

English, Language and Literacy 3 to 19

Principles and Proposals

Talk Drama
Reading
Writing Grammar
Media

Summary

John Richmond,
Peter Dougill and Mike Raleigh

owen EDUCATION

English, Language and Literacy 3 to 19

English, Language and Literacy 3 to 19: Summary

Talk

Reading 3 to 7

Writing 3 to 7

Reading 7 to 16

Writing 7 to 16

Grammar and Knowledge about Language

Drama

Media

English 16 to 19

owenEDUCATION

UKLA

The United Kingdom Literacy Association

All material here © UKLA and Owen Education April 2015.

ISBN 978 | 910543 34 4

ISBN EPUB 978 | 910543 35 1

ISBN AER 978 | 910543 36 8

ISBN ONL 978 | 910543 37 5

Contents

Preface: English, Language and Literacy 3 to 19	3
• Purpose	3
• Key principles	4
• The series	4
• The remainder of this booklet	5
• A tribute and an encouragement	5
1. The new National Curriculum	6
• Analysis before competence: the cart before the horse	6
• The particular problem of early reading	6
• Reading and writing for meaning	7
• Talk	7
• Which century are we in?	8
• Drama	8
• The non-National Curriculum	8
• Back to the drawing board?	9
2. The essentials of English	10
• Talk	10
• Reading 3 to 7	11
• Writing 3 to 7	12
• Reading 7 to 16	13
• Writing 7 to 16	14
• Grammar and knowledge about language	15
• Drama	16
• Media	17
• English 16 to 19	18
3. An alternative curriculum for English 3 to 16	19
• General principles	19
• Talk	21
• Reading	25
• Writing	30
• Grammar and knowledge about language	37
• Drama	40
• Media	44

continues over

4. Assessment 3 to 11	47
• Early Years Foundation Stage: present and planned arrangements	47
• Early Years Foundation Stage: an alternative proposal for assessment	49
• Key Stages 1 and 2: the position until summer 2015	49
• Key Stages 1 and 2: the government's plans from summer 2016	50
• The end of levels	51
• An alternative proposal for end-of-Key-Stage assessment at Years 2 and 6	52
• Continuous formative assessment	54
References	55

Acknowledgements

The authors thank Joe Elliott, Deirdre Finan, Veronica Frankland and David Reedy for important comments on the text in draft; and Bronwyn Mellor for her careful proofreading of the final text.

Talk Drama
Reading
Writing Grammar
Media

Preface: English, Language and Literacy 3 to 19

This booklet is the first in a series of 10. The series is about the teaching of language, literacy and English to children and young people aged 3 to 19. Its aim is to inspire and inform debate about school strategy. The remaining nine booklets draw on seminal studies and development work carried out over many years. The series has been commissioned by Owen Education, an independent school-improvement agency. This booklet summarises the findings of the other nine.

Purpose

Owen Education's purpose in producing the series is easily stated. There should, in the second decade of the 21st century, be a professional consensus amongst those who teach English to children and young people, or who teach those children and young people *in* English, as to how to help them most effectively gain confidence and competence in the use of English. We observe that though this consensus *should* exist, in practice it does not. We aim here to describe a desirable, intellectually sound and practically achievable consensus around which those who teach English or teach *in* English could unite.

By 'those who teach English or teach *in* English' we mean three groups of professionals: teachers of children aged from three to 11 in early-years settings and primary schools; teachers of the subject English in secondary schools and colleges serving young people between the ages of 11 and 19; and teachers of a range of other subjects in those secondary schools and colleges, for whom it is essential that students have sufficient confidence and competence as readers, writers and speakers of English to access and benefit from the curriculum in those subjects.

There is a particular urgency in our purpose, since all contemporary commentators agree that, whatever progress has been made overall in raising the achievement of learners in English, language and literacy, there is still a large gap between the highest and the lowest achievers. There are still far too many children and young people who are failing to become competent and confident users of English, when there is no valid reason, in terms of their potential, why they *should* fail. Those most at risk of failure are learners from socio-economically poorer backgrounds.

Key principles

We believe that the best work on the development of language and literacy draws on seven basic principles.

1. There is no intellectual achievement more intimately connected to a child's and young person's overall sense of worth as an individual and as a social being than the achievement of competence and confidence in the use of her or his language or languages.
2. The achievement of competence in any aspect of language is prior to and more complex than the achievement of the ability to analyse that aspect of language. Learners nonetheless continually engage in acts of reflection on aspects of the language they encounter and use.
3. The achievement of competence in any aspect of language is principally owed to the enjoyable *experience* of that aspect of language. *Instruction* in an aspect of language has a secondary but nonetheless very significant role to play in this achievement.
4. The learner's brain makes dynamic generalisations from enjoyable experiences of language. These generalisations prepare the learner for new encounters with and uses of language.
5. The motivation for any productive or receptive encounter with or use of language is the desire and need to construct meaning. Producers and receivers of language are both engaged in the construction of meaning.
6. Examples of language and literacy in use in English and of potential value and interest to learners are vast in number and diversity. Some of that diversity should be evident in the selection of examples which teachers present to learners.
7. Learners' experience of language in education should both value and confirm their linguistic, cultural and social backgrounds, and introduce them to cultural and social contexts beyond those they are familiar with.

The seven principles are stated here at a level of generality and abstraction which probably seems high-flown and dry. We shall try to invest them with a living practicality later on. In the meantime, it may be asked: what is so remarkable about them? Are they not self-evident, uncontroversial? The answer is: they should be, but they haven't been. The reason why they haven't been has something to do with the history of the contest for control of the teaching of English, language and literacy in our schools and colleges over the last five decades. It also has to do with the fact that worthwhile professional knowledge can sometimes be forgotten, get lost, in the welter of new initiatives and changes of course – often politically driven – affecting the curriculum.

The series

The series sets out and illustrates a comprehensive and rigorous basis on which learners are enabled to gain confidence and competence in the use of English. The booklets are entitled:

<i>English, Language and Literacy 3 to 19: Summary</i>	<i>Talk</i>
<i>Reading 3 to 7</i>	<i>Writing 3 to 7</i>
<i>Reading 7 to 16</i>	<i>Writing 7 to 16</i>
<i>Grammar and Knowledge about Language</i>	<i>Drama</i>
<i>Media</i>	<i>English 16 to 19</i>

The remainder of this booklet

Chapter 1 contains a brief critique of the new National Curriculum for English. Detailed critiques appear in eight of the other nine booklets.

Chapter 2 contains ‘summaries of main points’ on talk, reading, writing, grammar and knowledge about language, drama, media and English 16 to 19. These distil the essence of what each booklet says. They also appear at the beginning of the other nine booklets.

Chapter 3 presents an alternative curriculum for English, grouped by the areas of the English curriculum just listed, up to age 16. (These form the penultimate chapters of the eight other booklets concerned with the 3 to 16 age-range.) The alternative proposals accord much more closely with what is known about how children learn English and learn through English than do the government’s new National Curriculum orders. Reading and writing – divided by age-ranges in the four separate booklets on those topics – are brought together in this chapter, yielding an alternative curriculum for English spread over six sections.

The situation at 16 to 19 is somewhat different from that at 3 to 16, in that there are no statutory curriculum requirements at this age-range. So we offer no alternative curriculum for English 16 to 19. However, there are notable shortcomings and missed opportunities in the new examination arrangements at 16 to 19. These are discussed in the booklet *English 16 to 19*.

Chapter 4 contains a critique of the government’s existing and planned arrangements for assessment at the Early Years Foundation Stage and at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. The chapter offers clear, practical and rational alternatives. Those offered for the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 challenge the shortcomings of current and imminent government requirements, by restoring to reading and writing their wholeness as complex activities, and by granting to the spoken language the importance it deserves.

A tribute and an encouragement

What follows in this booklet and in the series as a whole is offered as a tribute and an encouragement to the professionalism of thousands of teachers in England, in the United Kingdom as a whole, and in the English-speaking world more widely. The principles stated and the proposals made are theoretical and practical frameworks within which teachers can take fuller responsibility for their professional actions than – in recent years and in England at least – they have been allowed to. For too long, teachers in England have been treated as machine operators, given sets of instructions narrowly related to ‘method’, and told to follow them. Professional success comes not from adherence to any one method of teaching, but from a deeper understanding of the conditions for successful learning. To promote that success is the ambition of this series.