

A framework for developing a school plan in HSIE

Many schools are looking to revise their school plan or scope and sequence in HSIE. In the last 10 years there have been many changes that now need to be incorporated into teaching and learning programs. Schools are looking at meeting syllabus requirements and DET policies to ensure quality teaching and learning strategies are reflected in school plans.

HSIE is a dynamic learning area where the teaching and learning practice will reflect the changing nature and context of our society. Revisiting the *Aim* of the syllabus is useful to clarify the purpose of classroom practice in this KLA.

The aim of Human Society and its Environment is to develop in students the values and attitudes, skills, and knowledge and understandings that:

- *enhance their sense of personal, community, national and global identity;*
- *enable them to participate effectively in maintaining and improving the quality of their society and environment.*

The four syllabus strands: *Change and Continuity, Cultures, Environments and Social Systems and Structures* provide an initial structure for developing a school plan. Each strand has two outcomes per stage of learning, except Early Stage 1 which has one outcome in each strand. The outcome(s) are defined and clarified by the syllabus subject matter listed in each stage, as the dot points adjacent to the outcomes page for each stage. The four pages that follow the outcomes and subject matter pages for each stage describe to some extent what the teaching and learning will 'look like' in the classroom for each stage.

Teaching and learning programs will focus upon one syllabus strand for a particular unit of work used in any one term. This will link with at least one or sometimes more of the other strands depending on the teaching and learning activities. Identifying the focus strand or outcome(s) and supporting strands and outcomes can be used to develop a framework for school planning.

Developing a school plan which is based on the syllabus strands simplifies assessment. Assessment will be based on the focus strand, rather than trying to assess individual outcomes. A school plan that uses the strands as organisers enables teachers to identify what needs to be assessed and ensures that multiple planned assessment tasks related to individual outcomes are not needed.

The name of a topic is often used in a school plan; sometimes teachers use the name of the topic to identify the teaching and learning program instead of referring to the syllabus requirements. This article will refer to units of work as a way of identifying that the teaching and learning has been referenced to the syllabus. The topic name may be different even though the unit of work has syllabus references of the teaching and learning that is actually the same, this is common when teaching the *Environments* and *Resource systems* components of the syllabus e.g. in Stage 3 a unit of work is about an Australian environmental case study, where different

classes could be undertaking different topics named after different locations around Australia, which all reference the same syllabus outcomes and subject matter.

A strategy for developing a school plan

Download and print the proformas located on the Curriculum Support web site at:

www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/primary/hsie/teaching/plan/index.htm

These proformas are designed to ensure a balanced coverage of all four strands, with components from all strands being addressed every year.

Steps in developing a school curriculum plan in HSIE:

1. Copy the proforma pages for each stage onto A3 sheets. Organise some sticky notes and photocopies of the relevant syllabus pages to refer to Early stage 1 pp 42 -43; Stage 1 pp 48 – 49; Stage 2 pp 54 – 55; and Stage 3 pp 60 -61. Write the names of the units onto the sticky notes so they can be moved around the A3 sheets. Use the photocopies of the syllabus stage to tick off subject matter and align outcomes.
2. Identify what is already being taught, what is working and what needs to be improved or even deleted from current school practice.
3. Check the units that have so far passed step 2 are identified in the syllabus for the correct stage. What is the focus strand (and supporting strands) of the units? It is also important to check that the unit is not correctly located in Stage 4 History or Geography. Refer to the Geography 7-10 Syllabus (pp 24 - 33) and History 7-10 Syllabus (pp 22-29) available on the Board of Studies web site http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/syllabus_sc/#syllabuses-7-10
4. Locate the sticky note, recording the unit of work on the HSIE proforma under the focus strand from step 3. Identify gaps and overlaps. Where there are too many units in the one strand this identifies overlapping or duplication of syllabus outcomes. When this occurs prioritise the 'best' unit.
5. Fill the gaps – identify teaching and learning resources for missing units. Some gaps may need specific units developed based on suitable resources. These may be found from the Curriculum Support website, school based or commercial resources. Begin with the DET HSIE resources available at <http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/primary/hsie/resources/index.htm> The focus outcomes and supporting outcomes are identified for these resources.
6. Finalise the units in each focus strand – check off the syllabus subject matter that will be addressed in the teaching and learning. Identify and record the specific supporting outcomes in the school plan. At this point it may be necessary to go back to step 5 if the syllabus outcomes and subject matter of a topic has limited fit or a suggested unit or topic is not appropriate.
7. Review whole school plan for all stages ensuring that no units of work are repeated in different stages and that there is a spiral of sequential learning aligned to the syllabus K-6. This will ensure all units of work included in the plan have been checked against the syllabus with the outcome(s) and syllabus subject matter identified for every unit in the school plan.

Hints and tips:

- Curriculum improvement in schools works best when an executive teacher with the responsibility for whole school curriculum coordination oversees the

process. This ensures a holistic approach to curriculum planning across all KLAs, where the requirements of all KLAs are balanced and coordinated.

- Planning in small schools or for across stage classes requires the unit of work to reference the same focus strand and outcome(s) for all stages. This will allow the learning to be differentiated for each stage according to the syllabus subject matter. It is not necessary for a class teacher to teach a different topic to students in each of the stages in a multistage class.
- Work in stage groups, where appropriate, to encourage teacher expertise and interests are included where possible.
- All units of work need to cover stage outcomes and syllabus subject matter. If the subject matter supporting the outcomes does not align then the unit should not be included in the school plan.
- Reviewing the school plan is best achieved by beginning at Stage 3 and working down the stages. This means that a wider variety of choices are available to each stage compared to starting with the limited choices available in Early Stage 1 and Stage 1. Ensure that a logical sequence of learning is identified so students are leaving primary school with sound knowledge, skills and understandings in HSIE.
- Allow enough time and have fun with the process.

When developing your school plan you should avoid:

- Topics which teachers wish to include in the scope and sequence which are not included in syllabus content. Common examples include ancient civilisations, inland explorers, and natural disasters.
- A cluster of topics which address the same strand(s) and outcomes in different ways. Including all of these topics reduces the time available for teaching and learning to occur in other strands e.g. having an overemphasis on the *Environments* strand.
- Incorrectly identifying the outcomes and therefore the focus strand and supporting strands of a unit of work. This can be overcome by identifying the subject matter of the syllabus addressed in the teaching and learning activities. This then identifies the focus strand (the one with the most subject matter covered) and then the outcome(s) that align with the subject matter.

It is best practice to teach the HSIE K-6 syllabus in each term. While the time allocated to HSIE teaching will be different in each school, about 90 minutes or about 10% of classroom time a week should be available to this Key Learning Area. This may overlap with literacy and numeracy at times.

For further advice and support on revitalising a school plan or scope and sequence in HSIE please contact:

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