

Leading curriculum for DELs



Acknowledgement of Country

We recognise the Ongoing Custodians of the lands and waterways where we work and live. We pay respect to Elders past and present as ongoing teachers of knowledge, songlines and stories. We strive to ensure every Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander learner in NSW achieves their potential through education.

Leading curriculum for DELs

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Leading to effectively engage with curriculum

‘A curriculum that supports teachers to...provide every young person with knowledge, skills and attributes that will help prepare them for a lifetime of learning, meaningful adult employment and effective future citizenship.’

Geoff Masters 2020

‘The more leaders focus their influence, their learning, and their relationships with teachers on the core business of teaching and learning, the greater their likely influence on student outcomes.’

Viviane Robinson 2007

‘Amazing things happen when a school staff shares the belief that they are able to achieve collective goals and overcome challenges to impact student achievement...Fostering collective teacher efficacy should be at the forefront of a planned strategic effort in all schools.’

Jenni Donohoo 2017



Engage

	Themes	Excelling ¹
Learning Domain: CURRICULUM	Curriculum provision	The school's curriculum provision promotes high expectations for student learning and nurtures student agency. Effective practices are enhanced by incorporating student voice and fostering learning alliances with other schools or organisations, where appropriate. Students' learning pathways are longitudinally monitored (for example K-2; K-6; 7-12) to ensure sustained challenge and optimal learning outcomes.
Learning Domain: CURRICULUM	Literacy and numeracy focus	There is a school-wide approach ensuring teachers understand and explicitly teach literacy and numeracy through the curriculum to students across all achievement levels and subject areas. There are embedded evaluative processes for utilising student progress and achievement data to measure impact. Parents/carers are supported as collaborative partners in their children's literacy and numeracy development.
Teaching Domain: PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS	Improvement of practice	The school has a high performing teaching staff as measured against the Australian Professional Standards, whose capacities are continually built to ensure every student experiences high quality teaching. The leadership team has participated in capacity development programs and implements principles of evaluative thinking, continually monitors the impact of programs and approaches used by all teachers, and improves practice as required.
Teaching Domain: LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT	Professional learning	The staff evaluate professional learning activities to identify and systematically promote and implement the most effective strategies to improve teaching and learning. Teachers collaborate with staff in other schools to share and embed good practice.
Leading Domain: EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP	Leading teaching and learning	The leadership team maintains a focus on distributed educational leadership to support collective efficacy and aspiration. This sustains a culture of effective, evidence informed teaching and ongoing improvement, ensuring every student is engaged and achieves measurable learning progress and closing of equity gaps.
Leading Domain: EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP	High expectations culture	The leadership team has established a strong professional learning community with a sustained focus on evidence-informed teaching, wellbeing and leadership practices. There is a collaborative culture of high expectations and continuous improvement across the school, underpinned by high staff wellbeing.
Leading Domain: SCHOOL PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION AND REPORTING	Continuous improvement	A school-wide culture of collaboration and continuous improvement exists, where strategic planning and implementation lead to an impact on learning progress and enhanced teaching and leadership practices. Embedded and iterative processes and practices evolve with the changing context of the school community.

¹ Whilst the Excelling stage of the School Excellence Framework (SEF) provides a clear vision of high-impact practice, it is important to recognise that every school is on its own improvement journey. Directors, Educational Leadership (DELs) are encouraged to refer to the SEF to support schools along their individual trajectories, using it as a guide to identify current strengths, areas for development and next steps towards sustained excellence.



Engage

Explore aspects of the new syllabus to identify and plan for changes required for effective curriculum implementation.

Expectations

Leaders develop a culture of active engagement with the new curriculum through:

- ensuring staff understand the new syllabus, the evidence underpinning it, and implications for classroom practice
- ensuring staff understand the evidence behind key pedagogical approaches aligned to each syllabus and how to embed those across their classroom practice including explicit teaching and formative assessment
- supporting staff to undertake curriculum implementation
- enabling the resources required to commence syllabus implementation and meet planning and programming, assessing, and reporting requirements
- developing a plan for implementation, including allocating time for capability uplift, reflection and evaluation.

Strategies for implementation

Schools actively engage with a new syllabus and take shared responsibility for its implementation when school leaders:

- understand the research underpinning the changes and the impact on classroom practice
- access and lead evidence-based professional learning to familiarise all staff with the new syllabus
- access and lead evidence-based professional learning to familiarise all staff with key pedagogical approaches aligned to each syllabus and how to embed those across their classroom practice including explicit teaching and formative assessment
- work in partnership to identify staff and student needs. This includes students with disability, high potential and gifted students, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students who are learning English as an additional language or dialect
- align plans and resourcing to a School Excellence Plan initiative
- allocate time to collaboratively evaluate, select, adapt and create resources to teach the new syllabus
- plan the school approach to student assessment and reporting to parents.



Engage

Prompts

Staff understand the syllabus and research underpinning the changes

- To what extent do staff have a clear understanding of the new syllabus and the evidence that underpins it? What strategies have been used to develop this understanding, and how has its impact been evaluated?
- To what extent are staff aware of the evidence behind key pedagogical approaches aligned to each syllabus and how to embed those across their classroom practice including explicit teaching and formative assessment?
- How will the new syllabus influence classroom practice, and what strategies are in place to support and evaluate its implementation?
- What school practices and systems are in place to support teacher professional learning? How are these evaluated to maximise support for teachers?
- Which communities of practice does the school collaborate with to enhance teacher curriculum knowledge and pedagogy?
- What evidence is there that staff have understood syllabus changes and familiarised themselves with these changes?
- How has staff understanding of the literacy and numeracy requirements of the syllabus been fostered? What implications for classroom practice have been identified?
- How has the principal prioritised their own professional growth in effective teaching practices and curriculum leadership? In what ways has this informed the support provided to middle leaders?
- How has the principal ensured there is clarity among the school leadership team about their specific responsibilities for curriculum implementation?

Staff are supported to undertake syllabus implementation

- To what extent are staff ready to undertake syllabus implementation? How is readiness determined?
- Do staff have the skills and understanding to collaboratively undertake syllabus implementation? What explicit systems are in place to foster collaboration?
- Do staff have the skills and understanding to embed appropriate pedagogy and practice into their implementation of the syllabus, for example explicit teaching and formative assessment?
- Do staff have the skills and understanding to differentiate syllabus outcomes for HPGE, and/or students with special needs?
- How has the school engaged with departmental resources and support for curriculum implementation, for example, communities of practice, curriculum resources, professional learning and DEL network initiatives?
- How will the current skills and understanding of staff enable collaborative curriculum implementation? What explicit systems are in place to foster collaboration?
- What structures are in place for tailored professional support for all staff to strengthen curriculum implementation? What else might be required for this syllabus?
- How are expert teachers identified and used to build the teaching knowledge and capacity of colleagues?
- How is success, collective efficacy and collaboration acknowledged and celebrated?



Engage

Resourcing enables staff to commence syllabus implementation and meet planning, programming, assessing and reporting requirements

- What resources are required to commence syllabus implementation and meet planning, programming, assessing and reporting requirements? How is this embedded into the School Excellence Plan?
- How will the school support the effective implementation of the new curriculum to optimise learning for every student in every classroom?
- How will the impact of resourcing be measured and evaluated?

The school has a plan for implementation including allocating time for reflection and evaluation

- To what extent does the plan for implementation allocate time for reflection and evaluation?
- What enablers and barriers to successful curriculum implementation have been identified? What plans are in place to overcome the barriers and leverage the enablers?
- How is the new syllabus being used to lift teaching practice? How does the plan for curriculum implementation measure the impact of this?
- How have change management considerations been embedded into the School Excellence Plan to support teachers and sustain and strengthen curriculum implementation?
- How will the school's plan for curriculum implementation be evaluated? How might this evaluation inform the implementation of future syllabuses?

Prompts for small schools and schools in unique contexts

- What content experts are available to mentor staff either remotely or through an alternative organisation or professional learning network (for example, professional association, learning community, peer principal, or mentoring partnership)?
- If in a small school context, how are staff who work part-time or across schools supported to engage with the syllabus and curriculum implementation?



Leading to effectively enact the curriculum

‘Ultimately, however well-evidenced an educational idea or intervention is, what really matters is how it manifests itself in the day-to-day work of people in schools.’

Jonathan Sharples, Jon Eaton and Jamila Boughelaf 2024

‘Educational policy is mediated through school leadership. The ongoing challenge to realise the ambition and intent of policy through the experienced reality of the teachers and students results in a wide variation of school practices. It is often easy to implement structural changes but to enable authentic change in teaching practice is more complex.’

What school leaders know, understand and care about is the key to the actions they take that shapes the work of teachers.’

Ann McIntyre 2011

‘Leaders tend to invest in building relationships, on the one hand, or using precise methods to structure and guide collaborative work, on the other. But collaborative professionalism is about integrating relationships and rigor.’

Andy Hargreaves and Michael T. O’Connor 2018



	Themes	Excelling ¹
Learning Domain: CURRICULUM	Curriculum provision	The school's curriculum provision promotes high expectations for student learning and nurtures student agency. Effective practices are enhanced by incorporating student voice and fostering learning alliances with other schools or organisations, where appropriate. Students' learning pathways are longitudinally monitored (for example K-2; K-6; 7-12) to ensure sustained challenge and optimal learning outcomes.
Learning Domain: CURRICULUM	Teaching and learning programs	Teaching and learning programs are dynamic and culturally responsive, with adjustments made based on feedback and reflection. This is consistent with reliable student assessment to support student progress and achievement.
Learning Domain: CURRICULUM	Differentiation	Teachers think critically and exercise their professional judgement in adjusting teaching and learning programs to address individual student needs and learning goals. All students are challenged, and all adjustments lead to improved engagement for learning. Teachers involve students and parents/carers in planning to support learning and share expected outcomes.
Learning Domain: CURRICULUM	Literacy and numeracy focus	There is a school-wide approach ensuring teachers understand and explicitly teach literacy and numeracy through the curriculum to students across all achievement levels and subject areas. There are embedded evaluative processes for utilising student progress and achievement data to measure impact. Parents/carers are supported as collaborative partners in their children's literacy and numeracy development.
Learning Domain: ASSESSMENT	Formative assessment	Assessment is used flexibly and responsively as an integral part of daily classroom instruction. Teachers expertly implement formative assessment, incorporating student voice and agency.
Learning Domain: ASSESSMENT	Whole school monitoring of student learning	The school uses systematic and reliable assessment information to evaluate student learning over time and implements changes in teaching that lead to measurable improvement. The school has processes in place to support teachers' consistent, evidence-informed judgement and moderation of assessments.
Teaching Domain: EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM PRACTICE	Lesson planning	Lessons are systematically planned as part of a coherent program that has been collaboratively designed. Teachers use their professional judgment to make adjustments to suit student needs as they arise. Lesson planning is informed by students' prior achievement, curriculum requirements, and student feedback, and provides continuous improvement for all students, across the full range of abilities.

¹ Whilst the Excelling stage of the School Excellence Framework (SEF) provides a clear vision of high-impact practice, it is important to recognise that every school is on its own improvement journey. Directors, Educational Leadership (DELs) are encouraged to refer to the SEF to support schools along their individual trajectories, using it as a guide to identify current strengths, areas for development and next steps towards sustained excellence.



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	Themes	Excelling ¹
Teaching Domain: EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM PRACTICE	Explicit teaching	Teachers consider students' cognitive load and employ explicit teaching strategies to optimise learning progress of students across the full range of abilities. Effective methods are identified, promoted and modelled, and students' learning improvement is monitored, demonstrating growth.
Teaching Domain: EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM PRACTICE	Feedback	Teachers review learning with students both in class and on work submitted, ensuring all students have a clear understanding of how to improve. Student feedback is elicited by teachers and informs their teaching. Student errors and misunderstandings are explicitly addressed until teachers and students are confident that mastery is demonstrated.
Teaching Domain: DATA SKILLS AND USE	Data use in teaching	Teachers clearly understand, develop and apply a full range of formative and summative assessment strategies. They use their professional judgement effectively on when and how to apply these strategies to gather data that informs teaching decisions, enables ongoing monitoring and assessment of student progress and achievement, and facilitates reflective analysis of teaching effectiveness.
Teaching Domain: LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT	Collaborative practice and feedback	The school fosters a strong collaborative culture, embedded in evaluative practices. These systems facilitate professional dialogue, collaboration, classroom observation, the modelling of effective practice and the provision of specific and timely feedback among teachers within the school.
Teaching Domain: LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT	Coaching and mentoring	School-wide and/or inter-school relationships provide mentoring and coaching support to ensure the ongoing development and improvement of all teachers, by expert teachers such as those accredited at Highly Accomplished or Lead.
Teaching Domain: LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT	Professional learning	The staff evaluate professional learning activities to identify and systematically promote and implement the most effective strategies to improve teaching and learning. Teachers collaborate with staff in other schools to share and embed good practice.
Teaching Domain: EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP	Leading teaching and learning	The leadership team maintains a focus on distributed educational leadership to support collective efficacy and aspiration. This sustains a culture of effective, evidence-informed teaching and ongoing improvement, ensuring every student is engaged and achieves measurable learning progress and closing of equity gaps.

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	Themes	Excelling ¹
Teaching Domain: EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP	High expectations culture	The leadership team has established a strong professional learning community with a sustained focus on evidence-informed teaching, wellbeing and leadership practices. There is a collaborative culture of high expectations and continuous improvement across the school, underpinned by high staff wellbeing.

¹ Whilst the Excelling stage of the School Excellence Framework (SEF) provides a clear vision of high-impact practice, it is important to recognise that every school is on its own improvement journey. Directors, Educational Leadership (DELs) are encouraged to refer to the SEF to support schools along their individual trajectories, using it as a guide to identify current strengths, areas for development and next steps towards sustained excellence.



Expectations

Leaders ensure that the syllabus and its pedagogy are effectively enacted through:

- leading and supporting staff to teach, assess and report using the new syllabus
- supporting all staff to plan effective learning experiences for the full range of students
- supporting all staff to develop capabilities in using evidence-based strategies aligned to curriculum implementation in classroom practice, including explicit teaching and formative assessment
- developing whole school learning routines, within and between schools to support continuity of learning, for example in explicit teaching and formative assessment
- refining whole school processes and structures to support staff to collaboratively plan and teach the new curriculum
- developing effective processes to support changes to assessment and reporting
- raising school community awareness of the changes to the curriculum
- ensuring processes and structures are in place to evaluate the implementation of new curriculum.

Strategies for implementation

Schools enact a new syllabus and share responsibility for effective teaching and learning practices when school leaders:

- create opportunities for explaining the curriculum to parents, carers and the community through authentic community engagement in line with agreed school processes
- work with the leadership team to provide professional learning to build teacher capability to enhance teaching and learning
- create opportunities for professional learning and collaboration to optimise learning for all students
- ensure processes and structures are in place to support staff to collaboratively plan teaching programs, teach the new curriculum and evaluate practice
- collaboratively develop whole school routines to support implementation of evidence-based pedagogy and practice for each key learning area, age and stage refine school processes for assessing student progress, analysing student data and reporting to parents
- work collaboratively with feeder schools to ensure continuity of learning across primary and secondary schools
- evaluate school processes and structures to ensure they support new syllabus implementation
- use strategic financial management to maximise resources available to implement the new syllabuses.



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Prompts

The school community is aware of the changes to the curriculum

- To what extent is the school community aware of the changes to the curriculum? How is awareness measured?
- How has staff awareness of the new curriculum and the implications for student learning been fostered across roles, stages, or faculties? How are staff supported to understand the implications for their role?
- How has the wider school community been supported to understand curriculum change and its implications? How has authentic community engagement informed the school's plan for implementation?
- What collaborative approaches have been established with feeder schools to support continuity of learning from primary to high school?

Staff plan effective learning experiences for the full range of students

- How are all staff planning effective learning experiences for the full range of students, including supporting continuity of learning from primary to high school?
- What structures and professional learning support staff to gain deep knowledge to optimise learning for every student? How are you collecting and evaluating data to understand what is or isn't working well?
- What inclusive planning practices do staff use to support the full range of learners in every classroom? How is evidence of impact collected and evaluated?
- What evidence-based strategies and learning routines have been planned for and established across the full school community – including feeder schools? For example, how has explicit teaching and formative assessment practice been incorporated into regular lesson delivery and student assessment?
- What ongoing processes and practices are in place to identify specific cohorts of students (including EAL/D learners, Aboriginal learners, high potential and gifted learners or learners with disability)? How has the school maximised resources (including needs-based funding) to enhance learning for these students?
- When optimising learning for all students, what whole school strengths and opportunities have been identified? How is this reflected in school planning?
- How are positive shifts in student achievement acknowledged and celebrated?

Processes and structures support staff to collaboratively plan teaching programs, teach the new curriculum and evaluate practice

- How has the principal ensured there is clarity among the school leadership team about their specific responsibilities in supporting teachers to plan, teach and evaluate their practice?
- What whole school processes and structures are in place to support teachers to collaboratively plan and teach the new curriculum? How is the impact measured and evaluated?
- What whole school processes and structures are in place to support teachers to collaboratively plan and teach the new curriculum across feeder schools to ensure continuity of learning? How is the impact measured and evaluated?
- How have the literacy and numeracy requirements of the syllabus been embedded into classroom practice? How is this evident in school planning and evaluation?
- How are teachers supported to deepen curriculum planning (beyond samples or standard resources) to optimise learning for every student? How is this evaluated?



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- How has the school leveraged support internally and externally (curriculum communities and networks) to ensure effective, subject-specific pedagogical practices are used to collaboratively plan and teach the new curriculum?
- What measures have been established to protect teaching time? What has been the impact of these measures on student outcomes?
- What processes support teachers to collectively evaluate practice and ensure ongoing improvement? How is evidence used to respond to emerging needs?
- How are successes acknowledged and celebrated to build collective efficacy?

Effective processes support changes to assessing and reporting

- How has the principal ensured there is clarity among the school leadership team about their specific responsibilities in relation to student assessment and reporting to parents?
- How effective are the current processes for supporting changes to assessment and reporting? How is their impact measured and effectiveness evaluated?
- What formative and summative assessment practices have been included in teaching and learning programs to support the monitoring of student progress? How is the data analysed to inform teaching?
- What formative assessment routines have been scaled across the school, to increase student engagement, and minimise cognitive load?
- What systems and structures does the school use to track and monitor every student's progress over time? How do these inform changes in teaching that lead to improved student outcomes?
- What whole school processes are in place to support teachers to share work samples and participate in evidence-based moderation of assessments? How is this reflected in reporting to parents?
- What processes are in place to ensure mandatory system requirements for assessment are being met?
- What changes have been made to share student progress and achievement with parents?

There are effective processes and structures to evaluate the implementation of the curriculum

- Reflecting on their role as the leader of curriculum implementation in their school, what strengths and opportunities does the principal see for their leadership and professional development? How have the strengths and opportunities been identified?
- How have middle leaders been supported to reflect on their leadership of curriculum implementation and the strengths and opportunities for their professional development? What evidence has informed their reflections?
- How effective are the processes and structures in place to evaluate the implementation of curriculum? How is efficacy determined and the information used?
- How does the school build high-quality curriculum implementation and evidence-based practice across all classrooms and stages/faculties? What evidence is there of impact?
- What processes ensure mandatory curriculum requirements as detailed in the Curriculum Planning and Programming, Assessing and Reporting to Parents K-12 policy are met? How are the processes evaluated for impact? How does the school achieve consistency across faculties and stages?
- What evidence has been used to identify whole school strengths and opportunities in curriculum implementation? How is this reflected in the School Excellence Plan?
- How is success achieved through collaboration acknowledged and celebrated? What is the impact of this approach within the school?



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Prompts for small schools and schools in unique contexts

- How have teaching and learning practices been aligned to the new syllabus in this context?
- How effectively have communities of practice supported teachers to make evidence-informed decisions about curriculum implementation in this unique context? How is this evaluated?
- What barriers or enablers have been identified when implementing the curriculum for multi-age classrooms or small student cohorts? What processes or practices support the school to effectively implement the curriculum?
- How is collaboration with colleagues from other contexts used to support evidence-based moderation of assessment?
How might this be developed or leveraged to strengthen consistent teacher judgement across settings?
- How have existing departmental resources and units of work been adopted and adapted to align with individual settings?



Leading to effectively embed the curriculum

‘(T)he greatest influence of school leaders on improving student outcomes is their promotion of and participation in teacher professional learning. Creating the kinds of conditions in schools in which teachers systematically use data to inform their practice for the benefit of students requires that they teach in contexts in which such practice becomes part of the organisational routines.’

Helen Timperley 2009

‘Teacher collaboration involves teachers working together to achieve a common goal through the sharing of evidence-informed practices, knowledge and problem solving... Collaboration is most successful when it is frequent and ongoing, either through formalised communities of practice or as part of a school culture that promotes and values the sharing of ideas and advice in non-threatening, encouraging ways.’

CESE 2020

‘Data-driven decision-making is a key pillar of educational reform initiatives in countries across the globe. Ensuring equitable opportunities and outcomes for all students is also a top priority of educators...thoughtful data-use practices can expand students’ opportunities to learn, whereas misinformed use of data can limit their opportunities.’

Amanda Datnow 2017



Embed

	Themes	Excelling ¹
Learning Domain: LEARNING CULTURE	High expectations	The whole school community demonstrates aspirational expectations of learning progress and achievement for all students. Strong partnerships with parents/carers support student learning and wellbeing. Student motivation for continuous and ongoing improvement is clearly evident.
Learning Domain: CURRICULUM	Curriculum provision	The school's curriculum provision promotes high expectations for student learning and nurtures student agency. Effective practices are enhanced by incorporating student voice and fostering learning alliances with other schools or organisations, where appropriate. Students' learning pathways are longitudinally monitored (for example K-2; K-6; 7-12) to ensure sustained challenge and optimal learning outcomes.
Learning Domain: CURRICULUM	Teaching and learning programs	Teaching and learning programs are dynamic and culturally responsive, with adjustments made based on feedback and reflection. This is consistent with reliable student assessment to support student progress and achievement.
Learning Domain: CURRICULUM	Differentiation	Teachers think critically and exercise their professional judgement in adjusting teaching and learning programs to address individual student needs and learning goals. All students are challenged, and all adjustments lead to improved engagement for learning. Teachers involve students and parents/carers in planning to support learning and share expected outcomes.
Learning Domain: CURRICULUM	Literacy and numeracy focus	There is a school-wide approach ensuring teachers understand and explicitly teach literacy and numeracy through the curriculum to students across all achievement levels and subject areas. There are embedded evaluative processes for utilising student progress and achievement data to measure impact. Parents/carers are supported as collaborative partners in their children's literacy and numeracy development.
Learning Domain: ASSESSMENT	Whole school monitoring of student learning	The school uses systematic and reliable assessment information to evaluate student learning over time and implements changes in teaching that lead to measurable improvement. The school has processes in place to support teachers' consistent, evidence-informed judgement and moderation of assessments.
Teaching Domain: EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM PRACTICE	Lesson planning	Lessons are systematically planned as part of a coherent program that has been collaboratively designed. Teachers use their professional judgment to make adjustments to suit student needs as they arise. Lesson planning is informed by students' prior achievement, curriculum requirements, and student feedback, and provides continuous improvement for all students, across the full range of abilities.

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Embed

	Themes	Excelling ¹
Teaching Domain: EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM PRACTICE	Explicit teaching	Teachers consider students' cognitive load and employ explicit teaching strategies to optimise learning progress of students across the full range of abilities. Effective methods are identified, promoted and modelled, and students' learning improvement is monitored, demonstrating growth.
Teaching Domain: DATA SKILLS AND USE	Data use in teaching	Teachers clearly understand, develop and apply a full range of formative and summative assessment strategies. They use their professional judgement effectively on when and how to apply these strategies to gather data that informs teaching decisions, enables ongoing monitoring and assessment of student progress and achievement, and facilitates reflective analysis of teaching effectiveness.
Teaching Domain: PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS	Improvement of practice	The school has a high performing teaching staff as measured against the Australian Professional Standards, whose capacities are continually built to ensure every student experiences high quality teaching. The leadership team has participated in capacity development programs and implements principles of evaluative thinking, continually monitors the impact of programs and approaches used by all teachers, and improves practice as required.
Teaching Domain: LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT	Expertise and innovation	Teaching staff demonstrate and share their expertise within their school and with other schools. All teachers have expert contemporary content knowledge and deploy effective teaching strategies. The school trials innovative practices and has processes in place to evaluate, refine and scale success.
Leading Domain: EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP	Leading teaching and learning	The leadership team maintains a focus on distributed educational leadership to support collective efficacy and aspiration. This sustains a culture of effective, evidence informed teaching and ongoing improvement, ensuring every student is engaged and achieves measurable learning progress and closing of equity gaps.
Leading Domain: EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP	High expectations culture	The leadership team has established a strong professional learning community with a sustained focus on evidence-informed teaching, wellbeing and leadership practices. There is a collaborative culture of high expectations and continuous improvement across the school, underpinned by high staff wellbeing.

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	Themes	Excelling ¹
Leading Domain: SCHOOL PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION AND REPORTING	Continuous improvement	A school-wide culture of collaboration and continuous improvement exists, where strategic planning and implementation lead to an impact on learning progress and enhanced teaching and leadership practices. Embedded and iterative processes and practices evolve with the changing context of the school community.
Leading Domain: SCHOOL PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION AND REPORTING	Evaluative practice	There is a culture of evaluative practice which supports the school to efficiently and effectively deliver their strategic priorities and demonstrate improvements in student learning outcomes.

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Embed

Strengthen and scale to ensure sustainable practices and systems.

Expectations

Leaders embed the curriculum and effective teaching and learning practices through:

- strengthening and scaling to ensure sustainable practices and systems for repeated curriculum implementation
- building collective understanding of the impact of curriculum change on student learning
- supporting staff to engage in evidence-based, reflective practices that continually build their capability
- identifying the enablers and barriers for future curriculum implementation
- collaboratively embedding and iteratively evaluating evidence-based whole of school learning routines, for example explicit teaching and formative assessment
- working collaboratively with feeder schools to facilitate continuity of learning as students transition from primary to secondary school.

Strategies for implementation

Schools embed the curriculum and share responsibility for effective teaching and learning practices when school leaders:

- sustain a culture of effective, evidence-based reflective teaching and ongoing improvement of curriculum implementation
- sustain a culture that supports meaningful teacher collaboration and high expectations
- provide ongoing development of staff. This includes developing their understanding of and capacity to embed evidence-based pedagogy and practice in their regular lesson delivery, for example explicit teaching and formative assessment
- evaluate processes and structures to monitor planning, programming, assessing and reporting
- consider changes needed to the School Excellence Plan for further syllabus implementation
- refine the whole school approach for identifying effective curriculum implementation practice.



Embed

Prompts

The impact of curriculum change on student learning is understood

- What has been the impact of curriculum change on student learning? What evidence is used to determine the impact?
- What refinements for monitoring student growth and progress longitudinally have been made to school systems? How is this data used to maximise learning for every student?
- How has the implementation of the new curriculum impacted the progress and achievement of student equity groups? How is the impact measured?
- How have whole-school routines in explicit teaching and formative assessment supported an uplift in student learning outcomes?
- What evidence is there of the impact of curriculum change on student growth in literacy and numeracy? How is this informing school planning?
- How are positive shifts in student achievement acknowledged and celebrated?

A culture of effective evidence-based reflective teaching and ongoing improvement

- Reflecting on their role as the leader of curriculum implementation in their school, what strengths and opportunities does the principal see for their leadership and professional development? What evidence has informed their reflections?
- How have middle leaders been supported to reflect on their leadership of curriculum implementation and the strengths and opportunities for their professional development? What evidence has informed their reflections?
- In what ways are staff engaging in reflective practices to continually build their capability? How does this inform ongoing improvement in curriculum implementation?
- How have whole school processes and structures supported staff to collaboratively deepen curriculum planning practice (beyond samples or standard resources)? How is this evaluated and how are evidence-based practices shared?
- How have whole school processes supported differentiation of the curriculum to support the needs of all learners, including HPGE?
- What evidence is there that the new curriculum has improved classroom practice? How has this impacted student outcomes?
- What evidence is there that the literacy and numeracy requirements of syllabuses are being enacted in classroom practice? What is the impact on student achievement in literacy and numeracy?
- How have school professional learning structures and processes impacted teacher capability? How do you know? How are they refined to maximise support for teachers?
- What school practices and systems help sustain and grow effective curriculum implementation? How do you measure the impact of these practices and systems?



Embed

Identifying the enablers and barriers for future curriculum implementation

- What are the enablers and barriers for future curriculum implementation? How is this addressed in the School Excellence Plan to support further syllabus implementation?
- How are the school's systems for assessing and reporting to parents reviewed and evaluated? What are the strengths and opportunities that have been identified?
- When optimising learning for all students, what whole school strengths and opportunities have been identified? How is this reflected in the School Excellence Plan?
- How has the whole school approach to identifying and sharing effective evidence-informed teaching practice strengthened curriculum implementation?
- How has collaboration with communities of practice deepened teacher subject matter knowledge, curriculum planning and pedagogy? How is the efficacy of this collaboration measured?
- How has the school leveraged and embedded support from external bodies (communities of practice, professional learning associations) to ensure effective, subject-specific pedagogical practices are used to strengthen curriculum implementation?
- How are successes acknowledged and celebrated to build collective efficacy?

Prompts for small schools and schools in unique contexts

- In Schools for special purposes (SSP) contexts, how do teaching programs reflect the age and diversity of students?
- In small school contexts, how have collaborative expertise or technological solutions been utilised to support the planning and programming requirements of a multi-stage cohort?

Resources and tools

NESA syllabus information

- [NSW Curriculum Reform](#)
- [NSW Curriculum website](#)
- [NESA syllabus development process and timeline](#)

NSW Department of Education resources to support leadership of curriculum implementation

- [Leading curriculum K-12](#)
- [Leading effective curriculum implementation \(LECI\)](#)
- [Lesson Library](#)
- [Phases of curriculum implementation](#)
- [School planning for curriculum implementation](#)
- [Syllabus information for school leaders](#)
- [Transition from primary to high school](#)

NSW Department of Education curriculum resources

- [Explicit teaching](#)
- [Lesson Library](#)
- [Planning, programming and assessing K-12](#)
- [Professional learning – curriculum K-12](#)
- [Strengthening assessment](#)
- [Student learning library](#)
- [Universal Resources Hub](#)

School Leadership Institute resources

- [Insights Series – On Demand](#)
- [Leadership for learning models](#)
- [Leadership Learning Resource](#)

Strengthening professional learning

- [Develop yourself as a leader](#) (AITSL)
- [High impact professional learning](#)
- [Improving Teacher Professional Learning](#) (AITSL)
- [Quality teaching in our schools](#)

Further research

- AERO (Australian Education Research Organisation) (2024) *A knowledge-rich approach to curriculum design*, AERO. <https://www.edresearch.edu.au/research/research-reports/knowledge-rich-approach-curriculum-design>
- CESE (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation) (2025), *What works best 2025: Evidence guide for excellent schools*, NSW Department of Education. <https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/education-data-and-research/what-works-best/what-works-best-2025-evidence-guide-for-excellent-schools>
- CESE (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation) (2025), *What works best illustration of practice: Explicit teaching at Doonside technology high school* [PDF 2.5 MB], CESE. [What Works Best 2025 illustration of practice – Explicit teaching at Doonside Technology High School](#)

- CESE (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation) (2025), *What works best 2025 practica guide: Explicit teaching* [PDF 1,820 KB], CESE. [What Works Best 2025 practical guide – Explicit teaching](#)
- Datnow A (29 August 2017) 'Opening or closing doors for students? Equity and data-driven decision-making' [Paper presentation], *Research Conference 2017 - Leadership for Improving Learning - Insights from Research*. https://research.acer.edu.au/research_conference/RC2017/29august/1
- Gleeson J, Cutler B, Larsen S, Parker B, Ridgway K, Rickinson M, Walsh L and People J (2022), *Supporting teachers to use research evidence well in practice: Survey findings and practical guidance from an AERO and Monash Q project collaboration*, AERO. [Supporting teachers to use research evidence well in practice](#)
- Hattie J (12 August 2018) 'Collective teacher efficacy' [video], *leap4principals*, YouTube. [John Hattie – Collective Teacher Efficacy 2018](#)
- NSW Department of Education (2025), NSW Department of Education, *Explicit teaching*. [Explicit teaching](#)
- NESA (NSW Education Standards Authority) (2020) *Nurturing wonder and igniting passion: Designs for a new school curriculum*, NESA. [Final Report: NSW Curriculum Review](#)
- Robinson V (2007) 'The impact of leadership on student outcomes: Making sense of the evidence', 2007 – *The Leadership Challenge - Improving learning in schools*. [The impact of leadership on student outcomes: Making sense of the evid” by Viviane Robinson](#)
- Sharples J and Albers B (2022), *Putting evidence to work: A school’s guide to implementation: Guidance report: All year levels* [PDF 3.7 MB], Evidence for learning. [Putting-evidence-to-work_a-schools-guide-to-implementation_Guidance-Report.pdf](#)
- Timperley H (August 17 2009) 'Using assessment data for improving teaching practice' [Paper presentation], 2009 – *Assessment and Student Learning: Collecting, Interpreting and Using Data to Inform Teaching*. https://research.acer.edu.au/research_conference/RC2009/17august/7