

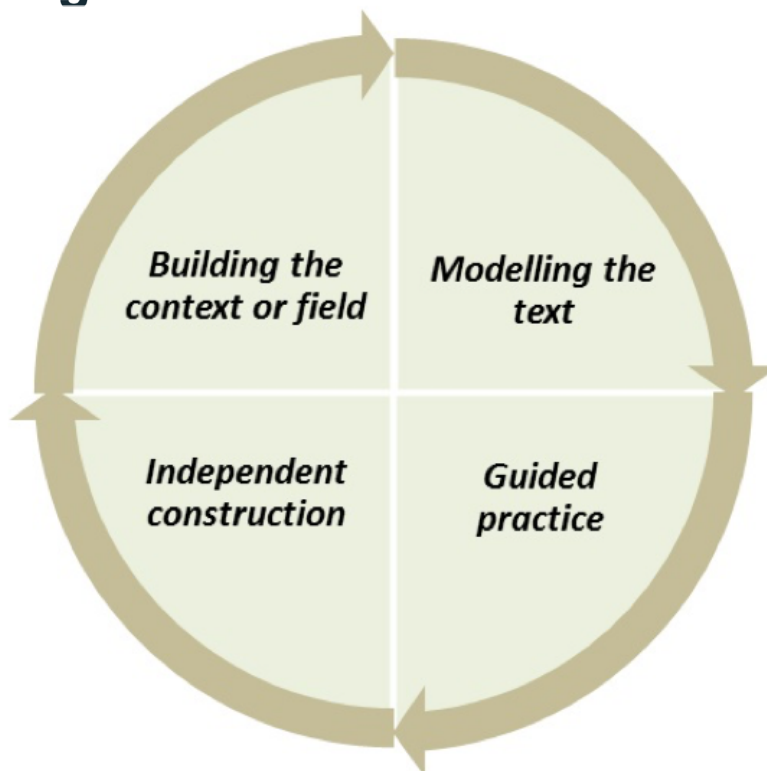
## **It's not what we do, it's how we do it – modelled reading**



Application of the teaching and learning cycle guides our work with texts in primary classrooms. Each element in the process is recognised as critical to our students' literacy development.

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The cycle has become so much a part of our work that we almost don't even have to think about it. We can get into what feels like a sound routine when working with a new text, a new genre, concept or topic. And that is where things can become unstuck.



To maximise the effect of our teaching we continually review and revise our practice. My recent work with teachers has assisted us all that it's time to re-examine each of the elements and processes of the teaching and learning cycle. This resource starts with modelling reading. We'll deal with the others in future resources.

## **Modelling the text**

If we are to do things differently, we need to be able to identify what we are doing now. What does 'modelling the text' look like?

For a start, there is little clear and explicit information about how to do it.

Reading programs and units of work will include a variety of activities designed to 'orientate' the developing readers to a text. These may include talking through the book, predicting the content from the cover, looking at the pictures, drawing on background information, symbols used, diagrams to explain sequences, developing knowledge about facts about the text, examining elements of the text such as the title page, title, author, publisher and date, etc etc.

Many of these ideas fall into the ‘building the context or field’ element of the T&L cycle. Each is worthwhile for what it is.

But what is it? It is not modeling the reading of the text. Reading a text is about reading the text. It’s about what reading looks and sounds like; what is in the text.

Our students need to know what reading looks and sounds like. To do this, they need to hear others read.

Many children bring well-developed text knowledge with them. Their parents value reading and are confident with their own reading. These children are read to frequently, engage in conversations about stories and information, use text effectively outside of the classroom, and are involved in environmental print and its value.

When a child doesn’t have that background, perhaps coming from a home where nobody reads, then there are no models. TV newsreaders don’t appear to read, and texts on a device are rarely designed for reading aloud. That leaves us.

All that other stuff is important as our children learn how texts work. But they need to know that text is for reading.



## Modelling reading

**Value:** We can re-evaluate reading aloud to our students as an invaluable motivating tool, and as a demonstration of the meaning-making process. There may not be the explicit instructional opportunities of other reading practices, but that is not the purpose of modelling reading.

**Purpose:** Reading to our students makes them keen to learn to read. It is the demonstration of why reading is important. We can use it to model a point of reading interest, such as the effect of particular literary, persuasive or informative devices. But its primary purpose is not to demonstrate our own mastery, or to examine the author's mastery. It is to show what reading a selected text looks and sounds like.

**Text selection:** Our priority is to select texts that will engage the students in sophisticated ideas, in concepts and thoughts that assist them with learning about themselves and their world. A second consideration is the teaching opportunities that may arise. For example, a paragraph of a cleverly developed argument may provide a reference for points to consider for discussion as students develop their own persuasive writing skills.

**Teaching from the text:** The teacher reads. Instruction does not interrupt the reading. The engagement of the students with the text comes first. A brief vocabulary alternative may be provided if misunderstanding could impact on overall text meaning. Following the reading, prompts for discussion of the text can be utilised, to support students in a collaborative construction of meaning.

**The work of reading:** The teacher does all the print work. The teacher provides the structures for students to do the meaning-making work. Students are not directed towards a predetermined meaning. The teacher is the expert in reading, each student is a meaning-maker.

**Discussion:** Structures for discussion allow students to use their noticing and wondering about the text to explore meaning. Text-based and/or closed questions from the teacher are not used. (See list below for sources ideas and structures to develop collaborative meaning-making).

Based on Burkins & Yaris (2016) pp 32-33

Such a focus on the authentic modeling of authentic texts will ensure:

Effective literacy programs [that] enable students to move between reading and writing, and involve them in speaking and listening experiences which support and extend their literacy learning and skills (Christie, 2005).

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## Resources

Chambers, A. (1993) Tell me: Children, reading and talk Newtown: PETA

Jones P. (Ed). (1996) Talking to Learn Newtown: PETA

Jones P., Simpson, A. & Thwaite, A. (2018) Talking the Talk – Snapshots from Australian Classrooms, Newtown: PETAA

### **For follow-up activities that can assist students as they make meaning:**

Hoyt, L. (2008) Revisit, Reflect, Retell: Strategies for Improving Reading Comprehension Portsmouth NH: Heinemann

### **For Ideas and suggestions for books to read to all ages:**

Trelease, J. (2013) The Read-Aloud Handbook (7th Ed) NY: Penguin

## References

Burkins, J. & Yaris, K. (2016) Who's doing the work? : how to say less so your readers can do more Portland Maine: Stenhouse



Christie, F. (2005) cited in Victorian State Government: Department of Education and Training at <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/discipline/english/literacy/readingviewing/Pages/teachingpraccycle.aspx#link24> accessed 03/09/2019

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