

Curriculum Support for teaching in English 7-12

NEW SOUTH WALES
DEPARTMENT
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LINKING PRIMARY SCHOOL AND SECONDARY SCHOOL

An important aspect of the State Literacy and Numeracy Plan is helping teachers help students to make the move from Stage 3 to Stage 4. In 1998 the Department published Teaching Literacy in English in Year 7. This book was reviewed in Curriculum Support (English), Volume 4, No. 4, 1999. In 1999, Continuity of literacy development Years 5 – 8 was distributed to schools.

This article presents an overview of Continuity of literacy development Years 5 – 8 and looks at an important initiative being taken in Dubbo through the Dubbo Transition Project (Middle Years).

Continuity of literacy development Years 5-8

Continuity of literacy development Years 5-8 draws on the experiences of researchers, teachers and students. It identifies the types of changes facing students as they enrol in Stage 4. It then suggests ways for primary and secondary teachers to exchange information about student outcomes, curriculum and learning needs, and ways for teachers to work together to devise the best ways of addressing these needs.

The most obvious change facing students is the way in which students' work is structured and organised: a shift from having one main generalist teacher and being in a consistent class group in a home room, working from a mainly integrated curriculum, to having several specialist teachers teaching defined areas of the curriculum in a number of rooms each day (page 7).

The document contains a summary of research findings on the differences between the literacy

demands of activities in Stage 3 compared with those experienced by students in Stage 4. It then suggests ways for teachers to address such issues, particularly in reading and writing. These strategies can be used in all key learning areas.

On the issue of maintaining high expectations of their students, *Continuity of literacy development Years 5-8* says:

Recent research has shown a high correlation between teacher expectation and student performance. A related finding is that students come to secondary school assuming that the curriculum will be more difficult and challenging than it was in primary school. This assumption, when linked to teachers' expectation that their new students can and will learn, creates a powerful learning environment. ... Year 7 students respond positively when teachers indicate ... that they value the learning that their students bring with them from the primary school. The positive impact of high expectations applies as much to literacy development as to learning in all areas of the curriculum (page 16).

Overhead transparency masters in the back of the document are useful for faculty and staff meetings.

The Dubbo Transition Project (Middle Years) 1999

BACKGROUND

The Dubbo Transition Project was initiated early in 1999. It focused on literacy learning in the middle years, and sought ways of helping students maintain constant literacy improvement throughout the middle years, rather than plateauing as presently happens in a significant number of cases.

Dubbo is currently undergoing an exciting reorganisation of its secondary schools into the multi-campus Dubbo College. The current Dubbo High School will be replaced by a new senior campus catering for students in Years 10 – 12. The current

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Delroy and Dubbo South sites will cater for students in Years 7 – 9, and an alternative education campus will be developed to support students seeking re-entry into the school system or who require short-term behaviour assistance. Links will be established with Charles Sturt University, the Western Institute of TAFE and the Dubbo School of Distance Education. The new college structure will be fully operational by 2002.

The first changes occurred at the beginning of this year when all Year 7 students enrolled at either the Dubbo South campus or the Delroy campus.

In this context of reorganisation and change, it was timely for the Dubbo schools to examine their middle years communication processes and look for ways of strengthening the links between the primary feeder schools and the high schools. So the 1999 Dubbo Transition Project came into being.

PROCESS

The Project's investigations looked at three areas: the curriculum, pedagogy and organisational factors that impact on students' literacy outcomes (see Cormack, P. and Cumming, J. 1996, *From alienation to engagement: Opportunities for reform in the middle years of schooling*, Canberra: Australian Curriculum Studies Association Inc.). This framework parallels the design of the National Middle Schooling Project, whose brief was to investigate the needs of adolescent learners in Australia and identify what needs to be done to strengthen the links between the primary and secondary phases of students' education.

A framework for teacher consultation was set up, aimed at identifying a model for students moving from Year 6 to the two junior campuses of Dubbo College, and making recommendations which would support continuity of literacy learning for the Years 5 – 9 students.

The project activities included:

- three working groups: curriculum, pedagogy and organisation. These groups met three times, researched in discrete areas and formulated recommendations
- professional training and development activities during Term 2 which supported the investigations and linked with what other schools were doing throughout NSW and Victoria
- professional training and development to enable teachers to know the standard required by Stage 3 outcomes of the English K–6 syllabus
- school visits and video conferencing

- surveys to gather information to feed into the final recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations arising from the project fell under three headings: curriculum, pedagogy and organisation. They identify the transition process for Year 6 students entering Year 7, and require student profiles which will influence teaching and learning in Year 7, for example, with each student providing reading and writing work samples which immediately demonstrate literacy skills in place. The recommendations also form the basis of future district teacher training and development in the middle years.

Curriculum

- In 1999 the literacy achievement of Year 6 students should be described in bands using Stage 2 and Stage 3 English syllabus outcomes, and this information should be explained to Year 7 coordinators or teachers in Week 6 of Term 4.
- There should be contact between the Year 6 teachers and the Year 7 coordinators or teachers in Week 6 of Term 1 to review students' placement and literacy achievement.

TRANSITION INFORMATION				
Name:.....				
School in Year 6.....				
School in Year 7.....				
LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT				
	achieved Stage 2	towards Stage 3	achieved Stage 3	beyond Stage 3
READING				
WRITING				
TALK/LISTENING				
NUMERACY ACHIEVEMENT				
	achieved Stage 2	towards Stage 3	achieved Stage 3	beyond Stage 3
NUMBER				
SPACE				
MEASUREMENT				
SUPPORT NEEDS		SUPPORT GIVEN		
Learning difficulties				
IM	IO	IS		
Hearing impaired / Vision impaired				
Physical disability				
Behaviour / Welfare				
Gifted and talented				
Special interests/ talents				
Additional comments:				

- Literacy skills should be used to link the junior secondary curriculum, and investigations continue to find effective ways of integrating the junior secondary curriculum.
- The 1998 ELLA reading test should be administered to Year 7 in 1999 to confirm achievement of Stage 3 reading outcomes.
- Year 6 class teachers should provide details of their students' support needs, past and current.
- The literacy progress of students in Years 7 – 9 should continue to be monitored using systems and school performance data, including ELLA (Years 7 and 8), curriculum-based data from Stages 3, 4 and 5, and School Certificate performance descriptors.
- Teachers should have the opportunity to learn about the context, practices and procedures for literacy learning in primary and junior secondary classrooms.
- Students should have regular and direct access to multimedia technology.
- Professional development should focus on literacy teaching in subject areas in the middle years, including across-KLA networks within schools.
- KLA networks should be formed across schools.

Organisation

Pedagogy

- A whole-school approach should be taken to literacy teaching, and the literacy skills of reading, writing, talking and listening should be explicitly taught in each subject area.
- Junior secondary teachers should know their students' literacy skills.
- A team of teachers, including the Year 7 coordinator, should be responsible for curriculum, welfare and coordinating Year 7 students, and the team should move with Year 7 into Year 8 and Year 9.
- The team should have a meeting time scheduled weekly to discuss curriculum, welfare and coordinating issues.
- The following model for student transition from Year 6 to Year 7 should be adopted for Dubbo schools.

TRANSITION PROCESS FOR YEAR 6 – YEAR 7

	Schools	Teachers	Students
Term 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appoint the Year 7 coordinator and team • organise training for the Year 7 coordinator and team on Tuesday of Week 3 • arrange for the Year 7 coordinator and team to be familiarised with the Year 6 learning context 	Year 6 teachers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • finalise the descriptions of Year 6 literacy achievement • gain the support of the District Literacy Team in describing Year 6 literacy achievement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enrol in Year 7
Term 4		Year 6 teachers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conduct common assessment if necessary • exchange with Year 7 teachers literacy and numeracy achievement data on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all students • LD / disabled students • behaviour / welfare students Year 7 teachers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • complete training in Stage 3 literacy outcomes provided by primary schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participate in an orientation day at Dubbo College for Year 7 on the Monday of Week 2 • participate in other visits for orientation to social and learning contexts
Term 1		Year 7 teachers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meet with former Year 6 teachers to check students' literacy progress 	