



Education and Training

# Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2009-2013

Better outcomes for all students... Better futures



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# Minister's message

Strong literacy and numeracy skills lay the foundation for all students to succeed at school and in life. It is essential that all ACT public schools give every student from preschool to year 12 the best possible chance to excel in reading, writing, spelling, grammar and numeracy.

The ACT Government is committed to ensuring schools prioritise the teaching of these important foundation skills. We are committed to bridging the gap between our highest and lowest achievers. All ACT public schools will be required to include literacy and numeracy targets and strategies in their school plans under this Strategy.

The ACT's public schools already produce some of the best results for literacy and numeracy nationally. This five-year Literacy and Numeracy Strategy will help ensure we continue this strong performance into the future. While many students perform well, this new Strategy will help us prioritise and target our support to those schools in most need and those students not performing to their full potential.

All teachers are teachers of literacy and numeracy. All students, regardless of their diverse backgrounds, must be supported to progress to higher standards in literacy and numeracy as they move through school. This Strategy provides the strategic direction to guide school leaders and teachers in targeting and improving the literacy and numeracy outcomes of all their students.

This *Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2009-2013* will support the literacy and numeracy learning of all students in ACT public schools and colleges over the next five years. It is based on a clear recognition that quality teaching and quality school leadership make a significant difference to students' literacy and numeracy outcomes.

The ACT Government is committed to ensuring the ACT remains the national leader in literacy and numeracy performance. More importantly, this Government is committed to raising the literacy and numeracy performance of every student in every classroom, ensuring *better outcomes for all students*, leading to *better futures*.

**Andrew Barr MLA**

Minister for Education and Training

# A strategy for action

## Introduction

Competence in literacy and numeracy is integral to effective learning in all learning areas and across all years of schooling from preschool to year 12.

Literacy is the ability to read, write and use written language appropriately in a range of contexts for different purposes and to communicate with a variety of audiences. Reading and writing, when integrated with speaking, listening, viewing and critical thinking, constitute valued aspects of literacy in modern life<sup>1</sup>.

Numeracy is the effective use of mathematics to meet the general demands of life at school and at home, in paid work, and for participation in community and civic life.<sup>2</sup>

From preschool to year 2, literacy and numeracy development is a central component of early childhood programs through quality differentiated play-based curriculum. From years 3-10, students are assisted to develop more complex literacy and numeracy skills and understandings through explicit instruction based on their individual needs. In colleges, there is continued recognition that literacy and numeracy skills underpin learning in all courses and, when required, explicit teaching both within course delivery and through targeted programs will occur to meet student needs.

This Literacy and Numeracy Strategy:

- recognises the expertise, commitment and professionalism of our teachers and school leaders
- builds on the practices in literacy and numeracy that have led to the ACT's high national and international standing
- acknowledges the crucial role principals and school leaders play in school effectiveness and improvement
- recognises the challenges in meeting the diverse needs of all our students and requires all schools to identify and support those students in need of specific attention
- recognises the importance of new technologies and their evolving role in assisting students to learn and demonstrate their literacy and numeracy capabilities
- is based on an understanding that all teachers are teachers of literacy and numeracy, and that a combination of literacy and numeracy strategies and interventions is needed to ensure all students realise their full potential
- values the importance of partnerships between the home and the school.

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1 ACT Department of Education and Training, (2007). *Every chance to learn - ACT curriculum framework for preschool to year 10*, p 13

2 MCEETYA Benchmarking Taskforce. (1997). *National Report on Schooling in Australia 1997*, as cited in *National Curriculum Board paper, National Mathematics Curriculum: Framing paper, 2008*, p 4

## Our objectives

This Literacy and Numeracy Strategy aims to:

- strengthen the leadership capacity of school leaders
- improve teachers' professional knowledge and skills in teaching literacy and numeracy
- improve the literacy and numeracy learning of every student
- enhance the use of data and systems to plan for, monitor and report on performance.

These aims translate into our priorities for action under the strategy.

## Our priorities for action

Figure 1 identifies the three focus areas for action under the Strategy—leadership, teaching and learning. Our achievements in each area will be reliant on the effective use of data and information to inform our actions in each area.

Figure 1: The *Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2009-2013*

Leadership	Teaching	Learning
Strengthen the leadership capacity of school leaders	Improve teachers' professional knowledge and skills in teaching literacy and numeracy	Improve literacy and numeracy learning of every student
<b>Evidence informed practice</b>		

### Strengthen literacy and numeracy leadership

This focus area will strengthen school leadership of literacy and numeracy by promoting and enhancing a productive school culture aligning highly effective teaching practices with resource allocation.

School leaders and principals are expected to build positive cultures in their schools to promote high expectations of all students and of all teachers. Principals are expected to set targets for improving the literacy and numeracy performance of their students and put in place plans for achieving these targets. School leaders and principals are expected to guide their teachers' practice and make informed decisions about the allocation of resources to support literacy and numeracy.

## Improve literacy and numeracy teaching

This focus area will develop teachers' professional knowledge, skills and capacity to use research-based practices to improve their teaching of literacy and numeracy.

Literacy and numeracy teaching in ACT public schools and colleges will incorporate explicit and systematic instruction, and will draw on the evidence base of a range of approaches.

The Strategy recognises that teachers must be able to draw on a flexible repertoire of skills, resources and professional knowledge to meet the needs of each student.

## Improve literacy and numeracy learning

This focus area will improve the literacy and numeracy learning outcomes for all students by providing a supportive learning environment and by addressing the diverse needs and abilities of students.

This Strategy aims to engage and support all learners and provide the best learning environment for every student to reach their full potential.

Particular attention will be given to Indigenous learners, learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, learners from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, gifted and talented learners and students in the early years.

## Our targets

While students in ACT public schools perform strongly by national and international standards for literacy and numeracy, there is more we can do. At the end of 2008, the ACT, along with all states and territories, signed a new National Education Agreement under the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agenda committing us to the following outcomes and targets:

- young people are meeting basic literacy and numeracy standards and overall levels of literacy and numeracy are improving
- Australian students excel by international standards
- halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade.<sup>3</sup>

To ensure we contribute to these national outcomes and improve our own literacy and numeracy achievement, the Department will set system-wide literacy and numeracy targets. Each school has set its own targets within school plans, to reduce achievement gaps and improve the literacy and numeracy outcomes of all students.

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3. Council of Australian Governments. (2008). *National Education Agreement*.

The ACT Department of Education and Training has set the following targets to be achieved by 2013:

- to increase the mean score in National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 by eight points in reading, writing, and numeracy
- to reduce the achievement gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy by 25%.

All ACT public schools will be required to contribute to these system targets. Each school will need to set their own targets for their students. Each school will be required to monitor and report on their improvements over the five-year period.

The School Improvement Framework will assist schools to identify their priorities, implement the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy and use systems and data effectively to regularly monitor, review and report on their progress.



# FOCUS AREA 1

## Strengthen literacy and numeracy leadership

*To promote and enhance a productive school culture that establishes high expectations for teachers and students and aligns highly effective teaching practices with resource allocation to improve literacy and numeracy.*

There is a need to sustain and build literacy and numeracy attainment levels. The principal is responsible for the setting of targets for students' literacy and numeracy outcomes. Sustaining student success is the responsibility of all schools and all teachers.

While it is recognised that teachers' expertise is crucial for improving students' literacy and numeracy skills, strong school leadership is necessary to drive whole school engagement with literacy and numeracy.

It is the principal's responsibility to ensure literacy and numeracy learning is addressed at the different stages of schooling and across all areas of the curriculum. To effectively guide school policy and teacher practice and development, principals require a high level of knowledge about how students acquire and develop literacy and numeracy skills and about effective teaching and learning practices.

School leaders and principals are expected to develop and promote a productive school culture that articulates a rich learning environment with high expectations. Teachers and students require a strong commitment to the importance of lifelong learning, as well as an understanding of the role they play in achieving it.

School leaders and principals need to monitor and support teachers to ensure they understand their role in the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills.

This Strategy includes actions aimed at strengthening leadership capacity in literacy and numeracy. School leaders and principals will require support to increase their understanding of effective literacy and numeracy teaching. They will also require assistance in understanding the systems available for assessing and monitoring student achievement, and assistance in interpreting the information and performance data these systems can provide.

**1. Strengthen literacy and numeracy leadership—to promote and enhance a productive school culture that establishes high expectations for teachers and students and aligns highly effective teaching practices with resource allocation to improve literacy and numeracy.**

Key elements	Actions	Responsibilities
<p><b>School culture</b> Productive school cultures will be built on high expectations, shared vision and shared responsibility for providing literacy and numeracy learning</p>	<p>School leadership teams will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>establish a shared vision for literacy and numeracy teaching and learning in the school context</li> <li>model and promote a professional learning community</li> <li>promote common understandings of literacy and numeracy standards.</li> </ul> <p>Principals will ensure all teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>understand that they are responsible for teaching literacy and numeracy skills</li> <li>have the knowledge and skills to teach literacy and numeracy skills.</li> </ul> <p>All schools will develop literacy and numeracy priorities within the School Plan to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>align with system priorities</li> <li>address all student needs</li> <li>monitor, evaluate, review and report progress each year in the School Board Report</li> <li>inform Professional Pathways goals of all school staff.</li> </ul> <p>All schools will promote inclusive home and school partnerships through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>connecting parents and carers with the school</li> <li>timely and effective communication on student learning and literacy and numeracy practices</li> <li>providing parent education programs.</li> </ul>	<p>Principal and School Leadership team</p> <p>Literacy and Numeracy School Coordinators</p> <p>Literacy and Numeracy Field Officers</p> <p>School Directors</p> <p>Literacy and Numeracy Section</p> <p>Measurement, Monitoring and Reporting Directorate—School Improvement Partners</p> <p>Teachers</p>
<p><b>Teaching practice</b> Teaching practice will be guided by principals as leaders of literacy and numeracy</p>	<p>The Department will provide professional learning to principals to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>link literacy and numeracy, curriculum, learning, teaching and assessment</li> <li>develop depth of knowledge of leading practice to enable effective guidance to teachers and clear communication with parents</li> <li>promote use of school, Departmental and national data to identify teaching and learning goals.</li> </ul> <p>Principals will identify Literacy and Numeracy School Coordinators to support the literacy and numeracy priorities within each School Plan and coordinate the sharing of effective practices.</p> <p>Principals will provide structures and resources to support Literacy and Numeracy Field Officers to undertake their roles within and across schools.</p>	<p>Principal and School Leadership team</p> <p>Literacy and Numeracy School Coordinators</p> <p>Literacy and Numeracy Field Officers</p> <p>School Directors</p> <p>Literacy and Numeracy Section</p>

Key elements	Actions	Responsibilities
<p><b>Strategic resource allocation</b></p> <p>Resources will be allocated strategically to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes</p>	<p>Principals will analyse their school context to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify student and teacher needs</li> <li>• allocate support for professional learning of teachers in literacy and numeracy.</li> </ul> <p>School leadership teams will allocate human resources to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• best meet student learning needs</li> <li>• provide targeted teaching to identified groups of students</li> <li>• provide adequate emphasis on early diagnosis of students' literacy and numeracy difficulties</li> <li>• provide immediate support, particularly early intervention programs in the early years.</li> </ul> <p>Principals will set school targets and monitor results with particular attention to identified groups of students, including more able students not reaching their full potential.</p>	<p>Principal and School Leadership team</p> <p>Literacy and Numeracy School Coordinators</p> <p>School Directors</p> <p>Teachers</p> <p>School Board</p> <p>Literacy and Numeracy Field Officers</p>

# FOCUS AREA 2

## Improve literacy and numeracy teaching

*To develop all teachers' professional knowledge, skills and capacity to use research-based practices to improve their teaching of literacy and numeracy.*

The quality of teaching is widely acknowledged as the largest in-school determinant of variation in student achievement. There is a need to continue to strengthen teachers' knowledge and skills about how students acquire and develop proficiency in literacy and numeracy.

The Quality Teaching model supports teachers in understanding the dimensions of pedagogy required to produce quality student learning outcomes. Professional learning based on research increases teacher understanding and, when supported through ongoing in-school mentoring and coaching, is the most effective approach to building teacher capacity. Through increased understanding, teachers are able to explain their practice and link this to pedagogical approaches.

Literacy and numeracy resources, which have been shown to provide rigour and balance in both content and teaching approach, will be used to support all our students. Developing consistent understandings within and across all public schools and colleges will provide a sound base to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students. Wide implementation of system-endorsed, research-based resources and programs will support the curriculum and provide teachers with explicit teaching, assessment and monitoring strategies.

A three-pronged educational approach will be used to ensure all students are supported. This approach involves:

- high quality instruction by every classroom teacher
- additional in-class support provided by School Literacy and Numeracy Coordinators and Field Officers
- intensive, short-term support for individual students when required.

Our challenge is to provide quality teaching at all levels. This means strengthening the capacity of all teachers, including building their knowledge of effective intervention strategies, so that every teacher can meet the learning needs of all students and assist them to develop their literacy and numeracy skills.

**2. Improve literacy and numeracy teaching—to develop all teachers’ professional knowledge, skills and capacity to use research-based practices to improve their teaching of literacy and numeracy.**

Key elements	Actions	Responsibilities
<p><b>Professional learning</b> Access professional learning that builds teachers’ depth of knowledge and skills for teaching literacy and numeracy</p>	<p>The Department will provide professional learning in literacy and numeracy that focuses on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• effective strategies for explicit instruction of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum</li> <li>• expanding the capacity of teachers to teach, assess and monitor literacy and numeracy development within the curriculum</li> <li>• incorporating and implementing new technologies to promote literacy and numeracy learning outcomes.</li> </ul> <p>School leaders will promote:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sharing of knowledge between teachers to embed practice across all learning areas</li> <li>• reflective practices within school communities through understanding the relationship between curriculum, assessment and pedagogy (Quality Teaching model)</li> <li>• active participation in professional learning, to build skills in teaching, assessing and monitoring literacy and numeracy development across the curriculum.</li> </ul>	<p>Literacy and Numeracy Section</p> <p>Literacy and Numeracy School Coordinators</p> <p>Literacy and Numeracy Field Officers</p> <p>Quality Teaching Consultants</p> <p>Teachers</p>
<p><b>Data informed</b> Implement a whole school approach to promote effective use of qualitative and quantitative data to inform teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy</p>	<p>Principals will implement a data-informed approach and embed this into school practice, as evidenced through teachers who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assess and monitor student performance in literacy and numeracy</li> <li>• demonstrate a culture of sharing class and student learning outcomes for whole school analysis</li> <li>• utilise a range of models of qualitative and quantitative assessment in literacy and numeracy for/of learning</li> <li>• reflect on student literacy and numeracy learning and their teaching to inform future planning.</li> </ul>	<p>Principal</p> <p>School Directors</p> <p>Measuring, Monitoring and Reporting Directorate—School Improvement Partners</p> <p>Literacy and Numeracy School Coordinators</p> <p>Literacy and Numeracy Field Officers</p> <p>Teachers</p>



Key elements	Actions	Responsibilities
<p><b>Consistent practices</b> Develop consistent understandings to build a whole school approach</p>	<p>School leadership teams will support the whole school as an active professional learning community by enhancing common understandings and building consistency in literacy and numeracy programs.</p>	<p>Literacy and Numeracy School Coordinators Literacy and Numeracy Field Officers Principal Teachers School Directors</p>
<p><b>Research-based approaches</b> Whole school commitment to develop a research-based approach to improving literacy and numeracy outcomes for students</p>	<p>School leadership teams will support teachers to develop greater understanding of how students learn, how to improve student learning outcomes and the findings of leading research by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• providing opportunities for teachers to undertake school-based action research that informs teaching practice to improve literacy and numeracy learning</li> <li>• providing opportunities for teachers to share and reflect on their practice</li> <li>• promoting links with universities to support relevant research projects.</li> </ul>	<p>Literacy and Numeracy Section Principal and School Leadership team Literacy and Numeracy School Coordinators Teachers University partnerships</p>

# FOCUS AREA 3

## Improve literacy and numeracy learning

*To improve the literacy and numeracy learning outcomes for all students by providing a supportive learning environment and addressing their diverse needs and abilities.*

Indigenous students, students from disadvantaged backgrounds and students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are over-represented in the lowest 20% of students in the ACT. All ACT public schools and colleges have the responsibility to address the needs of these students and support all students to reach their full potential.

Careful monitoring of student performance, with timely and targeted intervention strategies are recommended to support all learners.

Assessment plays an important role in the teaching and learning process. Careful analysis of diagnostic qualitative and quantitative data at every year level will lead to more targeted programs to support the effective delivery of literacy and numeracy.

Early success in learning helps to build strong student engagement and a positive attitude to learning. In the early years of schooling, attention is to be given to assessment at school entry to build basic competencies to ensure a strong foundation for future learning.

An analysis of performance trends on national and international assessments over the previous five years has identified specific areas where improvements in student outcomes can be made. These identified areas relate to:

- improving the literacy and numeracy outcomes for all Indigenous students
- writing, spelling and numeracy in the primary and middle years
- maximising the achievements of our high performing students.

Targeting these identified areas will support our goal of improving literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students.

Closer collaboration between sectors—primary schools, high schools and colleges—and effective transition planning is required to support students as they move through the phases of schooling.

Schools will use school-based, ACT and national assessment information to inform school plans and classroom teaching, and to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of plans and programs.

The Department will also draw on evidence of effective support programs and interventions in order to prioritise the allocation of system resources, and ensure schools are provided with the best support available.

**3. Improve literacy and numeracy learning—to improve literacy and numeracy learning outcomes for all students by providing a supportive learning environment which addresses their diverse needs and abilities.**

Key elements	Actions	Responsibilities
<p><b>Different needs</b> Address the identified needs of all students through differentiated, class based practice</p>	<p>School leadership will ensure an inclusive learning environment which promotes specific literacy and numeracy strategies to engage and support all learners, valuing and building on prior learning.</p>	<p>Literacy and Numeracy Field Officers  Literacy and Numeracy School Coordinators  Principal and School Leadership team  Teachers</p>
<p><b>Targeted groups</b> Improve literacy and numeracy learning outcomes for students</p>	<p>School leadership will develop school programs to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• enhance the development and implementation of Individual Learning Plans and Personalised Learning Plans with emphasis on literacy and numeracy strategies</li> <li>• engage, monitor and provide appropriate intervention programs for students at risk of not reaching their potential</li> <li>• utilise new technologies to enhance engagement and delivery of literacy and numeracy strategies</li> <li>• support Indigenous students by building all teachers' understanding and knowledge of appropriate pedagogies</li> <li>• encourage teachers to work collaboratively to provide targeted support for Indigenous students, students from disadvantaged backgrounds, students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and gifted and talented students</li> <li>• build on the assessment at school entry, including Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS) data, to implement timely and effective support programs that establish basic competencies in the first three years of schooling.</li> </ul>	<p>Principal and School Leadership team  Literacy and Numeracy Field Officers  Literacy and Numeracy School Coordinators  Literacy and Numeracy Section  Measurement, Monitoring and Reporting Directorate—School Improvement Partners  Learning Technologies and Curriculum Support P-12 Sections  Early Childhood and Indigenous Education Sections</p>
<p><b>Transitions</b> Support transition programs which promote the development of teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy</p>	<p>Establish:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• effective strategies to support students' literacy and numeracy development at the transition stages from home into school, from primary into secondary, from secondary to college and to the world of work</li> <li>• clear communication and transfer of literacy and numeracy approaches for students transitioning out of intervention units</li> <li>• networks to share information and useful literacy and numeracy strategies as students progress both within and between sectors.</li> </ul>	<p>Principal and School Leadership team  Literacy and Numeracy School Coordinators  Literacy and Numeracy Field Officers</p>

