



‘No student is too anything to be able to read and write’

Providing a literacy rich environment at Fernhill School

By Alison Seckold and Kimberley Rossouw

Information derived from ‘2018 Balanced Literacy Intensive’ led by Jane Farrall and Sally Clendon (August 2018)



The least dangerous assumption (Donnellan, 1984)

- To presume incompetence could result in harm to our students if we are wrong. Even if we are wrong about students' capacities to learn general education curriculum content, the consequences to the student of that incorrect presumption are not as dangerous as the alternative.



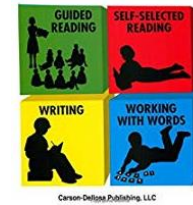
Furthermore...

- The only way we will know if any of our children can learn to read or write is to get them the literacy instruction and create the opportunities for them to learn. (Erin Sheldon)



“No student is too
anything to be
able to read
and write”

David Yoder, DJI-AbleNet
Literacy Lecture, ISAAC
2000





If we only teach parts of literacy, then students will only learn parts.



Types of learners

Emergent, Transitional, Conventional

What is an emergent literacy learner?

- Someone at the very start of their literacy journey!
- They are learning that print has meaning.
- Remember...a student may be at the emergent stage for a very long time...even years!
- And also remember...emergent behaviours are **fleeting** and **variable**.



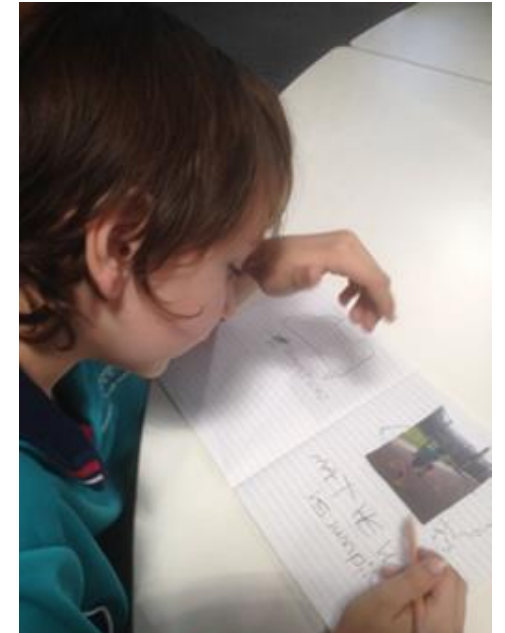
What is a transitional literacy learner?

- Students who haven't yet moved from emergent to conventional.
- They have consolidated emergent literacy skills but have not developed all the conventional skills.
- May take up to 3 years to bridge the gap.
- *Teach them as conventional learners to help them become conventional.*

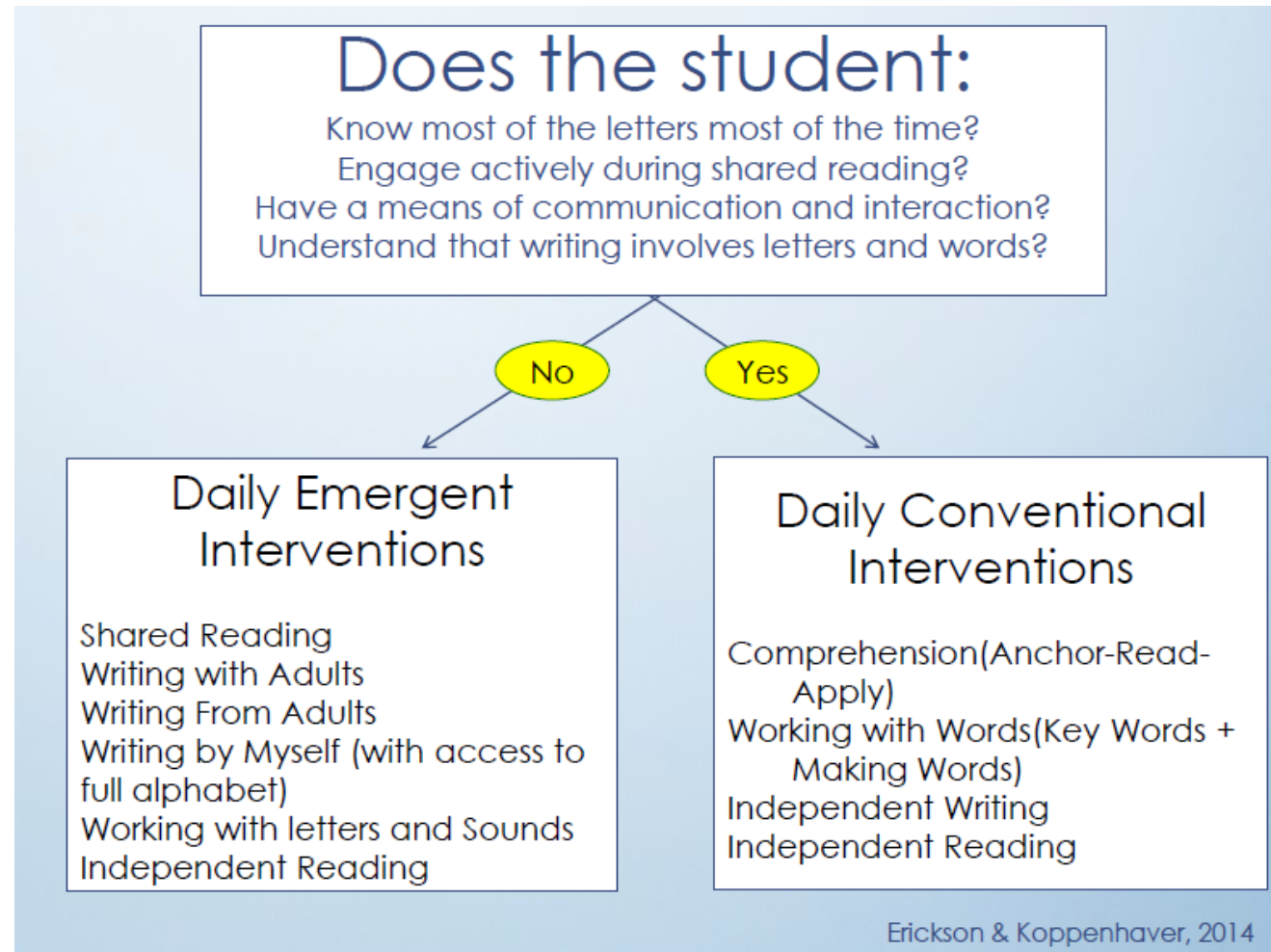


What is a conventional literacy learner?

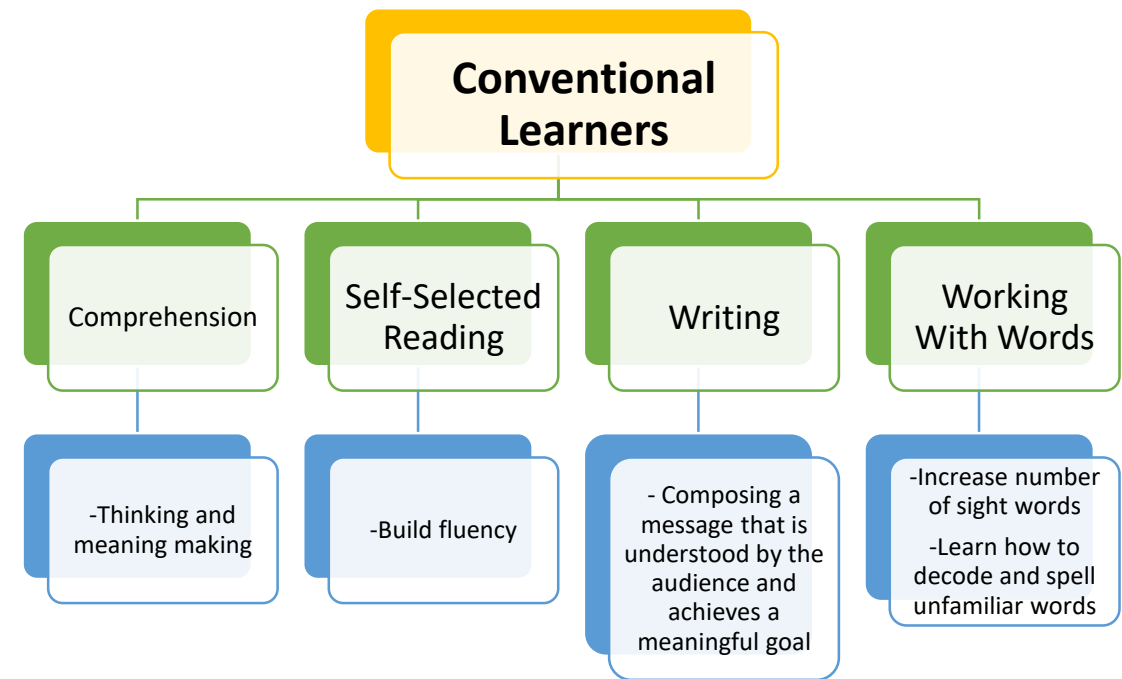
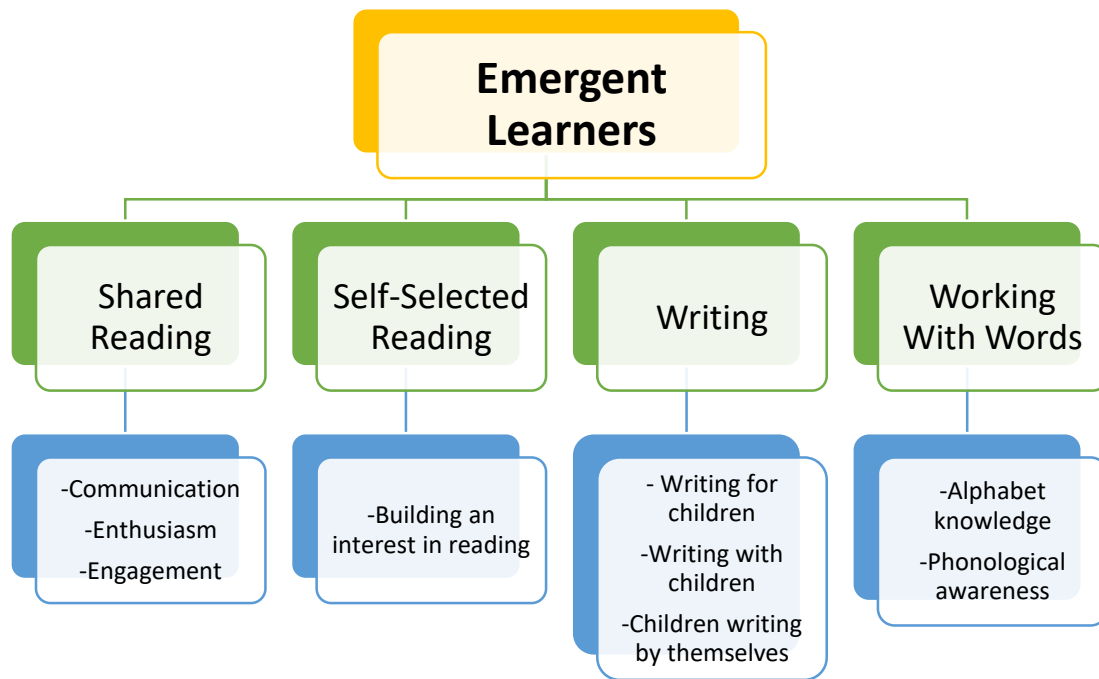
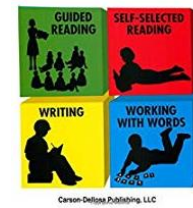
- Students who:
 - Know most of the letters most of the time
 - Engage actively during shared reading
 - Have a means of communication and interaction
 - Understand that writing involves letters and words



Where do you think your students are at?



A Balanced Diet





Introducing the 'Four Blocks'

An overview



Shared Reading/Comprehension

An overview

The differences between *shared reading* and *comprehension*



- **Shared reading** is a collaborative learning activity that emulates and builds on the bedtime book experiences that many children and parents have together. The focus is on interaction. Shared reading is appropriate for any emergent reader.
- **Comprehension (also known as guided reading)** is the process by which we can help students to be strategic in their reading. The focus is on students learning to get information from a text. Comprehension is appropriate for transitional and conventional readers.

Shared reading (emergent)

- Involves reading a text to students (e.g. ‘book of the week’).
- Impacts on children’s conceptual knowledge and reasoning skills.
- Builds vocabulary and language comprehension.
- Exposes children to concepts of print.
- The **key factor** is the **conversation** that takes place about a text:
 - Mutual questioning and responding
 - Making stories relevant to the child’s life
 - Explaining
 - Having whole conversations around the text, not just asking ‘wh’ questions



Comprehension (conventional)

- Comprehension instruction assists students to understand that reading involves thinking and meaning making.
- This allows students to become more strategic in their own reading.
- To do this, we must use a wide variety of books and other print materials.
- Our ultimate goal is for students to have a ‘toolbox’ of strategies that they can activate simultaneously and use flexibly.
- We want students to make meaning from texts **as they read**. It isn't about first reading a text and then answering questions...meaning should be made throughout the reading.



The basic structure of a comprehension lesson

Also known as *The Five Part Strategy*



Anchor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build or activate background knowledge• Set a clear purpose for Reading/Listening
Read	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read/listen for bulk of allocated time
Apply	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete a task directly related to the stated purpose• Follow-up and provide feedback.

IMPORTANT!!

We need good AAC systems

- Big Macks for repeated lines
- Step-by-steps for general comments
- Aided language displays for modelling language
- Yes / no for answering closed questions
- Visuals for making choices
- Proloquo2Go/PODD/LAMP etc. for commenting





Writing

An overview



We want our students to understand that....

- They are a writer.
- Anything they can say (think), they can write.
- There are many purposes for writing.

What writing is not....



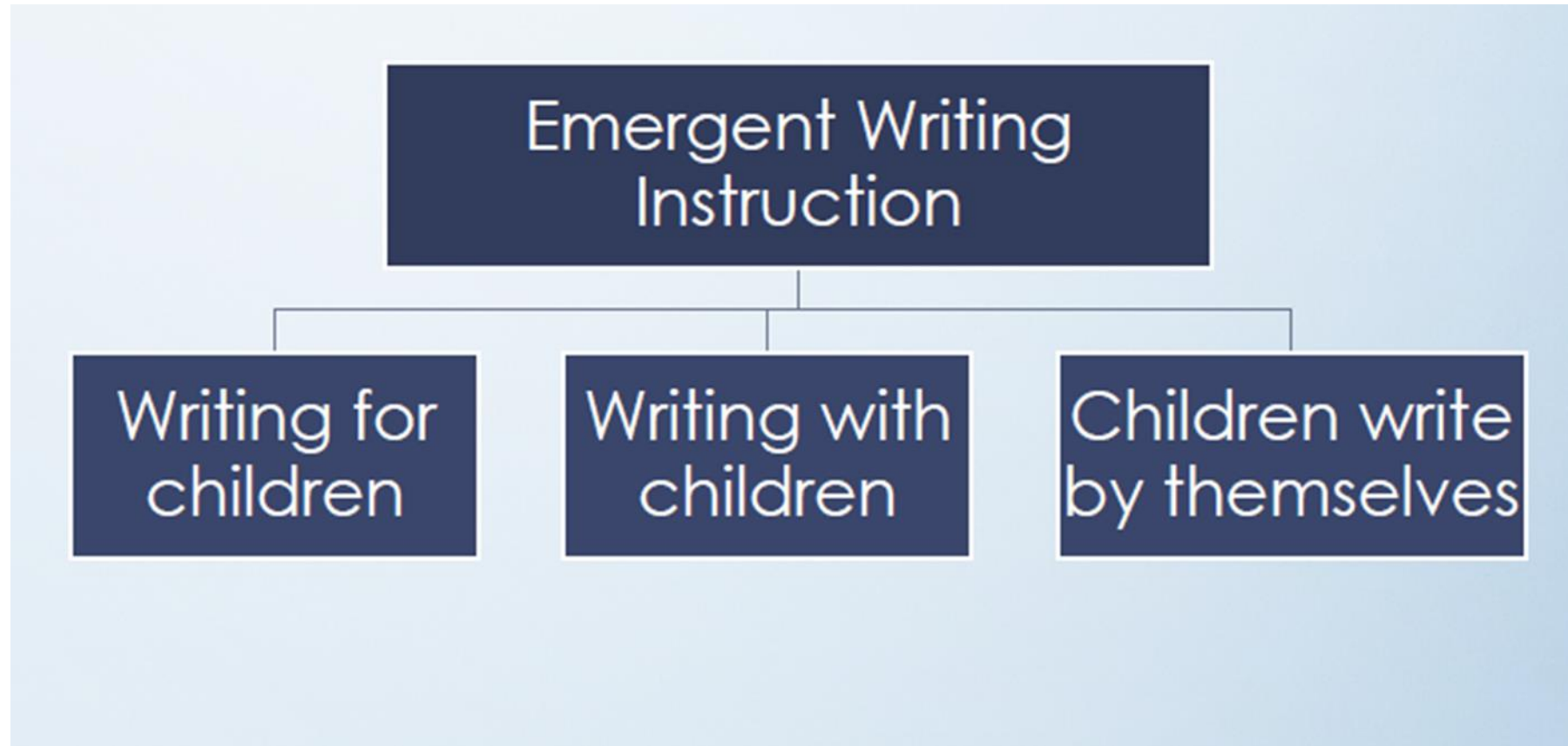
- Copying – this is a fine motor task that does not facilitate the process of writing
 - Copying is about forming letters
 - Copying does NOT
 - Teach that print has meaning
 - Teach WHY people write
 - Teach what it means to be a writer
 - Teach a student how to think like a writer
- Tracing – this is another fine motor task that does not facilitate the process of writing
- Dictation

Writing Involves ...

- The student's own ideas and attempts
- Cognitive engagement
- Independent attempts with a complete alphabet
- Needs to be in a real context and for real reasons



Writing (emergent)



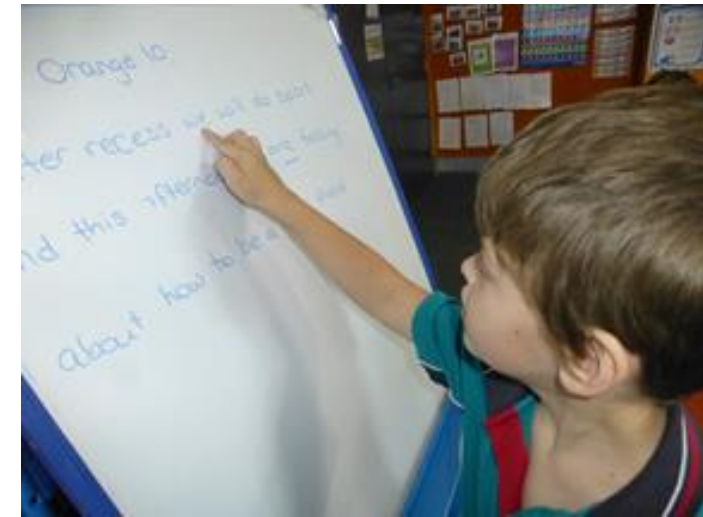
Writing for children



- Modelling the functions and forms of writing
- Morning message is the key way we can do this

Dear Class,
Today is Wednesday.
We will have music
after lunch.
Love from
Mrs Smith

Dear class,
Today is Wednesday.
We will have art with
David.
Love,
Alexander and Mae



Writing with children



- Predictable chart writing – creating sentences with children using a specified stem, e.g.:
 - I can...
 - I like to...
 - I do not like to...
 - I see...
 - I am...
- Remember: Repetition with variety is key. *Start simple and repeat.*



Other ideas

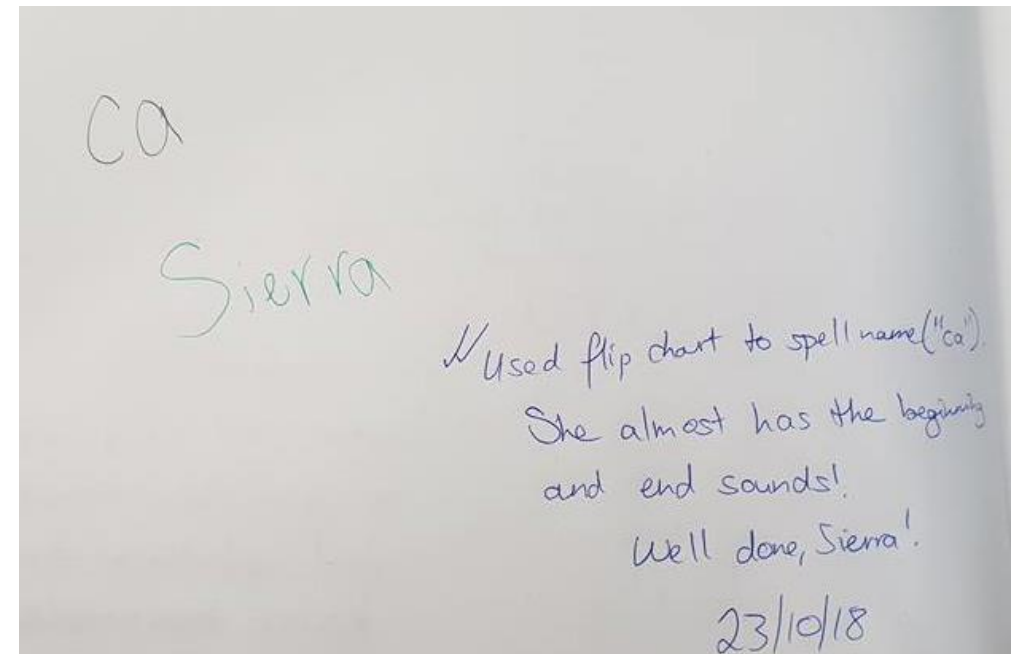
- Book topics (e.g. *Hairy MacLary: He is...*)
- Personal connections (e.g. In the holidays: I went...)
- School trips (e.g. At the zoo: I saw...)
- Topics/themes (e.g. In my garden: I will plant...)
- Descriptions (e.g. My pyjamas are...)
- Opinions (e.g. Dancing is...)



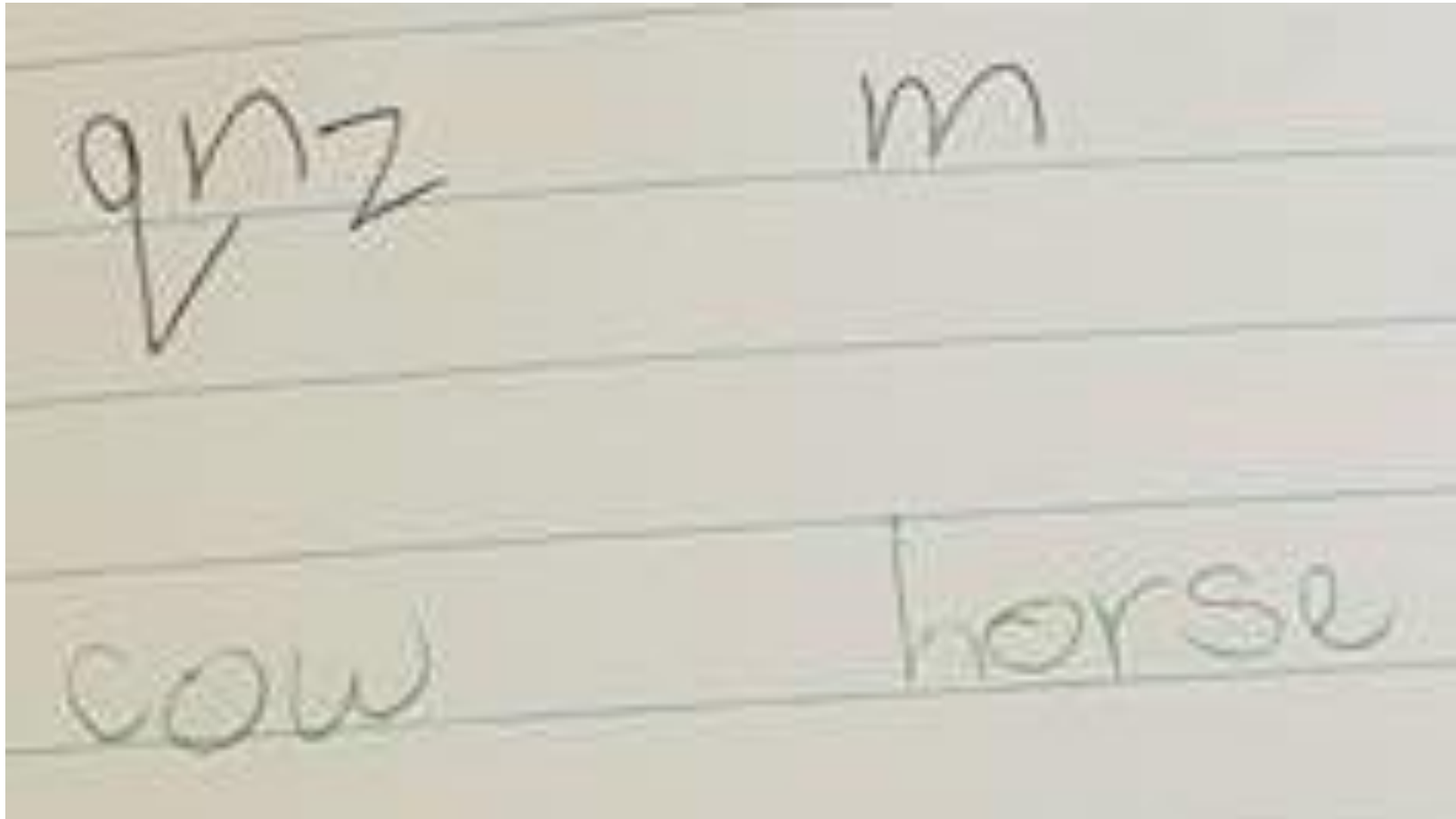
Children write by themselves



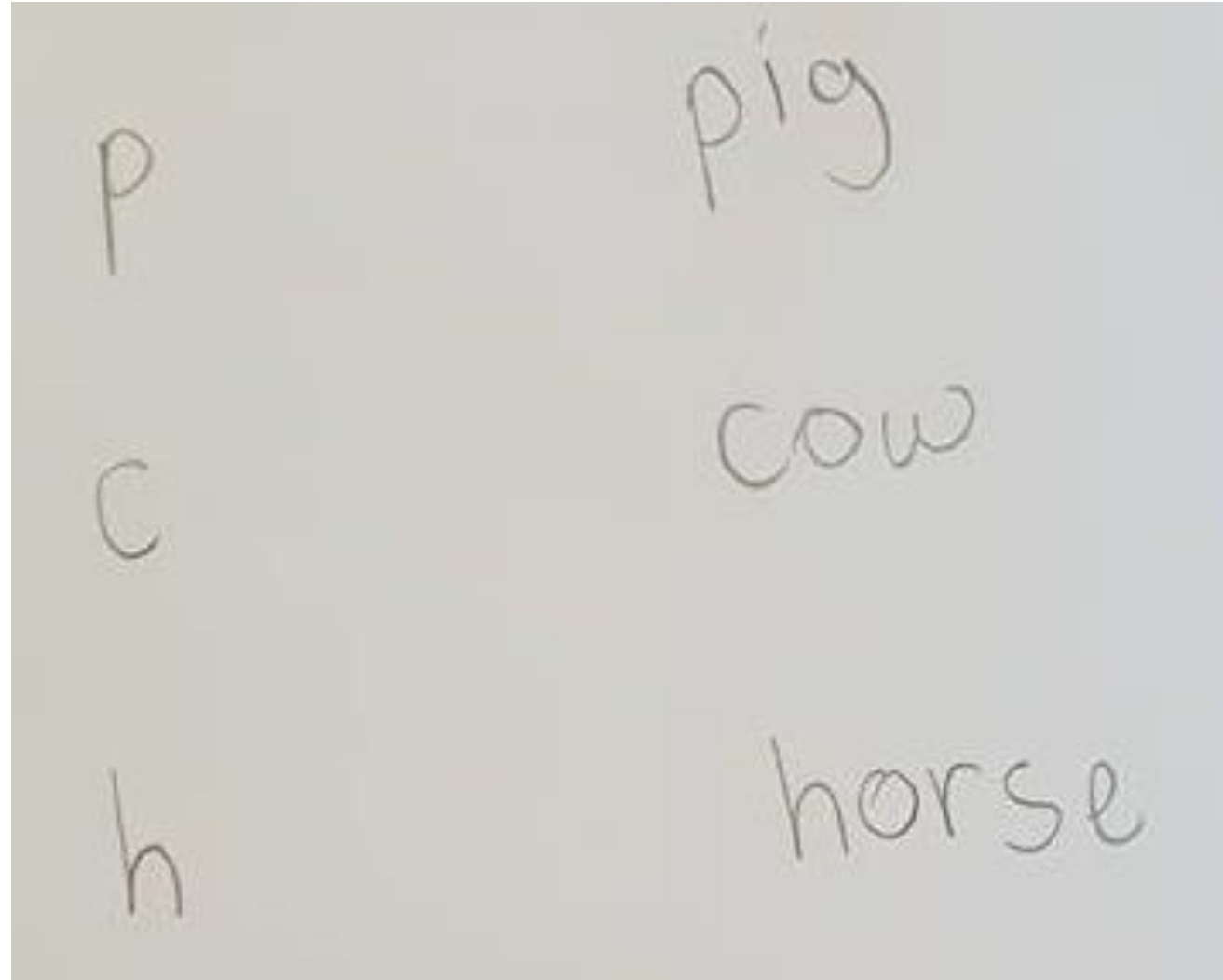
- Children learn writing most effectively when encouraged to write for real reasons, e.g.
 - Daily sign-in
 - Personal connections
 - Remnants
 - Related to shared reading
 - Letters
 - Notes home
 - Book report
 - Emails
 - Writing to/about favourites



An example of a student progressing...



An example of a student progressing...

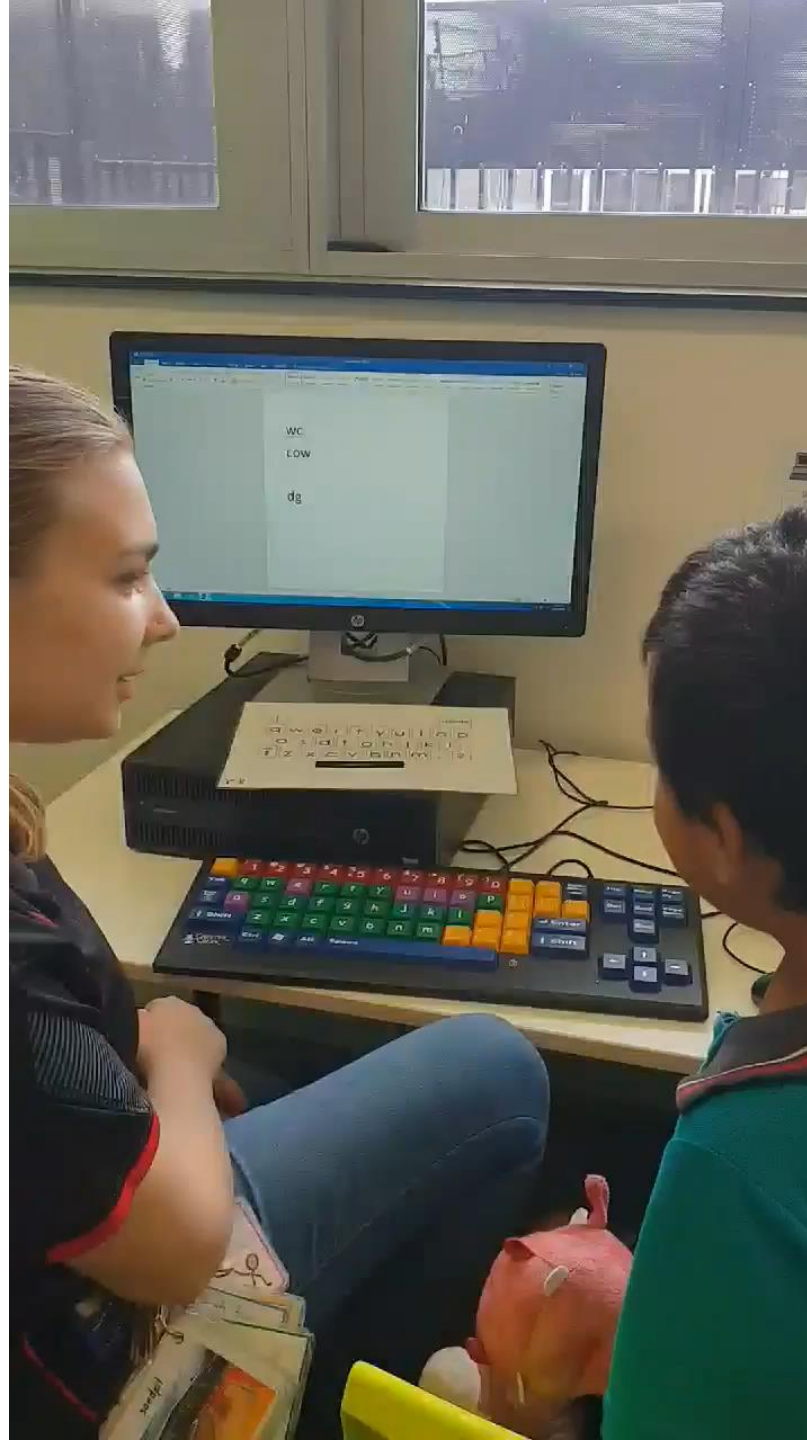


An example of a student progressing...



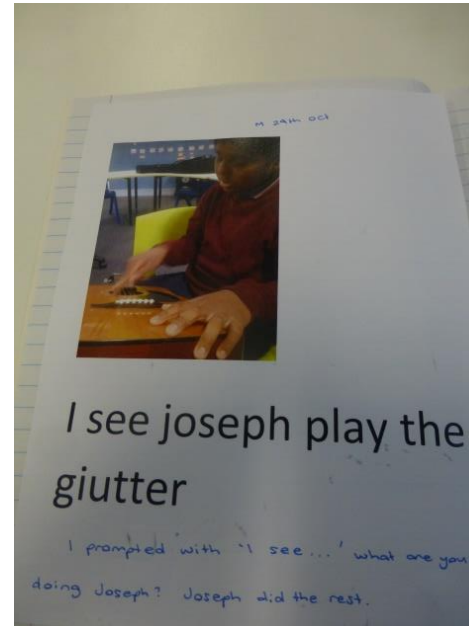
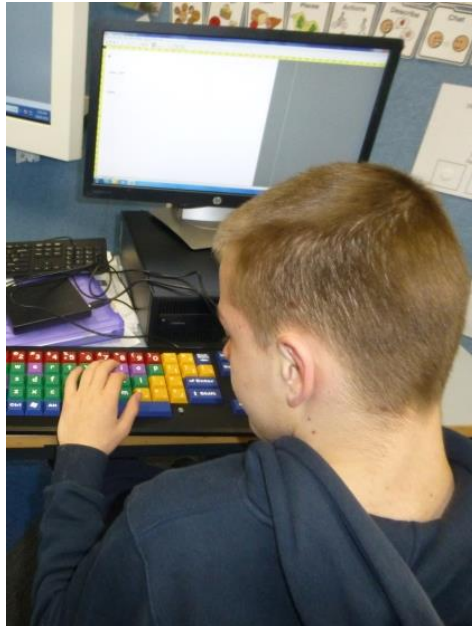
cw hs bt cw gt se cw
cow horse bat cow goat snail cow

An example of a Student progressing...



Writing (conventional)

- Multi-level and individualised.
- Starts with writing one good sentence
- Uses mini-lessons to teach skills
- Uses picture cues or experiences
- Often relies on access to a good AAC system



The writing block



Typically has three sections

- A mini lesson- approximately 10 minutes
 - *There is a whole list of mini lessons – start with writing ‘one good sentence’...then progress onto grammar, punctuation and editing skills.*
- Writing and teacher conferencing
- Writer’s chair



Alternative Pencils

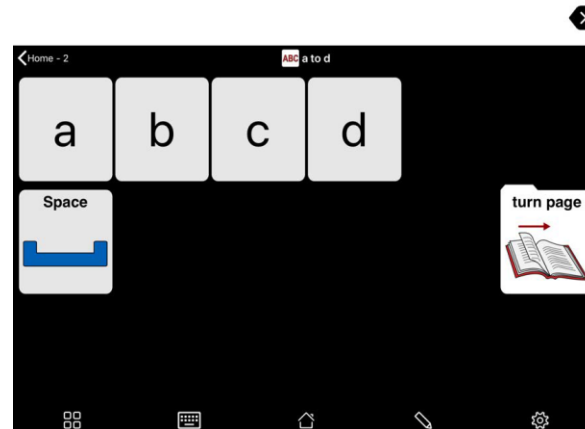
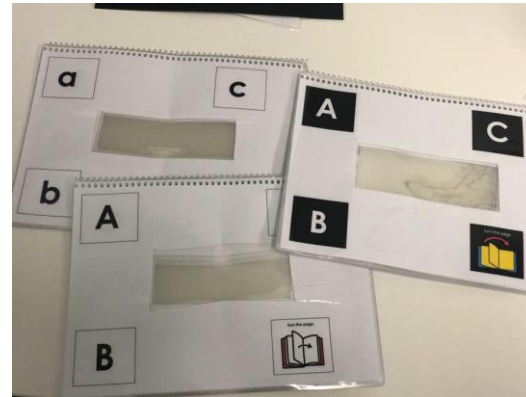
Every student needs a pencil



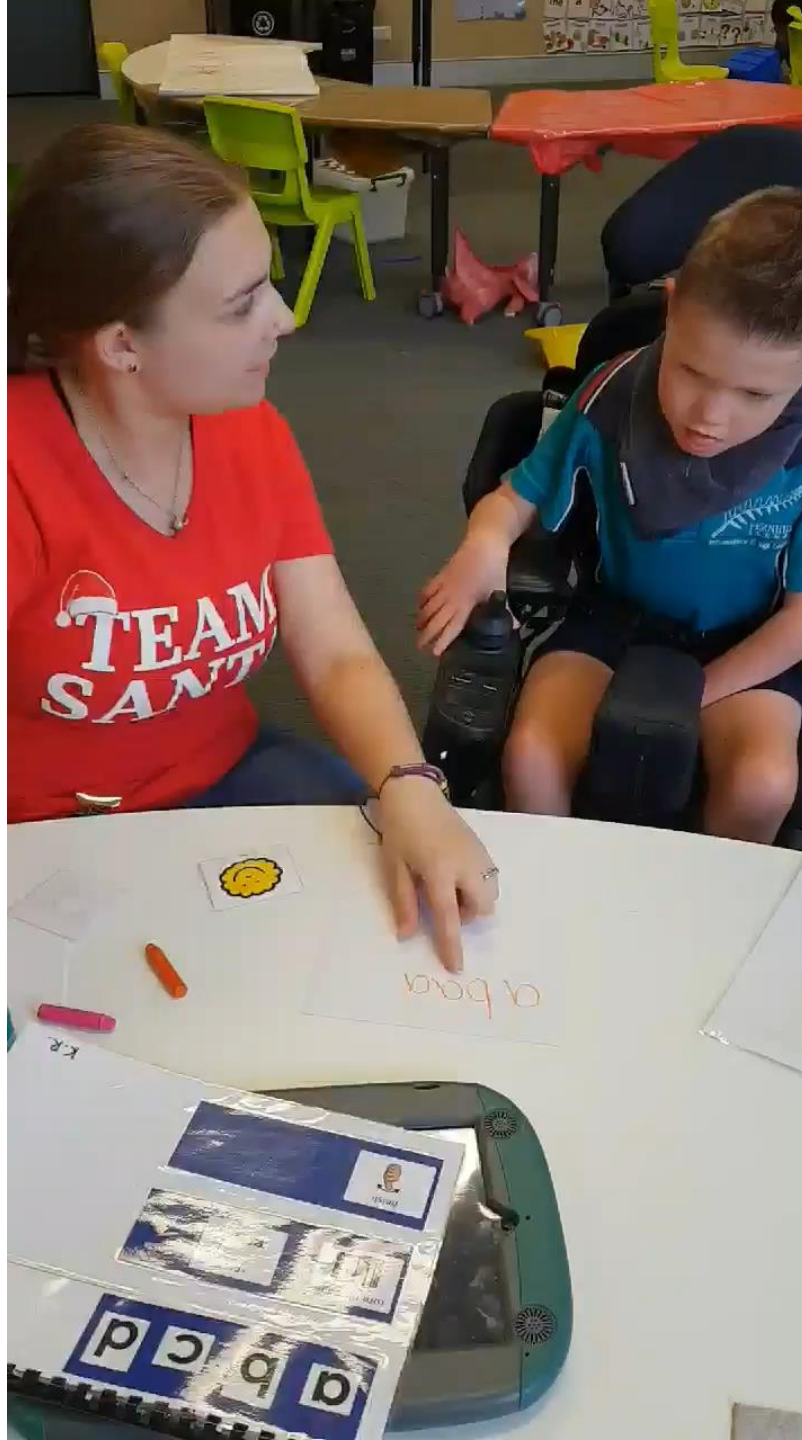
- We need to find a ‘pencil’ for each student that requires the least effort and allows them to have the most focus on all parts of writing – ideas, language, spelling, etc.
- Sometimes we need to be creative! What does the student like and how can we incorporate this interest into an alternative pencil?
- Remember – learning to use a pencil takes time...for both the teacher and student!

Flip charts

- Originally developed by the Centre for Literacy and Disability Studies.
- There are a lot of different flip charts for different students.



Example – Sam



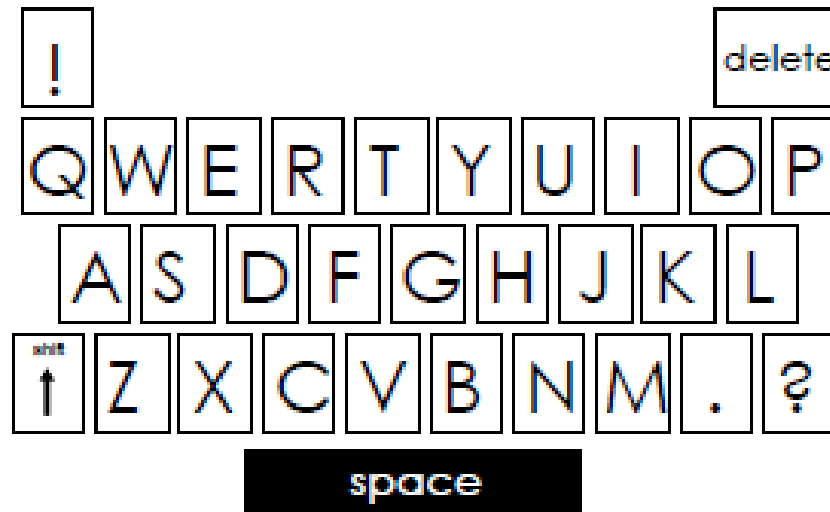
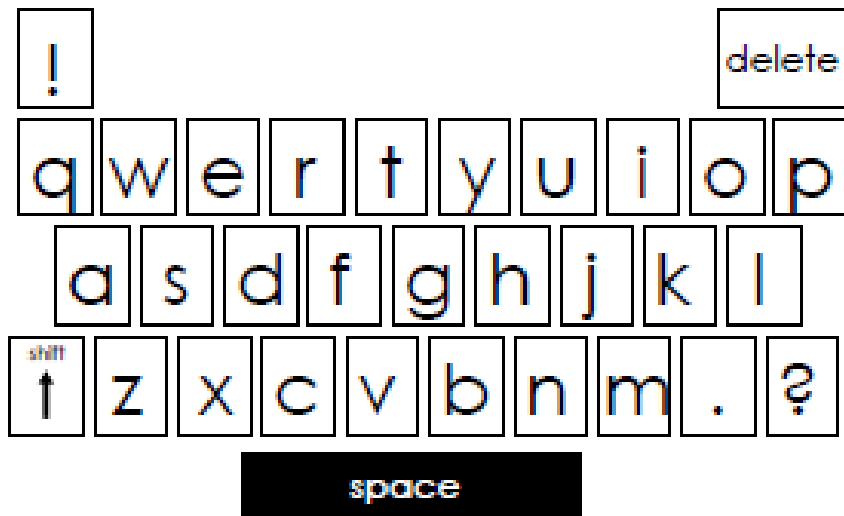
Example – Sam

a ba a o o a a
a j i a a



Low-tech QWERTY keyboard, double sided

- Used with students who know most of the letters, most of the time
- Can also be used by emergent students for scribbling – but never all the time



Keyboards for computers and tablets

- Use this type of keyboard with students who:
 - Are transitional or conventional
 - Have direct access
 - Keyguards available for students who accidentally press the wrong keys or need to rest on the keyguard
 - Low vision versions available for students who struggle to read the key labels



Eye gaze



◀	Steak	Stalk	Streak	Soak	▶								
📄	⚙️	Type anywhere. Control the mouse. Speak			🔊	👉							
◀	optionally	optometry	openly	opportunity	▶	o	p						
📄	⚙️	Hello and welcome to OptiKey			🔊	👉	k	l	☰				
	q	w	e	r	t	y	u	i	o	p	⌫	⌬	123 +!@
↕	a	s	d	f	g	h	j	k	l	☰	⌫	⌬	123 +!@
🏠	z	x	c	v	b	n	m	⌫	⌬	123 +!@	⌫	⌬	123 +!@
CTRL	☰	ALT	,	⌣	🔊	📈	↩	🖱					



Working With Words

An overview

Purpose of Words instruction



1. Help children learn high-frequency words needed for fluent, successful reading with comprehension.
2. Teach children the skills required to decode and spell words they will use for reading and writing.
3. Help children understand how words work.

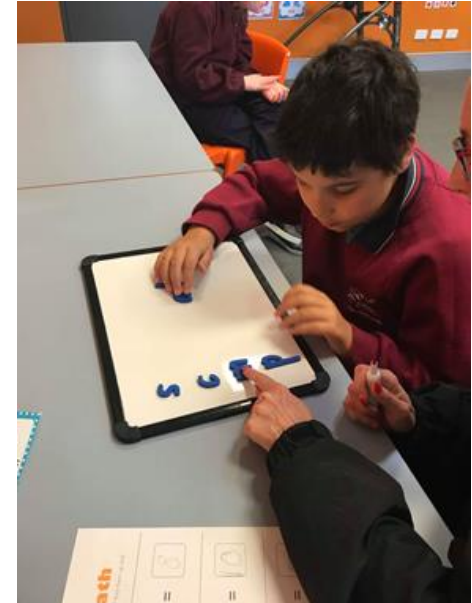


Working with Words



In this block students need to build two skills

- Emergent
 1. Alphabet knowledge
 2. Phonological awareness
- Conventional
 1. Increase the number of sightwords
 2. Learn how to decode and spell unfamiliar words for reading and writing



A basic approach



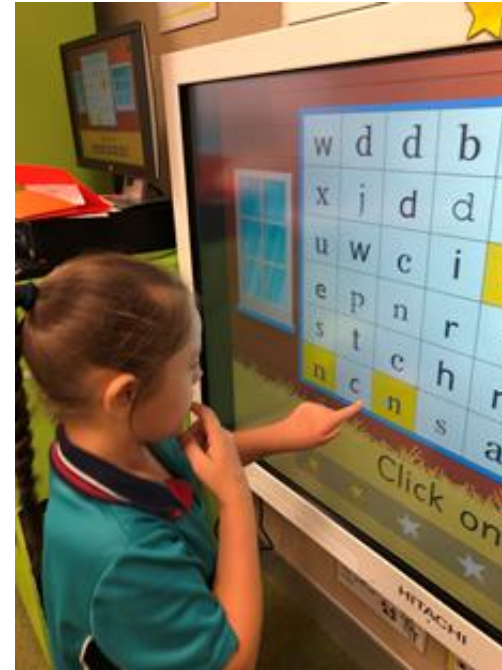
- Fernhill School uses the Get Reading Right Synthetic Phonics program to teach the ‘Working With Words’ block.
- What does this look like?
 - Emergent:
 - Phonological knowledge
 - Phonics (keep the same order as in the Synthetic Phonics program but go slooooooww)
 - Conventional:
 - Follow the Synthetic Phonics program

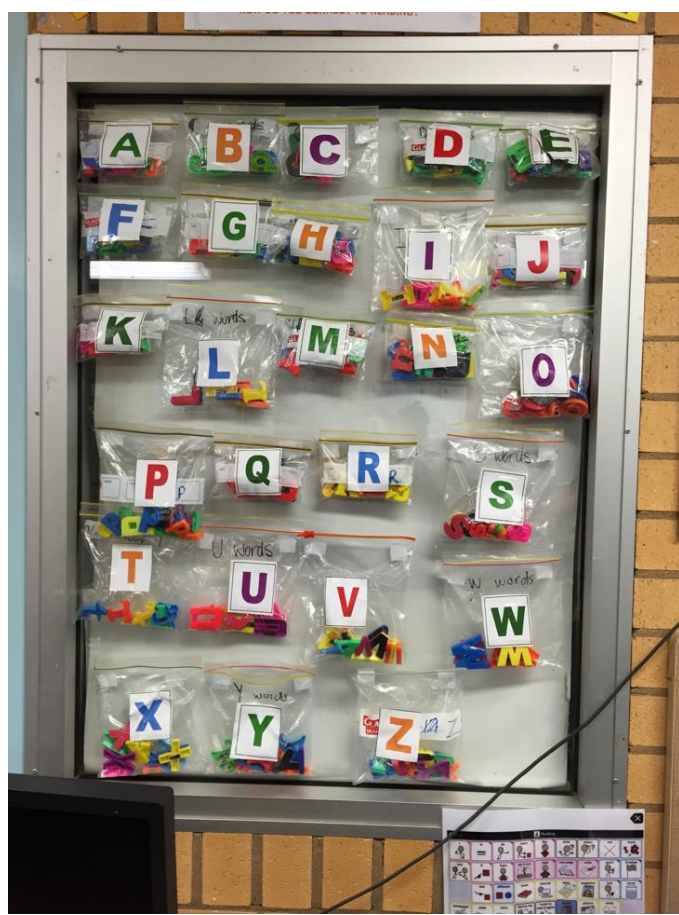
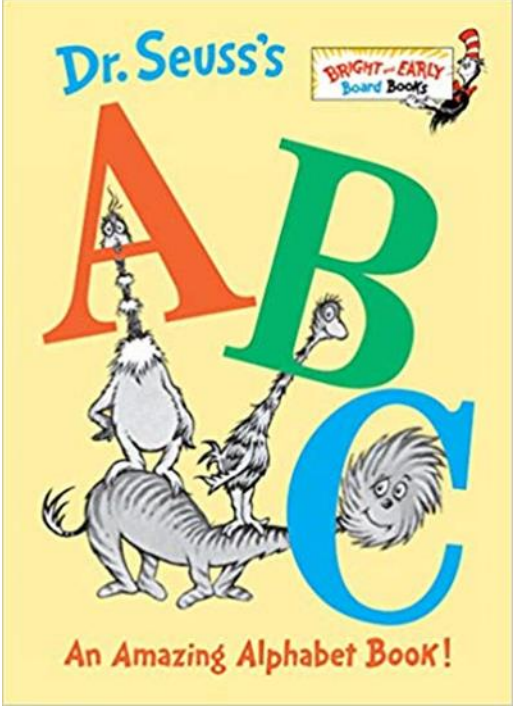


Working With Words (emergent)



- The focus is on building letter-sound knowledge through students interacting with the alphabet.
- There are a number of activities that can help students explore letters and sounds...

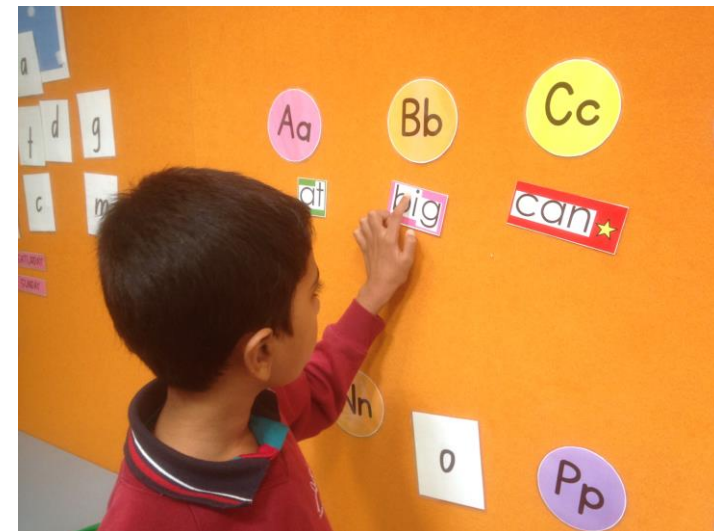




Working With Words (conventional)



- The focus is on building decoding skills and fluency.
- While there are many activities that can be used for decoding, a key way for conventional learners to develop their fluency skills is through a word wall.





Word wall

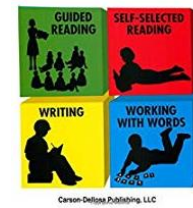
- Used to teach words that you don't want students to have to work to decode or spell.
- Used to teach words that you expect students to read with automaticity and spell with accuracy by the end of the year.
- Not a mastery approach.

What words do your students need on the word wall?



- Any word that they struggle to read OR WRITE automatically from the chosen high frequency word list should be included.
- Any word that they can read AND WRITE automatically from the chosen high frequency word list does not need to be included.
- If the students in your class are at very varied levels then individual word walls might be more appropriate.

Planning the Word Wall



- Choose whether you are having a large word wall, a portable word wall for each student – or a mixture of both!
- If making up a large word wall it needs to be in an area where all students can see the words easily.
- Portable word walls are excellent for classrooms where students are at very different word levels or for individual students who cannot see the main word wall.

Large Word Wall



Portable Word Wall





Self-selected reading

An overview

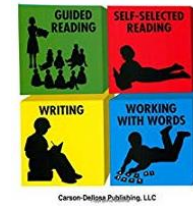


Self-selected reading

- All students:
 - Show students WHY they would want to read.....
- Conventional students:
 - Help them to become automatic in skill application
 - Give them practice to become more fluent

The BIG rules

- For all students
 - It isn't self-selected if you don't choose it yourself
- For conventional students
 - You can't get good at it if it is too difficult



Components of Self-Selected Reading

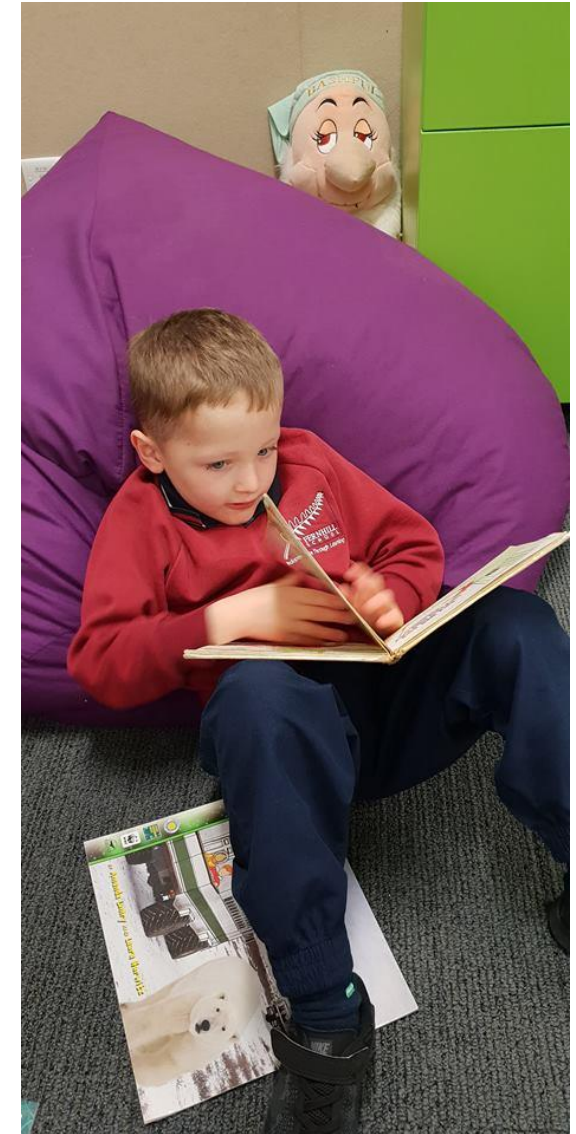


- A library of books!
- DEAR time (Drop Everything and Read)
- Teacher read alouds
- Reader's chair
- Book reviews

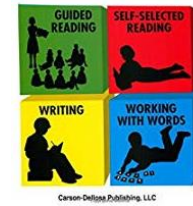


Setting up for Self-Selected Reading

- 20 books per student (or more)
- Rotated frequently
- Mix of fiction and non-fiction
- Include different types of books



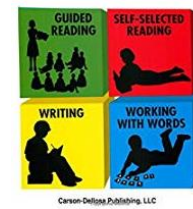
Make books accessible



- Need to make books accessible to ALL students
- Many children with disabilities have fewer opportunities to practice than their peers and when they do they are often passive participants (Koppenhaver and Yoder, 1992)
- Books can be made accessible in a range of ways:
 - Page fluffers
 - Cardboard inserts
 - Book stands
 - Bookworm from AbleNet
 - eBooks



Digital storybooks/Storybook apps



and Hairy Maclary
from Donaldson's Diary.



Guidelines for choosing digital books:
www.janefarrall.com/ipad-apps-for-guided-reading/

Tar Heel Reader



- In app mode
- As talking books in iBooks
- www.tarhellreader.org
- www.janefarrall.com/putting-tar-heel-reader-books-into-ibooks-with-speech/

iOS Accessibility

- Look at:
- Speak Selection
- Guided Access
- Switch Control
- VoiceOver

Where to next?

- Programming sample ->
- For details on teaching according to the 'Balanced Literacy' model, as well as a range of resources, visit Jane Farrall's blog at www.janefarrall.com

Balanced Literacy Planning

Week:

Book of the week Comprehension:

Book of the week Shared Reading:

Comprehension Purposes 1 2 3 4 5	Self-Selected Reading resources for the term:
Working with Letters/Words Letters of the week: Resources: Words of the week: Resources: Making words lesson:	Writing Purposes 1 2 3 4 5 Predictable Chart Writing frame:

Students in emergent group:

Students in conventional group:

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