes as fast as she can. And isn’t the crocodile cross? He’s as cross as anything. And he had to swim away because he knew he had been tricked, hadn’t he? Look how fast she is running away. She’s lucky, isn’t she, to be alive.
The long explanation the teacher gave after Student two answered ‘foot’ most likely explained a situation that was familiar to Student two. However, the teacher’s use of language choices that explained and confirmed the context enabled Student two to engage with meaning at a higher level both at this stage and later when the text was read to her again. In this way, shared understandings were established and developed and became the basis of further teaching (Edwards & Mercer, 1987).

This level of low order literate orientation (or re-orientation) is especially necessary when the student is working on a text above his or her independent reading level. The next step is to read the text to the student. Anxious students like this student with severe reading difficulties can be given an extra level of support by being asked to highlight words or phrases following further questioning. During subsequent reading, the student will read the highlighted parts while the teacher reads the rest.

Shared reading of the text

Following low order orientation, the teacher should read the text to the student. In the video, the teacher asked Student two to move the strip for her during the reading. Student two needed some assistance, which showed the difficulty she had following the print during a fluent reading.

Realising that Student two was still not sufficiently prepared for reading, the teacher had prepared a separate typed page of the text to use for highlighting. The book was kept open on the desk.

To diminish stress levels in a one-to-one situation that might otherwise seem threatening to the student, the discussion should be conducted in a co-operative way. This can be achieved by using terms such as, ‘Would you help me ...?’, ‘Do you remember ...?’ After giving information, use ‘Isn’t it?’ and ‘Didn’t she?’

Notice for example, the carefully graded questions the teacher asked Student two about the mouse-deer: ‘What did she forget to do? She forgot to look for something, didn’t she?’

In addition, all tasks should be set up so that they are achievable by the student, but the tasks must still have an element of challenge.
Guidelines for using high lighting prior to shared reading

- Have a typed copy of the text and a strip.
- The teacher should read the introductory sentence or sentences to set the context using a strip.
- When asking a question, the teacher should hold the strip over the appropriate line to direct the student’s gaze.
- Early questions should ask ‘who’ or ‘where’ and possibly ‘when’. ‘How’ questions are considered more difficult, so usually need more careful consideration.
- If the preparation for reading needs a lot of support, use a shorter section of the text.
- The student’s answer should be acknowledged, even if the teacher considers it wrong. In this case, an explanation can be given for the teacher’s interpretation.
- When framing questions, include the language of the text in the preformulation, even if the student is subsequently only asked to underline one or two words.
- Where a one-word answer is given and there is another word or words next to and associated with the answer, say the word and ask the student to underline it too.

Examples

Examples of each of these points can be observed in the video where Student two highlights words before sharing the reading with the teacher. Below are examples illustrating each of the last three points.

Example 1: acknowledging an answer and redirecting the focus.

T: And where did the mouse-deer go to get a drink?
S: To the river.
T: And where does it say to the river? Can you see? (No response) Where’s the word that says river? (Pause) Well done. That starts with ‘r’. That says ‘roots’. You watch my finger: went to the ....'
S: (Points to ‘river’ and underlines it)
Example 2: using language of the text when preforming a ‘how’ question. This question is also a challenge for Student two, who needs to be shown a strategy to find the word.

T: Now, do you remember there are all these tangled roots of trees, aren’t there? And how does she have to go through them? (Points to sentence in the book) She has to go very ....

S: Carefully

T: Well done. Can you see which word says ‘carefully’? (Long pause) You watch my finger, She stepped carefully between the tangled roots of lots of trees to get to the water.

S: (Finds the word and underlines it)

Example 3: adding an associated word.

T: And what did the crocodile catch her by?

S: By the foot.

T: OK, can you see where it says ‘one foot’? Good work.

During the shared reading Student two read ‘one foot’ correctly. The shared reading gave her the chance to participate in a reading task which would otherwise have been way beyond her capabilities. The thorough preparation given through low order literate orientation, where she worked within Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development (ZPD), meant she could be actively involved in processing the meaning of the text. Therefore, she was able to use her cognitive abilities during the shared reading. This would not have been possible if she had been working on a simple reader.

Transformations

Once a struggling reader has an understanding of, and familiarity with, a text, it can be used as a resource to teach about language and important word recognition skills. Transformations is a powerful tool and a vital one in the Accelerated Literacy teaching sequence. This is particularly so in a one-to-one situation where the student has a continuous physical connection with the transformations. Consequently, the guidance and support offered by the teacher becomes most important.

It is essential in the one-to-one situation that the teacher not only connects with but extends the student, while encouraging independent reading. A key factor is the degree to which the student is prepared for the task. This always begins with the earlier orientation when explicit building and sharing of common knowledge occurs. The resulting conversations give the student access to the language and understandings associated with the context of the task. Work on a transformations from a familiar context allows the student to show and tell back information given by the teacher on an earlier occasion. This is illustrated in the examples taken from the video showing Student two working with transformations.
Guidelines for working with transformations

- Have the book open at the page that includes the transformations so that it is visible to the student.
- Prepare the student for the task. Ask the student to read the transformations before working with it.
- Ask questions which result in the transformations being cut up into ‘chunks’ of meaning. Let the student cut transformations and handle pieces of card when working with them.
- With the student’s eyes shut, turn over a card. Ask the student what is written on the turned card. The student can work out the answer by reading up to the words on the card. After the student makes a prediction, turn the card back and read to check the words on the card.
- After cutting into single words, repeat the above activity, turning over one word at a time. To draw attention to the meaning, explain why a word is important in the sentence. With selected words, ask student to explain how she or he identified the word. Encourage identification and sound of the first letter.
- Spread out words in random order and ask the student to reassemble the sentence. Ask student to read the sentence when this is done. The student to self-correct where necessary.
- Ask the student to reread the sentence each time it is reassembled.
- Finish with ‘Your pile, my pile’. The student can work out a word from looking at the text if necessary.

Example
Transformations from The Mouse-Deer and the Crocodile

Preparation
This example shows how Student two was prepared for each of the transformations tasks. By this stage, her body language had changed. She appeared less stressed and more willing and able to participate in the session. This was a direct result of her being able to draw on the support and information offered to her during the session.

The sentence the teacher chose for a transformations was:

*One hot afternoon the mouse-deer went to the river to drink.*
During the shared reading, Student two had read the words *mouse-deer, river* and *drink*. So when introducing Student two to the sentence they were to work with, the teacher indicated the sentence in the text and included in her introduction the fact that it was a ‘hot afternoon’.

**T:** So look, this is the bit about the hot afternoon. OK, so I’m going to write this bit here. You watch me write it.

This reminder offered Student two another level of support for when she was asked to read the sentence. She spontaneously offered ‘hot afternoon the mouse-deer’, showing what she could read, while the teacher continued to write the words on the card.

Because student two had trouble with *went*, the teacher wrote and said that word. She continued to support Student two with the remainder of the sentence by using questioning techniques. When the sentence was written, Student two was asked to read it and point to the words. She did this correctly. However, because at this stage her word recognition skills were fragile, Student two had to rely to a large extent on meaning and her memory to read the sentence accurately.

**First cutting of transformations**
The questions given to students to direct them where to initially cut the card should keep a focus on meaning and the language to express those meanings. The supportive tone of the questions encourages the student and leads to co-operation. The extract below shows how the teacher asked her first questions. Note how she reminds Student two of the word *afternoon* and includes what it means and its significance.

**T:** What was the day like? What was the afternoon like? It was ...  
(Begins to read) One ... 

**S:** Hot.  

**T:** Afternoon. Are you going to cut off *hot*? You’d be very thirsty on a hot afternoon, wouldn’t you? Would you cut off *afternoon*, as that tells us the time of day. It wasn’t in the morning, it wasn’t when it was cool. It was when it was very hot. Now, who was it who needed the drink?  

**S:** Mouse-deer.  

**T:** OK, can you cut off the *mouse-deer*?

The last question showed that the two words *the* and *mouse-deer* went together. Similarly, ‘to the river’ go together. The three words tell us where the mouse-deer went. As Student two was still giving one-word answers, the reconceptualisation the teacher gave explaining the significance of afternoon, was another opportunity to give Student two not only information, but the language that she could adopt. Right through the Accelerated Literacy teaching sequence, there are opportunities for this kind of scaffolding of language and meaning.
After this discussion the sentence was cut as shown:

One / hot / afternoon / the mouse-deer / went / to the river / to drink / . / 

Before working on the sentence, Student two was asked to read it again. She read it fluently.

Prediction exercise
When Student two was working out which words or phrases had been turned over, she read from the beginning of the sentence. This meant she was repeatedly reading the sentence and practising a self-correction strategy.

Sentence in single words
For the next step, Student two was asked to cut up all the words. With the sentence intact, she was asked to work out which single word had been turned over. When she had successfully worked out the word to, the teacher asked what the word started with. Student two was able to give the sound of t. In drawing her attention to the first letter, the teacher showed her a way to identify a word and provided a bridge to later spelling activities.

Reconstructing the sentence
When all the cards were scattered and Student two was asked to reassemble the sentence, she quickly ordered the first five words but then became uncertain. Through rereading, she finally worked out the order without looking at the text. She was then asked to read the sentence yet again to make sure it was correct. The teacher was then able to offer Student two positive and constructive praise.

T: Well done. Do you know what I liked about what you did? Because you had left went out, hadn’t you? Then you went right back and you read up to the word that you needed and then you found it and put it in the right place, didn’t you? That was very clever, very good reading. You checked it beautifully. You did a very good job. That was a hard thing to do.

Your pile, my pile
The teacher put all the cards in a pile in front of Student two. She turned them over one at a time and read all the words in random order correctly. After reading a card, she placed it in an appropriate place so that the sentence was reformed. Now that Student two was confident in recognising these words, she was ready to work on improving her grapho-phonic skills by chunking words from this familiar sentence.
Spelling

In the Accelerated Literacy teaching sequence, spelling is only taught on words that students know well from a familiar context. Therefore, the students can read the words aloud with a good understanding of the meaning of each word and the meanings associated with its context. The strategies used to teach spelling also teach how words are constructed and provide explicit instruction about the grapho-phonic elements. Students who have already been taught phonics, but have not been successful in learning to read because of difficulty in synthesising so much information, respond readily to the Accelerated Literacy approach.

In a one-to-one situation, the individual student’s attention can more readily be focused on the spelling words and strategies. This is particularly valuable because of the importance of training the visual memory of words and their constituent parts when teaching spelling and phonics. Words can be worked through at a suitable pace, with the teacher repeating and confirming steps where necessary. This is the stage when serious attention is paid to teaching grapho-phonic information.

Guidelines for teaching spelling

- Choose words for spelling from the transformations that contain features the student needs to learn (e.g. simple blends, word endings, vowel patterns). Because words invariably contain more than one of these, two or more can be taught in a single session.
- Ask the student to read the chosen word. If there is any difficulty, the student can return to the sentence in the text. It is important that the student knows the word well and can read it confidently. The teacher might repeat the word saying it relatively slowly.
- Segment the word into suitable ‘chunks’ following Accelerated Literacy spelling strategies. Ask the student to say the chunks while pointing to each part. For extra support, do this yourself then ask the student to repeat the process. It is important that the student looks closely at the cards while saying the sound that each part represents to form a visual memory.
- Show the first part of the word to the student and indicate what it represents (e.g. to support Student two, the teacher says, ‘See what makes the ‘dr’: the d and the r.’) Remove the card and ask the student to write that part. After it is written ask, ‘What does that say?’ Turn over the card, showing that chunk so that the student can check it is written correctly. This is yet another chance to confirm visual memory.
- Repeat this procedure with each part of the cut word. Most chunks should be re-written and re-checked more than once to help commit patterns within words to memory.
Finally, with the whole word displayed, ask the student to say and point to each part. Talk through any potential problems to alert the visual memory before removing the word and asking the student to say each part while writing it. Initially, students find saying each part difficult because of potential overload so, as with Student two, it is to be encouraged but not insisted upon when beginning to teach the spelling strategies.

Display the word and ask the student to check his or her spelling with each chunk as well as the whole word. Repeating the writing practice is recommended according to need.

After working on spelling from a transformations, remind the student of the context by asking him or her to reread the sentence. Drawing attention to words in the sentence used for spelling will encourage the grapho-phonetic awareness needed for decoding.

In a later session, teacher and student could share the writing of the transformations containing the spelling words. The writing should be prompted by the teacher talking through the meaning of the sentence. (eg ‘I’m going to write when this happened – One afternoon – and will ask you to write what kind of afternoon it was. Let’s see how this is written in the sentence, One….’ Then say: ‘I’ll write how it starts - One. Now you write the kind of afternoon.’)

Example:

Examples given below are from the final section of the teacher’s session with Student two. This part of the session (which took 10 mins) reaffirmed some of Student two’s fragile phonic knowledge and gave her greater confidence in knowing how to look at words and letter patterns. In order for her to make lasting progress and commit strategies and information to long-term memory, Student two would benefit from a cycle of revision and extension over a number of one-to-one sessions.
Reading and ‘chunking’ a word
The teacher chose the word *drink* as the first spelling word. As well as being an important word in the sentence, it had simple phonetic elements (including a blend) and could be divided into just two chunks. The teacher’s first step was to ask Student two to read the word, which she did readily. Next, the teacher told Student two she was going to cut the word into two parts before asking Student two, ‘Do you know what they say?’ Although Student two did not give the answer sought, she did answer the question. Note how the teacher worked from Student two’s answer in a very positive way and waited for her when she didn’t answer immediately. Praise is left until the sub-task is finished.

T: I’m going to cut the word into two pieces, OK? Do you know what they say?  
S: Drink.  
T: This bit is dr and this bit’s...?  
S: (Pause) Ink.  
T: Yes. Dr. Ink (Pointing to each). Can you say them for me and put your finger under?  
S: Dr. Ink. (pointing to each).

Explaining a blend

T: (Picks up dr card) OK, see what makes the dr – the d and r. Can you do that bit? You practise writing that. (Student two writes) OK, what does it say? What does the d and r go together to make?  
S: Dr.  
T: Good work. (Holds up card for comparison) You got it right, didn’t you? Well done.

The explicit explanation given for ‘dr’ shows Student two how the letters connect and make the sound that begins the word *drink*. By encouraging Student two to look closely at the blend before writing and to look closely again when checking her writing, the teacher focused her on the visual representation. A similar approach was used with ‘ink’, with the teacher enunciating the three sounds as she said this.

Writing the whole word

T: Now I want you to write the whole word. But I want you to say dr ink as you write each bit, OK? Do you know how to do it? OK, say its two parts. You point to the two parts.  
S: Dr ink. (Then writes ‘drink’ but does not say anything)

The final step is for Student two to check what she wrote against the two parts of the word on the card.
Spelling ‘river’
Because Student two managed this well, the teacher moved on to the second word, *river*, using a similar procedure. She cut off ‘er’ first, and rehearsed looking at and saying the two chunks with Student two.

They looked closely at ‘riv’, discussed the three letters and sounds. Student two hesitated after writing ‘r’ but completed the chunk so the teacher asked her to write it again and say what she had written before moving on to ‘er’, which she wrote easily.

Writing and checking the word
Because Student two’s phonetic knowledge was very uncertain, she still needed careful support. After she had practised both chunks, the teacher asked her to write the whole word, but only after looking carefully at both parts of the word. After writing the word, Student two went through the checking process before writing the word again (as shown in the transcript below). Note the number of times Student two is asked to look at the word or chunks.

T: Now, do you think you can write riv – er (pointing to cards)? Say the bits to me that you are going to write.
S: (Looks at cards as the teacher points) Riv – er.
T: You say them as you write.
S: (Writes but does not speak)
T: Does it look right? Does it look OK?
S: (Shakes her head)
T: Well you point to the bits and see if you’ve got them.
S: Riv – er (Doesn’t point)
T: (Pointing) Have you got the riv? Is it there? Let’s see. (Turns over card and puts it underneath R’s writing) Is it there?
S: (Nods)
T: Have you got the er? (Puts er card under R’s writing)
S: (Nods)
T: Well you’ve written *river*, haven’t you? Well done. Well rub it off and have another go.

Student two needed some further support on her second attempt to write ‘river’. Because she was not integrating sound with visual memory satisfactorily, she relied mostly on visual memory so there was a long pause after writing ‘ri’. Finally, she completed the word and could remember the sounds when asked what she had written. She had a similar problem when re-writing *drink*. 
The teacher then models what Student two should do.

**W:** I’ll show you something. When I write the words – you listen – I say as I write it. I go – are you watching? (Writing) Dr – ink. OK, as I write it. That helps me remember. And when I write river, I go – r–iv – er. (Rubs it off) So can you write river and say the bits as you write it? Can you say it?

As mentioned earlier, many students initially have difficulty saying the chunks while writing. Often this is because they are saying the letter names rather than the sounds, and putting stress on short-term memory. If the student also has to give attention to formation of letters when writing, another level of stress and possible overload is likely to interfere with the spelling process. Because saying the sounds of chunks in words while writing is such an important step in the teaching of phonics, another level of support can be given by sharing the writing of a word. For example, the teacher could say and write the first chunk, ‘riv’, and the student say and write ‘er’. The process is then repeated with the student writing and saying the first chunk, the teacher the second. Finally, ask the student to write and say both chunks.

**Student three – a further example**

This short video clip is taken from a longer session with Student three, a Year 6 student who had been participating in Accelerated Literacy classes. In that time, his Individual Level (IL) scores for reading remained at 0%. The aim of the individual session, of which this clip is part, was to determine the misunderstanding about how to read that was responsible for Student three’s lack of progress.

Earlier in the session, it became obvious that Student three was attempting to memorise the study text and thought this strategy constituted the task of ‘reading’. He had no reliable strategies for decoding words that he could apply to even a text that he had been taught about. Despite having had literate orientation on the text, he could not use the meaning of the text gained from this strategy to assist decoding.
In the video clip we see the teacher working with Student three on words from a part of the study text that reads, It’s early Dry season. The rain is gone. The skies are blue. The grass is yellow and dry (The Barrumbi Kids by Leonie Norrington). Following transformations on this passage, the teacher took the words ‘rain’, ‘skies’ and ‘grass’ to teach for spelling. This late in the lesson, student three was familiar with these words. The teacher took each word and ‘chunked’ it into letter patterns as preparation for spelling.

It quickly became obvious that Student three could not take a word like ‘rain’, see it chunked into r–ain, and say it in those two chunks. In other words, his phonemic awareness was limited and, as a result, when he looked at a word he saw no patterns that could help him analyse the word. The spelling part of every Accelerated Literacy lesson, therefore, had failed to connect with him as an educational activity. It had become a ritual that he went through, writing symbols on a whiteboard, without realising that there was an educational purpose behind this exercise and that it related in any way to his reading. The spelling strategy had had none of its intended outcomes for this student.

Another interesting aspect about Student three’s word analysis skills appears on the video clip when he is asked how he knows which word says ‘skies’. In response he pointed to the final ‘s’. While this response could have other interpretations, one interpretation is that he does not look at words from left to right reliably.

As a result of noticing that Student three looked at the last letter of a word first to identify it and could not reliably segment a word into onset and rhyme patterns, the teacher worked on showing him how to use these skills on the three words she had chosen. The video clip demonstrates his developing ability to look at these three words in useful letter pattern chunks. Following this exercise, it could not be assumed that he had completely mastered this skill without further practice. For example, his teacher, during spelling, would need to check that he was carrying out the task efficiently.
Steps for carrying out an assessment of a student’s ability to chunk words

- Take a transformation from a familiar passage of text and work through it again with the individual student.
- Have the student read the transformations.
- Cut it into phrases, then into individual words.
- Gather the words into a pile, shuffle them, then ask the student to turn them over one at a time and read each word to you (as per the game ‘Your pile, my pile’).
- Where the student needs help with a word, ask him or her to identify it in the original text and read up to it. Alternatively, read up to the word for the student.
- Take about three of the words the student could read easily ‘out of context’ and use these for spelling, according to need.
- Cut the first one into its spelling patterns and ask the student to say it in its letter pattern chunks (eg r/ain). The student would say r – ain.
- Ask the student to practise writing each part of the word, then put the parts of the word together and write it while saying each chunk. Do this without the model being visible. The student needs to ‘see’ the word mentally.
- A final activity could be to see if the student could use the ‘chunk’ to decode other words, (eg p/ain, un/g/ain/ly).
- Also carry out these activities in class, with explanations as to why they are important and helpful.

Towards writing

Early negotiating and sharing of the meaning of language patterns such as One hot afternoon lays the foundation for subsequent high order literate orientation where preparation for writing is intensified. A knowledge and understanding of patterns and structures of literate language gained through explicit negotiated talk, together with an ability to write the words carrying those meanings through use of effective spelling strategies, gives the student the tools needed to share in a joint construction of text.

In a one-to-one situation, joint construction of single transformations by teacher and student can provide a bridge for the student to participate more effectively in jointly constructed class writing. Through the supportive mentoring process that is achieved using the Accelerated Literacy strategies, ways of thinking about and using language are shared and established as principled knowledge (Edwards & Mercer, 1987), lifting the student’s performance and literacy skills within his or her zone of proximal development.


Graetz, M 2000, *The Mouse-Deer and the Crocodile*


Practitioner Guide

This guide illustrates how the principles that underpin Accelerated Literacy pedagogy in classrooms can be applied equally effectively to teaching individual students in a one-to-one context.

The guide:
- provides advice on strategies to suit both beginning readers and low achieving students
- describes many examples of the strategies in practice (which may also be viewed on the available supporting DVD)
- lists the advantages for both the student and the teacher
- explains which students will benefit from one-to-one teaching.

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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