

Eltis Report holds little joy for schools in short term

The *Report on the Evaluation of Outcomes Assessment and Reporting in NSW Government Schools, Time to teach: Time to learn*, has 29 recommendations in five categories with Recommendations 1 to 16, more than half, focussed on curriculum and curriculum support. In recommendations 17 to 29, the report builds on the frameworks approach of the other recommendations without providing any specific assessment and reporting advice for schools.

The problems faced by schools are attributed to three main causes:

1. inappropriate curriculum documents from the Board of Studies leading to excessive demands on teachers mainly in primary schools
2. conflicting advice from the Board of Studies and the Department of Education and Training and a policy vacuum on reporting from the Department
3. schools acting in a policy vacuum to implement over zealous and detailed assessment and reporting processes further increasing the demands on teachers.

Solution 1. Curriculum and curriculum frameworks

The Board of Studies is to provide improved syllabuses with fewer, better-worded outcomes and by designating some outcomes as mandatory. The Department will develop curriculum implementation frameworks based initially on English and mathematics with the mandatory outcomes of the other KLAS integrated as appropriate and then consider the need for a integrated but limited program in each of the other KLAS.

Solution 2. Assessment and reporting frameworks

Assessment and reporting frameworks will flow from and support the curriculum frameworks. They will provide broad advice to schools on: the principles of good assessment and reporting practices; use of state-wide testing data; reporting on the progress of students with special needs; managing assessment across each school year; reporting to parents and tracking student progress. The Frameworks are to give attention to: the scope of reports to parents, the language, performance levels and how portfolios are used. The frameworks will also be supported by a web site with examples of best practice.

Solution 3. Single computer program for student data

Implementing one computer program to track and transfer student achievement information is recommended.

Solution 4. Professional development for teachers

There is a series of recommendations about professional development support for teachers including: supporting regional curriculum officers and identifying key teachers in regions to support implementation; involvement of teachers in the development of frameworks and for each school to consider their impact on the other school programs; and for the professional development activities around the *Quality Teaching* initiative to be focused on curriculum, assessment and reporting.

What next?

The Government has accepted the Report and officers in the Office of the Board of Studies and the Department of Education and Training are considering how the Report can be implemented.

What has been proposed is a very costly exercise and the new Department structure may not be able to do this work and meet the other expectations of roles and positions. Schools and teachers are to be heavily involved in the processes. Additional funding will be essential.

While the Report is almost entirely focused on primary schools and promises some long-term solutions, both primary and secondary schools continue to grapple with assessment and reporting issues. Secondary teachers are expressing concern about assessment advice from the Office of the

Board of Studies in its Year 7-10 syllabus support documents. Suggested processes around *assessment for learning* and how these relate to *assessment of learning*, combined with reporting against end of stage descriptors, should add to the confusion in schools as they work in a policy vacuum to make their own decisions about how to assess, track and report on student achievement. This Report has done little to fill this vacuum in the short-term.

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