Assessment

Stages A to D provide a clear set of standards for assessing student achievement. Students achieve the standards by successfully completing a wide range of learning and assessment activities designed by their teachers. The assessment process is ongoing and should provide opportunities for students to fully demonstrate their skills, knowledge and depth of understanding of the curriculum.

Assessment is not only focused on the end product or on test results. It is used by teachers to help direct the learning program so that it best meets the needs of students. Assessment can also be used as a learning tool, where students reflect on and monitor their learning to inform future learning goals.

Evidence used for assessment may be gathered through the production of physical items (such as written work, models, objects or videos) or through observation (such as participation in class discussions, presentations or approach to work).

Teachers use resources prepared by organisations like the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to develop programs. They also work with colleagues in their schools and teacher networks to refine their understanding of what is required to meet the standards of learning.

Reporting

Reporting is the process by which assessment information is communicated to help students, parents, teachers and the system to make decisions by providing information about what students know and can do, together with recommendations for their future learning.

Students with additional needs may have Student Support Groups and Individual Learning Plans that describe what is to be assessed and reported upon in student reports.

The student report provides you with a clear picture of your child's progress. You will receive a report twice a year and an offer to attend an interview to discuss your child's progress.

For further information:

The first point of contact for enquiries should be your child's school. Contact details for Victorian government schools can be found on at www.education.vic.gov.au/schoolonline/

Related websites

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
www.education.vic.gov.au
Student reports for parents
Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority
National Assessment Program: Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) 2008
Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
www.acara.edu.au/default.asp
Catholic Education Commission of Victoria
www.cecv.vic.catholic.edu.au/
Association of Independent Schools of Victoria
www.ais.vic.edu.au/
Why do we need this advice?
The Working Towards Level 1 documents support the delivery of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS). They provide a framework for developing effective learning programs and assessing students in Victorian schools who are recognised as working towards Level 1.

These documents describe a learning pathway for students with additional learning needs who are working towards Level 1. They provide curriculum advice for schools to support students at this level. They enable teachers to plan a learning pathway and develop goals for these students.

How does it relate to the VELS?
These documents support the delivery of the VELS. They introduce four stages A to D which students progress through as they work towards Level 1. Each stage has the same format as the VELS levels, including the strands and domains:

- Stages A to D
- Level 1
- Level 2
- Level 3
- Level 4
- Level 5
- Level 6

How will the documents be used?
The Working Towards Level 1 documents provide a clear set of statewide standards for assessing student achievement at four stages. They lead into VELS Level 1. They indicate a learning pathway and recognise that each student will progress at his or her own pace.

These documents can be used:
- in Student Support Group meetings
- to assist in the development of students’ learning goals
- to assist with the creation of students’ Individual Learning Plans.

What are the stages?
This curriculum advice focuses on progressing students from a pre-intentional to an intentional state of learning development. It encourages students to develop their independence as they explore, participate and engage in the world around them. Curriculum expectations for student achievement are set at four stages A to D. These are not associated with any set age or year level that links chronological age to cognitive progress. As students progress through these stages, the level of support decreases as they proceed towards becoming independent learners. The stages focus largely on foundational literacy and numeracy skills and the development of physical, personal and social capacities. At Stages A to D standards are written for English, Mathematics, Health and Physical Education, The Arts and Interpersonal Development.

The four stages are:

**Stage A: Beginning to Explore**
At this stage students experience a range of learning activities that will assist them to attend to and explore the world around them with as much independence as possible. Experiences are designed to move the student from a pre-intentional level of responding to a level where the response indicates beginning intention. Students will need high levels of active support and focused attention from the teacher to help them initiate and refine their responses. Students demonstrate some awareness and recognition of familiar people and routine activities.

**Stage B: Active Exploration**
Students at this stage become less reliant on high levels of active support and become more reliant on verbal prompts and gesture to facilitate their learning. They begin to explore their world independently and engage in simple cause-and-effect play activities. Students are able to focus on structured learning activities for short periods of time. They respond to familiar people and events and begin to use ‘yes/no’ responses.

**Stage C: Intentional Participation**
Students at this stage are less dependent on active support and respond more consistently to prompts and simple, clear directions from the teacher to support them in their learning. They are displaying the first signs of independence and becoming more peer focused. Students participate in structured learning activities with others and they begin to use pictures, photos and objects to communicate personal interests and experiences. They start to use and link some familiar words and images to form a meaningful communication.

**Stage D: Building Independence**
With teacher support and curriculum scaffolding, students at this level participate cooperatively in group-learning activities. They express their feelings, needs and choices in increasingly appropriate ways, and combine and sequence key words and images to communicate personal interests and to recount significant experiences. They indicate beginning understanding of social rules and expectations and are starting to reflect on their own behaviour.