

A resource for schools

# Literacy and numeracy interventions in secondary schools



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This resource identifies shifts in practice that some schools have made to support NCEA literacy and numeracy. They are ideas to act as a springboard for interventions that could be picked up or adjusted to suit other school settings.

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The ideas below are extracted from [Case Studies | NCEA](#).

## Actions for School leaders

- Create a whole school goal to improve literacy and numeracy. Be specific. Make it part of your school plan and vision.
- Assign someone to lead the work and develop the desired changes. Provide them with time to plan, meet and talk to staff. Give them agency to lead.
- Support interventions that suit your school culture and environment.
- Take every opportunity to share the message and promote the importance of literacy/numeracy, including school assemblies, whānau hui, and other community and NCEA presentations.
- Support Professional Learning and Development (PLD) for staff. This may look like:
  - Assessment training for staff so they can understand and interpret
  - Applications for funding and support from the Ministry to help achieve the goal
  - Support from local Ministry advisors
  - Links to current Ministry PLD offerings can be found here: [Strengthen teaching practice through professional learning and development](#)

## Actions for Teachers

### Data

- Focus on the good practices you are already doing to support literacy and numeracy. Share these with others.
- Monitor student literacy and numeracy progress in your subject area.
- Analyse students work in your subject area and identify aspects of literacy and numeracy that require further support to develop.

### Resources

- Use the reading, writing and maths that is relevant to your context.
- Facilitate subject-relevant literacy tasks called ‘Do Now’s’ at the beginning of each lesson.
- Explicitly teach literacy/numeracy skills students need to know and develop in your subject area.
- ‘Add’ and ‘tweak’ rather than ‘change’ lesson and unit plans to incorporate literacy and numeracy in your subject area.
- Provide students with literacy and numeracy strategies to access the subject content.
- Examples of literacy strategies can be found here under ‘Literacy Strategies’: [NCEA Literacy and Numeracy resources for kaiako | NCEA](#)
- Resources that help to embed literacy and numeracy strategies in all learning areas can be found here: [NCEA Literacy Planning Resources | NCEA](#) and [NCEA Numeracy Planning Resources | NCEA](#).

### Further ideas

- Teach students to clearly explain their ideas and answers to questions.
- Incorporate literacy/numeracy skills in the assessment rubrics and reporting for your subject.
- Link literacy and numeracy to student experiences.
- Explain to students why literacy and numeracy matter and discuss how you use it as part of your daily experiences.
- Take opportunities to develop your own knowledge of teaching literacy and numeracy.
- Develop a ‘Next Steps Framework’. This shows students what their next steps would be to progress and what this looks like.
- Have open conversations with students about their readiness for the CAAs. Students could choose whether they want to sit the assessment at the time it is offered.
- See also: [Effective Practices to Support Literacy](#) and [Effective Practices to Support Numeracy](#).

## Actions for Literacy/Numeracy Leads

### Literacy/numeracy lead groups

- Establish a small group of teachers dedicated to literacy/numeracy. Those in the group are often from outside the English/Maths departments and share a passion for bringing literacy/numeracy out to other subject areas.
- Include a representative from every department in creations of all documents, resources and strategies. Have them lead literacy and numeracy in their departments.
- Develop a working group that consists of heads of learning areas to unpack and identify what skills and knowledge students need to achieve their literacy and numeracy co-requisites and produce a spreadsheet demonstrating where these skills exist in each learning area.

### Data

- Analyse students' assessments to identify literacy/numeracy needs amongst certain student groups.
- Identify ARONA students. This is a school's acronym for "At Risk of Not Achieving" (to their potential).
- Analyse [NZQA Interim Assessment Reports](#) after assessment results, noting overall strengths and weaknesses of the national cohort. Use this information to adapt courses to ensure students are supported in the areas that other students have previously found difficult
- Create a survey to gather teacher and student voice.
- Conduct interviews to determine what key literacy skills students needed to succeed in school and in life.
- Construct a student focus group to find out what works for them.

### Resources

- Develop a toolkit across all subjects containing resources that encompass agreed shifts in practice to support NCEA literacy and numeracy. This helps students to experience consistency across subjects.
- Develop and promote a shared language of literacy terms that teachers use across all subjects
- Develop a whole school approach/framework to reading and/or writing structures with supporting resources and strategies. This includes posters that hang in every classroom so students and teachers can refer to the approaches.
- Provide professional development for teachers to use any resources you create, effectively.
- Develop internal assessment marking rubrics for reading, writing and/or maths.
- Produce a Monday morning self-starter activity across all subjects in the schools. This is a very short literacy/numeracy activity that all teachers use in period one.
- Support teachers to understand the required literacy and numeracy conventions they need to support students with.

### Whānau and parents

- Hold parent evenings to explain new approaches the school is trialling.
- Suggest ways whānau could get involved, where appropriate.
- Provide information and set family numeracy/literacy challenges in the newsletter.
- Gather feedback from parents and the school community.

### With staff support

- Support every teacher to be a teacher of literacy and numeracy.
- Work with subject teachers to support them to integrate explicit literacy and numeracy instruction into their unit and lesson plans. You may find these resources useful: [NCEA Literacy Planning Resources | NCEA](#) and [NCEA Numeracy Planning Resources | NCEA](#).
- Seek the support of the English learning area to unpack unit plans from other learning areas and explore where explicit literacy instructions could be further incorporated. With each unit plan ask 'Is this building literacy? If not, can it build literacy as well as other skills?' Also, add in more opportunities for students to engage in extended texts and increase writing opportunities.
- Provide an opportunity to discuss existing and new ideas. Acknowledge staff and departments who bring something exciting to the table with small prizes.
- Organise the Maths Department to support other departments in unpacking where numeracy exists in their subjects and support teachers to develop numeracy-rich activities. (Use weekly staff PD time where available).
- Ask the Maths Department to ensure all teachers are using consistent language, skills and standardised approaches to mathematical concepts e.g. graphs.

### Further ideas

- Develop a course to prepare students for the CAAs (Common Assessment Activities). The course could take students through sample papers, support students to understand how to tackle questions, provide suitable devices and prepare students to use the NZQA Assessment Master platform. [Preparing for digital assessment as a student - NZQA](#)
- Develop effective practices for determining readiness to the sit the CAAs. See: [Are your learners ready? | NCEA](#)
- Visit other schools to understand how they are implementing literacy/numeracy practices and attend conferences and online workshops for professional development.
- Hold a literacy and numeracy week. The week-long celebration aims to allow students to practice their literacy and skills and highlight how literacy and numeracy exist in every subject.
- Set up a schoolwide 'Drop Everything and Read' time.
- Facilitate an opportunity for senior students to support younger students with their literacy and/or numeracy.
- Develop a deep understanding of NCEA literacy/numeracy requirements for the co-requisite.

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### “Take small steps”

*This was the advice given by one school implementing literacy and numeracy changes. Choose the ideas that resonate for your school setting and keep student literacy and numeracy development at the centre of all that you do.*

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