Module 7: Literacy

This training aims to develop your understanding of Language Disorder in the context of literacy development. You will investigate the 5 essential components of reading and increase your knowledge of effective literacy strategies to support students with Language Disorder.

Learning to read and write is a crucial component of a student's development and enables them to participate fully at home and at school. Language provides an important foundation for accessing learning in particular literacy. As a result, students with Language Disorder will often present with literacy difficulties.

Reading is a complex task that requires affective language comprehension and word recognition. In the same way that a rope is made up of interwoven strands reading requires students to integrate a variety of skills. The strands at the top of the rope consist of skills that underpin a student's oral language abilities and support language comprehension. These individual strands include a student's background knowledge, range, and depth of vocabulary, understanding of language structures such as grammar, verbal reasoning and knowledge of literacy concepts such as genre. The strands at the bottom of the rope consist of skills and underpin a student's word recognition. These individual strands include a student's phonological awareness skills to isolate the structure of a word, ability to decode using letter sound correspondence, and sight recognition of familiar words. Skilled reading occurs when these strands weave together. Practice and time enables reading to become increasingly automatic until it appears effortless. However, students with Language Disorder are likely to have weaknesses in one or more strands of language comprehension, which flows onto effect the strands of word recognition. For each individual student it is important to consider which strands of the rope are strongest and which strands need the most support.

There are five areas to becoming an effective reader which include vocabulary, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and comprehension. We will now step through each of the areas to learn more and explore strategies to support students with Language Disorder.

Students with Language Disorder may have difficulty learning new words and using them in the correct context. They may use vague or general terms such as 'umm', 'stuff' and 'things' and have difficulty conveying their message. When reading, students draw on the words meaning to support comprehension or decode words in context. Students with Language Disorder are also less likely to transfer new words they've read into spoken vocabulary. Typically developing students need to be exposed to new words 6 to 14 times, whereas students with language is order may need closer to 40 repetitions before words are added to their vocabulary, therefore it is important to consider strategies to support vocabulary development when addressing a student's literacy difficulties. Please select the age group of students most relevant to you.

Primary: Consider how the following strategies could support primary school students with Language Disorder within your school context. Provide multiple oral and written exposures to new words, encourage students to provide a definition of the targeted word in their own words, consider using a tiered vocabulary approach to supporting targeted vocabulary, teach new vocabulary using a multi modal-approach such as photographs videos and objects, use word webs to provide visual supports for key features of targeted vocabulary. For more information on supporting the development of oral and written vocabulary please see our SALDA handout at the end of the module

Secondary: Consider how the following strategies could support high school students with Language Disorder within your school context. Pre-teach new vocabular especially words that are curriculum specific, consider using a tiered vocabulary approach to support targeted vocabulary, teach students how to use information about word parts, for example root words, prefixes and suffixes to support their reading, identify the different forms of the word, for example run, ran, running runner and runners, encourage the student to generate their own written and spoken definition of a word that they have read. For more information on supporting the development of oral and written vocabulary please see the SALDA handout at the end of the module

An understanding of the three tiers of vocabulary can be helpful when considering words to target. Tier 1 words are familiar words frequently used in conversation; these are often not explicitly taught. Tier 2 words are more complex words often used in the classroom. they can have multiple meanings and be used in a variety of contexts. When identifying potential vocabulary for instruction Tier 2 words are an ideal place to start. Tier 3 words are less frequently occurring content specific words that are often explicitly taught in the context of a lesson.

Activity: Take a moment to read through the following passage about frogs.

We will now sort the highlighted words into Tier 1, 2 and 3.

Phonemic awareness is a subset of phonological awareness skills which involves the ability to hear and isolate the sound structure of a word. Before decoding letters into sounds a student needs to understand words are made up of speech sounds that can be represented by writing. Phonemic awareness skills include the ability to, segment words into sounds, blend sounds into words and manipulate sounds.

Students with Language Disorder can often present with difficulties recognising rhyme and alliteration, comparing and contrasting sounds within different words, completing phonemic manipulation tasks, orally blending or segmenting words into sounds or syllables and replacing sounds in words to make new words. Therefore, it is important to consider strategies to support phonemic awareness development when addressing a student's literacy difficulties. Consider how the following strategies could support students with Language Disorder within your school context; Providing specific phonemic awareness tasks three to

five times per week, for example rhyming, blending and segmenting; Explicitly teaching the concepts of a sound, letter and word; Using visual supports to scaffold phonemic understanding such as coloured counters or signing systems; and practising phonemic awareness skills in context with books and other materials. The phonemic skill of segmentation refers to the ability to separate words into individual sounds. For example, the word cat has three sounds: c-a-t.

Activity: Practice segmenting by identifying the number of sounds in the following words.

When thinking back to the previous activity you may have noticed the number of sounds in a word does not always correspond to the number of letters. The English language has 26 letters which represent 44 different sounds. this knowledge of letter sound correspondence is referred to as phonics. it involves the awareness of sounds of individual letters, for example the letter 'b' sounds like /b/ and the sound /p/ looks like 'p', as well as letter combinations for example 'ck' sounds like /k/ and the sound /sh/ looks like 'sh'.

Students with Language Disorder can often have difficulties with phonics such as labelling letters quickly and accurately and decoding long vowel sounds digraphs and blends. Therefore, it is important to consider strategies to support phonics development when addressing a student's literacy difficulties.

Consider how the following strategies could support students with Language Disorder within your school context.

- Applying a systematic synthetic phonics approach that explicitly connects the representations of sounds with letters
- A synthetic approach has been found to be the most effective for phonics instruction
- Use decodable readers to practise newly learnt decoding skills.
- Teach clusters of similar vowel sounds or visually similar letters to support auditory and visual discrimination
- Developing automaticity of individual consonants as well as short and long vowel sounds through repeated practise. This helps reduce the cognitive load during reading, and;
- Utilise a multi modal approach including visuals, objects and signing.

For more information on supporting the development of phonics skills please see the SALDA handouts at the end of the module.

Activity: There are many terms utilised in phonics instruction test your knowledge by matching the terms with their definitions.

There are three key components to reading fluency, including, accuracy, rate, and expression. As decoding becomes more automatic and accurate and the student can apply prior knowledge reading accuracy will continue to increase.

As the reading process becomes more precise the student's reading rate will improve and proficient readers will be able to read aloud at a typical speaking rate. The student will also

begin using pitch, rhythm, tone of voice. and volume to read with expression and convey meaning. Difficulties with vocabulary, phonemic awareness, and phonics will likely impact on reading fluency which has a flow on effect to reading comprehension. The higher cognitive load of non-fluent readers will place greater demand on the student with Language Disorder, resulting in slow effortful reading which impacts understanding. Therefore, it is important to consider strategies to support fluency development when addressing a student's literacy difficulties.

Consider how the following strategies could support students with Language Disorder within your school context.

- Use timed activities where students are encouraged to beat their own personal best
- Repeating timed activities to re-read the same passage until the speed is increased
- Explicit teaching of punctuation, such as, full stops, commas, and exclamation points
- Modelling by a skilled reader of what fluent reading sounds like
- Demonstrating a range of expression where the teacher read to the class, and;
- Encouraging Theatre games where students read aloud from scripts.

Activity: Take a moment to listen to the following passage about the boat parade. Now select the components of fluency that were difficult for the reader in this passage.

Making sense of written information is the ultimate aim of reading, however, it is a complex process. A proficient reader needs to develop competency in the four other areas of reading and integrate these skills to understand writing. A difficulty in one or more of these areas will affect reading comprehension. For example, a student with poor phonemic awareness will struggle with letters sound correspondence during phonics instruction. This will likely impact developing their vocabulary and reading fluency. By needing to focus on the mechanics of reading a student with Language Disorder may not be able to focus on comprehending what is read.

As discussed in module two and three students with Language Disorder have difficulties with understanding words, sentence structures, and concepts which directly affects reading comprehension. Reading comprehension difficulties become increasingly critical as students move from learning to read, to reading to learn. With an increased focus on literacy-based learning, students with Language Disorder are likely to find it harder and harder to access the school curriculum. Without modifications and adjustments, it is very likely that learning and educational achievement will be compromised. Therefore, it is important to consider strategies to support reading comprehension when addressing a student's literacy difficulties.

Meta cognitive reading strategies involve increasing students awareness of the process of reading, through planning reading tasks, monitoring information is understood, and integrating new information about background knowledge. Metacognitive strategies can be implemented before, during, and after reading to support students with comprehension.

Consider how the following strategies could support students with Language Disorder within your school context.

- Before reading
    - Discuss the purpose or genre of the text
    - Use the title text type and diagrams or pictures to predict what might be included within the text
    - Brainstorm the student's current knowledge on the topic
    - Pre-teach relevant vocabulary, and;
    - Make questions to guide reading.
- During reading
    - Guide conversations to include key information and events in the text
    - Encourage students to self-monitor comprehension
    - Pause during reading to recall what happened and predict what might occur next, and;
    - Highlight unknown vocabulary
- After reading
    - Explicitly teach strategies for summarising paraphrasing and taking notes
    - Graphic organisers can support this process
    - Review any highlighted words or sentences, and;
    - Explore any new vocabulary or concepts together
    - Discuss the text with the student, including;
        - Identifying the main idea or theme
        - Drawing conclusions and making inferences based on the text
        - Determining causality and predicting outcomes
        - Generalising or relating the text to the students and experiences
        - Inferring the authors opinion or perspective
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Another reading comprehension strategy involves encouraging students to form a mental picture of stories in their minds and use this imagery to assist with comprehension. Visualising strategies are taught in a step by step manner, moving from describing familiar objects to creating mental images of sentences paragraphs and stories.

For more information on supporting visualisation please see our SALDA handout at the end of the module.

Finally, levelled questioning can be used to support higher order language skills both when reading and during auditory comprehension tasks. Higher level questions focus on increasing executive functioning skills and developing verbal reasoning organisation and inferential skills.

For more information on questioning please see our SALDA handout at the end of the module.

Activity: Take a moment to read the following passage about elephants. This passage was given to students in year four. Can you match the comprehension difficult to each student?

Reflection: At this stage of the training I invite you to take a minute to reflect. Consider the content covered so far.

What are the five essential components of reading you have learnt about?

How might the literacy skills of a student with Language Disorder present?

What strategies could you utilise to support literacy development in the classroom?

When you are ready to move on click the next button.

We hope that you have a greater understanding of the literacy needs of students with Language Disorder as well as strategies to support them in the classroom.

For more information on the content covered in this module please view the following handouts.

We value your feedback so please complete the following survey to help us improve future learning experiences.

This project was funded by the Queensland Government Non-State Special Needs Organisations Programme.