

An overview of the *Literacy continuum K–10*

Literacy is the ability to understand and evaluate meaning through reading and writing, listening and speaking, viewing and representing.

NSW Literacy K-12 Policy, 2007

What is the *Literacy continuum K–10*?

The NSW *Literacy continuum K-10* describes how students progress in literacy across the curriculum. It identifies the behaviours that demonstrate how a student's skills and understandings develop in eight aspects of literacy that are regarded as critical to individual success.

The *Literacy continuum K–10* describes the key markers of student achievement in each aspect.

The literacy continuum helps teachers to address the NSW Literacy K-12 policy as they implement all BOSTES syllabuses K-10. The continuum is informed by an extensive range of Australian and international research.

Who is the continuum for?

The *Literacy continuum K–10* is for all teachers K-10. It strengthens each teacher's knowledge of literacy to support their students to access all syllabus content. Teachers use the continuum to provide students with the necessary literacy skills for progress in each subject. It contributes to effective teaching, assessment and reporting practice.

This continuum can be used with other support materials such as the EAL/D Learning Progression and the ESL scales, to help meet the needs of all students.



The *Literacy continuum K-10* is available in two versions:

- two print (PDF) posters which sit side by side
- an online interactive resource

Both versions are accessible through the literacy and numeracy continuum website:

<https://detwww.det.nsw.edu.au/literacy-and-numeracy-support>

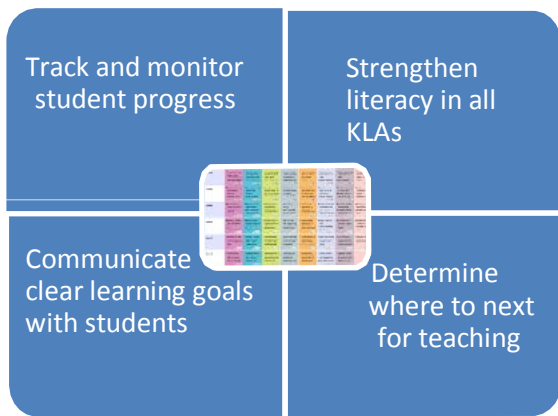
Using the literacy continuum

The *Literacy continuum K–10* can be used by all teachers 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

Literacy knowledge, skills and understandings need to be explicitly and systematically taught. When students master the different literacy requirements of each subject they are able to maximise their achievement in all learning areas.



How can the continuum be used to support teaching?

Teachers can use the continuum to:

- **track and monitor student progress** in literacy, both through the aspects and across the years of schooling
- **strengthen literacy in all subjects** by providing a shared understanding of literacy across KLAs
- **communicate clear learning goals with students** (and the wider community) to make literacy learning more visible
- **guide teachers to plan for teaching** for whole classes, groups of learners and individual students.

A cohesive, whole school approach to literacy is developed as this information is shared across grades and stages.

Teachers can determine where students are on the literacy continuum by using a range of evidence, including observations, work samples and interactions with students themselves. This assessment *for* learning guides teachers to plan 'where to next' for teaching.

Teachers can refer to literacy continuum markers to track and monitor student progress throughout the year. Continuum markers can be used to identify 'literacy learning goals' that may be transferred across subjects.

The Literacy continuum supports teachers to provide feedback to students, parents and caregivers about literacy progress.

Students can be informed of the skills and strategies they need to develop further in order to move along the learning sequence.

The literacy continuum can be used by teachers to differentiate programs to meet the specific needs of students. The continuum helps with developing individual learning programs and personalised learning plans.

How is the continuum organised?

Eight aspects of literacy form the framework of the continuum. Each is essential to student literacy development. There is no hierarchy within them.

These critical aspects of literacy are described as being either 'constrained' or 'unconstrained' skills.

The 'constrained' skills are prominent for students typically in the early years of schooling. These are:

- *Phonemic awareness*,
- *Phonics* and
- *Concepts about print*.

It is intended that they are taught early and explicitly, and mastered rapidly by all students.

The 'unconstrained' skills continue to develop, grow and expand throughout life:

- *Reading texts*,
- *Comprehension*,
- *Vocabulary knowledge*,
- *Aspects of writing* and
- *Aspects of speaking*.

Note: The term 'text' is inclusive of all texts – oral, aural, written, visual, electronic and multimodal.

The critical aspects

- **Phonics** – making the connection between sounds and letters when reading and spelling.
- **Phonemic awareness** – hearing and manipulating sounds in spoken language.
- **Concepts about print** – understanding and using conventions and concepts about print.
- **Reading texts** – recognising words automatically, reading in a phrased and fluent way and navigating texts to create meaning.
- **Comprehension** – responding to, interpreting, analysing and evaluating texts.
- **Vocabulary knowledge** – understanding the meaning of spoken and written words and using words to create and understand texts.
- **Aspects of writing** – creating texts for specific purposes using spelling, grammar, design features, handwriting and digital tools.
- **Aspects of speaking** – using oral language to communicate with others in a range of contexts, and listening actively and attentively when interacting with others.

Other important elements of literacy such as grammar, spelling, punctuation and listening are developed within these aspects of the *Literacy continuum K-10*.

Clusters and markers

Each critical aspect of the *Literacy continuum K–10* is organised into ‘clusters’ of literacy behaviours that demonstrate the progression of literacy learning across the years of schooling.

Students demonstrate literacy progress as they ‘move’ from one cluster to the next.

The *Literacy continuum K-6* contains clusters 1 to 12. These describe expected student achievement from prior to school, through Kindergarten and to the end of Year 6. The *Literacy continuum 7–10* begins with Cluster 13 for Year 7 and ends at Cluster 16, end Year 10.

Each cluster is composed of a number of ‘markers’. These describe literacy behaviours typical in each aspect at that point of development. Markers within a cluster have equal significance and don’t need to be addressed in any particular order.

Markers enable teachers to establish clear learning goals, and to plan for explicit literacy teaching.

Using the print version of the literacy continuum

This version of the NSW Literacy continuum consists of two documents, addressing K-6 and 7-10. They sit next to each other for continuity.

The print version of the continuum can be read:

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

The print version is ideal for collaborative planning.

Using the online interactive version of the literacy continuum



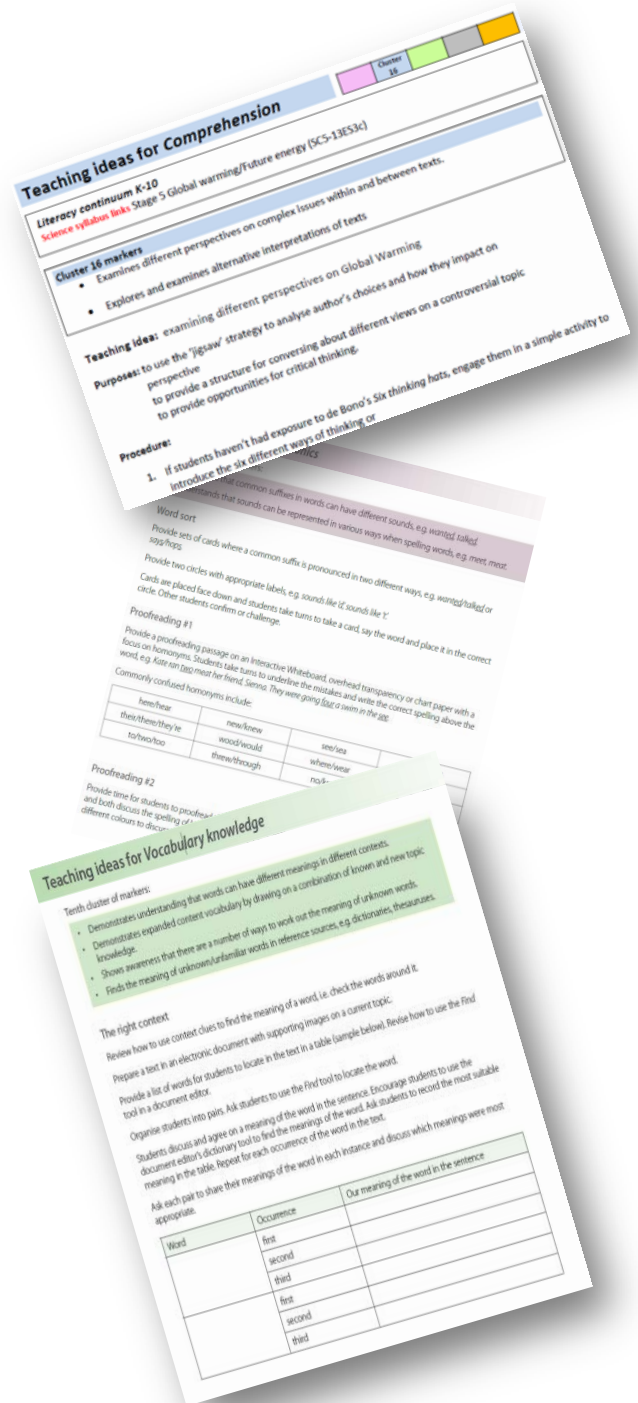
The online interactive continuum provides a number of viewing perspectives. This version is read differently to the print one:

- horizontally – gives the holistic view of how the critical aspects interrelate to describe expected learning at a particular point in literacy development.
- vertically – shows how to track the progression of knowledge and skills from K to 10 in each critical aspect

Interactive features include the *Links*, *Collapse* and *Compare* functions. The *Links* in each cluster provide access to useful NSW DEC resources. There is also the facility for teachers to share and access teaching ideas which have been developed by themselves and others.

Teaching ideas

Teaching ideas are accessible through the interactive version of the literacy continuum. These are practical ideas which address literacy learning described by the markers in each cluster. *Teaching ideas* provide both cross curriculum strategies and subject-specific examples.



Additional support

The [Literacy and Numeracy continuums support website](#) is accessed through the NSW DEC Portal at:

<https://detwww.det.nsw.edu.au/literacy-and-numeracy-support/literacy>

It links to support material and professional learning for NSW DEC teachers K-12, including:

- this NSW **Literacy continuum K-10 Overview**
- printable PDF versions of the NSW **Literacy continuum K-10**
- the online interactive **Literacy continuum K-10** with teaching ideas in each aspect of literacy
- the *Literacy matrix* and other resources for whole school planning for literacy
- professional learning and FAQs
- links to literacy publications in PDF format:
 - ✓ *An introduction to quality literacy teaching*
 - ✓ Literacy teaching guide: *Phonics*
 - ✓ Literacy teaching guide: *Phonemic Awareness*
 - ✓ Literacy teaching guide: *Teaching Comprehension Strategies*

Professional learning

Short courses and professional learning programs are linked to the use of the NSW **Literacy continuum**. These are accessible through the [Literacy and Numeracy continuums support website](#).

<https://detwww.det.nsw.edu.au/literacy-and-numeracy-support/literacy>

Related links

The [NSW Literacy K–12 Policy](#) includes the definition of literacy and the expectations of assessing and reporting in literacy in NSW DEC schools.

The [NSW Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards \(BOSTES\)](#) site contains online versions of all current syllabuses. The literacy continuum informs all syllabus teaching. The literacy demands of each subject, its content and both classroom and assessment tasks can be addressed for all students.

The [ESL Scales](#) is a framework for systematic interpretation of observed language behaviours. Level statements, outcomes and pointers provide a basis for assessment and reporting and can be matched to the literacy continuum. It is available for purchase from Curriculum Press.

The [EALD Learning Progression](#) describes a progression of English language learning typical of students learning English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D). This information directly informs the literacy progress of EALD students.

[Supplementary Literacy information for students with special learning needs](#) provides support for teachers of students who may not yet be demonstrating literacy behaviours at Cluster Level 1 at the time of Best Start assessment.

Contact us

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