

# State Literacy and Numeracy Plan

Focus on literacy:  
**Writing**

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Curriculum Support Directorate

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# Foreword

The Government’s \$200 million literacy commitment, while unashamedly taking a “back to basics” approach, is specifically designed to provide all students with the essential and basic skills they need to advance in the ever changing world. Making sure students learn and acquire the basics is essential if they are to secure their future educational, life and job opportunities.

The Government is committed to raising educational standards. Government literacy initiatives, along with the work of teachers in the classroom, are valuable tools for making sure students get the basics right.

*Focus on literacy: Writing* is the latest in this series of literacy documents. Its purpose is to describe the policy of the Department of Education and Training on the teaching of writing from Kindergarten to Year 12.

Teachers are required to teach writing in the same explicit and systematic way in which they teach other literacy skills and understandings. The key elements of teaching writing are similar to the key elements of the State Literacy and Numeracy Plan. The expectations are as follows:

- The knowledge, skills and understanding about writing will be taught in an explicit and systematic way.
- All students will learn to write in all subjects.
- Correct spelling will be valued and emphasised in students’ writing in all subjects.
- Students will write for a range of purposes and in a variety of contexts appropriate to their stage of development.
- A balanced writing program will include the composition of texts, processes in developing writing and the presentation of texts.
- The development of students’ writing will be monitored in a consistent way in all subjects.
- Students who are experiencing difficulties will be identified early and will be given appropriate support in the context of each subject.
- A planned, whole-school approach will ensure continuity in the development of each student’s knowledge and understanding about writing.
- Effective learning partnerships will be developed with parents and caregivers.
- Teachers will be given support for effective practice in the teaching and learning of writing.

The teaching of writing is a priority in the State Literacy and Numeracy Plan.

John Aquilina, MP  
Minister



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# Introduction

*Focus on literacy: Writing* is a policy statement about the teaching of writing in NSW government schools. It is for all teachers in all subject areas, from Kindergarten to Year 12, because it provides guidance in assisting all students to become competent, confident writers.

*Writing K-12* was published by the Department in 1987. At that time, it served as a syllabus as well as a statement of principles. Now, however, the teaching of writing is determined by current Board of Studies syllabuses, particularly *English K-6*. Curriculum materials recently published in support of the State Literacy and Numeracy Plan also guide the teaching of writing. *Focus on literacy: Writing* is one of these support documents.

In *Focus on literacy: Writing* it is recognised that learning to write involves developing skills, knowledge and understanding at all stages of schooling. Because this document is based on a social view of language, it emphasises that writing has a purpose and is meant to be read.

The contents of this document provide:

- an historical overview, outlining the contribution of different writing approaches to current teaching practice
- an explanation of a social view of writing
- an outline of what to teach and how to teach writing
- suggestions about achieving a whole-school approach
- information about meeting the needs of different learners
- advice about assessment
- an annotated bibliography.

*Focus on literacy: Writing* is a part of the State Literacy and Numeracy Plan and should be read in conjunction with *Focus on literacy* and *Focus on literacy: Spelling*.

# I. Approaches to the teaching of writing

Different approaches to the teaching of writing can be seen in past teaching practices. These approaches are the result of social conventions, policy directives, research and practice. Usually, an approach which finds its way into widespread teaching practice is the result of research developments based upon a particular theory. In such cases, there is often a difference between its application in practice and its application in theory.

As a result, changes to methods of teaching language sometimes seem like fads rather than the result of an evolving body of knowledge.

Research has added to our knowledge about what children do when they learn to use language. The teaching of writing is influenced by new methods developed from this research. In addition, the literacy demands of society, schools and employers have been evolving, to keep pace with increasing technological change. Literate people now need to be able to engage with a diverse range of print, electronic and visual texts. The teaching of writing must continue to respond to these changing literacy demands.

As teachers continue to build their understanding of language and the way it is learnt, they develop and refine the way they teach language. At the same time, they incorporate useful elements of earlier approaches into their current teaching practice. Some of these approaches are described below.

## Traditional approaches

Writing used to be taught as the process of building a fixed structure out of “building blocks”. The teaching of writing began with the smallest components, such as individual letters and their sounds, then moved on to the spelling of individual words, the writing of individual sentences and finally “composition”. These individual components were taught separately and often in terms of rules about what was “correct” or “incorrect”. This approach heightened students’ awareness of language structure.



The teacher structured writing experiences in order to control the writing produced by students. The language knowledge and experience which children brought from home was not necessarily valued, especially where that knowledge related to languages other than standard Australian English.

## Process writing approaches

Teachers knew that students needed to recognise how the individual components of writing were connected. The student's ability to take part in the process came to be valued as much as the accuracy and conformity of the final product. This was known as the process writing approach.

The process approach aimed to build on the knowledge, skills and understanding about writing that students brought with them to school. It encouraged teachers to set up classrooms rich in written language. The emphasis was on initiating writing activity without having to wait for formal lessons in letter formation or spelling. Students chose what they wanted to write about and the kind of writing they wanted to do.

The process writing classroom was learner-centred. The teacher was a facilitator and supporter of the students' writing, while the students themselves were encouraged by the teacher to take ultimate responsibility for their own writing. The teacher intervened and provided support through a technique known as conferencing, in which students, either individually or in groups, were assisted to draft, edit, proofread and publish their work.

As its name suggests, the process approach taught students to go through a series of steps in order to refine and correct their writing, rather than rely on a one-shot draft. In this way the process writing approach drew students' attention to the drafting, editing, proofreading and publication process from which a written text emerges. The conventions of writing were taught at the point of need.

The whole language movement included process writing as part of its methodology and was based on a view of natural learning. Whole language classrooms aimed to create an environment conducive to learning. These conditions replicated conditions under which children learnt oral language at home.

Students were encouraged to write for real purposes and demonstration by the teacher was valued as an effective teaching strategy. To overcome the fragmentation of the writing program into discrete skills, whole language approaches stressed the integration of talking and listening, reading and writing.

## Genre approaches

Teachers found that the writing of many students was not always developing beyond one or two basic kinds of texts, in which the language used was similar to that used in everyday spoken interactions. Also, the texts typically produced were not the kinds of texts which would support learning in the subject areas as students progressed through school.

It became apparent that many students needed more knowledge about the kinds of writing they would need in order to be successful at school. They also needed explicit teaching about written language in order to expand the repertoire of language choices available to them as they drafted texts.

Some educators sought, from within the academic discipline of linguistics, a model of language which would make it possible to talk to students explicitly about language and its use. This approach to the teaching of writing became known as the genre approach. Genres are descriptions of text structures and language features which are typically used to achieve different social purposes.

Learning these genres, or text types, provided students with a writing repertoire which laid the foundation for successful writing in the more specialised contexts of the secondary school.

## Current approach

Our current approach to the teaching of writing has been influenced by all of the above. The benefits of traditional approaches are seen in the current emphasis on knowledge of traditional grammar. The benefits of process writing and whole language are seen in the current practice of making the classroom a rich language environment. The benefits of genre approaches are seen in the recognition of the value of learning about typical text structures and related grammatical features.

The important feature of our current approach to writing, however, is that it is based on a view of language which recognises that texts are socially constructed. Students need to be able to compose texts with critical understanding of social contexts and how meaning is constructed. This emphasis on critical understanding as well as social purpose is what distinguishes the current approach from others.

This view of language is based on insights gained from developments in sociology and linguistics. It can be called a social view of language or a functional model of language. How this view of language determines our current approach to the teaching of writing is the subject of the next chapter.

## 2. A social view of writing

Communication is effective when it achieves its purpose. Everything that we write is written for a reason and meant to be read, even if only by the writer. Sometimes the act of writing helps writers to clarify their own thoughts, organise ideas or “get it off their chest”. The purposes for writing might be academic or personal, but in a social view of writing it is the act of communicating which makes it meaningful.

Writers therefore always communicate for a purpose, and there is always a context in which a text is created and another context in which the text will be read. These purposes and contexts will determine the language choices writers make.

A text is defined as any meaningful act of communication, whether written, spoken or visual, of any length. *War and peace* is a text, as is raising your eyebrows, because both convey meaning to another person.

### Social purposes

There are two sorts of purposes for students’ writing. At most times students write for academic purposes. Students also write for a variety of community purposes, related to the needs of the individual, home or workplace.

### Community purposes

Students’ experience of language in the home is rich and diverse. Students arrive at school with a range of experiences about why and how writing is used. Some students come from homes where two or more languages are spoken. Some come from families with strong oral story-telling traditions. Schools build on this knowledge and experience.

At home, for example, students may have seen their family members write letters or sign important documents. Students might have participated in these kinds of writing, seen parents write for work or study and older siblings write for school.

The ways in which students have learnt to use language at home is the foundation on which all other language development, including writing, is built.

Students need opportunities to write for a range of audiences such as self, peers, parents, community members or local government.

### **Academic purposes**

While at school, students also need to write for a wide range of academic purposes, which vary according to the different subjects being studied. Teachers in all subjects therefore have a responsibility to teach the kinds of writing which are required in those subjects. As they progress through school, students will, in increasingly skilful and sophisticated ways, use writing for various academic purposes.

In science, for example, students might be required to write up the results of an experiment or provide information about a particular species. In each case, they need to understand the purpose for which they are writing, who will read it and what it will achieve.

Students need to be taught explicitly how to handle diverse writing tasks, identifying the purposes for writing and how to structure texts to achieve those purposes. For these reasons, the teaching of writing should not place too much emphasis on text types. It is preferable to emphasise the primary importance of the writer's social purpose.

Teachers need to teach explicitly those language features which help to organise the content of a subject, as well as the specialist vocabulary of the subject area. This specialist vocabulary needs to be introduced progressively from primary school in meaningful contexts, so that students can use it confidently in their writing.

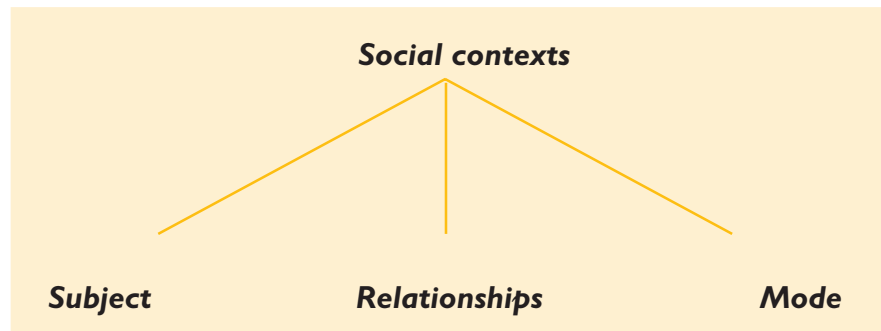
Students' writing develops when they apply a critical understanding to their writing, question their assumptions, look for alternative viewpoints and are aware of the kinds of language choices available to them and the effects of those choices.

Teachers need to help students understand what factors influence their choices as writers. In composing a text, choices which relate to the text's purpose, structure, cohesion, grammar, vocabulary and presentation should all be considered. Written texts have greater impact when the writer has control over these choices.

## Social contexts

While purpose is a writer's main consideration, any act of writing and reading takes place in a particular situation or context, which influences how language is used. This context consists of:

- (a) the subject matter
- (b) the roles and relationships of those involved
- (c) the mode of communication being used.



Systematic and explicit teaching of these three dimensions helps students to write effectively in the range of community and academic contexts.

### (a) The subject matter

Writers need to know what they are writing about. To write effectively in a subject, students need to know and understand the subject matter. They also need to learn the subject-specific vocabulary and the language structures and features that will help them write effectively in that subject. Students further develop their knowledge of the subject matter as they research, take notes, organise information and prepare written drafts.

In primary schools, subject-specific vocabulary and language structures and features should be explicitly taught, to prepare students to write effectively in different key learning areas. In secondary schools, such subject-specific vocabulary and language structures and features will be taught in context by subject teachers.

### (b) The roles and relationships of those involved

When students write, they make certain choices according to the way they want to relate to the reader. Their texts will differ according to the role they are adopting and their relationship

with their intended audience, for example, a customer writing to a company, a brother writing to his sister, or an expert writing to a novice.

The relationship the writer wants to establish with the audience determines the tone of the writing, which could, for example, be impersonal, friendly or cautious.

Written texts therefore need to be composed with a particular audience in mind. Students need to be aware of the ways writers make language choices which build different relationships with readers.

When writing, students need to choose words and grammatical structures that are consistent with the implied relationship with the audience. For example, if they are instructing a reader, they will write sentences as commands, because the writer understands that the reader wants to be told what to do.

### **(c) The mode of communication being used**

For many students, written modes of communication can be challenging, because written language has to do more work than spoken language in order to be meaningful to readers who are not present. Students need to be taught how to introduce things into a written text in a way which is meaningful for those who are not present. They also need to be taught to use definite articles, pronouns, conjunctions and connectives properly, for example, so that readers can keep track of people and things referred to throughout a written text.

## **Composing texts**

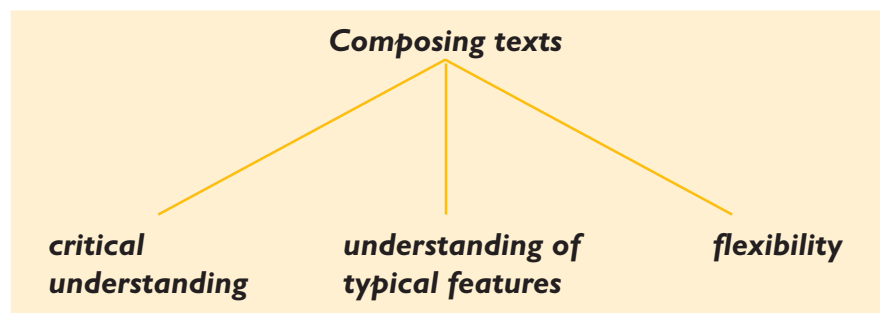
Writers' understanding of social purpose and context influence how they compose texts. In order to achieve their purposes, students need to know how different sorts of texts are typically structured and how text structures vary according to the demands of specific tasks. Students also need to know how to challenge conventional text structures in order to write more sophisticated texts.

Sometimes, students will write texts which conform to conventional patterns. At other times, they will adapt the patterns to achieve different effects. For example, in writing a narrative to entertain, a writer might embellish or expand on a text pattern in order to surprise, intrigue or challenge the reader.

When approaching the composition of texts, writers can aim for the typical features on the one hand and flexibility on the other. At all times, writers should be critically aware of how purpose and context influence what they are doing.

Accordingly, when composing texts there are always three core considerations. These are:

- (a) critical understanding
- (b) understanding of typical features
- (c) flexibility.



Writers draw on these considerations in an integrated way when writing. Writers seek to conform to the typical features of the type of text they are writing. At the same time, however, they seek to do the opposite, that is, to depart from these typical features, for the sake of originality, sophistication or creativity. At all times, they should pay attention to a critical analysis of the writing itself.

### **(a) Critical understanding**

Students learn to interpret and analyse the community and academic contexts for writing by acquiring critical understanding. If students learn to reflect on how meaning is constructed in what they are reading, they will be better equipped to approach the writing of their own texts with critical understanding.

At all stages of learning, students need to be taught that writers and readers have different purposes, roles, relationships and identities. They need to be taught that every written text is the expression of a particular perspective and they need to learn how to challenge written texts from a range of viewpoints. They should also be taught how texts attempt to position readers in certain ways.



Students can thus make judgements about the purpose of their writing. They can then make appropriate choices about structure, grammar, vocabulary and presentation. They will also be able to modify, challenge or subvert conventional choices if they wish.

### **(b) Understanding of typical features**

Just as writers have purposes, readers have expectations. Texts are effective when they suit the writer's purpose and are appropriate to the context. Texts which incorporate typical features help to fulfil readers' expectations.

In familiarising students with the typical features of texts, teachers might begin by clarifying the social purpose and then immersing students in sample texts, perhaps as part of an extensive reading program. Real texts should always be used as samples in preference to artificial ones. Invariably the real texts will be diverse, but students' attention can be drawn to the features they have in common.

Students could be asked to bring in examples from home or the library. The teacher might use examples in various reading activities. In guided reading activities some typical features could be pointed out. Students could do sequencing tasks, where a text is cut into chunks and re-assembled.

With support, students could develop overviews where the structure of a text is represented in the form of a flow chart, matrix, timeline or story map.

When students have experienced a sampling of typical texts, teachers should encourage students to reflect on such questions as the following:

- What job do these texts do? That is, for what purpose do we use texts like these?
- Where would we find texts like these? That is, what is their social context?
- Who reads them and why?
- Have you read or written texts like these before? What was your purpose?

As students consider the nature and purpose of typical texts, teachers should discuss with them the ways in which they are structured and why. It is important not to present these structures

as “formulae” or “recipes”. Rather, teachers should help the students to think about how each structural aspect helps to achieve the writer’s purpose.

To help them think about this, students can examine atypical texts, noticing what happens if structural features are changed or put in a different order. For example, how effective is a recipe in which the ingredients are not listed first?

### **(c) Flexibility**

Over-emphasis on text types as the object of study should be avoided, lest the importance of purpose and context is ignored.

Writing is successful when it fulfils the writer’s purpose and suits the social context. Sometimes writers want their texts to be conventional, familiar and easily read. At other times, writers want their texts to stand out and have an impact. Sometimes writers want to unsettle readers’ expectations. To produce texts effectively, then, students also need to be taught how to exploit a text creatively.

Reading authentic texts is particularly good for demonstrating ways of achieving flexibility, because most texts in reality are not aligned to a particular text type. Teachers can also address how to achieve flexibility in modelled and guided writing sessions, as explained in the following chapter.

Students should examine texts in order to identify aspects which are not typical. For example, in a set of instructions, a writer might diverge from outlining the procedure in order to explain something or describe alternative steps.

Teachers should investigate with students different ways of organising a text. For example, instead of stating a position at the beginning of a persuasive text, the writer might choose to wait till the end in order to make it a climax, or the moral of a fable might come in the title rather than at the end.

Students should be encouraged to experiment with manipulating text structures by incorporating typical features of one text type within another in order to create specific effects. For example, a poem might be used within an argument to stress a particular point, or a travelogue might include directions on how to reach the destination.

Teachers need to demonstrate for students how writers might use mixed text types, where a text has multiple purposes, e.g. on television where documentary programs are dramatised to add interest; or “infotainment,” where information is presented under the guise of entertainment. These mixed text types often become institutionalised as new text types in their own right.

Teachers could examine related texts with their students and discuss the language choices. For example, if students are looking at personal recounts, they should move on to more demanding types of recount, such as biographies or historical accounts.

Students need to be taught how to manipulate the typical features of texts in various ways. This is an important strategy in composing both factual and literary texts, wherever the writer wants to make an impact on the reader.

Flexibility includes recognising and allowing for creativity in writing. *Creative writing* usually refers to an activity in the English key learning area, where the purpose is to entertain. Teachers will find models of creative writing in literature, such as poetry, fiction or drama.

A creative approach to writing can also be appropriate in other subjects, however, and should be encouraged whenever it is consistent with the purposes of writing in that subject. Teachers will find such models of creative writing in detailed descriptions of historical settings, advertising or reviews.

Sometimes creativity is assumed to mean mere playfulness or working without rules and structures, but this is based on a false understanding. This false understanding will create problems if teachers try to reward writing that is “creative” but, in other respects, badly written. There is no conflict between rigour and creativity. Invariably, creativity is enhanced by an understanding of rules and structures.

When exploiting a text creatively, students need to be taught to understand the purpose and effect of manipulating the text. It might, however, be inappropriate to strive for a creative interpretation when a more straightforward one is required by the set task.

## Summary

There are two sorts of purposes for students' writing. At most times students write for academic purposes. Students also write for a variety of community purposes, related to the needs of the individual, home or workplace.

As students compose texts they need to consider their purposes, the context in which the text is being composed and read, the relationships between the writer and the intended audience, and the mode of communication.

Students need support if they are to become confident and competent users of the three aspects of composing texts. Critical understanding, understanding of the typical features of texts and flexibility will need to be explicitly taught.

## 3. Teaching writing

As students progress through school, they need to write more complex texts for a wider range of academic and community purposes. Therefore the teaching of writing needs to be explicit from Kindergarten to Year 12, with clear links between academic and community purposes.

In all subjects and at all stages of learning, students need to understand the purposes and contexts of their writing. This enables them to compose written texts effectively, which involves the ability to structure texts and to use language well. Using language effectively includes being able to move, when required, from spoken to written language.

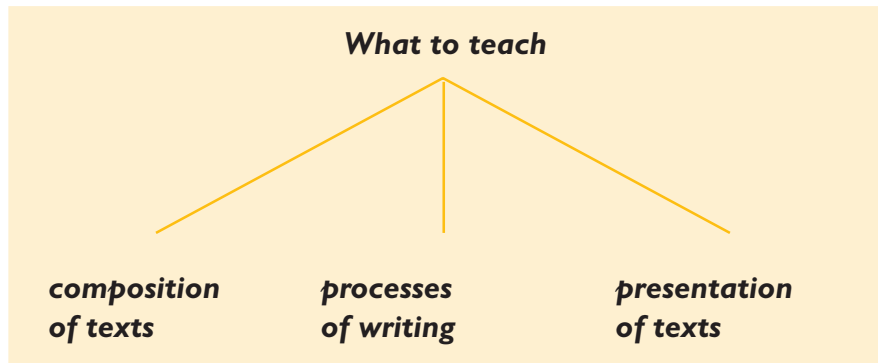
Students need to be taught how to write for different audiences and for different purposes. In all subjects there are different topics about which they will write.

The demands of writing increase in complexity and sophistication as students move through school.

### What to teach

The teaching of writing should aim to impart a balance of knowledge, skills and understanding so that students learn to write effectively. Composing texts also requires an understanding of the development of writing as well as presentation.

The aim of teaching writing is to ensure that students learn to write effectively in community and academic contexts. To develop the skills, knowledge and understanding required, students need to learn about writing and learn through writing.



### Composition of texts

Teaching writing involves teaching students how to take into account the purpose and context of a task. It follows that tasks set in class should have authentic purposes and contexts. Teaching students to write involves teaching them to reflect on written language, how it works and what makes it effective. It also involves evaluating the effectiveness of the writing in achieving the task.

Writing should be examined at all levels, including the whole text as well as its smaller components. Explicit teaching of writing includes teaching about:

- the composition of whole texts, i.e. purpose, text structure and cohesion
- sentences and words, i.e. syntax, grammar, vocabulary and spelling
- surface features, i.e. punctuation and layout.

Students should be taught to reflect on how writing changes in different situations and differs from one culture to another. Students should also be taught how writing changes over time and is affected by technological change.

Above all, students should be taught to consider the impact of their own writing on the intended reader.

### The processes of writing

Teaching students about the processes of writing equips them to produce accurate texts. For most academic purposes, the processes of writing consist of drafting, revising, conferencing, editing, proofreading and publishing.

*Drafting* involves making notes of ideas, planning the text and writing the text down initially.

*Revising* involves reworking a text to improve ideas or amend the content. Revising might involve editing, because it often requires reorganising the text or changing sentence structures.

*Conferencing* involves discussing drafts with others to engage in critical reflection and clarification of meaning. Revising and editing might occur during, or be the result of, such discussions.

*Editing* involves changing the drafts of developing texts in order to improve the text, for example, by improving cohesion, syntax, grammar and vocabulary. Editing leads to changes which will be incorporated into the next draft of the text.

*Proofreading* involves preparing the final text for presentation, including reading the text to locate and fix any inaccuracies in grammar, spelling, punctuation or layout.

*Publishing* involves presenting the text to its intended audience. At school, this is often the teacher, although it is good to give students the experience of writing for other audiences where appropriate.

In order to compose texts that are both accurate and effective, students need to be taught how to engage in these processes with a critical understanding of how written language is used.

## The presentation of written texts

How to present texts for publication needs to be taught in each subject. When publishing written texts which are to be read by others, writers should pay attention to legibility, spelling, grammar and punctuation. These features should be taught explicitly and systematically, as students learn to write texts for different community and academic purposes.

### (a) Technologies

**Handwriting** serves writing when students can produce legible handwriting fluently with a minimum of conscious effort.

All students need to be taught how to write fluently in letters of appropriate size and spacing, using appropriate pressure and correct grip, while maintaining a comfortable posture.

To introduce NSW Foundation style handwriting, teachers need to teach three basic movements as a basis for developing good manuscript and cursive handwriting styles. These are the clockwise ellipse, the anticlockwise ellipse and the downward stroke.

The English K-6 Syllabus (Board of Studies, 1998) provides a graphic overview of the NSW Foundation style on page 101.

At all stages of learning and in all subjects, teachers should help students to ensure that their handwriting has style, fluency and legibility.

Some students with disabilities or learning difficulties might need to use alternative methods of producing written texts, such as using a tape recorder, scribe or computer.

Students also need to be taught how layout can help them achieve their purpose and how to enhance writing, where appropriate, using different technologies.

**Computer-based technologies** can motivate and ease the way for many writers. Word processing programs enable students to make revisions to drafts easily and make layout tasks more manageable. All students need to develop confidence, accuracy and speed in keyboard skills.

Word processors, desktop publishing and hypertext programs provide many opportunities for the exploration of layout. An important skill for writers to develop is the ability to select strategically and discerningly from the array of fonts and other formatting possibilities made available by computer technology.

Students also need to be taught to conceptualise and write in different forms, such as hypertext links, which require a non-linear form.

Students using the Internet need to understand that anyone can publish on the Internet and that there are no quality control or selection procedures, unlike a library, for example, where the selection of resources is undertaken by trained staff.

Students also need to be taught about ownership of information and copyright concepts to support them when using the Internet.

### **(b) Spelling**

Students should be encouraged to use correct spelling automatically in first drafts. Students therefore need explicit teaching about the four forms of spelling knowledge:

- phonological knowledge, which focuses on how sounds correspond to letters



- visual knowledge, which focuses on how words look
- morphemic knowledge, which focuses on the meaning of words and how spelling changes when the words take on different grammatical forms
- etymological knowledge, which focuses on the origins of words and their meanings.

*Focus on literacy: Spelling* (Department of Education and Training, 1998) provides an overview of the historical development of the English language, on pages 9ff and a comprehensive description of the four forms of spelling knowledge on pages 12ff.

### (c) Punctuation

Students should also be encouraged to use correct punctuation automatically in first drafts. They therefore need explicit teaching about punctuation conventions and how punctuation affects meaning and supports the reader.

The accuracy required in using punctuation needs to be emphasised when teaching simple and more complex elements of punctuation.

Punctuation marks are an important element of written language. The breaks between sections or parts of messages need to be indicated in writing to assist readers, because elements of spoken language that fill this role, such as intonation and pauses, are not present.

Some punctuation marks are more frequently used and relatively simple to apply. Sentence punctuation is used in most forms of writing and is generally the first to be taught. It is expected that other forms of simple punctuation will also be taught in the earlier years of primary school.

Simple punctuation includes capital letters, full stops, question marks, the correct use of capitals for proper nouns, the use of commas to separate words in a list, and apostrophes of contraction.

Other forms of punctuation are considered more complex because they are either more difficult to apply or used less frequently.

Complex punctuation includes speech marks, semi-colons, colons, hyphens, commas separating clauses and phrases and apostrophes of possession.

## How to teach writing

When students are engaged in purposeful writing tasks, teachers provide support for them through explicit teaching. Teachers also guide students by demonstrating how to achieve particular purposes, discussing the effectiveness of writers' choices and giving feedback at all stages of writing.

The goal of all teaching is for students to become independent writers. Teachers continue to provide support until students can compose texts for particular purposes independently. However, even when students can write for certain purposes independently, there are always greater writing challenges over the horizon with which they need help. This applies even beyond school. So, even though independence is the goal, explicit teaching and guidance are always needed.

### Explicit teaching of writing

The explicit teaching of writing refers to the active and deliberate development of all aspects of students' writing rather than leaving it to chance. Explicit teaching of writing requires teachers to:

1. define the purpose of every writing task
2. provide opportunities for students to engage in a range of writing purposes
3. share with students the specific nature of the task, the reason for doing it and its value to their learning
4. explain to students the skills, knowledge and understanding required to fulfil the purpose, and demonstrate these where necessary
5. give students opportunities to practise those skills and enhance understanding
6. use a common language to talk about the effectiveness, meaning and accuracy of students' writing
7. provide continuous guidance and support as students develop their writing skills, knowledge and understanding
8. ensure that students understand the criteria by which their writing will be assessed
9. provide feedback to students about the effectiveness of their texts, which includes organisation, cohesion, grammar, word

choice, spelling, punctuation and presentation (handwriting or word processing)

10. continuously monitor students' achievements.

### **Systematic teaching of writing**

The systematic teaching of writing refers to the selection and sequencing of activities in order to ensure that students develop a comprehensive range of writing knowledge, skills and understanding. Teachers should build on what students already know and can do, to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding systematically over time. This involves the systematic and continuous monitoring of progress.

Systematic teaching occurs when teachers ensure that the writing program deals with the balanced development of all aspects of writing, such as grammar, spelling, punctuation, handwriting and word processing, as well as the writing processes of drafting, revising, conferencing, editing, proofreading and publishing.

Teachers should select activities to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding which are relevant to the identified needs of students and to the task at hand.

Teachers should provide opportunities for regular engagement in purposeful writing activities. These activities should help students to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding that enable them to write in order to demonstrate achievement of all syllabus outcomes.

### **Teaching strategies**

Effective writing programs use modelled, guided and independent teaching strategies to support students.

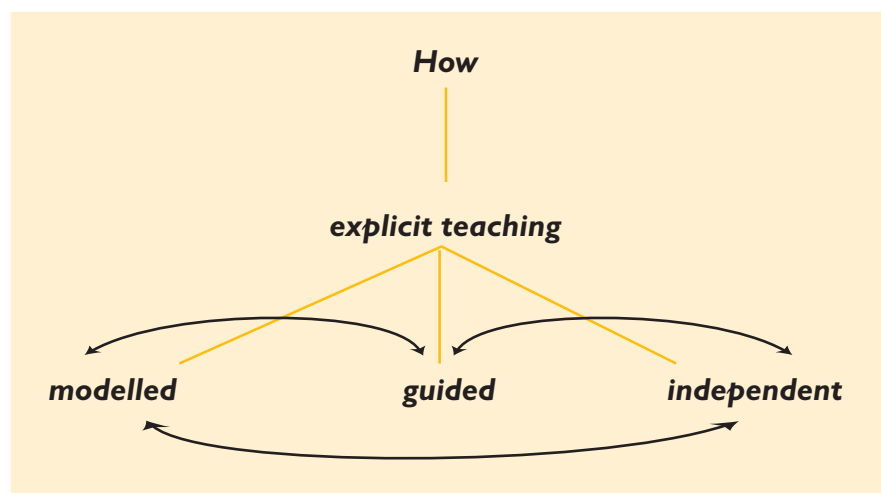
It is important to emphasise that these three types of strategies are applicable at all stages of schooling. Independent writing should happen in Kindergarten, while even in Year 12 there is a need for modelling and guiding. Kindergarten teachers model how to construct simple sentences and texts, while teachers of Year 12 students provide and analyse models of writing appropriate to the Higher School Certificate.

During modelled, guided and independent writing teachers need to ensure that students have a good understanding of the topic they will be writing about. This understanding might be developed

through such activities as research, teacher input, presentations, class discussion or first-hand experiences such as excursions. Knowledge of the topic and relevant research skills need to be developed through modelled, guided and independent teaching strategies.

Teachers will need to familiarise students with any subject-specific vocabulary they need, including the etymology of those words. It is good for teachers to model the practice of using a dictionary and it is strongly advised that students in every classroom have access to a good dictionary, which should be consulted constantly by both students and teachers.

It is also important to emphasise that the three strategies of modelled, guided and independent teaching are recursive, that is, teachers constantly return to them and apply them in new ways. When students achieve some independence in writing, they are ready to experience new models and receive different guidance.



### Modelled writing

This means both models and modelling. Modelled writing refers on the one hand to the selection of models to show students how writing works. It also refers to the teacher's practice of modelling or demonstrating writing to students.

The best source of models for writing is the real world, that is, the texts that students read. In modelled writing, teachers provide students with examples of the type of text they will be composing, explanations of how these texts work and structured demonstrations of what efficient writers know and do.

Modelled writing helps students gain the knowledge about language, vocabulary and text structures required to write for a range of purposes. Modelled writing should also include explicit teaching about the processes involved in composing texts.

When examining models of writing, teachers can pose such questions as:

- What is the writer's purpose?
- From whose point of view is this text written?
- For whom might this text have been written?
- What word choices signal the writer's purpose? What would happen if we deleted or altered these words? For example, if the writer's purpose is to entertain, how is language being used to develop a vivid image?
- What word choices signal the writer's attitude? Are they convincing or perhaps too emotive or emphatic?
- How do adverbs, such as *finally* or *previously*, help you to follow the sequence of events?
- If the model is a narrative, in what tense is it written? What would be the effect if we changed the tense, e.g. from past to present?

### Guided writing

In guided writing, students are required to draw on the knowledge, skills and understanding developed during modelled writing sessions, with varying degrees of support from the teacher. Guided writing activities sometimes involve students working as a group or in pairs to support each other, with the teacher as a guide.

There are various ways to conduct guided writing sessions. Guided writing sessions can involve the whole class, small groups or individuals. Guided writing sessions are also a useful strategy for providing support for students with specific needs.

A common guided writing activity involves students and the teacher jointly composing a text. The teacher might record, in random order, ideas on the topic as suggested by students. As always, it is important that this strategy should follow purposeful, extended research.

The teacher might then ask the students to start organising these ideas, perhaps drawing their attention to one of the model texts

examined previously. Having thought about the content of the text and how it might be organised, students and teacher collaborate in composing a text, with the teacher scribing the developing text on the board.

Students could write in pairs the opening section of a text. The teacher could then ask them to share these with the class and discuss which ones they felt were more effective and why.

Teachers might select one of these openings and then continue to scribe the rest of the text, eliciting ideas from the students and discussing how the class could go about shaping those ideas into a text. In this way, students have an opportunity not only to participate in a collaboratively written text, but also to observe how a mature writer makes decisions about the structure of a text and the language choices available. This is modelling, which is still appropriate during guided writing.

Teachers could discuss the developing text with students, asking such questions as:

- What is our purpose?
- Who is our audience?
- How can we best affect or influence our readers?
- How might we begin this text? What does the reader need to know first?
- How should we organise the different sections of this text?
- What should we leave in or take out?
- How are we going to end the text?

Refer to model texts for examples of all these considerations.

While guiding students in composing the whole text, teachers should provide guidance about particular language features and choices, posing such questions as:

- Can you think of a more effective verb?
- Do we need to define this technical term?
- What tense should we be using?
- This sentence is a bit clumsy. How can we make it more concise?
- This is how we would say it, but how would we write it?

- Should we combine these two sentences? Should we split this sentence?
- What sort of punctuation do we need here?
- How can we work out the spelling of this word?

During guided writing, the teacher not only discusses text structure, language features and choices, but also demonstrates the processes involved in writing, posing such questions as:

- Let's look at the outline we made earlier. Is it still working okay?
- Should we revise, move or delete this section of the text?
- Have we finished or are we just blocked?

Throughout the above activities, students and teachers will be developing a common language for talking about language. This language can be drawn upon when conferencing with peers, resulting in more detailed and informed feedback.

By jointly composing texts, students will develop an understanding of how spoken language differs from written language. This would be demonstrated by teachers as they mould students' verbal contributions into the language of the written mode.

### **Independent writing**

Independent writing involves students composing their own texts without help. Independent writing provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate their skills in composing a variety of texts.

When writing independently, students should be encouraged to:

- define their purpose
- identify their audience
- engage in further research if necessary
- jot down ideas and notes
- think about how to organise ideas effectively
- write drafts
- share drafts with peers and the teacher
- rework drafts in the light of comments about text organisation, cohesion, grammatical choices, sentence structure, spelling, punctuation and layout

- prepare and edit a final draft
- publish and present their work for further feedback.

During the editing phase of independent writing, a greater emphasis will be placed on aspects of writing such as spelling, punctuation, handwriting, word processing and layout.

### Summary

At all times, students should be given the support they require to compose texts independently. If, during independent writing sessions, students indicate the need for further development of knowledge, skills and understanding, teachers should provide further modelling and guidance.

Using modelled, guided and independent strategies, teachers should equip students to:

- produce effective texts for a variety of purposes on a range of topics for different audiences
- structure texts according to their purpose and select appropriate grammatical patterns and vocabulary
- present written texts in an accessible and readable way, demonstrating skills in spelling, grammatical accuracy, punctuation, layout, handwriting and word processing
- use such strategies as drafting, revising, conferencing, editing, and proofreading appropriately.



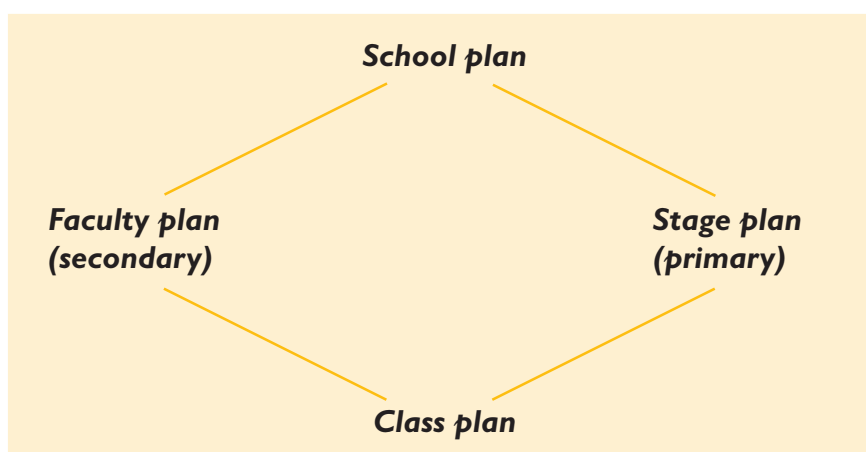
## 4. A whole-school approach

The content and strategies described in the previous chapter need to be implemented within a planned, whole-school approach.

Guided by the school's literacy support team, and as part of its annual management plan, each school has the responsibility of developing a whole-school plan for the teaching of literacy, which includes the teaching of writing.

This plan will include a statement of the school's priorities based on students' demonstrated achievements in writing in all subjects. This statement should be developed in consultation with parents, staff members and students, where appropriate.

To achieve a cohesive, whole-school approach to the teaching of writing, a school plan should be reflected in stage or faculty plans as well as in classroom plans or programs. Coordinated planning of the teaching and assessment of writing is necessary in order to ensure that all students use writing effectively to demonstrate the achievement of syllabus outcomes in all subjects.



## Whole-school planning

A school plan should consider the following elements:

### (a) Resources

How will resources be allocated to address school priorities?

How might parents and the community be involved in whole-school planning in order to support the school's writing program?

How can various personnel, such as ESL teachers, STLDS and teacher-librarians, best be used?

What opportunities will be provided for the continuing professional development of staff in the various aspects of writing?

What information will be provided for parents about the teaching of writing?

### (b) Teachers' knowledge and understanding

What is the role of writing in learning?

What place does writing have in the various subject areas?

How will the school ensure that teaching provides a balance between developing a knowledge about writing and the skills of writing?

How are writing, talking, listening, reading and viewing related?

How will students with diverse needs be catered for?

### (c) Students' achievements

How will achievement in writing be monitored and assessed?

How will information about the progress of individual students be collected, organised and made available to those who require this information?

How will the school use information gained from the Early School Assessment, the Basic Skills Tests (BST), the English Language and Literacy Assessment (ELLA) or performance descriptors for School Certificate courses?

What kinds of evaluation strategies will be developed?

What achievements are students demonstrating in writing?  
Are the achievements demonstrated by students consistent in all subject areas?

## Stage or faculty planning

A stage plan is necessary to ensure consistency in addressing syllabus outcomes. Stage planning will be done in faculty groups in high schools.

To support a cohesive, whole-school approach to the teaching of writing, a stage plan should consider the following elements:

- How can all syllabus outcomes be taught effectively over two years?
- How can teaching within the stage support students and build on what they know and can do over the two years?
- How can teaching in this stage prepare students to engage in learning in the next stage of schooling?
- What writing is required of the students to enable them to achieve syllabus outcomes in this stage? What teaching of writing is therefore required?

## Class planning

Class plans are designed to meet the specific learning needs of all students in the class.

For an individual class, the teacher will need to develop a plan far enough ahead to know where to go, but for a short enough period to be flexible and responsive. To achieve a cohesive, whole-school approach to the teaching of writing, a class plan should take into account the following elements:

- What are the needs of groups or individuals in this class, as identified by assessment of their writing knowledge, skills and understanding?
- Which areas of the curriculum will provide authentic purposes for writing?
- What elements of research, editing and publishing will be taught?
- What elements of text structure, grammar, spelling, punctuation, computer technology and handwriting will be taught?
- How will students requiring specific support be catered for?

- What modelled, guided and independent teaching strategies will be used?
- How will students' writing progress be monitored and assessed?

## Meeting the needs of different learners

There should be a whole-school approach to meeting the needs of different learners. Teachers should maintain high expectations of all students and ensure that writing is equally visible and valued across the full range of purposes, contexts and subject areas.

All students are entitled to whatever support they need in order to become effective writers. Although it is possible to make generalisations about the kinds of support student writers need, it is also important to remember that each student writer will bring individual needs to the writing classroom.

### Extending talented writers

Students with special needs include those who are gifted and talented. A gifted student tends to excel in all areas of the curriculum, while a talented student might excel in one particular area.

It might not be necessary to vary the sequence of activities for students who are talented writers. However, they might benefit from an adjustment to the program that allows for an individual pace of learning.

Talented writers benefit most from enrichment activities in writing. They should be given opportunities to experience a greater variety of texts in reading, writing, talking, listening and viewing, pursuing not only their own interests but also unfamiliar areas.

They should be encouraged to publish their writing both within and outside the school. Everyone benefits when the work of talented writers is published. It is rewarding for the writers as well as entertaining for the readers.

### Supporting writers experiencing difficulties

An effective writing program will take into account the individual learning needs of all students in the class. It is particularly important to identify and support student writers experiencing difficulties as early as possible at each stage of schooling.

Identify what students experiencing difficulties know and can do to ensure that intervention strategies address their specific needs. Explicit teaching of knowledge, skills and understanding will support these students in achieving syllabus objectives and outcomes.

Early intervention, based on systematic needs analysis and assessment within a supportive learning environment, is the key to successful writing at school.

### **Developing links between home and school**

Some students are more likely than others to find school a familiar and reassuring environment which confirms their world view and their orientation to language. For these students, writing at school becomes an extension of the language practices they experience at home.

Students whose home backgrounds do not match closely the values and practices of the school will need a bridge which makes meaningful links between home and academic contexts, language use and learning experiences. Making these links enriches the writing program for all students because a recognition of different social and cultural backgrounds makes it possible to introduce into the classroom social contexts which might not traditionally have been part of school learning.

It is important that the school and parents work together to reach a common understanding of the outcomes of the writing program and ways of achieving these outcomes. It is important that parents are informed in a supportive way about the things they can do to contribute to their children's writing development and to support the school's writing program.

### **Home language**

Students might, for example, come from homes with a rich linguistic tradition which combines more than one language or dialect or which has a complex oral tradition. Such backgrounds are a valuable foundation on which writing knowledge and skills can be developed. Every home language, whether Aboriginal English, standard Australian English or a language other than English, represents a rich cultural heritage and is a valuable teaching resource.

Diverse cultures can be recognised and valued in meaningful ways in a writing program. Writing activities can build on the different cultural understanding, skills and values that students bring to the writing class.

Students from different language backgrounds need to take part in writing programs which teach explicitly and systematically the writing demands of the school and develop the knowledge and skills needed to meet those demands. For many of these students, carefully structured talking and listening activities will be an important bridge to the successful use of written language at school.

For many students language practices and the meanings made at school are completely different from those experienced at home.

Writing activities for these students should be designed to teach explicitly:

- the meanings which are recognised and valued at school
- how to respond to and make these meanings
- how to critique, challenge and rework these meanings using standard Australian English.

Making the links, in an atmosphere of mutual respect, between the language and social contexts of the home and the language and social contexts of the school, plays a significant part in successful writing development. This is particularly important where the match between the home culture and the school culture is not an exact one. Home-school partnerships help to support these links.

## 5. Assessing students' writing achievements

The main purpose of assessing is to enhance teaching and learning. Assessment of students' achievements in writing needs to be based on evidence from a variety of sources.

### When to assess

Assessment should be focused, systematic and curriculum-based. Evidence of students' achievements in writing can be collected during modelled, guided and independent teaching strategies.

During modelled writing activities, teachers can collect evidence of achievement from students' responses to questions and discussions about writing. Teachers can also use opportunities which arise as students engage in research activities.

Guided writing provides further opportunities for assessing students. For example, when students are jointly composing a text, their contributions to the development of the text, the questions they ask and the comments they make can inform teachers about what they understand and know about writing.

Texts that are independently composed provide evidence of demonstrated skills. These texts are most likely to be the result of tasks set in planned units of work, but more spontaneous situations might also provide useful opportunities for writing. Texts do not need to be in final published form to provide evidence of achievement. Early drafts of independently written texts also provide evidence of writing.

Assessment will be richer if it is based on contributions from a variety of sources that cover the range of syllabus requirements. This coverage needs to provide information about students' writing knowledge, skills and understanding. This will more clearly link students' demonstrated achievements to the achievement of syllabus outcomes.

## What to assess

Students should be assessed on their knowledge and understanding about writing, their skill in composing a range of texts, their understanding about and use of the processes of writing and their skills in presenting texts for publication.

Samples of students' writing, carefully selected over time, provide evidence of progress. For this evidence to be useful in teaching, students' writing should be assessed against specific criteria. These criteria must be shared with students when assessment tasks are set. Teachers need to make sure that students are clear about what is required of the set task, how achievement of it will be assessed and how this links to the achievement of syllabus outcomes.

## Establishing criteria

The criteria for assessing writing in all subjects need to cover how well students communicate in that subject.

The criteria should be linked to and contribute evidence of achievement of syllabus outcomes. Single writing samples cannot provide sufficient evidence of achievement of syllabus outcomes. Teachers need to collect a range of writing samples in varying contexts or topics throughout a stage to confirm demonstrated achievement of syllabus outcomes. The selection of specific criteria will depend on the particular learning experiences preceding the written task and will also need to include criteria that are related to the purpose of the set task.

Assessing against specific criteria will reveal those aspects of writing which have been demonstrated and those which have not been demonstrated and therefore require further teaching. Using specific criteria for assessing writing will assist teachers to plan teaching experiences for individuals or groups of students.

## Assessing at the text level, sentence level and word level

Criteria for assessing writing need to cover the whole text, and the sentence-level and word-level aspects of a text. Students who demonstrate control of these features produce more effective texts.



Text-level criteria apply to features of the text as a whole or features across the text. The purpose or theme of the text, the tense used, the text structure, the types of sentences and the cohesive elements, such as conjunctions and pronoun reference, are examples of aspects that can be considered across a text.

Sentence-level criteria cover adequate construction of clauses, subject and verb agreement, use of articles, prepositions and punctuation.

Word-level criteria focus assessment on spelling and subject-specific vocabulary.

When teachers are selecting criteria for assessing writing, it is important to remember that some assessments will consider all levels but at times, where the learning focus has been more specific, the assessment might be more focused.

## Processes and presentation

Drafting, revising, conferencing, editing, proofreading and publishing can also provide useful information about students' achievements. Many of these processes can be assessed together. Editing could provide information about knowledge of text-level, sentence-level or word-level features that have been demonstrated or are still developing.

Much of this evidence would need to be collected by observing students' behaviours and interacting with them during these processes, in order to confirm that they have developed knowledge about writing and that they understand what they are doing. Successive drafts, from first draft to publication, may also provide written evidence of knowledge, skills and understanding.

# Annotated bibliography

The following is an annotated list of relevant publications of the NSW Department of Education and Training and the NSW Board of Studies.

## Publications by NSW Department of Education and Training

*Focus on literacy*, 1997, Curriculum Directorate, NSW Department of School Education, Sydney.

A document which outlines the policy and position underpinning the teaching of literacy in NSW government schools. It describes the key elements of literacy improvement and emphasises that all teachers from Kindergarten to Year 12 have a responsibility to teach literacy in an explicit and systematic way in all key learning areas and subjects. It advises that improved student literacy outcomes will be best achieved through a whole-school plan which addresses the needs of diverse learners and fosters effective partnerships among teachers, parents and students.

*Focus on literacy: Spelling*, 1998, Curriculum Support Directorate, NSW Department of Education and Training, Sydney.

This document is of relevance to all teachers in all subject areas, from Kindergarten to Year 12. It outlines the Department's policy on spelling and the principles involved in the teaching of spelling. It emphasises the need for a coordinated approach within a whole-school approach that supports students' ongoing development of spelling knowledge, skills and understanding. It further states that teaching a balance of phonological, visual, morphemic and etymological knowledge in an explicit way is a prerequisite, if students are to become proficient spellers.

*Implementation guide for schools*, 1998, Curriculum Support Directorate, NSW Department of Education and Training, Sydney.

This guide outlines considerations for the implementation of literacy in the State Literacy and Numeracy Plan. It guides schools in the establishment of a literacy support team and examines focus areas that schools should address if they are to implement the plan successfully. The document outlines procedures for developing action plans and selecting strategies for a whole-school approach to improving literacy.

*Assessment and reporting support documents*, 1998, School Assessment and Reporting Unit, NSW Department of Education and Training, Sydney.

A package of six bulletins that examine assessment and reporting issues for Years 7-12. The bulletins can be used by teachers to assist the development of appropriate assessment and reporting strategies. The bulletins refer to a “standards framework” as a point of reference for the development of curriculum, assessment and reporting processes.

*Breaking some of the myths—again*, 1997, NSW Department of Education and Training, Sydney, occasional paper by Dr Paul Brock.

A literacy discussion paper published to encourage informed debate on key issues relating to effective literacy teaching and learning. This paper deals with general topics relating to literacy development and the need for balanced literacy programs which recognise the variety of ways in which literacy is related to the everyday needs of all students.

*Choosing literacy strategies that work: Stage 2*, 1997, Curriculum Directorate, NSW Department of School Education, Sydney.

This book provides a range of literacy strategies for talking and listening, reading and writing, primarily for students in Years 3 and 4. However, the strategies can be adapted to content suitable for students from Kindergarten to Year 12. The writing strategies provide a comprehensive guide to understanding the key strategies of modelled, joint (guided) and independent writing. The roles of students, teachers and parents in the development of writing are explored. There are also sections which cater for students requiring extension or additional support. Learning experiences reflect the need for students to *learn about* and *learn through* writing, as well as *learn to* write.

*Continuity of literacy development in Years 5-8*, 1999, Curriculum Support Directorate, NSW Department of Education and Training, Sydney

The focus of this document is literacy teaching and school practices in Years 5-8. It describes the teaching and learning practices of primary and secondary schools that would ensure the explicit teaching of literacy as required for learning and success in Years 5-8 and beyond.

*English language and literacy assessment (ELLA), Years 7 and 8*, 1998, Schools Assessment and Reporting Unit, NSW Department of Education and Training, Sydney.

A manual that explains the criteria used to assess the writing tasks. It indicates how the results of the ELLA test can be used to provide diagnostic information to teachers and schools about students' literacy achievements. It provides specific information on how the writing tasks should be assessed against the criteria relating to each task.

*Home-school collaboration*, 1994, Specific Focus Programs Directorate, NSW Department of School Education, Sydney.

This document provides information about programs developed by eight NSW schools. Each shows how parents and schools worked together to initiate, develop and implement literacy learning programs for students.

*Learning and literacy broadcasts*, 1997, Curriculum Directorate, NSW Department of School Education, Sydney.

The Early Literacy Initiative (ELI) project aims to improve literacy teaching practice in K-3 classrooms in low socioeconomic contexts. Each broadcast is available in video form with support material designed to provide additional information on the class programs featured.

*Linking basic skills tests (BST) to the curriculum* and *Linking writing to the curriculum, Year 3, Year 5*, 1998, Schools Assessment and Reporting Unit, NSW Department of School Education, Sydney.

The BST assesses literacy across all key learning areas. These documents link the literacy demands of BST assessments to outcomes in key learning area syllabuses. They suggest teaching strategies to improve literacy skills identified through the BST.

*Linking ELLA to ... series*, 1998, Schools Assessment and Reporting Unit, NSW Department of School Education, Sydney.

These thirteen pamphlets support teachers of Year 7 subjects. They highlight the literacy demands of each subject and offer teachers a range of strategies to assist the development of students' literacy. There is a pamphlet for each of the following: *design and technology, dance, music, visual arts, drama, science, English, languages, history, PDHPE, mathematics, geography* and *ESL in the key learning areas*.

*Making a difference*, 1997, Special Education Directorate, NSW Department of Education, Sydney

This training program for STLD staff outlines their role and the kinds of support required to make a difference to the learning outcomes of students with learning difficulties. This training program suggests that programs offered by STLDs need to complement those offered in mainstream classrooms. It encourages schools to establish a literacy support team to develop whole-school strategies for the prevention of learning failure and to provide ongoing support for students with learning difficulties.

*Phonemic/phonological awareness*, 1998, Curriculum Support Directorate, NSW Department of Education and Training, Sydney.

A literacy discussion paper published to encourage informed debate on key issues pertaining to effective literacy teaching and learning. This paper defines terminology and outlines the purpose and need for the development of phonemic and phonological awareness.

*Principles for assessment and reporting in NSW government schools*, 1996, Curriculum Directorate, NSW Department of School Education, Sydney.

This document was developed to provide a basis for the review and development of school practices in assessment and reporting.

*Planning a whole-school approach to literacy*, 1997, Curriculum Directorate, NSW Department of School Education, Sydney

This document is a support package designed to assist secondary schools to plan for literacy improvement. It outlines a process for planning whole-school approaches to literacy.

*Securing their future: School-based assessment materials for the School Certificate*, 1998, NSW Department of Education and Training, Sydney

This document is a collaborative production with the Catholic Education Commission, the Association of Independent Schools and the Board of Studies. The materials in this package provide support to English teachers preparing to use subject-based assessment procedures. The five levels of performance outlined are provided as a guide when developing tasks to gather information, guide teaching and determine the strengths and weaknesses of students' achievements in reading, writing, and talking and listening.

*Starting Kindergarten: Assessing literacy and numeracy using foundation outcomes*, 1998, Curriculum Support Directorate, NSW Department of Education and Training, Sydney.

This document was developed in collaboration with the NSW Catholic Education Commission and the Association of Independent Schools as part of a project funded by the Commonwealth under the National Literacy and Numeracy Plan. It was designed to assist teachers in making informed judgements about the literacy and numeracy achievements of students in Kindergarten. The information gained forms the basis of teaching and learning experiences in the early part of each Kindergarten year.

*Starting Year 1: Assessing literacy* and *Starting Year 3: Assessing literacy* 1999, Curriculum Support Directorate, NSW Department of Education and Training, Sydney.

These documents were developed in collaboration with the NSW Catholic Education Commission and the Association of Independent Schools as part of a project funded by the Commonwealth under the National Literacy and Numeracy Plan. This document has been designed to assist teachers in making informed judgements about the literacy and numeracy achievements of students at the beginning of Years 1 and 3. The information gained forms the basis of teaching and learning experiences in the early part of the year.

*Strategies for reading factual texts*, 1997, Curriculum Directorate, NSW Department of School Education, Sydney.

This book offers practical strategies designed to support students as they learn to read factual texts. It shows how the three major concepts of building field knowledge, interacting with texts and responding to texts incorporate writing activities as a necessary component in understanding and using texts for specific purposes.

*Teaching literacy in ... series*, 1997, Curriculum Directorate, NSW Department of School Education, Sydney

These nine books support teachers of Year 7 subjects. They highlight the literacy demands of each subject and demonstrate how these demands can be explicitly taught through sample units of work. Advice is also given on using assessment information to plan appropriate programs and ways in which a whole-school plan for literacy might be developed. Each book details specific writing purposes and the skills, knowledge and understanding which students need in order to fulfil the literacy requirements of the subject area. Examples of various texts are given as examples of modelled, guided and independent writing activities. The ideas in this series can be adapted for application at other stages of writing development, e.g. writing at stages 3 or 5.

*Teaching literacy in PDHPE in Year 7*

*Teaching literacy in languages in Year 7*

*Teaching literacy in geography in Year 7*

*Teaching literacy in history in Year 7*

*Teaching literacy in English in Year 7*

*Teaching literacy in creative arts in Year 7*

*Teaching literacy in science in Year 7*

*Teaching literacy in mathematics in Year 7*

*Teaching literacy in design and technology in Year 7*

*Teaching spelling K-6*, 1998, Curriculum Support Directorate, NSW Department of Education and Training, Sydney.

This document is a guide to the systematic and explicit teaching of spelling from Kindergarten to Year 6. It includes information on the place of spelling in a literacy program, spelling development and teaching practices.

*The action pack series*, 1992-1996, Disadvantaged Schools Program, NSW Department of School Education, Sydney.

The three sets of topic booklets which make up *The action pack* support teachers in implementing modelled, guided and independent teaching strategies. Sample topics and text choices are discussed in planning and programming a unit of work. Detailed instructions on how the curriculum model can be used to determine instruction, along with explicit and systematic teaching, are described.

*The action pack: Animals*  
*The action pack: Environment*  
*The action pack: Technology*

*The Year 7 English language and literacy assessment (ELLA)*, 1997, Assessment and Reporting Unit, NSW Department of Education, Sydney.

This manual explains the marking procedures for the ELLA assessment writing tasks. The manual also outlines the criteria used to assess student achievement of the set writing tasks.

*Working successfully with parents in literacy, Years 5-8*, 1998, Training and Development Directorate, NSW Department of Education and Training, Sydney.

This training and development package is designed to assist schools to work successfully with parents to support the literacy learning of students in Years 5-8. Examples of successful, active and effective parent community involvement in schools are outlined, to assist schools to develop their own support networks.

*Writing Assessment, Years 3 and 5*, 1998, Schools Assessment and Reporting Unit, NSW Department of Education and Training, Sydney.

The writing assessments are criterion-referenced tests. The criteria cover four levels, ranging from the macro features of text process and cohesion to the surface features demonstrated by sentence-level and word-level proficiency. The assessments made against the criteria for each writing task provide a comprehensive picture of each student's competencies.



## Publications of the NSW Board of Studies.

*Assessing and reporting using stage outcomes, Part 1: Assessing*, 1998, NSW Board of Studies, Sydney.

This document is designed to assist schools in developing their own methods of assessment for summative and formative purposes. It suggests that the reporting of students' achievements should be done by the end of a stage against a standards framework described by syllabus objectives, stage outcomes and work samples. It is stated that the emphasis should be on the nature and quality of the evidence and on opportunities for students to demonstrate what they know. Ideas for student self-assessment are also included.

*Assessing and reporting using stage outcomes, Part 2: Reporting*, 1998, NSW Board of Studies, Sydney.

This document is designed to assist schools to develop their own methods of reporting students' achievements using stage outcomes. A coordinated whole-school approach to implementing reporting methods which use annotated work samples to illustrate student achievement is documented in a variety of case studies.

*English K-6: Introducing the English K-6 syllabus to parents and school community members*, 1998, NSW Board of Studies, Sydney.

This document is a part of a parents' package, which also contains an information flyer. The book contains a selection of material from the syllabus and support documents and some suggested activities that can be used in a variety of ways. The purpose of the book is to inform parents and the community about the *English K-6 syllabus* and what students learn in English in primary school. The material can be presented by parents or teachers and can be modified to cater for different parent audiences. The book also contains advice on how parents can help in the literacy development of their children at home.

*English K-6: Principal's package*, 1998, NSW Board of Studies, Sydney.

This package has been produced for principals to provide them with a summary of information about the 1998 *English K-6 syllabus* and the accompanying support documents. It focuses on matters considered to be of key interest to principals and school communities.



*English K-6 modules*, 1998, NSW Board of Studies, Sydney.

This support document has been developed to assist teachers in the use of the revised *English K-6 syllabus*. The modules contain teaching notes and a range of suggested English learning experiences related to a variety of texts for each stage. They also outline the purpose and typical structures and grammatical patterns of particular texts.

*English K-6 syllabus*, 1998, NSW Board of Studies, Sydney.

This document introduces a standards framework of stage outcomes in reading, writing, and talking and listening. The outcomes and content are organised into substrands of *learning to* and *learning about*. The outcomes describe the knowledge, skills and understanding, values and attitudes that students are expected to demonstrate and develop when reading, writing, talking and listening.

*English K-6 work samples*, 1998, NSW Board of Studies, Sydney.

This support document has been developed to assist teachers in monitoring students' progress. The work samples in this document are used to illustrate what students can do at each stage of their literacy development. Sample indicators, which state what students can do, with suggestions for follow-up, support teachers in planning writing programs.

*English syllabus Years 7-10*, 1987, NSW Board of Secondary Education, Sydney.

This document is organised under five specific objectives, which are elaborated as assumptions with implications for the classroom. The section on writing emphasises the importance of writing for purpose and meaning through a range of registers. Consideration is given to students' existing levels of knowledge of texts, and the document acknowledges writing as being part of an interactive process involving talking, listening and reading. A separate booklet describes outcomes aligned to each syllabus objective.

*English stage 6 syllabus: Preliminary and HSC courses*, 1999, NSW Board of Studies, Sydney.

This document provides five courses of study in English at stage 6: Standard, Advanced, ESL, Extension and Fundamentals. "The study of English enables students to make sense of, and to enrich, their lives in personal, social and professional situations and to deal effectively with change" (page 6).

The syllabus provides for both responding to and composing texts. The latter includes writing: “Composing is the activity that occurs when students produce written, spoken or visual texts. Composing typically involves:

- the shaping and arrangement of textual elements to explore and express ideas, emotions and values
- the processes of imagining, drafting, appraising, reflecting and refining
- knowledge, understanding and use of the language forms, features and structures of texts.” (page 7)