

## GUIDING OUR TEACHERS: A Briefer on Using the English MELCs

### About the Process

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent shortened academic year, the Department of Education, through the Bureau of Curriculum Development-Curriculum Standards Development Division, has produced a list of the most essential learning competencies (MELCs). This was done in order to ensure that the Grade Level Standards set for each learning area are still attained. In the process of identifying the MELCs, the ENDURANCE criterion was used as the sole determiner. Guided by the requirement that a learning competency (LC) be useful in lifelong learning, the group of specialists in-charge of the English curricula recognizes the role of the subject in providing the literacy and oracy skills necessary in acquiring the content knowledge in other learning areas. Therefore, the MELCs identified are those that work in close association with other competencies in other subjects, thus maintaining the curricular quality of integration.

#### *Example:*

G4 Q1: Identify different meanings of content specific words (denotation and connotation)

The example above provides students with knowledge of content specific words learned from subjects delivered using English such as Math and Science.

MELCs are also significantly less than the original number of LCs in the curriculum because of two factors. First, recurrence is avoided especially in a key stage. Although any language curricula would require recurrence as this is the nature of language learning, this is limited per key stage. In other words, an LC deemed significant enough to repeat shall only recur in the next key stage while observing spiral progression.

#### *Example:*

Key Stage 2 (G6 Q2): Detect biases and propaganda devices used by speakers

Key Stage 3 (G8 Q3): Examine biases (for or against) made by the author

However, this does not mean that the teacher is prohibited from teaching an LC more than once. Following the principle of curriculum flexibility and differentiated instruction, he/she is strongly advised to put focus, and therefore repeat an LC should circumstances require.

The second factor considered in determining the MELCs is the LCs' ability to be clustered together. Consider the example below:

#### *Example:*

Use a variety of informative, persuasive, and argumentative writing techniques

As can be seen, this LC would entail a number of other competencies in order for it to be achieved. Among the competencies needed are: (1) making a stand; (2) gathering information from various sources; (3) citing sources of information. This consequently calls for unpacking and sub-tasking on the part of the teacher, so that bigger or broader LCs may be broken down into manageable sub-competencies.

It should also be noted that domains were no longer retained as these may cause confusion among end users. The original English Curriculum Guide (CG) was designed in such a way that domains work together through horizontal alignment since one lesson does not tackle only one macro skill, but multiple skills. However, during the examination of LCs using the ENDURANCE criterion, some skills under a particular domain can no longer be retained. Organizing the MELCs by domain, through columns as in the original CG, would render the document seemingly incomplete and harder to follow due to the absence of horizontal alignment. See table below which shows Week 9 of the First Quarter of Grade 4; note that entries in red are not considered MELCs:

LC Listening Comprehension	OL Oral Language	V Vocabulary Development	RC Reading Comprehension	F Oral Reading Fluency	SS Study Strategy	G Grammar	WC Writing Composition
EN4LC-li-2.8 Infer feelings and traits of characters based on the story heard	EN4OL-li-10 Express one's ideas and feelings clearly	EN4V-li-13.9 Use context clues (exemplification) to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words	EN4RC-li-2.8 Infer feelings and traits of characters based on the story read	EN4F-li-14 Read with accuracy words, phrases, poems, and stories with silent letters	--	EN4G-li-3.2.1.1 Use simple present tense of verbs in sentences	EN4WC-li-6 Write a response to a story/poem read or listened to -letters

Accordingly, the MELCs were arranged in a list based on cognitive demand, which makes way for better curriculum flexibility as teachers are able to freely integrate LCs without the restrictions of horizontal alignment. Relative to this, the schedule and time allotment of LCs in quarters are suggestive in nature. As

discussed, the teacher is given the autonomy to unpack the MELC depending on the needs of the learners. Based on this premise, therefore, the duration of an LC is relative. What is required, however, is that the list of competencies be achieved in the specified grade level.

Lastly, because the content and performance standards in the English Curriculum are described in such detail, especially in Grades 1 to 4 where these are broken down into domains, the process of determining the MELCs required that some of these standards be forgone. See figure below showing some of the content and performance standards for Grade 2:

Domain	Content Standard	Performance Standard
	<i>The learner...</i>	<i>The learner...</i>
<b>Oral Language</b>	demonstrates understanding of grade level appropriate words used to communicate inter- and intrapersonal experiences, ideas, thoughts, actions and feelings	independently takes turn in sharing inter and intra personal experiences, ideas, thoughts, actions and feelings using appropriate words
	demonstrates understanding of familiar literary texts and common expressions for effective oral interpretation and communication	uses appropriate expressions in oral interpretation and familiar situations
<b>Fluency</b>	demonstrates understanding of punctuation marks, rhythm, pacing, intonation and vocal patterns as guide for fluent reading and speaking	fluently expresses ideas in various speaking tasks
		accurately and fluently reads aloud literary and informational texts appropriate to the grade level
<b>Listening Comprehension</b>	demonstrates understanding of text elements to see the relationship between known and new information to facilitate comprehension	correctly presents text elements through simple organizers to make inferences, predictions and conclusions
	demonstrates understanding of information heard to make meaningful decisions	uses information from theme-based activities as guide for decision making and following instructions
<b>Alphabet Knowledge</b>	demonstrates understanding of the alphabets in English in comparison to the alphabets of Filipino and Mother Tongue	distinguishes similarities and differences of the alphabets in English and Mother Tongue/Filipino
<b>Phonics and Word Recognition</b>	demonstrates understanding of the relationship of phonetic principles of Mother Tongue and English to decode unknown words in English	analyzes pattern of sounds in words for meaning and accuracy
		ably reads and spells out grade appropriate regular and irregular words in English
<b>Phonological Awareness</b>	demonstrates understanding of the letter-sound relationship between Mother Tongue and English for effective transfer of learning	effectively transfers the knowledge of letter-sound relationship from Mother Tongue to English
		correctly hears and records sounds in words
<b>Vocabulary</b>	demonstrates understanding of suitable vocabulary used in different languages for effective communication	uses familiar vocabulary to independently express ideas in speaking activities
<b>Book Knowledge</b>	demonstrates understanding about the concepts about print	correctly identifies book parts and follows reading conventions

Nevertheless, it is assured that all Grade Level Standards are maintained through the chosen MELCs.

### How to Use the MELCs

Given the nature of the MELCs, the teacher is advised to re-teach certain competencies needed for their achievement. It is also recommended that the teacher unpack the MELCs into more specific learning competencies as guided by the original 2016 English Curriculum Guide. Consider the following samples:

GRADE LEVEL/ QUARTER	MELC	SUB-COMPETENCIES
G3 Q2	Read phrases, sentences, and short stories consisting of words with initial and final consonant blends	Read words with initial consonant blends (l, r and s blends) followed by short vowel sounds (e.g. black, frog, step)
		Read phrases, sentences and short stories consisting of words with initial consonant blends
		Read words with final blends (-st, -lt, -nd, -nt, -ft) preceded by short e, a, i, o and u words (belt, sand, raft)
G5 Q3	Summarize various text types based on elements	Identify the elements of literary texts
		Identify informational text-types
		Summarize narrative texts based on elements: -Theme -Setting -Characters (heroes and villains) -Plot (beginning, middle and ending)
		Identify the main idea, key sentences and supporting details of a given paragraph
		Distinguish text-types according to purpose (classify or describe, recall series of events, explain, persuade)
		Distinguish text types according to features (structural and language): problem and solution, cause and effect, comparison and contrast, and time order (sequence, recounts, process)
		Make generalizations
		Respond appropriately to messages of different authentic texts
G6 Q2	Analyze the elements used in print, non-print, and digital materials	Identify the elements of a literary text listened to
		Identify the elements of informational text (editorial)
		Analyze sound devices (onomatopoeia, alliteration, assonance, personification, irony and hyperbole) in a text heard
		Analyze the characters used in print, non-print, and digital materials (age and gender, race and nationality, attitude and behavior)
		Analyze the setting used in print, non-print and digital materials (urban or rural; affluent or poor)

G7 Q4	Employ a variety of strategies for effective interpersonal communication (interview, dialog, conversation)	Determine the tone and mood of the speaker or characters in the narrative listened to
		Use different listening strategies based on purpose, topic and levels of difficulty of simple informative and short narrative texts
		Determine the intentions of speakers by focusing on their unique verbal and non-verbal cues
		Predict the outcomes of a verbal exchange listened to and their possible effects on the speakers
		Listen for important points signalled by volume, projection, pitch, stress, intonation, juncture, and rate of speech

The sub-competencies listed above are only some of the LCs subsumed by the MELCs. The teacher may include more or less than those identified depending on the needs of the learners. Teachers are given the leeway to formulate learning objectives deemed necessary for their students' cognitive development as long as they adhere to the existing curriculum standards prescribed by the Department of Education.