

OVERVIEW OF GRADES 4 TO 6

The expectations for Grades 4 to 6 focus on students' ability to use their knowledge and skills in listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and representing to understand, critically analyse, and communicate a broad range of information and ideas from and about their multicultural, multimedia environment.

Junior students' language knowledge comes from their life experiences and prior knowledge and from the foundational language knowledge and skills acquired in the primary school years. The expectations in the junior years build upon this foundation. Because the 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.

Language instruction in the junior years is designed to engage students in meaningful interactions with a wide variety of texts. They look beyond the literal meaning of texts and observe what is present and what is missing, in order to analyse and evaluate an author's intent. Junior students learn to identify and explore multiple perspectives, question the messages in texts, and look at issues related to fairness, equity, and social justice. They analyse the structure and elements of a variety of text forms, and create a variety of oral, print, and media texts in order to communicate their own ideas and opinions for a variety of purposes and audiences. Junior students develop their abilities to monitor their own learning and select appropriate strategies that will help them to make sense of and create increasingly complex and/or challenging texts for personally relevant purposes. They consciously use the knowledge, skills, and strategies from one strand to support their learning in the other three strands. They reflect on and talk about the strategies that have helped them construct meaning and communicate successfully in all strands and identify steps they can take to improve. 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 to promote the transfer of language knowledge, skills, and strategies to learning 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 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, guided, and independent 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 experiences and interests as readers, writers, and viewers. All texts chosen for instruction should be worthy of study, and promote antidiscriminatory education.

Junior students should have access to culturally diverse oral, print, and media texts that allow them to explore more complex topics or issues related to fairness, equity, and social justice, more subtle or abstract themes, and particular genres; that use a variety of organizational patterns and features; and that require inference and analysis. Oral texts such as dramatic presentations, oral reports, think-alouds, commentaries, poetry readings, speeches, monologues, and song lyrics; print texts such as short stories, series books, biographies, chapter books, non-fiction books, sports magazines, graphic novels, diaries, poetry, myths, and legends; and media texts such as movie trailers, graphic designs for various products, newspaper or magazine articles, video games, comic books, flyers, posters, websites, and e-mails provide a variety of sources to motivate and engage diverse groups of students.

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. To facilitate junior students’ ability to use the appropriate skills and strategies to construct meaning from and analyse increasingly complex and/or challenging texts, print texts for shared or guided instruction and independent reading should have a range of levels of difficulty with respect to organizational patterns, language structures, themes, vocabulary, and length; and a range of features such as hooks for interest, dialogue, illustrations, book or chapter leads, and tables of contents.

Modelled, shared, and guided learning experiences provide the instructional support junior students need to communicate increasingly complex ideas and information using a greater variety of oral, written, and media forms. Students’ knowledge of many different text forms – including personal recounts, reports, formal and persuasive letters, summaries, explanations, reviews, fables, legends, fantasies, brochures, advertisements, and websites – enable them to select and use appropriate forms, language patterns, words, conventions, and stylistic elements to communicate effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences.