

## Grade Bands, Learning Growth, and Dimensions of Learning

The Manitoba Kindergarten to Grade 12 English language arts curriculum describes learning in grade bands. The grade bands (Kindergarten to Grade 2, Grades 3 to 5, Grades 6 to 8, Grades 9 to 12) support teacher teams, individual teachers, and multilevel teachers in taking a more longitudinal view of learning and planning for learning. The grade bands provide support for teachers in planning for, teaching, and assessing student learning at various points along the continuum. Grade bands recognize that learning develops over time and across multiple contexts. Grade levels provide a way to look at learning in shorter periods of time.

### Enacting the Practices and Dimensions of Learning Growth: Independence, Breadth, Depth, and Transformation

Teachers and students maintain consistent focus on enacting practices in rich learning experiences and, over time and across contexts, on how learners' use of these grows, deepens, and transforms. Sets of grade band descriptors provide an illustration of how learners in a grade band might take up these practices within rich learning experiences. Descriptors must, therefore, always be seen in the context of the practices and their characterizing elements. The language of descriptors (e.g., *learners are using . . .* or *learners are responding . . .*) suggests that these enactments are a process that occurs over the course of the grade band. The ways that learners enact the practices should be continuously developed, elaborated, and transformed across novel and varied contexts (rich learning experiences) so that learning across grades and grade bands becomes more sophisticated, more complex, deeper, and broader with time and new experiences and applications. In this way, learning development is seen as an expanding field rather than a linear sequence.

Descriptors help teachers and learners describe learning and collect evidence of learning over the course of rich learning experiences. Over time and across contexts, this body of evidence would show how learners grow in relation to various dimensions of learning.

Teacher judgments are dependable and valid when based on this body of evidence:

Teacher judgment for sharing information on progress and achievement for reporting purposes has an added complexity because the judgment is made on a range of evidence. Teachers draw on and apply the evidence gathered up to a particular point in time, in order to make a judgment about a student's progress and achievement.

The use of a range of evidence builds dependability in decisions.  
(Te Kete Ipurangi [TKI]).

Bodies of evidence embody conversations, observations, and products/ processes: “When . . . teachers collect, interpret, and teach out of naturally occurring data, their assessment practices are theoretically congruent with their instruction” (Mills and O’Keefe, “Inquiry into Assessment Strategies” 2). When educators include data from externally developed assessment tools, they must critically examine how this data relates to (or does not relate to) other data from classroom-based assessment, to curriculum, and to knowledge of learners and learning.

Practices, elements, and grade band descriptors speak to the “what” of ELA, while the dimensions of learning support teachers and learners in considering “to what extent or degree.” Descriptors and evidence of learning also help teachers plan for intentional teaching and learning within rich learning experiences in order to support continued learning growth.

### Further Reading, Viewing, and Research

Illeris, Knud. *Transformative Learning and Identity*. Routledge, 2014.

Mezirow, Jack, and Associates. *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress*. Jossey-Bass, 2000.

Morrisette, Joëlle, and Marie-Françoise Legendre. “L’évaluation des compétences en context scolaire : des pratiques négociées.” *Education Sciences & Society*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2011, pages 120–132.

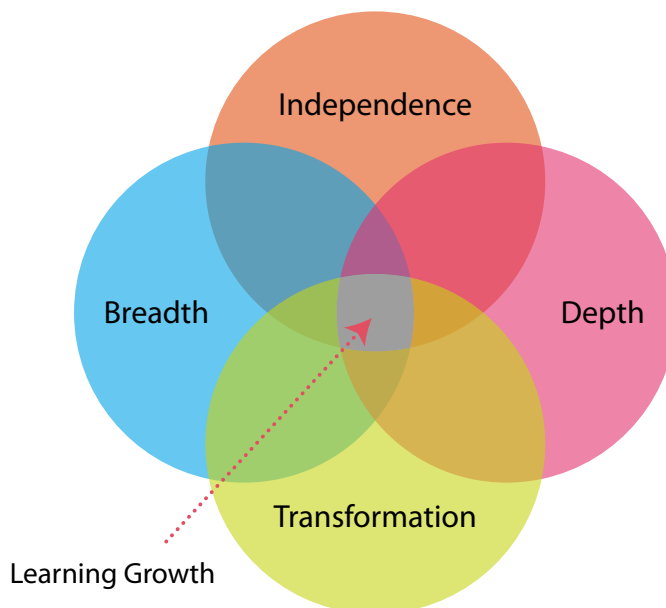
O’Sullivan, Edmund, Amish Morrell, and Mary Ann O’Connor, editors. Introduction. *Expanding the Boundaries of Transformative Learning: Essays on Theory and Praxis*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, pp. xv–xxi.

Pratt, Sarah Smitherman. “Complex Constructivism: Rethinking the Power Dynamics of ‘Understanding’.” *Journal of Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies*, vol. 6, no. 1, Spring/Summer 2008, pp. 113–132.

Stray, Janicke Heldal, and Emil Sætra. “Teaching for Democracy: Transformative Learning Theory Mediating Policy and Practice.” *Nordic Journal of Pedagogy and Critique*, vol. 3, no. 1, Dec. 2017, pp. 1–16, [doi:https://doi.org/10.23865/ntpk.v3.555](https://doi.org/10.23865/ntpk.v3.555).

## Interrelated Dimensions of Learning Growth

There are various ways through which one can observe learning growth. The following diagram presents four interrelated and overlapping dimensions of learning that represent learning as a recursive and expanding process. These dimensions allow educators and learners to plan for, observe, and reflect on learning growth over time and across meaningful contexts. (Click on each dimension for more information—below.)



Independence

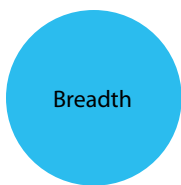
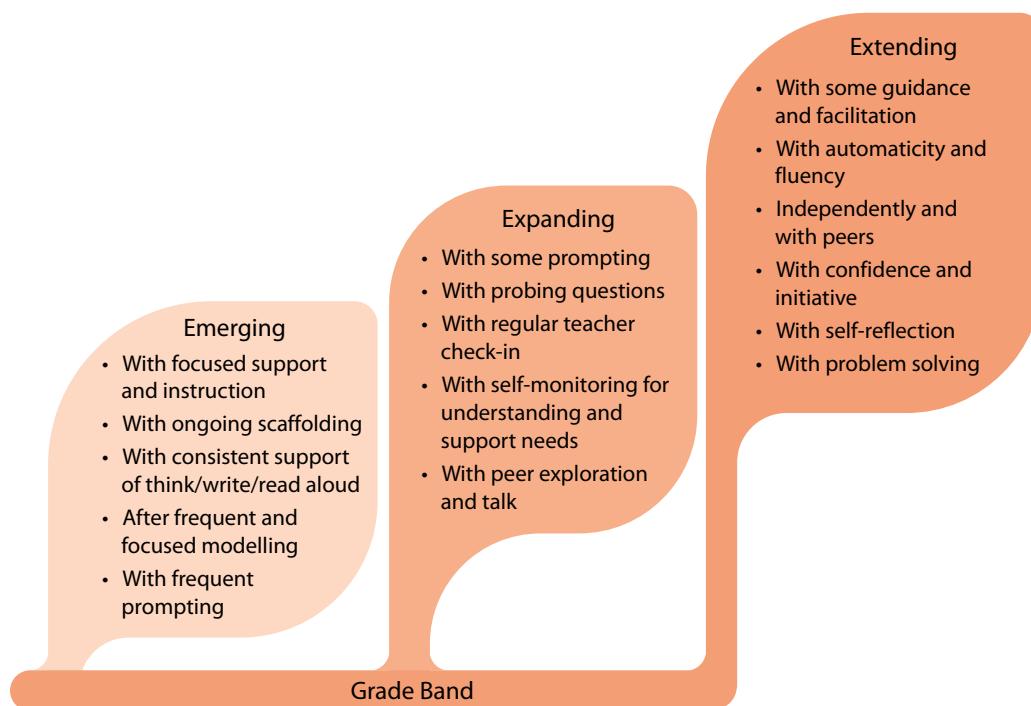
### Independence

Over the course of a grade and a grade band, teachers would observe learners showing evidence of practices, elements, and their sets of descriptors as they engage in rich learning experiences over time. Teachers will also notice and take note of the degrees of support that learners need over time and across contexts. Because learners progress at different paces and rates, teachers should expect that learners in their classrooms would require different degrees of support at different times and for different purposes. This process of reflecting on learning and scaffolding needs is responsive and ongoing.

When it comes time for teachers to report on student learning, teachers analyze their reflections and documentation, collection of bodies of evidence, and notes related to the degrees of support in order to see patterns and draw conclusions. Teachers will consider what their documentation and students' bodies of evidence tell them about reporting categories. For example, teachers will notice what the evidence tells them about students' comprehension, communication,

and critical thinking, and consider patterns related to degrees of support and independence to make professional judgments. Although the diverse students in our schools will show evidence of any stage of learning throughout a grade band (e.g., a learner in Kindergarten may show consistent evidence of self-regulation), for reporting purposes, one would expect learners to be emerging early in the grade band and extending by the end of the grade band. Bodies of triangulated evidence of learning (conversation, observations, products and processes) allow teachers to make valid and reliable judgments about learning.

### Observing and Communicating Learning Growth through Evidence of Increasing **Independence**

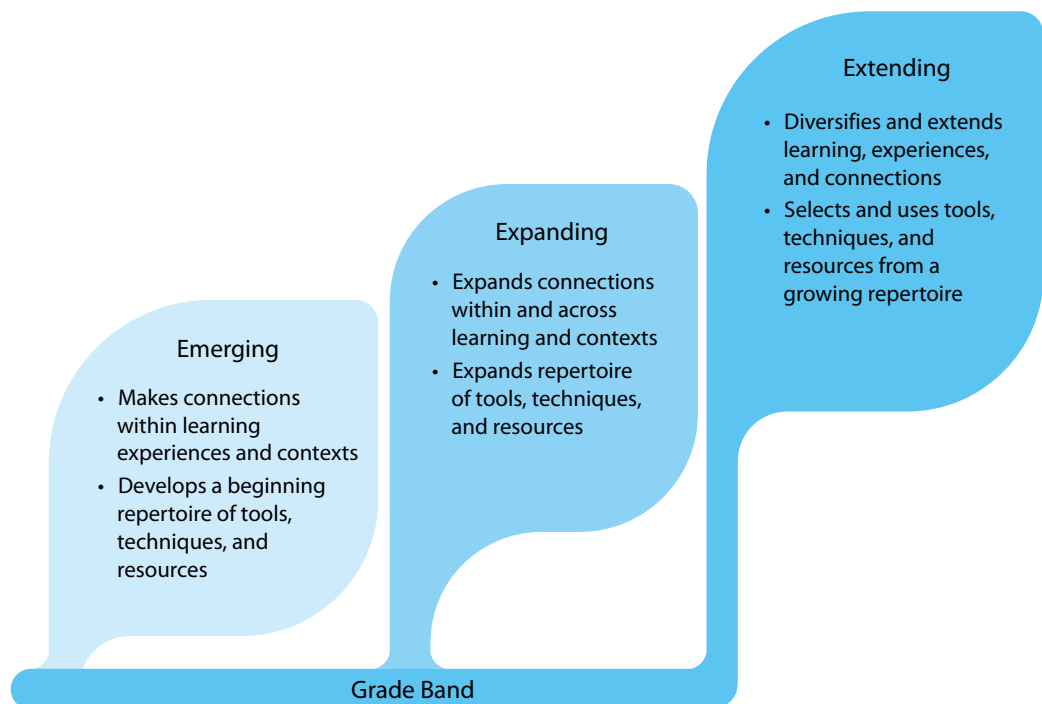


### **Breadth**

All learners need opportunities to meaningfully engage in practices within and across a range of rich learning experiences. These experiences allow learners to expand their repertoire of ways they enact the practices and the tools and techniques for doing so. Over the course of a grade and a grade band, teachers will notice how learners apply learning within and across learning contexts—increasing breadth. Because learners progress at different paces and rates, teachers should expect that learners in their classrooms would expand and apply their learning in different ways and to different degrees. This process of reflecting on breadth of learning is responsive and ongoing.

When it comes time for teachers to report on student learning, teachers will analyze their reflections, documentation, and collection of bodies of evidence to notice growth in breadth. Teachers will consider what their documentation and students' bodies of evidence tell them about reporting categories. For example, teachers will notice what the evidence tells them about students' comprehension, communication, and critical thinking, and consider patterns related to degrees of breadth to make professional judgments. Although the diverse students in our schools will show evidence of any stage of learning throughout a grade band (e.g., a learner in Kindergarten may show consistent evidence of application across contexts), for reporting purposes, one would expect students to be emerging early in the grade band and extending by the end of the grade band. Bodies of triangulated evidence of learning (conversation, observations, products and processes) allow teachers to make valid and reliable judgments about learning.

### Observing and Communicating Learning Growth through Evidence of Increasing **Breadth**

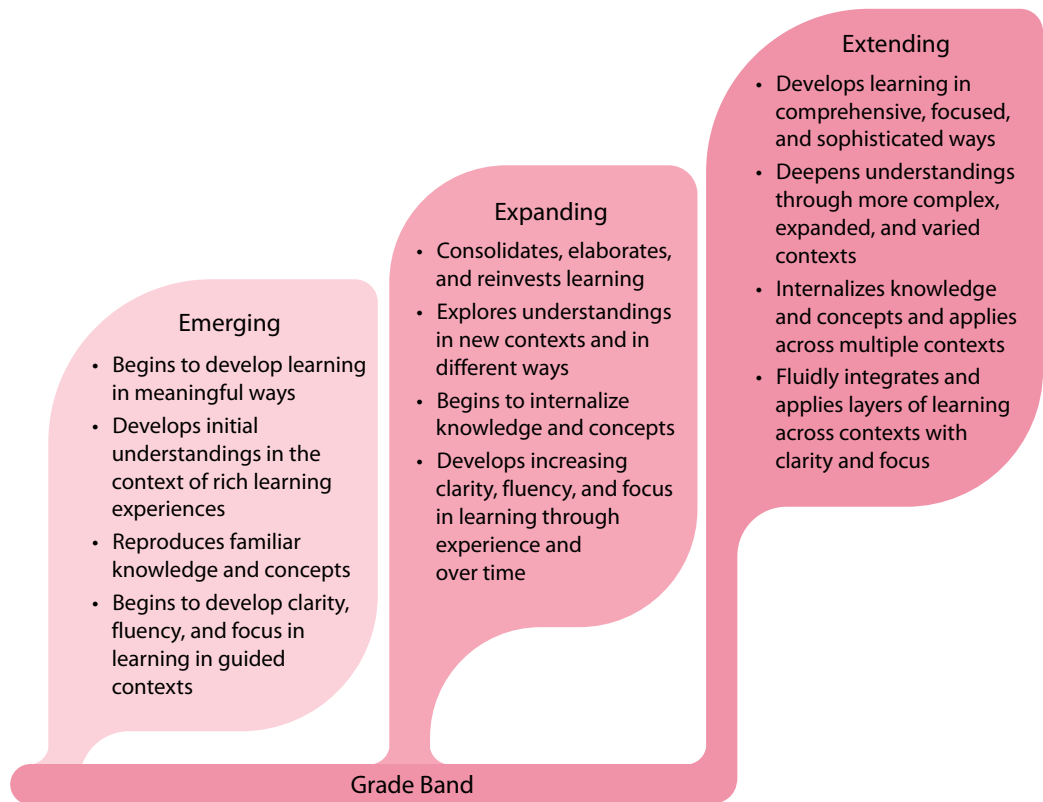


## Depth

All learners need opportunities to meaningfully engage in practices within and across a range of rich learning experiences. These experiences allow learners to deepen their practice and learning. Over the course of a grade and a grade band, teachers will notice how learners build deeper understandings, how they create and communicate in deeper ways, and how they engage in learning that is increasingly multi-faceted and complex. Learners' intensity and focus deepen as do the ways that learners integrate learning. Because learners progress at different paces and rates, teachers should expect that learners in their classrooms would deepen their learning in different ways and to different degrees. This process of reflecting on depth of learning is responsive and ongoing.

When it comes time for teachers to report on student learning, teachers will analyze their reflections, documentation, and collection of bodies of evidence to notice growth in depth. Teachers will consider what their documentation and students' bodies of evidence tell them about reporting categories. For example, teachers will notice what the evidence tells them about students' comprehension, communication, and critical thinking, and consider patterns related to degrees of depth to make professional judgments. Although the diverse students in our schools will show evidence of any stage of learning throughout a grade band (e.g., a learner in Kindergarten may show consistent evidence of deeper understandings) for reporting purposes, one would expect students to be emerging early in the grade band and extending by the end of the grade band. Bodies of triangulated evidence of learning (conversation, observations, products and processes) allow teachers to make valid and reliable judgments about learning.

## Observing and Communicating Learning Growth through Evidence of Increasing **Depth**



Transformation

### Transformation

All learners need opportunities to meaningfully engage in practices within and across a range of rich learning experiences. These experiences allow learners to transform their learning and themselves as learners:

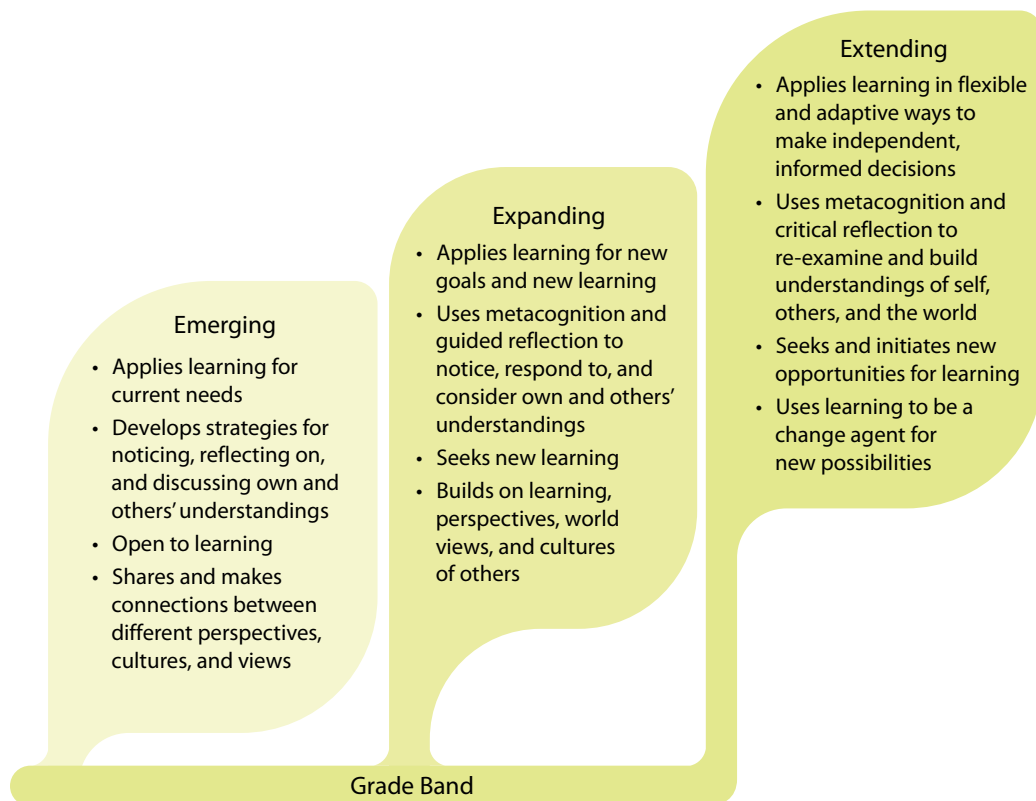
Transformative learning involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans . . . ; our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy. (O’Sullivan et al. xvii)

Over the course of a grade and a grade band, teachers will notice growth in learners’ ability to critically reflect on and discuss learning, their increasing sense of empowerment and agency, and their increasing initiative, leadership, flexibility, and adaptability. Learners will show change in their capacities to

see and know the world in different ways and from different perspectives. Because learners progress at different paces and rates, teachers should expect that learners in their classrooms would transform their learning in different ways and to different degrees. This process of reflecting on transformation of learning is responsive and ongoing.

When it comes time for teachers to report on student learning, teachers will analyze their reflections, documentation, and collection of bodies of evidence to notice transformation. Teachers will consider what their documentation and students' bodies of evidence tell them about reporting categories. For example, teachers will notice what the evidence tells them about students' comprehension, communication, and critical thinking, and consider patterns related to degrees of transformation to make professional judgments. Although the diverse students in our schools will show evidence of any stage of learning throughout a grade band (e.g., a learner in Kindergarten may show consistent evidence of critical reflection), for reporting purposes, one would expect students to be emerging early in the grade band and extending by the end of the grade band. Bodies of triangulated evidence of learning (conversation, observations, products and processes) allow teachers to make valid and reliable judgments about learning.

### Observing and Communicating Learning Growth through Evidence of Increasing **Transformation**





## Grade Band Descriptors

Sets of grade band descriptors support teachers in reflecting on student learning and progress by describing how students enact the four ELA practices and elements. The descriptors should always be seen in the context of the practices, and their characterizing elements, as these provide descriptions of the ways that learners enact the practices in rich learning experiences. The descriptors suggest that these enactments are a process that occurs over the course of the grade band. The ways that learners enact the practices should be continuously developed, elaborated, and transformed across novel and variant contexts (rich learning experiences) so that learning across grade bands becomes more sophisticated, more complex, deeper, and broader with time and new experiences and applications. Descriptors help teachers and learners describe learning and collect evidence of learning. Descriptors help teachers build profiles of practice at the end of a grade band as well as at all grade levels. Descriptors also help teachers to focus instruction and learning within rich learning contexts.

It is important to note:

Learners will show evidence of multiple descriptors at one time as they enact practices in meaningful, rich learning experiences. Descriptors are not intended to be fragmented and isolated; doing so would result in teachers and learners losing sight of the practices.

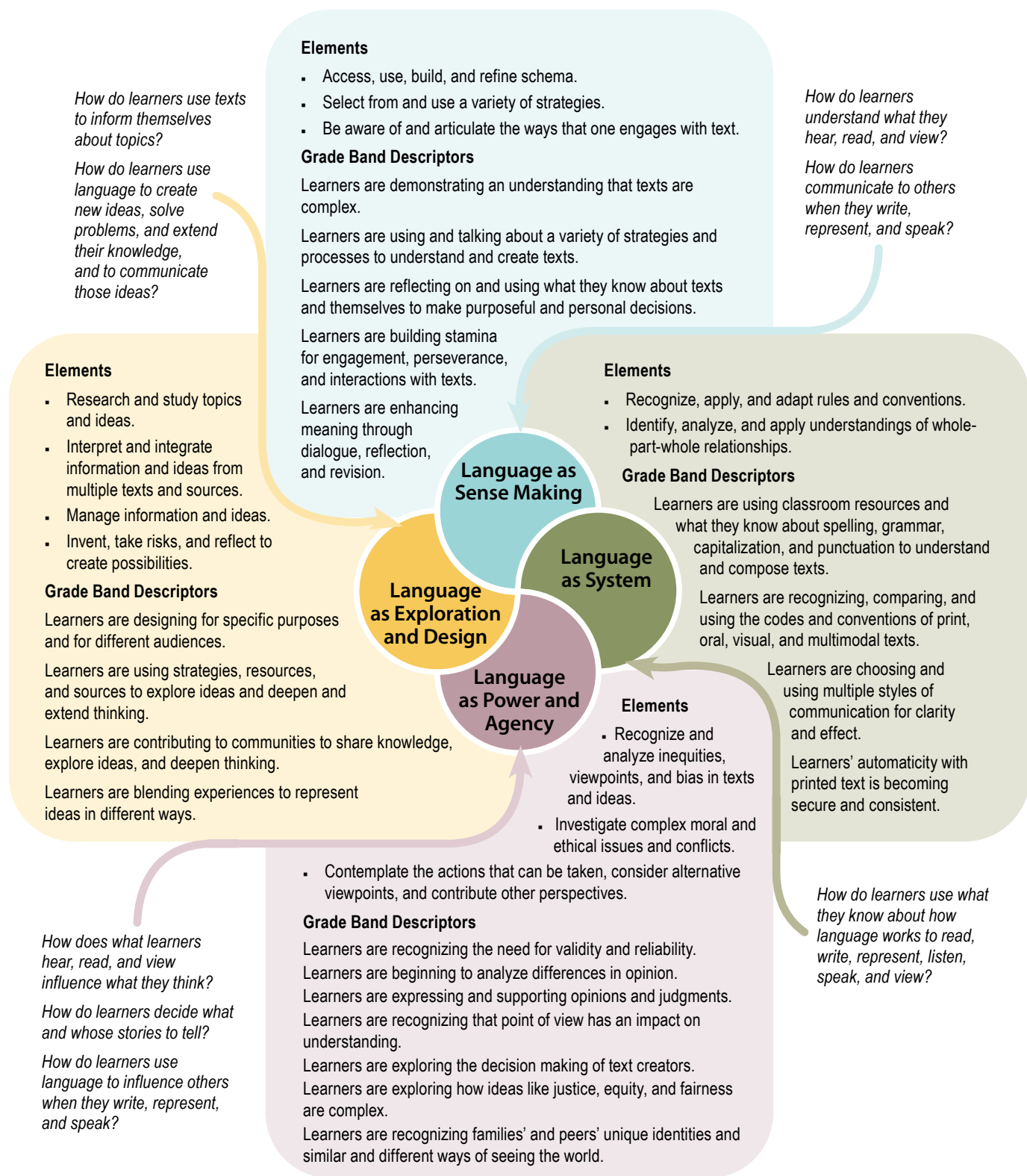
The following graphics provide bird's-eye views of the ELA practices, elements, and grade band descriptors for Kindergarten to Grade 2, Grades 3 to 5, and Grades 6 to 8. The guiding questions help to design rich learning experiences and to observe students enacting the four ELA practices.

Senior Years educators can expect more specific consultations and more focused development in the near future, and are encouraged to continue phasing in this *Kindergarten to Grade 12 English Language Arts Curriculum Framework* in their planning and practice.

# Enacting the Four ELA Practices in the K to 2 Grade Band



# Enacting the Four ELA Practices in the 3 to 5 Grade Band



# Enacting the Four ELA Practices in the 6 to 8 Grade Band

