

READING COMPETENCE AND TEACHER TRAINING

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1. THE CONCEPT OF LITERACY

Understanding the concept of literacy in England is to understand the potential tensions of the skills based curriculum and the home-school divide.

The Skills Based Curriculum

Brian Street (1984) developed the concepts of autonomous and ideological literacies. Street (1984) described an ‘autonomous model’ of literacy, that is one which privileges particular literacy practices familiar to dominant western cultures (Street and Lefstein, 2007). It is a model in which literacy has autonomy from the particular social contexts in which it is employed (Lankshear, 1987), and is therefore viewed as a set of decontextualized skills to be learnt, for example phoneme-grapheme correspondence when learning to read. As such skills are highly valued, individuals’ performance can be assessed and monitored. These skills, once learnt, can be transferred to any situation that requires an individual to read and write. The trend of conceptualising literacy as a set of skills, the acquisition of which will go on to boost cognitive practices and improve the individuals’ employment prospects, is questionable yet remains firmly in place (Street, 2012). It could be argued that the autonomous model of literacy has been, and continues to be evident in England’s national testing policy and various Primary National Curricula for English (DfES/WO, 1988; DfE/QCA, 1999; DfE, 2013) over the past twenty-five years with the most recent version of the National Curriculum (DfE, 2013) emphasising word recognition skills over language comprehension skills for children in Key Stage 1.

The alternative to the autonomous model offered by Street (1984) and New Literacy Studies, is the ‘ideological model,’ which suggests that literacy varies from one context to another and from one culture to another and is, therefore, culturally sensitive. It considers how individuals use literacy and adapt their practice in relation to their needs and the power structures within society and can, therefore, capture the negotiations of power involved in reading and writing (Bartlett and Holland, 2002). Street (1984) developed the concept of the ‘ideological model’ following his fieldwork in Iran where he undertook a study that focussed on literacy practices in different ‘domains’, that is spaces or places where literacy practices are carried out. Street was concerned with the everyday uses and meanings of literacy both inside and outside school. His research offered a more social constructivist perspective of literacy, that is literacy as ‘a set of practices which are domain specific, varied and multiple, tied to specific uses and functions within social institutions of power’ (Stein, 2008: 30). Street and Street (1991) recognised the fact that sometimes the domains where literacy practices are carried out, and the sites that the literacy practices originate from, may be the same. For example school literacy practices can be identified with a site called school. Sometimes they are different, such as when school work is taken home in the form of homework. Therefore, the ideological model of literacy addresses the fact that literacy learning does not just take place in the formal context of schools; instead it is a key aspect of everyday life and concentrates on the ‘overlap and interaction of oral and literate modes, rather than stressing a great divide’ (Street, 1984: 3). In doing this, it also recognises that there are multiple literacies, literacies that do not conform to the dominant written print text of highly valued ‘schooled literacy’ practices.

The Home School Divide

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The concept of situated literacies within New Literacy Studies has suggested that different literacy practices can be associated with different domains of life (Barton and Hamilton, 1998, Barton et al, 2000). According to Maybin (2007: 516), it has been suggested that ‘the home/school mismatch hypotheses is the most resilient theme in the last two decades of New Literacy Studies’ and as such a number of studies have focused on comparing literacy practices in the domains of school and home. They have been undertaken by researchers who are interested in exploring the dissonance between home and school literacy practices (Pahl, 2014). Such studies have tended to focus on three main groups; young children who are in nursery or starting school (Dyson, 2013; Levy, 2008, 2009; Marsh, 2003), bi-lingual children and their families (Gregory and Williams, 2000; Kenner, 2004; Pahl, 2002) and adolescents and the use of technology (Carrington, 2009; Dowdall, 2006).

Cairney and Ruge (1998) found that school literacies dominated the home setting and that literacy practices associated with school were the practices most valued by parents who were often ‘goal directed’ (Cairney and Ruge, 1998:30).

According to Moje et al (2009: 415), there has been a ‘recent identity turn in literacy studies’ which they recognise as being motivated by two key factors. Firstly, the shift from an autonomous view of literacy to recognising literacy practices as being socially situated. This shift has led theorists to recognise that people’s identities mediate and are mediated by the texts they read, write and talk about (Lewis and del Valle, 2009; McCarthey, 2001; McCarthey and Moje, 2002).

Equally, it would appear that teachers and schools do not always take into account the literacy practices of children outside school (Heath 1981; Cairney and Ruge, 1998; Bradford and Wyse, 2013). Pahl (2002) undertook a study of three families of 5 – 8 year old boys and found that by ‘paying attention to the space and structures of homes, a different set of pedagogical supports to children’s meaning making can be discovered’ (Pahl, 2002: 165). Her study emphasised the importance of teachers recognizing ‘their students’ intentions and the sources of their influences (McClay, 2002: 47), as failing to do so can result in tensions between home and school literacy practices and the child’s perspective of literacy (Dyson, 2013).

2. KEYS TO PROMOTE READING COMPETITION IN EDUCATIONAL CENTRES.

The Primary National Curriculum (2013) whilst emphasising the Simple View of Reading and a systematic synthetic phonics approach to teaching and developing early reading skills, also stresses the importance of children reading for pleasure.

Initial Teacher Training providers are expected to ensure that the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics is firmly embedded into their courses. The recent changes to the ITT providers’ inspection framework, provoked a response from which Universities’ Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET) highlighted concerns that the:

‘proscription of references to alternative ways of teaching early reading, even in cases in which SSP might not on its own be sufficient, is a cause for concern as it undermines the academic freedom and integrity of ITE providers and will prevent student teachers from learning about approaches to reading that might be helpful to them.’ (UCET, 2020)

ITT providers recognise the importance of raising trainee teacher’s awareness of alternative strategies to encourage both the skills required and a love of reading. ITT providers will set tasks for that ask trainee teachers to investigate how schools create a literate environment (see Part 3 below).

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Research conducted by the Association of Senior and Children's Librarians, the School Library Association and the Chartered Institute of Information Professionals (Primary School Guidelines, 2020) has identified common ways in which UK primary schools support and encourage reading for pleasure. We discuss these below.

Ways to promote reading within schools include

- World Book Day: All primary schools in England, and some nurseries and secondary schools, take part in World Book Day. Trainee teachers are made aware of this charitable initiative and most will take part whilst on placement. Others will engage in book related activities at university. For the last 25 years it has brought together children of all ages in over 100 countries to appreciate reading. The main aim of World Book Day in the UK and Ireland is to encourage children to explore the pleasures of books and reading by providing them with the opportunity to have a book of their own. Participating schools receive packs of Book Tokens and age-ranged World Book Day Resource Packs (age-ranged into Nursery/Pre-School, Primary and Secondary) full of ideas and activities, display material and more information about how to get involved in World Book Day.
- World Poetry Day: Some primary schools will celebrate world poetry day by engaging with activities such as memorising and reciting poems, performing poems, responding to poems through the mediums of art, music and dance.
- Reading Passport: This is a pdf document, available via <https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/reading-passport-11623801>, which is ready to print with 22 "destinations" or books to be read, where children have to fill very simple information about the books they read.
- Timetabled visits to the school library for every class and year group
- Author or storyteller visits to school
- Book weeks: The format of book weeks can vary for each school, but might include a book fair, a dressing up day, an author visit etc – See <https://www.booktrust.org.uk/books-and-reading/tips-and-advice/reading-in-schools/childrens-book-week/creative-ways-to-celebrate-at-schools-and-libraries/>
- Good classroom libraries
- Reading Champions (An initiative which uses peer influence to target reluctant readers and increase their enjoyment of reading - www.literacytrust.org.uk/reading_champions) and buddy reading
- Recommended reading lists: these can be created by individual teachers, but there are also many examples available online (e.g. <https://schoolreadinglist.co.uk/>)
- Chatterbooks groups: Chatterbooks started in 2001 and is now the UK's largest network of children's reading groups. Almost 9,000 children belong to Chatterbooks groups, which are run in libraries and schools to generate discussion and encourage children to enjoy reading. Chatterbooks is a flexible model that can be used with children from 4 up to 12, for all different abilities and in targeted or mixed groups. (<https://readingagency.org.uk/children/quick-guides/chatterbooks/>)
- Book related displays in library and classrooms

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- Whole school 'Stop and Read' event
- Role models, and images of them with their favourite books, e.g. 'Get caught reading' displays (<http://www.getcaughtreading.org/>)
- Timetabled library slots for each class or year group
- Reading aloud with pupils
- Competitions (e.g. best book review, book quiz)
- Themed displays of books (e.g. autumn, pirates, the seaside author of the month)
- Taking pupils to select/purchase books from local bookshops
- Bookmark reviews for pupils to complete
- Book trails
- Library suggestions box/list
- Peer recommendations
- Public library: membership, input into the school, class visits
- Summer Reading Challenge: The Challenge encourages children aged 4 to 11 to enjoy the benefits of reading for pleasure over the summer holidays, providing lots of fun as well as preventing the summer reading 'dip'. Each year the Challenge motivates over 700,000 children to keep reading to build their skills and confidence. (<https://summerreadingchallenge.org.uk/about-the-challenge>)

Primary School Library Guidelines (2020) also describes ways in which primary schools commonly involve parents and the wider community in reading. This includes the following:

- Newsletter articles
- Open evenings
- Library open on parents' evenings
- Library volunteers
- Sponsorship parent/child (Readathon www.readathon.org)
- Book fairs
- Book buddies (volunteer reading support)
- Displays and book lists for Y6 transition
- Encourage parents to borrow books (e.g. parents' shelf in school library)
- Link with local bookshops
- Link with local library
- Ask pupils to ask their parents what was/is their favourite book - display
- Invite book reviews from parents and other adults
- Time to Read: organisation sends book packs to every Reception and Primary One child in England and Northern Ireland to help families quickly and easily set up time to read with their new school starters (<https://www.booktrust.org.uk/what-we-do/programmes-and-campaigns/time-to-read/>).

As indicated by the links provided, there are many agencies in the UK that support schools in reading for pleasure initiatives (e.g. The Reading Agency, Book Trust, National Literacy Trust).

3. INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING

Routes into Teaching

Over 30,000 individuals enter Initial Teacher Training (ITT) in England each year through several routes. Key distinctions between the different ITT routes are whether they are university- led or school-centered, and whether the trainee pays tuition fees or receives a salary.

In the academic year 2019-20 there were 34,543 new entrants to ITT (DfE, 2019). The majority (29,580) were new entrants to postgraduate initial teacher training. Only 4,963 were new entrants to undergraduate ITT (DfE, 2019). The total number of Primary/EY applications for 2019/20 totalled 12,482.

The policy of recent governments has been to move toward “an increasingly school-led ITT system.” In line with this, the general trend has been an increasing proportion of trainees entering school-led routes. In the academic year 2019-20, 55% of those entrants were on school-led routes, whilst 45% were enrolled on University PGCE courses (DfE, 2019; Foster 2019).

Initial Teacher Training and School Placements

There is a Government requirement for all ITT courses that lead to an award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) to include time spent teaching in at least two schools and in adjacent Key Stages. This means that trainees will experience teaching across the age phase for which they will qualify. University led training requires all trainees to spend at least 120 days in placement schools (Foster, 2019).

The requirement for Qualified Teacher Status

Teachers in local authority maintained schools in England are required to have Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). The same general requirement to hold QTS is *not* in place for mainstream academies, free schools or for independent schools. Of the 453,000 full-time teachers employed in 2018, 5% (21,500) were unqualified, i.e they did not hold QTS.

A number of Primary ITT courses (undergraduate and postgraduate) offer Early Years Specialism routes. Such courses also lead to the award of QTS, allowing graduates to lead early years provision in maintained nursery and primary schools.

Early Years Initial Teacher Training (EYITT) provides specialist training covering the education and care of children from birth to the age of five. Training is delivered by accredited ITT providers. Successful EYITT trainees are awarded early years’ teacher status (EYTS). They are not eligible for the award of QTS at the end of their course. As a result, individuals with EYTS are not able to lead classes in a maintained nursery or primary schools. To do that, they must also obtain QTS. Early years teachers (EYTS) can lead teaching in all other early years settings in the private, voluntary and independent sector (sectors).

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There are several routes leading to the award of EYTS. Trainees can undertake an undergraduate course, which allows them to earn a degree in an early childhood related subject and EYTS combined, normally over a three-year period. Postgraduate EYITT courses can be undertaken through the graduate entry route. These courses usually take one year. Trainees are assessed against the Teachers' Standards (Early Years). These operate in parallel with the current Teachers' Standards, and have been designed specifically for early years teachers to ensure that the training and assessment is appropriate for children from birth to age five.

In 2019/20, 352 new entrants (99%) started on a postgraduate route to EYTS and 2 trainees (1%) started on an undergraduate route to EYTS.

Content of ITT programmes

It is the responsibility of individual providers to design an ITT curriculum that is "appropriate for the subject, phase and age range that the trainees will be teaching". The ITT Core Content Framework sets out "the minimum entitlement of all trainee teachers". Providers are expected to "ensure that their curricula encompasses the full entitlement described in the...Framework, as well as integrating additional analysis, and critique of theory, research and expert practice as they deem appropriate." The Framework is presented around the Teachers' Standards (2012).

In May 2019, the Government announced that an expert group had been appointed to review the content of teacher training and recommend ways to align this with the Early Career Framework. The revised Core Content Framework was published in November 2019. The Literacy specific content, which relates to Teachers' Standard 3 'Demonstrate good subject and curriculum knowledge' can be seen below.

Subject and Curriculum (Teachers' Standard 3 – 'Demonstrate good subject and curriculum knowledge')	
Learn that...	Learn how to...
9. To access the curriculum, early literacy provides fundamental knowledge; reading comprises two elements: word reading and language comprehension; systematic synthetic phonics is the most effective approach for teaching pupils to decode.	Develop pupils' literacy, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observing how expert colleagues demonstrate a clear understanding of systematic synthetic phonics, particularly if teaching early reading and spelling, and deconstructing this approach. • Discussing and analysing with expert colleagues how to support younger pupils to become fluent readers and to write fluently and legibly. • Receiving clear, consistent and effective mentoring in how to model reading comprehension by asking questions, making predictions, and summarising when reading. • Receiving clear, consistent and effective mentoring in how to promote reading for
10. Every teacher can improve pupils' literacy, including by explicitly teaching reading, writing and oral language skills specific to individual disciplines.	

	<p>pleasure (e.g. by using a range of whole class reading approaches and regularly reading high-quality texts to children).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussing and analysing with expert colleagues how to teach different forms of writing by modelling planning, drafting and editing. <p>And - following expert input - by taking opportunities to practise, receive feedback and improve at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching unfamiliar vocabulary explicitly and planning for pupils to be repeatedly exposed to high-utility and high-frequency vocabulary in what is taught. • Modelling and requiring high-quality oral language, recognising that spoken language underpins the development of reading and writing (e.g. requiring pupils to respond to questions in full sentences, making use of relevant technical vocabulary)
<p>Notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn that... statements are informed by the best available educational research; references and further reading are provided below. • Learn how to... statements are drawn from the wider evidence base including both academic research and additional guidance from expert practitioners. 	

Non-Graduate Route to Early Years' Teaching

Diploma for the Early Years Workforce (Early Years Educator) CACHE Level 3

This is not a degree qualification and does not provide Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) or Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS). However, the qualification criteria, 'lay out the minimum requirements for a high quality Early Years Educator qualification' (Department for Education, 2013). Holders of the qualification are able to work as practitioners in nurseries and primary school reception classes. Applicants for this qualification must be at least 16 years of age and hold GCSE (or equivalent) in English language or literature and mathematics.

Providers of these courses will focus on children's health, wellbeing, and development. Courses focus on learning through play and supporting emergent numeracy and literacy skills e.g.

- Be able to use strategies to plan and lead activities which support emergent literacy

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- Be able to review how planned activities support emergent literacy
- Be able to work with parents/carers in a way which encourages them to take an active role in their child's play, learning and development

Learndirect, <https://www.learndirect.com/course/early-learning-childcare-rqf>

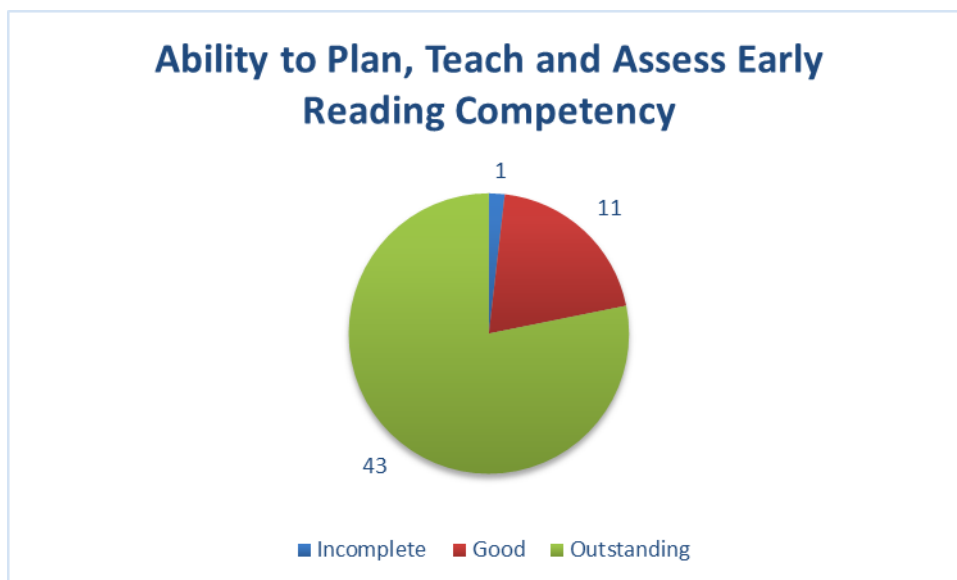
In addition to the academic element of the programme, students undertaking the course will spend time on placement in two settings, i) working with children aged 0-5 and ii) working with children aged 5-7 in order to develop an understanding of progression and transition.

DfE, (2013), Early Years Educator Level 3: qualifications criteria (last updated 05/08/2019)
London: NCTL/DfE

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-educator-level-3-qualifications-criteria>
accessed 06/05/2020

Trainee Teacher Competency in the Teaching of Early Reading – A response from students

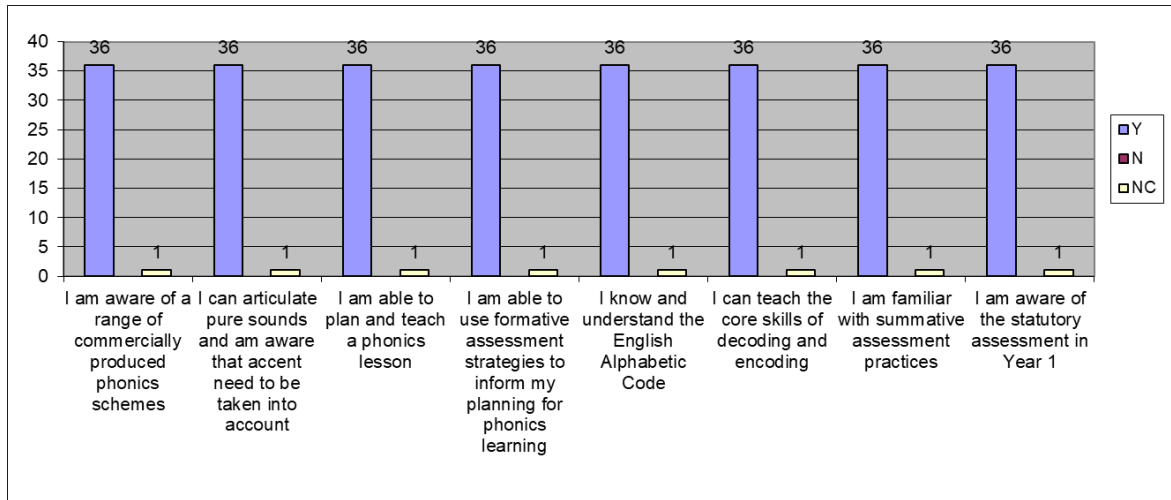
Teacher education has had a focus on the teaching of phonics and ensuring that qualifying teachers are both competent and confident in their ability to plan, teach and assess phonics lessons. This is to ensure pupil progress in reading. The chart below reflects the response of school mentors to final year primary education students' ability to teach systematic synthetic phonics. In order to grade the student's ability the mentors observed a series of phonics lessons delivered by students, and graded aspects of the lesson against a given set of criteria in the form of a rubric. In total 54 students were assessed and a final grade awarded. The four grading options were 'outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement', 'unsatisfactory'. Any student who did not receive an 'outstanding' or 'good' grading, or had an incomplete profile, was expected to undertake an intervention programme of further tuition and placement.



Of those 54 students, 36 responded to questions related to their understanding and confidence in the skills, knowledge and policy awareness required to teach early reading in schools in England. The

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questions asked for a ‘Yes/No’ response and results are below. Note: 1 student did not complete the task (NC).



Trainee Teacher Placement Activities

As previously stated, all trainee teachers on courses leading to QTS will undertake a minimum of 120 days on placement in a school setting. During that time they will undertake a number of activities in relation to the teaching of early reading in order to ensure that they meet the relevant Teachers’ Standards. Before moving on to planning, delivering and assessing literacy lessons for a whole class, students will undertake tasks to develop their understanding of the concept of literacy and how schools promote

An example of a three part task carried out by students on placement is below:

Part One

Preparing for Reading and Observing the Teaching of Phonics - EYFS

Find out about how children are being introduced to and encouraged to interact with books in preparation for reading. What opportunities are children given to develop the listening skills inherent in phonological development?

To complete this task you will need to:

- Talk to staff about how they approach planning for CLL
- Consider the classroom environment and organisation
- Observe children and staff interacting with books
- Consider the role of the teacher in supporting children's interactions with texts
- Find out about how the school organizes the teaching of phonics and the scheme in use
- Observe a systematic synthetic phonics lesson being taught in the EYFS

To gain maximum understanding from your data collection, you will need to consider the following questions:

- What opportunities do children have to listen and respond to stories books?
- What opportunities do children have to join in with songs, nursery rhymes, poems and music?
- Have you observed any activities designed specifically to promote speaking and listening skills?
- What opportunities do children have to explore and experiment with sounds and words?
- How is a phonics lesson structured? Are children grouped by ability? How is prior learning reviewed? How is a new phoneme/grapheme introduced? Are phonemes articulated correctly? Is there an opportunity for children to read and write? How does the teacher assess the children's progress?

Write a short report that outlines your findings. This will be shared with your peers in session 7 at university.

Part 2

Provision for Reading Across the School

Look at the provision for and promotion of reading throughout the school.

Make notes on:

- The school's reading policy
- The reading scheme(s) in use by the school. If the school does not use a reading scheme how do they ensure progression in reading? How is the reading scheme linked to phonics teaching and progression? How long are children expected to stay on the scheme? Look at a selection of books from different stages of the scheme. How do they progress in terms of vocabulary, sentence structure, font size and style, use of pictures etc.?
- Intervention programmes in Key Stage 2 to support struggling readers.
- How your school promotes reading for enjoyment
- The strategies that teachers employ for both gaining and sustaining children's involvement in reading
- The availability of library or book areas in school and classrooms and the use made of the areas by children
- The quality and range of the books and attractiveness of areas
- Any strategies such as writing book reviews, posters etc. to support engagement
- The link with parents to support reading
- Reflection of language, disability, beliefs, gender and cultural diversity in books
- Reflection of the global dimension or promotion of intercultural understanding.
- Book weeks and other whole school reading promotion activities held.
- Other strategies/interventions such as paired reading with older pupils etc.

This part of the task will be completed during the course of your placement. However, your preliminary findings about Reading Schemes will be discussed in session 8 at university.

Part 3

Teach a Child to Read

During your first two weeks of placement, you should select a child that you can work with on a regular basis in a class in Reception or Year 1. Initially, you should meet with this child on a one-to-one basis. You should build a constructive relationship with the child and establish the child's attitude towards reading i.e. their reading preferences, whether they think it is important to read or not, their family as readers, what they read at home (e.g. playstation games, comics etc), do they consider this to be reading, do they have a favorite book or author, do they visit the library, do they have books read to them at home, what level on the schools reading scheme is the child working at etc?)

Task 3a Beginning with the Alphabetic Code : One-to-one teaching

Observe the child being taught phonics in their phonics group. Note how the child responds to the teacher and interacts with his/her peers.

Using the teacher's planning, teach the next phonics lesson to the child on a ONE to ONE basis. Reflect on your teaching and the child's learning. How does teaching and learning in a one to one context differ from a group situation? How do you know what learning took place? How will you prepare to teach this child in his/her group?

You will share your reflections in session 8 at university.

4. CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (PERMANENT TRAINING) FOR TEACHERS

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is the means by which members of professional associations maintain, improve and broaden their knowledge and skills and develop the personal qualities required in their professional lives. Support for the professional development for teachers and support staff has been changing rapidly in recent years. Traditionally, continuing professional development was delivered through attendance at in-service training courses and school training events. However in 2016, the UK Government recognised that teachers' professional development should be prioritised by school leadership and highlighted a new standard for professional development consisting of four key aims:

1. Professional development should have a focus on improving and evaluating pupil outcomes.
 2. Professional development should be underpinned by robust evidence and expertise.
 3. Professional development should include collaboration and expert challenge.
 4. Professional development programmes should be sustained over time
- (DfE, 2016: 6)

This new standard for professional development means that schools are drawing on the many different opportunities for CPD, including the use of commercial short courses, for example National Literacy Trust offer a range of short training courses including Reading for Pleasure, Gender and Literacy, Reading for Pleasure on and with Screens (Key Stage 1), Teaching Reading in Key Stage 2 and Ruth Miskin Phonics Training 'Read, Write, Inc.' Such training is expensive and may cost schools up to £500 per delegate for a two day course.

However, the schools considered in this study had all adopted a writing programmes following training in the last 5 years. Training had been provided in either 'Talk for Writing' – Pie Corbett or Big Writing. Schools had sent their literacy subject leader to the training. This was cascaded to the rest of the staff during dedicated staff meetings or training days in order to embed the approach across the school.

All staff participate in the moderation of phonics, reading and writing tasks and assessments across the school in order to ensure pupil progression. This process is completed either termly or annually and is viewed as professional development for non-specialist staff.

Those teachers in academy's also work across schools within the group in order to develop their understanding of teaching and learning in different social contexts and to share best practice.

Accredited CPD

Part 2 of the new standard has resulted in a number of schools and individual teachers opting for postgraduate accredited CPD in the form of Masters degrees or Professional Doctorates (EdD). Courses offered at Manchester Met University provide students with an opportunity to critically explore an area of education that is of personal interest to them and their teaching context. At the start of the academic year 2019-2020, 224 students enrolled on the part-time Masters programme and 17 were enrolled on the most recent iteration of the EdD programme, which began in September 2018.

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