

Kindergarten to Year 2

Curriculum implementation at Parklea Public School

A case study of K–10 English and mathematics

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation



About this resource

In 2022, 396 schools across NSW participated in a pilot project to enhance the NSW Department of Education's development and delivery of comprehensive support for implementation of the new English and mathematics K-10 syllabuses.

These early adopter schools implemented the new English and mathematics syllabuses with their Year 1 cohorts, testing supports such as microlearning modules, scope and sequences, and sample units. Implementation support developed and refined in 2022, as a result of feedback from participating schools, is available to all schools ahead of mandatory implementation of the new syllabuses for Kindergarten to Year 2 from 2023.

This case study by the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) is part of a series on how early adopter schools have begun implementing new curriculum. Each case study shares how the focus school has engaged with the new syllabuses and explores key themes in how they approached curriculum implementation responsive to their context. The evidence base for the case studies can be found in the department's curriculum implementation research toolkit.

When and how to use

School leaders and teachers can read, consider, discuss and implement strategies highlighted in the case study and its accompanying discussion guide as part of school-developed High Impact Professional Learning (HIPL).

The appropriate time to use this resource may differ for each school, leader and teacher.

School leaders can:

- unpack the case study and curriculum resources as part of whole-school professional development and/or stage or grade team meetings
- access the phases of curriculum implementation and role-specific resources to support reflection and planning for effective implementation of curriculum
- access their school's data to lead discussions with staff about areas for improvement at a classroom and whole-school level.

Teachers can:

- read the case study and curriculum resources and reflect on current practice
- access the phases of curriculum implementation and role-specific resources to support reflection and planning for effective implementation of curriculum
- consider which practices could be implemented in the classroom to lift student achievement, and discuss their thoughts with colleagues
- reflect on the impact of implementation.

Contact: Email feedback about this resource to info@cese.nsw.gov.au.

You can also subscribe to the CESE newsletter and connect with us on Yammer.

Alignment to system priorities and/or needs: NSW Curriculum Reform, NSW Department of Education Literacy and numeracy priorities, School Success Model, School Excellence in Action, Mathematics Strategy 2025

Alignment to School Excellence Framework: Learning domain – curriculum, assessment; Teaching domain – professional standards, effective classroom practice, data skills and use; Leading domain – educational leadership, school planning, implementation and reporting

Alignment with other existing frameworks: High Impact Professional Learning, What works best, Curriculum planning and programming, assessing and reporting to parents K-12, Literacy K-12, Numeracy K-12, Aboriginal Education, Inclusive Education for students with disability, High Potential and Gifted Education, Multicultural Education, Controversial Issues in Schools

Reviewed by: Curriculum and Reform; Educational Standards; Teaching Quality and Impact; Inclusion and Wellbeing

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Implementing a new curriculum

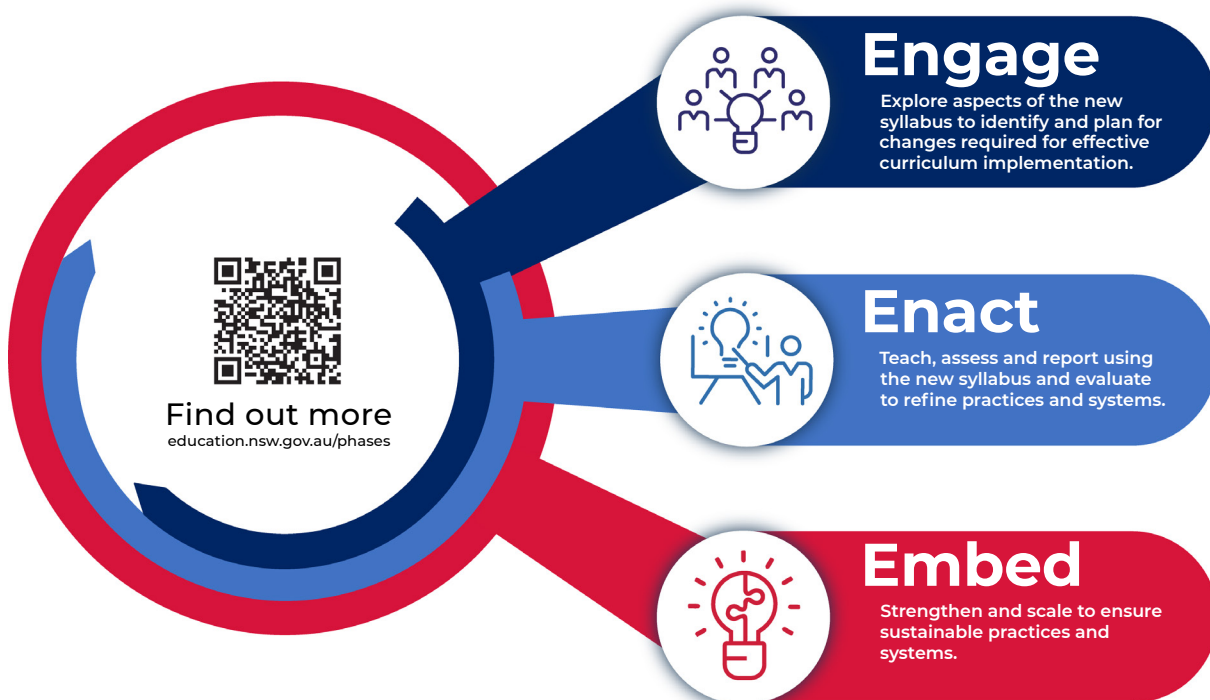
The NSW Curriculum Review, released in June 2020, was the first major review of the entire NSW school curriculum since 1989. Informed by research and extensive consultation with thousands of teachers, parents and education experts, it concluded that change was needed. In response, the NSW Government is reforming the curriculum to ensure that every student ‘learns with understanding, builds skills in applying knowledge, and makes excellent ongoing progress in their learning’.

In NSW, the curriculum can be thought of as the learning expectations and educational opportunities represented by syllabuses. It provides essential learning for all students and opportunities for them to show what they know, understand and can do. The curriculum also provides flexibility for teachers to meet students’ needs and interests.

The NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) is responsible for developing new syllabuses that adopt and adapt the Australian Curriculum for NSW schools. Syllabuses clarify the learning expectations of a subject or discipline, including outcomes and content, and form the basis for the development of teaching and learning programs. NSW Government schools plan for learning based on mandated syllabus documents and current departmental policies and procedures.

Phases of curriculum implementation

Effective curriculum implementation is an iterative process for school leaders and teachers, rather than a singular event. The phases of curriculum implementation (engage, enact, embed) can be used as a guide to support activities and reflective thinking when implementing a new syllabus. School leaders and teachers can find a range of [resources aligned to the phases of curriculum implementation](https://education.nsw.gov.au/phases) on the department’s website.



School context

Parklea Public School is on Darug land, in the Hills district north-west of Sydney. The school has a FOEI of 41.¹ It has a current enrolment of 667 students across 28 mainstream classes – including four Year 1, three Year 2, and one Year 1/2 composite – and 4 support classes. Of the 667 students enrolled, 2% identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and more than half (59%) are from a language background other than English. The school has 49 teaching staff. The executive team includes the principal, 2 non-teaching deputy principals, a full-time assistant principal, curriculum and instruction (AP, C&I) and 5 other assistant principals. Teachers have a range of levels of teaching experience – some are very experienced and some are in their first years of teaching. The school prides itself on its collaborative culture with a focus on student growth and attainment, and connectedness and belonging.

“We’ve been really lucky to have the expertise of [the] AP, C&I ... using her as a resource to support the implementation of the syllabuses.”

Zavera Shankaran, Deputy Principal

Implementing new curriculum at Parklea Public School – an overview

As Parklea Public School was an early adopter school in 2022, Kindergarten to Year 6 teachers engaged in professional learning about the new curriculum, and all Kindergarten to Year 2 classes implemented it. The leadership team at Parklea Public School has been proactive in its adoption of the new curriculum. The school had its external validation in 2021, which enabled the leadership team to alter the school’s existing Strategic Improvement Plan. The current 2022–2026 plan now embeds curriculum reform as a common thread through the school’s literacy and numeracy initiatives.

The school uses a distributed leadership approach, having created a team to lead curriculum implementation that includes one of the deputy principals, the AP, C&I and the Year 1 assistant principal. The principal strategically selected these staff because of their experience and expertise, and the positive relationships they have in the school community. Staff at Parklea Public School partly attribute their success in navigating the challenges of implementing new curriculum to the sense of trust this leadership team has built and maintained with teachers.



What has worked to implement new curriculum at Parklea Public School

- Creating a school culture receptive to the new curriculum by **listening and responding to teachers**
- Effective leadership and change management approaches with **experienced leaders working ‘side by side’ with teachers**
- Adapting school structures and processes, including **allocating time for collaborative ‘curriculum hour’ discussions, whole-school professional learning to improve staff knowledge and skills, and engaging parents in the curriculum implementation journey**

¹ Family Occupation and Education Index (FOEI) is a school-level index of educational disadvantage related to socioeconomic background. The average FOEI value is 100. A higher FOEI value indicates a higher level of disadvantage.

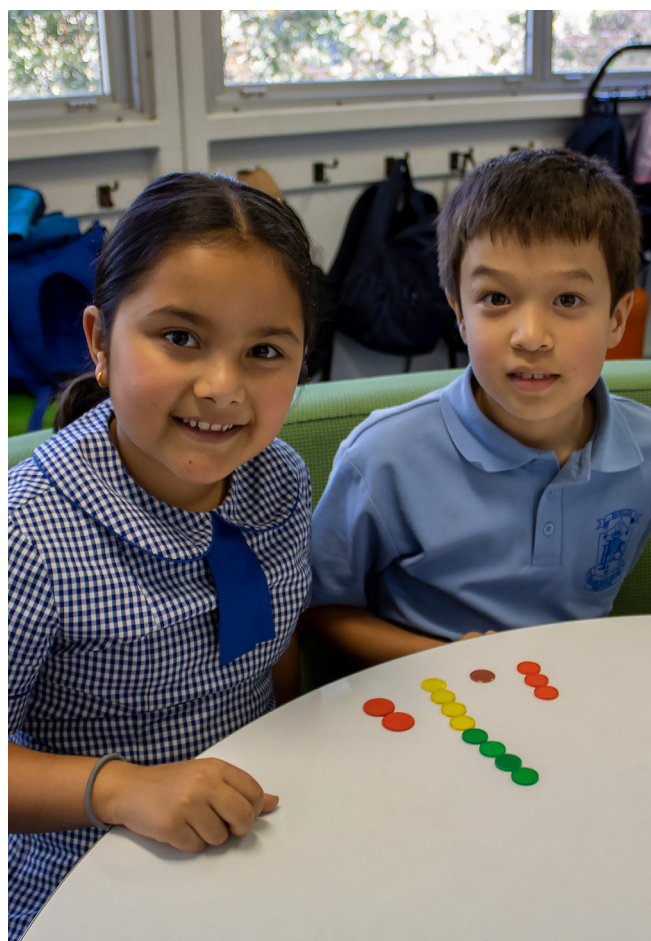
Creating a school culture receptive to the new curriculum

Listening and responding to teachers

To prepare staff to teach the new syllabuses in 2022, school leaders at Parklea Public School started conversations with Year 1 teachers at the end of 2021. School leaders reported that these preliminary conversations set the school up for a strong start as they began enacting the curriculum. Other Kindergarten to Year 2 teachers expressed interest in trialling the sample units (refer to 'Resources to support curriculum implementation' text box), so a collective decision was made to implement the new curriculum in all Kindergarten to Year 2 classes. As teachers began teaching the sample units, however, it became clear to the leadership team that teachers were feeling overwhelmed with the volume of work. Open and honest conversations revealed that the pacing of the sample units was one of the biggest challenges for the teachers. In response, the AP, C&I helped teachers adjust their expectations about pacing lessons to meet students' needs. In addition, the Year 1 assistant principal modelled how the units could be broken down into essential content ('must-dos') and optional extras ('can-dos'). This guidance from the leadership team helped to clarify expectations and provided practical advice teachers could apply to make teaching the units feel more manageable. School leaders observed that this guidance gave teachers confidence to tailor the sample units to the needs of their students.

“Probably towards the end of last term, I had a meeting with the team and ... I could just feel the stress ... and I said 'Well, then why are we doing it for 2 weeks?', and they looked at me like, 'Oh'. I said, 'We can extend that. If that's what your kids need and that's what you need to get through the units, let's extend it.'”

Zoe Prudames, AP, C&I



Effective leadership and change management approaches

Experienced leaders working 'side by side' with teachers

“[The AP, C&I] really does work side by side with the Early Stage 1 and Stage 1 [assistant principals] and actually goes through the process with them hand in hand.”

Zavera Shankaran, Deputy Principal

School leaders at Parklea Public School recognised the importance of teachers feeling that school leaders worked 'side by side' with them as they took on the challenge of implementing new curriculum. They adopted a structured approach to build a sense of cooperation with the teachers teaching the new syllabuses. As a starting point, all school leaders engaged with the new syllabuses before teachers began to explore it. This ensured all members of the executive understood the changes teachers were being asked to make and demonstrated to teachers that school leaders were in the 'learning pit' with them.

School leaders also frequently supported teachers in the classroom. They often engaged in formal and informal opportunities for classroom observations and team teaching. These opportunities were intended to build a shared understanding of pedagogical practices across the school and were not evaluative in nature. The AP, C&I visited at least one class every day, for one hour of reading and/or one hour of numeracy, to observe and advise on what was and was not working well. These sessions involved team teaching, where there were opportunities to enhance the learning experience for students. The Year 1 assistant principal also offered other teachers informal opportunities to observe or team teach with her when teachers self-identified that they needed support with teaching the sample units. This approach helped to build a school culture where teachers welcome other staff into their classrooms, provide feedback to each other and create opportunities to reflect on their learning. In turn, this open and collaborative culture contributed to the teachers implementing the new curriculum feeling supported by the leadership team.

“We usually chat while [the AP, C&I] is in the room. ... But then she’ll often send an email too ... a bit of a debrief, like this is what works and here are some ideas for things to do. ... But she’s also ... really easy to just track down. ... She’s been really supportive in just having those conversations ... about what she can do to help us improve our teaching practice.”

Rebecca Eze, Year 1 Classroom Teacher



Adapting school structures and processes

Allocating time for collaborative ‘curriculum hour’ discussions

A key strategy at Parklea Public School has been prioritising opportunities for teachers to collaboratively explore and plan for the implementation of the new curriculum. The school has strategically scheduled an extra ‘curriculum hour’ into the school’s release from face-to-face (RFF) timetable, allowing all Year 1 teachers to be off class together. Separate from their usual Stage 1 meeting, this hour is dedicated to teachers engaging in professional learning or discussions related to the planning of, and reflection on, curriculum implementation. In 2022, the deputy principal, AP, C&I and Stage 1 assistant principal worked with the school’s appointed curriculum advisor to lead and structure the curriculum hour.²

“Curriculum time to sit with one another to unpack the [sample units and] familiarise ourselves with the online syllabus ... has really helped us. Building curriculum time for us to meet within the RFF roster has been really helpful to us.”

Marisa Hack, Relieving Assistant Principal, Year 1

These dedicated meetings support teachers to feel guided and confident to implement the new curriculum in the classroom. During the early stages of implementation, teachers really valued this time to engage in microlearning modules (refer to ‘Resources to support curriculum implementation’ text box) to develop their knowledge and skills to teach the new syllabuses. Teachers reported appreciating having time to discuss how the sample units can be used efficiently. These conversations typically involve discussing how teachers can adapt the sample units by selecting the students’ learning outcomes, learning intentions, and ‘must-do’ and ‘can-do’ activities. Teachers also reported that these sessions help them to see the connections between topics in mathematics and how the topics align with the [National Numeracy Learning Progressions](#). The teachers also attribute an improvement in student outcomes to the knowledge and skills they develop in these meetings.

² The department appointed curriculum advisors to support early adopter schools implementing the new curriculum in 2022. From 2023, all schools can access curriculum advisor support by lodging a request with their learning, teaching and leading coordinator.

Whole-school professional learning to improve staff knowledge and skills

While the school's initial professional learning focus was on Kindergarten to Year 2 staff, the leadership team recognised the importance of ensuring all Kindergarten to Year 6 teachers engaged with the new curriculum and built their knowledge and skills to teach it. This ensured the whole school had a shared understanding of curriculum reform. This included all Kindergarten to Year 6 teachers attending a professional learning session after school where the school's appointed curriculum advisor and school leaders presented the evidence underpinning the new curriculum. This session was important for building teacher understanding of how and why the curriculum changes can improve students' literacy and numeracy outcomes.

“I came from a different stage. This is my first time being on Stage 1 and teaching a Year 1 class. But [I've been] doing all the professional learning, that microlearning and the [other professional learning] at school. And even just chatting to [the curriculum leadership team], having those conversations ... I feel more confident teaching things and feeling like I'm doing what they're trying to do.”

Rebecca Eze, Year 1 Classroom Teacher

All staff at Parklea Public School have also effectively used the microlearning modules that the department developed to help schools implement the new curriculum. The school has a highly structured approach to completing the modules. The leadership team completes the modules first to determine the order and timing for teachers to complete them. Initially, the Stage 1 teachers completed the microlearning modules together in their stage meetings and curriculum RFF time. However, now all Kindergarten to Year 6 teachers are expected to engage in the modules to develop their knowledge and skills around the reform. Teachers are emailed the modules they are expected to complete by a certain date. The school prioritises scheduling an additional hour of RFF for each teacher every fortnight so they can complete the modules. The assistant principals then follow up with teachers in stage meetings about what they have learnt. Teachers reported that these modules have been a particularly effective way to upskill themselves and build their confidence.

Engaging parents in the curriculum implementation journey

Parklea Public School prides itself on engaging and actively building connections with parents and carers in the school community. The Stage 1 teachers recognised the importance of proactively communicating the curriculum changes to parents. They used a variety of communication channels to share the curriculum implementation journey, including a parent information night at the beginning of the year, at which parents expressed excitement about the opportunity to be an early adopter of the new syllabuses. The school also discussed the new syllabuses at a P&C meeting and a note went out with half-yearly reports telling parents that the new syllabuses meant they would see some changes in the way the school reports student achievement to them. For example, the renewed focus on phonics together with the introduction of decodable readers meant a change to the structure and organisation of reporting. Teachers followed up on this information with parents at parent-teacher interviews, where parents said they appreciate being made aware of the changes and are supportive of the curriculum implementation journey their school is on.

“[Using decodable readers] was a big change as well because parents of K-2 kids would often say, ‘What is their reading level?’ ... It's no longer about the text level, and this was a big part of re-educating our parents.”

Marisa Hack, Relieving Assistant Principal, Year 1



Where to from here

Kindergarten to Year 2 teachers who have used the new curriculum and sample units in 2022 will spend time mentoring teachers who have not. They will share the teaching practices and programs they have used to implement the new curriculum with staff across the school. As an early adopter school, Parklea Public School has been connecting with other schools to share practices and resources through cross-school networking channels and presenting at their principal and director, educational leadership meetings. Teachers and school leaders have really valued these opportunities and are looking forward to continuing to strengthen their connections with teachers and school leaders at other schools.

Acknowledgements

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Resources to support curriculum implementation

The NSW Department of Education has developed a suite of resources to support the implementation of the new curriculum.

Professional learning

Schools can access a range of [professional learning resources on the new curriculum](#). As part of these resources, the department has developed online microlearning modules to support teachers' knowledge and skills for effective curriculum implementation, including:

- [English K-2 microlearning](#)
- [Mathematics K-2 microlearning](#)
- [Curriculum planning K-12 professional learning](#).

Sample units

The department has also developed sample units to support the implementation of the new curriculum. The sample units represent one approach to designing teaching and learning experiences for Kindergarten to Year 2 and can be adapted to suit the school context and students' needs. The department provides:

- [English K-2 units](#)
- [Mathematics K-2 units](#).

Leading curriculum K-12

There is also a range of [advice and resources available to support school leaders to lead effective curriculum implementation in their schools](#).

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