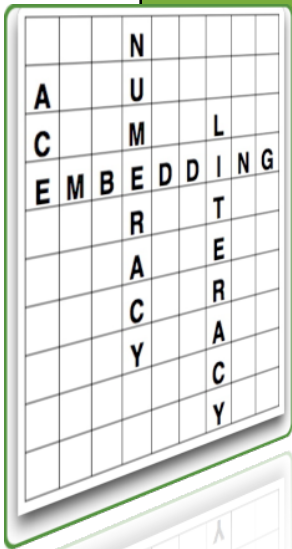


What is Embedding? a resource for ACE tutors



Working on Embedding addresses the main questions that tutors have asked about this subject.

This resource was developed by Alison Sutton, COMET, and Ginnie Denny, MarginZ, for Te Kupenga o Manukau ACE Network. The project was funded by the ACE Aotearoa Professional Development Steering Group.

What is ACE?

Adult and community education (ACE) is a broad term for the learning that is outside traditional schooling and formal tertiary education. Wherever it takes place — in a community house, farm paddock, church hall, marae, library, home kitchen or classroom — ACE occurs whenever people want to learn about something. It includes adults learning how to coach children's sports teams, social service agencies providing parenting courses, sewing classes at night school, handyman workshops at the hardware store.

What is literacy?

Literacy includes reading, writing, speaking and listening. This includes building English language skills for learners from non-English speaking backgrounds (ESOL learners). Literacy skills are essential for good communication, critical thinking and problem-solving in the workforce and the community.

What is numeracy?

Numeracy is the bridge between mathematics and real life. Numeracy includes the knowledge and skills needed to apply mathematics to everyday family and financial matters, work and community tasks. Numeracy helps people participate successfully in society and work.

What is embedding?

Embedding is an approach to teaching literacy and numeracy. When teachers are embedding literacy and numeracy, they are helping learners develop some literacy and numeracy skills at the same time that they are learning about the course subject.

How do learners benefit from embedding?

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Courses that embed literacy and numeracy skills make it easier for learners to understand and get the most out of the ACE course content and to develop skills they can use elsewhere as well.

They become more confident learners which means they are more willing to ask for help. Learners who understand the subject are more likely to complete the course.

How does embedding help me as a tutor?

Embedding strengthens teaching. When tutors are aware of the literacy and numeracy demands of their subject and help the learners develop those skills, literacy and numeracy are less likely to be barriers for the learner. When learners understand and get more out of the course content, tutors usually enjoy their teaching more.

Why is embedding literacy and numeracy being emphasised in ACE now?

The strongest feedback about these resources has been that they include strategies and suggestions that many ACE tutors have already been using for a long time; they were just more likely to have been recognised as 'good teaching practice' rather than 'embedding literacy and numeracy'. The reason that this language is being used more now is that improving literacy and numeracy skills is part of the government's Tertiary Education Strategy. As of 2009, funded ACE providers are required to demonstrate how they are improving literacy and numeracy skills of learners.

Embedding is a good approach to this in ACE because people improve their literacy and numeracy most easily and effectively when they are learning things that they want to know — that are relevant to them as family members, community members and workers.

For which learners is embedding appropriate?

All learners can benefit from having literacy and numeracy embedded into teaching, no matter what their current levels of literacy and numeracy; for example, new learning frequently involves new vocabulary. Improving comprehension skills can benefit anyone, no matter what their previous educational achievements have been.

I am not trained as a literacy or numeracy teacher. What can I do?

The strategies included in these resources do not require any specialised knowledge or skill. It is suggested that tutors who are new to including literacy and numeracy in their courses start by trying a few suggestions and then incorporate others into their teaching over time.

What kind of literacy and numeracy are in ACE courses?

Most ACE courses involve at least speaking and listening. The amount of reading, writing and numeracy will vary much more, but often there is more than tutors realise.

Can the literacy resources be applied to embedding te reo, sign, and other languages?

The resources were reviewed by tutors of te reo and Pasifika languages; they reported that they were relevant to their teaching. We assume that they are generally applicable — although as with all the resources, they need to be adapted to specific situations.

Does embedding require extra preparation by the tutor?

Initially, tutors may need to spend some time reviewing their courses, thinking about the resources and texts they use, and planning which strategies to use. Once a tutor becomes familiar with the suggestions, they don't require a lot of preparation.

Tutors who embed find that in the long run it saves them time. Learners understand more quickly; so often there is less need to re-teach. Even tutors who teach for only a few hours a term will be able to use these activities.

How does it work?

In order to embed literacy and numeracy, tutors first need to recognise the reading, writing, speaking, listening and numeracy skills learners need to use during their ACE course. Then the tutor needs to identify some literacy and numeracy teaching strategies that are relevant to those skills and consciously incorporate them into their sessions. Each tutor has to decide which skills and strategies are important for their ACE course.

Embedding on a computer course

Aroha and Pele both teach short courses on computer skills. Each of their courses lasts ten weeks and they attract a really mixed group of learners. Once a term they plan their sessions together.

In the past, some learners have dropped out after two weeks. Aroha and Pele wonder if it's because they are presenting too much information too quickly.

They identify technical words they use in course handouts and websites and decide to teach the meanings of those new terms right at the start.

Aroha prepares a glossary to give every learner on the first session.

Learners always seem to have trouble understanding an activity on Internet banking. Pele decides their instructions assume a higher level skill than learners actually have. He makes up a chart with different instructions and goes over it carefully with the group; then has people re-tell the instructions to each other in pairs before they start on the exercise.

Both Aroha and Pele found sessions went faster because the learners understood what was required earlier — and needed much less individual attention.