In 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.

Assessment

The Stages A to D documents provide teachers with learning focuses, indicators and, where appropriate, standards of progress in each domain. These provide criteria for assessment of 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.

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 relevant to the standards.

Teachers are encouraged to work with colleagues in their schools and/or with teacher networks to refine their understanding of what is required to meet the standards.

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 learning needs or who participate in a Program for Students with Disabilities may have a Student Support Group and Individual Learning Plan (ILP). In this case the ILP will inform what is to be assessed and reported upon in a student's report. These students may have their progress reported against stages A to D if they are working towards Level 1 of the VELS.

Whether the student report card or individualised student report is used, it should provide parents with a clear picture of their child's progress. Parents should receive a report twice a year and an offer to attend an interview to discuss their child's progress.

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.cec.vic.catholic.edu.au/
Association of Independent Schools of Victoria
www.ais.vic.edu.au/
How will they be used?

The Working Towards Level 1 documents provide a clear set of statewide standards for assessing of student achievement at four stages. They lead into VELS Level 1. These stage levels are not tied to expected performance ‘chronological and cognitive congruence’ as in the VELS levels construct. They indicate a learning pathway and acknowledge that each student will progress at his/her own pace.

These documents can be used:
• in Student Support Group meetings
• to assist in the construction of students’ goals
• to assist with the creation of student Individual Learning Plans
• where appropriate, to support curriculum design for individual students
• to assist in the development of class programs and assessment 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.

Learning progress for student achievement is 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.

In 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 coactive 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.

In Stage B: Active Exploration

Students at this stage become less reliant on high levels of coactive 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.

In Stage C: Intentional Participation

Students at this stage are less dependent on coactive 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.