

# Getting the Message Across

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Level 2

Gold 1

The Learning Progression Frameworks describe significant signposts in reading and writing as students develop and apply their literacy knowledge and skills with increasing expertise from school entry to the end of year 10. This teacher support material describes the opportunities in “Getting the Message Across” for students to develop the behaviours expected when reading at Gold.



## Overview

In this interview, Iona McNaughton talks to Alan Wendt, a New Zealand Sign Language interpreter. Alan explains why he chose to become an interpreter and describes what his job involves. “Getting the Message Across” is one of several pieces in this journal on the theme of communication.

This text requires students to “confidently use a range of processing and comprehension strategies to make meaning from and think critically about” text (*The Literacy Learning Progressions*, page 14).

There is a PDF of this text and an audio version as an MP3 file at [www.juniorjournal.tki.org.nz](http://www.juniorjournal.tki.org.nz)

## Related texts

Texts that use an interview format: “Bird of the Year” (JJ 59); “Tunç Tezel: Star Man” (SJ L2 May 2016)

Texts that explore ideas about “getting a message across”: *Joe’s News*, which also features sign language (RTR Green); “A School Comes Home”, “Making a Sign” (in this journal)

Texts that provide background information: “At the Hearing Clinic” (SJ Part 1 Number 3 2008); “Listening Eyes, Speaking Hands: The Story of Deaf Education in New Zealand” (SJ L3 Nov 2018). See page 5 of this TSM for links to further information.

Texts about jobs that people do: “Fronting the Show” (JJ 41); “Fingerprints” (JJ 54); “Ukulele Maker” (JJ 58); “Tunç Tezel: Star Man” (SJ L2 May 2016)

## Text characteristics

“Getting the Message Across” includes the following features that help students develop the reading behaviours expected at Gold and build their knowledge of the features of non-fiction.

The structure of the text as an interview

A mix of explicit and implicit content, including information that may be new, requiring students to make connections to their prior knowledge to identify main points and make inferences

Visual language features, including layout (a different typeface and background colour for the introduction and conclusion; name labels to track the interview questions and answers) to clarify the overall text structure and labelled photographs with arrows to show movement and direction (page 5)

Topic vocabulary that may be unfamiliar (for example, “interpreter”, “heritage”, “university”, “Miss Universe”, “translated”, “general knowledge”, “correctly”, “emotions”, “theatre”, “parliament”, “official”, “media”, “journalists”, “pressure”, “keep our distance”, “community”, “improve”, “East Coast wave”, “raise your eyebrows”, “individual”) or used in unfamiliar ways (for example, “hearing” used as an adjective and “sign” used as an adjective and a verb), requiring students to use their processing systems

Information organised in paragraphs and the use of a variety of sentence structures, requiring students to attend to punctuation, pronouns, and other linking words, including indicators of time and sequence (for example, “Then”, “When”, “one day”, “First”, “Finally”, “every week”, “thirty minutes before”, “During”) to clarify connections between ideas

Iona **What skills do you need to be a sign-language interpreter?**

Alan First you need to learn the language. It's very different from other languages because you use your hands and face instead of words. Then you need to have a good general knowledge and a good memory. You also need to like working with lots of different people. Finally, you need to practise and practise.

Iona **What are some of the challenges?**

Alan Sign-language interpreting is hard work. You have to listen carefully to what people say or sign so that you can explain it correctly. You also have to remember what was said, and you have to work very quickly.

Another challenge is that you have to think about how you use your face as well as your hands. Sign-language interpreters use their faces a lot. For example, if I sign “big” and then puff out my cheeks, that means “very big”. I also use my face to show emotions, such as happiness, sadness, surprise, or anger.



Language features typical of non-fiction:

- precise descriptive language, including adverbs (“carefully”, “correctly”, “quickly”) and noun phrases (for example, “general knowledge”, “theatre company”, “official language”, “news media”, “bubble pair”, “East Coast wave”, “social media”)
- the use of examples to support main points
- new topic words appearing in several forms (“interpret-ed/ing/er”, “translat-ed/ion”)
- inverted commas to indicate specific terms (“big”, “very big”, “bubble pair”, “East Coast wave”)

## Cross-curriculum links

### English (Reading)

Level 2 – Processes and strategies: Selects and reads texts for enjoyment and personal fulfilment.

Level 2 – Structure: Recognises an increasing range of text forms and differences between them.

### Social Sciences

Level 2 – Understand how people make significant contributions to New Zealand’s society.

### Health and Physical Education

Level 2 – Relationships with Other People: Describe how individuals and groups share characteristics and are also unique.

Level 2 – Healthy Communities and Environments: Explore how people’s attitudes, values, and actions contribute to healthy physical and social environments.

### Learning Languages

Level 2 – Selecting and using language, symbols, and texts to communicate: Receive and produce information.



The New Zealand Curriculum

## Suggested reading purpose

## Possible learning goals

What can the students expect to find out or think about as a result of reading this text?

- To find out about Alan Wendt’s job
- To think about why the work of a sign-language interpreter is important

What opportunities does this text provide for students to learn more about how to “read, respond to, and think critically” about texts?

The goals listed below link to the descriptions of reading behaviours in *The Literacy Learning Progressions* and the *Learning Progression Frameworks*. **Select from and adapt** them according to your students’ strengths, needs, and experiences – their culture, language, and identity (*The Literacy Learning Progressions*, page 7).

This text provides opportunities for students, over several readings, to:

- use text and visual language features to identify and track ideas and information (**summarise**)
- **make connections** between the article and their prior knowledge to **make inferences**
- **identify and discuss main ideas** (for example, about communication, helping others, inclusiveness)
- **monitor** their reading and, when something is unclear, take action to solve the problem, for example, by checking further sources of information, rereading, and/or reading on.



Sounds and Words



The Literacy Learning Progressions

## Introducing the article

Use your knowledge of your students to ensure that your introduction builds or activates their prior knowledge and provides appropriate support for a successful first reading. Several options are provided below for you to **select from and adapt**. A short video on the importance of introducing the text is available at <https://vimeo.com/142446572>

- A few days before introducing this text, you could reread and discuss *Joe’s News* (RTR Green) with the students. Alternatively, you could show them the sign language e-book version of a Ready to Read book or an online video clip of Alan Wendt or another interpreter in action.

For English language learners, you could talk through the article to introduce key vocabulary (in English and in their first language if possible) and provide support with text features that may be unfamiliar. You can find further information about features of texts that may need support at ELLP.

- Prompt the students to use the title and photographs to predict what the article might be about. *What does it mean to “get a message across”?* Read the first paragraph on page 2 together to check their predictions.

- Write some key topic words (for example, “sign-language interpreter”, “Deaf”, “NZSL”, “hearing people”) on a chart and discuss their meanings, referring to page 2 for support. Explain the convention of using a capital “D” when referring to the Deaf community and the use of the word “hearing” to describe people who can hear. Clarify that interpreters are people who know several languages and help people who use different languages to understand each other. Encourage the students to make connections to their own heritage and the language(s) they speak. Add word meanings to the chart, leaving room to add more examples after reading.
- Introduce the term “interview”. Clarify that Iona is the person asking the questions. Read the questions and answers on page 3 to demonstrate how an interview works.
- Briefly summarise what the students have found out about Alan so far. Read and discuss the question headings in the rest of the article. Record any other questions they have, along with other key vocabulary arising from the discussion.
- Set a reading purpose together, and share the learning goal(s). Give the students sticky notes to mark new words or questions and ideas that arise as they read.

## Reading the article

For the first reading, encourage the students to read the article by themselves, intervening only if it's clear a student needs help. Much of the processing that they do at this level is "inside their heads" and may not be obvious until the discussion afterwards. There will be many opportunities to provide support with word-solving and comprehension on subsequent readings.

### Student behaviours

*Examples of the sorts of behaviours (often overlapping and developed over several readings) that will help students achieve their learning goal(s).*

#### The students use text and visual language features to identify and track ideas and information.

- They use the question headings to clarify what each section is about and look for answers in the following paragraphs.
- On page 4, they use linking words (such as "First", "because", "Then", "also") to track the information about skills that interpreters need and the challenges of the job.
- They notice the inverted commas for the words "big" and "very big" and that these words are repeated in the photograph captions. They use the photos and arrows to visualise Alan's explanation of how he uses his hands and face to sign.
- On page 6, they notice the repeated key word "interpret" (and other forms – "interpreting", "interpreted") to track Alan's list of examples.

#### The students make connections between information in the article and their prior knowledge to make inferences.

- They gather information about Alan Wendt's skills and interests in language learning to infer why he chose to become a NZSL interpreter and his feelings about his role.
- They make connections between Alan's frequent references to working with people (pages 4, 6, and 8) to infer that this is a favourite part of his job.
- They use clues such as the reference to "challenges" and "hard work" and the adverbs "carefully", "correctly", and "quickly" (page 4) to infer the high level of skill an interpreter needs.

- On page 6, they use Alan's examples of situations he has worked in to visualise some communication challenges for Deaf people.
- They make connections between their own experiences of seeing interpreters in action and information (such as the number of Deaf people in New Zealand, friends and family who are learning NZSL, Deaf people working at parliament, and NZSL being an official language) to infer that NZSL is an important form of communication.

#### They demonstrate self-monitoring and problem solving.

- They use a range of word-solving strategies. For example:
  - they look for the biggest known chunks in unfamiliar words
  - they draw on their awareness that letters or letter clusters can have more than one sound, for example, "message", "language", "knowledge", "official", "improve".
- They read on and think about the overall meaning of the sentence to work out noun phrases.
- They reread to track connections between ideas, for example, to clarify who or what Alan is referring to on page 7:

"The interpreters get her [the Prime Minister's] speech notes ... That gives us [the interpreters] time to read them [the speech notes]."
- They mark words or phrases they want to come back to.

### Deliberate acts of teaching

*Examples of how you can support individual students (if needed).*

- Remind the students of word-solving strategies they can use (for example, looking for the biggest known word chunk and applying their knowledge of letters, sounds, and word structure) and for clarifying meaning (rereading or reading on, thinking about the pre-reading discussion, looking for definitions or explanations, and/or checking the photographs). If necessary, provide specific support, for example, with the proper nouns.
- Reassure the students that when reading non-fiction, they may sometimes need to read more slowly, reread parts, and/or check aspects such as photos or captions to build their understanding. Remind them that it is not always necessary to fully understand everything the first time they read the article and that they can use their sticky notes to mark aspects for later discussion.

### Discussing and rereading the article

You can revisit this article several times, providing opportunities for the students to build comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency. **Select from and adapt** the following suggestions according to your students' needs and responses to the reading. Some of the suggestions overlap, and several can be explored further as after-reading activities.  For some suggestions, you may find it helpful to project the PDF of the article so that you can zoom in on relevant sections.

- Remind the students of the reading purpose. *What did you find out about Alan Wendt's job?*
- Enjoy trying out examples of NZSL words and phrases shown in the photographs. If necessary, clarify the purpose of the arrows.

- Update the vocabulary chart started when introducing the article. Prompt the students to look for clues in the text and photographs to the meanings of new words and phrases. Draw attention to the use of inverted commas for some words and phrases (on page 4 to clarify meaning and on page 8 to show that they are special terms). Discuss how the familiar words “hearing” and “sign” are used in less familiar ways, for example, “hearing” used as an adjective (“hearing people”, “hearing coach”); and “sign” used as an adjective (“sign language”, “sign name”) and as a verb (“If I sign ‘big’”, “sign each individual letter”). Remind the students of the importance of reading on and/or rereading the sentence to clarify the meaning.
- Encourage the students to share any new questions they have. Discuss ways of finding answers to questions that are not answered in the article.
- Either now, or after further discussion (see below), prompt the students to think critically about why the job of an interpreter is important in “getting the message across.” Encourage them to make connections to the languages they and their families have experience of.
- Have the students reread the article, stopping to discuss points of interest, including aspects they have marked with sticky notes. Suggestions are listed below.
  - Build students’ skills in locating and summarising information. Ask them to look for key words in the question headings. For example: *What question will help you find information about the skills an interpreter needs? About working with the Prime Minister?* Then choose one of the questions and together highlight the main points that answer the question. Draw attention to indicator words such as “First”, “Then”, “also”, and “Finally” or “for example”, “such as”, “including” that help readers track the ideas. You could list the points in a table, such as the partially completed one below. Either now or as an after-reading activity, the students could work in pairs to find answers to the other questions. Each pair could focus on one question (and answer) and then report back to the group.

Questions	Answers (main points)
<i>What skills do you need to be a sign-language interpreter?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• you need to learn the language</li> <li>• you need good general knowledge [and so on]</li> </ul>

- Support the students to make inferences about what Alan is like as a person, drawing on explicit and implicit information in the text and photographs. For example, he is good at languages (page 3), has the necessary skills (page 4), works for whoever needs him, wants to do a good job (page 6), copes with pressure (page 7), welcomes feedback, has a sense of humour, enjoys challenges, and wants to help (page 8).
- Either now or as an after-reading activity, build vocabulary by giving the students sets of four topic words or phrases and having them think, pair, and share their ideas about the connections between them (for example, “interpreter”, “languages”, “Deaf”, “hearing people”; “hands and face”, “emotions”, “East Coast wave”, “happiness”; “general knowledge”, “practise”, “carefully”, “good memory”; “Prime Minister”, “speech notes” “pressure”, “cotton wool”).
- Use key topic words to build the students’ awareness of word structure. Discuss the meaning of “interpreter” and support the students to find the different forms of the word within the article (“interpret-ed/ing”). You could also introduce the word “interpretation”. Repeat the activity with the word “translated”. (Note that “interpreter” is more commonly associated with spoken or signed language and “translator” with written language.) Have the students experiment with adding suffixes (such as, -ed, -ing, -er, -tion) to create word forms from other key words in the article (for example, “help”, “learn”, “listen”, “explain”, “think”).

Provide support as required and note any aspects you might want to follow up on later, perhaps as a mini-lesson or as an after-reading activity.

## After reading: Practice and reinforcement

After-reading tasks should arise from your monitoring of the students’ needs during the lesson and provide purposeful practice and reinforcement. Where possible, make links to other texts, including texts generated by the students, and to the wider literacy programme (for example, oral language, writing, handwriting, spelling) and other curriculum areas. **Select from and adapt** these suggestions according to the needs of your students.

For English language learners, SELLIPS and ELIP also have ideas for purposeful and relevant tasks.

- Provide opportunities for the students to reread this article and to read other related texts, including the linked texts in this journal. The students can build their comprehension and fluency by rereading the article as they listen to the audio version.

Audio versions are particularly supportive for English language learners because, as well as clarifying pronunciation, they provide good models of the prosodic features of English, such as intonation and phrasing.

- Support the students to find out more about NZSL (see <https://www.nzsl.nz/>) and the Deaf community. You could read them the article, “Listening Eyes, Speaking Hands: The Story of Deaf Education in New Zealand” (SJ L3 Nov 2018).
- The students could use the NZSL alphabet to sign their name or learn a song to share with the rest of the class or school (see links on page 5 of this TSM). They could work in pairs to choose and practise their sign name.
- Create a chart of some frequently used words and phrases (for example, greetings, “thank you”, “whare paku”, “lunch box”, “drink”) in English, NZSL, te reo Māori, and in the other languages spoken by children in the class.

- Have the students add to the question-and-answer chart started when discussing the text.
- Support the students to research and share answers to their questions that are not answered in the article. They could use a question-and-answer format as in the article.
- Have the students work in pairs to construct a Venn diagram showing what they would like and what they would find challenging about being an interpreter.
- During shared writing, support the students to create questions they could use to interview a family member or someone from the local community about the work they do.
- Build on the vocabulary activity started in “Discussing the article” by giving pairs of students sets of four topic words or phrases and having them write sentences that show the connections between them.

## Additional information

### About NZSL

[www.nzsl.nz](http://www.nzsl.nz)  
[www.learnnzsl.nz/#/id/co-01](http://www.learnnzsl.nz/#/id/co-01)

### Songs

The New Zealand National Anthem:  
[www.deaf.org.nz/2019/11/new-zealand-national-anthem](http://www.deaf.org.nz/2019/11/new-zealand-national-anthem)

Te Reo Singalong (in NZSL):  
[tereosingalong.co.nz/te-reo-singalong-new-zealand-sign-language](http://tereosingalong.co.nz/te-reo-singalong-new-zealand-sign-language)

