

Language learning in the PYP

The complex processes involved in language learning represent a series of developmental continuums. A teacher collects data in order to identify where on those continuums a student is positioned to better design appropriate learning experiences. These experiences are designed to move the student from one development phase to the next. In this way, the learner is able to build on established skills and understanding, while being supported to meet appropriate challenges to extend their learning. Acknowledging that learning language is a developmental process, the ISUtrecht language document presents a set of developmental continuums that are designed as tools to assist teachers in monitoring students' development throughout their primary school experience with us.

The four language continuums in this document have been organized into various developmental phases with each phase building upon and complementing the previous one. The continuums make explicit the conceptual understandings that need to be developed at each phase. Evidence of these understandings is described in the learning outcomes associated with each phase. Bearing in mind the range of individual differences and the diversity of language learning experiences, learners are likely to display understanding and skills from more than one of the developmental phases at a time. Some learners may enter the programme already demonstrating all of the outcomes in the first phase, while others may not demonstrate all of the outcomes in the higher levels when they transfer into secondary. However, the identification of possible learning outcomes across various phases allows teachers to plan learning experiences that are challenging, rigorous and relevant to each student's knowledge, understanding and skills, according to their previous experience, individual starting points and diverse ways of learning.

Role Play Phase

Usual grade levels: kindergarten

Readers in this phase display reading-like behaviours when interacting with texts such as picture books, traditional tales, and simple informational texts. They rely heavily on topic knowledge, pictures and memorisation when 'reading' texts previously heard. Although Role Play readers may begin to identify their own name, or parts of it, they are yet to match spoken and written words.

In this phase, writers emulate adult writing by experimenting with marks to represent written language. Role Play writers are beginning to understand that writing is used to convey meaning or messages; however, as understandings about sound-symbol relationships are yet to develop, their messages are not readable by others. Role Play writers rely heavily on topic knowledge to generate text.

Some typical learning experiences for this phase are:

- Expose students to a range of text forms, pointing out purpose.
- Joint construction of meaningful environmental print.
- Providing opportunities for students to play at 'reading' and 'writing' a variety of texts, both literary and informational.
- Providing opportunities for students to develop and use new vocabulary.
- Discussions to encourage students to respond to texts to understand that writing has a purpose and an intended audience and to understand reading behaviours.
- Teach students the concepts of and modeling the use of conventions of print.
- Building students' knowledge of sound-symbol relationships.
- Teaching students strategies for how to locate, select and evaluate texts, and how to self-reflect while reading and writing.
- Modeling the connection between oral and written language, the composition of simple sentences and simple publishing alternatives.

Experimental Phase

Usual grade levels: kindergarten through grade 2

In this phase, readers use memory of familiar, predictable texts and their developing sound-symbol knowledge to match some spoken words with written words. Experimental readers are focused on understanding and conveying the meaning of these texts rather than reading all words accurately. They read and comprehend texts with repetitive, limited and known vocabulary and supportive illustrations.

In this phase, writers are aware that speech can be written down. Experimental writers rely on familiar topics to generate a variety of texts such as greeting cards, lists and letters. They demonstrate an understanding of one-to-one correspondence by representing most spoken words in their written texts. These words may consist of one, two or three letters, and reflect their developing understanding of sound-symbol relationships.

Some typical learning experiences for this phase are:

- Expose students to a range of text forms, pointing out purpose.
- Joint construction of meaningful environmental print.
- Reading and re-reading a variety of texts both literary and informational, providing opportunities for students to do the same and providing opportunities for students to compose similar texts.
- Discussions to provide opportunities for students to share and justify opinions and feelings about texts.
- Discussions about decisions authors and illustrators make when creating texts, such as the ways characters are represented.
- Teaching students to draw upon information in the text to better comprehend.
- Building students' knowledge of different text forms.
- Building students' knowledge of text organization and vocabulary.
- Teaching word-identification strategies,

- Teaching the use of parts of speech.
- Continue building students' sight vocabulary, phonological awareness, and graphophonic and word knowledge.
- Modelling the use of conventions of print, such as commonly used punctuation.
- Modelling the construction of sentences, how to group information that is related to compose a text, simple ways to plan for writing, simple ways to proofread and edit, and how to reflect on the writing process and products.

Early phase

Usual grade levels: grade 1 – grade 4

Early readers recognise a bank of frequently used words and use a small range of strategies to comprehend texts. These include short literary texts and structured informational texts that have familiar vocabulary and are supported by illustrations. Reading of unfamiliar texts is often slow and deliberate as they focus on exactly what is on the page, using sounding out as a primary word-identification strategy.

Early writers produce a small range of texts that exhibit some of the conventions of writing. Texts such as retells, reports and emails are composed to share experiences, information or feelings.

Some typical learning experiences for this phase are:

- Joint construction of meaningful environmental print.
- Reading and writing a variety of texts both literary and informational, providing opportunities for students to do the same.
- Discussions to encourage students to listen to the opinions and justifications of others, recognising different points of view and interpretations, how and why facts, characters, or events are presented in a particular way and how texts are written for different purposes and audiences.
- Discussing the purpose and audience of a range of text forms.
- Teaching students to identify explicit and implicit information and to make connections within texts using this information.
- Teaching that authors and illustrators use various devices to influence meaning.
- Teaching the use of more sophisticated conventions of print and parts of speech.
- Teaching more reading, writing and self-reflection strategies, and different ways to locate, select and evaluate texts.
- Teaching students to construct and manipulate sentences, to plan for writing in a variety of ways, how to use proofreading and editing to refine their writing, and how to find, record and organise information from texts.
- Continuing to build students' knowledge of different text forms and vocabulary.
- Continuing to build students' grammatical and cultural knowledge about language.
- Modelling the use of literary devices, how to group together sentences with similar information, a variety of publishing alternatives, and how to reflect on the writing process and products

Transitional phase

Usual grade levels: grade 2 – grade 5

In this phase, readers are beginning to integrate strategies to identify unknown words and to comprehend text. These strategies, combined with an increasing bank of sight words, enable readers to read texts such as novels, newspapers and websites with familiar content fluently and with expression. Transitional readers reflect on strategies used and are beginning to discuss their effectiveness.

Transitional writers show increasing control over the conventions of writing such as punctuation, spelling and text organisation. They consider audience and purpose when selecting ideas and information to be included in texts. They compose a range of texts, including explanations, narratives, brochures and electronic presentations. Writing shows evidence of a bank of known words that are spelt correctly. Transitional writers are moving away from a heavy reliance on sounding out and are beginning to integrate visual and meaning-based strategies to spell unknown words.

Some typical learning experiences for this phase are:

- Provide opportunities for students to read and craft a wide range of texts.
- Joint construction of meaningful environmental print and discussions of the features of each.
- Jointly analyse texts where combinations and adaptations of text structure and text organisation have been used.
- Discussions about how readers may react to and interpret texts differently, how authors and illustrators use devices to target specific audiences, and to provide opportunities for students to challenge the author's view.
- Discussing some of the reasons writers choose one particular text form over others, and how writers' knowledge, experiences and perspective influence the composition of a text.
- Analysing texts, identifying explicit and implicit information.
- Teaching students to identify the role of language features in a variety of texts.
- Teaching students how to represent characters and events or use devices to create specific effects, to construct and manipulate sentences, and to group sentences into a paragraph.
- Building students' vocabulary of less common words.
- Building students' knowledge orthographic, and world knowledge.
- Continuing to make deeper connections within texts, using both explicit and implicit information.
- Continue building students' knowledge about words and word parts.
- Continue teaching strategies used throughout the writing process.
- Consolidating and teaching additional comprehension, word-identification, location, selection, evaluation and self-reflection strategies.
- Extending students' knowledge of the use of punctuation and parts of speech.

- Modelling how concept knowledge and understandings can be shaped and reshaped using information from a variety of texts.
- Modelling how to reflect on the writing process and products.

Proficient/Conventional phase

Usual grade levels: grade 4 – secondary

Proficient readers have developed a multi-strategy approach to identify unknown words and comprehend demanding texts such as subject-specific textbooks, novels and essays. They are able to select strategies appropriate to the purpose and complexity of the text. Readers have a greater ability to connect topic, grammatical, cultural/world and text-structure knowledge with what is new in the text. Proficient readers identify the target audience of a text. They draw on evidence from their own experience to challenge or question the text.

Conventional writers demonstrate control over the conventions of writing and most components of the writing process. While composing, they take responsibility for adjusting the language and content to suit specific audiences and purposes. Conventional writers craft a variety of literary and informational texts, such as biographies, web pages and documentary scripts. In this phase, writers use an increasing bank of known words and select from a wide vocabulary. They integrate a range of strategies to spell unknown words.

- Providing opportunities for students to read a wide range of texts.
- Analysing texts using information to suit different purposes and audiences.
- Providing opportunities for students to discuss how the ideologies of the reader and the author combine to create an interpretation of the text.
- Providing opportunities for students to identify devices used to influence readers to take a particular view.
- Teaching students to analyse how authors combine language features and manipulate texts to achieve a purpose.
- Teaching different ways to develop cohesive paragraphs.
- Continue exposing students to a range of text forms, discussing the features of each, and how writers' and readers' knowledge, experiences and perspective affect the composition and interpretation of texts.
- Continue building students' knowledge about words and word parts.
- Continue teaching students to construct and manipulate a variety of sentences and text forms.
- Continue teaching strategies used throughout the writing process.
- Consolidating spelling strategies.
- Providing opportunities for students to explain their choices in writing.
- Extending students' knowledge of the use of punctuation, parts of speech and their relationships,
- Modelling how to reflect on the writing process and products.