



# Chapter 5: Planning a whole-school approach to literacy

This chapter should be read in conjunction with *Planning a Whole-school Approach to Literacy*, NSW Department of School Education (1997), which has been written to help schools to plan for literacy improvement by:

- interpreting and using Year 7 ELLA results as a basis for future planning
- evaluating the effectiveness of current literacy strategies
- assessing staff expertise in relation to literacy
- identifying, assessing and using available resources
- refining or modifying organisational or administrative structures
- refining or developing whole-school literacy plans.

A whole-school approach to literacy will result in:

- schools using the Year 7 ELLA results and other student literacy data as a catalyst for improving students' literacy achievements
- schools using the Year 7 ELLA results as a basis for school planning and programming
- school activities becoming more focused on improving the literacy outcomes of students and on teachers having further knowledge about the literacy demands of key learning areas
- providing teachers with more knowledge about how to teach subject content through appropriate generic and subject-specific literacy strategies.

*Planning a Whole-school Approach to Literacy*,  
NSW Department of School Education (1997), p.12

This chapter first outlines the key steps which schools should undertake as they work towards developing a whole-school approach to literacy and then suggests ways in which the PDHPE faculty can contribute to this process.

## Establish literacy as a school priority

At faculty and whole-school meetings teachers can discuss and develop understandings about the literacy demands of various KLAs and subjects. The district literacy team can provide advice to faculty groups about ways to identify and describe these literacy demands.

*Focus on Literacy* is a useful starting point for meetings and professional development activities related to literacy. It addresses the key elements of the State Literacy Strategy and provides information about the effective teaching of literacy in an explicit and systematic manner.

Chapters 1 and 2 of this book describe the literacy skills, knowledge and understandings that students in Year 7 need to demonstrate in order to be successful. They also outline the prior knowledge and skills which students bring to the secondary school by looking at the literacy experiences and demands of the primary school.

Having established an understanding of the literacy demands of each subject, teachers should then examine their teaching programs to identify opportunities for systematic and explicit literacy instruction.

The literacy support team in the school should assist in highlighting opportunities to develop students' literacy skills in each subject. Support teachers, such as ESL teachers and support teachers learning difficulties, should be involved in providing advice about specific strategies to assist those students who require additional support. Teacher-librarians have a significant role to play in assisting students to use information skills as they work with a range of resources to gain and use information.

The school as a whole needs to recognise the value of a whole-school approach to literacy and ensure that it becomes part of the school management plan. Ways of meeting the professional development needs of individual teachers and faculty groups should be included in the plan. Teachers could be surveyed to establish their current knowledge and expertise. Appendix 1 in *Planning a Whole-school Approach to Literacy* is an example of a survey that could be used for this purpose.

Sample survey from: *Planning a Whole-School Approach to Literacy*, Appendix 1.

**(A) 1: Literacy survey of staff**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

*Remember: Literacy includes reading, writing, speaking and listening in a range of contexts.*

1. List any formal training qualification in literacy

(a) Preservice \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(b) Inservice \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Do you have any other relevant training that could be useful in the literacy area at this school? e.g. public speaking, writing, acting, computing...

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. In the area of literacy, list any skills that you feel would be of value to others in the work place. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Are you a member of any professional organisations that have literacy as a component? If so, please list.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. List any literacy resources and/or strategies of which you are aware that could be used to benefit teachers and students at this school.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. What classroom literacy activities do you use in your classroom?

Sometimes	Often	Regularly

(a) What literacy programs or strategies do you think have been successful at this school?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(b) Why?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. (a) What literacy programs or strategies do you think have not been successful?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(b) Why? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you for taking time to complete this survey.*

## Determining priorities within the plan

In order to develop an appropriate literacy plan for the school, information about students' current literacy achievements needs to be analysed. The ELLA results can provide useful information about individuals' and year groups' strengths and weaknesses. An analysis of the areas in which students require additional support will indicate a focus for the plan. Other information can be gathered by analysing School Certificate and Higher School Certificate results. Data gathered by teachers through informal and formal assessment tasks will also highlight areas needing support.

Having collected and analysed all available data, the staff should determine priorities within the school plan. These priorities should also reflect the State Literacy Strategy. For example, the ELLA results and teachers' observations might demonstrate that 70% of students have difficulty with paragraphing their writing. In a school where this is the case, this could become an area to be addressed by all teachers in the writing tasks they set for students.

## Developing goals or objectives for the school plan

Priorities should then be translated into goals for students and teachers. These goals need to be written in clear language that defines precisely what is to be achieved. Some goals will refer to short-term achievements, while others will be long-term. A short-term goal might be that all teachers have been trained in the NPDP modules, *Literacy across the KLAs, Years 7 & 8*. A long-term goal might be that increased numbers of students are successful in 2 Unit PDHPE.

Some of the goals will have implications for teachers' professional development, and this will need to be documented in the plan, including what form the professional development will take, how it will be provided and how it will be funded.

## Resourcing the school plan

Collect information about available resources, both human and material. This will include the expertise which already exists within the staff and the district. It will also include collecting information about literacy programs which are already in the school to determine which programs are aligned with the outcomes of the school plan.

Appendix B in *Planning a Whole-school Approach to Literacy* offers one way of doing this.

Decide whether additional resources will be required to achieve the outcomes of the school plan. If additional human resources are needed, how will these be found? Will it require a more flexible organisation of the school timetable? If additional material resources are required, how can these be budgeted for in the school plan? Ensure that all staff have the opportunity to provide input to the resourcing of the plan.

Sample from:  
*Planning a Whole-School Approach  
to Literacy*, Appendix B.

### **(B) Mapping Existing Programs and Strategies**

*Step 1: List all literacy programs and strategies operating in the school.*

*Step 2: For each strategy or program, you may wish to ask some of the following questions or you may wish to include others.*

1. What is the program?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. When was it developed?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Is it still current?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. For whom was it designed?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Is it achieving its stated outcomes?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. How do you know?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. How is it implemented?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. Is it used by all people who should use it?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Is it part of whole-school planning?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Is it part of financial planning?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. Is it simple, practical and reliable?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. Does it fit in with current DSE Policy?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. Are there adequate resources for the program?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. Is it supported by training and development?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
15. Has it influenced student participation in teaching and learning outcomes?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
16. How do you know whether or not it has made a difference to student learning outcomes?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Informing parents and the community

Parents and community members could be involved in developing the school plan. Participants could be drawn from the Parents and Citizens Association, local community groups or parents who express a particular interest. All parents and caregivers should be kept informed of the development and progress of the plan through meetings and newsletters. It might be necessary to provide this information in a range of community languages.

When reporting on students' achievements, each KLA should include information about literacy achievements and indications of areas requiring additional support. The nature of the support being supplied by the school should be indicated. To do this teachers will need to include literacy achievements in the criteria they apply to assessing students' work and have a plan in place to assist those students who are experiencing difficulties.

## Evaluating the plan

Procedures for evaluating the overall success and the outcomes of the plan should be established and written into the plan. For long-term outcomes, indicators might need to be established to ensure that the school is working purposefully towards the achievement of those outcomes.

The development of effective literacy strategies for the explicit teaching of literacy in PDHPE requires planning, development, implementation and evaluation by a committed staff.

The following pages provide an example of the approach a PDHPE faculty can take to contribute to a whole-school literacy plan.

The suggested approach to literacy development in PDHPE involves three stages:

- Getting started
- Putting it together
- Making it work.

# A PDHPE faculty approach to literacy

## Getting started

Steps	Things to consider
1. Introduce literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why is literacy important?</li> <li>• What is the literacy approach of the whole school?</li> <li>• What is the role of the PDHPE faculty?</li> <li>• What support is available for the faculty?</li> </ul>
2. Identify literacy needs in PDHPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the demands of PDHPE?</li> <li>• What literacy skills are required of students in PDHPE?</li> <li>• What literacy skills, knowledge and understandings do Year 7 students bring with them from primary school?</li> </ul>
3. Become familiar with text types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are text types?</li> <li>• What text types are used in PDHPE?</li> </ul>
4. Identify literacy strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What teaching and learning strategies develop literacy skills?</li> <li>• What strategies are most appropriate for PDHPE?</li> </ul>

*Organise a faculty meeting.*

*Invite:*

- *school literacy coordinator*
- *district literacy consultant*
- *PDHPE consultant.*

*Examine PDHPE syllabus outcomes.*

*Link with your feeder primary schools.*

*Use the NPDP CD ROM, Literacy for Learning, Years 5-8.*

*Collect a range of strategies and examples.*

*See Chapter 4 in this document.*

## Putting it together

Steps	Things to consider	
1. Develop an action plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are we trying to do?</li> <li>• What needs to be accomplished?</li> <li>• What literacy skills should we focus on in our PDHPE programs?</li> <li>• What resources are available to the faculty?</li> <li>• Where will we start?</li> <li>• How will we know that we are making a difference?</li> </ul>	<p><i>Discuss in faculty meetings.</i></p> <p><i>Link in with the whole-school literacy plan.</i></p>
2. Start with a current unit of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do we expect students to be able to do at the end of the unit?</li> <li>• What literacy skills are needed to achieve the outcomes?</li> <li>• What literacy strategies are already in place?</li> <li>• Where could other literacy strategies be included in the unit?</li> <li>• What assessment methods can be incorporated?</li> <li>• How will we monitor the unit?</li> </ul>	<p><i>Select one unit of work to start with.</i></p> <p><i>Revisit PDHPE outcomes and identify literacy strategies.</i></p>
3. Strengthen other units of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What unit of work will we work on next?</li> <li>• Who will be responsible for rewriting each unit?</li> <li>• What is our timeline for development?</li> <li>• How will we monitor each unit?</li> </ul>	<p><i>Discuss at regular faculty meetings.</i></p> <p><i>Allocate tasks within faculty.</i></p> <p><i>Use PDHPE or literacy consultants for support.</i></p>

## Making it work

Steps	Things to consider
1. Implement the units of work	
2. Collect evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How best can we use student work samples?</li> <li>• What types of anecdotal evidence can we collect?</li> <li>• What formal assessment tasks should we include in each unit?</li> <li>• What other types of information can we collect about student achievement?</li> </ul>
3. Evaluate the units of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do the literacy strategies relate to the unit outcomes?</li> <li>• Have we addressed all literacy areas (reading, writing, talking and listening) in our units?</li> <li>• Have we catered for all students?</li> <li>• How much time is spent on developing literacy in the PDHPE unit?</li> <li>• Has students' achievement of outcomes improved?</li> <li>• What can we do better next year?</li> </ul>
4. Some personal reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where have I focused my development in literacy?</li> <li>• What do I already know?</li> <li>• What have I overlooked?</li> <li>• What skills do I have in the literacy field that will be of benefit to others?</li> <li>• What skills and knowledge of literacy do I need in order to do my job better?</li> </ul>

*Teach the units of work.*

*Identify formal and informal assessment strategies.*

*Use pre-planned evaluation strategies.*

*Discuss at faculty meetings.*

*Link to whole-school plan.*

*Take time for some individual reflection.*