Learning English: Achievement and Proficiency (LEAP)

INTRODUCTION

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The Learning English: Achievement and Proficiency tool (LEAP) describes the development of Standard Australian English (SAE) required to meet the increasing demands of the Australian Curriculum across the years of schooling from Foundation (Reception) to Year 10. This development of SAE is twofold. It involves developing:

- knowledge about the English language and how it works to make meaning
- knowledge about how to use language appropriately and effectively in varied contexts.

The development of language structures and vocabulary described within LEAP has been carefully cross-referenced with:

- the Australian Curriculum English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) Teacher Resource
- the Literacy General Capability: Literacy Continuum and the National Literacy Learning Progression to ensure consistency of the levels of expected language development
- the Australian Curriculum: English – Language strand to ensure consistency of terminology
- satisfactory work samples from the Australian Curriculum: English, mathematics, science, history, and geography, to draw relevant year level examples representative of a range of learning areas.

The LEAP Levels provide greater detail and exemplification of the broad descriptors contained in the Literacy General Capability: Literacy Continuum and the National Literacy Learning Progression.

RATIONALE AND AIMS

LEAP is an assessment, monitoring and reporting document for all teachers, which can be used to inform learning design. LEAP is intended to be used to:

- assess, monitor and report the language development (predominantly focusing on the development of academic language) of any student, in particular high needs students such as EALD students
- determine the level of student language learning need

- identify the appropriate support category to inform and direct allocations of EALD funding
- inform learning design through the identification of key teaching points in formative and summative assessments, to enable setting of learning goals and language level targets.

Consistent with the beliefs and understandings outlined within the National Literacy Learning Progression, LEAP is based on the beliefs that:

- language and literacy is fundamental to a student's ability to learn at school and to engage productively in society
- providing a comprehensive view of language and literacy learning and how it develops over time gives teachers a conceptual tool that can assist them to develop targeted teaching and learning programs for students who are working above or below year-level expectations
- for students who speak a language or dialect other than SAE, access to language and literacy development is especially important
- it is important to note that EALD students who do not meet age-related benchmarks when assessed against learning area achievement standards are not necessarily 'underperforming', but rather they are achieving at levels commensurate with their phase of English language learning.

SCOPE

LEAP describes the development of language needed across the year levels to access and demonstrate curriculum knowledge, skills and understandings for all learning areas (with particular reference to the ACARA Satisfactory work samples for learning areas: English, mathematics, science, history, and geography).

Levels 1–3 describe the beginning stages of development of SAE: learning to hear, understand and produce English words and phrases. For English-speaking background students, this is generally achieved before commencing school, but for many EALD students these Levels describe their early development of English at school.

Level 4 describes the level of language necessary for satisfactory achievement across the curriculum towards the end of Reception.

Levels 5–14 each describe 1 year's expected progression and are aligned to the subsequent years of schooling from Year 1 to Year 10 (see table on page 13 – LEAP Levels and year levels). They describe the language level needed for satisfactory achievement of Australian Curriculum Achievement Standards for the aligned year level.

Because of their alignment with year level standards, LEAP does not illustrate the complexities of second language learning. The complexities of EALD learning are described in the English as an Additional Language or Dialect Teacher Resource. See Appendix A for more information about the intersection between LEAP and the EAL/D Teacher Resource.

The alignment of Levels with the academic language required to achieve at year level standards means that any gap between these can readily be identified for a student. The wider the gap, the greater the difficulty for the student to access and achieve within the curriculum. There will then be a greater need for explicit teaching, scaffolding and differentiation. The LEAP Levels may also be a helpful guide regarding differentiation for high achievers, as it indicates how to extend students' language capabilities.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Consistent with the Australian Curriculum Literacy General Capability and the Learning Area of English, LEAP is underpinned by the social view of language that considers how language works to construct meaning in different social and cultural contexts. In particular, this theoretical orientation recognises that the shift from 'spoken-like' to 'written-like' language is pivotal to success at school. As subject-based learning develops, particularly in the middle and later school years, texts that students need to understand and produce are increasingly more 'written-like', with technical, abstract and specialised language forms. This movement from 'spoken-like' (everyday, informal) to 'written-like' (technical, formal) is described as a Register Continuum (see figure below). The language choices that students make when expressing and developing ideas, interacting with others and structuring and organising texts can be represented along this continuum. Students are typically required to make choices that increasingly shift toward the right of the register continuum as they progress through schooling to meet the ever-increasing demands of specialised learning area curricula.

Register Continuum

Expressing and developing ideas — subject matter

everyday	What is the topic?	technical
concrete	How is it expressed?	abstract

Interacting with others — roles and relationships

informal	Who is involved?	formal
personal	What are their roles and relationships?	impersonal
novice		informed/expert

Text structure and organisation — mode of communication

most spoken	How is the message conveyed?	most written
'here and now' context	How spoken or written-like is it?	generalised context
language with action	What technologies are used?	language of reflection

YEAR LEVEL AND REGISTER

LEAP is structured according to 3 year-level groupings that correspond to those of the Australian Curriculum: Levels 1–6 correspond to Reception to Year 2, Levels 7–10 correspond to Years 3–6 and Levels 11–14 correspond to Years 7–10. These broad groupings of LEAP also reflect students' language repertoires such as the range of contexts, texts and language for which the student is able to appropriately comprehend and produce language, and/or the register range over which they are developing control. These relationships are depicted towards the end of Appendix A and in Appendix B.

Given that an EALD student can commence school as a new arrival at any year level, an EALD student's level of English proficiency, can vary greatly from their age-related year level. For example, a newly arrived Year 8 student could be operating at LEAP Level 5.

Through descriptions and examples of language and vocabulary, LEAP shows the gradual and continual shift in language across the register continuum expected at each year level. As noted above, the shift from 'spoken-like' to 'written-like' language is pivotal to success at school. Therefore, LEAP has a strong focus on the development of 'spoken-language' in the early Levels, ending at Level 6 where the focus shifts to the development of more 'written-like' language. However, it must be noted that the 'written-like' language resources described within the Language Levels 1–14 could be employed in composing formal and technical oral, written or multimodal texts.

ORGANISATION

Organising elements

The organisational elements of LEAP draw from the elements of the National Literacy Learning Progression (see image below).
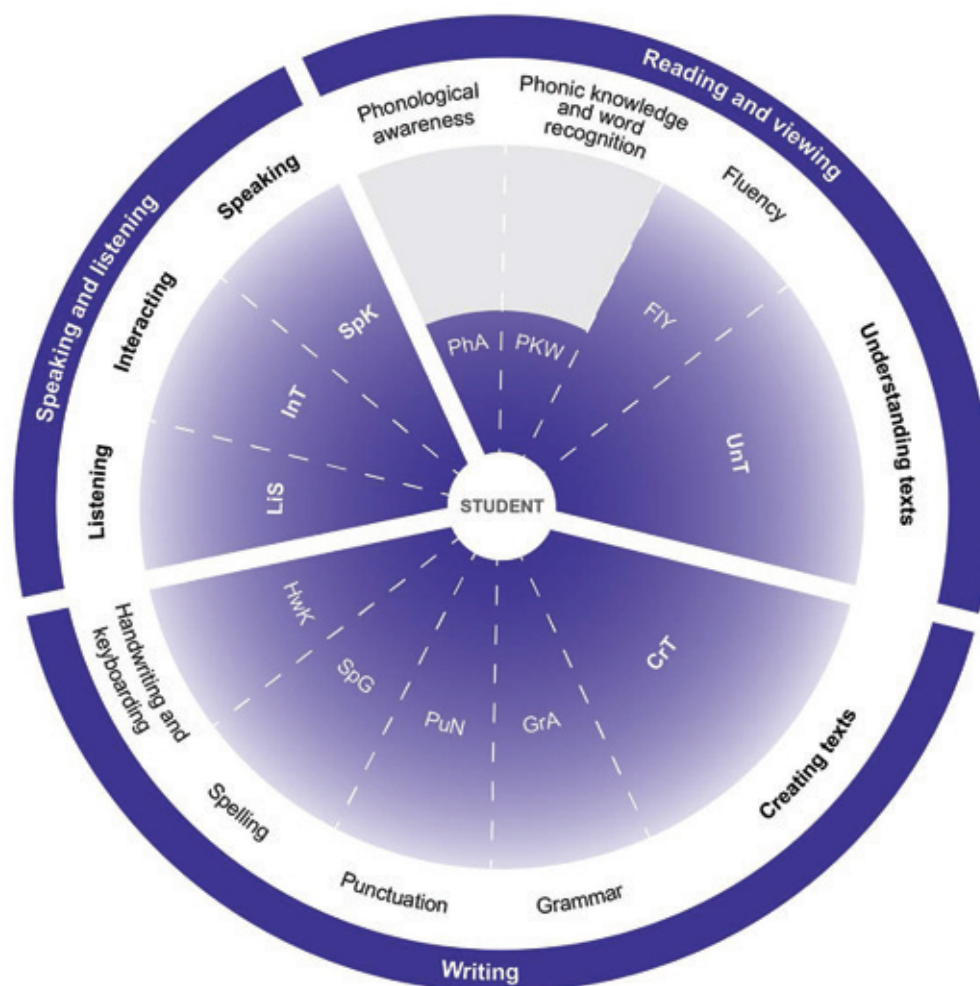
Elements and sub-elements of the National Literacy Learning Progression

The primary purpose of LEAP is to support the assessment, recording, tracking and reporting of SAE language and literacy development, which is typically based on a set of student work samples (the production of spoken, written or multimodal texts). Therefore, LEAP takes up elements of Speaking and Listening and Writing only. While the focus of the Levels is on the productive, receptive skills of Listening are included in the lower Levels (Levels 1–6) as these provide evidence of progression in the early stages of language learning. Since LEAP focuses on assessing English proficiency levels, it does not include mode dependent aspects such as Handwriting and Keyboarding, Punctuation and Spelling, nor does it include strategies and processes such as those included in the Writing – Creating texts sub-element, eg crafting ideas.

The 5 sub-elements taken up from the National Literacy Learning Progression are:

- Listening
- Interacting
- Speaking
- Creating texts
- Grammar

Rather than include Vocabulary as a sub-element of Speaking with general statements which then refer readers to Grammar as the Literacy Progression does, LEAP makes it clear that the specific descriptions and examples included under Grammar are utilised in both Oral language and Language.

LEAP

Oral language

- **Listening**
- **Interacting**
- **Speaking**
  - o As per language, Grammar including Vocabulary and Grammatical accuracy

Language

- **Creating texts**
  - o General descriptors
  - o Text forms of: Informative, Persuasive and Recounts and Narratives (imaginative and factual)
- **Grammar**
  - o Whole text level
  - o Sentence level
  - o Group and word level
    - > Vocabulary
    - > Grammatical accuracy

National Literacy Learning Progression

Reading and viewing (and all its sub-elements)

Speaking and listening

- **Listening**
- **Interacting**
- **Speaking**
  - o Vocabulary (general statements which then refer to grammar)

Writing

- **Creating texts:** Informative, Persuasive and Imaginative indicators at higher levels
  - o Crafting ideas
  - o Text forms and features
  - o Vocabulary
- **Grammar**
  - o Whole text level
  - o Sentence level
  - o Group and word level
  - o Grammatical accuracy

Key aspects of language

Within LEAP, the content of the Grammar sub-elements described under 3 broad levels: whole text; sentence; and group and word level are further broken down into key aspects of language. These are then used as threads across the Levels, where the expected uptake and development of each aspect is described through indicators of increasing development of Standard Australian English proficiency. The key language aspects are shown below.

Whole text level – Cohesive devices

- Reference: pronouns and demonstratives/pointers
- Text connectives
- Orientations to the message – sentence openers

Sentence level – Sentence structures

- Simple sentences (including fragments)
- Compound sentences (using coordinating/linking conjunctions)
- Complex sentences (using subordinating/binding conjunctions, relative and non-finite clauses)

Group and Word level

- Verbs and verb groups:
  Vocabulary
  o representing different processes:
    > action/doing
    > mental (thinking/feeling/perceiving/sensing)
    > saying
    > relating (being, having and causing)
  Grammatical accuracy (Levels 1–10)
  o verb groups including negatives, modals and multi-word verbs
  o tense (simple and elaborated)
- Adverbs, adverb groups/phrases and prepositional phrases) to express details of circumstances: place, time, manner, cause, role, angle and contingency
- Noun groups/phrases, including adjectives and adjectival phrases
  Vocabulary
  o key nouns (including nominalisations Levels 7–14)

  o adjectives and expanding before the noun
  o expanding after the noun
  Grammatical accuracy (Levels 1–6 only)
  o articles
  o plurals
- Evaluative language expressing
  o emotions
  o judgements
  o evaluations
  o varying intensity
  o modality

The Levels as a continuum

The 14 Levels of LEAP are a continuum that describes the ways in which students' language resources and repertoires are continually expanded. This is a process of expanding and adding to a language tool kit, not one of replacing poor language resources for better ones. As such, Levels do not necessarily repeat items from one Level to the other. Rather, the Levels are to be seen as cumulative, where a student at any given Level is presumed to have access to and control over the range of language resources described in previous Levels. For example, in terms of the use of conjunctions to form compound and complex sentences, it is presumed that a student who is demonstrating use of conjunctions such as since, as, unless, once, although would also be appropriately using conjunctions such as and, but, because, which are mentioned in earlier Levels, but it is not necessary for us to look for or note evidence of these.

Explanation of quantifying terms used within the Levels

The description of the progression of language across the Levels is complex and multi-faceted as it attempts to take into account aspects such as:

- accuracy/control: is the student able to use the feature with grammatical accuracy and regularity?
- appropriateness/choice: is the language feature used appropriately for the given text/context and to what degree is this based on modelling or an independent, 'deliberate' choice?
- quality/effectiveness: how specialised and technical or precise, refined and sophisticated are the language features and to what degree are they effective for the given text and context?

The examples included assist in distinguishing between adjacent Levels. It should be noted, however, that rather than seeing specific examples as evidence of a particular Level, the examples are merely indicative of the type and degree of precision typically found at that Level. The examples also need to be read in the context of the statement that precedes them. The stem often provides further guidance regarding expected number and frequency of instances of use, range of types, degree of precision, and appropriateness and accuracy of use.

As a guide, the following terms used within the Levels can be interpreted as:

- begins to use: 1–2 instances (may be the same resource) and may not be used accurately/appropriately
- uses: 3–4 instances (at least 2 different examples) used accurately/appropriately.

At all times professional teacher judgement needs to be used when assigning a Level for a student.

KEY REFERENCES

Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA) (2014) English as an Additional Language or Dialect Teacher Resource: EAL/D overview and advice, available at http://TLinSA.2.vu/EALDoverview2014

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APPENDIX A: INTERSECTION WITH THE ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE OR DIALECT TEACHER RESOURCE

LEAP and the EAL/D Teacher Resource have been designed for different purposes, and hence, support teachers in different ways. These differences are outlined in the table below.

LEAP	EAL/D Teacher Resource
Purpose	**Purpose**
assist teachers, schools and systems to monitor and report the language and literacy progress of all students, particularly high needs students such as EALD students	advise teachers about areas of the Australian Curriculum that EALD students may find challenging and why
highlight the size of any gap between a student's English language level and that expected for them to access the curriculum at their year level, thus enabling teachers, schools and systems to determine the level of student need	assist classroom teachers to identify where their EALD students are broadly positioned on a progression of English language learning across the macro-skills (listening, speaking, reading/viewing and writing)
inform and direct allocations of EALD funding	help teachers understand students' cultural and linguistic diversity, and the ways this understanding can be used in the classroom
inform learning design through the identification of key teaching points, learning goals and language level targets	provide examples of teaching strategies supportive of EALD students
	direct teachers to additional relevant and useful support for teaching EALD students
Components	**Components**
an introduction	an overview of EALD learning
a guide to language expectations for different text forms and their features (eg information texts, persuasive and evaluative texts and recounting and narrating texts)	four broad categories of EALD progression described at 3 stages of schooling R–10, covering listening, speaking, reading/viewing and writing
six detailed Oral language levels for Levels 1–6, describing the early development of oral language	advice and teaching strategies for teachers of EALD students
fourteen detailed Language levels, for Levels 1–14, describing the development of written-like language expected up to and including year 10 (refer to table on page 13 – LEAP Levels and year levels)	a glossary, references and acknowledgements
strategies to support students' language development and progress through the Levels	
a glossary	

LEAP	EAL/D Teacher Resource
Limitations	**Limitations**
Because of their purpose and design they do not:	Because of their purpose and design they do not:
indicate a student's level for receptive skills of listening (beyond Level 6), reading and viewing	allow for fine grain assessment, monitoring and tracking of EALD students to show progression (it may take several years to move from one broad category to another)
illustrate second language learning features, nor the complexities of learning Standard Australian English as an additional language/dialect	indicate the specific language resources required to move from one category to another and as such do not assist teachers to identify key teaching points and specific learning goals

The 14 Levels of progression in LEAP can be broadly correlated with the 4 broad phases of EALD development described in the EAL/D Teacher Resource as shown in the following table.

EAL/D Phase / Stage of schooling	Reception–Year 2	Years 3–6	Years 7–10
Beginning	Level 1	Levels 1–2	Levels 1–4
Emerging	Levels 2–3	Levels 3–5	Levels 5–7
Developing	Levels 3–5	Levels 5–7	Levels 7–10
Consolidating	Levels 5–6	Levels 7–9	Levels 10–12

LEAP Levels and year levels

The 14 Levels of progression in LEAP also correlate with the expected progression of language from Reception to Year 10. This progression represents the ongoing development of academic language and control over a wider range of contexts or registers. Appendix B further illustrates this.

Register Continuum														
	everyday, informal, spoken					more specialised and more formal				technical, abstract, formal, written				
LEAP Level	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Year level	Preschool/ Early Reception			Rec	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5	Yr 6	Yr 7	Yr 8	Yr 9	Yr 10	Senior secondary and beyond

APPENDIX B: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEAP, YEAR LEVELS AND THE REGISTER CONTINUUM

Register Continuum

everyday, informal, spoken   more specialised and more formal   technical, abstract, formal, written

Register range of Levels 1–3/ Pre-Reception	Register range of Levels 4–6/ Reception–Year 2	Register range of Levels 7–10/ Years 3–6	Register range of Levels 11–14/Years 7–10	Beyond Year 10
At these levels, students:	At these levels, students:	At these levels, students:	At these levels, students:	
• begin to communicate in familiar, highly supported contexts often relying on the use of visuals and gesture	• communicate in a small range of contexts	• communicate appropriately and effectively in a wider range of contexts	• communicate appropriately and effectively in a wide range of contexts many of which are becoming increasingly specialised, technical and abstract	
• are more likely to and best able to communicate in one-on-one interactions with a known and trusted person, or through their first language or dialect	• compose short spoken, written and multimodal texts about familiar things based on personal (shared) experiences, relying on modelled and predictable structures	• compose longer texts for a wider range of purposes, incorporating visuals and material from their own investigations and reference materials	• study more specialised, abstract and technical fields across the learning areas that focus on investigating complex issues, both practical and ethical, from state, national and international perspectives	
• initiate and respond to simple statements in familiar contexts, such as greetings, expressing needs and simple instructions	• study topics across learning areas that centre on students' immediate physical and social worlds: family, school and community	• study more specialised fields across the learning areas that focus on investigating the wider social and natural worlds	• interact and learn both collaboratively and independently through problem-based and inquiry learning often involving designing and conducting research investigations and critically evaluating ways of learning and investigating	
• begin to copy English words and very short texts, usually accompanying visuals	• interact and learn through activities which are concrete and everyday, learning new vocabulary to expand, explore, and begin to describe and categorise their world in new ways, specific to learning areas	• interact and learn both collaboratively and independently through problem-solving	• speak, write and present multimodal texts as informed speakers/writers in formal contexts and express ideas from different perspectives. Initially, complex issues are simplified to deal with two opposing sides but by the end of this stage students are expected to deal with multiple perspectives	
• compose visual texts to share experiences and express ideas and begin to use these to construct short spoken texts, typically still relying on supportive prompts and questions	• interact in informal contexts with known and less familiar others (eg students and teachers from other classes) in informal school situations	• speak, write and present multimodal texts to groups in increasingly formal contexts		
• understand and use a restricted vocabulary, limited to high frequency, concrete vocabulary related to home and school.	• interact with the community through activities such as excursions, assemblies and other school-wide events, developing an awareness of socio-culturally appropriate ways of communicating in their new schooling context	• take on a variety of more formal roles and relationships as they interact with larger audiences and unfamiliar people		
		• become more considered and critical in their responses and in the construction of their texts		

- begin to interact in a small range of more formal but familiar school situations such as making an introduction at an assembly or presenting a brief talk to the class, delivering a message to the principal
- begin to develop skills for collaborative group work, recording and reporting back
- learn to communicate through spoken, written and visual texts at the same time, and to compose texts using a range of communication technologies
- develop sound and letter knowledge and control of print conventions in English.

- begin to provide reasons and evidence from a variety of sources for their statements and opinions
- develop further ways to express cause and effect
- begin to move from the specific to the generalised and from the concrete to the abstract.

- compose longer texts for a wide range of purposes, many of which are now macro-genres, digitally produced and increasingly have an analytical and/or critical focus. Within these texts they incorporate visuals and material from their own investigations and reference materials using referencing conventions
- interact with others and gather information through interviews, surveys and questioning
- critically examine and evaluate texts, performances, products and processes
- put forward reasoned arguments about issues using valid evidence, including drawing on others' expertise
- consider and represent cause and effect in more complex ways, such as multiple factors and consequences
- understand theories and explanations of phenomena, apply abstract theories to specific situations and see specific examples as evidence or as supporting or disproving hypotheses and consequently make generalisations.

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