

LEARNING TO READ READING TO LEARN

Scaffolding the English curriculum for Aboriginal secondary students

NSW 7–10 English Syllabus
Aboriginal Support Pilot Project
Office of the Board of Studies

by

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Final Report

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Summary

The aim of this pilot project was to research the integration of literacy development in the secondary school, particularly for Aboriginal students, with the implementation of the NSW Years 7–10 English syllabus. The project used a literacy program, *Learning to Read: Reading to Learn*, that has proven highly successful with Indigenous school students (McRae et al 2000) and mainstream middle school programs (Culican 2004, 2005). The focus of the project was particularly on sustainable change in teaching practices that could provide long-term benefits for Indigenous students. The outcomes for teachers are described in the report of Erebus Consultants (Carbines et al. 2005). The following report describes the pedagogical approach in the context of the students, their teachers and the syllabus, and outlines some of their literacy learning outcomes.

The pedagogy

Learning to Read: Reading to Learn (LRRL) is a literacy teaching program designed to enable all learners to read and write at levels appropriate to their age, grade and area of study. It has been developed with teachers of primary, secondary and tertiary students of all backgrounds, across Australia and internationally, to support reading and writing across the curriculum. The teaching strategies have been proven to enable weak readers to rapidly learn to read and write at grade-appropriate levels, and advanced students to develop language understandings well beyond their independent competence (Culican 2004, 2005; McCrae et al. 2000). They draw on principles of scaffolded learning (Wells 1999), functional linguistics (Halliday 1993) and genre approaches to writing (Martin 1993, 1999, 2001), in a form that is accessible, practical and meets the needs of teachers and students (Martin & Rose 2003, 2005; Rose 2005a; Rose et al. 1999; Rose et al. 2004).

The students

Aboriginal students in the target schools were from a wide variety of family and community backgrounds. However, teachers reported that a significant proportion of these students scored among the lowest educational outcomes and literacy achievements in NSW. Almost all NSW Aboriginal students are in mainstream secondary classes, in which there are many other students with similar literacy problems. The approach taken by LRRL is not to withdraw or treat any of these students differently, but to train teachers to support all the students in their classes to successfully achieve the syllabus outcomes. Additional support can also be provided to weaker students, working with the same texts as the mainstream classes in which they are studying.

NSW 7–10 English syllabus

'In Years 7 to 10, English is the study and use of the English language in its various textual forms. These encompass spoken, written and visual texts of varying complexity through which meaning is shaped, conveyed, interpreted and reflected' (Board of Studies 2003, p 7). The project used the findings of the major secondary literacy research project *Write it Right*, conducted in NSW schools in the 1990s, to correlate the syllabus outcomes statements with the literacy demands of the curriculum. This formed a framework for training teachers to select and analyse texts in the English curriculum, and to teach students to read and write them successfully.

The professional development program

The project involved a two-day workshop each term, with classroom practice after each workshop, followed by review and feedback. The program aimed to support teachers to develop skills in classroom strategies to support all their students to succeed, and in selection and analysis of curriculum texts to plan lessons. From the teachers' perspective, the sequence of development began with practising the strategies with the support of detailed lesson plans, followed by initial text selection and lesson planning, then learning high-level tools for discourse analysis of curriculum texts, and finally assessment of students' writing using these tools. From the perspective of teaching the syllabus to students, the sequence began with engaging students in reading literature and writing stories, followed by interpreting the theme or message of literary texts, and writing texts with a message, and finally critiquing literary texts, including verbal and visual texts, and writing text responses.

Teachers' professional learning

Teachers at the start of the program demonstrated that they had a good intuitive understanding of the genres and language patterns of texts in the English curriculum, but all were concerned that many of their students were unable to achieve the outcomes of the syllabus, and were unlikely to succeed in secondary schooling. In the first stage of the project all teachers rapidly learnt to use the strategies for classroom interaction, and all reported an unprecedented level of engagement by all students in their classes. In the next stage all teachers began to plan their own lessons, selecting and analysing texts in the curriculum. This practice enabled them to take on high-level skills in discourse analysis in the third workshop, and their mastery of these skills was clearly demonstrated in the final workshop, as they had no difficulty analysing samples of students' writing using the discourse analysis tools.

Literacy outcomes

Analysis of students' writing provided by the teachers, before, during and after implementation of the LRR strategies, showed that students had improved an average of two to three years expected literacy development, over three terms of implementation. This is consistent with outcomes of other LRR projects (McRae et al. 2000; Culican 2005). The report illustrates stages of students' writing development over the course of the project, with samples of stories, poems and text responses. Target students' writing before the project ranged from levels expected at Stages 1–2 (junior primary). Following implementation of the LRR strategies, students were writing at levels expected at Stages 4–5 (middle school years).

Conclusions

The project has had three key benefits:

- implementation of the literacy and professional development strategies in a specific secondary curriculum area
- professional development of secondary English teachers using the strategies to meet the needs of Aboriginal and other students with literacy difficulties
- enabling teachers to map the learning development and needs of their students as they applied the strategies.

The project has shown that Aboriginal and other students can make rapid progress if:

- teaching reading and writing is integrated in classroom practice
- classroom interactions are carefully designed to enable all students to succeed in learning activities
- teachers are given explicit guidance on scoping and sequencing the curriculum. This could be facilitated by integrating the findings of the *Write it Right* research into secondary school syllabi, including the NSW Years 7–10 English syllabus.

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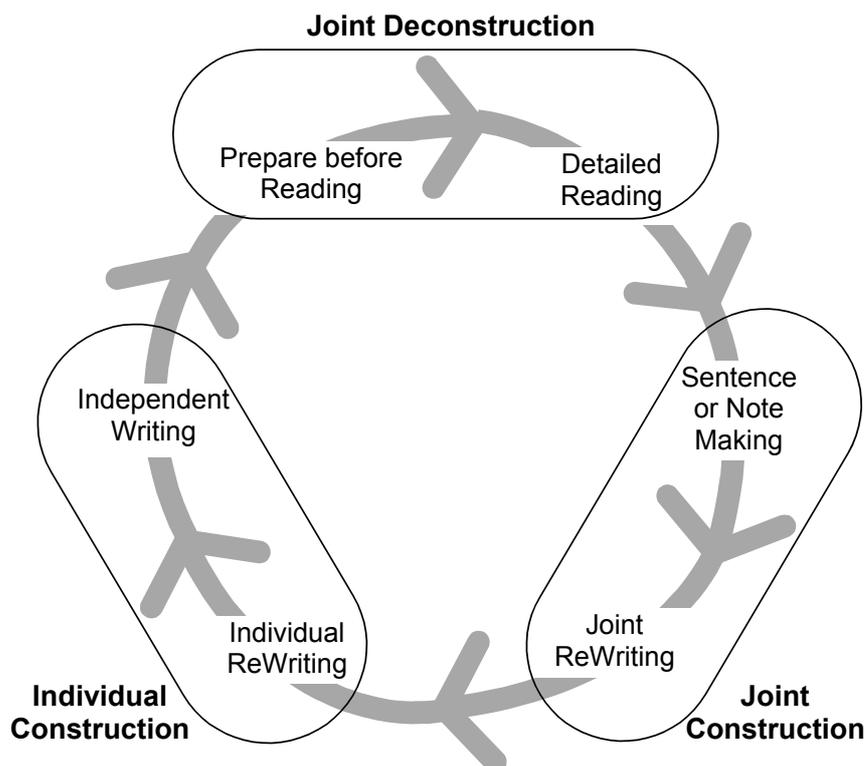
1 The pedagogy

The *Learning to Read: Reading to Learn* program (LRRL) trains teachers in scaffolding strategies that support students to read texts that are expected of their level of study and curriculum area, with fluency and comprehension. The ability to read these texts then forms the basis for learning to write texts at similar levels. The strategies enable teachers to actively engage all students in a class in recognising, interpreting and using the language of texts in their area of study. They can be used as part of normal classroom practice, engaging and extending all students, and as additional support for students in need.

For beginning readers the program focuses on recognising, comprehending and spelling words, and reading and writing stories (Rose 2004b). In the middle school years it includes techniques for teaching reading and writing of both stories (Rose 2004c) and factual texts (Rose 2004d).

Teachers support students to read a high-level text, firstly by preparing them to comprehend the text as it is read aloud, and then by giving them meaning cues to recognise and understand wordings within each sentence. As students are actively recognising wordings for themselves, these reading skills transfer to other contexts over time. Once students can read and understand a text, they prepare to write by spelling words and writing sentences from it, or by taking notes from it. With guidance by the teacher, students then jointly practise writing a new text that is patterned closely on the one they have learnt to read, using the information from factual texts, or the literate language patterns from stories. Students then practise writing their own text that is closely patterned on the original and jointly constructed texts. The final step is then to independently research, plan and write texts of their own, using the language resources they have learnt from the supported activities. These steps are summarised in the following diagram, Figure 1.

Figure 1: LRRL curriculum cycle



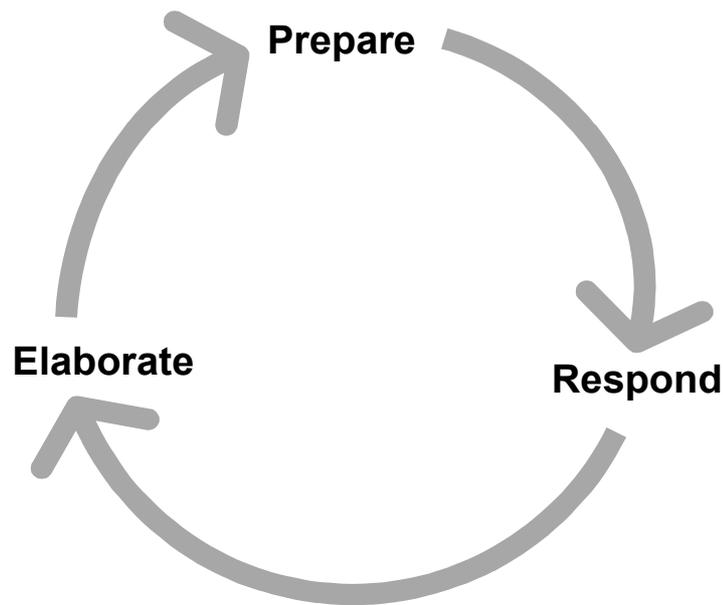
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Strategies for factual texts support students to practise key skills of reading specialised, technical or academic language, finding key information, and using this information in their own writing. These skills are practised in four stages. First the text is read aloud, but students are first prepared for listening with comprehension, by giving them background knowledge and summarising the sequence of meanings in the text. Secondly, in a detailed reading of a short passage, students are prepared to recognise and understand wordings within each sentence, using cues so that students know what each group of technical or literate words mean, and where to find it in the sentence. Students identify and highlight these words and the teacher then elaborates by defining, explaining or discussing them in more depth. This enables all students to read the passage fluently with full comprehension. Thirdly, students take turns to scribe the word groups they have highlighted, as notes on the classroom board. Fourthly the teacher guides the class to write a new text using these notes, but in words that are closer to the level they would write themselves. Students then practise writing texts independently from notes. These activities support students to critically interpret texts they are reading and writing, and prepare them for independent research.

Strategies for reading and writing stories are similar to those for factual texts, although the focus is on literate wordings, rather than specialised or technical information, and the goal for writing is to create a new story, using the literate language patterns they have learnt in reading. Here additional support can be given by writing out sentences or paragraphs on cardboard strips and using these to practise reading, spelling and writing. (This extra support can also be used with factual texts.) First the text is read aloud, as with factual texts, and students are prepared with background knowledge and the sequence of meanings in the text. Secondly, in the detailed reading of a selected passage, the teacher prepares students to identify and highlight wordings and then elaborates by defining, explaining or discussing them. And finally the teacher guides them to write a new text using the overall structures and language features of the passage they have learnt to read.

The core of the pedagogy is a carefully designed pattern of classroom interaction, in which the teacher prepares all students in a class to successfully identify features of reading texts, or select elements to write. Students responses are consistently affirmed, and then elaborated by defining new words, explaining new concepts, or discussing with students' experience. By this means all students are engaged in the activity and their learning is extended. This pattern is known as the *scaffolding interaction cycle* (Martin & Rose 2005; Rose 2004a, 2006), schematised in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Scaffolding interaction cycle



As the pedagogy is designed to integrate literacy teaching with classroom practice across the curriculum it is ideally suited for implementing the NSW Years 7–10 English syllabus (along with other syllabi). The research it draws on includes the major *Write it Right* secondary school literacy project conducted within the NSW Department of Education in the 1990s. Particularly relevant is the internationally acclaimed research on the literacy demands of secondary English, published by the Department as *Exploring Literacy in School English* (Rothery 1994). This research sets out a clear framework for organising and sequencing the implementation of a secondary English course, such as the NSW Years 7–10 English syllabus. The resource is focused on writing in the context of secondary English, but is readily adapted to teaching reading as well.

2 The students

A wide diversity of Aboriginal students were involved in the project, from a range of community and family backgrounds. Their community backgrounds ranged from the rural Aboriginal communities of Tabulam and Cabbage Tree Island, and families living within rural towns, to the inner-city Aboriginal community of Redfern, as well as other Sydney suburbs.

Teachers reported that the literacy skills of their Aboriginal students ranged from amongst the top students in the school, to students who had never been known to write more than a sentence or two, and some who had never written at all. All the Aboriginal students were in a minority in mainstream secondary classes, with the exception of Alexandria Park Community School, where Aboriginal students are a majority in some classes.

The *Learning to Read: Reading to Learn* program has been developed over a decade in the context of Aboriginal education. The problems that Aboriginal students experience with schooling have been extensively researched in this program (Rose 1999, 2004a, 2005a,b). This analysis is summarised as follows.

Aboriginal students' literacy problems and the nature of schooling

Lack of educational success is not a consequence of particular cultural or personal differences of Aboriginal learners, but is a normal outcome of educational practices that have evolved to service a stratified economic order (Rose 1999, 2004a, 2005b). That is, 10–20% of students go on to professional training at university, 30% receive vocational training, while over 50% receive no post-school qualifications (ABS 1994, 2004). Of the latter group many would traditionally have become unskilled labourers, but now face unemployment, including a disproportionately high number of Aboriginal school leavers. Educational outcomes for this group have not changed significantly despite economic changes.

These outcomes reflect levels of engagement of students in any secondary school class in Australia, according to teachers that we work with. That is, a minority of students are consistently actively engaged in classroom activities — following teacher explanations, answering questions, solving problems successfully — another group is generally just keeping up, occasionally answering questions and solving problems, while a third group rarely responds to questioning, is not successful with assessment tasks, and is left behind by much of classroom practice. An unfortunately high proportion of Aboriginal students fall into the last group.

Secondary teachers generally have no training to deal with this range of 'ability' levels in their classes, other than behaviour management strategies. Most feel constrained to cover the required curriculum and so cannot slow down the pacing to support weaker students. Some attempt to teach to the class average, hoping that weaker students will keep up, and worry about 'accelerating' more able students. A common view is that students should have learnt the skills to engage in the curriculum in primary school.

The central skill required for secondary schooling is the ability to independently learn from reading. According to Bernstein (1990, p 53), reading in school is 'the crucial pedagogic medium and social relation'. Without this skill, independent homework is not possible, but independent homework is essential to cover the secondary curriculum, to engage actively in class activities, and to successfully complete assessment tasks. Bernstein (1990, p 78) points out that 'the academic curriculum of the school creates the necessity of two sites of acquisition (school and home)'. Writing is usually not taught explicitly in secondary school, but successful students learn how to write assessment tasks from their experience of reading.

In upper primary classes the same proportions of 'ability' levels already exist. A current major trend in primary schooling, to cope with this, is to individuate learning activities so that each child is engaged in an activity at a level determined by their assessments, or by their own choosing. For some activities children may be grouped according to their assessed 'ability' levels, and/or by the books or tasks they have chosen. These practices are rationalised as giving students 'choice' and allowing them to work at their own level. But they demonstrably do not give weaker students the skills they need to successfully engage with secondary schooling, particularly Aboriginal students.

In particular, normal upper primary practices do not give weaker students the skills to independently learn from reading, at the levels required for secondary schooling. Explicit teaching of reading is not a widespread part of standard upper primary classroom practice. In junior primary years these differences in 'ability' levels are already apparent to teachers. Current standard junior primary practice is focused on assessing children's 'ability' levels and tailoring individual learning programs to these levels. Reading and writing activities are focused on children choosing their own books to read, and writing their own stories. Current junior primary practices demonstrably do not give weaker students the independent reading skills they need to start learning from reading in upper primary school.

At all levels of schooling, teaching practices continually assess and rank students, through formal assessment tasks and normal classroom interactions, in which teachers continually ask 'monitoring questions' to check students' understandings. Only a minority of students

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are continually successful at assessment tasks and answering teachers' questions; other students are moderately successful at tasks and sometimes answer questions successfully; other students are rarely successful at tasks and rarely answer questions successfully (Lemke 1990; Rose 2004a, 2006; Wells 1999). Evaluation and grading of students begins in junior primary and continues relentlessly through all school years. Successful students are continually affirmed and eventually develop identities as independent learners. Unsuccessful students are continually negated and eventually experience schooling as an unpleasant waste of time. This includes a high proportion of Aboriginal students.

The 'ability' levels of some students are assessed as to be so low that they need remedial intervention. Standard one-on-one remedial teaching is pitched at the assessed level of the student, which is well below the average level of their age or grade. This model of intervention ensures that few of these students will ever catch up to the level of their peers. They may improve gradually, but their peers are learning at an accelerating rate. Another approach is to give students an in-class support tutor, who sits with the student and supports them in class activities. This is an ineffective and inefficient use of teaching resources. Whatever benefits the practice is assumed to have are outweighed by its drawbacks. The student has to attend both to the class teacher, and to their tutor, distracting them and increasing their cognitive load. It ensures that the student remains dependent on tutor support, and also stigmatises them in the class as weak students.

A high proportion of Aboriginal students are assessed with very low 'ability' levels, including various categories of alleged 'cognitive' or 'language' deficits. These assessments of Aboriginal students can be seen to excuse teachers and schools from responsibility for teaching to the appropriate standard for their ages and grades. They contribute to an endemic culture in Aboriginal education of accepting low standards, and expecting low outcomes. They justify the shift in focus from academic achievement to behavioural control and pastoral care. They justify encouraging a tiny number of Aboriginal students to succeed to Year 12, while the overwhelming majority are expected to not succeed or to drop out before completion.

Attempts in primary school, and some junior secondary classes, to alleviate differences in 'ability' levels by individuating learning activities, appear only to delay their impact until secondary school. By Year 9 weaker students can no longer cope with the secondary curriculum. This is the age when many Aboriginal students begin to drop out.

Where the experience of schooling as an unpleasant waste of time is inter-generational and common to students' whole peer groups, there is little motivation to stay at school — major reasons for low retention rates of Aboriginal students.

Origin of students' 'ability' levels

It is now generally assumed that differences in 'ability' levels are less attributable to biological differences in children, than to cultural differences in their families that prepare them for school learning, in particular parent–child reading practices in the home. Children in middle-class literate families spend up to 1000 hours reading with their parents before starting school. They experience reading as highly pleasurable, and have already developed identities as readers before starting school (Bergin 2001).

Assessments of children in junior primary are focused on reading and learning skills that are acquired in parent–child reading in the home. Children who have not acquired these skills in the home will be assessed as weaker than those who have. This includes a high proportion of Aboriginal children, whose family culture tends to be oral rather than literate, and may not include parent–child reading to the same extent.

Normal reading practices in junior primary school have evolved to provide maximum benefit to children from middle-class literate families. They do not provide sufficient support

for children from oral family cultures to develop independent reading skills, especially Aboriginal children (Rose 1999; Rose et al. 1999).

Children who are not independent readers by the end of junior primary are not prepared to start learning from reading in upper primary. If they are not able to independently learn from reading by the end of upper primary they will not be ready to engage with the secondary school curriculum. In this way, normal teaching practices in junior primary, in upper primary and in secondary school ensure that children from oral family backgrounds are unlikely to succeed. This includes a high proportion of Aboriginal students.

So-called low 'ability' levels are a consequence of a mismatch between primary socialisation in the home, and normal teaching practices in junior primary and later stages. Schools, teachers and teacher training must take responsibility for teaching all students equally to the same level no matter what their starting points.

Addressing the problem

As almost all Aboriginal students in NSW schools are in classes with a majority of non-Aboriginal students, their needs cannot be addressed without addressing normal classroom practices. In general terms the solution is that reading and writing must be integrated with classroom activities, at all levels of schooling, in all curriculum areas (Feez 1998). Teaching reading should not cease after junior primary, should not be separate from the curriculum content that is being read, and should be aimed at engaging all students equally. This means that teachers at all levels of schooling must be trained to teach reading and writing as part of their normal classroom practice, and support teachers/tutors must be trained to teach weaker students to read class texts (not lower-level texts).

Secondary teachers need to know how to teach reading and writing in the context of their curriculum and normal classroom activities. All curriculum activities need to be planned around texts that students need to read and write for homework and assessment. We believe that at least 25% of class time should be devoted to developing skills including intensive reading of key texts, note taking, and writing. These activities must involve all students equally and be led by the teacher, not left to individual students or groups to struggle or succeed on their own. The practice of 'peer teaching' in groups should be limited to activities that the teacher has already shown all students how to do, and supported the whole class to practise together. Students may then support each other to practise reading and writing tasks in groups.

3 NSW 7–10 English syllabus

We believe that the NSW *English Years 7–10 Syllabus* aims to engage junior secondary students in the study of literature, including literary fiction, film and other modalities, as well as encouraging them to develop their own creative skills. These aims are implicit in the opening syllabus statement:

The aim of English in Years 7 to 10 is to enable students to use, understand, appreciate, reflect on and enjoy the English language in a variety of texts and to shape meaning in ways that are imaginative, interpretive, critical and powerful.

The underlying philosophy informing the syllabus is a progressivist-constructivist one of personal growth through immersion in texts (Brophy 2002). It is not explicitly concerned with addressing the needs of disadvantaged students, including Aboriginal students. As such it is

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not explicitly framed to provide teachers with tools for teaching the literacy skills they need in the context of the curriculum. However its lack of specificity in relation to supporting students in need offers wide opportunities for using strategies that engage students and extend their literacy. Key relevant statements in the syllabus are as follows:

In Years 7–10, English is the study and use of the English language in its various textual forms. These encompass spoken, written and visual texts of varying complexity through which meaning is shaped, conveyed, interpreted and reflected.

Students learn English through explicit teaching of language and through immersion in a diverse range of purposeful and increasingly demanding language experiences.

The syllabus enables teachers to draw on the methods of different theoretical perspectives and models of teaching to assist their students to achieve the syllabus outcomes at the highest levels.

Through responding to and composing texts, students learn about the power, value and art of the English language for communication, knowledge and pleasure.

The NSW Department of Education sponsored a major research project in the early 1990s, into the literacy demands of the secondary curriculum in English and other subject areas, entitled *Write it Right*. This research identified a set of genres, or types of texts, that students are expected to read and write in the context of the curriculum set out in the Years 7–10 syllabus (Rothery 1994). These are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Genres in the secondary English curriculum

Personal recount	Recounting events	Orientation Record of events	Stories
Biographical recount	Recounting life stages	Orientation Record of stages	
Narrative	Resolving a complication in a story	Orientation Complication Evaluation Resolution	
Anecdote	Sharing an emotional reaction in a story	Orientation Remarkable event Reaction	
Exemplum	Judging character or behaviour in a story	Orientation Incident Interpretation	
News story	Engaging and informing about public affairs	Lead Angles	
Personal response	Reacting emotionally to a text	Evaluation Reaction	
Review	Evaluating a literary, visual or musical text	Context Description of text Judgement	
Interpretation	Interpreting the message of a text	Evaluation Synopsis of text Reaffirmation	
Critical response	Challenging the message of a text	Evaluation Deconstruction Challenge	
Exposition	Arguing for a point of view	Thesis Arguments Restatement	Persuasive
Discussion	Discussing two or more points of view	Issue Sides Resolution	

These genres give teachers and students a basic framework for recognising and interpreting the texts they are expected to read, respond to and compose within the English curriculum, including written, spoken and visual texts. They also provide a systematic framework for sequencing the development of reading and writing skills (Feez 1998).

The natural starting point for students with little experience of reading for pleasure or for learning is with short stories. Short stories and novels include passages of narratives, anecdotes and exemplums. These passages can be used as patterns to begin writing complex literate stories.

The second stage is then to explore stories with a theme or message, both to interpret the message, and to practise writing stories with a message. Such thematic stories are a major

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component of the English curriculum, as adult literature is expected to convey messages of personal and social significance which the reader is expected to interpret. As such, thematic stories are seen as a vehicle for students' personal development, and as a first step towards critical interpretation of literature.

A third stage is then to begin reading and writing text responses. The starting point here is with reviews which simply describe and evaluate a literary text (verbal or visual), but then to practise writing *interpretations* that both evaluate a text and interpret its message. The interpretation genre is thus a key genre in the English curriculum. Research shows that this is the response genre most highly valued by English teachers and in public assessments, that reviews are less highly valued, and that students who can only write personal responses are likely to fail. This is despite the tendency of both English teachers and assessment tasks to encourage students to respond personally to texts (Rothery & Macken 1991). A fourth stage is then to look beyond stories and text responses to other genres, particularly expository genres that argue for a point of view or discuss two or more points of view.

In such a curriculum, skills that students develop in reading and writing genres at each stage provide a platform to begin mastering more complex genres in the next stage. The first stage enables all students to read and write stories with full comprehension and enjoyment, and to recognise how authors construct complex stories. The second stage builds on these skills to start recognising how authors construct the themes or messages in stories, and to use this knowledge to write thematic stories. The third stage builds on these skills to recognise how texts are evaluated and interpreted in literary culture, and to begin writing reviews and interpretations. At the same time these skills can be applied to recognising how arguments are constructed in public discourse, and to begin writing expository texts.

These skills in reading and writing complex stories, thematic stories, text responses, and expository texts underlie the explicit aims of the NSW *English Years 7–10 Syllabus*. However, it would be an enormous advantage to teachers and their students if the syllabus also provided explicit guidance for organising and sequencing its implementation, using a systematic model of genres in the English curriculum. It would be of great benefit if the syllabus included the findings of the *Write it Right* research project, as they provide precisely the kind of guidance that secondary English teachers need and ask for to support all their students.

This recommendation should ideally be extended to other syllabi in relation to students' literacy needs. The Board of Studies could significantly enhance its role in enabling all students to achieve success in schooling, if syllabi provided explicit guidance to teachers on the literacy demands associated with syllabus content and outcomes statements. This is provided to some extent in the K–6 syllabus, that incorporates research and practice in genre writing, under the name 'text types'. It would be of great benefit to all NSW secondary students if secondary syllabi incorporated the research of the *Write it Right* project.

A range of teacher resources have been published by the Department of Education for use in various subject areas (Humphrey 1996; Humphrey & Takans 1996; Iedema et al. 1994; Rothery 1994). These resources lead the international field in school literacy, and are just as relevant today as when they were first published. In addition the research findings have been published extensively in academic books and journals (Christie 1999; Christie & Martin 1997; Cope & Kalantzis 1993; Halliday & Martin 1993; Johns 2002; Macken-Horarik 2002; Martin 1993, 1999, 2002; Martin & Rose 2006 in press; Martin & Rothery 1990, 1993; Martin & Veel 1998; Rothery & Macken 1991; Unsworth 1997, 1999, 2001, 2004; Veel 1992, 1998). It would be of inestimable value to NSW school students if this body of research into the literacy demands of the secondary school curriculum was systematically integrated into NSW secondary syllabi.

4 The professional development program

The *Reading to Learn* inservice program provides teachers with two sets of skills: firstly in supporting learners to recognise and use literate language patterns in texts, and secondly in selecting texts and analysing their language patterns to plan lessons and programs. The discussion used to scaffold all students in a class, including weaker readers, is different from the practices that teachers are generally used to, and the analysis of language patterns to discuss with students is unique. The program provides careful demonstration and supported practice over time for teachers to take on these skills, using a series of workshops, training videos and print resources.

The inservice program for this project was designed to integrate the professional development of teachers with the literacy development of their students, in the context of the literacy demands of the Years 7–10 English curriculum. Four two-day workshops were planned with this twin focus. Each workshop following the first began with a review of teachers' experience putting the strategies into practice.

Term 1 *Engaging with texts*

The theme for Term 1 was *Engaging*, that is the aim was to begin engaging students in the pleasures of literature by teaching them to read enjoyable stories, and to begin using the language patterns they learnt to read, in order to write successful stories. To this end the first stage in developing students' reading and writing skills was to start them reading and writing complex literate narratives, in other words stories that are more complex than the simple texts used in remedial classes, and the simple little stories that weak students tend to write. Lesson notes were provided for supporting students to start reading Paul Jennings short stories, followed by Henry Lawson, and a brief autobiographical recount from Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom*.

The professional development focus for Term 1 was to support teachers to begin using the strategies in their classes. To this end the lesson plans provided highly detailed notes for discussing the language in the stories, to support students to read them with full comprehension. The first workshop was designed firstly to show teachers how the strategies work in principle and in practice, using videos of demonstration lessons to show the curriculum and scaffolding interaction cycles. Then teachers practised the strategies together in the workshop using detailed lesson notes. This practice then enabled teachers to start using the provided lesson notes in their classes.

Some teachers stuck closely to the lesson plans as they practised the strategies, taking as long as required to work through whole passages of text, with reading them in detail with their classes, and then writing new stories patterned on the reading text. Other teachers began writing their own lesson plans after briefly practising with the provided lesson plans. The most powerful outcomes for all teachers were firstly to begin teaching reading of high-level texts as part of their classroom practice, and secondly to use the carefully planned interactions to prepare all students in the class to succeed in the reading and writing tasks.

Term 2 *Interpreting texts*

Term 2's theme was *Interpreting*, that is to begin supporting students to recognise and interpret the messages in thematic stories, and to start writing stories with messages.

The professional development focus for Term 2 was on selecting and analysing stories, in particular to identify messages in thematic stories, and to analyse how messages are constructed by accomplished authors. To this end a set of stories was prepared for teachers to practise analysing, two of them written by Aboriginal authors. These included:

- *Butterfly Song* by Terri Jaenke, Penguin 2002
- *Finding Ullagundahi Island* by Fabienne Bayet-Charlton, Allen & Unwin 2002
- *Rain* by Glen Dolman from *Australian Short Stories*, Longman 1993
- *Macbeth* Act V, Scene 5 by William Shakespeare.

The workshop began with discussion of the genres in English, as outlined in Table 1 above, followed by discussion of levels of analysis of texts, as follows in Table 2.

Table 2: Levels of text analysis for preparing reading lessons

rank	examples
genre	narrative
stage	Orientation ^ Complication ^ Resolution
phase	description, setting, problem, reaction, solution, comment ...
sentence	<i>Later, on the beach, we set up our picnic.</i>
element	time ^ place ^ people ^ process ^ thing

Teachers first practised identifying the message in each example story. This was followed by identifying the phases of the story, and finally the elements in each phase through which the message was constructed.

In addition, teachers had requested analysis of some factual texts that were related to the English or Human Society and Environment curricula, which most also taught. These included:

- classifying report *Gladiators*
- compositional report *The Rule of the Republic*
- historical explanation *When Emperors Ruled*, all from *Jacaranda SOSE 5*.

Teachers then practised writing detailed lesson plans for stories and for factual texts. Writing and using these lesson plans are highly specialised skills that take considerable training in educational linguistics and classroom practice. This exercise was the first step in developing skills in writing the lesson plans.

Term 3 *Critiquing texts*

The theme for Term 3 was *Critiquing*. The aim for students in this stage was to start to analyse, interpret and evaluate literate texts (verbal or visual), using text response genres.

The aim for teachers' professional development was to be able to select and analyse a range of texts for lesson planning, including text responses. The starting point was to review analysis of thematic stories, identifying messages and story phases. The text used for this was:

Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence by Doris Pilkington, University of Queensland Press, 1996, p 43.

This was followed by discussion and practising analysing types of metaphor in literary texts. Metaphors are some of the features of written language that Aboriginal students, among others, have most trouble with. Practise included analysis of a passage from *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence*, and reports on the Bandjalung peoples of northern NSW.

Teachers were then introduced to tools for analysing discourse patterns in written texts, including:

- APPRAISAL for expressing attitudes about feelings, people & things
- LEXIS, including people, things, places, qualities, and relations between them
- CONJUNCTION for constructing sequences
- REFERENCE for introducing and keeping track of people and things
- PHASES for organising waves of information.

These tools were applied to analysing a range of texts, including stories, text responses, expository texts, and factual texts. Texts for analysis were provided from *Genre Relations: mapping culture* by J.R. Martin and D. Rose, Continuum, in press. Teachers found the use of these tools accessible and practical. Control of these tools make these teachers experts in selection and analysis of reading texts in their curricula, and in assessing their students' writing.

Text responses analysed in the workshop were responses to *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence*, including:

- Personal response by sweetprincess
www.imdb.com/title/tt0252444/board/nest/5105043 2004
- Review by J Korff www.creativespirits.de 2004
- Interpretation by K Martin www.abc.net.au/message/blackarts/review/s773970.htm

By the use of such texts, the expectations of the syllabus may be integrated with both literacy development and Aboriginal perspectives.

Term 4 Assessing writing

The theme for Term 4 was *Assessing*. The aim for teachers in this stage was to develop skills in assessing students' writing, built on the understandings of language in Term 3. These skills would enable teachers to diagnose the exact nature of students' writing, and use this knowledge to plan effective teaching programs. In this perspective, the development of students' writing is a clear indication of the effectiveness of the teacher's literacy teaching, which can be planned accordingly.

The approach in the workshop was to provide teachers with a set of students' writing samples to rank against each other. The following set of criteria were then introduced, and the writing samples were analysed for these criteria. The teachers found it easy to use these criteria, given their experience with the relevant language systems introduced in the preceding workshop.

Table 3: Story Writing Assessment

Genre	PURPOSE	Is the story genre appropriate for the writer's purpose?
	STAGING	Does it go through appropriate stages?
Register	FIELD	Is the story plot imaginative, interesting and coherent?
	TENOR	Is the reader engaged with characters' reactions and reflections?
	MODE	Is the creative use of literate descriptive language and metaphors appropriate for the level?
Discourse	PHASES	Are story phases used creatively to build problems and reactions, and to describe, comment, reflect?
	LEXIS	Are people, things and places followed through coherently to build up context?
	CONJUNCTION	Are logical relations between each step clear, eg shifts back and forward in time, comparisons, cause?
	REFERENCE	Is it clear who or what is referred to, eg in dialogue?
	APPRAISAL	Conscious control of appraisal, such as feelings, judgements of people and appreciation of things and places.
Grammar		Are grammatical conventions used appropriately?
Graphic Features	SPELLING	Is spelling accurate?
	PUNCTUATION	Is punctuation used appropriately?
	PRESENTATION	Is the layout clear and attractive? Is it well organised/presented?

Table 4: Factual Writing Assessment

Genre	PURPOSE	Is the factual genre appropriate for the writing task?
	STAGING	Does it go through appropriate stages?
Register	FIELD	Does the writer understand and explain the topic?
	TENOR	Is it appropriately objective?
	MODE	Is there an appropriate use of technical and abstract language?
Discourse	PHASES	Is it organised in appropriate phases?
	LEXIS	Is the field well constructed by sequences of lexical items?
	CONJUNCTION	Are logical relations between each step clear, eg time, comparisons, cause?
	REFERENCE	Is it clear who or what is referred to?
	APPRAISAL	Is appraisal used judiciously to evaluate things, processes and relations?
Grammar		Are grammatical conventions used appropriately?
Graphic Features	SPELLING	Is spelling accurate?
	PUNCTUATION	Is punctuation used appropriately?
	PRESENTATION	Is the layout clear and attractive? Is it well organised/presented?

In addition to the writing assessment, this workshop was also concerned with evaluating the program as whole, and involving the schools and community in planning further work. This included Aboriginal Education Assistants from the schools, together with teachers, Board of Studies personnel and project evaluators Erebus.

5 Teachers' professional learning

Teachers in the program represented a spectrum of professional experience and specialisations. Some teachers were first year out of training, or recent graduates, others had decades of experience. Some teachers had been many years in the school in which they practised, others had recently transferred from other areas in the state, including western areas of NSW.

Most had experience working with Aboriginal students in their current schools, as well as in other schools in different regions. Specialisations included head English teachers in at least two schools, specialists in history and geography who also taught English, and special education teachers.

Subject specialist teachers were in a good position to apply the LRRL strategies to their subject areas, as they quickly recognised the kinds of texts that students need to read and write in the subject, and had the subject knowledge and experience teaching it to plan lessons using the strategies. Special education teachers were in a good position to apply their experience supporting weaker students to provide a higher level support to all their students, using the strategies.

The two major areas of skills that all teachers needed to develop, to use the strategies effectively, were teaching reading in the context of their classroom practice, so that all students were engaged and extended, and to select and analyse texts to plan reading lessons.

Changes in teachers' professional knowledge and practices

Teachers reported the following changes in their professional knowledge and practices over the course of the project:

Techniques for engaging all students in learning tasks, and extending their skills and knowledge.

All teachers agreed at the start of the project that a significant proportion of their students, including Aboriginal students, were rarely engaged actively in classroom activities and discussion, and many more students were not optimally engaged. The first major change in practice that teachers reported was to engage all students, using the LRRL preparation strategies to enable all students to respond successfully in classroom interaction.

Teachers were also asked to video their lessons and these videos were discussed during school visits by project consultants and in the second training workshop. The videos demonstrated that all teachers were starting to use preparation strategies effectively. Videos also enabled feedback to refine and improve the strategies. Improvements enabled by this feedback were of three main kinds:

- strategies for extending students' understanding once they were engaged, using elaboration moves in the scaffolding cycle
- management strategies for ensuring that all students participated equally
- using affirmation and praise to motivate all students to participate actively.

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All teachers reported an unprecedented level of engagement by all students in their classes. However, it was reported that some students in some classes were at times still not effectively engaged. In discussion this was attributed by the teachers to four main factors:

- failure to adequately affirm and praise students for successful responses
- failure to adequately extend students through elaboration moves
- selection of texts that were not sufficiently challenging to keep students engaged
- habituated resistance by a few students to classroom interaction and challenging tasks.

These problems were largely overcome as teachers' skills developed. However, one response to behaviour problems by some students in a 'low ability' class, was to lower the level of texts used for reading and writing. This is a universal response by teachers in 'low ability' classes, and in Aboriginal education in particular, to behaviour problems arising from challenging tasks. In this case it was clearly demonstrated to be an ineffective response. The teachers decided instead that a more effective approach was to maintain the high level of text, but to more quickly cycle through activities of reading and writing, by focusing on shorter passages at a time.

Using detailed reading as a part of classroom practice.

Teachers varied in the extent to which they would use reading as an activity in the classroom, in the level of support they gave students to read, and in the level of text they expected students to work with. Detailed reading was an entirely new approach that enabled teachers to introduce reading of high-level texts into their classroom practice.

They reported that the strategies for supporting all students in detailed reading simultaneously engaged all students in the classroom activity and enabled all students to read the high-level texts with comprehension and accuracy.

Selecting and analysing texts to plan lessons.

Teachers began the project with a broad intuitive understanding of the language demands and genres of the English curriculum, but with little systematic knowledge of the language demands and how to teach them.

At the start of the professional development, teachers were asked to identify and classify a range of texts in relation to the English curriculum. There was consensus about the place and purposes of each text in the curriculum, and these interpretations by teachers were then systematically related to the genres of the English curriculum identified in Table 1. This activity demonstrated that:

- the genres and their purposes outlined in Table 1 are consistent with the expectations of teachers for the English curriculum
- teachers involved in the project had a clear understanding of the genres their students are expected to read and write in the English curriculum.

Teachers then agreed that the appropriate starting point for the project was with reading and writing stories, followed by interpretation and writing of thematic stories, followed by critique and writing of text responses.

In the first workshop, teachers were provided with detailed lesson plans for reading and writing a range of stories at middle school levels. They first practised using these in the workshop, discussing the language patterns that were focused on in the lesson plans, and how to discuss these with their students. After successfully implementing one or two of the detailed lesson plans, some teachers already felt confident to select and analyse other texts in the curriculum for planning lessons.

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In the second workshop, teachers were introduced to some general tools for systematically selecting and analysing texts in the curriculum. This approach used the genres in Table 1 as a starting point, and analysed the phases of meaning within each text. As the genres of the curriculum are intuitively understood by subject teachers, so too are these phases of meaning in specific texts. The approach was first demonstrated with a range of texts, and teachers were rapidly able to independently begin identifying genres and analysing phases.

In the third workshop, teachers were introduced to a set of high-level tools for systematically identifying the language features of texts to focus on in teaching reading and writing. These tools are typically taught in detail in postgraduate courses on discourse analysis; however, the practice that teachers in the project had experienced in identifying and discussing language patterns in their teaching, enabled them to rapidly learn to use these tools independently. Again, the approach was to demonstrate the relevant language patterns in texts from the curriculum, then for teachers to practise identifying them in the workshop, and then to apply these tools in their lesson planning and teaching.

In the final workshop, teachers were introduced to a set of tools for analysing students' writing, using the discourse analysis tools introduced in the previous workshop. These tools are set out above in Tables 3 and 4. Teachers had no trouble using these tools to practise analysing samples of students' writing in the workshop.

This sequence of development in teachers' knowledge about texts and language, and skills in selecting and analysing texts, demonstrated that:

- subject teachers generally have a strong intuitive understanding of the genres and language demands of their subject areas
- English teachers generally have no resistance to explicitly analysing the language patterns of texts in the English curriculum, and using these analyses in their teaching
- the most effective approach to developing teachers' knowledge and skills with language analysis is to start with their intuitive understandings, and then to make these understandings conscious and systematic
- a scaffolding approach of demonstration with curriculum texts, supported practice in workshops, and independent practice in the school, enables teachers to rapidly develop a high level of professional skills in selecting and analysing texts.

Teachers' experiences in acquiring and implementing these skills are also discussed more broadly in the Erebus Final Report on the project: *Evaluation of the Years 7–10 English Aboriginal Support Pilot Project*.

6 Literacy outcomes

The aim of this final section is to illustrate the gains that students made during the pilot. The focus in this section is on qualitative assessment of students' writing improvement, using the criteria introduced in the preceding section. In terms of quantitative assessment, average gains in writing improvement, measured from writing samples provided by teachers, were in the order of two years expected rate of progress, over the three terms of implementation of the project. This is consistent with the findings of other major projects conducted with *Learning to Read: Reading to Learn* strategies. These include work evaluated for DEST in the 2000 report *What Works and Will Again*:

Significant increases in student achievement have been measured ... [T]he average improvement in reading and writing was 2.5 [National Literacy Profile] levels At the same time, teachers have noted a range of student learning outcomes that are more difficult to measure, like an increased level of student engagement in their learning. Video and anecdotal evidence reflects much higher levels of student participation — especially in terms of the quality of dialogue between students and teachers (McRae et al. 2000).

It is also consistent with the 2004 project report by Catholic Education Office Melbourne:

The project confirmed the effectiveness of the *Learning to Read: Reading to Learn* (LRRL) literacy pedagogy for students in the middle years of schooling, particularly those considered to be educationally disadvantaged or at risk. ... [A]verage literacy gains across all schools and classes, and among students from all backgrounds and ability ranges, was ... approximately double the expected rate of literacy development (Culican 2004).

However it must be emphasised that targeted students in the Board of Studies project were starting from an extremely low base. One school reported that literacy assessments of many of their Aboriginal students were among the lowest literacy achievements in NSW. Average literacy levels of students at the start of the project ranged from that expected in Year 2 (Stage 1) to that expected in Year 4 (Stage 2). In consequence, accelerating these students' literacy learning at over twice the expected rate of improvement resulted in average writing outcomes at upper primary level. This is still short of the level these students need to independently succeed in secondary school.

On the other hand, these gains were made in three terms' implementation, by teachers who were themselves learning to apply the strategies in the project. As these strategies provide students with skills for independently learning from reading, it is expected that they are now far better equipped for coping with secondary schooling than they previously had been, and that their learning will accelerate accordingly, even without further intervention. In addition, most of these students still have access to the teachers trained in the project, and these teachers are now training other teachers in their schools to use the strategies.

Furthermore, improvements in writing consistently lag behind improvements in reading skills. The project did not involve quantitative assessment of students' reading levels, using tools such as miscue analyses, as these kinds of assessments lie outside the responsibilities of secondary teachers. However the teaching strategies themselves provide continuous opportunities for evaluating students' reading development in the context of classroom practice. Teachers report that all students made rapid gains in reading comprehension and fluency, and that detailed reading activities enabled all students to accurately read the texts used in these activities.

The following discussion is designed to illustrate the kinds of writing improvement that has taken place in the course of the project. To this end eight writing samples are analysed in terms of the criteria set out in Tables 3 and 4 above. The first two samples illustrate the average writing skills of target students at the start of the project, including a lower- and higher-level text in this range. The second pair illustrates a range of achievements in the first stage of the project, while teachers were first learning to make the shift from standard teaching practices to the LRRL strategies. The third pair shows the kinds of achievements that students can make using the LRRL strategies systematically, exemplified by story-writing. The fourth pair shows these kinds of achievements with other genres in the curriculum.

Students' writing before intervention

The following two writing samples were written before intervention in the project. Although they are extremely weak, they are characteristic of many Aboriginal and other students who are from oral family backgrounds, and who have not received adequate support in the course of their schooling to develop their literacy skills. Although these samples illustrate extremely weak writing skills for junior secondary students, they do not represent the weakest literacy skills at the start of the project, as teachers reported that many of their Aboriginal students never wrote more than a few lines, and some never wrote at all.

Writing sample 1: low range

This story was originally written as continuous text, but it has been transcribed here with one clause per line to show the sequence more clearly.

*we went hunt for goanna and kangaroo rob Max and scott
we went to the bush and we had a rifle
and we went to this place up to the bush was a little camp place
and up there we seen a speargun and it work so we put a bag at the camp
and we went hunt and we was lookin around the bush
and Max seen a kangaroo
and scott shot the kangaroo in the head
and we took back to the camp
as we was took the kangaroo back rob saw a goanna and another kangaroo
Max miss the goanna and it was run
Max and rob was chasing
and Max shot it in the eyes
and rob was at the camp with the kangaroo
and Max rob and scott was eating bush tucker*

The following analysis describes both the strengths and weaknesses of this piece. For explanations of these categories see Tables 3 and 4 above, and the Definitions in the Appendix.

PURPOSE	attempted narrative – Complication is 'Max miss the goanna'
STAGING	long Orientation – Complication signalled by time theme 'as we was took the kangaroo back' – but no Evaluation so that Resolution is weak
FIELD	plot is potentially interesting, but little elaboration of events
TENOR	no explicit attitudes expressed – reader is expected to engage with events without any expression of feelings
MODE	a spoken story written down, expected Stage 1 level
PHASES	some development of phases in the Orientation, with setting and events, but no reaction or description phases
LEXIS	people, things and places are followed through coherently, so that the story makes sense, but very simple oral vocabulary
CONJUNCTION	conjunctions are almost all 'and' – typical in oral stories

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REFERENCE	reference is simple but clear
APPRAISAL	no use of appraisal to evaluate events, things or people
GRAMMAR	very weak grammar – result of stress with writing, together with writer's spoken dialect
SPELLING	generally accurate
PUNCTUATION	no control of punctuation or letter cases
PRESENTATION	no use of paragraphs

This is a spoken story that the student has attempted to write down, with few skills for writing except for letter formation and spelling. The effort required means that other elements of language have suffered, including obviously grammar, but also resources for elaborating the story, such as characters' reactions, and descriptive and attitudinal wordings. In the spoken mode this may have been a successful story, but in order to produce successful written stories, this student needs continual practice with detailed reading of literate stories, and continual supported practice with writing that is closely patterned on these literate stories.

Writing sample 2: high range

The following sample was in the high range of writing produced by target students before the project commenced.

On my first day of high school it has been fun. I got here by car. I got to the hall and listen to some boring speech. Then we got classes chosen. I got a good class because it has two friends in it. Then I went to the class with the peer leaders and I met the [unreadable] girls wich was a highlight of my first day.

PURPOSE	recount highlights of first day at school
STAGING	simple recount, including comments
FIELD	simple personal experience
TENOR	evaluated with personal feelings
MODE	a spoken story written down, expected Stage 1–2 level
PHASES	initial comment signalled by time theme <i>On my first day</i>
LEXIS	simple oral vocabulary
CONJUNCTION	simple sequence in time with <i>then</i> , and cause <i>because</i>
REFERENCE	reference is simple but clear
APPRAISAL	some appraisal <i>fun, boring speech, good class, a highlight</i>
GRAMMAR	accurate simple grammar
SPELLING	generally accurate
PUNCTUATION	control of sentence punctuation and letter cases
PRESENTATION	no use of paragraphs

Although it is still very weak, writing sample 2 was classified as 'high range' because it displays some features of written language, including sentence punctuation, accurate grammar, and appraisals that evaluate the events, which was a requirement of the writing task.

These types of writing are representative of the plight of many Aboriginal and other students in secondary schools. Standard approaches to teaching have almost completely failed such students throughout their primary schooling. These types of text are produced as responses to the typical primary school activity of personal story writing, sometimes called 'journal writing' or 'process writing'. Such activities allegedly allow students to learn by freely expressing their creativity, but their actual function is evaluative, since it is only those students adequately prepared by their experience of reading who can produce successful stories. Students from oral family backgrounds, particularly Aboriginal students, rarely develop adequate literacy skills through such activities.

Early stages of the project

The next two writing samples illustrate the kinds of development that were achieved by target students at the beginning of the project. At this stage, teachers did not yet have full control of the LRRL strategies, and were still influenced by standard teaching practices. One such standard practice is known as 'modelled writing'. In this activity a text is read and discussed with the class, and students are asked to write a text of their own modelled on it. These activities resemble the LRRL strategies of detailed reading and text patterning, but are far less supportive for students attempting to use the language resources of the model text.

Writing sample 3: low range

The following text response was written after watching and discussing a film and reading model reviews, but without whole-class text patterning to support the writing activity.

Bend it like beckham
Film Review

The movie is about a girl who has a dream to be like David beckhm.

One day as Jess Minder was playing in the park with her friends a girl called Jules came to the park and saw how good Jess was good at soccer. Jules invited Jess to play soccer for her rep team. Then they travelled to Germany to verse [sic] a team. Jess and the team went to a club and Jess tried to hook up with the coach when Jules liked him so they had a fight.

Her sister was having a wedding and she could not go to an important game so she ends up leaving and going to the game. They one [sic] and Jess and Jules got selected by the selector so she ended up playing soccer and becoming good at it.

The end

PURPOSE	evaluate a visual text (movie) – but only recounts events
STAGING	Orientation and Record of events – no evaluation of text
FIELD	summarises events relevant to student's experience
TENOR	no evaluation
MODE	a spoken story written down
PHASES	only setting and events phases, stage 2 level
LEXIS	mostly spoken lexis, but some specialised soccer, rep team, selector
CONJUNCTION	simple time sequence with <i>then</i>
REFERENCE	reference is simple but clear
APPRAISAL	almost no appraisal how good Jess was good, important game, becoming good
GRAMMAR	simple spoken grammar with some problems
SPELLING	generally accurate with some problems
PUNCTUATION	control of sentence punctuation and letter cases
PRESENTATION	uses paragraphs

This text clearly displays the ineffectiveness of standard practices — such as modelled writing — to adequately support weaker students to produce successful text Responses. Although the student can use accurate spelling, punctuation and paragraphs, she has no resources for producing a review that evaluates a text. As a result she is restricted to simply recounting the film's events from her own perspective.

Writing sample 4: high range

The following sample was produced after detailed reading of a story, but without whole-class text patterning. In the story, *A Good Tip for Ghosts* by Paul Jennings, two boys encounter a ghost in a rubbish tip. The students were asked to write their own ghost story. Elements of Jennings's story are used by the writer here.

My Ghost story

When I was 13, I was walking down the road with my best friend Mitchell. It was my birthday & my parents weren't home, so we went to egg people houses (sic) One the way home around midnight we had to walk past the tip. The story that was going round at the time that there lived a ghost in the tip. As we were about half way past, we heard a weird nosie. We went to investigate, when we got there a rat was rolling a tin can. We heard the nosie again except it wasn't tin can. We went to investigate again we saw this thing floating in the air like something invisible was taking it along with them. We were so scare that we screamed so loud that the whole town could here us. Everyone came & by that time the ghost left. Everyone thought we were just causing trouble. Every since we never walk around town after 6:00pm. The End!!!

PURPOSE	attempted narrative – Complication is 'thing floating in the air'
STAGING	Complication signalled by time theme <i>As we were about half way past</i> – Evaluation <i>We were so scare</i> but Resolution is weak <i>the ghost left</i>
FIELD	plot is partly borrowed from a read story, with some personal and imaginative elements
TENOR	personalised with <i>best friend</i> and <i>my birthday</i> – feelings are expressed in Evaluation
MODE	a slightly more written story, expected Stage 3 level
PHASES	setting and comment in Orientation – minor problem and then major problem in Complication – reaction in Evaluation
LEXIS	generally coherent, so that the story makes sense – some written lexis, <i>went to investigate, floating in the air like something invisible</i>
CONJUNCTION	sequenced with time themes <i>One the way home around midnight</i> etc
REFERENCE	reference is simple but clear
APPRAISAL	some use of appraisal <i>weird noise, screamed so loud that the whole town could here us</i>
GRAMMAR	grammar is generally controlled, with some problems
SPELLING	generally accurate with some problems
PUNCTUATION	control of sentence punctuation and letter cases
PRESENTATION	no use of paragraphs

While this student controls more literacy skills than the first sample, the practice of 'modelled writing' does not provide sufficient support for students at this level to use the written language that they read in model texts. Modelled writing provides slightly more support for students than personal story-writing illustrated with sample 1, but still pushes weaker students to write an original story before they are ready to do so successfully.

Following implementation of LRRL strategies: stories

The next samples were written independently following systematic implementation of the LRRL strategies. In each case a passage was selected from an accomplished author. Detailed reading strategies were used to tune students into the language patterns that the author used to construct the model text. Then, with the teacher's guidance, the whole class jointly wrote a new text patterned closely on the text they had been reading. Students were then asked to write their own text using the same language patterns they had read and written as a whole class.

Writing sample 5: low range

This first sample shows the gains that a very weak student can make after detailed reading and whole-class text patterning. The passage they have read is from a short story (title not identified). This student was among those writing at the level of sample 2 before the project started.

The hitch hiker!

We came out of the garage on to the highway and I jammed my foot on the accelerator. The big car raced past other traffic like they were standing still. In around 10 seconds or so we leaped to ninety.

'Lovely,' he muttered. 'Beautiful, keep driving.'

I had the accelerator squished like a pancake against the floor and I held like a pancake.

'100!' he cried '...105...110...115! Go on don't slack off.'

I was in the outside lane and we flew past several cars like they were still.

'A hundred and twenty!' my passenger screamed, cheering as though it was the last time he was in a speeding car.

Suddenly, I heard a rattling sound, which was soft, but grew louder. It got so loud that it felt like my ear drums were going to burst. A tyre had busted.

I looked at the ragged wheel.

'Oh damn. A tyre busted.' I said.

PURPOSE	write a short anecdote patterned on a model text
STAGING	Well-developed Remarkable event stage, with Reaction signalled by <i>Suddenly</i>
FIELD	partly borrowed from model story, with imaginative elements
TENOR	reader engaged with accelerating action, and feelings expressed in reactions
MODE	many written language features, expected at Stage 4 level
PHASES	builds excitement through accelerating events, and intensifying reactions, followed by problem and reaction
LEXIS	constructs familiar field through consistent strings of lexis – <i>garage-highway-accelerator-big car-traffic-standing still-10 seconds-ninety-driving-the floor-outside lane-speeding car-tyre-ragged wheel</i>
CONJUNCTION	sequenced by series of events, and time themes <i>In around ten seconds, Suddenly</i>
REFERENCE	reference is clear
APPRAISAL	much use of appraisal using specialised lexis <i>jammed my foot, raced past</i> and similes <i>like they were standing still, squished like a pancake, as though it was the last time, like my ear drums were going to burst</i> , and feelings in reaction phases <i>'Lovely,' he muttered, screamed, cheering, Oh damn</i>
GRAMMAR	grammar is well controlled
SPELLING	accurate

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PUNCTUATION	control of sentence and dialogue punctuation
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Although there are elements of this text that are still not strong, such as the repetition of *tyre busted* in the last two lines, and a weak reaction at the end, this student has control over a host of written language resources, such as reaction phases to engage reader, constructing a coherent field through consistent lexis, time themes to signal changes, similes and descriptive appraisals, and the complex punctuation of dialogue.

Writing sample 6: high range

The next sample was written after a detailed reading and whole-class rewriting of a passage from the same Paul Jennings story as in sample 4 above. This time the writer is able to use many of language resources from the model text, while producing an original story.

A little way off from the biggest car pile in the wreckers we were scratching through some old car parts for our new go-cart. Tom had just found the fourth wheel. He pulled it out. It made a lot of noise for a tyre. But after he pulled it out the noise continued. It sounded like someone pushing a car over but no-one would be strong enough to do that, unless it was a ghost.

I looked at Tom, Wack! Something had hit him in the head. He fell to the ground. The tyre rim that had hit him came from the same direction as the noise. This was starting to freak me out. I wanted the headlights of a car to turn on so I could see what the noise was. I went to run but then I thought about Tom. I couldn't leave him here and let the ghost get him. I looked over at the pile and saw a head. It was hanging loose from a blurry body.

I grabbed Tom and dragged him into the nearest car. I jumped in but couldn't get Tom in quickly enough. The ghost looked directly towards him. I ducked down behind the car door ... (extract)

PURPOSE	accomplished narrative (extract)
STAGING	Complication signalled by time theme <i>But after he pulled it out ...</i> – well-developed Evaluation <i>This was starting to freak me out. I wanted the headlights of a car to turn on so I could see what the noise was ...</i> – temporary Resolution predicting a second Complication
FIELD	plot is partly borrowed from a read story, with well-developed imaginative elements
TENOR	reader engaged with build-up of tension and action, and feelings expressed in Evaluation
MODE	a more written story, expected at Stage 5 level
PHASES	builds tension through worsening problems, followed by reactions, temporary solution and further problem
LEXIS	imaginative use of <i>new go-cart</i> to find wheels that ghost throws – tied to context of <i>wreckers, car lights</i> and <i>nearest car</i>
CONJUNCTION	sequenced by series of events (using Jennings' strategy), time theme signals Complication
REFERENCE	reference is clear – including text reference <i>This was starting to freak me out</i>
APPRAISAL	much use of appraisal, eg <i>biggest car pile, no-one would be strong enough, Wack!, starting to freak me out, I couldn't leave him, couldn't get Tom in quickly enough</i>
GRAMMAR	grammar is well controlled
SPELLING	accurate
PUNCTUATION	control of sentence punctuation and letter cases
PRESENTATION	some use of paragraphs

Detailed reading and joint rewriting of a story by an accomplished author has enabled this student to independently write a highly successful written story. Continual practice of these activities over time, with a range of texts, will soon make such students successful independent readers and writers across the curriculum. These activities rapidly overcome the problems created by standard classroom activities such as personal story writing and modelled writing.

Following LRR: other English genres

The last two writing samples illustrate how continual practice with detailed reading and whole-class text patterning can eventually enable all students to write effectively across the curriculum.

Writing sample 7: poem

The following poem was jointly written by two of the weakest students in the project. These students had not been known to write at all before the project began. It was written following a detailed reading of a poem from the novel *So Much to Tell You* by John Marsden. Marsden's poem uses metaphor to encode a message that reflects on a personality and relationship. A new poem was then jointly constructed by the whole class, patterned on Marsden's, and the students were asked to write their own.

*Pale as a ghost you walked past
I wondered what its like to die
I waited for time to go past
To see if I would fly*

*I thought that ghost would come back
But there are things that cannot be
The ghost can touch nothing
There are things I cannot see*

PURPOSE	poem patterned on reading, using metaphors to encode message
STAGING	exemplum genre – Incident and Interpretation
FIELD	imaginative use of ghost and death metaphor to reflect on life
TENOR	generally personal, with objective generalisations
MODE	towards literary poetry, using alternating rhyme and scanned rhythm – expected at Stage 4
PHASES	two stanzas/phases – events and reflection, realising Incident and Interpretation
LEXIS	simple everyday lexis, but used for metaphors and reflections <i>Pale as a ghost, what its like to die, things that cannot be, things I cannot see</i>
CONJUNCTION	implicit cause <i>you walked past (so) I wondered</i> , concession <i>But there are things</i> , implicit comparison <i>The ghost can touch nothing (likewise) There are things I cannot see</i>
REFERENCE	reference is clear
APPRAISAL	judgements <i>Pale as a ghost, can touch nothing, I cannot see</i> used to reflect on life <i>things that cannot be</i>
GRAMMAR	grammar is well controlled
SPELLING	accurate
PUNCTUATION	control of letter cases
PRESENTATION	control of lines and stanzas

Although the poem is apparently very simple, a large set of written language resources are used to encode a message about life. This achievement is particularly striking as these

students' literacy skills would be assessed at Stage 1 (Years 1–2) before the project commenced.

Writing sample 8: interpretation

In sample 8 the genre is an interpretation — that is, it interprets the message of a text, in this case Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*. The interpretation genre was modelled and practised by the whole class over time, and students were then asked to write their own interpretation. The task was to interpret the message of a novel from the perspective of 'chance'.

The Grapes of Wrath is a story of a poor family living on a farm whose living is destroyed by drought (a natural force). By chance (fate) they are forced to leave their farm to work. In doing so they took a great risk because they had no home and no job, and were going by chance to find these.

When they do find work their labour is exploited through low wages, poor working conditions, inadequate housing and poor quality food. They had not achieved the certainty they had taken a risk for. Only a few had the collective vision to organise (planning) to strike for better conditions. In doing so, however, these people, like the character Tom, take a great risk with their lives. Tom feels any risk is worth it to make life better.

The Grapes of Wrath is a story of how chance can affect a whole generation of people.

PURPOSE	interprets message in novel
STAGING	message is interpreted through Synopsis, but no Evaluation of the text
FIELD	good control over the field of the text, summarising key elements
TENOR	objective, but implicit empathy for characters, eg poor family
MODE	written mode appropriate for secondary school
PHASES	repeated sequence of key events and reflections on chance and risk, concluding with summary of reflections
LEXIS	well developed field, eg <i>destroyed by drought (a natural force), labour is exploited through low wages, poor working conditions, inadequate housing and poor quality food, collective vision to organise (planning)</i>
CONJUNCTION	good control of consequence <i>By chance, In doing so, however</i> – and comparison <i>like the character Tom</i>
REFERENCE	reference is clear – including text reference <i>In doing so ...</i>
APPRAISAL	good control of objective appraisal, eg <i>a poor family, destroyed by drought, took a great risk, their labour is exploited, Only a few had the collective vision, chance can affect a whole generation</i>
GRAMMAR	grammar is well controlled
SPELLING	accurate
PUNCTUATION	control of sentence punctuation and letter cases
PRESENTATION	some use of paragraphs

In some respects sample 8 is not as successful as sample 6 above. This is partly because the task of interpreting a message in a novel is far more complex than writing a story patterned on a reading. On the other hand, this student is able to produce the key elements of synopsis and reflections to interpret the text, using the criteria of 'chance' set in the task. The student also has a strong command of the field of the text, is able to construct an argument using written conjunctions, and is able to use objective appraisals appropriately.

Conclusions

From the perspective of the *Learning to Read: Reading to Learn* program, this project has provided three key benefits. Firstly it allowed the implementation of the literacy and professional development strategies in the contexts of both a specific secondary curriculum area, and the needs of Aboriginal secondary students. Secondly it provided opportunities to follow the professional development of secondary English teachers using the strategies with Aboriginal and other students. And thirdly it enabled teachers to map the learning development and needs of their students as they applied the strategies.

Achieving literacy demands of the the syllabus

The project demonstrated that the *Learning to Read: Reading to Learn* strategies are well suited to enabling all students, including Aboriginal students, to engage more successfully with the secondary English curriculum than many currently do. The professional development program was adapted to meet the criteria of the *English Years 7–10 Syllabus*, in terms both of the types of literacy skills that students need to achieve its outcomes, and of the professional development needs of teachers. This was made possible by using research on the literacy demands of secondary English from the *Write it Right* project, published as *Exploring Literacy in School English* (Rothery 1994). This framework was adapted to the reading pedagogy and text analysis developed in the *Learning to Read: Reading to Learn* program.

An important finding of the project is that syllabi need to provide explicit guidance for teachers in the literacy demands of their subject areas, and appropriate models for scoping and sequencing the curriculum to enable all students to achieve the syllabus outcomes. With respect to the literacy demands of secondary curricula, the findings of the *Write it Right* research, sponsored by the NSW Department of Education and Training, provide an excellent framework for integrating literacy in the curriculum. If NSW schools are serious about providing access and equity for all students, including Aboriginal students, these findings should be incorporated in all secondary syllabi.

Teachers' professional learning

The professional development of teachers in the project has been extensively described in the Erebus report. Teachers need effective tools to enable all their students to achieve curriculum outcomes, including:

- strategies for classroom interactions that engage, affirm and extend all students
- knowledge about language and literacy in the context of the curriculum demands.

All teachers in the project rapidly took on the strategies for classroom interaction as soon as the workshops showed them how to do so, since all had a strong desire to engage all their students in work appropriate to their grades, and to close the 'ability gap' in their classes. By the end of the project all teachers had also developed a high level of expertise in selecting and analysing texts for teaching reading and writing in the context of the curriculum.

This finding has significant implications for future inservice and preservice training for teachers. In order to provide quality education for all students, including Aboriginal students, in their classes, teachers need training to teach reading and writing as a part of normal classroom practice. And they need training to enable all students to succeed in learning activities at their grade level. The *Learning to Read: Reading to Learn* program shows teachers how to achieve these goals. This project has demonstrated that teachers can make these skills their own and use them in the context of their curriculum.

Key strategies to overcome educational disadvantage

The project has reinforced our understanding of the extent of the progress in learning that Aboriginal students can make with well-designed teaching strategies. Some, perhaps many current teaching approaches do not assist many Aboriginal and other students to acquire the skills they need to achieve curriculum outcomes at any school level, but particularly in secondary school. This can be overcome if teachers are given explicit guidance in the skills their students need and how to teach them.

The project has shown that Aboriginal and other students can make rapid progress if:

1. teaching reading and writing is integrated in classroom practice
2. classroom interactions are carefully designed to enable all students to succeed in learning activities
3. teachers are given explicit guidance on scoping and sequencing the curriculum.

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These materials are provided for research purposes and may contain opinions that are not shared by the Board of Studies NSW.

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Appendix: Some definitions

GENRE	The overall structure of the text. Different genres are used for different purposes, each with their own sequence of stages.
REGISTER	The 'content' of the text, including its field, tenor and mode.
Field	The subject matter; what the text is about. From technical fields in science, technology, geography and history, to everyday or fictional fields in stories.
Tenor	The relationship between writer and reader, eg as more personal (first person) or more objective (third person). Stories may be personal but most writing is expected to be objective. Arguments can sometimes shift between objective and personal.
Mode	The continuum between highly written or more spoken language. Texts generally become more written from school year to year – eg more technical and nominalised (changing verbs into nouns, eg Instead of 'Humans discovered that some plants can be eaten' – 'The discovery that some plants could be eaten ...') in factual texts, and more literate in English (eg metaphors, similes).
DISCOURSE	Sequences of meanings as a text unfolds, and how they are tied together.
Phases	Phases are the steps that a text goes through. They are a few sentences or a paragraph long. Types of phases vary with the genre and the field. A well-organised text has a clear sequence of phases – each paragraph should contain one or two phases. Paragraphs in non-fiction texts usually begin with a topic sentence – what the phase is about.
Lexis	The way links are set up within a text through association between words and groups of words. Including repetitions, synonyms, contrasts, and class-member (mammal – kangaroo) and whole-part relations (body – hands).
Conjunction	Logical relationships between phases and between sentences. Including addition, comparison, time and consequence. Logical relationships are often expressed by a conjunction, but they are also often implicit.
Reference	How people and things are introduced into a text and tracked through each sentence, using pronouns, articles, comparison and so on. So that the reader can easily recognise who or what is being referred to at each step.
Appraisal	How attitudes are expressed, including feelings (happy, sad), judgements of people (kind, cruel), and appreciation of things (interesting, boring). Appraisals can be positive or negative. They can be amplified or diminished (stronger or weaker).
OTHER FEATURES	
Grammar	The correct use of words according to the conventions of written English. For writing assessment, we can focus on things like appropriate tenses, pronouns, articles, and plural/singular forms of nouns and verbs.
Presentation & Layout	Presentation & layout includes appropriate margins, headings, paragraph spacing, placement of illustrations and neatness.