

1996

# Whole Language: An Integrated Approach to Reading and Writing

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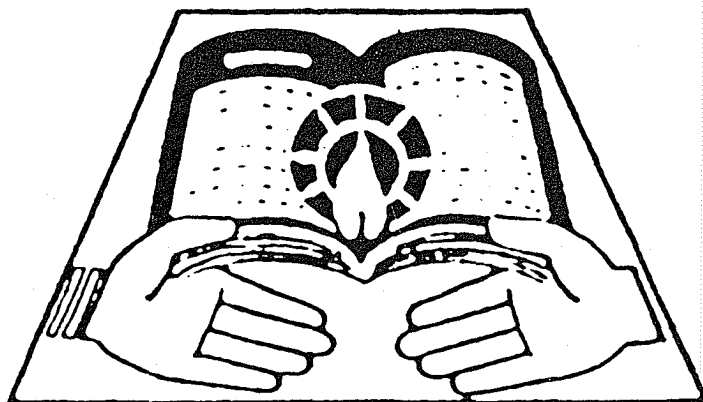
an integrated approach  
**whole language** to reading and writing

Action-Learning Manual

*A Guide for Literacy Practitioners*

by

Joan Dixon and Sumon Tuladhar



A Literacy Linkage Series Manual from the  
**Literacy Linkage Program**



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# Whole Language Action-Learning Manual

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*A Guide for Literacy Practitioners*

by

Joan Dixon and Sumon Tuladhar

The **Literacy Linkage Program**  
The Center for International Education  
Research Center for Educational Innovation and Development

# **The Literacy Linkage Series Manuals**

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**Producing a Newsletter for New Literates**

**Role Play**

**Whole Language: An Integrated Approach to Reading and Writing**

**Literacy and Learning in Families and Communities**

**Assessment**

**Supervision and Facilitator Support**

**Gender Perspectives in Literacy**

These manuals were made possible through support from the University Development Linkages Project, Global Bureau, Human Capacity Development Center, U.S. Agency for International Development under the terms of Cooperative Agreement No. DAN-5063-A-00-1108-00.

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**ISBN 0-932288-95-2**

## Foreword

This is one of the core manuals in a series of Action-Learning Manuals that was developed to assist community-based practitioners to expand their knowledge of the theory and practice of adult literacy and nonformal education. The purpose of the series is to assist practitioners to develop literacy activities and materials based on local needs, interests and resources.

The series offers the practitioner a wide variety of activities to choose from to meet the diverse needs of community literacy groups. The manuals are designed to complement each other, but can also be used independently. Two of the manuals, *Whole Language: An Integrated Approach to Reading and Writing*, and *Literacy and Learning in Families and Communities*, provide the core concepts for literacy learning. The other five manuals provide creative ideas and techniques for implementing those concepts. It is not imperative that *Whole Language* and *Family Literacy* be read before a practitioner attempts to implement ideas found in the *Role Play Manual*, for example, but it might be helpful.

The *Whole Language* manual introduces basic concepts and strategies for teaching reading and writing skills by involving learners in the creation of lesson activities and learning materials. The *Literacy and Learning* manual introduces basic concepts and strategies that develop locally relevant literacy activities and materials through researching issues and resources in the family and community. The other manuals in the series provide additional information and guidelines for implementing effective local literacy programs.

The strategies and information in this manual, *Whole Language*, were developed by Sumon Tuladhar and Joan Dixon and edited by staff at the Center for International Education. The Literacy Linkage Program staff at the Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development at Tribhuvan University in Nepal assisted in organizing workshops to field test the manuals. Special thanks goes to Julia Lee Proctor who worked with Sumon Tuladhar to introduce whole language workshops in Nepal. Portions of this manual were also developed and field-tested in Indonesia as part of an action research project for the Directorate of Community Education in the Ministry of Education. Feedback, editing and formatting were provided by staff and graduate students at the Center for International Education.

The Action-Learning Series was developed by the Literacy Linkage Program - a collaboration between the Center for International Education (CIE) at the School of Education, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, USA and the Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (CERID) at Tribhuvan University in Nepal. Send inquiries and correspondence to:

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## Getting Started with Action Learning

Action Learning is an educational approach designed to assist people in learning by doing. Everybody naturally learns how to do many things as they go through life. However, some things are easier to learn if you have guidelines for the process. Schools, books, training workshops and manuals were invented to help people learn new ideas and processes. But none of these educational strategies has replaced the need to learn something simply by doing it.

**What is the purpose of this manual?** This Action Learning Manual is designed for people who want to help or are already helping adults and out-of-school children learn how to use reading and writing skills in everyday life. Part of the information you will need is contained in this manual. The rest of the information you will have to discover by doing the activities and collecting information about your local situation.

The manual provides background information and activities to guide you as you learn by doing. Section I introduces you to the underlying principles of three approaches to reading and writing. Section II provides information and step-by-step guidelines for implementing twelve whole language strategies. By completing the activities in the manual, you will develop the skill to organize a class and create materials that are based on the needs, interests and resources of learners in the community or program where you work.

**Who is this manual for?** The manual is designed for people in community-based organizations that are involved in literacy education programs for adults or out-of-school children. It can be used in organizations that focus primarily on specific areas such as health, income-generation or agriculture as well as organizations that focus primarily on basic education.

**What do you need to do?** Read about the different approaches to literacy in Section I and think about what you have been doing in your program - what is working well and what you would like to improve. Then study the whole language strategies carefully and think about how they can be used in your situation. The whole language approach is based on developing literacy lessons from information and resources that exist in the local community. You will not really understand their potential until you try them out with learners. Invite some learners to join you in experimenting with the new approaches. You will find that your understanding and creativity increases as you learn by doing.

You may want to keep a journal about your experience using the whole language strategies. When you write about your experience, you gain new insights and deepen your understanding of literacy education. Keeping a personal journal is one method recommended by the whole language approach. You can use journal writing to document and guide what you are learning by doing. It can also help you learn about your own development as a literacy educator.

**Action Learning Support Group:** Learning by doing is usually easier if you can talk to other people who are learning the same things. For this reason, we recommend that you join



with other people using this manual to form an action learning support group.

A support group is made by a group of people who want to meet regularly to help each other. It does not have to be part of a formal organization. It can be organized by people to help themselves. You can form a support group with other educators who want to learn how to use the whole language approach to teach reading and writing. You can choose how often to meet depending on your own situation. Some groups meet monthly or every other week. It is even possible to meet weekly if you don't have to travel far to get together.

A support group can be any size. You need at least two people to begin the conversation. If you have more than ten, you may want to divide. If you cannot find people nearby to join your group, you can correspond with someone by letter. This can be a very effective learning method because it involves another whole language method called a "dialogue journal." In this method, two people talk to each other about their work through writing. You will find that you teach yourself new ideas as you write to your friend. You will also learn new things from the person who writes to you. Finally, you can also correspond with the staff of the Literacy Linkage Program in either Nepal or the United States.

Your Action Learning Support Group can discuss anything you are learning from your experience trying out the activities in this manual. You will find that your understanding develops as you thoughtfully reflect on what you learn by doing. You will discover that you have a lot to teach and learn from each other.

**Action Learning Network:** The Literacy Linkage Program is establishing an Action Learning Network to encourage communication between the individuals and groups who are using our Action Learning Manuals. We communicate through newsletters, regular mail, e-mail, faxes, face-to-face conversation, telephone, workshops and any other available means. We invite you or your Action Learning Support Group to communicate with others in the network by sending letters and evaluation feedback to the Literacy Linkage Program. Contact information is in the Foreword.

## Section One:

### Approaches to Literacy

Every day the literate environment of the world is expanding and changing. More and more literacy skills are being required of people regardless of their economic standing or geographic location. Traditionally, urban dwellers have been more concerned with reading and writing than people living in the rural areas of developing countries. But now, with the spread of democracy and development in many parts of the world, governments and development agencies are actively encouraging people everywhere to participate in literacy classes and rural development activities. The need for literacy is expanding even to remote areas of the world. Dealing with taxes, communicating with family members who migrate to cities and reading pamphlets produced by development agencies are just a few of the expectations heaped on new literates and communities that have thrived for centuries through oral communication and traditional knowledge.

In spite of widespread efforts to promote literacy through campaigns, volunteer tutoring, and nonformal education, evaluations show that many new literates have not learned to read and write well enough to use their literacy skills in daily life. The purpose of this manual is to introduce strategies that integrate literacy learning with the activities and experiences of learners.

This section describes three approaches to teaching literacy and examines the strengths and weaknesses of each approach. The conventional phonetic approach has influenced most people's assumptions about how we learn to read. The key word approach links community issues and action with the literacy learning process. The third approach, whole language, draws upon written materials from everyday life as well as the experiences and knowledge of learners to create reading and writing activities for literacy learning.

The subtitle of this manual refers to whole language as an integrated approach. As we introduce whole language strategies, it is not our intention to replace the useful techniques and strategies of other literacy approaches. We discuss the weaknesses of phonetics and key word in order to identify problems with their focus and implementation. But we also identify the strengths of these approaches and include strategies to incorporate them into the whole language approach.

Before describing and comparing these three approaches to literacy education, we need to examine the purpose and uses of literacy in daily life. The goal of literacy education is not to complete a class or pass a test, but to acquire the skills, resources and habits for using reading and writing in daily life.

Functional literacy is a term used to describe the ability to use reading, writing and numeracy skills (as well as thinking, listening and speaking skills) to (1) solve problems, (2) get access to resources, (3) function effectively in daily life, (4) sustain cultural identity within a changing society, (5) contribute to local development, (6) promote positive social change, and

(7) learn new skills and knowledge in order to participate in a changing world. Though many people have achieved some basic literacy skills, they have not achieved a level of functional literacy to participate in the activities described above.

It appears that many of the strategies used to teach reading and writing have not been effective in helping people understand how to use literacy in their daily lives. Many literacy programs and materials focus on reading skills and transferring information to the learners. However, if we look at how people actually use literacy skills in daily life, we realize that writing, organizing and creating information are as essential as reading. These skills, as well as many other uses and purposes of literacy, are seldom taught in literacy classes. As a result, many new literates are not functionally literate.

It is important to understand the concept of functional literacy in preparing to teach people how to read and write. The word function refers to the "use" and "purpose" of something. Therefore, to understand functional literacy, we need to think about the uses and purposes of different kinds of reading and writing activities. The following examples of literacy materials and their corresponding functions will help you to think about the range of ways that new literates can learn to use their reading and writing skills in daily life.

<b>FUNCTIONS</b>	<b>LITERACY MATERIALS</b>
ENTERTAINMENT:	books, poetry, cartoons, songs, magazines, TV
COMMUNICATION:	letters, advertisements, notes
INFORMATION:	leaflets, posters, signs, newspapers, dictionaries, books, maps
PLANNING:	calendars, proposals, agendas, clocks, bus schedules, shopping lists
PERSONAL GROWTH:	journal, personal diary
HISTORY/MEMORY:	record books, diaries, family records, government records, biography, history
SPIRITUAL:	religious writings, inspirational books and poetry
BUSINESS:	advertisements, receipts, record books
ORGANIZING:	organizational charts, file systems, directories
ANALYZING:	reports, diagrams, analytic charts
REGULATION:	forms, identification cards, passports, laws, stamps, signatures, attendance roster

Examine the variety of literacy materials listed above and think about how many of them are typically used in a literacy class. Notice how many of the functions of literacy described above require writing skills. Many literacy programs only focus on teaching reading skills. In fact, many people assume that learners cannot write or even learn technical information until after they have mastered the skills of reading. Reading is seen as the entry point for all opportunities to learn.

For example, a group of women in Nepal wanted to learn how to sew. When they were given a sewing manual and told they needed to read it before they could learn to sew, they lost hope. In order to read the sewing manual, they would have to take a literacy class. They felt that by the time they learned to read well enough to understand the sewing manual, their interest in sewing would be gone. Literacy was seen as a barrier to their goal because they and their teacher assumed that reading was a prerequisite to all forms of learning.

But their main problem was their assumptions that reading skills had to be taught before other things could be learned. Much of sewing is a physical skill. The reading skill provides supplementary technical information and the ability to use modern patterns and instructions. Why should these women wait to learn sewing after reading? Why can't the sewing manual be adapted for use as a literacy text? Why can't the sewing class serve as motivation for the literacy lessons? It can, if we open our minds to new ways of teaching reading and writing. Let's look at the three approaches to reading and writing and see how they can be used to meet the practical needs and interests of people like the women who wanted to sew.

### **A. PHONETIC APPROACH**

Many of us were taught to read and write by starting with the sounds of letters. We would repeat consonants or vowel sounds until the letter and the sound were well associated in our minds. Educators call this a phonetic approach. In this approach memorizing the shape of the letter and its sound is the first activity that must take place in the learner's brain. This approach has been around for so many years, that many people are convinced that it is the only way that reading can be taught.

In many literacy primers, learners are introduced to the symbols for each unit of sound in their language. Some primers begin with individual letters (a, b, c, d) while others introduce consonants and vowels together to form syllables (ba, be, bi, bo, bu). These units of sound are called "phonemes" taken from the Greek word "phone" which means sound. Hence the name "phonetic" refers to the sound of written symbols. The phonetic approach focuses on teaching learners to recognize the written symbol for each phoneme or sound. In some literacy primers, the learners study each phoneme one by one before they learn to read and write words. For example, in Nepali language, school children are expected to learn 36 consonants and 12 vowels so that they can read a matrix chart that shows all the ways consonants can be joined with vowels. The following chart shows just a few of the phonetic symbols that must be mastered in Nepal before beginning to read and write words. The matrix helps the learner recognize the different syllables that can be formed to represent sounds such as *ka, kaa, ki, kii*, or *gyan, gyaan, gyin, gyiin*.

क का कि की कु कू के कै को कौ  
 ख खा खि खी खु खू खे खै खो खौ  
 ग गा गि गी गु गू गे गै गो गौ

Once learners have mastered the syllables, they are taught to form words, and then to form sentences with words. Finally the learners read a passage from the primer that uses the words they have learned to identify. Phonetic primers usually start with easy words and symbols and then slowly introduce more difficult words and sentences. Often rather useless sentences are created to help the learners practice the symbol and sound connections. (For example, "The cat sat on the mat.") When learners assume that they must work through so many confusing symbols and sounds, you can see why the Nepali women who wanted a sewing class were discouraged by the idea that they must learn to read and write first.

In the phonetic approach, learning starts with the smallest parts of language and adds the pieces together until the learner understands how to decode every symbol to read or write a message. This method often doesn't work very well when people are not familiar with books and printed words. The symbols are too abstract and have no meaning in the lives of people who have not had opportunities to see others using the symbols to read and write. Notice on the following chart that the phonetic approach focuses on mastering separate parts of language before introducing organized language that contains meaningful information. Some educators refer to the phonetic approach as moving from the part to the whole.

SYMBOLS MUST BE MASTERED BEFORE INFORMATION IS INTRODUCED	
The learning process moves from the part to the whole in the phonetic approach.	
1. phonemes	
2. matrix of syllables	
3. words	
4. sentences	
5. passage or story	
PART	WHOLE

Many people who come from non-literate homes or villages do not easily make the connection between ritually memorizing symbols and using those symbols to communicate with others through writing. Children from literate homes often do better in school because they know from the very beginning how they will eventually use these symbols. They have seen their family members reading and writing these symbols on a regular basis. Adults who live and work in an oral culture may only see written words in their children's school books or in government documents. The written words represent another world that is not necessarily connected to the world they live and work in every day.

Like the women in the sewing class, people want to gain information, knowledge and directions, but it is not always clear what role reading and writing will play. The phonetic approach used by itself delays the learning process for some people by starting with pieces of language rather than a whole meaningful message. For adults who want to direct their learning toward a certain goal this approach can feel like a tunnel with no light at the end. Thus, when they are offered literacy classes, they simply refuse to join, saying, "Half of my life is already gone, why do I need to learn to read and write? I have sent my children to school, they will learn to read and write."

For many of the adults who drop out of literacy programs, the phonetic approach does not offer the flexibility to connect their literacy lessons to a personal goal or familiar information. However, it is still necessary for learners to recognize the symbols and sounds of written language. Phonetics activities need to be integrated with other literacy approaches. As an isolated approach, phonetics is not very effective. The strategies in Section II introduce many ways to connect literacy activities to the lives and interests of the learners. Strategy #11 includes ways to learn letters, words and spelling through meaningful activities rather than the repetitive drills of symbols and sounds usually associated with the phonetic approach.

## **B. KEY WORD APPROACH**

As educators became dissatisfied with the ineffectiveness of the phonetic approach, they began to analyze the learning process. Paulo Freire, the author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, developed a clear analysis of the problem. He believed that people needed to learn to read the world as well as the word. This meant that they should discuss and analyze the world of their own lives and learn to read and write words that are full of meaning from their own experience. He taught that adult learners are not empty vessels waiting for the teacher to fill them with knowledge from books. They have their own knowledge and understanding which can be brought to the literacy class. His goal was to teach literacy in a way that people could use reading and writing as tools to analyze and change their world.

The key word approach, which is based on these concepts, starts with issues or problems from people's daily lives and organizes literacy lessons based on learning to read and write key words and sentences associated with these issues. Many programs throughout the world have adapted these ideas and are using a key word or key sentence approach in adult literacy classes.

In the key word approach, problems or ideas are introduced to the learners through showing a picture, telling a story, or dramatizing an event. Presenting important issues to the class in this way generates many responses such as interest, anger, debate, hope, ideas, humor, etc. If a picture is used, the learners begin by looking at the picture and talking about how it is related to their lives and how it impacts what they want to do in the future. Stories, dramas and other things can also be used to start the discussion. As this approach depends on activities and discussion, it is more effective when learning in a small group. The discussion connects learning to people's experience and provides motivation for using reading and writing skills to solve the problems of daily life.

The key word approach builds on the belief that discussion reinforces skills of listening and speaking which help learners prepare mentally for reading and writing. Discussing the issue orally builds learners' confidence in their own knowledge and experience. When they approach the task of reading, they do not come with an empty mind waiting for the printed page to teach them what to think. They have demonstrated that they have important knowledge from life experience that brings meaning to the symbols on the page. Once they are mentally prepared to read, the key word is introduced. They learn to read the word with help from the facilitator. Then the key word is broken into syllables and the learners create new words by mixing and matching the syllables.

Some programs encourage the learners to identify their own key words or sentences which the facilitator writes down for them to study. The facilitator then develops reading and writing activities together with the learners. This approach will be discussed in more detail in Section II. Other programs use a primer with pre-planned pictures and key words followed by exercises and readings that have been researched and developed by experts.

Look at the example in the appendix (pp. 63-64) from the facilitator guidebook for Nepal's national literacy program to see how various activities are used to teach syllables, words, and sentences. In this example, the key word is *paani* (water). It will be broken into two syllables, *paa* and *ni*. Learners repeat these two syllables until they recognize them. Next the learners are introduced to a discovery chart where they learn more words by combining the new syllables with ones they have learned in previous lessons. For example, the syllables used in the sample lesson are:

*pa paa pi*  
*na naa ni*  
*ka kaa ki*  
*ma maa mi*

Learners combine the syllables from this chart to create new words, for example, *kaa + na = kaana* (eat). Gradually they learn to put words together into sentences and to read a story.

Although the key word approach breaks the words into syllables and teaches sound and symbol relationships, it is a big change from the phonetic approach. This approach starts with a discussion of meaningful issues and introduces key words related to the lives of the learners. After the phonetic reading and writing activities, the learners return to discussing the problems

and talk about ways they can take action to improve their lives. The following chart lists the various elements of the key word approach and shows how it surrounds instruction on the parts of language with whole ideas and relevant information.

The <b>KEY WORD APPROACH</b> starts by discussing real-life problems before introducing words and syllables. It also connects literacy to taking action in real-life situations.		
1. pictorial presentation, story or event from life  2. discussion  3. key word  4. syllables  5. new words  6. sentences  7. passage or story  8. action taken on real-life problems		
<b>WHOLE</b>	<b>PART</b>	<b>WHOLE</b>

The main strength of the key word approach is that it uses topics that are meaningful to people's lives. The approach builds on people's existing knowledge through discussion of issues before introducing written words, phonetic information and literacy skills. The example from the Nepal facilitator guidebook shows how the learners are engaged in the various activities of listening, thinking, and discussing the very relevant topic of water.

However, in application, many educators have found that the key word approach runs into the same problems as the phonetic approach when the learners move from discussing the key words to working with the syllables. When inexperienced facilitators use the discovery chart, it reminds them of how they learned to read with the phonetic approach in school. Many of them slip back into the comfortable routine of drilling the phonemes *ka, kha, ma*, etc. for the major portion of their class. The facilitator guidebook for the Nepal primer encourages facilitators to use games and other activities rather than drills to learn the parts of language. But many still find it easier to drill.

In the Nepali primer, each lesson includes a list of words created from the letters and syllables learned in previous lessons. Unfortunately, many of these words are not familiar to learners who speak limited Nepali as their second language. When the new words have no



meaning for them, the learners fall into the trap of mindlessly repeating sound and symbols. Thus the less desirable aspects of the phonetic approach gain power over the discussion of important issues and the learning of meaningful words. When this happens, the literacy class also finds it difficult to achieve the original goal of their literacy lessons—taking action on real-life problems.

The central purpose of the discussion in the key word approach is to help people identify common problems and plan activities to solve the problems as a group. The key word approach is most effective for helping a group to take action when the words are chosen from issues or problems that come from the community of the learners. However, when the key words and problems are pre-established in a book, the learners and facilitator are often more motivated to move on to the next lesson rather than to use their reading and writing skills to solve a local problem.

Finally, the key word approach is most effective if it is developed locally rather than nationally. For example, literacy workers in the diverse regions of Nepal discovered that key words and pictures cannot be standardized for the whole country. Because a single primer was being produced for everyone, materials developers became concerned that the book must introduce each letter of the alphabet in a systematic order. As a result, key words were sometimes chosen for their syllables or letters rather than for their usefulness or relevance for learners' lives in various parts of the country. Furthermore, the country is so diverse that some of the key words became meaningless and the pictures were not even recognized in some regions. Literacy workers in many areas learned from experience that literacy materials must be based on local knowledge, interests and issues if they are to be successful.

Many literacy workers throughout the world as well as in Nepal are realizing that they cannot rely on a centrally produced primer to meet all of their needs. They are recognizing that literacy workers in each region or ethnic community must have the skills to identify local key words and to create materials in local languages or dialects. For this reason, the strategies provided in Section II focus on how to develop local materials.

### **C. WHOLE LANGUAGE APPROACH**

The whole language strategies are introduced in this manual to help you connect the process of learning to read and write with local needs, interests and resources. Whole language is not a specific method. It is a philosophy of education that describes how we view language, literacy, teaching and learning. Its major assertion is that language is "whole." This means that if we take it apart to focus on letters, lists of words or grammar patterns, we lose the essence of what language is. Reading should not be taught as the isolated skill of connecting symbols and sounds. Learning to read must also be connected to life experience, meaningful activities and the learner's goals through discussion, speaking, listening, and writing.

Whole Language was chosen as the name of this reading approach because it is based on all aspects of language learning. Listening, speaking, thinking, remembering, reading, and writing

take place together in this approach. All of these aspects are interrelated and interactive with each other. People develop language skills by exchanging information with others about their own experiences and ideas. Reading and writing are social activities just like listening and speaking. If we work on all of these skills together, we can learn more effectively.

Whole language is based on the learners' knowledge of the language they already speak. In the first lessons, the facilitator invites the learners to say something that can be written down. The learners create the meaning and the structure of their first sentences orally. The facilitator then helps them understand how the written language is made by helping them see and read their own words in writing.

Many people have a very narrow definition of literacy. They see it as a personal skill that is used by schooled individuals. But literacy is a social skill as well as a personal skill; people participate in reading and writing activities together. At a minimum, there are two people involved in a literacy activity - a writer and a reader. For example, someone writes a letter and sends it to someone who reads it.

But often many people are involved in a simple reading and writing activity. For example, when a man dictates a letter to his son, the man composes the letter and his son acts as scribe. Which one is creating the letter? The letter may be sent to a relative who reads it out loud to his whole family. Both literate and non-literate people participate in interpreting and discussing the meaning of the message. The ability to read and write extends our ability to think and talk and listen. Literacy provides one more way to communicate with others.

The skill for reading and writing does not begin with the letters of the alphabet. It begins with the desire to get information, send messages, record knowledge and develop ideas. The preparation for literacy begins when people begin to participate in activities that rely on written materials. They recognize the importance of saving a document. They ask someone to write a message for them. They listen to someone read a newspaper. In some families where there are many literacy activities, children may often learn to read without ever being directly taught. They pick it up by watching, listening and imitating others.

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***The skill for reading and writing does not  
begin with the letters of the alphabet.  
It begins with the desire to get information,  
send messages, record knowledge  
and develop ideas.***

---

The people who developed the whole language approach got their ideas from observing how children picked up literacy skills from their environment. Ken Goodman, one of the creators of the whole language approach, identified the conditions for learning to read and write that are listed on the next page.

**WHOLE LANGUAGE SEES LITERACY  
AS A SOCIAL ACTIVITY**

Literacy learning is easy when the following social conditions exist:

- Reading materials are chosen by the learner.
- The reason to read and write is real and natural.
- The information to be read is whole, not just parts of words.
- The process for reading is sensible.
- The information is interesting.
- The information and process of reading are relevant.
- The ideas and words belong to the learner.
- Reading and writing are part of a real event.
- Reading and writing have social utility.
- The learner has a purpose for reading and writing.
- Written information is accessible to the learner.
- The facilitator gives the learners power to use their own ideas and skills to make a written text.

**WHOLE**

**The Story of Sita:** Sita was a nine-year old Nepali girl, living in the United States who changed her attitude toward reading when these conditions for learning were met. This young girl was surrounded by English language. Her mother was trying to teach her to read and write the Devanagarik script of the Nepali language, but it was not her choice. It was not relevant, interesting or sensible to her. She was not thrilled at all because she did not see where she would use that language. Her mother started teaching her the matrix of consonants and vowels that is commonly used in Nepali schools. Sita practiced writing the symbol for "A" more than 30 times in the exercise book. She learned it by heart. After a few days her mother tested her on the letters which she had already learned. She not only forgot the sound of "A", she also could not even recognize it when it was assembled with other letters to form a word. At this she got very frustrated and refused to proceed with learning to read and write the difficult script.

The next time her mother tried a different approach. She asked her daughter if she would like to learn how to write her name in Nepali. She learned that happily and even shared her knowledge with friends at school. The interest of her friends sparked more enthusiasm and gradually she learned to write the names of her friends and relatives. She learned the letters easily when she learned them for the purpose of writing names of people she knew. She was also able to transfer the knowledge to learning other words. Whenever she saw a letter somewhere, which was used in the names she had previously learned, she got excited, recognized the letter and wanted to learn the new word. The letters now belonged to her and she had power to use them to teach her American friends at school and to learn more about her family and relatives.

With this example, it is clear that learning the letter "A" without motivation is meaningless. However, when the letter is part of a meaningful word that has a relevant social purpose, the motivation falls into place and the learner is eager to learn how to use reading and writing for personal interests and purposes.

The whole language approach starts from a perspective opposite to the phonetic approach. It begins with information that is meaningful and motivating to the learner. Like the key word approach, this approach also assumes that learners are not empty vessels that need to be filled by the teacher or facilitator, but come with prior knowledge, values, interests and experiences.

Remember the women who wanted to sew? They already knew some of the vocabulary used in sewing and could explain some of the sewing procedures they had seen or tried. In the whole language approach, the facilitator could use this prior knowledge as well as existing written materials to teach a sewing/literacy class. For example, the facilitator could help the learners make their own sewing manual by writing down words and information they already knew.

The existing sewing manual could be adapted for literacy learning. Just like a basic primer, it contains all of the letters, symbols, words and sentence structures of written language. But unlike the primer, it also contains the specific information the women want to learn. The facilitator could help the women read the sewing manual by discussing pictures, reading out loud to them and helping them recognize key sentences and words in the instructions. Strategies #7 and #8 in Section II provide more detailed information on how to simplify and teach reading from existing materials. Strategy #9 provides instructions for helping the learners make their own reading materials.

Many educators criticize the whole language approach for not teaching enough phonetic information. This can be remedied by including phonetic and spelling activities in the literacy lesson. For instance, in the sewing class example, words can be selected from the sewing manual and taken apart to reveal the letters. Words that use the same letter can be grouped together to make dictionaries of sewing terms and word lists for reference in future reading and writing. Strategy #11 provides examples of learning activities to help learners build technical literacy skills.

Literacy workers throughout the world talk about the problems of drop-outs and motivation. The challenge for those who use the whole language approach is to find ways to identify and create the conditions for learning to read and write in the communities where they work. Whole language becomes more effective when it is integrated with the key word approach to connect it to local issues and strategies for community development and social action. As Ken Goodman pointed out, literacy workers must find ways that literacy is relevant in the lives of the learners. They must connect literacy lessons to real events chosen by the learners in a way that is sensible and interesting. If the literacy workers and learners do not understand how reading and writing can be used in daily life, there is no motivation for any kind of literacy approach.

## SUMMARY

Now that you have looked at three approaches to literacy learning, you realize that reading and writing involve much more than learning to interpret symbols. The challenge for the literacy worker is to bring all the different aspects of literacy learning into the class. Not only must you help people learn how to use the parts of written language (letters, phonemes, syllables, words, sentences), you also have to help them use written language in real life to address meaningful issues. These three approaches have different things to offer to the literacy learning process. In making a decision about how to combine the three approaches, it is helpful to review the strengths and weaknesses of each one.

APPROACHES	STRENGTHS	MISSING
Phonetic	-- sound-symbol connection	-- experience of the learners -- discussion -- reading and writing for meaningful communication -- action
Key Word	-- thinking, speaking and listening as the foundation for reading -- discussion for group action and social change -- sound-symbol connection	-- development of writing skills
Whole Language	-- reading and writing in a meaningful context -- based on learners' knowledge of oral language -- use of local materials -- development of writing skills -- based on learners' needs, interests, skills, and progress	-- discussion for group action

As a literacy worker, you can draw upon the strengths of each approach at appropriate times as you develop your literacy program. Clearly the whole language and key word approaches have more strengths and are more complete approaches. But the phonetic techniques can be brought in to supplement the other two approaches, especially when a learner is having difficulty with the sound-symbol connection.

Section Two of this manual contains twelve strategies for teaching literacy using the whole language approach and integrating techniques from the key word and phonetic approaches. The strategies will help you and your learners identify and use local reading materials. They will also help you create reading materials based on the experiences and knowledge of the literacy learners.

## **Section Two:**

### **Whole Language Strategies**

This section will take you, step-by-step, through twelve strategies for developing a whole language curriculum based on your local context and the learners' needs and interests. The instructions will help you use new techniques to involve the learners in planning and creating literacy materials and learning activities. You and the learners will use all aspects of language learning (experience, discussion, thinking, listening, speaking, reading and writing) to develop their literacy skills.

Some attempt has been made to organize the strategies in a logical sequence. However, the process of learning to read and write is circular and overlapping. Where you start depends on the level of the learners and whether you are starting a new program or improving an existing program. Strategies #1 and #2 focus on collecting background information from the learners and local community to help you identify topics to study in the literacy class. Strategies #3, #4 and #5 provide information on facilitating the learning process and managing class and community activities. Strategies #6, #7 and #8 focus on how to teach reading using locally available materials and information from the learners' experience. Strategies #9, #10 and #11 focus on developing writing skills and involving the learners in creating their own learning materials for the class. Strategy #12 provides some basic information on evaluation.

1. Finding Out About the Learners
2. Identifying Generative Themes
3. Making Learning Plans
4. Managing a Whole Language Literacy Class
5. Integrating Literacy with Community Development
6. Teaching Reading with the Language Experience Approach
7. Finding and Creating Appropriate Reading Materials
8. Helping Learners Read
9. Creating Learner-Generated Materials
10. Analyzing Learner Writing to Individualize the Learning Plan
11. Building Reading and Writing Skills
12. Evaluating Learners' Achievements

## STRATEGY #1: FINDING OUT ABOUT THE LEARNERS

In the whole language approach, the learners play a central role. In fact, programs based on the whole language philosophy say that their methods are "learner-centered" rather than "book-centered" or "teacher-centered." This means that the ideas for literacy lessons and materials come from the experiences, needs and interests of the learners rather than from a book developed by outside experts.

In order to begin a whole language program, you need to find out about the learners. A simple interview assessment can be done with each learner individually or in small groups. Keep a record of what you find out from each learner. You will use this information in planning literacy lessons. The assessment includes three activities: Interview, Reading Sample and Writing Sample. If you would like more information on this activity and other ways to integrate information from the learners into the literacy class curriculum, you can refer to the Action Learning Manual on *Assessment* in this same series.

**A. Interview:** The two purposes of the interview are to get to know the learners and to provide an opportunity for them to find out about the literacy class. To begin the interview, help the new learner feel comfortable by starting with informal greetings and conversation. Explain what happens in a literacy class and how joining the group can help them reach their goals. Encourage them to ask you questions if they do not understand.

You may want to make a short list of questions to guide your interview. Here are some examples of information you might want to collect. Take notes to help you remember what each person tells you.

### Personal Information:

- \* Name
- \* Highest level of schooling or other education (nonformal or religious)
- \* Family Information: marital status, children's names and ages, extended family, etc.
- \* Work, family and home responsibilities

### Goals:

- \* Why do you want to learn to read and write?
- \* What opportunities do you want for you future?
- \* What opportunities do you want for your children?

### Needs and Interests:

- \* What printed materials do you need to be able to read and write in daily life?
- \* What topics would you like to read about or discuss in the literacy class?

### Planning:

- \* When would be a good time for you to attend a literacy class?

**B. Reading Sample:** The purpose of having a reading sample is to see what skills the learners already have before they enter the class. This will help you teach them more effectively. Show the learners several different types of reading materials such as a literacy primer, book, newspaper, or letter. Invite them to choose something and read it to you or point to words or letters they recognize.

Watch what they choose. Did they choose it because they can already read it or because they want to learn how to read it? Did they read easily? Was the text too difficult for them to read? Did they make more than one error in every ten words? Were they too shy to choose anything? Give encouragement for any small amount a person can read, even if it is only recognizing a few letters on one of the items. Write down some notes about what each person was able to read and was interested in reading. You will use this information in planning learning activities and encouraging the new learners.

**C. Writing Sample:** The purpose of a writing sample is similar to the reading sample. You want to see what new learners can already do and find out what they are interested in learning to do. Spread some writing materials such as pens, notebooks, paper, envelopes or forms on a table or mat. Invite the new learner to write on the papers they know how to use -- to sign a document, address an envelope, fill in a form, or draw a simple figure on the paper. Watch to see what they can do and how comfortable they are with the different materials. Talk about their experience with writing. If learners have never learned to write, encourage them to try out the pencil and make some designs or marks. Keep the writing samples so you can evaluate their progress later. Strategy #12 has more information on evaluating writing progress.

**Summarize what you learned from interviewing and assessing each learner:**

Organize your interview notes and writing samples to help you create a picture of your literacy class. Make several lists where you group the learners who have similar needs or interests. For example,

- List learners who are able to meet at the same time of day. This will help you plan when to have the class meet.
- Categorize the learners by reading and writing ability. This will help you identify more advanced learners who can assist you in teaching the class.
- Make notes about what the different learners are interested in studying. This will help you identify topics for discussion, reading and writing.
- Make a list of the different reading skills learners already have. This will help you know where to start teaching and which learners can help others. List who is able to:
  - \* identify letters
  - \* read simple words
  - \* read sentences with some help



- \* read sentences themselves
- \* read and understand

- Make a list of what the new learners are able to write by themselves.
- Make a list of what kinds of documents the learners need to be able to read and write in daily life. This will give you ideas for local materials you can use for reading and writing activities in your class (e.g. letters, application forms, stories, etc.).

## STRATEGY #2: IDENTIFYING GENERATIVE THEMES

Probably the most important function of literacy comes into action when people use their reading and writing skills to analyze, understand and change the world they live in. The literacy class should do more than drill letters, words and sentences. It should be a place where people discuss real-life problems and issues, so that they can improve their understanding and change their lives.

Paulo Freire introduced the concept of generative themes as a way to help learners read and discuss the world they live in. The word “theme” is used to represent the ideas, concepts, hopes, doubts, values and challenges that people experience in their lives. Generative themes are those particular themes that contain the possibility of unfolding and opening up into many topics that need to be explored. The task of the literacy class is to identify the themes that are meaningful to the learners and explore their implications through discussion, reading, writing and action.

This strategy particularly focuses on how to identify generative themes and introduce them in the literacy class. The other strategies that follow will explain many ways to develop reading and writing skills as you and the learners explore the generative themes.

**A. How do you recognize a generative theme?** Generative themes are problems or topics connected to strong feelings. They may motivate a lot of emotional debate or discussion when they are brought up. They may also be hidden because people are hesitant to mention them or share their personal feelings. In order to bring generative themes into a literacy class, the facilitator must have a caring and trusting relationship with the learners, and be an observant participant in the daily life of the community.

**B. Getting acquainted with the community:** Before working with a group of learners, you need to become familiar with their community. You need to visit places where people are openly discussing community issues. Some examples of places where people talk informally are the local water tap or well, market places, tea shops or hair dressers. You can use informal discussions to let people know that you will be the new literacy facilitator and invite them to join the class. But most important, you can make friends and carefully listen to the topics they are discussing in order to understand what they see as important in their community.

**C. Observing:** As you meet with people in the community, observe the situation of their lives. What are some of the unique features of the community and surrounding area? What do you see that indicates pride, accomplishment and respect in the community? What do you see that indicates problems or difficulties in the community?

**D. Listening:** Since generative themes are connected to strong feelings, you must listen for the emotions that are behind the words people are saying. What are people worried about? What are they happy about? What makes them angry or sad or fearful? What are they hopeful about?

**E. Making a Code:** When you have identified some of the generative themes, the next step is to find a way to present them to the literacy class in a way that will encourage them to explore and discuss the meaning and importance of the theme. Freire calls this step making a code. The code is a way to present the theme back to the people so that they can objectively discuss it. The code may be a picture, a role play, a story, or an activity. For example, one facilitator who observed that alcoholism and gambling were causing problems in a rural village, simply brought an empty beer bottle and a deck of cards to class and set them on a table. She asked the learners how they felt about these items and they carried the discussion from there. Role play is another effective way to encode a generative theme. The Action Learning Manual in this series entitled Role Play is a helpful resource on how to use role play in a literacy class if you would like to learn more.

**F. Using a Code:** When you introduce a code, you do not explain it. You invite the learners to describe and analyze what they observe and know about the code. The purpose of the code is to pose a problem to be discussed. Therefore, you should not present a solution to the class. The learners will discuss the problems to uncover their own understanding and solutions. After the discussion, you assist the learners to write down what they talked about. They can develop their writing skills as they document the problem or to plan a solution that they discussed. The following strategies in this manual will provide you with guidelines for building reading and writing activities from generative themes and for using reading and writing as strategies to develop and implement action plans to make improvements in the learners' lives and communities.

**G. Keeping an Idea Book:** Write down the themes you hear and observe in a notebook together with your ideas for creating codes to introduce generative themes to your literacy class. This notebook will serve as a source of ideas for developing learning plans for your class.

### STRATEGY #3: MAKING LEARNING PLANS

In most formal schools and traditional literacy programs, the curriculum is determined by text books or primers that are written by experts. All the learners study the same books in the same order. The learning plans are oriented around the books. The problem with “book-centered” learning plans is that the books cannot always match the local needs and interests of the literacy learners.

The whole language approach proposes a different strategy. As mentioned above, it is “learner-centered” rather than “book-centered.” The learning plan is based on the needs and interests of the learners and the learning materials are developed in the class using local culture and resources. The learners and facilitators decide what they want to learn and make their own plan for learning. They choose a topic or generative theme that they want to study and develop their reading and writing skills in the process of learning about the topic.

**What is a Learning Plan?** A learning plan is made up of four main activities which the facilitator organizes so that the learners can participate in making and implementing the plan. The four activities are:

- A. Deciding what to learn
- B. Making a plan to study the topic
- C. Implementing the learning methods
- D. Evaluating progress

**A. Deciding What to Learn:** By interviewing the learners and observing daily life in the community before starting the literacy class, you will know some of their needs, interests and reasons for joining the literacy class. You should review the notes from your interviews and observations to find out what needs and interests the learners have in common and compile a list of possible topics for the group to study.

At the first meeting of the literacy class, you can tell the group about your list and invite them to add more ideas. The first literacy lesson is to write a list of the topics on the blackboard. The learners practice recognizing and reading key words from the list of topics. Then they discuss their level of interest in each topic and talk about which topic is most useful to begin their learning process.

Next, you organize a voting process. Each learner votes for the topic they want to study by writing the key word on a slip of paper. You then teach the group how to tally votes by asking a couple of the learners to assist reading the slips of paper and putting a mark by the appropriate topic on the list.

After the vote is counted, the learners discuss the result and make their decision. Depending on how the votes play out, the group may need to discuss availability of resources, or hold a second vote between the two most popular choices. In the end the decision should be based on a combination of voting and consensus. Topics that do not get selected can be studied later, after the first topic is completed.

**B. Making a Plan to Study the Topic:** Once members of the literacy class have decided what to study, they need to learn about how they will study the topic. The literacy class process includes four methods for learning: discussion, writing, reading and action. These four methods can be used in many different combinations and sequences. Often, the group will do all four each time they meet so that they have a well-rounded learning experience. You can use the second meeting of the literacy class to teach the learners how to make a learning plan. You will do three activities: 1) introduce the learning methods, 2) brainstorm activities, and 3) make a schedule. You will need to bring a calendar for the last activity.

1. Introduce the Learning Methods: To help the learners make a plan to study their new topic, you need to explain to them how the four methods will be used. The literacy lesson for this day is learning to recognize the four words: Discussion, Writing, Reading and Action. Write the words on the blackboard as you introduce them. You may want to draw symbols next to the words to help the learners remember which is which. As you explain each method, talk about how this class will be different from what is done in formal school.

**Discussion:** Discussions are used to share information from the experiences of the learners and to help everyone understand and analyze the things they are learning. Everyone in the group is considered to be an “expert” about their own life experience and, therefore, they have knowledge, stories and ideas to share with each other. You help facilitate the discussions by organizing the questions and issues and dividing the learners into small groups so that everyone will get a chance to talk and listen.

**Writing:** Writing is used to organize thoughts, ideas and experiences. By putting their own words on paper, the learners will learn how to read and how to think about things in a systematic way. The learners will also use their writing skills to create reading materials for the literacy class as well as for themselves and their families.

**Reading:** At first the learners will read things written by themselves to help them become acquainted with the sounds and form of letters, words and sentences. But soon, they will also read things written by other people. Reading is usually used to learn new information and to learn about ideas and experiences from outside their community. The learners will read information written by people who live in other places and have had different experiences. They will compare their own experiences and ideas with the experiences and ideas they read about.

**Action:** The purpose of organizing a literacy class is to help the learners gain new skills and knowledge that they can use to improve their lives. Therefore, the literacy class will organize action to put their reading and writing skills to use. Examples of action might include making leaflets or posters to share their new knowledge with other people in the village, inviting a guest

speaker to teach them a new skill or new information, organizing their families and neighbors to accomplish a community development project, etc. The group will choose actions related to the topic of study.

2. Brainstorm Activities: After explaining the four learning methods, you can ask the learners to discuss the methods and brainstorm what kinds of things they would like to do for each of the methods and what kinds of resources they will need.

**Discussion:** What are the subtopics, issues or problems that need to be discussed, learned and analyzed in order to study their chosen topic?

**Writing:** What kinds of things might the group want to write about their chosen topic? What types of written products could the group make? (see the list on page 4)

**Reading:** What kinds of reading materials are available? Can they find more? Where? How?

**Action:** What kinds of activities are relevant to the topic? What could they do in their homes or communities?

Write the ideas of the learners on the board. After they finish discussing each method, you can read the ideas back to the learners to check if everything is recorded correctly. Have the learners practice reading and copying from the lists. If learners are more advanced, they can copy the lists into their notebooks so that they have a record of the planning process. Beginning learners can practice writing selected key words.

3. Make a Schedule: The final task in making a learning plan is to draft a schedule for when certain key activities will happen. For example, the group may want to begin by inviting a guest speaker to teach them about their topic. This activity may then be followed by several weeks of reading, writing and discussion as they analyze the information from the speaker and develop their own reading materials. The schedule will need to be flexible, because there are always unforeseen circumstances and learning often takes longer than planned. However, the task of making the plan will give the learners an opportunity to consult a calendar, estimate days and weeks for accomplishing tasks, and learn some of the functional skills of planning. Work together with the learners to make a schedule showing activities and dates. Have the learners copy the schedule into their notebooks. The schedule can be evaluated and revised as they gain more experience with the process.

**C. Implementing the Learning Methods:** Implementation means guiding the learners through a series of reading, writing, discussion and action activities that will help them study the topic they have chosen. The schedule you made with the learners is your general guideline. It is your task to plan a combination of activities and learning methods for each class session that responds to the needs and interests of the learners. It is impossible to explain exactly what you will do, because you create the process through interacting with the learners and building on the ideas and information they bring to the class. Each of the strategies in this section of the manual

include step-by-step instructions for organizing a particular learning activity. But it is up to you as facilitator to choose activities and incorporate the input from the learners.

As mentioned above, the four learning methods can be used in any combination and sequence. For example, the group may use discussion to plan their action, to analyze something they read, or to prepare to write. They may use reading to get ideas for an activity or to prepare to do their own writing. They will frequently write so that they will have something to read.

Sometimes the plan for action will define the reading and writing tasks. For example, if a literacy class chooses to study how to improve the sanitation of their village, they may read leaflets produced by the ministry of health, they may rewrite their own versions of the leaflets in their local language, they may produce posters to inform other people in the village about the problem, they may organize their children to pick up and bury garbage. In every case, the action must be balanced with providing enough time for the learners to develop their reading and writing skills. It may take several weeks or months to produce a simple leaflet, but the time is well spent if everyone is developing their reading and writing skills. One literacy class spent four months helping learners write their life stories. The stories were not very long, but every learner used the writing process to analyze their life experience and to develop the ability to write with correct spelling and punctuation. In the process they also learned how to read each others' stories.

You will notice that all of the techniques in this manual include steps for integrating discussion, reading, writing and action in the learning process. Strategy #4 provides suggestions for making lesson plans and managing the learning process in a whole language class.

**D. Evaluating progress:** Whenever the learners finish studying a topic, or more frequently if the learning plan needs to be adjusted, they should stop to evaluate their progress and decide as a group what to do next. The evaluation serves several purposes: to identify accomplishments, to make improvements and to decide what to do next.

1. Measure accomplishments: First of all, an evaluation is a chance to see what the group has accomplished. Often the process of learning to read and write goes so slowly that the learners wonder if they will ever learn. The evaluation is a time for you to help the group to make a list of what they have learned. They can also look back at the first things they wrote in their notebooks and compare them with what they are writing now to get a concrete picture of how they have improved their skills. Use the evaluation to document the group's accomplishments. Have learners read their best writing out loud to the group. Put examples of good work on the wall. Thank people who have helped you by writing notes to them or inviting them to an event. At the end of big projects, some classes like to invite guests and family members to see the results of their work and to have a celebration.

2. Make improvements: To figure out how to improve your literacy class, you can facilitate a two part discussion about the process of the learning class. First of all the group should be asked to list what is going well and what they like about the class so that these activities can be

continued. Next, you should ask for suggestions on how to improve the literacy class. The learners should decide which suggestions they are willing and able to implement. In addition, they should review their learning plan and schedule of activities. As needed, they can adjust the timelines and set new goals for accomplishing activities or producing learning materials.

3. Decide what to do next: If the class has finished studying a topic, they should return to their original list of topics or generate a new list and repeat the discussion, voting and decision-making process described in step A to decide what to do next. If they are stuck with a topic that isn't working because resources failed to arrive or people lost interest, you should help the learners discuss whether they want to continue with the same plan or change to something new.



## STRATEGY #4: MANAGING A WHOLE LANGUAGE LITERACY CLASS

Each time the literacy class meets, you need to plan how to use discussion, reading, writing and action methods to help the learners develop their skills. One of the challenges that you will face is how to help each of the learners develop at their own pace. Typically literacy classes have mixed abilities. Some learners will be completely illiterate while others may have dropped out of primary school. In addition, the learners will also have a variety of interests and needs.

In a traditional literacy class, the teacher leads the lesson and all of the learners follow the same page in the book no matter what ability level they have. The learners may sit in rows or a circle, but they all focus their attention on following the teacher and learning the same things together. The teacher generally controls the learning process from the front of the room and only moves around the room to provide assistance and corrections when the learners are writing individually.

In an integrated whole language literacy class, the facilitator organizes and guides activities. The learners work actively in small groups and pairs to teach each other. They participate in discussions with the whole group to make decisions, brainstorm ideas and present information. They also work individually on personal writing and reading projects. The facilitator manages the learning process by moving around the room to answer questions and assist where necessary. The facilitator also organizes and trains the learners to help teach each other.

**A. Organizing Learners:** You can learn to organize the literacy class so that all of the learners get the help they need as well as the opportunity to help each other. The most effective technique for managing a literacy class is to subdivide the learners into smaller groups for various learning activities. Learners can work individually, in pairs, in small groups, and in the whole group. Several examples are listed below.

### 1. Individually

*Individual Practice:* Learning by doing is the only way to learn to read and write. Therefore, every learner will need time in the literacy class to practice their reading and writing skills individually. Often reading practice is done orally in a large group. When learners work individually, they can practice reading silently. You can check their understanding of what they read by asking them questions after they finish. When learners are working individually, you can move around the room and help anyone who needs extra attention.

*Evaluation:* In addition to individual assistance and practice, you need to pay attention to the individual progress of each learner. Strategy #1 explained how to interview learners and assess their existing reading and writing skills. Strategy #12 will explain how to keep a progress portfolio for each learner and to periodically interview the learners to evaluate their progress.

## 2. Pairs

*Writing Partners:* It is often easier to help learners get started with writing if they can work together with a partner. In this way they can pool their knowledge and help each other produce many different kinds of written materials.

*Trained Helpers:* Beginning learners need a lot of help to start writing. For example, the Language Experience Approach (LEA) described in Strategy #6 works best in a one-to-one situation. Obviously you cannot be expected to help every student individually. Therefore, you can train the more advanced learners in the LEA technique and ask them to be partners with the beginning learners. Both learners benefit from this arrangement. The beginners get special attention and the advanced learners gain teaching skills and improve their own understanding. You are then able to help the lowest level learners or to move around the room to assist the partners.

*Peer Teaching:* Even beginning learners benefit from the opportunity to teach someone else. When learners have completed a writing task, divide them into pairs and ask them to teach each other how to read what they have written. Learners can also be encouraged to help each other spell and identify words.

## 3. Groups

*Discussion Groups:* Often one or two learners will dominate discussion if the whole group is working together. You can help the quieter learners participate in discussions by dividing the learners into small groups. Most learners feel comfortable to speak in a group with three to five people. Each group can discuss the same topic, or they can discuss different topics. After the groups have discussed for several minutes, ask one member of each group to report the result of their discussion.

*Reading Groups:* If the learners have different interests and abilities, you can divide them into small groups. Then within each group, different reading material can be read together. You can also divide them by skill level with each group reading something that is appropriate for their reading ability. However, it is sometimes better to mix the skill levels so that the learners are able to help each other.

*Project Groups:* If your literacy class is planning an action that requires many different tasks, you can divide them into project groups to plan and carry out the tasks. For example, a literacy class may decide to organize a community meeting about a health issue. One task group can write a letter to invite a guest speaker from a near-by health post. Another task group can make posters or flyers to advertise the meeting in the community. Another task group can prepare the agenda for the meeting, and so forth. Every group will be using their writing and discussion skills to create a literacy material related to the event.

**B. Organizing Times and Places:** Many people think that literacy skills can only be learned in the class with the teacher. But in reality, with your help, the learners can practice their reading and writing skills at many times and places during their day. As the facilitator, you are responsible to help learners plan different learning times and places, but you do not need to be present to facilitate all of the learning. Learners can work individually, in pairs, and in small groups outside of class time. They can work with other class members or with members of their own families. Here are a few suggestions you can try out.

*Reading and Writing with Children:* Many adult learners have children who are in school. Reading together helps both of them learn. They can read stories, newspapers or school books. They can even write their own stories based on family history and folktales. Encourage learners to do things at home with their children and report on the experience when they come to the class.

*Reading and Writing with Friends:* Often a few learners will live near each other or have reasons to communicate with each other when they are not in class. Encourage them to add reading and writing to the things they do together. For example, instead of sending a child with a verbal message to their friend, they can try sending a child with a written note. They can also help each other read mail or write notes to the school. Ask learners to report on their experiences to the class.

*Literacy Coaching:* Often learners need help solving problems in daily life that require reading and writing. You can arrange special times during the week or before or after class when you can be available to help with individual problems. You can also create learning activities for your class if several learners have difficulty with the same type of task.

*Flexible Class Schedule:* Many facilitators have a problem with people arriving late to class. If this is your situation, you can plan individual activities and personal help for the first half hour so that those who come on time receive some personal benefit for their effort. You can also use the beginning part of class to provide special training or activities for certain groups of learners. For example, sometimes the ability levels of the learners in your class are so different it is easier for you to teach only part of the group at a time. You may want to read different materials with the beginning and more advanced learners, or you may want to give the advanced learners some special training in how to be writing partners. In this case, you can arrange for the advanced learners to come on time and for the beginners to arrive a half an hour later. Then you can use the first half hour for the special training or for advanced reading and writing activities. Another time, you could have the beginners come early.

**C. Organizing Learning Methods and Activities:** Now that you have some ideas about how to organize the learners into different types of groups and to use your time more flexibly, you are ready to think about how to organize the four learning methods—reading, writing, discussion and action. You may be asking, “Where do I start?” As mentioned in strategy #3, you can start with any one of the four methods and use them in any order. Strategies #6 - #10 include many suggestions for linking the learning methods. Each activity you do in class provides a starting point for the next activity. For example, the information you

collected in Strategy #2 can help you identify a discussion topic that will lead to a writing activity described in Strategy #9. In turn, the results of the learners' writing efforts will give you ideas for additional reading, writing, discussion or action.

In a whole language class, you are constantly creating the learning plan together with the learners. Therefore, you need to develop the skill to draw spontaneously upon the basic techniques for leading discussions, teaching reading and writing skills, and planning action that are described in this manual. In addition, you also need to do some planning in advance of each class so that you will be prepared with materials and ideas. The following steps will help you make a lesson plan before each class meeting.

1. Review: Review what you did in the last class. Look at what the learners wrote, think about what you discussed and read, and decide what is the next logical step to help the learners continue learning about the topic you have started to study. Strategy #10 provides helpful information on how to analyze the learners' writing in order to organize and plan the learning process.

2. Identify Activities: Identify what activities you would like to do for each of the learning methods and think about how long each activity will take. Make a few notes about how to divide the learners into pairs or groups and how to give them instructions for working together.

3. Plan Time for Each Activity: Make an outline showing the order of the activities and how much time is required. Adjust the time for each activity so that everything will fit into the available class time. You may want to have an extra activity in mind in case something doesn't work or goes faster than you expected. You also need to be prepared to adjust your plan if things end up taking more time or leading you in a new direction because of the learners' enthusiasm for a particular activity.

4. Write a Lesson Plan: Some facilitators like to have a standard lesson plan that covers all the activities in a systematic way. This way, they know that they cover each learning method at each lesson. After you have studied and experimented with the whole language strategies, you can decide what kind of a lesson plan works best for you.

*In a whole language class, you are constantly creating the learning plan together with the learners. Therefore, you need to develop the skill to draw spontaneously upon the basic techniques for leading discussions, teaching reading and writing skills, and planning action described in this manual.*

An example of a lesson outline for a two-hour class is shown below to give you an idea of one way a lesson plan can be designed.

### SAMPLE LESSON OUTLINE

Review of Last Session: We talked about how one learner's niece who lived in the next town had nearly died from dengue fever. Everyone wanted to know about the disease -- its cause and how it could be cured or prevented. We wrote stories about some of the serious diseases the learners had seen or experienced in their families. We decided to learn more and assigned two learners to visit the health center when they went to market later in the week. They brought back four leaflets and a poster.		
Time	Activity	Materials
15 minutes (or until all arrive)	<b>WRITING</b> Individuals write in their dialogue journals.	learners' dialogue journals
30 minutes	<b>DISCUSSION</b> (follow-up on <b>ACTION</b> ) Reports from learners who visited the health center and discussion of what they learned about dengue fever and other diseases.	
30 minutes	<b>READING</b> (getting new information) Divide into small groups. Each group will read a leaflet on dengue fever or another serious disease.	leaflets from health center
30 minutes	<b>WRITING</b> (analysis) Groups will compare their own knowledge with the information from the pamphlet. They will fill out a chart with two columns: (1) what we already know and (2) new information from the leaflet. They will also make a list of new questions they have.	individual notebooks and pens
15 minutes	<b>DISCUSSION</b> (planning) Each group will summarize for the class what they have been doing and then we can decide how much more time we need to study this topic and what we would like to do in the next class.	

## STRATEGY #5: INTEGRATING LITERACY WITH COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Many organizations that provide literacy classes are also involved in other types of community development activities such as income-generating projects, agriculture or forestry projects and health projects. Ironically, most of these organizations treat literacy classes as a separate activity that focuses narrowly on basic reading skills. When whole language strategies are used in the literacy class, there are many opportunities to integrate the literacy lessons with the community development activities.

All of the strategies in this manual provide information for using locally available reading materials and for creating materials for use in daily life. You can use the suggestions in each strategy to analyze the materials, activities and information associated with your community development projects in order to develop related literacy activities and learning materials.

To analyze the potential linkages between a community development project and the literacy learning process, you need to review the functions of literacy and expand your assumptions about how literacy is used in daily life. You also need to review the activities of your community development projects and pay attention to the literacy components that are routinely used in the process. Finally, you need to review the strategies in this manual and learn creative ways you can teach reading and writing by using them for a specific purpose in a community development project.

The following chart lists some of the functions of literacy along with examples of materials and activities that might be used in a community development project. Review the list and make your own chart that identifies the literacy functions and materials of your organization or development projects.

Functions of Literacy	Literacy Materials	Project Activities
<b>COMMUNICATION</b>	letters, memos, notes	correspondence between field sites
<b>INFORMATION</b>	leaflets, posters, books, manuals, maps	technical training
<b>PLANNING</b>	calendars, agendas, work plans, schedules, timelines	planning seminars, team meetings, goal-setting sessions
<b>DOCUMENTATION</b>	reports, log books, record books, diaries	data collection, monthly reports, evaluation
<b>FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT</b>	advertisements, receipts, record books, bank books	income-generating activities
<b>ORGANIZING</b>	file systems, directories, organizational charts	project management
<b>ANALYZING</b>	reports, diagrams, analytic charts	project evaluations, problem-solving sessions
<b>REGULATION</b>	official documents, stamps	legal issues
<b>OTHER</b>		

As you study the whole language strategies in this manual, make notes of ways that you can integrate them with the functions and project activities you listed from your own organization. The following strategies will be especially applicable.

Strategy #7 focuses on finding and creating appropriate reading materials. It includes a section on how to involve the learners in an exercise to simplify existing materials. You could use this strategy to simplify relevant technical materials your organization may have.

Strategy #8 explains how to help learners read. If you are integrating literacy activities with a community development project, you may find it useful to employ some of these reading techniques into project training sessions. In this way, you will help learners develop reading skills at the same time they are learning technical information for the project.

Strategies #6 and #9 provide helpful ways to find out and document information that the learners already know. You can use the techniques in these strategies to create technical materials based on local knowledge and folk wisdom. The learners can create all different types of literacy materials for the development project such as leaflets, posters, letters, project newspapers, record books and other sorts of documents. These documents serve a double purpose. They help the learners develop reading and writing skills and they provide relevant and useful reading materials for the project participants and larger community.

## **STRATEGY #6: TEACHING READING WITH THE LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE APPROACH (LEA)**

Learning to read is a natural process if it is connected to the spoken language and information that is familiar to the learner. People who only speak a non-standard dialect or localized mother tongue have difficulty reading a book that is written in the national language because the sentence structure, pronunciation, words and ideas are so different from local forms of communication.

The Language Experience Approach (LEA) is based on the idea that it is easier for learners to start reading the same words which they themselves have spoken. It starts the reading process with information that comes from the learners' experiences and past knowledge.

Language:	The words for the learning materials are the learners' own language.
Experience:	The ideas for the learning materials come from the learners' experience.
Approach:	A method for using writing as a tool to teach someone how to read their own words.

In this approach, learners are encouraged to tell a story, event or fact based on their experience and knowledge. The facilitator writes it down or helps the learner write it. Learners then practice reading the text which they created from their own ideas and memories. Materials which are created in this way can be shared among the learners in a class to broaden their reading experience and resources. Because the approach draws upon the words and knowledge of the learners, it is not necessary to have special literacy materials in order to teach them to read and write. Furthermore, since most countries do not have enough literacy experts to create materials in all the local languages and dialects, the LEA may be the only way for many learners to start out with reading material that they understand completely.

The learners themselves are a rich source of information which literacy programs can draw upon to create local reading materials. Even though they cannot read and write, they have gained a great amount of knowledge from their own experience. They also have information that has been passed to them from older generations, neighbors and peer groups in the form of songs, proverbs, religious stories, family history, folklore and conversations about life. This information and knowledge is part of what is called the oral culture of a people.

The progression of the LEA moves from the experience and knowledge of the learners, to the familiar spoken language of the oral culture, to the new forms of written language, to the new experience of reading. The process of reading and writing is a partnership between the facilitator and the learners and their environment. It starts with an extensive discussion of things that are important and familiar to the learners. You can use the information you collected in Strategies #1 and #2 to help the learners choose and discuss a topic for their LEA. You can



also use some of the ideas listed below that were developed by a group of teachers in Toronto, Canada.<sup>1</sup>

- Select pictures, posters or other visual materials which reflect the learners' interests. Learners may generate a story, discuss an issue or create a role play from the visual theme.
- Get the learners to draw a picture about themselves. For example, they may show what they do on a typical day. They do not have to be good at drawing, as the purpose of this exercise is to generate reading material rather than artistic work.
- Get learners to draw a map of their community places, such as their houses or their friends' houses, the tea stall, temple, market place, school, bank, and any other significant places. Have them circle the places where they have to use reading or writing skills. Ask them to describe how those particular places are related in their lives. Encourage them to tell stories of these places.
- Help learners make a family tree (or kinship chart) and invite them to discuss who has influenced their lives. They can also identify their relationships to different people in their family tree.
- Ask learners to talk about their specialized skills such as weaving clothes, making baskets, making mats, cooking special foods or meals, etc.
- Ask someone to recite a poem or a song which is popular among the learners and have the group write the words down.
- Talk about a television/radio program of common interest to the learners.
- Talk about common problems they face and ideas for improving their community.

### **Steps for using the Language Experience Approach**

This approach can be done with individuals or with a group. It is most effective to do it individually with low-level beginners. Use the methods for managing a literacy class described in Strategy #4 to give individual attention to beginners by organizing the class into pairs or small groups to work independently while you assist beginners individually. The LEA activity can also be done with a group by having the learners decide together what they want you to write for them.

1. Ask the learner to tell you about something s/he knows or experienced. Use one of the ideas listed above to get the conversation started. If necessary, ask questions to help

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<sup>1</sup>From *Themes and Tools for ESL*, Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Culture, pp. 5-12.

stimulate ideas. If the learner is a beginner, only ask a few questions and only write one or two sentences.

2. Write every word that the learner says. It is important for the learner to be able to see his or her own words as you write them down. Do not correct or change the language of the learner at this time. Write his or her actual language even if it uses non-standard grammar. You will teach standardized language patterns later. In the beginning, it is more important for each learner to be able to see his or her own spoken words.
3. Read the sentence(s) that you wrote and ask the learner if you took them down correctly and if they are written the way the learner wanted to say them. If s/he wants to change something, rewrite it.
4. Give the learner an opportunity to change the words or tell you to write more.
5. Read the sentence(s) together with the learner several times. Point to the individual words as you say them.
6. Ask the learner to try to read the sentence(s). If necessary, help the learner by reading together again.
7. Have the learner copy the sentence(s).
8. Copy the sentence onto a strip of paper and cut the strip so that each word is on a separate piece. Mix up the words and ask the learner to arrange the words back into their proper order. The first time, the learner can look at the original sentence and match the words visually. Later, s/he will be able to reconstruct the sentence by remembering the meaning, the structure and the sound-symbol connections of the letters. This is one of the most powerful ways to help learners practice reading the sentences they have created.
9. Invite the learners in your class to read each other's sentences. Divide the learners into small groups and ask them to help each other read their sentences. They may also want to help each other use the word strips to reconstruct the sentences after they study them.
10. After learners have done several language experience stories with assistance and have practiced copying their own sentences, they are ready to try writing their own story. Because they are beginners, it is not important if the spelling and grammar are imperfect. They will learn these skills as they work on improving their writing.

The Language Experience Approach is primarily a technique for using writing to teach people how to read. In Strategy #7, a variation of LEA is used to involve learners in simplifying difficult reading materials. LEA can also be the starting point for teaching writing. It can be used as the first step to help learners put their knowledge and ideas on paper in a language they can understand. Strategy #9 goes into more detail on how to involve the learners in creating their own stories, poems and other types of learner-generated materials.

## STRATEGY #7: FINDING AND CREATING APPROPRIATE READING MATERIALS

The whole language approach uses existing reading materials such as newspapers, books, letters, documents, and pamphlets instead of specially created literacy primers. Based on learners' needs, goals and interests, the role of the facilitator is to find reading materials from real life situations that are familiar to learners. You should never assume there is nothing to read until you and the learners have looked. Even the most remote villages can contain surprises.

To accomplish this strategy, you will need to make a survey of available reading materials related to the interests, needs and goals of your learners. You can learn more about how the people in your community use reading and writing skills in their daily life by training yourself to observe literacy practices. Each community provides different opportunities to use reading and writing skills. In some communities, printed materials are everywhere - newspapers, school books, posters, manufactured products, notebooks, paper, account books, legal documents, etc. In other communities, there is very little - maybe a few school books or religious books carefully wrapped and stored in family cupboards.

Spend some time observing men and women, adults and children. Make notes about what you see and share them with learners, facilitators and literacy workers. See if you can discover ways to help people learn to read and write during their daily life activities. Talk to people about what kinds of things they need to be able to read and write — letters, government documents, religious books, etc.

You will also need to assess the appropriateness of the materials and determine if it is possible to use them with new readers. Many materials from daily life will have appropriate content for your purposes. However, they will need to be simplified or shortened for new readers. You can simplify the materials yourself, or you can make the process of simplifying materials into a reading and writing lesson for the class. The following guidelines will help you identify local materials and involve learners in simplifying them.

### A. Sources for reading materials

1. Existing Literacy Learning Materials: Many reading materials have been created by government agencies and NGOs. The “post literacy” materials are usually more useful and interesting than the primers designed with rigid structures based on introducing the letters of the alphabet. Look for stories and articles on topics that will be interesting for your learners. Use these reading materials to supplement or stimulate discussion and writing activities in your literacy class. You do not need to use these materials in a prescribed order. You can skip around and select only the stories and articles that are useful and interesting to your learners.

2. Reading Materials used in Daily Life: Newspapers, magazines, leaflets, advertisements, posters, forms and books that are regularly used in daily life make great reading materials. These materials can be found in agency offices, health centers, banks, shops, NGOs, post offices, etc. Train yourself to see everything as a potential learning material. Encourage the

learners to look for materials and to bring things to the literacy class that they are trying to read or write at home.

3. Learner-Generated Materials: It is not necessary to have a primer or previously written material in order to learn to read and write. With help, learners can draw upon their experience and knowledge to create their own reading materials. Even beginning learners can help create materials. Their first learning materials can be the words and sentences which they dictate to the facilitator, using the Language Experience Approach described in Strategy #6. This approach is based on the idea that it is easier to learn to read language that the learners have spoken for themselves. Beginning readers are not beginning thinkers. If they are encouraged and assisted by the facilitator, they can think of many things to write. Writing becomes the technique for teaching the learner how to read. Materials created in this way can also be used as reading materials for other learners in a group to share ideas and stories. More advanced learners can write letters, stories, local history, plays, recipes and all kinds of interesting things using the process writing technique described in Strategy #9.

## **B. Choosing Reading Materials for Beginning Readers**

Reading materials for beginners need to be predictable so that the learners can easily guess the words. Predictable reading materials are based on well-known stories that people already know or have patterns of words that repeat regularly. Folk tales, chants, and popular songs often have these characteristics. The learners can help you think of familiar stories, sayings, prayers, chants and songs. The following information will guide you in selecting or creating reading materials.

1. Familiar Topics: Everyone uses their existing knowledge to help them understand what they are reading. Therefore, new readers will read more easily if they know something about the topic of their reading materials. For example, farmers already know a lot about agriculture. When they read books about farming, you can help them look for words and information they know: the names of local pests, tools, and work activities such as weeding and irrigation. Since they know these terms already, it will be easier for them to make informed guesses about the message of the text. Then you can read the words together to see if they guessed correctly.

2. Pictures: Pictures give important clues to what the text is about. Texts for new readers often include pictures to help the readers know what they are reading about.

3. Repetitive Patterns: When the same sentence format is repeated over and over with minor changes, new readers only have to guess one or two words. The structure of the text helps them anticipate what is coming next. Many traditional songs, stories and chants have a repetitive structure and can be written down to use for reading practice. For example, Hindu readers may find the religious prayer of 'Hare Ram, Hare Krishna' to be familiar and relevant reading material.

### **C. Training Service Agencies to Write More Simple Materials**

If you cannot find easy-to-read materials on the topics your learners want, you can also ask responsible agencies to help produce them or to simplify existing materials they have. Visit the organizations, offices and agencies that serve people in your local community. Explain that you are working with a literacy class and are collecting materials to help the learners read and write in daily life. Ask for samples of leaflets, posters, forms, etc. that you can use for lessons. Talk to the staff and see what concerns they have when working with people who cannot read and write. Discuss ways that you could work together to help the learners. For example, maybe a staff member could come to the literacy class as a guest speaker, learners could visit the agency to collect information, or you could work together to rewrite some of their materials.

Writing for new literates is considered a much more difficult task than writing for an educated audience. The style of writing needs to be clear, simple and direct. The writer must consider the meaning of words much more carefully and avoid using vague words or words that carry double meanings. The writer needs to tell all the relevant information and explain the meaning of concepts in careful order. The best writing style for new readers uses the language structure of spoken language. It helps if the writers think about talking to the reader in an informal situation as they write.

You can share the following suggestions with people who will be creating materials for new readers. You can also use these suggestions when you prepare materials yourself.

1. Use Familiar Expressions. It is important to use words that are familiar to the new readers. Listen to local expressions and ways of saying things. Identify important words in the local dialect. If learners have already used a literacy primer, you may want to review words they learned in their previous class to get an idea of words they have already practiced reading. You can also look in your community to see what words appear on signs, in shops, at health posts, in offices, etc.

2. Repeat New Words. When you are introducing new words, repeat the same words frequently in the text. Research studies show that if a new word is used five times in a text, a learner can figure out the meaning of this word from the context. It also helps to introduce new words gradually. Do not include more than one new word for every ten familiar words in a text. Never use more than 15% new words in a text.

3. Use Short, Simple Sentences. A new reader may forget what a long sentence is about by the time they reach the end. Try to limit sentences to eight or ten words. A sentence should not contain more than twelve words. Long paragraphs cause the same problems as long sentences, so use short paragraphs, averaging no more than six lines.

### **D. Working with Learners to Simplify Reading Materials**

Many of the reading materials you find in daily life will be too difficult for the learners to read by themselves. But this does not mean that they will not be able to understand the

information if you read the materials out loud to them. You can use the following strategy to help the literacy class make their own easy-to-read versions of more difficult reading materials.

1. Show the story, article or book. Read the title or show the pictures and invite the learners to tell what they already know about the topic from their own experience. This is a pre-reading strategy to build interest and to validate any prior knowledge the learners may have.

2. Read the story or article out loud to the learners. Stop and discuss what you are reading as often as necessary to help the learners understand. If the material is very difficult, you may have to discuss after every paragraph. If it is easy, you can discuss it after every page or at the end of a section. The discussion can be in the mother language rather than in the language of the reading material. Have people sit so they can see the page of the book as you read. If you do not have enough copies for everyone to see, you can write some of the important words or sentences on the board.

3. Ask the learners to retell the information or story in their own words. As they talk, write some of their sentences on the blackboard to help you remember what they said.

4. Write a new material. Work with the learners to write a new version of the story or article in their own words or in their local language. Use one of the five activities listed below to help the learners create a text in their own words from a discussion of the more difficult material.

- a. Drawings - Have the learners make pictures or diagrams about the information you have read. Help them write words or phrases to explain their drawings.
- b. Listing - Have the learners help make a list of key words from their discussion. Write the words on the blackboard and have the learners copy the list in their notebooks.
- c. List events in order - You can ask questions like the following to help the learners remember what they heard: What was the first thing that happened in the story? What happened next? Then what did they do? Write the answers that the learners give. Read the list together. The learners can copy the group-generated list or write their own list depending on their level of ability.
- d. Write Responses - Ask each person to tell what they thought was most interesting or important to remember from the story or article. Make a list of each person's responses. Read the list together. Have the learners copy the list. If they are beginners, they can just copy their own response. If they are more advanced, they can copy the whole list or write a longer, more detailed response on their own.
- e. Discuss and write your own version of the article. Reread each sentence or paragraph. Discuss the meaning and then work together to rewrite it in the local language or in more simple words.

f. Write a new article/story, or make improvements on the one you read. Include relevant information from the local community or correct information that is inaccurate. The new materials can be written together by the whole class or by individual learners depending on their writing abilities.

More advanced learners can write by themselves. Intermediate learners can work in small groups to write together. You can assist the individuals or small groups if they need help remembering or spelling something. You will probably need to work more closely with the beginning learners. Remember that the reading materials for beginners need to use repetitive patterns. You can help the learners organize their ideas by giving them a basic sentence that can be repeated with variations. Discuss and practice spelling any new words that come up in the discussion and reading materials.

After the learners have written their own text, have them look at the more difficult text and see if they can identify some of the new words they learned or read some of the more difficult sentences. When you work with learners to rewrite materials, you are accomplishing three tasks at the same time: 1) you are creating materials that they can read, 2) you are helping them develop their reading and writing skills, and 3) you are building their confidence to try reading materials from daily life that they may have thought were too difficult. As time goes on, the learners will be able to read the more difficult text by themselves. They will also gain skill in writing their own materials.

## STRATEGY #8: HELPING LEARNERS READ

The whole language approach to reading and writing is based on an understanding of how people naturally learn to understand language. Just as children learn to speak by living in a home where everyone is talking about familiar things, people can learn to read without much difficulty if the material is familiar, relevant and meaningful. The purpose of the facilitator is to help learners to develop an awareness of print and its functions, and to help them become independent readers by being a co-reader with them.

First you and the learners decide what to read and talk about it. Then you ask the learners to predict what they think the material will be about. Next, you help build the learners' level of confidence by reading the text out loud together with them. After reading, they select words they want to remember and learn. Eventually you encourage the learners to take the risk of reading alone and writing new materials which they choose.

The act of making predictions and confirmations, while reading, is an important element of the whole language approach. Consciously or unconsciously readers predict or guess what they think will happen in a story or article. For example, if you watch and listen to someone read a text, they will sometimes replace a word with a different word. If the word has the same meaning as the word replaced, the sentence will make sense and the reader may continue without knowing they changed a word. The reader successfully predicted the meaning even though they missed the exact word. However, if the reader did not predict accurately, the sentence will not make sense. The reader will back up and look for the mistake, confirm the error and make a new prediction or guess. Further reading will confirm if their prediction was accurate.

In order to make predictions while reading, learners need to have some prior knowledge about the topic. For this reason, beginning readers should read things that are based on their experiences and the environment where they live. Before they begin reading a text, they need to participate in a discussion about the information they will be reading. In this way, they will have heard and spoken many of the ideas before they see them in print. Then as they begin reading, they will be prepared to make good predictions about the words and sentences they read.

The facilitator, learners and staff in the literacy program work together to find and create reading materials that are related to the experience and environment of the learners. The facilitator talks with the learners to find out what they know and what they want to learn. In this way, the learners feel that their experiences, knowledge and their interests are valued by the facilitator, and they feel comfortable and confident about learning to read.

The following steps will guide you through the process of reading together with a beginning reader. This process can be done individually or in a group. More advanced learners can be trained to read together with beginners by following these steps. Adult learners can also learn to follow these steps for reading together with their children at home.



1. Choose or create reading material on the basis of the learners' interests and level of reading and writing skills.
2. Begin with the meaning of the text (not with the alphabet or words). Talk about the reading material - what is in it, why they want to read it, and what they think will happen in the text.
3. Begin to read the text while the learners follow along out loud or silently. Everyone can read at the same time as a chorus, or the facilitator can read first and the learners repeat afterward as an echo. For beginners, don't try to do a long text in one sitting. Choose a short piece or only part of the text.
4. Stop and encourage learners during reading by asking, "What do you think happens next?" in order to exercise their ability to make predictions about a written text.
5. Over time, you encourage learners to take the lead in reading a new text by fading away from reading as they begin reading on their own. However, you may need to lead the reading many times together before fading out and letting the learners read alone.
6. Encourage the learners to use pictures and prior knowledge to aid in understanding the story and to make it more interesting.
7. When learners start to read by themselves, don't jump in immediately with corrections if they make a mistake. Allow them to read on. Usually they will recognize the mistake and go back to make their own corrections. If they get confused and cannot find the mistake, you can help them solve the problem and prepare them to go on.
8. Ask the learner to retell the story when finished. You can use the Language Experience Approach to get the learners to write and study their own versions of the text.

This method works best when someone can work one-on-one with each learner to assist them with their reading. In a large class, the facilitator cannot give a lot of individualized attention. However, learners can help each other if they work in pairs. This approach is called paired reading. Divide learners into groups of two. If possible, put learners with different reading abilities together.

Each pair chooses something that suits their interest and ability to read. Have them sit side by side so they can both look at the same text. The more experienced reader reads first and models the reading process for the less experienced reader. In this way, the less experienced reader can learn new words and improve skills by watching and listening to someone else. When the less experienced reader takes a turn, the more experienced reader can assist. You are free to move around the room and listen to the pairs of readers. You can advise the experienced readers on how to help the other learners and offer assistance to any pairs that are having difficulty. In this strategy, all of the learners learn how to be reading coaches for each other. This is a skill they can also use at home to teach members of their families to read.

## STRATEGY #9: CREATING LEARNER-GENERATED MATERIALS

Most programs that use the whole language approach do not use conventional text books. The learners write their own materials as they documents what they are discussing, reading and doing in the literacy class. The Learner-Generated Materials (LGM) strategy is the most effective way to create excellent local reading materials for a literacy class. Learner-generated materials can range from a simple sentence or a list of words up to an autobiography or essay based on local knowledge. Some learner-generated materials are completed in one literacy lesson. Other materials may take many literacy lessons to produce.

Many programs make booklets or newsletters to publish and share the learners' writing. But the finished product is not the only goal of the LGM process. This strategy describes a five step process for creating learner-generated materials. Each step by itself is a learning experience. You do not have to complete all five steps for every piece of writing the learners produce. Sometimes, you can have the learners repeat steps A through C (below) in order to create and develop several interesting drafts on different topics. Later, you can help them select one draft that they especially like to complete steps D and E. By continuing through all five steps, you will cover the full cycle of the writing process and enable the writers to produce their own "publishable" materials.

Some facilitators organize writing projects based on learning and writing about a particular topic or issue that interests the learners. The materials can be written in local dialects and languages as well as in national and international languages. Learners at all levels from beginners to advanced can participate in creating their own stories and learning materials by following this five step process for learning to write.

As you help learners develop their writing skills, always remember that in the whole language approach communicating ideas comes before spelling and grammar. The writing process begins by talking with learners about what they want to write. Next they make a rough draft to get their ideas on the paper. You then boost their effort by encouraging them to share their efforts with each other. The learners offer compliments and suggestions to help each other expand their ideas and prepare to write more. At the fourth step, you help the learners standardize the spelling and punctuation. The last step is to make a final copy or self-publication to share with others. The five steps are described in detail below.

### A. Preparation for Writing

**Purpose:** It is not always easy to express ideas through writing. Learners need to have confidence that their ideas will be accepted by others. They need something to stimulate their thoughts, and help to organize their thoughts into words. You can help learners feel confident to write by organizing activities to stimulate thinking and talking about ideas. The ideas to help learners choose a topic for an LEA activity described in Strategy #6 can be used to help them get started on an independent writing exercise. You can also draw upon ideas that come from interviews with learners, generative themes and discussions to create your learning plans. Some additional activities to prepare learners for writing are listed below.

**Choose one activity to stimulate thinking.** Then choose an activity to stimulate talking that will complement the thinking activity. Talking is important because it helps the learners find words to explain their ideas. For example, if you choose to tell the beginning of a story to stimulate thinking, you could either ask the learners to make a role play or to brainstorm solutions as an activity to stimulate talking. Use your creativity to mix and match activities and to create new activities based on the culture and resources in your community. You can also think of these activities as strategies to illustrate the generative themes described in Strategy #2. Select topics or themes which you know the learners will be interested in and have strong feelings about.

1. Activities to Stimulate Thinking:

- a. Bring an object to class and ask the learners to talk about what it brings to their mind. (Possible objects might be a tool, traditional clothing, a government form, or an advertisement.)
- b. Ask a question about a current situation in the village.
- c. Tell or read the beginning of a story with a dilemma (problem) and ask learners to think of possible endings.
- d. Show a picture that poses a problem and ask learners to talk about how it relates to their lives.
- e. Play a simulation game and discuss how the learners feel about the results.

2. Activities to Stimulate Talking:

- a. Ask each learner to express an idea or opinion.
- b. Ask learners to make a role play (drama).
- c. Ask learners to brainstorm a list of possible solutions.
- d. Ask learners to make up a song.
- e. If some learners are silent, ask if they agree or disagree with others and tell why.

**Principles:**

- \* Use materials, events, and problems from the local community to stimulate thinking and talking.
- \* Pose choices, dilemmas or problems and ask the learners to find solutions.
- \* Give the learners time to think for themselves. Don't tell them what to say.

**B. Making a Draft**

**Purpose:** The purpose of Step B is to help learners write down what they talked about in Step A. You can use different strategies depending on the level of the learners. The writing does not need to be perfect. The learners will make additions and improvements in Steps C to E. The following activities are designed for beginners, intermediate and more advanced learners.

1. First Words: (This activity is good for beginning learners.) Help the learners identify one or two key words from the discussion in Step A. Then write the words and help the learners identify letters and sounds. The learners can copy the words into their notebooks. Then they can think of a sentence using the new words and you can help write the sentence for them. Read the sentence together. Ask the learners to find the key words in the sentence. The Language Experience Approach (LEA) is also an effective way to get beginners started in creating their own reading materials.

2. Small Group Writing: (This activity is good for intermediate learners.) Divide the learners into small groups and ask them to work together. The learners combine their skills to write a few sentences about the topic discussed in Step A. The learners will not know how to spell all the words. Encourage them to guess how to spell the words. This will help them figure out how to match the sounds with the letters. If they cannot make the whole word, they can write the letters they know (for example, house = hos). They will still be able to read their sentence because they made it.

3. Independent Writing: (This activity is good for more advanced learners.) Each learner writes something in their notebook. You or other learners can help them if necessary. Encourage them to guess how to spell words they do not know.

**Special Note About Invented Spelling:** Beginning writers can invent their own spelling if they do not know how to spell a word. By encouraging them to invent the spelling for a word, you help them figure out and remember which symbols are used for each sound. There are several strategies which beginning writers can use. Do not insist that they spell everything correctly in the beginning or they will become dependent on you to tell them everything. Tell them to communicate their idea on paper with any kind of symbol they know. For example, they can

- a. Write the first letter of the word if they remember which sound it starts with.
- b. Draw a line to represent a word they don't know how to spell.
- c. Draw a picture or a symbol to represent a thing or an idea.
- d. Invent the spelling from letters they know.
- e. Use their word list or dictionary to find words they have learned from reading lessons and copy the words into their story.
- f. Ask a fellow learner for help.

**Principles:**

- \* Don't worry about perfect writing.
- \* Help the learners feel comfortable and confident to write their own ideas.
- \* Encourage the learners to help each other.
- \* Let learners use an informal style of writing that is like the local spoken language.

### C. Sharing and Developing Ideas

**Purpose:** The purpose of this step is to praise the effort of the learners and encourage them to write more. The activity is accomplished by having the learners read their writing results to each other for praise and suggestions. Learners with different abilities can be mixed together for any of the following sharing activities.

1. Paired Reading: Ask the learners to sit with a partner and read their writing to each other. After they hear the piece, they can tell the writer what they liked about it and ask questions to encourage the writer to add more details and information.

2. Group Presentation: Gather all of the learners together and invite anyone who is ready to share to read their piece out loud to the group. Do not force everyone to read every time. Some people will need to listen to others a few times before they build the courage to read alone in front of the whole group. After each learner reads his or her piece, ask the other learners to comment on what they liked about the piece and to ask questions about the story or idea.

3. Sharing Group Writing: If learners have been writing together, ask someone from each small group to read their paper to the rest of the class. Again, ask the other learners to respond by telling the small group what they liked about their writing. Encourage the learners to ask the small group questions to find out more about their ideas. They may suggest new things for the small group to write. After the learners listen to all the other small groups, they go back to their own group and make any additions to their written piece.

4. Writing Conference: You can meet with each learner individually to discuss what he or she is writing. Ask questions to find out how the learner feels about the writing result, to help the learner explain things more clearly, and to help the learner decide what to add.

#### **Principles:**

- \* Focus on praising and encouraging the learners for writing something down.
- \* Do not worry about correcting spelling and grammar until Step D.
- \* If learners are working on a large project such as a story, biography, article, information leaflets, or newsletter, it may take them several weeks or months to finish writing the complete thing. You can use this activity to give them feedback and encouragement so that they will keep working and making progress.
- \* If learners feel that their written product is complete, they do not have to write more.

## D. Editing

**Purpose:** The purpose of this step is to help the learners understand and use the correct structures and spelling for written language. When you read something written by beginning learners, it should sound like their spoken language. Their writing should use the dialect and special expressions from their community. You may notice that the spelling of certain words reflects the local pronunciation of those words. After the learners have succeeded in putting their ideas on paper, you can help them learn the spelling, forms and style of written language. First you analyze their writing to find out what they already know and what you need to teach them. Then you help them make corrections using techniques that are appropriate for their skill level.

**Activities for Beginning Learners:** Beginning learners cannot learn to do everything at once. You should help them learn one thing at a time. For example, beginners can practice forming letters as they copy a sentence. They can also make word lists to practice spelling.

**Activities for Intermediate Learners:** Again, it is not important to correct every mistake at one time. Ask the learners what they think might need correcting or choose one or two things to teach the learners how to correct. Other things can be taught later. For example, one time, you can help the learners make punctuation marks. Another time, you can teach how to spell some difficult words.

**Activities for More Advanced Learners:** More advanced learners will know how to recognize some mistakes by themselves. Ask them to read their own sentences and look for mistakes. The learners can also read each other's writing and help each other make corrections. You can introduce new words and punctuation rules to help the learners write more complicated sentences.

### Principles:

- \* Do not correct their mistakes all at once.
- \* Choose one or two skills to teach at a time.
- \* Encourage learners to help teach each other.

## E. Self Publishing

**Purpose:** The purpose of this step is to share the learners' writing with others. After the learners complete their revisions and corrections, they should make a final copy in their best handwriting. Sometimes, the literacy class will want to make extra copies of their writing to share with others. There are several ways they can do this.

1. Handmade Copies: The learners write additional copies by hand.

2. Hectograph or Silkscreen: The learners write on a stencil or master and print multiple copies with a simple technology.
3. Local Printer or Photocopy: The learners make a clean master copy and take it to a printing or photocopy shop to make multiple copies. (The master copy can be handwritten or typed if a typewriter is available.)

The literacy class can make many kinds of publications. Learners can choose the publication form that fits the information they want to share.

1. News Wall or Bulletin Board: Stick the news, stories, poems or sentences written by the learners on a wall where other people can stop and read them.
2. Newsletter: Print one or two pages with news, information, stories, etc. For more detailed information and step-by-step instructions on how to make learner-produced newsletters, you can refer to the Newsletter manual in this Action Learning Series.
3. Booklets: Sew or staple several pages together.
4. Leaflets: Fold a paper in half or thirds. Organize the information and pictures so that they can be read as the paper is unfolded.
5. Posters: Make a picture and information on a large sheet of paper. Post where everyone can see.
6. Record Books: Have the learners help make a record of literacy class activities.
7. Journal or Diary: Learners can write their personal thoughts and daily activities in a notebook.
8. Writing Portfolio: Have the learners save copies of their best writing in a notebook or folder. This can also serve as an assessment tool. See Strategy #12 for more information.

**Principles:**

- \* Learners of all ability levels are able to make publications if you take the time to help them follow the five steps of the writing process.
- \* Publications motivate learners to read and write more.
- \* Publications are a way to document local history, knowledge and stories.
- \* Publications are a way to share information with people outside the class.

Remember, the five steps for making learner-generated materials serve two purposes. One purpose is to create materials. The other purpose is to teach writing skills. Literacy class

publications reflect the language and skills of the learners who write them. It takes a long time for a new writer to get the spelling and grammar perfect. But even an imperfect piece of writing can be worth copying and sharing with others. The learners are writing for themselves, their family and friends, not the school examination board. Formal grammatical structures and more sophisticated language can be learned over an extended period. In the meantime, there are many beautiful stories and pieces of family history and knowledge that can be written and published in local dialects with invented spelling and non-standard forms.

Practicing all five of the steps in the writing process is important because it takes a long time to master all the skills of writing. Even professional writers struggle to bring the words and sentences together in just the right way. They may spend days, weeks, or even years writing something for publication. Beginning writers can learn from following what good writers do. When they have an idea of something important they would like to write they should be encouraged to work on it for many days or weeks. Each time they add a new sentence to their story, they are learning the skills of putting their ideas into written symbols: When all the information is on paper, you can spend many days or weeks helping them learn the spelling and grammar to make their story "perfect." Each time the learners correct or improve their stories, they are improving their literacy skills. The process of writing their story becomes their individualized "text book" for learning writing skills.

Organize your literacy class so that the learners have time to write by themselves or in pairs or small groups. During this time, you can move around the room to advise and assist each person individually. When you and the learner are satisfied that a story or other piece of writing is complete, the learner can recopy it in a final form. The next two strategies will give you more ideas about how to develop a curriculum that helps the learners develop their ideas and build their skills.



## **STRATEGY #10: ANALYZING LEARNER WRITING TO INDIVIDUALIZE THE LEARNING PLAN**

You have probably noticed that writing is used for many purposes in the whole language approach. In Strategy #3, it was one of the methods for developing a learning plan. In Strategy #6, it was used in the LEA technique to teach reading. In Strategy #7, it was used to simplify difficult reading materials. In Strategy #9, it was used to create Learner-Generated Materials (LGM).

The pieces of writing created by learners provide very important information to the literacy learning process. You can analyze their writing to plan learning activities and to assess their progress. Each time the learners write, you need to analyze the writing results in two ways:

What does the content reveal about the learners' needs and interests?

What does the writing reveal about the learners' skill and knowledge of written language?

Answering the first question will help you guide the learners to study and write about things that interest them. This process will be explained below. Answering the second question will help you identify ways to help each learner develop specific reading and writing skills such as word recognition, spelling, grammar and punctuation. This process will be explained in Strategy #11. In addition, Strategy #12 explains how to use the writing products to assess the learner's progress.

### **A. Analyzing the Content of Learners' Writing**

By analyzing the content of the learner's writing, you can identify information that can be used in discussion, reading, action and additional writing activities. In this way, the learners' writing becomes the driving force for developing a learner-centered curriculum. The following questions will help you analyze each learner's writing results:

- \* What is the topic that the learner is discussing or exploring?
- \* Does the learner know a lot about this topic or does s/he need more information?
- \* What could the learner do individually to get more information?
- \* Are other learners interested in the same topic? What kind of class or group activity could be organized to help everyone get more information?
- \* Are reading materials available on this topic? Where?
- \* What type of written material has the learner produced — letter, story, proposal, leaflet, questionnaire, poster, etc.? What other type of written materials could the learners make to develop their information or ideas?

### **B. Implementing a Learning Plan**

In Strategy #3, you learned that a literacy class is made up of four learning methods — discussion, writing, reading and action. Each of these methods stimulates ideas and information

for the learners to study in the literacy class. Writing is especially important because it documents information from discussion and provides you with a concrete product that you can analyze and use in planning class activities. Analyzing the learners' writing and answering the above questions will help you plan specific discussion, reading, writing and action activities. You can use the following suggestions to organize the learners to explore specific issues and ideas that they bring up in their writing.

1. Reading and Discussing:

- *Reading Learner-Generated Materials:* After learners write, you can follow the activity with a reading lesson by having the learners read each other's writing. You can make multiple copies or write on a blackboard. The learners can read out loud in a chorus with you or they can exchange papers and read silently. They can also sit in pairs, read each others papers and discuss the ideas they are writing about.

- *Study Other Written Materials:* If you have additional written information on the same topics learners are writing about, you can have the learners read the material and compare it with their own ideas. By studying what others have written, the learners can get ideas for adding new information to their own writing. They can also get ideas about producing learner-generated materials in other formats such as posters, leaflets, poems, etc. for personal or local use.

2. Collecting Additional Information: Learners' writing may reveal they don't know enough about a topic they are interested in to describe it completely. You can help them collect more information in the following ways.

- *Review Personal Knowledge:* Most new writers do not write the whole story or explain all the information they know the first time they begin to write about something. When you read their work, you may have a lot of questions about missing information or half-formed ideas. You can encourage them to write more and help them add background information or more details to their writing.

- *Interviews:* Help the learners identify someone to interview or discuss the topic with. This could be a fellow class member, family member, friend or neighbor. Each learner can report to the class what they learned from the interview to stimulate discussion and additional writing.

- *Talk to "Experts":* Guide the learners to talk to a "local expert" with traditional knowledge, or an "outside expert" with schooled knowledge. (For example, a new mother could talk to the local midwife or the health worker at the community health post and write about what she learns.) Again, this information can be reported to the class, discussed and documented in writing.

- *Guest Speaker:* If many of the learners need expert information on the same topic, you can invite someone to class to give a presentation and answer questions. The learners can

write a letter inviting the “expert” and prepare a list of questions they would like to discuss with the guest. Following the presentation, they can discuss the information among themselves and write about what they learned.

- *Visit Agencies*: If there are non-governmental organizations, social services or government agencies nearby, you or some of the learners can go to the agency to get information. They can interview the workers in the agency and bring written materials back for the class to read, discuss and use as references for their writing.

- *Letters*: If resource organizations are far away, the learners can write letters requesting information or services.

3. Writing More: After the learners have collected additional information through reading and talking to other people or thinking more about their own knowledge and experience, you can encourage them to write more. They can reorganize or add to the original piece they wrote. They can also create some different types of written materials to share their ideas and information. Many things can be learned through the process of writing about the same topic in different formats. Encourage the learners to try organizing the information they collected or thought up themselves into two or more of the possible formats listed below.

songs	poems	stories
leaflets/brochures	posters	letters
reports	proposals	booklets
newsletters	flyers	advertisements
signs	books	diaries
record books	diagrams	maps
logs	journals	notes
questionnaires	lists	cartoons
agendas	charts	etc.

As you organize the learners to write about the things they are discussing, learning and planning in class, you are helping them develop the habit of using literacy for many of the practical functions of daily life listed in Section I. They make lists, plan activities, write letters, keep journals, summarize discussions, and so forth.

4. Taking Action: If the learners are discussing and writing about important issues or problems in their community, they may decide that they need to take action to improve a situation or solve a problem. You can guide them in the process of planning their action by helping them use their literacy skills to analyze the problem with charts and diagrams, to make public officials aware of their needs through letter-writing, to raise community awareness through making leaflets or posters, to develop a plan of action through writing action plans, agendas, work assignments, proposals, etc. The process of implementing action becomes an intensive period for applying literacy skills. Writing activities can also be used to document the action and to evaluate what happened.

## STRATEGY #11: BUILDING READING AND WRITING SKILLS

As mentioned in the previous strategy, you have two purposes for analyzing the learners' writing: to develop the learning plan and to build literacy skills. For the second purpose, you use writing as a strategy to teach the learners how information is organized in written materials with clear grammar, spelling and punctuation. The purpose of this strategy is to outline a number of simple techniques that you can use to help learners develop their understanding of letters, spelling, word identification and sentence structure.

### A. Analyzing Writing to Assess the Learners' Skill and Understanding of Written Language

The key to analyzing learner writing is to be able to recognize and understand how to use the learners' mistakes appropriately. In traditional educational approaches, mistakes are often seen as evidence that a learner is not as intelligent or has failed to understand a lesson. The learners are compared and ranked according to their ability to perform with the fewest number of mistakes. In the whole language approach, the mistakes are seen as evidence that the learners are reaching to the limits of their ability and showing the facilitator what they need to learn next. There is no need to compare and rank the learners. The facilitator examines the mistakes to find out what the learner is trying to do and helps teach the correct spelling, sentence structure or punctuation to convey the written message.

For example, in a whole language workshop to help Indonesians learn English, a group of learners copied a list of animals from the whiteboard: "duck, cow, horse, chicken." They then added the word "bafalo" to their list. The whole class laughed at the way they spelled "bafalo." But the facilitator pointed out that "bafalo" was the most important word on the list. It showed that the learners could do more than copy words the teacher gave them. They could think. They knew the list reflected American culture and they wanted to include an animal that was important in their culture. They stretched to the limits of their English ability to figure out how to write it. Even though they didn't spell "buffalo" correctly, their effort showed they wanted that word and were ready for the facilitator to show them the correct spelling. Another group of learners mixed English and Indonesian in an effort to make complete sentences. When they stretched beyond their ability and used words from another language to make a sentence, they were not making a mistake, they were letting the facilitator know what they wanted to say and what they needed to learn in order to write it correctly.

The following questions can help you analyze the writing of literacy learners to identify what they are trying to communicate and what they are ready to learn.

- Is there a mixture of languages?
- Which words are misspelled?
- Can the learner write a complete sentence?
- Does the learner use punctuation marks?
- What grammatical problems does the learner have?

Often, you will find that a learner makes many mistakes. If you try to correct all of them at once, you will discourage the learner. It is better to choose one or two things that the learner can correct and save the others for a later lesson. One very effective way to decide which problem to correct is to ask the learner if there is anything they are not sure about. As they were writing, did they feel unsure about the spelling of a word or the phrasing of a sentence? Very often, they will be able to identify one of the problems. If you help them correct that particular problem, they will remember it better than if you choose something else they had not thought about yet.

If the learners are not able to identify anything wrong, you can figure out something that will be helpful to them in improving their writing and help them make the corrections. You will also notice that learners will make similar mistakes. When this is the case, you can introduce activities to the whole class to help them learn new skills. Several of these activities are explained below.

## **B. Organizing Follow-up Activities to Help the Learners Develop Skills**

By identifying and analyzing “mistakes” in the learners’ writing, you can figure out what skills to teach the class. You can include many different kinds of skill development activities to help the learners pick up new skills, one by one, beginning with the things they need right now to communicate their ideas. The following activities can be used in any literacy lesson. Select the ones that meet the needs of your learners. The first activities in the list are especially helpful for beginners. The list starts with simpler skills and moves to the more complex ones.

1. Oral Reading: Help the learners read smoothly and fluently by giving them opportunities to read out loud in a group and individually. Read many stories and articles together with the learners. Encourage them to read at home with their children and other family members.

2. Silent Reading: Since most reading in daily life is done silently, plan class time to let the learners read silently. After they read, ask them questions to check their understanding. This activity can be done with reading partners. The learners silently read something written by their partners. Then the partners ask them questions to see if they understood.

3. Word Lists: Talk about the words in a reading material or LEA text. Ask the learners to pick individual words which they want to learn to read and write. Record those words on a blackboard or paper and have the learners practice reading and saying them orally. Help the learner copy some of the key words they want to remember into their notebooks. The learners will be able to use their list later to help them remember how to write those words.

4. Alphabet Wall Charts: The alphabet does not need to be learned in any particular order. Charts and self-made dictionaries can help learners keep track of the letters they know. Some facilitators use a chart on the wall with the letters of the alphabet and space for everyone to write new words that start with that letter.

5. Self-Made Dictionaries: Help the learners make their own dictionary. A letter of the alphabet is written on each page of a notebook. The learners record words that start with that letter on the same page. Making the dictionary helps them learn the letters of the alphabet. Each time they find a new word that they want to read and write, help them copy that word for their dictionary. They can use the dictionary to help them with future writing activities. Some facilitators help learners make bilingual dictionaries using both the mother tongue and national language. The dictionary can be organized alphabetically or according to useful categories, such as words they need when they go to the market, tools they need at work, greetings, etc.

6. Copying and Spelling: Help the learners copy the words down so they can carry them home. Have them watch for these words in the text and in other print materials. Limit the number of words, so they can learn easily. The learner begins by copying words from the board. Next they can develop the skill to write the words from their own memory when someone tells them the word out loud.

7. Signs and Labels: Help the learners make labels and signs for things in the classroom or in their homes such as furniture, tools, etc. You can also make signs for shops, homes or local roads.

8. Memory Game: Make several sets of cards with a new word on one card and a picture or the beginning letter on a second card. Mix the cards up and lay them face down on a mat or table. Then have the learners take turns turning two cards over at a time and trying to find a matching set. This game can also be done to teach a second language by writing the mother tongue word on one card and the national language word on the other.

9. Word Families: You can teach spelling rules, letters of the alphabet and vocabulary by helping the learners identify groups of words that have things in common. You can play games or make charts of words that have the same first letter, size, sound, rhyme, function or root meaning. For example, the learners can make charts of words that start with the same letter. They can make picture posters of words for familiar tools or objects. They can play games or make songs and poems with words that rhyme or sound the same. They can make collections of action words (verbs) or descriptive words (adjectives). They can make a list of all the words that come from the same root words. Challenge the learners to think up and discover different kinds of word families.

10. Sentence Activity: One of the most powerful ways to help a learner practice reading is to have them reconstruct a sentence that has been cut apart. This can be done as part of the LEA process, or it can be done with other sentences that the learners are reading in class. After you have helped someone learn a new sentence, write the words on a strip of paper and cut the words apart. Then mix up the words and challenge the learner to put the words back in order to make the correct sentence.

11. Paragraph Activity: Use this activity to help learners understand the sequence of sentences and the organization of ideas. Learners can work individually, in pairs or in small

groups. Read a paragraph or list of instructions together with the learners. Then cut the sentences apart and challenge the learners to put them back in the correct order.

12. Cloze Exercise: This activity helps learners build awareness of how the structure, context and meaning of a text enables them to predict and understand what kind of words will appear in certain places in the sentences. To prepare for this activity, choose a paragraph that is familiar to the learners. Copy the text, but put in a few blank lines instead of some key words. You can also leave a blank for every third, fifth or seventh word. Have the learners read the paragraph together and figure out which words are missing. This is called a “cloze” exercise. This exercise can be used for beginning or advanced learners. The more words you leave out, the more difficult the exercise becomes. See if you can complete the cloze exercise for this paragraph that you read a few pages back.

Often, you will \_\_\_\_\_ that a learner makes \_\_\_\_\_ mistakes. If you try to \_\_\_\_\_ all of them at once, \_\_\_\_\_ will discourage the learner. \_\_\_\_\_ is better to choose \_\_\_\_\_ or two things that \_\_\_\_\_ learner can correct and \_\_\_\_\_ the others for a later \_\_\_\_\_. One very effective way \_\_\_\_\_ decide which problem to \_\_\_\_\_ is to ask the \_\_\_\_\_ if there is anything they are not sure about.

13. Punctuation Lessons: Teach the rules for different types of punctuation marks one at a time. Help the learners practice punctuation by reading their written work out loud together and identifying where they need to pause for breath or to make the meaning clear. Each time the learners write something new, you can help them practice where to put the correct punctuation marks.

14. Analyzing Sentence Structure: Help learners understand how to properly organize the words in a sentence. You will find that many literacy learners speak non-standard dialects or have a completely different mother tongue from the language you may be expected to teach. When teaching learners to write in a new language or standard dialect, you will need to help them compare how their mother tongue and the new language put the words together in a sentence. For example, some languages put verbs at the end of a sentence while others put them in the middle. You do not need to teach technical terms like nouns and verbs. But you can teach about sentence order by helping them translate their own sentences into the new language and then compare how the same words are arranged differently. Only teach the grammar points that don't come naturally for the learners. It takes years of practice to master the grammar of another language. Teach the points that the learner needs in order to communicate their ideas in the new language.

15. Revising: The purpose of teaching writing skills is to help the learners communicate their ideas clearly. You and the learners should always check to see if the writing is clear. If it does not make sense, you can ask, “What do you mean to say here?” and let the learners explain orally what they are trying to say. Then help them find the words, phrases and punctuation marks that will make their meaning more clear. You should give positive encouragement for learners to rewrite their products to make them more clear, complete and

interesting. This is a skill which everyone works on their whole life. Even professional writers and academics need review, assistance from others and rewriting to make their meaning clear. New writers should not feel embarrassed to rewrite their materials.

16. Journal: A journal is a series of notes learners write for themselves each day when they come to class. Even new learners can participate in this activity. The content of journal writing is personal. It can be a log of daily activities, reflections on an incident, words of wisdom, weather reports, or anything that comes to mind. When you advise learners to keep journals, you mostly need to help them feel free to experiment with writing their personal thoughts. Journal writing motivates learners to find things from their daily life to write about. Working on a journal every day improves their writing skills and helps them learn to organize their thoughts. Over time, you will see their writing grow from a simple sentence (or a picture and a few words) to several sentences, then a paragraph or page.

17. Dialogue Journal: A dialogue journal is a notebook where two or more people have a conversation through writing. Usually the dialogue journal is done between the facilitator and each learner. But two learners can also use the journal to write to each other. Begin the dialogue or conversation by writing a question in each learner's journal. The learners then read the questions and write an answer. They complete their entry by asking you a question in return. You then read the journals and write an answer back to each learner. A dialogue journal is an important channel of communication between you and each learner. It also provides you with a way to evaluate how well the learners understand what they read because you can observe how they respond to your comments and questions. Unfortunately, the dialogue journal can take a lot of time if you write to every learner before every class. Sometimes it is helpful to organize the learners into dialogue journal partners so that they can write to each other on a regular basis. Then you can spread your own work-load out over several class sessions by only writing to part of the learners each time.



## **STRATEGY #12: EVALUATING LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENTS**

It is not easy to measure the progress of literacy learners. No one has been able to develop a test to measure the growth in self-confidence or community involvement that comes to learners as they figure out how to use their reading and writing skills to learn new things, document their experience and knowledge, and solve community problems. In the whole language approach, it is not effective to use tests and performance measurements that have been developed by outside experts. The evaluation tools developed for national performance statistics are not sensitive to the evolving patterns of progress that you will find with your beginning level literacy students.

If you look closely at many of the strategies used in the whole language approach, you will see that most of them help you to continually assess the progress of the learners. You must always pay attention to what the learners are discussing and writing in order to know what to teach them next. By assessing the learners' mistakes and achievements, you are able to plan how to teach them. According to Janet Kelly, who has taught adult learners with the whole language method for many years, assessment and evaluation should be an on-going, integral part of a whole language literacy program.

Assessment in a whole language-based classroom is ongoing. It is an integral part of the program design and helps drive the ongoing process of developing curriculum. One of the goals of a whole language program is to empower learners by helping them to become more self-directed learners, to identify and work towards their own goals for learning, literacy, and life. A logical outgrowth of that goal is to incorporate learners' self-evaluation into the overall assessment activities of a program. Both learners and teachers need to know why they are doing the things they are doing in a classroom so that they can have a sense of the progress they are making, as well as make decisions about future directions to take. One of the great motivations for people to keep going, especially in something as challenging as adult basic education, is to clearly see and feel their own growth. Standardized tests don't seem to measure either the kinds of growth in self-esteem, life skills, self-empowerment and community involvement, self-confidence, or literacy skills that learners make in many programs.<sup>2</sup>

In Strategy #1, you conducted three activities—interview, reading sample and writing sample—to find out about the learners before you started the literacy class. In this strategy, you will use the same three activities to find out how well each learner is progressing. You will also identify achievement levels that can be used to measure and compare the learners' progress along a learning path that is appropriate for their situation.

### **A. Keeping Records of Learners' Progress**

In order to keep track of every learner's progress, a portfolio (folder) of each learner can be maintained. The learners' portfolios may contain lists of their goals for learning to read, a

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<sup>2</sup>Source: *Whole Language - An Introduction* by Janet Kelly, pp. 5-10.

learning contract, a record of progress made in reading and writing assignments, samples of the learner's writing, observations by the facilitator about the learner's progress, and the learner's observations of their own progress.

A Progress Portfolio is an easy way to document the changes and progress of each learner. A portfolio is simply a folder, envelope or binder with the learner's name written on it. It is used to hold writing examples and other records of the learner's progress. The first things to go into the portfolio are notes from the initial interview and the first reading and writing samples. Later, other work that the learner produces gets put into the folder. Some facilitators like to have the learners make a list of the things they have read or skills they have learned. You can also put in small notes documenting accomplishments you have observed such as the first time the learner is able to write independently, or the first time they help someone else read.

It is often difficult to measure the progress of someone who is learning to read and write. Over a period of time, the things collected in a portfolio are proof that the learner is making progress. Early writing may have only a few words written by an uncertain hand. Later writing will reveal skills with forming words and sentences. The handwriting will be stronger, the ideas more clear. Both the facilitator and the learner can look through the writing samples in the portfolio to remember the struggles and the breakthroughs. Goal-oriented learners can use the portfolio to document their progress with examples of their achievement. A portfolio serves other purposes as well.

- \* It is a learner-centered assessment tool that documents each learner's growth without comparison to anyone else.
- \* It provides a place to record evidence of learning. The facilitator and learner can decide what they want to put in the portfolio.
- \* It is a formative assessment tool that can be used by the facilitator to plan learning activities to help the learners progress at their own rate.
- \* Examples drawn from all the learners' portfolios can be used in a program report or published in a newsletter or booklet for a final evaluation of the class.

## **B. Evaluating Progress in Writing**

After you have collected examples of learner writing in the progress portfolios for a while, you will begin to notice certain characteristics that seem to be typical of different levels of writing skill. The most obvious characteristic of beginning writers is the awkward shapes of their letters and the uneven sense of spacing for letters, words and lines on the page. As the beginning writers gain a feel for using a pencil and paper, their writing becomes more even and clear. You will also notice progress in the formation of ideas as the new writer moves from lists of words and phrases to more complex sentences and paragraphs. Of course, each learner will progress at their own rate depending on their prior experience and personal abilities.

To train yourself to understand the stages of writing progress that are typical of learners in your class, you can analyze and compare the writing of all your learners. Find a large table or mat and sort examples of the learners' writing along a continuum starting with the most beginning efforts and ending with examples of the most skilled writing. Look closely at the different stages of writing in between the lowest and highest and identify the important skills learners make at each step of the way as they work to improve their skills. For example, you may notice some of the following things:

- \* Handwriting becomes more even and smooth with practice.
- \* In the beginning stages, learners make lists of words rather than sentences to describe a process.
- \* In the next stage, learners are able to write complete sentences in a logical order.
- \* At a higher stage, the learners can write a page of sentences, but they don't seem to use any punctuation.

Make a list of the progression of stages in your class and think about ways to help the learners progress to the next stage. For example, you can teach them skills like punctuation directly, you can give them opportunities to read things written by more advanced learners and you can show them their work and point out the progress they are making from stage to stage.

### **C. Evaluating Progress in Reading**

Reading is more difficult to evaluate than writing because you do not have a product to examine. You can train yourself to evaluate reading progress by listening and observing the learners when they are reading. How fluently do they read? What kind of errors do they make? Do they correct their own errors? How well can they retell what they have read? Can they answer questions about the content?

Observe and listen to the learners in your class as they read. Make small notes of the things you notice about their reading. You can put these observation notes in the learners' progress portfolios. Review your observations and see if you can identify some characteristic steps in the reading progress of your learners. For example, one facilitator in The Gambia noticed the following steps as a group of learners with minimal exposure to the printed text began to understand the purpose and process of reading.

- \* The learner would begin to look at the text when trying to read. (This marked the point when the learner realized that reading in the literacy class was different from memorizing the Koran.)
- \* The learner would stop making random guesses about what words were on the page and began to sense the logical connection of words in a sentence. (This marked the point where each learner really understood that the written message was in their own language and they were not just memorizing the sounds and syllables of a foreign language. They could use the logic of their oral language and personal knowledge to guess what was written on the page.)

- \* The learner started helping other learners. Sometimes learners saw the mistakes more clearly when they were helping than when they were reading themselves.

The reading characteristics of the learners depend on their ability level and their prior experience with reading. Make a list of the different characteristics you observe among the learners you work with. See if you can detect points where a learner is progressing. Think about which strategies help various learners make progress. Tell the learners what you see. Encourage the learners to help each other.

#### **D. Interviewing Learners**

After you have reviewed each learner's reading and writing, arrange a time to meet with each one individually and talk with them about their progress in the literacy class. In this interview, you will talk about their general progress in the class, their writing accomplishments and their reading accomplishments.

1. General Progress: Begin by asking the learner to tell you what s/he likes about the class and has learned or accomplished in the class. Talk about things like confidence, understanding, friendship, etc. You may want to make a list of these things together with the learner to keep in the progress portfolio.
2. Writing Progress: Arrange the learner's writing in the order it was written. Discuss the improvements the learner has made in writing skill and ability to explain things clearly. Invite the learner to select one or more favorite pieces and tell you what s/he likes about it. Make a list of skills the learner has gained and compare the list of skills in writing development you identified above. Talk about the next step the learner may want to work on.
3. Reading Progress: Ask the learner to help you make a list of the things s/he has read both in the class and at home. Use questions such as: What do you enjoy reading? Who do you read with? What is difficult to read? Do you have any questions or problems with some of the things you are trying to read?

Keep the tone of the interview informal and friendly. The purpose of interviewing is to help you and the learners understand the progress that each of them are making from their own point of view. You do not evaluate them in order to compare them. You evaluate them in order to know how to help each one progress as fast as their ability and commitment allow them to go. The interview can be a time to encourage learners to attend more regularly and to motivate them through praising their effort and achievement.

The progress portfolio, reading and writing samples and interviews are just a few of the ways you can involve learners in the evaluation process. The Action Learning Manual on Assessment contains more information and many different techniques to help evaluate the progress of a literacy class.



## Concluding Report

As a literacy worker, you are more than a facilitator when you use whole language activities in your lessons; you are also a researcher. First of all, as you listen for generative themes and help learners write about their experiences, you are collecting and organizing information about real life situations that has never been collected or organized before. Secondly, you are experimenting with a new approach to reading and writing that has never been tried in your particular situation. Your experiences (both the successful things and the things that didn't work) are of great interest to other literacy workers. We invite you to write a detailed report of the process you followed and the issues you faced as you tried out the whole language approach in your program. Writing about your experience can provide valuable insights for yourself and for others. Therefore we ask you to think and write about the points below:

1. Describe the learners and community you work with.
2. Describe the process of what you did.
3. What did work?
4. What did not work?
5. What ideas do you have for future learning plans?
6. What were the learners' reactions to the different whole language strategies?
7. What questions would you like to ask other literacy workers?

Write a report based on answers to these questions. Include copies of the reading materials you used and created in your literacy class. Share your report with your trainer or with your Action Learning Support Group. If you are working independently, you can send it to one of the Literacy Linkage Program offices listed in the foreword.

**Appendix: LESSON 3 FROM NAYA GORETO FACILITATOR GUIDEBOOK,  
NEPAL'S NATIONAL LITERACY PROGRAM (SEE P. 8)**

पानी

3

पानी

Materials Needed for This Class

1. Poster Calendar
2. Syllable Cards to make the Discovery Chart for Lesson Two

Today's Lesson Plan



Poster Discussion

1. Peer Teaching. Divide the class into small groups and ask each group to discuss the picture on page 5 of their books.

2. Reporting. Have each group select one member to come to the front of the class and use the large picture on the Poster Calendar to explain what his group understood from the picture.

3. Discussion. Ask the class to discuss the following questions:

- What is happening in this picture?
- What do you like or dislike about what is happening?
- Do we find these practices in our village?
- What might happen as a result of the things you see in this picture?
- Is there a better way to do these things?



Introduce the Keyword and the Discovery Chart

1. Introduce the Keyword. Use the Syllable Cards to make the keyword paanii. Have the participants repeat it after you.

2. Break up the Keyword. Separate the Syllable Cares paa and ni. Pronounce each syllable several times and have the participants repeat them after you.

प	पा	पी
न	ना	नी
क	का	की
म	मा	मी

Lesson Two Discovery Chart

3. Introduce the Discovery Chart. Use the Syllable Cards to make the Discovery Chart for Lesson Two. Explain how the addition of the i vowel sign changes the sound of the syllable. Pronounce each syllable several times.



### Play the Game Challenge

1. Divide the class into two equal halves. Call one half ka and the other half ma.
2. Pick a fast learner from each half - one that can read the Discovery Chart.
3. Ask these two to come to the front as team leaders. Give each team leader five minutes in turn to teach the syllables to his half of the class.
4. Ask one or two participants (whichever is needed to keep the two teams even) to come to the blackboard to keep score by tallying correct responses.
5. After both team leaders have had a chance to drill their teams the facilitator should mix up the Syllable Cards on the Discovery Chart.
6. The first team leader points to one of the Syllable Cards and "challenges" a member of the opposite team to read it correctly. If the answer is correct the participant at the blackboard tallies one point for that team. No point is given for an incorrect answer.
7. Now the other team leader points to a different Syllable Card and "challenges" a member of the opposite team to read it. Team leaders must challenge each and every member of the opposite team once.
8. If the facilitator feels the class needs more practice the game can be repeated.
9. At the end of the game the participant at the blackboard counts the tally marks and announces the winning team.



### Reading

1. Peer Teaching. Divide the class into small groups and ask the participants to assist one another to read the words and syllables on page 6.
2. Reporting. Have each group send one member to the front of the class and read the words and syllables on page 6. As the participant reads each word or syllable the rest of the class can repeat it out loud.
3. Discussion. Ask the participants to explain the meaning of the words or to use them in sentences.

पानी



प	पा	पो
न	ना	नो
क	का	को
म	मा	मो

पानी	पाना	पीना
पापी	पाप	पीप
कान	काना	कानी
कम	काम	कामी
मन	माना	मीना



## Annotated Bibliography

Freire, Paulo (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: The Continuum Publishing Corporation.

This is Freire's classic work on education for empowerment. He explains the concepts of banking versus problem-posing education, the attitude of the educator, the essence of dialogue and the concepts of generative themes and codes within the context of the critical underlying issues of oppression, liberation and cultural action.

Gilles, Carol et al. (1988). "Theory in Use" in *Whole Language Strategies For Secondary Students* ed. with an Introduction and theoretical chapter by Dorothy J. Watson. New York: Richard C. Owen Publishers, Inc. (Rockefeller Center, Box 819, New York, NY 10185) pp.1-190.

This book includes the following chapters which are relevant to adult literacy programs: Graphic Organizers, Content Area, Using Newspapers and Other Sources, An In-Depth Look at the Whole Language Curriculum, Questions and Answers about a Whole Language Curriculum, Computers and Whole Language Instruction.

Gillespie, Marilyn (1990). *Many Literacies: Modules For Training Adult Beginning Readers and Tutors*. UMASS: Center for International Education (285 Hills House South, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003, USA).

This is a collection of modules on Creating a Community of Learners, Developing a Learning Plan, Introducing Reading, Writing and Publishing. It was prepared in collaboration with the staff and learners at the Read/Write/Now Adult Learning Center in Springfield, Massachusetts, USA.

Goodman, Ken (1986). *What's Whole in Whole Language?: A Parent/Teacher Guide to Children's Learning*. NH: Heinemann Educational Books, Inc. (70 Court Street, Portsmouth, NH 03801, USA).

This 80 page book explains the basic principles of whole language. It was designed for parents and teachers of young children in the United States, but it includes basic information that can be adapted to other situations. Relevant topics include: language development, the whole language view, what makes whole language whole, and how to develop literacy the whole way.

Hope, Ann and Timmel, Sally (1984). *Training for Transformation*. Zimbabwe: Mambo Press.

This is a three volume set for community organizers as well as literacy educators. The first volume provides excellent information on investigating community themes, creating codes and developing literacy lessons within the larger context of community development activities.

Kelly, Janet (1991). "Whole Language - An Introduction" in *Adult Basic Education Language Arts Curriculum Kit - System for Adult Basic Education Support* (World Education,

210 Lincoln St., Boston, Massachusetts, USA).

This is a compilation of different approaches to teach language arts to adult learners. One section focuses on whole language. This section describes the whole language approach with an example of a group of women who set a goal to get their driver's licenses. It also includes descriptions of reading and writing instruction, assessment in whole language, classroom organization, reading materials to use with learners, and a list of learner-written publications.

Rigg, Pat (March 1990). "Whole Language in Adult English as a Second Language Program" in *ERIC/CLL News Bulletin, Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics*. (1118 22nd Street NW, Washington, DC 20037). Vol. 13, No. 2.

This four page article attempts to answer the question, "What is whole language?" It provides basic information on how this philosophy translates into practice. It also describes the Invergarry Learning Center of Vancouver, Canada which is modeled on the whole language philosophy and produces the learner-written magazine, VOICES.

Watson, Dorothy and Crowley, Paul (1988). "How Can We Implement a Whole-Language Approach?" in *Reading Process and Practice: from Socio-Linguistics to Whole Language* ed. by Constance Weaver. NH: Heinemann Educational Books, Inc. (70 Court Street, Portsmouth, NH 03801, USA). pp. 1-483.

This book deals with the reading process and practice in formal schools. The chapter on implementing a whole language approach discusses what can be found in a whole language program. There are also chapters on involving parents, evaluation, comparing the approach of basal readers and whole language, and so on.

The **Literacy Linkage Program** is a collaborative effort of the  
**Center for International Education**, School of Education, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA, U.S.A.  
and the **Research Center for Educational Innovation and Development**, Tribhuvan University, Nepal

