

Developing early literacy skills in bilingual children

Meeting the challenge with a viable, sustainable program adapted to a First Nations context

A few points to get started

- All normally constituted children will learn when given a fair chance. *Our goal is to work together with you to give all kids the fairest chance possible.*
- The majority of people on this planet are bilingual. *The children you work with are part of this majority.*
- No matter how good you are as teacher, you cannot educate a child alone. *You will need help from the other children in the class, from your colleagues, from the community and from experts in the fields of literacy and numeracy.*

Skills children need in order to learn how to read

Oral language skills

- **Receptive and expressive vocabulary:** The more words the better!
- **Phonological discrimination abilities:** Being able to hear the difference between /k/ and /g/ or between /p/ and /b/.
- **Sound sequencing knowledge:** Knowing that /spl/ is a possible start for an English word but that /mpl/ is not. Knowing that Innu words can end in /shk/ but not in /shp/
- **Morphological awareness:** knowing that some words can be broken up into smaller parts that carry meaning. Ex. In English: *reaction* = re/act/ion, re = *again*, -ion = noun. In Innu: *niuapuiana* = ni/uap/uian/a
- **Syntactic awareness:** knowing about word order possibilities.
- **Pragmatic awareness:** understanding how to interpret what is really meant by using intonation, contextual cues and real world knowledge. Ex. *Very funny!* might mean something is not funny at all.

Phonological skills

- **Phonological Awareness:** the knowledge that words are made up of sounds and that these sounds can be both isolated and blended. Ex. *cat* = /k+æ+t/, *cat* without /k/ = /æt/, *cat* without /t/ = /kæ/
- **Phonological Recoding:** the ability to orally name a picture, number or written word.
- **Phonological Memory:** the ability to hold a phonological series in mind and then repeat it.

Word-level skills

- **Print awareness:** knowing that letters are used to represent words and understanding that writing is a code.
- **Knowledge of letter names.**
- **Knowledge of letter-sound relationships:** knowing the various sounds letters can represent (ex. “s” can be pronounced: *same* or *rose* or *sure* or *leisure*)
- **Knowledge of spelling rules.**

Early literacy skills and Innu children: What needs special attention?

What can you do?

- Engage actively in the systematic teaching of the sub-skills children need to learn to read (using a scientifically sound off-the-shelf program can be a good idea)
- Monitor the progress of the children in your class closely using valid instruments.
- Design every task so that children can succeed at it and learn from it.
- Read to the children in your class on a regular basis ... regardless of their age!
- Reach out to parents.

What sort of timetabling are we talking about?

Year	Literacy Skills	Numeracy Skills
Kindergarten	Vocabulary flood (English and Innu) targeting early primary words, specifically Grade 1 words). Phonological Awareness (Off the shelf program) Phonological discrimination Letter names Letter-sound correspondences Rapid naming Phonological and verbal memory practice Sentence repetition Oral narration (children talk about events in their lives, experiences, etc.)	Counting Topology Ordinals Relative quantities
Grade 1	Vocabulary flood (English and Innu) targeting words in Grade 2 textbooks Phonological Awareness Phonological discrimination Letter-sound correspondences Rapid naming Phonological and verbal memory practice (repeating words and numbers) Morphological awareness: practice in listening for grammatical morphemes Auditory memory (repeating rhythmic patterns) Sentence repetition: starting with simple sentences and moving to complex sentences Oral narration Narrative structure Oral comprehension Word writing	Counting Topology Ordinals Relative quantities Addition Subtraction Basic geometrical figures
Grade 2	Vocabulary flood (English and Innu) targeting words in Grade 3 textbooks Phonological Awareness Phonological discrimination Letter-sound correspondences (if needed) Rapid naming Phonological and verbal memory practice (repeating words and numbers) Morphological awareness: practice in listening for grammatical morphemes Auditory memory (repeating rhythmic patterns) Sentence repetition: starting with simple sentences and moving to complex sentences Word reading Sentence reading Easy book reading Oral narrations, descriptions, definitions Narrative structure Sentence writing	Addition Subtraction Multiplication Beginning of division More sophisticated geometrical shapes and solids
Grade 3	Vocabulary flood Rapid naming	Proficiency in addition and subtraction of whole numbers

	<p>Word definitions, antonyms, synonyms</p> <p>Morphological awareness</p> <p>Sentence repetition</p> <p>Word reading</p> <p>Sentence reading</p> <p>Book reading</p> <p>Oral narrations, descriptions, definitions</p> <p>Narrative structure</p> <p>Sentence writing</p> <p>Story writing, description writing</p>	<p>Introduction of fractions and decimals</p> <p>Multiplication and division</p>
Grade 4	<p>Vocabulary flood</p> <p>Word definitions, antonyms, synonyms</p> <p>Morphological awareness</p> <p>Book reading</p> <p>Oral narrations, descriptions, summaries</p> <p>Story retelling</p> <p>Narrative structure, descriptive text structure</p> <p>Text comprehension strategies</p> <p>Text writing strategies</p> <p>Introduction of Innu Awareness and reading and writing in Innu (metalinguistic instruction)</p>	<p>Proficiency in representing fractions and decimals.</p> <p>Multiplication and division of whole numbers.</p> <p>Adding and subtracting fractions</p> <p>Calculation of perimeters and areas of triangles and quadrilaterals.</p> <p>Adding and subtracting positive and negative integers</p>
Grade 5	<p>Vocabulary flood</p> <p>Word definitions, antonyms, synonyms, register</p> <p>Morphological awareness</p> <p>Syntactic awareness</p> <p>Book reading</p> <p>Oral narrations, descriptions, summaries, reports</p> <p>Text comprehension strategies</p> <p>Text writing strategies</p> <p>Story writing, description writing, report writing</p> <p>Innu Awareness</p>	<p>Proficiency in the multiplication and division and whole numbers.</p> <p>Proficiency in comparing fractions, decimals and percentages.</p> <p>Proficiency in adding and subtracting fractions.</p> <p>Multiplying and dividing fractions</p> <p>Proficiency in the calculation of perimeters and areas of triangles and quadrilaterals.</p> <p>Adding and subtracting positive and negative integers</p> <p>Multiplying and dividing positive and negative integers</p> <p>Calculating perimeters, areas and volumes of two and three dimensional figures.</p>
Grade 6	<p>Vocabulary flood</p> <p>Word definitions, antonyms, synonyms, register</p> <p>Morphological awareness</p> <p>Syntactic awareness</p> <p>Book reading</p> <p>Oral narrations, descriptions, summaries, reports, debates</p> <p>Text comprehension strategies</p> <p>Text writing strategies</p> <p>Story writing, description writing, report writing</p> <p>Innu Awareness</p>	<p>Proficiency in adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing positive and negative integers.</p> <p>Proficiency in calculating perimeters, areas and volumes of two and three dimensional figures</p>