

AMPLIFY LITERACY LEARNING WITH STUDENT VOICE

'When students choose an area of interest and work on it together, in fact, they will cover the curriculum skills that are required much more rapidly and much more deeply. They will actually own the learning because they will see it has some relevance.'

Mary Jean Gallagher, Education Expert

OVERVIEW

This professional practice note for school leaders and teachers provides advice and practical examples to engage and empower their students while developing their literacy skills.

EMPOWERED LITERATE STUDENTS

Students who are empowered - through voice, agency and leadership - demonstrate more active participation and deeper engagement in the classroom, school and community.

The acquisition and ongoing development of literacy skills enables students to build their confidence and guide their own learning. The independent learning and problem-solving skills of empowered students are lifelong attributes.

Teachers can engage their students in intentional learning activities guided by Amplify practices to extend general literacy skills, develop metalinguistic awareness and build student proficiency in multimodal expressions at all stages of the Victorian Curriculum F-10.

Teachers can develop the voice, agency and leadership of students through authentic learning experiences. These include opportunities for students to collaborate in their learning, participate in regular feedback practice, and co-design learning experiences. At all stages of the Victorian Curriculum F-10 there is scope for teaching and learning activities to be designed with students to enhance both their discipline specific and general literacy competencies.

For more information about structures, processes and practices that empower students to engage in their own learning, see: [Amplify: Student voice practice guide](#)

LITERACY IN PRACTICE

'Literacy is a social practice... becoming literate is always shaped by the interactions we have with the world and the interactions we have with texts.'

Professor Debra Myhill, Pro-Vice Chancellor and Executive Dean, Director of the Centre for Research in Writing, Exeter University

Literacy skills are a fundamental part of the Victorian Curriculum F-10 across all learning areas, and are demonstrated when students successfully engage in, for example:

- purposeful listening
- the pragmatics of language
- expressive and receptive language skills
- multimodal communication
- metalinguistic awareness.

We know that literacy skills are fundamental to accessing curriculum, building critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and enhancing communication skills. Empowering teaching and learning of literacy also lifts student ability to self-direct learning and the development of self-regulation. These skills can all be fostered through the engagement of:

Voice

- ✓ students ask questions and share ideas and opinions
- ✓ students negotiate learning goals and assessment
- ✓ students share their ideas and opinions
- ✓ teachers actively seek feedback from students

Agency

- ✓ students take responsibility for their learning
- ✓ students can track and measure their own learning growth
- ✓ students display capabilities, confidence and willingness to contribute ideas about what and how they will learn
- ✓ teachers co-design learning plans with students
- ✓ teachers model and develop students' critical, creative and higher order thinking skills
- ✓ teachers provide opportunities for students to share their learning, teach, question and challenge each other
- ✓ teacher develops team-building skills which enable students to collaborate

Leadership

- ✓ students set high expectations for themselves
- ✓ students have a growth mindset and build their knowledge and skills through effort
- ✓ students represent their school and their peers through active participation in a student leadership team
- ✓ teachers support students to engage with the school community in different forums
- ✓ teachers support students to self-evaluate
- ✓ teachers develop students' skills and confidence to seek and sustain partnerships for learning.

EXAMPLES OF PRACTICE

The following example describes an empowering teaching and learning experience that engaged students in integrated literacy learning across the curriculum. The example demonstrates how student voice, agency and leadership can activate learning and engagement in contextually relevant literacy skills areas.

1. COLLABORATION, COMMUNICATION AND CREATIVITY:

CANTERBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL'S L6P RADIO STATION

'One of the things that we've developed in our teachers is the skill to be able to follow the students' interests but then to bring the curriculum into everything.'

David Wells, Principal, Canterbury Primary School

To watch the video, see: [L6P radio at Canterbury Primary](#)

Amplifying literacy learning across the curriculum for a class of year 6 students began with one teacher's self-reflection.

'Our leadership team kept asking the question – whether or not students at this school are just compliant or are they truly engaged? And I thought, what could I change to truly engage them? Then I started questioning, is my teaching truly student-centered?'

Carly Pluck, Year 6 teacher, Canterbury Primary

With this renewed focus, Carly Pluck embarked on an innovative project with her students, where they created a radio program and invited celebrities to be interviewed, using social media to reflect on the process. Students would learn from each other as they worked in small groups and repeatedly applied their developing literacy skills to the project.

The radio station project engaged students in multiple sub-strands of the Year 6 literacy curriculum with, for example:

- purposeful development of assessment and project with students making choices and considering options (decision making, collaboration)
- development of job application and application of that content to a 'real' interview (creating text, developing ideas, language for interaction, writing for purpose)
- scripting radio interviews and adjusting in-context (language for interaction, creating texts, texts in context, expressing and developing ideas, writing for purpose)
- engaging guests for the radio programs and using social media to engage a broader audience (language for interaction, texts in context, writing for purpose).

This project was underpinned by what Assistant Principal Matt Forrest describes as 'a major shift' in the school's approach to curriculum planning, involving students in planning days, collaborating with teachers.

'The key conversation was please don't work harder, please work differently'

Matt Forrest, Assistant Principal, Canterbury Primary

Incorporating several High Impact Teaching Strategies, students were involved in setting goals for the project and assessment of their learning. They reflected on their skills and planning and tracked their learning and growth. Students developed a clear understanding of their learning intentions.

'On the first planning day, we organised it all together - if we wanted to be self-assessed, or peer-assessed or assessed by Miss Pluck – and that really helped us 'cause we knew what was happening in terms of the outcome.'

Year 6 student, Canterbury Primary

The focus on rich and authentic learning experiences (ie, students were encouraged to apply for a mock job at a radio station, following a radio producer expert class visit) also changed the learning partnerships. While relationships were forged with people outside the classroom, the dynamic transformed within the classroom making learning authentic. Students learned how to use questioning to open up opportunities to discuss, express their understanding and to learn from others.

Students collaborated with their teacher, built trust and worked as a team. Student voice was embedded throughout the learning design of the project.

'If we didn't have such a choice, we wouldn't have had such an amazing year'

Year 6 student, Canterbury Primary

'I won't ever plan something in isolation as a teacher again. I've seen firsthand how important it is to put the student's ideas and wants first.'

Carly Pluck, Year 6 Teacher, Canterbury Primary School

High Impact Teaching Strategies illustrated:

- [HITS 5 Collaborative learning](#)
- [HITS 1 Setting goals](#)
- [HITS 7 Questioning](#)
- [HITS 8 Feedback](#)

TRY IT IN YOUR CLASSROOM

Some simple ways to combine Amplify practices with literacy learning:

- Self-reflection: 'am I ready to learn from my students?'
- Create student feedback opportunities, for example: pulse-checks, periodical student surveys
- Discuss assessment with students: how can they demonstrate their own learning?
- Design peer feedback rubrics with students
- Then/Now: students set own literacy learning goals for a set period of time and review at the end of that period
- Collaborate with students to design small learning projects.

MORE TOOLS AND RESOURCES

- [Literacy teaching toolkit](#)
- [Expert literacy videos](#)
- [Victorian Teaching and Learning Model](#)
- [Student Voice Hub \(Victorian Student Representative Council\)](#)
- [High Impact Teaching Strategies](#)
- [Feedback and reporting](#)
- [Peer observation](#)

CONTACT US

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