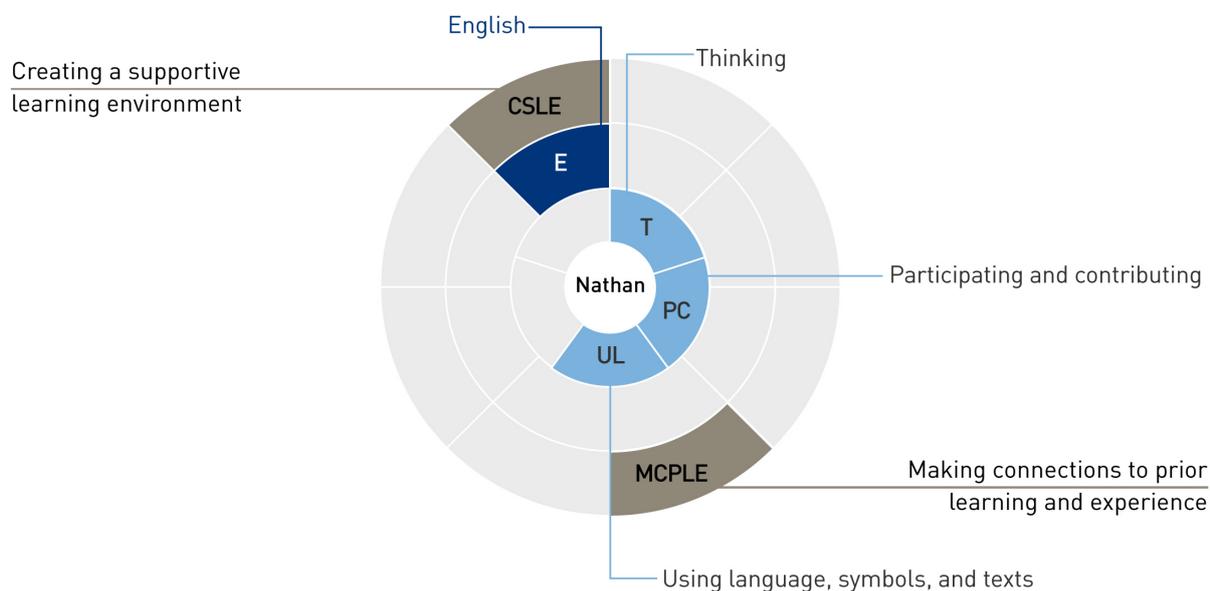


Nathan the reader

Links to the curriculum



Student background

Name	Nathan	Nathan lives in a small, rural community and has been at school for almost a year. Nathan attends school three half-days and two full days. From term 3, 2008, Nathan will attend school full time.
Age	5	
Year	1	
School	Primary	

Nathan is demonstrating a passion for literacy. He loves being read to and spends a lot of time browsing through books. He spells many words with his magnetic letters.

There has been significant growth of Nathan’s literacy capabilities, especially in understanding of text, sharing excitement with text, and communicating with text. Nathan has autism and is essentially “non-verbal” except for the use of “ah ha” with different intonations to communicate intent.

Nathan communicates using the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) and Makaton Sign Language (Makaton). The school education team is in the process of assessing communication devices to enable Nathan to communicate with others in and out of the classroom.

Four learning stories

- 1. Nathan learns to read** 24 May 2008
- 2. Nathan reads a whole reader** 30 June 2008
- 3. Nathan knows high frequency words** 2 July 2008
- 4. Nathan reads with a buddy** 18 September 2008

This string of stories was collected over several months and shows Nathan beginning to use language, symbols, and texts with growing independence as he participates in literacy activities.

Nathan learns to read

Student	Nathan	Date	24 May 2008
		Observer	Bridget (Mum)

Intended learning outcome

— Independently select and read for enjoyment.

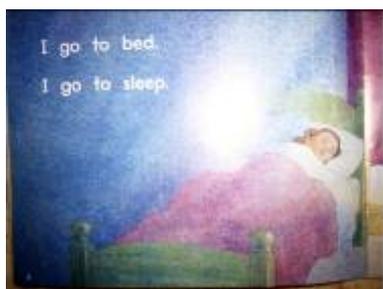
Background

In this video clip Nathan is joining in with his class reading poetry. He is able to independently find the poem in his book and then match one-to-one as the poem is read aloud in unison by the other children. ([Click here](#) to view the video clip online))

Learning story

When I picked Nathan up from school today, his teacher told me that Nathan had verbalised the words "up" and "bed" when listening to the teacher read, "The Sun and the Moon" in class. Up until today, Nathan would match one-to-one as text was read to him, but not give any verbal response or attempt to read it himself. So this was a big step. Nathan's teacher aide sent home another story called, "My Balloon Goes Up" for us to share with Nathan.

All weekend, Nathan repeated the word "up" and demonstrated its meaning by reaching up. We read and reread the book, "My Balloon Goes Up".



By the end of the weekend, Nathan read the story, he made sounds for all the text; for example, "t" (the) "ba" (balloon) "go" (goes) "up" (up). Nathan also used magnetic letters to spell many of the words from the story. Nathan is always eager to have books read to him at home and is keen to write words that are read to him or spell them on his magnetic board.

Footnote: One year after this story was written Bridget captured this [video clip](#) of Nathan's awesome independent reading at home.

Analysis – what learning is happening here?

Key competencies

Using language, symbols, and texts, Thinking

This is the first example of Nathan reading words aloud. He shows that he understands language is used for communicating information. From being part of an instructional reading group in class, he has learned how to read and interpret text. He is using thinking to understand (decode) text that he is reading and text that is read to him.

Learning areas

Level 1 English: Listening, Reading and Viewing, Speaking, Writing, and Presenting: language features

Nathan is demonstrating he is able to decode simple words and is beginning to use semantic, syntactic, visual, and graphophonic cues. He is showing he is aware that written and oral language can be used to convey meaning.

Where to next?

Nathan needs many opportunities to read simple, emergent texts that have repetitive language and a number of high frequency words. As his confidence grows, more difficult texts that require more complex decoding could be introduced. Care will need to be taken to ensure that Nathan has an understanding of what he is reading.

Nathan reads a whole reader

Student	Nathan	Date	30 June 2008
		Observer	Mary (teacher)

Intended learning outcome

- Actively participate in guided (instructional) reading group.

Over the past few days, Nathan has demonstrated a willingness to use words more and more in the classroom setting and to say the occasional word during the reading of a familiar story. During instructional reading with his group, Nathan would point to the text as the teacher or another child read the story to him. Yesterday, during reading, Nathan began verbalising the words while the classroom release teacher pointed to them. He made a sound for each word or said the whole word. Nathan then re-read the story a number of times. Each time he read the story, he pronounced the words more clearly and more audibly.

Today, I introduced a previously unread story called, "What would you like?" I introduced the story to the children in the group and we talked about what was happening on each page.



The children then read the story independently. I assisted Nathan with pointing as he read the text. He attempted all the words and read many of the high frequency words clearly. I helped him with the pronunciation of some of the longer words that he only said the first syllable for; words such as, "grasshopper" (pronounced as "gra" by Nathan). Nathan then re-read the story to Debbie (teacher aide) and a teacher from another classroom.

Analysis – what learning is happening here?

Key competencies

Participating and contributing, Using language, symbols, and texts, Managing self

This example shows Nathan using language, symbols, and texts as he decodes a simple, repetitive sentence in an early reader. He is also demonstrating managing self by following the routines of instructional reading. He is participating and contributing by being a part of the reading group.

Learning areas

Level 1 English: Listening, Reading and Viewing: processes and strategies, language features

Nathan is demonstrating that he expects text to make sense of text, that sounds combine to form words, and that sounds are represented by letters. He is able to decode simple words and can automatically recognise a number of high frequency words in context.

Where to next?

Nathan needs many opportunities to read simple, emergent texts that have repetitive language and a number of high frequency words that he can recognise. As his confidence grows, more difficult texts, that require more complex decoding, could be introduced.

Nathan knows high frequency words

Student	Nathan	Date	2 July 2008
		Observer	Mary (teacher)

Intended learning outcome

- Recognise and read high frequency words.

As part of continuing assessment of the emergent readers in Room 3, all children in the class are asked to read high frequency words printed on cards. Because Nathan has, up until now, been essentially "non-verbal", this task was completed asking Nathan to find the correct card. He was shown three word cards at a time. The teacher aide would say, for example, "Find me the card that says "the"". Nathan would then indicate which card he thought it was.



In February, this method revealed that Nathan could find approximately 10 words.

However, we were unsure of the accuracy of this method because Nathan could not verbalise the word and often needed hand-over-hand support to point to the card.

This term, with Nathan beginning to read simple texts, his ongoing and reviewable resourcing schemes (ORRS) teacher decided to check Nathan's knowledge of the high frequency words again, this time asking him to read them from the cards, as do the other emergent readers in the class. This day, Nathan correctly read 33 of the 40 words shown to him.

Analysis – what learning is happening here?

Key competencies

Thinking, Using language, symbols, and texts

This demonstrates Nathan using language, symbols, and texts by recognising and reading out the high frequency words shown on the cards without context. Nathan is thinking as he develops an understanding of written text.

Learning areas

Level 1 English: Listening, Reading and Viewing

Nathan is demonstrating that he recognises words both in and out of context. He can automatically recognise many high frequency words.

Where to next?

Nathan needs to have access to a range of instructional texts that have these high frequency words in them to help him to understand words and make meaning from text. He also needs to continue to be introduced to new words including those he could not recognise when tested today. Another high frequency word checklist will be carried out in term 4.

Nathan reads with a buddy

Student	Nathan	Date	18 September 2008
		Observer	Mary (teacher)

Intended learning outcome

- Read spontaneously with a buddy.

Every Friday morning, my class of year 1 and 2 students join with a year 4 and 5 class to do buddy reading. The children work in groups of two or three. The younger children get to share familiar books from their browsing boxes, while the older buddies in turn read library books. Up until now, during buddy reading and whole-class shared reading, Nathan has preferred to take a listening role.



However today, Nathan's buddy began reading a book called, "The Haunted House". Nathan had read this book to the teacher and his parents several times.

Every time he read it he would demonstrate enjoyment when reading the noises made by the characters in the book. His buddy had read two pages, when Nathan, unprompted, joined in and read aloud the next page, which involved making the character noise "woo-oo-oo-oo". He then proceeded to finish reading the book to his buddy. He read the text "woo-oo-oo-oo" and "boo!" with great animation.

Analysis – what learning is happening here?

Key competencies

Participating and contributing, Using language, symbols, and texts, Relating to others

This is the first time Nathan has read to a buddy spontaneously. It shows him relating to others by listening actively and sharing in the reading. It shows that he is open to new learning and able to take different roles. Nathan is participating and contributing as he reads alongside the buddy. He is using language, symbols, and texts when he interprets and reads the words in the story, especially those in bold print.

Learning areas

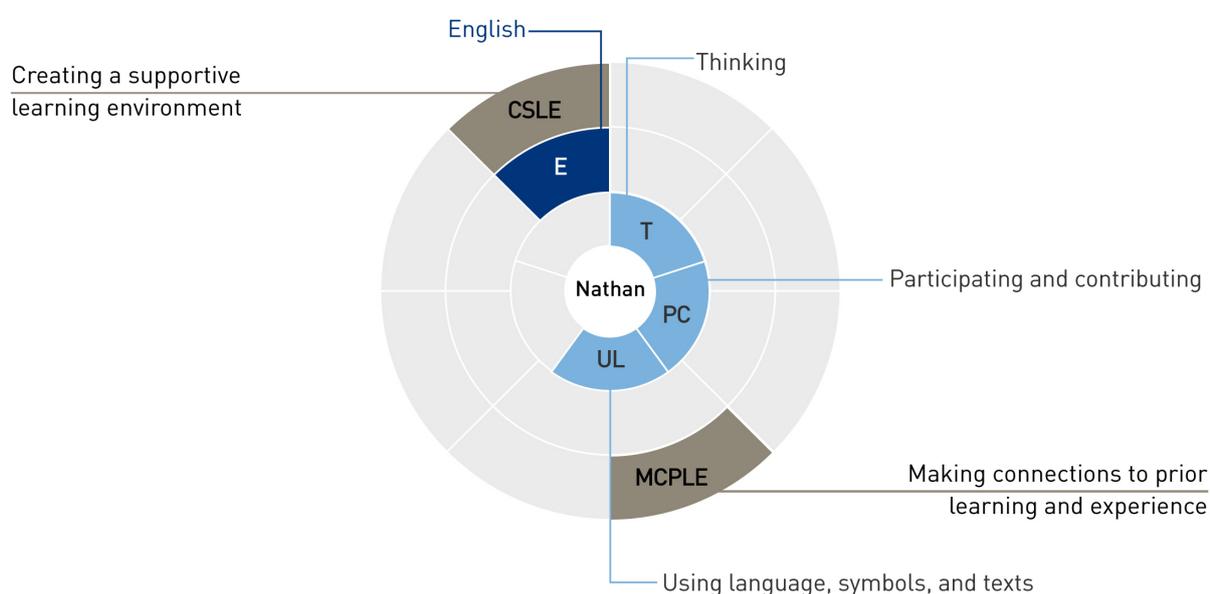
Level 1 English: Speaking, Writing, and Presenting: processes and strategies, purposes and audiences

Nathan demonstrates engagement with text when he uses animation to read parts of the text. This shows him responding to language and meanings and beginning to adapt spoken language to an audience when he takes the role of a character.

Where to next?

Nathan needs to be encouraged to read to and with his buddy every buddy reading time. We should expect Nathan to participate spontaneously in shared classroom reading.

Reflection – what these stories exemplify



Key competencies

These stories show Nathan participating and contributing in classroom learning. They also demonstrate Nathan meeting new challenges in his learning (thinking).

Nathan demonstrates his ability to use language, symbols, and texts in all the learning stories. He shows that he expects text to make sense, that sounds combine to form words, and that sounds are represented by letters.

How might these stories strengthen Nathan's identity as a learner?

The string of stories show Nathan's growing confidence in his ability to select and read a range of emergent texts, using semantic, syntactic, visual, and graphophonic cues, and his growing interest in being involved in literacy activities (agency).

The stories span several months during which time Nathan moves from repeating a few words from a story to reading an emergent reader to a buddy spontaneously and independently (continuity and depth). This learning occurs at home and at school in various forms – at instructional reading and one-on-one (breadth).

For more information on the four dimensions of agency, breadth, continuity, and depth (ABCDs), refer to *Narrative assessment: a guide for teachers*.

Learning areas

Level 1 English

This learning is in the strands of Listening, Reading, and Viewing and Speaking, Writing, and Presenting. Nathan is developing his ability to respond to meanings and ideas in texts. He is exploring language when reading. Nathan knows that text conveys messages and has an understanding of the connections between oral, written, and visual language.

Effective pedagogy

What does this tell us about teaching and learning in this setting?

Nathan's teacher has clear expectations for him. She works to create an accepting environment where routines, plus visual and verbal prompts, are used. There are plenty of supportive opportunities for Nathan to transfer new learning in a variety of contexts. His family takes an active interest in his learning at school and supports his achievements at home. The activities described in the learning stories show learning experiences that are introduced in steps, building on what Nathan already knows (making connections to prior learning and experience).

Reflective questions for the reader

"In what other ways might you extend your students' learning in a variety of contexts?"

"How can you encourage others to interact with learners with special education needs?"

"How can you continue to use what students know to enhance their further learning?"

Useful resources

Butterfield, N., Arthur, M., & Sigafos, J. (c1995). *Partners in everyday communicative exchanges: a guide to promoting interaction involving people with severe intellectual disability*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Pub. Co.

Downing, J. E. (c1996). *Including students with severe and multiple disabilities in typical classrooms: practical strategies for teachers*. Baltimore: P.H. Brookes Pub.

McCormick, L., Loeb, D. F., & Schiefbusch, R. L. (c2003). *Supporting children with communication difficulties in inclusive settings: school-based language intervention*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Ministry of Education. (2003). *Effective literacy practice in years 1 to 4*. Wellington: Learning Media.

Ministry of Education. (2007). *Literacy learning progressions: meeting the reading and writing demands of the curriculum: a professional tool for teachers: draft for consultation*. Wellington: Learning Media.