English as a second language (ESL) students and the Victorian Essential Learning Standards

Introduction

The Victorian Essential Learning Standards (also known as VELS or the ‘Standards’) outline expected statewide standards for students from Prep to Year 10 in Victorian schools. They describe what is essential for students to learn and understand during their time at school. The Standards are used in schools to plan student’s learning, assess student progress and report to parents.

How are the Standards organised?

The Victorian Essential Learning Standards are presented in three main strands or areas. They are:

- **Physical, Personal and Social Learning:** Health and Physical Education; Interpersonal Development; Personal Learning; and Civics and Citizenship
- **Discipline-based Learning:** English; Science; Mathematics; The Humanities; Languages; and The Arts
- **Interdisciplinary Learning:** other essential skills that apply across curriculum areas, Communication; Design, Creativity and Technology; Information and Communications Technology; Thinking Processes.

All these areas have usually been taught in schools, but they have not always been linked closely with traditional subject areas. Bringing them together emphasises their value and relevance in student learning.

How do the Standards match the year levels?

The levels of the Standards relate to year levels in the following way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Victorian Essential Learning Standards levels</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Level 5</th>
<th>Level 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year levels</td>
<td>End of Prep</td>
<td>End of Year 2</td>
<td>End of Year 4</td>
<td>End of Year 6</td>
<td>End of Year 8</td>
<td>End of Year 10</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

How are the Standards used for reporting?

Reports for parents will show student achievement against the Standards. The report card’s A to E scale will tell you how your child is progressing against the expected standard. For example a ‘C’ rating means your child is at the expected standard.

The reporting scale is:

A – Well above the expected standard at this time of year
B – Above the standard expected at this time of year
C – At the standard expected at this time of year
D – Below the standard expected at this time of year
E – Well below the standard expected at this time of year.

Students learning English as a second language and the Standards

Although ESL students already have knowledge and skills in their first language, they will need to learn English to show fully what they know, and to continue to learn at school in Australia. Until they learn sufficient English they may not be able to be assessed suitably on all the Standards, and in particular the English Standards.

The English as a Second Language Companion to the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (the ESL Standards) is used instead of the English Standards to show how ESL students are progressing in learning English. The ESL Standards can be used instead of the English Standards to assess and report the progress of students’ learning.

The ESL Standards are organised in Stages that reflect ESL students’ progress in the following way:

- **A Stages:** Years Prep to 2  2 stages  A1 and A2
- **B Stages:** Years 3 to 6  3 stages  B1, B2 and B3
- **S Stages:** Years 7 to 10  4 stages  S1, S2, S3 and S4

Students who do not have strong literacy skills in their first language begin learning English at Stages BL or SL.
The stages are shown in the diagram below.

English standards

Level 6
Level 5
Level 4
Level 3
Level 2
Level 1

S1 (Beginner)
SL (Preliterate)

B1 (Beginner)
BL (Preliterate)

A1 (Beginner)

Secondary (Years 7 to 10)
Middle
Lower

Primary (Years 3 to 6)
Upper
Middle
Lower

Primary (Years P to 2)

The diagram also shows how students progress through the ESL stages to make the transition to the levels of the English Standards.

In time students reach a stage where their English language skills start to match those at their expected English standards level (after Stage A2, B3 or S4). At this point your child’s teachers will begin to report their progress using the English Standards. The time it will take for your child to reach this point will vary depending on their age, prior education, and how much English they knew when they arrived in Australia.

What will my child’s ESL report look like?

Your child’s ESL report will give you information about which ESL stage your child is working in.

Your child’s teacher will be able to give you more information about your child’s progress at parent–teacher meetings, including a discussion about the work your child has been doing, what your child has achieved in their learning, where they need to improve, what the school intends to do to assist your child to learn in the future, and what you can do at home to assist your child to learn.

What will my child’s report in the learning areas other then English look like?

Your child’s progress in the learning areas other than English may be reported using the A to E scale described earlier, if appropriate. Your child’s school may use other ways of telling you about their progress, such as individual report forms, if it is not yet appropriate to use the A to E scale.

Your child’s teacher will take into account that your child is still learning English when they report their progress. They understand that when students are new to English, they often find it difficult to show what they have learnt or understood. For this reason, teachers use a wide variety of assessment activities that allow ESL students to demonstrate their knowledge, even when they have limited English language skills.

Further information


You can read about the new student report cards in some languages other than English at [http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/studentreports/about.htm#communitylanguages](http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/studentreports/about.htm#communitylanguages)


Contact your school to find out how they are teaching and assessing through the Victorian Essential Learning Standards.

For copies of this pamphlet in other languages see [http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/lem/esl/einter.htm](http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/lem/esl/einter.htm)