

Definition of Literacy

Literacy is the ability to read and use written information and to write appropriately, in a range of contexts. It is used to develop knowledge and understanding, to achieve personal growth and to function effectively in our society. Literacy also includes the recognition of number and basic mathematical signs and symbols within text.

Literacy involves the integration of speaking, listening and critical thinking with reading and writing. Effective literacy is intrinsically purposeful, flexible and dynamic and continues to develop throughout an individual's lifetime. All Australians need to have effective literacy in English, not only for their personal benefit and welfare but also for Australia to reach its social and economic goals.

Australia's Language and Literacy Policy, Companion Volume to the Policy Paper, 1991, p.9

Since 1991, the very nature of what constitutes literacy has been expanded by the emerging multimedia and information technologies, the appearance of the Internet and further developments in computing and word processing.

Literacy Strategy, Focus on Literacy. NSW Department of School Education, Curriculum Directorate, 1997, p.8

Literacy in the Catholic School

Education is primarily about the development of the whole person. It is essential that children learn sound literacy skills because they are crucial to the development of the individual made in God's image and likeness. Also, with God's help, the children can make a sound contribution to both their own and the common welfare, perceiving their world as something on which they can, and should, make a positive impact. Impoverished literacy skills mean a limited ability to communicate with others, to build effective relationships, to learn, to reason, to express joy, suffering, concern and love.

It is the responsibility of the Catholic School, in teaching literacy to ensure that Gospel values are incorporated into the literacy programme. These values are evident not only in the manner in which literacy is taught, but in the selection and acquisition of policies in regard to resources employed. The school reflects and promotes a belief in the children's dignity and provides experiences that will develop their gifts. It also educates the children to live responsible lives, being concerned for both themselves and others and developing their sense of value as disciples of Jesus.

The notions of uniqueness of the individual, rights and responsibilities, the individual as part of a wider community, social justice and transformation of self and the community are integral to the teaching of literacy in the Catholic school.

Aims of Teaching Literacy

The aims of literacy teaching at St Philip Neri are to:

- ∞ educate the whole child, spirit, body and mind.
- ∞ develop in children effective and purposeful literacy skills in order that they may function confidently at school, at home and in society.
- ∞ individually challenge children according to ability and interests so they can reach their full potential.
- ∞ develop literacy skills that promote critical awareness.
- ∞ develop in the children a love of reading and writing.
- ∞ develop in the children a perception of themselves as life long learners.
- ∞ develop in the children literacy skills that assist them in interpreting their world.

Beliefs about Literacy Learning at St Philip Neri

We believe that student's literacy development is enhanced when the following beliefs are evident in literacy teaching K-6.

1. Learning is natural. Children learn best when involved, stimulated and challenged.

- Children are active participants in their learning.
- Opportunities are provided for children to engage in authentic reading and writing activities daily.
- Purposes are made explicit for learning.

2. Learning is a life long process. It is continuous, developmental and holistic.

- Learning opportunities are developmentally appropriate and based on needs.
- Activities are always meaningful and contextualised.

3. Learning is individual. Children learn at different rates, have different learning styles and come to us with different understandings.

- Children are seen as individuals with unique abilities.
- Instruction is individualised based on effective assessment of needs.
- Learning experiences are based on children's understandings.
- Adequate resources are provided to support children at all the stages of their literacy development.

4. Environment impacts on learning. Everyone has the right to a supportive, positive, happy environment.

- Classrooms provide structure and predictability for students that support learning.
- The classroom environment demonstrates beliefs about literacy through the print displayed.
- Children's efforts are respected and valued.

5. Teachers' programmes support the development of the students' potential in literacy.

Programmes are well-developed and based on the outcomes of the English K-6 Syllabus. They reflect the interconnectedness between Talking and Listening, Reading and Writing. Class programmes are also based on authentic assessment and high expectation of individual achievement.

Teaching and Learning Practices K-6

When teaching literacy the teachers at St Phillip Neri follow key teaching and learning practices K-6 to ensure continuity and consolidation of learning.

A balanced approach to teaching literacy is required. An uninterrupted 2 hour literacy block takes place K-6 at least 4 days each week.

Features of the literacy block include the four strands of the English K-6 Syllabus.

See Appendix A.

Components of a Balanced Literacy Program

The following teaching strategies are a regular part of a balanced literacy block at St Philip Neri. Definitions of the strategies are in Appendix B.

Modelled Reading

Shared Reading

Guided Reading

Reciprocal Teaching

Readers' Circle

Independent Reading

Modelled Writing

Shared Writing

Guided Writing

Independent Writing

Modelled Talking and Listening

Shared Talking and Listening

Guided Talking and Listening

Independent Talking and Listening

Features of the literacy block at St Philip Neri include:

Talking and Listening

- ∞ The employment of individual, paired, group, whole class activities (integrated across KLA's).
- ∞ Modelling of talking and listening skills and provision of practical follow up tasks.
- ∞ Questioning which will challenge children to think at various levels and respond accordingly.
- ∞ Use of class presentations, debates and public speaking.
- ∞ Regular listening comprehension experiences.
- ∞ Ensuring the use of talking and listening as a foundation for the teaching of text types.

Reading

- ∞ Planning a balance of modelled, shared, guided and independent reading strategies every week. The balance of strategies is determined by assessment.
- ∞ Providing a balance of text types, both literary and factual.
- ∞ Providing resources that reflect multicultural and Aboriginal perspectives as well as those which appeal to boys.
- ∞ Providing opportunities to develop oral reading skills in a variety of settings.
- ∞ Providing responses to reading which are authentic and meaningful whereby children practise the skills of reading and writing they are learning.
- ∞ Providing reading group activities, serial reading and take home reading.
- ∞ Developing comprehension skills through literal and inferred questioning.

Spelling

At St Philip Neri, we believe that there are 5 important principles of spelling and our classrooms, K-6 reflect these. (See Appendix C).

- ∞ Teaching phonological and graphological processing as per the scope and sequence in English K-6 and Stage Agreements. See Appendix D.
- ∞ Providing frequent opportunities to write for a range of purposes and audiences.
- ∞ Explicitly teaching a range of spelling strategies and providing appropriate spelling activities throughout the week.
- ∞ Employing learning strategies K-6 as required including, have-a-go book, sight words, chunking, word families and spelling rules, dictionary skills, proofreading and editing.
- ∞ Individualising spelling by including personal words identified through the child's writing.
- ∞ Ensuring children have knowledge of high frequency words appropriate to their level of development.
- ∞ Encouraging children, when dealing with new words, to analyse and look at the structure, relating this to word meaning.
- ∞ Providing a rich print environment in K-6 classrooms and exposing children to everyday words (on word banks around the room).
- ∞ Encouraging independent correction of spelling K-6, through developing the skills of editing and proofreading. See "St Philip Neri Proofreading Symbols", Appendix E.
- ∞ Using annotated work samples to demonstrate spelling development.
- ∞ Using errors as diagnostic and developmental signposts.

Writing

- ∞ Planning a balance of modelled, shared, guided and independent writing tasks.
- ∞ Focusing on text types as per the Scope and Sequence in English K-6. Teachers refer to overview from the previous year. (Appendix F).
- ∞ Engaging the children in the writing process and emphasising process and product.
- ∞ Providing opportunities for children to reflect on their learning both orally and in writing.
- ∞ Providing the opportunity for children to write every day, exposing them to a variety of texts and extended writing tasks across all K.L.A's.
- ∞ Ensuring that students perceive both an audience and purpose for their writing.

Grammar

Grammar is taught in context for all stages as per the English K-6 Syllabus document. Specific grammar related to text types in the K-6 Modules is also addressed.

Handwriting

- ∞ Emphasising correct posture and pencil grip to develop fluency, style and speed.
- ∞ Explicit handwriting lessons will take place in K-4 classrooms, twice per week. These lessons will be of approximately twenty minutes duration and they will incorporate the use of handwriting textbook.
- ∞ Teaching word processing skills.
- ∞ Offering suggestions for improvement and follow up in response to regular assessment.

Identification of Students with a need for Learning Support and/or Special Talents

At St Philip Neri Catholic School, all children are seen as individuals, and as such may require intervention or extension programmes to be developed to suit their needs.

- Parent /teacher interviews to gather information.
- Observation Surveys are administered to children considered to be at risk at the beginning of Year 1.
- Running Records are used to identify specify reading behaviours and to determine appropriate focus for Guided Reading.
- Learning support teacher assesses children identified by the class teacher as being at risk. Following testing an IEP is developed in conjunction with the class teacher.
- Programs individually designed for children with special talents and needs.

Role of Specialist Personnel

To support the class teacher.

To support and enhance the class program.

To plan cooperatively with the class teacher.

To assess children identified as being 'at risk' and to feed back to the class teacher so that planning can be done cooperatively.

Support to be integrated into the classroom program.

Assessment and Reporting

Assessment involves teachers in identifying, gathering and interpreting information about learning achievements of their students. Assessment assists teachers to set the direction for ongoing teaching and learning. It allows teachers and schools to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching programs, to plan to meet individual learning needs of all students and to report to parents.

The outcomes provide standards of achievement for each stage. Each outcome has a number of possible indicators that suggest a variety ways of demonstrating the outcome. The indicators have been developed to assist teachers in monitoring student progress at each stage and are used to annotate student work samples. Teachers can develop other indicators which reflect the experiences of children and the cultural background of their students.

Once the assessment has been carried out, the English K-6 syllabus will be used to design teaching and learning programs to cater for the identified learning needs of all students. The content and scope and sequence sections of this document will provide guidance in selecting appropriate learning experiences related to the outcomes.

Teachers engage in authentic assessment for reporting by:

- ∞ collecting information about students' literacy development using a variety of strategies, multiple opportunities and varying contexts.
- ∞ observing and recording behaviours during whole class and group lessons
- ∞ using oral and written retellings of familiar texts
- ∞ taking and analysing running records. Years K-3, Benchmarks twice per year for portfolios and reports. Informal running records, twice per term. Years 4-6, running records when necessary.
- ∞ using student self assessment
- ∞ using work samples. Annotated writing samples to Principal once per term
- ∞ analysing a student's incorrect response talking to parents and caregivers.

- ∞ using “Assessment for Teaching” – Appendix G.
- ∞ Standardised tests are used as follows:
 Kindergarten – Letter ID, beginning and end of year.
 Year 1 - Observation Survey, MIST (Middle Infant Screening Test).
 Year 2 – Waddington Reading, South Australian Spelling Test.
 Years 3-6 – TORCH (Test of Reading Comprehension), South Australian Spelling Test, CARS (Comprehensive Assessment of Reading Strategies)
 Years 3 and 5 Basic Skills - Writing and Literacy.
- ∞ Diagnostic Testing used as required e.g. Neale Analysis, Phonemic Awareness

Standards and Targets

- ∞ At St Philip Neri, we are working towards achieving outcomes in the English K-6 Syllabus.
- ∞ We teach from outcomes-based class programmes.
- ∞ We will continue teacher professional development when applicable.
- ∞ We expect the following reading levels to be achieved by the end of the year – Kindergarten- Yellow; Year 1 - Orange; Year 2 – Gold; Years 3-6 children will be independent, fluent readers with deep comprehension.
- ∞ With the help of the Learning Support Teacher, students at risk of failure in English will be identified.
- ∞ BST and PWA results will be analysed to inform our teaching.

Professional Development

All teachers are encouraged to attend cluster meetings and inservices when available to enhance their expertise in the teaching of literacy.

It is expected that all teachers develop their skills and understandings of best practice in teaching literacy by:

- attending ongoing professional development
- reading journals and articles available through professional organisations such as PETA
- sharing professional reading
- visiting classrooms in and outside the school
- co-operative planning with stage teacher
- sharing of classroom programmes
- contributing appropriate information at regular staff meetings

Partnership Between Parents, Teachers and Children

The partnership between parents and teachers is seen as crucial at St Philip Neri Catholic Neri Catholic School. Parents are the children’s first teachers and their insights and input are both valued and valuable.

Ongoing communication is fostered by the following strategies:

- ∞ Information sessions
- ∞ Meetings, newsletters to enhance ongoing communication about various literacy issues.
- ∞ Biannual meetings with parents to explain goals and achievements
- ∞ Use of term overview and class newsletters to communicate specific grade information, learning requirements and special events.
- ∞ Regular and ongoing communication about the child’s progress.
- ∞ Making available training for parents working in classrooms with children.

Appendix B

Modelled Reading

St Philip Neri Catholic School, Northbridge: *Literacy Plan*

Modelled reading involves reading to the class daily. Reading to children leads to acquisition of language patterns and vocabulary and further demonstrates effective skills of reading aloud. It fosters an understanding of reasons for reading and provides a time for reading for pleasure.

Shared Reading

In this approach the teacher uses enlarged texts. Through shared reading children can become independent in reading material that would otherwise be too difficult. Shared reading is an important part of the whole class focus and provides a vehicle to demonstrate reading strategies in a meaningful context. A Shared Book experience may go through several stages in the course of a week or more – introducing the enlarged text (teacher-centred), exploring the text (children join in and the teaching focus is planned in terms of the group needs) and independent reading (may involve reading response activities appropriate to the reading level of individual learners).

Guided Reading

Guided Reading enables a teacher and a group of students to talk, read and think their way purposefully through a text. Books are matched to the individual reading ability of the children at an instructional level, determined by the analysis of running records. Each child is guided to be responsible for gaining and maintaining meaning and developing strategies to achieve accuracy. The teacher's role is to guide the students in developing reading skills with comprehension being central to the act of reading. Students will engage in silent reading and the teacher may read, or have a child read part of the text to provide support. When discussing or revisiting the text, it may be appropriate for students to read parts aloud to answer a question or to justify an opinion.

Independent Reading

Within the daily reading workshop children require a time to read suitable materials independently. A range of materials should be made available for children to practise their reading skills on familiar and unfamiliar texts. A Home Reading programme is in place from K-6. Books are self-selected and based on the children's independent reading levels.

Reciprocal Teaching

This is a useful strategy to move from the teaching of reading skills to developing depth of comprehension. It takes the form of a dialogue between the teacher and students as they use and develop the strategies of predicting, clarifying, questioning and summarising. For Reciprocal Teaching, it is important to find a suitable fiction or factual text at an instructional level for the small group of children participating. It is also useful to model the four processes prior to commencing the strategy. Reciprocal Teaching helps readers to internalise the strategies which effective readers employ. When engaging in reciprocal teaching strategies, the students are practising and developing the skills required to comprehend and to learn.

Readers' Circle

The purpose of Readers' Circle is to take children beyond the usual individual response to text. It involves a small group of children selecting a text to read. Each child must have a copy of the text and will read individually an agreed part of the text. The children then come together to explore their understanding and interpretations of the text.

The initial discussion should focus on the cover, author and blurb as the teacher leads the group to make predictions on the content. After beginning the reading in their own time, the group comes together to discuss reactions to the text, having kept notes about their likes, dislikes, patterns and puzzles to assist them in taking part in the discussion. The teacher's role is crucial in the early stages in guiding the discussion and helping to make links between the comments the children are making.

Modelled Writing

In modelled writing the teacher provides a model of a proficient writer in progress. The teacher 'thinks aloud' the writing process as the modelling takes place. The students are the observers of the writing process in action. The teacher can plan to model any aspect of the writing process or related skills.

Shared Writing

This is a joint construction of a piece of text where the ideas come from both the teacher and the students. The teacher needs to be aware of the different parts of the writing process as well as text types, and ensure that children are exposed to a variety of each.

Guided Writing

Guided Writing is most commonly used during small group focus section of the writing workshop. The role of the teacher is to facilitate, guide and respond to the student's thinking in the process of composing texts. Guided Writing is when the students are constructing the text while being guided by the teacher, to extend or support, most often when the class is engaged in independent writing.

Independent Writing

Students write independently to practise the skills that they are learning though modelled, shared and guided writing. It is essential that expectations and routines are clearly established. The whole class focus and guided writing sessions will continue to provide strong models of writing behaviours that will support children when they write independently for a clearly articulated audience and purpose.

Modelled Talking and Listening

In modelled talking and listening, the teacher provides a model of a proficient speaker and listener. The teacher can plan to model any aspect of listening and talking and related skills. When modelling talking and listening, teachers model different ways to ask questions, make statements and give commands. They also demonstrate the differences between open-ended and closed questions. The teacher encourages polite and active listening skills and draws attention to the different ways in which spoken texts are structured. It is the role of the teacher to facilitate an understanding of the way in which spoken texts vary according to context, audience and purpose. Finally, the teacher should develop the children's awareness of the needs of the listener.

Whole Class Talking and Listening

When engaging in whole class talking and listening, teachers at St Philip Neri:

- ∞ implement group activities that focus on joint sharing, problem solving, negotiation and consensus.
- ∞ point out the differing grammatical structures used when speaking.
- ∞ provide guidance in how to prepare for and rehearse spoken presentations.
- ∞ develop children's formal presentation skills
- ∞ discuss with children effective and ineffective aspects of spoken language.
- ∞ listen and respond to points of view presented by others in group and class discussion.

Guided Talking and Listening

Guided Talking and Listening is mostly used during small group focus activities. The role of the teacher is to facilitate, guide and respond to the children's needs in talking and listening.

Independent Talking and Listening

During independent talking and listening sessions, children:

- ∞ participate in a range of learning experiences (see *English K-6 Modules*) related to text types being learned.
- ∞ discuss and debate issues.
- ∞ use different kinds of questions to interview, research, and classify meaning.
- ∞ prepare and present information reports and projects.
- ∞ discuss events, incidents, people and personal experiences.
- ∞ prepare, present or perform spoken texts to different audiences and for different purposes.
- ∞ present a point of view on an issue and argue a case with supporting evidence.
- ∞ engage in debates.
- ∞ use appropriate pitch, pace, pause and emphasis in public speaking and performance.
- ∞ retell stories heard and read, changing their voice to indicate different characters.
- ∞ respond to spoken texts in a variety of ways.

Appendix C

At St Philip Neri, we believe that there are five important principles of spelling.
St Philip Neri Catholic School, Northbridge: *Literacy Plan*

Principle One - Spelling is learnt as we use it

Teachers have an essential role in increasing students' interest in words and in influencing their attitudes toward spelling. Students need to feel they are able to succeed in learning to spell. How we translate this into classroom practice:

- ∞ Providing frequent opportunities to **write for a range of purposes and audiences**
- ∞ Providing a print rich environment that includes displays of letters, words, and word patterns on **Word Walls etc.**
- ∞ Encouraging students' attempts to spell words. Letting them approximate — especially when they are trying to use new words. Pointing out the parts they have spelled correctly. Using the parts they have misspelt as a focus for teaching spelling
- ∞ Ensuring students **proofread** their writing to identify possible spelling errors
- ∞ Selecting words from their **have-a-go pad**.
- ∞ Responding to the messages in children's writing by writing back to them. Making use of words that are misspelt in order to model the correct spelling

Principle Two - Learning to spell is part of the developmental process of learning to write

When teachers understand **spelling development**, they can match teaching strategies to developmental needs. Records can be kept showing the developmental indicators, strategies and skills that children are using by monitoring students' writing. In this way, teachers can decide when and how it is appropriate to intervene. Teachers are able to determine what students already know about spelling and they can then build on that knowledge.

Principle Three - Exploring words and vocabulary are part of learning to spell

Teaching spelling is an on-going activity. Whenever students come across new words, they should be encouraged to analyse them and to look at their structure and relate this to word meanings. **Word study** is an important part of the literacy program.

Principle Four - Independence and self-evaluation are essential in spelling development

How we translate this into classroom practice:

- ∞ Teaching **proofreading** skills - proofreading is different from normal reading. Students are encouraged to proofread their work. Students identify words they think might not be correct, even when they don't know how to correct the words. Knowing when a word *looks* wrong, is the first step towards getting it right
- ∞ Encouraging students to evaluate their own progress, identifying goals achieved and areas that need further work
- ∞ Teaching students **how to learn words** and how to check spelling of words they have attempted
- ∞ Making students aware of processes for **trying to write new words**

Principle Five - Effective spellers use a number of different strategies interactively in order to spell correctly

We believe that students need to be explicitly taught four forms of knowledge in order to help them to become competent spellers:

- ∞ Phonological Knowledge
- ∞ Visual Knowledge
- ∞ Morphemic Knowledge.
- ∞ Etymological Knowledge.

Strategic spellers/readers/writers know a range of strategies and can describe them as well as use them. Spelling is a thinking activity, not a rote learning activity.

(Principles of Spelling - <http://www.discover.tased.edu.au/english/six.htm>)
