This infographic presents the Teaching and Learning Cycle (TLC) and its guiding principles for effective implementation. The TLC and the guiding principles together provide an instructional sequence that integrates evidence-based early language and literacy instruction with culturally and linguistically sustaining and inclusive practices. The goal is to affirm each student's identity and promote joyful teaching and learning.

What is the Teaching and Learning Cycle?

The TLC is a pedagogical approach for building students' skills in the following areas: reading comprehension, discussion, writing, vocabulary, grammar, and language awareness.

Effective literacy instruction includes explicitly teaching about the language in different text types and playfully exploring this language through talk. Using the TLC, teachers scaffold children's language and literacy development, with a special focus on language awareness, through a sequence of five stages.

1. Building the Field
2. Exploring the Language of the Text Type
3. Jointly Constructing Texts
4. Independently Constructing Texts
5. Sharing Texts

Throughout these stages, students engage with a high-quality and complex “mentor text,” such as a children's story book or science article. This mentor text provides a model for the writing students will do at the end of the cycle.¹

¹ For examples, see Spycher, Austin, & Fabian, 2018; Spycher, Garegnani, & Fabian, 2019; Spycher, Girard, & Moua, 2020; Spycher, 2017; and Spycher, 2021.
## The Teaching and Learning Cycle in Practice

### Building the Field

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<td>The first stage of the TLC focuses on building students’ “field” of knowledge, such as content knowledge of a science concept or knowledge of the events and life lessons in a story. Building the field occurs throughout the TLC, but the cycle always starts with meaning-making.</td>
<td>Ms. Ramirez reads aloud The Color Collector by Nicholas Solis and Renia Meallinou over three days. While reading, she pauses to briefly explain new vocabulary and figurative language and invites the children to discuss comprehension questions with a partner.</td>
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### Exploring the Language of the Text Type

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<td>During this stage, teachers guide students’ understanding of how language works within a text. Students learn to recognize how a text is organized; “unpack” the grammatical structures in sentences; or analyze word choice. They explore how authors use language effectively.</td>
<td>After Ms. Ramirez completes multiple readings of the story, she shows them how the story is organized in three big chunks: orientation, complication, and resolution. She guides them to identify and discuss how the author used dialogue and vivid vocabulary and charts this language on a poster.</td>
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### Jointly Constructing Texts

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<td>At this stage, teachers guide students to reconstruct the mentor text, first orally in partners and then in writing as a whole class. Teachers chart the co-crafted text on a poster and prompt students to include important information and language from the mentor text. Students are “rehearsing” for independent writing.</td>
<td>Ms. Ramirez briefly walks through the book to highlight events and language. Next, she invites the children to orally retell the story to a peer. Then, she asks the whole class to help her retell the story in writing. She writes what they say on chart paper and asks questions that help them recall the key events and language from the book.</td>
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### Independently Constructing Texts

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<td>At this stage, students are ready to independently write their own texts with confidence. Teachers provide support while encouraging peer collaboration. Students refer to success criteria, charts created while exploring and jointly constructing the mentor text, and the mentor text itself.</td>
<td>Ms. Ramirez guides the class to co-create a brief list of “success criteria,” to help them focus on important story elements, such as the problem and how it is resolved. While the students write, she observes them carefully to provide in-the-moment scaffolding, as needed.</td>
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### Sharing Texts

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<td>During this final stage, students celebrate themselves and their peers as writers. Students may share their writing in pairs, in small groups, or with the whole class. After sharing, students reflect on any feedback their peers provided using the same success criteria they used to compose their texts.</td>
<td>Ms. Ramirez sets up four designated “author’s chairs” in each corner of her classroom. First, she models with a parent volunteer, demonstrating how to share and how to be a good audience member. Then she sends small groups to each corner to take turns sharing their stories.</td>
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Guiding Principles for Implementing the Teaching and Learning Cycle

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The stages of the TLC represent a coherent and sequenced process in which evidence-based practices are implemented.

Three guiding principles are essential for implementation success: culturally sustaining pedagogy, scaffolding, and meaningful assessment.

Guiding Principle #1: Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

Culturally sustaining pedagogy involves recognizing cultural and linguistic assets, frames of reference, worldviews, and diverse learning styles students bring to the classroom as assets and integrating them into the curriculum. Using instructional practices and materials that are responsive to and accurately portray students' experiences, families, and communities cultivates a sense of belonging in school and promotes pride in one's identity, carefully choosing identity-affirming mentor texts in the TLC, showing students they matter and cultures pluralistic classrooms.

Guiding Principle #2: Scaffolding

Scaffolding is a process in which temporary support, adjusted to the learner's needs, is provided to assist the learner to move from what they already know or can do independently to new understandings or skills. Planned scaffolding involves the planning of instructional moves that take into account students' particular learning needs and provide strategic support so that all students are successful in lesson activities. Planned scaffolding does not spontaneously occur but is intentionally designed and then systematically carried out. It is complemented by "in-the-moment" scaffolding, which happens during instruction.

Guiding Principle #3: Meaningful Assessment

Meaningful assessment involves being explicit about teacher expectations, focusing on authentic learning tasks and artifacts, and inviting students to participate in the assessment process. For example, using success criteria for the final writing product in the TLC takes the mystery out of teacher expectations and gives students a clear focus. Teachers can use the same success criteria to evaluate student writing, provide strategic feedback to students, and make informed instructional decisions moving forward.

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2 Paris & Alim, 2017
3 Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1983.
4 Heritage, 2022

Culturally affirming texts are those that reflect students' identities, experiences, families, and communities. Culturally affirming complex texts are those that are rich in language, including academic vocabulary and complex grammatical structures, and rich in concepts and ideas. Culturally affirming complex texts provide opportunities for children to think critically, discuss their perspectives with peers, and develop knowledge about the world.
Joyful Literacy

The TLC is grounded in joyful approaches to learning in which each student feels engaged, motivated, and interested in learning. “Joyful Literacy” is a culturally and linguistically sustaining, inclusive, and whole-child approach that integrates creativity and playful learning with evidence-based literacy strategies. Children develop higher-order literacy skills, feel a sense of belonging, and learn how literacy can be creative, fun, and joyful.

For more resources on Joyful Literacy see the IES website: Joyful Reading and Writing with Young Children.

Learn more about evidence-based practices in early literacy from these What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) Practice Guides


References


Spycher, P. (2021). *Scaffolding writing with the “Teaching and Learning Cycle” for students in grades 6-12*. WestEd.


