

Board Bulletin



BOARD OF STUDIES NSW

September 1997 – Vol 6 No 8

HSC changes welcomed

Changes to the senior years of schooling outlined in the NSW Government's HSC White Paper, *Securing Their Future*, will see a simpler curriculum structure and will provide students with more meaningful information about their achievements in Year 12.

President of the Board of Studies NSW, Mr Sam Weller, welcomed the changes and the role the Board will play in revitalising the curriculum structure for the HSC.

'The aim is to encourage students to study the most appropriate courses. Changes to course structures and the reporting and assessment of students' achievements, which will place all students on a common scale for each subject, are sure to lead to students taking up the more demanding courses,' said Mr Weller.

'The review of the curriculum and the additional information that will be provided on students' credentials will lead to students making improved subject choices based on their own interests.'

Mr Weller also said the support for vocational education will lead to a simpler structure for vocational courses while raising their status in the HSC.

The distancing of the Board of Studies' Higher School Certificate results from the Tertiary Entrance Rank, or Universities Admissions Index as it will now be called, has been welcomed by teachers and will prevent the annual reporting of simplistic tables based only on schools' TER scores.

Changes to the School Certificate testing procedures and crediting students with their own School Certificate results have also been described as a positive initiative.



Premier Bob Carr with students at the launch of the HSC White Paper.
Photographer: Billy Ryan.

Key Features of *Securing Their Future*

Improving curriculum standards

Strict new criteria will be applied to existing and proposed new syllabuses. All courses will be reported on a single scale. Capable students will be rewarded for successfully completing advanced study. A 2 unit structure is endorsed in principle for all HSC subjects, with standard and advanced courses where appropriate. The feasibility of this structure will be thoroughly investigated for all subjects.

Creating more flexible study requirements

The Key Learning Area structure will be abandoned for Years 11 and 12. English will be the only compulsory subject. Students will be required to complete at least 12 units of Preliminary courses (Year 11) and 10 units of HSC courses (six units being Board Developed Courses).

Strengthening of English

This will be done by including new 2 unit standard and advanced courses and a new 2 unit Literature course. For the first time, students will have the option of taking four units of English for the HSC. A new English as a Second Language course will be introduced for students recently arrived in Australia. A course, Fundamentals of English, will be introduced for students needing additional help with English literacy — taken with and complementing the Preliminary standard English course.

Enhancing the quality and status of vocational studies

Meeting the standards expected of all HSC courses, these will lead to industry-recognised vocational qualifications, and facilitate the recognition of more vocational courses for university entrance.

Developing explicit standards against which achievement can be measured

These standards, derived from existing examinations and reflecting syllabus content, will enable clear reporting of what students know, understand and can do, as well as the relative performance of students. The current system, which measures students' performances in the HSC against each other rather than against clear standards, disguises the real achievements of students.

Reforming university entrance arrangements

The Tertiary Entrance Rank will be abolished. Students applying for university entrance will receive a Universities Admissions Index (UAI) directly from university authorities. The UAI will remain confidential to students and the university authorities to whom they apply. HSC results will be reported to students separately and prior to the release of the UAI.

Restoring the School Certificate as a significant stage of schooling

Reference Tests will be replaced by external exams and students will receive their own marks. The tests will be held in November 1998 in English and Mathematics. From 1999, statewide exams will also be held in Australian History, Australian Geography and Civics, and Science and Technology. School-based assessment of subjects will be strengthened.

Securing Their Future

The New South Wales Government's
reforms for the Higher School Certificate



New course structure

The in principle commitment to a 2 unit structure for HSC courses is one of the key elements of the NSW Government's changes to the Higher School Certificate announced in the White Paper, *Securing Their Future*.

By the end of this year, a feasibility study will have been completed to ensure that current course content will be able to be accommodated in a curriculum structure based on 2 units. The feasibility study will involve, amongst other things:

- an analysis of the content of current 2 unit related and 3 unit courses to clarify the nature of the 3 unit course and the extent to which it provides opportunities to extend what they have learnt in the 2 unit related course;
- an examination of the performance of the 3 unit students in comparison to 2 unit students to gain an insight on whether the 3 unit course is more demanding;
- looking at the ways teachers currently deliver courses in terms of time allocation and topic sequence for students studying only the 2 unit course, compared with those studying the 3 unit course.

The feasibility study will also expand the timetabling trials carried out during the development of the HSC White Paper. These initial trials, conducted across the three school systems, indicated that schools would be able to accommodate the new structure.

According to Robert Randall, Director of Curriculum at the Office of the Board of Studies, the aim of the new curriculum structure is to encourage more students to study more demanding courses, reversing the trend that has been apparent in recent years with many students opting out of more demanding courses.

The feasibility study will be followed by an evaluation of all courses to determine what changes, if any, need to be made to course content. In many cases this evaluation may simply confirm that the existing content is suitable and should remain largely unchanged.

Once this process has been carried out, work can begin on developing new syllabuses, with all courses to be finalised by July 1999.

Where the evaluation process shows significant changes will be made to a course, the Board plans to provide the various school systems with advanced notice to ensure professional development needs of teachers can be met.

Planned changes to the School Certificate

All Year 10 students in NSW will sit exams in English Literacy and Mathematics for the 1998 School Certificate.

Changes to the School Certificate announced in the NSW Government's HSC White Paper, *Securing Their Future*, will also see two new tests in Australian History, Australian Geography and Civics, and Science and Technology, to be introduced in 1999. To ensure the smooth implementation of these new exams, trial tests will be conducted in schools in 1998 with a view to their full introduction in 1999.

Details of the scope of the tests in all four areas will be provided by the end of 1997, and in Term 1, 1998 each Year 10 student will receive a booklet explaining the new exam specifications, including sample questions.

Mr John Cook, Director, Examinations and Assessment at the Office of the Board of Studies,

said the new School Certificate will be fair to all students.

'The external tests will be demanding, but there won't be any surprises for the students.'

The trial tests will be designed to ensure that students who have already studied the mandatory components of each subject in Years 7 and 8 are not disadvantaged. It is expected, however, that eventually the mandatory components on which the tests will be based will be taught later in the junior school.

Results for the School Certificate will be reported in the same way as HSC results will be reported in 2001, with students receiving the actual result they scored in the external tests, rather than earning grades for their school.

The School Certificate will familiarise students and parents with the procedures used in the Higher School Certificate.

President's Message



Now that the Government's HSC White Paper, Securing Their Future, has been released, a flurry of activity is under way to assist the implementation process.

Talks with principals and teachers around the state have identified many positive reactions to the HSC White Paper, especially regarding the more coherent curriculum structure and the development of standards-referenced assessment and reporting.

Principals have also indicated the need for urgent decisions about the School Certificate tests, particularly in the area of Australian History, Geography and Civics. The Board is aware of schools' organisational needs and is currently considering all the relevant issues. Schools will receive advice in the near future about possible mandatory curriculum requirements and their timing with respect to students currently in Stage 4. At this point, schools are advised not to make wholesale changes to their organisational structures until more detailed information is provided.

As this will be my last message as President of the Board of Studies, I would like to thank everyone in schools and the wider educational community for the generous support and encouragement I have received over many years of involvement in school and Board activities. I value deeply the friendships and professional contacts that have been afforded me by so many people.

I have enjoyed my involvement in education immensely and have remained totally confident about the value and paramount importance of education in the lives of our students. Despite the challenges and obstacles that teachers face, I have always found them positive and receptive, especially to suggestions that might help them in their work with young people. I feel proud and privileged to have been part of that vital work and wish you every success in your future endeavours.



Sam Weller, President

Contents

HSC changes welcomed	1
Key Features of <i>Securing Their Future</i>	1
New course structure	2
Planned changes to the School Certificate	2
President's Message	3
Check Your Mailbox	3
HSC and SC Important Dates	4
Learning and Technology Forum No 2	5
President of the Board of Studies Retires	5
Update on English K-6	6
<i>Official Notices centre liftout</i>	
Primary Matters	7
Expressions of Interest for PDHPE K-6 Syllabus and Support Document Project Team	9
Product News	10
'Principles of Learning' Forum Proceedings	10
Establishing standards for assessing and reporting	11
Key role for Office of the Board of Studies	11
1997 HSC Results Available to Students by Phone	12

CHECK YOUR MAILBOX



- ❖ 1997 HSC Examinations Timetable and Poster
- ❖ Industrial Technology Draft Syllabus, KLA Information & Exam Questions, and Survey
- ❖ HSC Portfolios
- ❖ 1996 SC Reference Test and Award Statistics

Documents currently being developed

- ❖ Agriculture Stages 4 & 5 Syllabus
- ❖ Agriculture Stage 6 Support Document
- ❖ English Stage 6 KLA Handbook — 1998 Preliminary and 1999 HSC
- ❖ Creative Arts Stage 6 KLA Handbook — 1998 Preliminary and 1999 HSC
- ❖ 1999 English HSC Prescribed Texts

HSC and SC Important Dates

Year 10

- 26 Sept** Final date for submission of deferred courses to Board of Studies Liaison Officer for final rulings.
First date from which principals can grant exemption from attendance.
Requests for special exam provisions for 1998 Year 10 students due at the Board.
- 29 Sept–10 Oct** Term 3 Vacation
- 10 Oct** Grading advice, school grading recommendation schedules, alternate grade schedule for students with 'N' determinations and report of school/State performance in School Certificate Reference Tests and profile collection sheets for special programs of study sent to schools.
- 16–17 Oct** Board Endorsement Panel final decisions.
- 17 Oct** Latest date for principals' 'N' determinations; notification of decision and appeal form to student(s).
- 20 Oct** School appeals against pattern of grades for School Certificate due at the Board.
- 24 Oct** Latest date for student appeals against 'N' determinations to be lodged with the principal.
- 30 Oct** Grading recommendation sheets, alternate grade schedule for students with 'N' determinations and profile sheets for special programs of study due at the Board.
- 31 Oct** Latest date for school reviews of 'N' determinations and principals' notification to student(s) of results of review of appeals against 'N' determinations due at the Board.
Board Endorsed Course applications not endorsed by this date lapse.

Year 11

- 19 Sept** General entry form for JSST courses to be undertaken in Term 4 sent to schools.
- 26 Sept** Final date for submission of deferred courses to Board of Studies Liaison Officer for final rulings.
Requests for special exam provisions for 1998 Year 12 students due at the Board.
- 29 Sept–10 Oct** Term 3 Vacation
- 10 Oct** Vocational course module collection forms sent to schools.
- 14 Oct** General Entry Forms for JSST courses undertaken in Term 4 due at the Board.
- 16–17 Oct** Board Endorsement Panel final decisions.
- 17 Oct** Latest date for principals' 'U' determinations; notification of decision and appeal form(s) to student(s).
- 23 Oct** Principals' 'U' determination schedules due at the Board.
- 24 Oct** Latest date for student appeals against 'U' determinations to be lodged with the principal.
- 31 Oct** Latest date for school reviews of 'U' determinations and principals' notification to student(s) of result of review of appeals due at the Board.
Board Endorsed Course applications not endorsed by this date lapse.

Year 12

- 19 Sept** General entry form for JSST courses to be undertaken in Term 4 sent to schools.
- 26 Sept** Final date for submission of deferred BEC courses to Board of Studies Liaison Officer for final rulings.
Latest date for school review of student appeals against 'U' determinations and principal's notification to student(s) of results of review of appeals against 'U' determinations due at the Board.
- 29 Sept–10 Oct** Term 3 Vacation
- 10 Oct** Request for address for principals' HSC Result List.
Vocational course module collection forms sent to schools.
- 12 Oct** Last completion date for Design and Technology 3 Unit Specialised Study. Submission details to be advised.
- 13 Oct** Assessment confirmation schedules (includes principals' certification) sent to schools.
- 14 Oct** General Entry Forms for JSST courses undertaken in Term 4 due at the Board.
- 16–17 Oct** Board Endorsement Panel final decisions.
- 27 Oct** Commencement date for Visual Arts itinerant marking.
- 27 Oct – 24 Nov (inclusive)** HSC Examinations
- 31 Oct** Changes to assessment marks due at the Board.
Board Endorsed Course applications not endorsed by this date lapse.
Assessment rankings for each course and assessment ranking sheet for each student showing assessment ranking in each course within the secondary school/college of TAFE for distribution to students sent to schools.
Final date for submission of vocational course module collection forms.

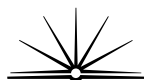
The *Board Bulletin* is a regular publication by the Board of Studies NSW. Principals are requested to circulate it among teachers and members of the School Council, P & C and parents. One copy should be filed for reference. Schools may only photocopy this publication for use by teachers, students and parents. Contributions or suggestions for articles are welcome.

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President of the Board of Studies Retires

President of the Board of Studies, Mr Sam Weller, announced his retirement last month after 40 years in education in New South Wales.

Mr Weller has seen many changes in education since he was first employed as an English/History teacher at Gundagai Central School in 1958.

'In those days you were suddenly told to appear at a school in the country. So you looked at a map of NSW and made arrangements with the railways.

'When I arrived at Gundagai I had two hand-written pages for teaching History. I asked about the head of the department and the principal looked at me for a good minute and said I was it. It was only my enthusiasm, thick skin and colleagues that made me survive. Fortunately teachers today receive a lot more support.'


As President of the Board, providing that support to teachers and schools has been a major part of Mr Weller's activities. The success the Board has achieved in representing all schools is something he believes everyone working at the Board should be proud of.

The decision to retire now follows the celebration of Mr Weller's 60th birthday and the significant changes under way in education.

'The reform agenda in relation to the NSW Government's HSC White Paper will need someone who has at least four or five years to devote to assisting the Government in implementing the reforms.'

Mr Weller said when he began teaching his aspiration was just to be a good teacher. Over the 40 years of his career, more than half of which has been spent in schools, Mr Weller has been a classroom teacher, deputy principal, Inspector and university lecturer. He has also held the following positions — Assistant Director and Director, Statutory Boards Directorate; General Manager, Curriculum, Board of Studies; and Executive Officer, Curriculum and Assessment Committee of the Australian Education Council's Standing Committee.

And while he won't miss any of the paperwork associated with his job, Mr Weller says he will definitely miss his colleagues and contact with schools and other educational institutions.

Mr Warren Grimshaw, Executive Director of the Coffs Harbour Education Campus, has been appointed by the Minister for Education and Training as the interim President. 

Learning and Technology Forum No 2

Following the success of the first Learning and Technology Forum held by the Board of Studies on 25 June this year, another forum is being organised.

Taking into account feedback from the first forum, it is proposed that the next one be focused to achieve the following outcomes:

- explore ways in which the information technology services and materials the Board provides can be used to achieve learning outcomes;
- discuss issues concerning information technology that the Board will need to consider and further explore in developing curriculum and delivering services to schools;
- examine examples of initiatives in the use of technology to aid learning.

The proposed date and venue for the forum are:

Saturday, 1 November 1997, 9.00 am to 4.00 pm
University of Western Sydney
Commerce Building, South Werrington Campus

The forum will suit anyone interested in educational decision making, planning, teaching and learning. Schools are invited to nominate up to three participants. Only 400 places are available. They will be allocated in order of application. The course fee of \$45 will include lunch and morning tea.

To enrol please fax the accompanying form to the Office of the Board of Studies on (02) 9367 8481. The Board will send an invoice.

Any inquiries should be directed to John Bennett, Director Information Technology, Office of the Board of Studies, phone (02) 9367 8201.

BOARD OF STUDIES Learning and Technology Forum No 2

Please enrol the following:

Name.....

Position.....

Name.....

Position.....

Name.....

Position.....

Name and Address of School or Institution

.....

.....

.....

Phone..... Fax.....

.....

Principal's Signature

Date



Update on English K-6

Release of the Draft English K-6 Syllabus and Support Documents

The first set of draft documents released to schools for English K-6 will be:

- *Draft English K-6 Syllabus;*
- *Draft English K-6 Modules; and*
- *Draft English K-6 Student Work Samples: Writing.*

Consultation

The consultation plan for the draft English K-6 documents includes:

- a written survey for all schools, that will be sent to schools in October;
- whole staff interviews in a sample of schools;
- focus group meetings in October and November.

The focus group meetings for teachers and principals will be held at ten different locations in NSW. Your local Board of Studies Liaison Officer (BOSLO) will be able to give you information about the meeting that has been organised in your area.

What's New?

Scope and Sequence Charts

A Scope and Sequence of Grammar for each stage has been included in the draft syllabus. This Scope and Sequence chart indicates the grammatical understandings and terms that students might be expected to have developed by the end of each stage. Teachers may choose to introduce certain grammatical concepts at earlier stages if they are relevant to a particular text.

A Scope and Sequence chart of literary and factual texts has also been included.

Literary Texts

The literary texts in the current syllabus have been reorganised into the categories of story, description and response.

Story includes:

- **Narratives** such as some picture books, short stories, novels, some ballads, fairytales, folktales, some myths, fables, legends, some song lyrics and some drama.
- **Literary Recounts** such as some picture books, short stories, some myths and fables, autobiographies, some humorous stories, some poems and some drama. Literary recounts entertain by dealing with a sequence of events that establish a relationship between a speaker/writer/reader/listener.

- **Observations** such as some picture books and some poems. Students in Early Stage 1 and Stage 1 often write observations such as 'I like mum and dad and my friends'. Observations are usually a statement about people, places, animals, things and events. Oral and written observations do not have a succession of events as in the other story types.

Description includes some picture books, some short stories, some myths and fables, autobiographies, humorous stories and some poems.

Response includes personal responses to texts and reviews of literary texts.

Factual Texts

Factual texts in the current syllabus have been expanded to include factual description, procedural recount and factual recount.

Factual descriptions describe a particular living, non-living or natural phenomenon.

Procedural recounts are written after doing a procedure. They recount in sequential order the steps taken to achieve a particular goal/outcome.

Factual recounts record a series of factual events in the sequence in which they occurred orally or in writing.

What Else Is New?

Stage Outcomes

What support will exist to assist teachers to use stage outcomes for planning, programming, assessing and reporting?

The Board of Studies will release draft modules of work for each stage and each text type.

The first set of modules deals with the text types — narrative, information report, procedure and recount. Each module includes outcomes for each strand in each stage and some suggested English learning experiences.

As students engage with English learning experiences for each text type, teachers will be able to observe and monitor students' progress as they work towards achieving the stage outcomes.

Teachers may focus on all the learning experiences in one module per term or select several learning experiences from one or more modules.

It is anticipated that students will engage in a range of learning experiences from several of the modules related to a stage. It will take a typical student approximately two years to achieve the outcomes for a stage.

continued on page 10



Primary Matters

Road Safety

The first set of draft Stage 1 materials developed for the 'Street Sense' Pedestrian project is currently being trialled in a small sample of schools. Other materials being developed for this project include:

- an Early Stage 1 big book written by Libby Hathorn;
- a big book appropriate for Stage 1 written by Margaret Wild;
- a CD of songs featuring the very popular group, the Hooley Dooleys; and
- a photographic picture pack.

These materials are expected to be available for trialling in October.

Personal Development, Health and Physical Education

The Physical Activity for Health and Fitness Support Document has now been distributed to all schools. A limited trial will take place in a sample of schools during September and October. This trial will be used to inform any adjustment to the draft Personal Development, Health and Physical Education Syllabus (1992) as part of the development of the final syllabus.

The Board will soon be appointing a project team to commence work on the development of the final syllabus. If you are interested in being a member of the project team, refer to the call for expressions of interest on page 9 of this *Board Bulletin*.

Aboriginal Languages Framework

The Board of Studies has recently endorsed a K-10 framework for Aboriginal languages. This framework, written by representatives of Aboriginal communities across New South Wales and representatives of the systems and sectors, provides guidelines, ideas, protocols and contact lists for schools wanting to establish an Aboriginal language program. There are presently at least 15 such programs operating in NSW schools, with the majority of these in primary schools.

The establishment of an Aboriginal language program can make a positive and practical contribution to the process of reconciliation.

CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST — PRIMARY PROJECTS

The Board of Studies is seeking expressions of interest from experienced primary teachers to work on various primary projects commencing Term 1, 1998. The projects include:

- ❖ *Linkages* curriculum support material
- ❖ *General Support Document* advice on matters common to all primary syllabuses

Period of Deployment

Successful applicants will be deployed for periods of up to one term on a full-time or part-time basis. Extensions beyond a term may be granted subject to agreement from schools and/or systems.

Submission of an Expression of Interest

Applications may be submitted on a photocopy of the form provided in this *Board Bulletin* on page 8. The application form should be submitted and be accompanied by supportive information on the applicant's:

- ❖ demonstrated knowledge of K-6 syllabuses and support documents;
- ❖ teaching and curriculum development experience;
- ❖ high level of oral and written communication skills;
- ❖ word processing skills;
- ❖ expertise in any or all of the following areas: curriculum integration using outcomes, early childhood education, assessment K-6;
- ❖ ability to work on several projects at a time and to meet tight deadlines;
- ❖ other information the applicant considers to be relevant.

Closing date

Application forms should be addressed to Phil Lambert, Office of the Board of Studies, GPO Box 5300, Sydney NSW 2001. The closing date for the receipt of application forms is 24 October. For further information contact Mr Phil Lambert, Inspector, Primary Education on (02) 9367 8199.

If you would like further information regarding these items or K-6 curriculum matters in general, contact Phil Lambert, Inspector, Primary Education, ph (02) 9367 8199 or fax (02) 9367 8476.

PRIMARY PROJECTS

Expression of Interest — Application Form

Name

Current position and school.....

Teaching qualifications

Number of years teaching experience in NSW schools.....

Work address	Home address.....
Tel.....	Tel.....
Fax.....	Fax

I wish to submit the following persons as referees from whom confidential statements may be sought. (One person should be able to provide information on the applicant's writing ability.)

Name.....	Name
Position	Position
Work/home address	Work/home address.....
Tel.....	Tel.....
Fax.....	Fax

Applicant's signature..... Date

Principal's Endorsement

Deployment to the Board of Studies is RECOMMENDED/NOT RECOMMENDED (please circle one).

Comments

.....

.....

.....

Principal's signature..... Date.....

Please return to: Mr Phil Lambert
 Office of the Board of Studies NSW
 GPO Box 5300
 Sydney NSW 2001

Tel (02) 9367 8199
 Fax (02) 9367 8476

Please attach information as requested in 'Primary Matters' (page 7 in this edition of the *Board Bulletin*).

Expressions of Interest for PDHPE K–6 Syllabus and Support Document Project Team

The Board of Studies is seeking expressions of interest from experienced teachers and tertiary educators to be members of a Project Team that will prepare the final PDHPE K–6 Syllabus and Support Document.

Written applications should indicate evidence of:

- demonstrated knowledge of the PDHPE learning area;
- practical teaching experience in PDHPE in primary education settings;
- demonstrated experience in curriculum development;

- high-level writing skills.

Expressions of interest must be accompanied by a completed application form.

Closing date

The closing date for receipt of applications is 10 October 1997. Expressions of interest should be addressed to: Ms Alison Haylock, Office of the Board of Studies, GPO Box 5300, Sydney, 2001.

For further information contact: Mr Paul Hewitt, Inspector, PDHPE on (02) 9367 8156.

PDHPE K–6 SYLLABUS AND SUPPORT DOCUMENT PROJECT TEAM Expression of Interest — Application Form

Name

Current position

Tertiary qualifications.....

Number of years teaching experience in NSW schools/tertiary institutions.....

Contact details

Work address	Home address.....
.....
Phone.....	Phone.....
Fax.....	Fax.....

Referees

Name.....	Name
Work address	Work address
.....
Phone	Phone
Fax.....	Fax.....

Principal's endorsement

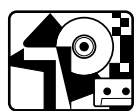
Employment as a project team member is RECOMMENDED/NOT RECOMMENDED (please circle one).

Comments

.....

Principal's signature..... Date.....

Please return to Ms Alison Haylock, Office of the Board of Studies NSW, GPO Box 5300, Sydney 2001. Phone: (02) 9367 8184, Fax: (02) 9367 8484.



PRODUCT NEWS

Available Now

OnSTAGE 1996 Video Price \$40 each

The OnSTAGE video features a selection of the finest performances from the 1996 OnSTAGE production, including set and costume designs, scriptwriting, critical analysis and video production by Higher School Certificate students in New South Wales. OnSTAGE demonstrates the development of students' creative, physical, critical and technical skills and reflects the dedication and commitment of the students and their teachers. Teacher's notes accompany the video.

New format

Geography Years 7–10 Teaching Kit

The Board of Studies Geography Years 7–10 Teaching Kit is now presented as individual modules — each priced at \$40. Modules cover the Balmain, Tamworth, Murray-Riverina and Gold Coast regions. Each module contains worksheets, OHTs, slides and colour broadsheets — there are at least 30 lessons per module. Separate sets of broadsheets for each area are also available at \$20 per set of 10.

New Class Storybook Pack

Storybook titles from the *Aboriginal Literacy Resource Kit* (K–6). Class sets of five individual storybook titles, together with teacher's notes, are available at \$60 per set. These are great for focusing on the importance of Aboriginal language and its varieties.

English K–6 —

Recommended Children's Texts \$10 each

A list of recommended English literature texts for Years K–6. The texts are organised into three broad sections: literary, factual and media texts.

English 9–10 — Works and Plays \$10 each

A list of recommended English literature texts and films for Years 9–10 covering a wide range of materials — poetry, Australian and international fiction, short stories, non-fiction, access literature, drama and films.

For further information, please contact:

Helen Griffin

Marketing Officer

Office of the Board of Studies

Tel: (02) 9367 8331 Fax: (02) 9262 6270

e-mail: griffin@boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au

Internet address: <http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au>

'Principles of Learning' Forum Proceedings

Following the successful 'Nature of the Learner' Forum in October 1995, the Board conducted a forum on the 'Principles of Learning' in August 1996 at Drummoyne Public School. This was attended by 180 participants from all sections of the NSW education community.

The aim of the second forum was to examine current research on learning and to identify the implications for curriculum development.

The Board invited two specialists in learning theory and practice to present their views in the context of the Board's curriculum development role: Dr John Edwards from the Education Faculty of James Cook University; and Ms Debbie Knight, Clinical Psychologist and Director of Queenscliff/Dalwood Assessment Centre.

A number of workshop groups were also conducted to examine specific questions on the principles of learning and the implications for the Board's curriculum responsibilities.

Copies of the proceedings of this forum, comprising the papers presented by the guest speakers and major issues raised in workshop discussions, are now available from the Board. Requests should be directed to:

Chris Kelly

Planning and Development Branch


Phone: (02) 9367 8205

Fax: (02) 9367 8478.

Update on English K–6 *continued from page 6*

Draft Work Samples will be released in print form in three parts — Writing; Reading; and Talking and Listening. The Board of Studies will also release a CD-ROM on Student Work Samples along with a hard copy Work Samples in 1998.

The Work Samples are annotated and will eventually include a 'Where to from Here?' box, which will provide advice for teachers on how to improve the student's writing, reading, talking and listening skills, knowledge and understandings.

Questions you would like considered for inclusion in a future Update on English K–6 can be faxed to Maria Hardy (Senior Curriculum Officer, English) on (02) 9367 8476. 

Establishing standards for assessing and reporting

The HSC White Paper states that 'the government has decided to adopt a standards-referenced approach to assessment and reporting. This will provide specific criteria against which to judge what students know, understand and can do — that is, the standards students have attained for their Higher School Certificate. Standards-referenced assessment and reporting also enables comparisons to be made over time in the standards achieved in the Higher School Certificate'. The move to a standards-referenced approach is in response to the strong support for such change identified during the Higher School Certificate Review conducted by Professor McGaw. This is a new direction as far as the HSC is concerned, but it will build on approaches that have been used successfully in other testing programs in Australia and overseas.

'The standards will be based on the educational outcomes expected of students as defined by the content of each Higher School Certificate syllabus. They will be objectively established by using examination "scripts" (answers by students) to establish a hierarchy of task difficulty.' Using this approach will provide both a measure of a student's relative performance to others and a measure of the standard they have achieved against benchmarks of clearly defined curriculum outcomes established by performance in the external examination. Standards-referenced assessment also makes it possible to compare the performances of students who have studied a subject in different years. It will, therefore, be possible to judge whether standards of achievement are rising, falling or remaining static.

In developing a scale of achievement in a subject, an analysis is made of student performances on the individual questions in the examination. Differences in the difficulty of the questions provide the basis for establishing the scale from less to more difficult questions and from low to high student performance. Once this is done it is possible to develop descriptors (statements) that describe different levels of achievement on the scale.

Research has been conducted over the past three years using a small number of courses to test the viability of this procedure. Encouraging results have been obtained by using a combination of professional judgement and statistical analysis. Recently, Board officers have begun to investigate the development of achievement standards for a wider range of subjects. Statistical analyses of the

performances of sample groups of students in the 1996 HSC examinations have been performed, using a Latent Trait model. This model enables measures of the difficulty of examination questions and measures of student ability to be placed on the same scale. Once this is done, subject specialists can use this and other information to make judgements about what knowledge and skills are typically possessed by students at different ability levels. Teams of experienced teachers and Board officers will use such information, and other available data, in making decisions about curriculum structures and contents and the creation of achievement scales.

As work on the development of the HSC standards-referenced approach progresses, the Board of Studies will release a paper explaining in detail the characteristics of the model.

Key role for Office of the Board of Studies

'The Office of the Board of Studies is gearing up to play a major role in the implementation of the Government's reform agenda for the Higher School Certificate and School Certificate,' said Mr John Ward, General Manager of the Office.

The Government has allocated the Office special funding during 1997-98 and 1998-99 to cover the cost of additional staff, accommodation, publications and technology that will be needed to complete the White Paper reforms, while still meeting the Eltis Review timetable for syllabus development in Years K-6 and 7-10. Board officers will be conducting existing Higher School Certificate examination programs from 1997 to 2000 while developing the new HSC for students in Year 12 in 2001.

To carry out the necessary consultation, developing, trialling, testing and writing, the Office will employ up to 30 extra staff from government and non-government schools and systems.

'Board officers have accepted the challenge of ensuring that the Board of Studies will provide a strong, demanding, relevant Higher School Certificate that meets the educational needs of the young people of NSW in the new century,' said Mr Ward.



1997 HSC Results Available to Students by Phone

Students will be able to receive their HSC results one week earlier this year by telephone. Students will still receive their results in the mail, on Tuesday, 6 January 1998, but a new phone-in system introduced by the Board will allow students to receive their results earlier if they wish.

Students wanting to use the service will call a 1900 number and, upon entering their student number and a PIN supplied by the Board, will have their HSC results read to them. A similar system was used by the Universities Admissions Centre earlier this year to enable students to change their course preferences. It is estimated that each call will take about two minutes, although students will have the option of having their results repeated.

Why has the Board decided to release the results this way?

The Board of Studies has received many requests in the past to provide HSC results to students earlier. With this new approach the Board is aiming to do what it can, under current arrangements, to give students as much time as possible to make decisions concerning tertiary studies and employment choices.

Will students experience significant delays in getting their results by phone?

Up to 310 telephone lines will be available to handle the calls at any one time so delays should be minimal. However, if over 60 000 students try to ring at once, then obviously there will be some delays.

In addition to the large number of lines available, the Board is working at making the service as efficient as possible. For example, the Board will provide a personalised sheet to students listing their PIN and the courses they have studied. This sheet will be in a form

that makes it easy for the students to write down their results when they are read over the phone.

Results will be available virtually 24 hours a day from the early hours of Tuesday, 30 December through to the end of January, so students will be able to take their time and call at their convenience.

How secure will the results be?

To access their results students will need to key in their student number and a PIN supplied by the Board. Only if someone else obtains their PIN and knows their student number will that person be able to access the student's results. The Board will provide the PIN to the student in a personal letter sent to their home address in November.

Do students need to have a particular type of phone?

It is not necessary for students to have a touch dial phone. Where a student is using a different type of phone the service will detect this and make the necessary adjustments.

How much will it cost students?

The cost of this service will be \$2.40 per minute. As it will use a 1900 service there will be a standard charge per minute for each call irrespective of the location of the caller. By taking measures to make each call as efficient as possible, the Board will do what it can to keep the costs to a reasonable level. It is anticipated that a typical call will cost around \$5. Students will be informed of the charges when they call and only after agreeing to proceed will they be charged.

This initiative is an additional service being provided by the Board of Studies and there is no compulsion for students to use it.

What other support will the Board provide?

The Board will open its Inquiry Centre at 9 am on Tuesday, 30 December. This facility will remain open until 9 pm. It will also run from 9 am to 5 pm on Wednesday, 31 December. It will re-open at 9 am on Friday, 2 January 1998.

Release of TER

Students will receive their TER from the Universities Admissions Centre. The Board of Studies will not receive TERs as in the past and so will not be in a position to provide them to students and schools. The Universities Admissions Centre will advise schools of the arrangements for the release of the TER to students.



*The HSC White Paper was launched at Burwood Girls High School on 20 August.
Photographer: Billy Ryan.*