Between the Lines

Literacy at Junior Cycle

Teachers' Resource Book

Aideen Cassidy and Bernadette Kiely

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Foreword

The Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) endeavours to make the Junior Certificate accessible and enjoyable for potential early school leavers. The Programme works with schools in developing approaches to the difficulties many students are facing. It looks at such issues as the transfer from primary to post-primary, student involvement and affirmation, parental involvement, social and personal skills, behaviour difficulties and self-esteem. One element of the Programme is literacy development.

Between The Lines is a teacher resource book that outlines a whole-school approach to literacy enhancement at Junior Cycle. It looks at the role of literacy in every classroom. The book encourages teachers to work through their own subject areas, as cross-curricular teams and as a whole school to improve literacy levels.

The techniques and ideas presented are firmly rooted in the practice and experience of teachers at Junior Cycle, particularly those participating in the Junior Certificate School Programme. The willingness of the JCSP co-ordinators and the teachers to participate in the debate and to implement the various strategies outlined has been invaluable in the development of this resource book. Their enthusiasm for Make A Book, Peer Tutoring, Readalong, Book Boxes, Time for Reading and Book Week has generated energy throughout schools in the area of literacy. This energy continues to drive the development of the JCSP Literacy Strategy.

The book suggests ways in which all teachers can make a difference to literacy levels in their school. It is hoped that there is something in here for everyone and that the effect of incorporating these strategies will have a noticeable impact in the school environment. A school-wide approach to literacy and reading development can make a real difference to the school experience of students, particularly potential early school leavers.

How to use this book

This resource book is designed to be a practical support to second level teachers regardless of their area of expertise. We hope science teachers will find it as useful as home economics teachers and this will be true across all subject areas. We encourage you to dip in and out, to try a strategy in your everyday classroom and see how it goes.

1. Looking at Literacy: considers the complex reasons why every student is not at the same level of reading and how we can ensure literacy levels are improved across our second level schools in Ireland. The premise on which this book, and JCSP literacy in-service is based, is that we can make a significant difference. It points to a whole-school approach with the emphasis on first year, a year when significant improvements can be made.

2. Oral Work: emphasises the centrality of collaborative learning and oral work in every classroom followed by some useful approaches to collaborative learning.

3. Textbooks: looks at the factors affecting the suitability of textbooks and the rationale for using them. A way of measuring the readability of a textbook and how to judge the level of support the students will need as you work through the book, are also referred to here.

4. Keywords Approach: explains how a keywords approach can open up a subject for students and deals with pre-teaching and reinforcing key vocabulary.

5. Reading Strategies: outlines skimming and scanning, which are common reading techniques used by adults and can easily be taught and used in every subject. All of the reading strategies help the students closely analyse the content and engage with it.

6. Writing: considers the writing demands of the various Junior Certificate subjects. Students need help in developing the many genres that are demanded of them in second level. The use of the genre structure needs to be both modelled and supported by the teacher, until the student becomes proficient. Here writing frames

can be a great help and have their place in every classroom. A whole-school approach to the development of a spelling strategy and a marking policy is also outlined.

7. A School-wide Approach: outlines some of the considerations and stages that need to be taken into account when putting together a school policy. All of the strategies and approaches in this book will yield best results if they are used in the context of a school-wide approach. Some of the initiatives that are part of the JCSP Literacy Strategy, including Readalong and the Make a Book Project, are also described.

Appendix: includes more ideas and resources that many schools report to have found useful. It also includes a bank of questions which can be used in a review of literacy support/development in schools, as well as some considerations we suggest participating schools think about when planning the implementation of a strategy to raise reading standards. There is also a bibliography for further reading and useful websites.

1

Looking at Literacy

1

The Shift to Secondary School

For some students the transfer from primary to post-primary school couldn't come at a worse time – these are the students who are just on the brink of independent reading. They are just getting to the stage where the printed word does not represent daily defeat. They have finally cracked the code that can open up a whole new world of self-respect, of public success and of enjoyment.

For these students, the switch from a single class teacher who knew them so well and knew when to assist and when to let them try it alone, to a class with up to ten or eleven teachers can often be disastrous. They are presented with an exciting, but often daunting, range of new subjects and a whole group of new teachers they must get to know. They have to accommodate themselves to a variety of personalities and teaching styles. The post-primary day is dominated by the written word in a way that the primary school day never was. There is a whole new vocabulary that must be mastered for each subject and a set of attractive textbooks that may have great pictures, but often impossible texts. Even the writing done in class is different. While students could get by in primary school by writing stories now they are required to write 'accounts', 'reports', 'reviews' and to spend a considerable amount of time taking down homework from the blackboard.

The Students' Perspective

Students who have difficulty with reading face a daily struggle both to catch up and to keep up with the class. For these students this means facing into a school day of panic and failure. Every lesson brings the possibility of exposure and ridicule; even in a supportive and sympathetic environment these students are confronted by their own inability to read the same textbooks, or to write from the blackboard as quickly, as their peers.

Very quickly these students stop seeing themselves as people who read, as people who access information through the written word. When urged to 'to have a go' or try harder they will shrug and say something like "Who cares anyway, this is stupid, just kid's stuff". If school is all about reading and writing then school is not for them. The future prospects for these students, inadequately equipped for the sophisticated literacy demands that will be made on them after school, is poor. The picture can be bleak. Not only will their employment prospects be very limited, but they will also end up in jobs that give them few incentives to practice their reading. With reading it seems to be a case of 'use it or lose it', people whose reading is poor are less likely to read and risk becoming 'de-skilled' in reading. A survey on adult literacy found that over four-fifths of the early school leavers never used a library and nearly half said they never attended films, plays or concerts. Early school leavers are also less likely to participate in sporting events, community and voluntary activities than are people who completed senior cycle. (Morgan et al, 1997)

> Early school leavers are also less likely to participate in sporting events, community and voluntary activities than are people who completed senior cycle.

Textbooks and Literacy

Post-primary is designed for children who can read. All the textbooks and course work are in place with that in mind. According to recent research by the Teachers' Union of Ireland, almost one in every three students, (30.7%) who enrolled in public-sector schools in the year 1999-2000 were found to have reading ages two years or more below their chronological age (TUI 2000 Survey of Remedial Education). However, the 1998 National Assessment of English Reading, (Cosgrove et al, 2000) indicates that there has been no improvement in reading scores over the last twenty years. One in ten (10%) of 5th class pupils have functional literacy problems – this figure is exactly the same as it was twenty years ago.

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The causes of reading failure are complex and they involve such areas as:

Childhood poverty – financial, social and cultural

The tendency towards socially segregated schools can result in a high concentration of students with poor literacy levels in certain schools

Mismatch between home and school cultures

Poor resources for literacy enhancement in schools

Lack of in-service for primary and post-primary teachers on developments in reading

Lack of adequate access to books, magazines and other appropriate reading material

Specific learning difficulties

Self-esteem issues

> "It is poor children who risk school failure more commonly"
>
> Allington and Cunningham (1996)
> *Schools That Work*

Students enter second level full of excitement and expectation. For many it will be their last chance to master essential skills and to experience success in school. Their primary teachers will have worked hard to bring them to their present level of literacy. Continuing literacy development in post-primary will help students to grow in confidence and go on to achieve independent reading.

Why a School-wide Approach?

Research has shown that a school-wide approach is a most effective way of supporting the student to make that leap to independent reading. While students with a reading age below 8 are usually offered individualised programmes by the learning support teachers, those with a reading age between 8-10 – to whom learning support resources cannot usually stretch – respond very well to a school-wide approach (Basic Skills, 1999). Schools have had success by broadening the awareness of reading among all the teachers in schools and encouraging the whole staff to analyse the reading needs of their subject. For the students this means that instead of a short

withdrawal period once or twice a week when reading is attended to, they have an opportunity to work successfully at their subject all week long. Their textbooks don't get any easier, but are more accessible because the teacher has anticipated some of the reading requirements and prepared the students for them.

Interventions like this can make a huge difference to young people's self-esteem and school performance. They can continue to use the same textbooks as their peers and hold their heads high. They also begin to experience success in subjects, which they might otherwise learn to hate.

The effects are felt not just in reading and writing. The relationship between the teacher and the student is no longer dominated by reading failure. Students can relax into the day, rather than waiting for the one or two subjects not dominated by reading that offer success.

Enabling Success

Under-performing students do not expect success. After all they haven't done too well up to this. Many may have left a long trail of unfinished copies and textbooks behind them. For them just finishing a book or filling a copy would be a new experience. They can feel that they are not in control of their own learning and are less likely (than successful students) to trust that their teachers can get them through the examinations. From their perspective success in school either happens or it doesn't – and they are very clear that it doesn't happen for them.

But it can! They need classwork that is geared for success in the short term. Once they have got used to the idea that they are people who can and do succeed, students need much less coaxing to work.

Poor reading skills and self-esteem become intrinsically linked. A good reader is often viewed as a 'bright' student. Students often have a firm view of themselves as poor readers when they arrive in second level. Every attempt to read is linked to failure and possible humiliation in front of their peers. Building confidence is a key element to a student becoming literate. Success on the football field, in art, cooking, using a lathe, etc., all have a direct impact on

reading. A student with low self-esteem will have little or no sense of being competent at anything, particularly in the school setting. No-one needs to feel capable in everything – none of us are, but we do need to feel capable in at least one thing. This is the challenge to schools – to ensure that every 1st year feels capable in one area. Once that sense of capability is in place, then learning can begin. So the time out of class, e.g. in the sport's hall or preparing for a school play, can be very productive for all subjects as the student builds up a positive self-image.

The findings shown in *Ready for Life?* (Shiel et al, 2001) and the 1998 National Assessment of Reading suggest a need to implement focused school-wide and individual programmes in second-level schools that are designed to target students with serious reading difficulties, and, where such programmes are already in place (e.g. learning support), to examine their effectiveness. A focused approach to addressing the needs of students with very low achievement in reading literacy might also service to increase their achievement in mathematics and science, where language skills are also implicated.

Some practical ideas that have been used successfully by teachers of reluctant and under-achieving students are presented in the following chapters.

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Oralwork

2

Factors Affecting Learning

There are several factors affecting the learning that takes place in the classroom. Students learn in different ways and a variety of teaching strategies (e.g. oral work and pairwork) can be used to enhance teaching and develop a strong learning environment.

There are several theories about learning and teaching styles. For example:

Auditory – someone who learns well by listening.

Visual – someone who learns well by watching.

Kinaesthetic – someone who learns well by actively doing and touching.

Multiple intelligences – the multiple intelligences perspective contends that we all learn in different ways and so, the more variety in presentations the better. Reading, drawing, talking, physical activity, music, writing and visual aids will help everyone learn. We learn through visual, auditory, concrete and abstract experiences – some to a greater extent than others. Classroom activities should reflect this diversity. Teachers can offer opportunities for all students to learn in the way that suits them best.

For students who learn quickly and easily, learning outside of their preferred style may make learning less enjoyable, but is not a hindrance. But students who find reading or memorising difficult may become de-motivated by always having to make the extra effort to adapt to another learning style, one that is less effective for them.

It is important to be aware of the fact that the teacher has control over many factors which combine to determine how well students learn. The following are some points to consider:

Expected learning outcomes – students and teachers need to be clear about what should be learned. Sometimes, concepts can be couched in subject-specific language – familiar to the teacher, but alien to the student.

Motivation – teachers motivate their students by guaranteeing success, providing clear feedback and maintaining a positive outlook. Students faced with unfamiliar vocabulary, unwieldy materials and confusing concepts have a lot of obstacles to overcome and would need to be highly motivated in order to learn.

Content knowledge – discuss a new topic with the class to check out what they already know, chances are someone in the class will know something about it and many of the students may know a great deal about it even if they don't know the technical terms. The teacher needs to determine the prior content knowledge of their students and to activate that knowledge. They need to relate the concepts within a text to what the class already knows, to give it a context the students can relate to. Find out what they know first about a topic and build on that.

Attention – help them find the main or important points in a text. To the student learning an unfamiliar concept, everything on the page is important and the amount of information to be learned can seem overwhelming. Students need help to distinguish between the important points and the supporting detail. Exercises such as Cloze or Group Prediction in pairs or groups and summarising in their own words, can greatly help students to make meaning of the text.

Integration – repetition can help the learner. When the same information is presented in different contexts, it is reinforced in the student's memory. The information is not only reinforced by repetition, but the different contexts demonstrate its application to real life situations.

Environment – it is worth remembering that bright, clean, airy surroundings encourage effective learning.

Just consider that…

During any given class activity, it is safe to assume that approximately two-thirds of the children are working outside their preferred learning style.

Hughes, M. (1999) *Closing the Learning Gap,*
Network Educational Press, Stafford

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Memory

A large part of the Junior Certificate curriculum requires the committing to memory of substantial amounts of information. For all of us retaining information relies on several things. We know that we remember new information better when:

- It interests us
- We understand it
- We already know something about it
- We can link it to what we already know
- We can link it to an image, a taste, a smell, a sound, a texture or colour
- It is strange/unusual.

Memory Triangle

After two weeks we remember:
10% of what we read
50% of what we hear and see
90% of what we do

Reading
10%

Hearing
20%

Seeing
30%

Hearing and Seeing
Watching a video/Seeing it done
50%

Giving a talk
Pairwork
Groupwork
70%

Doing a project
Cross-curricular thematic work
Doing the real thing
90%
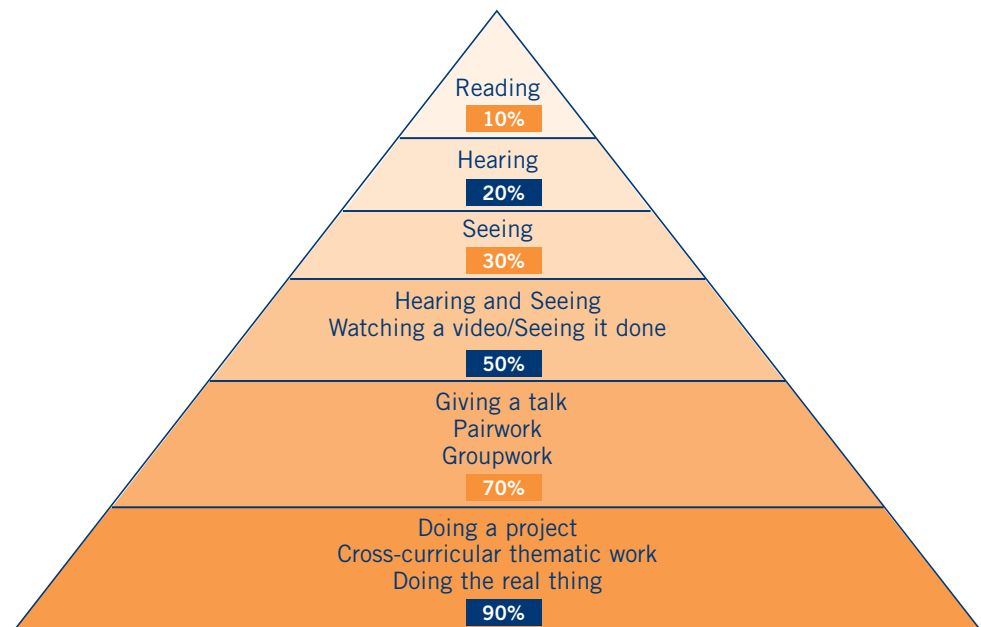
Adapted from Edgar Dale *Audio Visual Methods in Teaching,* Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965, The Dryden Press

The memory triangle illustrates for us how our memory works and if we consider it carefully it can guide us towards teaching methodologies that will ensure a higher level of retention of information amongst students.

Time for Talk

Ability with oral language can determine progress in reading, while ability with reading will extend vocabulary and also feed positively into the writing process. If we remember 70% of what we say and 90% of what we do, we need to think about how this information can be transferred into our teaching style.

For example:

- When starting a group activity, do we give pupils a chance to talk about what they already know?

- When explaining something or giving instructions, do we give students a chance to ask questions?

- Are we sure our instructions are clear? How do we know?

Oral skills need to be developed over time. If students articulate something themselves, they are more likely to understand and remember it. Students also learn from each other, and need time to be allowed to work together. The use of directed talk and discussion is a powerful learning strategy.

There are many types of directed and purposeful talk:

Giving instructions	**Asking questions**
Explaining	**Commenting**
Discussing/clarifying ideas	**Telling stories**

Remember .....
Say it first
Read it second
Write it third

We learn new concepts by hearing them and discussing them before being required to read or write them. If a word is not in the student's oral vocabulary it won't make sense in the text. An effective way to learn new topics or concepts is to discuss them with students before they are confronted with them in the text. Pre-teaching and discussion about the meaning of words with supplementary exercises allow the students to incorporate the words into their vocabulary. Link the topic with prior knowledge of the subject.

Pairwork

Students need opportunities to initiate and sustain purposeful conversation in the classroom. Pairwork is an ideal strategy to use. It allows students to develop their oral skills, both speaking and listening, and at the same time assists in their own learning.

The idea of letting the students work in groups can be daunting at first. With only 35–40 minutes per session, it can seem like a lot of time spent on just organising the class, unless the students are used to getting into groups.

Students not used to groupwork may need to be gradually introduced to it in 1st year – working in pairs is a good introduction to this way of learning. Pairwork does not demand any changing of places or classroom disruption as their nearest partner is the obvious one to work with at first. Later, if you feel things are going well, the pairs might come together occasionally and work in fours.

One type of activity useful in this context is a Group Prediction Exercise such as the following:

Group Prediction – What happens next?

The value of this exercise is in the discussion. The students have the chance to think, listen to other suggestions, weigh them up, clarify their own ideas and justify their point of view. The text is given out in sections and each one is read and discussed before the next one is distributed. The students work in twos/fours to read and discuss the text. They draw their own conclusions from each piece of the story. The exercise is completed in one lesson.

Work in pairs or in fours. Read Part 1 silently or have one person read it aloud quietly. Then discuss what you think it is about and what will happen next.

Part 1

Jamal looks at the cloudless sky. The hot sun shines directly down on him, another day and no sign of rain. Tonight the temperature will drop by about 38°C. There has been no rain for two years. Jamal and his wife, Waris, walk four miles each day to a well to get fresh water for their animals and crops. Jamal's mother looks after their young baby. The return journey is slow and difficult. They try not to spill a drop. Because of the water they are able to grow figs and vegetables and keep a small number of sheep and goats.

Now read Part 2.

Part 2

Their home is just a few miles from a huge desert. Across the desert in the north is the sea and then Europe.
Waris and Jamal have only a few neighbours but lately they notice more people moving into the area. They come because there is water there. But Jamal fears that there is hardly enough water for the farmers who live there. Some people who come are near starvation.
In the afternoon a strong wind starts to blow. Jamal hopes the wind will bring rain, but there is no sign of clouds and Waris is worried.

Work
in pairs or
in fours

Now read Part 3.

Part 3

When Jamal got his land from his father there were many trees and they gave good shade to the animals and the crops. Jamal and Waris had to cut down most of the trees to use as fuel for cooking. Jamal used the land to plant vegetables and figs. But the crops were small and dry. His neighbours used to keep lots of cattle and sheep because they could earn cash from them, but it was difficult to find enough grass to feed them. The cattle and sheep ate the grass right down to the roots so it could not grow again. Each year there was less and less grass.
As evening comes the wind gets stronger, there are no rain clouds but sand is blowing on the wind.

Now read the final part.

Part 4

The storm is blowing now. Sand is blowing everywhere; it must be coming from the desert in the north. Even in the house Waris can hardly breathe. She covers the baby's face with a fine damp cloth and protects him with her body. Jamal runs outside to check his goats and sheep. A terrible sight meets his eyes. All the soil has turned to dry dust and the dust is blowing away. When he got this land from his father a few years ago it was green and rich, now it looks like the desert. Jamal wonders what will happen to his farm and to his young family.

After the storm Waris and Jamal make up their mind, they will have to leave the farm and walk to the city. They might work there and get water and food.

> If the topic is being introduced for the first time a simple, but vivid, story with a certain suspense can be a dramatic way to generate interest.

The topic covered by the story is Desertification, and reference is made to desert climate, drought, oasis, farming methods, overgrazing, Sub-Saharan Africa, movement of people, etc. Depending on whether the topic has been covered in class before this may or may not be recognised and the appropriate terms can be used. If the topic is being introduced for the first time a simple, but vivid, story with a certain suspense can be a dramatic way to generate interest.

This exercise is an oral one and students should not be asked to write answers to questions. Over time, with good modelling from the teacher, they will extend their own range of questions and be more demanding in seeking justification for suggestions.

Concept Maps

Some subjects, such as science and geography, can be very wordy and overloaded with information. Concept maps reduce the need for long-winded explanations. There is very little reading involved and the students can get their point across without a lot of written work. The essential ideas of a topic can be extracted and discussed.

Using concept maps

Begin with a simple topic. Do one yourself in front of the class so they can see what you're doing and hear you working aloud. Point out that there is no single correct answer or layout. Give each pair, or group of four students, cards or labels with the words or pictures of the concept to be mapped and a sheet to stick them on.

Keep the instructions simple

Sort the cards and arrange them in a way that makes sense to your group. Each one gets a turn to place a card and has to give a reason for putting it where they do. When the pair/group is happy with the arrangement, stick the words on the sheet. Draw lines to show the connection/relationship between the words.

Living Things Concept Map
Living things – Plants – Animal – Cow – Human – Grass

Science
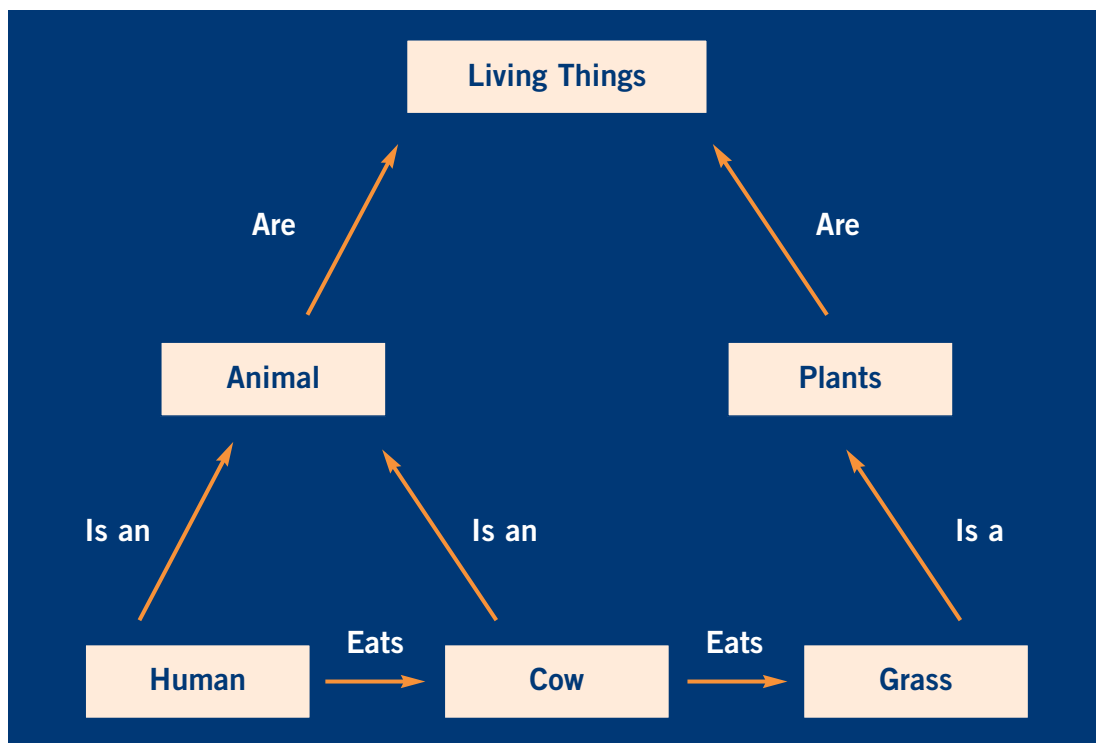
Here are some more ideas for pairwork.

Listen and Ask

Listen and ask is an approach to comprehension which involves students asking questions on a piece of text read to them by the teacher. For example, the teacher reads a recipe or reads instructions for making a model aeroplane or reads an account of the workings of the Dáil and students develop questions based on what they have heard. Another approach is for the teacher to write up the question stems; Who? What? Where? etc., and to ask students to create questions using these stems having listened to the text.

Because . . .

Read out a statement – students must think of as many possible explanations for the situation as they can, for example:

> It is the middle of the night, but the boy is in the kitchen…
>
> The man is standing outside the broken lift…
>
> The woman is underneath the tractor…
>
> The girl is walking down the stairs very, very, slowly…

Every answer is correct. The group could turn them into a full story.

Planning an Event

Ask the students to plan in pairs or fours.

Possible occasions:

> Trip out – field trip, history visit, reward trip, etc
>
> Weekend away
>
> Celebration or party
>
> Christmas project
>
> Parents' meeting
>
> Visitor – speaker / author
>
> Fundraising, e.g. People in Need.

It can be very useful to give the students the opportunity to step into the shoes of other people. It can be a good preliminary exercise to planning an event. Ask the students to imagine being there. For example, imagine coming up to the school before hosting a parent meeting. (Some of the JCSP project statements or organising a school function statement could be used for many of the above events.)

Presentations

Example – To plan a talk for 1st years.

This activity is best done with 2nd and 3rd year students. Students work in pairs. Each pair of 2nd/3rd years chooses a subject which they have to describe to the incoming 1st year class. They:

- Agree on a subject

- Brainstorm ideas for the talk

- Plan the presentations

- Think up as many questions as possible in advance

- Volunteer two pairings to make a practice presentation to their own class

- Class observes how they present the information

- Short class discussion about good points of the presentation

- Keypoints noted on the blackboard

- Each pair revises their presentation

- Each pair presents it to another pair – plenty of rehearsal time

- Then present it to the 1st years

- Review and evaluate the activity with the pupils.

As you get used to pairwork you can mix and match pairs. For example:

- Matched ability peers

- Mixed ability peers

- Match according to their interests

- Working with a friend occasionally

Benefits of Pairwork

If a pattern is established from the very early stages in second level, students become used to working in pairs or groups.

Discussions, whether as a class or in groups, need to be directed – both the students and the teacher need to be clear on the direction of the discussion or the expected outcome of the group activity.

Noise level can be higher and the teacher needs to ensure that pairs or groups don't break up into chatter. Planning and preparation and the use of various learning strategies can go a long way towards reducing unproductive noise and chatter.

Allowing students time to talk, whether in pairs or groups, helps them to both access the curriculum and access the textbook. They will start seeing themselves as people who can access information through the written word.

There are many benefits to pairwork:

● Collaborative and co-operative learning is fostered

● There is a socialising effect

● It is relaxed and enjoyable

● The less able student is supported unobtrusively

● Two or more minds are better than one

● Able children are stimulated by having to explain or recount

● Students can become more responsible for their own behaviour

● Encourages ownership and involvement of learning.

There are many more strategies that we can use to help our students become competent learners.

All strategies described presume pairwork, as this allows for that 70% of learning through talking. The methods described incorporate both talking and doing – hopefully allowing students to remember 90% of what is taught.

In this section we have drawn attention to the variety of learning styles that teachers may utilise in response to any class group, encouraging them to incorporate strategies and exercises into their work that would meet the needs of larger numbers of students. Finally, we have promoted the use of pairwork as a particularly useful strategy to deal with subject content and especially to develop oral skills and collaborative learning. Next we will look more closely at the use of textbooks.

3

Textbooks

3

Why Use Textbooks?

Textbooks are useful tools as long as they are approached in an imaginative way. There can be a temptation to abandon the use of textbooks altogether when teaching students with literacy difficulties. However, there are many good reasons to use them.

Nobody likes to feel different, especially teenagers. Students want to use the textbooks – they want to be the same as their peers and use the same books, even if they have difficulty in accessing the information within. To remove the textbooks from the classroom situation immediately sets those students apart and actually accentuates their difficulties, both in their own eyes as well as those of their peers. Textbooks, rather than loose photocopies, can give students a feeling of self-worth and equality with their peers.

Textbooks provide the context of the concepts being taught. Information stripped bare of context is very boring and difficult to remember. Graphics such as pictures, diagrams and photographs also present information in an alternate and colourful form, thus aiding students in understanding the key concepts and accessing information through their preferred learning styles.

Eliminating textbooks from the classroom can also result in the overuse of handouts and worksheets. Worksheets can cut out the padding and the context of a piece so that the meaning is diminished. Struggling readers are the very students who often have difficulty organising and storing large quantities of worksheets. They don't need *death by a thousand worksheets!*

When worksheets are needed it can be a good idea to let the students do the work. It is in the process of devising a worksheet that much learning can take place. The students have to break down the text – an exercise which helps them remember the key concepts.

Choosing a Textbook

Modern textbooks are very attractive and improving all the time. Used well, they can be very enjoyable. Teachers could use the following guidelines with regard to text to make a judgement about the suitability of materials.

Layout: students with reading difficulties need to be able to find their way around a text easily. Too much text on the page, paragraphs and columns that are too close or an absence of margins can lead to confusion and ultimately, to the student 'giving up' on the exercise.

White space: which separates the text, makes it more manageable and allows the reader to proceed at his/her own pace and to experience success, thus increasing motivation.

Leading: the space or gap between lines is also very important. If the spaces are too close, students with reading difficulties will tend to skip lines. However, if they are too far apart, students will have difficulty in relating them to each other. Sentences, which run from one column to another or from one page to the next, inhibit the readers' chances of grasping the meaning.

Headings: should be clear and consistent in design, so that students can clearly differentiate between sections, sub-sections, new topics, etc.

Summary: a textbook, which includes a *summary* of the main points at the beginning or end of each chapter, is also very useful for reinforcing and revising the course content.

Type: attention should also be paid to the size and styles of typeface used in the textbooks chosen for students with literacy difficulties.

If the *type size* is too big materials may seem too 'babyish' and has shown to de-motivate students. However, if the type is too small, students can become confused and give up on the exercise quite quickly.

Print type, or font, should be as unadorned as possible. Complex fonts may look well but they are difficult to decipher. For example this '*word*' is not as clear as this **'word'** for a student to read.

Overuse of upper case (capitals) letters also causes confusion. Many students recognise words as much for their shape as for their spelling. Using capitals throughout a word or a sentence destroys the shape of the individual words. If a word or a sentence needs to be highlighted it is preferable to use bold type or to put a box around it instead.

Illustrations: illustrations such as photos, drawings, graphs, tables can open up a text. They should be placed as near to the relevant piece of text as possible, so that the reader can pick up clues to the meaning of the text itself. However, if a paragraph is split by an illustration the essence of the text may be distorted.

Readability of Textbooks

> A text that is attractive, interesting and comprehensible is a very readable text.

Most textbooks used at Junior Cycle are designed for students with a reading level of 14-15 years. However, they will be read by 12-13 year olds. This may not be a problem for a student who is coping well with reading. But it can cause huge difficulties for the student whose reading age is several years behind their chronological age. They will have to struggle with a text that often holds little meaning for them. This needs to be taken into account when choosing a textbook and when using it in the classroom.

A text that is attractive, interesting and comprehensible is a very *readable* text. It is approachable; it invites us in and encourages us to read more. Readability is about reading with **understanding** and is affected by factors such as:

● Previous knowledge of the subject

● Interest and relevance

● Layout

- Line length
- Illustrations
- Sentence length
- The reader's own interest
- Length of words
- Construction of sentences
- Style.

Levels of Readability

When evaluating textbooks for a class, consider how you will use them. Do you want the students to read them every day and do homework from them? Will you use them regularly to illustrate particular concepts and to practice skills? Will you use them occasionally for their illustrations, tables and graphs?

Independent level

If you want students to read a text comfortably and do homework from it, then the readability of the text needs to approximately match the reading age of the students. The students can read at what is called 'independent level'. They can read with a high degree of understanding without any help from a teacher. At this level students can happily use a textbook to do homework.
Workbooks should be close to independent level.

Instructional level

If, on the other hand, you intend to guide the students through the text, explaining as you go and giving carefully prepared homework, then the student does not need to read and understand all of the text unaided. The text can be at 'instructional level'. This means that with the help and encouragement of an adult the student can benefit from the text. Most textbooks aim at this level. Students should not be asked to work **unaided** on texts at this level.

Frustration level

The text is far too difficult for a student to use even with a teacher's help. Students should never be asked to do work on texts at this level of difficulty. All it will lead to is frustration!

SMOG Readability Test

There are several ways to judge the readability of a text. The SMOG formula is one of them. It is a useful tool for gauging readability as it gives a figure that can be compared to the reading age of the students. The higher the readability figure, the more difficult the passage. McLaughlin (1969) who developed the SMOG suggested that the name stood for "Simple Measure Of Gobbledygook". Follow these simple steps and you will get a rough guide to the reading level of the book.

Use the SMOG formula to get a rough idea of the level of a text. Open the textbook in three different places at random and use the SMOG formula. It only takes a few minutes to do it.

1. Select a text.

2. Count 10 sentences together from that text to work on.

3. Count the number of words in those sentences that have 3 or more syllables.

4. Multiply this by 3.
   3 x _____ = _____

5. Circle the number below which is closest to your answer:
   1 4 9 16 25 36 49 64 81 100 121 144 169

6. Find the square root of the number you circled

Number:	1	4	9	16	25	36	49	64	81	100	121	144	169
Square Root:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13

7. Add 8 to your answer to get the readability level
   _____ + 8 =

The higher the readability figure the more difficult the text, e.g. a text with a readability of 14 *should* be accessible to a student with a reading age of around 14 years. Lots of other factors should also be taken into account, such as interest in the subject, relevance, previous knowledge of the subject, motivation, layout of the text and generally how the content is presented to the reader.

Try the SMOG readability test on the following text adapted from a
Junior Certificate History book.

The Vikings Settle Down

At first the Vikings attacked and plundered and then returned to their ships. But they later began to establish bases on coasts and river banks. These were ship-forts (longphort) where the ships were tied up, houses built and a stockade or fence erected for protection.

This was how Dublin began in the year 841. However, archaeologists have never found any traces of this settlement and so we do not know its exact position.

Maybe the Vikings chose the high ground beside the dark-coloured pool in the River Poddle, a tributary of the River Liffey. This would have been a very suitable location as it was easy to defend and the pool itself was sheltered.

The name Dublin comes from the dark pool (linn dubh). The Vikings called it Dyflin. The pool has long since been filled in, but it was close to where Dublin Castle stands today.

This is what that piece of text might look like to a student reading *two years behind the level of the text*. Meaning has been compromised:

The Vikings Settle Down

At first the Vikings   and   and then returned to their ships. But they later began to   bases on coasts and river banks. These were ship-forts (longphort) where the ships were tied up, houses built and a stockade or fence   for   .

This was how Dublin began in the year 841. However,   have never found any traces of this   and so we do not know its exact   .

Maybe the Vikings chose the high ground beside the dark-coloured pool in the River Poddle, a   of the River Liffey. This would have been a very suitable   as it was easy to defend and the pool itself was   .

The name Dublin comes from the dark pool (linn dubh). The Vikings called it Dyflin. The pool has long since been filled in, but it was close to where Dublin Castle stands today.

3

Homework

Don't assume that students can read their homework. Ideally, reading material for homework should be at *independent level*. A student shouldn't be asked to do homework on a text if it is at instructional level, unless they are well prepared and supported.

We have discussed the readability of texts and explained how to use the SMOG formula to judge the difficulty levels. Next we offer a well-proven strategy that can help open up a subject to your students. That is the keywords approach. This approach allows the teacher to concentrate on the essential vocabulary of their subject and suggests a variety of ways to reinforce that vocabulary.

4

Keywords Approach

Approaching Keywords

Before students begin to tackle the text, the teacher can anticipate a lot of the difficulties or problem areas that a student may encounter. Some of the areas that may cause difficulty can be overcome for the student if we pre-teach key vocabulary. As we plan a topic we need to identify the keywords, key concepts and key spellings inherent to it. Students will need to understand the topic and be able to talk and write about it.

Keywords   Key concepts   Key spellings

Keywords and key concepts are the essential vocabulary and essential concepts needed by students in order for them to gain access to a subject area. They help students to confidently access the subject matter. Students should not meet a difficult keyword or key concept in the textbook first. It should be in their oral vocabulary – well practiced before they meet it in the text. All keywords and key concepts can be pre-taught. There are several ways of doing this:
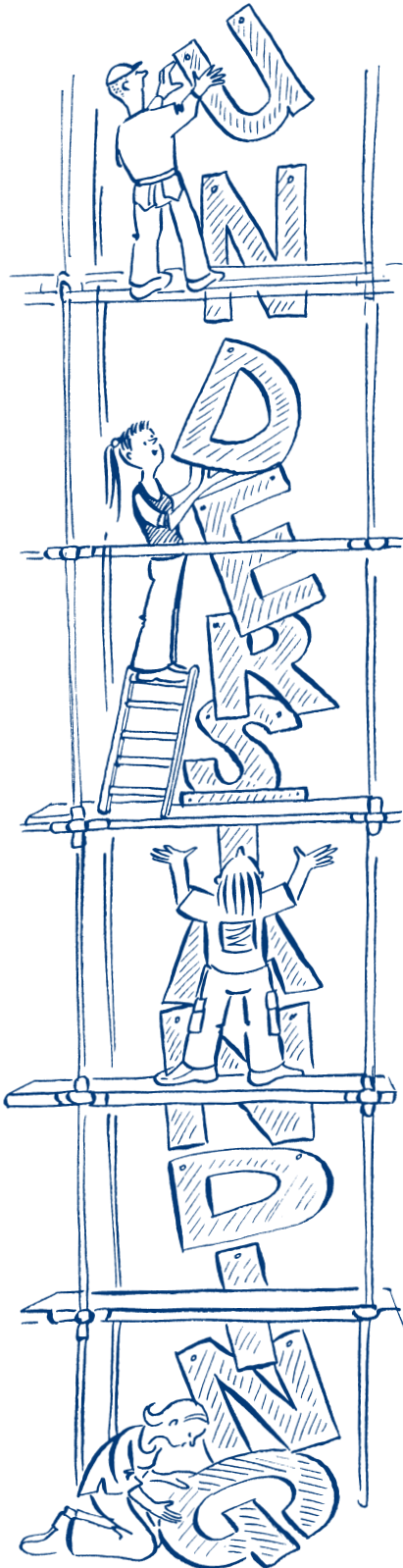
Keywords

- Check out your text and identify the essential keywords
- Make a list, keeping it as short as possible
- Pre-teach keywords.

Students need to be able to read and understand the word before learning the spelling.

Key Concepts

- Check out the key concepts ahead
- List them
- Discuss and explain each one.

Key Spelling

Students will not need to write all the keywords regularly. For example, they must be able to read the word and describe it, but they may not have to write it. So carefully choose a small number of key spellings that you want all students to know. Some students may be better spellers, but the key spelling approach ensures every student can spell the essential or core spelling of the topic.

More than a list

After you have picked out the keywords and concepts for the topic you are about to move on to, there are several ways of helping students learn those words and concepts. Some schools, for example, put together a keyword list of the core vocabulary for 1st years. Some compile a subjects keywords / concepts list through discussion with colleagues. The list of keywords needs to be put into context for the student. A de-contextualised list is difficult to remember. Keyword exercises that help students to understand and remember these words is where the learning will take place.

When using the keyword approach keep in mind the following:

Select a small number of keywords per topic

Pre-teach these words – meanings, context, and usage

Once the keywords are in the student's **oral vocabulary** have them write them on a keyword list, in notebooks or copies or give them a typed list

Store sheets in copies, folders, on cards, special keyword notebooks, etc

Use keyword **bookmarks** to reinforce keywords

Display keywords list on walls using Keywords Template (on page 86)

Use them **regularly** and read them frequently

Give students opportunities to **discuss**, use and revise them

Check comprehension and spelling regularly

Revise

An example of a Keyword List is below. A template that can be used in any subject is contained in the Appendix (page 86).

This example shows how a geography teacher might use it.

Keyword List is adapted from Developing Literacy
The Basic Skills Agency *(1997)*

JCSP Keyword List

Subject: Geography   *Topic*: **Deposition of a River**

Key Concepts

1. **Deposition**	3. **Stages of a river**
2. **Load**	4. **Deposition**

Words you need to know

1. **Flow**	6. **Delta**
2. **Deposit**	7. **Alluvial Soil**
3. **Material**	8.
4. **Meander**	9.
5. **Oxbow Lake**	10.

Words you need to write

1. **Deposit**	5. **River**
2. **Load**	6. **Bend**
3. **Meander**	7. **Mouth**
4. **Lake**	8.

Reinforcing Keywords

It is important that the keywords and concepts are reinforced as much as possible. Remember that in 24 hours we forget 80% of what we hear, if it is not practiced or thought about in between.

There are several ways you can help students remember those words and concepts necessary for access to your subject. For example:

Wall charts help reinforcement in base classrooms or subject specialist rooms.

Labelling equipment in specialist classrooms also aids word recognition by directly associating the keyword with an object.

Cloze exercises with keywords provided are a useful method for practising writing keywords.

Timed Exercises
The following 5 exercises only take a few minutes to do in class.

1. Two minutes to read the room – the keywords around the subject or base classroom.

2. Two minutes to fill in a key word list about a new topic in pairs

3. Two minutes to find six keywords in a text and circle or underline them

4. Two minutes to list the key words you know about the new topic

5. Two minutes to re-cap keywords from the last session – what words did we use in the last class. This could be done using a word string.

WORD STRING

Acids....acids and bases......acids, bases and vinegar.......acids, bases, vinegar and milk.......acids, bases, vinegar, milk and litmus......................... until they run out of words or can't remember the full string of words.

> Keywords can open up a subject to certain students for whom it would otherwise remain closed.

4

Keywords Exercises

There are many activities, exercises and games that can be adapted for use to teach and reinforce keywords. They can act as attention grabbers, reinforcers or revision exercises.

Word Spiral

Geography

Topic: Developing World
This exercise could be used as an introduction to keywords students may come across when learning about the Developing World in geography. They must find the words in the word spiral and mark off each one. Students can create their own word spiral by using WordArt in a wordprocessing package.

Refugees Immigrants Multi-national Drought Famine Poverty

Word Searches and Crosswords

Word searches and crosswords are often viewed as fillers, but are actually useful aids to learning. They can be used to reinforce keywords in a fun way and spelling in a practical way.

Wordsearch

Business Studies

r	e	t	a	i	l	e	r	l	q
e	a	c	g	n	l	s	e	i	u
f	r	n	h	v	i	a	m	a	a
u	u	o	k	o	b	b	u	b	l
n	w	y	a	i	g	e	s	l	i
d	u	i	t	c	o	i	n	e	t
g	f	h	v	e	n	d	o	r	y
b	c	z	x	v	r	i	c	u	r
r	e	c	e	i	p	t	o	v	u
g	u	a	r	a	n	t	e	e	t

retailer	**invoice**
consumer	**receipt**
guarantee	**bill**
refund	**vendor**
liable	**quality**

In order to ensure success for all students, word searches can be graded in difficulty.

For those students experiencing greater literacy difficulties, it is important that *all words in the search be written left to right.*

Internet sites contain templates for making wordsearches and crosswords. See Appendix for suggestions. There are also software packages available which will make them for you.

4

Hang Man | Gaeilge

The teacher can play the first game and then students can play it in pairs.
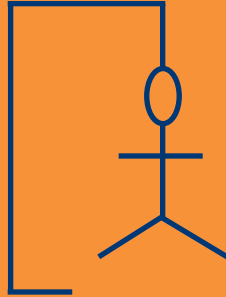
1. Smaoinigh ar "focal" (MILSEOG)
2. Cuir na bearnaí ar an gclárdubh/ar do chóipleabhar

   _ _ _ _ _ _
3. Gach litir atá ceart ag duine líon isteach é

   _ _ _ S _ _ _
4. Gach litir atá mí cheart déan líne
5. Níl cead ag éinne an focal a rá
6. Tabhair seans do gach duine.

Word Grid | Maths

Students are given the grid and the list of keywords. They are asked to fit the words into the grid. The teacher can include certain letters in the grid to help the students get going.

Fit these words into the grid:

AVERAGE	MULTIPLY	ESTIMATE	SUM
DECIMAL	FRACTION	ADD	DIVIDE

F	R	A	C	T	I	O	N

D
I
V
I
D

E	S	T	I	M	A	T	E

Fill in the blanks

Religion

Students are given the keywords and asked to fill in the missing letters.

Keywords: TRADITION, CELEBRATION, CUSTOM, PARISH, GOD, MIRACLE, SACRAMENT, WORSHIP, FAITH, FESTIVAL, BIBLE.

CEL __ BRATION,   __ __ __TOM,   __A __ I __ H,
GO __ , M __ R __ C __ E,   B __ BL __ ,   SA __ RA __ E __ T,__
__ __ SHIP,   FAI __ __,   FES __ __ VAL,
T __ A __ I __ IO __

Word Wall

Home Economics

A list of keywords is displayed and each word is discussed. Students work in pairs and each pair is given one word and a blank Post-It. The pair must write a definition of the keyword on the Post-It and stick it on the keyword. Alternatively the pair give it to another pair who have to guess the keyword and place it correctly on the keyword word wall.
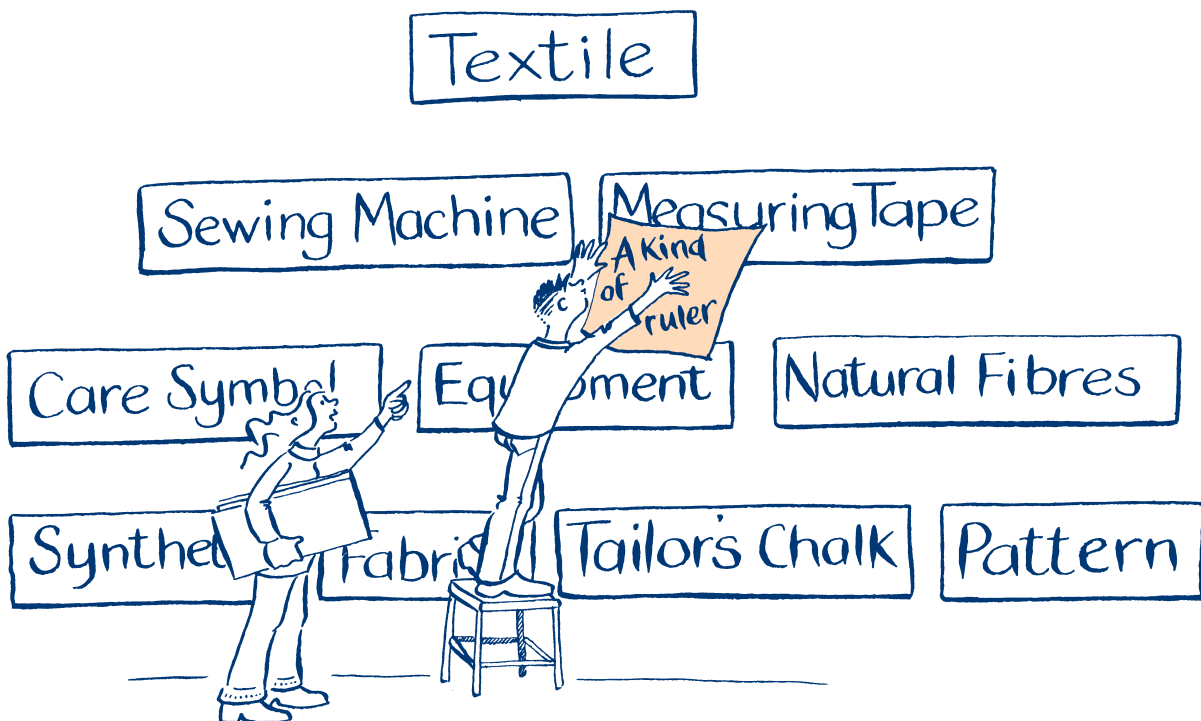
Blackboard

The teacher puts the keywords on the side of the board for that particular topic.

The keywords are visible and referred to for the duration of that topic.

Tuesday
April 7th

Archaeologist
Source
Document
Evidence
Discover
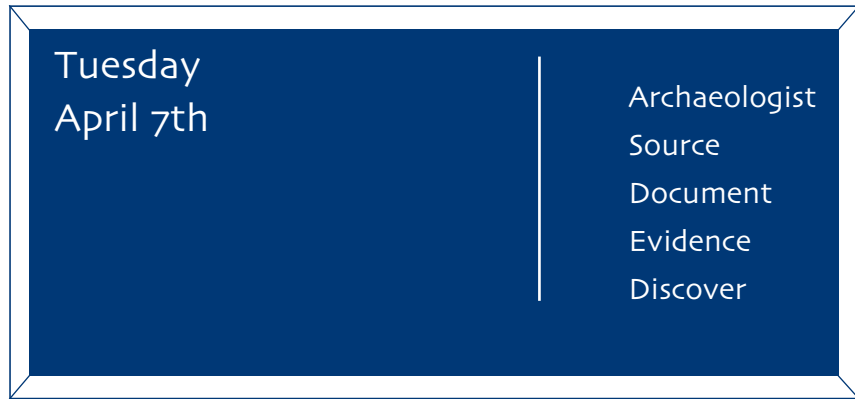
Label the Diagram

Physical Education

This can help to reinforce keywords.
Ask the student to label the diagram using the words supplied.

Front of the body
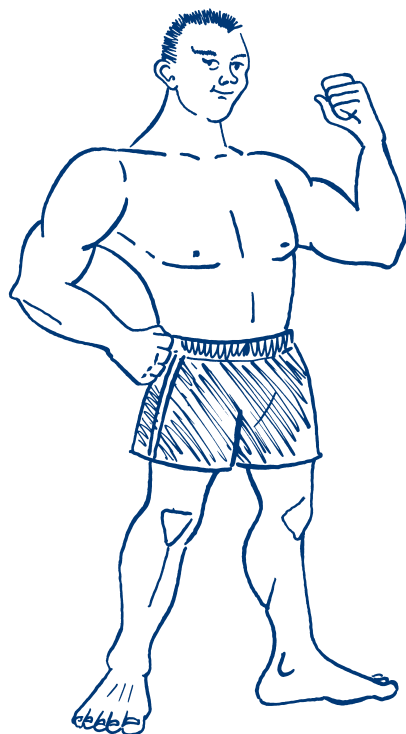
Quadriceps (Quads)
Pectoral Muscle (Pecs)
Biceps
Adductors
Shin
Abductors

Word Notice Board

Metal Work

Keywords can be displayed on a noticeboard in the classroom. The teacher can refer to them throughout the lesson or do some of the *Timed Exercises* (p. 37) that were mentioned earlier in the chapter.

measuring

metal

enamelling

plastic

environment

adhesive

rivet

drill bits

lathe

joining

finish
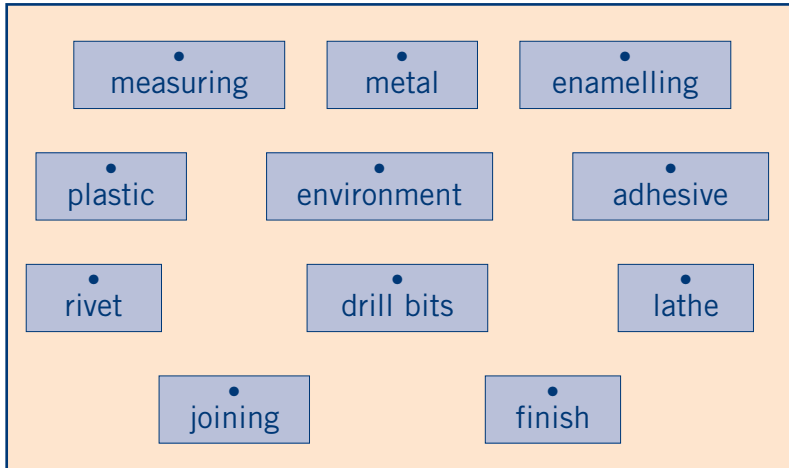
Visual – Verbal Squares

Environmental and Social Studies

Each pair of students is given a keyword and is asked to draw a square and in each corner of it they: write their own definition, write a sentence using the keyword, give a word that is connected to the keyword and finally to draw a sketch of the word or something related to the word.

Students' definition	Connected word
KEYWORD	
Sketch	Sample Sentence

Someone who comes to live in a new country	Migrate
Immigrant	
	Many Irish people came to America as immigrants

This keywords approach section has explained how to build activities and exercises around keywords and key concepts to teach and reinforce essential vocabulary and concepts. Next we consider reading strategies such as skimming and scanning and look at a variety of exercises that enable students to access their textbooks.

5

Reading Strategies

5

Strategic Reading

Teaching students how to apply their reading skills is a significant way that we can assist in their learning, regardless of the subject areas. Students who have difficulty with reading often have only one reading speed and that is slow. Their eye often follows their finger slowly across the page. They may also think they have to start at the top and read every word to the bottom. But depending on the purpose of our reading we employ a variety of reading techniques – from skimming and scanning to close reading.

How do you read the newspapers?
Do you start at the first word and make your way through the paper?
Or do you do something like this:

check out the first page

scan the TV guide

check the weather

the lotto results if you feel lucky

look up the sports page

check out the letters page

find an article about teacher's pay and give it a close read!

Students who are struggling with reading need to be given the freedom to use these techniques in the course of the school day. They need to read texts that do not require them to read every word, e.g. looking up the yellow pages for suppliers of timber in the woodwork class or scanning the business pages of the newspaper in the business studies class.

Skim to find the section

Scan to read the particular information in that section

Skimming & Scanning

Skimming and scanning are techniques we use all the time. You skim the full book to seek out the particular information you are looking for and then you scan that information very closely.

For example, you skim the dictionary to find the **P** section but you scan for the meaning of **'patience'**. You skim the newspaper for the television section and scan to find what time *Sports Highlights* is on.

Teaching these reading strategies to students will help them access information more effectively and enable them to become faster readers.

5

Skimming Activities

Introducing a new textbook
Allow students time to savour the enjoyment of a new book when they get it for the first time. For example students could:

- Look at the cover and discuss impressions

- Examine the title

- Who wrote the book?

- Who illustrated the book?

- Who printed it?

- Contents page: do some exercises where the students have to check how many chapters/sections are in the book

- Find topics within sections of the book

- Find a chapter

- What page is _____ on?

- Talk about what's in the book.

We use this reading technique all the time.
It is an essential reading skill – an essential guide for adult life

Skimming is a useful technique for students to learn, particularly students with reading difficulties, as they, more than any other students, generally believe that they have to read every word in order to read successfully.

Give the students time to have a good look around the book

Discuss how long it will be used for

Look at the illustrations, again giving some focused exercises

Scanning Activities

We use scanning when we are looking for particular information. For example, looking up a phone number, finding the price of an item in a catalogue or finding a topic in an index. You don't need any special equipment or materials for skimming and scanning: your ordinary textbooks, an old yellow pages or phone book, tool hire or mail-order catalogue, a bus or train timetable, recipe books, Guinness Book of Records, quiz book, local directories and newspapers, event guides, whatever is appropriate to your subject can be used. These types of materials are encountered frequently by students and can be used to practice the techniques in class.

Using the telephone directory
Scanning involves very close reading to pick out the information you need. Here's an example:

Scan the phone book to find the phone number of Peter Murphy, 6 Meadowgrove, Mytown.

Murphy

. Peter,	13 Harbour View, Mytown	9672 4423
. Peter,	14 Buttercup Pk., Mytown	8876 9876
. Peter,	16 Waterpark, Mytown	2472 6543
. Peter,	12 Cedar Downs, Mytown	3498 6754
. Peter,	22 Redwood Cl., Mytown	7456 7654
. Peter,	14 Lobilia Downs, Mytown	9876 5665
. Peter,	454 Lower Rd., Mytown	6670 9877
. Peter,	Ferrycarrig Rd., Mytown	1847 4683
. Peter,	6 Meadowgrove, Mytown	3487 6183
. Peter,	36 Sweetmount Pk., Mytown	6298 7634
. Peter,	34 Hazel Lawn, Mytown	5821 3452
. Peter,	56 Ashwood Rd., Mytown	456 8754
. Peter,	54 Oldfield Ave., Mytown	4842 4864
. Peter,	34 Mannix Rd., Mytown	7857 4523
. Peter,	19 Castel Pk., Mytown	5382 6762
. Peter,	64 Main St., Mytown	6677 5654
. Peter,	Mountain Rd., Mytown	4805 7258
. Peter,	Thorndale Cres., Mytown	3342 9099

After students have learned the techniques of skimming and scanning it is essential that they have regular opportunity to practice on a variety of materials.

5

SQ3R

Another strategy that uses the skills of skimming and scanning to help students read for meaning is SQ3R. **SQ3R** stands for **Survey, Question, Read, Review and Recall**. Students use skimming techniques to get a flavour of the text and identify the questions they want answered by a more thorough reading. It is an oral activity best done with the whole class initially until they are competent with the technique. Later the students can work in pairs/fours.

It is a technique that can be used to introduce any new textbook or piece of text. It encourages students to approach the text in an active way, anticipating and expecting that their questions will be answered, the information found and meaning revealed.

Survey
Look at the cover, the title, illustrations,first sentence, headings and last paragraph.
What you know about the topic already, what's the author's purpose in writing this, is this fact or opinion, is there any evidence of bias?

Question
Ask yourself what is this about? What do I need to know? Are there questions I have to answer? Specific information I must find? What evidence is there for the points made?

Read
Read the passage carefully, identify the main idea and details, can you follow the sequence of events, distinguish between facts and opinions?

Review
Reread the parts you think are important and any parts you are not sure of, note key points, summarise the points for your classmate.

Recall/Recite
This is done with the book closed. Have the question been answered? Remember the keywords or main points. Tell your classmate/partner.

Reading for Meaning Exercises

Marking a Text

Many learners find it useful to highlight the main points of a chapter, both to aid retention and, later, revision. Some learners find that they have difficulty understanding or remembering the content of the text unless they can annotate, underline, highlight or circle the important parts or the main points. Marking text can help students to analyse, understand and remember content.

The following exercise uses this method of marking texts. Students are asked to mark the main points of the passage. It can be useful to give the students a photocopy of the text for this exercise.

Colour can be used for good visual effect when marking text. Two colours could be used for comparing and contrasting. For example, when reading about the industrial revolution in history the advantages could be marked in red and the disadvantages in green, or in geography the features of erosion could be marked in yellow and the features of deposition could be marked in purple.

Many people in the USA are the descendants of European immigrants who left their home countries to settle there in the 19th century. The immigrants were escaping (poverty) and other problems, such as (famine) and (drought,) in their countries. They travelled by ship to New York, where many stayed to set up new homes.

The USA is the richest country in the world. It exports machinery, cars and trucks, aircraft, iron and steel, chemicals and cereals. They are exported all over the world.

---

1. Scan this piece of text and find these keywords. Circle each keyword
    drought   poverty   famine
2. Underline in <u>red</u> the sentence that tells you <u>why</u> the immigrants came to the USA.
3. Underline in <u>blue</u> the sentence that tells you <u>where</u> the immigrants came from.
4. Underline in <u>black</u> the sentence that tells you <u>how</u> the immigrants came to the USA.

5

Keywords can also be placed in the appropriate place in the margin to act as clues and reminders of the content.

Alternatively: If students are not allowed, or do not like to, mark the text a simple alternative is to use sticky notes. They can help to locate important passages of text and main points can be noted. They have the advantage that they are easily removed. For example give students five Post-its and ask them to establish in pairs the five most important keypoints of the text.

Table/Diagram Completion

Science

All too often we, as teachers, do the work for the students: we fill in the tables, we categorise, we clarify, we give them back a neat diagram to learn, when in fact the learning is in the completing, the searching of the text and the discussion around it. The students could be involved in doing this work.

These exercises allow students to search the text. They can employ the techniques of skimming and scanning in order to categorise and clarify their learning. The students can be supplied with a table with headings filled in and they work in pairs to complete it:

The journey of food

Food goes into the mouth and is chewed up into small pieces by the teeth. Food then travels down the oesophagus and into the stomach where it is broken down and changed some more.

Food then moves into the small intestine where even more changes take place. The dissolved food or digested food then passes through the walls of the small intestine and into the blood stream ready to be taken all around the body to nourish it.

(Healthy and Safe Living, Unit 2, CDU)

Parts of the body involved in digestion	Explain the job of each part
teeth	The teeth chew and break up the food

5

Fill in the Missing Word

Filling in the missing words can be used to reinforce the keywords and key concepts (page 34) that are relevant to the topic that is being taught. The exercise can supply the keywords or leave students to search the text.

In both of these exercises the keywords are deleted.

> **Woodwork**

In this exercise the first letter is supplied.

Part of a Tree

Trees are the largest type of **p**............ . Some reach a height of 130 metres. The parts of a tree are the **C**..........., Trunk and **R**........... . The roots anchor the tree in the **g**........... . They also absorb **w**........... and minerals which the tree needs to **g**............ . The **t**.......... of a tree supports its crown. It also allows **m**........... and water to move from the **r**.......... to the crown.

Materials Technology: Wood   *Student Workbook* (1999)
Mooney, O'Brien & Ronayne, CDU

> **History**

In this exercise the keywords are supplied.

Court Cairns

The earliest types of _____ built by the first farmers were Court _____. The main part of the cairn was made up of two or three____. In front of the chambers was an open _____. The bodies of the dead were placed in the chambers and then the whole tomb was covered with stones and _____.
_____ stones are all that remains of the majority of Court Cairns in Ireland today.

Tombs	Chambers	Standing
Earth	Courtyard	Cairns

5

Cloze Exercises

History

Cloze exercise – an oral exercise for pairs/fours/groups. The word Cloze comes from psychology and relates to the tendency to complete missing parts of a pattern.

Cloze is different from 'fill in the blanks' exercise in that it is not an individual, written activity with totally predictable outcomes. Rather is an activity best carried out orally and in groups of at least two, but better in fours.

Students are given a suitable piece of text with words deleted at regular intervals. The first paragraph may be left intact so that students can get the gist of the piece and a sense of the style and the purpose of the piece. They read the passage silently or one student reads it quietly for the group. When she/he comes to the first deletion she invites suggestions for the missing word. If there is disagreement justification may be required by reference to the rest of the sentence. There may be several 'right' answers.

> **Let students work in pairs and talk about their answers.**
>
> **It's all about talking – negotiating, clarifying and justifying.**

When all the missing words have been supplied and agreed upon the teacher gathers the groups together to discuss the solutions. This is an opportunity to identify and highlight the clues to the solutions that are contained in the text.

This passage on the Vikings could be used for a group cloze exercise, every fifth word has been deleted but it could be made easier by deleting every seventh or tenth word.

The Vikings Settle Down

At first the Vikings attacked and plundered and then returned to their ships. But they later established settlements on coasts and river valleys. These were ship-forts and the ships were tied up, houses built and a stockade or fence erected for defence.

This was how Dublin .... in the year 841. .... archaeologists have never found ....traces of this settlement .... so we do not .... its exact position.

Maybe ....Vikings chose the high .... beside the dark-coloured pool........... the river Poddle, a ....of the river Liffey. .... would have been a .... suitable location as it .... easy to defend and ....the pool itself was sheltered.

The name Dublin comes .... the dark pool (linn dubh). ...... Vikings called it Dyflin. .... pool has long since .... filled in but it .... close to where Dublin .... stands today.

Or, perhaps .... Vikings settled a .... or so further up .... Liffey in the Kilmainham .... A Viking cemetery that .... from the ninth century .... been found there. It .... at least forty graves. .... makes it the largest .... all the Viking burial-places discovered .... of Scandinavia (Norway, Sweden .... Denmark).

In 902 the Vikings .... defeated by an Irish .... and driven out of ....

Adapted from Foley, K. and Enright, F. (1989) *Evidence of the Past*
Dublin: School and College Publishing

5

Sequencing – putting them in the right order Science

By asking students to put a 'mixed up' piece of text into the correct order, they are encouraged to read the text carefully and to make sense of the ideas contained within. There are several ways to approach a sequencing exercise and much will depend on the ability level and range within the class.

These are the instructions for decanting liquid. The sequence is mixed up.

Decanting

A. Pour the water out of the beaker.
B. Leave it to settle.
C. Get a beaker, sand, water and a glass rod.
D. This is called decanting.
E. Put some sand and water in a beaker and mix together.
F. Get a glass rod and hold it at the spout of the beaker.

1. Put the sentences in the correct order by matching the number in the table with the correct letter. (The first one is done for you)

1	C
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	

2. Write out the instructions for decanting in the correct order in the table below.

1	Get a beaker, sand, water and a glass rod
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	

Match the Headings   Civic Social and Political Education

Reading with the aim of completing a task will focus the reader on the text. This results in students reading the text very closely, which is difficult to achieve without the help of a task. Matching the heading is one such exercise that allows students to focus their reading.

Students are asked to read a piece of text and to choose appropriate labels or headings for each paragraph or section. The teacher provides the headings for the students, initially.

Government in Ireland

Suggested Headings

_____

There are two levels of government in Ireland – local and national. Local government makes decisions at a local level. The main forms of local authorities are Corporations, County Councils and Urban District Councils. National government is made up of the Oireachtas and the High and Supreme Courts.

Seanad

_____

The Oireachtas is made up of the Dáil, the Seanad and the President. In Ireland we have a democracy, which means that the power to rule lies in the hands of the people. Anyone who is over 18 and a resident of Ireland has the right to vote.

Dáil

_____

There are 166 members in the Dáil. They represent the people of the Republic of Ireland because they are elected by the people. After a general election, the Dáil elects one of the 166 TDs to the position of Taoiseach, which means leader.

Types of government

_____

The Seanad has 60 members. They are elected in three different ways. 43 are elected by councillors, out-going senators and in-coming TDs. Six are elected by university graduates and 11 are nominated by the Taoiseach.

Oireachtas

5

Like all of the exercises they can be increased in difficulty or simplified. For example, students could come up with their own headings for the exercise above or the heading for the first paragraph could be done for them.

1. Read this passage about the Government in Ireland.

2. How many paragraphs are there?

3. Look at the list of words on the right. Each word is a heading for a paragraph in the story. Can you decide which heading goes with which paragraph?

These Reading Strategies can be used in any subject area to help open up the text for students. Next, we consider the writing demands placed on students by the Junior Certificate curriculum and look at ways to support them until they can write fluently and independently.

6

Writing Genres

6

Writing

Many students experience difficulty in translating their knowledge into the written word. They find it difficult to express themselves in a sequential, logical structured way. They may also lack the confidence in their own writing abilities because of previous 'failures'.

When students come into second level they are more skilled at using one type of genre writing – they can tell stories. However, they will be required to write in several different genres such as:

Recount: Scene setting / re-telling events / closing

Report: Describe the way things are / were

Procedure: Recipe / instructions – material / illustration / diagram

Explanation: Series of logical steps to explain something

Persuasion: Promote point of view – statement / argument / reiteration

Discussion: Different view points – statement one side / other side / recommendations in summary.

Students are required to write using a variety of genres that depend on both the purpose of the task and the subject area.

Genre	Characteristics	Subjects
Recount	To re-tell what happened in logical progression To state prior knowledge of a given topic and to list down what is now known following the investigation of the topic	All
Writing Reports	A factual/technical description of a phenomenon Comparing and contrasting	Geography, Science, Home Economics, History, English, ESS, Technology
Writing an Explanation	State what is to be explained and give several reasons	Science, Maths, Materials Technology, Technology, Geography, ESS, CSPE, History
Writing Instructions	Statement – e.g. *Making a kite* List materials / equipment List steps Draw diagram	Home Economics, Materials Technology – wood and metal, Geography, ESS, Technology, ICT
Persuasion	Putting forward one point of view A position is stated The back up arguments given Re-statement of position in summary	History, Religion, CSPE, ESS, English, SPHE
Discussion	Give two sides of a situation and draw a conclusion based on the information. Statement of the issue Argument in support Argument against Recommendations	English, Religion, CSPE, SPHE, Geography

Languages (Irish, French, etc.) would use all genres at different times

6

What are the types of writing styles necessary for your subject area?

Writing Demands of My Subject

Checklist

Subject _____

Which genre/s are the students expected to use when doing written work in this subject?

Genre	Regularly 1	Often 2	Sometimes 3	Never 4
Recount				
Writing Reports				
Writing an Explanation				
Writing Instructions				
Persuasion				
Discussion				

Using Writing Frames

Students need support in developing confidence in the different genres. Writing frames can help students structure their writing. They supply students with the outline, the connectives, which will knit the particular piece of writing. They also supply students with the logical sequence of a piece of writing. The idea is that you give the student a frame for whatever genre they need to write in. Ideally you tailor the frame to the particular exercise topic they are writing about.

The sentence stems can be written into their copies and they work in pairs to develop the text further. Negotiation around the text helps develop a fluid piece of writing.

Step One: Teacher Demonstration
The teacher models writing a piece of text in a particular genre. The teacher talks out loud to illustrate to the students what's involved in shaping their work. Initially, the teacher may need to do all of the writing. Wall charts can be useful at this stage.

Step Two: Teacher and Student together
The teacher writes with the students. The teacher does all the hard parts and is always on hand. All research shows that students learn more effectively when supported by an expert

Step Three: Students on their own with Writing Frames
The students should write in pairs with the support of a writing frame in whatever genre they are using. The frame should be tailored to the topic / task at hand. The students eventually produce a best copy as a result of working together. The teacher continues to support if necessary.

Step Four: Independence
The students should write independently once they feel confident.

The following are examples of the six frames mentioned – more are contained in the Appendix (pages 87-91). They can be adapted to suit any topic. The frames are made up of sentence stems **not questions.**

The writing frames are a development of the work of Vygotsky, L. (1978)
Mind in Society: the development of higher psychological processes
and are adapted from the work of Lewis, M. & Wray, D. (1997).

In Short…

Step 1
Teacher demonstration

Step 2
Teacher and students together

Step 3
Students supported by frame

Step 4
Independent writers

6

Recount Writing Frame

Topic _____ Subject _____

Date: _____ Name: _____

I knew already that _____

And _____

I also just found out that _____

I also found that _____

As well as _____

The best that I learned was _____

Genre	Characteristics	Subject
Recount	To re-tell what happened in logical progression. To state prior knowledge of a given topic and to list down what is now known following the investigation of the topic.	All

Report Writing Frame

Topic: _____   Subject: _____

Name: _____   Date: _____

Before we began we thought that _____

However, I found out that _____

I also found out that _____

If I were investigating a topic like this again I would

_____

A second example is _____

A third example is _____

Genre	Characteristics	Subject
Writing Reports	A factual / technical description of a phenomenon Comparing and contrasting	Geography, Science, Home Economics, History, English, ESS, Technology

Explanation Writing Frame

Name: _____   Date: _____

Subject: _____   Topic: _____

I want to explain why _____

The main reason is _____

Another reason is _____

A further reason is _____

It's also thought that _____

Genre	*Characteristics*	*Subject*
Writing an Explanation	State what is to be explained and give several reasons.	Science, Maths, ESS, Materials Technology, Technology, Geography, CSPE, History

Instruction Writing Frame

Topic: _____   Subject: _____

Name: _____   Date: _____

When we _____

First we _____

Then we _____

After that we _____

Finally we _____

Genre	*Characteristics*	*Subject*
Writing Procedure	Statement – e.g. *Making a kite* List materials / equipment List steps – usually chronological Include diagram (usually).	Home Economics, Materials Technology – wood and metal Geography, ESS, Technology, ICT

6

Persuasion Writing Frame

Topic: _____   Subject: _____

Date: _____   Name: _____

I think that _____

Because _____

Another reason I think this is _____

_____

Furthermore _____

Moreover _____

Because _____

I have shown that _____

Writing frames for other genres

Genre	Characteristics	Subject
Persuasion	Putting forward one point of view A position is stated The back-up arguments given Re-statement of position in summary.	History, Religion, CSPE, ESS, English, SPHE

Discussion Writing Frame

Topic: _____ Subject: _____

Date: _____ Name: _____

There are many different views about _____

One side of the argument would say that _____

_____

Because _____

On the other hand it could be said that _____

_____

Because _____

Others believe that _____

There are arguments against this point of view which are

_____

I believe that _____

Because _____

Genre	*Characteristics*	*Subject*
Discussion	Give two sides of a situation and draw a conclusion based on the information. Statement of the issue Argument in support Argument against Recommendations.	English, Religion, CSPE, SPHE, Geography

6

Researching New Information

The Information Grid is another method that can be employed with students who are undertaking project work. Often when students are doing a project, they end up copying chunks of text from books, the Internet and CD Roms. Information grids allow students to organise their work and plan what they need to find out. Like writing frames, the teacher first models how to use the grid.

INFORMATION GRID

The information grid asks students to think about what they know of the subject already, what they need to find out, where they'll find it and finally to record what their research taught them. In introducing any new topic the students consider what they already know about a topic – for example, the science teacher when introducing the topic of respiration can ask the students what they already know about the concept. They may have never heard of the word, but they know about breathing, getting out of breath, air, etc.

What do I already know?	What do I need to find out?	Where will I find it out?	What did I learn?
I breathe air	What happens the air when I breath?	Science wall chart	_____ _____ _____
Air goes into my lungs	How do my lungs work?	My textbook	_____ _____ _____

The entire grid should only take a copy page or less. Confining them to the small space is intentional. They are forced to be selective about the information they gather.

Spelling

Students' writing is often inhibited if they cannot spell. They may choose to use an inappropriate word they can spell instead of the most suitable word. These key spellings (page 35) must be taught by the subject teacher. The *Look-Say-Cover-Write-Check* is a useful strategy that can be adopted as a whole-school approach to spelling. The copying of the word is not helpful in learning to spell the word, because it is in the process of making a visual memory of the word and then checking your memory – by attempting to write it – that the spelling is learned. The *Look- Say- Cover- Write- Check* strategy helps students' visual memory.

The teacher chooses a small number of key spellings for the topic or section they are working on. If a consistent spelling approach is used across the whole school then the strategy will become automatic and so, more effective.

LOOK at the correct spelling of the word. Try to memorise the spellings and the shape of the word. Attention should be paid to the difficult parts of the words. Play with the word. Mnemonics can be useful tools in aiding memory, e.g.

Wednesday
Wed-nes-day
<u>Wed</u>-nesday
Wednes-<u>day</u>

Identify the parts of the word you already know. Identify the letter strings, which you may find difficult.

SAY the word out loud as it is being learned.
Have a spelling pronunciation:
Wed – Nes – Day.

COVER the word and try to visualise it.

WRITE the word without looking at the correct version.

CHECK the correct version against your own. Identify areas where mistakes occurred and repeat the whole process again.

Adapted from the strategy in Margaret Peters (1990)
Spelling; Caught or Taught, Routledge, London

This activity can be taught to the class as a whole but practiced individually.

Spellings

Subject: _____

Name: _____   Date: _____

Look   Say   Cover   Write   Check

Word I need to learn: **Practice** _____

_____
_____   **COVER THE WORD**
_____
_____
_____

Now try to write the word:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Did you get it right?
If not try to write it again

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Marking Policy

The corrections on a student's work should be clear and focused on how the student can make improvements. If students are clear about what is expected of them, their ability to progress and achieve will be greatly enhanced. This, in turn, provides students with a feeling of success and increases their intrinsic motivation to learn and their confidence in their own capabilities. One way to eliminate confusion is to develop an overall school marking policy.

Corrections are opportunities for feedback. They should be constructive and informative. For example, a comment such as 'fair' or 'satisfactory' does not help the students to improve their work. However, a concrete suggestion – choosing one or two aspects of their work, such as 'skip a line between questions', 'you could start a paragraph here', or 'this is how environment is spelt' – gives students a better chance to improve their work.

A consistent approach among the whole staff could involve:

- Agreeing on set symbols.

For example:

for a misspelling	'*sp*'
for a full stop	⊙
for a missing word	⋀

When using a set of agreed symbols it is important to explain the symbols to the students, otherwise some may spend their entire school life unsure of what '*sp*', for example, means!

If spelling is a difficulty for some students consider choosing to correct only the keywords or limit the correction to the words in the first paragraph.

An agreed format for presentation of work could be considered, e.g. the page be ruled for written work and the date be written at the top of every exercise.

A positive and constructive comment can encourage students to have another go, improve their work and give them clear guidelines on how to progress. A marking policy can be seen as part of an overall positive school environment which nurtures the development of self-esteem. School supports should "include such homely resorts as a second chance, honour for a good, if unsuccessful try, but above all

the chance for discourse that permits one to find out why and how things didn't work out as planned ... school is supposed to provide a setting where our performance has fewer esteem-threatening consequences than in the 'real world', presumably in the interest of encouraging the learner to try things out". Jerome Bruner (1996) *The Culture of Education*, Harvard University Press.

This section on writing reminds us of the huge range of writing demands that are made of Junior Cycle students. Writing frames are proposed as a method of supporting and scaffolding students' learning until they can write independently. An important point to remember is that consistency throughout a staff in approaches to writing, spelling and marking policy will ease the burden on students. Next, in the final section of this handbook we consider what is involved in developing a whole-school literacy policy and we look at some JCSP initiatives to encourage reading and writing.

> **... school is supposed to provide a setting where our performance has fewer esteem-threatening consequences than in the 'real world' ...**

7

A School-wide Approach

7

Whole-School Policy

Students are often on the brink of being confident readers when they arrive in second-level schools. The challenge to secondary schools, is to continue the work of the primary school and bring the student over that final hurdle to independent reading.

So far a variety of strategies individual teachers can use within their classroom to support the developing skills such as keywords, skimming, scanning, writing frames, etc. have been outlined. Ideally subject teachers select, adapt and integrate these strategies into their teaching methodology in the context of a co-ordinated school-wide approach agreed by the staff. The report on Remedial Education (Shiel G. et al, 1999) at primary level recommends that "schools should be aware of school-wide restructuring programmes that have been shown to increase achievement across all subjects". Although this is written with primary schools in mind it also has relevance for post-primary schools.

Time for Reading, Peer Tutoring, Paired Reading, Readalong, Book Boxes, Make a Book and a variety of short term reading initiatives are just some methods schools use to support literacy development in a school wide way. The mix tends to be different in each school, but there is a common ingredient – the belief that reading skills continue to develop after primary school and that post-primary schools can meet the students' needs in language and literacy, just as they do in other disciplines. This is critical to a successful school-wide approach to literacy improvement.

If subject teachers are to participate in such an approach and spend their valuable subject time adapting their teaching methods to take account of literacy, it will only be because they are convinced that they can make a difference to literacy levels. This belief, that their intervention can make a difference, has been identified as a common factor among schools that have achieved significant improvements in literacy in other countries. Such a school "is confident that the initiative can make a difference to young people's literacy skills regardless of current literacy levels, community attitudes to education or problems inherited from primary level education". (What Works in Secondary Schools, 1999).

The JCSP Literacy Strategy

Literacy across the curriculum is one element of the framework offered to schools as part of the Junior Certificate School Programme: a programme, which endeavours to make the Junior Certificate accessible and enjoyable for potential early school leavers.

The JCSP literacy strategy takes a whole-school approach to literacy development. This approach involves subject teachers adopting specific techniques in teaching the literacy demands of their subject area. It allows for subject-specific learning to take place more effectively while at the same time improving literacy levels.

When several teachers use these strategies the students not only master subject content, but also develop the skills necessary to become independent learners.

The development of a consistent approach in such areas as spelling and marking is another element of the strategy that further supports students.

Short term initiatives and targeted interventions are a component of the strategy. These aim at raising the profile of reading throughout the whole school. Finally the development of support materials and in-service training for teachers is an on-going part of the JCSP literacy strategy.

When several teachers use these strategies the students not only master subject content, but also develop the skills necessary to become independent learners.

The Process

The following is a series of stages that a school could go through in order to implement a school-wide approach to raising literacy levels.

Stage 1		
Where are we now?	**A review of the current provision.** **Key issues are identified** **Staff training needs are identified**
What are our needs?	**The extent of literacy problems** **The impact poor literacy is having on learning, progression and survival at senior cycle**
Organise Training	**Meeting with the JCSP support service to tailor the in-service day, to meet the identified needs of the school**

Stage 2	
Initial full staff training	**In-service – full day** **Key strategies chosen by staff** **Working group put in place** **Review date decided**

Stage 3	
Working Group	

Stage 4	
Strategies put in place	**Implement with target group**

Stage 5	
Review	**Review and report carried out** **Review meeting with whole staff**

Stage 1 — Preliminary Review of current provision

Where are we now?

The school would be asked to reflect on their current provision with the help of the following review.

These questions help in deciding what the strengths and weaknesses of the current literacy provision are.

Reading Levels
Below 8 Reading Age

How many 1st years have a reading age below 8?

Is there provision for individualised programmes for all of these students?

What structures are in place to support these students?

Between 8-10 Reading Age

How many 1st years would have a reading age between 8 and 10?

What supports are in place to help them improve their reading?

Is there an agreed expectation of improvement in reading ages between 1st year and 3rd year?

Assessment

What is the average increment in reading age between 1st and 3rd year?

Besides the Junior Certificate examination what methods are used by the school to assess the reading attainment of 3rd year students?

How many students successfully complete the Junior Certificate Examination i.e. achieve a pass grade or higher in approximately 8/9 subjects, but cannot read at a level to succeed in senior cycle?

What are our Needs?

Key issues would be identified.

Staff training needs would be identified.

What is the impact poor literacy is having on learning, progression and survival at senior cycle.

More questions that could be considered as part of a review are in the Appendix on pages 92-94.

Stage 2 — In-Service

- The agenda is planned in detail in consultation with key staff and tailored to meet the established needs of the school.

- Initial full staff in-service is delivered to the whole staff. This consists of a rationale for adopting a school-wide approach and includes presentation of current research findings. This full day

in-service provides an overview of the possible strategies subject teachers could adopt.

- A strategy which could be implemented in the short term and is appropriate to the needs of the students, is identified. Additionally, other appropriate elements of a school-wide approach are also chosen that the whole staff agree to pilot.

- The formation of a small working group, which would include the JCSP school co-ordinator, representatives from a range of subject specialists, members of the learning support team and management, is encouraged. This working group would take responsibility for supporting the implementation of the strategies chosen by the full staff.

- Review date decided.

Stage 3   Working Group

The role of the working group:

> Support the introduction and implementation of the strategy that has been chosen
> Purchase equipment / materials / books
> Establish further training needs
> Identify who will organise training
> Review and evaluate
> Advise staff of outcomes

The support service often links in with the working group as they implement the strategies.

Stage 4   Implementation

Strategies put in place with the support of the working group.

A target group is chosen which could be:

> Small group
> Whole class
> Year group
> Whole school

Stage 5   **Review**

A review is carried out and report written by the working group.

● Ongoing review and evaluation is built into the process. This is an essential element. Often strategies need to be short term so cut-off dates should be adhered to. Interventions that are allowed to go on so long that they peter out are often seen as ineffective by staff.

Planning the next step begins in light of the review

Examples of School-wide Literacy Initiatives

Many schools have introduced initiatives and interventions which aim at increasing reading ability and establishing reading as an activity that can be enjoyed.

Readalong

Many schools have introduced a Readalong Project. Schools are grant aided to purchase personal tape recorders (walkmans), and headphones along with a selection of audio books. Students listen to books on tape while following it in the text. Readalong projects have been hugely successful in schools and as one teacher put "students now see reading as something to be enjoyed rather than endured". Where pre and post testing occurred a significant increase in reading levels was reported.

"Our reading ages increased from 8.0 to 10.1 in three months."

The success of these reading projects can be seen in the responses of teachers and students to the initiative:

"The initiative was very successful. The project was measured by students giving their own recommendations on the tapes they had listened to and their own comments."

"Students enjoyed and requested their books at lunch-time and during 'free' classes. Staff reported students were more positive and interested in reading as a result."

"Pupils' self-confidence and oral skills were boosted. They were challenged to finish a book and to sit still and read quietly. In return they got a 'time out' class from academic subjects and got a chance to read for pleasure and not as part of schoolwork."

"As a result of the success of the initiative students will be allocated reading classes as part of next year's JCSP timetable."

"All students were very eager. Weaker readers enjoyed the extra help the tape provided and encouraged them to 'finish' the book. More able readers in the daily reading group attempted books that did not have tapes supplied."

"If I was doing this initiative again I would organise a display area for books on tape and increase the number of books on tape. A possible follow-up would be a forum for students to recommend books to others."

"It enticed reluctant readers to pick up a book and the variety of books available ensured that students could find something relevant to their interests."

Peer Tutoring

Several of these initiatives involve peer tutoring or reading buddies. This is where senior students and/or transition year students volunteer to read with junior cycle students for 15-20 minutes, three times a week for a set period of weeks. Senior students are trained to become paired readers. Evaluation and assessment are a feature of many of the peer tutoring projects.

An outline of a Peer Tutoring Project and some helpful ideas on setting up a project can be found in *Start a Peer Tutoring Project in your School*, Teacher's manual and resource pack.
(Cassidy, A., CDU, 2000)

Keywords

Several schools concentrate on Keywords as part of their literacy strategy. In some schools teachers come together and agree to teach the most common words. Other schools produce wall charts noting keywords for each of the JCSP subjects. Some schools have given a keyword notebook to each first year student.

Make A Book Project

Central to the JCSP is the belief that all students are capable of success. The Make A Book Project succeeds in proving that.

The project began in 1999 when students of the Programme were invited to write and produce their own books. Students experience the excitement of becoming authors and sharing their work with a wider audience. Every year a public exhibition is held with all participating schools exhibiting their work.

Students need an audience if their writing is to be real and meaningful. Make A Book gives them an opportunity to be involved in an imaginative and creative cross-curricular project which challenges them to express their voice in an original way. The project brings together four elements of the Programme – building self-esteem, developing literacy, facilitating team work through a cross-curricular project.

The books come in all shapes and sizes, often accompanied by exciting displays featuring everything from dragons to dolls' houses.

The topics range from mystery stories and local legends to favourite recipes and family histories. Most of the books cross the subject boundaries. The metalwork, geography and art teachers or the Religion, Irish, English and Art teachers work together with students to produce these books. Living books, treasure chests, a computer book, dolphin-shaped books, are just some of the original ways students' stories are displayed.

Appendix

Resources
and Templates

Keyword List Template

What are the key words and concepts specific to the topic you are doing at the moment?

JCSP Keyword List

List Subject _____   **Topic:** _____

Key Concepts

1.	3.
2.	4.

Words you need to know

1.	6.
2.	7.
3.	8.
4.	9.
5.	10.

Words you need to write

1.	5.
2.	6.
3.	7.
4.	8.

Contrast Writing Frame

Topic: _____   Subject: _____

Date: _____   Name: _____

_____ and _____ are different in many ways.

To begin with _____ **is** _____ **and**

_____ **is** _____

They are different in that _____

They are also different in that _____

Another way they are not alike is _____

To finish they _____

Genre	Characteristics	Subject
Writing Reports	A factual/technical description of a phenomenon. Comparing and contrasting.	Geography, Science, Home Economics, History, English, ESS, Technology

Comparison Writing Frame

Student Name: _____   Date: _____

Subject: _____   Topic: _____

To start they both have _____

_____ **and** _____ **are alike in many ways.**

They also have _____

They are very alike in _____

There are also similarities between them in that

_____

Finally they both _____

Genre	Characteristics	Subject
Writing Reports	A factual/technical description of a phenomenon Comparing and contrasting	Geography, Science, Home Economics, History, English, ESS, Technology

Writing frames can be built around certain Junior Certificate School Programme statements, for example: Number 6 and Number 14:

Number 6   Cross-curricular Project
At Junior Certificate level the student can:
Plan, prepare and carry out with assistance a project involving different subject areas.

Cross-Curricular Project Writing Frame

Topic: _____   Subject: _____

Date: _____   Name: _____

The project is _____

My task is to _____

I will look for help/information from _____

The materials I will need are _____

And I will get them from _____

To begin the task I will _____

To do the task I will _____

To finish I will _____

Number 14   Organising and Planning a School Function
At Junior Certificate level the student can:
Work as part of a team in order to plan, prepare and present all
aspects of a simple school function

Celebration Writing Frame

Topic: _____   Subject: _____

Date: _____   Name: _____

Our celebration will be on _____ in _____

_____ are invited.

The invitation will say _____

At our celebration we will _____

and _____

as well as _____

We will feed our guests _____

My task is to _____

I will need _____

I hope _____

JCSP Make A Book Project Writing Frame

Student Name: _____   Date: _____

Topic: _____   Subject: _____

The book will be about _____

The information I will need _____

It will be made of _____

so the materials I will need are _____

I will get help/information from _____

My book will look _____

I want to have the book finished by _____

The book will be exhibited in _____ **on** _____

I hope _____

Review of School Literacy Support/Development

Here is a list of the possible questions that will form part of an audit on literacy. It is not intended to be exhaustive, rather it could be used to generate a discussion on literacy as part of the development of a school plan.

What is already in place?

1. Is there a **whole-school policy** on literacy in your school?

2. Is there a **programme** for the reading development of students in the bottom/middle reading levels?

3. What kind of **support** do you have from –
   a) Management   b) Staff?

4. Is there individual/small group **withdrawal provision** for students with a reading age below 8?

5. Is there **support for students** with reading age between 8–10?

6. Is **literacy support** concentrated on 1st years or spread throughout the school?

7. Is there a **Paired Reading Programme** in the school? If not, would it be useful?

8. Are **age appropriate** reading materials available to the students?

9. Is there timetabled **Time for Reading** in the school? Is there a need for it?

10. Could the school be described as a **'print rich'** environment for students?

11. What impression of the **status** of reading would new students get?

12. How is the **status of reading** indicated to the students?

13. Does the school organise or participate in a **literary or book event** ever/annually/regularly?

14. Does the school participate in **Readathon**?

15. Is the state of reading ever discussed **with** students/class or at groups/assemblies?

16. Do individual students get an opportunity to **discuss** their progress/lack of progress with teachers?

17. Is attention paid to the provision of positive role models for **boys' reading**?

18. Do many subject teachers regard the development of literacy as part of their **role**?

Establishing needs

19. Are the literacy levels of the **majority of students** in the school satisfactory? If so, how do you know?

20. Is there a perceived need for a literacy programme/**whole-school approach**?

21. Is there agreement on the **causes of under-achievement** in literacy in the school?

22. Is there a school policy on any of these – spelling, marking, homework, presentation of work?

23. Are teachers other than the english/learning support teachers involved in **reading support**?

24. Are reading levels **assessed** regularly?

25. Does this assessment influence the setting of **learning targets**?

26. Is students' **choice of reading** monitored?

Training

27. Do the teachers need assistance in establishing the **literacy demands** in their subject area?

28. Do the subject teachers feel they need **training** in literacy support?

29. Have they **received** any training in this area?

30. Are many of the teachers **familiar** with all/some of the following?

    Oral & Listening skills
    Keywords
    Writing Frames
    SQ3R
    Skimming & Scanning

Reading materials

31. Is there a **school library**?

32. If yes, can the students **borrow** books?

33. If no, are there books (**bookcases/book-boxes**) in the classrooms?

34. Do the students have access to **fiction and non-fiction** books at school?

35. Is there a **library programme** which teaches students how to make best use of a library?

36. Does the school have a formal link with the local public library?

After the review schools may wish to consider what aspects they want to explore. They can reflect on which aspects are strong in the school and which elements they would consider particularly appropriate to strengthen in view of the needs of the students. The following checklist may assist them in this process.

Strategies for reading development/extension
Oral & Listening skills
Keywords
Writing Frames
SQ3R
Skimming & Scanning

Text-related activities
Cloze
Sequencing
Matching up Technical Words to Definitions
Labelling
Classification
Table Construction
Prediction
Text Marking
Labelling/Segmenting
Pupil-generated Questions
Diagram Completion
Summarise Information

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Useful Websites:

www.scoilnet.ie
Scoilnet is the Irish Education site by NCTE.

www.nine.org.uk/
The Northern Ireland Network for Education has links to British literacy sites.

www.yearofreading.org.uk
The official site of the British *Year of Reading Initiative* has lots of good ideas and links.

www.bbc.co.uk/education/schools/
The BBC site is extremely useful.

www.yearofreading.org.uk/writers/moreideas/index.html
Students can read and write reviews here.

www.basic-skills.co.uk
This is the website of the Basic Skills Agency, which also produces a Basic Skills magazine intended for anyone teaching basic skills to young people and adults.

www.actis.co.uk/coi-bin/chrysali/reader/listview.cgi/list
This is the Readers Exchange site listing popular novels and allowing reviews to be read and opinions to be entered.

www.nesbitt.com/poetry/poems.html
Poetry on the web can be fun.

www.vtc.ngfl.gov.uk/
A huge selection of resources and links to subject related sites are available at the Virtual Teachers Centre.

www.worksheetfactory.com
Worksheets are available here, ready to use.

www.crosswords.com
A resource for crosswords lovers.

The following websites are useful for seeing what is available in software packages, both for specific subject areas as well as general educational software like crosswords and wordsearch packages.

http://www.sherston.com
Sherston Software Limited

http://www.scet.com
Scottish Council for Educational Technology

http://www.avp.co.uk
AVP Publishers, Developers and Distributors of Educational Resources

http://www.tagdev.co.uk
TAG Developments Ltd

http://www.haring.kids.com/master1/html
Art, cartoons and fun stuff is on Keith Haring's site

http://www.puzzlemaker.school.discovery.com
A resource for word searches, letter tiles, puzzles, etc

http://www.familyeducation.com
This U.S. K-12 site has a collection of tools, activities and resources for teachers, students and parents

http://www.eduplace.com/tales
Eduplace.com is another U.S. K-12 site with resources for teachers, students and parents. This link takes you to a section on story writing for students