



Introduction to the National Literacy and Numeracy Learning Progressions

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Why were the National Literacy and Numeracy Learning Progressions developed?

Literacy and numeracy are fundamental to a student's ability to learn at school and to engage productively in society. Improving literacy/numeracy development is a priority for many schools.

The development of the Literacy and Numeracy Progressions has been identified as an area for national action. The Education Council identified supporting STEM education opportunities in school systems as one of five areas for national action. This action included the extension of the national literacy and numeracy continuums to:

... better assist teachers to identify and address individual student needs according to the expected skills and growth in student learning at key progress points from the early years through high school, given the evidence of the spread of student achievement within any classroom. (Education Council 2015, National STEM School Education Strategy, p. 9)

What is the purpose of the National Literacy and Numeracy Learning Progressions?

Successful teaching and learning to address student needs in relation to literacy and numeracy requires the teacher to have an understanding of where the student is now and where the student needs to go next in their literacy and numeracy development.

The National Literacy and Numeracy Learning Progressions describe common pathways or developmental sequences for the acquisition of aspects of literacy and numeracy development. The progressions complement key learning outcomes of the Early Years Learning Framework (COAG 2009) – particularly that children are confident and involved learners and effective communicators.

The progressions provide a tool to:

locate the literacy and numeracy development of students and identify the literacy and numeracy development that should follow

facilitate a shared professional understanding of literacy and numeracy development.

How are the progressions structured?

There are common structural and organisational features in the progressions. Within each progression, the largest structural unit is an element. Elements are further divided into sub-elements, which are populated with indicators. The indicators within a sub-element are grouped together to form developmental levels. Where appropriate, the indicators in a sub-element are grouped into subheadings. The division of each progression into elements and sub-elements, which are presented as sequences, ensures structural consistency throughout the progressions.

How are the progressions and the Australian Curriculum related?

In the Australian Curriculum, learning area content describes the knowledge, understanding and skills that are to be taught in each year or band of years. Achievement standards describe the

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learning expected of students at each year level or band of years. The progressions, which provide a sequence for the development of literacy and numeracy skills, amplify the literacy and numeracy in the Australian Curriculum. They do not replace the curriculum. The content and achievement standards of the curriculum continue to be the focus for planning, programming, teaching, learning and assessment in relation to the Australian Curriculum.

In the Australian Curriculum, literacy skills are explicit in English and numeracy skills are explicit in Mathematics. However, all Australian Curriculum learning areas require the application and development of discipline-specific literacy and numeracy knowledge and skills.

To accommodate teachers across stages of schooling and subjects, the progressions provide:

- advice on the literacy and numeracy demands of each subject in the Australian Curriculum
- links between the levels and expectations in the Australian Curriculum for English and Mathematics.

How can the progressions be used?

The progressions do not describe what to teach; they provide a detailed map of how students become increasingly adept in particular aspects of literacy and numeracy development. Learning area content and achievement standards continue to be the focus for planning, programming, teaching, learning and assessment in relation to the Australian Curriculum.

Figure 1 shows the relationship between the progressions and the Australian Curriculum, in the context of the teaching and learning cycle.

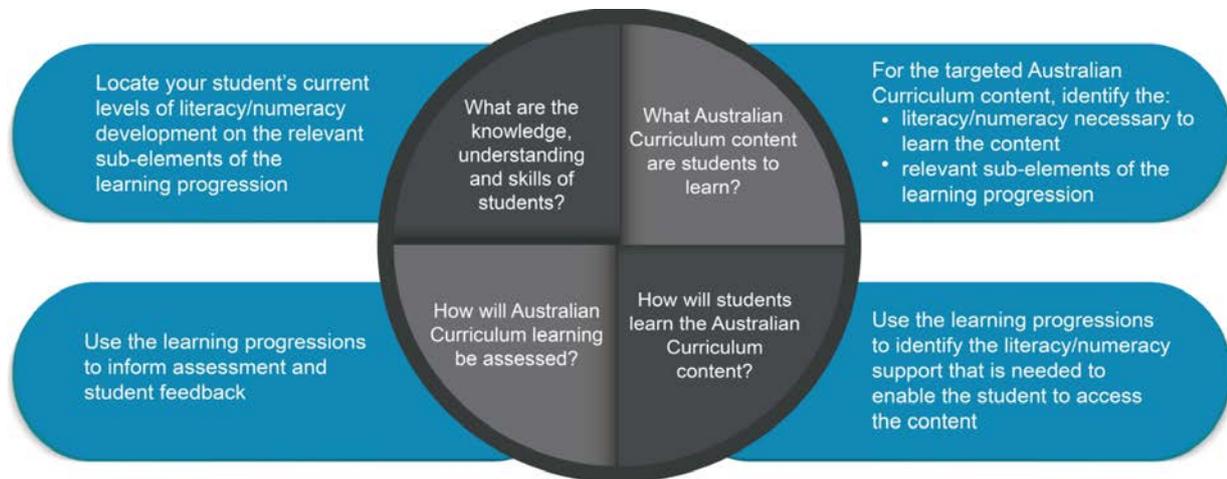


Figure 1. Using the learning progressions to support teaching and learning of all Australian Curriculum learning areas

How can the benefits of the progressions be maximised?

Whole school

In a school, the benefits of the progressions are maximised where there is a whole-school, systematic approach to literacy and numeracy development that ensures:

- opportunities for professional dialogue and collaboration to strengthen teacher understandings of literacy and numeracy development
- a shared understanding of the progressions
- expertise and processes to locate the literacy and numeracy development of targeted students
- systems for sharing information about students' literacy and numeracy progress.

Teachers

While much of the explicit teaching of literacy and numeracy occurs in the learning areas of English and Mathematics, literacy and numeracy skills are strengthened, made specific and extended in other learning areas.

Literacy and numeracy are part of learning in all curriculum areas in both primary and secondary contexts. Paying attention to the literacy and numeracy demands of each learning area ensures that students' literacy and numeracy development is strengthened so that it supports subject-based learning.

The way the progressions are used may differ between primary and secondary teachers and between subject teachers in the secondary context. The benefits of the National Literacy and Numeracy Learning Progressions are maximised where the teacher:

- recognises that much of the explicit learning underpinning literacy development occurs through the content of the Australian Curriculum: English and that much of the explicit learning underpinning numeracy development occurs through the content of the Australian Curriculum: Mathematics
- recognises that each learning area requires the application of discipline-specific literacy and numeracy
- uses the progressions to build understanding of their students' literacy and numeracy capability
- differentiates teaching and learning experiences to support student progress in literacy and numeracy development
- provides feedback to students about next steps in their learning.

Secondary teachers

In the secondary context, the benefits of the National Literacy and Numeracy Learning Progressions are maximised where the teacher:

- understands the literacy and numeracy demands and opportunities of their subject content
- takes responsibility for teaching the subject-specific literacy and numeracy of their learning area.

How are the progressions different from the general capabilities and how can they be used?

The National Literacy and Numeracy Learning Progressions are different from the general capability literacy and numeracy continua in scope, structure and intended use.

The general capabilities describe what can reasonably be expected of students at particular year levels, whereas the progressions describe the steps of literacy and numeracy development and, unlike the general capabilities, are not organised by year levels or stages of schooling.

The general capabilities materials were initially developed to inform the writing of learning area curriculum (Foundation to Year 10) and to ensure the strong and coherent inclusion of the general capabilities in the Australian Curriculum learning area content. They were designed to support the broader application of literacy and numeracy across learning areas. The progressions are more fine-grained than the general capabilities and describe a detailed sequence of literacy and numeracy development.

The progressions can be used in tandem with the literacy and numeracy general capabilities continua. The general capability continua help teachers develop a shared understanding of the scope and sequence of the general capabilities in the Australian Curriculum and support teachers to see the opportunities to build the literacy and numeracy experiences into their teaching and learning programs. The literacy and numeracy continua also provide opportunity for the inclusion of curriculum content to support students with disability. Levels 1a – 1d in literacy and level 1a in numeracy support teachers build programs to meet the needs of all students.

The progressions can be used to help teachers locate the literacy and numeracy development of students and identify what literacy and numeracy development should follow. The progressions will assist teachers to be more explicit and targeted in their teaching.

How do the progressions cater to the diversity of learners?

Consistent with ACARA's [Student diversity advice](#) on the Australian Curriculum website, the progressions support teachers to cater for the diversity of learners by:

- acknowledging students' different rates of progress through the levels and across elements
- acknowledging that students at the initial levels demonstrate literacy skills in different ways and that some students communicate using augmentative and alternative communication strategies to demonstrate their literacy and numeracy skills
- acknowledging different starting points in students' literacy or numeracy learning development
- supporting teachers to differentiate for students at all stages of schooling
- complementing ACARA's English as an Additional Language or Dialect Teacher Resource: EAL/D Learning Progression, which describes important features of second language development.

Adjustments may be needed for students with disability to demonstrate their learning and be considered against the progressions.

The Australian Curriculum provides advice to support teachers in meeting their obligations under the *Disability Standards for Education 2005* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006) (the Standards) to ensure that all students with disability are able to participate in the Australian Curriculum on the same basis as their peers through rigorous, meaningful and dignified learning programs.

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the Standards are intended to give students with disability the same rights as other students, including the right to education and training *on the same basis* as students without disability.

How were the National Literacy and Numeracy Learning Progressions developed?

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), in partnership with NSW Department of Education, led the development of national collaborative action to develop the progressions from mid-2016 to the end of 2017.

During 2016, version 1 of the National Literacy and Numeracy Learning Progressions was developed, in consultation with literacy and numeracy experts (refer to Appendix 5), using available evidence of the learning sequences for literacy and numeracy development. Appendices 1–4 outline research used in the development of the progressions.

Reflects growing interest in learning progressions

The use of learning progressions is of increasing interest to educators as it builds on other theories of the developmental nature of student learning.

A considerable body of research shows that optimal learning occurs when learners are presented with challenges just beyond their current level of attainment. This is what Vygotsky (1978) referred to as the ‘zone of proximal development’ (Masters 2013, p. 15).

A learning progression can be described as a common pathway of conceptual development or a sequence for learning or acquiring a new skill.

Learning is conceptualised not simply as a matter of acquiring more knowledge and skills, but as progressing toward higher levels of competence as new knowledge is linked to existing knowledge, and deeper understandings are developed from, and take the place of, earlier understandings (Pellegrino, Chudowsky & Glaser 2001, p. 115).

Trialled in Australian schools

Version 1 of the progressions was trialled by 602 teachers in 137 Australian schools between March and May 2017. State and territory school and curriculum authorities nominated trial participants. Trial participants gave comprehensive feedback about the usability of each progression in locating student literacy and numeracy development and determining the learning that should follow.

Validated against NAPLAN student performance data

During late 2016 and early 2017, ACARA mapped NAPLAN test items to the progressions to support validation of aspects of the progressions. This resulted in specific suggestions for improvement.

Improved based on school trial and validation data

Further improvements were made on the basis of analysis of findings from the trial and NAPLAN validation work.

From early July to 23 August 2017, consultation on version 1.1 of the progressions took place with all state and territory school and curriculum authorities, key national ACARA advisory groups and a selection of literacy and numeracy researchers and experts.

Further NAPLAN validation work and the development of linkage advice to the Australian Curriculum learning areas and the NAPLAN performance scale occurred between July and August 2017. This work was used to inform the progressions.

Findings from consultation and further validation informed the development of version 2 in September 2017. Version 2 was approved by the ACARA Board in October; Schools Policy Group and AESOC in November; and Education Council in December 2017.