



# Accelerating literacy in secondary schools

The following information aims to provide practical strategies, resources, and information about accelerating literacy in a secondary school classroom.

## What does acceleration mean in the context of the NCEA Literacy Co-requisite?

Acceleration refers to targeted teaching that enables students to make rapid progress towards meeting the NCEA Literacy Co-requisite. It is not about teaching faster or covering more content, but about being strategic and timely with support. Acceleration strategies are responsive, focused, and often short-term interventions that help learners catch up or meet key goals in a set timeframe.

## Acceleration for literacy is effective when:

1. providing the right support and prioritising immediate needs without replacing classroom learning.
2. integrated with core classroom activities to prevent isolation, duplication, or cognitive overload.
3. embedded in all learning areas across the curriculum, not just English.

### What literacy acceleration is:

- **Intentional and focused.** Uses diagnostic evidence to identify key capabilities students need for success in upcoming learning and assessment and addresses them precisely.
- **Time-bound.** Targets improvement within a limited timeframe to support readiness for future learning and opportunities.
- **Success-oriented.** Supports students to strengthen core literacy capabilities so they can confidently engage in curriculum learning and assessment—not just pass a test.
- **Embedded in meaningful contexts.** Grounded in rich, relevant learning tasks that build transferable skills in a range of learning areas.

### What literacy acceleration is NOT:

- **Remediation.** It is not about reteaching everything, just the essential capabilities that unlock access to current and future learning.
- **Unfocused.** It is not a general catch-up; it is informed by evidence and designed to strengthen specific capabilities.
- **Ongoing tutoring.** It is not indefinite support—it is targeted, short-term and designed to build learner independence and readiness.
- **Teaching to the test.** It is not about preparing students for one assessment— it is about building enduring literacy capabilities that enable success across contexts, including but not limited to NCEA.

## Practical strategies to accelerate literacy progress

- Identify the gaps. Supporting and accelerating learner's success with literacy begins with knowing the learner's strengths and gaps. Formative assessment tools can help to do this quickly. See: [Are your learners ready? | NCEA](#) for a list of tools.
- Explicit teaching. Using structured literacy approaches in secondary contexts. Direct vocabulary instruction and reading comprehension strategies effectively improve adolescent reading skills. Teaching reading comprehension strategies explicitly is more effective than implicit learning through reading practice. For some useful strategies see Literacy-Reading Strategies and Literacy-Writing Strategies found here: [NCEA Literacy and Numeracy resources for kaiako | NCEA](#)
- Activate prior knowledge. Useful in cross-curricular literacy initiatives such as school-wide acronym writing strategies.
- Scaffolding. Provide scaffolding within the context of new learning and then slowly remove so the student works towards independence. Use tools like graphic organisers, templates and sentence starters to help students structure their thoughts.
- Assessment for learning. Student-led goal setting and reflection.
- Specific feedback and feedforward. Targeted, unambiguous and prompt feedback to learners.
- Develop oral language. Provide opportunities to integrate oral language practice.
- Collaborative learning opportunities. In a safe learning environment, provide guided practice by working alongside peers and use activities like group discussions.
- Cultural responsiveness. Culturally sustaining text selection.
- Regular progress monitoring checks.

### For more information on accelerated literacy learning, see:

- [Support Materials for Additional NCEA Literacy and Numeracy-rich Standards | NCEA](#)
- [TMKR Literacy 10 lessons](#)
- [TMKR Targeted Support and Acceleration - Literacy](#)
- [Accelerated learning in secondary schools](#)

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

- [Accelerating progress – Leadership guidance](#)
- [Accelerating progress in literacy – Teacher guidance](#)
- [Strengthening-decoding-and-fluency-Y7-8](#)
- [Strengthening-spelling-skills-Y7-8](#)
- [Strengthening Writing-processes-Y7-8](#)
- [Strengthening sentence-structure-and-paragraphing-Y7-8](#)
- [Strengthening-comprehension-Y7-8](#)



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