Abilities Based Learning & Education Support

An introductory guide for Victorian Government Schools

ables

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01. Introduction

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is committed to supporting every child in Victorian government schools to achieve the best possible start in life and to provide school leaders with resources and support to provide a unique and personal education for every student.

Students with disabilities and additional learning needs are central to this commitment, and over the past decade there has been significant investment in the professional development of teachers, new assistive technologies and facilities, and resources to support individual students and the implementation of their learning plans.

The development of Abilities Based Learning and Educational Support (ABLES) continues this investment and represents a fundamental change in teaching and learning for students with disabilities.

Starting with the recognition that every child is at the centre of their learning process, ABLES enables students to be assessed on the basis of their abilities, not their disabilities. Teachers will be provided with access to assessment tools, individual reports, and guidance about teaching strategies and resources that will enable them to effectively plan and teach for the individual needs of students with disabilities and additional learning needs.

ABLES provides teachers and schools with evidence-based curricula, teaching strategies and resources to support the development of targeted learning programs that utilise the Ultranet to share and collaborate, provides students with access to learning tasks and support schools to help every student with a disability meet their individual learning goals.

About this resource

This resource provides teachers, school leaders and central and regional staff with an overview of ABLES and its key features. It provides teachers with advice on how to effectively utilise the ABLES online tools and materials to identify and access strategies and resources for students with disabilities.

ABLES extends on the e5 Instructional Model and Teacher Journal and complements teachers' existing skills to focus on quality learning for students with disabilities and additional learning needs.

New ABLES materials will continue to be developed and published online via the Ultranet.

02. Why develop ABLES?

Over the past three years the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has been working in partnership with the University of Melbourne to develop ABLES.

A new approach

ABLES is a response to the recognised limitations of current curriculum advice and teaching and learning resources for students with disabilities.

ABLES will strengthen Victoria's approach to better meet the educational needs of students with disabilities through the creation of defined learning pathways, evidence-based strategies and guidance that encourages teachers to support learning progress and online tools and strategies available through the Ultranet.

ABLES recognises that children and young people's disabilities range from those requiring intensive support due to a moderate or severe disability to those that require program adjustments to enable children to participate in activities and learning programs on the same basis as their peers.

ABLES will strengthen the teaching and learning experiences for students to enable the greatest level of student participation in learning to ensure:

- schools are supported and have the capacity to respond to the individual needs of students with disabilities and additional learning needs

- students with disabilities and additional learning needs can access and participate in education on the same basis as their peers

- parents have confidence in a government school system that measures the progress of their child's learning and focuses on their successful completion of schooling whilst making adjustments to facilitate access to, and participation in, appropriate curriculum.

ABLES will not be used to determine funding outcomes for students supported via the Program for Students with Disabilities. However, schools may be able to use ABLES to determine how to best allocate resources provided via the Program for Students with Disabilities as a result of the additional teaching and learning information that ABLES will provide.

The development of ABLES has been informed by research and the high quality and innovative teaching and learning that is occurring in Victorian specialist and mainstream schools.

The commitment and knowledge of teachers and school leaders to effectively promote and advance the learning and development needs of students with disabilities is a tremendous asset for Victorian schools, and a critical input into ABLES as it continues to test, develop and recommend a range of teacher strategies, resources and guidance material.

03. What is ABLES?

What are the features of ABLES?

There are five key features of ABLES:

1. A new approach to effectively assess, monitor and respond to a student's abilities. Teachers in primary, secondary and special schools will be able to use the ABLES tools, and draw on a set of developmental learning pathways, to develop individual learning plans that are tailored to meet individual student learning needs where students are working below level 1 of the VELS. These learning plans will be aligned to the stages of development that lead into the Victorian Essential Learning Standards and can be monitored through the Ultranet.

2. Professional learning, curriculum materials and guidance will be developed and offered for teachers, to equip them with the skills and knowledge they need to recognise and respond to the diverse learning needs of students.

3. Teachers, schools and parents will be able to more accurately identify and set learning goals for students with disabilities and additional learning needs.

4. Teachers will be better able to identify the resources that are best placed to support students on their identified individual learning pathway – resources that are known to improve learning and can be adjusted as the learning needs of students change over time.

5. Teachers, schools and parents will be able to track a student's progress against their individual learning plan over time, and provide new information to parents on their child's learning and development.

Figure 1: Types of support for Victorian students

Intensive support

Significant adjustments

Additional assistance
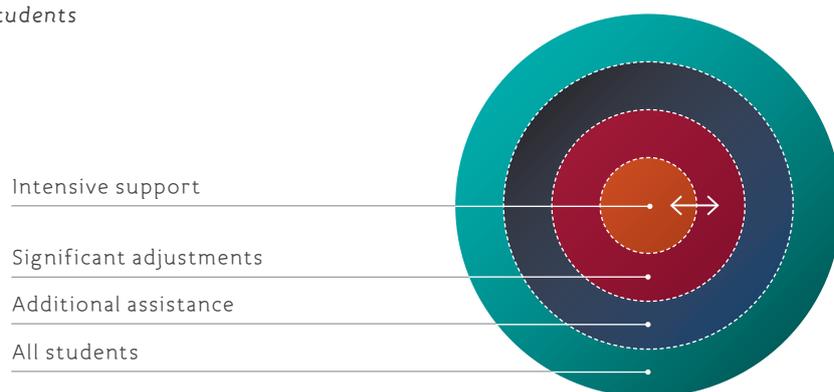
All students

Learning and support needs of Victorian students

ABLES will support students who are currently supported by the Program for Students with Disabilities. However, it is recognised that there are children with additional learning needs who are not supported through the Program for Students with Disabilities, and they will also benefit from the tools and guidance materials developed.

The support required for Victorian students is characterised in *Figure 1*.

All teachers will be able to use the ABLES tools to inform the teaching and learning strategies they employ to cater for students with additional learning needs who require intensive support, significant adjustments or additional assistance.

ABLES will also provide support to those children who have additional learning needs, but do not meet the eligibility criteria for the Program for Students with Disabilities.

Under the *Disability Standards for Education,* schools are required to make reasonable adjustments for students with a disability to enable participation in education on the same basis as students without a disability, unless it would impose an unjustifiable hardship to do so.

The concept of 'disability' has been defined widely by legislation to include all students with a disability/impairment, regardless of whether they are eligible under the Program for Students with Disabilities for additional resources. As such, the law requires schools to make reasonable adjustments for a broad group of students.

ABLES (in addition to other initiatives such as the Language Support Program) provides guidance to schools in relation to how to effectively provide for these students. The assessment tools and teaching and learning strategies developed through ABLES provide guidance for developing Individual Learning Plans and incorporating the recommendations of experts, such as allied health and medical practitioners into the educational program of students.

04. ABLES in Action

Getting started with ABLES

The development of ABLES confirms the importance of having every child at the centre of the learning process and having the skills, knowledge and materials to effectively identify and respond to the individual learning and development needs of students.

Moreover, ABLES represents a new facet in Victoria's investment in our workforce, and is enhanced by the development and release of the e5 Instructional Model and Teacher Journal, and the collective engagement of teachers and school leaders in the differentiated learning and development needs of every student, in particular students with disabilities.

As summarised in *Figure 2*, the tools and materials available through ABLES have been incorporated into the Learning and Teaching Cycle to provide teachers with advice and strategies to inform their classroom practice.

ASSESS

The ABLES Assessment tools can be used by teachers to determine a student's abilities, capabilities and readiness to learn.

In using these tools, teachers may identify that some children with disabilities can be assessed using existing tools such as English online and VCAA on Demand testing.

DATA

The ABLES Assessment tools produce a Learning Readiness Report that identifies the point at which a student is ready to learn on one of five developmental pathways. Each pathway can be linked to relevant curriculum and a set of recommended teaching strategies.

Completing the ABLES Assessment allows the teacher to gather data about the level at which the student has the ability to learn and strategies that can be used to teach the student.

TEACH

Teachers implement the strategies and Individual Learning Plans developed for their students. Teachers can use the Ultranet to create, share and collaborate on high quality learning tasks to meet the needs of their students. Teachers will monitor and make adjustments to the content, pedagogy, strategies and resources based on the learning of their students.

Critical reflection on their teaching practice and consideration of a student's progress will lead teachers back to the assessment phase.

PLAN

The teacher can use the Victorian Essential Learning Standards to identify appropriate student learning goals. For students below Level 1 of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards, teachers can use Towards Level 1 of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards as the most relevant curriculum framework. Teachers will then be able to plan programs to achieve these goals using relevant teaching and learning strategies.

Every student supported through the Program for Students with Disabilities has a Student Support Group to assist the school to plan for the student. Once the Student Support Group has met and discussed the student's learning and development needs, the teacher can construct an Individual Learning Plan.

Figure 2: The Learning and Teaching Cycle for ABLES

Using ABLES to support high-quality teaching and learning

The e5 Instructional Model supports the delivery of ABLES in schools and classrooms.

e5 provides the framework for defining high-quality instruction in the Victorian education system by describing the instructional capabilities required for effective instructional practice.

e5 assists teachers to reflect on their strengths and areas for self-improvement in their instructional practice and then identify the professional learning that would enable them to improve. The Model can also be used as an instructional sequence to support planning and delivery of curriculum content.

ABLES has enhanced the resources available to teachers when implementing the Learning and Teaching Cycle for students with disabilities. ABLES resources target and support the development of Individual Learning Plans. Implementation of both ABLES and the e5 instructional model will ensure Victorian schools continue to support high quality teaching and learning in every classroom.

In creating an Individual Learning Plan for a student with a disability, teachers utilise the Victorian Essential Learning Standards where possible. They may also draw on *Towards Level 1 of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards curriculum* to assist them to cater to the specific educational needs of the student.

Integrating the Learning and Teaching Cycle outlined above and the e5 instructional sequence, teachers can prepare an individualised plan for students with disabilities.

Coupled with knowledge gained about students from analysing ABLES assessments, (available in English, Speaking and Listening, and Reading and Writing, Personal Learning and Interpersonal Development), the relevant curriculum level, and recommended teaching strategies and resources will result in high quality targeted classroom programs.

For more information on e5, go to *http://www.education.vic.gov.au/ proflearning/e5/default.htm*

An example of ABLES and the Learning and Teaching Cycle in action

ABLES enables a teacher to:

- assess a student's readiness to learn
- develop appropriate learning goals for four foundational domains of curriculum in consultation with a Student Support Group
- develop an appropriate Individual Learning Plan that can be linked to teaching and learning strategies that have been found to work
- monitor learning progress
- better support a student through the Learning and Teaching Cycle (Assess, Data, Plan, Teach).

Consider the following fictional example:

With this scenario in mind, the teacher would look to the e5 model and select the relevant capabilities, which in this instance could be:

- establish learning goals
- determine readiness for learning.

These capabilities provide explicit advice to the teacher about how to strengthen their teaching and learning practice.

The teacher would then review their instructional practice and identify specific capabilities from e5 which need to be developed to support Michaela. They identify the e5 Engage domain level that should be targeted to enhance their own practice, mindful of Michaela's learning ability.

The teacher would then use the Learning and Teaching Cycle (assess, data, plan, teach) to support Michaela's learning.

Michaela is a six-year-old girl with an intellectual disability and a moderate hearing loss. She attends her local neighbourhood mainstream primary school along with her two elder brothers. Prior to school entry she received regular support from early childhood intervention services. The intervention focused primarily on her hearing loss and communication needs. At school entry her language delay was approximately two years below her age peers.

Michaela is easy to engage, and she likes to be around people and to know what is being said. She has been fitted with behind-the-ear hearing aids bilaterally, and uses a radio frequency device to supplement her hearing in the classroom. She readily accepts support from her teachers and is learning to work alongside her fellow students. Her family are very supportive and work with the classroom teacher to reinforce the classroom program at home.

ASSESS

The teacher uses the ABLES assessments to identify Michaela's readiness to learn across the four developmental learning pathways. Michaela's progress along each pathway will guide the teacher to the appropriate curriculum level that could be used to develop an Individual Learning Plan.

The ABLES Assessment Tool

The ABLES Assessment Tool is available online for teachers via the Ultranet. To use the tool, request to join the Ultranet ABLES Design Space (78480023). Then navigate to the Assessment Tool.

There are some simple steps to follow when accessing this tool. These are explained in detail in the *ABLES Assessment Guidance Materials* which can be downloaded from the Ultranet ABLES Design Space.

1. Teachers log in to the Assessment Tool using the school number as both identification and password.

2. Once logged in, the school coordinator will click on the "Change Password" button to create a new school password. This is important to protect security of student data. Note – make a personal record of the new password and share with all school personnel who will use the program.

3. Before getting started, review Sections 3 and 4 of the *ABLES Assessment Guidance Materials* for information on how to complete student assessments and interpret reports.

4. Teachers then click on the "Register Students" button and follow the prompts to enter some background information about the student. This takes no more than two minutes per student and needs to be completed only once for each student.

5. Click on the "Complete Instruments" button to start an assessment.

6. Teachers can use the assessment tools to assess the student's current readiness to learn in terms of four learning domains that, together, provide a foundation for learning across other discipline areas. The assessments target a student's learning readiness in terms of their skills and understanding in English, Speaking and Listening, and Reading and Writing, and Personal Learning, and Interpersonal Development.

7. To download student reports, click on the "Produce Reports" button and select from the three report formats:

   a. Learning Readiness Report

   b. Student Profile Report

   c. Class Report.

Other Assessments

The ABLES assessments are designed to support planning in four foundational learning domains for students with additional needs. They are not the only assessments that can or should inform planning and program design for an individual student. The four learning domains are not the only areas of the curriculum that should be described and monitored for students, but rather a foundation for students' learning across the curriculum. The assessments should not be used for students who are working at the same overall level as their age peers in a particular domain. Rather, it may be most appropriate and helpful to use the ABLES assessments only for a subset of learning areas. This decision should be taken by the Student Support Group.

DATA

ABLES Learning Readiness Report

The Learning Readiness Report is generated following the completion of the ABLES assessment tool for individual students.

For each student whose learning is assessed with the full suite of ABLES assessment tools, four Learning Readiness Reports describing the student's learning on pathways of *English, Speaking and Listening, and Reading and Writing, Personal Learning and Interpersonal Development* are available.

Each section on the Learning Readiness Report is briefly described by a summary statement of indicative skills and abilities. These are linked to stages on *Towards the Level 1 of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards* or the relevant *Victorian Essential Learning Standards* level, which give a more detailed picture of the skills and abilities that cluster at each of the sections on the report.

There is one Learning Readiness report for each of the foundational learning domains of English Speaking and Listening, English Reading and Writing, and Interpersonal Development, but two alternative reports for the Personal Learning domain. The second of these is a report tailored for students who have been diagnosed as having autism spectrum disorder. This Learning Readiness report has the letters (ASD) in its title.

The report summarises the skills and abilities the student is currently developing and those that the student might learn next. It also can be used to reflect on set objectives and an appropriate focus for student learning.

It is recognised that there is considerable individual variation in students' expected patterns of learning and the goals that might be set for them. For some students, objectives might be set to help them make the transition to the next level of proficiency and understanding on the learning pathway. For others, it may be more appropriate to consolidate or build a stronger repertoire of abilities at their current level.

One important thing to note, is that a student's estimated level on the Learning Readiness Report is not an achievement level, but rather an indication of the sorts of things the student is currently learning to do. It is a point of intervention that teachers can draw upon to make decisions about the best possible learning program and experiences for the student.

Examples of Learning Readiness Reports for Michaela in the domains of *English, Reading and Writing, and Speaking and Listening* are shown below. The teacher will also be able to access Learning Readiness Reports for *Interpersonal Development and Personal Learning*. The results of all of the assessments are shown in the Student Profile Report (see next section).

The teacher is able to recognise that Michaela is working at a stage that is below level 1 of the VELS across all four of the foundational domains of learning. As a result, the teacher would turn to *Towards Level 1 of the VELS* curriculum to plan a program that is tailored and adjusted to meet Michaela's learning needs.

All of the Learning Readiness Reports generated by ABLES provide the teacher with a range of teaching and learning strategies developed by the University of Melbourne through research with teachers. These strategies have been shown to be effective and to support and inform teaching practice. They are not the only strategies that should or could be used, but they can be drawn from as a reference and guide to the sorts of strategies that experienced teachers use to support the learning of their students.

Learning Readiness Report

Student name:
Student code: **AAA0006**
Student class: **SAMPLE**
School code: **9999**
Assessment: **English, Reading and Writing**
Period: **Start 2011**
Date: **23 June, 2011**

Pathway	Stage	Pathway

Pathway

The student uses a range of strategies to confirm or modify understanding of text. S/he interprets the main ideas and purpose of texts, and is working towards ordering ideas in written work.

The student matches print and spoken text in the environment, and recognises how sounds are represented alphabetically. In writing, the student uses conventional letters, groups of letters, and simple punctuation such as full stops and capital letters.

The student recognises the difference between text and pictures, and may sort, match, or identify letters and numbers. The student may recognise very familiar words by sight, and link these to basic needs and wants.

The student is exploring objects within a familiar environment, and may show interest in photographs of familiar objects/people.

Pathway

The student reads and responds to short texts with familiar ideas and a small amount of unfamiliar vocabulary. The student makes use of known spelling patterns to attempt the spelling of unfamiliar words.

The student names letters of the alphabet and identifies their common sounds. S/he recognises the connection between print and the spoken word, and reads familiar words and signage using partial cues and illustrations.

The student is learning to identify objects, pictures, shapes and sounds, and may role-play reading, scribble freely, or recognise own name in print.

▬▬▬ The student is estimated to be at this location

Learning Readiness Report

Student name:
Student code: **AAA0006**
Student class: **SAMPLE**
School code: **9999**
Assessment: **English, Speaking and Listening**
Period: **Start 2011**
Date: **23 June, 2011**

Pathway	Stage	Pathway

Pathway

The student is learning to adapt, elaborate, adjust and use different strategies to communicate with different people and across a range of familiar and unfamiliar social contexts.

The student is learning to take turns, ask and answer questions, and extend vocabulary to include descriptions and observations.

The student is learning to make simple requests, and communicate basic needs, wants, and feelings.

Pathway

The student is learning to use communication skills appropriately in a variety of contexts and with different audiences.

The student is learning to recognise basic social rules of communication, and explore ways to convey information to others.

The student is learning to receive and respond to environmental stimuli and communication from others.

▬▬▬ The student is estimated to be at this location

VELS

Towards level 1 of the VELS

Student Profile Reports

Another report that can be generated from ABLES is the Student Profile Report. This report maps a student's level of learning and progress across two consecutive assessments, and in all four of the learning pathways (or the number of areas in which an assessment has been completed for a student). It is designed to support consideration of a student's individual pattern of strengths and abilities as well as their pattern of learning progress.

The black bars on the report show the student's "readiness to learn" at the time of the most recent assessment. Note that this time does not have to be identical for all learning areas, and the date of the most recent assessment for a particular learning area is shown above the black bar on the report. Note also that the levels are not necessarily aligned across the four learning areas.

There is no expectation that a student will work at the same level across all learning areas simultaneously, nor that they will move through levels at the same general rate of progress.

Indeed, it is quite common for a student to be working at a high overall level in terms of their English, Reading and Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Personal Learning, while also working at a lower level, or even struggling to retain their current level of proficiency, in their Interpersonal Development skills.

The reasons for this may be particular to the student's situation and best understood by those who know the student well. They can, however, flag the need to provide extra support for the student which should be discussed by the Student Support Group.

The level description that appears in the lower half of the report provides a brief summary statement of indicative skills and abilities for the student's assessed level for each learning area, as also shown on the Learning Readiness report.

These are linked to the *Towards Level 1 of the VELS* and VELS curriculum framework, which provides a detailed picture of the skills and abilities at each of the stages or levels.

Following a second round of assessment (using an alternate and matched form, and conducted at least six months apart), this report shows changes over time in terms of a student's learning readiness.

The earlier assessment is shown on the report as a light-coloured bar and with the date of the assessment displayed below the bar.

Note that students do not necessarily progress to new levels or move forward within a level over consecutive assessments.

Rather, students may show rapid periods of growth in a particular area and then take some time to embed their new level of understanding. It is also possible that a student may show a loss of proficiency in some areas of learning.

As can be seen from the example Profile Report on the next page, Michaela is working at Stage C of the *Towards Level 1 of the VELS* Curriculum Framework. This information can be used by her teacher to identify appropriate curriculum resources as required.

Student Profile Report

Student name:
Student code: AAA0006
Student class: SAMPLE
School code: 9999
Print date: 15 September 2011

English, Speaking and Listening:
23-06-11
21-03-11

English, Reading and Writing:
23-06-11
21-03-11

Personal Learning:
23-06-11
21-03-11
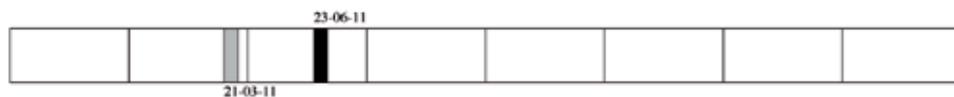
Interpersonal Development:
23-06-11
21-03-11

Current level description for student

English, Speaking and Listening: The student is learning to recognise basic social rules of communication, and explore ways to convey information to others.

Reading and Writing: The student recognises the difference between text and pictures, and may sort, match, or identify letters and numbers. The student may recognise very familiar words by sight, and link these to basic needs and wants.

Personal Learning: The student is learning about responsibility for actions, and becoming more socially aware.

Interpersonal Development: The student is learning to independently participate in simple familiar and/or highly personally valued social activities.

▌ Most recent record for student   ▌ Second most recent record for student

Class Reports

Class reports can also be produced when there has been more than one student assessed in a class. This report provides an opportunity to reflect on the learning of clusters of students who are working at the same or adjacent levels on the learning pathways. You may choose to monitor student learning over time by comparing each student's most recent assessment (shown as a black bar) with their earlier assessment outcome (shown as a light-coloured bar).

The class report allows the teacher to reflect on the curriculum and teaching and learning strategies that have been used, why they have been successful and how they may need to be adapted to meet the changing learning needs of the class. The teacher can also reflect on why some students have not progressed, consider their individual circumstances, and decide whether further adjustments to curriculum or teaching and learning strategies might be implemented.
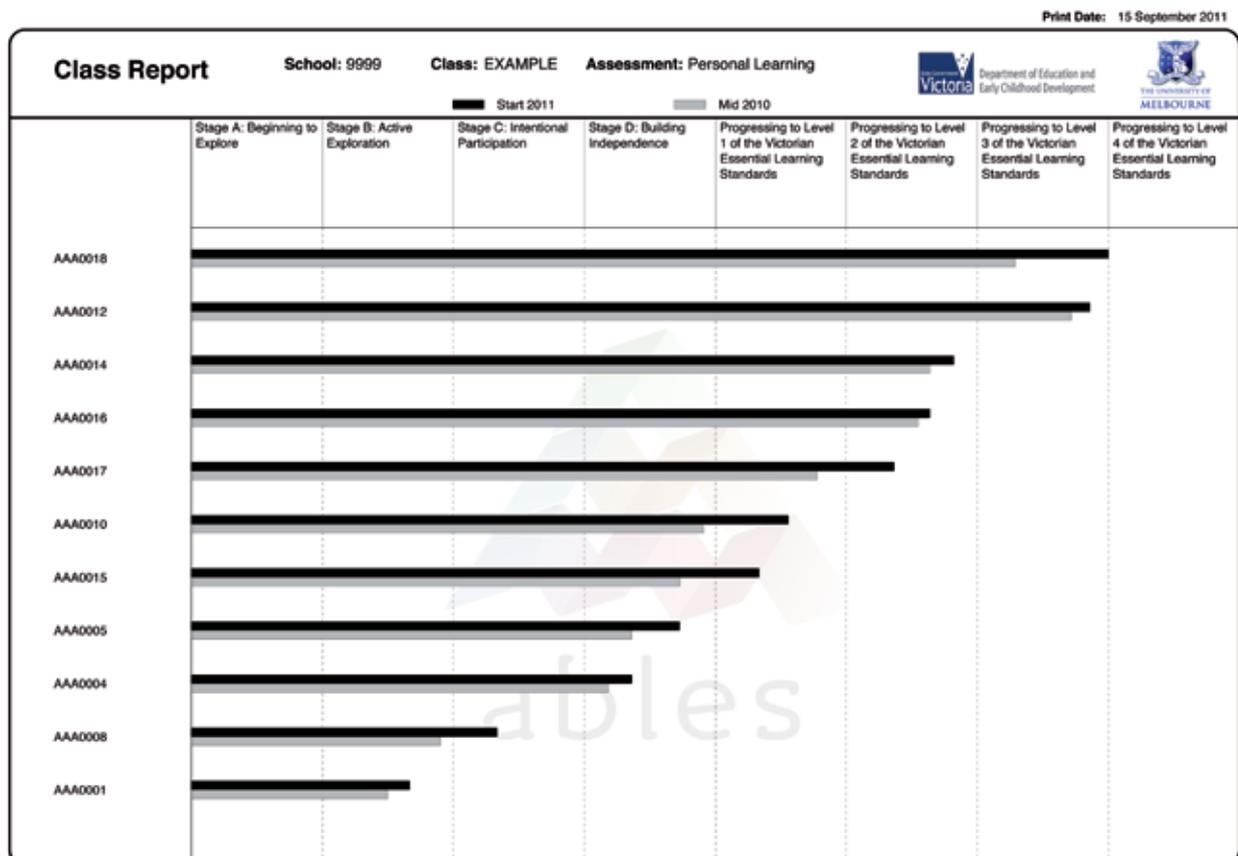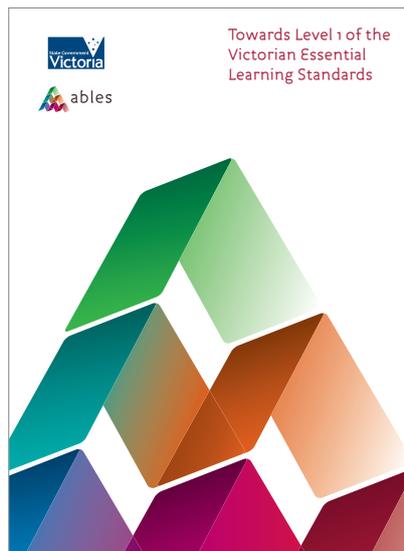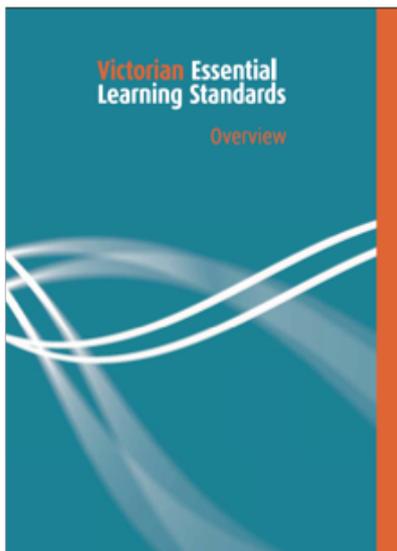
Towards Level 1 of the Victorian Education Learning Standards

This resource supports the development of effective learning programs for students with disabilities and additional learning needs in Victorian schools who are recognised as working towards Level 1 of the VELS and not meeting state benchmarks.

Towards Level 1 of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards contains empirically validated curriculum advice presented in a Victorian Essential Learning Standards format for school leaders and teachers. This high quality resource contributes to a universal design for learning in Victorian schools. It provides the capacity for schools to treat all students on the same basis and to meet their obligations in the *Disability Discrimination Act, Disability Standards for Education (2005)* with regard to curriculum provision.

Towards Level 1 of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards will provide curriculum guidance for Michaela's teachers in both the four foundational domains of learning that are monitored using the ABLES assessment and across a broader curriculum.

The resource is available from: *www.education.vic.gov.au/ studentlearning/teachingresources/ velslvl1.htm*

Based on the assessments undertaken, the data obtained, the appropriate curriculum identified and consultation with the Student Support Group, an Individual Learning Plan for Michaela might look like this:

PLAN

In collaboration, the Student Support Group would set learning goals for Michaela. The establishment of goals and objectives would benefit from reference to the relevant stage on the *Towards Level 1 of the VELS* Curriculum resource.

The outcome of the ABLES assessment shown above thus provides the teacher and Support Group with signposts that assist to identify appropriate curriculum adjustments for the student and outcome targets that inform a teaching and learning plan.

Victorian Essential Learning Standards

The Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) outlines what is essential for all Victorian students to learn during their time at school from Prep to Year 10. They provide a set of common state-wide standards which schools use to plan student learning programs, assess student progress and report to parents.

The VELS is based on best practice in Victorian schools and draws on national and international research about how students learn.

The VELS differ from traditional curricula by including knowledge and skills in the areas of physical, social and personal learning. Skills which are transferable across all areas of study such as thinking and communication are also included. The VELS curriculum encourages a flexible and creative approach to learning.

This resource is available from: *http://vels.vcaa.vic.edu.au/*

INDIVIDUAL LEARNING PLAN

School: Victorian Primary School
Student: Michaela Jefferies
Teacher: Ms Browne
VELS Domain: English Speaking and Listening, English Reading and Writing, Personal Learning, Interpersonal Development
Review Date: dd/mm/yyyy
Level: Working Towards Level One of the VELS, Stage C

Long-Term Goals (Twelve-months goals, with a review after six months)

- To consolidate and extend her oral language skills to enable her to contribute to classroom conversations
- To broaden her reading and writing skills repertoire so she can co-actively participate in the morning literacy hour
- To build her capacity to independently take part in learning activities
- To develop appropriate play behaviours.

Goals	Entry Skills	Outcome Target
English, Speaking and Listening, *Towards Level 1 of the VELS*: Stage C **Focus:** Learning to recognise basic social rules of communication, and exploring ways to convey information to others.	• Michaela recognises basic rules of communication such as paying attention and taking turns • She looks at the person who is speaking • She is able to communicate basic needs and feelings.	• Michaela will make requests for specific and desired items or activities • She will initiate and end an exchange • She will answer one or two questions in response to an activity or text that has been read to her.

Example Strategies

- Incorporate social interactions into daily routines (e.g., routines for greetings and farewells, asking questions)
- Use targeted questioning to extend Michaela's requests, comments, and observations
- Play games to teach, reward, and reinforce waiting and turn-taking skills, and to provide opportunities for Michaela to practise asking and responding to questions
- Provide opportunities for Michaela to share information with others (e.g., "circle time", "turn and talk") and for her to observe more capable students sharing or presenting information.

Goals	Entry Skills	Outcome Target
English, Reading and Writing, *Towards Level 1 of the VELS*: Stage C **Focus:** Learning to match or identify letters and numbers, to recognise very familiar words by sight, and to link these to basic needs and wants.	• Michaela can identify most letters and numbers • She shows interest in books by role-playing reading behaviour with support.	• Michaela will match pictures to letters and simple words in her language experience book and other similar reading materials • She will independently open a book to the front page and turn the pages one at a time.

Example Strategies

- Engage Michaela in daily individual and small-group shared reading sessions
- Provide opportunities for Michaela to draw and trace over letters, numbers, shapes, words, and patterns
- Use ICT resources to engage her interest, including talking books, ipads, laptops and interactive whiteboards.

Goals	Entry Skills	Outcome Target
Personal Learning, Towards Level 1 of the VELS: Stage C **Focus:** Learning about responsibility for actions and becoming more socially aware.	• Michaela is able to identify her belongings and those of others • She follows step-by-step instructions to collect materials for familiar tasks.	• Michaela will independently collect materials at the start of a task, and pack them away at the end of each task.

Example Strategies

- Establish routines for activities and tasks. Arrange opportunities for Michaela to watch others model activities, and then to repeat and practise steps in activities
- Provide support and guidance for Michaela's collections of materials (e.g., modelling, prompting) building to independence
- Acknowledge and celebrate Michaela's successful completion of tasks, activities, or steps in activities.

Goals	Entry Skills	Outcome Target
Interpersonal Development, *Towards Level 1 of the VELS*: Stage C **Focus:** Learning to independently participate in familiar and/or personally valued social activities.	• Michaela can take part in activities with the support of familiar adults who direct and regulate her participation.	• Michaela will participate in a shared activity with other students, with limited adult assistance.

Example Strategies

- Create a classroom environment that encourages group interaction. This could include participation in group activities, that Michaela enjoys, such as cooking, games, and "circle" time for sharing and listening to others
- Establish classroom rules and shared expectations for positive interaction between students
- Provide Michaela with a role of responsibility (e.g., classroom monitor) to build her social confidence.

Comments

TEACH

Strategies for teaching and learning

The strategies for teaching and learning have been developed through two years of research conducted with teachers of students with additional needs. They represent strategies that experienced teachers draw upon to support the learning of their students.

The full list of strategies can be accessed as part of the range of ABLES support materials via the ABLES design Space on the Ultranet. They are also shown on the Learning Readiness Reports.

The strategies include a list of general strategies to guide teachers as they work with their students. These principles are relevant and useful for all students, regardless of their level of learning readiness.

For each level on a learning pathway, teaching strategies that are used on a daily or weekly basis by a majority of teachers of students at that level are listed. They are ordered from those that are used most frequently and by more teachers to those used less frequently and by fewer teachers.

Some of the strategies will be appropriate for all students at a particular level, and some will not be appropriate for students with particular types of disabilities or for older or younger students. The choice of strategies to be incorporated into the teaching program for an individual student rests with the team of educators and professionals who take responsibility for a student's learning.

The strategies chosen for a student should be subjected to regular review by the team of educators and professionals at the student's school, to monitor and reflect on their impact on the learning progress of each student. Teachers should also consider the success of various strategies through their own critical reflection in their e5 journals.

General strategies

The following general strategies can be applied for the teaching and learning of students with disabilities:

- Build positive relationships with students and their parents/carers. Seek input from parents or carers of students and work in partnership

- Establish an optimal learning environment with consideration given to the impact of lighting, visual displays, sound, proximity to other students, and positioning in the classroom. Allow space for students to sit apart during group activities if they choose to do so

- Use each student's preferences to guide choice of materials, media, and topics for activities. Make learning activities personally relevant and rewarding for your students. Build connections between learning activities and their application in the student's daily life

- Provide your students with a choice of materials or options for responding to a particular learning task and demonstrating their understanding

- Consider the age-relevance of resources

- Establish routines to help your students anticipate events or activities, and to build their independence as participants in school and classroom activities
- Start with direct, explicit teaching and modelling of each new skill or activity. Over time, reduce prompting and support. Use these steps to encourage independence:
  - clearly model the skill or behaviour and provide opportunities for students to observe others perform the skill or behaviour
  - work co-actively or cooperatively with the student to perform the new skill or behaviour
  - give prompts or single step instructions
  - provide repeated opportunities for practising a new skill, starting with structured and supported situations, and gradually reducing support over time
  - encourage students to generalise new skills, by providing a variety of contexts, materials, or locations for their application.

- Immerse students in language. Provide a language-and print-rich environment
- Use specific, consistent language, or other forms of communication
- Establish a shared and common set of terms and expressions across all curriculum areas and specialist programs to reduce confusion and frustration for students. Share this information with the student's family/carers to build a clear link between home and school
- Use planning days to share skills across the various subject areas, and ensure that specialist teachers are informed about literacy and learning goals and strategies that they can reinforce
- For some students, responses and reactions can vary from day to day and during the day, and can be affected by a range of factors (e.g., ill health, anxiety, fatigue, medication).

05. Ultranet and ABLES

Utilising Ultranet for planning, delivering and assessing learning activities

The Ultranet is an online student-centred learning environment that supports high-quality learning and teaching and connects students, teachers and parents.

It is a 21st century online learning platform that takes learning beyond the walls of the classroom and provides a rich knowledge management framework for schools.

The Ultranet enables teachers to:

- incorporate the use of Web 2.0 technologies in teaching, enabling students to communicate, collaborate, publish and share with peers within and across schools
- collaborate with colleagues in their school and in schools across Victoria
- facilitate knowledge transfer and sharing across schools and the system
- easily access quality digital learning resources
- access, monitor and record student progress online

- readily plan, assign and assess learning activities online
- communicate each student's learning progress more easily with parents and guardians.

In addition, Ultranet:

- provides online, anytime, anywhere access for students, parents and teachers
- captures a complete record of student learning progress overtime, from year to year and school to school
- enables students to take more responsibility for their own learning.
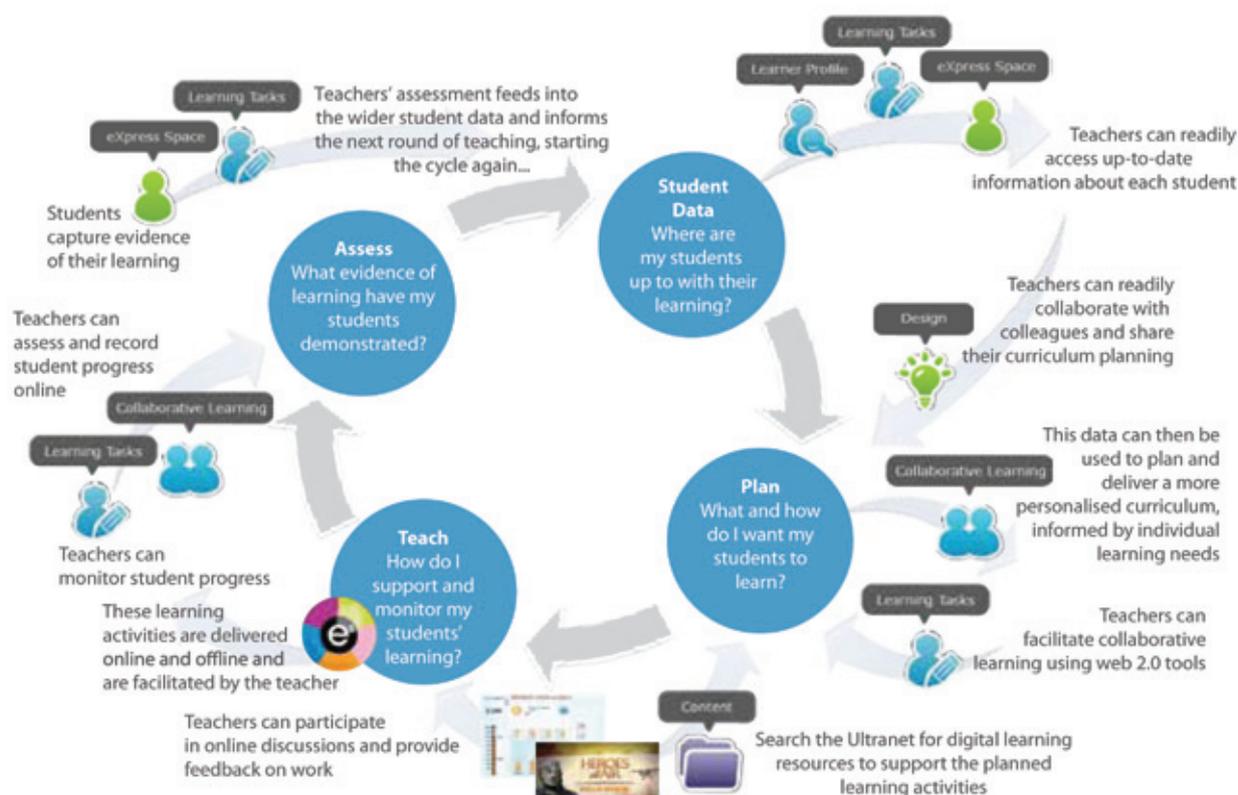

Figure 3: Learning and Teaching Cycle for the Ultranet
Model sourced from 'Ultranet: Getting Started - Release 2', DEECD 2010, page 10

How is ABLES applied within the Ultranet?

The Ultranet will provide the opportunity for:

- all students' plans, goals and achievements to be presented
- teachers to collaborate and communicate across schools for planning and learning and teaching advice and support.

ABLES is supported in Ultranet in the following ways:

- Inclusive approach to curriculum design, delivery and advice
- Ensures advice and curriculum reflect policies and processes for all students
- Provides examples, links and sign posts where relevant, for different cohorts of students
- Ultranet has Towards Level One of the VELS as a curriculum framework
- Clarification of messages around individualised planning, curriculum design and delivery and its integration within the Ultranet.

Specifically, Individual Learning Plans or Career Action Plans for students with a disability can be captured in:

- Student eXpress Space (Learning Goals, Learning Portfolio)
- Learning Tasks (Curriculum planning, delivery and assessment)
- Learner Profile (Student data).

The diagram on the next page provides further information on the ways in which Ultranet supports ABLES.

Ultranet applications to support ABLES

Teachers:

- set up learning contacts which reflect networks based on disability, year level program and student cohort
- maintain and share professional Portfolio, which reflects professional learning topics including disability, student cohorts, programs, use of IT tools to support learning.

Students can:

- document their Individual Learning Plan goals
- collect evidence of their learning in their learning portfolio; which reflects progress towards and achievement of Individual Learning goals
- portfolio viewers include SSG members
- use SSG meeting to assist with understanding of themselves, their ability and skills.

Teachers:

- tag and search for resources which are related to ABLES, disability, special education, *Towards Level 1 of the VELS* so they can easily find and share resources
- easily locate teaching and learning resources and incorporate them into Spaces to support student learning.

Teachers and Students can:

- access, manage and store their own content
- search for personal, school and DEECD quality-assured digital learning resources which have been specifically tagged such as: ABLES, *Towards Level 1 of the VELS*, special or specific program title or student cohort.

Teachers and Department staff within schools and across the system:

- create and share curriculum, programs, resources and strategies within/across schools for a specific area or student cohort
- ask questions, share expertise, develop a knowledge bank and understanding of a specific topic, program, disability, issue and topic
- coach or mentor staff within or across schools
- network with staff with similar roles and responsibilities across schools to have a professional dialogue, collaborate, share and learn e.g. therapists, curriculum coordinators, music therapists.

Schools can:

- construct spaces to meet the individual groups/needs within their community for example parent network, PBS team, Curriculum planning, Therapists, Wellbeing, Special Education, Intensive Interaction
- construct spaces which include a community across schools e.g. disability specific group, such as Autism, learning difficulties.

Home — Personalised home page for all users

eXpress Space — My personal space

Connect — A place to find websites and online activities

Design — A place for professional collaboration and learning

My Content — A place to store and search for personal, school and DEECD digital resources

Community — A place for my school's communities

Learning Tasks — A tool for planning, delivering and assessing learning activities

Collaborative Learning — A place for student collaboration and learning

Learner Profile — Personalised learning information for and about each student

RELEASE 1

RELEASE 2

ultranet

Teachers construct or moderate so students can:

- collaborate on aspects of learning and co-create knowledge
- connect for a common purpose or common learning goal
- work on small groups tasks, whole school projects, cross class projects
- display their learning and achievements towards their ILP and learning goals.

Teachers can:

- access up to date, personalised information about a student
- monitor student learning progress.

Teachers can:

- plan, deliver and access learning activities which relate to a student's Individual Learning Plan
- plan and share curriculum
- construct a learning item then copy, modify and assign to individual students to meet their ILP and learning goals
- link Learning Items to curriculum framework that reflects the student's ability (including *Towards Level 1 of the VELS*) and individual student's ILP goals
- embed digital learning resources
- provide feedback, record observations and monitor student progress towards their learning goals.

Students can:

- view and participate in learning activities.

06. Further information

For further information about ABLES:

- go to: *www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/wellbeing/ables*
- visit the ABLES Ultranet Design Space (78480023)
- contact your regional disability coordinator
- email the ABLES team at: *ables@edumail.vic.gov.au*

If you have any questions about the ABLES assessment tool, please contact the Assessment Research Centre, Melbourne Graduate School of Education via email at *swans-plt@unimelb.edu.au*

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Glossary

ABLES	ABLES is a new teaching, learning and support approach for students with disabilities. ABLES enables students to be assessed on the basis of their abilities, not their disabilities, and will provide teachers with explicit guidance material and resources that will assist them to effectively plan for and teach students based on their individual learning needs.
ABLES Assessment Tool	The ABLES Assessment Tool is an observation survey conducted by the teacher that identifies a student's readiness to learn along a particular developmental learning pathway. The Assessment Tool can produce three reports: • Learning Readiness Report • Student Profile Report • Class Report.
Developmental Learning Pathway	There are five developmental learning pathways which identify progress across four foundational learning areas: • English, Reading and Writing • English, Speaking and Listening • Personal Learning • Personal Learning (ASD) • Interpersonal Development. Each pathway is aligned with *Towards Level 1 of the VELS*.
Disability Standards for Education	The Disability Standards for Education clarify and make more explicit the obligations on schools and the rights of students under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DD Act). The Standards cover enrolment, participation, curriculum development, student support services and harassment and victimisation. See: *http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/wellbeing/disability/handbook/legislation.htm*
e5 Instructional Model	The e5 Instructional Model is a reference point for school leaders and teachers to develop a deeper understanding of what constitutes high-quality teacher practice in the classroom. See: *http://www.education.vic.gov.au/proflearning/e5/*
Foundational Learning Area	Foundational learning areas are the broad areas of skill or ability that a child or young person needs in order to be able to successfully and confidently access other curriculum areas. A student requires a foundation in the ability to communicate, work with others, manage their own learning, and so on in order to be able to successfully participate in discipline-based curriculum areas.
Individual Learning Plan	A document developed by the Student Support Group which describes the short-and long-term educational goals for the student. See *http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/wellbeing/disability/default.htm*
Program for Students with Disabilities	The Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD) provides additional support within the Student Resource Package for eligible students with disabilities in regular and specialist schools. See *http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/wellbeing/disability/default.htm*

Student Support Group	The aims of the Student Support Group are to: • ensure that those with the most knowledge of, and responsibility for the student, work together to establish shared goals for the student's educational future • plan reasonable adjustments for the student to access the curriculum • provide educational planning that is ongoing throughout the student's life • monitor the progress of the student. See: *http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/wellbeing/disability/handbook/default.htm*
Towards Level 1 of the VELS	*Towards Level 1 of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards* contains scientifically validated curriculum advice presented in a Victorian Essential Learning Standards format for school leaders and teachers. This resource supports the development of effective learning programs for students with disabilities and additional learning needs in Victorian schools who are recognised as working towards Level 1 of the VELS and not meeting state benchmarks. The resource is available from: *www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/teachingresources/velslvl1.htm*
Ultranet	The Ultranet is an online student-centred learning environment that supports high-quality learning and teaching and connects students, teachers and parents. It is a 21st-century online learning platform that takes learning beyond the walls of the classroom and provides a rich knowledge management framework for schools. See: *http://www.ultranet.vic.edu.au*
Victorian Essential Learning Standards	The Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) outlines what is essential for all Victorian students to learn during their time at school from Prep to Year 10. They provide a set of common state-wide standards which schools use to plan student learning programs, assess student progress and report to parents. This resource is available from: *http://vels.vcaa.vic.edu.au/*