Semester*: One

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<th>Unit Code*: ETL411</th>
<th>Unit Name*: Teaching Literacy</th>
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<td>Assignment Title*:</td>
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<th>Lecturer’s Name*: Peter McDowell</th>
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<td>Student’s Full Name*: Ben Stuckey</td>
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<td>Student’s Email: * <a href="mailto:benjamin.stuckey@students.cdu.edu.au">benjamin.stuckey@students.cdu.edu.au</a></td>
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I declare that all material in this assessment is my own work except where there is a clear acknowledgement and reference to the work of others. I have read the University’s Academic and Scientific Misconduct Policy and understand its implications.*


I agree ☑️ I do not agree ☐

Double click on the square check box to mark as checked.

**CHECKLIST**

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Please start your assignment on the following page.
Student Cohort and Classroom

The setting for this assessment is a hypothetical classroom of Year One students situated in a very remote community of the Northern Territory. There are 25 students enrolled in Year One at the school, however, for various reasons there are on average 16 students in attendance on any given day. The students are all indigenous and speak one or more of the Yolngu Matha languages as their first (L1), having only limited contact with (L2) Standard Australian English (SAE) within their domestic setting. Where English is spoken, it is predominantly Australian Aboriginal English however there is acknowledgement from senior community members, in agreement with the school, of the importance of learning SAE.

The classroom is technology rich. Interactive Whiteboards (SMART Boards) are used and students have XO laptop computers. In a remote classroom, the use of laptops individually and a SMART Board for use by the entire class, allows great opportunity for educational Digital Instructional Resources (DIR's) deployed in the classroom situation. The class also has part time indigenous teacher's assistants who assist greatly in language barriers and cultural protocols which should be respected. Student performance data for similar schools can be viewed at MySchools (ACARA, 2012). Equal numbers of girls and boys attend the class. Student ability, as far as literacy is concerned, varies widely. The spectrum of student abilities can be clearly expressed using the ESL Early Childhood and Primary Learners Document within the Northern Territory Curriculum Framework (NTCF) (DET 2012a); in this class it ranges in the from BL1 to Level 3 across the Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening learning areas. Critical attention is given to students in the context of English as a
Second Language (ESL). Most of the students fall at the lower end of this scale and are below national averages, a familiar scenario for indigenous schooling (ACARA, 2012; Indigenous Literacy Foundation, 2010).

The school highlights its priorities as boosting school attendance, higher achievement in numeracy and literacy, increasing community engagement and providing skills for employment. Several initiatives, both Federal such as 'Closing the Gap' (FAHCSIA, 2012a), and (Northern) Territorian such as Territory Growth Towns (DHLGRS, 2012) and 'Every Child, Every Day' (DET, 2012c) are complementary or subsidiary to the 2007 Northern Territory Emergency Response (FAHCSIA, 2012b). Current philosophy of the school is very much pertinent to the community and recognises these objectives. As a result, there is a focus on **halving the gap between non-indigenous and indigenous year 12 completion rates by 2020**, and also **reading, writing and numeracy achievements for all children by 2018**. For the school, this means a focus on school attendance and improving domestic and social welfare to assist learning outcomes through student wellbeing.

Student wellbeing is critical to learning outcomes within a school. A major focus of the aforementioned reforms is to address child wellbeing. Wellbeing encompasses a holistic ethos drawn from the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic aspects of the student’s life (MCEECYDA, 2008, p. 4).

**Use of ICT in the hypothetical school context**

Although just beginning formal schooling life, elementary digital technologies can offer young students a window to better understanding the 'outside world', particularly in regard to Western culture. It could be argued that this is very important due to the sheer remoteness of this school relative to others in the country. The use of technology in all Australian classrooms is seen as an important step for future prosperity, as outlined in the Melbourne
Declaration (2008) and the preceding Australian Curriculum (2012). Marsh (2009) summarises and Somkeh (2007) explores the many pros and cons of technology in the classroom. Young students given appropriate teaching, should adapt quickly to new technologies particularly because of their exploratory nature and lack of fear for 'breaking things'.

Literacy can be seen as developing oral and written language skills and knowledge of literature. In a modern world digital literacy is essential to achieving outcomes listed as priorities at the school level, by community stakeholders and at the Territorian and Australian political levels.

As building 'constructive learners able to access tools from appropriate sources' is seen as priority in the hypothetical school, developing digital literacy is essential to achieve various outcomes of the EsseNTial curriculum - such as Con 1, where there emphasis is on accessing technologies for specific purposes (DET 2009b, p. 49).

Few of the students will have read text such as storybooks in their domestic setting in a way that gives a solid background to starting school. As a result students find understanding differences between printed and oral text challenging (ACARA 2011, p.84). The Melbourne Declaration and the Territory's embracing of the Australian Curriculum reinforces the emphasis on literacy and numeracy as well as advocating digital media use (MCEECDYA, 2008, p.5). Three digital instructional resources (DIR's) and their application in the context of the hypothetical classroom are discussed and evaluated below.

**Resource 1: Storytime: Flutter-by friends! L10406**

This resource has been designed with a SMART Board in mind, for example, students can reach the page turning or press the play again button on the lower part of the board. The pages of a caterpillar-come-butterfly story are read out with text highlighted and are
underlined as spoken. Although digital, presentation retains characteristics of a normal hard copy book so that features such as title, author and the overall 'feel' of the book can be discussed (e.g. it is a story 'book' with imaginative text). Initially, teachers can talk students through the text, taking time to construct and de-construct the story as negotiated within the class. The story can form solid material for a range of outcomes from Foundation to Level 1 particularly in the Literature and Literacy Strands, particularly: Responding to literature (ACELT1582). It would certainly suit curriculum methodology advocated by Murray (2007) and Harris (1990 p.145), where creative measures such as role play, theme development and discussion are intertwined with the story. These approaches reinforce the 'looking deeper into text' philosophy discussed in the Melbourne Declaration (2008) and ratified by the Australian Curriculum English Strand. The teacher can build on the familiarity and scaffolded learning approaches to later have students read this story, or others, themselves (Murray, 2007).

Another valuable feature of this text is the cross curricular relevance to LL 1 'Life and Living – Reproduction and Change' of the NTCF. It may be the case that students already have a good knowledge of life cycles, allowing outcomes from the science stream to be addressed, perhaps to the level of Band 2. Informative, factual text is likely to be encountered in the realm of science and as such teachers could elaborate on differences between the types of texts referring to the butterfly life-cycle (ACELY1658).

The use of a narrator to read text, allows students to engage with story separately to the teacher. The ‘page turn’ buttons allow reading and reviewing at learner’s own pace if used on laptops, and reviewing and questions to be asked by the teacher if used on the SMART Board. Reading through text, discussing and generally engaging with the student about the text is seen as critical to learning literacy (Gee p.58). Other interactive texts can be used when group discussion is helpful to push the boundaries of learning, known as the 'zone of proximal development' of Vygotzky (DEECD, 2012). This software offers an excellent
starting point to introduce students to literature, from which they can then move onto hard copy books for the purposes of individual learning and further developing reading skills.

Resource 2: Tux Paint http://tuxpaint.org/

This is an open source drawing program with raster graphic shapes, lines etc., but it does have a very basic word processing capability. Initially I had some reservations recommending this program because of its perceived lack of relevance to literacy, however after some thought, I reaffirmed that the simplicity and flexibility – and therefore possibilities – would make it of some value in the classroom. Having viewed several word processors aimed at younger learners, it was decided that this probably has all that is required at the Foundational/Year 1 level of the English curriculum. Many of the students in this class would not have used a computer at all before so best to start of simple and ensure positive experiences with Tux. It has the potential to provide a platform to build from for further tasks on true word processors and more complex writing tasks. Some of the icons (such as the font button) in Tux are similar to those of more advanced word processors. By using the program, students will intuitively contribute to their developing digital literacy.

Tasks addressing learning outcomes (ACELY1662) can be centred on creating text (such as a paragraph of descriptive text) followed by creative illustrations using the paint tools available. The flexibility of the software allows students to tap into the visual-spatial realm of Gardner's multiple intelligences (L. Connell, personal communication 16th, March, 2012).

The use of 'drawing features' can be considered a 'reward' for students, or equally as a link to other outcomes: A. Mathematics - drawing and describing shapes (ACMMG009); write 1-10 with illustrated representations of those numbers (ACMNA002) or, for more advanced students, create illustrated assessments with several sums. B. Visual Art – KGP 3 (NTCF.
2002) 'choose different combinations of various shapes and colours to recreate real or imagined images and forms, e.g. collage from natural materials'.

As a simple word-processor, Tux could be used as a medium for rewriting and editing text from a written hardcopy. This could be done at different stages of a unit of learning, e.g. small amount of text created at the start of a unit of grammar, punctuation etc. (ACELY1662) and then revisited later in a unit, to be 'reworked' (ACELY1664), perhaps by classmates and especially to cater for more advanced students.

Criticism could be aimed at the lack of flexibility in ordering the text, but simplicity is key. Another potential drawback is that there may be issues where students become distracted and don't concentrate literacy based task set out by the teacher; extra effort may be required to ensure students are 'on task'. However, if a key aim of the school is to boost attendance, then learning materials must be interesting for the student. Stamps (symbols) can be downloaded for Tux projects where a specific topic is being discussed or focussed on e.g. animals. However, efforts should be focussed on internalising the learning rather than expecting external rewards. Positive goals students can work towards can include preparing projects for submission online (may need an email address, however) competitions such as Doodle for Google.

Resource 3: Snappy L115625

Snappy is an easy to use interactive presentation software that allows straightforward uploading of images (jpegs only) and sound files (wma's only) in addition to text boxes. Content can be 'drag and dropped' in user arranged page layouts. It may not be suitable for the students at the beginning of the school year. There would be some scope to use it after confidence is gained on other software, as the abilities to intuitively navigate around the programs improve. Then students can focus on literacy components of the task(s). However
careful, step by step (scaffolded) instruction, as theorised by Bruner (DEECD, 2012) may allow some work to commence sooner rather than later.

Like the Tux there is a great number of cross curricular possibilities that could be tied in with Snappy and like the former it acts as a simple word processor; an example for Year One students would be to write a story about Macassan fisherman (addressing OL.8 of the ‘Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia’ cross curricular priority). There is great potential to combine individual students work into a class project and from there include some kind of presentation to be delivered orally (ACELY1647). A more authentic and rich task with numerous outcomes of history, cultures and English combined is hopefully achieved. The ability to create multiple pages and view in a slideshow format allows for collaborative learning, although at Year One level this is not a priority. This type of software might be considered a good pathway to group collaboration and portfolio based assessment in later years (Davies, 2009 p. 38).

Conclusion
The introductory discussion of the student cohort in the sphere of national strategies hopefully highlights the value of remote students having access to appropriate DIR's and experience with technology so as not to be further disadvantaged. Discussion of each reveal that a large amount of preparatory work and consideration is needed to use these tools to get the most from the literacy outcomes in the curriculum. All three are free of cost, easy to download and there are no issues surrounding privacy or increasing the digital footprint of the students.

Use of software that allows the typing of texts may allow teachers to more accurately assess the capabilities of a student, for example, it may give clearer formative assessment for a
student that can't physically write well on a page. Digital output produced by students allow
easy snapshots to show student progress for purposes of formative assessment.

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*The Learning Federation* [e-repository for educational software]
http://econtent.thelearningfederation.edu.au/ec/p/home
What have I learned during this assignment:

I believe I made this task more difficult for myself by choosing the indigenous perspective. But in doing so I realised there is a lot to learn about ESL and teaching in indigenous schools.

I became somewhat absorbed by ideas of how curriculum is best adopted in these schools and probably focussed on this too much. I found it difficult to be confident in realistically implementing these 3 instructional materials to students that have little SAE under their belt. It seems to me one could spend another year of study to get head around how pedagogy is best delivered in the remote school situation.

There may be conflict between offering material to suit all levels of learning in the classroom and at the same time trying to keep this simple. It could alienate some learners if the media appears too complex, so it may be worthwhile to have material s that 'hide' these furthering possibilities, to be unveiled if needed by the teacher at a later time.

Some of the tools seem better than others and there is a lack of critical reviews (at least on the learning federation site) on the value of these materials. Many of the tools are very narrowly focussed and only cater for a very defined skill level of the learning area; there may be a reason for this is many cases but often I wondered why not expand to cater for more capable students. I did get the impression that many materials available may be designed by persons interested in programming/graphics, rather than by teachers seeking an learning outcome.

While the materials may appear to be useful for a year level, consulting the curriculum should be the next step where it often becomes obvious that the students are not yet ready or capable of doing the task and they will not get anything out of it. I think I have to be wary of bending the the outcomes to suit the material. I'm sold on the idea of working from the curriculum and then finding tools to fit the outcomes to be achieved.