

GUIDING OUR TEACHERS: A Briefer on Using the Mother Tongue 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. A sole determiner was used in the process of identifying the MELCs – the ENDURANCE criterion, which states that a learning competency (LC) is considered *enduring* if it is useful in lifelong learning. Despite the irrefutable importance of the Mother Tongue (MT) in literacy building, not all the LCs in its curriculum satisfied the above mentioned criterion.

In the first key stage, that is from Kindergarten to Grade 3, the medium of teaching and learning is the student’s first language. Therefore, MT as a subject is significant in providing the literacy and oracy skills necessary in acquiring the content knowledge in other learning areas. Accordingly, the MELCs identified are those that work in close association with other competencies in other subjects, thus maintaining the curricular quality of integration. Consider the Grade 3 LC cited below:

Example:

Interprets a pictograph based on a given legend

The example above deals with the skill to draw meaning from nonprose texts – knowledge which is especially useful in Math.

MELCs are also considerably less than the original number of LCs in the curriculum because of two factors. First, recurrence is limited. Although any language curricula would require recurrence as this is the nature of language learning, this was done with restriction in identifying the MELCs. 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:

Get information from various sources: published announcements and map of the community

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) distinguishing different sources of information; (2) comparing and contrasting different sources of information in terms of structure and content; (3) interpreting nonprose

texts. 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 Curriculum Guide (CG) for Mother Tongue 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 1 of the First Quarter of Grade 1; note that entries in red are not considered MELCs (domains with no LC entries were no longer included):

Oral Language (OL)	Book and Print Knowledge (BPK)	Fluency (F)	Grammar Awareness (GA)	Vocabulary and Concept Development (VCD)	Attitude Towards Reading (ATR)
MT1OL-Ia-i-1.1 Talk about oneself and one's personal experiences using appropriate expressions	MT1BPK- Ia-c-1.1 Use the terms referring to conventions of print: -front and back cover -beginning, ending, title page author and illustrator	MT1F-Ic- IVa-i-1.1 Read Grade 1 level words, phrases and sentences with appropriate speed and accuracy	MT1GA-Ia- e-1.1 Use appropriate expressions orally to introduce: -Oneself -Family -Friends -Others	MT1VCD- Ia-i-1.1 Use vocabulary referring to: -People (Self, Family, Friends) -Animals -Objects -Musical Instruments -Environment	MT1ATR- Ia-i-2.1 Browse books read to them

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, given the detailed nature of the content and performance standards in the Mother Tongue Curriculum, the process of determining the MELCs required that some of these standards be forgone. See figure below showing the content and performance standards for Grade 1:

Domain	Content Standard	Performance Standard
	<i>The learner...</i>	<i>The learner...</i>
Oral Language	manifests beginning oral language skills to communicate in different contexts.	uses beginning oral language skills to communicate personal experiences, ideas, and feelings in different contexts.
Phonological Skills	demonstrates understanding that words are made up of sounds and syllables.	uses knowledge of phonological skills to discriminate and manipulate sound patterns.
Book and Print Knowledge	demonstrates understanding of the basic features of a book and how print works, as a prerequisite for reading.	demonstrates knowledge and understanding of the organization and basic features of print.
Phonics and Word Recognition	demonstrates knowledge of the alphabet and decoding to read, write and spell words correctly.	applies grade level phonics and word analysis skills in reading, writing and spelling words.
Fluency	demonstrates the ability to read grade one level text with sufficient accuracy, speed, and expression to support comprehension.	reads with sufficient speed, accuracy, and proper expression in reading grade level text.
Composing	demonstrates the ability to formulate ideas into sentences or longer texts using developmental and conventional spelling.	uses basic knowledge and skills to write clear, coherent sentences, and simple paragraphs based on a variety of stimulus materials.
Grammar Awareness	demonstrates awareness of language grammar and usage when speaking and/or writing.	speaks and/or writes correctly for different purposes using the basic grammar of the language.
Vocabulary and Concept Development	demonstrates developing knowledge and use of appropriate grade level vocabulary and concepts.	uses developing vocabulary in both oral and written form.
Listening Comprehension	demonstrates understanding of grade level narrative and informational text.	comprehends and appreciates grade level narrative and informational texts
Reading Comprehension	demonstrates understanding of grade level narrative and informational texts.	uses literary and narrative texts to develop comprehension and appreciation of grade level appropriate reading materials.
Attitude Towards Reading	demonstrates positive attitudes towards language, literacy and literature.	values reading and writing as communicative activities.
Study Skills	demonstrates basic knowledge and skills to listen, read, and write for specific purposes.	listens, reads, and writes for specific purpose.

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 Mother Tongue Curriculum Guide. Consider the following example:

GRADE LEVEL/ QUARTER	MELC	SUB-COMPETENCIES
G3 Q3	Uses the correct form of the verb that agrees with the subject when writing an event, or an interesting experience	Identifies and uses verbs appropriate for the grade level
		Uses the correct form of the verb given the time signal
		Uses the correct form of the verb that agrees with the subject

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.