

ABLES Introduction

Rachel scheuboeck

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Thank you for logging into the ABLES training. During this session, you will have an understanding of what ABLES is, how to access the site and log on and how to add students. You will also have an understanding of how to undertake an assessment and print a report. If you require any further support, please contact SERU.

My name is Rachel Scheuboeck and I am the manager Special Education Resource Unit (SERU). We are located on the Fulham Gardens Primary School site at Henley Beach. Any teachers and SSOs working with students with disabilities or learning needs can borrow from SERU. Families from non-government schools are able to borrow from SERU and can access support, advice and resources through visiting SERU. Teachers can borrow up to ten items at a time while families are able to borrow five resources for four weeks at a time.

If you haven't visited SERU for a while we have a number of services that we also provide. We have a Senior Adviser, Teaching and Learning who will support you with all aspects of borrowing resources from our library for students that you might be working with. Our Senior Advisers in the Inclusive Technologies Service are available to support the needs of students who might require some assistive technology to support their access to the curriculum. The Senior Adviser, Learning Difficulties is available to provide some support around literacy but also around some online training which could be under a number of areas. The Project Officers, for Early Intervention Services for deaf or hard of hearing services support our preschool students and those students from birth up until preschool. Conductive Education is another service that we provide which support students with physical disabilities within some of our Education Department sites.

You don't have to visit SERU to access our service. We have a website which has access to our online catalogue where you are able to reserve and borrow items via our web order system.

SERU also supports educators to meet their obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act and Disability Standards for Education to give learners with disability the same rights as others by giving consideration to reasonable adjustments, to ensure that students with disabilities are provided with opportunities to meaningfully participate in education and training on the same basis as their peers.

Abilities Based Learning and Educational Support (ABLES) is an assessment tool that links to curriculum and supports reporting. It allows teachers to assess students with disabilities at the point where they're at currently. It generates reports. It provides some guidance materials and strategies to help teachers and it helps to track students over a period of time. It's a teacher

judgement tool so teachers need to ensure that they know the student before embarking on the assessment.] The student's progress is tracked through the twice yearly assessments. There is round one which is open from mid-January through to the July school holidays and second assessment round is open between the beginning of Term three until the end of December.

The ABLES assessment is expected to close the current gap in the measurement of educational progress for individual students with disabilities. Currently it is a required assessment for students with significant intellectual disabilities who are not accessing Foundation in Maths and English. It could potentially benefit a broader group of students who are not otherwise assessed. So there is the potential for it to be used more widely but our students that we really want to be using this are those students who are not accessing Foundation due to a disability.

ABLES is the only assessment for students working towards Foundation curriculum at the system data level. If a student is exempt from our mainstream assessment such as the phonics screener, running records, NAPLAN, PAT assessments and has a disability, they should be assessed using ABLES.

This flowchart might help you to decide whether or not your students require ABLES. So does your student have a disability and an extensive level of support and is the student exempt from assessments. If your answer is yes then you will be looking, you will need to ask yourself "Is the student accessing Foundation English and Maths. If you answer yes, then you can use the appropriate assessments you would use for other students. If you answer no, the student is assessed using ABLES.

ABLES was designed in Victoria by the Victorian Education Department in collaboration with the University of Melbourne. To establish the ABLES tool they used and assessment call the SWAN assessment which stands for Students with Additional Needs and they found a way to match it to the curriculum. So to make this tool an evidence-based tool they conducted a study across 1700 students and 700 teachers across 77 Victorian schools that describe students proficiency in English speaking and listening, English reading and writing, personal learning and personal development. This research informed the development of the ABLES resource which targets and supports the development of individual learning plans by providing knowledge about student readiness to learn in those four areas.

ABLES curriculum was developed in Victoria and it has links to the Victorian curriculum and assessment authority. There are some differences between the Victorian curriculum and the Australian curriculum. Probably most notably before additional curriculum levels which are logical and sequential unpacking of the foundation level. These additional levels are called the Towards Foundation levels A, B, C and D. Within ABLES South Australian edition, we would call these ABLES SA levels A to D.

So ABLES is especially useful for our students with an intellectual disability and it is required for those students who have not achieved Foundation in English and Maths due to a disability. It now has nine assessments and it is a site decision as to how you use or access those

assessments. You may choose to use some or you may choose to use all of them, depending on how useful it is for you as a teacher. Due to a high level of use, the ABLES platform has recently moved to a new and improved format. And this platform is called Ruby.

Despite being developed in Victoria, the ABLES platform does work really well with a number of our current initiatives in South Australia. So it does work really well with our Learning Design Framework. It provides that link from assessment to the curriculum and then it supports the pedagogy so that we can understand what we want the students to learn, how we'll know if they've got it and what we can do to help them get there.

ABLES also connects really well with the General Capabilities and there are a number of assessments and if you look at the diagram you will see that there are some stars where there are directly assessments related to the General Capabilities in the areas of literacy, numeracy, ICT capabilities, creative and critical thinking, personal and social capabilities. At this point, we don't have assessments for understanding or intercultural understanding. Those assessments are being worked on and potentially there may be something in the future.

The ABLES site has recently moved. So to access ABLES you need to go to the web address ablesa.arcassess.education. You can Google ABLES portal but ensure that you have that web address at the top so that you are on the correct portal.

This is the screenshot of the new ABLES site. I will actually be moving a little bit between the new site and the old site for this training just to describe aspects of the site in more detail for you. However, when you move onto the home screen, you'll see that there are a number of options. There's a left navigation bar which will help you find all of the elements of the platform at any point. And you can always get back to the home icon where you'll see classes and students, assessment reports and there's also a guidance materials tab as well.

So logging on to the site has now for teachers has now changed and in needs to be done through your principal or administrator within the school. Their site will look a little bit different to yours. They will have a manage schools icon and within that manage schools icon, you'll see that there is the option to select teachers. Administrators can select teachers and click on the create new teacher and sign any teachers within the school up to the site.

To add a teacher, the Administrator or principal needs to click on to the create new teacher and you'll have the opportunity to put the teacher's name, surname, email address. I would and suggest that you copy and paste the email address as the user name and you will see that there is 4 highlighted areas. They need to stay highlighted so that the teacher can get an activation email and a temporary password.

Along the top you will see that it says user information underlined then you will see school teacher, school principal, admin. If you click on the school teacher you can then select the classes that you want the teacher to be able to see. If you click on school principal or admin you can add that staff member to have access to the whole site including adding other teachers.

If you have any difficulties with any school teachers accessing the site you can go back and click on the 3 dots right next to the teacher's name. This gives you the option to make them active or inactive if they have left the school. It also gives you the opportunity to change their password on their next log in or send in another activation email.

To register a student you need to go to the class and click on create new student. If you haven't already got a class organised you'll need to create a class first. The second box will open where you can add new students and you will need to have the student ED ID, year of birth and you need to know if they have a diagnosis of autism. On the new Ruby Portal you can edit the student details at any time for example if the student has a diagnosis of autism you can go in and add this yourself without contacting myself. You can also move the ED ID into the hidden field and insert the name you would like in the display name area instead so that when you're working on the platform the name that comes up is the student name and with the improved security and individual log in we can maintain confidentiality of our students.

Select the class that the student is currently in and scroll down and you'll be able to see a list of students within the class.

Students are all listed below the classes. To move any students between classes at the beginning of the year you can select the three dots beside their name and request either to edit their name or their information within their ED ID etc. You can request to remove the student from the class while leaving them in the school or you can mark the student as left or mark the student as graduated. So there are a number of different options but if you do remove the student from the class they will remain on your school list and then you can insert them into another class by using an existing student.

To assess the student you need to select the assessment icon on the left-hand side of the screen. You will then be taken to this screen which will highlight your site name, the period of the assessment and the list of possible assessments. In the list you can choose from critical and creative thinking, digital literacy, English, reading and writing, English speaking and listening, mathematics, movement and physical activity, personal and social capability self, personal and social capability self emotion and personal and social capability social.

Once you have selected an assessment a list of students will be available. Select the assess button for the student that you want to assess. You will see on the new system there is a progress bar that indicates if you have assessed another student within that assessment period. That is where the 100 percent is next to the student Mary. If you haven't assessed the student that progress icon will be blank.

So across the top of the page you will see the assessment period, the assessment selected, the school name and the student name. The numbers across the top show the progress of the assessment. There is always between three and six responses per question. The first response, being the easiest to demonstrate and then increasing in difficulty, until the very last

descriptor which always starts with, is moving towards but not yet achieved these skills and behaviours, which indicates that the very first dot point entry skill is not achieved. So, within that first one to the second to last, moves through that progression but the last dot point is always they haven't accessed the first point. Its really important to ensure that your site has moderated and has a shared understanding of how you will tackle an assessment. The data is only as good as the people inputting it. If staff share an understanding of whether a skill needs to be consolidated and transferred to different settings or whether you just want to observe the skill on a number of occasions consistently, you will have consistent data. So this point is really, really important.

Once you get to the end of the assessment you will see that there is an icon that says save. Click on the save button and then you can go back and close that assessment. From that point you can make the choice as to whether to continue to assess other students in the class using the same assessment or whether you want to go and print a report.

So to access a report you need to select reports in the main menu on the left-hand side. You will then be able to select the type of report you would like by clicking on the arrow next to the report. The Readiness report is the report that will support teachers in making links to the curriculum and provide some strategies to support the student in their learning. To display a report click on the report type.

To display the Readiness report you will need to select the class, the assessment type and the period of assessment by clicking on the buttons. You can then choose to show all reports for a class group or just to enter a single student.

The Learning Readiness report has a new design but it still includes student information and the rocket that we will see on the next page.

This is an example of the nutshell statements at each level starting from ABLES SA level A all the way up to Australian curriculum level 4. The dark line in the second box represents where the student is currently working. If you start at the very bottom of the screen the student who is engaging with objects and immediate sensory environment is currently working at ABLES SA level A. In the second box the student is exploring pictures, shapes and sounds. They are working at ABLES SA level B. In the third box we are working towards ABLES SA level C. And at this level students are learning to recognise letters, numbers and shapes as different types of symbols sets. In the next fourth box we are working at ABLES SA level D and in this box students are typically learning to use letters and pictures to communicate and you might have an example of this where students start to write lines on pages and show them to you as a letter. In the next box up, the fifth box, we are now working at foundation and you can see here in this level students typically are learning to use relationships between letters and sound and this is all our phonics work that we do with our students. The next box up represents level 1 and 2 in the Australian curriculum and at this level students are learning to use conventions of text presentation. When we move to the next box we are now working across levels 3 and 4 in the Australian curriculum. And at this level students are learning to apply and extend

understanding of text. As you will see from this demonstration there is a lot of really rich information moving up towards foundation and at foundation level. When we move past foundation the richness of information is less and therefore that is the point you might like to use other readily available assessments that are part of your school assessment suite.

When you print out a Readiness report you will find that the dark line that indicates where the child is currently working. That line does move within the box so it can show if a student is only just in a particular level or they are moving towards the next level.

When you move to the second page of the report you will see that there is a link to where the child is currently working and what curriculum level that relates to. In this case the student is at level C. Students will either be at ABLES SA Level A to D or Foundation to level 4 in the Australian curriculum. When you look at the second window with the statement around Level C you'll see that the first paragraph outlines the level descriptor that the child is currently working in. So that is for ABLES SA level C. The last paragraph always refers to the next curriculum level that the child is working towards, so we constantly have that sense of where the child is now and where they need to be working towards.

So like with the previous slide this just shows you the descriptor that is copied straight out of the curriculum statement which is the Victorian curriculum statement. We don't have an equivalent in the Australian curriculum so we are borrowing these additional unpacked towards foundation levels from the Victorian curriculum. And again you will see how the second paragraph relates to the next level within the curriculum documentation.

The third page of the report is perhaps one of the pages that teachers find the most useful. It is a list of suggestions for the student working at a particular level. I always encourage teachers when they are looking at this report to use maybe two highlighters and a pen. I always use one highlighter to note any things that I am already doing. Then I use a different coloured highlighter to note what I would like to incorporate in the students plan. My pen I often used to cross out any strategies that may not be age appropriate or relevant to the student. For example there is a dot point that says provide greater support for dexterity e.g. dots and fonts, cutting, drawing activities. For a student with significant physical challenges this dot point is not going to be something that we would be working on. So I would immediately get rid of that. You will also find that strategies are ordered in some of the more easily representative, moving down into more challenging or moving more towards the next level.

This is an example of a class report. If you have more than one student on ABLES you may find this report quite useful but for classes that are only doing an individual student you might find that you don't need this report. This report provides a bit of a sense of where the students are working in a particular curriculum area and by using this report you might be able to make some decisions around grouping students so that you can target the learning that they are doing.

And this is an example of a school report. This will give a list of all the students that have been

assessed within the school and it captures two years of data. This can be quite useful for principals or leaders in the school just to have a bit of a sense of how students are travelling at a glance and see how they are moving in their ABLES assessments across time.

And this last assessment is a student profile report. This is a summary of all the assessments that have been undertaken on a particular student. This report again will show up to 2 years of data, to show students improvement. So I don't know that I have said it previously but for all of these reports I would not recommend that you hand a report to a parent because they not personalised. Its the teacher's job to personalise and make these relevant and put them into smarter goals for the particular student that you're working with. This is the only one of the assessment reports that I do show to parents and the reason I show it is it does captures data over time and where students were making very very small improvements it does actually show that they are making that progress over time. Again it's not personalised, it provides the nutshell statement of where the student is currently working. But through the coloured arrows and the shaded areas you can actually track and see progress over time.

So for some students who have ASD in one of our assessments the personal and social self, there has been some tailoring of the assessment in terms of the strategies to support students who have ASD. Its only for the one assessment so if you have a student who you might suspect has ASD but does not have an assessment it doesn't matter if you can't mark them them as having autism because it is only for this one assessment. But if you have a look down the slide you will see there are some little extra strategies or different strategies that have been added in for those students who might have ASD. For example independently describing and remembering activities and for a student with ASD we've added and coping with substitutions and familiar tasks, because we know that can be an area that can challenge some of our students who are on the autism spectrum.

There is also a Guidance Materials section to support you in using the ABLES site. I would recommend that you go in and have a look. You'll see when you click on guidance materials it will take you to the second screen. Available under the guidance materials is the ABLES fact sheet which can give you information that you can give to parents to explain what ABLES is. There is also the Ables website which is the website that was developed in Victoria if you're looking for further information. There is a link to VCAA which is the Victorian curriculum and assessment authority and that will give you the unpacked information that sits in the towards foundations level A to D if you're interested in further information. The curriculum tab takes us to the Australian curriculum so that we can have a look at the foundation level in more detail if you would like. There are 3 additional English, maths, health and physical education and these are some examples of a scope in sequence that will help you see the connection to the levels ABCD and foundation. So that when you're looking at the foundation level you can see how it relates to the different levels that are the unpacked levels. There is also a user guide which I could recommend that you have a look before you start using ABLES. It gives you lots of extra additional information in how to access the site and how to do assessments and how to enter students. And the last one is the technical specifications. If you're having any difficulties with accessing the site perhaps have a look at that because it might be about the technical

specifications.

This screen really just gives you a bit of a sense of what the scope and sequence looks like. And this is what I was describing on the previous slide when you go into the English, Maths or Health & PE. You'll see that you can download a scoping sequence like the one on the screen and it shows you how each level relates to the Australian Curriculum foundation level.

One of the things that I think is really exciting about the ABLES curriculum is it really give us that opportunity to really gather lots of really useful information about our students and in fact you really need to know your students before you do the assessment as it is a teacher judgement assessment. You need to be able to watch and observe your students. You need to be able to ask not only the students themselves, perhaps the SSO, perhaps the parents of the child, perhaps teachers from last year or previous years, or NIT teachers. You also need to be able to listen and see what information you're receiving about the student. Reading is really important. There is probably a lot of really useful information in student files that is available as well. There might be old assessments and old tests so being able to gather all of that information together will give you the richest information to be able to tackle the assessment. Moderating your judgements. Its really important to be able to, as a staff, interpret assessment questions. Think of some examples, support each other in how you manage the assessment task. And look at the context. We know that some students can work differently in different situations. How are you going to manage that as a school. If you have one teacher that the students work really really well for and another teacher where they don't display as many skills. How are you going to make judgements about that and you need to make a decision as a group so that you get accurate data. But the thing I like most about ABLES is this idea of shifting the focus. Its really about what the skills that we want to develop in the student. Its not about this child can't do this. Its about the child has these skills and so therefore this is what we need today to move them on. Its not about scores. Its about what evidence do we have. This provides us with evidence to say yes the child is able to do this or no they are not. It doesn't need us to use our inference or make decisions because we know as teachers and educators when students have achieved a skill and are ready for the next skill. And this does help to provide that evidence but most importantly this is about students. Its about looking at where the student is, looking at their skills and in supporting them through targeted teaching to achieve their goals and to be the best students that they can, for themselves.

This is a slide that the Victorian team shared with me. This table shows the results from the 1700 students that I spoke about earlier who were taken across at Victoria and who used ABLES from 2015 to 2017. All the students were assessed and the midpoint for each level was established. Two year later they were re-assessed and again the midpoint was taken for the group. The table shows that students whose teachers used ABLES assessments and the suite of resources all showed improvement over time, confirming that ABLES can do no harm and in actual fact it can produce really good results for the students that we use it for.

As I stated earlier this has been a collaboration between the University of Melbourne and as you

can see there were a number of people who were involved in this. I believe seven people's PhD's formed the basis of the ABLES program. The partner investigations was the Education Department from Melbourne who worked very closely with the University to create the strategies and the ideas to support students to move within their learning. And then there were some funding supports that were available as well.

If you have any questions or any issues please contact SERU for any additional support and they will be able to put you through to somebody who can support you in either accessing the portal or with some questions around how to support students once you've done an assessment. Hope this has helped. Any further questions please get in contact