

How CARS & STARS Online Can Help with NAPLAN Reading Tests

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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 own understanding, rather than specific 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.

This might at first seem contrary to the idea of NAPLAN reading tests, where students are periodically tested throughout their schooling to make sure they are keeping up with instruction at designated year levels. But while CARS & STARS Online’s approach is more to do with student skill levels for each individual, rather than making sure the individual student is at the same

level as their peers, the approach of CARS & STARS to enhancing reading comprehension and developing better readers can directly complement efforts to improve reading ability as gauged on NAPLAN tests.

In the NAPLAN reading tests, “students are provided with a magazine containing a range of texts that illustrate different writing styles”. CARS & STARS Online is built on exposing students to different types of texts, different viewpoints and different ways of expressing meaning. A student undertaking CARS & STARS Online instruction will be working with reading passages of a variety of different genres, styles and points of view as standard across every level of the program. This means that this student will necessarily, through undertaking CARS & STARS activities, have been introduced to a significantly larger range of texts in most cases than a student who has not been using the program. A CARS & STARS student therefore will have been ideally positioned to do well on relevant NAPLAN reading tests in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 if they’ve undertaken a degree of CARS & STARS Online instruction.

The following list outlines the minimum standards for reading for each of the four years where NAPLAN reading tests are mandated, and the specific CARS & STARS strategy (or strategies) that ties in with each. Note that while some standards will directly match with one specific CARS & STARS strategy, there are others that are represented in multiple strategies, or even across them all. As you will see, connections are often more direct and explicit at the lower levels, where concepts can be more typically concrete and direct, but can be less so at the higher levels as thinking necessarily becomes more abstract – and where “minimum standards” can truly be said to have been represented by most CARS & STARS Online strategies by then.

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 a student who is at year level with CARS & STARS Online might actually be slightly ahead of stated curricular 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. It's also important to note that CARS & STARS Online is concerned with improving student reading comprehension as a whole, so what seems like a lack of a direct correlation between a "standard" and a specific strategy is rarely evidence of it not having been covered at all.

For example, the NAPLAN website, when describing the minimum standards of reading for Year 7 students, says "At the minimum standard, Year 7 students generally infer the main idea in a text and connect ideas within and between sentences. At this level, students will not only interpret the meaning of words but also the intention of a narrator and the motivation of a character in a narrative, and the writer's point of view in an argument." These elements noted here have all been introduced to students from the very start of CARS & STARS Online instruction, and so any student who has used the program – particularly one who has been using it since the earlier year levels – will have been repeatedly and systematically exposed to all of these concepts at a gradually increasing level of difficulty. The "minimum standard" here for NAPLAN is thus, in a way, something that has been the very minimum expected of CARS & STARS students for quite some time, and so something they should have much less trouble with than students who have not been similarly exposed.

NAPLAN Minimum Standards: Reading and CARS & STARS Online Strategies

Year 3

When reading simple imaginative texts, students can:

- find directly stated information (Recalling Facts and Details, Finding Main Idea)
- connect ideas across sentences and paragraphs (Finding Main Idea, etc)
- interpret ideas, including some expressed in complex sentences (all strategies)
- identify a sequence of events (Understanding Sequence, Recognising Cause and Effect, etc)
- infer the writer's feelings (Identifying Author's Purpose).

When reading simple information texts, students can:

- find directly stated information (Recalling Facts and Details, Finding Main Idea)
- connect an illustration with ideas in the text (relevant skill recurs throughout the program, but is prominent early on)
- locate a detail in the text (Recalling Facts and Details, Finding Main Idea, Summarising)
- identify the meaning of a word in context (Finding Word Meaning in Context, Interpreting Figurative Language)
- connect ideas within a sentence and across the text (all strategies)
- identify the purpose of the text (Identifying Author's Purpose, Distinguishing Between Fact and Opinion)
- identify conventions such as lists and those conventions used in a letter (recurs across program, with letters one form of narrative regularly featured).

Year 5

When reading a short narrative, students can:

- locate directly stated information (Recalling Facts and Details, Finding Main Idea, Summarising)
- connect and interpret ideas (all strategies)
- recognise the relationship between text and illustrations
- interpret the nature, behaviour and motivation of characters (Making Predictions, Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences, Distinguishing Between Fact and Opinion, Identifying Author's Purpose)
- identify cause and effect (Recognising Cause and Effect).

When reading an information text, students can:

- locate directly stated information (Recalling Facts and Details, Finding Main Idea, Summarising)
- connect ideas to identify cause and effect (Recognising Cause and Effect, Making Predictions, Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences)
- identify the main purpose for the inclusion of specific information, diagrams and illustrations (Summarising, Finding the Main Idea, Identifying Author's Purpose, etc)
- identify the meaning of a phrase in context (Finding Word Meaning in Context, Interpreting Figurative Language)
- infer the main idea of a paragraph (Finding the Main Idea, Summarising).

When reading a biography or autobiography, students can:

- connect ideas (Understanding Sequence, Recognising Cause and Effect, Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences, Identifying Author's Purpose)
- identify the main purpose of the text (Finding Main Idea, Summarising)
- make inferences about the impact of an event on the narrator (Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences)

- interpret an idiomatic phrase or the meaning of a simple figurative expression (Interpreting Figurative Language).

When reading a persuasive text such as an advertisement, students can:

- locate directly stated information (Recalling Facts and Details, Finding Main Idea, Summarising)
- identify the main idea of a paragraph or the main message of the text (Finding Main Idea, Summarising, Identifying Author's Purpose).

Year 7

When reading a narrative, students can:

- infer the motivation or intention of the narrator or a character (Finding Main Idea, Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences, Identifying Author's Purpose)
- draw together ideas to identify a character's attitude (Finding Main Idea, Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences, Identifying Author's Purpose)
- interpret dialogue to describe a character (Finding Main Idea, Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences, Identifying Author's Purpose, Interpreting Figurative Language, Finding Word Meaning in Context)
- connect ideas to infer a character's intention or misconception, or the significance of the character's actions (Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences, Making Predictions, etc)
- interpret the significance of an event for the main character (all strategies).

When reading a poem, students can:

- identify the intention of the narrator (Identifying Author's Purpose, etc).

When reading an information text, students can:

- identify the main idea of a paragraph and the main purpose of the text (Finding Main Idea, Summarising)
- link and interpret information across the text (Recalling Facts and Details, most other strategies)
- recognise the most likely opinion of a person (Distinguishing Between Fact and Opinion, Making Predictions, Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences)
- use text conventions to locate a detail (Recalling Facts and Details).

When reading a persuasive text such as an argument, students can:

- locate and interpret directly stated information, including the meaning of specific words and expressions (Recalling Facts and Details, Finding Main Idea, Summarising, Interpreting Figurative Language, Finding Word Meaning in Context)
- identify the main message of the text (Finding Main Idea, Summarising)
- identify the purpose of parts of the text (Finding Main Idea, Recalling Facts and Details)
- interpret the main idea of a paragraph (Finding Main Idea)
- infer the writer's point of view (Identifying Author's Purpose)
- identify points of agreement in arguments that present different views (Identifying Author's Purpose, Comparing and Contrasting, etc)
- identify and interpret language conventions used in the text, such as lists, order of online posts and the use of punctuation for effect (all strategies)
- identify the common theme in a variety of writers' opinions (all strategies).

Year 9

When reading a complex narrative, students can:

- locate a directly stated detail (Recalling Facts and Details, Finding Main Idea, Summarising)
- connect ideas across a paragraph or across the text to interpret a description or the motivation of characters (Finding Main Idea, Summarising, Identifying Author's Purpose)
- infer the main idea (Finding Main Idea, Making Predictions, Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences)
- interpret and evaluate a character's behaviour and attitude (Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences,
- interpret dialogue to describe a character (all strategies)
- interpret the reasons for a character's response (Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences, etc)
- connect ideas to interpret figurative language (Interpreting Figurative Language)
- interpret the effect of a short sentence (all strategies).

When reading a poem, students can:

- identify the main idea of the poem (Finding Main Idea, Summarising).

When reading a complex biographical text, students can:

- locate a directly stated idea in the text (Recalling Facts and Details).

When reading a complex information text, students can:

- locate directly stated information (Recalling Facts and Details)
- connect ideas in the introduction of the text or in the body of the text and illustrations (Finding Main Idea, Recalling Facts and Details, etc)

- identify the main purpose of a text or an element of the text (Finding Main Idea, Summarising)
- identify the main idea of a paragraph (Finding Main Idea, etc)
- identify the purpose of a labelled diagram (Finding Main Idea, etc)
- identify the intended audience of the text (Identifying Author's Purpose, etc)
- identify conventions used in a text, such as abbreviations or italics for a foreign word (all strategies).

When reading a persuasive text such as an argument, students can:

- connect ideas across the text or in two arguments (Identifying Author's Purpose, Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences, Comparing and Contrasting etc)
- identify the tone of an argument (Identifying Author's Purpose, Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences, etc).