



AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION DIGEST

Australian Curriculum Special

4 March 2010

- [THE LAUNCH](#)
- [THE FIRST QUOTES](#)
- [SUBJECT BY SUBJECT](#)
 - [ENGLISH](#)
 - [MATHS](#)
 - [SCIENCE](#)
 - [HISTORY](#)
- [CONTEXTUAL DISCUSSIONS](#)
- [THE TRIAL SCHOOLS](#)

THE LAUNCH

Draft Australian Curriculum Released Today

Hon Kevin Rudd MP & Hon Julia Gillard MP, 1 March 2010

Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, and Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, today released the first draft Australian Curriculum for students from Kindergarten to Year 10 in the subjects of English, maths, science and history.

Having an online curriculum means the curriculum will be dynamic, and easily updated, in contrast with the static, hard-copy format. The Australian Curriculum will be among the world's first curriculum delivered online.

From next year, students from all states and territories will be able to move schools, school systems and states and be taught the same knowledge, skills and understanding as part of a curriculum for the 21st Century. For the first time, the 80 000 students who move interstate each year won't have to get to know a whole new curriculum at the same time as getting to know a new school.

Building on the consultation process to date, from today all Australians interested in our children's education are invited to review and provide feedback on the curriculum taught in our schools during the public consultation period until 23 May 2010.

In addition, 150 schools across Australia will be trialling the new curriculum over the next 3 months.

Read entire release: http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_100302_082635.aspx

Transcript of Kerry O'Brien interview with Julia Gillard on the 7.30 Report 1 March 2010:

http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Transcripts/Pages/Article_100302_083212.aspx

Transcript of "doorstop" interview with Prime Minister Rudd & Minister Gillard at the launch on 1 March:

http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Transcripts/Pages/Article_100302_084446.aspx

[< top >](#)

ACARA Releases Draft Australian Curriculum for National Consultation

Australian Curriculum Assessment & Reporting Authority, 1 March 2010

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) today released the draft K-10 Australian Curriculum in the four learning areas of English, mathematics, science and history for national consultation.

According to ACARA Board Chair, Professor Barry McGaw AO, "It is now time to engage the education and broader community across Australia in a conversation about what it is we want young people to learn in these four areas. The overall aim is to produce a final curriculum in English, history, mathematics, and science that equips all young Australians with the essential skills, knowledge and capabilities to thrive and compete in the globalised world and information rich workplaces of the current century."

Feedback is easy to provide - and anyone in Australia can provide feedback.

The consultation portal, <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au>, hosts the draft curriculum. Here, anyone can:

- View, read or print the draft materials
- Provide feedback on any part of the draft curriculum directly, online
- Complete an online survey by rating areas of the draft curriculum or providing comments
- Provide additional notes and written feedback online, as an attachment to the survey

In addition, teachers wishing to provide feedback can attend state and territory consultation sessions and workshops where they are invited to provide direct feedback on the draft curriculum materials.

Feedback from the various sources will be collated, analysed and made publicly available. The analysis will result in decisions about adjustments and refinements that need to be made to the draft Australian Curriculum prior to final publication, later in 2010.

The consultation period for these four learning areas will extend through to 23 May, 2010 and final curriculum will be available to be taught in Australian schools from 2011.

Read complete release:

http://www.acara.edu.au/verve/_resources/Media_release_Draft_Aust_Curriculum_for_National_Consultation_20100301.pdf

[< top >](#)

Draft national curriculum unveiled

Samantha Hawley & David Mark, ABC News, 1 March 2010

The curriculum - covering English, maths, science and history - will go up on the web this morning for a public consultation period before all state and territory standards are abolished.

Federal Education Minister Julia Gillard will unveil the draft curriculum, which covers students from kindergarten to year 10.

"As a nation we have to be able to reassure ourselves that we have got a high-quality curriculum being taught to every child in every school," she said.

"There are around 80,000 students who move interstate each year and it is obviously easier for them if they are in a new school and they are doing the same curriculum."

"Certainly it will require professional development, schooling teachers up to teach the national curriculum."

Public consultation will last for three months.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/03/01/2832549.htm>

Video: The Midday Report: http://www.abc.net.au/reslib/201003/r522722_2910360.asx

Video: ABC TV News NSW: http://www.abc.net.au/reslib/201003/r523034_2914736.asx

[< top >](#)

THE FIRST QUOTES

Great expectations – Professor Barry McGaw

ABC News, 1 March 2010

Professor Barry McGaw is the chairman of the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority and as the man driving the new national curriculum, he has great expectations.

"[I expect] that Australia will have a world class curriculum and maybe even a world's best curriculum," he said. "My hope is that this curriculum will take us to the top."

"The research evidence is strong that students do need a good basis in what is called a phonetic awareness and that that depends upon the development of the capacity to spell out words," he said.

"They have reduced material and kept the essential ideas, or what they call the big ideas of maths and science, to make sure that the key understandings are developed and that students get time to develop skill at depth," Professor McGaw said.

"On the question of retraining, teachers will want some reassurance that that will be addressed," he said.

"I have been in a number of meetings with teachers where they move fairly quickly away from the question of 'What will the curriculum be like?' to 'How will we be trained?'

"So that will all have to be spelled out and teachers will need some reassurance about that."

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/03/01/2832549.htm>

[< top >](#)

Retraining concerns – Teachers' Union & Principals

ABC News, 1 March 2010

Principals and the teachers' union are worried that there is not enough detail about retraining and that there will not be enough time to put the curriculum into place.

The federal president of the Australian Education Union, Angelo Gavrielatos, says teachers acknowledge that more professional development is needed. "With this new curriculum due to be introduced from the commencement of next year, there is no plan nor any associated budget with respect to the implementation and support of this curriculum document and of course no budget with respect to the necessary professional development," he said.

The president of the Australian Primary Principals Association, Leonie Trimper, says like Mr Gavrielatos she broadly welcomes the national curriculum, but she is concerned the process is being rushed.

"Let's find out what schools do need, what individual teachers do need," she said. "[We] almost should do an audit. We could be talking August/September before the final curriculum documents develop, so that is too late ... you've got three or four months for teachers to engage in this and have some quality professional development.

"We need to know now what is being planned, what resources are going to be added, what professional development. So the whole issue of implementation for us is a huge one."

Dave Edwards from the Australian Primary Principals Association says it will give teachers a better idea of the benchmarks that need to be met.

"It's going to be much, much easier for teachers to actually assess the individuals in their class - are they achieving at an appropriate level, [at a] standard that mirrors expectations across the whole of Australia," Mr Edwards said.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/03/01/2832549.htm>

[< top >](#)

New curriculum 'blots out British heritage' – Opposition

ABC News, Mar 1, 2010

The Federal Opposition says Australia's British heritage has been ignored in a new national curriculum.

Opposition education spokesman Christopher Pyne says the document makes more than 100 references to Indigenous history and culture. But he says he could find no mention of the Westminster system of government or the Magna Carta.

"On the one hand we have a seemingly overemphasis on Indigenous culture and history, and almost an entire blotting out of our British traditions and British heritage," he said.

Mr. Pyne says the national curriculum has been rushed and is biased towards Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.

"To me it smells of another disaster waiting to happen," he said. "The national curriculum is unbalanced; it will not give young Australians a confidence about their future because it doesn't teach them the truth necessarily - and the balanced truth - about our past."

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/03/01/2833405.htm>

[< top >](#)

Students to learn 'balanced view of history'

ABC News, Mar 1, 2010

Ms Gillard says the curriculum takes a balanced view of Australian history. "It is neither black armband nor white blindfold," she said.

"There have been some claims made about the content of the curriculum on media in recent days that actually aren't right."

Australian Curriculum and Assessment Reporting Authority board chair Professor Barry McGaw says a lot of effort has been made to ensure a mix of voices had input to the curriculum.

"What they brought forward is a proposal that, for example, with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island perspective, that their history be represented in the curriculum - their history before the arrival before the arrival of European and upon the arrival of Europeans, their perspective as well as those of the settlers," he said.

"The settlers' perspectives are part celebration - it's not black armband in that sense at all.

"It's people travelling enormous distances and setting up a whole new country in a hostile environment on the one hand - but there are Indigenous perspectives on that as well and we're covering both."

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/03/01/2833094.htm>

[< top >](#)

School scheme 'could hamper' Aboriginal kids - Union

Gina Marich, ABC News, 1 March 2010

The Australian Education Union says it is cautious about a new national curriculum which could further disadvantage Indigenous students. The union's Northern Territory branch president, Rodney Smith, says any national curriculum needs to make allowances for differences between schools and regions.

"My initial reaction is having a draft national anything becomes a problem," he said. "I mean where does the local content fit and how strict is it going to be?"

"We are still having a debate about bilingual and the use of traditional language in scaffolding students so that they can then get the whole principle of learning and then being able to scaffold into English," Mr Smith said.

"So is this just going to be a further hurdle for our Indigenous students?"

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/03/01/2833310.htm>

[< top >](#)

New national curriculum to fix patchy standards: Rudd

PM, ABC Local Radio, 2 March 2010

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: I note that there are 118 references to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

And while we all believe that Indigenous culture and history should be taught as part of the curriculum there are no mentions at all of Westminster; there are no mentions at all of the Magna Carta which of course is the foundation of all our laws in this country; and there is one reference to Parliament.

So on the one hand we have a seemingly over-emphasis on Indigenous culture and history and almost an entire blotting out of our British traditions and British heritage. That's just one example.

Read more at <http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2010/s2833407.htm>

[< top >](#)

National Curriculum

The Hon Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education, 2 March, 2010

Transcript: ABC Radio interview

JULIA GILLARD: What we're going to do with the curriculum now apart from the consultation period is it's going to be trailed in around 150 schools in the country so teachers teaching it in classrooms, giving us really practical feedback about how they're finding teaching the curriculum, and then we'll be working with states and territories and school systems to start phasing in the teaching of the new curriculum from next year.

This is the start. This is the first four core subjects. Of course the curriculum has not been written by me; it's been written by our education experts using a very consultative process. But now we'll trial it in schools, phase it in and our experts will move to writing the rest of the curriculum so there is one national curriculum around the country.

Read more at http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Transcripts/Pages/Article_100302_143048.aspx

[< top >](#)

SUBJECT BY SUBJECT

ENGLISH

Making sure no one misses the literacy bus

Scott Hannaford, Canberra Times 2 March 2010

The study of literature is to be pushed back from high school back into the primary years and the basic literacy skills needed to understand and use language will be taught for longer to avoid children falling through the cracks in high school under the national curriculum.

English teaching is to be divided into three main streams: study of language; development of literature; and the study of literacy.

Professor Peter Freebody of the University of Sydney, who worked on the development of the English curriculum, said students would be supported for longer to ensure they had the necessary literacy skills to allow them to progress through their education.

"In the past the basics were laid down and then the bus left, and if you weren't on it, you weren't on it. The research is very clear on the need to maintain support. In particular, kids often fall away badly as the literacy demands start to become more specialised in the middle years across the different curriculum areas - and that transition in the middle years is where a lot of kids get lost.

"This is a curriculum that will really emphasise the continued pushing of basic literacy support into the secondary years."

In addition to introducing literature at a younger age, grammar will be taught in all years. Spelling will be taught using phonic, visual and morphemic [units of meaning] knowledge approaches, which will have a strong focus in earlier years that will be consolidated throughout a child's schooling.

By Year 10 children will be writing texts that "develop abstract concepts, generalise about and question human experience and persuade other to action."

Australia's Indigenous languages, engagement with Asia and sustainability will be raised in cross-curriculum teaching.

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/>

[< top >](#)

QUT expert

Professor Annette Patterson, Head, School of Cultural and Language Studies in Education, QUT, 1 March 2010

"The emphasis on literature in the proposed English national curriculum is very welcome as is the sustained focus across the year levels on aesthetic and cultural aspects of literary studies.

"The curriculum retains many of the strengths of current state-based English curricula. It aligns its approach with current thinking on the importance of explicit teaching about language. This alignment will help foster the idea that the teacher's role in enabling learning is a very important one.

"There's a tendency to over-emphasise the importance of phonics in the early years as a means of teaching reading.

"This is regrettable as a balanced approach to teaching reading is essential for success.

"A balanced approach ensures that children are exposed to a range of different ways of learning to read and optimises the chance of learning through the approach that best suits the individual child."

Read more at <http://www.news.qut.edu.au/cgi-bin/WebObjects/News.woa/wa/goNewsPage?newsEventID=31527>

[< top >](#)

MATHEMATICS

Reasoning and problem solving count

Scott Hannaford, Canberra Times, 2 March 2010

Problem solving and reasoning are to be at the heart of mathematics education across all years in a curriculum that has been pared back to make it easier for students to understand fundamental concepts.

According to national curriculum documents, maths teaching is to be divided into three content strands of: numbers and algebra; statistics and probability; and measurement and geometry.

A further four proficiency strands will be introduced in categories of understanding, fluency, problem solving, and reasoning – with students taught about the “thinking and doing” of mathematics.

Kindergarten children through to Year 2 would be exposed to important mathematical concepts and would learn the language of maths.

In Year 3 through to Year 6, models, pictures and symbols would be used to show how mathematical concepts relate to the lives of students; and from Year 7 students would be taught the benefits of algebra and how geometry was used in the real world.

Professor Peter Sutherland of Monash University said the curriculum sought to take focus away from a previous over-emphasis on fluency. “Mathematics is not about nouns – it’s about verbs, its’ about the actions we do.”

By concentrating on fewer areas, students would have a greater chance to absorb important grounding concepts that would be built on.

“By having less content we hope that kids can better adapt. Inclusiveness is important. We say that everyone should be doing the full curriculum to the end of Year 9 at least – and everyone should do maths in Year 10. Maths creates opportunities, and if you haven’t done the mathematics you can’t have the opportunities.”

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/>

[< top >](#)

QUT expert

Professor Lyn English, QUT, 1 March 2010

"The curriculum does not appear to be radically different from existing curricula. A few aspects are being introduced earlier, others a little later.

"My main concern is that the listing of content for each grade level does not adequately reflect or support the rationale, aims, and the highlighted emphasis on reasoning presented at the start of the document. For example, the document preamble stresses that the curriculum will foster creativity, problem solving, a range of reasoning skills, and other important future-oriented processes.

"I fear these might not be addressed adequately when implemented. The 'basics' of today and of the future are not the basics of the past; they have fundamentally changed and the curriculum content and its delivery needs to reflect this."

Read more at <http://www.news.qut.edu.au/cgi-bin/WebObjects/News.woa/wa/goNewsPage?newsEventID=31527>

[< top >](#)

SCIENCE

Aiming to open young eyes to their surroundings

Scott Hannaford, Canberra Times, 2 March 2010

Teachers will attempt to rekindle students' flagging scientific curiosity by showing them how science relates to the world they live in.

Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority chairman Barry McGaw said Australian students were among the world's top achievers in science, but were becoming disengaged.

“OECD analysis of the achievements of 15-year-olds in science has Australia right near the top... but when you look at another set of measures – how important do students think science is for their country, for themselves and their future

life – among the 60 countries participating in those studies we range between 40th and 50th. So we have a bunch of students who are good at science but don't engage with it, don't feel engaged by it."

Under the curriculum, science will be broken into three main streams: science inquiry, science as a human endeavour, and science understanding.

Like other areas of the curriculum, young children will begin their scientific education by learning about how science affects their immediate surroundings and will begin observing, studying and questioning the world around them.

The level of observations and analysis will be built on in the later years to prepare students for senior secondary courses in physics, chemistry, biology and earth and environmental science.

The dean of the faculty of education at the University of Canberra, Professor Denis Goodrum, said Australia was a country with a proud scientific heritage that included Nobel laureates in medicine - but student engagement with the subject was becoming a concern.

"We think science as human endeavour gives that dimension to students so they realise that science isn't a boring topic, it's actually done by humans in very interesting ways, both from an historical perspective and a scientific perspective."

Opposition spokeswoman on science and research Sophie Mirabella said the science arm of the curriculum had focused on trendy areas of study at the expense of basics. "Political correctness has taken hold of the science curriculum with Chinese traditional medicines, natural therapies and indigenous sciences forming part of the draft curriculum," she said.

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/>

[< top >](#)

QUT expert

Professor Stephen Ritchie, QUT, 1 March 2010

"The first stated aim of the Science Learning Area is for students to develop an interest in science, presumably to address well-documented concerns about students' waning interest in the sciences.

"Yet, the document lists numerous disconnected content topics to be covered each year that could have been copied just as easily from the table of contents of any existing traditional text book in high school science.

"Only superficial reference is made to unifying ideas like sustainability, and how cultural aspects of science (cf. Science as Human Endeavour Strand) might be linked to the topics for Science Understanding.

"If interest in science was the chief goal for the design on the National Curriculum in Science, this document has not delivered.

"Teachers will now need to be supported by supplementary resources and professional development to achieve what the document has failed to do - link the three strands of content in interesting ways."

Read more at <http://www.news.qut.edu.au/cgi-bin/WebObjects/News.woa/wa/goNewsPage?newsEventID=31527>

[< top >](#)

Science deans have doubts

Guy Healy, the Australian, 4 March 2010

THE new national science curriculum is "dangerously vulnerable" to interpretation by too many science teachers without an adequate background in science, university science deans have warned.

The historic reform, aimed at reversing students' continuing lack of interest in science, rested on yet-to-be produced teacher resource materials, the Australian Council of Science Deans executive director John Rice told The Australian yesterday.

"The K-10 curriculum has been divided into three streams, and that's extremely dangerous," Professor Rice said. The strands were laudable aims, supported by the science deans, but "you can't teach science in a way that's compartmentalised. They have to be done together. Everything depends upon how well that integration is explained [in the resource materials], and then how well teachers take it on board.

"A good teacher will integrate the strands, but many teachers have been drafted in from other disciplines and they will be looking to the national curriculum for strong guidance," he said.

The lead writer of the science curriculum, the Australian Academy of Science's Denis Goodrum, defended the changes as overdue but agreed that teaching resources would be crucial.

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/science-deans-have-doubts/story-e6frg6nf-1225836706893>

[< top >](#)

Dreamtime `spiritual', so off science courses

Justine Ferrari, the Australian, 4 March 2010

ABORIGINAL Dreamtime stories will be removed from the national science course on the orders of curriculum head Barry McGaw, who said religious and spiritual beliefs had no place in the science classroom.

Professor McGaw, chairman of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, said he had not realised the Dreamtime had been included in the science course until it was reported by The Weekend Australian last Saturday.

"I'm a science graduate and a former science teacher," he said. "I think Dreamtime is a religious or spiritual interpretation of the beginnings of life. For the same reason, we wouldn't let intelligent design or creationism be included. It shouldn't be in the science curriculum, and we're going to take it out."

The Weekend Australian revealed the national science curriculum - released on Monday with national courses in English, history and maths - included a topic called "science and culture" examining different cultural groups and their perspectives on science. The curriculum directs students be taught the scientific knowledge of different cultures from primary school to Year 10.

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/dreamtime-spiritual-so-off-science-courses/story-e6frg6nf-1225836724718>

[< top >](#)

Creationism could slip into science classes

Anna Patty, Sydney Morning Herald, March 4, 2010

The draft national curriculum does not prohibit the teaching of creationism in schools, raising questions about whether this will open the door to its promotion as a science in classrooms.

The NSW Board of Studies has explicitly ruled out the teaching of creation theory from the Bible as science; however it allows the teaching of spiritual perspectives on creation in science classes, as long as they are not dressed up as scientific or used to substitute any curriculum content, such as the teaching of evolution.

Professor McGaw [Chairman of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment & Reporting Authority] said it was not necessary to prohibit the teaching of creationism as science in the national curriculum.

"Our curriculum will not justify teaching creationism. It is not our intention that intelligent design or other [metaphysical] explanations of origins be taught as part of science."

Read entire article: <http://www.smh.com.au/national/education/creationism-could-slip-into-science-classes-20100303-pj4d.html>

[< top >](#)

HISTORY

History curriculum 'could fail'

Dan Harrison, the Age, March 1, 2010

HISTORY teachers are warning that the national history curriculum could be a failure if the subject is placed in the hands of bored or ill-trained teachers. ... History Teachers' Association of Australia president Paul Kiem, a member of the advisory panel for the history curriculum, also suggested the document might be too ambitious in the amount of content it expected teachers to cover.

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), responsible for developing the curriculum, instructed curriculum writers to assume 20 hours a year would be devoted to the subject in kindergarten, rising to 80 hours by year 7. But the documents make no reference to time allocation.

"At the moment there is no guarantee that state and territory jurisdictions will allocate this time," Mr. Kiem said. "There is an urgent need for clarification from state and territory authorities." He said there must be a focus on "quality rather than quantity", and hard decisions had to be made about the significance of proposed content in order for it to be delivered in the classroom.

"It is a subject where so much depends on the passion and expertise of the teacher," he said. "Particularly with history, if a teacher is not a passionate expert there is the danger that any teaching of a mandatory subject will be counter-productive."

Only about half of Australian secondary students study history, and many are taught by a teacher without a background in the subject.

Read entire article: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/education/history-curriculum-could-fail-20100228-pb7q.html>

[< top >](#)

QUT expert

Dr Chris Sarra, executive director Stronger Smarter Institute at QUT, 1 March 2010

"For Indigenous children there is tremendous potential to feel a sense of 'connectedness' to schools, as well as pride in knowing and understanding that the history of our people does indeed have a valid place in our classrooms.

"For non-Indigenous children there is the opportunity to understand and celebrate the notion that they are friends and schoolmates to those who are descendants of the oldest living human existence on the planet.

"For educators there is tremendous scope here to engage positively with local Indigenous people in communities to develop relevant learning experiences.

"If one is to read correctly the intent of the national curriculum, it seems determined to move beyond romantic white notions of Australian history.

"Fortunately it also seems determined to move beyond black armband views of history. It may surprise some to realise that many Aboriginal people will be pleased about this shift beyond such representations of Aboriginal history.

"We have always been a historically proud and robust group of people who have simply asked other Australians to know and understand the truth about us and our history, not to feel sorry for us.

"The new curriculum directions has some scope to enable such knowledge and understanding without the need for other Australians to feel threatened, guilty, betrayed or sorry."

Read more at <http://www.news.qut.edu.au/cgi-bin/WebObjects/News.woa/wa/goNewsPage?newsEventID=31527>

[< top >](#)

So Many Dates, So Little Time

Annabel Astbury, New Matilda, 1 March 2010

... While there's a lot to like in the document, it also raises some serious concerns about how achievable a curriculum like this will be in a real-world setting, where what can be taught is limited by class time and by teachers' professional learning.

... In terms of the History document, the concerns raised will be reasonably predictable. The one that will be asked most in the media will be whether Australian students will learn particular facts in Australian History, a concern that has almost reached the point of fetishisation for the popular press. (How many times have you seen an unsuspecting public bombarded with probing questions such as "What was the name of Australia's first prime minister?")

A look at today's draft should reassure "concerned parties" that students from Kindergarten to Year 10 will get a chance to learn plenty of history. Anzac Day, exploration, Federation, Indigenous history, Industrial Revolution, World Wars, the Holocaust, South Pacific history are all there — in fact it is difficult to find something that is not included.

... This is not to say that students at this stage of learning are incapable of acquiring such knowledge relevant to each of these topics; however it does raise a question of whether such an ambitiously sweeping coverage of historical content may hinder the delivery of what the Government refers to as this "world-class" curriculum.

There is not much use in aiming to cover vast amounts of historical knowledge if there isn't enough time to develop the skills which are inherent to the discipline and which are highlighted in the Rationale and Aims of the History curriculum draft document.

Read entire article: <http://newmatilda.com/2010/03/01/so-many-dates-so-little-time>

Annabel Astbury is the Executive Director of the History Teachers' Association of Victoria, which provides professional learning support to teachers. She supports the idea of a "world-class" curriculum that, hopefully, her children will enjoy.

• See also her recent article: "How do you deliver a world-class curriculum" <http://newmatilda.com/2010/02/03/how-do-you-deliver-worldclass-curriculum#comment-20255>

[< top >](#)

Govt accused of blotting out UK links

Bethany Hiatt & Andrew Tillett, The West Australian, 2 March 2010

"The early signs are that the black armband view of history is back," shadow federal education minister Christopher Pyne said. "How can Australians know where we are heading in the future if we don't have a balanced view of our past?"

Kimberley Land Council chief executive Wayne Bergmann said it was disappointing that Mr Pyne was indulging in cheap political football by harking back to the black arm-band debate.

"We can't hide the truth," he said. "I have worked with Aboriginal people who witnessed first-hand their families being shot."

La Salle College Aboriginal student co-ordinator Darren Perrett said the curriculum was a step forward for education and indigenous children. "Because they're a minority they're sometimes overlooked," he said. "This offers an opportunity to cater for them as well."

Read more at <http://au.news.yahoo.com/thewest/a/-/wa/6872093/govt-accused-of-blotting-out-uk-links/>

[< top >](#)

Teaching focus on students' place in the world

Scott Hannaford, Canberra Times, 2 March 2010

In an attempt to make it seem less boring to students, Australian history will be taught in relation to international experience, according to experts behind the development of the national curriculum.

Professor Stuart Macintyre of the University of Melbourne said teachers did struggle at times to engage students in history and that the national curriculum would give them a good framework to understand where events fitted in without attempting to cover everything.

"Research has found a number of students find Australian history boring - and that's a worry – partly because they say they've done it before, partly because they feel uncomfortable with what can be a facile moralism: so there's a real challenge to teaching history.

"What this attempts to do is to teach history from within an international perspective

"Students will understand aspects of Aboriginal history far better and it will be far more engaging, if we compare it with the experience of other people." Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history will cover spiritualities and histories and recognition of the contribution these groups make to modern Australia.

Rather than try to teach students about all aspects of history, the curriculum attempts to give them the skills to put historical events into perspective, equip them with the skills to research in greater depth; and to understand key concepts including: evidence, continuity and change, cause and effect, significance, empathy, perspectives and contestability.

While earlier years will learn how history relates to their own family experience, from Year 7 students will begin to look at world history from the earliest times and in Year 10 will learn about history from 1901 onwards.

"They will be given a cognitive map of history where they can place events," Professor Macintyre said.

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/>

[< top >](#)

CONTEXTUAL DISCUSSIONS

Teachers key to curriculum success

Geoff Masters, Canberra Times, 3 March 2010

This week's release of the proposed national curriculum from K- Year 10 in English History, Science and Mathematics is a milestone for Australian education. After several false starts late last century the nation at last has a clear road map of the minimum essential knowledge skills that all students should learn – and it's not before time.

Although Australia has a population less than some American states, we have lived with unnecessary differences and substantial duplication of curricula across eight jurisdictions. This new curriculum is a step towards ensuring that every child receives a sound basic education - regardless of where they live.

The launch of this curriculum also points to the next challenge of ensuring that every classroom teacher is equipped and supported to teach it. Clarity about what teachers should teach and students should learn is the first step. The implementation of the new curriculum will require teachers with expert knowledge about effective teaching practices and high levels of skill in interpreting the new curriculum for particular groups of students.

Teachers already know that teaching is more than delivering a one-size-fits-all curriculum to all students in a particular grade. They understand the enormous variability in students' interest, motivation, rates and levels of progress. In any given year of school the highest achieving 10% of students in areas like mathematics and reading are about 5-6 years ahead of the lowest achieving 10%.

Excellent teachers understand the importance of first identifying where individual students are up to in their learning, including diagnosing misunderstandings and gaps in learning. They then use this knowledge to identify starting points

for teaching and to provide differentiated learning opportunities appropriate to individual levels of readiness and need. The best teachers know that the greatest inefficiencies in teaching are the result of teaching some students what they already know and teaching others what they are not yet ready to learn.

Evidence from recent audits of teaching and learning practices in Australia reveals that teachers differ significantly in their ability to provide differentiated teaching of this kind. Some fall back on teaching to the middle of the class with the consequence that lower achieving students fall further behind as each year's curriculum becomes increasingly inappropriate for them; others allow higher achieving students "free time" when they complete class work early, rather than extending them with more advanced work.

The worst possible outcome of a national curriculum would be an increase in the number of teachers who deliver the curriculum in an undifferentiated way to all children in the same year level.

The challenge of building teachers' skills to implement the new curriculum should be high on the agenda of the newly established Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership. Tasks for the Institute include: identifying and promoting evidence-based teaching strategies; developing teachers' and leaders' skills; diagnosing difficulties and monitoring learning over time; and building skills in the delivery of differentiated learning - including through more effective uses of technology.

The new Australian Curriculum will enhance the quality of teaching and learning in our schools to the extent that it is accompanied by a systematic effort to identify and promote highly effective teaching practices, to evaluate the quality of classroom teaching, and to recognise and reward teachers who achieve high standards of teaching excellence.

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/>

Professor Geoff Masters is CEO of the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER)

[< top >](#)

Curriculum's narrow focus leaves students bereft of big ideas

Libby Tudball, the Age, March 2, 2010

Australia needs an innovative, world-class approach to school curriculum, but it is clear from the "back to basics" national curriculum draft that we have a long way to go yet. While maths, science, history and English - the disciplines the draft gives priority to - are all critically important, they do not cover many areas of significance for 21st-century learners.

Curriculum must pay attention to questions and issues that confront the world today, such as climate change, economic issues, refugees, social dislocation among young people, and the challenges of a technology-driven world.

Yes, we want students who are knowledgeable in maths, science, history and English, but we must recognise that some of the most important knowledge will not fall neatly into these disciplines - politics, multiculturalism, water shortages, increasing violence and under-age drinking are vital concerns in their lives.

Students need to develop the knowledge and skills to be active and informed citizens who know how to think critically, and how to respond to contemporary issues; a narrowly focused curriculum will not do this.

Speaking at the Social Educators' Association of Australia national conference in Adelaide last week, Professor Cathie Holden, of Britain's University of Exeter, urged the writers of the Australian national curriculum not to make the mistakes that her country is now fixing.

She says that by focusing too narrowly on history, Australia's curriculum risks failing to address big-picture education in fields such as civics and citizenship, global education, sustainability and economics.

Read entire article: <http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/politics/curriculums-narrow-focus-leaves-students-bereft-of-big-ideas-20100301-pdi2.html>

Libby Tudball is a senior lecturer in the education faculty at Monash University and a life member of the professional association Social Education Victoria.

[< top >](#)

Making history in the classroom

Justine Ferrari, the Australian, 4 March 2010

For years, that was the lament of parents worried that an out-of-touch school system was failing to equip their children with the basic skills needed for life and work. Well, their day is back. At least that is how the federal government is selling its new "back-to-basics" national curriculum, with the release on Monday of the first four subjects of English, history, maths and science.

The national curriculum is not intended to provide an exhaustive list of everything a student will learn but to set out the essential knowledge and skills children across the nation need to know.

The maths and science curriculums concentrate on the disciplines that students must master to build knowledge in those areas. Many of these are already common. Even before the national curriculum was conceived, 90 per cent or more of maths and science courses was the same across state and territory borders.

The national curriculum differs most markedly in history and English, which contain new directions - and return some old ones - to two of the most contentious school subjects. The existing state curriculums in history and English vary widely and the national curriculum attempts to recast the way in which these subjects are taught.

The most obvious difference is the return to schools of a subject called history.

For many years history has been taught as part of an integrated social studies course, studies of society and environment, except in NSW, where it has always been taught as a stand-alone subject. Victoria recently changed its curriculum to reinstate history as a subject.

And for the first time history will be taught as a discrete subject in primary schools. It will provide a more structured approach to the introduction of history to young students and a more cohesive course for high school students, ending the haphazard approach that has characterised history teaching under SOSE.

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/features/making-history-in-the-classroom/story-e6frg6z6-1225836706773>

[< top >](#)

Focus on Special Education Needs

Melanie Tait, Radio 666 ABC Canberra, 3 March 2010

With the new national curriculum about to be trialled, the Australian Special Education Principals Association is calling on the government to include students with special needs.

The organisation says students with special needs have been ignored in the proposed national curriculum.

Fiona Forbes, National President of the ASEPA spoke to Louise Maher about what she would like to see as part of the national curriculum for students with special needs.

Listen to audio at <http://blogs.abc.net.au/canberra/2010/03/focus-on-special-education-needs-.html>

[< top >](#)

National curriculum is the way forward

Karen Brooks, Courier Mail, 2 March 2010

MONDAY marked the launch of yet another step in the Labor Government's "Education Revolution" - the draft National Curriculum.

Rudd and Gillard have hailed the changes as being about "back to basics" - a term the government-appointed chairman of the authority, Professor Barry McGaw, resists. "I don't like 'back to basics', because it implies you're only focusing on initial performance - we need a curriculum that builds the basics, but also extends students, hence the emphasis on literature."

A close look at the proposed curriculum does reveal a scaffold approach to education, where knowledge is built upon each year, at age-appropriate levels, and importantly a context is created - contexts that are personal, social, cultural and global.

One of the ways this has been achieved is by making History, a subject that was relegated to the past, compulsory. However, it has already attracted negative commentary. ...Referring to the authors as "leftist ideologues" who are "capturing the curriculum for political purposes", some uninformed critics are trying to derail what is a long-overdue inclusion in education. The circumstances surrounding Sorry Day, along with the significance of the Dreamtime etc, are not being taught at the expense of other historical moments, as implied, but beside them. Why is that so wrong? Or offensive?

If anyone is being political, it is not the designers of the curriculum so much as it is political parties taking cheap shots.

...We need to support it where we can and be mindful of its shortcomings and communicate these in helpful ways, not simply criticise, so together we can improve not only what our children learn, but the ways in which they learn as well. After all, the future depends on this.

Read entire article: <http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/opinion/national-curriculum-is-the-way-forward/story-e6frerfo-1225836268267>

Dr Karen Brooks is an associate professor of media studies at Southern Cross University

[< top >](#)

THE TRIAL SCHOOLS

Australian Capital Territory

The Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, and the ACT Minister for Education and Training, Andrew Barr, today announced that 10 ACT schools will trial the new Australian Curriculum for years K-10 over the next three months:

Ainslie Primary School: English: Years K-2
Lyneham High School: Mathematics: Years 7-10
Alfred Deakin High School: Science: Years 7-10
Monash Primary School: English, Mathematics: Years K-2
St Edmund's College: English, Maths, History, Science: Years 3-6
Garran Primary School: English: Years K-2
Telopea Park School: History: Years 7-10
Holy Trinity Primary School: Mathematics: Years K-2
St Francis Xavier College: Science: Years 7-10
Canberra Girls' Grammar School: English, History: Years K-2

Read more at http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_100302_121141.aspx

[< top >](#)

Tasmania: Schools selected to test-drive curriculum

ABC News, 4 March 2010

More than a dozen schools in Tasmania have been chosen to test-drive the Federal Government's draft national curriculum. The draft curriculum covers the teaching of English, maths, science and history in all Australian schools from kindergarten to year 10.

Thirteen Tasmanian schools have been chosen to put it to the test, seven from the south and six from the north, with a mix of both state and private schools.

They are: **Sacred Heart, Campbell Street Primary, St Michael's Collegiate, Spreyton Primary, Kingston High, Rose Bay High, Penguin High, Penguin Primary, Friends, St Aloysius, Riverside High, Riana Primary and St Leonards Primary.**

The Premier David Bartlett says he supports the proposed national curriculum but will not rush its implementation if the Government is re-elected later this month.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/03/04/2836047.htm>

HAVE YOUR SAY ON THE DRAFT AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

Go to <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au>

[< top >](#)

ACSSO EMAIL NEWSLETTERS

- Australian Education Digest : <http://www.acsso.org.au/australian-education-digest/> (weekly)
- International News Roundup : <http://www.acsso.org.au/roundup/> (monthly)
- Values Education : <http://www.valuesineducation.org.au/news.htm> (monthly)
- Languages Education : <http://www.languageseducation.com/news.htm> (monthly)
- Ensemble - Music Education : <http://www.ensemble.org.au/news.htm> (monthly)
- Family School Partners : <http://www.familyschool.org.au/news/> (monthly)
- Public Education Voice : <http://www.acsso.org.au/public-education-voice> (quarterly)

Do you know of an event or resource that schools should know about? Email us at letters@acsso.org.au. Details of products, services, events, resources or points of view are provided for information only; publication does not imply endorsement or recommendation. No warranty is provided nor liability accepted by ACSSO, its members or employees.

To unsubscribe from Australian Education Digest click here: <mailto:webmaster@acsso.org.au?subject=unsubscribeAED>

To unsubscribe from all ACSSO mailings click here: <mailto:webmaster@acsso.org.au?subject=unsubscribeALL>