



KATHRYN BELLACH offers some initial reflections to assist teachers in developing clear, simple and practical teaching programs ...

Programming is one of the keys to engaged students who are learning at their level while meeting Syllabus requirements. There are a few key questions to ask yourself while programming that will make it meaningful and effective.

- What do I want my students to learn?
- Why does it matter?
- What evidence will I collect to demonstrate their learning?
- What am I going to get them to do?
- How will I differentiate the learning so all students can achieve at their level?

These questions are vital and should always form the basis of your program along with the syllabus outcomes. Make sure the focus is not just on the content being taught but also the skills for the students to become lifelong learners.

After looking at the syllabus for the outcomes that need to be covered there are a few other aspects to consider:

- Try to program around your own and your students' passions/interests. This will ensure the students are engaged and willing to participate in the learning. Try things like incorporating football scores or ladders during Maths lessons or a love of cooking into literacy lessons;
- When programming it is important to focus on an outcomes-based yet student-directed approach. Let the students guide their own learning. This will encourage self-regulation and enquiry-based research into your classroom;
- Only program around a few quality up to date resources. We could spend our whole lives as teachers searching the internet for the perfect resource or idea. Find a few websites that you trust and can always use and start with those. There is no point reinventing the wheel each time;
- Always incorporate assessment and work backwards – start with the end in mind. Decide based on the syllabus what is the expected end point. What will it look like? How will students demonstrate their understanding? Then work backwards from there and scaffold the students each step through the unit of work so they have the possibility of reaching that end point and maybe a few small assessments along the way;
- Plan time to allow for self/peer/teacher feedback. We as teachers know the value of feedback for students. Ensure through your programming that there is enough time to facilitate the various types of feedback and that it becomes a valuable part of all lessons;
- Sequence lessons and units of work around your timetable and term planner. We all know that throughout any day or week at school there are likely to be various interruptions. Try and program around events that you know about in advance like sporting carnivals, assemblies and excursions. This will ensure you are not rushing at the end and your students will be able to achieve their goals;
- Your program is an important communication tool. It should be able to be picked up by anyone and understood. You never know when someone is going to have to take over from you and they need to know what has been covered and where the class are up to;
- Programming relates to Standard 3 within the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. This means that we all need to, as professionals, write and implement quality teaching and learning programs to ensure all our students' needs are being met;

Programming is an important aspect of teaching and one that does get easier over time but just remember that you are writing a program to make your life easier – not harder.

Kathryn Bellach is an Assistant Principal at Guildford West PS. She has been a Teacher Mentor and a presenter at many teacher training courses including those for the Centre for Professional Learning.