

Getting the balance right

The Department's response to Time to Teach, Time to Learn



This booklet has been developed to explain:

- how the primary curriculum is now more manageable
- the improved reporting to parents
- the support available to assist you with your teaching



In his report *Time to Teach, Time to Learn* Professor Ken Eltis commended primary teachers for the way they were managing the complex issues of outcomes assessment and reporting.



Teachers asked for:

- a clear specification of what is mandatory in curriculum, assessing and reporting in NSW Government schools and in which areas they have more freedom
- more detailed frameworks to assist with developing teaching programs while not undermining their teacher professionalism and independence to create individual teaching programs
- clear guidelines from the Department about the essential elements of a student report
- professional development programs for teachers, with a focus on ways to bring schools together to build on shared experiences

This booklet, *Getting the balance right*, gives teachers information about the Department's response to recommendations in the Eltis report in the areas of:

- Curriculum policy (p 4-5)
- Planning, programming and assessing (p 6-7)
- Reporting to parents (p 8-9)
- Professional learning (p 10-11)

It also provides web sites where you can get further information.

This fresh approach, as it is progressively implemented, will support teachers in programming, assessing and reporting and through this, further strengthen public education in NSW.

Foundation Statements

The Board of Studies has developed Foundation Statements to help you manage the curriculum more effectively. These describe clearly the state-wide common curriculum requirements and prioritise what needs to be taught in all primary schools. They do not add new content or concepts to the K-6 curriculum.

The six key learning areas (KLAs) and the Board's syllabuses remain at the core of planning and programming for primary schools.

Foundation Statements replace the Stage Statements in syllabuses.



The Department has also undertaken significant work, in consultation with teachers and key groups, to improve clarity and workload in the following areas:

Curriculum policy

A new policy called *Curriculum Planning and Programming, Assessing and Reporting to Parents K-12* will now clarify what you and your school need to do in these important areas.

Planning, programming and assessing

A fresh approach to supporting school-based teaching and learning programs has been developed to make it easier for you to plan, program and assess across KLAs.

Curriculum specialists, working with classroom teachers, have looked across all of the KLAs from K-6 to produce a comprehensive set of support materials, ready for you to use. It provides complete units of work as well as ideas and suggestions for planning, programming and assessing.

The support materials adopt an integrated curriculum approach and have been developed by making connections between syllabus outcomes from different KLAs. This grouping of outcomes is called Connected Outcome Groups – COGs.

Reporting to parents

We've also removed the uncertainty around what to report to parents by clarifying state-wide requirements and providing sample report forms for you to work from. The style of the written reports and the information provided in them will mean that parents can better understand what their child has learned and achieved.

These twice yearly written reports continue to support your ongoing relationship with your students' parents.

Professional learning

A state-wide support plan has been developed to assist you and your school to implement the *Curriculum Planning and Programming, Assessing and Reporting to Parents K-12 Policy*.

As part of their regular professional learning planning, schools will continue to identify teachers' professional learning needs and respond to these in a range of ways.



Curriculum policy

Why has a new policy been developed?

The policy has been developed to make it much clearer for teachers and schools about what is required to plan and program, assess and report to parents.

When does the policy begin?

Schools will begin implementing the policy from the start of 2006.

This will mean looking at your current practice and collaboratively planning ways to put the policy into action during 2006. It should happen through your usual school planning and development processes.

What's in the new policy?

The policy has three sections:

- curriculum planning and programming
- assessing students' work
- reporting to parents

What the new policy says about curriculum planning & programming

- Schools plan curriculum and develop teaching programs consistent with the Education Act, Board of Studies syllabuses and Department requirements (as described in the policy document)
- Teachers develop quality teaching programs that are appropriate for the stage of learning, as summarised in the Foundation Statements, and which address the needs of all students
- Teaching programs incorporate assessment as an integral component
- Teaching programs indicate the outcomes being addressed, the teaching activities planned and the intended assessment strategies

The policy confirms that there are no other K-6 curriculum requirements beyond the provision of learning programs in each KLA (based on Board of Studies syllabuses), physical activity, sport and time for special religious education.

Approximately 50% of teaching time should be allocated for English and Mathematics and 40% for the other KLAs and sport. Schools typically use the remaining 10% flexibly to meet school priorities such as language programs or extra-curricular activities such as school performances, debates and community service activities.

What the new policy says about assessing students' work

- Schools plan assessment so that:
 - students can demonstrate achievement for the relevant stage of learning
 - valid and reliable assessment strategies are used
 - assessment processes are time efficient and manageable
- Teachers plan assessment strategies when developing teaching programs and make additional assessment judgements in the course of teaching and learning
- Teachers use assessments that are appropriate for judging student achievement of standards as summarised in the Foundation Statements
- Teachers collect and record assessment information to:
 - guide ongoing teaching and learning
 - monitor and evaluate student progress
 - report achievement to parents

What the new policy says about reporting to parents

- Schools will provide parents/carers, throughout the school year, with formal and informal opportunities to receive information about and discuss their child's learning
- The school's procedures for reporting to parents will be based on the Department's policy. They should be time efficient, manageable and developed by teachers in consultation with parents/carers
- Schools will provide parents/carers with a written report at least twice per year. The written report will meet specific requirements detailed in the policy
- Parents/carers will be able to obtain information on how their child's achievement compares with other students in the year group from the school
- Schools will disseminate to parents/carers the reports from state-wide testing programs and, as appropriate, will provide opportunities for discussion between teachers and parents

"This gives me clear advice in the one document about what I need to do to plan and program from syllabuses and link with my assessment and reporting." **Primary Teacher**



What else is available?

Policy guidelines are available to assist you with practical implementation strategies and processes.

Further information and support materials can be obtained from:

www.curriculumsupport.nsw.edu.au/timetoteach

Handy hint

Get a copy of the curriculum policy from www.det.nsw.edu.au/policies



Planning, programming and assessing

What new materials have been developed to support planning, programming and assessing?

A comprehensive set of support materials has been developed to make it easier for you to plan, program and assess across KLAs.

The materials adopt an integrated curriculum approach and have been developed by making connections between syllabus outcomes from across KLAs. This grouping of outcomes is called Connected Outcome Groups – COGs.

The materials range from an overview of COGs across K-6 through to units of work that contain teaching and learning activities, with literacy and numeracy links, as well as assessment strategies.

How were the COGs developed?

The COGs were developed by classroom teachers supported by curriculum specialists. Together they worked to identify connections between syllabus outcomes from the HSIE, PDHPE, Creative Arts and Science and Technology KLAs and grouped these into a coherent framework across K-6.

Teaching ideas, literacy and numeracy links, resource materials and assessment strategies have been identified for each COG.

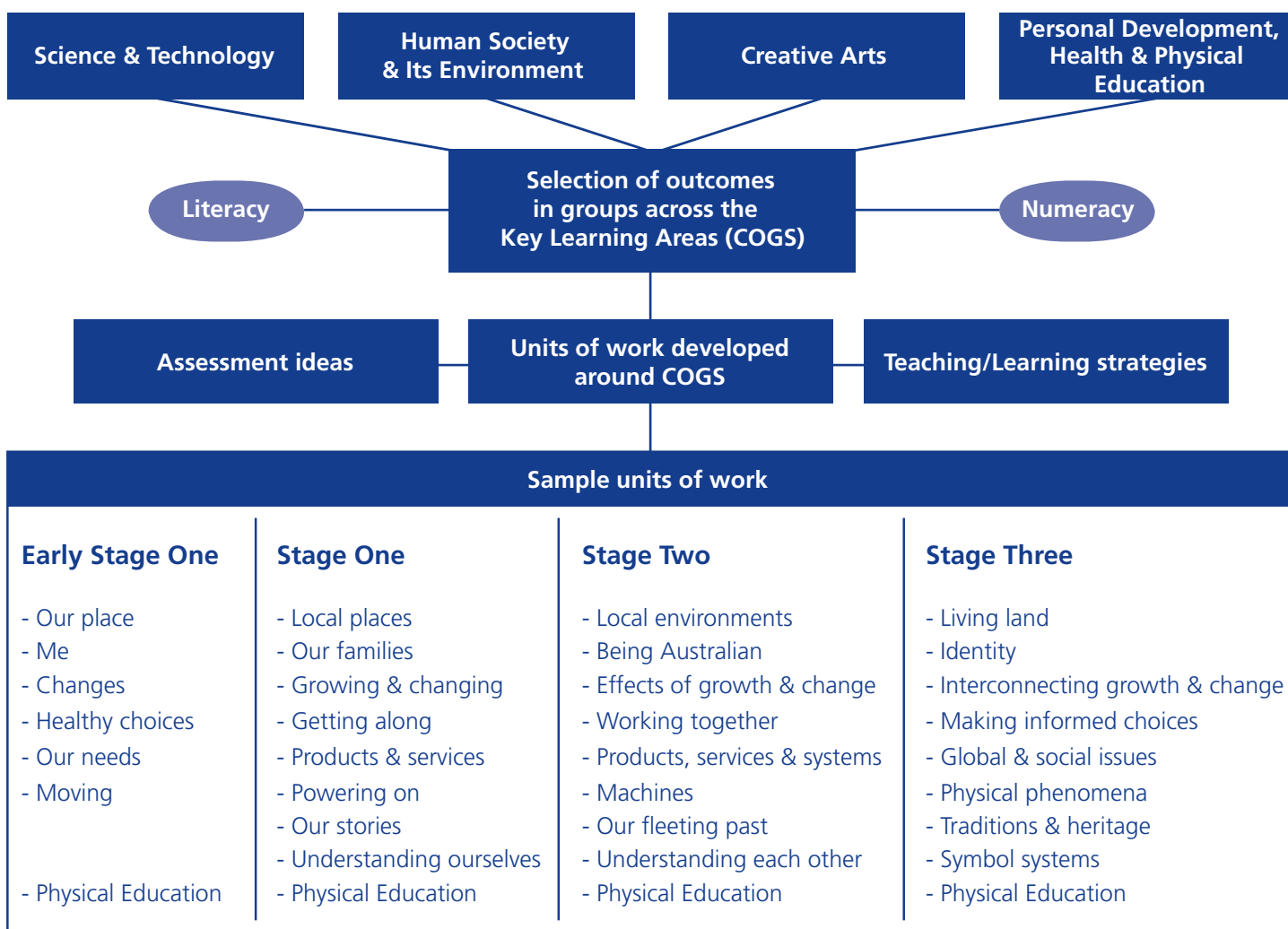
As a result there are thirty COGs across K-6.

How do I use COGs?

You could choose to use the materials in any of three ways:

1. For whole school curriculum planning the COGs present one way to organise syllabus outcomes from across the KLAs
2. For year level programming the materials provide detail on how and why the outcomes can be connected along with suggested teacher resources and materials
3. At the classroom level the materials provide 30 units of work for use across K-6. Each unit contains teaching and learning activities, with literacy and numeracy links, as well as assessment strategies. The set of units provides the basis for a complete teaching program or individual units can stand alone

How do Connected Outcome Groups (COGs) work?



“ COGs are exciting, integrated and practical. They maximise the use of my time and assist in multi-stage programming with a variety of topics and contexts. They make things easier.” **Primary Teacher**

How do the COGs relate to the Board's Foundation Statements?

The Board's Foundation Statements set out a clear picture of the knowledge, skills and understanding that each student should develop at each stage of primary school. They encompass, at a level broader than syllabus outcomes, the nature (key concepts and content) and scope (breadth, depth and rigour) of learning in Kindergarten to Year 6.

The COGs have been based on all of the syllabus outcomes in the relevant KLAs. If you use a set of COGs from a stage you can be confident that your students will have opportunities to learn the knowledge, skills and understanding described in the Foundation Statements.

It is neither necessary nor desirable for you to assess and report on separate individual outcomes.

You are in the best position to select the particular outcomes and content in a COG that suit the learning needs of your students.

Where can I get copies of these materials?

The curriculum planning, programming and assessing support materials are available now at www.curriculumsupport.nsw.edu.au/cogs

Send us your feedback

We welcome your feedback. Please use the feedback option on: www.curriculumsupport.nsw.edu.au/cogs



Reporting to parents

“As parents we want clear information about how our children are going, including their achievements. We really value getting a detailed written report with teacher comments.” **Parent**

From 2006 we have a new approach to reporting in New South Wales schools. Parents will receive clear and easy to understand information on their child’s progress. There will be greater consistency in report formats across all public schools.

What will the written reports provide?

The written reports will:

- use plain language
- provide information on a student’s learning in each of the key learning areas (KLAs) or subjects
- compare the student’s achievement against statewide syllabus standards using a five point (A-E) scale
- include teacher comments about the student’s specific achievements and how he or she will be helped to improve
- have information about the student’s attendance at school
- provide information about the student’s achievement in special school programs
- provide information about the student’s social development and commitment to learning

Parents are encouraged to request additional information from their school on how their child’s achievement compares with the performance of other students in the peer group. This information will indicate the proportion of students receiving each grade, A-E, in the student’s peer group at the school.

Are sample reports available? What other support will there be?

Sample reports and further information on the new reporting requirements can be found at:

www.curriculum.nsw.edu.au/timetoteach

Software that schools will be able to use to produce reports will be available early in Term 2, 2006.

When will parents receive the reports?

The new reports will be sent to parents by the end of 2006. Some schools will choose to use the new report format for the mid-year report in 2006.

What about Kindergarten reports?

Kindergarten reports will not have an A-E grading. Reports for Kindergarten students will include teacher comments on English and Mathematics and other KLAs covered in the reporting period.

What about reports for students with special needs?

Variations in the reporting requirements will apply for some groups of students. These variations are explained in the policy.

“We talk to parents regularly about their child’s progress. The student report is an important part of the teacher–parent relationship.” Primary Teacher

	outstanding achievement	high achievement	sound achievement	basic achievement	limited achievement
Talking & Listening		✓			
Reading		✓			
Writing			✓		

--- A table showing achievements for each area of English. There is a similar table for Mathematics.

A
B
C
D
E

An overall achievement grade for each key learning area:

- A (outstanding achievement)
- B (high achievement)
- C (sound achievement)
- D (basic achievement)
- E (limited achievement)

Susan is using the knowledge and skills she has learnt to read many types of books. She is also contributing to discussion and talking about books read in class. Susan needs, however, to spend more time planning her spoken presentations. She is writing well on a range of topics, although she needs to take more responsibility for checking her spelling, grammar and use of commas.

In Year 6, Susan will be helped with improving her use of strategies for checking her writing, such as re-reading her writing, using dictionaries and spell checkers.

--- A detailed teacher comment for each key learning area



Professional learning

“Ongoing professional learning is the key to increasing teachers’ confidence and competence.” **Primary Principal**

A state-wide support plan has been developed to assist you and your school meet the new requirements of the *Curriculum Planning and Programming, Assessing and Reporting to Parents K-12 Policy*.

The support plan has three phases.

Phase 1

During Terms 3 and 4, 2005 state office and regional personnel have met to develop regional implementation support plans.

Phase 2

During Term 4, 2005 and Term 1, 2006 regional workshops have been or will be conducted with school teams about the new policy requirements and the support that will be available for schools.

The workshops for school principals and teachers will cover:

- Knowledge and understanding of the new policy requirements
- Board of Studies Foundation Statements
- School review of current practice and planning for implementation
- Use of the A-E reporting scale
- Consistency and comparability of teachers’ assessment judgements
- Curriculum support materials that are available for teachers (eg curriculum planning, programming and assessing support materials)
- Reporting software for student reports
- Professional learning and support that will be available in 2006 and beyond

Phase 3

Commencing in 2006 and continuing through to 2008, professional learning opportunities for you will focus on planning, programming, assessing and reporting processes.

The professional learning opportunities will include supporting teacher networks to share and reflect on quality teaching, assessment and reporting practices.

You will have the option of participating in one or more of the following:

- Joint planning for students in same year, stage or whole school groups – based on Foundation Statements and COGs units, with development of materials as well for multi-age and ability groups
- Collaborative planning of assessment – developing, sharing and adapting assessment materials
- Moderation exercises – undertaking processes to develop shared understanding of standards of student work within and between schools
- Collecting and sharing examples/evidence of student work that meets described standards – contributing to a state-wide standards resource for all teachers

Will support materials be ready for our Day 1, Term 1 School Development Day?

Support materials are available on

www.curriculumsupport.nsw.edu.au/timetoteach

to assist your school to conduct sessions during school development days in 2006.

The sessions available include:

- A brief 30 minute introductory session for teachers to 'walk through' the materials and identify issues and questions requiring further consideration
- A 90 minute session that explores the background to the development of the new policy and provides opportunities for teachers to reflect on current and required practice using a 'self-evaluation matrix'. This analysis would provide the basis for school planning for implementation
- An all-day session that allows teachers to:
 - explore the background to the development of the new policy
 - reflect on current and required practice
 - explore the COGs, and
 - explore grading using the A-E scale
- Any of these sessions, or others you may design yourself or that the region may provide, can be used to commence your initial school planning for implementation



Where can I find out more about the curriculum materials and teacher professional learning?

More information on the support that is available to assist you and your school with implementation of the new policy can be found

at: www.curriculumsupport.nsw.edu.au

and via your regional communication networks.

Your region will continue to work with principals and teachers to determine the best ways to provide schools with ongoing support.

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