



What should we think about for equitable literacy teaching?

National Literacy Network 15.3.19

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Why is literacy teaching so hard to get right?

Two problematic areas – each with implications:

- Literacy is a **social practice** and reading is a **habit of mind and language**, not just autonomous knowledge and skills
- In progressing learning, teachers work to a broad horizon, not a linear track so pathways to progression vary – children will get there in different ways.



Literacy as social practice 1

- Literacy and numeracy – all learning – is shaped by families and communities
- What we learn depends on what we think something is for -is it about pleasure & relaxation, work, or just irrelevant?
- How we engage depends on how familiar or unfamiliar something appears
- How quickly we ‘learn’ depends on how we engage & on how well the differences between the familiar and unfamiliar are bridged - this is intellectual, social & emotional
- Schools make assumptions and often need stronger and more careful bridge-building



Literacy as social practice 2

- For many children from low literacy backgrounds school is their main literacy experience: they learn what we teach.
- So what do we teach? Is reading about pleasure & relaxation? About 'having a go and being adventurous?' About making different meanings & thinking new thoughts? About connecting reading to life? Or is it about worksheets & getting it right? Reading texts only if you know all the words and the sounds? Does the way we teach reading define & grade, or does it create friendships & laughter?
- Schools can make assumptions
- Schools can skew the focus



Phonically regular text – learning to think only in the moment, as right/wrong

Bob is a bug

Bob bug has a mum

His mum is big

Bob has a dad

His dad is fit

Bob has a cup

His cup has a lid

Bob has a cot

His cot has a rug

Mum! Dad! A big bad rat.

Bob bug has a hug



Similar level: thinking across the text

It was Kipper's birthday

Kipper wanted a party

Everyone wanted to come

Biff put up balloons

Mum made a cake

Dad took a sandwich [PICTURE]

'Stop it!' said mum

Everyone came to the party

Dad wanted to play a game

But Kipper put the television on

Oh No! said mum [PICTURE]

What a mess.

The children played with the bubbles

What a good party everyone said.

How inequality works: Language as a habit of mind – the oral to written leftward shift



Then away down the hill trotted Lucie and Mrs. Tiggy-winkle with the bundles of clothes

Pedagogy of poverty (Martin Haberman)

Highly performative, teacher-directed, skills-based pedagogies:

- Giving information and grades, directions, assignments, tests & homework
- Asking questions
- Monitoring work
- Settling disputes
- Punishing non-compliance

BUT...

“Before we can make workers, we must first make people, but people are not made - they are conserved and grown“

Pedagogy of poverty

“The pedagogy of poverty does not work.

Youngsters achieve neither a minimum level of life skills nor what they are capable of learning.

The classroom atmosphere created by constant teacher direction and student compliance seethes with passive resentment that sometimes bubbles up into overt resistance. Teachers burn out because of the emotional and physical energy that they must expend to maintain their authority every hour of every day.”



The unintended consequences of school systems

- Children accumulate multipliers of advantage/disadvantage through everyday experiences.
- Some enter an ‘upward spiral’ - success breeds success.
- Others enter a ‘downward spiral’ where lack of early success is allowed to breed more adult-directed, restrictive activities in schools, fewer formal and informal practice opportunities, low esteem, and eventually intellectual, social and emotional disengagement.
- **Do current differentiation practices enshrine disadvantage?**

Something to think about...

To what extent does your current literacy curriculum and policy promote good habits of mind and good habits of language?



Literacy as social practice in the secondary school

Secondary school teachers, according to their discipline:

- Demonstrate different literate behaviours
- Use different kinds of thinking – bring a different mindset, look for different things
- Use texts with different structures
- Use different vocabulary & syntax
- Learning to read like a Chemist/ Historian/ Geographer is learning to think like a Chemist/ Historian/ Geographer

So why do we assume a generic literacy approach across the school?



What would happen if ...

1. We stopped talk of 'able' and 'less able' children, and spoke of 'experienced' and 'inexperienced' instead?
2. We accepted the different disciplines in school provide micro-climates of people who think differently, and use literacy differently; there is no 'one' literacy but many disciplinary literacies?
3. We asked teachers and head teachers: To what extent does your current literacy curriculum & policy promote good habits of mind and good habits of language?

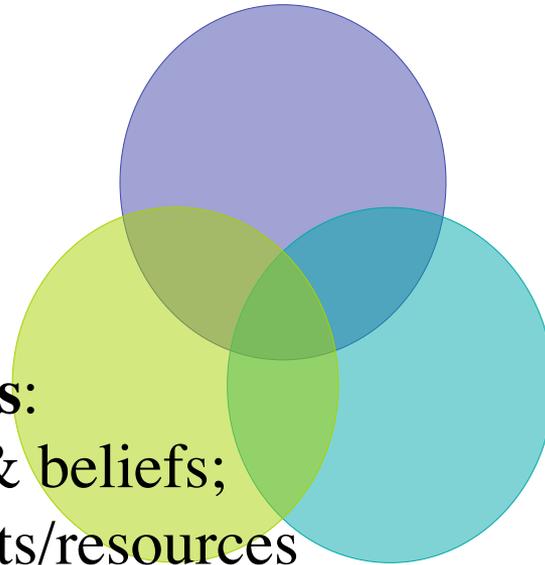


Thinking about how to effectively bridge to school

- Values around books & reading – beliefs about why we read; ideas of what's reading about.
- Show don't tell: spaces to learn that books are relaxing, social, good fun.
- Use what children know about the world- the kinds of knowledge they have to bring, and ensure the book-stock embraces it, attend to how it makes them feel
- Knowledge/skills and experiences for reading: the 'reading scheme' is not enough!

Strathclyde 3 Domain Model: a tool to Different KINDS of evidence & pathways

Cognitive knowledge skills, phonological aware; phonic/alphabetic;
Decoding cues & strategies, concepts abt print; comprehension skills.



Cultural /social capitals:
home practices, values & beliefs;
funds of knowledge; texts/resources
available; ideas/ experiences/
people/ activities/ home literacies

Personal/social identity:
aspirations; reader
Identity; friendships; view
of self as a reader& how
positioned by others;
entitlement

The ethics of “differentiation”

- Pupil progress is not a straight line

- KS1 to KS2: 55%

Most unpredictable for lowest-scoring pupils

- KS2 to KS3: 45%
- KS3 to KS4: 33%
- KS1 to 2, 3, & 4: 9%

(Becky Allen: Education Datalab)

- Setting, streaming, grouping: chance & justice?
- Traditional differentiation may limit & constrain, not support

The ethics of “differentiation”

What value and meaning do we bestow on temporary situations around attainment?

Assumptions of Predictive capacity:

- The percentage of children whose test score at 6-7yrs roughly predicts their score at 10-11 yrs?
- The percentage whose 10-11yr score roughly predicts their 13-14yrs score?
- The percentage whose score at 13-14yrs predicts their results aged 15-16?

The ethics of differentiation

- Pupil progress is not a straight line
 - Age 6-7 to 10-11yrs : **55%**

Most unpredictable for lowest-scoring pupils

- Age 10-11 to 13-14: **45%**
- 13-14 to 15-16: **33%**
- Across all 4 tests: **9%**

(Becky Allen: Education Datalab)

Predictive capacity

This may indicate

- poorly aligned tests **OR**
- that learning is not a linear and constant trajectory – that there are plateaus and sudden rises. Whether a child is assessed on a plateau or just after a rise is complete chance. ***It is just a helpful snapshot.***
- Predictive capacity of SNSA is an empirical question – we need 12 consecutive yrs of data to answer it.

Until then, do not harm. So rethink current policies on:

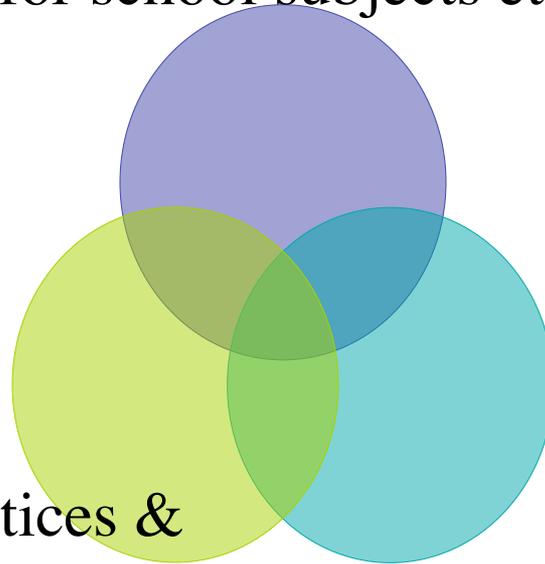
- Setting, streaming, grouping
- Traditional differentiation may limit & constrain, not support & grow

What matters for equity?

- **Environment AND teaching programmes**
- **Meaningful – authentic tasks**
- **Useful content**
- **Continuous print & quality texts**
- **Social sense-making/ definition of what matters**
- **Actively engaging**
- **Balance learner control & teacher control**
- **Iterative, responsive to learner voice and agency (application opportunities)**

Strathclyde model: Pathways to impact

Cognitive knowledge, skills; phonics;
comprehension, linguistic & text knowledge
engagement for school subjects etc.



Cultural capital, practices &
funds of knowledge – beliefs,
ideas, experiences, people,
activities, home literacies

Personal/social identity,
aspirations, entitlement
how presenting & how
positioned as a learner
by self & others