

curriculum for excellence: literacy across learning

principles and practice

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Literacy across learning

Principles and practice

Language and literacy are of personal, social and economic importance. Our ability to use language lies at the centre of the development and expression of our emotions, our thinking, our learning and our sense of personal identity. Language is itself a key aspect of our culture. Through language, children and young people can gain access to the literary heritage of humanity and develop their appreciation of the richness and breadth of Scotland's literary heritage. Children and young people encounter, enjoy and learn from the diversity of language used in their homes, their communities, by the media and by their peers.

Literacy is fundamental to all areas of learning, as it unlocks access to the wider curriculum. Being literate increases opportunities for the individual in all aspects of life, lays the foundations for lifelong learning and work, and contributes strongly to the development of all four capacities of *Curriculum for Excellence*.

Competence and confidence in literacy, including competence in grammar, spelling and the spoken word, are essential for progress in all areas of the curriculum. Because of this, all teachers have responsibility for promoting language and literacy development. Every teacher in each area of the curriculum needs to find opportunities to encourage young people to explain their thinking, debate their ideas and read and write at a level which will help them to develop their language skills further.

Building the Curriculum 1

The literacy experiences and outcomes promote the development of critical and creative thinking as well as competence in listening and talking, reading, writing and the personal, interpersonal and team-working skills which are so important in life and in the world of work. The framework provides, for learners, parents and teachers, broad descriptions of the range of learning opportunities which will contribute to the development of literacy, including critical literacy.

What is meant by literacy?

In defining literacy for the 21st century we must consider the changing forms of language which our children and young people will experience and use. Accordingly, our definition takes account of factors such as the speed with which information is shared and the ways it is shared. The breadth of our definition is intended to 'future proof' it. Within *Curriculum for Excellence*, therefore, literacy is defined as:

the set of skills which allows an individual to engage fully in society and in learning, through the different forms of language, and the range of texts, which society values and finds useful.

The literacy experiences and outcomes promote the development of skills in using language, particularly those that are used regularly by everyone in their everyday lives. These include the ability to apply knowledge about language. They reflect the need for young people to be able to communicate effectively both face-to-face and in writing through an increasing range of media. They take account of national and international research and of other skills frameworks. They recognise the importance of listening and talking and of effective collaborative working in the development of thinking and in learning.

In particular, the experiences and outcomes address the important skills of critical literacy. Children and young people not only need to be able to read for information: they also need to be able to work out what trust they should place on the information and to identify when and how people are aiming to persuade or influence them.

How is the literacy framework structured?

The framework opens with a set of statements that describe the kinds of activity which all children and young people should experience throughout their learning to nurture their skills and knowledge in literacy and language. Teachers will use them, alongside the more detailed experiences and outcomes, in planning for learning and teaching.

The three organisers within the literacy framework are the same as those used in the literacy and English, literacy and Gàidhlig, Gaelic (learners) and modern languages frameworks:

- listening and talking
- reading
- writing.

Within these organisers there are a number of subdivisions.

Enjoyment and choice experiences and outcomes highlight the importance of providing opportunities for young people to make increasingly sophisticated choices.

The *tools* sections include important skills and knowledge: for example, in reading it includes such important matters as reading strategies and spelling.

The sections on *finding and using information* include, in reading, critical literacy skills; while the *understanding, analysing and evaluating* statements encourage progression in understanding of texts, developing not only literal understanding but also the higher order skills.

Finally, the *creating texts* experiences and outcomes describe the kind of opportunities which will help children and young people to develop their ability to communicate effectively, for example, by writing clear, well-structured explanations.

The statements of experiences and outcomes emphasise that learning is an *active* process: for example, the outcomes stress *making* notes, rather than the passive activity implied by *taking* notes. Experiences represent important continuing aspects of learning such as exploring and enjoying text, and outcomes describe stages in the development of skills and understanding.

The experiences and outcomes have been written in an inclusive way which will allow teachers to interpret them for the needs of individual children and young people who use Braille, sign language and other forms of communication. This is exemplified in the words 'engaging with others' and 'interacting' within the listening and talking outcomes.

The level of achievement at the fourth level has been designed to approximate to that associated with SCQF level 4.

Why are the literacy experiences and outcomes also published separately from the literacy and English and from the literacy and Gàidhlig frameworks?

The importance of the development of literacy skills across all areas of the curriculum is stressed in *Building the Curriculum 1*. All practitioners – from the early years, through primary and secondary education, in youth work settings and in colleges – are in a position to make important contributions to developing and reinforcing the literacy skills of children and young people, both through the learning activities which they plan and through their interaction with children and young people. Schools and their partners need to ensure a shared understanding of these responsibilities and that the approaches to learning and teaching will enable each child and young person to make good progress in developing their literacy skills. It is expected that the literacy experiences and outcomes, and this accompanying paper, will be read by a range of practitioners, including those who work in school library resource centres, who make an enormous contribution to the development of the literacy skills of children and young people.

What does this mean for learning and teaching?

For teachers and other practitioners, it means asking the question, 'How am I meeting the literacy needs of the learners in front of me?' It means thinking about the kinds of literacy experiences provided for young people. It doesn't mean that every practitioner will teach everything that a secondary English teacher does. These experiences will sometimes be provided through collaborative working with other departments; but the greatest impact for learners will come from all practitioners, in all learning environments, including rich literacy experiences as part of their day-to-day learning and teaching programmes.

What are broad features of assessment in literacy?

(This section complements the advice for literacy and English.)

As literacy is the responsibility of all staff, and because of the importance of literacy across all aspects of a young person's learning, all staff should be clear about their responsibilities and their roles in the assessment of literacy. Assessment in literacy will focus on children and young people's progress in developing and applying essential skills in listening and talking, reading and writing. From the early years to the senior stages, and particularly at times of transition, it is vital to have a clear picture of the progress each child and young person is making across all aspects of literacy so that further learning can be planned and action can be taken if any ground has been lost.

Within the overall approach to assessing literacy, evidence of progress in developing and applying skills in day-to-day learning across the curriculum will complement evidence gathered from language lessons. Specific assessment tasks will also have an important part to play. Practitioners and learners need a common understanding of expectations in literacy across all curriculum areas, and discussion and sharing examples of work will help to achieve this.

Approaches to assessment should identify the extent to which children and young people can apply their literacy skills across their learning. For example:

- How well do they contribute to discussions and openly explain their thinking?
- Are they increasingly able to distil key ideas from texts?
- Can they apply their literacy skills successfully in different areas of their learning and their daily lives?

Children will demonstrate their progress in *reading* through their growing fluency and understanding, and their increasing confidence in reading to learn as well as learning to read.

Literacy experiences and outcomes emphasise the development of *critical literacy*. Progress here can be seen as children move from dealing with straightforward information towards analysing, evaluating and being aware of the trust that they should place on evidence.

Children and young people will demonstrate their progress in *writing* through the degree of independence they show, the organisation and quality of their ideas, their skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar, the match of their writing to audience and the effectiveness of their use of language.

Progress in *listening and talking* can be assessed through their interactions in social and learning contexts and through using individual talks, presentations and group discussions. This range of sources will provide evidence about their confidence, their increasing awareness of others in sustaining interactions, the clarity of their ideas and expression and their skills in listening to others and taking turns.

Learners' enthusiasm and motivation for using language will show in their growing use of different media and texts, their preferences in reading, their confidence in sharing experiences through talk and writing and in the ways they apply their skills in their learning and communicating. These aspects will be indicators of their long-term success in using literacy in learning in their lives as citizens and in preparing for the world of work.

Where do I begin?

You might begin by asking yourself to what extent you already provide literacy experiences for learners. As a first step, you might want to consider the ways in which you use listening, talking, reading and writing for learning day to day in your teaching programmes. For example, do you provide learners with opportunities to:

Listening and talking for learning

- engage with others in group and class discussions of appropriate complexity?
- learn collaboratively – for example, when problem solving?
- explain their thinking to others?
- explore factors which influence them and persuade them in order to help them think about the reliability of information?

Reading for learning

- find, select, sort, summarise and link information from a variety of sources?
- consider the purpose and main concerns in texts, and understand the differences between fact and opinion?
- discuss similarities and differences between texts?

Writing for learning

- make notes, develop ideas and acknowledge sources in written work?
- develop and use effective vocabulary?
- create texts – for example, presentations – which allow learners to persuade/argue/explore ideas?

Where you answer 'yes' to these questions, you are contributing to the development of the literacy of the learners for whom you are responsible.

You will see that literacy is already reflected within the experiences and outcomes of the other curriculum area frameworks. It is important to use the literacy experiences and outcomes alongside those of the other curriculum areas when planning for learning.

What is meant by 'texts'?

It follows that the definition of 'texts' also needs to be broad and future proof. Therefore, within *Curriculum for Excellence*:

a text is the medium through which ideas, experiences, opinions and information can be communicated.

Reading and responding to literature and other texts play a central role in the development of learners' knowledge and understanding. Texts not only include those presented in traditional written or print form, but also orally, electronically or on film. Texts can be in continuous form, including traditional formal prose, or non-continuous, for example charts and graphs. The literacy framework reflects the increased use of multimodal texts, digital communication, social networking and the other forms of electronic communication encountered by children and young people in their daily lives. It recognises that the skills which children and young people need to learn to read these texts differ from the skills they need for reading continuous prose. Examples are given below.

Examples of texts
novels, short stories, plays, poems reference texts the spoken word charts, maps, graphs and timetables advertisements, promotional leaflets comics, newspapers and magazines CVs, letters and emails films, games and TV programmes labels, signs and posters recipes, manuals and instructions reports and reviews text messages, blogs and social networking sites web pages, catalogues and directories

In planning for learning in any curriculum area it is important for practitioners to ensure that children and young people encounter a wide range of different types of text in different media. As they progress in their learning, children and young people will encounter texts of increasing complexity in terms of length, structure, vocabulary, ideas and concepts.