

What types of books should be in P-2 classroom libraries?

A diverse range of books should be present in P-2 classrooms, including picture books, decodable texts, predictable texts such as levelled books, non-fiction and narrative, poetry, and culturally diverse literature. Classroom libraries should cater to various interests and include a range of complexity to engage and support growth for all learners. Students should be able to see themselves in text and engage with texts that are meaningful to them, build on their interests and skills and support the development of background knowledge. Experiences with books is a critical part of literacy development. Beginning on the first day of school, students should have access to a variety of books in the classroom library.

How does each type of book respond to the needs of P-2 learners?

Even if they are not yet able to decode with mastery, all students should have access to a variety of books from the first day of school. Access to books can foster a love reading, creativity and imagination and support literacy development which has lifelong benefits. Students should have regular access to books in the following categories:

Pictures books/look books are rich in illustrations and visual content to engage young learners' attention and stimulate their imagination. These look books often feature diverse cultures and settings, can connect to topics related to other content areas, and allow students to engage with texts that are meaningful to them, build on their interests, and develop background knowledge.

Predictable texts such as levelled books and rhyming books have a repetitive pattern or structure that enables young learners to anticipate what comes next, making it easier for them to understand and follow along. They offer learners opportunities to read high-frequency words in context, build vocabulary, and comprehension of basic story structures.

Decodable texts support systematic phonics instruction and learning, which is effective in teaching children to read and spell. They help establish a solid foundation by offering opportunities to connect sounds to letters and blend the sounds learned through explicit instruction to form words.

When should students engage with text during the literacy block?

Students should have opportunities to engage with text during read-aloud, shared reading, independent reading, small group instruction. In addition, books can be sent home from school.

What books can be sent home in student “book bags”?

The selection of books sent home should be rotated regularly to keep students excited about new reading opportunities and continuously develop their reading skills. This can include a mixture of decodable text focused on sound letter combinations for which the student is approaching mastery, predictable text with a complexity that aligns with the students' reading behaviours, and books selected by the students based on their interests. This can also include the occasional look book if it is particularly fascinating for the student. Providing access to books at home can support the development of reading skills and confidence and can also help instill a love of reading by providing materials that are engaging, informative, and enjoyable.

What are the essential components of early literacy instruction?

The essential components of reading instruction can be found in the [Six Pillars of Effective Reading Instruction](#) document. These include oral language, phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and reading comprehension. Daily instruction in writing is also critical to literacy development and provides the opportunity to apply and practice phonics skills and spelling, use new vocabulary, develop handwriting skills, and express thoughts and ideas. Writing activities can include a mix of drawing and writing words, sentences, and paragraphs (building in complexity from grade primary to two) for a variety of audiences and purposes.

When do I teach phonics and phonological awareness?

For an example of when phonics and phonological awareness can be taught during the 123-minute literacy block see [Instructional Guidelines to Support the Six Pillars of Effective Reading Instruction](#). Phonological awareness and phonics should be taught systematically and explicitly during the day. Throughout the day students should have authentic opportunities to use these skills when reading and writing.

Can reading and writing workshops take place during the 123 minutes of instructional literacy time?

Yes, reading and writing workshops can take place during the literacy block. The workshop model is an instructional approach that combines explicit teaching with opportunities for practice, discussion, and reflection, all within a student-centered, engaging framework. This method supports the development of independent reading and writing skills and nurtures a positive community of learning within the classroom. Reading and writing workshops can contextualise phonics and phonemic awareness learned explicitly during a dedicated time and can provide opportunities for students to apply their developing skills in authentic reading and writing experiences. In addition, these workshops provide opportunities to integrate content area learning within the literacy block. This approach aligns with the [Inclusive Education Policy](#) due to its emphasis on individualized instruction and student choice. This model provides a structured yet flexible environment where students engage with texts supported by explicit instruction, guided practice, and opportunities for independent reading and writing. Refer to [Instructional Guidelines to Support the Six Pillars of Reading Instruction](#) for an example of how reading and writing workshops can be organized within the 123 minutes of instructional time.

What is the role of independent reading and writing time?

Students need time to practice skills learned during explicit instruction. This time offers learners the opportunity to engage actively in their own learning and reflect on their growth as readers and writers. It gives learners the time and space to build reading and writing skills and stamina and make choices about what books to engage with and how to express themselves as writers. It is guided by the teacher but individualized for each student. This time should provide “stimulating and accessible learning opportunities to keep every student engaged, challenged, and inspired” as outlined in the Inclusive Education Policy

What types of visual supports can help students in grades primary to two learn to read and write?

When selecting visual supports on walls or boards, teachers can ask themselves the following questions:

- Are they responsive to the needs of learners?
- Are they dynamic and adjustable to learning needs?
- Do they support current instructional goals?
- Can students interact with them to support their learning?

Visual supports can include word walls, sentence walls, sound walls, alphabet charts, letter formation guides, anchor charts, new vocabulary in either pictures or words (depending on the age level), etc. The key is to ensure that they adapt to student learning needs. This may mean that vocabulary, words, sounds, or processes that are mastered are no longer needed as whole class visual supports and can be replaced with visual supports that align with new learning.

What can small group instruction look like in the P-2 classroom?

Small group instruction is a key component of universal instruction as outlined in the [Multi-Tiered System of Supports](#) (MTSS) approach. The purpose is to promote deeper understanding, engagement, and academic success. Students can be grouped flexibly based on their learning needs. The focus of small group instruction will vary based on the needs of students and the instructional focus. To support reading development, some students may benefit from a group focused on a phonemic awareness or phonics skill and others may benefit from a group which supports the development of reading behaviours and comprehension. To support writing development, one group of writers may need more individualized support with spelling while others may need support with developing ideas, sentence structure, organisation, punctuation, or writing style.

How will P-2 instruction change and how do I prepare for these changes?

Updates to the P-2 curriculum will reflect information that has already been shared with Regional Centres of Education and CSAP. The Six Pillars of Effective Reading Instruction provides an overview on the essential components of reading instruction. There is a renewed focus on explicit and systematic phonological awareness and phonics instruction and a more intentional instruction of oral language and vocabulary. The following documents will help to prepare for changes to the P-2 curriculum:

- [Six Pillars of Effective Reading Instruction](#)
- [Instructional Guidelines to Support the Six Pillars of Effective Reading Instruction](#)
- [Essential Skills for Readers in Primary](#)
- [Essential Skills for Readers in Grade One](#)
- [Essential Skills for Readers in Grade Two](#)
- [Progression of Essential Reading Skills P-2](#)

An overview of the essential components of literacy instruction is provided in response to a question above (*What are the essential components of early literacy instruction?*).

When do I teach phonological awareness and phonics if I am using the Neurolinguistic approach in French Immersion?

Refer to [Instructional Guidelines to Support the Six Pillars of Reading Instruction](#) for an example of how phonological awareness and phonics learning can be distributed in the 123-minute literacy block in French Immersion. Additional opportunities for learners to apply these skills are present in authentic reading and writing experiences within the Neurolinguistic approach. The strategies outlined in *Maternelle à la 3e année: Enseignement de l'écriture* and *Maternelle à la 3e année: Stratégies de lecture* (L'approche neurolinguistique de Germain et Netten) indicate how phonological awareness and phonics are applied when reading continuous text (see strategies 5, 6) and writing (see strategy 3).

If you have other questions regarding P-2 literacy, please email curriculum@novascotia.ca for English Programs and fls@gnspe.ca for French programs. The answers will be added to upcoming FAQ documents.