FS1 Evaluation Update

As you are aware, the Department has commissioned external evaluators to conduct a four year longitudinal evaluation of the implementation of the Flagship Strategy 1 initiatives. The evaluation will characterise the nature of schools’ stages of engagement with them, and the multiple learning pathways that schools are using to achieve them. The evaluation activities undertaken by the Project Team so far are providing rich data about the way Victorian schools are engaging with the FS1 initiatives.

In March, approximately 55 schools across Victoria responded to the Self Audit phase of the study. Initially, 20 of these schools were invited to participate in a telephone interview as part of the Team Audit. As a result of the richness of data provided in the initial interviews, the Project Team has extended the invitation to all the schools that completed the Self Audit. The Team Audit process is currently underway and will close around mid-May. In Term 3, a small sample of these schools will be invited to participate in longer-term case studies.

In late April, the Project Team presented preliminary findings of the Self Audit and Team Audit activities to DE&T in an Initial Stages-as-Standards report. An interim report is due in July 2006.

Initial findings indicate that school actions prior to FS1 influence their responses during implementation. These factors include:

1. School leadership experience with large scale change and strategic approaches to implementation.
2. A whole school culture of learning, collaborative teams, and encouragement of experimentation and risk-taking.
3. School responsiveness; confidence in responding to system and local community demands, including leadership with a meta-view of implementation options.

In some schools there is clearly a positive alignment between activities that were already underway and the ethos around FS1. Other schools have had more work to do to build momentum around their overall pattern of engagement.

The next evaluation activity, the Teacher Questionnaire commenced this week and will be available online in the period 8 – 26 May. Teachers from a random sample of schools across Victoria are being invited to complete this short online questionnaire about their views on teaching and learning. Schools and teachers are being contacted regarding participation and your support is sought in this process.
New Student Report Cards Update

Posters and parent brochures will shortly be delivered to schools as part of the New Student Report Cards media campaign. The parent brochure updates the initial brochure distributed in 2005 and has a focus on explaining the A-E ratings. Updated support materials, including frequently asked questions and further sample reports are available on the New Student Report Cards website.


The rollout of the DE&T reporting software, including the one-day training program has been completed, and in response to feedback, a second round of training sessions has been organised. Schools using the software this year will be contacted with details of dates and venues directly by the software supplier.

Schools that may wish to use the DE&T software in 2007 should note that briefings will be organised early in Term 3. These briefings will include an introduction to the software, as well as an update on assessment and reporting support.

For further information about the new student report cards, contact assessment.reporting@edumail.vic.gov.au. For further information specifically about the software, visit www.quickvic.com.au

Victorian Essential Learning Standards Assessment Maps

The VCAA is continuing to develop annotated work samples as part of domain-specific assessment maps to support schools in making judgements about student achievement against the Victorian Essential Learning Standards. Currently samples are available in English and Mathematics at http://vels.vcaa.vic.edu.au in the Assessment and Reporting section.

As new samples are identified, they are assessed against the standards, located at an appropriate point on the assessment map scale, annotated in relation to the standard and published online. Several editing and quality assurance processes are undertaken before they are published to ensure such things as consistency with progression point descriptions, accuracy of content and ease of usability in the electronic format. In response to feedback from teachers, some improvements to the format have been made. The VCAA would like to thank those teachers for their input into this work.

Additional samples in Mathematics and English have been prepared and will be published online from Thursday 18 May. As new samples are added to the website, the ‘What’s new’ section of the home page will list the recently uploaded samples.

The VCAA welcomes feedback about the assessment maps from teachers at curriculum.vcaa@edumail.vic.gov.au. Teacher feedback will inform the development of assessment maps in the remaining fourteen domains. These will focus initially on samples which illustrate work typical of responses to assessment tasks at the standards and will be published progressively from Term 3 2006.

Using the standards, progression points and assessment maps to assess student achievement – Frequently asked questions

Two workshops on using the standards, progression points and assessment maps are now...
on the Curriculum Planning Guidelines. Workshop 1 is an overview of the standards, progression points and assessment maps. Workshop 2 is about using the standards, progression points and assessment maps to make on-balance judgments and improve consistency of outcomes. Click on the link below and scroll down to see the workshops. http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/blueprint/fs1/guidelines/progression_points/about_PP.asp

In addition, the frequently asked questions on the Student Reporting website are continually being updated as questions are received from schools. Some examples include:

“Does a student need to have achieved every aspect of a standard to be judged as at that standard?”

Towards the end of a semester teachers make an overall judgement about student progress at the dimension level using the standards, progression points and assessment maps. This judgement will be evidence-based and holistic. That is, based on the evidence gained from the range of formal and informal assessment tasks and activities undertaken over the semester, an overall, on-balance judgement is made about which standard or progression point the evidence best matches.

The key question, therefore, is not how many aspects, but which standard or progression point descriptor the evidence gained over the semester best matches overall.

“In our school we are implementing more domains than English and Mathematics. There are currently only progression points for English and Mathematics. How do I make judgements about student achievement in the other domains?”

Until progression points are published for these domains, teachers will need to make first of all, an on-balance judgement about which standard is the best fit, and then whether the evidence indicates achievement closer to one standard than another, or about in the middle, and then assigning the appropriate score. The same on-balance, best match process applies.

“I have a Year 8 class. At which standard or progression point should my students be by the end of semester 1?”

The important question is not where the students ‘should be’ at, but where they ‘are at’. Each standard is broadly associated with the end of a year level. It is very important to remember, however, that although the Level 6 standard, for example, is broadly associated with the end of Year 10, there will be students achieving beyond that standard, as well as students who may be progressing towards standards below Level 6. There is very firm evidence that the range of achievement increases as students progress through the primary and secondary years, and it is essential that programs are designed to meet that range of student needs.

FS1 Professional Learning Package

Many school curriculum/professional learning leaders have now completed the three day Professional Learning Package, becoming familiar with the Curriculum Planning Modules, the Assessment Professional Learning Modules and the PoLT Online Resource. They are now well placed to lead professional learning at their school to support the implementation of the Student Learning initiatives through a whole school approach to curriculum planning, pedagogy and assessment.

One participant commented, “Great to have time to explore the materials, discuss with others and think about what would be useful for my school.”
OLT are beginning to work with some schools that will provide samples of filled-in templates from the modules and the stories behind these – ie: how were the decisions reached and what will the next step be? These samples and stories will be placed on the website.

**Integrating LOTE and Content: Lessons from an Immersion Program**

With Victorian schools rapidly pushing ahead with the implementation of the Standards into their curriculum planning, it seems timely to revisit the way in which LOTE immersion programs can and do cater for the integration of different learning domains. Integrated language and content instruction provides opportunities for students to acquire a new language through the study of discipline-based learning domains such as Science, Mathematics, the Humanities, and the Arts. Also known as content-based language learning, this approach has been shown through many studies to be an effective way for students to develop their language skills and their academic skills at the same time.

An example of this approach can be seen in the bilingual (English – German) immersion program at Bayswater South Primary School, which this year celebrates 25 years of excellence in bilingual education.

The implementation of the bilingual immersion program at Bayswater South Primary School suggests at least three elements of general relevance for second language instruction:

1. LOTE instructional approaches that integrate content and language are likely to be more effective than approaches in which language is taught in isolation.
2. A content-based approach provides relevance and context to the children’s language learning and thus aids both their first and second language acquisition and their academic achievement in other domains.
3. Language objectives should be systematically targeted along with learning objectives of relevant domains in order to maximise language learning.

A description of the lessons to be learned from the bilingual immersion program at Bayswater South Primary School may be read on the Curriculum Planning Guidelines [link]

**Professional Reading**

This paper was presented by Dylan Wiliam at the 2005 *Making Mathematics Vital: Twentieth Biennial Conference of the Australian Association of Mathematics - NSW*

*Keeping learning on track: Formative assessment and the regulation of learning*

There is a growing body of evidence that learning is enhanced when teachers make use of the result of day-to-day assessments to guide instructional decision making, and yet there is also evidence that assessment for learning is not well developed in the practice of most teachers. Experience of developing the formative function of assessment suggests that it must be integrated into all aspects of teaching (including planning). Using assessment formatively requires a shift from long feedback cycles to short feedback cycles. For the full article, click on the link below.

[link]