



# Accelerated learning in secondary schools

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The following information aims to clarify accelerated learning for secondary school teachers. It provides brief answers to questions about accelerative practices and provides links to resources for a more in-depth and detailed discussion.

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## What is accelerated learning?

“The concept of accelerated learning in relation to children’s oral language, reading, writing, and mathematics refers to advancing the learning of children who [need to build prior knowledge] related to content at their current year level.”

(Gillon et al., 2024, p. 13)

## How is accelerated learning achieved?

“Accelerated learning is achieved through specific teaching strategies, learning conditions, or scaffolded supports that enable learners to acquire skills more rapidly than they would under ‘usual teaching conditions’.... [It] relies heavily on continuous monitoring of student progress against benchmarks and progress indicators, ensuring that the learning process remains aligned with year-level expectations.”

(Gillon et al., 2024, p. 13)

***Accelerated learning is a deliberate act of teaching.***

## What does accelerated learning success look like?

Accelerate learning is learning that shows:

- a noticeably faster, upward movement than might otherwise have been expected by the trend of an individual's own past learning; and
- a rate faster than classmates progressing at expected rates in order to achieve equitable outcomes; and
- that it brings the learner achievement level to that consistent with, or beyond, a set of benchmarks or standards. (NZ Curriculum National Standards.)

([Achievement analysis 2014 programmes for students | Education Counts](#))

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## What can facilitate accelerated learning in schools?

There are several elements that facilitate accelerated learning in schools, including:

- **Explicit and Systematic Instruction:**

Explicit and systematic instruction is highlighted as an important teaching approach. This includes teaching strategies such as modelling, scaffolding learners' attempts, guided practice, and providing learners with immediate corrective feedback. Well-structured lesson plans, or detailed teaching guides, based on the research evidence, are common features of effective interventions.

- **Intensity and Duration:**

Small group interventions up to 4 or 5 times per week (with 20-30 minute teaching sessions) for a minimum of between 8 – 11 weeks were found to be effective for most learners. Increasing intensity of teaching and longer interventions are necessary for children with more severe learning difficulties or complex learning needs.

Note: Adjustments may need to be made to accommodate a secondary school setting.

- **Incorporating Technology:**

Technology enhanced assessment and teaching approaches show promise. Teaching that incorporates gamification can be effective, particularly for younger learners.

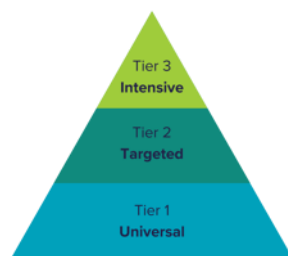
- **Professional Learning and Development:**

Ongoing professional learning and development for educators is crucial to ensure the successful implementation of effective teaching strategies. It is important that teachers are supported to integrate new learning into their daily teaching practices and have access to quality teaching resources.

- **Multi-Tiered Systems of Support:**

Within inclusive teaching frameworks it is crucial that teachers are regularly monitoring children's response to quality evidenced based Tier 1 (universal) teaching as well as children's response to Tier 2 (targeted) and Tier 3 (tailored) interventions. Monitoring assessments must have proven reliability and validity. The Tiered-supports structure is:

- **Tier 1:** High-quality classroom teaching for all, with numeracy and/or literacy integrated across subject areas.
- **Tier 2:** Small group instruction (3-5 students) focusing on specific gaps (e.g., additive strategies).
- **Tier 3:** Intensive, individualized intervention.



- **Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices:**

Research on culturally responsive teaching practices in New Zealand schools emphasises the importance of integrating Māori knowledge and perspectives across the curriculum. The development of respectful relationships and partnerships, with Pacific families and their communities is important in enhancing achievement for Pacific learners.

[Accelerating learning in Oral language Reading Writing and Maths - Canterbury University](#)

## What are characteristics of accelerated learning in the classroom?

- Teaching is focused on acceleration not remediation. Learning is forward-moving, fast-paced, and active.
- Teaching is data informed. Effective acceleration starts with diagnosing students' specific literacy needs (usually using standardised testing e.g. e-asTTle, PAT).
- Teaching is connected to prior knowledge. Support students to understand new information more readily and make learning relevant and more meaningful.
- Teaching is explicit. Instruction is tailored to address identified gaps
- Teaching is scaffolded to allow students to quickly progress in complexity, growing confidence and independence.
- Teaching is guided by on-going formative assessment with regular progress monitoring to adjust or increase support if necessary.

***Accelerated learning is not back-filling; it is forward-focusing.***

FIGURE 1.1. Acceleration and Remediation: A Comparison

	Acceleration	Remediation
Self-efficacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-confidence and engagement increase.</li> <li>• Academic progress is evident.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students perceive they're in the "slow class," and self-confidence and engagement decrease.</li> <li>• Backward movement leads to a sense of futility and lack of progress.</li> </ul>
Basic skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills are hand-picked just in time for new concepts.</li> <li>• Students apply skills immediately.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instruction attempts to reteach every missing skill.</li> <li>• Skills are taught in isolation and not applied to current learning.</li> </ul>
Prior knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key prior knowledge is provided ahead of time, enabling students to connect to new information.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Typically does not introduce prior knowledge that connects to new learning.</li> </ul>
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treats relevance as critical component to student motivation and memory.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevance is not seen as a priority.</li> </ul>
Connection to core class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instruction is connected to core class; ongoing collaboration is emphasized.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instruction is typically isolated from core class.</li> </ul>
Pacing and direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active, fast-paced, hands-on.</li> <li>• Forward movement; goal is for students to learn on time with peers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passive, with focus on worksheets or basic software programs.</li> <li>• Backward movement; goal is for students to "catch up" to peers.</li> </ul>

Source: Learning in the Fast Lane

[TMKR Targeted Support and Acceleration - Evaluation Associates](#)

**For more information on accelerated learning, see:**

- [Support Materials for Additional NCEA Literacy and Numeracy-rich Standards | NCEA](#)
  - Science of learning – accelerating literacy/numeracy
  - Targeted support and accelerating numeracy learning
  - Target support and accelerating literacy learning
- There are also resources specific to accelerating literacy and accelerating numeracy that can be found here: [NCEA Literacy and Numeracy resources for kaiako | NCEA](#).

Whilst strictly aimed at Years 0-8, the links below contain information that could be relevant to the secondary school context.

- [Accelerating progress – Leadership guidance](#)
- [Accelerating progress in literacy – Teacher guidance](#)
- [Accelerating progress in maths and stats – Teacher guidance](#)



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