Dear Principal

THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide you and your staff with an update on the development of the Australian curriculum, initially referred to as the national curriculum, and consultation activities in NSW this term.

The Commonwealth, State and Territory governments agreed in 2008 that an Australian curriculum, initially for English, Mathematics, Science and History (phase 1 learning areas) should be developed. The development of the Australian curriculum is being managed by the national body, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), with input and feedback from the states and territories.

Detailed information about the Australian curriculum including curriculum design documents and timelines about ACARA’s processes are published on the ACARA website <www.acara.edu.au>. A facility to subscribe to updates from ACARA is also available at this site.

Content
The Australian curriculum is being developed in phases. Phase 1 curriculum development involves English, Mathematics, Science and History. The final curriculum materials for Phase 1 are scheduled for publication in August 2010. Phase 2 curriculum development involves geography, the arts and languages. Curriculum in other learning areas may be developed over time.

It is intended that general capabilities and cross-curriculum dimensions will be integrated into each learning area. The general capabilities will include literacy, numeracy, ICT, thinking skills, creativity, self-management, teamwork, intercultural understanding, ethical behaviour. The cross-curriculum dimensions will include Indigenous history and cultures, Asian literacy, sustainability.

The draft curriculum is expressed through content descriptions, which describe what young people should be taught and the quality of learning expected of them at each year level. In most subjects, the content descriptions are organised in strands. The depth to which students are expected to acquire knowledge, understanding and skills are defined by an achievement standard at each year level.

Reporting on student achievement will be by A-E grades, or, equivalent. Apart from NAPLAN, formal assessment and credentialing processes such as the School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate are not part of the Australian curriculum and remain the responsibility of NSW and the Board of Studies NSW.
Consultation and Online Publication
ACARA has advised that the draft curriculum documents for K-10 will be available during the week of 22 February 2010 for a consultation period between February and May 2010. The draft curriculum documents for the Senior years will be available for consultation between April and June 2010.

The Board of Studies NSW continues to be responsible for advising the NSW Minister for Education and Training on the appropriateness of curriculum, including the Australian curriculum, for NSW schools and the structure and process of its implementation.

The Board of Studies will conduct consultation meetings during March to gather feedback about the draft K-10 Australian curriculum.

System authorities, school associations and professional bodies will also undertake a level of consultation to inform their own position. The consultations processes are being carefully coordinated.

More detailed information on the consultation process will be forwarded to you shortly.

ACARA is also conducting a trial of the draft K-10 curriculum in schools to gather feedback about its description and manageability. The Board of Studies has coordinated the nomination of schools from the Department of Education and Training, the Catholic Education Commission and the Association of Independent Schools. Twenty five schools in NSW representing the three education sectors have been selected by ACARA to participate in trialing aspects of the curriculum including its online delivery.

Approval and BOS NSW syllabuses
Once the Australian Curriculum for a subject has been approved by the NSW Minister for Education and Training, it will replace equivalent NSW curriculum content and be adopted for implementation in NSW.

The Board of Studies NSW will provide notification and information about changes to syllabuses as they are approved.

Assessment and credentialing
Credentialing, and related assessment requirements and processes, remain the responsibility of states and territories, which in NSW means the Board of Studies.

Pedagogy
Similarly, pedagogy, that is, how the curriculum is taught and assessed (other than for a credential) remains the responsibility of each education sector. Hence, models, approaches and practices to which schools are committed need not be affected by Australian curriculum.

Implementation
ACARA intends that the Australian Curriculum in the areas of English, Mathematics, Science and History be available for implementation from 2011. The phases and details of the implementation process in NSW will be substantially informed by this consultation process.

Advice will be provided to schools about implementation timelines and support materials developed by the Board of Studies and the education sectors after the curriculum is published in Term 3.
The adoption of the Australian Curriculum will involve changes in NSW. Advice to schools on how to manage these changes will be provided by both the Board and the sectors.

In conclusion
A national curriculum for Australia is a highly significant development designed to benefit all young Australians and the nation.

Education sectors are working closely with principals, teachers and with the Board of Studies NSW to ensure that the Australian Curriculum enhances the already high standard of curriculum in NSW and that its implementation is well supported.

Schools are encouraged to keep abreast of the development of the Australian Curriculum and to participate in the upcoming consultation processes.

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