



## Jenny Williams and Mary-Ellen Betts share some ideas about how Primary English is unfolding...

Primary teachers in NSW have been implementing the new NSW K-6 English Syllabus for the Australian Curriculum. At this point in the implementation it is timely to look at teachers' reactions to the syllabus and consider how they are using it to plan and assess in their classrooms. Discussions with teachers across the state reveal some interesting trends. There are positive aspects to the implementation as well as challenges.

### The Positives

The new K-6 English Syllabus supports twenty-first century learners. The learning across the curriculum and Objective E Reflective Learning excite teachers. 'Assessment for, as and of learning' fit comfortably with meeting the needs of twenty-first learners. Teachers are addressing 'assessment as learning' enthusiastically when they understand the connection with learning intentions, success criteria and feedback. The text requirements open many teachers' eyes to the possibility of exploring multimodal and spoken texts. Many teachers feel a sense of relief that the syllabus emphasises purpose and audience and how purpose and audience shape the composition of texts, rather than a rigid study of text types.

The key processes of responding to and composing text resonates with teachers as reciprocal aspects of 'making meaning through language.' (NSW K-6 English syllabus, page 24) This understanding leads to teachers integrating reading, writing, speaking and listening within the English block.

### The Challenges

Implementation of the syllabus document occurred at the same time that the number of DEC consultants available to support teachers across the state diminished significantly. Unfortunately, some overly enthusiastic people with a personal viewpoint to share have partially filled this gap. When searching the internet teachers find sites recommending a scope and sequence of concepts K-6 or using the Literacy continuum to plan for English. Bypassing the syllabus to go in these directions has caused some confusion for teachers. Of course all the new syllabuses have key concepts related to the KLA and the literacy continuum has a purpose but the English syllabus is the mandatory document and the challenge for teachers is to unpack this document, first, with the learning needs of their students in mind. Much of the new document is familiar to teachers from the previous syllabus and actually exploring what is familiar and what is new is the best starting place.

Another challenge for some teachers is how to replace a text type driven view of the syllabus with a more flexible approach to the teaching of reading and writing shaped by the key processes of responding and composing.



## Recommendations

All teachers need a hard copy of the syllabus as well as access to an online copy. Both serve different purposes. Teachers need a hard copy to be able to discuss the syllabus in stage meetings and annotate as they explore the content.

Units of work created during the implementation process should be recognised as DRAFTS. As a deeper understanding of the syllabus develops modifications will be made through a process of continual evaluation and improvement.

The main goal now should be familiarisation with the syllabus through discussion with colleagues on the same grade or stage. The more teachers explore what the intended learning in each objective means, the better they are able to design teaching and learning plans to address the intended learning. This exploration leads to planning units of work and experimenting with new texts and concepts. This experimentation is an essential part of coming to understand the 'Englishness' of the syllabus. Whole school plans or scope and sequences may follow after this initial phase. So the best advice: open the syllabus and read it.

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