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

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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.

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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

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 selfregulation), 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

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

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**



Grade Band

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**



Extending

- Applies learning in flexible and adaptive ways to make independent, informed decisions
- Uses metacognition and critical reflection to re-examine and build understandings of self, others, and the world
- Seeks and initiates new opportunities for learning
- Uses learning to be a change agent for new possibilities

Grade Band

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

Elements

How do learners use texts to inform themselves

about topics?

How do learners use

language to create

new ideas, solve problems, and extend

their knowledge, and to communicate

Research and study topics

information and ideas from

multiple texts and sources.

Manage information and ideas.

Invent, take risks, and reflect to

Learners are making design choices for

explore ideas and deepen thinking.

deepen and extend thinking.

Learners are actively partaking in communities to

Learners are using different sources to explore ideas and to

Learners are imagining and exploring different ways to represent

Interpret and integrate

create possibilities.

Grade Band Descriptors

different purposes.

thinking and ideas.

those ideas?

Elements

and ideas.

- Access, use, build, and refine schema.
- Select from and use a variety of strategies.
- Be aware of and articulate the ways that one engages with text.

Grade Band Descriptors

Learners are responding to text in different ways to build and share understanding.

Learners are using what they know about texts and themselves to reflect, set goals, and make decisions.

Learners are using and talking about familiar strategies to understand and create new texts.

Learners are using what they know about texts to understand and create new texts.

Learners are making decisions about how to communicate ideas.

Language as Sense Making

Language Elements Agency

understand what they hear, read, and view? How do learners

How do learners

communicate to others when they write. represent, and speak?

Elements

- Recognize, apply, and adapt rules and conventions.
- Identify, analyze, and apply understandings of wholepart-whole relationships.

Grade Band Descriptors

Learners are demonstrating an understanding that legibility enhances communication.

Learners are recognizing that English has conventional spellings.

Learners are experimenting with, using, and adjusting conventions of familiar print, oral, and visual texts to enhance communication.

> Learners are developing automaticity with printed text.

> > How do learners use what

they know about how language works to read,

write, represent, listen,

speak, and view?

 Recognize and analyze inequities, viewpoints, and bias in texts and ideas. Investigate complex moral and

ethical issues and conflicts. - Contemplate the actions that can be taken, consider alternative

viewpoints, and contribute other perspectives.

Grade Band Descriptors

Learners are recognizing that different experiences, opinions, and ideas have an impact on understanding.

Learners are recognizing that texts have different audiences, purposes, agendas, and points of view.

Learners are expressing opinions and judgments.

Learners are understanding the role of the text creator.

Learners are using language appropriately to meet needs and to share their identities.

Learners are understanding that they can resist, change, or accept ideas, points of view, and opinions.

influence what they think?

How do learners decide what and whose stories to tell?

How do learners use language to influence others when they write, represent, and speak?

How does what learners hear, read, and view

Language

as System

Language as Exploration and Design

as Power and

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

Elements

- Access, use, build, and refine schema.
- Select from and use a variety of strategies.
- Be aware of and articulate the ways that one engages with text.

Grade Band Descriptors

Learners are demonstrating an understanding that texts are complex.

Learners are using and talking about a variety of strategies and processes to understand and create texts.

Learners are reflecting on and using what they know about texts and themselves to make purposeful and personal decisions.

Learners are building stamina for engagement, perseverance, and interactions with texts.

Learners are enhancing meaning through dialogue, reflection, and revision.

Language as Sense Making

Language as Exploration and Design

> Language as Power and Agency

Contemplate the actions that can be taken, consider alternative

viewpoints, and contribute other perspectives.

Learners are recognizing the need for validity and reliability.

Learners are recognizing that point of view has an impact on

Learners are expressing and supporting opinions and judgments.

Learners are beginning to analyze differences in opinion.

Grade Band Descriptors

understanding.

How do learners understand what they hear, read, and view?

How do learners communicate to others when they write, represent, and speak?

Elements

Language

as System

and ideas.

Elements

Recognize and

analyze inequities,

viewpoints, and bias in texts

Investigate complex moral and ethical issues and conflicts.

- Recognize, apply, and adapt rules and conventions.
- Identify, analyze, and apply understandings of wholepart-whole relationships.

Grade Band Descriptors

Learners are using classroom resources and what they know about spelling, grammar,

capitalization, and punctuation to understand and compose texts.

Learners are recognizing, comparing, and using the codes and conventions of print, oral, visual, and multimodal texts.

Learners are choosing and using multiple styles of communication for clarity and effect.

Learners' automaticity with printed text is becoming secure and consistent.

How do learners use what they know about how language works to read, write, represent, listen, speak, and view?

How do learners use texts to inform themselves about topics?

How do learners use language to create new ideas, solve problems, and extend their knowledge, and to communicate those ideas?

Elements

- Research and study topics and ideas.
- Interpret and integrate information and ideas from multiple texts and sources.
- Manage information and ideas.
- Invent, take risks, and reflect to create possibilities.

Grade Band Descriptors

Learners are designing for specific purposes and for different audiences.

Learners are using strategies, resources, and sources to explore ideas and deepen and extend thinking.

Learners are contributing to communities to share knowledge, explore ideas, and deepen thinking.

Learners are blending experiences to represent ideas in different ways.

How does what learners hear, read, and view influence what they think?

How do learners decide what and whose stories to tell?

How do learners use language to influence others when they write, represent, and speak?

Learners are exploring the decision making of text creators. Learners are exploring how ideas like justice, equity, and fairness are complex.

Learners are recognizing families' and peers' unique identities and similar and different ways of seeing the world.

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

Elements

- Access, use, build, and refine schema.
- Select from and use a variety of strategies.
- Be aware of and articulate the ways that one engages with text.

Grade Band Descriptors

Learners are monitoring, reflecting on, and discussing processes for making sense of and creating texts.

Learners are strategically selecting and applying strategies and processes for making sense of and creating different types of text for different purposes and audiences.

Learners are using a variety of thinking processes (e.g., computational, imaginative, creative, interpretive, critical) to make sense of and respond to increasingly

varied and complex texts.

Learners are using and integrating background knowledge and sources of information purposefully to make sense of increasingly varied and complex text. Language as Sense Making How do learners understand what they hear, read, and view?

How do learners communicate to others when they write, represent, and speak?

Elements

Language

as System

and ideas.

Elements

Recognize and

analyze inequities,

viewpoints, and bias in texts

Investigate complex moral and

ethical issues and conflicts.

- Recognize, apply, and adapt rules and conventions.
- Identify, analyze, and apply understandings of whole-part-whole relationships.

Grade Band Descriptors

Learners are more consistently and strategically applying knowledge of and using various resources for spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization.

> Learners are using their understanding of a range of text structures and features to understand and communicate clearly and effectively.

> Learners are assessing and applying their understanding of how the English language works to understand more challenging and

unfamiliar texts, and for clarity, precision, and accuracy in own creations.

Learners are examining, considering, and using knowledge of conventions of a growing range of forms and genres.

> How do learners use what they know about how language works to read, write, represent, listen, speak, and view?

How do learners use texts to inform themselves about topics?

How do learners use language to create new ideas, solve problems, and extend their knowledge, and to communicate those ideas?

Elements

- Research and study topics and ideas.
- Interpret and integrate information and ideas from multiple texts and sources.
- Manage information and ideas.
- Invent, take risks, and reflect to create possibilities.

Grade Band Descriptors

Learners are participating in, extending, and discussing creative processes for designing. Learners are selecting, assessing, and organizing a variety of sources and information for different purposes.

Learners are reconstructing, manipulating, and remixing existing texts or sets of text to create new ideas, forms, purposes, and messages.

Learners are tapping into and combining experiences with ideas, images, and sounds from various sources to create something new.

- Contemplate the actions that can be taken, consider alternative viewpoints, and contribute other perspectives.

Grade Band Descriptors

Learners are recognizing that one's identities are influenced by various factors and change over time and contexts.

Learners are understanding that texts represent and promote particular beliefs, values, and ideas.

Learners are exploring multiple perspectives, points of view, and interpretations.

Learners are exploring their own voices to transform their identities, tell their personal narratives, and critically view their own and others' texts. Learners are collaborating to investigate challenging social issues, moral dilemmas, and possibilities for social justice.

How does what learners hear, read, and view influence what they think?

How do learners decide what and whose stories to tell?

How do learners use language to influence others when they write, represent, and speak?

Language as Exploration and Design

Language as Power and Agency