

## Helping Children with Reading

A presentation for SVPACT Inc by Jan herald, Literacy adviser with the ACT Education Directorate

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority defines Literacy as **being the fundamental knowledge and skills students require to access, understand, analyse and evaluate information, make meaning, express thoughts and emotions, present ideas and opinions, interact with others and participate in activities at school and in their lives beyond school.**

Literacy is embedded in all Australian Curriculum Learning Areas. There is the greatest coverage in Australian Curriculum: English where the focus is on developing the ability to listen to, read, view, speak, write, create and reflect on increasingly complex and sophisticated spoken, written and multimodal texts.

For students in **Years 1 and 2** there is a strong focus on literacy. Students listen to and enjoy texts that entertain and persuade, such as picture books, non-fiction and film. Students grow into more independent readers, learn to create a range of different texts and become more confident when they communicate.

Typically, students will:

- Listen to, read, view and talk about simple information books, stories, films and some online texts
- Independently read books and discuss what they have read or viewed with other students, teachers or family members
- Sound out or recognise words
- Use simple punctuation, such as capital letters and full stops
- Write about their experiences, tell a story or talk about topics they have covered in class
- Spell a number of common words correctly and write in sentences
- Add pictures to what they write
- Produce their texts using computers or other devices
- Listen and give talks to the class about a topic they are interested in
- Develop readable handwriting.

Source: [www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/media/7660/information\\_for\\_parents\\_years\\_1\\_-\\_2.pdf](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/media/7660/information_for_parents_years_1_-_2.pdf)

You can find a plain English description of the literacy outcomes for each year level at this site.

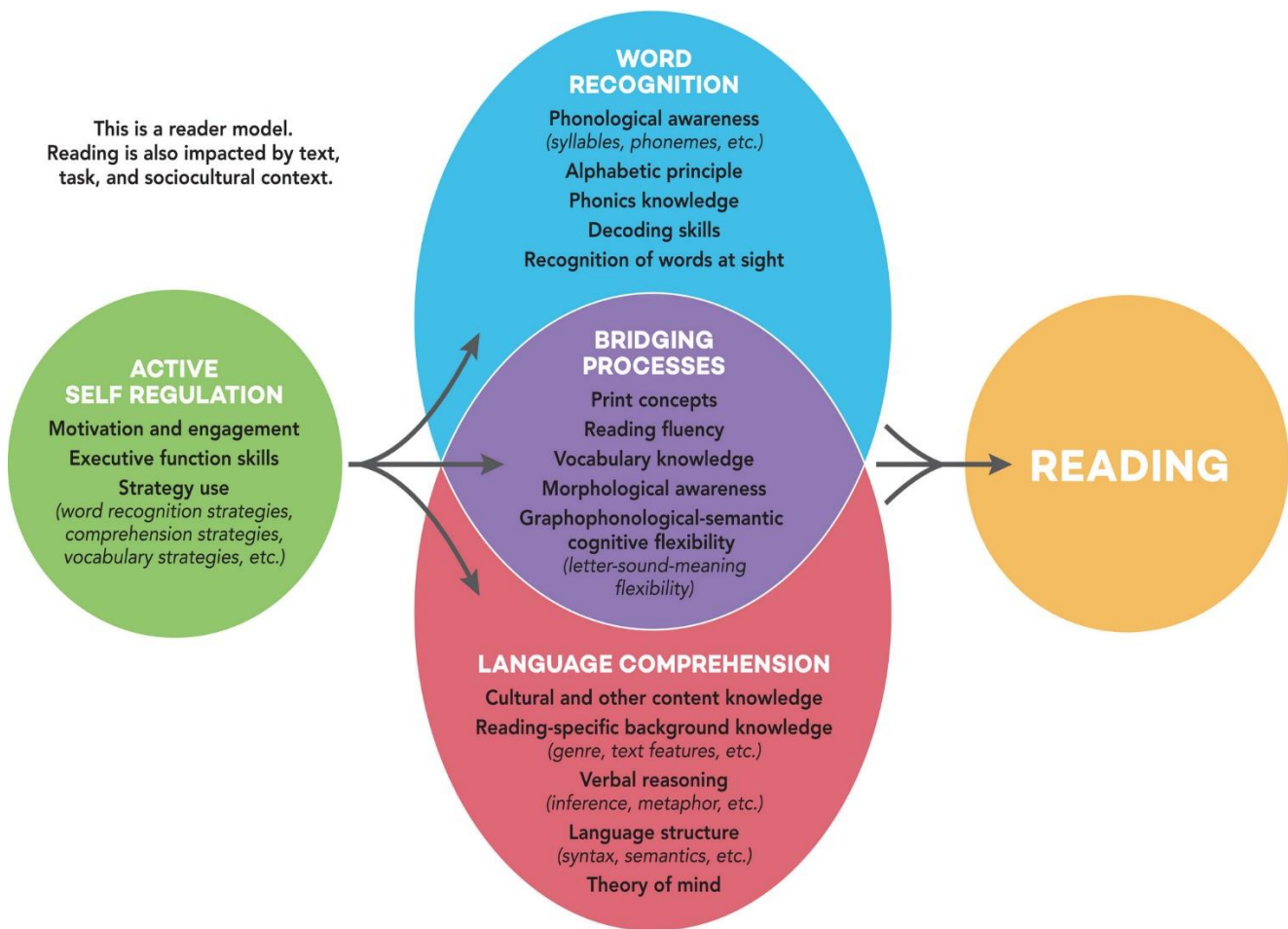
As volunteers you play an important role in assisting students to improve their achievement with this task. As James Britton wrote: ***Reading and Writing Float on a Sea of Talk.*** As a volunteer you have the time to talk with and listen to the child that you are working with. This is extremely precious!

**Thank you for what you do.**

To summarise what you are doing the literacy capability can be divided into three areas:

- Speaking and Listening
- Reading and Viewing
- Writing

The Active View of Reading Model shows how the different process interact and support one another.



Teachers are aiming for a gradual release of responsibility. Initially they will read the book to the class or individual students. They will help students to recognise sounds and then words. Eventually the student will be able to read for themselves. It is not magic but it is a complex process.

**Morphological awareness** is one of many skills that help students [learn how to read](#) and write. **A morpheme is the smallest unit of meaning in language.** The words “like” and “a” are both single-syllable morphemes as they both have meaning. Longer words, like ‘between’ and ‘crocodile’ are morphemes, too. That’s because there are no parts of these words that contain meaning on their own.

Morphemes aren’t always whole words. A morpheme can also be an affix, as affixes by themselves still have meaning. For example, the suffix ‘ish’ is a morpheme because it carries the same meaning regardless of where it appears. The word ‘child’ is made up of one morpheme, while the word ‘childish’ is made up of two. Once students can identify the smallest units of meaning in words they read, they can decode and define larger words. **They have morphological awareness when they are aware of the fact that words are composed of smaller units of meaning.**

The 10 Essential Instructional Practices in Literacy are listed below for Years k-3. These were :

### Kindergarten to Year 3

- Deliberate efforts to foster motivation and engagement within and across lessons
- Read-alouds of age appropriate books and other materials, print or digital
- Flexible groups targeted to student need in specific aspects of literacy development
- Activities that build **phonological awareness**
- Explicit instruction in letter-sound relationships (phonics)
- Research-informed writing instruction
- Intentional and ambitious efforts to build vocabulary and content knowledge
- Abundant reading material and reading opportunities in the classroom
- Ongoing observation and assessment of children's language and literacy development that informs their education
- Collaboration with families in promoting literacy

Nell Duke et al (2017) have researched early literacy at length and in great depth. The summation of their findings and advice are articulated in the 10 Essential Instructional Practices documents, with focuses on improving students' literacy outcomes in the early years (prekindergarten), Grades K to 3, and Grades 4-5. You can find out more at <https://literacyessentials.org/>

**Phonological awareness** is "the recognition that words have constituent sounds."

How can we help students develop these skills?

- 1. Exposing students to a wide range of different texts. Read aloud to them. Spell out the words. Talk about the book and what it is about. Use quality picture books and authentic texts.**
- 2. Talk to the child and find out what interests them. Find books that will be of interest to the child.**
- 3. Explicit teaching about sounds, letters, combinations of letters, spelling of words**
- 4. Assist students to recognise the sounds made by different combinations of letters and then practice at reading words that use those combinations.**

Children need to have access to lots of different reading material.

### What are decodable books?

Decodable books focus on specific phonics sounds or spellings. These books use words that follow phonics rules, such as consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words. Occasionally, these decodable books will have high frequency words (sight words) that students can't decode but will be part of the instruction of reading and writing for young readers.

In the workshop delivered by Jan we were shown some examples of decodable texts.

On the following page are some sites where you can find out more about these books.

## Decodable Readers

### 1. abctutor.org

All early readers can benefit from using decodable texts. Decodable texts are very useful for dyslexic students.

If you click on the book title you will be able to read the books.

<https://rolls.bublu.com/abctutor/free-decodable-books>

### 2. The Measured Mom

Students need to read decodable text so they get practice applying the phonics skills we've taught them. Anna, who is the Measured Mom, was not impressed with what was on the market so she has created her own sets of books.

<https://www.themeasuredmom.com/free-decodable-books/>

### 3. Reading Elephant.com

Decodable books gradually introduce the phonetic code. Since our Reading Elephant decodables introduce one phonics sound at a time, kids can practice each new sound with confidence and gain mastery over that sound before learning another. This step-by-step method allows beginners and struggling readers to build a strong decoding foundation.

<https://www.readingelephant.com/>

Most schools will have sets of decodable books as well and other readers that can capture student interest and motivate them to learn to read.

## PAUSE, PROMPT, PRAISE

When listening to a student read, it is important to provide them with the right feedback.

1. **Pause** when the student makes an error, hesitates or misses out a word.
2. Wait 5 seconds or to the end of the sentence, to allow the student to work out or correct the word.
3. If they have not read the word correctly, prompt the student to attempt or correct the word with a *general phonic prompt* (eg. "try sounding this word out"). If the word they offer does not make sense, remind them that this is the case.
4. If the general phonic prompt does not work, offer a *specific phonic prompt*, focusing on specific letters in the word.
5. If the student gets stuck on a word or skips a word, offer a *re-read prompt*, asking them to re-read the sentence from the beginning.
6. If that is not effective, offer a specific phonic prompt.
7. If the student cannot read the word accurately after two prompts, supply the word and allow them to continue reading.
8. **Praise** the student frequently, being clear about what you are praising them for. This little video shows this strategy being used: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z0YTFevd-cE>