

Language Support Program

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Available at www.softweb.vic.edu.au/wellbeing/disabil/index.htm



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Foreword

The Victorian government is committed to delivering an inclusive education system that ensures that all students have access to a quality education that meets their diverse needs.

The Language Support Program was developed in response to recommendations from the Ministerial Working Group for Victorian government school communities to assist them in supporting students with language disorders and difficulties within their schools. Since the initial implementation in 2005, substantial professional learning, implemented by regions, has been provided.

Regions have expanded the scope of the program to respond to teachers' increased knowledge and skills in oral language teaching.

This document contains information on:

- the Language Support Program which provides curriculum and professional development support to assist schools in implementing their Language Support Program
- a range of resources available to class teachers and special educators to support the identification of students with significant language difficulties including severe language disorder
- details of the additional funding that is provided for schools to support their Language Support Program through the Student Resource Package.

LANGUAGE SUPPORT PROGRAM

The Language Support Program

The Language Support Program aims to build the capacity of schools and teachers to provide appropriate programs and learning experiences which will improve the oral language skills of all students, particularly those with a language disorder.

It is recognised that teachers currently offer quality programs which meet the oral language needs of the majority of students, particularly, through the English component of the Victorian Essential Learning Standard of Discipline-based Learning. However, these opportunities do not equip all students with the necessary oral language skills for optimising the students' potential.

1. Aims of the Language Support Program

The Language Support Program aims to provide schools and teachers with:

- an understanding of the components and development of oral language
- a screening procedure based on observation of classroom language behaviour through which students with a language disorder may be identified
- an oral language observational profile enabling the targeting of specific areas of difficulty
- teaching strategies which directly address the difficulties identified through the screening process and can be implemented within the classroom
- a detailed list of resources

For some students who are in the early stages of learning English as a second or additional language, the oral language observational profile may exhibit surface similarities to first English language speakers with a language disorder. An observational profile for second language learners is described in the ESL Companion/ESL/English component of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards.

<http://vels.vcaa.vic.edu.au/support/esl/esl.html>

For students whose language development in a second and/or additional language is not reflected in an ESL language profile, it may be appropriate to assess oral language development in their dominant language (see [page 10](#) - First Language Assessment Tasks). Early identification of an underlying language disorder is essential, regardless of which language is dominant. These students should be referred to a speech pathologist.

The implementation of the Language Support Program may lead to enhanced student learning in the areas of:

- vocabulary
- phonological knowledge
- grammatical usage
- fluency and intonation
- listening comprehension
- expressive language
- using language to learn and to communicate effectively
- storage and retrieval of information in and from long-term memory
- perception and attention to spoken language.

2. Content of the Language Support Program

The Language Support Program provides a framework for teaching oral language to students requiring additional support. It enables schools to further build on the objectives of the Principles of Learning and Teaching.

A key focus of the Language Support Program is a model of language learning based on the **Ideas, Conventions, and Purposes** of language allied with the learner's **Ability to Learn** language in both the expressive and receptive modes. This model is encapsulated in the mnemonic ICPAL.

I	Ideas	the meanings of words, sentences, discourse and topics of language
C	Conventions	the rules governing the sounds, sentences and genres of oral language
P	Purpose	the use of oral language within our social interactions
AL	Ability to Learn	the necessary skills and their prerequisites for the acquisition of oral language.

A student with a language disorder may experience problems in one or more of the areas implicit within the ICPAL model.

3. How will the Language Support Program provide support to schools?

In order to provide high quality programs for all students with diverse learning needs, schools will need to embrace the broad objectives and the specific aims of the Language Support Program. The incidence of language disorders and their inherent difficulties mean that the related issues are relevant to every school and to all aspects of teaching and learning.

Schools will need to examine:

- what they know about the influence of oral language on learning and general school performance
- what they know and understand about oral language learning disorders
- how their current practices meet the oral language needs of all students, and in particular those experiencing difficulties
- what processes they have in place for identifying students who may have a language disorder and the exact nature of their disorder.

Schools will need to determine:

- how the Language Support Program will be implemented and coordinated
- what students will be specifically targeted and how they will be identified
- how it will involve all appropriate staff
- who will be responsible for its implementation and coordination.

The Language Support Program has been developed by Dr John Munro (University of Melbourne) in collaboration with Department of Education and Early Childhood Development personnel. Professional Development is available in all regions; schools should contact their regional office for details.

Support material is available at the Student Wellbeing website at: <http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/wellbeing/disabil/index.htm>

4. Language Support Program Funding Arrangements for Schools

The funding model allocates Language Support Program funding to all primary, P-12 and secondary schools which enables schools to develop strategies to support the needs of their students who have language disorders or difficulties.

Strategies may include the use of targeted resources such as additional speech pathologist expertise, teacher aides and the support of pedagogical approaches such as the Language Support Program.

- The funding model is based on the rationale that:
 - Resources are best directed to building teacher capacity
 - Embedded funding ensures certainty for schools
 - Research tells us there is a link between Student Family Occupation and additional language needs.
- The model allocates Language Support Program funds to every school on a formula based model with the following elements:
 - a weighting based on the Stages of Schooling allocated on a per capita basis – for Prep to Year 9 students; and
 - a proportion of the Language Support Program funding allocated through a Student Family Occupation weighting.
- This model has been developed in consultation with experts including Philip Holmes-Smith, Director, School Research Evaluation and Measurement Services and key stakeholders.

5. Language Support Program Resources

Resources to assist and support teachers in the identification of students with a delay or disorder of language development.

It is recommended that students suspected of having a language disorder be referred to a speech pathologist for a comprehensive assessment.

1. The Language Support Program Observational Profile

The Language Support Program contains an observational profile for teachers to identify and profile students with language difficulties. A range of further references and materials are provided within the regional professional development program.

This observational profile is available at the Student Wellbeing website at:

www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/wellbeing/disabil/index.htm

2. English Continuum - Speaking and listening

Indicators of Progress in the Speaking and Listening domain are organised into four areas of knowledge.

- **Communicating Orally (Ability to Learn Oral Language)** addresses the necessary skills and their prerequisites for the acquisition of oral language.
- **Purposes of Communication** addresses the use of oral language within our social communications.
- **Conventions of Language** addresses the rules governing the sounds, sentences and genres of oral language.
- **Ideas Communicated** addresses the meanings of words, sentences, discourse and topics of language.

These areas of knowledge reflect the Language Support Program.

www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/teachingresources/english/englishcontinuum/speaklisten

The following resources are examples of available support programs which can be used by classroom teachers.

1. One in Eleven: Practical Strategies for Teaching Adolescents with a Language Learning Disability

This program is a whole-school approach that identifies students with a Language Learning Disability. It provides suggestions for teaching and learning strategies to address this difficulty in various school contexts, especially in subject based areas.

The emphasis of this program is on modifying the curriculum and employing explicit teaching strategies.

Further information is available from Australian Council of Educational Research at

www.acer.edu.au

2. Time for Talking

Teachers at the lower primary school level can use this book to develop the **oral language** skills of their students. It contains information about oral language development, key **oral language building blocks** and **genres** that students need to master in order to function and learn in the classroom.

Focus language areas addressed include storytelling, recounting, discussing, active listening and questions. In each section there is information about stages of development, relevance to literacy and the child at risk, followed by practical classroom activities. There is also a resource section for children's literature, games and reference material.

Uses: Information for teachers about the nature of oral language and its relevance to literacy development and classroom performance. It includes practical activities for classroom and small group use. Reproducible pages can be enlarged and coloured to make lasting classroom resources.

Age Range: Early primary students aged 4 to 8 years, and older students with language difficulties.

Further information is available from Pearson Education Australia at www.pearsoned.com.au

3. A Sound Way

A Sound Way is a popular and practical teacher resource book for developing children's phonological awareness skills essential for early literacy. It was first published in 1994 and has since been reprinted 12 times. A Sound Way is divided into four sections:

1. What's in a sound? gives comprehensive information about the sounds, where and how they are made, as well as fun ways to establish oral awareness.

2. Sound-Letter Links shows the teacher ways of assisting children acquire clear concepts of sounds and letters.

3. Phonological awareness activities in seven areas - word awareness, syllables, rhyme, alliteration, sound analysis - segmentation, blending sounds, and manipulation of sounds in words. Each phonological awareness area contains activities that are purely oral/aural (represented by a mouth symbol at the top of the page) as well as activities that link sounds with letters in writing/reading activities (pen symbol at top of page).

4. Resources and references.

Uses: Classroom and small group activities to develop phonological awareness.

Reproducible pages can be enlarged and coloured to make lasting classroom resources.

Age Range: Early primary students aged 4 to 8 years and older students with reading or spelling difficulties.

Further information is available from Pearson Education Australia at www.pearsoned.com.au

4. **Ready-Set-Remember**

Ready Set Remember is a rich resource of information and activities for teachers with students who may have auditory processing difficulties. In order to listen well, a child must have adequate hearing, intact auditory processing skills and an 'active listening' mindset.

This book helps teachers identify children with auditory difficulties aged 5–8 before referring them to an appropriate health professional. When the child returns to the classroom, **Ready Set Remember** provides strategies and activities to encourage children's confidence and improve their ability to efficiently and effectively remember auditory information by practising listening and sequencing tasks.

Section 1 of **Ready Set Remember** includes an introduction to:

- hearing, auditory processing, active listening, short-term auditory memory and how to identify and assess children aged 3–7
- factors affecting a child's ability to remember
- relationships between listening, auditory memory and literacy.

Section 2 has over 30 activities and support materials, which have been used successfully by the authors over the past 20 years.

All activities are easy to fit into the daily classroom program and each activity has a clear aim, simple instructions and requires minimal equipment.

Age Range: Early primary students aged 5 to 8 years and older students with reading or spelling difficulties.

Further information is available from Australian Council of Educational Research at www.acer.edu.au

5. **First Language Assessment Tasks - 2000**

Department of Education, Employment and Training, Victoria.

First Language Assessment Tasks help to assess ESL students' language skills in Arabic, Khmer, Somali or Vietnamese (Turkish and Chinese in development stage). It comprises sets of assessment tasks and recording sheets which are able to be photocopied.

The tasks were designed for newly arrived students entering Australian schools at the upper primary and secondary levels, however, some of the early tasks may provide useful information about younger students.

It is envisaged that the tasks will be most useful with students who have had little or no schooling in their first language.

This publication is available by mail order from Languages and Multicultural Resources Centre.

http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/teachlearn/student/lem/LMERCOrderform__2005.doc



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