

## The New Zealand Curriculum

# Update



Teaching and Learning

### In this issue:

02

Series supporting literacy learning

03

Teachers as mediators

04

Developing and improving the instructional series

## Welcome to The New Zealand Curriculum Update

Curriculum Updates support school leaders and teachers as they work to design and review their school curriculum in line with the New Zealand Curriculum and with current knowledge and understandings about effective classroom teaching.

Curriculum Updates are published in the *Education Gazette* and are available online at <http://www.nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz>

This Update focuses on the various English-medium instructional series published by Learning Media for the Ministry of Education and on the critical role of teachers in the use of the series.



## Teaching and learning with the instructional series

**The Ministry of Education instructional series are supplied free to schools and support learning across the New Zealand Curriculum.**

All series include student materials and teacher support materials, and many are accompanied by CDs providing additional audio support. You will be familiar with many of the series already.

- **Ready to Read** and the **Junior Journal** lie at the core of reading programmes for children in years 1–3.
- The **School Journal**, published in four parts, supports literacy learning across curriculum areas for years 4–8.
- The **School Journal Story Library** books and the **Electronic Storybook** CD-ROMs support students in years 5–6 and 7–8 who are reading 1–2 years below their expected levels of achievement.
- **Connected**, published in three parts, provides in-depth content in science, technology, and mathematics for students in years 4–8 and supports literacy learning in these areas.

- **Figure It Out** is a series of mathematics curriculum support books for years 3–8.

Each series is designed for a specific stage in students' learning, providing supports and challenges to scaffold students' growing understandings and to prepare them for the next stage in their learning. To help you use these series strategically, the teacher support materials that accompany them provide constructive, practical guidance. This guidance is critical as schools address the requirements of the New Zealand Curriculum.

You should use the instructional series flexibly to suit your classroom programme and the strengths and needs of your students. At the same time, it's important that you make the most effective use of the series as tools for teaching and learning.



# Series supporting literacy learning

## A major focus of the instructional series is literacy.

The English-medium series encompass a wide range of engaging, lively texts that reflect and affirm the identities and cultures of New Zealand's diverse learners. They offer many opportunities for students to read, use, and create increasingly complex texts in ways that build on their existing experience and knowledge. Many texts reflect Māori and Pasifika perspectives and cultural values. When some students have first-hand knowledge of the ideas and experiences in a text, the teacher and other students can learn from these students. Contributing in this way also strengthens these students' own engagement and interest in their learning.

Additionally, these literacy series form a strong, coherent whole that is planned and developed to support teaching and learning right through years 1–8. Ready to Read is designed to establish the foundations of literacy for students in their early years at school. In year 3, the *Junior Journal* acts as a bridge to the *School Journal* by providing texts at the top of the Ready to Read colour wheel while introducing students to the anthology format of the *School Journal*. The four parts of the *School Journal* provide progressively more

challenging texts for students in years 4–8.

We know, however, that not all students progress at the same pace; so alongside the core literacy materials for everyday classroom programmes, there are targeted resources – *School Journal Story Library* and the *Electronic Storybook* – for students who are not achieving as they should be in reading. These resources connect to the themes and content of the *School Journal*, with the teacher support materials focusing on accelerating students' literacy learning.

These series are aligned closely with the Literacy Learning Progressions and the year and cohort levels of the National Standards. Levelling is a key tool for ensuring that each text provides an appropriate balance of supports and challenges and is both accessible and challenging for students in its target audience.

When you use all these series in a strategic way (see page 3), you'll help students to become confident learners and to build the skills, knowledge, and strategies that they need to fully access the richness of the New Zealand Curriculum.

## Where does *Connected* fit?

As a companion resource to the *School Journal*, *Connected* can be used in classroom literacy programmes for years 4–8. *Connected* supports you and your students to navigate the reading and writing challenges often found in scientific, technological, and mathematical texts. At the same time, it provides in-depth content that promotes the exploration and learning of ideas in science, technology, and mathematics.



## Supporting components

Different series have different components, depending on their purpose. For example, Ready to Read includes big books and poems cards as specific supports for literacy learning in the early years. But all series include student texts and teacher support materials, and most are accompanied by audio materials.

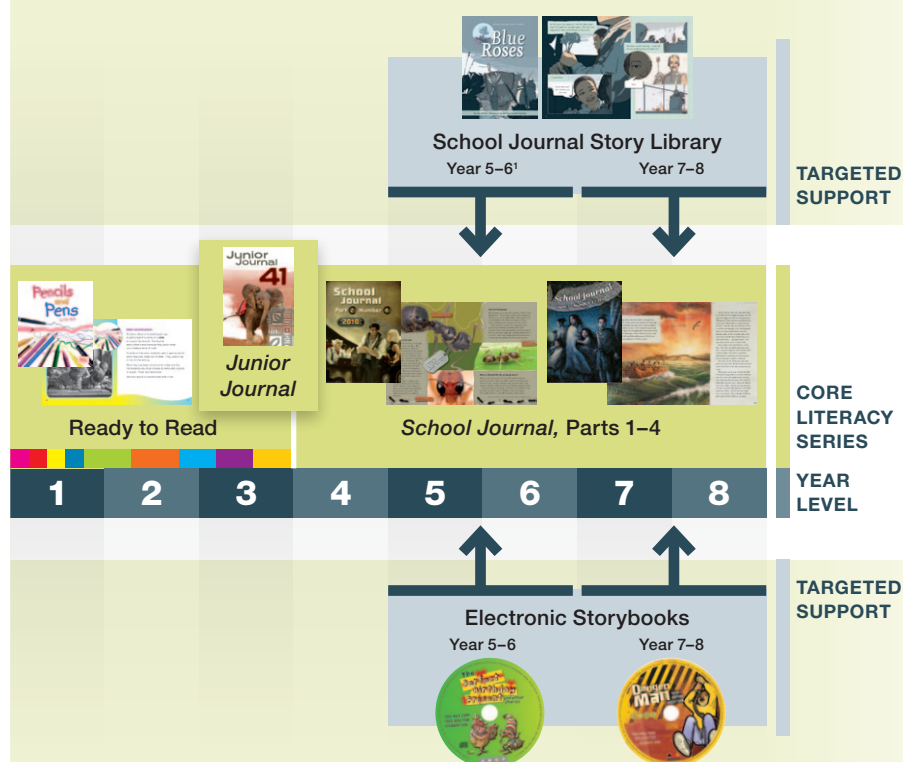
The **teacher support materials** are there to help you to fully explore the teaching and learning opportunities of student texts. Throughout the support materials, you'll find strategies and advice for maximising the potential of the student texts and for working with diverse learners, including English language learners. You'll also find suggestions for supporting students' writing.

To access the teacher support materials, follow the instructional series link on the Literacy Online homepage: <http://literacyonline.tki.org.nz>

The **audio materials** (CDs) that accompany Ready to Read, *Junior Journal*, *School Journal*, and *School Journal Story Library* also support readers by providing models of clear, fluent reading in authentic New Zealand voices. Having students read along with an audio recording is one way to increase their reading fluency and confidence and to help them engage with more difficult texts than they can read on their own.



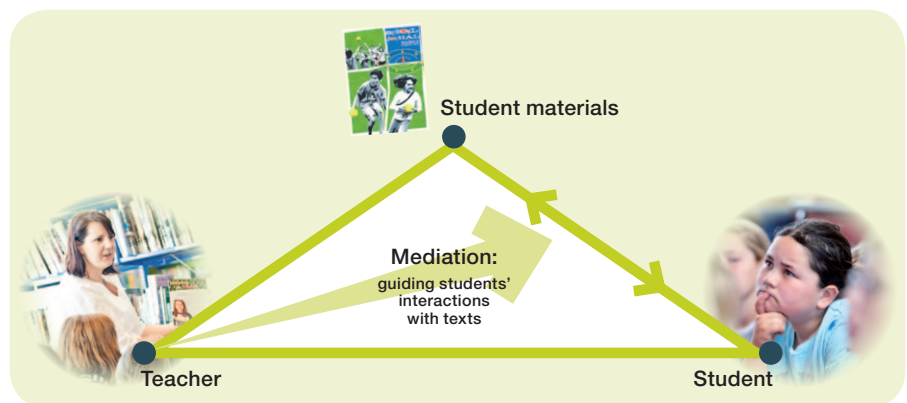
### Instructional Series Supporting Literacy Learning



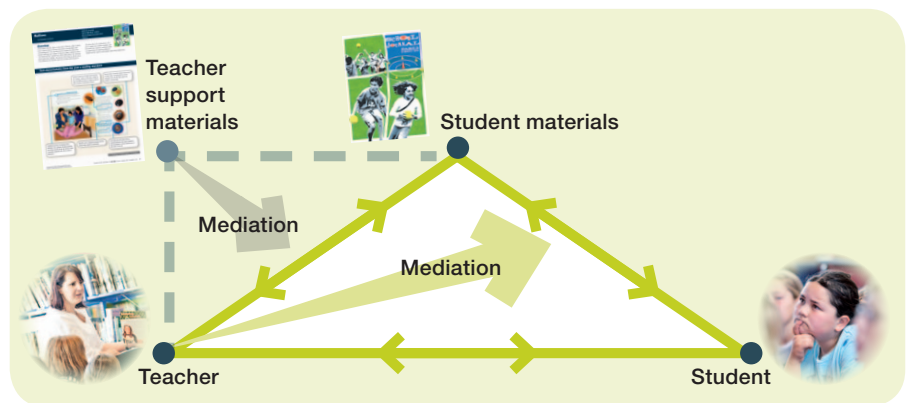
<sup>1</sup> The year 5–6 *School Journal Story Library* is a new series, complementing the longstanding year 7–8 series. The first issues in the series will be distributed in 2011.

# Teachers as mediators

Effective teachers act as mediators of student materials. That is, they play a vital role in selecting appropriate texts for students, supporting them to interact with those texts, and watching their learning behaviours closely. Based on what they notice, they decide how best to guide students' interactions with the texts according to their particular strengths and needs. The upper diagram on the right shows this mediation process.



The teacher support materials add a second level of mediation, helping you to use the student materials in a careful, deliberate way. They provide connections to other texts in the instructional series, as well as links to specific supporting documents. Most importantly, they describe specific strategies you can use to support students' learning. These in turn help your understanding of where your students are at, strengthen the connection between you and them, and lead to improved teaching and learning.



## > CASE STUDY

### Creating powerful connections with students

**Jenny Moylan teaches students in years 2–3 at St Bernadette's School in Naenae, Lower Hutt. She explains how the teacher support materials enhance her use of the Ready to Read series.**



The teacher support materials really help me to get more out of the texts my students read. I use them when I'm planning my guided reading sessions and to help me think about links I might make across the curriculum and integrate into my instructional reading programme. This week, I've used the support materials for both *White Sunday* and *Diwali* to extend my thinking and knowledge about these celebrations. For *White Sunday*, this really helped me to facilitate a class discussion in which my Pasifika students shared their knowledge and experience of such ceremonies prior to reading the text.

The materials extend my thinking about how I can use a text. I look at the suggested purposes for reading, and they can prompt me to think in different ways about how I might use the text. The support materials are particularly helpful when I know I need to challenge my students to think deeply about a text. I can draw on the suggestions for supporting my students' use of comprehension strategies to promote their critical thinking.

Recently, I used the Ready to Read teacher support materials for *Did You Shake Your Tail Feathers?* with a group of students who need considerable support to think about what they read. They are very good at decoding words but much less focused on going deeper into a text. I chose this text because it is rich in information and I knew it would be engaging and provide suitable challenges for them. The teacher support materials gave me guidance on how I could support students to make inferences. I framed some questions to help students pick up on the clues about the specific personalities of the birds. In particular, I wanted them to notice key words and phrases such as "snapped Kiwi" and ask "What does this tell us about Kiwi's personality?" The students' responses showed that they were thinking more deeply about the text as a result of my questions. Ultimately, I want them to be able to do this by themselves.

One aspect I find very useful in the support materials is the particular features of each text – because otherwise I probably wouldn't

explore these to the extent that I do! I also like the way that the materials refer to similar texts, which is great when I want to focus on a particular theme. And after my class has read the text, I can engage them purposefully by using the suggested "After Reading" responses.

It's really convenient that the support materials are online. It makes all that information so accessible, and that takes some of the sweat out of my planning. Being able to go online at home helps me to plan my lessons more thoroughly, which in turn helps to make my teaching more relevant to the learning needs of my students.

#### Guiding questions He pātai

- How do the teacher support materials inform your practice?
- How do you guide your students' interactions with texts?

# Developing and improving the instructional series



Specialists, editors, and designers at Learning Media regularly review the instructional series to ensure that they reflect the latest understandings from research on teaching and learning. They also carefully consider how well the instructional series serve New Zealand students of all cultural groups and how the range of quality texts can be grown.

Specialists and editors work with leading New Zealand educators and experienced classroom teachers to make and evaluate changes to the series. An important focus of this work is making sure that the texts contain both relevant curriculum content and the features and challenges that support students to meet literacy demands across the curriculum.

Components of many series are trialled in schools before publication. Trialling the student books with both students and teachers helps to determine how well the books engage, support, and challenge students within a guided programme of instruction. Feedback from teachers about the support materials helps to gauge how effectively those materials provide guidance on making the best use of the student texts.

The introduction of the reading and writing standards has led to a sharper focus on the readability of texts in each series. When the year level of each text is clearly signalled, teachers can be more confident that they're choosing appropriate texts for their students and making sound judgments about their progress. In the past year, there have been comprehensive investigations into the levelling of series in years 1–3 and years 4–8 to ensure that it follows robust, evidenced-based, and internationally accepted procedures.<sup>2</sup>

An investigation into the series' audio materials has also taken place. Its purpose was to examine how audio materials support literacy learning, how teachers and students currently use audio materials, and future options for audio materials. The investigation has confirmed that audio has real value in literacy learning, especially in the early years and for those readers who aren't achieving at the level they need to be.

Such investigations ensure that the different instructional series provide the best possible support for teachers and diverse students in New Zealand classrooms.

<sup>2</sup> The years 4–8 investigation is ongoing. More comprehensive information on reading levels for texts in years 4–8 will be provided during 2011.

## Supporting resources

### ► Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1–4 and 5–8

These two professional learning handbooks are invaluable for all teachers of literacy. They explain and illustrate the dimensions of literacy teaching practice that research clearly links to improved outcomes for students.



### ► Learning through Talk: Oral Language in Years 1–3 and 4–8

These two professional learning handbooks focus on the role of oral language and its development and use in literacy learning.



### ► Literacy Online

<http://literacyonline.tki.org.nz>

This website helps primary and secondary teachers to develop teaching and learning programmes based on the literacy strengths and needs of their students.



### ► Journal Surf

<http://journalsurf.learningmedia.co.nz>

Journal Surf is the online catalogue of the *School Journal* and other resources (*Junior Journal*, *Connected*, and the *School Journal Story Library*). It contains a searchable database to help you locate items in these resources.



### ► Building Science Concepts

This series of books, which supports teachers of New Zealand students at curriculum levels 1–4, will help you to make stronger use of *Connected*. It is designed to help teachers build students' science understandings. Each book is based around a theme and includes science information for teachers and a sequence of classroom activities.



### ► Down the Back of the Chair

<http://www.thechair.minedu.govt.nz>

Down the Back of the Chair is the Ministry of Education's online catalogue of the teaching and learning resources it provides to schools. You can search for the resources you need and then order copies from the website. Schools are entitled to replace lost or worn copies free of charge.

