



LISA BURMAN

Questions to Support Beginning-of-Year Planning

How to use this list:

- Think of the list of questions as a menu. Read through all of them and return to the ones that resonate most with you. It may not be necessary to 'tick off' each question, as many are interconnected. They are intended to spark reflection and thinking.
- It is important to have a sound knowledge of the expectations in the *Australian Curriculum* and your school's *Literacy Agreements, Policies or Essential Guides*. With this knowledge, you can be creative with how the expectations are met. You can plan how the learning outcomes will be explored & reached through authentic, meaningful contexts and purposes that make sense for your group of learners, for your teaching and for your school context.
- The *General Capabilities* include Literacy Capability and so it is important that this informs your thinking. The other General Capabilities will often connect to the pedagogy you use in Reading and Writing Workshop, for example, Social & Emotional Capability, Creative & Critical Thinking Capability and ICTs Capabilities.
- In terms of the English Curriculum, a helpful place to start is to become very familiar with the *Australian Curriculum Year Level Descriptors* and the *Achievement Standard* in English for the year levels you work with.
- The Spotlight Study planners I have designed can be used to track the connections to the Australian Curriculum, by engaging in an evaluative process *at the end* of a Study and highlighting the learning that was evident and explored in the English Content Descriptors.
- This level of planning is two-fold: the big ideas that will drive your pedagogical choices throughout the year, and the organisational elements that will enable you to effectively and efficiently guide, activate, monitor and assess learning during the year.
- The list of questions is not meant to be a definitive list. Other questions may be raised as you reflect on and discuss these particular questions with your colleagues. My intention is for this to be a starting place and I hope it is particularly helpful for teams of educators navigating ways to create continuity of learning for children, whilst keeping their individuality as a teacher.

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WRITING WORKSHOP

Big Ideas

- What are the most important things you want children to learn about being a **writer**? Make a list.
- Which of these will be learnt through the culture you create and the routines you establish?
- Which of these will be learnt through explicit teaching (i.e.: through focussed spotlight studies, in mini lessons, small group learning or conferences)?
- What language of learning (metalinguage) will you consistently & intentionally use to provide children with a sense of continuity in their learning?
- What purposes for writing do you intend to provide children the opportunity for? To entertain, to persuade, to organise, to inform or teach, to show how to do or make...
- What authentic, real-world text-types connect to these purposes for writing? How can you 'freshen' this up rather than show the same kinds of text types you always have used? Can you find examples of these texts types in real world examples?
- How will you provide frequent opportunities for young writers to share and get feedback about their writing? Will you use the concept of "Read Aloud Publishing" and will this be ongoing and managed by children and/or whole class times/deadlines for all to publish? Or a mix of both?
- What possible "Spotlight Studies" could you explore? Ensure a balance of PRODUCT (e.g.: genre/text type), CRAFTING (e.g.: how to make your characters come alive) and PROCESS (e.g.: how to have successful peer conferences) studies across the year.
- Do you have any favourite mentor authors you want to explore in your teaching this year?
- How will you provide opportunities for children to choose and use their own mentor authors?
- How will you connect Writing to other areas of learning and Reading Workshop?
- How will you plan for children to make connections between their word study (i.e.; phonological awareness, phonics, high frequency word learning, grammar) and writing?



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WRITING WORKSHOP

Organisation

- How will children organise their bookmaking materials? What resources & scaffolds will you include for children to have easy access to as they write?
- How will you provide child access to writing materials? (For example: paper, stapler, paper clips, mentor texts, writing goals, alphabet charts, high frequency words, pens and pencils?)
- How will you organise & use Writer's Notebooks this year? Can you involve children in this decision-making through researching how other writers use their Notebooks?
- How will you integrate the use of digital tools in writing workshop?
- How will you make the writing process visible for young writers?

Assessment & Record-keeping

- What assessment tools will you use? When will you schedule this?
- How will you use the information from these assessments? How will you share this with young writers and their families?
- What record-keeping system will support your ongoing formative assessment? Apart from your conference notes, will you keep other anecdotal observational records (e.g.: during Reflection Circles of children's metacognitive thinking)? Of what? When?
- What system will help you to keep on top of the volume of writing produced by your group of writers? (e.g.: Collect 4 notebooks each week to assess, keep notes about, provide feedback to the writer; or Collect all notebooks in weeks 2 and 6 for the above.)
- How will children know their writing goals? When will you provide opportunity to talk about and share these goals, supporting children to show evidence of their learning? How can the children make informed decisions about their writing goals so they are negotiated or co-constructed?



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READING WORKSHOP

Big Ideas

- What are the most important things you want children to learn about being a **reader**? Make a list. The framework of the following 4 quadrants may help define this: 1. Habits & Dispositions; 2. Comprehension Strategies; 3. Word-focussed Strategies/Accuracy Strategies; 4. Fluency Strategies.
- Which of these will be learnt through the culture you create and the routines you establish?
- Which of these will be learnt through explicit teaching (i.e.: through focussed spotlight studies, in mini lessons, small group learning or conferences)?
- What language of learning (metalinguage) will you consistently & intentionally use to provide children with a sense of continuity in their learning?
- What purposes for reading do you intend to provide children the opportunity for? For entertainment, for talking about ideas, for learning new information, for following directions...
- How will you provide frequent opportunities for young readers to talk about their reading?
- What possible “Spotlight Studies” could you explore?
- How will you connect reading with other areas of learning and Writing Workshop?
- How will you plan for children to make connections between their word study (i.e.; phonological awareness, phonics, high frequency word learning, grammar) and reading?
- How will you intentionally create a ‘book club culture’ in your Community?
- What is the place of ‘home-reading’? Understanding that whatever is sent home gives powerful messages about what you believe is important about reading. What do you want families to understand as the most important things about reading? (High frequency words? Love of reading? A varied reading diet? The expectation to read every night, no matter what?)
- Research has shown that reading logs can be counterproductive to building reading dispositions and positive attitudes as they can make reading into a chore for children and families. Consider this when deciding on the expectations and systems you will put in place.



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READING WORKSHOP

Organisation

- How will children organise their reading materials? How will you teach strategies for choosing Just Right/Good Fit texts?
- Will you use a Reader's Notebook to collect evidence of children's thinking about and thinking during reading? What will that look like? What might it include?
- How will you integrate the use of digital texts in reading workshop?
- How will you provide access to a variety of reading material in your Community and/or in your class?
- How will books and other texts have visibility in your learning spaces without overwhelming the space?

Assessment & Record-keeping

- What assessment tools will you use? When will you schedule this?
- How will you use the information from these assessments? How will you share this with young readers and their families?
- What record-keeping system will support your ongoing formative assessment? Apart from your conference notes, will you keep other anecdotal observational records (e.g.: during Reflection Circles of children's metacognitive thinking)? Of what?
- How will children know their reading goals? When will you provide opportunity to talk about and share these goals, supporting children to show evidence of their learning? How can the children make informed decisions about their writing goals so they are negotiated or co-constructed?