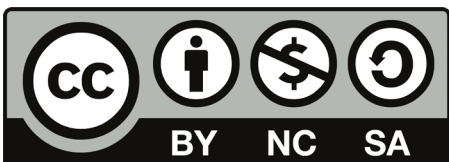


# Grade R Language Improvement Programme

## Concept Guide





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# ★ Foreword from the Head of Department



**GAUTENG PROVINCE**

EDUCATION  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**GGT 2030**  
GROWING GAUTENG TOGETHER

Dear Teacher/Practitioner

Welcome to the training of the Grade R teachers/practitioners. The Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) has prioritized Early Childhood Development as its Strategic Goal 1. This is to ensure that we can lay a solid foundation and seamless transitioning of learners to Grade 1.

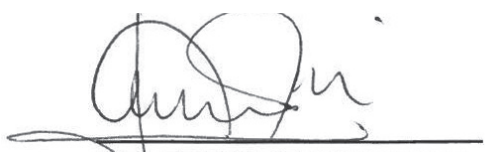
The Grade R Mathematics and Language Improvement Project has been developed to provide the much-needed classroom based support for the Grade R teachers/practitioners in Gauteng. It is about classroom practices with exciting techniques and methodology most appropriate for Grade R Teaching and Learning. This is in response to a study that reported that 65% of children across South Africa have not mastered the skills required to be able to succeed in Literacy and Numeracy when entering Grade 1. This project is intended to support the Grade R practitioners/teachers to address this challenge.

The Department's expectation is that you are ready to learn and be a more empowered Grade R teacher/practitioner. Your commitment to the training process and thereafter the implementation of lessons learnt in your classroom will contribute to the improvement of Grade R learner readiness for Grade 1.

We trust that this intervention will help enhance your potential, innovation and creativity as you lay an important foundation for learning of our children. This project would not have been possible without the support of our partners. The GDE is grateful for the support of the GEDT, Zenex Foundation and USAID who contributed to this initiative.

I trust you will learn a great deal from this training programme and improve the learning experience of the young children in your care.

Yours Sincerely

  
**MR EDWARD MOSUWE**  
**HEAD OF DEPARTMENT**  
DATE: 3/6/2020

The Language Concept Guide is divided into three sections which can be read in any order because they all connect with one another. We encourage you to return to this Guide throughout your training on the programme and to reread the different sections. You will find that your understanding of the content deepens each time you read and that it will inform how you approach your teaching of the young learners in your classroom. This double page offers you a summary of each section and refers you to the pages where you can read more.

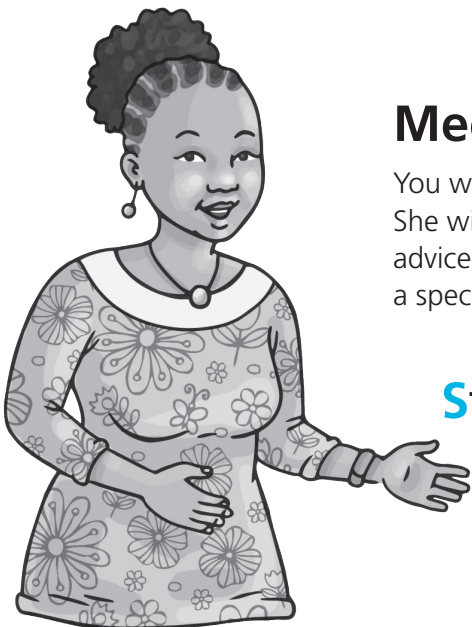
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## Section 1:

### The Grade R Language Improvement Programme

*This section discusses **8 features** of the Language Improvement Programme, which was developed for the GDE to strengthen the teaching of language and literacy in Grade R.*

- ★ The programme takes learners on a journey from spoken to written language.
- ★ The programme is resource-based, giving learners access to exciting materials.
- ★ The programme requires 50 minutes of focused language teaching time every day.
- ★ The programme provides whole class and small group activities for each day.
- ★ The activities for a two-week cycle of teaching are designed around a story.
- ★ The activities for the year are planned for 18 two-week cycles.
- ★ The activities provide opportunities for learners to build all the CAPS language skills.
- ★ The activities allow you to observe learners' progress and tools are provided for continuous assessment.



## Meet Stella

You will see that there is a teacher present throughout this Concept Guide. She will keep you company on your learning journey and will often give advice based on her years of experience in the Grade R classroom. She has a special name:

**Strengthening the Teaching of Early Language and Literacy for All.**

## Section 2:

### Guiding principles for teaching in Grade R

*This section discusses **8 principles** which have guided the design of the Grade R Language Improvement Programme and which we trust will guide your teaching.*

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- ★ The context principle. Learning takes place in meaningful and appropriate situations.
- ★ The activity principle. Learners should be directly involved in the learning-teaching process.
- ★ The play principle. Play is fun and the most natural way for young learners to learn, whether at home or at school.
- ★ The interaction principle. Learning takes place when there is communication and sharing of ideas.
- ★ The level principle. Learners pass through various levels of understanding and development.
- ★ The guidance principle. Learning takes place when teachers guide learners in developing new knowledge.
- ★ The inclusivity principle. Learning takes place in an environment where everyone is welcomed, included, fairly treated, respected and can participate.
- ★ The practice principle. Learning is consolidated through practising new skills and knowledge.

*It also focuses on the fundamental importance of perceptual and motor development for the learning of language, with an emphasis on visual, auditory, tactile and kinaesthetic perception.*

## Section 3:

### Teaching language and literacy in Grade R

*This section explains how young learners learn to read and write and shows how the programme builds on this understanding. These **11 points** summarise the thinking.*

page 40

- ★ Learning to read and write is not something that happens overnight, but is a process that takes many years. We call this emergent reading and writing.
- ★ Without good oral language skills, learning to read and write can be very difficult for young learners.
- ★ A rich and wide vocabulary is key to literacy development and to learn new words, learners need to encounter them many times in a range of different situations.
- ★ Book language is critical for literacy. This kind of language is used in stories and when we talk about abstract things such as thoughts, feelings and events in another place and time.
- ★ Through different activities linked to a story, learners use the story language and vocabulary over and over again and build their comprehension.
- ★ Through role play, pretend play, telling and retelling stories, learners build their understanding of characters, context and the sequence of events. This is an important foundation for reading, comprehension and writing.
- ★ Through interactive discussions, learners have the opportunity to ask and answer open-ended questions. This encourages learners to think through and share their own ideas and opinions.
- ★ Learners who see adults reading and writing are inspired to read and write themselves because they learn that the marks they make on paper can carry a message and have meaning.
- ★ Learners usually start to "read" without reading actual words, and to "write" without writing words correctly – this is a very important stage in their literacy journey.
- ★ To become skilled readers, learners need to understand the alphabetic principle – that there is a link between the letters they see on a page and the sounds they hear in words.
- ★ Phonological awareness and letter-sound knowledge are among the best predictors that learners will learn to read and write successfully.

# ★ Section 1: The Grade R Language Improvement Programme

## Introduction

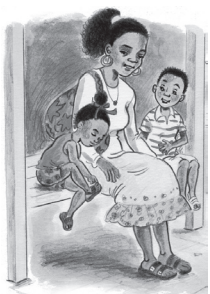
Have you ever thought about when learners begin learning to read and write? In this introduction we look carefully at this important issue.

### Early learning is crucial

While we know that teachers have a very important role to play, would you be surprised to know that the process of learning to read and write begins well before a learner steps into a Grade R classroom? Early learning starts from birth and, along with social and emotional skills, language is learnt as the learner interacts with family members, friends and teachers. All these provide foundations for the learner's life-long learning and lay the ground for the school's focus on skills such as listening, speaking, writing and reading which are developed further by the teacher. Learners who learn to read and write successfully do not only have good teachers at school, but tend to be those who have benefited from critical early learning experiences from birth to six years.

### Listening and speaking

Research has shown that skilled reading and writing depends on oral (receptive and expressive) language abilities that begin developing from the earliest days in a learner's life. Through nurturing relationships, critical brain connections are made that support a learner's language development from birth. Learners' language grows as caregivers and teachers talk with them, explain what words mean, follow their interests, ask and answer questions and share books and stories about day-to-day events. We know that learners who grow up in these sorts of language-rich environments have a better vocabulary and are likely to be better at reading comprehension at age nine. Who would have thought that talking with learners would be one of the greatest gifts we could give?



Teachers of young learners also have a very important role to play in building young learners' oral language. This does not mean formal teaching! Teachers can do this by sharing stories and books, encouraging drawing and emergent writing and building oral language through giving explanations, introducing new words and encouraging learners to ask and answer questions.

### Early writing

In addition to hearing and using language in their early years, learners need to learn about print. Written language is different to spoken language, and it is a big step for learners to understand that writing is in fact speech written down. By pointing out print in the environment such as signs, names and labels, learners start to see that writing has a purpose.

When learners have access to paper and crayons and we encourage their mark making, drawing and scribbling, they feel confident to experiment with expressing their ideas through drawing and "writing". We call learners' very earliest attempts to write "emergent writing" as it does not yet look like grown-up writing – they do not keep to the lines, they mix letters, numbers and pictures, and their spelling is invented! This is a normal stage of development. Learning to write is a process, and as with any new skill, it takes time, practice and a great deal of encouragement before it is mastered.



### Early reading

As learners watch adults reading and writing, they learn that the marks on paper carry a message and have meaning. They learn how books work, and become captivated by the stories of different people and places.





If they have adults in their lives who read with them, they learn to associate reading with warm and trusting relationships, and this gives them confidence to try and read themselves. Young learners' reading may not be accurate and they may "read" from memory or make up stories to go with pictures. Over time, they will start to focus more on printed letters and words, and their reading will become more accurate.



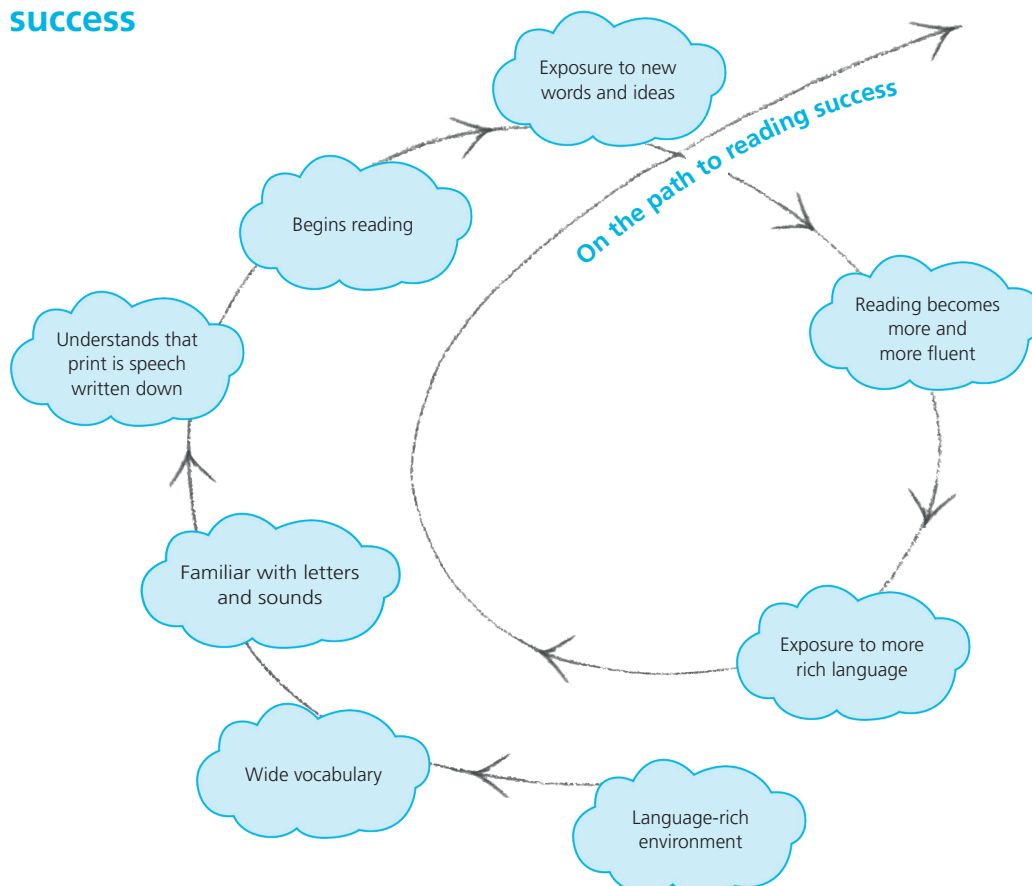
## Learning about letters and sounds

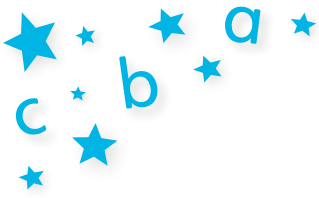
In order to learn to read and write, young learners need to understand that the marks they see on a page are in fact our speech written down! This is a big step for young learners, as it means they need to become aware of the sounds of spoken words, and to link these sounds to letter symbols. Clapping out syllables and listening games such as "I spy with my little eye" help learners to become aware of sounds in words. Letters can be introduced through learners writing their names, writing letters in the sandpit, writing letters with paint or making letters with playdough. All of these fun activities might not seem that relevant for the serious business of learning to read and write, but it is through these experiences that learners enter the world of literacy.

## Language- and print-rich environments

Learners who have grown up in language- and print-rich homes and preschool environments are likely to begin school with a wide and deep vocabulary. They will understand what words mean and will be able to use the language they already know to understand when people talk and read aloud, and in this way will learn new language and ideas. They will start school being familiar with letters and sounds, and will understand that print is speech written down. This means that they will master basic texts early on in Grade 1, quickly moving onto longer and more complex texts which give them exposure to new words and ideas. The more they read, the more fluent their reading will become, and the more their language will develop and enable them to engage with increasingly difficult texts. They are on a path to reading success.

## A cycle of success





Unfortunately, in South Africa very few learners have the kind of early learning experiences that set them on this path to reading success. You may be wondering if it is too late to build these language skills in Grade R. No, we do not believe so. If Grade R teachers commit to providing a rich language experience for learners every day, it can make a significant difference to their learning success. This is what the **Grade R Language Improvement Programme** was designed to do!

See what Stella has to say about the programme below and learn more in the pages that follow.

## A journey from spoken to written language ...



The Grade R Language Improvement Programme has been developed to give Grade R learners experiences that support early language and literacy development. Using stories, the programme takes learners on a journey from spoken to written language. Each new story forms the basis of two weeks of teaching, learning and assessment activities.

The learners' first encounter with the story is when they hear the story being told by their teacher with puppets and other props to make the characters come alive. After hearing the story being told, learners will have a chance to sing a song related to the story. Songs are a wonderful way to develop language skills and some learners find it easier to remember new language through melody, rhythm and rhyme. After singing, learners participate in role-playing the story as it is narrated. This gives them a chance to participate in the telling of the story in an active way and use the words and phrases of the different characters. It also requires them to think about story sequence – what happens next.



Building on the oral telling of the story, the singing, role play and sequencing of events, learners have a chance to draw their favourite part of the story and make their first attempts to write their ideas (even if these are scribbles). They also see how writing works and how their ideas can be written down as you model writing a text for a purpose (a letter, a list, a song). This activity begins with rich discussions and sharing of ideas, with contributions from as many learners as possible.

As you model the writing process, using the learners' words and ideas, they see that what we say can be written down. This will give them the confidence to start trying to write themselves – even if they begin with scribbles and made-up letters! In addition to reading the texts they have co-written with you, learners will have another opportunity to see how reading works when they make little books to take home, and when you read the Big Book to them in the second week. Here they will encounter the same, familiar story but in print form.



In addition to story-based activities that build learners' listening, speaking, reading, viewing and writing, the programme includes many fun, age-appropriate ways to build learners' knowledge of letters. We know from research that learners who know something about letters and the sounds they make, are likely to learn to read and write more easily than learners who have limited letter-sound knowledge. However, we are not suggesting that learners in Grade R should be taught about letters in a formal way. Learners learn best when something has meaning to them, so letters and sounds are linked to stories – and to new words, pictures and objects. Learners learn about language while building their knowledge of letters.

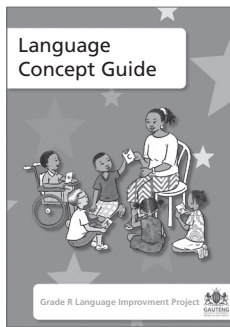
Research has also shown that it is vital for learners to become aware of sounds in spoken language (phonological awareness). If learners don't learn to pay attention to sounds in spoken language, they might know what they want to write, but not be able to hear the sounds in words in order to write them. The letters and sounds section of the programme includes many oral activities that help learners to develop this awareness.



# Language programme resources

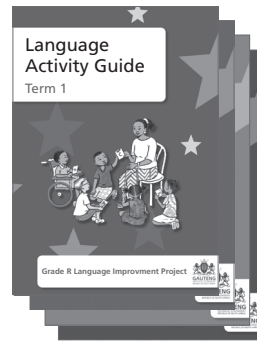
Teachers using the Language programme will receive a number of high quality resources during their training.

## ★ The Concept Guide



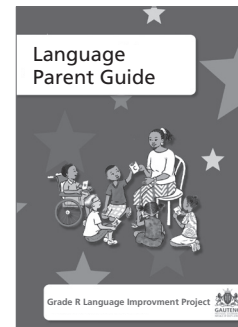
You will reference this throughout the teaching year to remind yourself of key ideas.

## ★ Four Activity Guides



The Activity Guide for each term introduces new stories, songs, vocabulary and activities, together with new letters and sounds that learners will learn.

## ★ A Guide for working with parents



As teachers, we cannot build language foundations without the assistance of parents. With this guide you can inform, inspire and resource parents.

## ★ Eighteen story packs

Each story pack is used for a two-week teaching cycle and contains resources to give the learners different experiences of the story:

- Pop-out character puppets on card



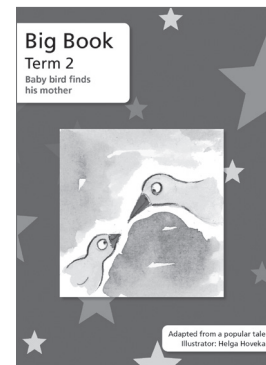
The teacher uses the puppets and other props to tell the story, and they are used again by the learners.

- A set of sequence picture cards



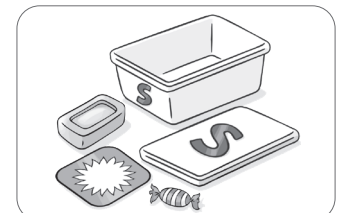
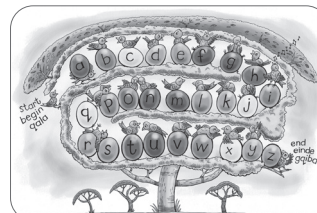
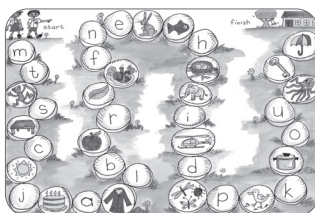
The learners first experience the story in two dimensions through the sequence pictures.

- A Big Book with simple text

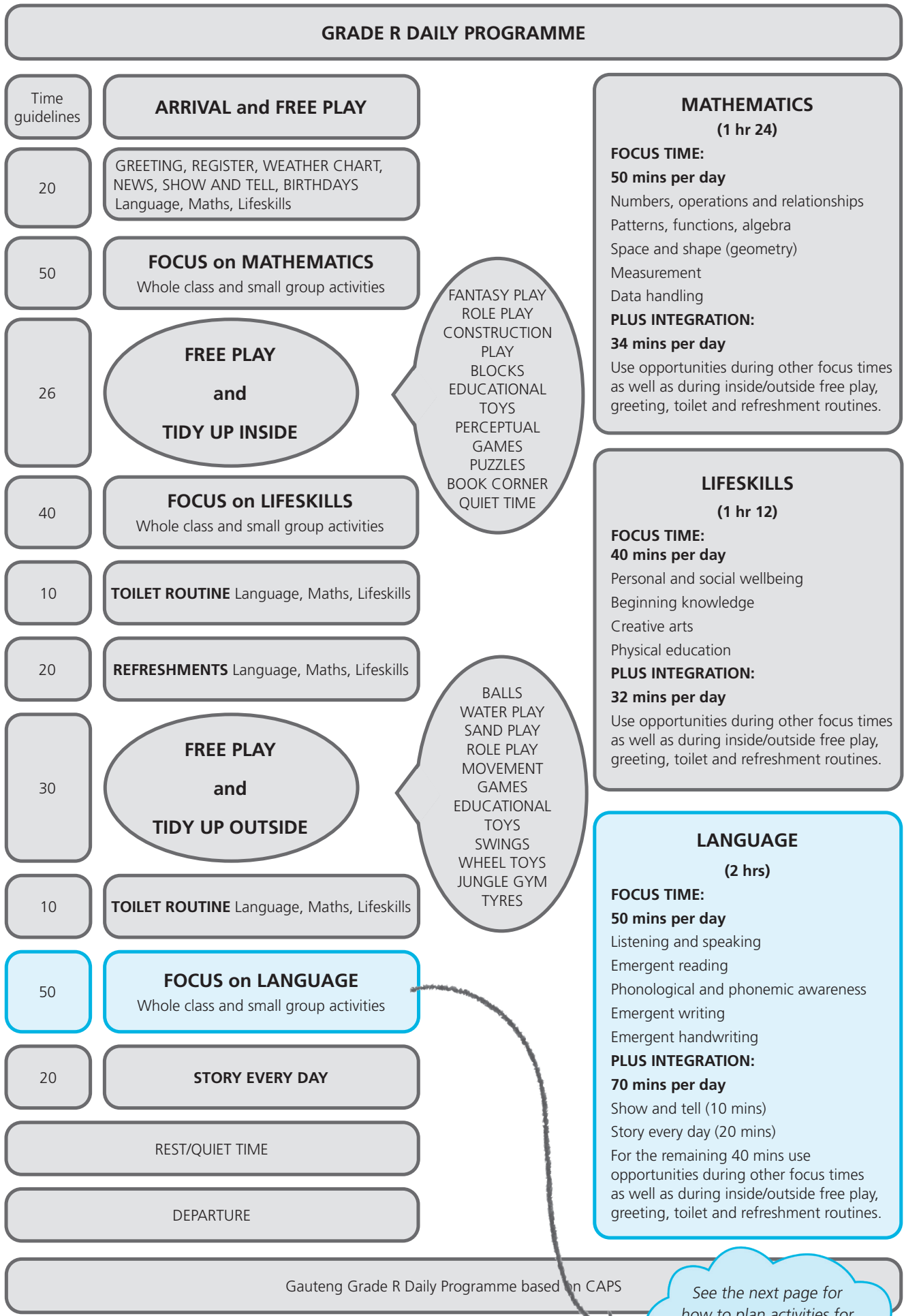


The Big Book has similar illustrations to the sequence pictures, and introduces printed words to tell the story.

## ★ A game pack including board games and letter box apparatus



# How to plan for a Focus on Language every day



Gauteng Grade R Daily Programme based on CAPS

See the next page for how to plan activities for the 50 minutes Focus on Language.

## FOCUS ON LANGUAGE

50 minutes whole class and small group activities

### WHOLE CLASS ACTIVITY

(led by the teacher)  
25 minutes

Story-based  
activities

Letter and sound  
activities

### SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY

(set up by the teacher)  
25 minutes

Step-by-step  
guidance for whole  
class and small  
group activities are  
set out in the Activity  
Guides for each term.



### ACTIVITY 1

Drawing and emergent writing  
(teacher-guided in Week 1)



### ACTIVITY 2

Puzzles and games  
(teacher-guided in Week 2)



### ACTIVITY 5

Pretend play



### ACTIVITY 3

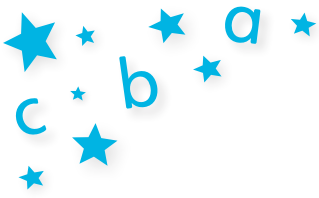
Independent reading



### ACTIVITY 4

Fine motor skills and handwriting





## How to organise your classroom for the daily Focus on Language

As we have seen, the Language focus time should be organised to allow for whole class and small group activities every day. Step-by-step guidance for the language activities is set out in the Activity Guides for each term. Here we focus on how you teach whole class as well as small group activities to provide learners with different experiences and facilitate different learning goals.

### Whole class activities

All the learners sit at their tables, or in a circle on the mat, while the teacher:

- ★ introduces/extends/reinforces a story, skill or concept
- ★ leads discussion involving all the learners
- ★ leads an activity involving all the learners.

At the end of the whole class activity, the teacher explains each small group activity before sending learners to their places.

### Small group activities

- ★ Five small group activities are planned by the teacher.
- ★ Resources and equipment for all five activities are set out every day.
- ★ Activities are set out at tables, on the mat, in activity corners or outside.
- ★ One learner group works with the teacher (teacher-guided activity).
- ★ The other four learner groups work more independently.

Over the course of five days, each group rotates to a different activity each day. This means that in a week all learners have the opportunity to participate in five small group language activities – the teacher-guided activity as well as four other group activities.

### In the classroom ...



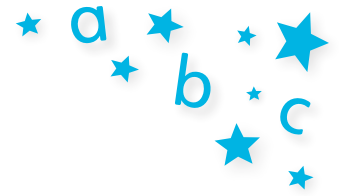
#### How to group learners

- ★ Learners are usually divided into five groups.  
(If your class size requires a sixth group, allocate the same activity to two groups.)
- ★ Each group should have their own name and symbol.
- ★ Groups should not remain the same over an extended time.

There are *two main ways* to group learners. For both of these, the teacher needs to have a good idea of her learners' abilities through careful observation of each learner across the school day.

*Mixed-ability groups:* It is usually recommended that learners are grouped together with other learners with different levels of language skills. A learner who is challenged with drawing may be assisted by her peers and may also be able to contribute strengths in other skills needed by the activity, such as social, planning, construction or imaginative skills.

*Same-ability groups:* When particular support is needed, it is sometimes useful to group learners together with other learners who are on a similar developmental level. This allows the teacher to choose the level of the activity, and the amount of explanation and time needed, without leaving anyone behind.



## The advantage of small group activities

- ★ Less resources are required for a small group than a whole class, for example: scissors, paintbrushes, playdough, game boards, etc.
- ★ Every learner has an opportunity to handle the materials and resources.
- ★ Learners develop interpersonal skills, for example: sharing, turn taking, talking and listening.
- ★ Learners take responsibility for group tasks, for example: tidying up.
- ★ Small group work works well for consolidating and practising previously taught concepts and skills.

## The teacher-guided small group activities are planned so that the teacher

- ★ works with the learner on the floor or at a table
- ★ gives instructions and asks questions at the level of the group
- ★ observes and engages with each learner individually
- ★ assesses whether each learner has built the required skills
- ★ makes the session practical and interactive, with both you and the learners joining in.

## The independent small group activities are planned so that the learners

- ★ find them meaningful and enjoyable
- ★ can work without help from the teacher
- ★ can work at their own pace
- ★ who work slowly should be able to complete the task within the time provided
- ★ who complete the task early are encouraged to leave the group quietly and choose a free-choice activity from those set out by the teacher.

*If you notice learners can't get started, or are not progressing, explore the reasons. Change or adapt the activity, if necessary, for individual learners or groups.*

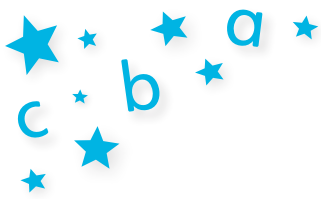
### In the classroom ...



#### Teach the learners simple rules for

- ★ how to move between activities
- ★ how to behave during small group activities
- ★ how to tidy and pack up their work when done.






*Repeat the rules daily until learners know and can follow them automatically. This takes time! Be consistent. Gently correct learners if they challenge the rules.*



# How to plan for a two-week activity cycle

The Language programme is built around a two-week plan of activities. The activity routine is repeated throughout the year to allow for the introduction, development and consolidation of learners' skills.

## Week 1






Whole class activities	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>Story-based activities</b>	<b>Storytelling and building vocabulary</b> Learners hear the story for the first time while learning new vocabulary.	<b>Storytelling and singing</b> Learners listen to the story again and sing a song related to the story.	<b>Storytelling and role play</b> Learners take on different roles and use the story language themselves, while the story is narrated.	<b>Sequencing pictures</b> Learners retell the story by using pictures.	<b>Make, draw and write</b> Learners represent their ideas about the story by making an object, drawing a picture or participating in shared writing.
	<b>Letter and sound activities</b> Learners are introduced to a focus sound linked to words from the story.	<b>Forming the letter</b> Learners form the focus letter using different materials which give them a rich sensory experience.	<b>Letter boxes</b> Learners see, hold and talk about objects and pictures that start with the focus sound.	<b>Listening for focus sounds</b> Learners identify focus sounds in words.	<b>Blending and segmenting</b> Learners blend sounds to make words and break up words into sounds.
Small group activities	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Stella indicates which small group activities are teacher-guided each day.					
<b>The blue group</b>	<b>Activity 1: Drawing and emergent writing</b>  Learners record their ideas through drawing and emergent writing.	<b>Activity 2: Puzzles and games</b> Learners do puzzles and play language games.	<b>Activity 3: Independent reading</b> Learners read independently and enjoy books and other printed material.	<b>Activity 4: Fine motor skills and handwriting</b> Learners do fine motor activities and practise forming letters.	<b>Activity 5: Pretend play</b> Learners build on the story language and theme through pretend play.
	<b>The green group</b>	<b>Activity 5: Pretend play</b>	<b>Activity 1: Drawing and emergent writing</b> 	<b>Activity 2: Puzzles and games</b>	<b>Activity 3: Independent reading</b>
<b>The yellow group</b>	<b>Activity 4: Fine motor skills and handwriting</b>	<b>Activity 5: Pretend play</b>	<b>Activity 1: Drawing and emergent writing</b> 	<b>Activity 2: Puzzles and games</b>	<b>Activity 3: Independent reading</b>
<b>The red group</b>	<b>Activity 3: Independent reading</b>	<b>Activity 4: Fine motor skills and handwriting</b>	<b>Activity 5: Pretend play</b>	<b>Activity 1: Drawing and emergent writing</b> 	<b>Activity 2: Puzzles and games</b>
<b>The purple group</b>	<b>Activity 2: Puzzles and games</b>	<b>Activity 3: Independent reading</b>	<b>Activity 4: Fine motor skills and handwriting</b>	<b>Activity 5: Pretend play</b>	<b>Activity 1: Drawing and emergent writing</b> 

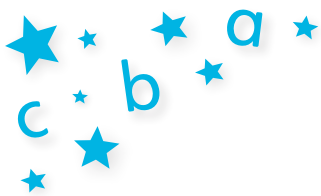




Learners' interest is held through the ever-changing story context and through creative variation in the activities which are graded – becoming more challenging as the year progresses. Details of stories and activities for each two-week cycle are provided in the Activity Guides for each term.

## Week 2

Whole class activities	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>Story-based activities</b>	<b>More sequencing pictures</b>	<b>Shared reading – Big Book</b>	<b>Learning to listen</b>	<b>Read and do</b>	<b>Make, draw and write</b>
	Learners consolidate their story knowledge by sequencing pictures more independently.	Learners listen to a familiar story being read as the teacher models the reading process.	Learners listen carefully and follow verbal instructions.	Learners interpret written and picture cues.	Learners represent their ideas about the story by making an object, drawing a picture or participating in shared writing.
<b>Letter and sound activities</b>	<b>Introducing a sound from the story</b>	<b>Forming the letter</b>	<b>Letter boxes</b>	<b>Listening for focus sounds</b>	<b>Blending and segmenting</b>
	Learners are introduced to a focus sound linked to words from the story.	Learners form the focus letter using different materials which give them a rich sensory experience.	Learners see, hold and talk about objects and pictures that start with the focus sound.	Learners identify focus sounds in words.	Learners blend sounds to make words and break up words into sounds.
Small group activities	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	Stella indicates which small group activities are teacher-guided each day.				
<b>The blue group</b>	<b>Activity 1: Drawing and emergent writing</b>	<b>Activity 2: Puzzles and games</b> 	<b>Activity 3: Independent reading</b>	<b>Activity 4: Fine motor skills and handwriting</b>	<b>Activity 5: Pretend play</b>
	Learners record their ideas through drawing and emergent writing.	Learners do puzzles and play language games.	Learners read independently and enjoy books and other printed material.	Learners do fine motor activities and practise forming letters.	Learners build on the story language and theme through pretend play.
<b>The green group</b>	<b>Activity 5: Pretend play</b>	<b>Activity 1: Drawing and emergent writing</b>	<b>Activity 2: Puzzles and games</b> 	<b>Activity 3: Independent reading</b>	<b>Activity 4: Fine motor skills and handwriting</b>
<b>The yellow group</b>	<b>Activity 4: Fine motor skills and handwriting</b>	<b>Activity 5: Pretend play</b>	<b>Activity 1: Drawing and emergent writing</b>	<b>Activity 2: Puzzles and games</b> 	<b>Activity 3: Independent reading</b>
<b>The red group</b>	<b>Activity 3: Independent reading</b>	<b>Activity 4: Fine motor skills and handwriting</b>	<b>Activity 5: Pretend play</b>	<b>Activity 1: Drawing and emergent writing</b>	<b>Activity 2: Puzzles and games</b> 
<b>The purple group</b>	<b>Activity 2: Puzzles and games</b> 	<b>Activity 3: Independent reading</b>	<b>Activity 4: Fine motor skills and handwriting</b>	<b>Activity 5: Pretend play</b>	<b>Activity 1: Drawing and emergent writing</b>



## How to assess learners' progress in Grade R

In Grade R, assessment is a continuous, planned process of gathering, analysing and interpreting information about each learner.

Assessment should be informal and formative. In other words, the information gathered about the learners' progress during assessment should help you to plan and adapt learning activities so that learners' learning will be enhanced. In Grade R, the focus of assessment is not to give marks, but to make decisions about the best way to support each learner's development.

You cannot assess what you have not taught! Assessment is the link between CAPS subject content and skills and your teaching and learning activities. Assessment for teaching and learning is done to:

- ★ establish the level of each learner
- ★ encourage each learner's development
- ★ check on each learner's progress
- ★ guide planning and the selection of activities
- ★ inform the level of your teaching
- ★ plan additional support for learners who experience barriers to learning
- ★ help to generate reports on learners' achievements.

### Glossary

#### formative assessment

assessment that provides information about learners' progress while learning is taking place

## In the classroom ...



### Assessment tips

Information on learners' knowledge and skills development should be collected every day in different ways and at different times:

- ★ Observe learners during whole class activities as well as during free play inside and outside the classroom.
- ★ Conversations with individual learners or small groups of learners can help you to understand the level and depth of learners' thinking and reasoning.
- ★ Look carefully at the things that learners do and make (pictures, drawings, objects and/or 'writing') to show you what they understand and have achieved.
- ★ Work with one small group of learners each day on a specific activity linked to a CAPS component or skill. While the learners are engaged in the activity, carefully observe each learner in the small group and ask questions to gain insight into their thinking and level of understanding.

## Assessment tools

Remember that assessment should never make learners feel anxious or scared. For this reason, learners should never be aware of you recording information about them. By recording your observations throughout the year, a complete picture of each learner, with all their strengths and weaknesses, is gradually built up. There are four different tools that you can use: learners' files, observation books, checklists and rubrics.

Refer also to the GDE Grade R Assessment Practices Resource Pack for more ideas.



## Learners' files

The teacher should prepare a file or folder for each learner in the class and use it to keep each learner's paper-based work safe. Write the learner's name and the date on each page filed. This will give the learner a sense of the value attached to their work and will also give you a great way to assess progress across the year. (Please before you file it, display learners' work in the classroom.)



## Observation books

In Grade R the teacher should observe the learners inside and outside the classroom, during free play and structured activities. Set up a couple of pages for each learner and record what you notice about their behaviours, skills, attitudes, performance and classroom incidents.

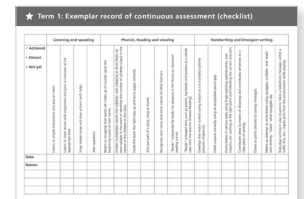
(These anecdotal notes will assist you to complete the checklist each term.)



## Checklists

Checklists provide a list of assessment criteria for the skills that have been taught during the term. The teacher will mark with a tick or a cross to show "achieved" or "not achieved". A third option is a dot, which indicates that the learner is not fully competent, but is showing that they are on the way to achieving the skill.

(Checklist templates are included in the Activity Guide for each term.)



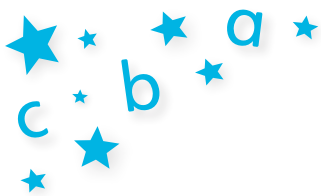
## Rubrics

A rubric is another tool for assessing learners' achievements. It also consists of a list of criteria, but offers more detailed descriptions than the dot, cross and tick. A rubric sets out descriptions for different levels of performance for each assessment criterion. A rubric allows teachers to be more objective and consistent in their assessment and gives more detailed guidance to the teacher as to what support each learner requires.

(Rubric templates are included in the Activity Guide for each term.)

The rubric level descriptor is linked to a rating code and this is entered into the South African School Administration and Management System (SA-SAMS) for each rubric that you use during the year. The system analyses the codes and produces a report for parents.

Assessment Criteria	1. Not achieved (0 – 29%)	2. Moderate achievement (30 – 49%)	3. Adequate achievement (50 – 74%)	4. Outstanding achievement (75 – 100%)
<b>Tells stories and retells stories of others in own words</b>	Unable to tell stories and retell stories of others, but only able to say a few words.	Limited retelling; only includes some events; order might not be correct; uses short sentences and simple vocabulary.	Able to retell most events in story with beginning, middle and end but very few details; needs prompts such as: "and then ..."; "what happened next?" Starting to use longer sentences.	Story follows logical sequence and has a beginning, middle and end; characters and setting described in detail; intentions and feelings of characters are described; uses longer and more complex sentences and joining words such as "and then"; "after that"; uses new vocabulary from the story.



## Programme activities are CAPS aligned

This table shows how the activities of the two-week cycle build specific CAPS language skills, and shows how you can use these activities to assess learner progress against CAPS assessment criteria.

Two-week cycle	Whole class story-based activities	CAPS language skills	Assessment checklist	Assessment rubric
			(derived from the CAPS assessment criteria)	
<b>Week 1:</b> Monday	Storytelling and building vocabulary	Listening and speaking	Listens to short stories with enjoyment and joins in choruses at the appropriate time Asks questions	
Tuesday	Storytelling and singing	Listening and speaking	Sings simple songs and does actions (with help)	
Wednesday	Storytelling and role play	Reading and viewing	Acts out part of a story, song or rhyme	
Thursday	Sequencing pictures	Listening and speaking		<b>Listening and Speaking Rubric 1:</b> Tells stories and retells stories in own words
Friday	Make, draw and write	Listening and speaking Emergent writing	Contributes ideas by means of drawings and contributes sentences to a class piece of writing Draws or paints pictures to convey messages	
<b>Week 2:</b> Monday	More sequencing pictures	Listening and speaking Reading and viewing		<b>Listening and Speaking Rubric 2:</b> Arranges a set of pictures in such a way that they form a story and a logical sequence of events when verbalised and relates the story created
Tuesday	Shared reading – Big Book	Reading and viewing	“Reads” enlarged texts such as poems, Big Books and posters as a whole class with the teacher	
Wednesday	Listen and do	Listening and speaking	Listens to simple instructions and acts on them	
Thursday	Read and do	Reading and viewing	Recognises own name and some names of other learners	
Friday	Make, draw and write	Listening and speaking Emergent writing	Contributes ideas by means of drawings and contributes sentences to a class piece of writing Draws or paints pictures to convey messages	



Two-week cycle	Whole class letters and sounds activities	CAPS language skills	Assessment checklist	Assessment rubric
<b>Week 1 and 2:</b> Monday	Introducing a letter from the story	Phonics		<b>Phonics, Reading and Viewing Rubric 1:</b> Recognises aurally and visually some consonants and vowels
Tuesday	Forming the letter	Handwriting	Forms letters in various ways using finger-painting, paintbrushes, wax crayons, etc. starting at the right point and following the correct direction	<b>Emergent Writing and Handwriting Rubric 1:</b> Develops small muscle skills and fine motor skills
Wednesday	Letter boxes	Phonics	Recognises aurally and visually some initial consonants and vowels especially at the beginning of a word	<b>Phonics, Reading and Viewing Rubric 1:</b> Recognises aurally and visually some consonants and vowels
Thursday	Listening for focus sounds	Phonics		<b>Phonics, Reading and Viewing Rubric 2:</b> Begins to recognise that words are made up of sounds: gives the beginning sound of own name
Friday	Blending and segmenting	Phonics	Divides multisyllabic words into syllables: uses clapping or drum beats on each syllable in the word or identifies the number of syllables (claps) in the names of the learners in the class	
Two-week cycle	Small group activities	CAPS language skills	Assessment checklist	Assessment rubric
<b>Week 1 and 2:</b> Monday	Drawing and emergent writing	Emergent writing	Makes an attempt to write letters using squiggles, scribbles, etc. and “reads” own writing: “reads” what squiggles say Holds crayons correctly using an acceptable pencil grip	<b>Emergent Writing and Handwriting Rubric 2:</b> Draws pictures capturing main idea of the stories, songs or rhymes <b>Rubric 3:</b> Understands that writing and drawing are different: pretend writing represented using squiggles
Tuesday	Puzzles and games	Phonics Listening and speaking	Uses language to think and reason: matches things that go together and compares things that are different.	<b>Phonics, Reading and Viewing Rubric 1:</b> Recognises aurally and visually some consonants and vowels
Wednesday	Independent reading	Reading and viewing	“Reads” independently books for pleasure in the library or classroom reading corner Holds the book the right way up and turns pages correctly	<b>Phonics, Reading and Viewing Rubric 3:</b> Makes up own story by “reading” the pictures
Thursday	Fine motor skills and handwriting	Handwriting	Forms letters in various ways using finger-painting, paintbrushes, wax crayons, etc. starting at the right point and following the correct direction Copies known letters in own name to represent writing: copies own name Develops fine motor control using scissors to cut out bold outlined pictures, shapes, etc.	<b>Emergent Writing and Handwriting Rubric 1:</b> Develops small muscle skills and fine motor skills
Friday	Pretend play	Listening and speaking Emergent writing	Role-plays writing in play situations: takes a telephone message, writes a traffic fine, etc. Copies print from the environment while playing	

# ★ Section 2: Guiding principles for teaching in Grade R

The programme encourages an approach to teaching and learning that is stimulating and motivating for learners so that they will develop the attitudes, knowledge and skills that they will build on in later grades. Education research in classrooms has highlighted a set of teaching principles which contribute to successful learning. The programme is built on eight of these principles.

While the principles are numbered, this is purely for ease of reference. All the principles are equally important and you will notice that they are closely linked to one another.

## Glossary

### principle

a general rule that is accepted to be true



**8** The practice principle. Learning is consolidated through practising new skills and knowledge.



**1** The context principle. Learning takes place in meaningful and appropriate situations.



**2** The activity principle. Learners should be directly involved in the learning-teaching process.



**7** The inclusivity principle. Learning takes place in an environment where everyone is welcomed, included, fairly treated, respected and can participate.

## THE EIGHT PRINCIPLES OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN GRADE R



**3** The play principle. Play is fun and the most natural way for young learners to learn, whether at home or at school.



**6** The guidance principle. Learning takes place when teachers guide learners in developing new knowledge.



**5** The level principle. Learners pass through various levels of understanding and development.



**4** The interaction principle. Learning takes place when there is communication and sharing of ideas.



## Eight principles for teaching and learning

The next part of the Concept Guide takes you through eight principles for teaching in Grade R. Each principle has:

- ★ a definition
- ★ more information about the principle
- ★ an "In the classroom" box where we explore how a concept or principle can be applied in the classroom.

### 1 The context principle

#### Learning takes place in meaningful and appropriate situations.

Learning happens during everyday experiences in the home, at the shops, in the street, at the clinic, in the taxi, at the library, in the yard, at church and mosque, in the park, and in many other everyday contexts. When learners arrive in Grade R, they come with their experiences as well as their understanding and ideas about the world. This is their everyday knowledge. They will have grown up using the language of their family. Everyday knowledge and language will not be the same for all learners as it depends on the learner's family, community and culture.

When learners arrive in Grade R, they come with their experiences.

#### In the classroom ...

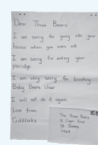


Many learners in South Africa grow up in contexts where there is limited exposure to books and where drawing and writing is not part of their everyday experience. As teachers of young learners, we need to create classroom spaces that help to bridge learners' home and school contexts so that learning is meaningful to them.

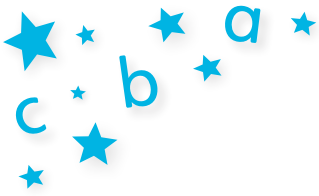
We might encourage learners to look for print and letters on their way home from school or around their neighbourhood, so that they see writing in their own contexts. We could show learners that reading and writing has a purpose through activities such as writing a shopping list or making a card for someone.

Creating a print-rich classroom environment also helps learners to see the purpose of print. Here are some ideas for using print in meaningful ways in a Grade R classroom:

- ★ Write learners' names on a birthday calendar and check the calendar with the class every day.
- ★ Put labels on storage boxes, such as blocks and puzzles. Whenever you take out resources, read the labels out aloud with the learners.
- ★ Create a poster that illustrates the daily programme with pictures and words. Encourage learners to "have a go" at reading the poster to find out what activity is next.
- ★ Display hygiene posters next to the sink or toilet reminding learners to wash their hands. Use pictures and words for these posters.
- ★ Read posters on the walls. Make a weather chart that you read with the learners every day.
- ★ Display learners' drawings and emergent writing around the classroom.



We know from the context principle that young learners learn best when new learning has meaning and is connected to something they already know about. One of the powerful ways young learners make meaning is through stories. This is why the Language Improvement Programme has been structured around stories, allowing learners to build new skills and knowledge in a familiar story context.



## 2 The activity principle

**Learners should be directly involved in the learning-teaching process.**

*Young learners learn best by being active.*

Young learners learn best by being active, doing things and by being involved in hands-on activities. They use their bodies to explore and learn about the world around them, and find it difficult to sit still for a long time. They learn more easily when they can link new words and concepts with actions and real experiences.

Learning in Grade R should consist of enjoyable, hands-on activities and meaningful experiences that make use of many objects. Wherever possible, the activities should provide learners with opportunities to use their whole bodies and their senses, especially sight, hearing and touch.

### In the classroom ...



When learners role-play a story, they have a chance to embody the characters and make the language of the story their own. They use new language and build their confidence by being actively involved in telling the story.





## In the classroom ...

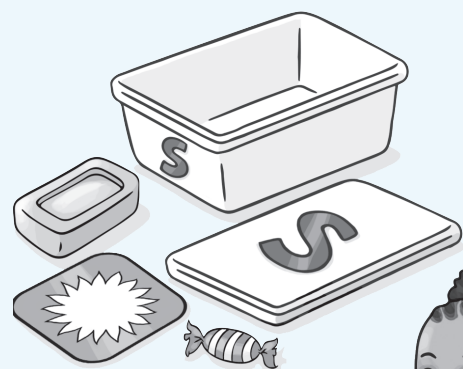
Grade R learners should not be made to chant the alphabet, copy letters from a board or practise writing letters between lines or on paper with a pencil. Young learners should learn how to form letters through big movements and through experiences that involve all of their senses. Letter formation must be taught in multisensory ways such as painting a letter on concrete with a paintbrush dipped in water, making a letter from playdough, linking the formation of a letter with the sound it makes, or tracing letters in a tray filled with sand.

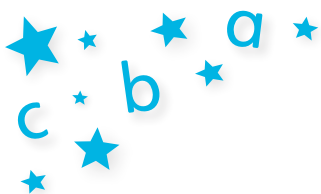


It will be easier for learners to hear sounds in words by connecting the sounds to physical actions and concrete objects. This can be done, for example, by encouraging learners to clap or hop for each syllable or sound, or to move counters as they say each syllable or sound in a word.



When introducing a new letter, it is a good idea to show learners objects that start with that sound – talk about the objects, pass them around so that learners can touch them, and then say the name of the object while emphasising the focus sound.





### 3 The play principle

**Play is fun and the most natural way for young learners to learn, whether at home or at school.**

For learners, learning and play are not separate activities.

For learners, learning and play are not separate activities. It is not something that learners only do in their "free time" or when a teacher is not around. Play can mean many things: outdoor physical activities; playing with sand or water; pretend play with friends or alone; playing with blocks and construction toys; playing listening games, guessing games or card games. Although some play activities need extra time and resources, learners often enjoy playing with everyday objects and simple homemade materials.

#### Five types of play

Researchers have identified five types of play that can be seen in all cultures and that support the physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of the learner:

	<p><b>Physical play</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ This includes active exercise, fine motor practice and rough-and-tumble play.</li> <li>★ Physical play is important for learners to develop gross and fine motor coordination and for building strength and endurance.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Play with objects</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ As learners explore, investigate and experiment with different objects in their world, they develop their thinking skills and learn to problem-solve.</li> <li>★ These can be noisy objects like pots and pans, floating objects like corks and plastic bottles, stacking objects like yoghurt containers, objects that can be squashed, folded, moulded, thrown, bounced, cuddled and carried.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Symbolic play</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ This is where learners use a toy, object, picture, drawing or other mark-making to represent real-life objects in their game.</li> <li>★ In symbolic play, learners learn that one thing can "stand for" or represent another one just as later they will learn that a letter can represent a sound.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Pretend and sociodramatic play</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ This involves imagining a scenario, taking on different roles, dressing up, using different voices and negotiating events.</li> <li>★ Pretend play promotes cognitive and social development and helps learners to manage their own behaviour and thinking.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Games with rules</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ These can include hopping, counting, skipping games, board games, dice games, card games, hide and seek games.</li> <li>★ These games encourage learners to learn, follow and explain rules, share and take turns, help one another, deal with disappointment and try again.</li> </ul>

## In the classroom ...

Learners often love to pretend, and pretend play is a very good way to support their learning. Pretend play can be noisy, but this kind of play builds learners' ability to understand and use language which goes beyond the here-and-now, beyond their own personal experiences and beyond the real world. They have to negotiate roles and explain what they are doing. They also learn about representation – that one thing can stand for another. Grasping this difficult concept will help them to understand that the writing on a page stands for the words we speak.

Here are some practical ideas to help you to encourage fantasy play in your classroom:

- ★ A pretend shop is easy to set up with old boxes, plastic containers and other items from the kitchen. Scrap paper can be used for pretend money. Young learners also enjoy role-playing routines around the house, such as cooking and washing.
- ★ Encourage fantasy play (pretence and sociodramatic play) by starting a game. For example, place chairs in a row to make a train. Then ask a learner to be at the front as the train driver or on the second and third chairs as passengers. In this way learners have fun, but also learn concepts like position and number order.
- ★ Join in and share activities with learners as they play. Show your enjoyment and involvement by thinking aloud and talking about what is happening in the activity. For example, *"I filled three cups with water – one, two, three. Now I've filled one more so, look, there are four. Look how neatly they are lined up!"* Discussion is an important way to teach maths language to learners.
- ★ Help learners to think about symbols during play. Suggest how one thing might represent another. For example, *"You could turn that table upside down and use it as your boat."*





## The play-based approach

The play-based approach to teaching and learning recognises that at times learners learn best from free play activities initiated and directed by the learner without adult involvement.

At other times, learners learn best from guided play activities that are directed by the teacher in whole class or small groups. A well-planned teaching and learning programme should include a balance of all the different types of play activities.

Learners need many opportunities to:

- ★ *explore their environment using their senses*  
For example: outdoor activities like climbing and running, hopscotch and ball games
- ★ *investigate and solve problems*  
For example: using construction materials to make a tower, or using water or sand to fill containers
- ★ *practise what they already know or can do*  
For example: playing structured games like snakes and ladders or dominoes.

A learning programme should include a balance of all the different types of play activities.



## The importance of play for literacy and language development

When learners play, they often use objects in their environment and pretend that they are other things. When learners draw, they make pictures to represent real life or an imaginary world.

In this kind of *symbolic play*, learners use one object to "stand for" or represent another one. This is the beginning of learning that symbols can represent real things. For example, they learn that:

- ★ a rectangular wooden construction block can represent a telephone
- ★ a drawing of two people can represent two real people
- ★ the letter "s" stands for the sound /s/ that you hear in the words "sun" and "sand".

In symbolic play, learners use one object to "stand for" or represent another one.

There are many other play activities that promote language learning. For example:

- ★ When learners play guessing games, they have to use language to describe what they are thinking about.  
"I am thinking of an animal that lives on a farm. It gives us milk and meat."
- ★ Games like "I spy with my little eye" help learners to identify the beginning sounds in words.  
"I spy with my little eye something beginning with /t/."
- ★ Listening games help build learners' vocabulary and understanding of concepts.  
"Stand on your left leg and put your hands on your head."



## 4 The interaction principle

### Learning takes place when there is communication and sharing of ideas.

Learners learn best when we respond to what interests them and they are given opportunities to interact, share their ideas and ask and answer questions. Conversations between adults and learners are the cornerstone of language development and the more learners are encouraged to be part of a conversation and to articulate their questions and ideas, the quicker their language and thinking skills will grow.

Research has shown that high-quality early childhood classrooms are those where the teacher is responsive and creates an environment that supports interaction and communication. It is so easy to give instructions and expect our learners to be quiet, but this is not how young learners learn language.

Responsive teachers build learners' language.

### In the classroom ...



In a Grade R classroom, there are many opportunities to build oral language throughout the day.

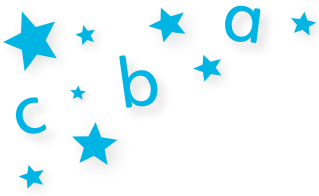
*Show and tell* is a unique opportunity for learners to bring something of their own into the classroom, to prepare and to speak for a sustained amount of time about something special to them. Here are some strategies that a teacher could use to support interaction during *Show and tell*:

- ★ Affirm the learner's choice of object for show and tell.
- ★ Get down to the learner's height, make eye contact and listen with interest.
- ★ Repeat what a learner says and then add some more information, rephrase or expand on what they said, while being careful to affirm their message.
- ★ Ask specific questions and listen to the learner's answers. Make a point of asking open-ended questions that extend learners' thinking ("*I wonder why ...*"; "*What do you think ...*"; "*How do you think he felt when ...*").
- ★ Give learners plenty of time to think before expecting a response.
- ★ Show learners you are actively listening (by using responses like "*mmm, ok, yes, really?*").
- ★ Affirm the other learners' listening skills and create a safe space for them to ask questions.
- ★ Involve learners who are listening to the "show and tell" by asking them questions about what they heard and about new things they learnt.
- ★ Explain your own thoughts and feelings (and the thoughts and feelings of others).

### Asking questions enhances language development.

Through asking questions, learners learn how different experiences and ideas are connected. The more they ask questions and explain their own ideas, the quicker their language and thinking skills will grow. Learners' answers may not always be correct, but making mistakes is part of learning together. Teachers should ask questions that a learner is able to answer and should never humiliate a learner who has given a wrong answer.

Read more in the next section about questions you can ask learners at different levels of development.



## 5 The level principle

### Learners pass through various levels of understanding and development.

Learners in a Grade R classroom are all a similar age, but they each have individual personalities, needs, abilities, interests, strengths and challenges. They will differ in terms of their prior experiences and language levels. All of this will influence their pace of work and the support they will need from teachers and others in order to learn.

Many factors will influence learners' pace of work and the support they will need from teachers.

### In the classroom ...



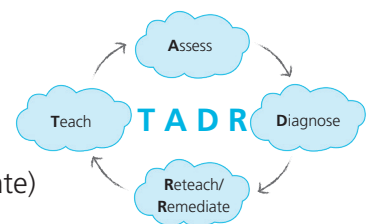
If learners have not grown up in homes where they are encouraged to ask and answer questions, they may not feel comfortable to do so in class. Different questions make different demands on learners' developing language skills. Teachers should try to use questions at the appropriate level for each learner.

- ★ Some questions can be answered with very little language, for example: "Where is the cat hiding?" If learners point to the correct answer, it shows that they have understood the question, even if they don't speak.
- ★ Questions that require learners to choose between two responses can help build confidence, as learners can answer even if they don't have much language: "Would you like to use the blue or green crayon?"
- ★ Closed questions that have a single answer also build the confidence of learners whose language is still developing. For example: "What colour is the girl's dress?"
- ★ Questions that encourage learners to share their own experiences are essential for building confidence, as learners' ideas and experiences are valued, and they can draw on something familiar to provide an answer. For example: "Have you ever gone on a picnic? Can you tell us about when you went on a picnic?"
- ★ Questions about words and word meanings stimulate interaction and help to build curiosity about words. For example: "The word 'orange' can mean two things. It can be a fruit, but what else can it mean? Yes, it is also a colour!"; "In English, we say these are our 'knees', what do you call these in other languages?"
- ★ Open-ended questions that have more than one correct answer are very important for developing learners' language and thinking skills. For example: "What do you think will happen next?"; "Why do you think ...?"

These questions stimulate interaction and sharing of ideas, but learners will only feel confident to respond if the teacher has created a classroom where all responses are accepted and valued.

### Differentiated teaching

Differentiation means that what you **T**each and the way in which you teach it needs to take into account the different abilities of your learners. To use this approach, teachers need to observe and **A**ssess each learner during activities and use this information to **D**iscover what support the learner needs and plan how they will **R**e-teach (or **R**emediate) so as to build and stretch learners' understanding and skills. Some learners may understand a new idea, with just a little support from the teacher. Other learners might need more time, more demonstrations, more examples and more support to achieve the same understanding. When you use differentiation in your teaching, you need to:



- ★ be aware of similarities and differences amongst your learners
- ★ plan the best way to support each learner based on their strengths and challenges
  - What resources would help?
  - Which group would best suit the learner?
  - Will the learner need more time? How can the activity be extended for a fast learner?
- ★ adjust what you expect each learner to have learnt by the end of the activity.



## In the classroom ...

At the start of the year in Grade R, some learners may have limited experience of drawing and writing, while others may already know how to write their name and will feel confident about drawing their ideas. Their prior experiences, abilities and interests will influence their developmental levels, and by observing learners carefully, teachers will be able to determine their skill levels and plan how best to support their development.

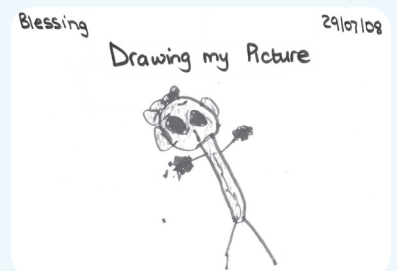
### Drawing

The following case study illustrates the TADR process (teach, assess, diagnose, re-teach/remediate). After teaching a lesson that included drawing, the teacher assessed the learners through informal observation and noticed that some learners were not able to complete the drawing activity at the expected level. Her observations led her to diagnose that the learners did not realise that drawing required careful looking and paying attention to visual details. She then took steps to remediate through careful scaffolding. The pictures show how this intervention enabled a learner to move to the next level.

Blessing was five years old when he drew this picture. The teacher was concerned when she saw his drawings and realised he needed some special attention. She decided to observe him during drawing time, and came up with a plan to support his drawing. She chatted to him every day about what he was drawing. She said things like: *"I can see you have drawn a picture of yourself here. How many arms do you have? Can you show me your ... arms? Yes, they are here on the side of your body. Do you think you can draw some arms for yourself?"*

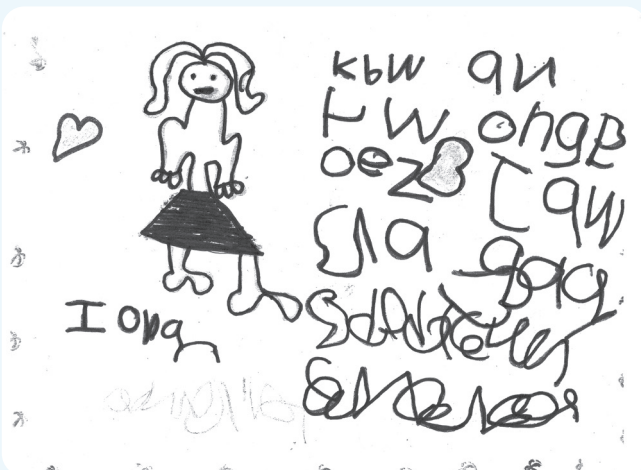


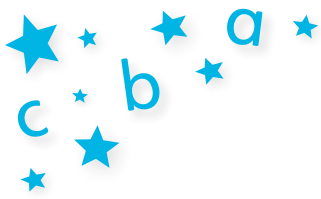
The teacher encouraged him to take more time doing his drawings and helped him to plan which colours to use. She encouraged him to look more carefully at things when he was drawing, for example: *"Look at this apple – what shape is it? Yes, it is round. And what colour do you need to draw it?"* The teacher also discussed what she was doing with Blessing's parents and encouraged them to support him at home. Blessing, his parents and his teacher were really pleased by the progress he made!



### Writing

Young learners' first attempts at writing may not look like grown-up writing, but they are becoming writers as they try to communicate their ideas on paper and use writing for different purposes. We use the term "emergent writing" to describe the mark making and writing that young learners do before they learn to write in a conventional way. The following examples show how learners pass through different stages of understanding and development in the process of learning to write. See the Guidance Principle for more about how a teacher can guide learners appropriately for their stage of writing.





## 6 The guidance principle

### Learning takes place when teachers guide learners in developing new knowledge.

Learners are born wanting to learn and although they can discover some things on their own, in order to learn and develop, they need relationships. Nurturing and trusting relationships are the cornerstones of all learning. Caregivers or teachers who respond to the interests and efforts of a learner, mediate learning and help learners to make sense of their experiences.

### Give learners responsibilities.

Learners love to be included in "grown-up" tasks and most of a young learner's early learning will take place while doing something alongside a caregiver or sibling. Through "guided participation", they will gradually learn to do a task on their own. Just as an apprentice learns a job from a master or someone skilled in that job, learners learn new skills by being apprentices to older siblings, family members and teachers.

*Nurturing and trusting relationships are the cornerstones of all learning.*

### In the classroom ...



Just as at home, learners love to be given roles in the classroom. Ask learners to take responsibility for the birthday calendar, the weather chart, handing out resources, leading their group, helping a classmate, tidying up the book corner. First, ask them to help you. They will learn by watching you do these tasks, and will soon be ready to take on the jobs themselves.

### Self-regulation is key.

Learners need to learn how to learn. This means that they must learn to manage or regulate their behaviour. Through completing an activity together with a responsive caregiver or teacher, learners learn how to slow down, think before acting and not respond hastily. Learners learn to control their impulses, change plans and manage their frustration when a task is difficult to solve. They learn to think ahead and consider alternatives rather than just responding thoughtlessly. Teachers who give learners opportunities to wait their turn, listen to instructions and participate in planning a task, are helping learners to learn to self-regulate.

Teachers can help learners to stay focused on a task or activity by managing the learning environment. This might mean reducing the noise or tidying away toys or objects that are not relevant to the activity and might distract learners' attention. Teachers can also help learners to stay focused by pointing out important parts of the activity or modelling how to approach a task. Learners need many opportunities to participate in tasks to develop their ability to stay focused.





## Guidance at the right level.

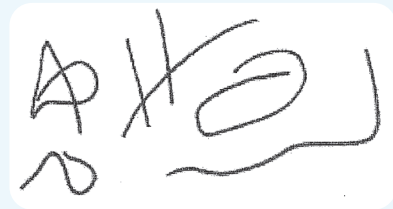
It is important that the guidance a teacher offers a learner is suitable for their level of development. As we saw in the level principle, when learners learn to write, they pass through different stages of writing and it is crucial that the teacher recognises this and supports the learner appropriately.



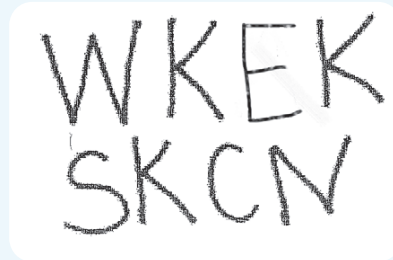
### In the classroom ...

Teachers have an important role to play in guiding learners as they draw and make their first writing attempts. Here are some suggestions for ways to guide young learners' emergent writing:

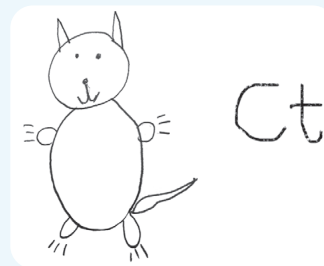
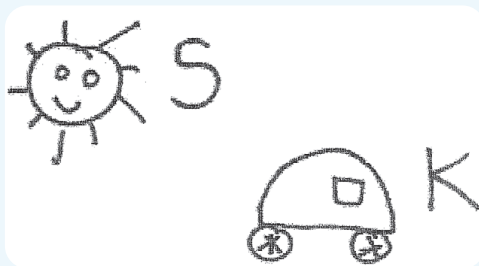
- ★ It is normal for learners' writing to include scribbles, letters, numbers or shapes. If a learner spontaneously scribbles or tries to write, ask them to tell you what they have written and affirm their efforts. For example: "You have done a good job of writing your story. Can you tell me what it says?"



- ★ Don't worry if some learners write a long string of letters without spaces. Sometimes it can be helpful to count the learner's words on your fingers as they tell you their sentence, pointing to a finger as you say each word. Encourage the learner to do the same with their fingers as they are writing. This may help them understand the spaces between words.



- ★ As the year progresses, learners may start using single letters to represent some sounds in words. Make a comment about what you have noticed in their writing. For example: "I like the way you used the letter /b/ for baby bird in your writing – that was good thinking!" They might still write letters backwards or upside down. Don't correct their writing. They will practise the correct formation in other activities.



- ★ Some learners may become aware that they are not writing "correctly" and may refuse to write at all. This may happen when they have developed a good understanding of letters and sounds, but cannot yet use conventional ("grown-up") spelling. This is an important phase in writing development. Support the learner by writing some words for them and encouraging them to write words that they can sound out or words that they know how to spell. Soon they will be writing again with more independence.

I look like this  
when I have fun.





## 7 The inclusivity principle

**Learning takes place in an environment where everyone is welcomed, included, fairly treated, respected and can participate.**

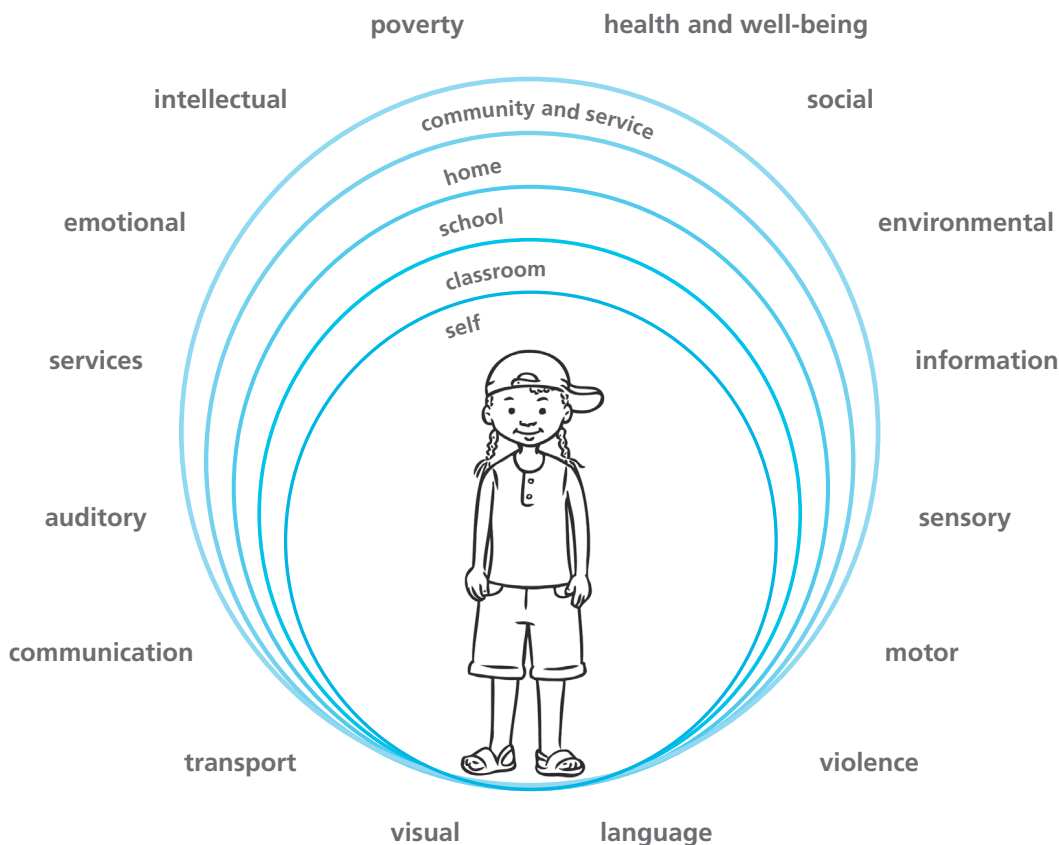
Teachers who have an inclusive mind-set embrace diversity amongst their learners. Every South African classroom has many different learners, each one bringing their own identity, personality, capabilities, interests and background.

The inclusivity principle means that all *learners* are included in all classroom activities. All learners have a right to feel special and to participate in classroom activities and discussions irrespective of disability, behavioural problems or other barriers to learning. Learners should be welcomed, encouraged to participate in all aspects of the school or centre and supported to learn to achieve their full potential.

The inclusivity principle extends to *parents and staff* who should be welcomed, treated fairly and respected regardless of their culture, ethnicity, race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical or intellectual ability, religion or socio-economic status, language and learning styles.

### Barriers to learning

The Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education is clear on the inclusion of learners, especially those who have previously been excluded or marginalised from mainstream education. The following barriers were identified as some of the reasons for learners being excluded from learning:



*Inclusive education means that all learners have the right to access basic education without discrimination.*

*Respect for diversity and a commitment to inclusion are learners' rights and protected by the South African Constitution.*

*Inclusion policy advocates that teachers are aware of each learner's identity, needs and interests in order to address them in the mainstream classroom.*

### Glossary

#### barrier to learning

a barrier to learning is anything that prevents a learner from being able to learn effectively

Barriers can be:

- *Intrinsic*: linked directly to the learner (for example: cognitive impairment, emotional or physical) **or**
- *Extrinsic*: outside of the learner (for example: poverty, neglect, violence in the community).



## In the classroom ...

*Plan your lessons, activities and materials to accommodate different learning styles to make them suitable for the needs of different learners:*

- ★ Use objects, pictures and gestures to support what you are saying so that learners who have a hearing loss or do not speak the language of instruction can learn visually.
- ★ Be aware of learners' home language and where it is different from the language of instruction, encourage them to identify words or phrases in their home language to understand or consolidate ideas.
- ★ Engage learners in many different practical activities with real objects so that they can build up their understanding in concrete ways.
- ★ Give learners additional support and time to practise and master new skills.
- ★ Allow learners more time to think through a problem, to complete activities and to answer questions.
- ★ If you are concerned about a learner, reach out to a colleague to discuss the level you are working at to make sure you are offering appropriate activities and to discuss what else you can do to provide the learner with all possible opportunities for learning and development.

*Make sure you are familiar with national policy for Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS):*

- ★ Teachers need to screen all learners when they are admitted to Grade R and record their findings on a Learner Profile.
- ★ Teachers should develop an Individual Support Plan (ISP) for any learners they identify as experiencing barriers to learning.
- ★ This information should be shared with the parents and/or caregivers so that they are aware of any additional needs and the support plan for their learner.
- ★ Teachers should collaborate with the School/Centre Based Support Team to provide the necessary support to the learner in line with the support plan.
- ★ A learner will be referred to the District Based Support Team if additional support is required.

*Ask for training and support.* Schools must ensure that teachers have adequate and appropriate resources to accommodate all their learners, despite barriers to learning. This includes training to identify barriers to learning and to intervene to support the learner by using diverse teaching strategies; adapting the curriculum according to learner needs; and managing large classes. Teachers should have the support of trained classroom assistants.



## 8 The practice principle

### Learning is consolidated through practising new skills and knowledge.

Structure, routine, practice and repetition are important for young learners' learning. Structure and routine help learners to anticipate what will come next in their day, and remove anxiety from the learning experience. Repetition and practice give learners the chance to try out new learning, and practise skills until they have mastered them. Repetition and practice do not mean doing the same thing every day, but reinforcing and using new knowledge and skills in different contexts.

*Repetition and practice give learners the chance to try out new learning, and practise skills until they have mastered them.*

### In the classroom ...



Learning to hear sounds in words and link these sounds to letter symbols require much practice and repetition. It takes time and patience, and in Grade R there are many informal opportunities for learners to practise listening for sounds in words.

Phonological awareness skills develop through daily practice:

- ★ While we're waiting for lunchtime, let's play a game of "I spy!".
- ★ If your name begins with /b/, you can line up first for a snack.
- ★ I am thinking of a kind of animal that likes to eat bones. It starts with the sound /d/.

Practising letters does not mean daily repetition of the same activity. There are many activities that provide much needed practice, but are nevertheless fun and engaging for young learners:

- ★ Form the letter in the air or in the palm of your hand.
- ★ Practise forming the letter using a piece of chalk, a stick in the sand, or a paintbrush with water.
- ★ Play games that require learners to match letter symbols and pictures that start with the sound the letter makes.
- ★ Make a little letter book by writing a letter and then drawing pictures of objects that start with that letter.
- ★ Write a letter with different colour crayons to make a rainbow letter.
- ★ Make letters out of playdough.

In a story-based language programme, through the daily activities linked to the story, learners experience and practise the language of the story in different ways. Each activity is designed to give learners fun and meaningful opportunities to practise and use the story language. Although teachers might be concerned that it may become boring for learners if the activities for two weeks of teaching are based on one story, teachers report that learners are eager to hear the story over and again, and that repetition and practice build confidence and deepen learning.

### In the classroom ...

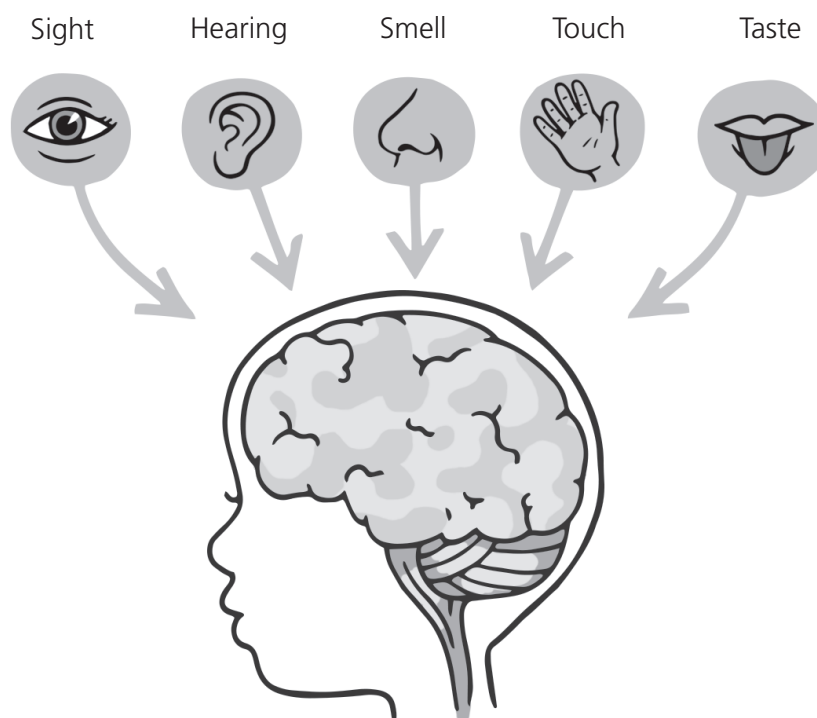


We know that in order to learn new vocabulary and make it their own, learners need to hear and use words often and in different contexts. Learners often understand words before they have the confidence to use them, and it takes time and practice for them to develop a deep and lasting knowledge of new vocabulary. Young learners might hear new words and phrases in a story told by the teacher, but need opportunities to practise using these new words and phrases in different situations. Retelling the story using a sequence of pictures, role-playing the story, drawing their favourite part of the story and explaining what they have drawn and taking a little book home to "read" the story to their families, all provide the repetition and practice that build confidence and mastery.

## Perceptual and motor development

The development of perceptual and motor skills in young learners is extremely important in laying a foundation for all future language development and learning. Sensory perception means using the senses to get information about the environment.

Perceptual skills allow us to make sense of the world around us. Sensory information is collected by our five senses, for example: what our eyes see, our ears hear, our skin feels, our tongue tastes and our nose smells. This information is sent to our brain. The brain processes, organises and remembers this information so that we can use it later for everyday activities.



Motor skills are actions that involve using our muscles. We use the big muscles in our bodies for gross motor activities, for example: kicking a ball, running and jumping. We use smaller muscles for fine motor activities, for example: cutting, writing and drawing.

Sensory perceptual motor development includes the following:

- ★ visual perception
- ★ auditory perception
- ★ tactile and kinaesthetic perception.

These are discussed in more detail on the next page.



## Visual perception

Visual perception is the ability of the brain to use what the eyes see and to interpret this information. Visual perception skills are important for looking at and interpreting pictures.

### Visual discrimination

- ★ Visual discrimination is the ability to see similarities and differences between objects.
- ★ Learners use and develop this skill when they compare two pictures and identify what is missing from one of the pictures.
- ★ Visual discrimination is also used when learners recognise the similarities and differences between two letters such as a "b" and "d".



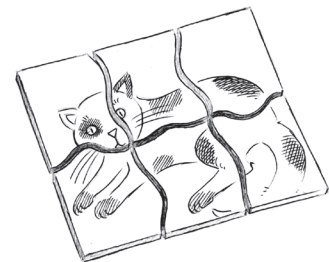
### Visual motor coordination (eye-hand coordination)

- ★ Visual motor coordination is the ability of the eyes, brain and body muscles to work together to perform actions. It is important for activities such as handling objects, drawing and writing.
- ★ Learners use and develop visual motor coordination through ball and beanbag games, building with blocks, playing with objects that roll or slide, as well as through threading, cutting and drawing.



### Visual closure

- ★ Visual closure is the ability to complete objects, pictures or drawings that are incomplete. In other words, the learner is able to recognise or identify a whole object even though the total picture is incomplete.
- ★ Learners use and develop visual closure when they complete puzzles or describe what is missing in an incomplete picture, for example, one that shows only part of the face or body.



### Form constancy and form perception (recognition)





- ★ Form constancy is the ability to recognise forms and symbols, even when their size and position change. In other words, it means being able to recognise the constant characteristics of something.
- ★ Learners use and develop this skill when they see letters in different contexts and understand that a letter symbol (for example: 's') remains the same whether it is written in different colours or in big or small writing.



### Visual figure-ground perception

- ★ Visual figure-ground perception is the ability to recognise or identify an object, symbol or shape when surrounded by other shapes, symbols or objects.
- ★ Learners use and develop visual figure-ground perceptual skills when they are asked to identify particular objects in a picture, for example: "Find the girl with the red top in the picture."



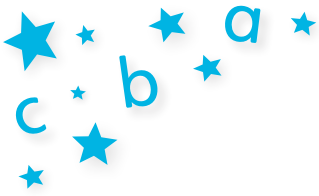
<p><b>Visual sequencing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Visual sequencing is the ability to place objects or items in the correct order after looking at them or observing them.</li> <li>★ Learners use and develop this skill when they look at a pattern of different coloured beads on a string and then repeat the pattern themselves or copy the letters in their name in the correct order. Learners will use visual sequencing to copy the letters in their name in the correct order.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Visual motor integration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Visual motor integration is the ability to make sense of visual information and then use that information in another activity that uses motor skills.</li> <li>★ Learners use visual information and develop fine motor skills when, for example, they copy their name or draw objects in front of them.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Visual conceptualising</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Visual conceptualising is the ability to make pictures in your mind (mental images) based on experiences, observations or other visual information.</li> <li>★ Learners use and develop this skill when, for example, they draw pictures of something like a room in their homes or of their families.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Visual memory</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Visual memory is the ability for the brain to recall what the eyes have seen.</li> <li>★ Learners will use and develop this skill to recognise high frequency words.</li> </ul>	

## In the classroom ...

Observe learners playing outside and inside with different equipment. Can they:

- ★ tell the difference between different sounds and different words
- ★ spot the difference between two pictures or groups of objects
- ★ remember what they have seen and heard
- ★ repeat a list of words or numbers in the correct order
- ★ respond to different sounds, their names and instructions
- ★ feel the difference between smooth and rough
- ★ taste the difference between sweet and sour while blind-folded?





## Auditory perception

Auditory perception is the ability of the brain to use what the ears hear and to interpret this information. Auditory perception is important for developing language skills, following and understanding instructions as well as sharing and discussing ideas and information.

<p><b>Auditory discrimination</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Auditory discrimination is the ability to recognise similarities and differences in sounds.</li> <li>★ Learners use and develop this skill when they can identify whether two sounds spoken by the teacher are the same or different (for example: "p" and "b" are different sounds).</li> <li>★ They also use auditory discrimination to identify the first sound in a word (for example: the word "ball" starts with the sound /b/).</li> </ul>	<p>Teacher: "Clap when you hear a word that starts with the sound /p/: big, pig, dig."</p>
<p><b>Auditory memory</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Auditory memory is the ability to store and remember something you have heard.</li> <li>★ Learners use and develop this skill when they follow a set of instructions, sing songs with actions and use story language in role play.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Auditory figure-ground perception</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Auditory figure-ground perception is the ability to recognise or isolate a sound from other sounds.</li> <li>★ Learners learn and develop this skill when they must focus on what someone in their group is saying without being distracted by the noise of other groups talking.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Auditory sequencing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Auditory sequencing is the ability to remember objects or items in the correct order after hearing a list.</li> <li>★ Learners learn and develop this skill when they learn the alphabet (A,B,C ...) or the days of the week (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday ...).</li> </ul>	

## In the classroom ...



The Perceptual Skills Checklist (see GDE Assessment Guide) is a useful tool for identifying learners who have underlying perceptual difficulties that are likely to impact on their learning in Grade R.

The Activity Guides include many activities that can be used to support the development of perceptual skills. For example:

- ★ Learners with visual-motor integration difficulties might find it difficult to make a letter out of playdough or paint a letter on a piece of paper. You could try giving them a letter on a piece of card to copy, or a template so that they can trace over the outline of the letter.
- ★ Learners with auditory perceptual difficulties might find it difficult to hear the difference between sounds in words. You could try asking them to watch your mouth as you say the sounds, or hold a mirror in front of their mouth so that they see how the sound is formed.



## Tactile and kinaesthetic perception

Tactile perception is the ability to use the sense of touch to explore your environment. Kinaesthetic perception is the awareness of body movements and position in space. They work together to provide the brain with information.

### Tactile perception

- ★ Tactile perception is the ability to use the sense of touch to explore your environment. Tactile and kinaesthetic perception work together to provide the brain with information.
- ★ Learners use and develop tactile perception when they participate in activities such as shutting their eyes, choosing an object in a bag, and feeling and describing the object. For example: they could say that it has corners/it is round, it is soft/it is hard.



### Kinaesthetic perception

- ★ Kinaesthetic perception is the awareness of body movements and position in space.
- ★ Learners use and develop awareness of their body relative to other objects around them through outdoor play such as climbing over or under objects and crawling through tunnels.
- ★ Kinaesthetic perception is also developed when learners participate in action rhymes and songs that help build their awareness of their body movements and position in space (for example: the song "Heads, shoulders, knees and toes").



### Position in space (spatial awareness) and directionality

- ★ Position in space is the ability to perceive an object's position in space relative to oneself or another object. Spatial awareness begins with awareness of one's own body in space, and then extends to being able to describe the position of objects relative to each other (for example: up, down, in front, behind, between, left, right).
- ★ Learners use and develop this skill as they learn to read and write from left to right on the page.
- ★ Spatial awareness will also help learners to notice the difference between letters that look the same, but have a different orientation (for example: **b, d, p**).



# ★ Section 3: Teaching language and emergent literacy in Grade R

## Listening and speaking (oral language)

How do we teach learners to read and write? If asked this question, many will answer that learners' literacy develops through reading books, practising writing and learning about letters and sounds. These are all important aspects of literacy. And yet, to become skilled readers and writers, it is *as important* that learners are supported to develop their oral language – their listening and speaking skills. Without good oral language skills, learning to read and write can be very difficult for young learners. Without a solid foundation of language skills, learners might learn to read words, but not *understand* what they are reading. They might be able to write words, but not be able to express their ideas in writing. For these reasons, in this programme, there is a strong emphasis on the development of listening and speaking skills throughout the two-week cycle, but particularly in the first week.

Let us look in more detail at two important aspects of oral language development that the programme supports: the development of new vocabulary and book language.

### New vocabulary

A rich and wide vocabulary is key to literacy development.

Through listening to spoken language, and later through speaking themselves, learners develop knowledge of word meanings (which we call vocabulary). Studies have shown that young learners who have a good vocabulary at age five are also likely to be those that score well on reading comprehension tests in Grades 3, 4 and even 7 (Sénéchal, Ouellette & Rodney, 2006; Tabors, Snow and Dickinson, 2001). On the other hand, if learners have limited vocabulary when they start school, even though they might learn to read easy texts, they will have difficulty understanding what they read as they encounter more difficult texts.

In order to develop their understanding of and ability to use new words, learners need to encounter these words many times in a range of different situations. Words are not learnt in isolation, but are made real and meaningful to learners in the context of a story or a theme and through participation in a conversation or activity.

### Book language

While the knowledge of word meanings is important for understanding language, another language skill has also been found to be very important for literacy development. When young learners first begin talking, they use language in a very concrete way – to communicate about something that is happening at that moment in their immediate environment (the "here and now"). For example, they name objects they see or describe actions or activities that are happening. They often explain what they mean by pointing to things in the environment, or by making gestures or facial expressions. This is known as everyday language and is the language most of us use while going about our daily lives.

As learners' language develops, however, they learn to use language to talk about more abstract things. They learn to talk about things that happened in the past or things that are planned for the future. They develop the skills to explain why things happened and talk about feelings and thoughts. They learn to use language in pretend play

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*The number of words learners know is key to learning to read and write (Biemiller & Boote, 2006; Scarborough, 2001).*  
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*Walker et al. (1994) found learners with poor language and vocabulary skills during the early years were the lowest achievers in reading and related literacy skills seven years later.*  
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*Presenting vocabulary thematically helps learners make associations between words and scaffolds students' learning (McGee & Richgels, 2003). Learning is enhanced by an opportunity to use the words from a theme or story (Barone & Xu, 2008; Tabors, 2008).*  
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situations where some things stand for or represent other things, and they learn to tell stories about things that have happened in their lives. This language is more advanced than everyday language and is similar to written or book language that learners will encounter in school when they read books and when they write. Being comfortable with this kind of language has been shown to be critical for literacy and academic success (Dickinson and Snow, 1987; Heath, 1983; Snow et al., 1998).

## Activities to build new vocabulary and book language

### Listening to stories

One way of helping learners to become familiar with the language of books is through oral storytelling. Research has shown a relationship between listening to and interacting with stories, and subsequent literacy competence. It is as if storytelling helps to bridge the gap between oral and written language. Wells (1987) proposed that hearing stories is the most crucial of all the interactions that contribute towards learners becoming literate. When learners are told stories, they are exposed to a special type of oral language that is different to the language they use in everyday speech. This is language that goes beyond the "here and now" and uses words to convey information about things happening at another time and place. It is critical for school learning.



Interactive storytelling has been shown to be an effective way to develop vocabulary and comprehension of language, particularly when it includes an emphasis on previewing vocabulary, using props linked to target vocabulary, interactive discussions about vocabulary in the stories, and practising new vocabulary in small group activities. Interactive storytelling has been shown to be an effective way to develop vocabulary and comprehension of language, particularly when it includes an emphasis on previewing vocabulary, using props linked to target vocabulary, interactive discussions about vocabulary in the stories, and practising new vocabulary in small group activities.

### In the classroom ...

#### 1 Before you tell the story

- 1.1 Say the rhyme "Two eyes to see" with learners.
- 1.2 Tell learners the title of the story and introduce the characters using the puppets.
- 1.3 Relate the story to learners' lives: Talk about how old they are, whether they have brothers or sisters, where they live, how they get to school, what they wear to school.
- 1.4 Say: *"Before we begin, I want to tell you the meaning of some new words which we will find in the story."* Discuss the keywords from the vocabulary list, and show learners an object or a picture or do an action to show them what a word means. For example: Make a worried face and ask learners to show you how they look when they are worried. Ask learners to say the word in their own language if they speak a different language at home.

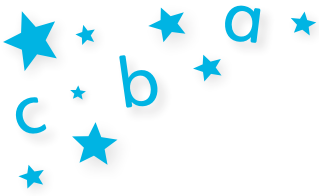
#### 2 While you tell the story

- 2.1 Tell the story in a lively way and use different voices.
- 2.2 Do actions and make use of the puppets and props.
- 2.3 Ask learners to predict what happens next in the story and involve them through open-ended questions, such as: *"I wonder how Zinzi felt when they were on their way to school?"*

#### 3 After you tell the story

- 3.1 Ask learners: *"What did you like about the story? What didn't you like? What was your best part? What questions do you have about the story?"*





## Telling stories

Learners learn through both hearing and telling stories. This is an easy and natural way to develop language and prepare learners for the language of books. Stories can be traditional tales, or they can be school or family stories about long ago events or something that happened recently. Young learners love participating in storytelling and as their language develops, they will enjoy telling their own stories to teachers and caregivers who show interest and value what they have to say. If learners learn to tell good stories when they are young, it will be easier for them to write good stories when they are older.

Through telling or retelling a story or recounting a past experience, learners learn that they need to describe the characters involved and give a context to their story (describe where and when it took place). They learn that their story needs to follow a specific order of events if it is to make sense.

When learners sequence pictures to make a story, they use their ability to predict, anticipate, make links and comprehend. These are all important skills for reading comprehension. Telling a story in the correct sequence is a very important skill and something that can be challenging for young learners, so they need lots of opportunities to practise this skill. When learners understand that stories are made up of sequenced events, they are able to plan their own stories to have a beginning, middle and end. This will support their development as writers.

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*"Oral event-narratives that learners learn to tell as preschoolers are similar to the texts that learners learn to read in school. As a result, learning about and using narratives help learners form expectations about how written texts are organised"* (Peterson, 2006, p. 2).  
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## In the classroom ...



In the first week of the cycle, once learners have heard the story being told and retold, and after they have participated in singing and acting out the story, they have an opportunity to think carefully about the events and to sequence these in the correct order.

### Using pictures to sequence the events in a story

- 1 Choose one of the sequence pictures and hold it up.
- 2 Ask learners what they see and talk about the picture in detail.  
These are useful questions to ask about each picture:
  - ★ "Who can you see?" (characters)
  - ★ "What is he/she/it doing?" (verbs and actions)
  - ★ "What else can you see?" (looking again)
  - ★ "Where is the ...?" (naming places/position)
  - ★ "Why do you think ...?" (creative thinking, expressing opinions)
- 3 Once you have discussed each picture, stick it on the board so learners can see it. Make sure the pictures are not in sequence at this stage of the activity.
- 4 After talking about all the pictures, ask learners: "Are the pictures in the correct order?"
- 5 Ask learners to point out the picture for the beginning of the story. Work together to arrange the sequence of the pictures so the story makes sense.
- 6 Keep learners actively involved in this process. Ask questions like: "What happened next? Who can remember the next part of the story?"
- 7 When the pictures are in the correct order, invite a few learners to retell the story in the correct sequence.





## Acting out stories

When learners participate in dramatic types of play, they copy and practise the words they have heard others saying and this helps to reinforce vocabulary and language skills. They take on different characters in the story which helps them see the events from different points of view. They have to follow the sequence of events in order to join in the role play at the correct time in the story.



### In the classroom ...

#### Storytelling and role play

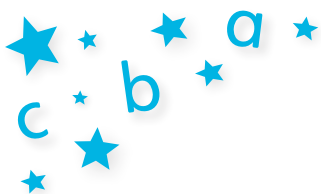
- 1 Sing the song.
- 2 Choose learners to play the characters in the story.
- 3 Talk about each character in the story. Tell learners who they are going to be in the role play and show them the props that will be used to tell the story.
- 4 Explain to learners that you (the teacher) are going to be the storyteller, also known as the narrator. The acting learners are going to act out everything you say. Help them to organise where they are going to stand.
- 5 Start telling the story and encourage learners to do the actions to match your words while the rest of the class watches the role play.
- 6 If there is time, you may want to repeat the role play with different learners.

Pretend play also provides learners with opportunities to use language that is different to everyday talk. A specific kind of language is used in pretend play, where learners need to negotiate roles and plot, and explain what they are doing and thinking to their playmates. Pretend play builds learners' ability to understand and use language which goes beyond the here-and-now, beyond their own personal experiences and beyond the real world. In pretend play, learners also learn about representation – that one thing can stand for another (for example, a wooden block can stand for a cell phone in the game). Grasping this difficult concept will help them to understand that the writing on a page can stand for the words we speak.

#### Interactive storybook reading

Many learners in South Africa will not begin school with any experience of the joy of being read to. Their journey with books might only start in Grade R and so we need to ensure that they hear stories read to them for pure enjoyment. This is a time when learners are read stories with rich language and beautiful illustrations, with no expectations or activities to follow. Learners need to truly "be in the moment" – to become absorbed in a wonderful story and to experience the magic of books. The aim is not to use a book to teach, but to create a warm and inviting space for sharing the wonder of books that both you as the teacher and your learners will love.

While growing a love of books, reading stories also provide an ideal platform for developing oral language through talking about things in the book and about things that are not in the book itself. Books can lead to discussions about past experience or predictions about what will happen. Inferences can also be made about things that are not in the text or illustrations. Reading might lead to questions about the story and the pictures, including open-ended questions such as, "I wonder if...", "What if...", "Why do you think...". These open-ended questions encourage learners to express their own



ideas and initiate discussion. One way to help learners to engage in this type of talk is through repeated readings of favourite books, as studies have shown that learners generally participate more in later readings of the same text, which can include more speculation and interpretation (DeTemple, 2001).

## Reading and writing

Learning to read and write is not something that happens overnight, but is a process that takes many years. When we use the term "emergent reading and writing" we mean that learning to read and write starts early in learners' lives, rather than being something that begins when formal reading tuition begins in Grade 1. Learners don't need to wait for reading lessons to discover the magic of printed words and to learn about why we read and write!

### Emergent reading

While learners will learn about how books work through reading for pleasure, teachers can also model the reading process by reading Big Books, posters and texts in their environment. During these shared reading activities, if we "think aloud" and talk about our thought processes and strategies, young learners begin to understand "how" the reading process works. We can create opportunities for learners to read print in their environment and experiment with writing across the daily programme in Grade R. The more you encourage learners' emergent reading, the more they can engage with environmental print.

When learners watch adults reading and writing, they learn that the marks they make on paper carry a message and have meaning. They begin to understand what print is for and this motivates them to want to read and write themselves.



*Teacher models the reading process.*

### In the classroom ...

By reading the Big Book with learners, they will see how words on a page link with the words you say. The story in the Big Book is a simplified version, so that learners feel confident to try to "read" it themselves. This gives them the experience of being a reader – even if they are just reciting the words in the book from memory.

#### Shared reading – Big Book

- 1 Encourage learners to look at the cover picture and talk about what they see and recognise.
- 2 Read the title of the story to the class. Point to each word as you read. Read it again and ask learners to read with you.
- 3 Take learners on a picture walk through the book, discussing the pictures and encouraging learners to ask questions.
- 4 Point out the page numbers and talk about what number will come next.
- 5 When you have "walked" through the whole book, go back to the beginning and read the title again. Then turn the pages and read each sentence in a clear and natural voice. Point to each word as you read.
- 6 Read the book again and encourage learners to "read" with you.



Through observing adults in their lives reading, learners start to become active participants in reading books even though their reading may not be accurate and they may "read" from memory or make up stories to go with pictures. We call this emergent reading. Young learners who have no knowledge of writing as an alphabetic system,



generally "read" by making up or reciting a story to match the pictures in a book. They might initially point to the pictures while "reading", but gradually start to realise that you read printed words. However, they might still not have a concept of what a word is, and will tend to point to a sentence while saying a single word, or to a word while saying a whole sentence.

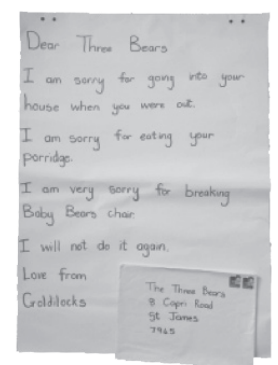


Learners in this phase rely heavily on context when reading print in their environment, such as using colour cues to remember that a street sign says "stop" or reading "KFC" because of the logo. They do not understand that letters in written words are related to sounds in spoken language, and see reading as remembering a visual sequence of letters using whatever cues are most helpful, such as word length and shape, and shapes of letters (for example: the word "look" is often remembered by the two "eyes" in the middle of the word). These links are arbitrary and are likely to mean that learners frequently confuse words having the same letters. They might read "Colgate" while holding a toothpaste tube that in fact says "Mentadent P"!

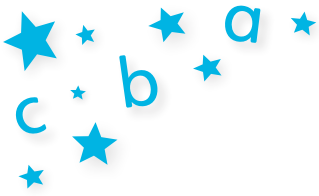
## Emergent writing

In the same way that learners might learn how reading works by watching their teacher and listening to her "thinking aloud" as she reads, through shared writing activities, teachers model the writing process for Grade R learners. These texts are co-created by teachers and their learners and it is an important moment when learners start to see their own ideas and spoken words in print! Shared writing texts are ideal for shared reading as the text contains ideas, words and phrases that are very familiar to the learners – they will take great pride in "reading" their own words. Once teachers have written a piece of text with input from learners, it is a good idea to read over the text together, pointing to each word so that learners start noticing how our speech is made up of different words, with spaces between each word.




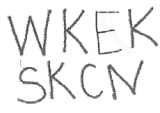



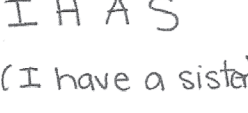
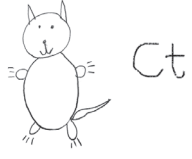
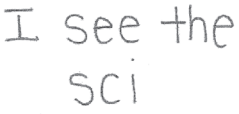

While Grade R learners can learn about writing from observing their teachers writing, they will not yet find it easy to write independently. The first way they will represent their ideas and thoughts on paper will be through drawing. Before learning to read and write, most learners are familiar with drawing as a way of representing things. Drawings of things look something like the things they represent. However, the difficulty with writing is that words are not in any way related to how things look, and learners need to learn that written words are related to how we say things, not the things themselves. Studies have shown that many young learners go through a stage of thinking that written words relate to how things look, a big thing should be represented by a long word and a small thing by a small word (Ferreiro and Teberosky, 1982). Young learners' first attempts at



Teachers model the writing process.



writing may not look like grown-up writing, but they are becoming writers as they try to communicate their ideas on paper and use writing for different purposes. We use the term "emergent writing" to describe the mark making and writing that young learners do before they learn to write in a conventional way.

 <p>1. Scribble stage (starting point at any place on the page)</p>	 <p>2. Scribble (left to right progression)</p>	 <p>3. Mock letters (can be personal or conventional)</p>	 <p>4. Letter string (left to right and progressively downward)</p>
 <p>5. Groups of letters with space in between to resemble words</p>	 <p>6. Picture labeling (matching beginning letter to sound)</p>	 <p>7. Copies environmental print</p>	 <p>8. Uses first letter of a word to represent the word</p>
 <p>9. Uses beginning letter and ending letter to represent the word</p>	 <p>10. Uses invented spelling and writes words with beginning, middle and ending letters</p>		

At this stage of their literacy development, learners might be keen to see how things are written and often ask a nearby adult to "write it down". This is an important part of writing development, for even though they are not physically doing the writing, learners are learning important things about written language: that spoken words can be written, and that each spoken word corresponds to a written word. They are also developing confidence in expressing themselves and communicating a message through speaking and writing. When learners initially "write" themselves, they tend to use scribbles, marks and a mixture of numbers and letters.

Scribbling or writing using random letters and symbols is an important developmental

## In the classroom ...



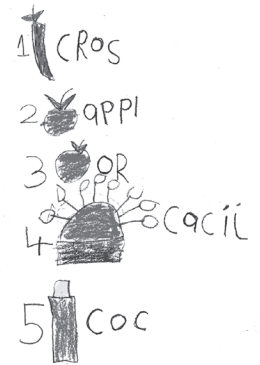
### Drawing and emergent writing

- 1 Ask learners whether they would like to draw a picture of themselves in their uniform or in their favourite clothes.
- 2 Make a comment or ask the learner to tell you about their drawing.
- 3 Ask learners if they would like to write something about their picture or if they would like you to write for them.
- 4 Think aloud as you write the learner's sentence: "I ... like ... to wear ... my ... blue ... shorts ... and ... red ... hat." If they would like you to write for them, keep them involved by asking them to say the words slowly as you write them down.
- 5 Write exactly what the learner tells you, word for word. Remember to write neatly and clearly.
- 6 When you have finished writing, encourage the learner to read the sentence with you. Point to each word as you read and acknowledge their efforts.





step. However, it is the next phase of writing development that really shows that a learner has taken the first steps into literacy. Consider this example of writing (a shopping list written by a learner who had just started school). Although these words are not spelt in a conventional way, they are meaningful attempts to represent the sounds in words. This type of "invented spelling" or emergent writing is a good sign that the learner can hear sounds in words, has some letter-sound knowledge, and knows that written language has something to do with the sounds in spoken words. The learner is starting to discover how the system works.



In many studies of preschool learners in first-world countries, researchers have found that young learners go through a phase of "invented spelling". Invented spelling means that learners are experimenting with how to represent sounds in words. Studies have shown that in high poverty contexts, learners are less likely to have an "invented spelling" phase. Studies have also demonstrated a relationship between invented spelling and reading. Bryant and Bradley (1980) found that the ability to write words the way they sound preceded the ability to read among learners, which suggests that alphabetic understanding might well be evident in learners' writing before their reading. Mann, Tobin and Wilson (1987) found that invented spelling was a predictor of later reading ability, confirming the importance of a learner's growing ability to represent sounds in words.

## Letters and sounds

Once learners start using letters to represent sounds in words when writing, they are also likely to be paying attention to letter-sounds when they read. This gives them an advantage over learners who do not know any letter-sounds and are learning words using visual cues only. Some teachers hold the view that learners initially learn words by sight and then only later start to use letter knowledge when they decode or sound out words. Researchers have challenged the idea that learning to read words initially involves memorising shapes of words or other visual features – they have proposed that letter-sound correspondence plays a role from the earliest stages of literacy development (Ehri, 1997; 1998; Dixon, Stuart and Masterson, 2002; Stuart, Masterson and Dixon, 2000).





## In the classroom ...

English is an alphabetic writing system, even though there are many irregular words in which letters do not match sounds. The majority of words can be read using letter-sound knowledge, and even an irregular word will have some letters that match the sounds in the spoken words (for example: **yacht**). To become a skilled reader, and to be able to write words, learners need to learn how to make use of this alphabetic system. Learning about letters and the sounds they make takes time and it is important that Grade R classrooms are rich with opportunities for learners to learn about letters and the sounds they make through using all of their senses.

### Listening for sounds

- 1 Ask learners to sit on the mat and listen carefully to you. Say these words from the story: "Sam, Spot, sad, school, sock". Ask learners where they have heard the words before.
- 2 Say to learners: "Can you hear what sound these words start with: Sssam, Ssspot, sssad, ssschool, sssock? Yes, you are right! They start with the sound /s/. Listen carefully, here are some more words that start with /s/: soap, sweet, swim, supper, surprise, sand, stick, swing." (Emphasise the beginning sound as you say these words, for example: "sssweet, ssswim".)

### Saying the sounds

- 1 Say the sound /s/ clearly and tell learners to watch your mouth carefully as you make the sound.
- 2 Ask learners to say the sound /s/: "sssss". Make this fun: Say it softly, loudly, to the wall, to the ceiling and to each other. Make sure the learners are saying the sound of the letter and not the letter name, **s** ("ess").
- 3 Teach learners an action associated with the sound. For example: Learners can pretend to slither like a snake while saying "sssss".

### Thinking of words beginning with the sound

- 1 Ask learners if anyone's name starts with /s/ or if they can think of any other words that start with the sound /s/.

### Forming the letter

- 1 Ask learners if they know how to write a letter that makes the sound /s/.
- 2 Show learners how to form the letter **s**. Write a large letter on the board as you say: "Start at the dot, go over to the left, down, to the right and around to the left again."
- 3 Let learners practise the letter formation in the air, on the carpet, on their hands, using thick chalk or a paintbrush with water outside, using playdough or a sandtray.

### Linking the letter to the alphabet chart

- 1 If you have an alphabet chart in your class, show learners the letter **s** on the alphabet chart. Explain that this letter also has a name: "ess". This will help them to link the sounds they are learning with the letter names and the alphabet song.

Once learners are familiar with letters and the sounds they make, they will be able to use phonetic cues to work out what words say. In contrast, a visual learning strategy means that an emergent reader is initially reliant on someone to tell them what a word says – they have no way of working out by themselves what the word could be. Visual cue readers also have to remember arbitrary connections. For example, a learner who has some letter knowledge might use the "l" and the "k" as clues to help them read the word "look". A learner who has no letter knowledge, might remember the word "look" because it has two "eyes" in the middle. This strategy works when they only have a few words to learn. However, it does not help them when they are faced with other words that look similar such as "book", "moon" and "roof". Even though not all the letters in irregular words correspond to the sounds in the word, there will be some letters that do correspond to sounds and can be used to anchor the word in memory. For example, if a learner knows the letters "s" and "d", and his teacher asks him to read the word "said", he can use his knowledge of letters as a clue to what the word says.



To become skilled readers, learners need to understand the alphabetic principle – that there is a link between the letters they see on a page and the sounds they hear in words. Although this is obvious to adult readers, this is a big step for young learners, particularly as they must first learn to hear the different sounds in words. Young learners often use and understand many words, but haven't yet become aware of the sounds that make up these words. They might know that a butterfly is a beautiful insect, but might not know about the sounds that make up this word. For example, the word **butterfly** is made up of three parts (that we call syllables): **but | ter | fly**. The word **butterfly** starts with a /b/ sound. Other words also start with this sound (such as ball, bag, bus, banana). The awareness of the sounds in a word, rather than the meaning of the word, is called phonological awareness. Phonological awareness activities don't require a focus on letters – most can be done with your eyes closed!

**Glossary**

**syllables**  
a syllable is a word or part of a word with one vowel sound

Phonological awareness is not the same as phonics:

- ★ phonological awareness = the ability to hear sounds in words
- ★ phonics = knowing how specific written letters relate to specific spoken sounds
- ★ phonological awareness lays the foundation for phonics.

Phonological awareness and letter-sound knowledge are among the best predictors that learners will learn to read successfully. They are even better predictors than IQ! What this means is that young learners who have good phonological awareness and letter-sound knowledge will have a better chance of learning to read successfully.



### In the classroom ...

There are many skills that contribute to phonological awareness. This table lists different phonological awareness skills and gives examples of activities that can be used to teach, practise and assess these:

Phonological awareness activity	Examples
<b>1</b> Judging whether sounds are the same or different	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Which word starts with a different sound? <b>ball pen bag bus</b></li> <li>★ Do these words start with the same sound? <b>sun ... sea / man ... pan</b></li> </ul>
<b>2</b> Hearing the beginning and end sounds in words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ What sound do you hear at the beginning of the word <b>table</b>?</li> <li>★ What sound do you hear at the end of the word <b>bus</b>?</li> </ul>
<b>3</b> Combining parts of words to make the full word (blending)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Which word do you get if you put these syllables together: <b>te   le   phone</b>? (telephone)</li> <li>★ Which word do you get if you put these sounds together: <b>c-a-t</b>? (cat)</li> </ul>
<b>4</b> Breaking words into parts (segmenting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ How many syllables do you hear in the word elephant: <b>e   le   phant</b>? (three syllables)</li> <li>★ Say the sounds you hear in the word dog: <b>d-o-g</b>. (three phonemes)</li> </ul>
<b>5</b> Deleting or adding parts of words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Say "Sunday". Now say it again, but don't say "sun". (day)</li> <li>★ Say "mice". Now say it again, but don't say /m/. (ice)</li> <li>★ Say "up". Now add a /c/ at the beginning at the word. (cup)</li> </ul>
<b>6</b> Substituting parts of words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Say "packet". Now take away the /p/ and in its place, add /j/. What is the new word? (jacket)</li> </ul>

## ★ formative assessment

assessment that provides information about learners' progress while learning is taking place

## ★ principle

a general rule that is accepted to be true

## ★ barrier to learning

a barrier to learning is anything that prevents a learner from being able to learn effectively

*Barriers can be:*

- *Intrinsic: linked directly to the learner (for example: cognitive impairment, emotional or physical)*

*or*

- *Extrinsic: outside of the learner (for example: poverty, neglect, violence in the community).*

## ★ syllables

a syllable is a word or part of a word with one vowel sound

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