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Writing to Reading
the Steiner Waldorf Way
Foundations of Creative Literacy in Classes 1 and 2

Abi Allanson
Nicky Teensma

Hawthorn Press

Dedication

To my grandmother, Gwladys Junor, and my mother, Viki Junor – both of them brilliant, heartfelt English teachers. Abi

To all the children who have inspired me to develop more poems, songs, activities and games. Nicky

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I would like to express my thanks to the many people who have shown support for this project and lent their help for me to write, over its long gestation. In particular, I acknowledge my grandmother for the first £500 she gave me for childcare. She would have approved. I also thank my family – Phil, Isaac, Aaron and Seth – for getting out of the way sometimes and cheering me on always.
Abi Allanson

I would like to thank my family who have, on so many occasions, patiently accepted that my attention was with lesson preparations, my pupils and all those extra tasks we will go the extra mile for as class teachers. I can't express enough how much your support has meant to me.
Nicky Teensma

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Foreword

Alongside historical upheaval and calamity, the twentieth century was in many respects also the era of the reading wars. As became evident to leading personnel during military conscription in the First World War, despite the existence of universal education at least at a primary-school level in the West, many adults were functionally illiterate. The rapid technological expansion during and after the Second World War – including the space race, the cognitive revolution, and the shift in Western economies from production-based to service-based activities (including research and development) – has further heightened the need for a well-educated workforce.

However, economic reasons alone are never the sole driving force for cultural development. Just as in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the reformation brought about the teaching of reading to the peasant masses in Central Europe – so that each could read the Bible in his or her own language, independently of the authority of the Church – social reasons are also a factor in the modern emphasis on developing adequate literacy skills. It is no longer acceptable to leave un-aided those struggling with reading. Each and every citizen should have access to this emancipatory skill to allow the cultivation of true independence at both a practical (obtaining a driver's licence, reading medicine labels) and an intellectual-spiritual level (to inform and form one's own thoughts). Given the societal, military and economic forces and interests at heart, it is of little wonder that reading's role in education was a source of further conflict.

Two issues have dominated the debate around reading – the first of which considers when this should be taught, and the second focusing on how this should be 'instructed'. The argument around timing is actually quite an old one: in his treatise *Émile ou de l'éducation*, Rousseau argued that reading represented an adult activity that was tiresome for children, such that it was better left for late childhood. In the 1920s and 1930s two empirical investigations led to conflicting conclusions – namely, that children under the age of six were not cognitively ready to learn to read, whereas a second concluded that children could learn to read, provided that the materials were sufficiently tailored so as to be developmentally appropriate. For many even today, if either of these poles are not the default position, they might instead hold a stronger belief yet, namely that children must learn to read early (i.e. in preschool), lest their educational development suffer long-term disadvantage.

As with many questions, Rudolf Steiner – the founder of Steiner-Waldorf education – held a view that went above and beyond conventional ideas. He maintained that learning to read later need not negatively influence later achievement: in fact, if it were replaced with appropriate pedagogical

activity, delaying reading could have long-term benefits, and early reading might even be harmful. To the modern mind, such a conclusion might seem absurd – and as a result, it has constituted one point on which Steiner-Waldorf education has repeatedly been attacked. It therefore bears closer consideration.

In empirical studies, we have looked at the reading development of children who by virtue of attending Steiner-Waldorf schools began learning to read around age seven in comparison to those who started on their fifth birthday or sooner. Findings indicated that the Steiner-Waldorf children were indeed initially well-delayed on early reading skills. However, at around age eight or nine their reading skills began to show a strong burst in development, such that by age nine, ten or eleven (depending on the individual children) they had caught up to their regular school peers. In other words, *they had gained in two to three years what their regular school peers did in four to five years.* In additional work, I was able to show empirically, using data from international reading studies (i.e. PISA), that countries with earlier school entry do not have better reading skills.

All in all, then, Steiner's first idea that delaying reading until around age seven will not lead to long-term disadvantages appears to be empirically supported – certainly as long as care is taken to provide the children with a rich preschool environment. In the current work, the current authors allude in many places to the kind of foundations that underpin the approach to writing and reading advocated here. They encourage teachers to draw upon the aesthetic, social, sensori-motor, language and attention skills that children have. Each of these, in turn, could and should be gently nurtured in a preparatory way in preschool settings.

Turning to arguments around content of reading interventions, scientists, educators and politicians have argued – at times vehemently – over the best approach for early reading instruction. The one position, loosely termed phonics, advocates for the systematic teaching of children to identify the phonemes present in words (i.e. that the word 'cat' comprises the sounds /c/ /a/ /t/) and to pair these with their corresponding letters. The other whole-language position argues that this is overly reductionist, and that because of the irregular nature of English orthography, knowledge of letter–sound combinations is confusing and superfluous. Instead, children need to learn to automatically recognise words, using contextual cues and information. Although it sounds strange, the debate between these two positions has indeed been so impassioned and absolute, that this has been termed 'the reading wars'.

A third, lesser-known position is that reading is best learned through writing. Such approaches advocate the acquisition of reading through a manual activity, whereby letter–sound correspondences are learned through noticing links between written symbols and sounds.

Again, the authors of the current book show just how non-dogmatic and well-rounded Steiner-Waldorf education can be, when the starting point is taken from the child itself, as opposed to an abstract theory. This book is built on many wise examples garnered out of practical experience with real children, representing what arises out of a synthesis of these three methods (i.e. phonics, whole-language and reading-through-writing) coupled with a holistic view of the human being as found in the Steiner-Waldorf approach.

Children are first gently eased out of early childhood through a language– and pictorially rich method that introduces them to the archetypal, then graphical forms of the letters. These graphical forms take on the shape and function of letters, out of which words are formed. At the same time, these letters are allowed to remain in context and hence more holistically experienced by the children, because these are actively embedded in and presented through song, rhyme and story. The authors recognise English's difficult orthography, and the need for children to be able to recognise frequently occurring words automatically, and hence advocate teaching automated sight-word reading of commonly occurring words.

Care and detail are also paid to the cognitive and motor-skill foundations of reading and writing. Expressed in terms of cognitive psychology, the mental representation of a concept is richer if it is anchored in sensory experience in multiple domains. With the approach outlined in the current work, children have the opportunity to experience the written and spoken forms of the language in aesthetically pleasing forms, through many senses – the auditory, visual, tactile, kinaesthetic, proprioceptive, and even vestibular. The individual strengths of children are thereby used to advantage while weaknesses are gently supported, resulting in a rich and multi-faceted approach to teaching reading, centred around knowledge of the child and an ability to observe clearly and in detail.

Accordingly, the current work promises to be useful not only for teachers seeking to guide children into the world of literacy, but it also provides a long-overdue and unique resource detailing the holistic Steiner-Waldorf approach that has hitherto been unjustly neglected in scholarly and lay discussions.

Sebastian Suggate, Ph.D.
University of Regensburg, Germany
Regensburg, Germany, Autumn 2016

Preface

Sharing our Teaching

One of the great privileges that I have been fortunate enough to enjoy over the last 40 years has come through visiting many schools and classrooms. I could probably say that most of what I know is based upon years of watching teaching as well as sharing my own teaching. This focus on the tricky business of teaching and learning has been a constant delight. Often it is a mystery, sometimes a frustration, especially when we try to unravel the creative act of teaching.

Reading this book is a joyful invitation into the classrooms of Abu Allanson and Nicky Teensma.

This is a wonderful read, taking us deep in to the practice of two talented and thoughtful teachers. Great teaching is an art. Sometimes, we hardly know what it was that we did that brought about an effect in the classroom. We know what we think we did but do we really know what actually happened? Describing that clearly to others, so that they might use our teaching as a springboard, is even more of a challenge.

I know that in my own early teaching, I used to love marking! I have thought about this for many years because I meet lots of teachers who hate marking. I saw teaching as a creative act. I brought my imagination to the occasion, crafting lessons and sequences that might help children write creatively. As I taught, I thought on my feet. I tired to weave atmospheres that might set up the space for a little bit of magic as children wrote creatively. I tried to be the spark that lit the fire.

So what the children wrote was a result of the chemistry between teacher and learner. Their writing was an extension of my teaching. So it was that I came to the marking with curiosity to see what they had made of the sessions, ready to be surprised and delighted. Many, many times I have tried to write or talk about that breathless sense of excitement, trying to make the complex simple without losing the richness, challenge and depth of teaching. It is not easy to explain such things but we should try to share the gift of our teaching so that we can all broaden our repertoire of what might be possible in the classroom.

The authors' deep thinking and sharing is an act of such generosity, laced with so much classroom wisdom. They will have given much time to discussing teaching and describing learning to achieve such clarity so that we can learn from their years of reflection. Indeed, reading this book made me want to get back into the classroom and there can be no higher praise for a book about teaching.

This book will be a catalyst for many teachers, in all types of schools, prompting us to challenge the status quo and bring into harmony our work on early literacy enhanced through movement, song, rhyme and art. Indeed, the richness of the programme puts to shame the meager attempts by governments to prescribe the education of small children, too often reducing early literacy to a withered curriculum that lacks heart or sense.

Here we find the voice of authentic teachers speaking to us through their unpicking of what has worked well for them. The book provides us with a radical and responsible view of teaching early literacy that confronts the mainstream view about how we should teach reading. The key challenge to current orthodoxy is the idea that children should be taught to write before they read, placing primary importance on the need to actively create rather than passively receive. This sits alongside the significance of valuing the child's 'voice'. There is a strong focus on the need to start from the 'whole' of speaking and listening so that the analytic parts of phonics and letters enjoys a rich and meaningful context.

Central too to the work of these teachers is the role of story. Literacy is taught as an art that is about both technique and feeling. I had such a vision many years ago. What would happen if we could take a school and every year children became intimate with a bank of stories that took them on a journey from the naughtiness of the Gingerbread Man to the might of Beowulf and the great, rolling adventures of the Odyssey? Steiner schools are founded on a respect for the potency of story. This is complemented by giving space to the role of song and rhyme so that children tune to the rhythms and language patterns that lie at the heart of so many cultures. Choral speaking and learning to listen provide opportunities to develop not just listening, but also a love of language, the comfort of rhythm and the confidence that comes with community.

Time is given to the importance of growing the imagination. We process the world through our imagination but it is also is developed through fruitful play as well as the story worlds that the teachers create by both telling and reading. Regular work on visualization helps to build the inner world and can be practised though visualization games. Teaching children to observe their experiences more closely and more carefully is a precursor to being able to see more vividly inside our heads. Looking outside helps you to look inside. In this way, moments in stories can be slowed down and children learn how to observe more closely what they see in their minds, searching for the details and building pictures.

The authors also recognize that our teaching should fit the rhythms of the day as well as thinking about how learning should be phased over time. Attention is given to the importance of movement, balance and spatial awareness all of which have an influence upon early literacy and well-being. Infant classrooms should be places where story is central; where children sing and chant action rhymes; where they dance and move with purpose.

They are not afraid to address the thorny issue of play and its role in education. Active and collaborative learning is central so that children develop '*initiative, stamina and a confidence for inquiry*'. Play can be the '*staple diet for educating and engaging children's will*'. Steiner believed that play should not just be there to entertain or become '*mere playing about*'. It should educate. When our teaching is right then almost all primary school learning is a form of play. It might be a form of

serious play but great literacy, and writing in particular, requires total engagement where we tussle with words and ideas with intent and joy.

Having devoted a lifetime to the importance of creativity in education, I whooped aloud when I read an early passage which points to the importance of children's early authorship, that notices and celebrates a child's own voice. They move on to make the telling point that such children will be less likely to '*over-lay these jewels with the habits of self-doubt or self-censorship, two characteristics that frequently cripple creativity and original thought in more mature writers*' (page 30).

Fear is the enemy of creativity. In mainstream primary education in England children write with checklists of grammatical features to include, robbing them of the opportunity to think for themselves. Indeed, most young children write by numbers learning that their own ideas are not what the teacher requires. Education is becoming so criteria bound that those who succeed are those who can fulfill the criteria. Free-thinking, curiosity, questioning and creativity have less space than ever before. No wonder our businesses and universities despair at young people who know how to do what they are told but lack confidence in themselves and find independent learning and thinking a challenge. There is such wisdom in the simple words, '*a classroom quickly turns sterile if the teacher is the only one with answers*' (page 23).

This is a book not just for those working in Steiner schools. It offers a richer view of what it means to develop literacy with young children. It is a little gem glittering in the dark night of current educational thinking about early education.

Let's all work hard to share our teaching with a similar generosity. We do not have to always agree but we can think, learn and grow together. Ultimately, this book is about whom we are as human beings; how we cherish the human spirit in ourselves and within those we are fortunate enough to teach.

Pie Corbett, creator of *Talk for Writing* (see page 346), teacher, author and poet.

Introduction

> It would be a good idea if Waldorf teachers would work on creating decent textbooks that reflect our pedagogical principles.[1]

This book is intended to provide a rationale and practical pathway for teaching and working with foundation literacy skills in Steiner Waldorf schools where English is the first language. The material in this book provides a clear route through Classes 1 and 2, offering guidance and inspiration to Waldorf class teachers. Most new teachers have not previously studied linguistics, and it can be deceptively complex to understand the structure of one's own mother tongue. In addition to knowing one's subject – in this case literacy in English – an effective teacher needs to know their pupils. Most novices will need some experience before they can knit together their training on child development, the temperaments, learning strengths and difficulties with the reality of the live children they actually encounter in the classroom.

We hope that the framework set out in this book will enhance the essential principles of Waldorf education to help those teachers who are in the early stages of becoming expert and adept. With class teachers following the steps in this book, with some discipline and repetition, our goal is that, through the stages of mastery, they will paradoxically become creatively freer as they come to understand more deeply the craft of literacy teaching. We would like to share our work in order to encourage teachers to form a conversation with the book, and to develop their own exercises. After all, what works for one class does not always work for another, and the poems, stories, songs and exercises teachers develop themselves are often the ones that give most joy and success in their classes.

In addition, we sincerely hope that the suggestions herein will help teachers navigate around common pitfalls on the learning journey. It is quite easy to teach English literacy badly and to inadvertently leave students behind. Our aim is to help all teachers develop confidence and increase creativity in their work so that they can teach effectively, whilst successfully including all children in their classes, even those who have learning differences.

Rudolf Steiner gave inspiring indications about how to introduce the letters in Class 1, and many stories and poems have been written by teachers over the years to help us make this first introduction

1 Rudolf Steiner, p. 440 (Steiner, 1998).

to writing a wonderful experience for Class 1 children. But what do we do with those letters once they have been introduced? How do we practise the skills the children need to become confident writers and readers? And how can we do it in such a way that it is a joyful experience for the children – an experience that they will love, and that does not detract from the wholeness of imagination, reverence and well-being that we like to foster in the lower classes of our schools? In this book, we hope to set out a pathway that blends the best techniques of teaching from the Waldorf traditions with effective and efficient tools used by teachers everywhere to reach all the children in a class.

Finally, we have a fundamental aim regarding levels of achievement. Rudolf Steiner says,

> It would be good to try to get the children to learn to write themselves. In our opinion, between the eighth and ninth year they even ought to be able to write after a fashion... we should have brought them to the ordinary primary level by then.[2]

In our interpretation, this means that all children in a class ought to be measurably at a peer-equivalent level with those in the mainstream education system somewhere in Class 2 or 3. While later chapters will set this out in greater detail, we aim for the majority of children in any given class to reach an age-appropriate[3] level of independence and facility in writing, reading, listening and speaking by the end of Class 3. With the methods set out here, and in further volumes, we suggest that this outcome can be achieved or exceeded.

Structure of the Book

The first, Part 1 of this book sets out some core principles of good practice in Steiner education. These include foundation ideas about teaching that are both generally applicable and also essential for literacy teaching. These include teaching with authority, image-building, learning styles, multi-sensory methods, active learning, whole-class and group work. In Chapter 2, we describe specific principles for the teaching of literacy. This includes an analysis of Steiner's suggestion to teach writing before reading and the fundamental importance of facilitating a child's written 'voice'. A technical overview of English language structure is also given, with a summary of the role of story-telling, poetry, phonics, whole-word, visual and auditory learning. These principles will inform and underpin the practical methods which follow.

In Part 2, we begin with some background information about children in transit from the Kindergarten phase into the classroom environment. We set out what needs a teacher must expect to meet and how to prepare the way for effective literacy teaching. We describe practical ways for engaging with and addressing weakness in physical co-ordination and movement; form drawing and desk skills; speaking and listening; visual processing, memory and other social aspects of learning.

2 Steiner, *Faculty Meetings with Rudolf Steiner* 1922-1924, 1998, p. 439, 28/10/22.

3 Standards for what and when to test change according to current educational mores. Steiner schools will need to practise discernment and exercise their own judgements about the best way to demonstrate such information for comparison. We give some information about our experience of assessment throughout the book.

In Part 3, the reader will find substantial lesson content for working with sounds and symbols. This includes a variety of traditional and mainstream methods for letter introduction and developing phonemic and graphemic awareness. Suggested lesson content and real examples are given to show how to teach word craft, common word recognition and authorship. Throughout, box inserts include reminders, signposts for navigation and summaries.

In Part 4, there is an outline of good assessment techniques for checking progress, with the results also being helpful for the diagnosis of learning differences. We suggest ways for differentiating work so that all children are engaged and are learning at an appropriate level. We give further examples of practice work and extension tools.

In Part 5, we describe how to start the curriculum for Class 2, revising and consolidating after the summer holidays. We include physical exercises and Form Drawing to set the groundwork for learning. Part 6 then describes the teaching of cursive writing, more formal spelling instruction, extended authorship including elementary sentence structure and reading practice. Again, this includes assessment tools, differentiation suggestions and guidance for achievement at this age.

In Part 7, the reader will find a discussion of reading, and the teaching of reading. We explain how you back up your writing instruction with reading practice, supporting gradual independence for children at school and at home. Included here is guidance on how to communicate with parents about this and other issues around learning difficulties or delay.

In the book's many appendices, the reader will find resource lists of words, poems, games and additional references. We also provide example year, main lesson, subject and week plans showing how to pace your instruction. These are for your adaptation, and some of these include real-life notes showing how they were altered or annotated during one class year.

Note, finally, that in-text footnotes are numbered by part throughout.

PART 1

Theory and Best Practice

Chapter 1

Principles of Steiner Waldorf Education

In this chapter, we introduce some fundamentals of best practice in teaching, using familiar Steiner-Waldorf principles as well as widely used mainstream approaches. These include:

- Teaching with loving authority
- The use of imagery and rhythm in lesson design and implementation
- Understanding varied learning styles
- Active and independent learning

In this chapter, we briefly describe a few fundamentals of good practice that we believe will support all class teaching. All the examples of lesson material in this book draw upon these principles. Some of these principles are well-known, are more extensively explained elsewhere, and form part of the Waldorf paradigm.[1] Some are a blend of ideas taken from other settings.

The theory that Rudolf Steiner presented is practical because it helps us recognise and interpret classroom behaviours and respond in our teaching accordingly. Steiner Waldorf professionals use terms such as 'teaching with authority' or 'teaching with an image' as a kind of short-hand, useful for communicating and sharing with colleagues. However, this short-hand can become a 'jargon' that masks the nuances of Steiner's accounts, not to mention the particular time and place in which he worked. We fear that on occasion, classroom practice may be developed according to a thin interpretation of the concept and is therefore weakened. Whilst we absolutely defend the benefit of studying Steiner's works and of wrestling to understand them anew, we also present other teaching concepts here for their augmentation. This is not because a newer parlance of teaching is necessarily more robust – although we consider them qualitatively strong – but because they are

1 We hope it goes without saying that our description of these principles is only our own interpretation of the exceptionally detailed and subtle accounts that Steiner gave.

easily communicable. Many modern educationalists are striving to support creative, effective and enjoyable teaching and learning in a very sympathetic way. Teachers ought to understand what they are doing! We suggest that holding the old and new theories in a healthy tension is probably good for creative teaching, and we argue for pragmatically working with both.

Teaching with Authority

In Steiner schools, although there is a substantial traditional curriculum to follow, each class teacher is free to organise and colour the lesson content according to their own judgement. They will do so according to the characteristics and needs of the children and their personal specific skills or interests. Steiner described the art of 'loving authority' as being the hallmark of the teaching relationship in the class years.[2,3] Benevolent leadership is onerous, requiring excellent judgement and conferring formidable responsibility. It's attractive, however, because there is also an awesome freedom and creative potential in the work.

Teachers' confidence to do so stems from knowledge of three things. First, they will have a good understanding of their subject. This book is primarily an aid to supporting the class teacher's understanding of the subject of literacy teaching. Secondly, they will have a strong understanding of the full range of students as learners before them. The final requirement for confident teaching with authority is an openness to self-reflection and self-development. If a teacher has self-knowledge and some practice at how to change their own habits and behaviours, they will be able to meet the unknown and the unpredictable without fear. Such qualities will enable the teacher to organise the time and space well, and provide healthy boundaries of learning and behaviour. The result of such qualities will be a peaceful classroom of trust, with a positive attitude to learning.

The classroom is created primarily for the benefit of the ***students***, even though the journey of the class teacher can be extremely rewarding. So why are the children there? They are there to learn about and develop their own relationship to two things: themselves and the world around them.[4] All education occurs in the dynamic of relationship between members of a learning community. The crucible is the classroom. In the next chapter, we will describe how the teacher–student relationship of 'loving authority' best functions to enable the student to know themselves and the world through the written word, to ***become*** literate.

Imagery and Rhythm

If the relationship between the teacher and child is vital for effective learning, so too is the form and timing with which the information is presented. How do we make it easier for teaching and learning to occur? By working with the grain of the natural development of the child.

2 Steiner, ***The Education of the Child in the Light of Spiritual Science***, Berlin 10 January 1907 (1996) p. 24.
3 Steiner, Education in the Light of Spiritual Science, Koln, 1 December 1906 (1996), p. 58.
4 Robinson, 2013.

'I like it when you tell a story. It makes me feel like a giant!' This was a comment made by one of the students during the first term in Class 3. He was perhaps experiencing a feeling of expansion, of relaxation, of 'breathing out' that comes when a good story is told. He was one of those students who struggled with dyslexic-type difficulties. Since much of his school work requires intense labour, perhaps this is why he felt the different quality of the story and was able to express this feeling so eloquently.

What is it about a story? Again, much has been written elsewhere about the great pedagogical benefits of story-telling and dramatisation.[5] According to Steiner's views on child development, the child between the ages of 7 and 14 experiences the world primarily through theirfeelings.[6] That is to say that their emotional connection and personal response to the world have their most dominant influence during this phase. If they care about it, it will be noticed and 'taken in'. Steiner suggests that a direct way to pass on knowledge and encourage understanding is to teach using an image. In particular, he suggests (verbally) carefully describing images so that they are seen in the mind's eye or conjured in the imagination, prior to actually giving a physical picture for the eyes to see.[7] In other words, perhaps paradoxically, he suggests that it is optimal to use the child's auditory sense to listen to words that stimulate an inward, personal, visual sense. He claims that such teaching best reaches the child's heart, their sense of emotional connection. So when we teach, particularly in the earlier class years (up to the age of 11, for example), we must try to use a medium through which the child optimally relates to the world: vivid, personal pictures and images. Thus, stories are the ideal diet. A great deal of information can be conveyed in this way such that the child can 'own' it effortlessly.

> ...everything that one brings to a child at this age must be given in the form of fairy tales, legends, and stories in which everything is endowed with feeling.[8]
>
> The etheric body will unfold its forces if a well-ordered imagination is allowed to take guidance from the inner meaning it discovers for itself in pictures and allegories... with the mind's eye.[9]

Alongside these comments, Steiner made suggestions about the pacing of teaching. Human beings of all ages learn best when there are periods of concentration and effort, and some phases of relaxation. Steiner specifically gave us to understand that this is because of the way memory works. How do we teach and learn most effectively over time?

Steiner said that emotional engagement with the world, which is most important for learning during this age-range, takes two forms: a sympathetic or an antipathetic response. That is to say, a child will feel drawn to or repelled by something. Both types of response result in learning. Steiner

5 Daniel, 2011; Hollingsworth & Ramsden, 2013; Perrow, 2012.
6 Steiner says that this phase is when the child's etheric body can be developed and worked with through external education. He gives many details in foundation lectures such as 'The Education of the Child in the Light of Spiritual Science', Berlin, 10 January 1907 (publ. 1996), pp. 23–26.
7 See Lecture 4 (Steiner, ***The Kingdom of Childhood***, Torquay 12–20 August 1924 (publ. 1995).
8 Steiner, ***The Kingdom of Childhood***, Torquay, 12–20 August 1924 (publ. 1995) p. 31.
9 Steiner, 'The Education of the Child in the Light of Spiritual Science', Berlin, 10 January 1907 (publ. 1996) p. 23.

says that this emotional reality is akin to the physiological mechanism of breathing – we must breathe in and breathe out, receive and express, and so on. Our educational process, therefore, best operates according to these natural laws. Learning new academic skills demands concentration, but allowing them to sink into our long-term memory requires relaxation.[10] A series of activities that require concentration and relaxation, antipathy and sympathy, breathing in and breathing out, make for a healthy school experience. Such a learning experience appeals to children: 'Children now have a strong desire to experience the emerging life of soul and spirit on waves of rhythm and beat within the body – quite subconsciously, of course.'[11]

Steiner extended this principle as far as practically possible to underpin the design of main lesson practice and the school day. Designing learning around phases of the day, the week and blocks of several weeks pays off as an economical method for encouraging absorption of information and integrated understanding. Such an ecological approach has been noticed and documented by other educational thinkers.[12] Later in the book, we will describe ways for rhythmically bringing new ideas and concepts to a class especially to enhance the prospects of improved recall and remembering.

Learning Styles

While there is not the scope in this book to give a full account of learning preferences and difficulties that a class teacher may encounter in their classroom, here we set out a brief guide. We encourage readers to make every effort to learn more about this topic through experience, professional development and study. References are included in the bibliography to support this. Steiner addressed this issue – of the variability among children – through several key concepts, and we mention just two of these here. Perhaps simplest and most user-friendly for the class teacher is the idea of the four temperaments.[13] Children can be characterised as having dominant physical and personality temperament types, and Steiner gave examples of how the teacher may best address each of the four predominant child temperaments. Another way to consider meeting the child is to think about the three-fold faculties of the human being: thinking, feeling and willing.[14] We may plan our teaching so it can address each aspect appropriately. Other commentators have described this in far greater detail than we are currently able to do.[15]

In terms of addressing learning difficulties and classroom pitfalls, we think it is helpful to consider the three media of auditory, visual and kinaesthetic processing. All mainstream curricula now incorporate the requirement to teach in a multi-sensory way. This means that the same concept is brought using, at the least, auditory, visual and kinaesthetic means. The theory is that

10 This is described as learning being absorbed by the developing etheric forces. See Steiner, ***Soul Economy: Body, Soul and Spirit in Waldorf Education***, Dornach, 23 December 1921 – 5 January 1922 (publ. 2003) for a full description.
11 Steiner, ***Soul Economy: Body, Soul and Spirit in Waldorf Education***, Dornach, 23 December 1921 – 5 January 1922 (publ. 2003), p. 136.
12 Claxton, 1998.
13 Steiner, ***Discussions with Teachers***, Stuttgart, 21 August – 6 September 1919 (1997), pp. 13–21.
14 Steiner, 'The Education of the Child in the Light of Spiritual Science', Berlin, 10 January 1907 (1996), pp. 33–35.
15 For example, see Rawson & Avison, 2013, Petrash, 2003 and Finser, 1994.

in this way, all the children will be able to access it. Another current way to understand learning is to try to design teaching that suits both the left and right brain for specific tasks. Later in the book, there will be more information about the art of teaching for different needs. You need to know a good deal about how children process and integrate new information and what can happen when this fails. You will find plenty of activities that help prevent failure, but in order that you may invent more, appropriate for your children, the more expert you yourself become about how their brains can work the better.

Active Learning: Playing and Independence

While children will ordinarily be comfortable and respectful receiving wise words from their teacher, a classroom quickly turns sterile if the teacher is the only one with answers. It's a teacher's job to proactively alert the children to how much they know and how much they can discover.

Although we promote the idea of teaching authority, the teacher is the facilitator as well as the guide. You are ***training*** them in self-reliance.[16] Children are very likely to digest and retain more information from each other than they will from you, or from most adults.[17] A classroom designed around active learning is one where children develop initiative, stamina and confidence for inquiry.[18]

Partner and group work is fundamental to enabling children to become independent learners. Most of the exercises set out in the next part of the book will include elements where the children work with each other, particularly to talk about learning and to practise a new skill. ***Encouraging*** talking in the classroom may still be imagined a risky or trivial undertaking but it is one we applaud, with appropriate boundaries.

> On one hand, talk has more official recognition now than at any time in our educational history; on the other hand, as a culture we value reading and writing more highly than oral competence and our assessment system is still conducted predominantly in the written mode. In the pre-GCSE era, there existed a deficit model of oracy, which suggested that it was a way of compensating for the lack of writing ability of lower ability pupils.[19]

We rate it as a high-quality teaching strategy, as do many mainstream educationalists. Perhaps paradoxically, we think behaviour in the class can ***improve*** when children are talking – independence leads to confidence; to relaxation and a peaceful environment. In the following pages, you will find many games for children to play together to learn. Play can be the staple diet for educating and engaging children's will. Steiner made the point that games must not just be entertainment. He warns

16 Janis-Norton, 2004.
17 Topping, 1998, Wiliam, 2011.
18 For further examples, see Clarke, 2008 and Myhill, Jones and Hopper, 2005.
19 Introduction, p. 1, Myhill, Jones and Hopper, 2005.

> It is not good to introduce mere playing about into education. On the contrary, it is our task to introduce the fullness of life into education; we should not bring in things that are no more than playing about. But please do not misunderstand me. I am not saying that play should not be introduced into education; what I mean is that games artificially constructed for the lesson have no place in school. There will still be a great deal to say about how play can be incorporated into the lessons.[20]

We hope the learning games set out here will educate your children easily and meaningfully.

20 Lecture Four, Steiner, *Practical Advice to Teachers*, Stuttgart, 21 August – 6 September 1919 (publ. 1976), p. 58.

Chapter 2

Literacy Pedagogy

In this chapter, we introduce some fundamental principles of best practice as specific to literacy teaching. These include:

- The value of literacy
- Age of starting literacy teaching
- The relationship principle of education
- Voice
- Why writing before reading?
- Authorship and editorship
- What teachers need to know about English

Occasionally, some may question the overarching assumption that it is necessary for children to become literate at all. Perhaps there is no fundamental requirement for the health of the human being that they learn this skill. In Rudolf Steiner's view, the capacity to read and write was not intrinsically important for a child's health, development or spiritual progress as an end in itself.[21] This is quite hard to grasp for people today. Steiner felt that other subjects such as mathematics, but most especially music, movement and fine arts, are much more organic and natural to the human being, and therefore of benefit to the health and well-being of the individual. For the young child, he also vigorously championed the cultivation of curiosity and 'pure science' observation. He urged the practice of detailed observation right from the start of school. Historically, literacy is indeed a relatively young educational 'discipline', and Steiner termed it as belonging to the physical world, further away from the spiritual. We encourage readers to research this question more deeply for yourselves.

21 Steiner, Practical Advice to Teachers, Stuttgart, 21 August –6 September 1919 (publ. 1976), p. 10

PART 3

Class 1 Lesson Content

Chapter 8

Introducing Sounds and Symbols

- Sequence of phonemes and graphemes
- The first consonants
- Upper-case archetype: how to use story, sound and picture

Phonemes and Graphemes: Sequence of Introduction

Now we are ready to introduce literacy properly. After the classic first lesson, as described in Chapter 5, you may then spend the first week or main lesson block of the autumn term extending and practising Form Drawing whilst you also concentrate on initial classroom management and socialisation.[1] There is a great deal to get used to in the early days, some of which may not look like as much fun as Kindergarten, and it is a good idea to include a few really grown-up elements in your early discussions so that the children know where they are heading and why you are drawing or preparing first. Let them tell you what they know already, what they would like to learn and so on. In this book, we demonstrate a term timeline often taken by one author.[2]

Once you are ready, we suggest following this method for introducing the letters. It is one of the areas where Rudolf Steiner has left fairly clear, if short, procedural indications.[3] Start with the first group of most commonly used consonants, perhaps around six or seven initially, addressing

1 One very well respected teacher known to the authors spends just a few days only on Form Drawing and certainly starts teaching letters within the first week. His view is that children are expecting this: they come from Kindergarten with anticipation and eager to be learning something different. We have heard children saying, 'I can't wait to learn something!' Thus, right from the start they get the message that Class 1 is a great step in maturation and agency.

2 See Appendix 9 for details.

3 Steiner, 1976, pp. 13–15.

each one individually with a story and picture, as described below. They don't need to be given in alphabetical order, but in rough order of usefulness for the children's first writing of basic words. For the very first few, you might decide to choose consonants that only have one sound associated with them.[4] We show you how to convey an understanding of the principle of how letters came into being. The purpose of this is to root the abstract literacy concepts in reality: for children of this age, story is authentic and alive, and drawing pictures which metamorphose into letters offers a genuine human experience (see description below). A suggested sequence of consonant initial sounds is listed here:

B M R T
H S N P
C K G F D
L J W
Y Z V

We suggest that after the first batch of consonants, you move straight on to vowels, as described in the next chapter, so that you can begin your first writing with the children. The whole point of acquiring this information is to be *active* with it, and no-one can write much without a vowel! We show you how to introduce them. In this author's class, the initial consonants and all the vowels were fully introduced in the first 'Letters' main lesson block.

The teacher then moved on to work with numbers, and their only language work was reciting, speaking and listening during that time. Other teachers may choose to continue with some consolidation of writing practice, perhaps extra main lessons if you have them.

After your vowels, you can return to the consonants and also the consonant digraphs,[5] but this time you may choose to bring them in a group, without the extended story, picture and writing routine described in this chapter. Once the principle of letter 'discovery' has been established, the rest of the phonemes and graphemes could legitimately be given in batches, perhaps three at a time, as simple tools to use, albeit in a playful way, using story, poem and song for facilitation.

Class Teachers vary in their approach to this. One author found so many beneficial ways to practise literacy skills during the introduction of each letter that it was still both enjoyable and economical to follow the extended, individual letter routine with more consonants. Appendix 2 gives more examples of these. Other teachers prefer to cover this introduction more quickly and then use games and other activities to rehearse all the sounds and symbols steadily in combination. Assuming you use two main lesson blocks for literacy in the first term, amounting to about seven weeks in total, plan for some core writing tasks to be completed in that time. Put yourself in the shoes of the children and ask yourself what would be satisfying for them. What would they feel proud of if they finished it by Christmas, after their first term of being a Class 1 child? This may help you decide how to pace the introductions of the letters. See our suggested year plan in Appendix 7.

4 See Appendix 1 for a list of the 44 sounds and ways of spelling them.
5 You may want to introduce some of these, such as /ch/, /sh/ and /th/, before finishing the alphabet.

The First Consonants

There are three aspects to the letters that need to be conveyed and memorised by the children. These are the symbol or form of the letter, known as the grapheme; the corresponding sound or phoneme; and finally, the name of the letter, which is quite different from the sound it makes. The name of the letter is the least important aspect for initial literacy. However, it is the name of the letter that most people whom the child encounters outside the classroom will use to identify them. Make sure you're clear about which aspects you are teaching, and whenever you talk about letters, always be clear whether you're talking about the 'sound' or the 'name'.

Take note also that there are sometimes two letters that make the same sound (for example, /s/ can be made with a 's' or a 'c') or a letter that makes two sounds (for example 'g'.) In these cases, prioritise giving the most common associated sound. You would first emphasise 's' as /ss/ and 'c' as /k/, for example. But it's worth explaining to the children that letters can sometimes make mischief and change their usage. This author chose to introduce 'c' and 'k' simultaneously from the same fairy tale, for example. See Appendix 9.

We teach upper-case (capital) letters first because they represent a sort of archetype of the way the sound corresponded to form at the origin of the Aramaic alphabet.[6] Introduce upper-case letters with a strong image[7] taken from a vivid story such as a Grimm's fairy tale. Choose a word where the initial sound is clear. For example, T for 'tower' is preferable to T for 'tree' because the sound /tr/ is easily mistaken as /ch//r/. On Day 1, the teacher tells the story (from memory) and attempts to bring it alive with language designed to evoke 'mind's eye' inner pictures. On Day 2, the children re-call the story verbally and the teacher guides them through a drawing of the character or scene that she is using to introduce the letter. On Day 3, after a brief revision, class members draw a guided picture again, but this time the letter 'emerges'. This is the symbol or *grapheme*. We find that the children are very excited at their first discovery of the letters in this way and, once they're accustomed to it, many will be anticipating which letter will newly emerge.

At the same time, the class will work with the related sound, or phoneme, perhaps by reciting a poem or tongue twister, or playing a word-finding game. The class will often perform an action such as a clap or a jump during recitation in the rhythmical time – perhaps they will stamp whenever a word in the poem starts with the particular sound, or they could recite the poem sitting down, standing up for any word that begins with the newly taught sound – so that they are learning kinaesthetically as well as through auditory and visual means.

6 In this sense, we are aiming authentically to recapitulate the human literacy journey – drawing symbols out of an image. Steiner, *Practical Advice to Teachers*, Stuttgart, 21 August to 6 September, 1919 (1976), Chapter 5.
7 Steiner, 1995, Chapter 2.

Introduction of the First Group of Consonants

A process for introducing a new letter

Tell a story

The next day
- recall the story
- draw a picture
- Introduce and practise the poem

The next day
- Practise the poem with movements on the target sound
- Play 'I spy'
- Play auditory guessing games
- Draw the letter
- 'Memory read' the poem from the blackboard

Following days
- Practise the poem with movements on the target sound
- Play 'I spy'
- Play auditory guessing games
- Play visual guessing games
- Gather and write words that begin with the target sounds
- Copy the poem or write it from memory once the children are able to do so
- Play the 'Troll Game'[8]

The following are examples of stories, poems and illustrations that could be used. The Baker poem mentioned earlier,[9] which has been used during the first Form Drawing main lesson, could be used as an image to introduce the letter 'B'.

8 The Troll Game is fully described in Chapter 10.
9 Part 2, Chapter 4

There was once a baker
Who baked a big bun
And I will show you how it was done
He took the flour and poured in the yeast
Then stirred it together
It was such a feast
He stirred and stirred, his arm started aching
But he never got tired of all that baking
He pummeled the dough and pushed it hard
He pummeled the dough and again he'd start
He pushed it down with all his weight
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
Now he rolled it round and round
And never a ball so round was found
He threw it up and caught it neat
And then the rolling would repeat
I tell you the baker had such fun
All for the baking of one big bun.

For introducing 'F', you could use the Flounder letter from the Grimms' Fairy Tale 'The Fisherman and his Wife'.[10] Steiner also gives this as an example of a suitable early letter introduction.[11] Here is a (slightly altered) poem that the fisherman cries out to call for the flounder.

Flounder, flounder in the sea
Come fulfil a wish for me.
Full of wishes I find my wife;
Never finished in all her life.
Flounder, flounder in the sea
Come fulfil a wish for me.

10 Grimms' Fairy Tales, 2009.
11 Steiner, 1976, p. 11.

During Michaelmas time, the 'D' could be introduced as the Dragon Letter with the story of St Michael.

Deep is the deed to be done by men.
Dangerous dragon asleep in his den.
Who dares to conquer, who dares to slay.
Who dares to banish the dragon this day?
Deep is the deed to be done by men
Dangerous dragon lies bound in his den.

The Golden Goose Letter could be introduced using Grimm's fairy tale 'The Golden Goose'.

Oh my, a golden goose I see
That golden goose must be for me
The greedy sisters grabbed the tail
Were glued together without fail
Oh goodness grace, the golden goose
Will never let the three girls loose

The 'M' could be introduced using Grimms' fairy tale 'Simeli Mountain'. It becomes the Mountain letter.

Many masked men came to the mighty mountain;
Semsi mountain, semsi mountain open, let us in.
Many masked men came out the mighty mountain;
Semsi mountain, semsi mountain shut and let us win.
Money in the measure
To collect a little treasure
But the rich man with his greed
The mighty mountain never freed.

'K' and 'C' could be introduced at the same time with Grimm's fairy tale *The Crystal Ball*.

Can the boy catch the crystal?
Can he catch the crystal ball?
Can he free the king's kind daughter
And become the king of all?

The Swan letter could be derived from Grimm's fairy tale 'The Six Swans'.

Six swans swam silently
Their souls full of sorrow
At sunset they shed their skins
But swans they'll be tomorrow.
Dear sister, dear sister please save us in our need
Sew six new shirts all silently
And your brothers will be freed.

As the 'S' is a letter that children often reverse, it will be very helpful to embroider on the story, adding for example that the swan must be looking out of the window side of the class to see whether the little sister is coming to rescue him. Adapt it to your situation but make sure they have something to help them remember its direction.

More examples and illustrations of letters are included in Appendix 2. See also Appendix 1 for a full list of all the 44 phonemes in English. You will need to teach all of these. We suggest that you teach 'Q' as 'Qu', since they are never apart in English words and pronounce them as /kw/, avoiding a schwa.

PART 4

Class 1 Assessment and Differentiation

Chapter 16

Learning Differences and What To Do

- Moving from whole-class to differentiated work
- Good for SEN, good for everyone!
- Three groups of needs
- Timing of support
- Multi-sensory work
- Incremental work

Teaching for different needs can be a demanding art. In this chapter, we give you some core principles for planning lessons. Active learning methods are good for those with special educational needs and the whole class. Organisation is another key to being able to reach every child in the class appropriately, achieving a balance between support and challenge. Additionally, the more you yourself understand about how children receive and process new information, the better you will be able to innovate for your particular class.

Moving from the Whole Class to Groups of Different Needs

We have described introductory work for Class 1 that ought to give you a good opportunity for engaging every child in the class from the first day, all of them progressing at a level appropriate for them. At the beginning, it is sensible to let the children all do the same activity; you don't know the detail of their different abilities and they have yet to become a 'whole class'. With literacy, they love to do the same letter learning work. It is done in such a unique way that even those who have learnt the letters already, whether at home or in a different school, usually still find great joy in doing the same work as those who have never encountered them.

As the first term progresses, you will naturally know to direct harder questions to the children who always seem to know the answers. It may start to make sense to team up more and less able children so that they can help each other practise new knowledge. This is the ideal time to start

training children in the social skills necessary to exchange information helpfully and encourage each other, rather than dominate, ignore or act out. From the start, you are teaching children independence from you: they are active, not passive. You will also be watching them very closely, noticing their skills, or who doesn't want their lack of skills noticed! Develop the discipline of making post-lesson notes every day about the tiny things that the class demonstrate. It's very easy to forget detail, and writing down these observations makes a difference.

It is an often-stated truism that good teaching methods for those with special educational needs are also generally good for the whole class. An example would be the '3 counts rule'. If you ask a question and require the class to wait for '3 counts' before hands go up, it will ensure that more children are able to work things out. The classic 'put your hand up' to answer technique only ensures that one child at a time is on task, and it can be positively alienating.

In a similar way, you could use beanbags to ask individual children a question: ask the question out loud and then throw the beanbag three times up to yourself, before choosing the child you want to answer the question. Another option for call-out questions is to have a box of names on lollipop sticks and pick one at random for answering. Everybody's name could come out of the cup, so everybody is trying hard to find the answer, not just those who put their hands up. Your aim is mass engagement and mass response – in this way you get many children working at once, and those who need more processing time can participate equally.

Nonetheless, probably about half-way through Class 1 there will come a stage where it just doesn't make sense any more for them all to do *exactly* the same work. It doesn't seem right to suppress the advanced children's eagerness in order to wait for the others. It would be a particular kind of negligence. However, some will still be working hard at a more basic level.

During the first term, aim to arrange your class into roughly three groups in order that you don't become overwhelmed with trying to cater for the varied individual needs. In an average class of 20–30 children in a Steiner school, you are likely to have the following composition.[1] A handful, perhaps five, will be very able and will pick up information with one telling. Some children seem to be able to teach themselves, and if a donkey gave them the instruction, they'd still be able to learn! In time, you may have about a third of the group who can progress very well, at speed, with good independence.

There will also be a handful, probably fewer than five, who have significant learning difficulties and who will quickly demand more of your attention to make sure that they are still accessing the work appropriately. In time, you may find there are around a third of the class who need some extra, intensive input to succeed with certain aspects of basic skills. The central third of children are those who need clear explanation, modelling and repetition but who will make good progress according to your targets, provided they have this practice. This could be termed the 'on-target' group. Expert differentiation advice suggests that you plan tasks for this group in the middle first, secondly for those who find things more difficult, and finally adapt for those who are ahead of the game.[2]

Becoming really good at differentiation entails three main requirements: first, to know the children and what they do and don't know. This requires assessment and excellent record-keeping. Secondly, you need to really understand the subject of literacy learning and then have a repertoire of games and activities up your sleeve to address each incremental step along the path. Game playing, group working and formative assessment techniques are methods that help the children decide for themselves what is good work and how well they're doing. These are fundamental for effective differentiation.[3] Finally, you will need to develop a 'flexible thinking' muscle to enable you to be creative in the face of both the predictable and the unexpected. You can do it!

By term two, in their literacy work, your Class 1 may have the following combination:

- Some will already want to write their own stories
- Others still need to practise splitting words into sounds
- Some may confuse sound–symbol links.
- One of them may struggle to know the sounds and the letters
- Another may not be able to hear rhyme, or whether two words start with the same sound.

How will you plan for addressing those needs? The first step is good assessment. In the next chapter, we share with you some thoughts about assessing children in a useful way and ideas for helping you develop your repertoire.

1 There is a significant caveat here. Most Steiner schools in the UK are privately funded. This means that their natural constituency tends to be relatively privileged and well-educated, middle-class people. There also tend to be a large number of nationalities represented. Admissions are different at state-funded schools and in other parts of the world. In terms of learning style and literacy, there can be a great many social and environmental factors that influence children's ability, so you may find that in your school the relative proportions are different.

2 Dodge, 2005; Heacox, 2012; and Cowley, 2013.

3 Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnstone, 2012; Clarke, 2008; Myhill, Jones, & Hopper, 2005; Janis-Norton, 2004; Cunningham, 2012; and Palmer & Corbett, 2003.

Chapter 17

Record Keeping and Assessment

Continuum of assessment types, including:

- Observational notes
- Formative assessment of the teaching and learning process
- Summative assessment of progress
- Examples of tests in C1 and how to use the results

What Do They Know? – Examples of Assessment of Children in Class 1

As discussed in the previous chapter, one key to being able to plan lessons for the different needs in your class is that of good assessment. If you have taken concrete steps to measure your children's progress, you will be confident in creating the next day's lessons. You will also be demonstrating transparency so that any observers, internal or external, can see that you are aware of the way that teaching is affecting learning in your classroom. In this chapter we discuss how types of assessment run along a subjective–objective continuum, each type yielding results that are useful for different purposes. We explain two main ways in which we assess progress appropriately in Class 1. First, we discuss how to record your careful observations. Secondly, we set out some appropriate methods of testing. We aim to gain an accurate impression of each child's development and genuine knowledge, without inducing unnecessary anxiety.

Observational Notes

Rudolf Steiner was very keen on teachers observing their students, advocating a scientific method in the broadest sense of the term. While any one professional would be likely to notice different features about any one student, according to all sorts of subjective factors, he was emphatic that the teacher should cultivate their own attention to detail. He suggested that teachers note things like skin tone, warmth of the hand at the morning hand-shake, the way a child breathes or speaks... – all sorts of things that may be particular or remarkable about a child, considering them in a holistic way. He thought education could be *healing*, with a much broader remit than is usually considered the province of school. To this end, he encouraged teachers to pay attention to all possible ways in which a child might present.

One of the cornerstone practices of the College of Teachers[4] meeting is Child Study. This is a period of time dedicated to discussing details of a particular child of concern. Ideally, every member of staff who works with that child would contribute every variety of pertinent information for the group to contemplate. A rich, collective picture of that child would then emerge, and time would be given to the consideration of best practice or necessary interventions. However, this is not the same as the everyday notes that the class teacher needs.

Develop the habit of jotting down the daily thoughts you have about your class as you observe them. You may have a formal record book with lines and tables, a day journal or a notebook (or all three).[5] From the beginning of Class 1, record details of left- or right-handedness, pencil grip, vocabulary, listening and recall. For example, do any children have speech difficulties? These can have a strong effect on their ability to spell. If a child can't say /k/, can they hear it?

Further, children might demonstrate particular artistic sensibility or talents and you will perceive qualities of a child's sense of form or capacity for practical organisation. Their physical movements, sense of balance, rhythm or laterality might also interest you. You may also observe social aptitude or emotional and behavioural qualities. Notice those children who sit quietly and do not like to be conspicuous. Some children are expert at being forgotten! Writing these remarks down will help you cement impressions for more sustained contemplation; it serves as a record for remembering particular incidents or events, and this may be unpredictably useful, especially when communicating with other adults about a child, and it can feed planning and fine-tuning activities when you sit down more formally to organise upcoming work.

Assessment Using Tests

Testing sometimes has a bad name these days, with many parents and teachers wary of burdening children with stressful procedures, but we will show you ways that even in Class 1, a test can be carried out without the children being disturbed by it, perhaps not even being aware it's happening.

Testing or assessments are often classified as either formative or summative. Formative assessment is the term for multiple types of reflection in the active learning process. The key principle is that tests are not organised primarily to make judgements but to gain useful information for our teaching, and are usually administered by students *and* teacher. In formative assessment, you are taking stock of what has happened, making collaborative judgements about areas of success and

4 College is the word used to refer to the group of staff who take professional responsibility for pedagogy in the school. Although today, every school organises itself in a unique way with subtle differences that suit individual circumstances, in Rudolf Steiner's original vision, the College would be a sort of faculty body that would concern itself with pedagogy and student care.

5 We find it useful to have a robust, hard-backed planning book or folder with plenty of space to set out daily plans. Behind the plans section will be a record-keeping section, also with a table or chart to set out results and observations of the children. There are several such teacher's planners on the market. In addition, we find it helps to have an informal jotter or notebook to write down *any* ad hoc thoughts, questions, ideas or insights so that they are put down somewhere and won't get lost!

where there is room for improvement. You then use this information to immediately return to work, armed with new goals.[6] Summative assessment is a type of assessment where a more objective 'outcome' is established, such as a reading level. This gives a snapshot of a child's performance in comparison with appropriate benchmarks at a given point in time.

As you can see, formative assessment is useful internally in the classroom; summative can have an effective role for transparency and communication purposes with others. Formative information is usually very useful to children and teachers; summative can be useful to those overseeing the whole process – parents, teachers and their colleagues. It is the second type that usually causes most stress. It is highly problematic to try accurately to judge a person who is, by definition, growing and changing quickly! Performance isn't identical to learning or ability. There isn't space in this book to explore all the issues of how working to a test has the potential to crush creativity in both student and teacher, but we do encourage you to do so yourselves.[7]

In the early classes, we mainly use formative techniques, many of which we have described already, especially when engaging in group learning. We encourage the children to be reflective and active in their engagement with the work. See below for examples of more summative tests that would be appropriate in Class 1. You will see further information in the Appendices on suitable outcomes. These will help you consider in a judicious and mindful way when to use summative tests and what to do with the results.

Testing Word Work

After the introduction and practice of a certain teaching point, how will you know that every individual student can really tell short vowels apart, for example? Indeed, after each Main Lesson block, on whatever topic, it is very important to have one or two sessions that include a summary and some kind of assessment in order to see how much each child has absorbed.

Vowel countries

Here is an example of a mini-test after a teaching point. For working out whether the children know short vowels, ask the children to draw two 'countries', an /a/ 'country' and an /o/ 'country', and then dictate some words for them to write in the correct 'country'.

Blind words

For testing knowledge of common words, at the end of a three-week block of daily work, you can put a cloth over the word-wall words and dictate them. Tell the children that you need to know which words must stay on the word wall and which can be taken off. Explain that if they don't know how to spell the words, they can draw lines for the sounds. For example, if they know only the first letter, they can write that and draw lines for the rest of the sounds. With children late in Class 1 or into the next year, you will want to assess their spelling of common words regularly so that you can be really responsive to individual practice needs.

Blends Dictation

Having worked for a while with blends, it is also worth doing a blends dictation like the one described in Chapter 11. Use the words the children came up with in the blends game and a 'snaking' worksheet to make it more fun.

Assessment of Free Writing

A teacher can learn much from studying students' free writing. It is especially worth doing regular spelling analyses. However, be aware that children who create their own writing can sometimes confine themselves to words they can spell. They may look at words on the word wall or get their spellings from a neighbour. In their free writing, their spelling may appear better than it really is. Alternatively, children's spelling in a free writing task may present poorly as they concentrate on getting their thoughts on paper and forget their spelling. Either way, investigate what type of mistakes the children make.

- Are there missed sounds? If so, the troll game or snakes and ladders for sound counting will be useful.
- Does the child forget common words they have seen often? This would suggest possible difficulties or weakness in visual memory. Mnemonics might help as an alternative method of memorisation, or increased frequency of visual exposure.
- Does a child persist with symbol reversals? Form Drawing and gross motor spatial orientation exercises would help.

Once or twice a year, you may also decide to administer a more general spelling assessment, for example the one from the book *Words Their Way* described here.[8] The results directly feed into your planning.

In the book, learning is categorised into three areas: this test helps you understand what the child gets right most times, what they 'use but confuse' and what they are getting wrong most of the time. The authors suggest that we primarily direct our teaching to the middle area. If you present material that the child knows already, you risk frustration; there is a similar result if you present material that they are not ready for. The book provides several inventories and three levels of word dictations, each using around 25–30 words that will help you identify the areas in each child's spelling in which he is confident, that he 'uses but confuses' and that he is not yet aware of. The book is also full of teaching suggestions and games.

This is the first inventory we gave at the end of Class 1. As preparation, the children were told that many of the words they were going to be asked to write were Class 2 or even Class 3 words.

6 Clarke, 2008.

7 Robinson, 2015. There are many educational authors who tackle the subject of testing and assessment. Please see the book's bibliography.

8 Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnstone, 2012.

They were told that the dictation was for the teacher to know what she should teach them next year. They were also told that for many words, they would probably get some bits right even if they did not know the whole word. The teacher modelled what to do if they did not know how to spell the word giving the example of 'BRACELET'. The teacher explained that she knew that they would probably not yet know how to spell it in the grown-up way, but they might know some bits. 'You might know it starts with BR and ends in T. If you know that you could write BR_____T, or you could have a guess at the other letters and perhaps write BRASLUT.' If the teacher introduces a spelling assessment like this, the children feel good about what they are achieving.

After this test, one girl later told her mum that they had had to write lots of really difficult words; she continued proudly that she had got them all right. According to formal spelling rules, she was not in fact correct, but the result was perfect: the teacher had gained valuable insight into her spelling strategies and she maintained pride and confidence in her work. Here are some examples of spelling results with diagnostic comments.

SHARA

1 FAN	14 FRIT
2 PET	15 CHOOD
3 DIG	16 CRUL
4 ROB	17 WISH
5 ~~HOB~~ ____	18 FON
6 WAT	19 SHATIG
7 GUM	20 STOG
8 SLEDD	21 GRAL
9 STICK	22 ~~FFD~~ FROUL
10 SHIN	23 KANT
11 DREM	24 TRIS
12 BLAD	25 CLATIN
13 CLOSNP	26 RIDIG

Shara is confident about initial consonants, end consonants and short vowels. She is using digraphs /SH/, /CH/, /TH/ but is not certain of them. She hears /TH/ as /F/. She is confident in her blends. She is not using any long vowel or diphthong spellings yet. Shara should do some more work with digraphs before being introduced to the first long vowel spellings. Her confusion between /TH/ and /F/ needs some further investigation. Does she speak /TH/ correctly? Some speech exercises such as tongue-twisters might help, as well as simple activities to distinguish /F/ and /TH/. This could be a cranes and crows game with /F/ and /TH/ words, a sorting activity with cards, an auditory sorting activity or a dictation with a /F/ land and a /TH/ land.

ERIN

1 FAN	14 FRITTE
2 PET	15 CHOOD
3 DIG	16 CROLE
4 ROB	17 WISHISE
5 HOPE	18 THORN
6 ~~WHAT~~ WAIT	19 SHAOUTID
7 GUM	20 SPOIEL
8 SLED	21 GRALE
9 STICK	22 THAD
10 ~~SHINE~~ SHIN	23 CAMPDE
11 DREAM	24 TRISE
12 BLADE	25 CLAPING
13 COTCHE	26 RYDING

Erin is confident about initial consonants, end consonants and short vowels, digraphs and blends. She is using some long vowel spellings and some other vowel spellings but makes regular mistakes with those. Erin is ready to work with long vowels and other vowel spellings.

Chapter 20

Assessment in Class 2

- Determining the starting point
- Free-writing assessment task
- Identifying and addressing individual needs

When you return to the classroom after the long summer break, it's a good idea to set the ground rules for the term ahead – not just for literacy! Usually delighted to see each other and be back at school, the class will also have developed and assimilated a great deal, cognitively speaking, in their absence. In addition to the data you have kept from the end-of-year spelling assessment described in Chapter 7, we recommend carrying out some baseline assessment tasks early on to give you up-to-date information. A 'free' writing task re-telling a fable the children will have heard on one of the first days might be a good way to see how much the children have retained. You will see from this what regular revision and practice of the skills they were taught in Class 1 is necessary.

Here are some examples with observations about the work. Note that prior to the task, some spellings will have been given.

Child 1

- Initial and end consonants are in place.
- Blends are recognised and used mostly correctly.
- TH is in place, also in conjunction with a blend.
- Creative spellings show that this child is listening well and trying to use their phonological skills, e.g. 'bisnis' for 'business', 'throo' for 'through'.
- There are a few long vowel spellings in place, e.g. 'day' and 'tree', but silent 'e' spellings need to be taught – e.g. 'kam' for 'came' and 'mad' for 'made'.
- Common words 'the', 'was', 'on', 'his', 'them', 'at', 'you' 'and', all are in place. Common words used but misspelled are: 'there', 'they', 'were', 'their', 'said', 'we', 'what'.
- This child should continue with work on silent 'e' words and should learn these common words – 'there', 'they', 'were', 'their', 'said', 'we', 'what' – because she is using them. It would also be useful to tackle the choice between C and K, as this is quite an easy and consistent rule.

Child 2

- This child is conscientious and letter formation is much better.
- The care over the work does mean she is working more slowly, and she has only managed to write the beginning of the story.
- This child is using her phonetic skills confidently.
- She is using silent 'e' in broke.
- She is also using some doubling rules, as in 'better' and 'tell'.
- A lot of common words are in place. 'What' and 'want' should be on her list of words to start working with.
- This child should probably do some more work with long vowel spellings. Then more unusual vowels like OU and W influenced A, as in 'want', could be tackled.

Child 3

- Again, good use of phonological skills is evident.
- WH may need revising.
- Silent 'e' is not yet used and should be taught.
- W influenced A is also a problem for this child. 'Was', 'want' and 'what' are probably best taught as common words at this stage.
- QU may need to be revised.
- Common words – 'they', 'the', 'do', 'me', 'and', 'you', 'if', 'said' – are in place; 'when' and 'those' might be amongst the common words to tackle.

This, combined with the results of the diagnostic spelling assessment done at the end of Class 1,[8] will give a picture of the things you will have to revise thoroughly with the whole class and those that need revising only with some children. You could record individual needs as suggested on page 137.

Class Two Observation List

OBSERVATIONS *FROM WORDS THEIR WAY* SPELLING ASSESSMENT – DATE
Note: '/' means confuses.

Child A	New child – was not part of the assessment
Child B	Needs work on short u, short e, CH, SH and TH/F
Child C	
Child D	
Child E	Needs work on CH, TH. Also hearing ST/SD
Child F	
Child G	
Child H	
Child I	
Child J	Needs work on ST/SD
Child K	
Child L	
Child M	
Child N	Needs work on TH SH and TH/F
Child O	Needs work on short u, ST, DR, CH, SH, GR, F/TH, MP, LONG I/A
Child P	New child – was not part of the assessment
Child Q	
Child R	
Child S	Needs work on short e, short i, SH and blends BL, FR and CR
Child T	Needs work on CH and TH/FR
Child U	Needs work on SH and TH/F
Child V	

In your plans, include tasks for the whole class to revise all these skills, and during the practice, notice particularly how the individuals fare. If they still need it, arrange for some one-to-one time to rehearse these items. An assistant could help them carry out a sorting activity from *Words Their Way*,[11] or the parents can be asked to help at home. An explanatory note like the example on page 138 could accompany the materials:

11 Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton & Johnstone, 2012. Chapter 3 in this book gives extensive guidance for methods for working with words, including analysis of patterns in sorting activities. These are classroom-friendly and highly effective for building children's understanding of language and training spelling memory.

Dear parents

We have found that your child struggles hearing the difference between words starting with 'F' and words starting with 'TH'. I would like you to help by practising a little every day.

Attached is a document with cards for 'TH', 'F' and some odd ones out. These cards can be printed and cut out (it works best if they're printed on card or thicker paper).

This is how I would like you to practise:

- Put the 'TH' card and the 'F' card and the Odd One Out card on the table and practise saying those sounds. (Say the sound as you would hear it in a word without the schwa /uh/ sound – so /TH/ not /THuh/.) Let the child repeat the sounds and make them aware where their top teeth are: /F/ on the bottom lip, /TH/ on the tongue. I always say this is the only time they can stick their tongue out!
- Look at the cards with your child and sort them into words beginning with /TH/ and words beginning with /F/, and words beginning with neither. You will have to read the words as they are not all words that the children are able to read.
- Then you shuffle the cards, read the first card without the child seeing the word, and the child repeats the word and points to the correct spelling for the first sound.
- Then show the card and put it in the correct column.
- When this is too easy, you can do all the cards in the same way, but let your child place the cards in the correct column. Ask your child to check their columns at the end when all the cards are upside down.

When they say the words, keep watching that their top teeth are on the bottom lip for the /F/ and on their tongue for the /TH/.

I would like some feedback before the half term or earlier if there is a problem or an observation you'd like to share.

THANK	THINK	THIRST	THAW	THERMOS
THUNDER	THUMB	FIRST	FIN	FREE
THICK	THREE	THROW	THISTLE	THIN
THIRD	THIEF	THREAD	FAN	FISH
FIG	FOG	FUN	FLASH	FROG
FIST	FROST	FOND	FILL	FELL
CHAT	SHOW	SIT	CHAIR	SHOE
F	TH	ODD ONE OUT		

PART 6

Lesson Content for Class 2

Chapter 22

Cursive Script

- Introducing cursive script and handwriting
- Form Drawing
- What kind of cursive?

On the first day of Class 2, perhaps there will be a message for the children written in cursive script on the blackboard. Who can read it? Can we recognise some of the letters? What do we notice? The children might point out that all the letters in the words are connected, that the letters are all the same size, that there are some that are taller and some that go down but that these are also all the same size, that some have loops etc. What a mysterious start for children who feel well beyond the inexperience of a year ago!

Class 2 children will learn to identify several versions of the same letter: upper case, lower case, print and cursive. Obviously, it isn't functional to know only upper-case letters. Once the principles of sound and symbol correspondence have anchored, speed becomes the more essential characteristic. Indeed, historically as literacy became more democratic, cursive letters (both lower and upper case) were created out of a need for swift reproduction. As a child develops their handwriting capacity, they also develop a kinaesthetic memory of letter and word formation, so that spelling can become automatic, for example. We feel this to be especially important to maintain in our teaching and learning practice when so many of us now use keyboards. Fluency in handwriting might also become a major logistical factor in children's enthusiasm for authorship. What is the optimal relationship between thinking, wording the thoughts and the speed and ease with which one can set it down on paper? Potentially, a keyboard allows swifter release of thoughts, with easy revisions, but the steady pace of the hand might enable a deeper reflection.[1] If it's too slow, however, will it just be off-putting?

Of course, children must also know lower-case print letters for reading. How do we introduce all these sets of letters in the most economical way without confusing the children?

1 Chemin, 2014; Mueller & Oppenheimer, 2014

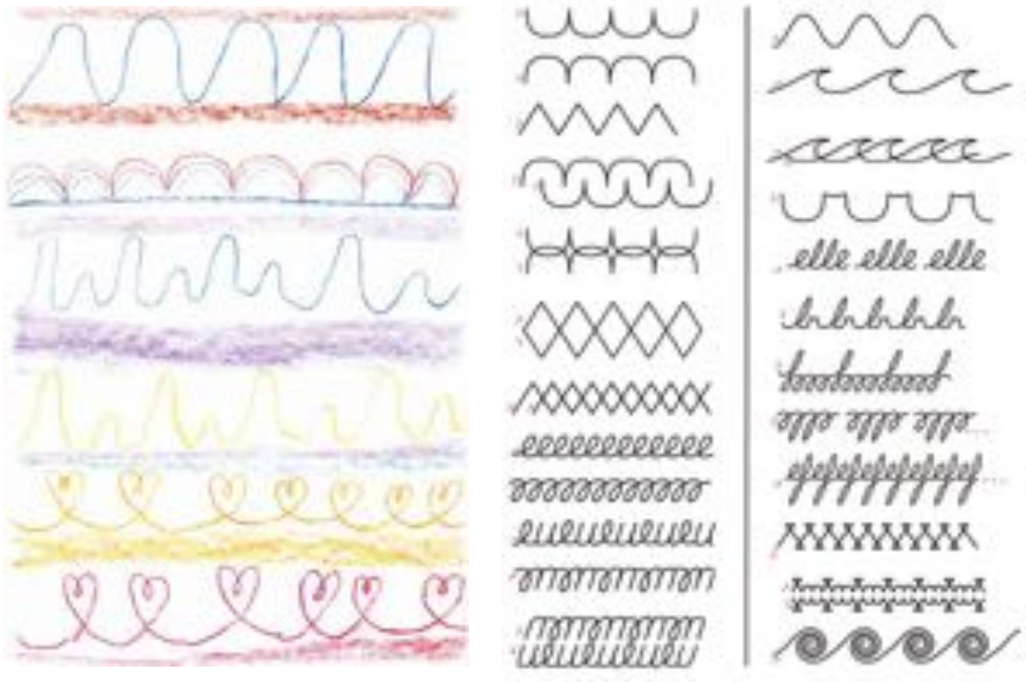
As described at the beginning of Part 7, in one author's class the book letters were gently introduced at the end of Class 1. In the first weeks of Class 2, we suggest returning to this more fully to give the children practice in recognising the shapes.[2] This chapter shows you how to lead the children into good handwriting, and the next gives you examples for distinguishing between and becoming versatile with the different types of script they need to know.

We first prepare children for their own cursive writing with Form Drawing, following on from Class 1 (see Chapter 5).This Form Drawing is also a way to develop a sense for geometry.

Your aims are:

- Regularity
- Sticking to a straight line
- Fitting a pattern between two straight lines
- Straight backs slightly leaning forward

Here are some example running forms:[3]

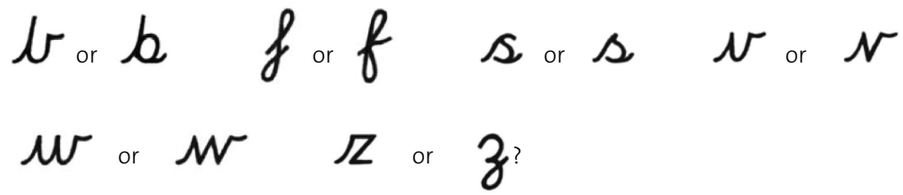


2 Do remember that the exact timing suitable for your class may vary. What we set out here as appropriate for the first term in Class 2 you may wish to introduce at another point.

3 These forms are from http://teachingfromatacklebox.blogspot.co.uk/2012/06/preparation-for-handwriting-form.html (goo.gl/b8A6ro). See also Lois Addy, 2004. Her book, *Speed Up!*, is an excellent handwriting resource.

Which Cursive Script?

For certain letters, a choice needs to be made; do we teach



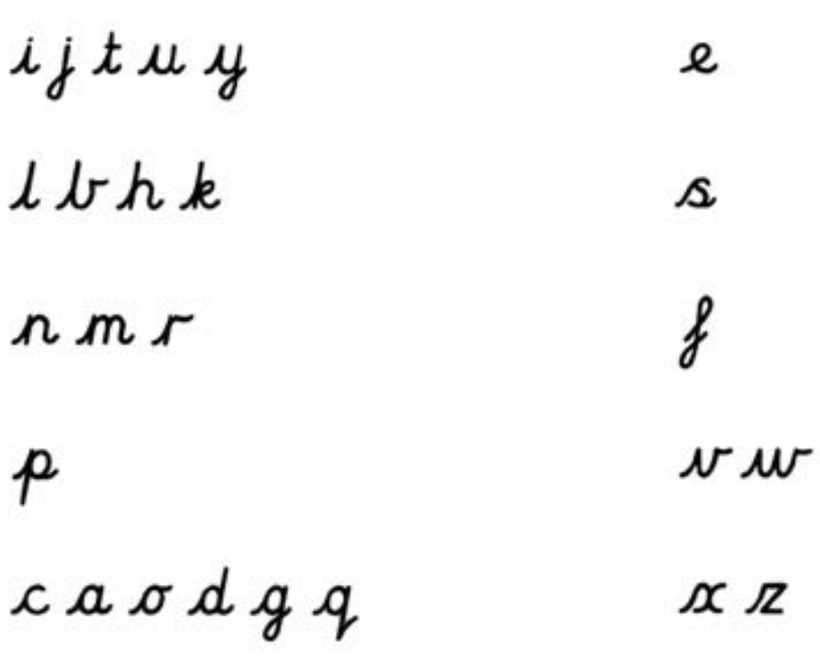
You may have your own preferred aesthetic but here we also recommend that you consider the children with dyslexic difficulties. Many children with visual-processing difficulties reverse their letters both when they are writing and reading. You can help prevent this by your choice of script.

The shape of the 's' and the 'z' are more easily recognised in  and  .

The  has an advantage as it is more clearly distinguished from the  .
It can be identified as the 'bucket letter' which further helps the reversal issue.

The  is also far more manageable than the  for children with dyslexia.

When you are ready to introduce the first cursive letters, we suggest doing so in groups, as follows:



Introduce the letter shapes in singular letters written quite large so that the children really feel the shape. Ask the children to draw them in various ways – for example, with their finger in the air, large on the desk, in sand trays and on individual blackboards.

- To get a real tactile experience of the letter, ask each of the children in the back row to choose a letter which they write on the back of the child sitting in front of them.
- This child writes it on the back of the child sitting in front of them. The front-row children write it on the blackboard.
- Check with the children behind; was it the letter they had written? Can we understand why the letter has changed?

Whilst practising the letters, use the opportunity to revise some of the spelling patterns the children have learnt. There is far more benefit in cursive writing with real words than writing lots of joined up *iiiiii*, which is a pattern we never encounter.

Check Writing Position and Pencil Grip Regularly

As the children are developing their writing habits it is crucial that we continue to monitor writing position and pencil grip (see Chapter 5):

- Is the child sitting comfortably with good posture?
- Is the child leaning slightly forward?
- Are the feet flat on the floor?
- Are both arms resting on the table?
- Is the pencil guided by the thumb and index finger?
- Is the pencil grip relaxed (no white knuckles)?
- Is the paper positioned slanting to the left for the right-handed child or to the right for the left-handed child?

Chapter 23

Different Types of Script and Letter Recognition in Class 2

- Scripts – lower case, print and cursive
- Games for letter recognition

This chapter gives you more activities which link the letters shapes to each other in a clearly understandable way.

Making Bingo and Pairs Cards

- Display upper-case letters and book or print letters (that is, letters as found in printed material such as books) on the wall and photocopy the worksheets on pages 152–155 on card. Ask the children to write the upper-case letters next to the print/book letters on their cards. The cards can later be cut up and used for the bingo or pairs game below. Make sure the darker line is at the bottom of each card to give the correct orientation. A note of caution: some may not have written their upper-case letters neatly enough for others to recognise. You may need to print a version of the game for a few children.