



Literacy Skills

Literacy skills are the foundation for navigating the information bombardment of the 21st century – they are also a basic right. Whilst literacy importantly empowers students with the ability to critically comprehend disinformation and truth it also gives students a voice, it gives them an identity, it fights poverty and ignorance, it enables creativity and the ability to persuade. Yes, it's reading and writing, but it's so much more.

Context

Literacy underpins much of the learning at ASMS. High literacy levels enable higher order thinking, student engagement and confidence. It is part of our Site Improvement Plan and incorporated into our 3-year plan. We are passionate about producing critical thinkers, contributive citizens, and life-long learners at the ASMS. As such we want our students to be able to critically comprehend texts, videos, and images independently and we want them to be articulate, perceptive and persuasive in written, spoken and visual mediums.

What does this look like?

The million-dollar question. If the answer was easy, we'd all be doing it. The benefit of interdisciplinary learning at the ASMS is literacy is everyone's business. We use a variety of ways to track and develop students' literacy, focusing on evidence-based strategies. We are regularly involved in action research and are always on the lookout for new pedagogies and methods to help us improve our efficacy in this area. Currently some of our successful methods include:

- Using EALD LEAP levelling to measure all students' writing abilities and find students who require support.

- Video drafting for feedback. The impact size of feedback has hovered in the 0.7 range over the last decade according to Hattie, nearly twice the impact of the hinge point 0.4. Sometimes it's not used effectively and is in fact wasting teacher time and confusing students. When it's used correctly, in this case drafting student writing via video recording by knowledgeable staff, it has had significantly positive effects.
- Incorporating functional grammar, sentence structure and other strategies in Central Studies using the 'just in time' mentality so that they are utilised in an authentic way. Observations from the LEAP levelling often influence the grammar required. Some strategies include:
 - o Nominalisation
 - o 'This does that' complex sentence strategy (based on the Seldon method)
 - o Relative clauses
 - o Verbs and adverbs in creative writing
 - o Modelling close reading
- Reviewing the school's methods of teaching literacy using the DfE Literacy Guidebooks.
- Offering Pop-up literacy PL sessions.

Summary

- + Literacy strategies underpin all learning
- + Evidence based strategies are fundamental
- + There is no magic bullet or 'one size fits all' - you need to design the literacy support that suits your site





Case Study

Rowell was year 10 EALD student who attended ASMS with a LEAP level of 11. His writing was verbose, imprecise, and often circumvented the point, however he desired 'As' for his assignments and thus actively sought feedback to achieve this.

All year 10 and 11 students are levelled as well as all year 12 EALD students at ASMS and many EALD and non-EALD students like Rowell are identified via this process annually.

During the LEAP levelling process areas of improvement are identified for students with levels below 12. We also consider patterns of improvement across the entire cohort. For Rowell these areas were connectives, precision of language and relative clauses.

Feedback, and the effective use of it, is extremely important in improving our students' writing. Video drafts where Screencast-O-Matic is used to provide feedback orally and visually, sometimes incorporating online resources and exemplars – was, and is, a valuable tool. Rowell appreciated the clarity and depth of feedback, he could replay it and receive the advantage of the teacher's tone of voice and personalisation. A staged approach was used, introducing one or two improvement areas at a time and Rowell continued to action the learning in these videos.

The focussed use of video drafting feedback continued when Rowell enrolled in English Literary Studies in year 12 with our Literacy Development Coordinator. Rowell received a B+ (16.3/20) for English Literary Studies in 2021.

Further reading & resources:

- + William, D 2016, The Secret of Effective Feedback, ASCD, viewed 10 June 2022, <<https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/the-secret-of-effective-feedback>>.
- + LEAP Level Information, viewed 10 June 2022, < <https://edi.sa.edu.au/educating/literacy-and-numeracy/eald/support-for-teachers/leap-levels>>
- + LEAP Level Training, viewed 10 June 2022, < <https://www.plink.sa.edu.au/pages/description.jsf?menuId=1108#/users/@self/catalogues/7661707/coursetemplates/11390867/description>>

