

February, 2012

ACARA Update

My School

The *My School* Principal's Portal was released on 18th November 2011 with the ICSEA data being made available first and then the finance data on 21st November. The Portal closed on 20th December.

Discussions with school authorities across the school sectors have indicated that data relating to refugee status and language proficiency could not be made available for all school sectors in an accessible and consistent form in time for incorporation into the *MY School* version 3.0 ICSEA formula.

Approximately 93% of schools now have an ICSEA value based on direct student data. ACARA will undertake further work to reduce the number of schools where indirect data is used to calculate their ICSEA value.

Changes in ICSEA values of greater than 50 were automatically reviewed. Forty four Independent schools sought a review of the ICSEA value.

A revised version of the depiction of 'gain' has been prepared. Ministers' approval is to be sought out of session.

Earlier versions of the diagrammatic depiction of 'gain' had raised questions about whether parents might find the proposed representations difficult to comprehend.

The proposed new depiction compares students matched within the same school with:

- Students in statistically similar schools-similar to last year's depiction;
- Students across Australia with the same starting scores or
- Students in all schools in Australia.

Viewers will also be able to view results expressed in terms of average scores and median scores.

No significant issues emerged in relation to finance data.

School Opinion Surveys

The pilot survey for parents and students closed on 25 November 2011. Collected data has been reviewed and the experience of the survey pilot will be extensively surveyed and advice will be provided to Ministers.

The response rate from the 300 schools included in the sample was about 50%. Very few Independent schools participated in the survey. The response rate from parents in the participating schools was very low.

It is proposed that data from the Opinion Survey of parents and students be placed on the *MySchool* website. Further, it is proposed that the data be presented via graphical depiction of results for each of the core items, with no reporting of an overall index of satisfaction.

New funding will be required to implement the proposed Opinion surveys for parents and students. It is proposed to implement the survey in August 2012. ACARA would provide a dedicated web portal for delivering the survey.

Schools could have the facility to add sections to the national survey to suit their needs and are likely to have access to their full data.

Reporting on Assets

An external consultant has investigated the feasibility on how school assets, for all schools, such as financial assets including trust accounts, term deposits and investment portfolios, as well as physical assets could be captured and presented to the community on the My School website. On the basis of the consultant's report the ACARA Finance Working Group has indicated that very little comparable asset data is currently available that would enable presentation of additionally nationally consistent information about school resources that support the delivery of student learning.

Variations relating to how assets were defined and recorded, who owned the asset, depreciation rates and different types of accounting treatments all generate challenges in reporting consistent and fair data.

The above Working Group has also indicated the value, area and condition of land would provide little context to the community on the capacity of a school to educate students in a given year.

There is currently no nationally consistent financial reporting methodology to measure the value of school physical assets and any information reported would not provide the community with an awareness of a school's capacity to deliver education.

In addition, the above Working Group has reported it is not currently possible to collect additional information that would provide the community with consistent and accurate information of the financial assets available to schools. It has pointed out the limitations on using school bank

account details as cash information on its own could be misunderstood or significantly misleading. It represents only one side of a balance sheet entry with no explanation or presentation of related liabilities.

The above Working Group has recommended the investigation of the development of a key facilities register for reporting of key assets on *My School* and that an investigation is also undertaken into the quality of Capital Expenditure Trend Data for inclusion on *My School*.

Geography

The draft Foundation to Year 12 Australian Curriculum: Geography was released for public consultation in mid-October 2011 and is published on the Australian consultation portal at www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/consultation. The consultation period will continue through to 29 February 2012. The timeline for the development work has been extended until August 2012.

The Arts

The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts was released in late August 2011. Following consideration of feedback work has commenced on the development of the curriculum. The timeline for the completion of the development work has been extended until November 2012.

Languages

The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Languages paper was released in late November 2011. Writing has commenced for F-10 Chinese and Italian with work to commence soon on a Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages.

The curriculum is being developed on the assumption that all students will learn Languages across primary and secondary schooling, although there is concern among jurisdictions that this objective will be difficult to meet.

Other related matters such as the need for a national languages policy, the demand for qualified teachers supported by high quality teaching resources, professional development of existing teachers, management of the diversity of learners in schools, incentives for learning languages and entry requirements for senior secondary languages have been raised in the consultation on this Learning Area.

The role of Community Languages has been raised along with the need to explore a different model of delivery for Languages Education and the possibility of setting national targets.

The role of ACARA in alerting Ministers to some of these key issues has been discussed.

Health and Physical Education

Work has commenced on drafting the *Shape Paper*. A national forum was held on 6th December 2011.

Issues that have been raised in consultations on the initial advice paper include:

- balance across health and physical education;
- overemphasis on the socially critical perspective at the expense of a more evidence based framework;
- the notion of *health Literacy*;
- the place of sport in the curriculum;
- concerns that the two strand structure may result in the Learning Area being split into two courses;
- The place of THE Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures: Cross-Curriculum Priority in the Health and Physical Education Learning Area requires clarification.

Technologies (Including ICT and Design and Technology)

Work has commenced on preparing a *Shape Paper*. A national forum was held on 5th December 2011.

It is proposed that the draft *Shape Paper* will indicate that this Learning Area will comprise two subjects: Design and Technology and ICT. It has been acknowledged that ICT could be organised in a different manner from Design and Technology.

The difference between ICT as a *General Capability* and ICT as a subject remains an area of debate. The knowledge, skills and understanding associated with ICT and those associated with Design and Technology is also a key point of discussion.

It has been proposed that the ICT subject be renamed Digital Technologies.

The curriculum for this Learning Area could be divided into three strands

- Technologies Knowledge and understanding/digital technologies knowledge and understanding
- Creating Futures
- Technological processes and production/Digital technological processes and production.

Other Work

Preliminary work has commenced on Civics and Citizenship and Business/Economics.

In 2012 ACARA will coordinate, with the support of States and Territories, a systematic approach to the collection and publication of work sample portfolios.

Teacher resources have been developed to support AEL/D students to access the Australian Curriculum. The resource was published on the ACARA website in August 2011. Additional support in the form of

annotations to accompany content descriptions in F-10 English, Mathematics, Science and History are being prepared for publications.

ACARA has worked with Early Childhood Australia to support the production of a paper (*Foundations for Learning*) which describes the relationship between the Early Years Learning Framework and the Australian Curriculum. The paper has been distributed.

Implementation Support

ACARA is working with Education Services Australia (ESA) to ensure that support materials for teachers and students are appropriately connected with the Australian Curriculum.

General Capabilities

Further refinements are being made to the Literacy and Numeracy *General Capabilities*. The relationship between Literacy and English, Numeracy and Mathematics and ICT and Technologies will also be clarified.

Cross Curriculum Priorities

The Cross-Curriculum Priorities consultation report has been approved for publication.

Students with Disability

The F-10 Australian curriculum is being extended for students with moderate to severe intellectual disability to enable teachers to more readily identify the students' current levels of learning and achievement.

Additional descriptions, content elaborations and achievement standards in English and Mathematics have been developed as draft curriculum materials. The feedback received on the draft documents was generally positive. However, at least two States have voiced disagreement with elements of the approach. In addition a national association representing special education

has expressed concerns with the materials developed and the potential separation of students with disability through titling of the above curriculum as *Progressing to Foundation*.

Others consider the curriculum materials are a valuable resource to meet the developmental needs of students with disability.

Advice has been received from the Australian Human Rights Commission which indicates that the curriculum should not be organised and presented in a way that suggests that a particular part of the curriculum is for a particular group of students, although the notion of a sequence of the curriculum that allowed teachers to identify current levels of student learning, rather than labelling the curriculum for use by a particular group of students may be a more appropriate approach.

Further consultation occurred in December 2011 with the F-12 Curriculum Reference Group and the Students with Disability Advisory Group.

A small group has been established to progress discussion on the key issues.

Some options to be explored are:

- the development of illustrative examples of how teachers use the F-10 Curriculum Framework flexibly to meet the needs of students with disabilities.
- the development of a broader range of curriculum content elaborations designed to illustrate curriculum content for students with disability.

The draft curriculum materials will be circulated while the above deliberations progress.

Senior Secondary Curriculum

There are four key matters relating to further development of the senior secondary curriculum:

- Engagement with State and Territory curriculum, assessment and certification authorities
- Scope of development of the national senior secondary curriculum
- Development and implementation of senior secondary curriculum
- Australian Baccalaureate and its links with the senior secondary curriculum.

ACACA agencies will continue to be responsible for implementation of the senior secondary curriculum, including assessment, certification and the attendant quality assurance mechanisms.

During 2011 ACARA has sought formal feedback from the ACACA agencies in relation to protocols and the design specifications of senior secondary curriculum.

The ACARA chair will invite ACACA chairs and their chief executives to a meeting in early 2012 to discuss progress with the development of the senior secondary curriculum and the issues and opportunities that arise. A fundamental question to be discussed is how best to advance a national senior secondary agenda given the variation in policies, customs and practice that currently exists. A further issue is how best to align the decision making processes of ACACA agencies with the processes that inform Ministerial Council decisions.

Work is proceeding on the development of English, Mathematics, Science and History with the knowledge that there is already a fair degree of consistency across the States and Territories. The current timeline for these Learning Areas is the

end of 2012. Original development timelines proposed completion of senior secondary curriculum by 2010. Further consultation will occur on these areas in the first quarter of 2012. Geography has also been developed within an F-12 Framework.

Following approval by Ministers in late 2012 the State curriculum authorities would then need to take senior secondary Australian Curriculum in English, Mathematics, Science and History and embed them within their local suite of courses and undertake appropriate work on assessment and reporting consistent with local certification. This is likely to take one to two years beyond 2012

ACARA is consulting with the State ACACA agencies on Content and Achievement Standards for the above Learning Areas. The latter remains a contentious area with further exploration of the following options:

- a) National *levels of achievement* are implemented in States and Territories as the with either a dual arrangement with 15 subjects using the national *levels of achievement* and remaining subjects using the current State/Territory levels of achievement or all State/Territory *levels of achievement* are changed to the national design or
- b) There is a delayed implementation of national *levels of achievement* until the extent of national senior secondary curriculum is known.

No decisions have been made about proceeding with senior secondary curriculum development in other Learning Areas at this stage. A range of views are being considered such as proceeding with an F-12 approach for all remaining Learning Areas and subjects, separating senior secondary development from F-10 and postponing senior secondary

development in other Learning Areas and limiting the development of senior secondary curriculum to targeted subjects.

ACARA's remit covers F-12 in all Learning Areas.

Revised design specifications have been developed by ACARA to guide the development of the curriculum.

The senior secondary years remain one of the key challenges for ACARA as there are significant differences across States and Territories on how to proceed with the ACARA remit

Australian Baccalaureate (AB)

A draft discussion paper on the proposal to create an Australian Baccalaureate (AB) has met with mixed reaction across States/Territories. The paper outlines a number of options for the development of the AB. The intent is not to replace State and Territory credentials but it will 'sit alongside' them. It would promote excellence and recognition of high achievement, allow for breadth and depth of study without excluding local courses.

There is concern among some representatives about generating an 'elitist' baccalaureate style credential versus a credential available to all students.

This development of this proposal is likely to progress slowly. Some see the discussion of an AB at this point of time as a distraction from the negotiations around the design and content of senior secondary curriculum.

The paper does not canvass the establishment, in the longer term, the option of a national credential such as the Australian Certificate of Education.

A further version of the above discussion paper is to be presented to the national Strategic Policy Working Party Group.

Alternative Curriculum

The ACARA recognition process focuses on the assessment of the:

- extent to which the 'recognised alternative curriculum' aligns with the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*;
- meets the principles and guidelines outlined in the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum* (2011,v3) and
- compares with the Australian curriculum content differences in content need to be explained by the proponent with an explanation of how gaps are addressed and why different content is valued by the proponent.

It does not replace the school registration process which continues to be a responsibility of State registration authorities.

ACARA has advised that the recognition process of the International Baccalaureate, Montessori and Steiner curriculum frameworks has now been completed for F-10 English, Maths, Science and History. Each organisation is now listed on ACARA's Recognition Register of Alternative Curriculum for these four Learning Areas.

The ACARA Alternative Curriculum Recognition Committee (ACRC) was responsible for overseeing the process of assessing the IB, Montessori and Steiner submissions and determining whether their curriculum frameworks were comparable. ACARA will provide State and Territory registration authorities with copies of the *Recognition Recommendation* forms for their information and consideration for the registration process of schools using the recognised alternative curriculum.

There are four Montessori schools (Banksia Montessori School and Parklands School, WA, Farmhouse Montessori

School, NSW and The Essington School Darwin) and six Steiner schools (Leaning Tree Community School WA, Aetaomah School, Kindlehill School, Manning River Steiner School, Shearwater, Mullumbimby Steiner School, and The Newcastle Rudolf Steiner School, NSW) that are not signatories to the Montessori Australia Foundation or Steiner Education Australia's submission for recognition of alternative curriculum. These schools will need to submit their own curriculum documentation to their State/Territory registration authorities for approval.

Information about the recognition process and the roles of ACARA and the State or Territory registration authorities is available on the ACARA website: http://www.acara.edu.au/curriculum/alternative_curriculum_recognition.html. The website will also have a summary of the IB, Montessori and Steiner recommendations and a link to the *Recognition Recommendation* forms.

The recognition of alternative curriculum will be an on-going process as new Learning Areas of the Australian Curriculum are introduced, or when changes are made to recognised alternative curriculum and/or Australian Curriculum.

On-Line NAPLAN

Currently all NAPLAN/NAP assessment is conducted by means of paper and pencil tests, but with the extensive use of on-line marking of scanned papers.

In August 2010 the Australian Government announced funding (\$39.9 million) over four years to deliver on-line diagnostic tools for parents, teachers and students. It has three elements:

- On-line tools for teachers that enable individualised assessments for students, diagnostic feedback and links to specific resources

- A parent website to help them obtain information about their child's progress in key learning areas and access to activities that help parents support their child's learning
- On-line delivery of National Assessment program assessments in key areas of the curriculum.

The initiative anticipated developing a platform to deliver NAP sample assessments on-line. However feedback from jurisdictions indicated that NAP is strategically less significant than NAPLAN and that the attention should be on NAPLAN.

The Australian government has agreed that the Online Diagnostic initiative should be amended to encompass online delivery of NAPLAN. This will be seen as an integral part of the Online Diagnostic Tools initiative.

The development and delivery of NAPLAN should be aligned to the implementation of the Australian Curriculum. Alignment of NAPLAN to the Australian Curriculum will require the development of new test blueprints and some changes in both what is assessed and how it is assessed.

The opportunity exists with on-line delivery to explore the potential to assess a range of learning outcomes and student abilities and to make use of a wide range of authentic tasks and online stimulus materials in constructing items. The benefits of moving to an on-line environment include:

- aligning with emerging practice and the rapid spread of computers in schools;
- the capacity to assess a wider range of learning outcomes and to make use of a wide range of authentic tasks and online stimulus materials;
- the capacity to better tailor assessment to the abilities of students;

- a significant reduction in turn-around and feedback time, allowing more feedback to teachers;
- the potential to reduce testing pressures through more extended 'windows' of time in which assessment may be undertaken;
- the potential to provide direct link to resources;
- significant savings for jurisdictions in costs of printing, distribution, collection, data capture, etc.

Access to sufficient computers and dependable high speed internet access are two limiting factors. For some schools and students special paper and pencil versions could also be made available. Variability in keyboard proficiency could also be an issue.

The objective is to deliver NAPLAN on-line to full cohort students in May 2014, with trialling to occur in 2013. Adequate trialling on online NAPLAN is essential.

It is likely the on-line NAPLAN test specifications will be based on the English and mathematics Australia curricula. Any change to the content and mode of delivery of NAPLAN tests will have implications for the maintenance of underlying measurement scales, which will create a discontinuity in time series.

The new NAPLAN tests could seek to assess writing across genres and to link them to more robust scores.

The numeracy tests will need to address the increased attention to statistics within the Australian Curriculum.

NAPLAN reporting is currently referenced to a set of standards that result in very high proportions of students meeting the requirements. The Australian Curriculum is not minimalist and the opportunity could be taken to establish an additional new target standard that is more demanding than the current standard.

The majority if not all of the NAPLAN tests could be delivered on-line and objectively scored. In the case of the extended writing tests students in Years 5,7 and 9 would key in their responses; further investigation will be required to determine whether Year 3 students could also respond using the online environment.

A significant information program will need to be implemented to convince teachers and parents of the benefits of the on-line delivery of the national tests and to ensure students are provided with sufficient skills to use the on-line technology.