

The Literacy Assistance Program

Information for Head Teachers and Classroom Teachers

Foundations of the Program

The Literacy Assistance program is based on a program developed in the 1970s by New Zealand educator Marie Clay. *This program was designed for children whose first language is English. For Fiji, we have made some modifications, due to English being the second language. We also have fewer resources available so have to make some compromises at this stage.*

Reading Recovery is a school-based, short-term intervention program designed for children who are the lowest achieving in literacy after their first year of school. For instance, a child who is unable to read the simplest of books and unable to use phonics, after a year in school, would be appropriate for a referral to the program.

In this program, we are targeting children who fail to read after two years at school, allowing for the fact that for most, English is a second language, and education in English is not compulsory in kindergarten.

The Reading Recovery program involves intensive one-to-one lessons for 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week, with a trained Beacon Media Literacy Assistant.

When there are many students who need to be on the program, and there is a limited number of Literacy Assistants available, the program can be modified: 20-minute one-on-one sessions instead of 30 minutes; 3 days per child each week instead of 5 days. Please note that 3 sessions per week is the minimum. It would be unrealistic for one Literacy Assistant (working 5 mornings per week) to take on more than 10 students, working one at a time. (Part-time Assistants will take on a number of students in proportion to that.)

Description of the program

1. The lowest-achieving children in the class are identified at the beginning of Year 3. The assessment is made by means of a Running Records test and a sound identification test. The Running Records test will establish the Reading Level of the child. Running Records levels are from Level 1 (a basic beginner) to Level 30 (a competent reader).
2. Daily 30-minute lessons (*or 20 minutes minimum*) are individually designed and delivered by specially trained Literacy Assistants, one-on-one.
3. The students' Running Records scores are matched with a set of leveled books or story cards. For example, a child who scores at Level 0 on a Running Records test will go ahead and read *all* the Level 1 story cards in the Literacy Kit, over a period of a few weeks. Once the child has read all the Level 1 books, the Level 1 Running Records test is given. If the child scores 95% or above, the child then goes on to read all the Level 2 stories, and so on.
4. During the one-on-one lessons, children read two story cards. These include one or two **familiar** books, (a rereading of previous well-known story), and the introduction and reading of a **new story**, (called **instructional** reading). There will also be some work on learning basic phonics (initial sounds). Phonics will also be taught incidentally during the reading of the story card, e.g. sounding out the words.
5. Children also compose, write and read their own message in the form of a sentence. The student will think of, and write an original sentence in an exercise book. The child is not expected to know how

to spell every word of their sentence. The Literacy Assistant may contribute to the physical writing of the sentence. The main focus is on the child composing and expressing an idea. The De Bono Thinking hats are a good tool for promoting discussion about a story and developing ideas for writing a sentence.

Note:

For children who have a problem with speaking English, a picture test can be used, asking the child to talk about the pictures in a book. If English language is a problem, then time needs to be spent on conversational English before teaching reading.

The Goal

The goal of the program is to bring children up to the level of their peers and to give them the assistance they need to develop independent reading and writing strategies. Once they are reading and writing at a level equivalent to that of their peers, their series of lessons is discontinued.

The program is not intended as an alternative to classroom teaching, but is complementary, to enable children to engage in their classroom program.

Professional development for Literacy Assistants

An essential component of the program is the training of the Literacy Assistants who provide the tutorial instruction. A 5-day course is run by qualified trainers. During the course the Assistants will learn to observe, analyze, and interpret the reading and writing behaviours of individual students and to design and implement an individual program to meet each student's needs. There is also a practical element of the course where Assistants gain practical experience working with school students.

Support for Literacy Assistants

Once working in a school, it is important that the Literacy Assistants do not work in isolation. The school must make sure that there is regular contact and discussion with the classroom teacher. The Literacy Assistant and classroom teacher work together on student progress, not independently.

Practical needs of the Literacy assistant

1. A quiet space for the Literacy assistant to work one-on-one with children. Because time is the essence, and only 20 minutes per student is allocated, it is important that the working space is not a long distance from the classroom, because time will be lost with coming and going from the classroom to the Assistant's work space. In good weather, a desk and two chairs outside the classroom would be suitable, if there is no other suitable space available. It is a good idea that the classroom teacher monitors the students that are coming and going. The can assist greatly by sending the next child on the list as one returns to the classroom.
2. Each student on the program will need a manila folder. Inside this folder will be record sheets, some of which will need to be photocopied. The Literacy Assistant therefore needs access to a photocopier. Each student will also need an exercise book for the writing section of the lesson. The Assistant will also need a set of ordinary plain small envelopes.

3. The Literacy Kit has been purchased by the school and is the property of the school. The kit is used *only* by the Literacy Assistants and not by classroom teachers. A storage space for the kit must be found, and safely guarded, so that students and/or teachers do not help themselves.

Getting started

1. The class teacher will identify the students at-risk, through one-on-one testing of Initial Sounds, and Running Records tests. The Literacy Assistant has been trained to do such testing and can assist in testing.
2. Once the at-risk students have been identified, the classroom teacher will draw up a timetable for the Literacy Assistants so that the Assistants know what they are meant to be doing every moment of the day. The teacher will write a list of the students at-risk and the times and days of their sessions.
3. The Literacy Assistants will organize their materials, name student folders and exercise books, and make the extra things required such as flashcards and word games.
4. The Literacy Assistant will make photocopies of blank student record sheets and the levelled reading lists. There will be one levelled reading list per student folder. The story titles are ticked off as the student completes them.

Checklist for student folders:

Each student folder should contain:

- A record of daily activities and progress
- Running Records test results (with dates)
- A list of Leveled Reading Titles, which can be ticked off as the student works through these.
- An exercise book
- An envelope for storing the 5 words that the student is working on (may be phonics or sight words)

Daily Activities (approx. 5 minutes per activity)

Name:

Stories	Read at least two stories each session: one or two Familiar and one Instructional
Sounds (Phonics)	Briefly revise previous sounds taught and introduce a new one if the student is ready. Make use of flashcards, phonics charts, Bible Phonics and phonics games such as 'I spy'.
Sight words	Work on 5 Dolch words at a time. Keep a list of words known. Write the 5 words being learned on small individual pieces of paper and store them in an envelope. Tick the back of the paper each time the word is said correctly. Five ticks after 5 sessions means the word is known and can be replaced. Also make use of word games.
Sentence	The student thinks of their own short sentence, says the sentence out loud and writes it in the exercise book with assistance. It can be a response to one of the stories read. De Bono's Thinking Hats can be used.

Note: Some children will not get through all of four activities in 20 minutes. If for example, they only get through two, work on the other two activities in the next session.

When to conduct one-on-one sessions

Efficient use of time is the key. Students can be taken out of class during any literacy activity: oral or written. This includes handwriting, show and tell and library periods. The classroom teacher will use discretion as to whether a student can miss a science, social studies or health lessons occasionally. If for example, a student misses Social Studies one week, then the teacher can make sure that a different student misses Social Studies the next week. The other way of dealing with this is to place the Literacy Assistant next to at-risk students to quietly assist with written work during these subjects. Any subject work that involves reading could be a waste of time for the student who cannot read, but if they have the support of a literacy assistant they will have a positive attitude to learning and not feel isolated. Subjects that should not be missed: Maths, Christian Studies, Vernacular language, Physical education. There will be a number of students who need assistance in Maths. The Literacy Assistant can sit beside such a student in the classroom and quietly give help.

Documentation

The following record keeping is required by the Literacy Assistants:

1. Student record sheet
2. Running Records progress sheet

How to fill out student record sheet:

Name:..... **Class**

Date of session	Familiar reading	Instructional reading	Phonics	Sight words	Sentence
11 . 09 . 18	Level 4 Look at me	Level 5 Hide the baby	3 letter words: "c-a-t"	help, not, want, said, will (<i>working on Dolch group 31-45</i>)	✓

How to fill out a Running Records progress sheet

A separate sheet will be required to record the results of Running Records Tests. Students should be tested approximately once every few weeks, or when they have completed all the story titles on a particular level in the kit.

Name..... Class

Date	Test Level	Score
9 . 2 . 17	Level 1	85%
20. 2 .17	Level 1	95%
15 . 3 . 17	Level 2	97%

Note that the score on the first Level 1 test was not satisfactory, (not 95% or above) so more work had to be done on sounds and sight words, then the test repeated.

Checklist for schools receiving Literacy Assistants

1. Does the Literacy Assistant have a proper place to work?
2. Is there storage for a) Literacy Kit b) the student record folders
3. Have Running Records tests been done before getting started on the program, and if so, how many children per class are in need of special assistance? (e.g. are there more than 10 in the class reading at Level 1 or below?)
4. Is the Literacy Assistant conducting one-on-one sessions 3 times a week with each of their students?
5. Is the full-time Literacy Assistant working with *no more than* 10 students? (a proportional number for part-time)
6. Has the school budgeted for the photocopying needs of the Literacy Assistant?
7. Is the Literacy Assistant in communication with the classroom teacher and receiving adequate support?