

Draft Literacy Learning Progressions: Response

To: Ministry of Education

The purpose of this response is to do two things.

1. Critically analyse the link between the language of the Draft *Literacy Learning Progressions* and that of the *Effective Literacy Practice* (ELP) handbooks and English in *The New Zealand Curriculum*.
2. Demonstrate the links between the Draft *Literacy Learning Progressions* and a range of assessment tools and procedures used in the Literacy Professional Development Project (LPDP)

The LPDP project team's belief is that the Draft *Literacy Learning Progressions* will be an effective tool if teacher educators and school leaders help teachers to see how it is linked to other resources and tools designed to guide and support them towards providing effective literacy instruction for all students.

1. Critically analyse the link between the language of the Draft *Literacy Learning Progressions* and that of the *Effective Literacy Practice* (ELP) handbooks and English in *The New Zealand Curriculum*

A careful reading of the Draft *Literacy Learning Progressions* has identified only a small degree of mismatch between the language of the *Progressions* and that of the *Effective Literacy Practice* handbooks and English in *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

Where terms used in the *Progressions* are not present in ELP or in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (for example, “collocations”, “discourse marker”, “inflected endings”, and “lexical chains”) they are usually clearly defined in the glossary, so their inclusion in the *Progressions* presents no problems. The only exceptions to this are the following terms:

- phrase structures (year 3 – reading)
- pronoun references (year 6 – writing)
- noun clauses (year 6 – writing)
- adverbial clauses of reason (year 6 – writing)
- rhetorical pattern (year 8 – reading)
- non-linear ways of organising information (year 10 – reading).

We also note that the terms “phoneme-grapheme knowledge” and “relationship” are used constantly throughout the *Progressions*. We recommend that the identified terms be defined and added to the glossary.

2. Demonstrate the links between the Draft *Literacy Learning Progressions* and a range of assessment tools and procedures used in the Literacy Professional Development Project (LPDP)

The following response outlines how the LPDP project team sees the links between a range of assessment tools and the Draft *Literacy Learning Progressions*. It also highlights areas in the *Progressions* that the project team feel need to be strengthened. This response is based on the understanding that the *Progressions* are neither an assessment tool nor a teaching programme, but rather are a description of the

knowledge and skills that students need to have developed at specific points in their schooling if they are to engage with texts and tasks of the curriculum and make the expected progress. (MOE 2007).

The following assumptions underpin this response:

- that the primary purpose of assessment in literacy is to identify how effectively students are making or creating meaning in written language and to use this information to provide direction for further teaching and learning and for reporting to parents;
- that literacy learning is cumulative and builds on existing expertise;
- that students take individual and multiple pathways to develop their literacy expertise;
- that no single assessment tool or procedure will provide the information necessary to identify a student's literacy strengths and needs; rather a suite of tools and procedures needs to be used to build up a rich picture of what a child can and cannot do;
- that a teacher's knowledge of literacy acquisition is crucial in enabling them to use assessment information constructively to focus instruction in ways that support students to use their literacy strengths to problem-solve and master new literacy challenges.

The assessment tools and procedures explored and linked to the Draft *Literacy Learning Progressions* in this response can be divided into two categories: those that are used predominantly in the project in the first three years of schooling and those that are used in years 4–8. The tools and procedures include:

- Standardised assessments, such as School Entry Assessments; Running Records; The Observation Survey, Reading Progressive Achievement Tests; STAR Supplementary Tests of Achievement in Reading; and asTTle reading and writing
- Non standardised tools such as the writing exemplars
- Observation-based procedures

The LPDP is supporting teachers to analyse and synthesise the information from a range of tools to identify patterns of strengths and needs across a class, or group and to adjust their teaching accordingly. The Draft *Literacy Learning Progressions* are supporting teachers both to understand what information these tools can and can't provide and to focus their instruction and monitor the pace of progress for their students. Learning profiles of individual students who are identified as focus students (selected from groups of students identified as at risk of underachieving) are being created to inform focused instruction and close monitoring of students' progress.

Links between the Draft *Literacy Learning Progressions* and Assessment Tools and Procedures Used at School Entry and to the End of Year 3

At school entry, the Draft *Literacy Learning Progressions* demonstrate the kinds of literacy knowledge and understandings that enable many five-year-olds to meet the demands of literacy instruction from their first day of school. These are providing a valuable scaffold for teachers to base their initial observations on.

At each of the subsequent four stages (listed below) the *Progressions* recognise the cumulative nature of literacy learning and describe the kinds of literacy expertise that teachers should expect students to have developed if they are making effective progress. These include constrained knowledge and skills that are required to be mastered in a short period of time as well as unconstrained knowledge and skills that continue to develop over time.

- After six months at school
- After one complete year at school
- After two years at school
- After three years at school

The assessment tools and procedures used by the project across these levels include the following standardised assessments and observation procedures.

Standardised Assessments

From School Entry to the end of Year 3 the standardised diagnostic assessment procedures most commonly used by LPDP schools are:

- The Observation Survey,
- Running Records
- The Supplementary Tests of Achievement in Reading, Year 3 (STAR).

The purpose of these tests is to help teachers identify patterns of achievement, including areas of strength and areas that need further focus, to monitor progress over time, and to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching.

The Observation Survey

The Observation Survey, developed by Marie Clay, incorporates six literacy tasks, all of which are necessary for describing a young child's emerging reading and writing behaviors:

- **Letter Identification** to determine which letters the child knows and the preferred mode of identification
- **Word Test** to determine if the child is building a personal resource of reading vocabulary
- **Concepts About Print** to determine what the child knows about the way spoken language is represented in print
- **Writing Vocabulary** to determine if the child is building a personal resource of known words that can be written in every detail
- **Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words** to assess phonemic awareness by determining how the child represents sounds in graphic form
- **Text Reading** to determine an appropriate level of text difficulty and to record

what the child does when reading continuous text (see “Running Records”)

Teachers are able to reference the test items to a number of the relevant descriptors from the Draft *Literacy Learning Progressions* (see Appendix 1). This is helping to demonstrate the usefulness of this tool for contributing to a rich picture of a child’s current literacy knowledge and used to inform teaching and learning and to monitor progress over time. In many schools this information previously has been collected at six but not used by classroom teachers.

However, while many teachers are finding this enlightening and informative and enabling them to be more focused in their instruction, the danger is that without informed facilitation and/or school leadership, teachers overlook the significance of the introductory stem (*As they read, students demonstrate that they ...*) and resort to teaching item knowledge out of context. It is important for students to explore the way language works and develop this item knowledge as they read continuous text. Then the instructional emphasis is on how the knowledge and skills they are developing are enabling them to make meaning from or create meaning using written text.

Therefore the project team recommends that the examples provided be strengthened to ensure that the behaviours relating to the use and integration of text information are strengthened so that teachers can see the link between what can be identified and observed in text reading that indicates the item knowledge is present.

Running Records

“Running records taken on continuous text at selected intervals can plot a path of reading progress.” (Clay 2002).

This procedure, developed by Marie Clay, employs standard methods with recognised conventions for recording exactly what the child does as they read. Through careful observation, reliable scoring, and thoughtful interpretation, the teacher gains significant insights into the child’s:

- strategies for solving unknown words;
- competence for drawing together all the sources of information;
- self monitoring and self correction strategies;
- willingness to take risks.

In addition to the core procedure, the teacher may explore the child’s comprehension of the text by inviting the child to retell the story or by asking questions that require them to interpret what they have read. (MOE 2003)

This is the most common tool used by LPDP schools in years 1–3 to identify and monitor students’ progress in reading. Many of the progression descriptors (for example, those at “After Six Months at School” and “After One, Two, and Three Years at School”) can be directly referenced to the information that can be gained from analysing a running record. (See Appendix 1 for an example linked to the progression descriptors for “After Six Months At School”).

The follow-up retelling or responses to questions asked also provide more detailed information on how students are making meaning from the text they have read.

Once again, it is the teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skill linked to their content knowledge, (their understandings about literacy acquisition, and their knowledge of the developmental nature and multiple pathways of learning) that enable them to make effective use of the information gained. This is still a tool that facilitators report is being used variably in schools.

Therefore the project team recommends:

- that benchmark texts are identified and supported by focus questions and /or conversation structures that will support a teacher to elicit a student's ability to make meaning from the text; and
- exemplars of analysed running records using the benchmark texts are developed that demonstrate the range of behaviours successful readers are using as they use their developing knowledge and skills to make meaning from these texts.

We believe this will support teachers to see how over time successful readers are integrating and using the constrained and unconstrained knowledge and skills to make meaning from text.

Supplementary Tests of Achievement in Reading Year 3 (STAR)

This group test provides information on a student's decoding ability, their ability to read for meaning at a sentence and paragraph level, and their reading vocabulary knowledge.

While the links to the *Progressions* are not so clear from this tool, careful analysis of the tests and each student's test responses can be referenced to aspects of the expertise, outlined in a number of the progression descriptors, that identify what students need to be demonstrating after two and three years at school. The following examples illustrate these links.

After Two Years at School

- *“uses their knowledge of phoneme-grapheme relationships to decode words”* (information gained from the Word Recognition subtest)
- *“uses comprehension strategies to get the gist of a text”* (information gained from the Sentence and Paragraph subtests)

After Three Years at School

- *“are aware of synonyms for and multiple meanings of many common words”* (information gained from the Vocabulary Range subtest)
- *“can integrate and use a variety of comprehension strategies to understand texts”* (information gained from Sentence and Paragraph Comprehension subtests)

However, we think that this test at sentence and paragraph level provides some strong evidence of a student's ability to **integrate a range of text information to gain meaning, including context, word order, grammar, visual clues and background knowledge**. This is extremely important at this level and needs to be made more explicit in the progression descriptors at these two stages.

Non-standardised Assessment Tasks

The New Zealand Curriculum Writing exemplars

In Years 1–3, the LPDP schools use the New Zealand Curriculum Writing Exemplar Progress Indicators along with the analysed exemplars for supporting their analysis of students' writing and developing their understanding about quality writing and progress over time. While this tool is not norm-referenced, it provides reference points that help teachers and students make decisions about the student's current progress and the next steps for teaching and learning. (MOE 2003)

The indicators deal with deeper and surface features. The information gained from this tool can be clearly referenced to the *Progressions*. Together these tools are supporting teachers to identify students' writing strengths and needs and enabling them to make more explicit connections between reading and writing, particularly as they create their profiles for focus students.

Some schools are now using the exemplar criteria alongside the *Literacy Learning Progressions* to confirm existing school-developed exemplars or benchmarks for writing or to develop and annotate their own exemplars as benchmarks at particular points in time.

Observation-based Procedures

Many experts highlight the importance of planned and informed observations as a way of gathering information about a child's literacy expertise. When children enter school, we need to observe what they know and can do, and build on the foundation whether it is rich or meagre (Clay 2002). Structured recorded observations of new entrants is especially important, given the wide range of knowledge and expertise that children bring at school entry (MOE 2003)

Structured Observations

Many of the Draft *Literacy Learning Progressions* can be observed during structured classroom observations during classroom literacy activities. The following examples help to illustrate this.

- At School Entry, close observations of a student listening to a text read or engaging in the reading of a text will identify whether the student is *able to connect stories to their own experiences and lives and respond to texts in ways that demonstrate engagement with the texts (e.g., to laugh at funny bits, empathise with a character, join in, or express an opinion).*" This is an important indicator that a child at this level can make meaning from text and a strength to build on during further instruction.
- After One Year of School, the focus on making meaning from text is more specific, and would be observed during guided reading. For example, can the child *"make simple inferences when reading stories (e.g. about motive, character, and theme?); and "answer questions about facts, using information that is explicit in the text"?*

The *Progressions* have the potential to inform the focus of structured observations, particularly of students identified as focus students in the project (i.e, students in project schools who have been identified as at risk or of concern.) Teachers are being supported to closely monitor these students to see the impact of their changed teaching practice.

Links between the Draft *Literacy Learning Progressions* and Assessment Tools and Procedures Used in Year 4 and to the End of Year 8

It is stated in the Draft *Literacy Learning Progressions* that by year 4, students' year level becomes more significant than their age in terms of the reading and writing expertise that they need to meet the demands of the curriculum (p7). Therefore the *Progressions* show expectations for students' literacy expertise at the following key transition points in the primary school:

- by the end of Year 4;
- by the end of Year 6;
- by the end of Year 8;

The assessment tools and procedures used by the project across these levels include the following standardised assessments.

- asTTle Reading and Writing
- Progressive Achievement Test: Reading

There is a strong correlation between the information that can be gained from these tools and the progression descriptors, particularly at the end of year 6 and year 8. However, the progression descriptors for *by the end of year 4* have more emphasis on word level knowledge and strategies than either of these tools provide. *By the end of year 4*, in writing, there is a need to make the progression descriptions more explicit in relation to writing for an audience and shaping, organising and sequencing ideas in text to create meaning. These understandings and skills should be evident at this level.

We believe, at these transition points, there needs to be some exemplification of how the information gained from these tool is demonstrating that the student is operating at the particular standard described.

Conclusion

The project team believe that the Draft *Literacy Learning Progressions* are an invaluable tool to support teachers to develop further their understandings of what students need to know and understand to be able to meet the literacy demands of the curriculum. We believe that in the main the assessment tools and procedures outlined above can be readily referenced to the progression descriptors. The following is a summary of our recommendations to further enhance this:

- that the terms identified in section 1 be defined and added to the glossary.

- strengthen the progression for the early stages by providing more detailed descriptions at each of the stages of how a student demonstrates they are integrating a range of text information to gain meaning
- develop a standard for each of the early stages using a range of identified benchmark texts with focus questions for engaging students in discussion that will elicit a student's understanding of the text..
- develop exemplars of analysed running records to accompany these benchmark texts that demonstrate how over time successful readers are integrating the constrained and unconstrained knowledge and skills identified in the progressions and using this information to make meaning.
- make more explicit reference to writing for an audience, and shaping, organising and sequencing ideas in text to create meaning *after 4 years at school*
- provide some exemplification of how the information gained from standardised tools such as PAT and asTTle demonstrates that the student is operating at the particular standard exemplified in the progressions.

Curriculum link	Links between the Literacy Learning Progressions & other resources Reading progressions - Reading after six months at school	Assessment tools & practices	Links to ELP An Observation Survey – Marie Clay	Links to other project resources	
English and cross curriculum including key competencies	In order to engage with these texts students build on their earlier expertise. As they read, students demonstrate that they:	How will the teachers know? Teacher's close observations of students' reading and writing of real text.	Chapter 2 is essential reading. [module in 'Explaining the ELP Handbook'] and Chapter 5		
	1. expect a text to make sense and understand that they read the text rather than the illustrations;	Running Record	P.59 ELP	Lit Leaders Module – Workshop 3. Running Record Video and Book. Year 1 Guided Reading Video	Rich Texts
	2. have many concepts about print under control, including one-to-one matching, directionality, and some simple punctuation;	CAPS	Chapter 5 & 7 An Obs Survey P.33 ELP P.40 An Obs Survey		
	3. know that sounds combine to form words and that sounds are represented by letters;	Word Text Writing Vocab Hearing and Recording Sounds		Sounds Sense	
	4. use their developing phonemic awareness to orally blend some phonemes in simple words that have two to three phonemes;	Hearing and Recording Sounds			
	5. attend to initial letters and common inflections (e.g., -s, -ed, -ing) as they read.	) Running Records		
	6. process text using interrelated sources of information (semantic, syntactic, and visual and grapho-phonetic);	) ) Running Records	ELP p.30	
	7. decode simple, regular words by using word-solving strategies, e.g., by using their knowledge of letter-sound relationships and by making analogies to known rimes;	) Running Records)		Spell-Write Essential Lists
	8. use sentence structure and context to supplement information from partial decoding attempts;	) ) Running Records		
	9. confirm word predictions by cross-checking (e.g., by checking sentence patterns, illustrations, or the meaning of text already read);	) Running Records)		
	10. recognize approximately twenty-five high-frequency words automatically, both in and out of context;	) Running Records + word reading) test		
	11. use comprehension strategies, including making connections to prior knowledge, to understand and respond to aspects of texts such as characters in fiction texts or simple facts in information texts;	) Running Records))		
	12. self-monitor, at times, by recognizing when they've lost meaning and using some simple fix-up strategies (such as checking with the picture or rereading the line);	) Running Records)		
	13. clearly understand a text (e.g., through conversation, drawing, and retelling).	) Running Records + Tell Me		