

Media Release

The Hon Natalie Hutchins MP
Minister for Education
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VICTORIAN KIDS BENEFIT FROM EARLY LITERACY ASSESSMENTS

The Andrews Labor Government is delivering the best start for kids across the state, with a new initiative to assess early literacy skills like phonics for Grade 1 students, through enhanced one-on-one assessments with teachers.

Almost 55,000 students in Victorian government schools have been assessed through the English Online Interview for Grade 1 students last week alone, with strong positive feedback from students, families and teachers.

The English Online Interview is an important resource for teachers, providing them with a point-in-time overview of student achievement, supporting student learning and informing teaching practices and curriculum planning.

From 2023, every Grade 1 Victorian government school student will have their early literacy skills, including phonics, assessed each year through the English Online Interviews in Term 1.

Backed by an investment of \$11.3 million, the new initiative further supports Grade 1 government school students in learning to read and communicate effectively. As in previous years, all Prep students are also assessed.

Schools and teachers have been provided with support like funded time release for teachers to learn to implement the new assessment, analyse results and design appropriate responses.

Updates have also been made to the Literacy Teaching Toolkit to provide teachers with additional detailed guidance on the teaching of phonics and phonological awareness ready for Term 1, 2023.

In Victoria, the teaching of phonics is a central component of learning the English language and is an explicit part of the curriculum.

Phonics is one of the key building blocks in learning how to read and teaching literacy must include systematic phonics instruction, alongside supporting students' literal, inferential and evaluative comprehension within rich and meaningful literacy contexts.

The statewide expansion of the early literacy assessments follows a successful pilot in 23 Victorian government primary schools in 2022.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Education Natalie Hutchins

"The early literacy skills of Victorian students are among the strongest in Australia – and the explicit teaching of phonics is an essential part of the Victorian Curriculum, developing strong reading skills in kids across the state."

"We're empowering teachers with the professional learning, development and enhanced resources they need to support their students learning, ensuring every Victorian kid has the best start."

Quotes attributable to Melbourne Graduate School of Education Language and Literacy Education lecturer Dr. Helen Cozmescu

"This assessment provides valuable information that can help teachers plan sequential, explicit, and systematic instruction to support the literacy learning of all students, including those who may require extra support to develop their phonological awareness and phonics skills."

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