

# **A Facilitators Guide for Early Literacy and Assessment for Learning (K–3) Series**

## **Introduction to the Facilitators Guide**

The facilitators guide is designed to accompany five booklets that are part of the Early Literacy for Learning (K–3) Series. The booklets are:

- Print Literacy.
- Assessment for Learning.
- Alphabet Knowledge.
- Word Identification.
- Comprehension through Retelling.

Though each booklet can stand alone, it is recommended that *Print Literacy* and *Assessment for Learning* be read first, as they are meant to form a basis for discussion with teachers around reading and assessment theory. In three booklets (Alphabet Knowledge, Word Identification, and Comprehension through Retelling), you will find a teacher’s story, a corresponding assessment, and suggested instructional activities. They offer teachers numerous opportunities for discussions around teaching and learning.

## **Contents of the Study Guide**

The facilitators guide is designed to offer ways in which you, the facilitator, can provide professional development in small study groups or whole group trainings to teachers. Facilitators can pose the suggested questions and discussion points to any size group. The guide will recommend specific sections in each of the booklets where the facilitator can encourage teachers to “stop, think, and discuss” pertinent information. As the facilitator, you will need to decide how much you want to use the guided questions, and you will need to gauge the direction of your group. It is impossible to predict what kinds of discussions the guided questions will generate or how a conversation might flow. Use your best judgment when in the midst of your session and gently guide it back when the conversation seems to be going off topic.

As a facilitator, it is critical to create an open and safe environment where teachers can articulate thinking, explore new ideas, and/or teaching strategies without judgment. The questions posed in this guide are not intended to elicit one right answer. Rather, they are meant to be open-ended, inviting teachers to think about their work and giving them opportunities to reflect/refine their teaching practices in the company of their colleagues. In addition, discussions that occur will likely allow teachers to discuss many kinds of challenges we all face as educators.



## **Professional Development Strategies Defined**

For the purposes of the Early Literacy K–3 series, we will explore two professional development strategies: school based study groups and trainings.

*Study groups* offer teachers the opportunity to gather together to address issues of teaching and learning, implying that any new learning may be applied to teaching. Study groups provide a forum in which teachers can inquire and ask questions around a specific/particular topic, over a period of time, in a collaborative and supportive environment. Often times, teachers are asked to read and respond to professional literature, which may lead to conscious change and decision making in the classroom.

*Trainings (large or small group)* often involve one or more presenters imparting knowledge to participants. Trainings are often synonymous with workshops, small and large group presentations, and seminars. Many of the discussions below can be made into training sessions. Of utmost importance is that trainings conducted are based on the needs of the participants.

## Discussion Questions for *Print Literacy*

*Read pages 1–3. Stop and discuss. Use the following guiding questions:*

- Consider literacy in your entity or in your present teaching situation.
  - How important is keeping storytelling alive in schools?
  - How can storytelling aid your students' in learning to read and write?
- Oral language development is key.
  - Discuss what teachers can do to create the conditions for conversation to flourish in classrooms?
  - How have you planned for children to have conversations with you and their classmates?

*Read pages 3–6. Stop and discuss. Use the following guiding questions:*

- In this section, there might be some new information with regard to the reading process. Unpack each area and discuss further.
  - For example, “prior knowledge.” What role does it play in reading and in your instruction?
  - How often do you discuss with your students how much they know about a subject before actually reading about it?
- Look at the Cueing Systems diagram in Figure 1 on page 5. Discuss common errors teachers notice as their students are reading. Try to uncover the reasons for those errors.
  - In the booklet there is an example of a student that reads “house” when the word is “home.” What does that tell you about the reader?
  - Another example is as the student is reading, he or she reads “sea” when the target word is “ocean.” Which cue source is the student using or neglecting to use?
- Discuss how teachers are collecting evidence of students' ongoing reading process and progress?

## P-CHILD

**Note:** A training session on the reading process is highly recommended. The Cueing Systems diagram on page 5 can be useful if put on an overhead and presented to the whole school. It is important for all teachers to have a good idea of what the process of reading looks like. In addition, Figure 2. Early Reader Concepts, on page 7, can offer the facilitator valuable information when leading a training session.

*Read pages 7–10. Stop and discuss. Use the following guiding questions:*

- Page 7 has a diagram of what early readers must learn in order to be an effective reader.
  - As a group, have teachers brainstorm lists of activities that are done in the classroom to address each area.
  - Are there areas that you seem to concentrate more/less work in?

*Note.* This diagram can be put on an overhead and discussed in a training session for the whole school. Discuss any areas that teachers feel they need help in developing.

- Page 8 discusses writing. In some schools, writing may not be seen in early grade (K–1) classrooms.
  - Discuss opinions about writing beginning as early as kindergarten?
  - What is your current approach to writing in the classroom? Are children writing for different purposes?
  - What are some of the challenges in developing a writing program in your classroom/school?

## Discussion Questions for Assessment for Learning

*Read pages 1–2. Stop and discuss. Use the following guiding questions:*

- How is your teaching experience the same or different from Hannah's?
- Do you relate more to Hannah or the teacher next door?
- How do you currently find out about your students?
- Are you satisfied with the amount of information you have about them in terms of literacy?
- What are the challenges teachers face with the tests they give their students?

*Read starting from the bottom of page 2 to page 5. Stop and discuss. Use the following guiding questions:*

- Now that you have read about the traditional teaching cycle (TTC) and the teaching learning cycle (TLC):
  - Has that information altered the way you think of yourself as a teacher?
  - Discuss the differences in these two approaches.
  - If you wanted to work like the TLC teacher, what challenges would you face?

**Note:** A training session on both the TTC and TLC is highly recommended. The group trained will benefit by clearly defining each model, as well as having discussion about how they view assessment for learning.

*Read pages 6–10. Stop and discuss. Use the following guiding questions.*

- After reading the booklet, how has it changed your thinking regarding assessment?
- As a classroom teacher:
  - Which pillar of assessment can you relate to?
  - What would you like to do more/less of?
- Discuss the term “authentic assessment.”
  - What does this mean and how is it helpful when trying to get to know your students?
  - How does authentic assessment differ from what you currently know about assessment?
- What are the challenges you face as a teacher with regard to formative assessment?

## Discussion Questions for *Alphabet Knowledge*

*Read page 1 to the top of page 4. Stop and discuss. Use the following guiding questions.*

- Why do you think it is important for students to have letter knowledge skills?
- How do you currently assess your students in letter knowledge?
- Do you use multiple methods of information, such as performance, conversation, and observation?
- Hannah creates daily routines, such as morning message and shared writing to increase her students' understanding of letter knowledge.
  - Share some daily instruction that occurs in your classroom.

*Read page 4 to the bottom of page 8. Stop and discuss. Use the following guiding questions:*

- In this section, the term *letter flexibility* is used.
  - What is your understanding of letter flexibility?
  - What are some examples where you have seen students demonstrate their ability to be flexible with letters?
- Hannah continuously assesses her students and regroups them according to their needs.
  - Why do you think this is important?
  - What strategies or routines do you have in place to monitor students' progress?
- An important lesson to remember is that teachers must create opportunities to find out what students know about letters.
  - Share some strategies you use to teach letter sounds, names, and formation.

*Read pages 8–11 (begin at Lessons Learned on page 8). Stop and discuss. Use the following guiding questions:*

- The booklet states, “One-time explicit teaching of a concept to the whole class does not guarantee students understand or learn what is expected at a given time.”
  - As an educator, why is this statement extremely important?
  - How does it impact your teaching?

## **P-CHILD**

- This booklet contains a letter knowledge assessment that can be administered with your students individually.
  - Before you begin to administer the assessment, what are some organizational and management techniques should you consider?
- How will you use the data collected from the assessments to inform instruction?
- What insight have you gained as a result of reading this booklet?

## Discussion Questions for *Word Identification*

*Read pages 1–3. Stop and discuss. Use the following guiding questions:*

- How do you currently assess your students in word identification?
- In Pacific languages, what frequently occurring words would be considered important for students to learn?
- Discuss the statement, “When students spend a lot of time trying to decode these words, they lose the meaning of the phrase or passage, thus affecting their ability to make sense of the text.”
- What are some decoding strategies teachers can demonstrate?
- Word identification is one part of becoming a fluent and proficient reader.
  - What kind of instruction can you provide to help students become fluent readers?
- Performance, observation, and conversation are three methods to assess students’ understanding of word identification.
  - What ways have you assessed students’ knowledge? Do you feel it’s important for students to be assessed using all three methods?

*Read pages 4–9. Stop and discuss. Use the following guiding questions:*

- After assessing, Hannah creates a list of words that students are having difficulty with.
  - How would you use assessment information to inform instruction?
- Hannah consistently observes and regroups her students as they are making progress.
  - How do you know when it’s time to reassess and regroup students?
- Share some strategies that you implement to teach word identification.
- Hannah has a classroom library with early reader books and a print rich environment.
  - How does this add to her students’ understanding of word identification?
- Discuss ways parent volunteers can help students learn to identify words.

## P-CHILD

- The booklet states, “The most meaningful learning experiences for students arise from the work they are engaged in rather than from isolated skills and drills.”
  - What do you think this means?
- This booklet contains a word identification assessment that can be administered with your students individually.
  - Before you begin to administer, what are some organizational and management techniques you should consider?
- What insight have you gained as a result of reading this booklet?

## **Discussion Questions for Comprehension through Retelling**

*Read page 2 to the top of page 4. Stop and discuss. Use the following guiding questions:*

- What is your current understanding of retelling?
- How does this relate to your understanding of what it means to comprehend a story?
- Is retelling a part of your plan for students? If so, share some of your current activities around retelling.

*Read the bottom of page 4–6. Stop and discuss. Use the following guiding questions:*

- How do you currently assess retelling in your classroom?
- Do you converse with students about the story they have just read or have you limited this to after the story questions?
- Are there opportunities for students to retell to you and to their peers?
- If so, how do you monitor your students?

*Read pages 7–14. Stop and discuss. Use the following guiding questions:*

- Rita spends a lot of time on prediction.
  - Why is this important?
  - Do you plan instruction that focuses on prediction as a strategy?
- On page 8 in the booklet, there is a quote about “affirming” and “crafting.”
  - Discuss this notion and why it is important.
  - Why does this booklet pay attention to building vocabulary and language structure?
  - How is language structure connected to retelling for comprehension?
  - How do the charts that Rita makes with her students support language structure?
- On page 12 in the booklet, there is a retelling checklist.
  - Why is it important to have students monitor their own ability to retell stories?
  - How and when would you use this checklist with students?
  - What more would you want to know about the students as retellers?
- What insight have you gained as a result of reading this booklet?