CHAPTER 1

Examining literacy in the twenty-first century

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

1.1 identify the literacy gaps children experience in the twenty-first century
1.2 discuss contrasting beliefs relating to literacy education
1.3 describe the various models of schooling and their impact on literacy learning and teaching
1.4 identify how the literacy curriculum can be taught in such a way as to make it more relevant and reflective of young people’s twenty-first century literacy practices
1.5 describe the role the Australian Curriculum plays with regard to literacy
1.6 appreciate the impact of one’s personal vision on literacy development and teaching.
How do highly effective teachers teach literacy?

As a teacher of literacy you will, over the course of your career, develop views about what makes an effective teacher of reading and writing. It has been suggested that the effective teaching of literacy is aligned with the following dimensions: i) understanding the processes of literacy learning; ii) knowing professional standards; iii) knowing students as learners; iv) setting high expectations for students and encouraging risk-taking; v) engaging in a range of teaching strategies; and vi) challenging students with content and in tasks (Hervey, 2013). As you become familiar with the debates, theories and models of practice surrounding the teaching and learning of literacy, you will probably hear how standards have fallen, and that too many children in schools are failing to master the basics of reading, writing, grammar and spelling.

The moral panic surrounding literacy (Gannon & Sawyer, 2015) has been shaped and framed by a reported decline in the performance of Australian students in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). Since the introduction of PISA in 2000, Australian students’ reading scores have consistently declined, except for a slight rise in 2009 (OECD, 2014, 2016). According to the 2015 PISA assessment, ‘Australia’s performance was significantly lower than 11 countries . . . [however it] was not significantly different from that of 13 countries . . . [and] was significantly higher than 44 countries, which included 15 OECD countries’ (Thomson, De Bortoli, & Underwood, 2015, p. 95). The 2016 PIRLS data indicated that ‘Australian students performed significantly higher, on average, than students in 24 countries’ (Thomson, Hillman, Schmid, Rodrigues, & Fularton, 2016, p. ix). High-stakes knowledge culture values metric-driven assessment procedures (Gable & Lingard, 2015; Huddleston & Rockwell, 2015). The global shift towards metrics that centralise assessment, such as SATs (Student Assessment Tests) in the UK, NAPLAN (National Assessment Program — Literacy and Numeracy) in Australia, and the NCLB (No Child Left Behind) policy in the US, does not tell the whole story. Increasingly lost in the debates around effective literacy pedagogy is the fact that effective teaching and learning starts with the child (Robert, 2015; Cambridge Primary Review, 2009). The influence of PISA and PIRLS in Australian classrooms is felt alongside the development of a national curriculum from Foundation to Year 12. This was an initiative that started in 2008 and has resulted in a reconceptualisation of the English curriculum, pedagogical strategies and assessment of literacy in schools. In 2017 Australian schools will consider the introduction of synthetic phonetics to baseline test Year 1 students in the National Year One Literacy and Numeracy Check (Martyn-Jones, 2017).

Increasingly positioned within global participatory networks, effective teaching of literacy involves constantly questioning our understanding of what being literate means in the twenty-first century. On a recent train journey, I sat in a carriage opposite a young boy who I estimated to be about six or seven years of age. I watched him for 20 minutes playing with his Game Boy. As he attempted to teach his grandmother the intricacies of the game, he proceeded to provide very detailed explanations. Ten minutes later, after giving repeated instruction, the child in his exasperation remarked to his ageing relative, ‘It is really easy all you have to do is . . .’. The child laboured to initiate his elderly relative in the rudiments of the game, but after five minutes of trying to work out how to play the game his grandmother gave up, produced a book and started to read. The boy reluctantly turned off his Game Boy, and by the third page he had totally tuned out.

As a teacher of literacy, I have come to understand how reading and writing in the twenty-first century is increasingly shaped by participation as readers and writers in communities of practice. The idea that literacy is only learned within the walls of the classroom fails to include the way literacy learning is closely connected to pupils’ everyday life and interests. Davies (2012) has indicated how we need to be aware of the ways in which contemporary literacy behaviours involve ‘all kinds of social “stuff”’ (p. 20) that surrounds texts. Lankshear and Knobel (2006, p. 13) argue for an acknowledgement that literacy does ‘not exist apart from the social practices in which they are embedded and acquired’. As technologies increasingly transform literacy behaviours and practices, our students are actively creating and participating in new ways of reading and writing. Understanding the epistemological and ontological ‘new’ situates literacy as an ever-emerging assemblage of meanings, practices, technologies and contexts. As students game, blog, email, and use YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram and Snapchat, the new ‘textual landscape’ (Carrington, 2005) has become an assemblage of words, images, sounds, downloads and hyperlinks. Being a reader/writer is increasingly about interaction. Luke (2003, p. 401) has noted how “texts of the new technologies have mutated into complex hybrid systems that have made new demands
on reading and writing, viewing, social exchange, and communication’. Teaching children how to read and write involves having a repertoire of pedagogic skills and a discipline knowledge of what is involved in becoming literate (Costello, 2012). A one-size-fits-all curriculum or pedagogy does not fully cater for the diversity of ways to read and write.

In 2015, the Australian Literacy Educators’ Association declared that in the twenty-first century:

- Literacy is a powerful, wide-ranging life skill beyond traditional notions of talking, listening, reading and writing.
- Learning to be literate plays a central role in determining an individual’s life choices and life chances.
- Meaning making is at the heart of all literate practices.
- Access by all learners to strong, effective, and lifelong literacy education is a key feature of a society committed to equity.
- Educators lead literacy but do not have sole responsibility in literacy education.

(Australian Literacy Educators’ Association [ALEA], 2015)

Rethinking literacy pedagogy for twenty-first century classrooms requires an understanding of the complexity of practices that draw on reading and writing events and behaviours, and how these have changed. Matthew (Year 6), Johnny, Mikey and Nathan (all Year 5) are described by their teachers as lacking in concentration in reading and writing lessons. They have been identified by their teachers as reluctant readers and as struggling with print literacy. Drawn together by a shared passion for comics, computer games, robotics and science fiction, they are avid readers of monthly magazines that serialise sport and martial arts. In class they argue and discuss their interests in anime and manga, trading websites to download updates and participating in online communities that share similar interests. Mikey is enamoured by the character Shaun Murphy from the TV show The Good Doctor and is an exuberant encyclopaedic reference machine about the show. He speaks rapidly to anyone who will listen and his talk is freewheeling, often disjointed and covering any number of topics. He often distracts Nathan, who reads at home and likes to write stories that his mother types up, but never speaks directly to his teacher in class. Mikey, talking about reading and writing at school, remarked how:

In class, I just type on the computer and the teacher keeps telling me to do better and it is boring. It would be great if we could bring our Xboxes to school, or footy mags. I read them all the time at home. I don’t read anything school gives me at home, the books are so boring. I go on the internet and look up footy stuff or Facebook my friends.

New technologies have extended print-based literacy, and children are now using literacy in ways that require teachers to understand and be knowledgeable about a range of literacy behaviours and practices. Effective teachers of literacy will read and enjoy quality literature with pupils, create opportunities for pupils to experience and become skilled as readers and writers across a range of genres and text types, be conversant with using technology in the classroom and make available opportunities for children to use literacy authentically. Effective teachers of literacy provide opportunities for students to work independently and collaboratively, encourage students to inquire and ask questions, and create a classroom that accommodates a diversity of perspectives.

I WONDER . . .
1. Think about how your reading and writing has developed since you left school. List three things you can now do that you could not do as a school leaver.
2. What opportunities, interaction and models helped you to develop your literacy knowledge and skills?
3. What do you think are ‘new literacies’ and how are they best taught?
4. How do you think twenty-first century literacy is best defined?

Chapter overview
This chapter invites you to think about how, as a teacher of literacy, you can best respond to the contemporary landscape of pupils’ literacy behaviours and practices. As children learn to read and write they will be exposed to and experience a range of literacy events and practices in their daily lives. A literacy event is an activity that includes the written word, and a literacy practice is where literacy plays a role in a particular activity (Barton & Hamilton, 1998), such as writing their name on a birthday card or a thank-you letter and sending a text or email to a friend. In writing their name on a letter or sending an email, young children are drawing on the social practice of literacy, and while early attempts at being a reader and writer may not be immediately decipherable as text, children are involved in becoming readers and writers by gaining an understanding of tone and formal or informal register.

As children join the literacy club (Smith, 1988), they do so with the assistance of and modelling by more knowledgeable and proficient readers and writers: parents, grandparents and teachers. This work requires
an understanding that becoming literate requires children’s active and engaged participation across a range of genres and text types — print and multimodal — and effective teachers of literacy are knowledgeable of the pedagogies that can be used to develop literacy skills.

As the teaching of reading and writing continues to be shaped by national and international debates focused on the raising of standards in the teaching and learning of literacy (Snyder, 2008), teachers are increasingly being held accountable. In 2011, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership introduced standards for teachers that sought to define and clarify characteristics of what could be considered effective classroom practice in contemporary schools and were connected to raising student educational attainment. The standards provide a framework for thinking about the work that teachers do and provide a structure for educators to reflect on and develop best practice. The standards indicate a shift towards accountability and situate professional knowledge, professional practice and professional engagement as key components that teachers can use as a tool for self-evaluation and reflection, to demonstrate professional learning and development, and for recording professional achievements.

The three components covered by the standards include the following.

1. **Professional knowledge**
   (a) Know students and how they learn.
   (b) Know the content and how to teach it.

2. **Professional practice**
   (a) Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning.
   (b) Create and maintain a supportive and safe learning environment.
   (c) Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning.

3. **Professional engagement**
   (a) Engage in professional learning.
   (b) Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community.

As teachers, you will be assessed against professional standards. It is important to understand and think about the model of literacy that is being constructed and to be familiar with the standards and curriculum and pedagogical approaches.

Teaching writing and reading in twenty-first century classrooms will increasingly require teachers to challenge assumptions and understandings of literacy that have been based on their own experiences of learning to read and write. It has been claimed that effective ‘teaching is a skill, or a complex combination of skills, but it is much more than that, and a teacher’s knowledge, dispositions, attitudes, values . . . are no less important’ (Alexander et al., 2010, p. 28). Recognising how students possess and perform literacies invariably involves critical reflection about what is literacy and how best to teach it.

Effective teachers of literacy:
- can guide learning through classroom interactions
- can monitor learning and provide feedback
- can influence student outcomes
- adopt a problem-solving stance to their work
- are focused on individual students’ performance in the class
- take advantage of new information, quickly bringing new interpretations and representations of the problem to light.

Introduced in 2018, the Assessment for Graduate Teaching (AfGT) is a synoptic Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA) to be implemented in all Australian Initial Teacher Education (ITE) institutions. It is designed to provide a summative assessment of pre-service teachers, providing evidence of their classroom readiness. Evidence-based approaches to teaching and learning (Hattie, 2012; Marzano, 2007) have developed an instructional framework in which High Impact Teaching Strategies (HITS), it is argued, ‘reliably increase student learning wherever they are applied’ (2017, p. 5). These are outlined in figure 1.1.

As literacy curriculum and pedagogy continue to be debated and subject to reform, it is equally important to remember that effective literacy teaching and learning starts with the child. In an increasingly globalised world it is important to recognise the linguistic, **social and cultural capital** (Bourdieu, 1986) that students bring with them into the classroom and that informs their reading and writing behaviours.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I WONDER . . .</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What are the characteristics of an effective teacher?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. What is the role of the professional standards and professional learning?</td>
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</table>
1.1 Mind the gap: literacy practices in school and outside of school

LEARNING OUTCOME 1.1 Identify the literacy gaps children experience in the twenty-first century.

Children growing up in the twenty-first century are able to navigate and interact effortlessly with the many formats of technology that are found in the home. Children’s home textual practices often incorporate visual, written and verbal modes of communication, and understandings of literacy practices and learning to be literate at home have changed with the development of technology. New literacy practices have moved beyond print literacy (Gee, 2010) and have transformed how the strands of literacy (see table 1.1) are experienced by children in the home and outside of the classroom.

TABLE 1.1  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Oral language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book sharing</td>
<td>Scribbling/drawing</td>
<td>Speaking/listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental print</td>
<td>Mark making</td>
<td>Phonological awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handwritten texts</td>
<td>Labelling</td>
<td>Narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other print genres</td>
<td>Story writing</td>
<td>Decontextualised talk</td>
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<td></td>
<td>School writing</td>
<td>Talk about texts</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal writing</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

LITERACY IN CONTEXT 1.1

Think back to your own experiences of literacy growing up. What reading and writing did you do at home and at school? Now think about your current uses of literacy and list all your reading and writing activities across each domain. Draw a line between the activities that connect in some way. Which activities are different? Why is that?

Bulfin and Koutsogiannis (2012, p. 331) have suggested that there has been a shift in the:

clearly demarcated boundary between the digital literacy practices of children in- and out-of-school. According to this discourse, out-of-school practices are presumed creative, innovative and non-traditional, while in-school practices are a dreary part of traditional school life and ignore the pervasiveness and informal educational potential of children’s everyday digital literacies.

Such a statement aligns with the view expressed in a report by Lenhart, Arafeh, Smith, and Macgill (2008), which indicated that students find it difficult to see relationships between their home and school digital literacy practices.

Children intuitively understand the fluidity of images, words, logos and icons; they attend not only to the print on a page but also to the topographical design of a page in print or on the screen (Moss, 2001). Mr Joshua overhears a preschool boy chatting animatedly on a mobile phone while on the bus. As he invited a friend over to play he listed what his friend should bring and proceeded to give made-up directions. He informed his friend that he would text his address and that he would catch up on Skype later that day. Mr Joshua was surprised at the child’s knowledge of communicative devices and his apparent skill in engaging with technology, considering his age. At the next bus stop his mother got ready to get off and the boy dropped his phone, revealing that it had no back casing, no batteries and that the conversation had been an elaborate imaginative play.

Very young children now have extensive experience with technologies through tablets, personal computers, console games, DVD players and smartphones. Email, blogs, Skype, Viber, FaceTime, Instagram, emojis, software applications, websites, text messages, e-books, instant messaging, music lists, graphic novels, fanzines and online gaming are familiar terrain. Long before students reach the classroom, they are familiar with composing multimodal texts and are knowledgeable about how communication occurs through different but synchronous modes: language, print, images, graphics, movement, gesture, texture, music and sound. Students come to school already accustomed to making choices about how to communicate with technologies that underpin twenty-first century literacy practices. Effective teachers of literacy will incorporate these resources and bridge the digital divide between home and school. They will create opportunities in classrooms for literacy that is both print-based and multimodal, and be mindful of the range of textual resources and technologies that children access as digital natives as they construct meaning in their daily lives (see figure 1.2) (Marsh et al., 2005).

In order to extend professional knowledge and understanding of the contemporary literacy landscape, it is important as a teacher of reading and writing to critically consider the views people have about literacy development, how schools are organised to achieve particular goals and how departmental policies and national priorities drive these actions.
1.2 Perspectives on what it means to be literate

**LEARNING OUTCOME 1.2** Discuss contrasting beliefs relating to literacy education.

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Executive Committee in the United States adopted the following definition of literacy in February 2008:

> Literacy has always been a collection of cultural and communicative practices shared among members of particular groups. As society and technology change, so does literacy. Because technology has increased the intensity and complexity of literate environments, the twenty-first century demands that a literate person possess a wide range of abilities and competencies, many literacies. These literacies — from reading online newspapers to participating in virtual classrooms — are multiple, dynamic, and malleable. As in the past, they are inextricably linked with particular histories, life possibilities and social trajectories of individuals and groups.

In this chapter, you have been asked to consider what literacy is and what it means to be literate in the twenty-first century. Is reading merely possessing a functional ability to decode a grapheme in a phoneme or is it a more complex process of understanding how textual meaning is derived? Is it connecting experiential learning to be interpreted and enjoyed from a range of texts? What we think and believe about literacy is likely to inform how we teach it in our classrooms. Our belief systems are informed by particular ideologies that are entrenched in cultural practice and our own cultural experiences as readers and writers.

In Australia, teachers are required to teach Standard Australian English (SAE) and a curriculum that is organised around three interrelated strands: language, literature and literacy. Pupils are assessed in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 in the National Assessment Program — Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), introduced in all states in Australia in 2008. National assessments of learning in literacy, aligned with an industrial model of schooling, have been critiqued as being counterproductive for the development of reading and writing (Robinson, 2015; Gonski et al., 2018). Critics have argued that league tables and quantitative measurements do not tell the whole story:

> national tests and tables are narrowing the curriculum, limiting children’s learning and failing to provide sufficiently broad and reliable information about individual children, schools or the primary sector as a whole. They are too limited in scope to tell us much about a particular child’s progress . . . It is often claimed that national tests raise standards. At best their impact is oblique . . . High stakes testing leads to
'teaching to the test'. It is this intensity of focus, and anxiety about the results and their consequences which make the initial difference to test scores. But it does not last; for it is not testing which raises standards but good teaching. Conversely, if testing distorts teaching and the curriculum, as evidence from the review and elsewhere shows, it may actually depress standards. (Alexander et al., 2010, p. 30)

**LITERACY IN CONTEXT 1.2**

We are each part of a complex history that includes our experiences and expectations, family structures and friendship circles, achievements and realities. Learning to read is affected by what our lives are and what they have been.

- How has your experience of reading been shaped by your family and the types of reading you did as a child?
- What is reading? Think about a particular group of learners. Create a concept map with literacy events and types of texts that you consider could constitute a contemporary understanding of reading and writing. What do children need to know to successfully read and understand different texts?
- Reflect on the potential use of multimodal texts in the literacy curriculum that you are most familiar with. What do you think could be the impact of such texts for learning to read?

Ideologies and values about the teaching of reading always involve social contexts and histories, and a significant debate surrounding the teaching of literacy has been between whole language and phonics approaches.

Children’s early literacy experiences are the starting point for becoming active readers and writers, and advocates of a phonic approach argue that literacy needs to be taught systematically with direct instruction in letter formation, handwriting and spelling. Whole language supporters do not believe language should be broken down, preferring instead for skills to be taught in context using authentic texts in order to develop literacy in children as ‘real’ readers and writers.

In debates about the most effective ways to teach reading and writing in schools some have argued that literacy development should create productive citizens and members of the workforce. For others, literacy should transform the world and, in the process, value diverse viewpoints, experiences and histories of those involved (Cardiero-Kaplan, 2002). However, at the centre of all the debates on literacy teaching and learning is how schooling practices have an impact on literacy development. The impact of departmental policies can be felt in the classroom through the types of pedagogy that underpin the materials and activities that teachers use with students to teach reading and writing. It could be argued that schooling has become a politically nuanced field in which curriculum and pedagogy are reproduced to maximise more favourable statistical outcomes (Lundgren, 2011; Pereyra, Kothoff, & Cowen, 2011).

### 1.3 Models of schooling that affect literacy development

**LEARNING OUTCOME 1.3** Describe the various models of schooling and their impact on literacy learning and teaching.

Methods of teaching reading and writing have evolved through a complex interplay of historical circumstances and competing ideologies that have constructed the classroom contexts in which children learn how to read and write. Over time these have moved between traditional models of instruction to more progressive and critical models.

The relationship between education and society is experienced by teachers and students in classrooms in the ways in which policy shapes pedagogy and classroom practice in education systems (Whitty, 1985). In the following discussion, three models of schooling are presented along with how the model of schooling impacts the nature of literacy instruction in particular classrooms.
Learning as skill building: industrial model

The industrial model of schooling has persisted throughout the twentieth century and now into the twenty-first. Schooling practices designed according to this model are developed to be efficient, uniform and competitive. The ideological perspective in the industrial model is meant to create a workforce that is functionally literate and ready for the workplace. This model would be more aligned with an understanding of literacy that aligns with the autonomous model (explained later in the chapter). Teaching using this model would involve a didactic approach and learning would be characterised by being uniform, subject to testing and measurement. Seymor Papert (1993) commented that someone from the nineteenth century could enter a contemporary classroom that aligns with this model and know at a glance where they are.

In an industrial model, there is a push to create uniformity across schools, irrespective of the context in which they exist. This means that all students should be provided with essentially the same content and curriculum that focus on mastery of identified skills. In 2010, then Federal Minister for Education Julia Gillard launched the introduction of school league tables based on students’ academic results. The My School website (www.myschool.edu.au) compares the performance of almost 10,000 Australian schools. Statistical and contextual information about schools can be compared with statistically similar schools across the country. The implications of such an initiative are felt in classrooms, with teachers held accountable for student performance. Learning outcomes are based on evidence-based approaches to the teaching of reading and writing, and in Australia this has been in the form of mandatory national assessment of literacy through NAPLAN. NAPLAN is one way the federal government holds schools accountable for achieving adequate yearly progress (AYP) in the areas of literacy and numeracy. Reading and writing skills often move from simple to complex, with all learners being expected to attain the same understandings (Leland & Kasten, 2002). Given that accountability is a significant aspect of the industrial model, schools use standardised assessments to judge whether or not students accomplish the desired outcome of meeting national standards.

NAPLAN assessment scales aim to describe the development of achievement measured against a ten-band scale. Band 1 is the lowest band and band 10 is the highest. The national minimum standards in literacy (see table 1.2) provide an indicator of attainment, and pupils who do not attain the standard for a given year are considered likely to encounter difficulty in progressing academically at school.

In an industrial model of education, the focus on standardisation and the emphasis on developing accuracy of skills can mean students encounter repetition. The teacher would be expected to regularly assess the quality of the performance by measuring student work against predetermined standards and other benchmarks. For example, a teacher in a Year 5 classroom considers how students respond on an activity sheet attached to Olive’s ocean by Kevin Henkes (2003) that focuses on characterisation, plot and setting. This work is then displayed on a bulletin board with teacher comments that address the standard. Little room exists for students to construct their own version or interpretation. Students are held accountable for demonstrating a level of proficiency in a literacy task before moving on to the next skill or to a higher level.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1.2</th>
<th><strong>NAPLAN minimum standards — reading</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Year 5</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will be able to make some meaning from short texts, such as stories and simple reports, which have some visual support ... make connections between directly stated information and between text and pictures.</td>
<td>Students will be able to interpret ideas in simple texts and make connections between ideas that are not stated. They identify the purpose of a text as well as parts of a text such as diagrams and illustrations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When reading simple imaginative texts, students can:</td>
<td>When reading a short narrative, students can:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• find directly stated information</td>
<td>• locate directly stated information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• connect ideas across sentences and paragraphs</td>
<td>• connect and interpret ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• interpret ideas, including some expressed in complex sentences</td>
<td>• recognise the relationship between text and illustrations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• identify a sequence of events</td>
<td>• interpret the nature, behaviour and motivation of characters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• infer the writer’s feelings.</td>
<td>• identify cause and effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When reading simple information texts, students can:</td>
<td>When reading an information text, students can:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• find directly stated information</td>
<td>• locate directly stated information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• connect an illustration with ideas in the text</td>
<td>• connect ideas to identify cause and effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• locate a detail in the text</td>
<td>• identify the main purpose for the inclusion of specific information, diagrams and illustrations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• identify the meaning of a word in context</td>
<td>• identify the meaning of a phrase in context</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When reading a biography or autobiography, students can:
- connect ideas
- identify the main purpose of the text
- make inferences about the impact of an event on the narrator
- interpret an idiomatic phrase or the meaning of a simple figurative expression.

When reading an information text, students can:
- identify the main idea of a paragraph and the main purpose of the text
- link and interpret information across the text
- recognise the most likely opinion of a person
- use text conventions to locate a detail.

When reading a complex information text, students can:
- locate directly stated information
- connect ideas in the introduction of the text or in the body of the text and illustrations
- identify the main purpose of a text or an element of the text
- identify the main idea of a paragraph
- identify the purpose of a labelled diagram
- identify the intended audience of the text
- identify conventions used in a text, such as abbreviations or italics for a foreign word.

When reading a persuasive text such as an advertisement, students can:
- locate directly stated information
- identify the main idea of a paragraph or the main message of the text.

When reading a persuasive text such as an argument, students can:
- locate and interpret directly stated information, including the meaning of specific words and expressions
- identify the main message of the text
- identify the purpose of parts of the text
- interpret the main idea of a paragraph
- infer the writer’s point of view
- identify points of agreement in arguments that present different views
- identify and interpret language conventions used in the text, such as lists, order of online posts and the use of punctuation for effect
- identify the common theme in a variety of writers’ opinions.

When reading a persuasive text such as an argument, students can:
- connect ideas across the text or in two arguments
- identify the tone of an argument.


To further highlight an industrial model for schooling, consider Ms Day’s Year 1 classroom. Ms Day teaches at a school where teachers are mindful of improving student results as there is particular concern that the school is not performing well on NAPLAN. Ms Day implements a prescriptive literacy program that focuses on discrete skills in the reading process. In one particular lesson early in the school year, Ms Day asks her struggling readers to manipulate magnetic letters to form a list of words that is in the same word family (\textit{mat, fat, cat, rat, sat}, etc.). Students then complete a worksheet that has them matching the words with pictures. Students write the words at the bottom of the page. In later lessons, Ms Day has students read from a decodable text that emphasises the rhyme pattern of \textit{-at}. Students read such sentences as ‘Up went the cat. The cat saw a rat. The rat sat on the mat’. Reading and writing instruction from this viewpoint concentrates on sounds, letters and direct comprehension of text in a sequential order. The lesson
is offered because it is a lesson contained in a reading scheme previously used in the school and part of the prescribed curriculum set by the publishing company who produced the scheme.

Given the lack of flexibility in the prescribed program, Ms Day is not able to take into consideration her students’ experiences with words and texts. She does not acknowledge how some of her students have had many experiences with the ‘old favourites’ *The cat in the hat* (Dr Seuss, 1967) and Eric Carle’s (1997) *Have you seen my cat?* Conversations with other teachers remind Ms Day of the constant pressure to move students through the curriculum, while attending to such standards and benchmarks as ‘know how to decode new and familiar words using common letter/sound relationships’ (Curriculum Corporation, 2005, p. 5).

**Investigating a question: inquiry model**

In contrast to the industrial model of education, where the focus is on compliance and accountability, an *inquiry model* of schooling promotes the notion that schools should represent one’s real life. This is not a one-size-fits-all perspective, but one where learning and teaching can take many forms depending on the students and teachers in the classrooms. The goal of education should be to ‘cultivate productive differences’ (Eisner, 1990).

In the early part of the twentieth century, John Dewey advocated developing curriculum with students’ interests in mind. An inquiry model suggests that learning is best achieved when students are invited to participate in making decisions about their learning process: for example, locating topics and interests to study; choosing materials to use; finding ways to represent their learning (e.g. PowerPoint slides, reports, dioramas, videos, wiki pages). The tasks and activities are authentic and meaningful to the learners as they discover the world in which they live. Reading and writing instruction expands to include texts commonly used in settings outside of classrooms (e.g. newspapers, news magazines, websites). Within an inquiry model, teachers facilitate students’ learning rather than direct it. There is an emphasis on ‘lifelong learning’ that is critical in nature and not dependent on standards or minimums (Leland & Kasten, 2002).

The inquiry model of education recognises diversity and multiple ways of knowing. Inquiry is learning from knowledge domains and using the habits of mind of writers, scientists, artists and historians. The
inquiry model values and affirms the cultural knowledge and language practices students bring to the
classroom. Literacy is not a competitive enterprise where some students succeed and others fail; but rather
literacy development is collaborative, with students working together on various questions and projects.

Imagine Ms Day’s ideological perspectives shifting from an industrial model to an inquiry model.
Her literacy curriculum embraces a greater degree of flexibility and authenticity. She acknowledges and
values that children come to school with different experiences, interests and strengths. The focus for her
curriculum is not just on skills, but on making meaning. Her role shifts from transmitter of information to
demonstrator of different ways of learning, such as offering art as a way to respond to texts, investigation
centres for students to pursue questions and writing centres to explore different genres. Discussions about
various topics are more conversational in nature. Meanings are drawn from the text as well as personal
experiences.

Ms Day’s reading curriculum is not defined by a particular prescriptive program (learning the -at word
family), but by students’ current interests. Ms Day’s students live in a beachside community and they
expressed an interest in the recent shark attacks off the coast of Western Australia. To build on this interest,
Ms Day creates a text set on different kinds of sharks, including picture books, websites and newspaper
articles on the attacks and ocean safety. Additionally, Ms Day made audio books available for those students
that may need more support in reading the text. The readability of the texts in the set is not controlled as
it is in the prescribed reading program. The literacy events and practices include sustained and authentic
uses of texts for seeking information and answering inquiry questions. Children immerse themselves into
the inquiry by reading and writing about sharks and shark attacks. They work collaboratively in groups
that are organised according to the different questions being pursued. Reading and writing in an inquiry
model are for purposes that will make a difference in the lives of students as they learn about the habitats
and life cycles of sharks and ocean safety.
Problematising the status quo: critical model

The industrial model requires students to know the basics but not to question or challenge the perspectives presented in the text. The inquiry model focuses on students’ personal interests. A third model of schooling, the critical model, raises questions about power, gender, social structures and identity, offering a more global context for learning. In a critical model of education, the conversation focuses on the ways in which various literacy and cultural practices privilege and/or marginalise people. Moreover, teaching and learning are seen as political acts. Freesmith (2006) pointed out that critical literacy and traditional literacy practices are not mutually exclusive, and Synder (2008, p. 1) has suggested that the teaching of critical literacy is necessary if we are to ‘create a questioning, critical, ethical citizenry’. Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, who coined the term Banking Education to describe students as empty vessels to be filled up by the teacher depositing knowledge, regards literacy as a conducive element of critical thinking and ‘an intellectual, difficult, demanding operation’ (Freire (1998, p. 19) in which students reading the word is connected to a reading of the world.

The critical model challenges long-held commonplace beliefs and understandings. A critical literacy ideology encourages students to interrogate the text and the curriculum, and ponder whose voice is missing and how the story might be told from a different perspective. So, when students in Year 3 read biographies of early Australian explorers, they begin to question why others are not included on the list (e.g. Indigenous explorers, recent explorers, women explorers). Texts are placed within historical and cultural contexts that provide a sense of place. A critical literacy ideology empowers students and teachers to actively participate in a democracy and move literacy beyond text and into social action. Many educators and parents believe that this critical perspective is not appropriate for younger children because the texts are too difficult and the issues too complex. While there may be a need for more scaffolding and demonstration, young children are capable of considering socially significant and important issues (Chaffel, Flint, Pomeroy, & Hammel, 2007; Lewison & Heffernan, 2008; Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002).

If Ms Day operated from a critical ideology perspective, her literacy curriculum would invite students to examine questions related to social issues such as the environment, global weather patterns and pollution that may lead to sharks swimming in shallow water. Students may begin to investigate and interrogate current environmental policies and practices. Similar to the inquiry model, the texts are not controlled or prescribed, enabling children to glean information from a variety of sources.

The models of schooling as discussed here are found in classrooms around the country. In some classrooms, national testing has pressured teachers into focusing on organising their curriculum around the teaching of discrete and sequential skills. However, other schools work from an inquiry model where the curriculum is student centred and students collaborate across ages and year levels to understand the different functions that literacy serves. Other schools have a critical model in place and recognise that...
reading and writing do not take place in a vacuum but occur in larger social, cultural, political and historical contexts. Freire (1998, pp. 72–73) remarked how:

Educators need to know what happens in the world of children with whom they work. They need to know the universe of their dreams, the language with which they skilfully defend themselves from the aggressiveness of their world, what they know independently of the school and how they know it.

What lies beneath these three models of schooling are assumptions about teaching and learning. The industrial model presupposes that the ‘content of what an educated person should learn was assumed to be universal; [therefore] all learners received the same curriculum’ (Leland & Kasten, 2002, p. 8). The inquiry and critical models of schooling are rooted in significantly different assumptions, including the premise that learning occurs when students have opportunities to construct understandings with others, to explore their own interests and to consider socially significant and real-life issues.

One of the goals of this text is to help teachers bridge the chasm between the literacy experiences students have outside of school and their literacy learning in the classroom. Recent educational research and theory — technology and multimodal texts (Kress, 2003; Kist, 2005; Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004), new literacy studies (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Street, 1995), four roles of the reader (Freebody & Luke, 1990), critical theory (Freire, 1973; Shannon, 1990), social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978) and reader response (Rosenblatt, 1978) — suggest useful guidelines for teaching literacy today. Table 1.3 indicates how educational theory and research is influencing classroom practices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1.3</th>
<th>Theories of literacy: contexts and models of practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perspective</td>
<td>Application</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Pedagogy    | • Schooling                                          | • Apprentice                      | • Scaffolding
|             | • Classrooms                                         | • Partner                        | • Motivation
|             | • Curriculum                                         | • Co-constructor                  | • Play
|             |                                                      |                                   | • Child’s resources               |
| Genre       | • Non-fiction                                        | • Code-breaker                    | • Genres of power                |
|             | • Fiction                                            | • Text-analyser                   | • Accreditation                  |
|             | • Narrative                                          | • Modelled learning               | • Cultural and social resources  |
|             | • Persuasive text                                    | • Negotiated learning             |                                   |
|             |                                                      | • Independent producer            |                                   |
| Critical literacy | • Schooling                                   | • Critical text analyser          | • Schooling/’proper’ literacy    |
|             | • Policy                                             | • Text-participant                | • New literacies                 |
|             | • Culture                                            | • Reflective learner              | • Emancipatory literacies        |
|             |                                                      | • Interpretative learner          | • Banking                        |
|             |                                                      | • Active learner                  | • Education                      |
|             |                                                      |                                   | • Transformative education       |
| New literacies | • Digital/ICT                               | • Text-user                       | • Multilayered identities        |
|             | • Multimodal texts                                  | • Participatory learner           | • New technologies               |
|             |                                                      | • Digital native                  |                                   |
|             |                                                      | • Reflective learner              |                                   |
|             |                                                      | • Autonomous learner              |                                   |
|             |                                                      | • Empowered learner               |                                   |
| Home-to-school literacies | • Home                                        | • Producer and consumer of popular cultural and media texts | • Popular culture |
|             | • Communities                                       |                                   | • Hybridity                      |
|             |                                                      |                                   | • Critical literacy              |
|             |                                                      |                                   | • Cultural capital               |

In the next section several guiding principles for effective literacy instruction are examined.
1.4 Six guiding principles for teaching reading and writing in the twenty-first century

LEARNING OUTCOME 1.4 Identify how the literacy curriculum can be taught in such a way as to make it more relevant and reflective of young people's twenty-first century literacy practices.

Despite an increasing acknowledgement of how technological innovations have changed how children learn and use literacy, the teaching of reading and writing guided by policy continues to privilege a print-based principle and an industrial model. The following guiding principles for teaching reading and writing present a broad perspective of literacy development and set the foundation for each chapter in this text.

The first of these six principles declares that reading and writing are not isolated, but rather involve social and cultural understandings. The second principle notes that literacy should be purposeful and take social goals into consideration. The third principle states that some approaches to literacy are more influential than others. Fourth, literacy is learned through inquiry. Fifth, students use their knowledge and experience to learn to read. The sixth principle suggests that everyday types of materials and multimodal texts can be used to teach reading and writing.

Principle 1: literacy practices are socially and culturally constructed

What does it mean when it is said that literacy is ‘socially and culturally constructed and situated’? The focus here is not on the specific skills a reader or writer can do, but rather the relationships that are established (Hamilton & Barton, 2001). Any time people are engaged in reading and writing events they are constructing social relationships with others.

LITERACY IN CONTEXT 1.3

When you think of someone reading, or writing, do you envision someone at home, at school, online on social media, on their phone, in cafés, on public transport? Do you think of someone reading and writing alone or interacting with others?

In classroom settings, reading and writing events are organised to involve groups of readers and writers. Children often interact with each other and the teacher as they work in reading groups, participate in book discussions and share their writing with peers. Contemporary childhood has facilitated social participation in literacy events and practices via the emergence and expansion of technology in and of play. Xbox, Wii and PlayStation have created platforms through which children access literacy and social connectivity, and within these figured worlds of play children are already demonstrating how literacy development is socially situated and is a form of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

Children learn how to ‘do’ literacy as a result of being a member of a group — whether the membership is in a family, a neighbourhood, a place of worship or a classroom. Because they are members of these groups, children observe others engaged in a variety of literacy practices. Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) introduced the term funds of knowledge as a way to talk about the historically and culturally accumulated bodies of knowledge that people have access to as they navigate their daily worlds. (See the chapter on getting to know students for a more in-depth discussion on funds of knowledge.) For some children, these funds of knowledge and experiences will closely match the literacy engagements that are prevalent in school settings (e.g. story reading, library trips, writing lists and other documents, drawing pictures, talking about a previous experience).

For example, Rory, three years of age, observes his mother creating and using a grocery list when going to the shops. He watches her write out the list of needed items and, while at the shops, he also watches as she crosses off the items as they are placed in the shopping trolley. These brief encounters with text are authentic sites for how reading and writing are used to accomplish particular tasks in the world. Other home literacy practices occur because they have meaning and are useful in people’s lives — for example, writing phone messages, reading the mail, scanning the on-screen TV guide for a particular television show, reading the newspaper, selecting an option on the DVD menu, having a story routine before bedtime and reading websites.
Literacy is collaborative and connected to the life experiences of students.

When completing a worksheet, children figure out that there is often just one answer, while in a literature discussion they discover that the teacher may value multiple interpretations. For example, students need to know how to discuss their ideas in a group setting and how to write down and present their ideas to others. Looking at what people do with literacy, with whom, when, and how is central to the concept of literacy as a social practice. Children learn that different literacy events have different expectations. They become aware of what is expected of them, what is important with regard to the literacy event, and how to meet teachers’ and group members’ goals and expectations. Literacy practices, then, are not just about learning a particular set of skills; literacy also includes learning how to be socialised into particular social practices in particular settings (Bloome & Katz, 1997). For example, students need to know how to discuss their ideas in a group setting and how to write down and present their ideas to others. This is all part of literacy. Literacy practices do not exist in isolation. They are a part of social relationships and networks. In this way, literacy is a socially and culturally situated practice formed through cultural and linguistic diversity and the funds of knowledge that students have as they enter the classroom.

**Principle 2: literacy practices are purposeful**

We use different literacy practices to achieve different goals. Barton and Hamilton (1998) identify a number of reasons why people engage with literacy practices:

- to organise their lives (e.g. agendas, daily journal)
- to communicate with others (e.g. letters, email and instant messages)
- to entertain (e.g. novels and greeting cards)
- to document experiences (e.g. memoirs and poems)
- to make sense of their worlds (e.g. books and internet sites)
- to participate in social life beyond their immediate context (e.g. reading about others).

Reading and writing practices in classroom settings can be organised in ways that are authentic and purposeful, as the above list suggests. Most of these events are social; meanings are constructed as a result of working together. There are abundant opportunities in classrooms to engage children in real-life, social experiences involving literacy. Reading and writing logs, journals, daily agendas and plans for inquiry projects help children to organise their time during the school day. To communicate with others, children write letters, email and text messages. Reading and writing events inside other disciplines (e.g. music, maths, science) can be designed to support learning concepts and making meaning. Such practices might include reading informational texts, recording facts in learning journals, documenting questions,
engaging in discussions, presenting newly learned information or creating PowerPoint slides. The personal narratives, poems, essays and other texts students compose during class are opportunities to document their lived experiences. Students may read literature selections for entertainment. Reading literature also encourages learning beyond the immediate context in which they live. All of these support the idea that people read and write for a reason.

Principle 3: literacy practices contain ideologies and values

If we think about how literacy practices are situated in broader social relations, we can understand the importance of the social setting of literacy events, and consider how social institutions support particular literacies. This can mean some literacy practices are more valued and social institutions support particular literacies as they carry with them values, ideologies and beliefs about how the world should be organised and operate. Brian Street (1984, 1995) introduced two perspectives around literacy: autonomous and ideological.

Autonomous model versus ideological model

The autonomous model conceptualises literacy as a set of skills to be taught, learned and tested and promotes explicit teaching and learning of skills: phonics, grammar, spelling and the corresponding testing of these skills. In contrast an ideological model is practice focused and acknowledges how literacy is plural and must always be seen as a result of social involvement of the learner. Taking this into consideration is how literacy is context-dependent, non-quantifiable, continually changing and inevitably value-laden.

An autonomous model suggests that literacy practices are free of cultural, social and economic contexts. Literacy is seen as neutral and is an individual skill that, upon acquiring it, will afford the basic skills to be a fully functioning member of society (Quigley, 1997; Terry, 2006). To illustrate an autonomous view at the classroom level, print-based reading and writing are often privileged over communicative practices and oral or other meaning making systems. The autonomous model assumes that children should reach a specific standard of skill. Skills and standards are established as ‘givens’ and to challenge such an idea would seem as though one does not care about standards and is irresponsible. In classrooms students will complete worksheets and respond to literature in ways that are very much defined by the curriculum and assessment.

In contrast, the ideological model takes into consideration the ideologies and values that are associated with the people engaged in the literacy practices. In other words, literacy is a symbolic system used for representing the world to ourselves. Literacy is part of our thinking and we have awareness and attitudes. An ideological model suggests that literacy practices are related to people’s everyday lives and our individual life histories contain many literacy events from early childhood onwards. When teachers and students assume an ideological model of literacy, they engage in literacy practices that are meaningful and purposeful to those involved. These practices offer opportunities to legitimise uses of literacy outside
of school contexts; to value alternative ways of meaning making (e.g. oral, drawing, music, movement); and to recognise that literacy is collaborative. From an ideological perspective, then, classroom literacy practices are connected to the life experiences of the students. In Ms Barwick’s Year 3 classroom, the students express interest in the recent increase in ‘boat people’ hoping to migrate to Australia. Many of the students in Ms Barwick’s class are from Vietnam. They have life experiences in border crossing based on their personal experiences or those of a relative. Collaboratively, students read and write about these events as they shape their own understandings about immigration policies and practices. They write letters to politicians, hold debates and problematise the issues that confront their families.

**Principle 4: literacy practices are learned through inquiry**

Operating with an inquiry stance is critical to being an effective teacher and, in particular, an effective reading teacher. In the chapter on ICTs and reading to learn, an inquiry curriculum is discussed in more detail. An inquiry stance is one that positions the teacher as a ‘problem poser’ (Freire, 1985), asking questions about the ways in which children come to make sense of squiggles on a page. With an inquiry stance, a teacher considers that there may be more than one way to approach the teaching of reading and writing. Inquiry is not so much seeking the right answer (because there often is not a singular answer), but rather seeking resolutions to questions and issues. This opens the possibility for viewing literacy in a more complex and dynamic fashion, rather than in a one-size-fits-all formula. Teachers working from an inquiry stance begin with what they know and juxtapose this knowledge with new perspectives. In doing so, they come to new insights while continuing to ask more questions.

Inquiry implies a ‘need or want to know’ premise. For teachers, the emphasis is on nurturing inquiry attitudes or habits of mind. Students who actively make observations, collect, analyse, synthesise information and draw conclusions are developing useful problem-solving and learning skills. To illustrate, students in Ms Cunningham’s Year 4 classroom are studying their local community and they engage in a series of questions around the contributions people have made to their community, historical markers in the community and the history of the monuments in the community. The students use a number of resources — including text sets, interviews and photographs — as well as go on an excursion. The knowledge and skills students acquire in this inquiry can be applied to future ‘need to know’ situations that students will encounter both at school and at work. Another benefit that inquiry-based learning offers is the development of habits of mind that can last a lifetime and guide learning and creative thinking.

Mr Brown, the principal of an inner-city primary school with a high percentage of non-native speakers of English decided to embed the teaching of literacy in an inquiry model using eLearning. He decided to provide every member of staff with an iPad, as he believed that if he wanted them to utilise the technology to teach, they needed to be competent confident users themselves. He started seeing staff gathered around computers in the staffroom at lunchtime discussing how to manage their music, movies, podcasts and apps. As part of the redevelopment plan the library space was remodelled to increase the amount of power outlets to accommodate the laptops and MacBooks. As well as conventional library areas, there was a designated computer area, an area for an interactive whiteboard, a data projector for showing streamed movies, a class set of still cameras, a class set of iPads, two movie cameras and a recording studio.

Mr Brown encouraged the Year 1 teachers to make their own movies and podcasts and develop their digital skills and transfer them to their classroom. Students started to make short animations, and as Mr Brown supported his staff throughout the term there was a visible difference in the teaching and learning environment. He observed a lot of peer and cross-age tutoring taking place and, as digital inquiry learning portfolios were introduced as a form of assessment, he decided that at the end of the academic year every child in Years 5/6 would produce either animations, podcasts, comic life or keynote presentations for their end-of-term assessment project using a data screen.

Individual log-ins to the school intranet were provided for all students, and Mr Brown encouraged students to upload their podcasts, photos and movies to contribute to an online student forum, a noticeboard, a discussion room and a wiki. Mr Brown described how one student had gone overseas touring Europe with his parents and he kept in contact with his friends, posting ‘reports’ of his trip on Instagram and Snapchat. Another student who had been at the school for 1 year in Year 5 and had then returned to Pakistan for 6 months commented at how ‘in Pakistan we are taught to remember but in Australia we are taught how to think’.

However, Mr Brown was frustrated by the lack of access the students had to computers. In his school the Year 1 classes had 12 computers, enough for 1 between 2, but access was only available for between 2 and 3 hours a day. He decided it wasn’t enough and he implemented a 1-to-1 program with 80 laptop
computers being leased to every child in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6. The educational value for every child having a computer was described by Mr Brown as making possible anytime, anywhere learning, preparing students for their future, not the past.

In an increasingly globalised world, we have to prepare our students to be successful, and in integrating technology the school has changed and is changing the directions for its students. Technology has become the vehicle through which to develop their thinking and students, from entry on day one, are analysing, synthesising, comparing and contrasting material from a range of sources and text types to develop their literacy skills. Our students are now actively learning, engaging with and participating in the reading and writing process as real producers and consumers of a broad range of texts, print and multimodal.

**Principle 5: literacy practices invite readers and writers to use their background knowledge and cultural understandings to make sense of texts**

Children come into school bringing with them their cultural capital, and as readers and writers they draw on their funds of knowledge, constituted from linguistic backgrounds and personal experiences. A child’s cultural context and literacy experience (e.g. considerations regarding what types of texts are available in their home or whether English is the child’s second, third or fourth language) play a significant role. Literacy events and practices that are valued in the home and community may not be given the same value in school contexts. Children who may not have access to the cultural capital that aligns with school-based literacy practices can be disadvantaged and placed in a deficit category of what it means to be literate. Knowing the latest version of a video game console, how to send text messages, or the power strength of a Yu-Gi-Oh! or Match Attax trading card usually does not count towards developing literacy knowledge in schools. Teachers, when they acknowledge and draw on the funds of knowledge and cultural capital that children bring with them, create opportunities for children to build on what they know as they engage with what may be unfamiliar practices around reading and writing. Recall how Mikey in the opening vignette felt about his literacy learning:

> In normal classes I just type on the computer and the teacher keeps telling me to do it better and it is boring. It would be great if we could bring our Xboxes to school, or footy mags. I read them all the time at home.

Children’s experiences of being a reader and writer are connected to identity. Sophie, a student from a culturally and linguistically diverse community (CALD), remembers how:

> Special English class was daunting. I wondered if my English was up to it. I was the only Italian among a smattering of Turks, South Americans, Yugoslavs and Portuguese. I listened to the headmistress but I didn’t understand and couldn’t join in. I looked down and studied my shoes. In the Special English classes, I copied words I didn’t understand from the board. I learned to string sentences together, spell unfamiliar
words by relying on memory. I worked through the monotony of learning grammar and vocabulary. Before I knew it, six months had passed and as if by magic, I could hold my own in English. An exhilarating sensation of freedom. All those months I had been working to get on the ‘other side of the fence’ and all of a sudden it all seems so easy. I’m almost Australian and it only took six months.

I headed off to my new school naively expecting a similar experience to what I had become familiar with: a tailor-made program for my growing English, with extraordinary attention given by a team of specialised teachers. As I’m shown around the school, I advise the head teacher that I’ve come from ‘Special English’ classes. He smiles and tells me I can join Special English at this school and I’m massively relieved. It doesn’t take long, however, to realise that the programs offered in the two schools’ Special English classes — short of giving support to students who are struggling with English — are almost vastly different. I am taken to a small, windowless room near the office. There are a handful of us in the bare, grey space, and the lesson consists of one teacher listening as the students take turns to read. The reading is painstakingly slow, as the students stumble over words, the meaning of the text lost as vital links between key words are lost in the sluggish delivery. I realise that at this school, Special English doesn’t mean ‘migrant English’, it means ‘remedial English’. I take my turn at reading and the teacher quickly works out I don’t belong with the group. I am sent off to have English classes with the rest of my home group, and after six months in Australia, my mainstream English experience is about to start.

It is in this class that I begin reading *Sun on the stubble* by Colin Thiele — a story set in rural South Australia, between the World Wars. It tells the story of a German immigrant family living in a South Australian farming district. Every day, the teacher reads to us or she chooses students to take turns at reading. It is a painstaking process for those who can read faster, who can read ahead like I can. What I found the most difficult was making sense of the story, how to place it and how to understand the context. Where did these people live? How did they belong in the world? Being different is not a pleasant sensation and I begin to hate it with a passion. All around me I saw kids who belong, who were part of social groups, who could speak English flawlessly. In a time of very few after-school activities television viewing provided the clues I needed to tap into the popular culture. When my friends discussed what they saw on TV the previous night, I was able to be part of the conversation. Sharing these common experiences helped me reach out to my new friends, to belong. Through speaking, listening, negotiating, discussing the elements of our teenage culture, I found my identity in Australia.

It is important to consider how some literacy practices and behaviours are privileged over others, and how teachers might create more space in their curriculum for students to share their interests, passions and resources in ways that matter. Disrupting the notion that there is one universal way of thinking about literacy (an autonomous view) is necessary to shift the perspective of literacy as a set of neutral skills to a perspective that literacy is socially and culturally constructed; that the materials and availability of particular kinds of texts in the classroom library matter to the students and the teachers they work with.
LITERACY IN CONTEXT 1.4

1. What do you think are the influencing home factors in promoting literacy in classrooms (e.g. increased use of environmental print, familiarity with favourite books)? Complete the home learning strand.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School learning</th>
<th>Home learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shaped by curricular objectives</td>
<td>Shaped by interest and need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often formally assessed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrived problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low adult-child ratio</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timetabled</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed duration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited conversations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. In what ways are home experiences made visible in classroom literacy events?

3. Think about how a teacher could find out more about the home literacies of students’ linguistic, social and cultural resources. How might this knowledge positively affect CALD students’ literacy experiences in school settings?

Principle 6: literacy practices expand to include everyday texts and multimodal texts

Children quickly learn to identify icons from their everyday environment, such as the yellow arch of McDonald’s, the red block of Lego, favourite cereal brands and cartoon characters. The branding of SpongeBob SquarePants, Barbie and Mickey Mouse, on everything from lunch boxes and pencil cases to pyjamas and bedding, is recognisable to children without explicit attention or instruction. Children are immersed in literacy from an early age through environmental print. Increasingly, children live and operate in a world where language is not the only form of communication, and become adept at reading and producing multimodal texts (e.g. images, graphics, sound). The nonlinear nature of such texts is also significant. As Lotherington (2004, p. 317) states:

It is important to remember that the children in elementary schools today were born into a world complete with digital gizmos. To them, typewriters are almost as old-fashioned as dinosaurs. Their history is one of computerization.

Multimodal literacies (a combination of linguistic, visual, auditory and spatial modes) play a significant role in the ways children access, use and understand how text makes meaning. Before coming to school, many children will experience some sort of interactive digital media, such as DVDs, Skype, electronic ‘educational toys’, software applications for computers and tablets, handheld gaming devices such as Nintendo 3DS and virtual gaming worlds. The access to digital media and exposure to sophisticated multimodal texts increases as children learn to surf the internet for information; play online games; download music files onto their tablets or smartphones; utilise text messaging, email and chatrooms for communication; design blogs and create movies with portable digital devices.

Along with the digital world, there is also an explosion of what Vasquez (2003) calls ‘pocket monsters’ (e.g. Pokémon, Yu-Gi-Oh!, Dragon Ball Z, Digimon). These television-based cartoon characters are central to trading card games. Young children collect and trade cards and they find their way into what has been called ‘under-the-desk’ literacies (Maybin, 2007). The wide range of icons, abbreviations and symbols associated with children’s informal literacies means that children are frequently involved in and are adept at ‘reading’ and understanding textual information.

Children are sophisticated in their interactions with these texts and across digital media platforms and teachers have to adjust to and be conversant with literacy practices that are meaningful in young people’s worlds. This involves working with printed material and digital media, becoming knowledgeable about
the worlds of blogs, discussion boards, social networking, gaming, Twitter, Instagram, fan sites, and so on. Williams and Zenger (2012, p. x) note how:

... Literacy educators ... must seriously investigate what [young people] are learning when they spend much more time reading and writing online than they do in the classroom ... multimodal literacy practices ... are changing conceptions of texts and of rhetorical concepts such as audience and authorship.

Most schools in Australia approach literacy teaching through a direct instruction method that involves regular morning sessions in the classroom dedicated to silent reading, genre-based approaches to writing, phonetics, word, sentence and text level structures. In contrast, textualising the spaces of the classroom with an everyday logic of a lived-through experience/connection with, and to, a text (Rosenblatt, 1976, 1978) can be used to support reading and writing practices in school settings.

The learning of and about literacy is always in constant evolution:

... new literacies have emerged ... embodied in new social practices — [in] new ways of participating as a citizen in public spaces, and even perhaps new forms of identity and personality. (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 167)

It therefore becomes pedagogically generative to incorporate into classrooms those activities that extend across a range of texts and communicative practices.

**LITERACY IN CONTEXT 1.5**

1. What types of literacy learning are apparent in children’s interactions with digitised practices? How can they be used to support or develop pupils’ literacy skills?
2. Reflect on the potential use of new technologies and multimodal texts in the literacy curriculum that you are most familiar with. Have you used such technologies and texts? If so, what was the impact of this work? If you have not used such technologies and texts, think about how you could approach such work. Use your reflections on this issue to complete the following grid. Examples have been given to start you off.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technologies and texts</th>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Picturebooks and information texts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Talking books</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- E-books</td>
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The upcoming chapters in this text explore the following topics in teaching reading and writing to primary school children: oral language, culturally relevant pedagogy, models of reading, curricular programs, emergent literacy, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, literature discussions, assessment, inquiry, and struggling readers and writers. Each of these topics (chapters) uses the six guiding principles as a framework for discussing how to effectively teach literacy.

### PEDAGOGIES FOR THE CLASSROOM

**Why read and write?**

Interview a small group of students about their perceptions and understandings of what reading and writing are for. Possible questions to ask include the following.

1. Why do people read and write?
2. How did you learn to read and write?
3. Who helps you with your reading and writing?
4. When you are reading, what do you do when you come to a word you don’t know?
5. What types of things do you like to read? What do you like to write?
6. Who do you know who is a good reader or writer? What makes them that way?
7. How would you help someone who is having trouble reading? How would you help someone with their writing?
8. Where do you like to read or write?
9. How do you choose what you read or write?
10. How often do you read or write in school and at home?
11. How do you feel about writing? How do you feel about reading?
12. Do you like to write? Why or why not?
13. Do you like to read? Why or why not?
14. How do you decide what to write about?

### 1.5 The Australian Curriculum

**LEARNING OUTCOME 1.5** Describe the role the Australian Curriculum plays with regard to literacy.

The day-to-day business of the teaching and learning of literacy, and indeed all teaching in Australian classrooms, has increasingly been, and continues to be, directed by federal and state government initiatives such as the:

- National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy
- National Literacy and Numeracy Plan
- National Literacy and Numeracy Benchmarks.

In 2008, Australian education ministers agreed on a national curriculum to play a key role in delivering quality education to all students from Foundation to Year 12. This decision was based on a review of contemporary views of education and documented in the 2008 *Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals for Young Australians*. It acknowledges the changing ways in which young people learn, ‘promotes equity and excellence and supports young Australians to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens’ (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2010). The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is an independent authority, responsible for the design of the Australian Curriculum through consultation with stakeholders including teachers, principals, governments, state and territory education authorities, professional education associations, community groups and parents.

According to ACARA, the benefits of implementing a national Australian Curriculum are as follows.

- **Quality** — an Australian curriculum will contribute to the provision of a world-class education in Australia by setting out the knowledge, understanding and skills needed for life and work in the twenty-first century and by setting high standards across the country
- **Equity** — an Australian curriculum will provide a clear, shared understanding of what young people should be taught and the quality of learning expected of them, regardless of circumstances, the type of school they attend or the location of their school. (ACARA, 2012, p. 5)
The Australian Curriculum has been continually revised and updated. The latest version, 8.1, was endorsed in 2015 and has the aims of ensuring children:

- learn to listen to, read, view, speak, write, create and reflect on increasingly complex and sophisticated spoken, written and multimodal texts across a growing range of contexts with accuracy, fluency and purpose
- appreciate, enjoy and use the English language in all its variations and develop a sense of its richness and power to evoke feelings, convey information from ideas, facilitate interaction with others, entertain, persuade and argue
- understand how Standard Australian English works in its spoken and written forms and in combination with non-linguistic forms of communication to create meaning
- develop interest and skills in inquiring into the aesthetic aspects of texts and develop an informed appreciation of literature. (ACARA, 2015)

The *Australian Curriculum: English* (ACARA, 2015) is designed around three strands:

- **language** — knowing about the English language
- **literature** — understanding, appreciating, responding to, analysing and creating literature
- **literacy** — expanding the repertoire of English usage.

The proposed general capabilities for the English curriculum for Foundation through to Year 12 indicate teaching a synthesis of the ‘knowledge, skills behaviours and dispositions’ required of twenty-first century students. These capabilities are illustrated in figure 1.3.

These capabilities are directed at ‘producing’ students who are able to ‘possess’ or ‘perform’ a functional literacy, required to sustain productivity and growth within the globalised skills-based marketplace. As government policy promotes and facilitates the development of functional reading and writing skills in children, teachers of literacy will need to consider how the rich range of ways of reading and writing can be taught inside the ‘disciplined’ test-controlled space of the standardised ‘one-size-fits-all’ driven classroom.

### 1.6 Creating a vision for effective literacy instruction

#### LEARNING OUTCOME 1.6
Appreciate the impact of one’s personal vision on literacy development and teaching.

All teachers bring to the classroom their understandings and beliefs about literacy that influence decision making on a daily basis. As evident in some classrooms, teachers group students by ability for reading instruction, and they operate from implicit assumptions that some skills need to be mastered before one can move to the next level. Other teachers offer their students opportunities to interact and collaborate.
through various literacy events, believing that literacy practices are embedded in the lives of their students. Long before teachers enter the classroom, they have a vision or image of what teaching reading will be like. They hold images of the classroom (e.g. the arrangement of furniture, types of materials accessible to the students), the students (e.g. who will be in the classroom) and their own ideal classroom practices (e.g. what type of teacher will they be). These images may at times be congruent with what is actually happening in the classroom; however, at times they may be at odds with the current context. For many teachers, their visions of the ideal classroom are unstated and implicit. Yet, when these visions become visible, teachers may develop a more defined sense of purpose (Hammerness, 2003) and, ultimately, provide a literacy curriculum that is meaningful for students in the classroom.

Duffy (1998) explains that when teachers develop their own stances (visions), they also develop a ‘focused mindfulness’ about their actions. This mindfulness is not based on someone else’s vision for the future, but rather their own values and intentions for the students in their classrooms. Duffy notes that when given the opportunity to think deeply about their practice, teachers began to seek alignment between what they valued about teaching, learning and literacy and what actions they were taking in the classroom. For example, current and recurring debates in the field of literacy instruction include questions such as ‘Should writing instruction include timed writing prompts?’ or ‘Do levelled readers support reading development?’ Questions framed this way really allow for only one particular vision to emerge. However, when such questions are asked differently — for example, ‘Given your vision for a writing curriculum, what contributions do timed writing prompts make?’ or ‘Given what you envision for students, what role do levelled readers play in supporting students’ literacy development and knowledge?’ — they allow space for teachers to construct responses that reflect their own understandings of literacy development and what they acknowledge as central to creating literate students.

Create your vision of the ideal classroom engaged in literacy practices. Consider the following four questions.

1. What is the role of the teacher? The students? The curriculum?
2. How do these factors relate to student learning?
3. What is the relationship between the classroom and the kind of citizens you want to see in the twenty-first century?
4. What do effective classroom practices/pedagogy look like, sound like and feel like in relation to the development of literacy in and across the following strands?
   - Reading
   - Writing
   - Oral language

LITERACY IN CONTEXT 1.6
SUMMARY

This chapter provided a foundation for thinking about literacy practices in the twenty-first century. Literacy practices are rapidly changing from print-based and linear, to multimodal and digital. The definitions of reading and writing are changing along with the technologies. Children are beginning to redefine what it means to be ‘literate’ and how to flexibly navigate the fluidity of images, words, logos and icons that appear before them (either in print or on a screen). While there are significant advances in our technologies and children’s access to such technology, we continue to operate with outdated models of schooling. There are three models of schooling discussed in this chapter: industrial, inquiry and critical. The industrial model emphasises compliance, punctuality and accountability. The inquiry and critical models of schooling encourage students to select personally meaningful topics and issues, to use authentic texts (literature), to collaborate with others and to consider alternative perspectives.

The six guiding principles addressed in this chapter provide a framework for addressing literacy development in the twenty-first century.

• **Principle 1:** literacy practices are socially and culturally constructed.
• **Principle 2:** literacy practices are purposeful.
• **Principle 3:** literacy practices contain ideologies and values.
• **Principle 4:** literacy practices are learned through inquiry.
• **Principle 5:** literacy practices invite readers and writers to use their background knowledge and cultural understandings to make sense of texts.
• **Principle 6:** literacy practices expand to include everyday texts and multimodal texts.

These principles affect the type of curriculum, materials and activities that teachers make available in their classrooms. Moreover, as teachers begin to consider these principles in light of their literacy curriculum, they begin to create particular visions. Envisioning a meaningful and productive literacy curriculum requires that teachers think deeply about their practice. They seek alignment between their ideologies and what they value and their instructional decisions and activities in the classroom. As the process of meaning making from texts increasingly draws from a range of modes in the twenty-first century, as teachers, we must find new ways of teaching reading and writing to ensure appropriate, relevant and purposeful curricula and pedagogy.

KEY TERMS

- **adequate yearly progress (AYP)** The minimum level of improvement schools must achieve each year.
- **autonomous model** Sets of literacy skills and competencies separate from the situations in which they are used.
- **critical model** Raises questions about power, gender, social structures and identity, offering a more global context for learning.
- **curriculum** Knowledge as it is selected and organised for use in educational institutions as the basis of teaching and learning.
- **epistemological** Relating to beliefs about how knowledge is made and the processes of knowing.
- **experiential learning** A process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience; knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience.
- **funds of knowledge** Cultural experiences, skills, knowledge and ways of knowing associated with particular social groups in the real-world settings they inhabit.
- **grapheme** A letter or combination of letters that represent a phoneme.
- **ideological model** Sets of literacy skills and competencies that are not generalised or culture-free, but a set of specific practices in particular social contexts.
- **ideologies** Systems of beliefs that people carry with them as they navigate their daily living.
- **industrial model** A model of education that focuses on standardisation.
- **inquiry model** Suggests that learning is best achieved when students make decisions about their own learning process.
- **literacy event** Any activity that includes the written word and in which literacy has a role.
- **multimodal literacy** The different ways in which meaning can be created and communicated in the world today.
National Assessment Program — Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) An assessment of Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 students in literacy and numeracy, the test results of which are used to compare student achievement against national standards.

ontological Relating to the relationship between who we are (being) and reality.

pedagogy The characteristics of teaching and learning; the teaching strategies we use to teach for learning to occur.

phoneme The smallest unit of sound in a language.

phonics An approach to reading that emphasises the regularities of phoneme/grapheme relationships and ‘sounding out’ to form repeated phonemic patterns.

social and cultural capital Ways of knowing that relatively powerful social groups inherit in their life circumstances, especially through family and other early-life contexts, and which are privileged in school curriculum.

whole language An approach to reading that uses real books, storytelling and familiarity with narratives that are read and re-read to build a familiarity with language and model meaning making.

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

• How do you see the guiding principles described in this chapter playing out in classroom literacy programs?
• What tensions do you see between the guiding principles and literacy instruction in an industrial model?
• How well do you feel you know the contemporary learning and teaching landscapes of all pupils, and how could you use that knowledge to construct twenty-first century literacy teaching and learning practices?

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Examining literacy in the twenty-first century


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**CHILDREN’S LITERATURE REFERENCES**


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