

OVERVIEW OF GRADES 1 TO 3

The expectations for Grades 1 to 3 focus on the foundational knowledge and skills that students need in order to establish a strong basis for language development. These include students' oral language, prior knowledge and experience, understanding of concepts about print, phonemic awareness, understanding of letter-sound relationships, vocabulary knowledge, semantic and syntactic awareness, higher-order thinking skills, and capacity for metacognition.

Most of what primary students know about language comes from listening and speaking with others, being read to by adults, and interacting with media texts such as advertisements, television programs, video games, songs, photographs, and films. The expectations for language build upon the prior knowledge and experience that students bring to Ontario classrooms from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Because this base of knowledge, experience, and skills varies from student to student, it is important for instruction to be differentiated to meet the needs of individuals and small groups of students.

Students listen and speak for different purposes, both formal and informal. They develop an understanding of appropriate listening and speaking behaviours and identify strategies they can use to understand what they hear and clearly communicate what they want to say. With support and direction from the teacher, primary students use oral language to talk about their learning as readers and writers and as viewers and producers of oral, print, and media texts. The expectations in oral communication provide a bridge to the interconnected knowledge, skills, and strategies that primary students will use to read, write, view, and represent. Real, purposeful talk is not only an essential component of the language curriculum; it needs to be threaded throughout every day and across the curriculum.

In all four strands, teachers explicitly teach and model the use of the knowledge, skills, and strategies most relevant to the particular strand. Explicit teaching and modelling help primary students to identify the skills and strategies they need in order to become proficient language users and move towards achievement of the expectations. Initially, students engage in rehearsal through shared and guided practice; eventually, they demonstrate independently their achievement of the learning expectations through multiple, diverse learning opportunities and activities.

Appropriate instructional texts are central to students' development of the knowledge, skills, and strategies embedded in the expectations across the language strands. Oral, print, and media texts that are designed to support and challenge students at their individual level of language development will enhance the benefits of appropriately scaffolded instruction. It is important to ensure that, in addition to the materials provided for

instruction, students are able to choose from a wide range of texts that are engaging and relevant to their personal interests as readers, writers, and viewers. All texts chosen for instruction should be worthy of study, and promote antidiscriminatory education.

Grade 1 students should have access to oral, print, and media texts with familiar topics and structures. Oral texts such as songs, poems, teacher read-alouds or simple readers' theatre, large- and small-group discussions, and one-on-one conversations; print texts such as environmental print, simple fiction and non-fiction, picture books, and books in their first language; and media texts such as a soundtrack for a story, posters or signs, photographs or collages, cartoons, movies, and television shows provide a variety of sources to motivate and engage diverse groups of students. To facilitate the development of early reading and writing behaviours and concepts, print texts for guided instruction and independent reading will initially need to have many high-frequency words, illustrations that provide direct support for meaning and word solving, and language structures that are simple and natural. Eventually, Grade 1 students will encounter texts of greater length with somewhat more challenging ideas and vocabulary, somewhat more literary language, and low to moderate support from the illustrations.

Modelled, shared, interactive, and guided learning experiences provide Grade 1 students with direction and support in producing oral, written, and media texts for a few different purposes. Through these experiences – and their growing familiarity with texts such as simple recounts, stories, procedures, and environmental print – they develop an understanding of the vocabulary and structure of a few oral text forms; of sound/symbol relationships, letter formation, and language structure; and of the communicative possibilities of images and sounds. Students also benefit from daily opportunities for independent practice in applying their speaking, writing, and media production knowledge and skills for personally meaningful purposes. Through these supported and independent experiences students learn to construct words and sentences and to combine words, images, and sounds to express personal thoughts and feelings and communicate ideas and information in a number of oral, written, and media forms.

Grade 2 students should have access to oral, print, and media texts that provide opportunities to extend their life experiences by exploring less familiar topics. Oral texts such as poems, teacher read-alouds on new topics, readers' theatre, presentations or talks by guest speakers, large- and small-group discussions, and one-on-one conversations; print texts such as stories, folk tales or fairy tales from other cultures, picture books, early chapter or series books, non-fiction books on topics of personal interest, nature or science magazines, and books from home; and media texts such as digital images, recorded music, soundtracks, television commercials, and films provide a variety of sources to motivate and engage diverse groups of students. Print texts for guided instruction and independent reading should include an expanded vocabulary, more difficult ideas and language structures, and illustrations that extend the text and support interpretation. Grade 2 students need to be able to sustain their interest in and make meaning from longer texts, such as longer picture books and chapter books that include chapter titles, a few illustrations, somewhat more sophisticated plots, and multiple characters and events.

Modelled, shared, interactive, and guided learning experiences provide Grade 2 students with direction and support in creating oral, written, and media texts. They also benefit from daily opportunities for independent practice in applying their speaking, writing, and media production skills for personally meaningful purposes and audiences. Grade 2 students

speak more confidently and fluently, and their expanded oral vocabulary helps them choose effective words for their written and media texts. Their developing ability to use familiar spelling patterns and combine or sequence sentences helps them refine their ability to write words, sentences, and simple paragraphs. Their experience with a broader range of texts – such as friendly letters, stories, factual recounts, folk tales, directions, posters, plays, films, and television shows – enables them to use a greater variety of forms to express thoughts and feelings and communicate ideas and information.

Grade 3 students should have access to oral, print, and media texts that require more background knowledge, that allow them to explore new ideas and information and more complex and technical topics, and that may require more interpretation and inference. Oral texts such as plays, presentations, large- and small-group discussions, peer conferences, and oral story telling; print texts such as adventure stories, chapter books, fables, instructions, letters, and longer picture books; and media texts such as magazines, video clips, comic strips, maps, storyboards, and photographs provide a variety of sources to motivate and engage diverse groups of students. Appropriate print texts for guided instruction and independent reading would include vocabulary that is specific to content; more symbolic or abstract themes; complex sentences with many multisyllabic and technical words; and a variety of organizational features such as tables of contents, glossaries, indexes, diagrams, and chapter titles. Grade 3 readers will need to develop the ability to retain and recall information to support comprehension of the text over several days.

Modelled, shared, and guided learning experiences and daily opportunities for independent practice provide Grade 3 students with the scaffolding they need to develop independence in creating oral, written, and media texts. Grade 3 students use their speaking skills to communicate increasingly complex ideas and information in both formal and informal contexts. As writers, they understand the stages of the writing process and use this process independently to produce finished pieces of writing. With help from peer and teacher conferences, they practise generating ideas; composing draft texts; and revising, editing, and publishing their writing. Students' experiences with a broad range of oral, print, and media texts – such as oral reports, personal and factual recounts, descriptive and explanatory paragraphs, a letter expressing a personal opinion, familiar stories or fables seen from a new perspective, a script for a play, or a brochure – enable them to select appropriate forms and extend their ability to express thoughts and feelings and communicate ideas and information fluently and effectively for purposes they see as meaningful.