



Curriculum Portfolio

2024 Conference Report

Portfolio Leaders: Anna McCorkle and Naomi Obst

The Curriculum Portfolio received one motion in 2023, citing the need for reporting timeframes for the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) testing to be expediated to better support specific learning needs of rural and remote students. Federal Council continues to advocate on behalf of members in the NAPLAN space and keep abreast of other key issues in the Curriculum space, such as the inclusion of food and fibre production within the curriculum.

Federal Council continues to hold a position on the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) National Peak Parents body (formerly the National Peak Parents and Principals Group) which has recently held its first meeting in the new format, discussing issues specific to the parent member groups. This group provides a direct line of contact with ACARA and the opportunity to raise members' issues regularly.

The Australian Curriculum plays a crucial role in shaping the education and future of students across the country. The implementation and delivery of the curriculum in rural and remote schools presents unique challenges that need to be addressed. This report aims to provide an overview of the current state of the Australian Curriculum in rural and remote schools in 2024.

Rural and remote schools face several challenges when it comes to implementing the Australian Curriculum. These challenges include limited access to resources, difficulty attracting and retaining qualified teachers, and a lack of support for professional development. As a result, students in these schools may not be receiving the same quality of education as their urban counterparts which can be inferred from the NAPLAN data.

Rural and remote schools often struggle to attract and retain qualified teachers resulting in a high turnover of staff and a lack of continuity in learning for students. This lack of continuity of learning or a "break" in a student's learning places these students at a significant educational disadvantage and is an area where programs need to be in place to limit this disruption.

Without initiatives designed to attract and retain experienced teachers in rural and remote schools, such as offering financial incentives, professional development opportunities, and adequate support networks, students ability to engage with the curriculum and the quality of their education can be hindered.

NAPLAN

2024 saw the second year of NAPLAN testing being administered online to students from years 3,5,7 and 9 in term one. 1.2 million students across 9411 educational campuses completed the testing in Maths and English. ICPA (Aust) is pleased to report that preliminary results, with the exception of writing as it takes longer to mark, were provided to schools at the commencement of term 2, eight weeks earlier than in 2023, and a full school term earlier than in 2022. Schools will receive their full results from June 2024 and parents and carers will receive their results from the start of term 3, 2024.

ACARA is expecting to publish the National Results in mid-August of 2024. A new look reporting format to parents with their child's individualised student report (ISR) will be issued. Feedback on this new reporting format is welcomed by ACARA. Please send your feedback to the Curriculum Portfolio leader for collation and presentation to ACARA.

Rural and remote schools face unique challenges in delivering education to students, including limited resources, teacher shortages, and isolation. These challenges can impact student achievement and



performance on standardized tests such as NAPLAN. However, despite these challenges, NAPLAN results in rural and remote schools can provide valuable insights into student learning and inform strategies for improvement.

A quote from the ACARA media release ...

“Not only does NAPLAN show us whether young Australians are developing the literacy and numeracy skills that provide the critical foundation for learning and for their adult life, but it also helps government and educational authorities know how education approaches are working and where changes and support might be needed.”

By addressing the unique challenges faced by rural and remote schools and implementing targeted interventions and support programs, we can work towards improving student learning outcomes and performance on standardized assessments such as NAPLAN.

Media Release on NAPLAN can be found here:

<https://www.acara.edu.au/docs/default-source/media-releases/media-release-successful-naplan-testing-concludes-for-2024-26-3-24.pdf>

NAP Science Literacy Report 2023

In addition to NAPLAN, in 2023 ACARA offered schools the option to also have their students in years 6 and 10 sit the National Assessment Program – Science Literacy Assessment. The assessments tested the students' general science literacy skills and knowledge in a sample of schools across the country. The 2023 assessment had a stronger focus on Critical and Creative Thinking, which tested skills in reasoning, analysing and evaluating. Results indicate that students who reported engaging more frequently in creative and critical thinking activities tended to have higher levels of science literacy. The results in science literacy across Australia have overall remained steady.

2018 Year 6, 58 % of students gaining proficiency

2023 Year 6, 57 % of students gaining proficiency

2018 Year 10 50% of students gaining proficiency

2023 Year 10 54% of students gaining proficiency

Further analysis of the NAP Science Literacy Report 2023 indicates that results overall have remained steady, however it also highlights that some disparities persist depending on a student's background and location. Students from a metropolitan location tended to have higher levels of science literacy than students from a regional or remote location for both years 6 and 10.

The media release on NAP Science & Literacy Report can be found here:

<https://www.acara.edu.au/docs/default-source/media-releases/media-release-national-assessment-program-science-literacy-2023-public-report-29-05-24.pdf>

To conclude, we want to remind members to be aware of updates in curriculum requirements set by state entities, particularly regarding the upper secondary assessment processes, and how these may alter the pathways for students within each state. As an example NSW has seen an update in their curriculum with the Assessment Certification Examination (ACE) rules and procedures, revised for the first-time since 2012. The ACE rules sit behind the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) who are responsible for the assessment required to issue students the Record of School Achievement (ROSA) and the Higher School Certificate will come into effect on 14 October 2024.

The state of the Australian Curriculum in rural and remote schools in 2024 remains challenging, but there are opportunities for improvement. Federal Council encourages members to continue to raise any concerns or issues they feel need to be addressed at any time and we will endeavour to ensure these are raised with the



appropriate authorities. We also encourage members to engage with the ACARA suite of websites whereby a variety of information and resources related to all curriculum topics is housed at <https://www.acara.edu.au/>.

Many thanks to all involved in compiling the 2024 Curriculum Portfolio Report.