



# Teacher pedagogic decision making about the teaching of reading

This paper relates to the following Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

## **Standard 1:**

**Know students and how they learn**

- 1.2 Understand how students learn
- 1.3 Students with diverse linguistic, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds
- 1.4 Strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- 1.5 Differentiate teaching to meet the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities
- 1.6 Strategies to support full participation of students with a disability

## **Standard 2:**

**Know the content and how to teach it**

- 2.1 Content and teaching strategies of the teaching area
- 2.2 Content selection and organisation
- 2.3 Curriculum, assessment and reporting
- 2.5 Literacy and numeracy strategies

## **Standard 3:**

**Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning**

- 3.1 Establish challenging learning goals
- 3.2 Plan, structure and sequence learning programs
- 3.3 Use teaching strategies
- 3.6 Evaluate and improve learning programs

## **Standard 5:**

**Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments**

- 5.1 Assess student learning
- 5.4 Interpret student data

## **Standard 6:**

**Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning**

- 6.1 Identify and plan professional learning needs
- 6.2 Engage in professional learning and improve practice
- 6.3 Engage with colleagues and improve practice
- 6.4 Apply professional learning and improve student learning

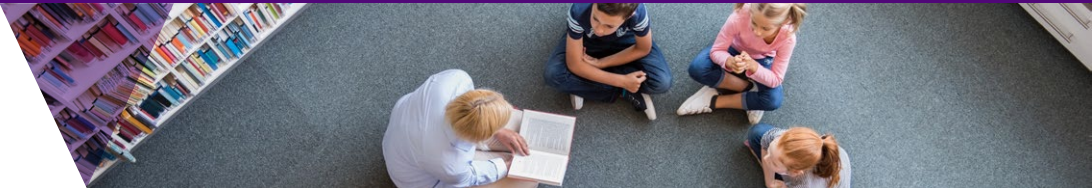


## The complexity of reading

Reading is a complex and multidimensional cognitive process, which is situated in and mediated by social and cultural practices (Compton-Lily et al., 2020). To break down this complexity, reading is often presented about under two broad categories: decoding and language comprehension (Hoover & Tunmer, 2020). Researchers have demonstrated that housed within these broad categories are the essential components that support reading development, including oral language, phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension and fluency (Konza, 2014).

When reading, these essential components form the basis for a range of cognitive, linguistic and social processes that help the reader comprehend the text.

Factors like the reader's working memory knowledge, intrinsic features of the text, as well as the purposes and objectives for reading play pivotal roles (Castles et al., 2018). While it is beneficial for educators to view reading in terms of decoding and comprehending texts, it is important to understand that it is the interplay between these reading components that enables an individual to read effectively (Wyse & Bradbury, 2022).



## The development of teacher knowledge

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AISTL) professional standards for teachers acknowledges that teachers' knowledge is built across the span of their careers. Teacher knowledge and skills in the field of reading are built over time. Therefore, professional learning in the field of reading or literacy more broadly should be a career-long goal. Teacher knowledge building in reading can be targeted in the following areas:

- Understanding [the developmental progression](#) of knowledge and skills in reading and viewing, writing, speaking and listening
- Administering and analysing student literacy assessment data, including standardised assessments, such as the [English Online Interview \(EOI\)](#), and the [Diagnostic Assessment Tools in English \(DATE\)](#) and informal assessments as relevant to individual students and the school context, such as teacher anecdotal notes, moderated work samples and student surveys.
- Supporting diverse learners, including [students who need extra support](#), [high ability students](#), students who have [English as an additional language](#) and [Koorie students](#)
- Understanding the relationship between reading and engagement (Refer to the 'Reading engagement and enjoyment' paper in the professional readings series)
- Knowing the [Victorian English Curriculum](#)
- Using evidence-based practices that support all learners, such as the [High Impact Teaching Strategies \(HITS\)](#).

Knowledge building in these areas support teacher judgement about what students need to learn, how they need to learn it and the measures they will use to monitor and assess the students' learning. Schools need to help develop 'expert teachers' who draw on their knowledge to make informed decisions about teaching and challenge and modify their existing knowledge (Beard et al, 2019).



## Teachers' knowledge of their students

Teachers recognise that student diversity encompasses differences in students' knowledge and skills, difference in students' rates of learning, difference in interest, motivation and self-regulation levels and differences in language proficiency. All these factors need to be considered when planning, teaching, monitoring and assessing reading. At the start of the school year, it is crucial to gather information on students. Both informal interactions and formal assessments, like the EOI, offer invaluable opportunities to gain insightful information about students and their capabilities. Throughout the year, this information is supplemented by ongoing monitoring, to ensure that teaching remains targeted to meet the needs of each student. Additionally, teachers will gain insights into their students' journey as literacy learners through everyday interactions and opportunities that arise in the classroom for observation of students.

To further understand their students as literacy learners, teachers can utilise:

- Formal assessments, such as those presented on the Insight Assessment Platform (Refer to the 'Using the EOI for differentiated planning' paper in the professional reading series)
- Screening tests designed to investigate reading or reading-related skills that are predictive of future reading achievement (e.g letter naming) (Hoover, W.A. & Tunmer, 2020).
- Teacher designed assessment
- Rubrics
- Pre and post tests
- Anecdotal notes
- Writing analyses
- Observation, informal discussions, interviews, questionnaires to gain insights into students' interests, attitudes and motivation
- Portfolios of student work samples (see the [Victorian Curriculum English annotated work samples](#))
- Parent, teacher, student meetings
- Discussions with colleagues.



## Teachers' knowledge of the English curriculum


The [Victorian Curriculum English](#) is structured as a continuum of learning, describing what students should learn, and therefore what teachers should teach.

The curriculum, including the content descriptors and the achievement standards describe knowledge and skills in English. The [Literacy Learning Progressions](#) provide a detailed understanding of literacy development and can be used in conjunction with the curriculum to support teachers' planning of English. Typically, classrooms will have students who are at working at different levels of the Victorian Curriculum English, therefore, teachers need to know the curriculum and the progressions at several levels to cater to the diverse needs of their students. This may also include knowing the [Victorian Curriculum A—D levels](#) for students with disabilities and additional learning needs and the [English as an additional language \(EAL\) curriculum](#) for those students who are EAL learners.

## Teachers' knowledge of pedagogy

The [Victorian Teaching and Learning Model](#) includes the Pedagogic Model, which describes what effective teaching looks like in the classroom. The model requires teachers to consider their knowledge of students and content, when selecting teaching strategies. The teaching strategies that teachers select help to meet the literacy learning goals set for each student. Resources such as the [Literacy Teaching Toolkit](#), the [High Impact Teaching Strategies \(HITS\)](#) and [English as an Additional Language \(EAL\)](#) strategies provide examples of evidenced-based pedagogic practices. Teaching strategies can be considered along the gradual release of responsibility model and range from highly supportive practices, such as [modelled reading](#), to practices where students take greater responsibility in the learning process, applying their knowledge and consolidating their skills in language and literacy, such as [independent reading](#).

The teaching of reading is multifaceted and involves consideration of individual student differences in language and literacy development and the English



curriculum content to be covered. Additionally, teachers are required to select pedagogical practices that will link the teaching of literacy skills across the 3 modes of English and through meaningful contexts. This is to ensure students recognise the purpose for the learning while benefitting from the opportunity to practise and develop their learning. Hoover and Tunmer (2020) report on the importance of matching students with appropriate pedagogical practices. They suggest that differentiated reading instruction is necessary from the beginning of school, especially for those students who begin school with limited amounts of reading related skills. Teaching strategies should be selected for the whole class, small groups and individuals. The following concepts may be useful to consider when making pedagogic choices.

## Differentiated instruction

Different teaching strategies can be used to meet diverse students' needs. For example, in a Foundation classroom, [shared reading](#) may be used to teach phoneme/grapheme correspondences to the whole class, based on data from the EOJ, DATE and teacher observations. Then some students may work with the teacher using [interactive writing](#) to consolidate their understandings of the phoneme/grapheme correspondences. Some students may be involved in [independent reading](#) with texts that highlight the taught correspondences. Other students may be working in a small group playing [oral language games](#) to reinforce their phonological awareness.

## Reciprocity

A reciprocal relationship exists between reading and writing, where reading instruction can support writing and vice versa (Graham, 2020). Additionally, oral language comprehension supports reading (Hoover & Tunmer, 2020). Selecting teaching practices that support [development in more than one mode of English](#) can work towards meeting a number of learning outcomes (Refer to the 'Oral Language to support phonological awareness and phonics instruction' paper in the professional reading series).



## Motivation

Motivation to read has been identified as a key factor to support students' independent reading. Students are likely to be motivated to read when they read texts that interest them and that their friends enjoy (Castles et al., 2018). The implications for classroom practice include:

- Availability of a wide variety of texts
- Time allocated to student selected texts
- Opportunities for peer talk about texts
- Pedagogical practices that engage students with both texts and reading, such as games, role-play and discussions.

Teacher expertise is necessary to deal with the complexity of reading and its multiple components (Compton-Lily et al., 2020). Pedagogic decision making involves teachers' deep knowledge of their students, the content they need to teach and the practices that support the teaching of literacy. Continuing to develop these knowledge elements enables teachers to meet the diverse literacy needs of their students.

## How can leadership support pedagogic decision making?

UNESCO (2021) International Commission On The Futures Of Education report presented teaching as a collaborative profession, characterised by teamwork. The report claims that quality teaching is the result of teachers' intellectual engagement and knowledge building. This occurs through research and reflection on their own practice, supported by professional learning that develops teachers' expertise in designing and leading student learning. The school's leadership team can provide support to teachers by allocating time for pedagogic decision making, planning, sourcing appropriate resources and organising opportunities for collegial discussions and professional learning.



## Suggestions for further discussion

1. Do we hold a shared understanding about how students learn to read?
2. How can we audit our literacy programs to see if we are adequately covering the components of reading?
3. What are our individual and collective professional learning needs in the field of literacy?
4. What do we have in our term/ yearly professional learning community (PLC) agendas that will provide professional learning in English and literacy?
5. What formal and informal assessments are we currently using to enable us to know our literacy learners? Are these sufficient?
6. How can we audit our knowledge of the Victorian Curriculum English?
7. At what levels of the Victorian Curriculum English are our students working and are these reflected in our planning documents?
8. Considering our student cohort do we need to become more familiar with the Levels A—D or the Victorian Curriculum English or with the English as an additional language (EAL) curriculum? If so, how?
9. How do our planning documents reflect activities that cater for students at different levels of the curriculum?
10. How do we know if we use diverse teaching practices that support all students within a gradual release of responsibility model?
11. What opportunities can we create for peer observation and modelling, mentoring and professional discussions to further our understandings of teaching practices?



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