



St. Martin de Porres School

Avondale Heights

ENGLISH POLICY

RATIONALE

At St Martin de Porres School we believe that the development of literacy is a lifelong process. The role of the school is to continue the language learning students have before school and to help them to become proficient language users throughout their lives in our society where there exists oral, visual and written language.

Our students are exposed to language in the variety of texts and contexts in which it is spoken, read, viewed and written. Learning English is concerned with a wide range of texts and media in print and electronic forms, including imaginative literature, popular fiction and non-fiction, personal writing, commercial and workplace texts, everyday communication, plays, film and other multimedia texts.

Learning about texts and language is important to the personal and social development of the individual. Students need to understand and control the English language to develop the confidence and competence to meet the demands of school, employment and further education as active and informed citizens.

Students are active participants in reading, viewing, writing, comparing and talking about texts. They are encouraged to explore a wide range of literature, everyday and media texts, as they think critically about both the local and global communities. Through this they are then able to use the texts they read and listen to as recourses in creating and constructing their own texts.

AIMS

At St Martins De Porres School our English programme aims to develop in the students:

- ◆ the ability to speak, listen, read, view and write effectively with confidence, purpose and enjoyment in a wide range of social and school based contexts.
- ◆ a knowledge of the linguistic patterns and grammatical features used to construct different texts and the capacity to apply this knowledge.
- ◆ a broad knowledge of a range of texts and a capacity to relate this to aspects of contemporary society and personal experience.
- ◆ the ability to appreciate, discuss and analyse texts and language critically.
- ◆ An awareness of the ways textual interpretation and understanding may vary according to cultural, social and personal differences

BELIEFS AND UNDERSTANDINGS

At St. Martin de Porres school we believe that 'almost all students can make progress, given sufficient time and support' (Hill & Crevola,1997). Educational research evidence suggests that there are a small number of factors that best predict whether students make best progress at school. These include :

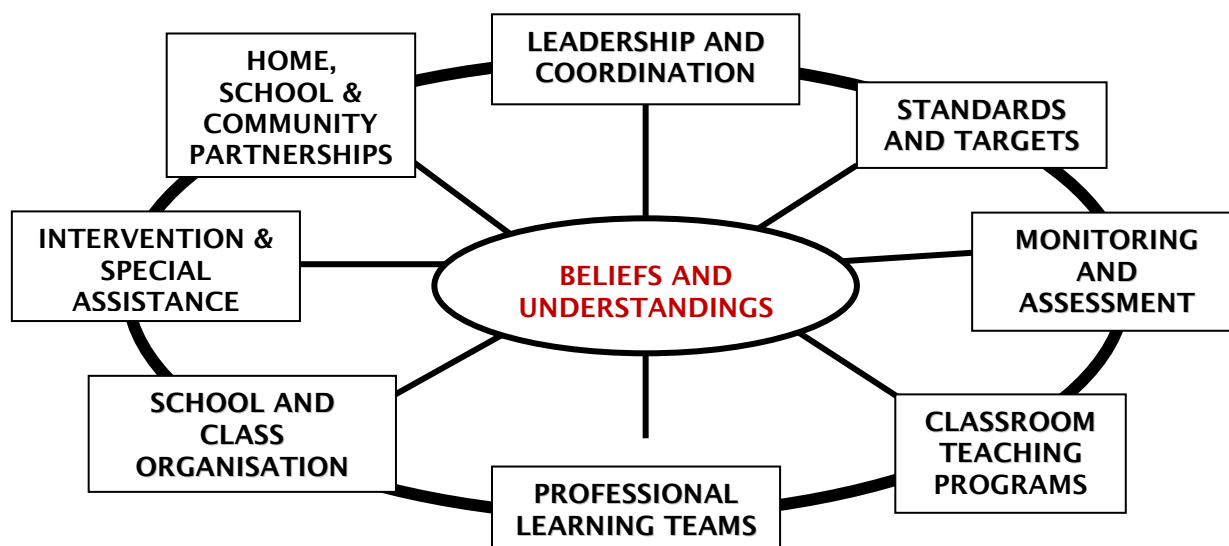
- ◆ high expectations of student achievement;
- ◆ engaged learning time;
- ◆ structured teaching focused on the learning needs of students.

St. Martin's literacy strategy is a whole school approach to ensuring that all students make progress and achieve success in literacy. The critical elements include the establishment of high expectations, focussed teaching based on the learning needs of students, student attentiveness, and a relentless determination on the part of the whole school community to ensure success for all.

We believe that.....

- ◆ proficient oral language is the basis for students to develop as competent readers and writers of the English language;
- ◆ reading is a process;
- ◆ reading is essentially about gaining meaning from a given text;
- ◆ reading is central to all learning and integrated with all curriculum areas;
- ◆ reading is an essential skill;
- ◆ specific skills must be taught if our students are to become proficient readers;
- ◆ a systematic and structured approach will directly impact on student success;
- ◆ the reading program should very much aim to actively promote reading as an enjoyable and rewarding activity;
- ◆ on-going monitoring and assessment of students and their reading is essential;
- ◆ early intervention must occur for students identified as not making expected progress;
- ◆ strong links must be made between home and school;
- ◆ reading is a problem solving activity in which the reader uses knowledge about print, language skills and prior experience to construct and reconstruct what has been read;
- ◆ writing is an essential skill and an important form of communication;
- ◆ writing is a complex skill that requires explicit teaching, modelling, practice and experimentation;
- ◆ we write for a variety of purposes;
- ◆ as writers we vary the manner in which we convey our written thoughts , conscious that our audience differs as does the context and setting;
- ◆ English skills of reading, speaking and listening are critical and work hand in hand in enhancing the quality of our writing.

The design elements of the model (see below) have been adopted as we believe that dramatic achievements in literacy attainment are possible within the context of a fully implemented, comprehensive program that is results-driven and involves both system and school-wide commitment and coordination. Students in this area will be working on developing the appropriate strategies needed in becoming an independent reader and writer.



IMPLEMENTATION

At St Martin de Porres School the teaching and learning of English reflects the design elements of a whole school approach to literacy learning.

DESIGN ELEMENTS

Leadership and Coordination

The Principal is ultimately responsible for the effective operation of the program within the school. The principal oversees the organisation of school programs to allow for an uninterrupted literacy block. The Literacy Coordinator ensures the work of the teachers is coordinated and that they operate as a Professional Learning Team (PLT).

Standards and Targets

Broad based content and performance standards have been largely determined by system authorities via the Victorian Curriculum. These guidelines for students from Prep to Year 12 in Victorian schools are set down by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA)

Targets are based on local knowledge and needs. Basic Indicators based on the Record of Oral Language (ROL), Pat R, the Observation Survey, BURT and PROBE are used to inform learning and teaching.

Monitoring and Assessment

The focus of assessment is to improve student learning outcomes. Formal testing takes place at the beginning and at the end of the school year and informal testing is continually undertaken. This allows teachers to find out as much as possible about students' strengths and weaknesses in order to establish starting points for teaching and to use the diagnostic information to direct classroom teaching programs.

Student progress and change is constantly monitored within individual classrooms by the classroom teacher and across the school by learning teams under the guidance of the coordinator. Assessment tools include the use of the Clay Observation Survey. This includes testing items such as Letter Identification, Concepts About Print, BURT Word Reading Test, Clay Word Test, Writing Vocabulary, Hearing and Recording Sounds (Dictation), Record of Oral Language, Peter's Spelling In Context and Running Record of Reading Behaviour, PROBE Reading Assessment Kit, Miscue Analysis, Writing Analysis and Teacher Observation.

IMPLEMENTATION (cont.)

DESIGN ELEMENTS (cont.)

Classroom Teaching Programs

Effective teaching is structured and focussed on the learning needs of each student and requires well developed understandings of how students learn and of oracy and literacy. It requires well developed classroom routines, organisation and management related to the teaching of small groups. Teachers need to be able to implement a range of practices and strategies in response to the needs of individual students.

Professional Learning Teams (PLTs)

Teachers share ideas and plan together, create opportunities to learn with each other and solve problems as a team. The PLT's across the school (Junior, Middle – Senior) meet regularly to review progress and discuss strategies so that successful learning and each student's growth and development becomes a shared responsibility.

School and Class Organisation

A pre – requisite is the daily literacy block. Engaged learning time is a key factor in student progress. It is expected that each class will have a minimum of four flexible instructional groups and use these groupings as the main means of focussing teaching to the needs of all students. Groupings and contact time will vary according to the needs of the students, the type of activity and its expected outcome.

Intervention and Special Assistance

The main form of intervention is Reading Recovery in the Junior School and 'ERIK' and 'GREED' in the Middle/Senior classes. Reading Recovery focuses on those students who have not developed effective reading and writing strategies after one year of schooling. Parent Helpers also work in various ways across the school to support students, particularly in Reading, who have not yet reached appropriate targets.

Home, School and Community Partnerships

Efforts focus on developing a true partnership between school, family and community through good communication and meeting and working together when possible.

Parents/Guardians are acknowledged as the first educators and provide information and insight into students' learning styles. Special assistance may take the form of additional time and attention provided by the classroom teachers and support staff, in-school referrals which in turn may lead to external referrals and the development of individual education plans.

Assessment

At St Marin de Porres School, assessment practices are integral to the teaching and learning process. They inform curriculum planning to improve student learning.

Assessment occurs formally and informally using a variety of strategies and is the ongoing process of gathering, analysing and reflecting on evidence to make informed and consistent judgements to improve future student learning. A variety of assessment types, techniques and instruments, moderation practices and authentic tasks that reflect real world situations are used. Assessment processes are fair and equitable and cater for a range of different learning styles. Assessment techniques include samples of work, oral presentations, anecdotal records, teacher observation, self and peer assessment, formal and informal testing, checklists and running records.

Assessment for learning occurs when teachers gather information and make inferences about student progress to inform their teaching.

Assessment as learning occurs when teachers use evidence of student learning to make judgements on student achievement against goals and standards.

IMPLEMENTATION (cont.)

DESIGN ELEMENTS (cont.)

Evaluation

At St Marin de Porres School it is important for teachers to evaluate the on - going effectiveness of the English programme.

The tools utilised for this process include the use of:

Level evaluation
Teacher reflection
Student Feedback
Audit of resources
Literacy planners
Teaching foci
Curriculum documents
School based policy documents

WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

Effective teaching is structured and focused on the learning needs of each student through the implementation of a variety of practices and strategies. These include the adoption of an two-hour literacy block, broken into a reading hour and a writing hour. Prep to Year 2 adopt this block on most occasions between 9.00 - 11.00am each morning. Year 3 - 6 adopt the literacy block on most days in the middle learning session between 11.55 am and 1.55pm.

The Components of Reading

- ◆ Reading to children
- ◆ Language experience (reading)
- ◆ Shared reading
- ◆ Guided reading
- ◆ Independent reading

The Components of Writing

- ◆ Modelled writing
- ◆ Shared writing
- ◆ Language experience (writing)
- ◆ Interactive writing
- ◆ Guided writing
- ◆ Independent writing

The Two Hour Structure

The structure of the two-hour literacy block is shown below. It is within this three-part, whole class/small group/whole class structure that each of the above strategies is integrated into effective classroom practice.

Whole-class focus ~ The daily reading workshop begins with a whole-class focus which is based on the Shared reading strategy. Shared reading can consist of books, charts, poems, songs etc. the daily writing workshop begins with a whole-class focus which consists of either Modelled writing or Shared writing. This element of the classroom program sets the scene for the workshop, providing an initial teaching focus and a specific teaching of the visual information of print, including direct instruction in phonics. This is teacher-directed time.

Small-group teaching focus ~ This section of the reading and writing workshop focuses on the explicit teaching of small groups of students. During the reading workshop the strategies of reading to children, language experience and guided reading take place at the same time that learning centres are in operation for the remainder of the class. During the writing workshop the teaching strategies of language experience, interactive writing and guided writing take place while the remainder of the class are engaged in independent writing and various other activities included to extend the students' understandings of grammar and spelling. This is a time for students to take responsibility for large sections of their learning time.

Whole-class focus: sharing ~ This is the concluding section of both the reading and writing workshops and it is a time for reflection when students articulate what they have learnt. During this time the teacher encourages the development of the students' oral language. This share time draws the workshop to a close and the teacher concludes the formal reading and writing components for the day. This is also a teacher-directed time.

Developing Student Independence

Through personalised reading, regular conferences with the classroom teacher, oral presentations and improved questioning techniques, students will begin to develop their own critical analysis of texts. They will acquire new knowledge through independent reading. The activities the children present will be based on the Multiple Intelligences, ensuring children are experiencing and experimenting with a variety of learning styles.

Reading and writing will at times be combined as the students respond critically to the knowledge they have acquired through reading. Teachers will continue to model shared reading and writing in order to provide support for students to ensure they continue to learn. Oral language and critical questioning will become a major focus as the students respond to texts. Students will have acquired a sound knowledge of the linguistic patterns used to construct texts and the capacity to apply this knowledge.

CO-ORDINATION

A Curriculum Leader is appointed to ensure the implementation of sound, developmental literacy strategies and programs from Prep to Year 6. Duties include :

- ◆ Conducting regular PLT meetings
- ◆ Monitoring the on-going assessment of all students in literacy
- ◆ Monitoring the implementation of the literacy strategy
- ◆ Modelling strategies for teachers, assistants and helpers
- ◆ Providing information and training to parents
- ◆ Mentoring classroom teachers in the area of teaching and learning
- ◆ Organising and implementing the pre and post testing procedures
- ◆ Liaising with parents of students having difficulties
- ◆ Assisting in the resourcing of literacy from Prep to Year 6

Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) - Junior, Middle and Senior levels meet to plan the literacy requirements for their particular groups of students on a weekly (P/1/2) and two of every three week (3/4 & 5/6) basis. These PLTs also discuss the progress of individual students, share strategies for dealing with specific issues and new strategies, and other initiatives are shared via the Literacy Coordinator.

Professional Development for teachers is provided both on and off site to further develop a deeper understanding of the rationale behind the teaching strategies used and improve their capacity to impact effectively on students' literacy progress.

Home, school and community partnerships are valued and encouraged at St. Martin's. As parents, care-givers and teachers begin to view each other as partners in education, a community forms around students that is caring and supports learning. As parents become better informed and skilled, they are further equipped to help students succeed in school and in later life. Parent Helpers are an integral part of the literacy program from Prep to Year 2.

We believe that in promoting effective relationships between school and home result in the development of a caring educational environment, a focus on academic excellence, good communication, and productive interactions involving the school, the family and the environment.

Spelling is taught through the use of strategies such as Look-Say-Cover-Write-Check, personalised spelling lists, partner testing, weekly revision, weekly tests, computer programs and specific and incidental teaching throughout the literacy block. (See Attachment No. 1)

Handwriting ~ all Year levels learn the New Victorian script and may use the 'New Write Well' Handwriting book. Teachers may choose to make Handwriting a focus for the whole class session, or conversely for a small group focus. (See Attachment No. 2)

CO-ORDINATION

Reading Recovery ~ is an important aspect of the Literacy program at St. Martin's, as it enables all children to acquire the necessary skills to participate more fully with the reading and writing program.

It is a short-term early intervention program, focussing on students who, after one year of schooling and despite good first teaching, have not yet established effective reading and writing processes. It is an accelerative program, which selects students who have the lowest achievements in early literacy learning, and takes the majority of them to the average performance of their peers. Students in the program receive a one-to-one daily thirty-minute Reading Recovery lesson in addition to the regular classroom reading and writing program. This usually takes between sixteen and twenty weeks (some longer, some less).

Learning Diversity Program ~ while reading recovery can be expected to address the needs of many students 'at risk', there will be some students who, after intensive one-to-one intervention continue to experience difficulties. For such students, assistance is likely to take the form of referral to the Student Wellbeing Leader. After some initial testing to pinpoint the areas of need, the Student Wellbeing Leader in consultation with the classroom teacher, parents and Principal will devise an Individual Education Plan or refer the child to an outside agency. These plans are regularly assessed within Parent Support Group meetings, which are generally held once a term or according to need.

ASSESSMENT

We believe in a systematic program of observation and assessment of students in order to establish as much as possible about each student's strengths and weaknesses, in identifying starting points for teaching and to use this diagnostic information to drive classroom teaching programs. These include:

PREP ~ YEAR 2

- ◆ Focussed Teaching Group Records to be completed on a daily basis
- ◆ Observation Survey (Marie Clay) - Pre and Post Testing :
 - ~ Text Levels 0 - 4 - weekly
 - ~ Text Levels 5 - 10 - fortnightly
 - ~ Text Levels 11 - 19 - every 3 weeks
 - ~ Text Levels 20 - 28 - monthly
- ◆ Record of Oral Language - Pre and Post Testing
- ◆ Pat R tests
- ◆ Writing and spelling analysis to be administered at least once each term
- ◆ Recognition of 100 most used words
- ◆ On-going Running Records (weekly/fortnightly)
- ◆ On-going Focus Evaluation Sheets for both Reading and Writing
- ◆ Observation/Anecdotal notes
- ◆ BURT Word test

YEARS 3 - 6

- ◆ Focussed Teaching Group Records to be completed on a daily basis
- ◆ Writing/spelling analysis to be administered at least once each term
- ◆ Probe Comprehension test
- ◆ Pat R testing
- ◆ Peter's Dictation
- ◆ BURT Word Reading test - Pre and Post Testing
- ◆ Burt Word Spelling Test
- ◆ Running Records for 'at risk' students
- ◆ Observation/Anecdotal notes
- ◆ Spelling Tests & own Word bank
- ◆ Conferencing
- ◆ NAPLAN Tests ~ Year 3 and 5 in Term 2

SPELLING POLICY

RATIONALE

“Until you have an effective writing program in place, it is not appropriate to look at changing your approach to teaching spelling. Without all the elements in place, children would not be supported in learning spelling and would struggle”.

Children only need to learn to spell so that they can write. It therefore makes sense to teach spelling through the writing program. However, children can also learn about spelling patterns through the texts they read.

We learn to spell pattern by pattern, not word by word. The patterns are visual patterns, sound patterns and meaning patterns.

Students need to be immersed in a reading and writing program as the success of spelling depends on the effectiveness of the literacy program.

The teaching of spelling is supported by an understanding of the stages through which students progress.

The teaching of strategies and skills is the scaffolding for students to experience success when attempting to write.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

1. The spelling program must help children to become *strategic spellers*.
When children know the strategies and how to apply them, they are empowered to tackle any word they wish to spell. There are visual memory, graphophonic and morphemic strategies.
2. The spelling program will include:
 - ◆ Spelling across the curriculum with the whole class (eg. through units of work)
 - ◆ Group activities (to attend to specific spelling skills)
 - ◆ Activities designed to meet the needs of individual children
 - ◆ Incidental activities.
3. Spelling goes through clearly defined developmental stages:
 - ◆ Precommunicative stage
 - ◆ Semiphonetic stage
 - ◆ Phonetic stage
 - ◆ Transitional stage
 - ◆ Correct (conventional) stage
4. Spelling is mainly a visual skill. However, beginning writers rely more upon graphophonic strategies. Their development through the stages will only occur as they begin to experience and use the visual and morphemic strategies
5. English spelling is more tied to meaning than it is to sound. Consequently, at the appropriate stages, words should often be taught in “meaning patterns”. Eg. Children study the word “two” along with “twin, twenty, twice, and...; they study “sign” along with “signal, signature, signify,....”.
6. During the early developmental stages, it is essential to help children become phonologically aware. Eg. They need to be aware of words, syllables, onsets and rimes. Phonemic awareness (awareness of individual phonemes, and the ability to manipulate them)
7. Spelling rules should be taught if they have high utility. (Eg if they are true most of the time.) Many spelling rules do not have high utility and are not worth teaching.
8. Spelling success arises from the students’ ability to monitor and assess their own errors.

IMPLEMENTATION

GENERAL PRACTICE

- ◆ Each week, teachers will provide opportunities for children to learn and practise spelling strategies.
- ◆ The use of Spelling Journals is to be encouraged.
- ◆ There will be daily opportunities to write.
- ◆ Teachers will use children's temporary spellings to assess their spelling strategies. Rather than seeing a spelling as "right" or "wrong", teachers will assess individual spellings as "semiphonetic", "phonetic", "transitional" or "correct".
- ◆ Teachers will use their knowledge of children's developmental stages to assist their weekly planning.
- ◆ Children will be encouraged to monitor their own spelling. They will be given opportunities to identify their own incorrect spellings (eg. they will be asked to underline the words they think are incorrect).
- ◆ At the appropriate stage, children will be taught proof reading skills. Co - operative work with pairs or small groups may be appropriate.
- ◆ Teach children how to use "Spell Checkers" in computer programs, dictionaries, and other resources.
- ◆ Spelling is taught at school. Spelling homework should be practice of what has been taught.

STRATEGIES

The following teaching procedures are recommended as they help to develop the major spelling strategies.

Visual Memory Strategies

- ◆ Encourage the use of "Have-a-Go" and "Look, Say, Cover, Write, Check."
- ◆ See Gentry & Gillet, pages 65 - 70, 88 - 91
- ◆ See "First Steps DC" Phases 1 Preliminary Spelling pages 22 - 37, Phase 2 Semiphonetic Spelling , pages 38 - 53
- ◆ Relevant words lists will include common visual patterns. (E.g. a Year 2 class may study the visual pattern 'ack' in words such as *back, Jack, pack, rack, sack, tack, whack.*) - See Appendix

Graphophonic Strategies

- ◆ At the early stages, many of the graphophononic connections are learned through the reading program.
- ◆ See Gentry & Gillet, pages 65 - 70 - 80
- ◆ See "First Steps DC" Phase 3 Phonetic Spelling, pages 54 - 72
- ◆ See "First Steps Spelling Resource" Chapter 3 Teaching Graphophonics, pages 40 - 50 and Chapter 4 Word Study and Proof Reading, ages 53 - 69
- ◆ Relevant word lists will include words that have a common sound. Eg. *hay, bay, way, say, play, stray, away.* But you would also include, in a separate section of the list, other words with the same long/a/sound, such as *they.* - See Appendix

Morphemic (meaning) Strategies

- ◆ Whenever possible, words will be grouped according to meaning.
- ◆ Eg. relevant groups include:
- ◆ Prefixes used for opposites happy, unhappy; honest, dishonest
- ◆ Derivational endings: teach>teacher; act>actor;..... - See Appendix
- ◆ When appropriate, study derivations, Greek and Latin base words, prefixes and suffixes, inflectional endings, etc. - See Appendix
- ◆ See Gentry & Gillet, pages 81 - 85
- ◆ See "First Steps DC" Phase 4 Transitional Spelling, pages 73 - 92
- ◆ See First Steps Spelling Resource Chapter 4, pages 53 - 69

Policy reviewed in 2005, 2009, 2015, 2017

HANDWRITING POLICY

RATIONALE

The school believes that, even though a greater emphasis on student proficiency in typing has occurred with the increasing use of digital technologies, students still need to have the capability of writing with correct letter formation and with increasing fluency throughout the primary school years. The audience for writing still need to be able to read student (writing) pieces with ease and clarity.

The school has adopted the letter formation models, letter joining and fluency recommended in the Victorian Cursive Script for all classes from Preparatory to Year 6.

AIMS

For each student to :

- ◆ hand write with correct letter formation;
- ◆ hand write with neatness and fluency.
- ◆ hand write with correct formation, neatness and fluency at increasing speed and efficiency.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Prep to Year 6 emphasis on achieving the above aims.
- Teaching individual letters using dotted thirds handwriting paper, particularly in Years Prep to Year 4.
- Teaching via four different formation 'letter families' – i.e. : a, o, d, g, c, q; m, n, h, k, p, r; u, v, w, y, b, i, l, t; e, f, j, s, x, z
- Teaching handwriting techniques and styles via clinics on a weekly basis during the writing block.

ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION

On-going development which assesses student competency in letter formation, neatness of presentation and fluency.

Reviewed 2015, 2018