T U T O R   T I P S

Reading – more than barking at print. Helping your students with reading

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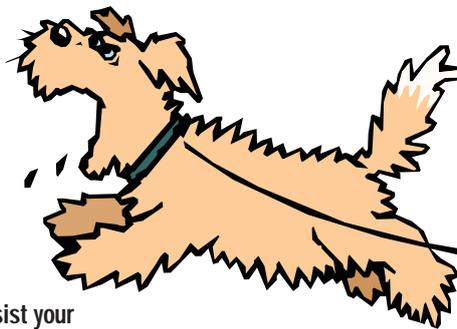
In this Tutor Tip ideas will be shared on how to assist your student(s) with reading. I will outline a range of reading activities which may be undertaken with students at about Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) Level 2.

Firstly, I will briefly outline the indicators at ACSF Level 2; then a number of reading theories will be discussed from 'information processing' and 'phonics' to social literacies and the 'Four Resources' model of reading. Next, a way of analysing students' reading abilities will be demonstrated in order to show how you can draw upon the different theories to meet your students' needs. Finally, this tip will focus on reading for various purposes and include ways of increasing learners' confidence with reading.

The Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) is based on the National Reporting System (NRS) and has 5 levels of performance in each of the core skills of reading, writing, oral communication, numeracy and learning. At each level within a core skill there are statements called Indicators, which describe achievement at that level. So for Reading at

Level 2, the indicators are:

2.03   Identifies and interprets relevant information and ideas within familiar contexts. This Reading Indicator addressed audience, purpose and meaning-making strategies.

2.04   Uses a number of reading strategies to identify and interpret relevant information within familiar text types. This Reading Indicator addresses text structure and features, grammatical expression of ideas, word identification strategies and vocabulary.

Reading theories

You will have seen many debates in the media regarding the teaching of literacy – phonics versus whole language, or too much emphasis on critical literacy. The following table will introduce you to some reading theories, each of which has some value for students. It can be argued that it is not a case of one method is best but that all have their part to play, as there is more to reading than barking at print.

Discipline/Field	Associated theories	Teaching practices	Resource examples
Psychology + linguistics	Information processing Psycholinguistics	Decoding meaning by identifying & matching letters & sounds i.e. phonics. Reading for meaning based on semantic (word meaning), syntactic (word order) & grapho-phonic cues.	Decontextualised word lists and basic readers using phonically regular words. Natural language readers, cloze exercises and language experience texts using a student's own language.
Anthropology, sociology + linguistics	Social literacies	Understanding the ways in which people use literacy in different contexts, i.e., Public (official standard English) v. vernacular (community, non-standard English) literacies.	Social, personal, public and workplace texts and tasks.
	Critical literacy Critical language studies	Transforming through social action (Freire) Meaning through dialogue and problematising. Examining how texts are socially and ideologically constructed.	Community texts – could be environmental issues (no dams, save the trees). Advertising material (used to discuss the power of persuasion) and fine print on warranties or costs for mobile phones

The Four Resources model of reading (Freebody, 2000) brings together the theories outlined above and highlights four roles for the reader: It is suggested that when you work with your student, you think about these roles. Depending on your student, you may chose to focus on one role or show how all roles work together to make meaning.

1. The reader as code breaker. Readers use their knowledge of phonics, semantics (word meanings) and syntax (word order) to make meaning from the text.
2. The reader as text participant. Readers use a range of reading strategies, some relating to the reader's skills, others relating to practice in a particular context. They also monitor their reading so they know when they have lost comprehension (metacognition).
3. The reader as text user. Readers choose from a range of texts to achieve different purposes for reading. Meaning is derived from matching the reading strategy to the right text to achieve the purpose for reading, in a particular context e.g. reading a car manual or a referdex.
4. The reader as text analyst. Readers read between the lines or read the fine print, to consider what the text might mean for them, their family or community.

You will find that adult literacy curricula in Queensland are based on this model of reading.

Where to start?
What do you need to know?

Graphic/cartoon

Now you have an overview of some reading theories, it is time to think about your student. Your student may not think they read much at all. One starting point is to find out what you student reads now. Below are two sets of questions you could use to start a discussion.

BURKE'S READING INVENTORY	**DAILY LIFE SKILLS**
• When you are reading and you come to something you don't know, what do you do? • Think of someone you know who you think is a good reader. Why do you think that? • Do you think they ever come to something they don't know when they're reading? What do you think they do about it? • If you knew that someone was having difficulty with reading, how would you help them? • How did you try to learn to read? Did anyone help you? How? • What would you like to do better as a reader? • What do you think of yourself as a reader?	• Do you drive a car? If yes, did you have any problems getting your licence? • Are you able to find your way around an area unfamiliar to you? If yes, how? • Do you shop at a supermarket or other stores? How do you make choices in shops when you are required to read the labels? Have you ever made the wrong choice? • Do you watch T.V.? Do ever read reviews of TV programs? • Do you ever eat out (Restaurant, Pizza Hut etc)? How do you make your choice from the menu? Have you ever made a wrong selection because of your reading problem? • Have you ever voted in elections? How do you make your selection in the voting booth? • Has not being able to read caused problems with your mail/ email? How do you find out what is in the mail you receive?

Next you need to know what your student wants to read. Your student may want to focus on one or all of the following contexts for reading, with different text types and approaches to reading. You will need to agree on which one takes priority.

i. At home – reading for pleasure, reading to children (books and magazines), reading for life (everyday texts).
ii. At work – reading to do (workshop manuals, rosters, production charts etc).
iii. For study – reading to learn (study materials).

Now you need to know how well your student reads. If you discussed the questions above, you may already have some indication, or you could ask your student for a self-assessment. That is, if s/he says they sometimes read a menu you could ask if they can read with ease or if they need assistance? For a more detailed assessment you should ask your program co-ordinator. You may also ask your student if s/he is willing to read something, of their choice, to you. Following is a basic Reading Behaviour Profile to give you some ideas of what to look for. Then some ideas have been provided for you to help your student if s/he student needs assistance with word meanings (semantics), word order (syntax), letter-sound relationships (phonics) or identifying different text types (genres).

Reading Behaviour Profile	**Ideas to assist with recognising text types (genres):**
• Shows a positive attitude towards reading • Recognises text structures and uses them to anticipate text types • Comprehends a range of texts and chooses appropriate texts to suit his/her purposes • Predicts using context, pictures and diagrams; and uses reading-on, guessing, re-reading • Identifies and recalls details • Uses scanning techniques • Uses skipping techniques • Works out the meaning of unfamiliar words • Critically evaluates writing: - can understand information not explicitly stated - able to detect writer's perspective	• Collect a range of different types of text: news story, recipe, business letter etc. • Help your student to identify the different text structures - the way the texts are set out on the page - whether there are headings and subheadings - use of features such as a date, an address, Dear…, Yours… • Help your student to identify different text features: - How is the vocabulary different? - Are specific terms, amounts, names used? - Are numbers used eg 1, 2, 3, or first, second, then, next, finally? - What comes first in the sentence e.g. "I am writing…" "Cream the butter and sugar…"

Ideas to assist with semantics (word meanings):
- Vocabulary building
- Focus questions before reading re prior knowledge of topic
- Questions during reading to focus on word meaning
- Build word families eg sun, sunny, sunshine, sunset
- Cloze exercises (see text box)
- Dictionary work (alphabetical order - also telephone/street directory etc)
- Latin or Greek roots (choose a root eg auto and see how many words you can make through word building)
- Student's own dictionary for new words and word families
- Discuss everyday words used as technical terms eg how many meanings can you think of for 'wave'?

Ideas to assist with syntax (word order):
- Cloze exercises omitting parts of speech e.g. word endings which indicate tense or plurals; prepositions; adjectives etc
- Cut ups – select a paragraph, read through then cut it up into sentences. Try re-ordering sentences. Try adding clauses, adding adjectives. Change the subject in the sentence i.e. what goes first.
- Choose a short text you are reading, try changing the tense or change from singular to plural (and note subject-verb agreement). Try substituting conjunctions to show similar/different meanings.

Ideas to assist with phonics (letter-sounds):
- Use words from your student's writing or words which they have difficulty reading
- Check your student can hear different sounds (beginning, medial, ending)
- Check your student can match sounds with letters (consonants, vowels)
- Check your student knows the sounds made by different letter combinations (digraphs, blends etc).
- dd phonic word families to your student's personal dictionary e.g. snow, row, throw.

CLOZE EXERCISES
How to prepare a cloze exercise.
- Choose a paragraph that is on a topic of interest and at a suitable reading level for your student.
- Write it out omitting every fifth or sixth word. Mark where the omission occurs using underline. Draw each _____ the same length.
- Or, delete a particular part of speech, e.g. all the nouns, all the verbs, all the adjectives.
- To focus on sentence construction, leave out the first or last word of the sentence and punctuation.
- To focus on phonic patterns, leave out all the words containing a particular phonic element, e.g. "ai". All the words left out would rhyme with "rain".
- Construct a passage based on a text the student is reading and omit words that the student has been learning to read (vocabulary).
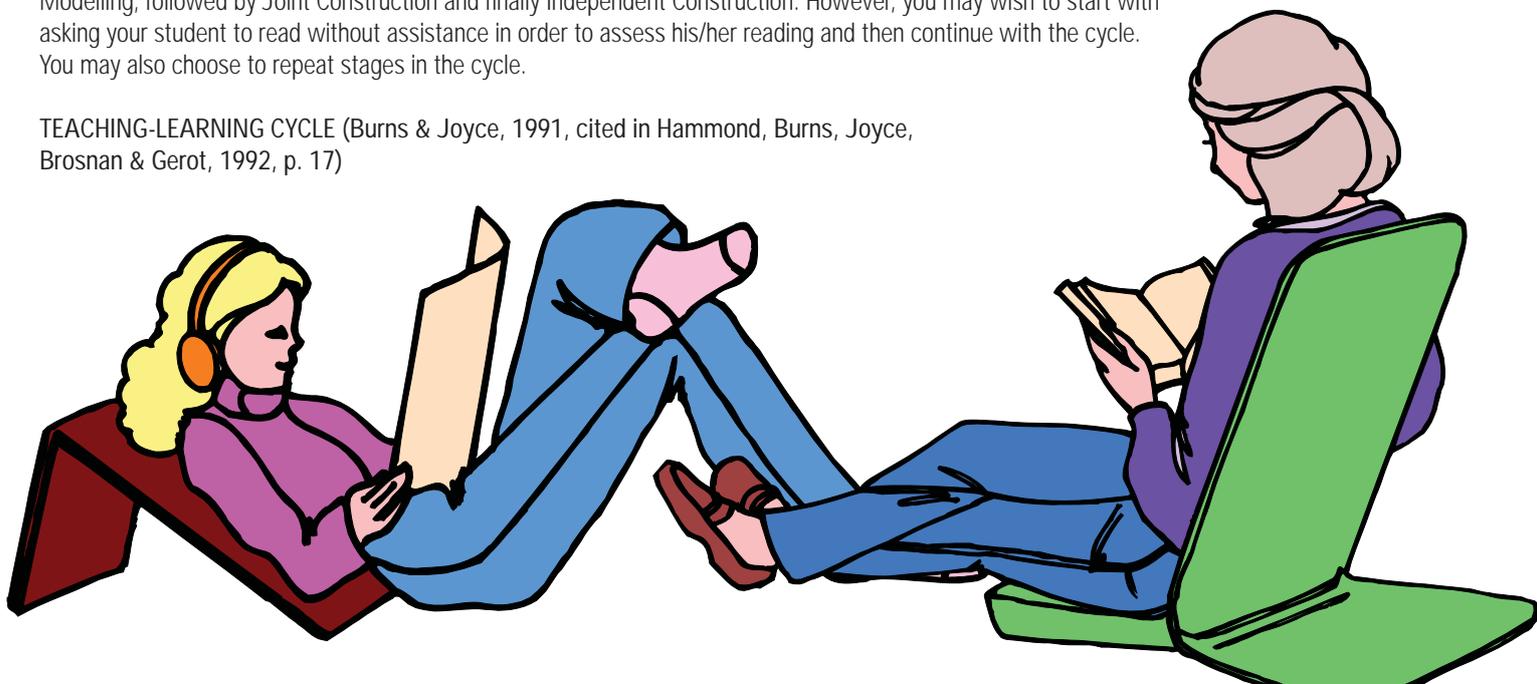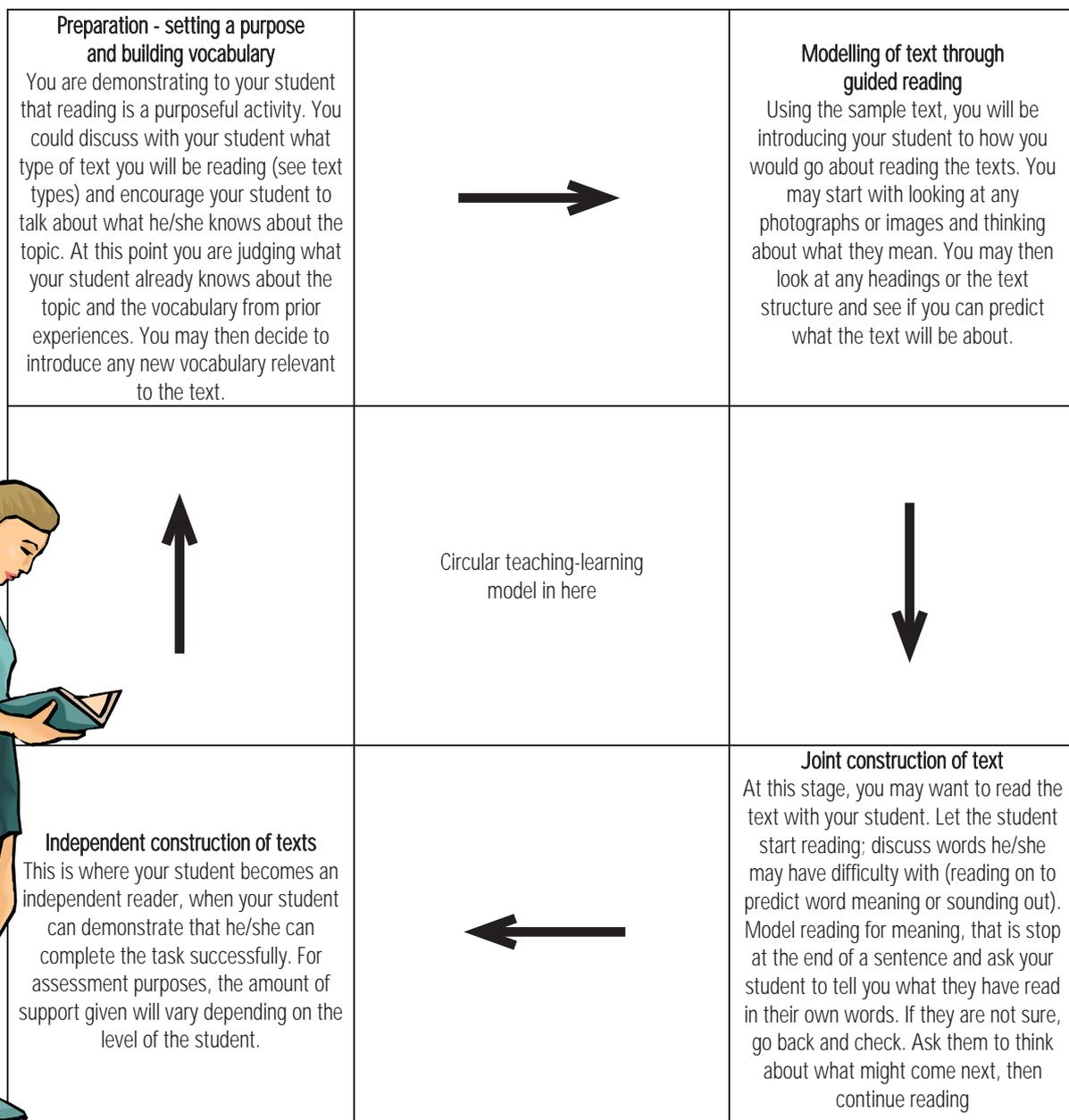
How is the technique used?
- Your student reads through the entire Cloze passage (to make the most use of all clues).
- Your student reads one sentence aloud.
- Your student suggests words that could fit in the blanks and offers reasons for the choices.
- You help through discussion, explaining reasons for unacceptable responses and noting problems your student is having for follow-up lessons.
- If possible, compare the Cloze passage with the original version. Even if the student's response was different, it may not necessarily be wrong, that is, the student may have made an acceptable substitution.

Modelling reading
Now you have discussed what your student reads, what s/he wants to read, their reading behaviours and have some ideas to assist with particular problems when reading. In this section we are going to show you a model, which can be used to assist your student with reading. The Teaching-Learning Cycle (Burns & Joyce, 1991, cited in Hammond, Burns, Joyce, Brosnan & Gerot, 1992) usually starts with Preparation, then moves to Modelling, followed by Joint Construction and finally Independent Construction. However, you may wish to start with asking your student to read without assistance in order to assess his/her reading and then continue with the cycle. You may also choose to repeat stages in the cycle.

TEACHING-LEARNING CYCLE (Burns & Joyce, 1991, cited in Hammond, Burns, Joyce, Brosnan & Gerot, 1992, p. 17)

Preparation - setting a purpose and building vocabulary You are demonstrating to your student that reading is a purposeful activity. You could discuss with your student what type of text you will be reading (see text types) and encourage your student to talk about what he/she knows about the topic. At this point you are judging what your student already knows about the topic and the vocabulary from prior experiences. You may then decide to introduce any new vocabulary relevant to the text.	→	**Modelling of text through guided reading** Using the sample text, you will be introducing your student to how you would go about reading the texts. You may start with looking at any photographs or images and thinking about what they mean. You may then look at any headings or the text structure and see if you can predict what the text will be about.
↑	Circular teaching-learning model in here	↓
Independent construction of texts This is where your student becomes an independent reader, when your student can demonstrate that he/she can complete the task successfully. For assessment purposes, the amount of support given will vary depending on the level of the student.	←	**Joint construction of text** At this stage, you may want to read the text with your student. Let the student start reading; discuss words he/she may have difficulty with (reading on to predict word meaning or sounding out). Model reading for meaning, that is stop at the end of a sentence and ask your student to tell you what they have read in their own words. If they are not sure, go back and check. Ask them to think about what might come next, then continue reading

In this Tutor Tip you have been introduced to some reading theories and shown how you can put them into practice. Your aim is to assist your student to identify and interpret relevant information and ideas within familiar text types and in familiar contexts. So your student needs to understand not only how to de-code and have a range of reading strategies but also know that reading is purposeful – that we read different texts in different ways depending on the purpose for reading. Sometimes your student will just need to locate information in the text; at other times s/he will need to think through the implications of what is being said or what the author is implying. They may also have to consider how the information can be used in other contexts or situations.

It is also important to encourage your student to think about what they are doing when they read. That is, they need to know how to identify the task (reading a road map or a recipe) and then be able to select appropriate strategies to complete the task (assuming that the student has a range to choose from). In addition, they need to know how to monitor their reading while completing the task i.e. being aware of when they have lost comprehension and deciding what to do about it.

Finally, we hope that you enjoy reading to and with you student – being conscious of the fact that reading is more than barking at print!

References

Hammond, J., Burns, A., Joyce, H., Brosnan, D. & Gerot, L. (1992). English for social purposes. Sydney: NCELTR, Macquarie University.

Luke, A. & Freebody, P. (nd). Further Notes on the Four Resources Model. Retrieved 14/11/2008 from http://www.readingonline.org/research/lukefreebody.html

[1] For more information on the ACSF go to the WELL website: www.deewr.gov.au/well and scroll down to 'What's New' then click on the Australian Core Skills Framework.