

Consider the range of texts that years 9 and 10 students need to be able to read as they undertake different learning tasks: science

This activity is intended to be used with teachers as they identify the reading demands that are integral to their programme, and consider the implications for their teaching. It focuses on teachers from the same department thinking about the reading demands of their subject. Although it describes the work of a science department, the same process can be used by teachers in any subject area.

This activity is part of a collection of activities that focuses on developing teachers’ understanding of the reading demands and tasks associated with a range of subjects. All of the activities involve either a group of teachers of a specific subject area working together, or a group of teachers who work across different subjects working together. Select the activities that will work best in your school and for your teachers.

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| **1.** | **The context** |
| The teachers in the science department want to strengthen their year 9 and 10 students’ ability to locate and use information in a range of texts – in print and online – so that they can work more independently and thoughtfully as they learn in science. The initial step in their inquiry is to consider the range of texts that students are required to read and use in science.The teachers are aware that their students are currently getting most of the science-related information they need through the worksheets or notes that they are preparing for them. Occasionally the students locate their own sources of information by searching online. The teachers know that they need to expand the range of texts the students are finding and using for different learning purposes. |
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| **What to do …**  |  | **Record your answers** |
| Ask each teacher to bring at least one example of the different types of texts they use in their programme.Use the texts that each teacher has brought as prompts to discuss the kinds of texts that students in years 9 and 10 could use to get the information they need in science. List these texts, and note different ways they could be grouped or categorised.From this list, identify the types of texts your students currently use and those which, as far as you’re aware, they’re not using .Keep this list to use later. |  |  |

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| **2.** | **Turning to the reading framework** |
| To check their ideas about the range of science texts students could be using, the teachers take a look at the illustrations that are in the top three signposts in the progression, *acquiring and using information and ideas in informational texts*, that have been developed for science in the reading framework of the LPFs.  |
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| **What to do …**  |  | **Record your answers** |
| Look through the illustrations that have been developed for years 9 and 10 science in the reading framework, focussing particularly on the aspect, *acquiring and using information and ideas in informational texts.* Note the different texts that the students have used in their science tasks.What are the characteristics of these texts that make them particular to science rather than another subject such as English or health? |  |  |

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| **3.** | **Identifying the particular characteristics of texts** |
| The teachers agree that it’s the particular way the texts are structured and the language that is used that, along with the science content, makes them science texts. They realise that these characteristics are also fundamental to the particular kinds of texts that the students have to write in science.  |
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| **What to do …**  |  | **Record your answers** |
| Return to the examples of different kinds of science-related texts that you gathered in step 1. For each text:Identify the science content. Note the way the text is structured. Look at the overall structure of the text as well as the way sentences and paragraphs are written. Note how the text uses any visual language such as diagrams.Identify the words and phrases that are science-specific. Note any vocabulary that could be considered “academic”i.e. words that are used in the classroom context, such as “define” or “method”, that are not used in everyday contexts (or are used differently in those contexts). |  |  |

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| **4.** | **Expanding the range of texts**  |
|  The teachers decide to expand the range of texts they use in their science programme.  |
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| **What to do …**  |  | **Record your answers** |
| In what ways could you introduce a wider range of texts so that students’ learning in science is strengthened? How could you link this range of texts to those they need to write in science? |  |  |