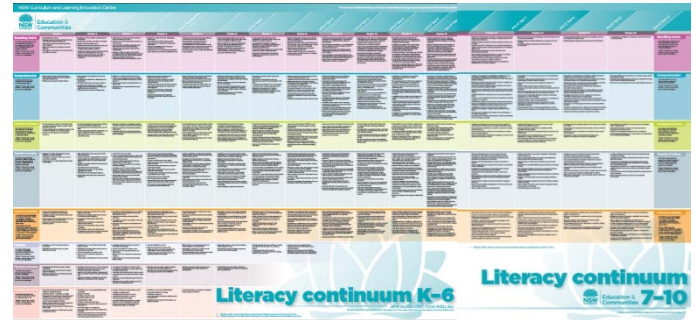# An overview of the *Literacy continuum K–10*

What is the *Literacy continuum K–10*?

The *Literacy continuum K–10* identifies the literacy skills and understandings regarded as critical to literacy success. It maps how critical aspects develop through the years of schooling by describing key markers of expected student achievement. The continuum focuses on capturing the literacy connections that are critical to success, are applicable to all key learning areas and cannot be left to chance. It has been informed by an extensive range of international and Australian studies, reports and research.

The *Literacy continuum K–10* is a powerful tool which all teachers can use to strengthen their knowledge of literacy and so deliver a quality program with a strong literacy focus to enhance learning opportunities for their students. In conjunction with the NSW syllabuses, the continuum assists teachers to integrate literacy into all key learning areas. It is important to note that the *Literacy continuum K–10* does not replace syllabus documents and that teachers always report against syllabus outcomes, not the continuum markers. When used together with syllabus documents and other support materials such as the ESL Scales, the continuum assists teachers to deliver a quality program in every key learning area.
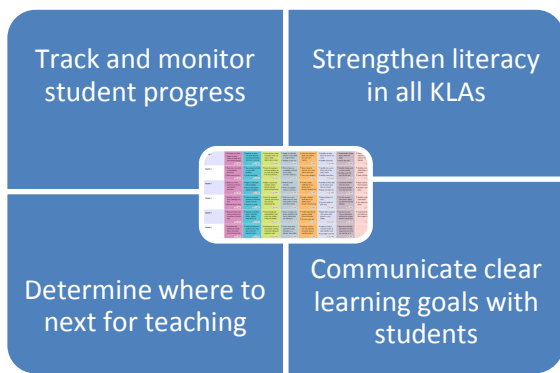

Who will use the continuum?

The *Literacy continuum K–10* is for all teachers of all subjects from Kindergarten to Year 10.

> *While literacy comprises a complex repertoire of knowledge and skills that develop throughout the years of schooling, its practical application is at the core of teaching and learning. Accordingly, literacy is not a subject in its own right but is fundamental to all learning areas.*
> (*An introduction to quality literacy teaching,* NSW DET, 2009 p. 11)

Each subject area has its own literacy requirements which students need to master if they are to maximise their achievement in that learning area. Furthermore, literacy knowledge, skills and understandings need to be explicitly and systematically taught through modelled, guided and independent learning experiences in each key learning area.

Track and monitor student progress	Strengthen literacy in all KLAs
Determine where to next for teaching	Communicate clear learning goals with students

How can the continuum be used to support teaching?

The continuum is a tool which can be used flexibly for a variety of purposes including to:

- **track and monitor student progress** in literacy through the aspects and across the years of schooling
- **strengthen literacy in all KLAs** by providing a shared understanding of literacy across subjects to inform modelled, guided and independent teaching
- **communicate clear learning goals with students** (and community) to make literacy learning more visible
- **determine 'where to next' when planning teaching** for whole classes, groups of learners and individual students and to assist when differentiating programs.

Using a range of evidence such as observations, work samples and interactions with students, teachers can assess *for* learning and determine where students are currently at on the continuum and plan 'where to next' for their teaching. Throughout the year, teachers can refer to continuum markers to track and monitor student progress and pass this information on to strengthen a whole school cohesive approach to literacy.

Literacy, like numeracy and ICT, is not a separate learning area but permeates all learning areas. For students to be successful learners of each key learning area, they need to be successful literacy learners within each KLA. The continuum can be used to identify 'literacy learning goals' that may be transferred across subjects.

The continuum assists teachers to make necessary adjustments to their programs to meet the needs of their students when developing differentiated programs or units of work. By mapping students onto the learning sequence, teachers can identify the 'where to next' for groups or individuals with particular learning needs, such as proficient readers or students who have special needs in aspects of speaking. The continuum is a particularly helpful tool for teachers with multistage or composite classes as well as for developing individual learning programs and personalised learning plans.

The continuum supports teachers to provide feedback to students about their literacy progress and inform them of the skills and strategies they need to develop further in order to move along the learning sequence. This visible progress can be shared with the school community.

How is the continuum organised?

The eight critical aspects which form the framework of the continuum have been identified as critical to the literacy achievement of all students. There is no hierarchy within the critical aspects as they are all essential to student literacy development. Each aspect begins with a definition which is key to understanding the significance of that aspect. Whenever the term *text* is used, for example in *Reading texts*, it is inclusive of the broad notion of texts – oral, aural, written, visual, electronic and multimodal texts.

The critical aspects

Following are the descriptions of the aspects which provide the framework for the continuum:

- **Reading texts** – involves recognising words automatically, reading in a phrased and fluent way and navigating texts to create meaning.
- **Comprehension** – involves responding to, interpreting, analysing and evaluating texts.
- **Vocabulary knowledge** – involves understanding the meaning of spoken and written words and using words to create and understand texts.
- **Aspects of writing** – involves using spelling, grammar, design features, handwriting and digital tools to create texts for specific purposes.

- **Aspects of speaking** – involves using oral language to communicate with others in a range of contexts, and listening actively and attentively when interacting with others.
- **Phonics** – involves making the connection between sounds and letters when reading and spelling.
- **Phonemic awareness** – involves hearing and manipulating sounds in spoken language.
- **Concepts about print** – involves understanding and using conventions and concepts about print.

Other critical areas of literacy such as grammar, spelling, punctuation and listening are developed within the above aspects.

The critical aspects consist of both 'constrained' and 'unconstrained' skills. The constrained skills are prominent for students typically in the early years of schooling. These skills include *Phonemic awareness, Phonics* and *Concepts about print*. It is intended that they are taught early and explicitly, and need to be mastered quickly. The other five critical aspects, *Vocabulary knowledge, Reading texts, Comprehension, Aspects of writing* and *Aspects of speaking*, consist of unconstrained skills and continue to develop, grow and expand throughout one's lifetime.

The *Literacy continuum K-10* is available as:

1. A1 and A2 print or 'poster' version

This version is available as a PDF to download http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/literacy/index.htm

2. an online interactive version

This version is designed as an interactive tool and is accessible via the DEC portal at http://www.literacy-continuum.det.nsw.edu.au

Using the print version of the continuum

The print version is portable and ideal for collaborative planning. On this version, each critical aspect is identified by a coloured sequence that

shows the sequence of learning from left to right. This continuum can be read in two ways:

- horizontally – to track how the progression of knowledge and skills develop from K to 10
- vertically – for a holistic view of how the critical aspects interrelate to describe expected learning at a particular point in time.

The print version includes two documents, K-6 and 7-10. These are designed to sit next to each other in order to be read across.

Clusters and markers

Each column is described as a 'cluster of markers'. The clusters range from Cluster 1 to Cluster 12 on the *Literacy continuum K–6* and describe expected student achievement from Kindergarten to the end of Year 6. The *Literacy continuum 7–10* begins with Cluster 13 and ends at Cluster 16 and describes expected achievement from the end of Year 7 to the end of Year 10. The clusters represent milestones of achievement expected of the typical student at particular points in time.

As the nature of learning changes over time, the continuum is organised differently for these different stages of learning. School years are found along the

top of the continuum. As students progress through the years of schooling, the learning within each cluster of markers becomes increasingly complex and specialised.

Kindergarten is encompassed in four 'clusters of markers' capturing the nature of growth in discrete literacy skills, while Year 1 and Year 2 expectations are reflected in two clusters respectively. Expected achievement from Year 3 to Year 10 is described within one cluster of markers for each critical aspect representing milestones that require broader learning across aspects. The clusters in Years 7 to 10 identify literacy skills, knowledge and understandings across all subjects.

Each cluster is composed of a number of 'markers'. These markers are designed to assist teachers to establish clear learning goals and plan for explicit teaching. Markers within a cluster are not hierarchical, although markers may show a development from one cluster to another. For example, in *Aspects of writing* a progression of learning can be traced in areas such as grammar, spelling, use and knowledge of text features.

Using the interactive version of the continuum

The interactive continuum is a versatile online tool that provides a number of viewing perspectives. In contrast to the print version, the clusters on the interactive continuum appear vertically.

Interactive features include the collapse, compare and support functions located on the top task bar. The *Collapse* feature offers the teacher a select view of one or more clusters across all aspects and facilitates the tracking of student learning across these aspects. The *Compare* feature allows teachers to view and print up to three clusters at once, supporting teachers to differentiate when

planning. Also on the task bar, the *Support* feature provides access to PowerPoint presentations and a range of other useful resources developed by the NSW DEC to assist school executive and teachers to further understand and use the ***Literacy continuum K–10***.

The *Links* feature provides access to the *Teaching ideas* as well as useful NSW DEC resources. This is also a shared space for teachers to access resources developed by other NSW DEC teachers or post resources of their own.

What additional support is available?

Teaching ideas
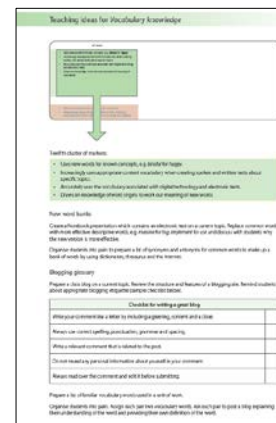
Accessible through the interactive version of the continuum, *Teaching ideas* are suggested lesson ideas to support teachers to address literacy learning described by the markers. These *Teaching ideas* are designed to give the continuum markers a practical application and classroom context with cross curriculum strategies and specific subject examples (particularly in Years 7-10). The *Teaching ideas* can be used as:

- suggestions for modelled teaching (for introducing new learning)
- ideas for guided teaching (to further develop this new learning)
- independent learning (to provide practice for this learning)
- springboards for applying new learning in a different context or subject area
- modified formative assessment tasks and ideas for how to gather evidence about the extent students have achieved particular skills and knowledge.

Professional learning

Several short courses and professional learning programs are linked to the use of the Literacy continuum. These include:

- short courses related to *An introduction to quality literacy teaching* and the *Literacy teaching guides*
  http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/literacy/workshops/index.htm
- *Best Start Kindergarten Assessment* and accompanying resources including supplementary literacy information
  http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/beststart/assess.htm
- *Language, Learning and Literacy (L3)* – a professional learning program for Kindergarten and Stage 1 teachers
  http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/beststart/lll/index.htm
- *Focus on Reading 3-6* – a professional learning programs for Years 3 to 6 teachers
  http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/literacy/prolearn/index.htm

Contact us
Literacy team
Level 3, 1 Oxford Street
Darlinghurst NSW 2010

Michele Mawer Literacy K-6
michele.mawer@det.nsw.edu.au

Annalies van Westenbrugge Literacy 7-12
Annalies.vanWestenbrugge@det.nsw.edu.au

Related links

NSW Literacy K–12 Policy
https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/policies/curriculum/schools/literacy/PD20050288.shtml?query=literacy+policy
Defines *literacy* and describes the teaching and assessment needed to ensure students develop literacy competence in all areas of learning.

Literacy website
http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/literacy
Provides links for the interactive continuum, *An introduction to quality literacy teaching* and literacy teaching guides for *Phonics* and *Phonemic awareness* as well as literacy resource packages to support professional learning.

Interactive *Literacy continuum K–10*
http://www.literacy-continuum.det.nsw.edu.au
Online version of the *Literacy continuum K–10* with teaching ideas for each aspect.