

# USING HIGH IMPACT TEACHING STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT LITERACY LEARNING

**“It is critical that teachers learn about the success or otherwise of their interventions: those teachers who are students of their own impact are the teachers who are the most influential in raising students’ achievement”<sup>1</sup>**

Hattie, 2014

## OVERVIEW

This professional practice note provides advice to school leaders and teachers on applying High Impact Teaching Strategies (HITS) to areas of the Victorian Curriculum F-10 to support effective literacy learning. This note will describe how the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO), the Victorian Curriculum F-10, and HITS can be used together to improve literacy learning outcomes.

## EFFECTIVE LITERACY LEARNING

Literacy can be defined as students’ ability to interpret and create texts with appropriateness, accuracy, confidence, fluency and efficacy for learning in and out of school, and for participating in the workplace and community.<sup>2</sup> A strong foundation in literacy is vital for every child and young person, and underpins their ability to engage in education, reach their potential and fully participate in the community.

While literacy is explored, developed, challenged and embedded across all areas of the Victorian Curriculum F-10, students also experience explicit literacy instruction through the English learning area.

Effective literacy learning occurs when schools embed high impact strategies in literacy programs. This includes teachers

reflecting on their practice, identifying an area of improvement focus, applying the teaching strategy and evaluating its impact.

The Department’s HITS resource supports teachers, professional learning communities and whole-school groups to set goals and actions based on the teaching strategies. The following examples demonstrate how the HITS can be applied to support literacy learning.

## EXAMPLES IN PRACTICE

### Example 1: Setting goals (0.56 effect size)<sup>3</sup>

The English team at a Melbourne secondary college invited the Professional Learning Coordinator to their team meeting to discuss using goal setting and success criteria for an upcoming Year 8 English Unit. Their discussions underlined the importance of providing students with **clear learning intentions, with goals that clarify what success looks like (HITS #1)**.

At the start of the Unit, the English teachers present their students with a Unit overview, and provide them with opportunities to demonstrate their current knowledge and skills on a proficiency scale. Students are also introduced to the Unit’s learning intentions and success criteria so that they can self-monitor their progress during and at the end of the Unit.

The use of proficiency scales enabled students and teachers to recognise prior learning levels and reflect on student growth. The use of learning intentions enabled teachers to set challenges that fostered student commitment and confidence in their learning.

To access examples of learning intentions, see the *in practice examples* of the Literacy Teaching Toolkit, including [reading and viewing](#), [writing](#), [speaking and listening](#).

### Example 2: Explicit teaching (0.59 effect size)<sup>4</sup>

A teacher at a regional primary school is interested in how they can support students to move beyond making bare assertions and to take account of differing perspectives and points of view (for further information, see [English level 5 achievement standards](#) and [language for interaction sub-strand](#)).

After consulting with peers and the school’s learning specialist, the teacher identifies that explicit teaching may

<sup>1</sup> Hattie, J. (2014). *Visible learning for teachers: maximizing impact on learning*. London; New York: Routledge, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority. (2017). *English structure*. Retrieved from <http://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/english/introduction/structure>

<sup>3</sup> As reported in: Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible Learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. Milton Park, UK: Routledge.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

improve learning in this area. In **explicit teaching (HITS #3)** practice, teachers show students what to do and how to do it, and create opportunities in lessons for students to demonstrate understanding and apply learning.

The teacher introduces *accountable talk*, where students are accountable to the learning community, to pursue accurate knowledge and apply rigorous thinking.<sup>5</sup> The teacher begins the lesson by being explicit about the learning goals and success criteria, before demonstrating a range of interaction strategies, such as initiating the topic, affirming to somebody who has contributed, politely disagreeing and asking for clarification. At the end of the lesson, the teacher revisits the reasons and protocols for accountable talk, to ensure that students recognise these interaction strategies as tools for learning.

For further information, see: [Accountable talk](#) and the [Literacy Masterclass on High Impact Teaching Strategies](#) (at 26 minutes).

### Example 3: Multiple exposures (0.71 effect size)<sup>6</sup>

A teacher at an inner city primary school recognises that some students require support in phonics sequences. This includes support to recognise most letter-sound matches and generalisations for adding suffixes to words (see [phonics and word knowledge sub-strand, level 2](#)).

After consulting with peers, the teacher identifies that multiple exposures may improve learning in this area. **Multiple exposures (HITS #6)** involve providing students with multiple opportunities to encounter, engage with, and elaborate on new knowledge and skills. This involves spaced interactions with new knowledge and concepts.

The teacher works together with other teachers to trial an intervention over a number of months, designed to expose students to carefully selected 'target words' linked with the learning area content. Strategies used to reinforce this learning include peer discussion on how to read target words, as well as a vocabulary wall that students contribute to over time.

For further information, see [Phonics](#).

### Example 4: Collaborative learning (0.59 effect size when compared to individual work)<sup>7</sup>

A regional secondary college has recently welcomed a new literacy coach. This literacy coach is supporting the refresh of a literacy program in year 7. As a means of engaging both students and teachers in the program, the literacy coach suggested adopting a **collaborative learning (HITS #5)**. Collaborative learning occurs when students work together in small groups and everyone participates in a learning task.

Using the Literacy Teaching Toolkit, teachers work together to establish literature circles as part of their current English Unit. This involves a student selected text and small group discussions focusing on higher level thinking skills such as the author's intent, writing style and characterisation.

The teachers support the literature circles by explicitly demonstrating and modelling strategies to sustain a rich conversation about the text, including conversation stems such as "I noticed...", "I wondered..." and "I was surprised by..."<sup>8</sup>

As a result of the scaffolding and guidance, the students organise themselves into small groups that function effectively, and experience sharing roles, responsibilities and project ownership. Collectively, the teachers have a significant impact on the literacy learning outcomes of year 7 students.

For more information, see the [Literacy Teaching Toolkit](#) and [literature circles](#).

<sup>5</sup> Wolf, M.K., Crossen, A. C. and Resnick, L.B. (2006) Accountable talk in reading comprehension discussion. CSE Technical Report, 670. Los Angeles. Learning and Research Development Centre, University of Pittsburgh.

<sup>6</sup> As reported in: Hattie, J. (2009). Visible Learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement. Milton Park, UK: Routledge.

<sup>7</sup> As reported in: Hattie, J. (2009). Visible Learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement. Milton Park, UK: Routledge.

<sup>8</sup> Mills, H. & Jennings, L. (2011). Talking about talk: Reclaiming the value and power of literature circles. *The Reading Teacher*, 64 (8), 590-598.

### ADVICE FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

- The Literacy and Numeracy Strategy provides a platform for leading the improvement of literacy learning in your school. The Strategy outlines principles and expectations for students, teachers, school leaders, network leaders and regional leaders to lift literacy achievement for all children and young people in Victoria. For more information, see [Literacy and Numeracy Strategy](#).
- The *evidence-based, high impact teaching strategies* dimension is part of the Excellence in Teaching and Learning Priority in FISO. Consider how you can use the FISO Continuum of Practice as a tool to engage members of your school in an aspirational conversation about embedding and excelling in the delivery of high quality teaching for literacy learning. For more information on FISO, see [Framework for Improving Student Outcomes](#) and the [Excellence in Teaching and Learning continuum](#).
- As a professional learning team or community, examine the range of teaching strategies currently used to support literacy learning in your school, using the HITS resource and relevant continua of practice as a guide. Identify literacy learning areas that might benefit from new or additional teaching strategies. For more information, see: [HITS](#) and the [Literacy Teaching Toolkit](#).
- The Department's Peer Observation Guide for Principals and School Leaders provides guidance on the key phases for successful peer observation, which can be used to coach, model, observe, provide feedback and reflect on teaching strategies and improvements to progress literacy learning. For more information on the Department's peer observation materials, see: [peer observation, feedback and reflection](#).
- Consider how the school can continue to improve its literacy program through continuously evaluating the impact of teaching on student learning. For more information, see: [evaluate the impact of your teaching](#).

### ADVICE FOR TEACHERS

- The first step to implementing HITS in your classroom is to understand your current impact on student learning and how to best support students in their learning journey.
- Consider undertaking a self-reflection of your current practice, using the Practice Principles for Excellence in Teaching and Learning reflection tools. The Peer Observation Guide for Teachers also provides useful information on self-reflection. For more information, see: [Practice Principles for](#)

[Excellence in Teaching and Learning reflection tools](#) and [Peer observation guide for teachers](#). Use the HITS resource and relevant continua of practice as a guide to identify strategies to improve the delivery of high quality teaching and literacy learning. For more information, see: [HITS](#).

- If you are already using HITS, consider how you can continue to evaluate the impact of your practice on students' literacy learning. For more information, see: [evaluate the impact of your teaching](#).

### RELEVANT TOOLS AND RESOURCES

This note is part of a series of professional practice notes to support school based staff to continue improving their practice. See [Professional Practice Elements](#) for more information.

Relevant tools and resources include:

- [Evaluating the impact of your teaching](#)
- [Expert literacy videos](#)
- [Framework for Improving Student Outcomes](#)
- [High Impact Teaching Strategies](#)
- [Peer observation, including feedback and reflection](#)
- [Practice Principles for Excellence in Teaching and Learning](#)
- [Practice Principles for Excellence in Teaching and Learning reflection tools](#)
- [Literacy Masterclass on High Impact Teaching Strategies](#)
- [Literacy and Numeracy Strategy](#)
- [Literacy Teaching Toolkit](#)
- [Victorian Literacy Portal](#)

### CONTACT US

For more information, or to share your feedback on this resource, please email: [professional.practice@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:professional.practice@edumail.vic.gov.au).