

Literacy and Numeracy FAQs

How does Alberta Education define literacy and numeracy?

In collaboration with education partners, Alberta Education has created the following definitions of literacy and numeracy:

- Literacy is the ability, confidence and willingness to engage with language to acquire, construct and communicate meaning in all aspects of daily living.
- Numeracy is the ability, confidence and willingness to engage with quantitative or spatial information to make informed decisions in all aspects of daily living.

Why are literacy and numeracy important?

Literacy and numeracy play a vital role in living, learning and working in today's society. Alberta students need strong literacy and numeracy skills to navigate and make meaning in an increasingly complex and technology-driven world.

We want our students to develop strong literacy skills so that they can confidently access and critically evaluate information and communicate in a way that is effective and appropriate to the context. It is important for our students to have strong numeracy skills so they can interpret quantitative and spatial information to make informed decisions throughout their lives.

What is Alberta Education's commitment to literacy and numeracy?

The *Ministerial Order on Student Learning: Goals and Standards Applicable to the Provision of Education in Alberta* (#001/2013) states that one of the goals of an inclusive Kindergarten to Grade 12 education is to enable all students to “employ literacy and numeracy to construct and communicate meaning.”

Literacy and numeracy already exist to varying degrees in current provincial curriculum (programs of study) and in the learning experiences that teachers create for students. As Alberta Education creates future curriculum, there will be a more explicit focus on literacy and numeracy development within each subject.

Can literacy and numeracy be developed in all subjects?

Teachers are already familiar with many aspects of literacy and numeracy. They currently address literacy and numeracy through learning outcomes and learning experiences in their subjects.

Although many aspects of literacy and numeracy are learned primarily in language arts and mathematics, every subject has aspects of literacy and numeracy that are specific to that subject. For example, re-reading and summarizing to clarify understanding are literacy strategies that students can apply across all subjects. Similarly, working with percentages or graphs are numeracy skills that can be applied across many subjects. The reading of a periodic table or the writing of a laboratory report, however, are literacy skills unique to science. In numeracy, the method by which data is gathered and analyzed, the use of specialized instruments to gather the data, or the formulae and equations used may be unique to a specific subject. The expertise of teachers in each subject supports the overall development of literacy and numeracy for all students.

Students who use literacy and numeracy in all subjects develop breadth and depth in their literacy and numeracy skills and gain a deeper understanding of the subjects themselves.

Alberta Education has prepared documents to further support teachers as they continue to work with their students' literacy and numeracy development.

What are the literacy and numeracy progressions?

The literacy and numeracy progressions are a resource that teachers can use to support students in meeting the learning outcomes in the current curriculum. They are not intended to be an add-on or a separate program of studies. They should not be used to teach or to formally evaluate and report literacy and numeracy separately from subject learning outcomes.

The progressions have been developed by Alberta Education, in consultation with stakeholders, to support teachers in developing students' literacy and numeracy awareness, knowledge and understanding. The progressions describe key literacy and numeracy milestones along a continuum of developmentally appropriate expectations and behaviours across all subjects from Kindergarten through Grade 12.

The progressions provide teachers with a common reference for literacy and numeracy development within certain age ranges or divisions. A wide range of abilities exists within each stage of development. The progressions are associated with children's age-related cognitive and socio-emotional development as they pertain to literacy and numeracy. This development is a lifelong process that varies between individuals. The progressions are intended to be considered in their entirety and across subjects to gain a picture of each student's comprehensive literacy and numeracy development.

How can the progressions be used to support students' literacy and numeracy development?

The literacy and numeracy progressions can be used with the current curriculum to:

- assist in the design of developmentally appropriate learning experiences that foster literacy and numeracy growth in all students;
- support teachers' understanding of the continuum of literacy and numeracy development from Kindergarten through Grade 12;
- provide teachers, who may not be experts in literacy and numeracy, with insights on how to help students who have not yet acquired the literacy and numeracy skills they need to access subject content; and
- provide a tool to help teachers explain developmentally appropriate literacy and numeracy expectations to parents.

In future provincial curriculum

- the literacy and numeracy progressions will provide curriculum developers with a consistent reference tool that describes literacy and numeracy milestones;
- the connections between learning outcomes and relevant literacy and numeracy progressions that are developed and applied in a given subject will be shown; and
- the progressions will be identified by Alberta Education to indicate the literacy and numeracy that students will use, develop and enhance through the learning outcomes, and for ease of use by teachers.

Do teachers assess the literacy and numeracy progressions?

Literacy and numeracy development can be observed within the context of learning experiences across the subjects. Teachers are not required to formally evaluate and report on the progressions separately from learning outcomes.

The literacy and numeracy progressions are not intended to be a formal diagnostic tool or to replace subject learning outcomes. They may be used by teachers to inform the selection of assessment strategies, activities and tools that are appropriate for their students.