

# **CARS & STARS Online and the National Literacy Learning Progression**

**Hawker Brownlow**

D I G I T A L

CARS & STARS Online is a digital reading comprehension program based around the repeated application of twelve core reading strategies to make students better readers who can analyse and interpret any text at a high level of understanding. The strategies that underpin the program represent distilled elements of word and reading comprehension that carry across all year levels. They are introduced in basic forms in Foundation Year and expanded upon throughout each level of the program.

The multi-level program is designed to be entirely paper-free, with all student answers entered directly into the software, and results being instantly recorded and corrected automatically, requiring no teacher marking. Students work at the level of their understanding, rather than year level.

In large part this is possible because CARS & STARS Online is not tied directly to any one, single curriculum – rather it’s designed to be able to complement any existing literacy program or English subject plan, as it focuses directly on reading skills and growing comprehension ability, regardless of student’s actual year level. Students are engaged at their point of need and instruction is provided directly at their current skill level, with multiple students undertaking CARS & STARS Online in the same classroom often being at different levels in the program at the same time – something for which the program is actually designed.

While CARS & STARS Online is not specifically tied to it, the program directly complements the focus of the National Literacy Learning Progression, that “literacy development influences student success in many areas of learning at school.”

As a digital reading comprehension program whose entire goal is the development of more capable readers who are able to engage with any text at an advanced level of understanding, the element of the National Literacy Learning Progression that most directly aligns with CARS & STARS Online is “Reading and Viewing”, and specifically the sub-element of “Understanding Texts”, which is central to every level of the program (and every stage of being a literate person).

However, the other sub-elements of “Fluency” and “Phonic knowledge and word recognition” are also expressly present throughout the program across the levels and the reading strategies it is based around (with “Finding Word Meaning in Context” being a direct example of the later sub-element that features prominently).

While the CARS section of CARS & STARS Online is based around multiple-choice questions, both STARS and the recently added FOCUS Reading module include written responses that tie into the “Writing” element of the National Literacy Learning Progression, specifically reinforcing the sub-elements of “Creating texts”, “Grammar”, “Punctuation” and “Spelling” to an extent based on the discretion of the administering teacher, as well as (due to the program’s entirely digital nature) the “keyboarding” part of “Handwriting and Keyboarding”.

While CARS & STARS Online is primarily about reading text, the way in which it can be taught also ties in with elements of the “Speaking and Listening” element of the National Literacy Learning Progression, particularly when reading the exercises to a class as a group (“Listening”), getting them to respond (“Interacting”) or allocating students to read them out to the class or groups themselves (“Speaking”). A recent addition to CARS & STARS

Online is the Read Aloud feature, which allows students to hear stories read directly to them by the program at every level. This feature has been particularly valuable for students with word-processing variances, or even those who just prefer to hear something read to them first before they read it themselves.

You can find more information about how CARS & STARS Online aligns with elements of the Australian National Curriculum as a whole on our website. It's important to note that with both specific content descriptions in the curriculum and precise details of the National Literacy Learning Progression, a student who is at year level with CARS & STARS Online might actually be slightly ahead of stated goals (at least insofar as they are concerned with reading comprehension and general literacy) because they have been introduced to elements of textual analysis that are only explicitly stated in these curriculum documents at a later level.