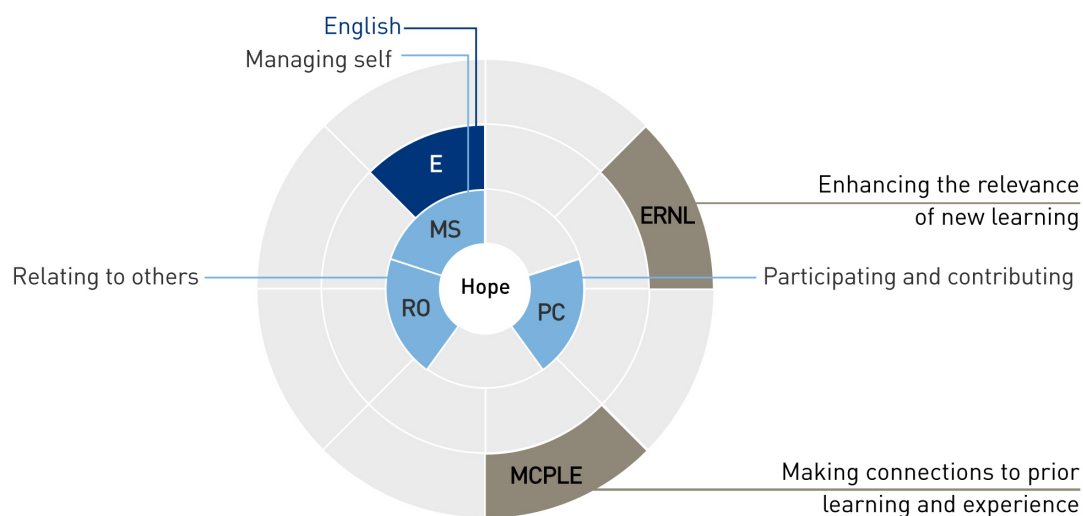


Hope gains credit

Links to the curriculum



Student background

Name	Hope	Hope has considerable health and learning needs. Her mother died when she was four years old and she spent the next 13 years with the Open Home Foundation. This year she is flatting with other girls in similar situations.
Age	18	
Year	13	
School	Secondary	

Hope has had many setbacks in her life but wants to achieve. She lacks confidence, is a slow reader, and struggles with writing. At the beginning of the year she had a total of five National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) level 1 credits in literacy and the rest were supported units.

In term 1, I was allocated an NCEA level 2 English class of 15 students selected by the head of department for English. All the students had only achieved a small number of NCEA level 1 credits and had learning difficulties or found English challenging. Their progress had suffered from being poor self-starters and from a lack of confidence in their own abilities. Hope asked to transfer into this class.

Though there were three other year 13 students in the class as well as Hope, most of the students were year 12. Hope did not know the other students so it was a brave move on her part. I also knew it would be a real challenge to try and get her to the required level. After a consultation interview, Hope and I agreed she would focus mainly on NCEA level 1 tasks and set a goal to complete her literacy requirements by the end of the year.

Hope has been under the wing of the Learning Centre since coming to our school last year and we have a good working relationship. We have learning progress discussions on a regular basis.

While students in the class are moving through a range of units at either NCEA level 1 or 2, according to abilities, each student is on an agreed individual programme. Progress depends on matching skills, interest, and motivation to units.

One string of learning stories

This string of learning stories (spanning terms 1 to 3, 2008) shows how Hope achieves some success in literacy in her final year at secondary school. Using her own personal experiences as her resource bank, she has been able to focus on the tasks, participate more in class, and develop relationships with other students.

Hope gains credit

Student	Hope	Date	Terms 1 to 3, 2008
		Observer	Joan (team leader)

- 20 February** Hope has started enthusiastically with her writing log but I can see it is going to be a real challenge for her to get to the required NCEA level. Although there is a structured writing template with clear steps for the task, she is a minimalist when it comes to writing!
- This task continues throughout the year, and for Hope, at NCEA level 1, this involves six entries of different kinds of texts. It also involves interaction with others. She tends to sit by herself and is reluctant to engage in discussion with classmates.
- 10 March** We have been reading our novel in class – I have selected the novel, “The Whole of the Moon” that I believe all the class can relate to. There are two units we will do that relate to this text: static image and discussion. I note that, like most of the others, Hope can get the meaning from the text more readily when she is read to. We do some starter exercises in preparation for discussion.
- 7 April** This is our first assessment: “paired discussion”. As Hope finds it difficult to take risks with another student, the discussion does not go well. I soon realise that we need to use scaffolded activities with her to help promote greater confidence in oral interactions with other classmates, as they make their responses to the novel. There will be other assessment opportunities.
- 23 May** We have progressed to static images on the novel’s theme. Hope is showing determination and is keen to get this visual interpretation done. While the static image draft plan gets completed, she becomes very frustrated with the process. I suggest we put it on “pause” and come back to it later.
- 20 June** Today, we worked on the group discussion. We used articles on topics that fitted in with the theme of our novel but were more general in nature. I noted that Hope seemed to be more animated in the discussion preparation and was contributing actively. It was a topic she knew well. Her mother had died from cancer and she had lots to say about how this can affect families. Her active involvement in the discussion showed me, with the right topic, Hope could get there. She passed her group discussion first time round and was actively drawing out others’ opinions with confidence. I saw a different Hope. Go Hope!
- In spite of negative feelings about the demands of the work, Hope does continue reading and maintains her reading log.

17 July



Static image work continues. After threatening to throw her work out, Hope is persevering and beginning to work on her commentary. She seems to have a more positive attitude this term and we need to build on that.

The new topic is speeches. The topic lends itself to her experience with her mother dying. I broach it carefully and there is a flicker of interest. Keep trying!! Lots of discussion about how it could fit but she is not sure. After lots of coaxing and general discussion, Hope thinks she could use this focus for her speech. We work out a plan and suddenly the ideas start to flow.

11 September

Today was our senior exam slot. Although the class has no external exams, I ran a two-hour workshop in the classroom so that students would have the opportunity to catch up on their work. Students were mainly working on their speeches and reading logs. Hope is the only student who has not fully completed her discussion; she still has to complete the paired section. When we were having our snack break, I commented that it was a pity she had not got it done and one of the other students who is more outgoing said, "I'll be your partner, Hope, if you want to finish it?" Hope grabbed the opportunity and they went off to prepare. Needless to say they did a great job and Hope got her first two literacy credits of the year. It was a great celebration for us all. The class knew how much it meant and the other students were instrumental in creating a positive atmosphere for Hope to give it a go. I heaped praise on everyone: a team effort.

Now we just have to work on the speech. Hope is also doing learning support classes through the Learning Centre. I talk to her teacher about giving her time to work on the preparation in class. Her teacher encourages one of the students to coach her by offering to hear her speech and give her pointers on presentation.

22 September

Hope is really stressed today. She tells me she has been practising all weekend. She is prophesying doom and gloom. "I don't think I can do this!"

24 September



Today is the day. For the benefit of all students we swap rooms with the learning support class so we have privacy. There are no students walking past the window with the opportunity to look in.

With the teacher aide armed with the video camera, our anxious band of students as audience, and some fearful participants, we complete the presentations. Hope's speech about the effect of her mother's death on her life had us all gobsmacked and I saw the teacher aide turn and wipe away a tear with one hand while trying to keep the camera steady. Hope was so proud of what she had done. She had brought along her mother's handcrafts, which were valued mementoes, to show us. A great end to the term!!

13 October

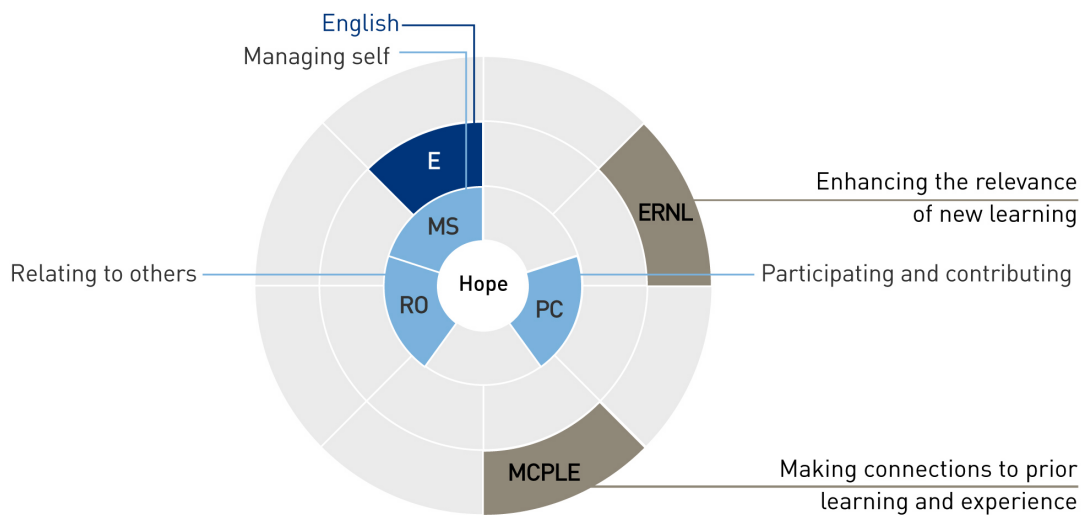
Today, Hope has decided that she will give the reading logs another go. Her recent achievements have given her new enthusiasm and confidence. I notice that she is chatting to the other girls in the class, sharing observations, and discussing what she is doing. Her writing is her barrier and, after our consultation today, we decide that once she has done her draft of each entry she can dictate her work to be typed. It suddenly seems possible.

Analysis – what learning is happening here?

Hope’s progress to achieve literacy credits has been a learning journey for us all. As her teacher, I have learned to understand her strengths, her weaknesses, and her fear of more failure, and have learned how to encourage and support her efforts using her interests. Hope has learned to trust me and to trust herself, to finally relax with the other students, and to be prepared to accept peer coaching from someone who had been on a similar journey.

Hope has learned to take risks, to participate actively, and to make new friends: skills that have helped her in this course but also ones she can use in life.

Reflection – what these stories exemplify



Key competencies

This string of learning stories shows Hope gaining confidence in her own ability and working towards achieving NCEA level 1 English (managing self). Using her own experiences as a positive motivation, she has been able to engage more successfully in the learning process. The learning support class has been a further tool to support her progress, and working with the teacher has ensured support and consistency. Hope has been able to make positive steps towards achieving her NCEA level 1 credits in literacy. Once she gained some success she began to contribute to class discussion. Support from peers within the English class and her learning support class gave her further confidence and improved her relationships with other students (relating to others).

How might these stories strengthen Hope’s identity as a learner?

Hope has been able to engage in learning as her confidence has grown and she has gained success. She is choosing to accept support out of the English classroom as well as within (agency).

This confidence has extended into the learning support class and she has accepted peer support to have peer training (breadth). While it took Hope some time to gain confidence, she has made significant progress over the year and will complete her literacy requirements for NCEA level 1 English. As Hope's learning has advanced, her increased positive interaction with others, and the extension of these into the learning support class, has also brought progress in several other learning areas (depth).

For more information on the four dimensions of agency, breadth, continuity, and depth (ABCDs), refer to *Narrative assessment: a guide for teachers*.

Learning areas

NCEA Level 1 English

This string of learning stories shows Hope gaining confidence in her English ability through using her own experiences and interests in the discussion and static image units, which has helped her to complete tasks successfully. As a year 13 student, Hope felt the goal posts were a long way off. By using her personal difficulties and challenges, she has been able to participate and be successful. The new-found confidence and success has resulted in better relationships with other students and more engagement in learning, as well as being prepared to be peer coached.

Effective pedagogy

What does this tell us about teaching and learning in this setting?

The key to Hope's achievement, motivation, and improved relationships with others has been her success at gaining NCEA credits through using her life experiences (making connections to prior learning and experience). This has had a significant effect on her self-esteem. She is now observed actively engaged with other students rather than isolating herself. She is also prepared to offer advice to other students who are still working on their speeches. Asking her to help others, further encourages her new-found confidence (enhance the relevance of new learning).

Reflective question for the reader

"How do you meet the challenge of designing a relevant and effective model of learning that empowers senior students who have had frustrations achieving previously?"

Useful resources

Hogue, A. (1996). *First steps in academic writing*. White Plains, N.Y: Longman Pub Group.

Ministry of Education. (2004). *Effective literacy strategies in years 9 to 13: A guide for teachers*. Wellington: Learning Media.

Ministry of Education. (2007). *Literacy learning progressions: meeting the reading and writing demands of the curriculum: a professional tool for teachers: draft for consultation*. Wellington: Learning Media.

Ministry of Education. (2008). *The English Language Learning Progressions: a resource for mainstream and ESOL teachers*. Wellington: Learning Media.

Strong, J. & Richardson, K. (2004). *Active writing: Understand, practise, succeed: Teachers Resource book*. London: Harper Collins.

Whitehead, D. (1998). *Catch them thinking and writing*. Cheltenham, Vic., Australia: Hawker Brownlow Education.