

The review of the Australian Curriculum Foundation to Year 10 is now well underway, with eighteen reference groups made up of teachers and curriculum specialists from across the country now established and working to support our ACARA curriculum experts in thinking through how the curriculum needs to change.

The review has a particular focus on what needs to be done at the primary level. It's here that the foundational knowledge and skills are taught, and where children develop the attitudes to learning that they take into secondary school. These are the years for fanning the flames of wonder and inspiring a love of learning in our children.

I'm in the process of having conversations with teachers from twenty-four primary schools, one from each sector in each jurisdiction, about their experience in using the Australian Curriculum. And I'm hearing a number of key issues coming up again and again.

First and foremost, teachers are very supportive of the main aim of the review to reduce the overall amount of content so that teachers have more time to spend on each topic, allowing them to teach for greater conceptual understanding. This will also allow students to consolidate their knowledge and skills in the various learning areas or subjects, instead of skating across content in a race to tick all the content boxes off before the end of the year.

Another key message is that the language that is used in the curriculum is either too 'waffly' or 'overly technical', or both. It needs to be in 'plain English', so that it can be more easily used by teachers. This will also help students better understand the intention of lessons, and parents and teachers will be able to have more meaningful discussions about student progress.

And the content descriptions and the achievement standards need to be much clearer and better aligned, so that teachers don't have to spend excessive amounts of time interpreting what is actually intended. Teachers want much clearer guidance about what the essential 'need to know' content is rather than that 'nice to know'.

Another hot topic that is coming up is the need for clarity about the relationship between the eight key learning areas, the three cross-curriculum priorities, and the seven general capabilities.

The key learning areas have primacy of place and are the focus of the curriculum. Incorporating information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and perspectives, about our Asian neighbours, and about sustainability, should only be done where it is relevant to the teaching of the content in the key learning area, and only where it can be done in an authentic way, not tokenistic in a 'tick a box' kind of way. Similarly, the general capabilities, such as critical and creative thinking, are best developed drawing on the subject matter of the relevant learning areas, rather than as separate, isolated skills.

One issue where we are getting mixed feedback is whether, for all key learning areas other than Maths and English, the primary curriculum should be presented in two-year bands (that is, a band for Years 1 and 2, one for Years 3 and 4, and another for Years 5 and 6). Some teachers prefer the specificity of expectation that a year level structure presents, while others prefer the flexibility afforded by a two-year structure.

There are many other issues that these conversations are bringing to the surface. We are getting very practical suggestions for improving the Australian Curriculum website to make it more teacher friendly. We are very aware of the fact that if we can make the curriculum more accessible and easier to understand in terms of the various elements and how they work together, more teachers will go the Australian Curriculum website and become more familiar with what the national curriculum entails.

I will provide another update on progress in October. In the meantime, if you'd like to have your say on matters covered in the review's Terms of Reference, which you can find at [www.acara.edu.au/curriculum/curriculum-review](http://www.acara.edu.au/curriculum/curriculum-review), please contact us at [engagement@acara.edu.au](mailto:engagement@acara.edu.au).

Thanks for listening.