

OVERVIEW OF GRADES 7 AND 8

The expectations for Grades 7 and 8 focus on the consolidation of students' language knowledge, skills, and strategies and their ability to use them independently and effectively to understand, reflect on, apply, and communicate information and ideas, and for continued learning in school and in a multicultural, multimedia world.

During the primary and junior years, students have acquired essential knowledge about language. In addition to the rich diversity of language knowledge from home and community that they bring to the classroom, they have a range of skills and strategies they can use to analyse, evaluate, and create increasingly complex oral, print, and media texts. They have also developed the ability to reflect on, monitor, and take steps to improve their language knowledge and skills in all strands. The expectations for Grades 7 and 8 build upon this foundation. Intermediate students consolidate and apply their language knowledge, skills, and strategies across the curriculum in order to learn in all subject areas as the content becomes increasingly challenging.

Because the base of language knowledge, skills, and strategies continues to vary from student to student, it is important for instruction to be differentiated to meet the needs of individuals and small groups of students, including students in need of additional time or support to acquire foundational language knowledge and skills.

The language curriculum for Grades 7 and 8 is designed to engage students in tasks that they see as meaningful in order to motivate them to analyse, evaluate, and create texts out of *interest* as well as to meet curriculum expectations. The expectations encourage students to explore issues related to personal identity and community concerns as they interact with increasingly complex and/or challenging texts; to critically analyse and evaluate perspectives in texts and the influence of media on their lives; and to write about and discuss topics of relevance that matter in their daily lives. The expectations also promote the use of language knowledge, skills, and strategies to facilitate learning in other subjects, such as science, mathematics, history, and geography, and as a tool to help students understand and participate in society beyond the school.

Teachers in the intermediate division explicitly teach and model the use of language knowledge, skills, and strategies across all subject areas. 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. Explicit teaching and modelling help students to identify the skills and strategies they need in order to become proficient language users in a variety of contexts and to move towards achievement of the expectations. While

students in the intermediate division continue to engage in rehearsal through shared and guided practice, the goal of instruction is to move them to a greater level of independence as language users. Students require multiple, diverse opportunities to practise independently and demonstrate their achievement of the learning expectations.

Appropriate instructional texts are central to students' development of the language knowledge, skills, and strategies embedded in the expectations across all 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 have access to a wide range of texts that are engaging and relevant to their personal experiences and interests as readers, writers, and viewers. All texts chosen for instruction should be worthy of study, and promote antidiscriminatory education.

The level of challenge represented by a specific text will vary from reader to reader because individual students bring their own unique experiences, perspectives, and backgrounds to a text. It is important, therefore, for intermediate students to have access to a range of texts that vary in length and form and that include a variety of types of themes, plots, ideas and information, organizational patterns, and features of text. The range of texts should be sufficiently wide that readers at all levels will need to use a variety of strategies to understand and analyse vocabulary, plot, or theme.

All students, especially young adolescents, need to see themselves in the texts they encounter. They need to be able to choose independently to read, listen to, or interact with texts that have personal relevance in their day-to-day lives, including texts that deal with issues related to fairness, equity, and social justice. Intermediate students should have access to a broad range of relevant texts: oral texts such as speeches, debates, presentations, radio advertisements or dramas, song lyrics, raps, and sound bites; print texts such as memoirs, autobiographies, historical fiction, science fiction, realistic fiction, satire, essays, reviews, editorials, letters to the editor, and books in their own first language; and media texts such as magazines, online zines, websites, blogs, public-service announcements, comedy shows, video games, and newspapers.

As writers/producers of oral, print, and media texts, intermediate students use their language knowledge, skills, and strategies as tools for finding information, exploring ideas, expressing opinions, and taking positions across the curriculum. They apply their knowledge of different text forms – such as debates, speeches, persuasive letters, memoirs, realistic fiction, magazine articles, letters to the editor, maps, scripts, surveys, or graphs – in a wide range of learning contexts. While modelled, shared, and guided learning experiences continue to provide instructional support for intermediate students as they consolidate their essential skills and processes, the focus of instruction is on helping them develop the ability to independently choose and use appropriate forms, structures, vocabulary, conventions, and stylistic elements to communicate ideas and information effectively for diverse purposes and audiences.