

Developing Early Literacy Skills In Bilingual Children

Grades 4 – 6

Designed for *Mamu Tshishkutamashutau*



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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>

I'm a Grade 4 teacher. What could I be doing with the children?

Vocabulary Building

Take a look at the grade 5 textbooks. The children will need to know the words in them to be able to read and recognize them next year. They will also need many more words to engage in reading to learn. Take a look at the books (novels, short stories, etc.) the children need to read in the course of grade 4 and 5 and work at pre-teaching the vocabulary items they are likely to have trouble with. If a child does not understand at least 95% of the words in a text, he or she cannot read and understand the content of that text.

Use definitions and paraphrasing to help teach the meanings of words. Be sure to show children the written form of new words and leave them time to copy words in a notebook.

Play word games with the children that allow them learn words that rhyme, words that start with the same sound, words that belong to the same semantic field (ex. names of animals, names of food, names of clothing, etc.) Composing poems and jazz chants and rapping with the children can be effective. If you are not musically inclined, you can pick up recordings of great jazz chants at fairly low cost from producers of ESL materials.

Use new words in context so the children can learn which words go together. For instance, if you teach the *parachute*, you can talk about parachute jumping, parachutists, paratroopers, landing, free falling, rip cords, jumpsuits, and so forth.

Call attention to new meanings for words the children already know.

Play games with synonyms, antonyms, and definitions. Teach the children how to use a dictionary.

Read to the children every day. Show them the book you are reading. Point to words and say them. Teach them new words using the illustrations (if the book is illustrated). Provide time for the children to read on their own each day. Children who are reading well can be left to their own devices and you can read with those who are having more trouble. If you don't know what children might like at their age, talk to a children's librarian next time you are in a big city or check with someone in the children's section of a major bookstore.

Even if you speak no Innu, ask the children for the Innu word for new English vocabulary items. Use your Innu aide to teach the Innu word for concepts being introduced in English. The children need to understand that Innu has a place in school and that learning involves Innu and not just English. You can also learn more about Innu by doing this.

Teach the children how to use prefixes and suffixes to create new words and to work out the meaning of words in texts.

Word Level Skills

Make sure lots of words and texts (in both English and Innu) are on display in your classroom.

Pay careful attention to how the children are representing phonemes that exist in English but not in Innu.

Do sentence and story repetition tasks on a regular basis. You can also have children memorize poems and songs.

Oral Production

The children in your class need an opportunity to practise relating events and telling stories in Innu and in English. You will need your Innu-speaking aide to help you out with the Innu narratives. You can ask children to tell a story or relate an event first in Innu and then in English. You should also make sure your pupils can describe, define and give instructions in Innu. It is important that their Innu academic skills develop at the same rate as their English academic skills.

By grade 4, children should be called upon to describe and define in addition to simply narrating. They can give oral presentations and demonstrations that teach other pupils.

Collective story-telling, with the whole class making up characters and a plot as you go, can be fun. After the story has been made up, it can be retold and recorded or written down.

Reading Skills

By the end of the year, most children should be reading books and graded readers with ease, and should be able to discuss or write about what they have read. Please take care that you don't require children to discuss or answer questions on every single piece of reading they do. This simply sucks all the pleasure out of reading and turns kids off.

Writing Skills

Children should be able to write quite complex stories of their own creation, introducing and developing characters, developing a plot, and arriving at some sort of dénouement. They should also be able to write descriptions, instructions, definitions.

For help with vocabulary teaching, you can download free software called Lextreme from microbe.ca. There are English and French versions available (PC compatible, alas. I believe the school is on Mac).

I'm a Grade 5 teacher. What could I be doing with the children?

Vocabulary Building

Take a look at the grade 6 textbooks. The children will need to know the words in them to be able to read and recognize them next year. They will also need many more words to engage in reading to learn. Take a look at the books (novels, short stories, etc.) the children need to read in the course of grades 5 and 6 and work at pre-teaching the vocabulary items they are likely to have trouble with. If a child does not understand **at least 95% of the words in a text**, he or she cannot read and understand the content of that text.

Use definitions and paraphrasing to help teach the meanings of words. Be sure to show children the written form of new words and leave them time to copy words in a notebook.

Composing poems and jazz chants and rapping with the children can be effective. If you are not musically inclined, you can pick up recordings of great jazz chants at fairly low cost from producers of ESL materials.

Use new words in context so the children can learn which words go together. For instance, if you teach the *parachute*, you can talk about parachute jumping, parachutists, paratroopers, landing, free falling, rip cords, jumpsuits, and so forth.

Call attention to new meanings for words the children already know.

Play games with synonyms, antonyms, and definitions. Give the children words to look up in the dictionary. Teach them how to trace the origins of a word.

Read to the children every day. Wonder out loud as you read to help them with predictions, presuppositions. Provide time for the children to read on their own each day. Children who are reading well can be left to their own devices and you can read with those who are having more trouble. If you don't know what children might like at their age, talk to a children's librarian next time you are in a big city or check with someone in the children's section of a major bookstore.

Even if you speak no Innu, ask the children for the Innu word for new English vocabulary items. Use your Innu aide to teach the Innu word for concepts being introduced in English. The children need to understand that Innu has a place in school and that learning involves Innu and not just English. You can also learn more about Innu by doing this.

Teach the children how to use prefixes and suffixes to create new words and to work out the meaning of words in texts.

Work on sensitizing the children to register and level of language so that they understand the need to adjust to the social situation with which they are dealing.

Word Level Skills

Make sure lots of words and texts (in both English and Innu) are on display in your classroom.

Pay careful attention to how the children are representing phonemes that exist in English but not in Innu.

Oral Production

Try to make room for presentations in both English and Innu so that the children's mother tongue grows with them and develops to meet academic needs as well as social needs.

By grade 5, children should be called upon to describe and define in addition to simply narrating. They can give oral presentations and demonstrations that teach other pupils.

Collective story-telling, with the whole class making up characters and a plot as you go, can be fun. After the story has been made up, it can be retold and recorded or written down.

Improvisation can work well if the children are coached properly and not just told to stand up and improvise.

Reading Skills

The children should be reading books with ease, and should be able to discuss or write about what they have read. Please take care that you don't require children to discuss or answer questions on every single piece of reading they do. This simply sucks all the pleasure out of reading and turns kids off.

Reading and performing plays is a good opportunity to combine written comprehension and oral production.

Make sure the children in your class do lots of on-line reading. Children who would never pick up a book can be led to engage in hours of intensive reading when confronted with a problem to solve or information to find on line. Sometime simply googling the "topic of the day" can result in a child engaging with text for hours.

Writing Skills

Children should be able to write quite complex stories of their own creation, introducing and developing characters, developing a plot, and arriving at some sort of dénouement. They should also be able to write descriptions, instructions, definitions.

Report writing can be done after scientific experiments are conducted.

The children can write and perform their own plays or videos.

Blogs can be a great way to get children writing on a daily basis. They can be supplemented with pictures, music clips and whatever strikes the children's fancy.

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I'm a Grade 6 teacher. What could I be doing with the children?

Vocabulary Building

If a child does not understand **at least 95% of the words in a text**, he or she cannot read and understand the content of that text. You need to pre-teach the difficult words in important reading tasks.

Use definitions and paraphrasing to help teach the meanings of words. Be sure to show children the written form of new words and leave them time to copy words in a notebook.

Composing poems and jazz chants and rapping with the children can be effective for teaching new words. If you are not musically inclined, you can pick up recordings of great jazz chants at fairly low cost from producers of ESL materials.

Use new words in context so the children can learn which words go together. For instance, if you teach the *parachute*, you can talk about parachute jumping, parachutists, paratroopers, landing, free falling, rip cords, jumpsuits, and so forth.

Call attention to new meanings for words the children already know.

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Read to the children every day. Wonder out loud as you read to help them with predictions, presuppositions. Provide time for the children to read on their own each day. Children who are reading well can be left to their own devices and you can read with those who are having more trouble. If you don't know what children might like at their age, talk to a children's librarian next time you are in a big city or check with someone in the children's section of a major bookstore.

Even if you speak no Innu, ask the children for the Innu word for new English vocabulary items. Use your Innu aide to teach the Innu word for concepts being introduced in English. The children need to understand that Innu has a place in school and that learning involves Innu and not just English. You can also learn more about Innu by doing this.

Teach the children how to use prefixes and suffixes to create new words and to work out the meaning of words in texts.

Work on sensitizing the children to register and level of language so that they understand the need to adjust to the social situation with which they are dealing.

Word Level Skills

Make sure lots of texts (in both English and Innu) are on display and available to read in your classroom and make sure your displays change over the course of the school year.

Pay careful attention to how the children are representing phonemes that exist in English but not in Innu.

Oral Production

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