

Teacher talk *Life Cycle of a Frog*

Read about evidence-based theories that underpin best teaching practices. By learning more about the theory behind teaching strategies you will develop a deeper understanding of what ‘works best’ for the learners in your classroom.

Teacher talk will help you to understand the pedagogic practices surrounding the [‘Big Six’](#) focus areas. You will discover a range of instructional strategies that integrate these core elements of reading development.

Inclusive teaching and learning opportunities that build on the Big Six as well as students’ needs, strengths and interests are vital for building student capacity in learning English. This can be a complex and challenging task. Teacher talk offers instructional strategies aimed at scaffolding the learning of a diverse range of students, including English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) students and students from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

Try these strategies as you share *Life Cycle of a Frog* with your class, and use them in other aspects of your reading program. Discuss with your colleagues the instructional practices that resonate with you, and those that have been effective in your classroom.

Scaffolding meaning, vocabulary and oral language

Many of your students will have some prior knowledge about frogs. They’ve possibly seen them in books or even in real life! But what they may not be familiar with is the structure of this non-fiction text and the vocabulary used to describe the stages of a living thing’s life cycle.

Understanding a non-fiction diagram is a complex process. Viewing *The Life Cycle of a Frog* diagram requires students to:

- understand the concept of a life cycle
- understand the specific technical vocabulary related to this concept
- identify the various parts of the diagram and what they mean
- combine all of these understandings together with their prior knowledge to construct meaning.

Just like learning to read written text, students need to learn how to view and make meaning of visual texts. Supporting your students as they view and discuss this visual text will help them understand both the concept of a life cycle and how to read the diagram. As you explore the meaning of this text your students will be involved in listening to and using rich oral language.

Viewing and understanding a visual text

Support your students by explicitly teaching them how to 'read' a diagram. Revisit the language surrounding this diagram and discuss the meaning of the vocabulary associated with it many times (Trivette et al., 2012).

Guide students as they build their understanding of a frog's life cycle. Involve them in explicit conversations about life cycles. Make links beyond the text by talking about the life cycles of other living things they know about such as a chicken or a caterpillar/butterfly.

To check students' understanding ask them to explain what they know about the diagram. Scaffold the language of this explanation by using the 'PEER' and 'CROWD' strategy (Zevenbergen and Whitehurst, 2003). You can expand your students' answers by rephrasing, adding information or modelling correct syntax and vocabulary. Encourage students to share things they don't understand or to ask further questions they have.

The PEER and CROWD questioning strategy

The PEER (prompt, evaluate, expand, repeat) strategy outlines a sequence to follow when asking questions. The CROWD (completion, recall, open-ended prompts, 'Wh' prompts, distancing) strategy gives examples of different ways or prompts to begin the PEER questioning sequence.

Strategy	What it means
PEER - sequence of questions	<p>P - Prompting the student to talk about the text by using questions to begin the conversation</p> <p>E - Evaluating the student's response and providing a comment</p> <p>E - Expanding the student's answers by rephrasing, adding information or modelling correct syntax</p> <p>R - Repeating the prompt so the student has the opportunity to reuse the language</p>
CROWD - different ways to begin the PEER questioning sequence	<p>C - Completion prompts: the student fills in the blanks by saying a word or a phrase to finish the teacher's sentence</p> <p>R - Recall prompts: the student is asked to recall information</p> <p>O - Open-ended prompts: open-ended questions are asked</p> <p>W - 'Wh' prompts: questions beginning with who, what, where, when, why and how</p> <p>D - Distancing prompts: relate something in the story to the student's personal experiences</p>

Australian Curriculum links

Year 1: [AC9E1LA03](#), [AC9E1LA08](#), [AC9E1LA09](#), [AC9E1LY02](#), [AC9E1LY05](#)

For more information go to:

- [The Literacy Learning Toolkit: Vocabulary](#)
- [Noella Mackenzie: A focus on vocabulary](#)
- [Primary Connections: Using a word wall to support student explanations](#)

Phonemic awareness

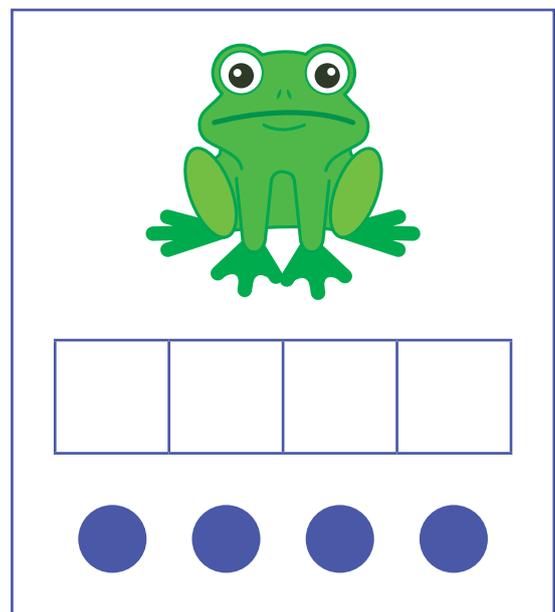
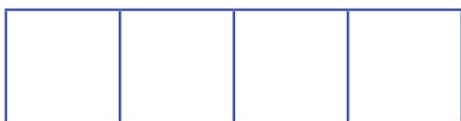
Phonemic awareness involves hearing and isolating the individual phonemes in words. You can support students as they work on their phonemic awareness by planning and implementing teaching and learning opportunities around this skill.

Work with the word 'frog' to isolate the four individual phonemes (*f*, *r*, *o*, *g*). Say the word slowly and have students listen for the individual sounds. Talk about what they hear. Keep in mind that some students may find it difficult to isolate the two phonemes in the consonant blend 'fr' - *f* and *r*. If this is the case and a four-phoneme word such as 'frog' is too challenging, try a word with two phonemes first and build up to three phonemes, then four.

Some students may require additional opportunities and support to hear and isolate the phonemes in words. For these students introduce sound boxes as a supportive framework for isolating the sounds.

Phonemic awareness sound box strategy

1. Make a picture card for the word 'frog'.
2. Slowly articulate the word for the student, segmenting each phoneme.
3. Ask the student to say the word slowly.
4. Use boxes and four counters as a visual model for the sounds that are articulated. Demonstrate the procedure by segmenting the phonemes in the word. Say each one slowly and clearly as you push each counter into one box, sound by sound.
5. Have the student do this independently.



If students find this challenging, support them by sharing the task with them. For example, the student says the phonemes while you push the counters up into the boxes, or you say the phonemes slowly and have them push the counters into the boxes. Further support could be given by guiding the student's hand to push the counters up into the required boxes.

Ensure students have time to practise the above steps until they can control the task independently. For further practice and consolidation, repeat using other words that have four phonemes.

Australian Curriculum links

Year 1: [AC9E1LY10](#)

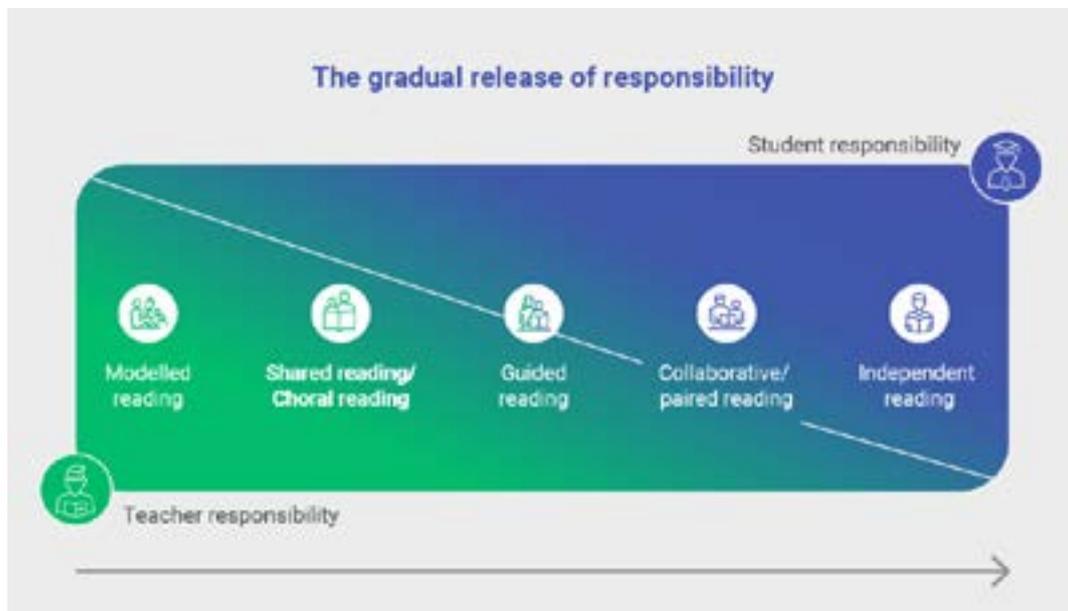
Fluency

Use [this poem](#) about tadpoles to focus on fluency.

Read the poem aloud, modelling fluent reading and emphasising phrasing, rhythm, stress and intonation. Read again and encourage students to join in as you do so. Discuss and develop the children's understanding of the phrases/lines in the poem. Consider the grammatical structure of the lines and highlight these to the students.

Point out and explain the punctuation used in the poem and model how to read to the punctuation through the 'think aloud' strategy (Fisher, Frey and Lapp, 2011).

Through the gradual release of responsibility model (Pearson and Gallagher, 1983), demonstrate how the poem should sound. Choosing one verse at a time (over a week with repeated exposure), work through the gradual release of responsibility model. Allow ample opportunity for students to practise before they can read the poem independently and with fluency.



Find more information on teaching fluency at [NSW Department of Education: Fluency](#).

Australian Curriculum links

Year 1: [AC9E1LY01](#), [AC9E1LY04](#), [AC9E1LE04](#)

References

Fisher, D., Frey, N., & Lapp, D. (2011). Coaching middle-level teachers to think aloud improves comprehension instruction and student reading achievement. *Teacher Educator*, 46(3), 231-243.

Pearson, P. D., & Gallagher, M. C. (1983). The instruction of reading comprehension. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 8(3), 317-344.

Trivette, C. M., Simkus, A., Dunst, C. J., & Hamby, D. W. (2012). Repeated book reading and preschoolers' early literacy development. *Centre for Early Literacy Learning*, 5(5).

Zevenbergen, A. A., & Whitehurst, G. J. (2003). Dialogic reading: a shared picture book reading intervention for preschoolers. In A. Kleeck, S. Stahl, & E. Bauer (Eds.). *On reading books to children*. New York: Routledge.



This document is part of the **Literacy Hub's shared reading set**.
[Access more texts and related teaching materials.](#)

Tiny Tadpoles poem



Tiny Tadpoles

Tiny little tadpoles
Have hatched out of their eggs.

Tiny little tadpoles
Start to grow their legs.

Tiny little tadpoles
Grow and grow and grow.

Tiny little tadpoles
Will soon be frogs, you know!



Tiny little tadpoles
Have grown up into frogs.

Swimming in the water,
And sitting on their logs.

