

Key Characteristics of Effective Literacy Teaching P-6

Differentiating support for all students



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Introduction

The international evidence-base has reached consensus about the significant influence teachers have in the classroom and the knowledge and the skill base required to teach all students well. In order to improve teacher practice, teachers must not only understand what it looks like to improve in different domains of learning but they must also believe they are capable of improving their practice. (e⁵ Instructional Model, DEECD, 2009)

Students within each class present their teachers with a wide range of literacy experiences, knowledge and skills. This provides a significant challenge as teachers need to ensure that all students are provided with the knowledge and skills to continually improve their literacy.

International research indicates that to respond effectively to the diversity of student learning needs and aspirations at all stages of learning, teachers need to consider systematically 'two phases of teaching':

- The **first** phase—quality differentiated classroom teaching for all students.
- The **second** phase—additional short-term intervention for students not achieving the expected level in literacy in order to accelerate their learning.

The Key Characteristics of Effective Literacy Teaching P-6 specifies the nature of first phase high quality differentiated classroom teaching for all students. These characteristics were informed by research and developed through consultation with classroom practitioners, literacy experts, and regional personnel.

This document uses the Victorian Essential Learning Standards as the core framework that all teachers should use to inform literacy development. The document also includes links to relevant online learning and teaching resources. The Key Characteristics of Effective Literacy from P–10 recognises that student literacy learning is a continuum from Years Prep to 10 and different students develop at different rates. The VELS standards enable teachers, schools and parents to form a clear picture of student progress throughout the stages of learning from Years Prep to 10.

This resource can be used by teachers, coaches and school leaders to identify:

- **Teacher knowledge**—outlines disciplinary and pedagogical content knowledge that teachers require including VELS English and Communication domains, ESL Standards, English Developmental Continuum P-10, ESL Developmental Continuum P–10, Literacy Professional Learning Resource, Language Support Program, Early Years Learning and Developmental Framework and advice on literacy learning concepts and theory, and information on particular cohorts of students.
- **Literacy focus**—advice on essential knowledge and skills that teachers need to focus on.
- **Assessment**—advice on key assessments and their timing to inform teaching including English Online Interview, Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement, VCAA Adaptive and Progress Tests.
- **Planning and instruction**—advice on organisational structures, recommended teaching strategies and text selection. This section also refers to the e⁵ Instructional Model which provides a framework to support differentiated, purposeful teaching for literacy.

The document uses this structure for the Key Characteristics of: Effective Literacy Teaching P-6

- Prep
- Years 1 and 2
- Years 3 and 4
- Years 5 and 6

In a differentiated classroom, the teacher proactively plans and carries out varied approaches to content, process, and product in anticipation of and response to student differences in readiness, interest, and learning needs. (e⁵ Instructional Model, DEECD, 2009)

Selected Readings

[Literacy Professional Learning Resource](#)

provides support and guidelines for effective practice for classroom teachers and school leaders as recommended in Literacy Teaching and Learning in Victorian Schools Paper No. 9 Part A (August 2006).

[Literacy Teaching and Learning in Victorian Schools](#) and [Evidence-based research for expert literacy teaching: Paper No. 12, October 2007 \(PDF - 605Kb\)](#)

examine the findings of national and international literacy education research and discuss effective literacy teaching and learning practices. The reports provide high quality research-based information on how to best improve literacy skills to maximise student outcomes.

Prep

Teacher knowledge

Effective literacy teachers have knowledge of:

- VELS [English domain](#) –with a focus on levels 1 and 2 and [ESL Standards Stages A1 and A2](#)
- [English Developmental Continuum P-10](#) (indicators of progress, teaching strategies, video snippets of typical student literacy behaviours) and if appropriate, the [ESL Developmental Continuum P-10](#) (standards and progression profiles, indicators of progress, teaching strategies)
- typical student literacy behaviours:
 - Reading videos [0.5](#), [1.0](#), [1.25](#), [1.5](#), [1.75](#), [2.0](#)
 - Writing videos [0.5](#), [1.0](#), [1.5](#), [2.0](#)
 - Speaking and listening videos [0.5](#), [1.5](#), [2.0](#)
- key [literacy learning concepts](#) including: how children learn and begin to understand language, selecting appropriate texts to support literacy learning and the reciprocal relationship between oral language, reading and writing
- [oral language competencies](#) necessary for the acquisition of reading and writing knowledge and skills
- the particular needs that students may have in relation to English language and literacy, including students from [Koorie](#), [ESL](#) or [Low SES](#) backgrounds.

Literacy focus

Effective literacy teachers determine the literacy focus by referencing the VELS English Standards.

For students achieving at the expected level, effective literacy teachers:

- use students' [oral language](#) competencies as the starting point for teaching reading and writing
- teach English language and conventions using relevant and authentic texts and contexts
- engage students in [speaking and listening tasks](#) in English to consolidate and expand student understanding of the social and learning contexts and purposes for which English is used - telling a personal story, responding to and asking simple questions, retelling stories, listening to stories, giving and following simple instructions, participating in social interactions
- teach [phonological knowledge](#) and [phonemic awareness](#) –awareness of the sounds in spoken language including individual sounds within words
- teach reading of a range of simple texts, including multimedia texts–[comprehension](#) of texts; including prediction based on semantic and syntactic information, identifying the storyline, the use of pictures, [vocabulary](#), [fluency](#) and letters-sound relationships ([phonics](#))
- teach early concepts about print in [reading](#) and [writing](#) including spatial and directional conventions of writing, one-to-one matching, concept of a word and a letter and locating initial and final letters
- teach [writing](#) –composition of brief texts about topics of personal interest in print and digital settings, introducing basic punctuation including full stops and capital letters, the formation of upper and lower case letters, spelling of frequently used vocabulary and strategies to [attempting to spell words](#) by writing one or more of the letters in words and matching letters with their common sounds.

For students achieving above the expected level, teachers should refer to the appropriate [VELS standards](#).

For students needing additional assistance, teachers should refer to the [Language Support Program](#) and [Early Years Learning and Development Framework](#).

Assessment

Effective literacy teachers continually monitor and track the progress of individual students.

At the beginning of the year, effective literacy teachers:

- analyse [transition statements](#) for all students
- administer and analyse the [English Online Interview](#) for all students (February).

Throughout the year, effective literacy teachers:

- schedule and document ongoing assessment to track individual students against VELS English standards and progression points or ESL standards and progression profiles
- administer and analyse for students identified with additional learning needs the [Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement](#) –teachers select from a set of six assessment tasks to assess how a student works with printed information
- administer and analyse [running records](#) at regular intervals for all students. Running records are used to record a student's reading behaviour and comprehension while a student is reading
- regularly observe students reading, writing, speaking and listening within the class context, particularly during independent reading and writing, and document progress using the [indicators of progress](#) from the English Continuum
- regularly collect and [analyse](#) regularly student writing samples
- Provide students with regular opportunities for self-assessment of literacy progress using agreed criteria
- administer and analyse the [English Online Interview](#) for all students (October).

At the **end of each semester**, effective literacy teachers:

- integrate evidence collected throughout the semester to make on balance judgements against VELS English standards.

Planning and instruction

Assessment data is the starting point for curriculum planning and differentiated instruction.

Effective literacy teachers:

- demonstrate capabilities as described in the [e⁵ Instructional Model](#)
- differentiate instruction according to student need
- plan and provide independent reading and writing time to enable students to practise what they know
- provide opportunities for students to read, re-read, illustrate and write simple texts
- dedicate a daily two hour literacy block to explicit literacy teaching
- focus on the teaching of [literacy across relevant VELS domains](#)
- use a range of dynamic student groupings ensuring appropriate level of teacher support:
 - whole class
 - flexible small group
 - independent activity
 - whole class sharing.

Recommended teaching strategies

Effective literacy teachers:

- use a balanced approach drawing on a range of [literacy theories](#)
- select from a range of literacy teaching strategies, depending on student need, including:
 - [Language Experience](#) –illustrates the powerful relationship between spoken language, written language and reading in English.
 - [Reading to](#) –involves the whole class listening to a text read aloud by the teacher. The teacher models skilled reading behaviour, enjoyment and interest in a range of different styles of writing and types of text
 - [Guided reading](#) –involves the teacher guiding students as they read, talk and think their way through a text
 - [Shared reading](#) –involves teacher and students working together using an enlarged text. The text can be used to demonstrate the reading process to students or to demonstrate how texts work (e.g. concepts about print and organisational features).
 - [Independent reading](#) –involves students selecting and reading texts of interest
 - [Modelled writing](#) –involves the teacher writing and making explicit the considerations and thinking behind a piece of text as well as articulating the process
 - [Guided writing](#) –involves the teacher guiding a small group of students as they create their own individual texts. The teacher guides, extends students' thinking and responds to questions
 - [Interactive writing](#) –involves the teacher and small groups of students jointly composing a large print text on a subject of interest to the students and sharing responsibility for the recording at various points in the writing
 - [Shared writing](#) –involves the teacher (as scribe) and students collaboratively composing a piece of writing.

Recommended [text selection](#)

Effective literacy teachers:

- support students to select [narrative and informational texts](#) that they can read independently
- select a range of narrative and informational texts that:
 - are based on the student's knowledge of print and level of oral language proficiency in English (independent reading)
 - are based on the student's interests
 - expand the student's world knowledge
 - are socially and culturally inclusive.

The [Victorian Premier's Reading Challenge](#) is for all Victorian students in Prep to Year 10.

The aim of the Challenge is to promote a love of reading and challenges students to read, to read more and to read more widely. The Reading Challenge book list is updated each year in consultation with experienced teacher-librarians.

There are over 7,000 titles on the Challenge book list. Each title has been allocated to the year level or levels for which it is **usually** most appropriate. The books on the list are diverse in style and cover a broad range of themes and ideas. The book list is a useful stand alone reference for teachers (it can be accessed by teachers even if their students are not involved in the Challenge).

The list also includes a range of young adult titles from which students, parents and teachers can choose reading material which is appropriate for each individual. The inclusion of a book on this list does not mean it is a recommended text for all students.

- [Premier's Reading Challenge book lists](#) (<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/prc/books/default.htm>)

Years 1 and 2

Teacher knowledge

Effective literacy teachers have knowledge of:

- VELS [English domain](#) –with a focus on levels 1, 2 and 3 and [ESL Standards Stages A1 and A2](#)
- [English Developmental Continuum P-10](#) (indicators of progress, teaching strategies, video snippets of typical student literacy behaviours) and if appropriate, the [ESL Developmental Continuum P-10](#) (standards and progression profiles, indicators of progress, teaching strategies)
- typical student literacy behaviours
 - reading videos [0.5](#), [1.0](#), [1.25](#), [1.5](#), [1.75](#), [2.0](#), [2.5](#), [3.0](#)
 - writing videos [0.5](#), [1.0](#), [1.5](#), [2.0](#), [2.5](#), [3.0](#)
 - speaking and listening videos [0.5](#), [1.5](#), [2.0](#), [2.5](#), [3.0](#)
- key [literacy learning concepts](#) including: building vocabulary knowledge and the development of comprehension strategies
- [oral language competencies](#) necessary for the acquisition of reading and writing knowledge and skills
- the particular needs that students may have in relation to English language and literacy, including students from [Koorie](#), [ESL](#) or [Low SES](#) backgrounds

Literacy focus

Effective literacy teachers determine the literacy focus by referencing the VELS English Standards

For students achieving at the expected level, effective literacy teachers:

- use students' [oral language competencies](#) as the starting point for teaching reading and writing
- teach English language and conventions using relevant and authentic texts and contexts
- engage students in [speaking and listening tasks](#) in English to consolidate and expand students understanding of the social and learning contexts and the purposes for which English is used - contributing to classroom discussions, logically sequencing a small number of ideas in a personal story or retell, asking and appropriately responding to questions, listening to stories, giving and following instructions
- teach [phonological knowledge](#) and [phonemic awareness](#) –awareness of the sounds in spoken language including individual sounds within words
- teach the reading of simple texts, including multimedia texts–[comprehension](#), including prediction based on semantic and syntactic information, identifying the storyline, the use of pictures and diagrams, [vocabulary](#), [fluency](#) and letter-sound relationships ([phonics](#))
- teach [writing](#) –composition of personal recounts and simple and sequenced texts about familiar topics in print and digital settings, including the correct use of capital letters, full stops and question marks, the formation of upper and lower case letters, spelling of frequently used vocabulary and strategies to attempt [to spell unfamiliar words](#) using [frequently occurring letter patterns and letter-sound relationships](#)

For students achieving above or below the expected level, teachers should refer to the appropriate VELS standards.

For students needing additional assistance, teachers should refer to the [Language Support Program](#) and [Early Years Learning and Development Framework](#).

Assessment

Effective literacy teachers continually monitor and track the progress of individual students.

At the **beginning of the year**, effective literacy teachers, analyse the following data sets to determine the starting point for their students and to inform instruction

- end of year assessments from the previous year against each dimension of the VELS English standards or ESL standards
- end of year assessments from the [English Online Interview](#) including reading, writing, speaking and listening (October).

Throughout the year, effective literacy teachers:

- schedule and document ongoing assessment to track individual students against VELS English standards and progression points or ESL standards and progression profiles
- administer and analyse the [Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement](#) for students who are performing at lower than expected levels. Teachers use information from a set of six assessment tasks to assess how a student works with printed information
- administer and analyse [running records](#) for all students at regular intervals. Running records are used to record a student's reading behaviour and comprehension while a student is reading
- regularly observe students reading, writing, speaking and listening within the class context, particularly during independent reading and writing and document progress
- regularly collect and [analyse](#) student writing samples
- provide students with regular opportunities for self-assessment of literacy progress using agreed criteria
- administer and analyse the [English Online Interview](#) for all students (October).

At the **end of each semester**, effective literacy teachers:

- Integrate evidence collected throughout the semester to make on balance judgements against VELS English standards

Planning and instruction

Assessment data is the starting point for curriculum planning and differentiated instruction.

Effective literacy teachers:

- demonstrate capabilities as described in the [e⁵ Instructional Model](#)
- differentiate instruction according to student need
- plan and provide independent reading and writing time to enable students to practise what they know
- provide opportunities for students to read, re-read, illustrate and write simple texts
- dedicate a daily two hour literacy block to explicit literacy teaching
- focus on the teaching of literacy across relevant VELS domains
- use a range of dynamic student groupings ensuring appropriate level of teacher support:
 - whole class
 - flexible small group
 - independent activity
 - whole class sharing.

Recommended teaching strategies

Effective literacy teachers:

- use a balanced approach drawing on a range of [literacy theories](#)
- select from a range of literacy teaching strategies depending on student need, including:
 - [Language Experience](#) - illustrates the powerful relationship between spoken language, written language and reading in English
 - [Reading to](#) - involves the whole class listening to a text read aloud by the teacher. The teacher models skilled reading behaviour, enjoyment and interest in a range of different styles of writing and types of text
 - [Guided reading](#) – involves the teacher guiding students as they read, talk and think their way through a text
 - [Shared reading](#) – involves teacher and students work together using an enlarged text. The text can be used to demonstrate the reading process to students or to demonstrate how texts work
 - [Independent reading](#) – involves students selecting and reading texts of interest
 - [Modelled writing](#) - involves the teacher writing and making explicit the considerations and thinking behind a piece of text as well as articulating the process
 - [Guided writing](#) – involves the teacher guiding a small group of students as they create their own individual texts. The teacher guides, extends students' thinking and responds to questions
 - [Shared writing](#) - involves the teacher (as scribe) and students collaboratively composing a piece of writing
 - [Interactive writing](#) - the teacher and small groups of students jointly composing a large print text on a subject of interest to the students and sharing responsibility for the recording at various points in the writing

Recommended [text selection](#)

Effective literacy teachers:

- support students to select [narrative and informational texts](#) that they can read independently
- select a range of narrative and informational texts that:
 - are based on the student's knowledge of print and level of oral language proficiency in English (independent reading)
 - are based on the student's interests
 - expand the student's world knowledge
 - are socially and culturally inclusive.

The [Victorian Premier's Reading Challenge](#) is for all Victorian students in Prep to Year 10.

The aim of the Challenge is to promote a love of reading and challenges students to read, to read more and to read more widely. The Reading Challenge book list is updated each year in consultation with experienced teacher-librarians.

There are over 7,000 titles on the Challenge book list. Each title has been allocated to the year level or levels for which it is **usually** most appropriate. The books on the list are diverse in style and cover a broad range of themes and ideas. The book list is a useful stand alone reference for teachers (it can be accessed by teachers even if their students are not involved in the Challenge).

The list also includes a range of young adult titles from which students, parents and teachers can choose reading material which is appropriate for each individual. The inclusion of a book on this list does not mean it is a recommended text for all students.

- [Premier's Reading Challenge book lists](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/prc/books/default.htm) (<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/prc/books/default.htm>)

Years 3 and 4

Teacher knowledge

Effective literacy teachers have knowledge of:

- the literacy demands of the relevant VELs domain with a focus on the [English](#) domain particularly levels 2, 3 and 4 and [ESL Standards Stages BL, B1, B2, and B3](#)
- the [English Developmental Continuum P-10](#) (indicators of progress, teaching strategies, video snippets of typical student literacy behaviour) and if appropriate, the [ESL Developmental Continuum, P-10](#) - (standards and progression profiles, indicators of progress, teaching strategies)
- typical student literacy behaviours:
 - Reading videos [2.0](#), [2.5](#), [3.0](#), [3.5](#), [4.0](#)
 - Writing videos [2.0](#), [2.5](#), [3.0](#), [3.5](#), [4.0](#)
 - Speaking and listening videos [2.0](#), [2.5](#), [3.0](#), [3.5](#), [4.0](#)
- key [literacy learning concepts](#) including the importance of quick and accurate recognition of words and phrases for reading fluency and comprehension and the selection of, and characteristics of text types
- the continuing role of [oral language](#) in learning, to build the semantic and linguistic knowledge necessary for reading and writing
- the particular needs that students may have in relation to English language and literacy, including students from [Koorie](#), [ESL](#) or [Low SES](#) backgrounds.

Literacy focus

Effective literacy teachers determine the literacy focus in all VELs domains by referencing the VELs English Standards.

For students achieving at the expected level, effective literacy teachers:

- use students' [oral language](#) competencies as a resource for the development of reading and writing skills
- teach English language conventions using relevant and authentic types of texts and contexts, including visual, digital and online texts appropriate to all VELs domains
- teach the [specialised and technical vocabulary](#), comprehension strategies, genres and critical analysis skills used in each VELs domain
- teach the [spelling](#) of frequently used words, morphemes and less regular spelling patterns
- teach [speaking and listening](#) skills that prepare students for formal interaction with an audience
- teach higher order [comprehension](#) skills including critical interpretations, identification of stereotypes, figurative and symbolic language
- teach [composition](#) of imaginative and informative texts containing several logically ordered paragraphs, and multimodal and online texts
- teach strategies to [read](#) and respond to texts with some unfamiliar vocabulary and or textual features such as captions for illustrations.

For students achieving above or below the expected level, teachers should refer to the appropriate VELs standards and the [Language Support Program](#).

Assessment

Effective literacy teachers continually monitor and track the progress of individual students.

At the **beginning of the year**, effective literacy teachers analyse the following data sets to determine the starting point for their students and to inform instruction:

- end of year assessments from the previous year against each dimension of the VELS English Standards or ESL Standards
- end of year assessment (October) from English Online Interview (for Year 3 students only)
- previous year's English NAPLAN data (for Year 4 students)

Throughout the year, effective literacy teachers:

- systematically collect evidence from a range of assessments, monitor and analyse this information over time
- schedule and document ongoing assessment to track individual students against VELS [English Standards](#) and progression points or [ESL](#) standards and progression profiles
- administer and analyse VCAA [On Demand Adaptive Testing](#)—a range of computer-based assessments in reading, writing conventions and spelling which identify a student's achievement level. It is recommended that teachers use this tool to identify the spread of achievement within the class and then to use the progress test to gain more detailed information about individual students.
- administer and analyse [VCAA On Demand Progress tests](#) which are linear tests designed to measure outcomes against VELS levels
- administer and analyse [Running Records](#) at regular intervals for individual students who are not performing at expected level
- administer and analyse [Read and Retell](#)—an assessment strategy where students listen to or read a text and then retell
- regularly observe students reading, writing, speaking and listening within the class context, particularly during independent reading and writing and document progress using the Indicators of Progress from the English Continuum
- provide students with regular opportunities for self-assessment of literacy progress using agreed criteria
- regularly collect and [analyse](#) student writing samples
- administer English NAPLAN for Year 3 students (May) and analyse data when it is available.

At the **end of each semester**, effective literacy teachers:

- Integrate evidence collected throughout the semester and make on balance judgements against VELS English standards.

Planning and instruction

Assessment data is the starting point for curriculum planning and differentiated instruction.

Effective literacy teachers:

- demonstrate capabilities as described in the [e⁵ Instructional Model](#)
- differentiate instruction according to student need
- plan and provide for independent reading and writing time to enable students to practice what they know
- dedicate a daily two hour literacy block to explicit literacy teaching and maximise the reciprocal relationship between speaking and listening, reading and writing
- integrate the teaching of literacy across relevant VELS domains
- use a range of dynamic student groupings ensuring appropriate level of teacher support:
 - whole class
 - flexible small group
 - whole class sharing
 - independent activity.

Recommended teaching strategies

Effective literacy teachers:

- use a balanced approach drawing on a range of [literacy theories](#)
- select a range of literacy teaching strategies for all VELS domains, depending on student need, including:

[Reciprocal Teaching](#) is an instructional approach that takes place in the form of a dialogue between teachers and students regarding text

[Guided reading](#) is used to guide students as they read, talk and think their way through a text ([guided reading videos](#))

[Shared reading](#) - teacher and students work together using an enlarged text. The text can be used to demonstrate the reading process to students or to demonstrate how texts work

[Independent reading](#) – involves students selecting and reading texts of interest

[Guided writing](#)- involves the teacher guiding a small group of students as they create their own individual texts. The teacher guides, extends students' thinking and responds to questions

[Interactive writing](#) - the teacher and small groups of students jointly composing a large print text on a subject of interest to the students and sharing responsibility for the recording at various points in the writing

[Shared writing](#) involves the teacher (as scribe) and students collaboratively composing a piece of writing.

[Genre Learning and Teaching cycle](#) can be used for any piece of writing related to any domain of the VELS. It has three steps: joint deconstruction, joint construction and individual construction.

Independent writing—roving conferences involves a student using his or her knowledge of the writing process to compose texts, the teacher observing the student, identifying teaching points and providing a model for the students about questions to consider as they work on texts independently.

Recommended [text selection](#)

Effective literacy teachers:

- select a range of [imaginative and informative texts](#) based on a student's interest and extend the student's knowledge of text types and associated reading strategies
- [select texts](#) that are socially and culturally inclusive
- support students to select appropriate texts for a variety of purposes for independent reading.

The [Victorian Premier's Reading Challenge](#) is for all Victorian students in Prep to Year 10.

The aim of the Challenge is to promote a love of reading and challenges students to read, to read more and to read more widely. The Reading Challenge book list is updated each year in consultation with experienced teacher-librarians.

There are over 7,000 titles on the Challenge book list. Each title has been allocated to the year level or levels for which it is **usually** most appropriate. The books on the list are diverse in style and cover a broad range of themes and ideas. The book list is a useful stand alone reference for teachers (it can be accessed by teachers even if their students are not involved in the Challenge).

The list also includes a range of young adult titles from which students, parents and teachers can choose reading material which is appropriate for each individual. The inclusion of a book on this list does not mean it is a recommended text for all students.

- [Premier's Reading Challenge book lists](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/prc/books/default.htm) (<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/prc/books/default.htm>)

Years 5 and 6

Teacher knowledge

Effective literacy teachers have knowledge of:

- the literacy demands of the relevant VELS domains, with a focus on the domains of [English](#), levels 3, 4 and 5, [Communication](#), levels 4 and 5, and [ESL Standards Stages BL, B1, B2, and B3](#)
- the [English Developmental Continuum P–10](#) (indicators of progress, teaching strategies, video snippets of typical student literacy behaviour) and, if appropriate, the [ESL Developmental Continuum P–10](#) (standards and progression profiles, indicators of progress, teaching strategies)
- typical student literacy behaviours:
 - reading videos [3.0](#), [3.5](#), [4.0](#), [4.5](#), [5.0](#)
 - writing videos [3.0](#), [3.5](#), [4.0](#), [4.5](#), [5.0](#)
 - speaking and listening videos [3.0](#), [3.5](#), [4.0](#), [4.5](#), [5.0](#)
- key [literacy learning concepts](#), including the importance of the reciprocity of reading and writing and specialised and technical language
- the continuing role of [oral language](#) in learning to build the semantic and linguistic knowledge necessary for reading and writing
- the particular needs that students may have in relation to English language and literacy, including students from [Koorie](#), [ESL](#) and or [Low SES](#) backgrounds.

Literacy focus

Effective literacy teachers determine the literacy focus in all VELS domains by referencing the VELS English Standards and Communication Standards.

For students achieving at the expected level, effective literacy teachers:

- use students' [oral language](#) competencies as a resource for the development of reading and writing skills
- teach English language and conventions using relevant and authentic types of texts and contexts, including visual, digital and online texts appropriate for all VELS domains
- teach the [specialised and technical vocabulary](#), comprehension strategies, genres and critical analysis skills used in each VELS domain
- teach multi-strategy approaches to [spelling](#), including applying morphemic knowledge and developing understanding of visual and phonic patterns
- teach [speaking and listening](#) skills that focus on the protocols of formal presentation skills, and the use of evidence to support an argument/debate and to differentiate between fact and opinion
- teach reading and [writing](#) that focuses on the generic structures of different types of texts, including multimodal and online texts
- continue to teach [comprehension](#) skills with a continuing focus on higher-order skills, including critical interpretations, identification of stereotypes, figurative and symbolic language appropriate for all relevant VELS domains
- teach the [composition](#) of texts appropriate for all relevant VELS domains covering a range of different audiences and purposes
- teach strategies to [read](#), [interpret](#) and respond to a wide range of literary, everyday and media texts, including reading on, contextual cues and knowledge of text organisation.

For students achieving above or below the expected level, teachers should refer to the appropriate [VELS standards](#) and the [Language Support Program](#).

Assessment

Effective literacy teachers continually monitor and track the progress of individual students.

At the **beginning of the year**, effective literacy teachers analyse the following data sets to determine the starting point for their students and to inform instruction:

- end-of-year assessments from the previous year against each dimension of the VELS English and Communication standards or the ESL standards
- the previous year's English NAPLAN data (for Year 6 students).

Throughout the year, effective literacy teachers:

- systematically collect evidence from a range of assessments, and monitor and analyse this information over time
- schedule and document ongoing assessment to track individual students against the [VELS English](#) and [VELS Communication](#) standards and progression points or the [ESL](#) standards and progression profiles
- administer and analyse VCAA [On Demand Adaptive Testing](#)—a range of computer-based assessments in reading, writing conventions and spelling which identify a student's achievement level. It is recommended that teachers use this tool to identify the spread of achievement within the class and then to use the progress test to gain more detailed information about individual students.
- administer and analyse [VCAA On Demand Progress tests](#) – linear tests designed to measure outcomes against the VELS standards
- administer and analyse [Read and Retell](#) – an assessment strategy where students read and then retell what they have read, or students listen to a text and retell what they have heard
- regularly observe students reading, writing, speaking and listening within the class context, particularly during independent reading and writing, and document progress against the indicators of progress from the English Continuum
- provide students with regular opportunities for self-assessment of literacy progress using agreed criteria
- regularly collect and [analyse](#) student writing samples
- administer English NAPLAN for Year 5 students (May) and analyse data when it is available.

At the **end of each semester**, effective literacy teachers:

- integrate evidence collected throughout the semester and make on-balance judgements against the VELS English standards.

Planning and instruction

Assessment data is the starting point for curriculum planning and differentiated instruction.

Effective literacy teachers:

- demonstrate capabilities as described in the [e⁵ Instructional Model](#)
- differentiate instruction according to student need
- plan and provide for independent reading and writing time to enable students to practise what they know
- dedicate a focused time to explicit teaching of speaking and listening, reading and writing, as described in the VELS English and Communication domains
- integrate the teaching of literacy across all VELS domains
- use a range of dynamic student groupings ensuring appropriate level of teacher support:
 - whole class
 - flexible small group
 - whole class sharing
 - independent activity.

Recommended teaching strategies

Effective literacy teachers:

- use a balanced approach drawing on a range of [literacy theories](#)
- select a range of literacy teaching strategies for all VELs domains, depending on student need, including:

[Reciprocal Teaching](#) – an instructional approach that takes place in the form of a dialogue between teachers and students regarding text

[Literacy to Learn strategies](#) – a series of literacy teaching procedures to support literacy learning in all domains.

[Collaborative cloze](#) – a comprehension strategy using a learner's knowledge of content, vocabulary, grammar and spelling

[Guided reading](#) – used to guide students as they read, talk and think their way through a text ([guided reading videos](#))

[Shared reading](#) – teacher and students work together using an enlarged text, which can be used to demonstrate the reading process to students or to demonstrate how texts work (e.g. concepts about print and organisational features)

[Independent reading](#) – involves students selecting and reading texts of interest

[Guided writing](#) – involves the teacher guiding a small group of students as they create their own individual texts – the teacher guides, extends students' thinking and responds to questions ([writing strategies for all domains](#))

[Shared writing](#) involves the teacher (as scribe) and students composing a piece of writing collaboratively

[Genre Learning and Teaching cycle](#) – used for any piece of writing related to any domain of the VELs, having three steps: joint deconstruction, joint construction and individual construction

Independent writing—roving conferences – involves a student using his or her knowledge of the writing process to compose texts, the teacher observing the student, identifying teaching points and providing a model for the students about questions to consider as they work on texts independently

Recommended [text selection](#)

Effective literacy teachers:

- select a wide range of [literary, everyday and media texts](#) in print and in multimodal formats based on the student's interest and to extend student knowledge of text types and associated reading strategies
- [select texts](#) that are socially and culturally inclusive
- support students to select appropriate texts for a variety of purposes and to read independently.

The [Victorian Premier's Reading Challenge](#) is for all Victorian students in Prep to Year 10.

The aim of the Challenge is to promote a love of reading and challenges students to read, to read more and to read more widely. The Reading Challenge book list is updated each year in consultation with experienced teacher-librarians.

There are over 7,000 titles on the Challenge book list. Each title has been allocated to the year level or levels for which it is **usually** most appropriate. The books on the list are diverse in style and cover a broad range of themes and ideas. The book list is a useful stand alone reference for teachers (it can be accessed by teachers even if their students are not involved in the Challenge).

The list also includes a range of young adult titles from which students, parents and teachers can choose reading material which is appropriate for each individual. The inclusion of a book on this list does not mean it is a recommended text for all students.

- [Premier's Reading Challenge book lists](#) (<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/prc/books/default.htm>)

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