Validation of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards

The VCAA continues to work closely with schools and the education community during this validation year. One of the key components of the validation of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards has been the trialling of assessment tasks in schools throughout Victoria. Over 40 schools have participated in these trials and students have produced thousands of pieces of work across the domains and levels in the Standards.

Late in Term 3, approximately 60 teachers, curriculum coordinators and principals attended a two-day workshop to look at the suitability of the tasks and assess the student work samples. The information gathered during the two-day workshop will not only contribute to the validating of the Standards, but will also form the basis for the development of new assessment maps and annotated work samples.

The VCAA continues to analyse the responses from the on-line survey, focus groups and independent evaluation conducted in Term 3. The data collected from these validation projects is currently being reviewed and will be used to inform any refinements to the current domain content.

Assessment and Reporting Week

Assessment and Reporting Week is from 20 – 27 October 2005 and is an opportunity for schools to broaden their knowledge and understanding of current and future directions in assessment and reporting. It is also a chance to promote assessment and reporting to let the wider community know about the excellent and innovative practices happening in Victorian schools. Schools are invited to participate in a range of activities during this week to highlight the importance of assessment and reporting. These include:

- Assessment and Reporting Conference on Friday 21 October, 2005
- Seminar Series, Part 2 on 26 and 27 October, featuring Margaret Forster (ACER) as guest speaker
- System, Region and school based activities promoting assessment and reporting.

Regional Reporting Briefing Sessions start on Tuesday 4 October in Benalla and will continue in all Regions until Friday 11 November. Click below to view dates in Term 4 2005.

The Assessment and Reporting Conference is currently open for registration and can be accessed on the assessment and reporting website:

The Seminar Series, Part 2, will be on 26 and repeated on the 27 October. Registration details can be accessed on our website:
Standards Parent Brochure

Students with Disabilities Guidelines – Online Consultation
The VCAA is developing the Victorian Essential Learning Standards – Students with Disabilities Guidelines (the Guidelines). The Guidelines will provide a framework for teachers to develop programs for students with disabilities that are consistent with the Standards by linking the rationale and structure of the Standards to individual program development and assessment for students with special needs. An online survey is being currently being conducted at [http://vels.vcaa.vic.edu.au/disabilities.html](http://vels.vcaa.vic.edu.au/disabilities.html) until Friday 21 October 2005 to gather feedback about the clarity and usability of the draft Guidelines. Schools and other members of the community are encouraged to provide feedback via the online questionnaire.

Principles of Learning and Teaching P-12 Update

2005 Principles of Learning and Teaching (PoLT) Training
The 2005 PoLT training has been delivered to 811 participants from 535 schools and 39 regional personnel. Evaluation of the program has now commenced. Focus groups of university providers, regional personnel and PoLT coordinators have been conducted. In addition, there has been a very pleasing response to the on-line PoLT evaluation survey of participants. More than 300 responses were received within a week of the survey going live. The evaluation findings will be used to sustain and extend the program in 2006.

Overall the initiative has been well received with most clusters and schools well on the way to reviewing their pedagogy and planning for change. With the recent completion of the Professional Development Modules training, most clusters and schools are beginning to implement their action plans. The level of implementation varies considerably between clusters with many beginning on a fairly small scale with the intention of bringing more teachers on board progressively.

2006 Principles of Learning and Teaching (PoLT) Training
Delivery of PoLT training in 2006 will be more flexible and adapted to maximise support for schools. The program will be advertised to all sectors in Term 4 to facilitate early registrations in 2006. Given the short duration of Term 1 due to the Commonwealth Games, the training program will commence in Term 2, 2006.

For further information please contact the Pedagogy Unit by email at pedagogy@edumail.vic.gov.au

Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games

United through the Games – Integrated Units
*United through the Games – Integrated Units* is a CD-ROM that provides five units of work for students from Prep to Year 10 that link to the Victorian Essential Learning Standards. Based on the core values of the Commonwealth Games, units of work explore humanity, equality and destiny. This resource will be sent to all schools in Term 4 and is currently
available online at the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games Education Program website by following the prompts to the Education Program and Classroom Resources sections at http://www.melbourne2006.com.au/education

Professional Development Program
A state-wide professional development program is being offered to teachers in October and November 2005 throughout regional and metropolitan Victoria. No registration fees apply. The three-hour professional development sessions aim to bring together all the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games Education Program resources and activities. The professional development is suitable for teachers of all year levels (Prep to Year 12) and subject areas. Registration forms are available from www.dk2.com.au/commggames.htm

Altona Meadows Primary School’s Implementation Strategy during the Validation Year

Altona Meadows Primary is a school of approximately 360 students in the Western Metropolitan Region. The Leadership Team saw Flagship Strategy 1: Student Learning as the ideal opportunity to review student learning and the program that AMPS offers. Jeff Bell, Principal at Altona Meadows Primary School, and Eve Sakellarides, Curriculum Coordinator, share how they have begun this process.

“This ‘new curriculum’ and model gave us the impetus to look at current procedures, develop curriculum and to improve teaching and learning methods,” said Jeff Bell, Principal at Altona Meadows Primary.

Throughout late 2004 and during 2005 support structures were developed to enable the whole staff, teams and individuals to discuss the Blueprint, in particular Flagship Strategy 1: Student Learning. Two meetings per term were allocated to specifically discuss the new approach to curriculum. This enabled staff to discuss the new terminology in the Victorian Essential Learning Standards, look at the structure and to explore the Standards website at http://vels.vcaa.vic.edu.au

Staff also attended numerous professional development activities including the Hobsons Bay Curriculum Network meetings. The grade 5 and 6 team participated in the training on Principles of Learning and Teaching (PoLT) with the Middle Years Cluster. Lessons from the PoLT training are flowing on throughout the whole school. Staff will also develop an action plan for improvement of teaching practice at Altona Meadows PS.

Half of a curriculum day was devoted to exploring the Victorian Essential Learning Standards, using the VCAA website and tools from the Curriculum Guidelines website. Teachers have found the support materials, in particular the sample units, very useful. The teaching and learning resource also generated discussion about the teaching and learning strategies that teachers currently use and others that were new to them.

After gaining confidence about the website, teams trialled the sample units. Teams modified the structure in line with planning tools from the Curriculum Planning Guidelines. Teams are allocated a planning day each term, which they use to develop their essential learning units of work. “Although initially a time consuming process, it has given staff the confidence to begin planning their own essential learning units of work,” said Mr Bell.

“The arrival of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards by Level print publications in June
2005 was welcomed as teachers were already familiar with the framework and terminology. The Student Learning DVD released in April 2005 also facilitated teacher access to the Standards” he said.

In August this year, Eve Sakellarides, Curriculum Coordinator, conducted a curriculum audit. Four staff members were given a day’s release to plan and implement the audit day. This was critical as it enabled the planning team to discuss how the curriculum audit would occur. They had time to explore the Curriculum Planning Guidelines and the Standards websites, in order to plan an effective curriculum day. A quiz, the Curriculum Audit Workshop Tool and the Standards Reference Tool from the Curriculum Planning Guidelines were all used. Click on the link below for an outline of the curriculum day and its planning.

Altona Meadows P.S. - Planning for a curriculum audit

“I think the planning group had some outstanding activities which helped everyone become more familiar with the elements of the Standards. Each level now has a copy of some curriculum audit sheets and checklists to use in their topic planning for next term. It made you aware of how much we already do or touch on and can now work towards documenting in our planning” one teacher reported.

Mr Bell thought this curriculum audit was an outstanding success and well worthwhile. “It confirmed that we are on the right track during the validation year”, he said. Now that the curriculum audit has been completed, Altona Meadows PS will focus on assessing and reporting against English and Mathematics in preparation for 2006.

Jeff Bell and his colleagues at Altona Meadows are more than happy to share their experience. For further information contact Eve Sakellarides, Curriculum Coordinator, sakellarides.eve.e@edumail.vic.gov.au or Jeff Bell, Principal bell.jeff.r@edumail.vic.gov.au

NEW Mathematics Tools on the Curriculum Planning Guidelines

In order to support schools to implement the Mathematics domain of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards, two new tools have been added to the Curriculum Planning Guidelines.

A PowerPoint presentation, with accompanying notes and worksheets, has been developed to help build whole school knowledge of current practice and future planning considerations in Maths, in relation to Student Learning initiatives – the Victorian Essential Learning Standards, Principles of Learning and Teaching and Assessment & Reporting advice. http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/blueprint/fs1/guidelines/phase1/Math_domain.asp

Another resource to support teacher conversation and reflection about pedagogical practice that focuses on numeracy is the findings of the Researching Numeracy Teaching Approaches in Primary Schools project, commissioned and funded by the Australian Government: Department of Education, Science and Training. This project identified effective classroom teaching approaches in mathematics for primary school students in Victorian schools. http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/blueprint/fs1/guidelines/phase1/pedagogy.asp

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4/10/2005     4/10/2005