



2026 Curriculum Federal Conference report

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The Curriculum Portfolio has been quiet the last few conferences in terms of motions being brought forward, however, curriculum in Australia is consistently being reviewed, updated and discussed.

Before becoming part of the curriculum portfolio, I must admit that I had absolutely no understanding how the Australian Curriculum was determined. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority or ACARA is more than the organisation that does 'NAPLAN'. ACARA is the independent statutory authority responsible for developing and setting the Australian Curriculum.

While ACARA sets the national baseline for what students should be taught across the country, they do not manage day-to-day implementation. The actual teaching, scheduling, and adaptation of the curriculum are handled by individual state and territory education and schooling authorities.

We can, however, learn how the curriculum is derived. The Australian Curriculum is developed by taking account of three distinct areas; learning areas, general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities.

Let's break this information down.

Learning areas are the foundation of learning and encompasses what you would expect, English, Mathematics, Science, Humanities and Social Science, the Arts, Technologies, Health and Physical Education and Languages.

The second area is general capabilities. Skills and learning techniques are assessed according to the cognitive, ethical, cultural and physical abilities (including disabilities) of students. This area is where support on a deeper context and student engagement is considered.

The third area of the three dimensions of the curriculum is cross-curriculum priorities. This covers national, regional and international contexts that is relevant to existing student learning.

Our ICPA community do not need to be advised on how students learn in different ways and that access to education in rural, remote and very remote locations can not be put into a cookie cutter and expect the same learning outcomes as their peers in more populated areas. As such, each state and territory then implements the curriculum according to reporting of students learning areas and their requirements.

The curriculum and its implementation differs greatly for our ICPA families depending on whether their students attend a rural school or study via distance education – another reason for constant reviewing and emphasising the importance of the unique needs.

'County kids' have additional challenges to a blanket curriculum such as multistage classrooms, maintaining a home classroom / facility including a home supervisor, limited face to face with their teacher, screening availability, access to preschool and communication disadvantages.

The Curriculum Portfolio is able to voice these additional challenges and advocate for our students by having a seat invitation to ACARA quarterly meetings. Being able to raise our members issues and giving a unique perspective provides an opportunity for understanding and awareness of some of the most geographically isolated students.



ICPA (Aust) will continue to advocate for food and fibre production to be a focus in the curriculum in Australian schools, not only to highlight the significance of agriculture, but also for sustainability and stewardship of the Australian environment and economy. Broadening and enhancing the learning experience of students and fostering positive understandings of agricultural will strengthen our communities and build stronger connections between industry and students.

There are many resources available to implement -Food and Fibre into your classroom, however, the adaption into the three dimensions of the Australian curriculum would be the ultimate goal.

NAPLAN is what most people think of when they hear ACARA. This years NAPLAN had some significant issues on the first day for students and their teachers. Western Australia was not affected at all by the technology hiccups on the first day being two hours in time difference. The Eastern states incurred a critical platform incident on the morning of the 11th of March 2026 disrupting the writing portion for years 5,7 and 9.

Tasmanian participation levels had fallen to unprecedented low levels due to public school industrial action coinciding with day one of NAPLAN.

The Northern Territory also have low participation due to weather and natural disaster related impacts.

Due to these issues, ACARA is investigating the best possible way to report on such events that are out of students control and could possibly alter their result if these impacts did not occur.

ACARA has also released a Media Release on the 27th of May 2026 in relation to the widespread use of AI and other digital tools that students are utilising. This is an interesting read considering it was also established that there has been a decline in information technology literacy. In fact, the latest report shows results have fallen to the lowest levels since ICT (Information and Communication Technology) literacy assessments began in 2005.

ICT literacy is the ability to use digital technology, communication tools, and networks effectively to access, manage, integrate, evaluate, and create information. It goes beyond basic computer skills to include the critical, ethical, and responsible use of technology in modern society.

The latest report also includes further information on performance results for sub-groups of students based on their background and demographics.

For example:

- Female students had higher levels of ICT literacy in comparison to male students in both Year 6 and Year 10 (consistent with previous testing cycles)
- The gap between indigenous and non-indigenous students attaining the proficient standard remained significant and has observed over the last four assessment cycles.
- Schools in major cities generally outperform those in regional and remote schools
- Achievement of ICT literacy gradually increased with increasing levels of parental occupation and parental education, resulting in large significant differences between the highest and the lowest occupational and educational groups.

For more understanding and your curiosity, the ACARA website is full of information, reports, media releases and can possibly answer some question you may have.

The Curriculum Portfolio was delighted to see a few motions submitted to this years conference and we look forward to working with branches with these motions and continue to advocate for our rural and remote students.