

# Unpacking Literacy

**Tāraia te mahara, ka tāraia ai te rākau**  
Carve the mind before carving your path



The concept behind this whakatauākī comes from Tangaroa, known as the God of the sea and the God of wood and bone carving. Those who enter into whare whakairo (traditional carving schools) start their development by learning about 'te hiringa i te mahara' (the power of the mind) through karakia, pūrākau, waiata tahito and whakapapa long before touching a piece of wood or bone.

This whakatauākī stands as a metaphor for equipping the mind with the literacy tools necessary for students to live a full and prosperous life.

Foundational literacy refers to knowledge and capabilities in reading and writing that enable learners to access further learning, develop important life skills, engage in employment and in their communities. In Aotearoa New Zealand, these include an understanding of how to participate in our bicultural society.

While the Literacy standards and associated materials relate to literacy in the English language, te reo Māori and Māori concepts are increasingly prevalent in New Zealand English. These documents therefore acknowledge the mana of te reo Māori me ōna tikanga when communicating in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Literacy enables voices to be heard. It empowers learners to participate in, communicate with, and contribute to their communities. This includes making connections to personal, learning and work contexts.



## Purpose

This document accompanies the Literacy Learning Matrix and the Reading and Writing Standards. It explains and unpacks the Big Ideas and Significant Learning that make up the foundational reading and writing skills at the literacy benchmark.

## Frameworks

The NCEA literacy benchmark is aligned to the following frameworks:

### 1. Upper level 4 and lower level 5 of the English learning area of the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC).

This means that learners have full mastery over Curriculum Level 4 and are ready to work at Level 5.

This benchmark broadly aligns with scale descriptors in the range 750-850 on the PaCT scale for reading, and the scale descriptors in the range 800-900 for writing. The tool locates learners on a learning progression, provides exemplars of the progression, and is aligned to levels of the NZC.

### 2. Step 4 of the Learning Progressions for Adult Literacy (LPAL)

The LPAL outlines literacy progressions for New Zealand adults to work and participate effectively in a modern knowledge society.

(see: <https://ako.ac.nz/assets/Knowledge-centre/ALNACC-Resources/Learning-progressions/ALNACC-Background-Learning-Progressions-for-Adult-Literacy.pdf> )

### 3. Upper Stage 3 and lower Stage 4 of the English Language Learning Progressions (ELLP)

The English Language Learning Progressions (ELLP) are key documents for the assessment, planning and teaching of English language learners.

(see: <https://esolonline.tki.org.nz/ESOL-Online/Planning-for-my-students-needs/Professional-support-for-teachers-and-teacher-aides/English-Language-Learning-Progressions#ELLPBooks> )

### 4. Upper level 2 and lower level 3 on the PIAAC framework

The Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) is a programme of assessment and analysis of skills required by adults to participate in the workforce, in ongoing education and in active citizenship.

(see: <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/litproficiencylevel.asp> )



# Unpacking the Big Ideas and Significant Learning for Reading

## *Big Idea 1: Learners make sense of written texts*

### **Significant Learning:**

Learners use:

- a processing system to decode and comprehend text. Readers develop expertise in using sources of information and comprehension strategies to make sense of text.
- knowledge of text structures and features. Readers develop their knowledge of text features and use this to navigate and understand texts.
- vocabulary knowledge. Successful comprehension depends on understanding most of the meanings of the words in the text.

This means that they:

- use both skills (automatic processes) and strategies (deliberately selected processes) to understand text.
- decode the words in the texts they read **and** understand their meaning.
- use a range of strategies to work out the meaning of the texts they read.
- draw on their knowledge of how texts are structured to help them make meaning (for example, they scan through headings in a report to find the section that is of most interest to them).
- understand that different texts have different structures, and that these impact on the way a reader engages with a text.
- use their knowledge of sentence structures, and of the way ideas are linked in texts, to make sense of the overall text.
- use strategies to work out the meanings of unfamiliar words.

'Making meaning' refers to understanding the content and ideas of a written text. This includes illustration or other visual elements that may be included in a written text.

'Texts' include continuous and non-continuous texts in digital and print forms.

## *Big Idea 2: Learners read critically*

### **Significant Learning:**

Learners develop a critical awareness that enables them to consider who wrote a text, for whom, why and whether it may have purposes that are not immediately apparent.



This means that they:

- understand that writers of texts are influenced by their culture, values, beliefs, and sense of identity.
- use the above understanding to identify a writer's point of view, their purpose for writing, and the language techniques the writer has used.
- begin to reflect critically on the explicit and implicit messages in the text, as well as how they have been presented by the writer to the audience.
- think about the background knowledge and experiences of the writer of the text when they assess the credibility of informational texts.

### *Big Idea 3: Learners read for different purposes*

#### **Significant Learning:**

Learners:

- are clear about their purpose for reading and have appropriate strategies to meet that purpose.
- understand and use ideas in texts.
- locate and evaluate the ideas and information within and across a range of print and digital texts to meet their purpose.

This means that they:

- select texts that meet their purpose for reading.
- identify main ideas and information relevant to their purpose for reading, both within and across texts.
- know that their purpose for reading, and their background knowledge and prior experiences, will impact on the strategies they use for reading (which may include skimming, in-depth reading, and re-reading).
- choose appropriate strategies for reading depending on their purpose for reading.
- choose appropriate strategies for reading depending on their background knowledge/prior experiences.



# Unpacking the Big Ideas and Significant Learning for Writing

*Big Idea 1: Learners write meaningful texts for different purposes and audiences.*

## **Significant Learning:**

Learners:

- use strategies within a writing process to plan and create texts.
- select content, text structure and language choices appropriate to purpose and audience.
- select and use vocabulary that is specific to their topic, purpose and audience.
- revise and edit their work.

This means that they:

- write for different purposes, such as: enjoyment, personal interest, specific purposes.
- write different sorts of texts, such as: instructions, letters, reports, descriptions, promotional material, narratives, and essays.
- write for different audiences, such as: the learners themselves, individuals, and communities.
- are familiar with a variety of ways to plan their writing, such as: brainstorming, using graphic organisers, and note-taking.
- are aware of the suitability of different planning strategies for specific tasks.
- choose an appropriate text structure to achieve their purpose, and for their audience.
- use word choice and word form to apply an appropriate level of formality to achieve their purpose, and for their audience.
- edit and proofread their own work.

*Big Idea 2: Learners use written language conventions appropriately to support communication.*

## **Significant Learning:**

Learners develop their expertise in sentence construction, grammar, punctuation, spelling, and word choice.

This means that they:

- write complete sentences.
- write simple, compound, and complex sentences.
- write in a consistent tense across sentences and paragraphs.



- use subject-verb agreement.
- use pronouns appropriately.
- use correct word forms (for example, “-ing” or “-ed”).
- start sentences with capital letters.
- use full stops and question marks correctly to end sentences.
- spell everyday high frequency words accurately.
- recognise that different words, and different sentence constructions, may work better in different contexts and for different audiences.
- recognise that different sentence constructions may work better in different contexts and for different audiences.



## Reading

Big Ideas	Links to Key Competencies in the New Zealand Curriculum	Links to <a href="#">Tātaiako</a> All cultural competencies should be apparent in learning of the literacy standards <i>Quality literacy teaching and learning....</i>	Links to <a href="#">Tapasā</a> All values and all Turu should be apparent in learning for the literacy standards <i>Quality literacy teaching and learning....</i>
1. Learners make sense of text	<p><b>Thinking</b> Learners engage in thinking processes in order to decode and make sense of text.</p> <p><b>Relating to others</b> Through reading, learners interact with a diverse range of people in a variety of contexts. They recognise different ideas and points of view.</p> <p><b>Participating and contributing</b> Through reading, learners participate in communities, and make connections with others. Communities include family, whānau, may be school-based, or based on a common interest or purpose. They may be local, national or global.</p>	<p><b>Tangata Whenuatanga</b> Happens in contexts that affirm the identity, language, and culture of Māori learners and their whānau.</p> <p>Uplifts the mana and inherent potential of Māori learners.</p> <p><b>Manaakitanga</b> Recognises, validates, and values the prior knowledge that ākonga Māori bring with them.</p> <p><b>Wānanga</b> Involves and reflects the relationships with and between Māori learners, whānau, hapū, iwi, and communities.</p>	<p><b>Turu 1</b> Happens in contexts that are familiar and relevant to Pacific learners.</p> <p>Builds on the cultural and linguistic capital of Pacific learners, their parents, families and communities.</p> <p><b>Turu 2</b> Uses Pacific resources, tools, references and conceptual models.</p> <p><b>Turu 3</b> Recognises and values the prior knowledge that Pacific learners bring with them.</p>
2. Learners read critically	<p><b>Thinking</b> Learners ask questions, draw upon personal knowledge and intuition, and challenge the basis of assumptions and perceptions.</p> <p><b>Using language, symbols, and text</b> Learners recognise how choices of language, symbols, and texts may reflect a writer's background or their purpose for writing.</p> <p><b>Managing self</b> Learners are capable of self-assessment. They are resourceful, reliable, and resilient. They have strategies for meeting challenges.</p>	<p><b>Tangata Whenuatanga</b> Recognises the influence of a learner's cultural identity in their development of literacy skills.</p> <p>Considers the impacts of identity, place, socio-cultural awareness on the writing and reading of texts.</p> <p><b>Manaakitanga</b> Recognises, validates, and values the prior knowledge that ākonga Māori bring with them.</p> <p><b>Wānanga</b> Acknowledges and accesses the expertise that whānau, hapū, and iwi offer.</p>	<p><b>Turu 1</b> Considers the full breadth of reactions, responses, and solutions to situations that are dependent on culture.</p> <p><b>Turu 2</b> Uses Pacific resources, tools, references and conceptual models.</p> <p><b>Turu 3</b> Considers the holistic and collective aspects of Pacific learners, families, and communities.</p> <p>Understands the dual and multiple contexts and world views Pacific learners navigate.</p>
3. Learners read for different purposes	<p><b>Thinking</b> Learners use thinking processes in order to construct, make meaning from, and reflect on texts.</p> <p>They ask questions, draw upon personal knowledge and intuition, and challenge the basis of assumptions and perceptions.</p> <p><b>Using language, symbols, and text</b> Learners recognise how choices of language, symbol, or text affect people's understanding and the ways in which they respond to communications.</p> <p><b>Managing self</b> Learners are capable of self-assessment. They are resourceful, reliable, and resilient. They have strategies for meeting challenges.</p>	<p><b>Wānanga</b> Actively seeks out and understands the values, aspirations, and views of Māori parents, whānau, hapū, and communities for their ākonga, and supports these through teaching and learning.</p> <p><b>Whanaungatanga</b> Empowers Māori learners to participate in their whānau and community through reading.</p> <p><b>Ako</b> Integrates Māori language in multiple contexts (formal and informal), to legitimise and validate te reo me ōna tikanga.</p> <p>Facilitates opportunities for reciprocal teaching and learning (for example, educator–Māori learner; learner–learner).</p>	<p><b>Turu 2</b> Reflects the relationships with and between Pacific learners, parents, families, and communities.</p> <p>Understands the importance of shared knowledge and the power of collaborative relationships.</p> <p><b>Turu 3</b> Understands the aspirations of Pacific learners, their parents, families, and communities for their future; sets high expectations, and ensures that learning supports this.</p> <p>Understands the dual and multiple contexts and world views Pacific learners navigate.</p>





## Writing

Big Ideas	Links to Key Competencies in the New Zealand Curriculum	Links to Tātaiako All cultural competencies should be apparent in learning of the literacy standards <i>Quality literacy teaching and learning.....</i>	Links to Tapasā All values and all Turu should be apparent in learning for the literacy standards <i>Quality literacy teaching and learning.....</i>
<p>1. Learners write meaningful texts for different purposes and audiences</p>	<p><b>Thinking</b> Through writing, learners process information, experiences, and ideas. They actively use and create knowledge.</p> <p><b>Using language, symbols, and text</b> Learners use language, symbols and text to represent and communicate information, experiences and ideas. They produce texts of all kinds: informative and imaginative, informal and formal, in contexts across the curriculum.</p> <p><b>Relating to others</b> Through writing, learners interact effectively with a diverse range of people in a variety of contexts. They can share their ideas, and are aware of how their words can affect others.</p> <p><b>Participating and contributing</b> Through writing, learners make connections with others and contribute to communities. They have a sense of belonging and the confidence to participate within new contexts.</p>	<p><b>Tangata Whenuatanga</b> Uplifts the mana and inherent potential of Māori learners.</p> <p>Empowers Māori learners to participate in and contribute to their whānau, hapū, iwi and communities through writing.</p> <p><b>Ako</b> Integrates Māori language in multiple contexts (formal and informal), to legitimise and validate te reo me ōna tikanga.</p> <p>Facilitates opportunities for reciprocal teaching and learning (for example, educator–Māori learner; learner–learner).</p> <p><b>Manaakitanga</b> Recognises, validates, and values the prior knowledge that ākongā Māori bring with them.</p>	<p><b>Turu 1</b> Happens in contexts that are familiar and relevant to Pacific learners.</p> <p><b>Turu 2</b> Reflects the relationships with and between Pacific learners, parents, families, and communities.</p> <p>Recognises, reflects, and builds upon Pacific values such as the notion of 'teu le vā'.</p> <p><b>Turu 3</b> Understands the aspirations of Pacific learners, their parents, families, and communities for their future; sets high expectations, and ensures that learning supports this.</p> <p>Recognises and values the prior knowledge that Pacific learners bring with them.</p>
<p>2. Learners use language conventions appropriately to support communication</p>	<p><b>Thinking</b> Learners use creative, critical, and metacognitive processes in order to construct texts. They reflect on their own knowledge and skills.</p> <p><b>Using language, symbols, and text</b> Learners are competent users of language, symbols and texts. They recognise how their choices affect people's understanding and the ways in which people respond to communications.</p> <p><b>Managing self</b> Learners manage themselves. They see themselves as capable learners, set high standards, and use strategies for meeting challenges.</p>	<p><b>Ako</b> Reflects and supports high expectations of Māori learners achieving as Māori.</p> <p>Creates opportunities that promote Māori learners' autonomy in their acquisition of literacy skills.</p> <p><b>Whanaungatanga</b> Actively seeks ways to work with whānau to maximise the success of Māori learners.</p> <p><b>Wānanga</b> Supports effective teaching interactions, co-construction and co-operative learner-focussed activities.</p>	<p><b>Turu 1</b> Happens in contexts that are familiar and relevant to Pacific learners.</p> <p><b>Turu 2</b> Uses Pacific resources, tools, references and conceptual models.</p> <p><b>Turu 3</b> Ensures Pacific learners are confident and successful in both Pacific and English-medium contexts.</p>