Building solid foundations for developing literacy skills for life through a new Learning Progressions initiative

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Overview

- Background
- The Literacy Learning Progressions
- Rationale
- Initiatives
- Discussion
Learning for Living Project – New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission initiative

Project aim: improve literacy outcomes for students by improving lecturers’ understanding of effective literacy practices

Our role: share learning progressions and trial tasks
Literacy Progressions can be used to:

- Gain a basic picture of student’s literacy skills
- Identify English language demands of tasks and texts
- Provide a sequence for teaching and learning programmes and design suggestions
Literacy Progressions

• Listen with Understanding
• Speak to Communicate
• Read with Understanding
• **Write to Communicate**
Write to Communicate Literacy Progressions

- Purpose and audience
- Spelling
- Vocabulary
- Language and text features
- Planning and composing
- Revising and editing
### Appendix B.4 Analysing writing: ‘best guess’ chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE</th>
<th>SPELLING</th>
<th>VOCABULARY</th>
<th>LANGUAGE AND TEXT FEATURES</th>
<th>PLANNING AND COMPOSING</th>
<th>REVISING AND EDITING</th>
</tr>
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Rationale

• For first-year students who withdrew for academic reasons the major factor was “not knowing what was expected of them” (Waters, 2004)

• Lecturer expectations vs. student interpretations (Clerehan, 2003; Lea & Street, 1998; Leki, 2007; McCune, 2004)

• Clear writing expectations lead to better long term study outcomes
Content Lecturer Initiatives

- Majority find the progressions too complicated
- Focus is on vocabulary development
- Academic advisors’ work to embed literacy into programmes is slow
Example of content lecturer’s use of the progressions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features of paragraph writing</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Partial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tone is appropriate for audience.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Most words are spelt correctly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocabulary includes some words related to government</td>
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<td>Punctuation is used correctly eg. Fullstops, commas and capital letters.</td>
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<td>Complete effective sentences are used.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grammar is used correctly eg. Subject-verb agreement, correct tense, correct articles, singular/plural.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Features and structure of a paragraph is used – one idea introduced by a topic sentence, development of idea with further explanation or examples.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evidence of revising and editing.</td>
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</table>
Learning Development Lecturer Initiatives

Write to Communicate implementation in one-to-one sessions

- Students read progressions – discuss writing development
- Students and learning development lecturer discuss questions related to the progressions
Purpose and Audience

- Who is your audience for this piece of writing?

- Does your tone (level of formality) match your audience and have you used this tone consistently?

- What is the purpose of this text?

- Is the purpose clearly stated?
Can you describe how this piece of writing is structured?
Student feedback

- “I never thought about my writing in these ways”
- “It’s useful to have specific questions to answer about my writing”
Can we build solid foundations by using the Write to Communicate Progressions?

- Progressions useful in one-to-one sessions
- A useful tool for lecturers but...
- Need sustained professional development
- Need institutional and government support
Discussion

- To what extent is your institution embedding literacy development in its programmes?

- How is this being done?

- What level of knowledge about academic writing do content lecturers need?
References and links

- For the progressions: www.literacyandnumeracyforadults.com


