

Using the CSF: An Introduction

Victoria. Board of Studies, 1995

Overview of the document

75 page booklet providing an introduction to the CSF. The CSF itself consists of eight booklets in a ring binder: The Arts; English; Health and Physical Education; Languages Other Than English; Mathematics; Science; Studies of Society and the Environment; Technology. This document aims to assist with the implementation of the CSF.

Keywords

Curriculum review; curriculum planning; learning outcomes; key learning areas; cohesive and systematic curriculum; assessment and reporting; CSF implementation.

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Summary of Contents

THE CHALLENGE OF THE CSF

- Begins by noting that this booklet is the first of a series designed to assist with the implementation of the CSF.
- Notes that the CSF provides a major opportunity for schools to review their curriculum and that much of this booklet consists of practical advice for schools on the use of the CSF for curriculum review and planning.
- States that “The most notable distinction between the CSF and previous comprehensive curriculum planning documents is the central position of learning outcomes, not as discrete items but related clearly to the curriculum focus within key learning areas, and elaborated by examples of activities which students undertake.” (p. 1)
- States that “In undertaking audit and review using the CSF, schools will go beyond simply checking off current course outlines and look again at questions like:
 - How do we provide a curriculum that embodies the qualities of breadth, comprehensiveness, challenge, access? What are the appropriate trade-offs to be made to achieve the right balance in our school?

- What does it mean for curriculum planning and teaching practice in our school to work with a concentration on learning outcomes and to focus on student achievement, the learning side of the teaching and learning equation?
 - While being more explicit about standards of student learning, how do we ensure that our program really caters for the full range of students? Students in a class will progress at differing rates. Individuals are likely to differ among the key learning areas – How does our program allow for this reality?
 - What are the implications for our school and classroom organisation? Does our review and audit indicate the need for alternative forms of grouping, more flexible modes of delivery, greater opportunity for students to demonstrate achievement?
 - How can the information that could be gathered on student achievement be distilled and reported to parents? How can we improve diagnosis of students' needs? How might assessment procedures be developed which allow students to demonstrate their achievement in relation to the learning outcomes? How might reporting formats be developed which express clearly the improved information on student achievement?" (pp. 1-2)
- Notes that these and many other questions are stimulated by the CSF.

Structure of the CSF

- Notes the following in relation to the CSF structure:
- "The CSF sets out the major learning areas to be covered and describes learning outcomes which most students are expected to achieve at particular levels." (p. 2)
 - "The CSF provides the basis for curriculum planning and development in Victorian schools for Years Prep-10." (p. 2)
 - "It provides a common basis and language for schools to plan and review curriculum and to assess and report on student achievement." (p. 2)
 - "Schools continue to have responsibility for decisions about:
 - course planning
 - curriculum organisation
 - classroom practice
 - the amount of time allocated to key learning areas
 - the range of subjects offered
 - specific issues relating to school culture such as the development of attitudes, values and beliefs." (p. 2)

How is the CSF is organised?

- Notes that the CSF is organised into 8 Key Learning Areas:
- The Arts
 - English
 - Health and Physical Education
 - Languages Other Than English (LOTE)
 - Mathematics
 - Science
 - Studies of Society and the Environment (SOSE)
 - Technology
- Notes that each key learning area is organised into seven levels. Except for LOTE, these levels relate to year-levels of schooling as follows:
- Level 1 - End of Prep Year

- Level 2 - End of Year 2
- Level 3 - End of Year 4
- Level 4 - End of Year 6
- Level 5 - End of Year 8
- Level 6 - End of Year 10
- Level 7 - Enrichment of those exceeding Level 6
- Notes that the levels are organised into strands. Each strand has a curriculum focus which describes the key features of the content and processes to be learnt in that strand at that level.
- Notes that each curriculum focus has outcome statements which describe what is expected of students for the completion of that level.
- Notes that the learning outcomes describe standards of student achievement relating to a particular strand and level. (p. 3)

How will the CSF help teachers, students and schools?

- States that “For the first time in many years students across the State will have a common basis and language with which to:
 - plan, review and develop a cohesive and systematic curriculum
 - organise balance, breadth and depth of learning across key learning areas
 - assess and report student achievement in ways clearly understood by teachers and parents
 - facilitate transitions between levels by building on prior learning and avoiding unnecessary repetition
 - provide schooling which takes account of particular interests and needs at both local and State levels
 - know how students are performing relative to established standards
 - cater for individual differences amongst students.” (p. 4)

How will schools use the CSF?

- Notes that “In 1995, it is expected that schools will focus on reviewing their curriculum and using audits to plan for a fuller implementation of the CSF in 1996 and beyond. This is a progressive process according to schools’ priorities in their charter, policy or mission statement.” (p. 4)

SUPPORT FOR IMPLEMENTING THE CSF

- Outlines support that will be offered by the Board which will include:
 - General advice booklets.
 - Key learning area advice booklets.
 - A professional development program.

CURRICULUM REVIEW AND PLANNING

- Presents an overview of whole school curriculum provision and staff professional development.

CSF Expectations

- States that “The CSF establishes expectations for teachers and students across learning areas. It does so by:
 - defining the major content and processes and the year-levels of schooling to which they relate (strands/levels)

- describing the curriculum in broad terms for each strand and each level (curriculum focus)
- making general statements of attainment for strands at a particular level (learning outcomes)
- describing sample student activities that contribute to attainment of the learning outcomes (examples).” (p. 8)
- Notes that “A key issue for teachers is how the CSF is going to improve the quality of teaching and learning.” (p. 8)

Curriculum Audit and Review

- Notes that: “Over the past few years many schools have undertaken review of their curriculum. In Government schools there has been a systematic review with the development of school charters and the associated identification of priorities for school improvement.” (p. 8)
- States that a curriculum review is clearly the starting point for the implementation of the CSF.

A Sample Curriculum Review and Planning Process

- Provides an example of curriculum review and planning processes.

ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING: INITIAL ADVICE

- Notes that as part of the audit and review process, schools will be exploring the implications for assessment and reporting.
- States that “As with school curriculum generally, the CSF accommodates much of what schools at present do in terms of assessment and reporting.” (p. 23)
- Notes that “the challenge is to find ways of including the wealth of information about student achievement the CSF will provide into practical, understandable and helpful information for students, parents and teachers”. (p. 23)
- Notes that the CSF will retain some of the common features of current assessment and reporting, including:
 - the use of a variety of assessment approaches;
 - recognition of the needs of individual students;
 - use of assessment activities that help to clearly identify strengths and weaknesses in student learning;
 - emphasis on describing achievement with comments based on evidence; and
 - twice yearly reports to parents.
- Notes that in maintaining these approaches the following issues will need to be resolved:
 - The need for teacher observation, assessment, record keeping and reporting to be manageable.
 - The need to report on all aspects of student achievement, beyond the CSF.
 - The need to improve consistency of school reports.
 - The need to provide clear, informative reports to parents indicating achievement and areas for improvement.
- States that “The key question that arises from the structure of the CSF is: How do you use the outcome statements in the assessment and reporting process?” (p. 24)
- Notes that there are a number of reasons for not simply extracting the learning outcomes from the CSF and translating them directly onto a school report:
 - There are too many of them to be clear and helpful to parents.
 - They often use technical language or jargon.

- It is not their purpose: they are intended to be read primarily for curriculum planning.
- They may not accurately describe student achievement.

Learning Outcomes

- Notes that outcome statements generally integrate content and process and that this has implications for reporting, including students working at different levels within and across key learning areas at any one time.
- States that “The task is therefore to provide a means of reporting on student achievement using the level and strand structure while maintaining clarity, brevity and practicability.” (p. 24)
- Notes that it is likely that schools will continue to use a combination of elements and approaches including:
 - A brief description of course content, with reference to strand/learning areas.
 - A qualitative description of the student’s achievement.
 - An indication of achievement related to the CSF levels.

Use of the Levels in Reporting

- Describes reporting in the context of students commonly not falling neatly into one of seven levels in any given strands. Notes that reporting will typically describe where students are working which may be described using such terms as “beginning”, “developing”, “working towards” and “achieved”. (p. 25)

Using Outcomes in Program Design

- States that “Probably the most important use of the outcomes statements themselves is to ensure that programs include teaching and learning activities that allow the student to demonstrate the outcomes.” (p. 25)
- Notes that the accompanying outcome statements will provide examples.

INTEGRATING THE CURRICULUM: INITIAL ADVICE

- Notes that “Teachers who use the integrated curriculum approach will wish to identify connections across the key learning areas within the CSF. Many strands will relate to and complement each other across key learning areas in a broad range of topics.” (p. 26)
- Notes that typically schools integrate some learning areas while delivering others separately.
- States that “The CSF allows schools to continue to deliver a variety of curriculum organisations. It also provides a comprehensive basis upon which to extend this flexibility by further developing ways of integrating key learning areas.” (p. 26)

Future Integrated Support Material

- Notes that the Board has a continuing commitment to providing support to teachers with the implementation of the CSF including published material. Notes that material that should be available to schools during 1995 includes:
 1. Integrated curriculum models and issues
 2. Links within the CSF
 3. Topic unit outlines
 4. Exemplary curriculum materials for Years P-2
 5. Assessment and reporting

THE TRANSITION YEARS: INITIAL ADVICE

Transition 5-8

- States that “The CSF provides the basis for primary and secondary schools to address some issues which have provided a continuing challenge for teachers of the transition years.” (p. 28)
- Notes that the Board has acknowledged the special needs of this group by establishing the 5-8 Advisory Group to provide advice on issues relation to the needs of students and teachers in these levels. The group believes the CSF provides great opportunities for secondary schools and their feeder schools to plan for the transitional group in creative ways.

Curriculum

- Notes the following in relation to the curriculum:
 - “The basic format and structure of the CSF provides clear information about the curriculum content in a common language.” (p. 28)
 - “It will encourage the development of a curriculum that features continuity and consistency.” (p. 28)
 - “It will enhance the progression of students across all levels of schooling.” (p. 28)
 - “It will also provide for a comprehensive description of the possible range of achievement within a group of students and as such will encourage teachers to plan and cater for the range of students in their classes.” (p. 28)
 - “Primary and secondary schools now have direction for the development of courses which are continuous and complementary to each other.” (p. 28)

Communication

- Outlines how the common understanding and content of the CSF will benefit students. Notes that it will do this by supporting the transfer of information from student to teacher in relation to learning strategies; promoting interaction for curriculum development; assisting to breakdown the barriers between primary and secondary schooling; and exposing successful teaching and learning strategies of curriculum being utilised in primary and secondary schools.

APPENDIX

- The remainder of the document (pp. 29-75) consists of further advice regarding curriculum review and planning, as well as worksheets and Key Learning Area plans to assist with implementation.