

Reading

Working with year-level texts

The texts that students read become increasingly complex over time, supporting them to understand text in all learning areas at each year level. For this to occur, when the purpose of the reading is other than learning decoding or reading for pleasure, students need opportunities to engage with texts at or above the complexity described below for each year level. Although fluent readers may still work with simple texts, particularly to reduce cognitive load when new skills or concepts are being introduced, they will be working predominantly with texts that are at least at their year level. This does not mean you should prevent able readers from reading more complex texts; most texts will be at their year level or above. During phase 1, the focus will be on written texts. Many of these texts will also include visual elements such as pictures and illustrations.

Decodable (phonically controlled) texts are used primarily to practise phoneme-grapheme correspondences. Although comprehension opportunities will be less complex in these texts than in those you read aloud to students, you should include a focus on meaning making with every text students read.

The texts referred to on pages 45–47 have been designed for students in New Zealand.

Noticing, recognising, and responding to students' strengths and needs

Except when they are specifically learning to decode text or reading for pleasure, students who are still consolidating their decoding skills need to access year-level texts to develop skills and knowledge (including vocabulary, comprehension, and content knowledge) alongside their peers. Help students do this by adapting the relevant supports and scaffolds, rather than by simplifying or modifying texts. An effective way to accelerate students' learning is to explicitly teach them the features of year-level texts that carry meaning. This will enable them to make sense of texts that are above their traditional 'instructional level'. Students who need to accelerate their decoding skills will continue to require frequent, intensive, and explicit teaching and practice in flexible small groups, targeting their decoding needs.

Students who reach decoding mastery at an accelerated rate of progress need opportunities for enrichment and extension in other literacy domains, such as vocabulary and comprehension, and ample opportunities to read increasingly challenging text.

Texts for the first six months at school

At this level, students are likely to be reading decodable texts in which single-consonant, short-vowel, consonant-digraph, and phoneme-grapheme correspondences are practised in connected text.

These include texts at the Kākano level of the Ready to Read Phonics Plus scope and sequence. These texts have been designed around a scope and sequence of grapheme-phoneme correspondences and include:

- › a simple narrative with a clear beginning, middle, and end
- › some high-frequency words.

Texts for the second half of the first year at school

At this level, students are likely to be reading decodable texts in which consonant patterns, adjacent consonants, and a range of long-vowel phoneme-grapheme correspondences are practised in connected text. These include texts at the Tupu and Māhuri levels of the Ready to Read Phonics Plus scope and sequence. These texts are designed around a scope and sequence of grapheme-phoneme correspondences and include:

- › a variety of sentence structures, including compound, and some complex sentences, with an increasing number of high-frequency words
- › a narrative that has a beginning, middle, and end and that may include a problem and a resolution.

As soon as students can accurately decode texts with words that contain consonant digraphs and adjacent consonants, and have learned long-vowel patterns from early in the chosen phonics scope and sequence, they will be reading a wide range of carefully selected texts with teacher support in ways that align with structured literacy approaches. These texts could include Ready to Read colour-wheel books up to Green level. They will include:

- › generally familiar contexts and settings, one text form, and one main storyline or topic
- › content that is mostly explicitly stated, but also some implicit content that provides opportunities for simple inferences
- › dialogue between easily identified speakers
- › illustrations that support and extend the meaning but do not exactly match the words
- › sentences that run over more than one line without splitting phrases
- › topic words and interest words (including a wide range of regular and irregular verbs and some adjectives and adverbs) that are likely to be in a reader's oral vocabulary and whose meaning is strongly supported by the context or illustrations
- › a range of punctuation, including speech marks and commas, to support phrasing and meaning
- › some visual-language features such as diagrams or speech bubbles.

Texts for the second year at school

Early in year 2, students are likely to be reading decodable texts in which r-controlled vowels, alternative spellings, diphthongs, and morphemes are used in connected text. These could include texts at the Māhuri and Rākau levels of the Ready to Read Phonics Plus scope and sequence. These texts are designed around a scope and sequence of phoneme-grapheme correspondences. They include:

- › a narrative that has a beginning, middle, and end and that may include more than one problem and resolution
- › a variety of sentence structures, including complex sentences.

Students will also be reading a wide range of carefully selected texts (e.g., Ready to Read colour-wheel books at Orange and Turquoise levels) in ways that align with structured literacy approaches. These texts will have characteristics that include:

- › some settings and contexts that may be outside the students' prior knowledge but that they can easily relate to
- › a mix of explicit and implicit content that provides opportunities for simple inferences
- › illustrations that support the meaning and that may suggest new ideas or viewpoints
- › mostly familiar words, but some new topic words and descriptive language (e.g., synonyms, definitions, or explanations) whose meaning is supported by the context
- › visual-language features such as labelled diagrams, inset photographs, and bold text for topic words linked to a glossary.

Texts for the third year at school

Students will be reading fiction and non-fiction texts of varying lengths, such as Ready to Read colour-wheel books at Purple and Gold levels, Junior Journals, CHAPTERS, and texts from other sources, in ways that are aligned with structured literacy approaches. These texts will have characteristics that include:

- › some unfamiliar contexts and settings with shifts in time and place, many characters and events, and more than one storyline in narrative texts
- › a variety of sentence structures, including complex sentences
- › frequent use of dialogue, some of which is not explicitly attributed, and more than one character speaking on a page
- › some unfamiliar words and phrases whose meaning is supported by the context or illustrations, including descriptive vocabulary, subject-specific vocabulary, and commonly used words with multiple meanings

- › a mix of explicit and implicit content, requiring students to make connections between ideas expressed in the text or illustrations and their prior knowledge in order to make simple inferences
- › some pages with no illustrations
- › visual-language features such as subheadings, text boxes, footnotes, glossaries, indexes, and diagrams and maps that are clearly explained and linked to the body text
- › ideas and information organised in paragraphs
- › text that encourages critical analysis by raising wonderings and questions in the mind of the reader within texts and across texts.

These texts will include a range of poetry, children's literature, visual and graphic texts, and informational texts from a range of sources, including digital sources.

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Noticing, recognising, and responding to students' strengths and needs

Except when they are specifically learning to decode text or reading for pleasure, students who are still consolidating their decoding skills need to access year-level texts to develop skills and knowledge (including vocabulary, comprehension, and content knowledge) alongside their peers. Help students do this by adapting the supports and scaffolds for students, rather than by simplifying or modifying texts. An effective way to accelerate students' learning is to explicitly teach the features of year-level texts that carry meaning. This will enable them to make sense of texts that are above their traditional 'instructional level'. When this is not possible, remove barriers and provide alternative ways to access year-level texts, for example, by using audio versions or print-to-speech software. Students who need to accelerate their decoding skills will continue to require frequent, intensive, and explicit teaching and practice in flexible small groups, targeting their decoding needs.

Students who reach fluency and comprehension mastery at an accelerated rate of progress need opportunities for enrichment and extension, and ample opportunity to read increasingly challenging texts.

Selecting text

During this phase, texts will include oral, visual, and written texts (fiction and nonfiction) in print and electronic media. Texts across this phase of learning will also:

- › use appropriate text features, structures, and language to support students' growing understanding about reading and writing texts across the learning areas, building knowledge of content-specific literacy
- › offer opportunities for students to critically analyse and discuss interpretations.

Factors that affect the level of text difficulty include:

- › age appropriateness
- › complexity of ideas
- › structure and coherence of the text
- › syntactic structure of the text
- › difficulty of vocabulary.

Year 4 level texts

The texts that students use to meet the reading demands of the curriculum at this level will be of varying lengths and often include:

- › some abstract ideas that are clearly supported by concrete examples in the text, or easily linked to students' prior knowledge
- › some texts where information and ideas are implicit, and where students need to make inferences based on information that is easy to find (because it is nearby in the text and there is little or no competing information)
- › a straightforward text structure, such as one that follows a recognisable and clear text form, with some compound and complex sentences consisting of two or three clauses
- › some words and phrases that are ambiguous or unfamiliar to students, but whose meaning is supported by the context or clarified by visual features, such as photographs, illustrations, diagrams, or written explanations
- › text that may have visual features that support the ideas and information (e.g., text boxes or maps) or figurative language, such as metaphors, similes, or personification.

Year 5 and 6 level texts

The texts that students use to meet the reading demands of the curriculum at this level will be of varying lengths and will often include:

- › abstract ideas, in greater numbers than in texts at earlier levels, accompanied by concrete examples in the text that help support the students' understanding
- › some ideas and information that are conveyed indirectly and that require students to infer by drawing on related pieces of information in the text, and some information that is irrelevant to the identified purpose for reading (i.e., competing information) which students need to identify and reject as they integrate information in order to answer questions
- › mixed text types (e.g., a complex explanation within a report) with sentences that vary in length and structure (e.g., sentences that begin in different ways, and different kinds of complex sentences with subordinate clauses).

Deciding if a text is at a year 5 or year 6 level involves considering a range of different factors relating to text difficulty, including readability levels, length and complexity of the sentences, and the sophistication of the vocabulary, ideas, concepts, and storylines. School Journals contain items that have been allocated reading year levels; these can be helpful for building a sense of text level to apply to other texts of varying lengths, including books.