

How to implement a whole-school curriculum approach

A guide for principals

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This guide accompanies Grattan Institute's 2022 report,
[Ending the lesson lottery: How to improve curriculum planning in schools](#)

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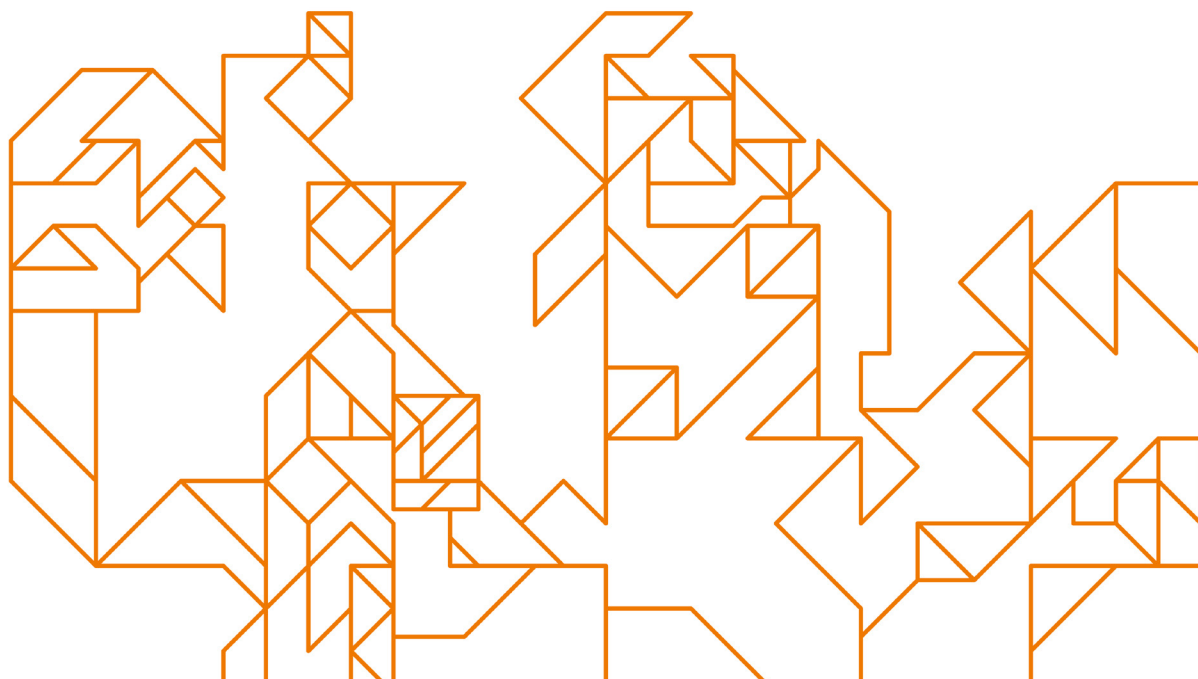
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In 2022, Grattan Institute surveyed 2,243 teachers and school leaders across Australia. They told us:

Teachers are struggling

Of teachers we surveyed

49% are planning on their own for class

85% do not have access to a shared bank of high-quality curriculum materials for all their classes

55% are not satisfied with curriculum planning in their school

Students are missing out



Student learning varies from class to class, which means teaching can be highly repetitive or leave critical gaps



Disadvantaged students miss out most

Shared curriculum materials make a difference

Teachers with access to a shared bank of high-quality curriculum materials for all their classes are much more likely to:



have a shared understanding with colleagues of what constitutes effective teaching



report consistent learning by students in different classrooms



be satisfied with their school's approach to curriculum planning

The workload benefits are enormous: a typical teacher who has access to shared curriculum materials for all their classes saves 3 hours a week.

We are calling for immediate action from governments



Ensure all teachers have access to a suite of high-quality, comprehensive curriculum materials



Recognise and build curriculum expertise across the system



Overhaul school reviews and fund rigorous evaluation

Overview

The curriculum lies at the heart of every school. The knowledge and skills that students are taught in class every day can set them up for life.

We need great teaching in every classroom, but great teaching requires careful planning.

To make this happen, a coordinated, whole-school approach to curriculum planning and materials – which carefully sequences teaching of key knowledge and skills across subjects and year levels – is best.

This approach takes the lottery out of learning, because it guarantees that all students receive common, high-quality teaching that supports them to build knowledge and skills through their school years. Teachers benefit too – high-quality curriculum materials improve their classroom instruction and give them more time to tailor instruction to their students' needs.

The benefits are clear. Yet, schools rarely work this way. Two recent surveys by Grattan Institute of more than 7,000 teachers and school leaders sounded the alarm. We discovered that few teachers have access to high-quality curriculum materials for all their classes. As a result, they often plan alone, scouring the internet for lesson materials. This can waste a lot of teacher time and means students are taught a highly varied curriculum. Many teachers are dissatisfied with current approaches to curriculum planning and see the benefits of shifting to a whole-school approach.

Tackling this problem will require action from school leaders and teachers, as well as governments, and Catholic and independent school sector leaders. Grattan Institute's 2022 report, [*Ending the lesson lottery: How to improve curriculum planning in schools*](#), sets out what governments and sector leaders should do to help tackle this problem.



Photo: A teacher and students from Aveley Secondary College. Photo courtesy of Aveley Secondary College and Sharp Shooting Photography.

But school leaders should not wait for government action. This guide sets out practical steps school leaders can take now to establish an effective whole-school approach to curriculum planning that empowers teachers to set their students up for success.

This guide draws on the lessons we learnt studying five schools across Australia that have embraced a whole-school approach to implementing the curriculum. We hope the experiences of our case study schools will help other school leaders.

Section 1 identifies the key elements of a whole-school curriculum approach, demonstrating why it matters for student learning and why it won't happen without strong school leadership.

Section 2 explains the six key elements of a whole-school curriculum approach: a shared school vision; detailed and sequenced curriculum materials; an agreed instructional approach; a tiered support model; curriculum expertise; and professional learning.

Section 3 suggests key steps school leaders should take to embed a whole-school curriculum approach in their school.

SECTION 1

Why a whole-school curriculum approach is best

This chapter outlines what a whole-school curriculum approach entails, why it matters, and how it benefits students and teachers.

1.1 There is a problem with curriculum planning in schools

Great teaching transforms students' lives. But preparing for great teaching takes time. And most teachers are telling us they are too stretched to do high-quality curriculum and lesson planning.

1.1.1 Teachers are struggling with their curriculum planning load

Our 2021 and 2022 surveys of more than 7,000 teachers and school leaders paint a bleak picture of curriculum planning in schools.¹ More than 90 per cent of teachers say they don't have enough time to prepare effectively for classroom teaching – the core part of their job.²

Many teachers are being left to fend for themselves. Almost half of teachers are planning on their own and only 15 per cent have access to a shared bank of high-quality curriculum materials for all their classes.³ Even more troubling, teachers in disadvantaged schools are only half as likely to have access to a shared bank as teachers in advantaged schools.

Tinkering won't solve this problem. Our case study schools and our interviews with curriculum design experts suggest it takes at least 500 hours to develop a year's worth of knowledge-rich, sequenced, and detailed curriculum materials for one subject (e.g. Year 8 English). The numbers don't add up – teachers simply don't have the time to do all this work themselves.

And teachers want change. More than half are not satisfied with their school's current approach to curriculum planning.⁴

1.1.2 Students are missing out

With so many teachers planning lessons on their own, variation is inevitable. If teachers don't know what preparation students have had in previous years, teachers may waste precious time planning for and reteaching concepts and skills students have already mastered, or they may overlook critical concepts and skills, assuming their students have already been taught them. This creates a lesson lottery for students and teachers.

Disadvantaged students miss out most. These students are most likely to be taught by a beginning or out-of-field teacher or be in a school with high teacher turnover.⁵ We need to solve the curriculum planning problem if we are going to make a dent in the ever-widening achievement gap between disadvantaged and advantaged students.⁶

¹ The full results of our 2021 and 2022 surveys are reported in our 2021 report, [Making time for great teaching: How better government policy can help](#), and our 2022 report, [Ending the lesson lottery: How to improve curriculum planning in schools](#).

² See Figure 2.1 in our 2021 report, [Making time for great teaching: How better government policy can help](#).

³ See Figures 3.1 and 3.2 in our main report, [Ending the lesson lottery: How to improve curriculum planning in schools](#).

⁴ See p. 32 in our main report, [Ending the lesson lottery: How to improve curriculum planning in schools](#).

⁵ See Thomson et al (2021); and Weldon (2016).

⁶ Grattan Institute analysis of 2021 NAPLAN data: see Hunter (2022a), p. 6.

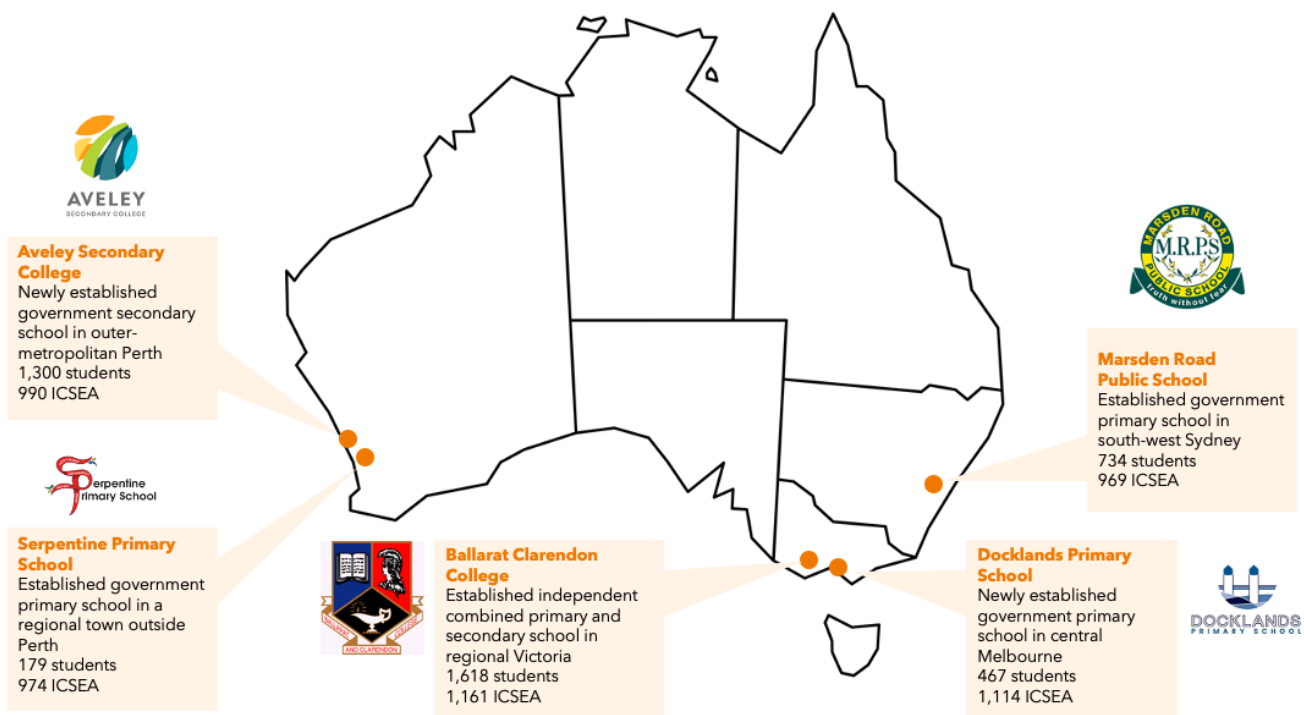
Box 1

Our research with teachers and school leaders underpins this guide

This guide accompanies our 2022 report, [*Ending the lesson lottery: How to improve curriculum planning in schools*](#). For that report, we examined the research literature; consulted extensively with teachers, school leaders, and policy makers; conducted a new survey of 2,243 teachers and school leaders; and studied five case study schools that are implementing a whole-school curriculum approach.

In this principal guide, we are sharing with you what we learnt from our case study schools. These schools work in very different contexts across NSW, Victoria, and Western Australia (see Figure 1). They are big and small, metropolitan and regional, government and non-government, serve advantaged and disadvantaged students, and are at different stages of embedding a whole-school curriculum approach.

Figure 1: Our case study schools implement a whole-school curriculum approach in diverse contexts



Note: The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) measures the level of students' educational advantage. ICSEA values are calculated on a scale which has a median of 1,000 and a standard deviation of 100.

Sources: ACARA (2021) and case study schools.

1.2 A whole-school curriculum approach can tackle this problem

A whole-school approach to curriculum helps teachers and students.

1.2.1 This approach is best for students

A whole-school approach benefits students because:



It boosts student learning. A whole-school approach maximises learning by providing students with a highly-sequenced, knowledge-rich curriculum that presents new material incrementally, connects new content to what's come before, and gives students ample opportunities to practice.⁷

It takes many years for students to build the sophisticated discipline-specific knowledge they need to tackle the complex topics and tasks expected of them in the final years of school. If teachers don't start building this knowledge early, many students – especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds – won't be ready in time. See Box 2 for an example of what this means for students in a senior Biology class.



It means fewer students miss out. All students should receive the same rich learning opportunities, irrespective of the class they are in. A whole-school approach ensures this because teachers collectively agree on what content they will teach, how they will teach it, and how they will assess their students' learning.



It enables effective teaching. With access to shared materials, teachers can spend less time figuring out what to teach, and more time focusing on how to teach most effectively for their students (see Figure 2). They can also spend more time tailoring instruction for and attending to their students' individual needs.

1.2.2 This approach is best for teachers too

A whole-school curriculum approach benefits teachers because:



It builds teachers' expertise. With shared, high-quality curriculum materials and a common view of what effective teaching looks like, teachers can make great leaps in their classroom practice. This common foundation enables teachers to discuss problems, learn from one another, and further refine curriculum materials, improving their classroom practice.

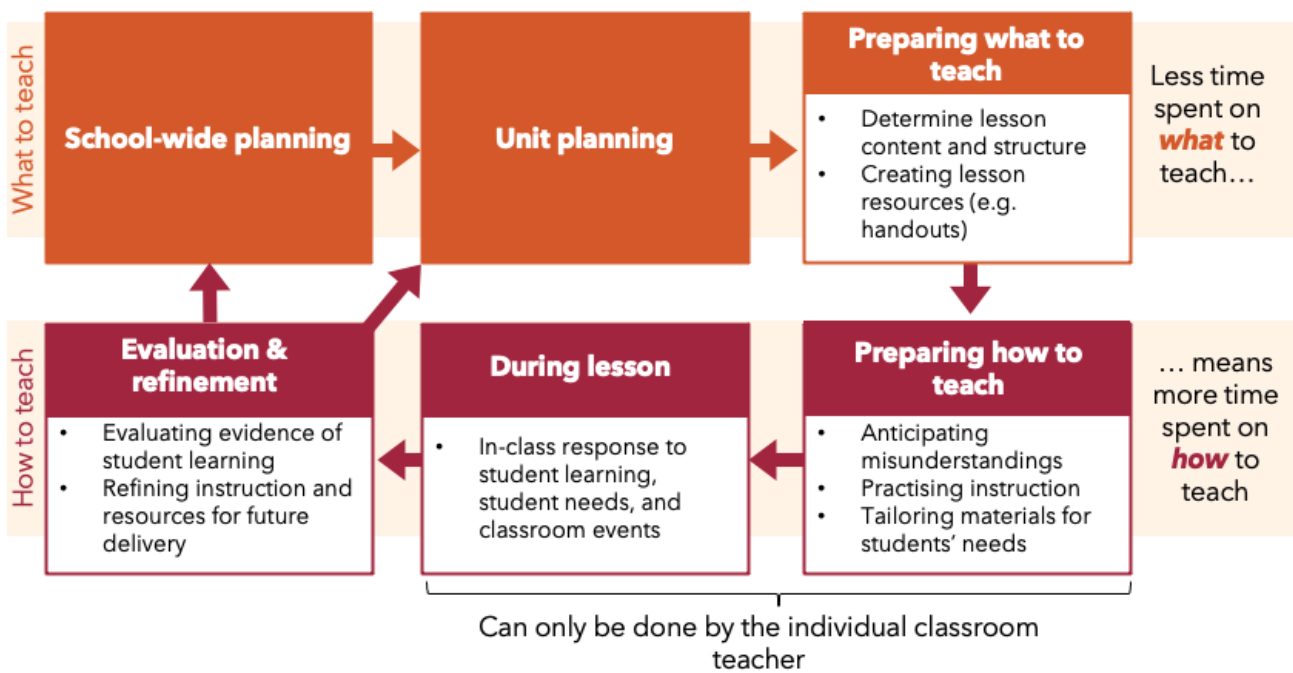


It reduces teachers' individual planning load. Teachers share the planning workload by developing and refining curriculum materials collaboratively. These workload benefits are real. Our survey results show teachers with access to a shared bank of high-quality curriculum materials for all subjects spend three hours less each week sourcing and creating materials than those without a bank.⁸ With less individual planning, teachers can also focus on other important parts of their role, such as building strong student relationships.

⁷ See Rosenshine (2012); and Willingham (2009).

⁸ See Figure 3.6 in our main report, *Ending the lesson lottery: How to improve curriculum planning in schools*.

Figure 2: A whole-school approach gives teachers more time to prepare for great teaching





Box 2

Why building students' disciplinary knowledge over several years is vital to later success – a Biology example

A Year 12 Biology student may, for example, be asked to identify and explain the processes that caused the formation of two different species of octopus from the same ancestor (see Figure 3).

To do this, they need strong foundational knowledge of how specific adaptations give organisms a survival advantage in certain environments (Year 5), as well as the definition of species and how to classify living things (Year 7). They will need a strong grasp of how genetic mutations can result in heritable adaptations and give organisms a survival advantage (Year 10).

Students will also need more advanced knowledge to describe two groups of octopus as 'geographically isolated' from each other which prevents 'gene flow' (the transfer of genetic material between the two populations), and that speciation is the result of the accumulation of mutations over many generations.

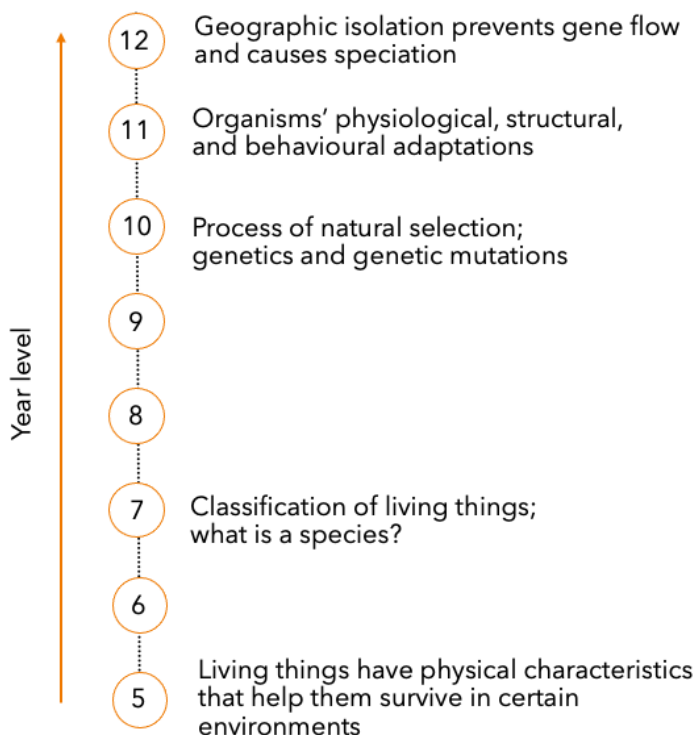
Students cannot attack this complex problem without this accumulated knowledge, which needs to be built over years of study. What happens in primary school matters because it prepares students for later years. For example, six lessons spent examining different environments and adaptations (Option 2) is better than just one lesson (Option 1) because the six lessons arm students with the detailed knowledge and vocabulary they need for tackling problems in later years.

Figure 3: Students need to build specific Biology knowledge in earlier years to succeed later on

Year 12 Biology exam question

Populations of octopus can be found on both the east and west coasts of Australia. While these populations shared a distant common ancestor, the population of octopus on the east coast of Australia is a distinct species from the population on the west coast. Describe the process that may have led to the formation of the two distinct species of octopus from the distant common ancestor.

Sequence of biological knowledge required to answer this question



Year 5 lesson options

Option 1: 1 lesson

- Students learn about defence mechanisms of animals and draw a diagram of an animal
- Students build limited background knowledge and vocabulary

Option 2: 6 lessons

- Students learn about how organisms have adaptations that enable them to live in deep sea, underwater, desert, and cold environments
- Students build more sophisticated background knowledge and vocabulary to describe adaptations (e.g., insulation, echolocation, nocturnal, etc.) and the survival advantages they confer

1.3 Key features of a whole-school curriculum approach

Our case study schools show that this is an all-encompassing change. It requires a revamp of how schools are often run.

To make this happen, school leaders need to bring together several different elements. These include:



A shared vision. School leaders and teachers need a shared understanding of why a whole-school approach matters and how staff will work together to achieve it.



Shared curriculum plans and materials. Shared curriculum plans and materials should set out the specific knowledge and skills students are expected to learn in each subject each year and provide teachers with the right materials to bring this to life in their classes each day.



An agreed instructional approach. Curriculum materials work best when they go hand-in-hand with an agreed instructional approach. Teachers need a shared understanding of what great teaching will look like in the classroom, and materials need to be designed accordingly.



A tiered support model. School leaders and teachers need to implement a tiered support model, with high-quality, whole-class instruction (Tier 1) and more intensive support for students who need it (Tiers 2 and 3).



Curriculum leadership roles and expertise. Principals and senior leaders need to design curriculum leadership roles to achieve their vision. Curriculum leaders need the expertise, authority, and time to carefully sequence learning in their subject area, coordinate the development of high-quality materials, and support teachers to implement these in their classes.



Ongoing professional learning. Implementation is hard and teachers need support to change their classroom practice. Ongoing professional learning needs to be embedded in teachers' day-to-day work, aligned to the school's curriculum materials and instructional approach, and focused on improving teaching practice.

Box 3, at the end of this chapter, illustrates how Marsden Road Public School brings all of these elements together.



1.4 School leaders are key

School leaders are vital to this change – it is impossible for individual teachers to implement a whole-school curriculum approach on their own.

Moving to a whole-school curriculum approach is a long-term change-management challenge – the experience of our case study schools suggests it can take five years or more. To be successful, school leaders need a clear vision, strong leadership skills, deep curriculum expertise, an upfront investment of time, and sustained effort.

But the change is worth it. In our case study schools, teachers and school leaders agreed: they wouldn't want to do it any other way. They could see the benefits for their students, who were making great strides in their learning. They could feel the benefits for themselves too, seeing the improvement in their own teaching and workload.

The next two chapters provide a roadmap for how school leaders can implement a whole-school curriculum approach.



Photo: The principal of Serpentine Primary School with students. Photo courtesy of Serpentine Primary School and Dome Photography.

Box 3

Marsden Road's whole-school curriculum approach

Marsden Road Public School is a government primary school in south-west Sydney. It serves a low socio-economic community, has a highly mobile student population, and more than 90 per cent of its students come from non-English speaking households.

Taking the helm in 2016, the principal's top priority was establishing and implementing a school-wide curriculum plan. Previously, curriculum planning had been based on year levels and was, as one school leader told us, 'quite disjointed, with no school-wide understanding of how students progressed from Kinder to Year 6'.

Over several years, the principal gradually introduced a school-wide curriculum plan – called the 'Core Program'. This includes a detailed learning sequence for each subject, accompanying pedagogical model, common assessment schedules, lessons plans, and shared classroom materials such as textbooks.

Now there is no guess work about what students are learning and when. Common classroom materials mean that all students in a year level learn the same phonics sequence, approaches to structuring an essay, and grammar rules, for example, and these build on what's been taught before. The benefits for teachers are significant. As one teacher said, 'I finally know what someone should have done last year. You don't have the gaps.'

Teachers in each year level plan together using the Core Program, creating shared classroom materials that they can then adapt for their classes. With all teachers using the same classroom materials, teacher workload is reduced – one teacher told us her workload had 'dropped by two thirds' since she joined Marsden Road.

This shared approach also means teachers have a baseline from which they can improve their own teaching practice:

'I feel like I've learnt and grown so much. Having this reference - the Core Program - which is quick and easy, has had a massive impact on the kids. Because we're more knowledgeable, our teaching is better.'

This school-wide approach also provides clear expectations to students. As one teacher observed:

'We spend our time teaching and don't manage behaviour. We're all on the same page. The kids know we're all on the same page. You can tell Marsden kids from non-Marsden kids. Our kids are like "we're learners". We don't have the challenges other schools have.'



This can only happen because everything at the school is geared towards implementing the Core Program well. Each term, teams spend a day together coordinating planning based on the Core Program, and half a day creating or refining shared classroom materials. Weekly whole-school professional learning is driven by the Core Program, focusing on specific content (such as grammar rules) and pedagogical strategies (such as effective questioning techniques).

School leaders provide instructional coaching and monitor implementation. They frequently observe classes in action, review teachers' Core Program documentation each term, moderate common student assessments and results, and ensure teacher performance reviews are aligned to the Core Program.

Photo: The principal of Marsden Road Public School reading with students. Photo courtesy of Marsden Road Public School.

SECTION 2

What a whole-school curriculum approach looks like in practice

This chapter outlines the key elements of a whole-school approach, illustrating what this looks like in practice in our case study schools.

2.1 A shared vision – getting collective agreement on why, what, and how

In our case study schools, principals and teachers agreed to implement a whole-school curriculum approach because they believed it was the best way to improve their students' learning (see Box 4 for each principal's description of this vision).

Change was hard work. Having a clear vision helped school leaders because it provided an anchor for their decision-making, helping them prioritise their resources and overcome inevitable challenges.

Our case study schools also had a detailed action plan for change, and school leaders were relentless in their dedication to bring the plan to life.

At Ballarat Clarendon College, auditing their school's curriculum was the 'trigger' for change. The leadership team worked with all teaching teams across Foundation to Year 12 to map out what content and skills were being taught in each unit across every year level. The results unearthed several surprises: by taking a bird's eye view of the topics covered across each subject and year level, school leaders could see that some topics were repeated unnecessarily, while others didn't get the attention they deserved. By refining the topics and sequence of learning in each subject, they could improve the use of instructional time with their students and provide a stronger foundation for learning as academic demands increased over time.

2.2 Teachers need carefully sequenced and detailed curriculum materials

Shared curriculum plans and materials are essential to a whole-school approach. Schools need to have:

- **A whole-school curriculum map.** Guided by the Australian Curriculum (or state-level variants), this is generally organised by subject area and details each unit to be taught, including the knowledge and skills students are expected to learn, and how and when learning will be assessed. This map sets out the 'backbone' learning sequence for every subject and shows how knowledge and skills become increasingly sophisticated over time. Curriculum leaders, such as heads of department, 'own' this learning sequence for their subject and are responsible for ensuring teachers understand this sequence and have the accompanying materials they need for their classes. For school leaders, this curriculum map gives them a bird's eye view of their school's curriculum.
- **Shared unit plans.** Unit plans set out a detailed lesson-by-lesson plan of what will be taught for a specific unit (e.g. Ancient Egypt in Year 7 History). Underpinned by a subject's learning sequence, these plans set out in detail the key knowledge and skills to be taught, the intended instructional strategies, student assessments, and an outline of the key learning tasks in the unit, such as writing tasks or practical experiments. Shared by teaching teams (e.g. all Year 7 History teachers), a unit plan is a collective agreement about how teachers will teach a particular topic.

- **Shared classroom materials.** This includes physical and online textbooks, learning software, worksheets, assessments, exemplar responses, and/or lesson slides. These materials are the concrete resources teachers need to teach day-to-day in their classrooms. Teachers' preparation time is then spent intellectually preparing for their classes and adapting materials where necessary.

With a whole-school approach, planning doesn't have to be the job of every single teacher. Curriculum and teaching expertise can be shared across teams.

Once these shared materials are established, they can free-up teachers to focus on preparing for the classroom and tailoring their teaching for their particular students. Box 5 provides an example of how the Maths Department at Ballarat Clarendon College uses shared classroom materials.

Box 4

Our case study school leaders describe their school's vision for a whole-school curriculum

'Our goal is equity – we want every student to experience consistent teaching and a low-variance curriculum within and between grades. We also want students to build strong background knowledge over years of learning. While initial set up takes some work, the time investment is worth it for the gains our students make, and the workload shift for our teachers, which allows them to focus on practice rather than planning.'

– **Docklands Primary School**

'We needed to prioritise student learning. Before the introduction of the Core Program, there was a 'choose your own adventure' approach where students were exposed to the content that teachers individually decided should be taught. There was a lack of clarity in regard to what was taught and learnt in the year prior, and there was no cumulation of student knowledge. With the Core Program we put students first, creating whole-school consistency and sequencing learning across years.'

– **Marsden Road Public School**

'This is an equity issue for us. We want to have a coherent curriculum so we can best serve our students, many of whom are from a disadvantaged background. We have lots of new and beginning teachers – by equipping them with ready-to-go structured lesson materials we ensure continuity across classes and guarantee learning opportunities for our students.'

– **Aveley Secondary College**

'We were driven to challenge our assumptions of what our students could do. To do this, we had to get on the same page about what great teaching looks like and exactly what knowledge and skills we expected our students to learn. Once we did this, our students surprised us with what they could achieve.'

– **Serpentine Primary School**

'We believe all students can learn and our goal is to have every student make progress, every day. Having a common, knowledge-rich curriculum makes it more straightforward for teachers to follow the agreed plan than to deviate from it. Teaching is complex, but having common materials means what's being taught is consistent and teachers have the time to prepare to teach the students in front of them.'

– **Ballarat Clarendon College**



Box 5

How Ballarat Clarendon College's Maths Department uses shared classroom materials

In Ballarat Clarendon College's Maths Department, teachers use a common set of PowerPoint slides, student booklets, and assessment tasks. The slides give teachers a detailed lesson plan, including instructional guidance, clear explanation of concepts, worked examples, and practice problems with answers. With all materials at the ready, teachers then intellectually prepare for lessons by completing practice problems, preparing to address any student misconceptions, and considering the 'micro-details' of delivery (e.g. what questions they will ask students).

Each lesson has a core set of roughly six-to-eight 'essential slides' that all teachers are expected to use, as well as additional slides that cover pre-requisite content, independent practice, and extension activities (see Figure 4 at right). Teachers can use these additional slides to adapt their approach to their class, adjusting the pace and drawing on other slides to provide extra teaching and practice where needed. This means all students learn the same essential content, while teachers are well-supported to address specific needs in their classes.

Figure 4: An illustration of how Maths lesson slides are structured



2.2.1 Schools have several options to establish shared classroom materials

Myth: The best teachers develop their own curriculum materials from scratch

Reality: Research shows that when teachers use carefully sequenced, high-quality curriculum materials – even if developed by others – they can boost student learning by about one-to-two months each year, possibly more.⁹

Developing high-quality shared curriculum materials is time consuming and requires specialist content knowledge and pedagogical expertise. But schools don't have to do all of this work on their own.

Our case study schools made strategic choices about which materials to develop themselves and which externally-available materials to adopt and adapt. Serpentine Primary School, for example, used a high-quality spelling program and Maths textbooks, which freed up teachers' time to focus on developing English curriculum materials that included a focus on the stories and landscapes important for the local Indigenous (Noongar) people.

Adopting high-quality externally-developed materials is a great way to get started. Schools can adapt and build on these materials as they develop in-house expertise. Our case study schools commonly used carefully selected textbooks and existing comprehensive materials such as Core Knowledge units (which can be found [here](#)).¹⁰ For some small, niche subjects – such as Literature or Languages – high-quality external materials

simply didn't exist, so in-house development was necessary.

Our case study schools also developed and shared curriculum materials with other schools. For instance, Serpentine Primary School led a network of more than 15 primary schools that was developing a detailed sequence for teaching grammar from Foundation to Year 6. Having agreed on the learning sequence and format/content for each lesson, teachers from these schools created accompanying classroom materials, such as detailed lesson-by-lesson PowerPoints. These are now freely available for other schools to use and can be found [here](#).¹¹

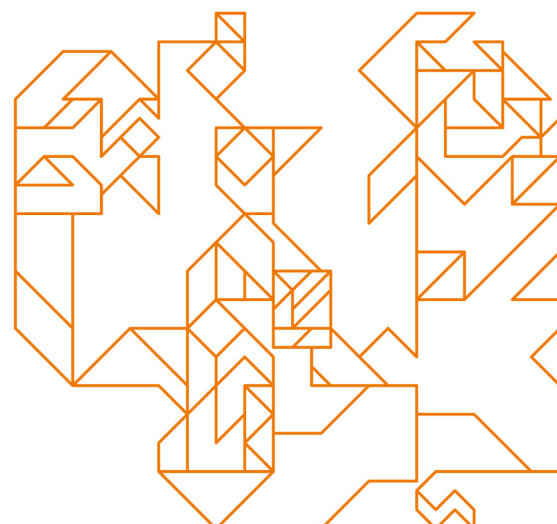
Where school leaders chose to develop materials from scratch, they carefully considered how to give teachers the time and support to do this work. This included limiting the number of different or new subjects each teacher was assigned, providing teachers with exemplar templates – such as unit and lesson plans – and allocating teachers to develop new materials for one subject only at a time.

Box 6 shows how Docklands Primary School built its shared classroom materials, adapting high-quality external materials and developing some materials in-house. Box 7 provides advice on how to identify high-quality curriculum materials.

⁹ See Appendix B in our main report, *Ending the lesson lottery: How to improve curriculum planning in schools*, for a summary of key studies.

¹⁰ The Core Knowledge Foundation (n.d.).

¹¹ The Grammar Project (n.d.).





Box 6

Docklands Primary School's approach to developing high-quality, shared curriculum materials for English

At Docklands Primary School, school-wide English planning has been led by the Head of English, who spent three-to-four months developing a highly-detailed curriculum map. Although the school serves a relatively advantaged student group, English was a high priority because almost 80 per cent of students have a language background other than English.

For each English text unit, the Head of English worked with teachers to carefully select and sequence high-quality external resources—such as Core Knowledge, Reading Reconsidered, and Australian Geographic—to build student knowledge across subject areas and year levels. Teachers then adapted these materials for the Victorian Curriculum and the school's instructional norms and routines (such as including more embedded writing instruction in lessons). The school opted to build some units in-house (about one in six text units in English), but has avoided doing so as much as possible because this work is time intensive.

With this approach, students build strong foundational knowledge by studying texts on a range of diverse topics such as Ancient Greek civilisations, the human body, Indigenous stories, and Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Sequencing is key. Within a subject, knowledge is built over several years as topics are revisited with increasing depth and complexity. Background knowledge is also built between subjects—particularly English and the Humanities—to support reading comprehension and increase student

opportunities for reading and writing practice on topics they know well. For example, Prep students study *The First Australians in History* before completing an Indigenous Stories unit in English and Grade 6 students study Greek Mythology in History while reading *Heroes, Gods and Monsters of the Greek Myths* in English.

Sharing the planning workload also reduces teachers' individual workloads and helps them focus on instruction in the classroom. Once high-quality materials are established, teachers can also focus on refining materials over time. As one teacher reflected:

'To have someone give me a lesson plan is quite freeing. I feel relaxed knowing that what I'm teaching is quality. I don't miss spending three hours looking for a picture book that would suit my class. I feel like I'm a better teacher here.'

Photo: Students on break at Docklands Primary School. Photo by Peter Clarke.

Box 7

Key questions to ask when selecting or creating high-quality curriculum materials

Are the materials aligned to the mandatory curriculum content and standards?

To achieve at year-level, students need to be taught year-level content.¹² Curriculum materials should be aligned to year-level (or stage-level) appropriate national or state curriculum content and achievement standards. Materials should include appropriate scaffolds to help students who have fallen behind engage with year-level content.

Are materials coherent and knowledge-rich?

Curriculum materials should be carefully sequenced to ensure students accumulate knowledge and develop more complex skills over time. Materials also need to specify what knowledge students are expected to learn. For instance, in a Year 5 Science unit on animal adaptations, materials should define key concepts (e.g. the theory of evolution, fossil records), vocabulary (e.g. population), and specific animals and their adaptive features (e.g. a platypus's duckbill). Having learnt this disciplinary knowledge, students can then complete more complex tasks that require critical thinking (e.g. analysing fossil records to see how an animal has adapted to a changing habitat over time). Over years of learning, students can then accumulate deep disciplinary knowledge and tackle increasingly challenging topics and tasks.¹³

Do materials promote evidence-based instructional practices?

Curriculum materials should reflect the growing evidence base for effective teaching practices. For example, research has demonstrated the efficacy of a range of practices, including explicit instruction, mastery learning, spaced and retrieval practice, and formative assessment.¹⁴ High-quality materials support teachers to implement these practices reliably in their classrooms.¹⁵

Are materials comprehensive?

Curriculum materials should be comprehensive and detailed, providing teachers with everything they need to teach a subject. This includes a map of the expected learning sequence across years, unit plans for each topic, and classroom materials that are ready-to-use and adapt (e.g. lesson plans, textbooks, and background materials and guidance for teachers).

Do materials include embedded assessment of student learning?

Curriculum materials should include targeted assessments that enable teachers to accurately assess students' grasp of particular concepts, content, and skills taught. Formative assessments (e.g. pre-tests, quizzes, exit tickets) provide evidence of students' current achievement and misconceptions, allowing teachers to adapt instruction as needed. Summative assessments (e.g. unit tests, written responses, submitted portfolios) allow teachers to evaluate student learning at the end of a unit.

Are materials easy to use?

Teachers need to know how to adapt and use curriculum materials for their classes, otherwise those materials are likely to be left to gather dust. Materials themselves can include supports such as teacher explanations of key concepts and background information, guidance on lessons pacing, advice on common student misunderstandings, and scaffolds to meet different students' needs. Accompanying professional development can further support teachers to understand and use materials.

¹² TNTP (formerly The New Teacher Project) (2018).

¹³ See for example: Cervetti et al (2016); Neuman et al (2016); Willingham (2006); E. D. Hirsch (2006); and Young (2013).

¹⁴ Australian Education Research Organisation (2022); and Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (2020).

¹⁵ See for example: Doan et al (2022); and Tarr et al (2008).

2.3 An agreed instructional approach

Curriculum materials need to work hand-in-hand with an agreed instructional approach, which defines what great teaching will look like in the classroom.

Our case study schools chose to implement an explicit instructional model across all classes because the evidence shows this is the most effective way to teach.¹⁶ This model involves carefully explaining new information to students, demonstrating what students need to learn, and providing learning in bite-sized chunks, that build on what's come before.¹⁷

Several of our case study schools codified their approach in an instructional 'playbook' – a detailed document that outlines core instructional principles and classroom strategies. A playbook gives teachers detailed guidance on the research underpinning the instructional model, specific teaching strategies such as checking for understanding or explicit vocabulary instruction, behaviour management routines and protocols, and domain-specific instructional strategies such as paired reading fluency for literacy.

For our case study schools, the playbook was a 'living' document that was updated over time. As one instructional coach told us:

'The playbook is a two-way document. It tells us what we believe effective teaching is. But we also observe our teachers to inform the instructional playbook. It's like the old family recipe book, handed down generation to generation, with Nonna's tips in the margin. In writing it down, we're making the collective wisdom in our school public.'

Box 8 on the following page gives a snapshot of Serpentine Primary School's instructional playbook.

¹⁶ Australian Education Research Organisation (2022); and Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (2020).

¹⁷ Rosenshine (2012); and Willingham (2009).



Box 8

A look inside Serpentine Primary School's instructional playbook

Serpentine Primary School's instructional playbook is an evolving document. School leaders and teachers have worked on it together, adding more detail over time. The playbook includes sections on:

- The school's vision, purpose, and expectations for teachers and students,
- The school's instructional approach, including an explanation of the underpinning evidence,
- The school's instructional norms and protocols, such as agreed instructional routines for teaching vocabulary explicitly (see example in Figure 5), using questioning techniques when reading English texts aloud with a class, or procedures for using worked examples in Maths, and
- The school's tiered approach to supporting struggling students who need more intensive help.

You can read Serpentine's instructional playbook [here](#).¹⁸

Photo: A teacher and students from Serpentine Primary School. Photo courtesy of Serpentine Primary School and Dome Photography.

Figure 5: Snapshot from Serpentine Primary School's instructional playbook

Instructional routine checklist explicit vocabulary

- The word is categorised as tier 2 vocabulary (high utility and sophisticated relative to age)
- Word is displayed with sound markers
- Students chorus the word together
- Choral reversal: word and child-friendly definition
- Teach the morphology of the word
- Examples and non-examples provided: I Do and We Do
- Choral read sentences containing the word (simple, compound, and complex sentences)
- Hinge point question—examples and non-examples OR which sentence makes sense (multiple choice)
- Students to put the word in a sentence (picture prompts)
- Participation tactics/engagement norms and check for understanding throughout

2.4 A tiered support model

Myth: using shared curriculum materials means teachers can't target their instruction to individual student needs

Reality: Nine out of 10 teachers in our survey said that having access to a bank of shared, high-quality curriculum materials would give them more time to meet the learning needs of individual students and focus on improving their classroom practice.¹⁹ A whole-school approach to curriculum planning can also make it easier to establish a well-targeted 'Response to Intervention' model that supports struggling students to catch up.

Across our case study schools, a whole-school approach to curriculum has enabled teachers to implement a tiered support model, with high-quality, whole-class instruction (Tier 1) and more intensive support for students who need it (Tiers 2 and 3).²⁰

At Marsden Road Public School, for example, teachers devise subject-specific student seating plans to tailor their classroom instruction depending on different learning needs. In a Year 1 phonics lesson, for instance, all students learn the same letter-sound combination, but the teacher might direct the front row of students to practice the combination by writing monosyllabic words, the middle row to use multisyllabic words, and the back row to write a whole sentence. Teachers' grasp of the sequence of learning is key to making this approach work.

Several of our case study schools used flexible student

groupings to narrow the range of student ability in a class, and allow teachers to better 'pitch' whole-class instruction to student needs. At Serpentine Primary School – a small school with only one class in each year level – daily spelling classes occurred at the same time across the whole school, with students primarily grouped based on their current achievement. While some students were consolidating early phonics, others were working through different stages of the school's highly-sequenced spelling curriculum, and the most advanced students were taking extension etymology lessons.

Beyond whole-class instruction, our case study schools also had a systematic approach to meeting a range of student learning levels. This approach – commonly referred to as a Response to Intervention (RtI) model – ensures that all students get the help they need. Schools focused on delivering high-quality whole-class instruction (Tier 1) then added intensive supports (Tiers 2 and 3) for students who needed it.

Box 9 illustrates Serpentine Primary School and Aveley Secondary College's tiered support model for literacy.



¹⁹ See Figure 3.4 in our main report, [Ending the lesson lottery: How to improve curriculum planning in schools](#).

²⁰ For further detail on tiered support models, see our report, [Tackling under-achievement: Why Australia should embed high-quality small-group tuition in schools](#).



Box 9

How Serpentine Primary School and Aveley Secondary College provide tiered literacy supports for students

Serpentine Primary uses a series of high-quality literacy assessments to pinpoint individual student needs. They test all new students and measure progress every term. Using sequenced and detailed curriculum materials, trained support staff provide additional tutoring to students who have fallen behind. As one literacy leader told us:

‘We don’t miss students. You know you’re not going to get students in Year 3 that can’t read. We have high expectations, we want all kids to be at grade level.’

At Aveley College, all Year 7 students sit a literacy test upon arrival, which enables teachers to identify struggling students straight away. These students have intensive literacy support classes built into their timetable. Of the 300 Year 7 students, about 50 receive intensive literacy

support, alongside about 20 Year 8 students. These students work through a highly sequenced and detailed spelling and reading curriculum. The aim is for them to be able to move back into mainstream English classes as soon as possible. This model has been a great success.

One teacher told us:

‘Pretty much all of the intensive literacy support students progressed. We have some doing ATAR classes now. There’s a Year 10 student who is now at grade-level, I have videos of them being unable to read in Year 7. Another Year 11 is getting a B who was in the same program.’



Photo: A student from Serpentine Primary School. Photo courtesy of Serpentine Primary School and Dome Photography.

2.5 Curriculum leadership roles and expertise

Myth: using shared materials undermines teachers' expertise

Reality: High-quality, shared materials can boost teaching expertise. Shared materials can provide powerful professional learning for beginning teachers and out-of-field teachers. They can also underpin high-impact collaborative learning in teaching teams, because they provide a common foundation that allows teachers to learn from one another and discuss problems of practice. Expert teachers can share their knowledge with others by leading the development or refinement of shared materials.

Principals and senior leaders are central to setting up a whole-school curriculum approach. They need the vision, curriculum knowledge, and management skills to be able to redesign curriculum leadership roles (such as heads of faculties or assistant/deputy principals) and set up new processes and practices in their school. It's only when these curriculum leaders are working well that teachers can then genuinely share the curriculum planning load and have more time to focus on the learning needs of their students.

Curriculum leaders should be responsible for high-quality curriculum planning in their subject area. To do this well, they need the expertise to be able to carefully sequence learning across year levels; coordinate the selection, development, and refinement of high-quality classroom materials; and support teachers to implement these in their classes.

School leaders can support curriculum leaders by:

- **Building curriculum expertise.** Our case study schools invested heavily in training and upskilling curriculum leaders, drawing on in-house and external expertise. At Marsden Road Public School, for instance, an external literacy expert provided professional learning for the whole school as well as coaching for two curriculum leaders, upskilling them to lead the implementation of the new literacy approach.
- **Granting authority to lead.** Curriculum leaders need the authority to map out a sequence of learning for their subject area and to lead the collaborative work of developing and refining the shared materials needed to teach this sequence. Principals need to give this authority to curriculum leaders, demonstrating that a whole-school, coordinated approach to curriculum is the expectation for all staff. Our case study school leaders did this in multiple ways, communicating this in whole-staff and smaller team meetings, through policy documents and guidelines, and as part of recruitment and performance review processes.
- **Creating enough time for the role.** Our case study school leaders made time for curriculum leaders to work on whole-school planning and coordination in two ways: by providing additional time-release each week, and by clearly defining the scope of the role so that curriculum leaders were not asked to do work that was not directly related to curriculum.

Box 10 on the following page shows how school leaders at Aveyley Secondary College have structured curriculum leadership roles to lead curriculum planning across year levels, and instructional coach roles to support teachers to improve their classroom practice.



Identify the symbolic meaning of the narrative elements

Character - The Toymaker

Character - The wife

ected and known for
ork.
s power over his wife;
ctifies her.
ree will and agency.

Symbolic meaning: Male
er (patriarchy) in
ety.

How did I identify the
Symbolic meaning?

What qualities give the
wife symbolic meaning?

What real world
issue does this ch
symbolise?



Box 10

Aveley Secondary College's leadership roles support shared planning and improved classroom practice

At Aveley Secondary College, heads of subjects have been key to implementing a whole-school approach. They have developed detailed learning sequences across year levels and overseen the development of classroom materials.

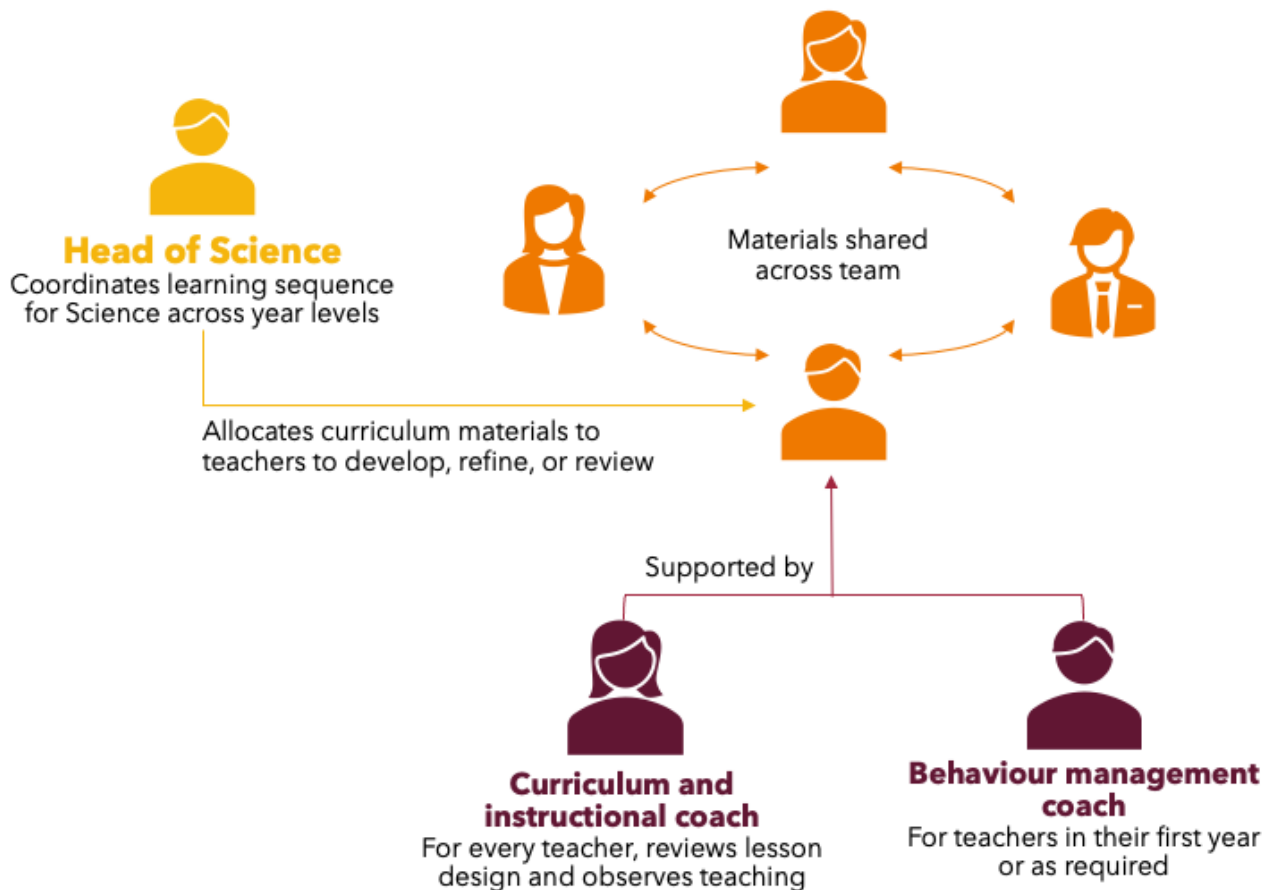
In Science, for instance, knowledge and skills are mapped from junior general Science subjects up to specialised senior subjects such as Biology and Chemistry. Student booklets, assessment tasks, and detailed lesson-by-lesson PowerPoints are all saved in a common drive, and responsibility for developing or refining these materials is allocated to different team members at the start of the year.

Teachers see the benefit of this approach. One said: 'Every teacher is doing the same thing. Whether you're in another class or my class, you're learning the same thing at the same time. There's no lottery.'

This approach relies on a strong school-wide culture of professional trust. The school's leaders articulated the vision and set expectations, but individual teachers also need to buy-in to this vision and be willing to share their work. As one teacher said: 'There needs to be a culture of openness, trust, and dialogue. People need to be able to deliver feedback and take it on board.'

To build this culture, the school has invested heavily in teacher induction, professional learning, and implementation support (see Figure 6). The head-of-department role is supported by a deputy head and team leaders in every year level. Teachers meet in subject teams each week to analyse student assessment data and further refine materials. Every staff member has an instructional coach who helps them to design shared lesson materials and gives feedback on their implementation in the classroom. New teachers also have an additional coach who works with them specifically on managing student behaviour.

Figure 6: How Aveley Secondary College’s curriculum leaders and instructional coaches support the Year 7 Science teaching team



2.6 Ongoing professional learning

To improve teaching quality and consistency, teachers need high-impact professional learning that is connected to classroom practice.

Our case study schools invested heavily in this kind of professional learning. The following section describes how these schools trained and coached their teachers, facilitated 'disciplined' collaboration among teachers, and inducted new staff.

2.6.1 Explicit training and coaching

Our case study schools deliberately trained teachers in the content and skills they needed to implement their whole-school curriculum.

School leaders invested in training that:

- **Is closely aligned to the school's curriculum approach.** Our case study schools knew what great teaching should look like in every classroom and the content knowledge and skills teachers needed to get there. This meant that school leaders could give priority to high-impact training, avoiding one-off external workshops and instead designing a professional learning program that built teachers' knowledge and skills over time through external courses, whole-school professional learning sessions, and team meetings.
- **Targets teachers' professional needs.** School leaders drew on various sources – such as regular learning walks, observations, student learning data, and feedback – to target support to teachers' professional needs. In several of our case study schools, for instance, school leaders noticed that teachers had common gaps in their knowledge of grammar and punctuation conventions, which

impeded their ability to teach these writing skills to students. To remedy this, these schools invested in both upfront external training, such as online training courses like The Writing Revolution, as well as ongoing in-house professional learning, such as weekly whole-staff mini-lessons on grammar and punctuation.

- **Directly supports teachers' practice in the classroom.** Instructional coaching can be highly effective in supporting teachers to translate knowledge learnt in seminars or workshops into practice in the classroom. In our case study schools, teachers were regularly observed and received expert feedback on their instruction. With shared curriculum materials and an agreed instructional approach in place, coaching could focus on the nitty-gritty, providing teachers with small instructional tweaks that they could implement immediately.

Box 11 describes Docklands Primary School's training and instructional coaching approach.

2.6.2 Disciplined professional collaboration

Our 2021 survey of 5,442 teachers and school leaders across Australia found that almost half of teachers think collaborative preparation time – where teachers work together to develop and share lesson plans – is actually *unhelpful*.²¹ Teachers pointed to several reasons for this, including: poor leadership of the meetings; discussions focusing on issues other than curriculum planning, such as administration or difficult student behaviour; teachers preferring to work individually; insufficient time for quality collaboration; and timetabling clashes that prevented teachers from meeting together.

²¹ See Figure 4.2 in our 2021 report, [Making time for great teaching: How better government policy can help](#).

Box 11

Docklands Primary School's approach to training and instructional coaching

At Docklands Primary School, ongoing professional learning reinforces the school-wide instructional 'playbook' and sequenced lesson-by-lesson curriculum materials.

When new teachers arrive, they receive training in key curriculum materials and approaches that the school has adopted, such as Sounds Write and The Writing Revolution. This allows them to hit the ground running.

Regular planning and whole-school professional learning further build teaching capability. Weekly whole-school professional learning is targeted to teachers needs, based on twice-termly learning walks, classroom observations, and teachers' goals. The school also provides every teacher with one-on-one instructional coaching over time, which includes weekly observations and feedback sessions.

As one school leader reflected:

'The key ingredient is the school saying what good instruction looks like.'

And as a teacher told us:

'Coming here, I feel like I've actually learnt so much about so many different things. Having input from instructional coaches is really helpful. You can do your own research, but when you have someone you can talk to who can show you exactly what it looks like, then you can actually improve.'

When collaboration works well, teachers benefit hugely. But school leaders need to set up teachers for success. Our case study schools laid the foundations for disciplined professional collaboration by anchoring collaboration to the development and delivery of shared curriculum materials, and assessment data that showed the impact on learning. School leaders also set the expectations for how collaborative time would be used effectively.

Boxes 12 and 13 illustrate what this looks like in two different types of meetings at Aveley Secondary College and Ballarat Clarendon College.



Photo: Students on break at Docklands Primary School.
Photo courtesy of Peter Clarke.



Box 12

At Aveley Secondary College, shared accountability is key to using meeting times effectively

At Aveley Secondary College, teachers meet in their faculty teams every fortnight. Knowing this time is precious, school leaders have set up specific structures to make the most of every minute. Heads of faculty share the meeting agenda with staff beforehand, specifying what pre-work is required and how the time will be used during the meeting.

In the English faculty, for instance, this time is focused on refining curriculum materials and preparing for instruction in the classroom. The Head of English delegates specific lesson materials for each staff member to develop, refine, or review across the year. Lesson materials are ready two weeks before they're needed for class, giving reviewers time to evaluate the materials and bring any issues to the faculty meeting for discussion. Every meeting starts with this discussion, to make sure all teachers are prepared to teach their upcoming lessons.

Mutual accountability is key to making this process work. Each teacher needs to play their part, and

the review and meeting process helps build this professional trust. As one teacher said:

'We have high accountability to each other, I think that's an unspoken culture. The process emphasises those who aren't on board.'

Once a unit has been taught, teachers also use these meetings to evaluate student learning and refine materials for next time. As one teacher said:

'Teachers only have the capacity to do this work because they have the reduction in lesson planning. This means teachers have capacity to look at data and assessments and can be more sophisticated in their work.'

Box 13

In curriculum meetings at Ballarat Clarendon College, teachers use student assessment data to improve teaching

At Ballarat Clarendon College, all staff participate in 'Phase 2' meetings, which are set up to hone in on and share strong teaching practices. In the Maths Department, for instance, all teachers use the same curriculum materials, including assessments. In Phase 2 meetings, which are held most fortnights, teachers can then examine student results from the most recent common assessment, looking for variation on each question. If one teacher's class has excelled, the teacher is asked to demonstrate to the group how they taught that particular point. The principal explained to us:

'Variation is our friend. It's not revolution, it's evolution. We're trying to hold one lever steady so they can apply the scientific method. We want to hold the curriculum lever steady so they can see what works.'

Having teachers demonstrate their teaching of a concept or skill is key. Often it enables the group to pick up on tiny details about which some teachers might not be

aware. One teacher described to us her experience in a recent Phase 2 meeting:

'It was literally just the lay-out of how the teacher had set out their working. It sounds minor but it's not. I guess because we care so much about micro-excellence, doing those tiny things means a lot to us. I love it, I love feedback. My class didn't perform well on that question, and I'm like "yes, I have a strategy now"'

As effective teaching strategies are identified, they are recorded on the shared PowerPoint slides for the benefit of future classes. These are often small instructional details – the type that help teachers hone their craft in the classroom – such as the best questions for teachers to ask students, the specific words used to describe a process, or common student misconceptions to address. As one teacher explained:

'The point is to get the best teaching practice possible. When someone explains in a Phase 2 meeting what they did, we put it in the slides for next year.'

The Phase 2 collaborative process allows teachers to focus on continual improvement over time, rather than 'reinventing the wheel'.



Box 14



Photo: Students at Ballarat Clarendon College. Photo courtesy of Ballarat Clarendon College.

2.6.3 Inducting new teachers

When starting at any school, there is a lot for a new teacher to take in. And because our case study schools work in a unique way, the learning curve is probably steeper. These schools overcame this by investing in strong induction programs for new starters.

Induction often started the year before, with new teachers visiting the school for preparation days. New teachers already knew about the school's whole-school curriculum approach through the recruitment process, so preparation days could be focused on providing teachers with background reading, training in the school's instructional approach, and access to necessary classroom materials.

Once new teachers were on board, they commonly received further training on the school's instructional approach and how to use specific curriculum materials (such as Sounds Write and The Writing Revolution). They were also assigned a mentor teacher and a reduced curriculum planning load, where possible.

Box 14 describes Ballarat Clarendon College's induction process.

Ballarat Clarendon College's induction process for new teaching staff

At Ballarat Clarendon College the induction program lasts several terms. New staff are provided with professional reading that explains the research underpinning the school's instructional model, knowledge-rich curriculum, and behaviour approach. They also receive explicit training in key curriculum materials they will use, such as Spelling Mastery; behaviour management protocols; and key instructional strategies, such as using mini-whiteboards to check student understanding.

Knowing that there is a lot for new teachers to get their heads around, school leaders try to avoid giving new teachers any extra work. They do this by allocating them to teach classes that have an existing set of classroom materials and pairing them with a mentor teacher. This means that new teachers don't have to build any material from scratch and can then focus on their in-class practice. As one teacher said:

'The cognitive load was quite big coming in. Now it's much easier and I can drill down into how I'm explaining things in class, and tweak tiny things. The quality of my instruction is a thousand times higher than if I'd been working from scratch – making what's tried and tested and filling in all the gaps is a far better use of my time.'

SECTION 3

How to get there

Moving to a whole-school curriculum approach is a big change. This chapter steps out the key actions school leaders can take to start and manage this process.

1. Establish your vision for success



You need to understand why you are making this change, what this change will look like in your school, and how you and your staff will get there.



Questions to ask yourself and your leadership team

What is your why?

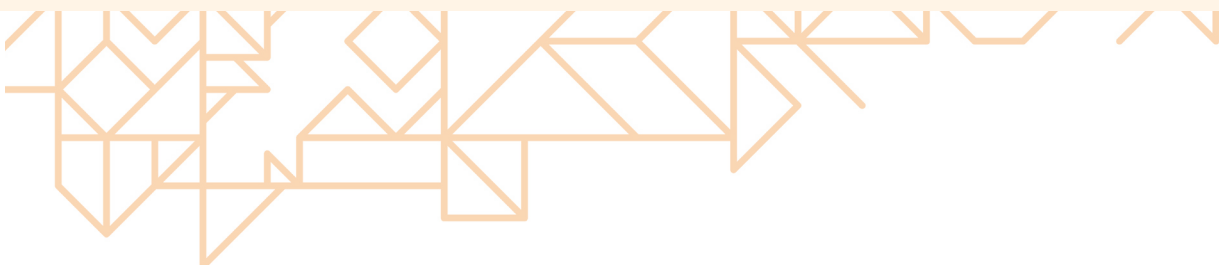
- Why are you implementing a whole-school curriculum approach? What do you want for your students? What do you want for your teachers?

What would success look like in your school?

- How do teachers currently plan curriculum in your school? What would it look like if a whole-school curriculum approach was working successfully in your school?

How can you bring staff on board?

- In what ways can you share and test your vision with staff (e.g. through whole-staff meetings, policies and processes, committees, leadership, etc)?
- How can you make this vision concrete for staff (e.g. by visiting a demonstration school)?
- What kind of concerns are staff likely to have? How might these be overcome?



2. Audit your school's current approach to curriculum and planning



Work with your teachers to map out in detail what you're currently teaching in your school – write down what you're teaching in every subject, every year level, and every unit. This will tell you where you are unnecessarily repeating content, or leaving critical gaps, and show you what work you have to do to reach your vision for a powerful, logically sequenced, whole-school curriculum that sets students up for success.



Questions to ask yourself and your leadership team

- In your school, does learning build up logically and sequentially over time? Are there pockets of unintentional repetition? Are there critical gaps? Are there missed opportunities for better sequencing within or between subjects and year levels?
- How will you make sure you capture the curriculum as it is actually taught across all of your classrooms (not just what you might hope it looks like in theory)?
- Who in your school is best placed to coordinate an audit of your curriculum?



Photo: Students from Aveley Secondary College in class.
Photo courtesy of Aveley Secondary College and Sharp Shooting Photography.

3. Start small and look for early wins



Change is hard. Leaders should set an ambitious but achievable goal, such as tackling one learning area in the first year as a starting point, and look for ‘quick wins’ along the way.

At Serpentine Primary School, the school leadership deliberately focused first on spelling and introduced a highly sequenced spelling curriculum, which included detailed lesson plans, PowerPoints, and student workbooks. Teachers saw results quickly – the next year’s NAPLAN results provided a big tick of approval. This early win was key for staff morale. As the principal said:

‘It’s quite a powerful experience to have your teaching validated by data. Teaching is hard work, but really rewarding when we see results. Otherwise we get change fatigue. You start something but it’s either the wrong thing and we don’t get results, or we don’t stick with it long enough to see the results, or we don’t measure the results at all.’



Questions to ask yourself and your leadership team

- Is there a priority area in need of improvement that makes a compelling place to start, or are there any areas that could deliver ‘quick wins’ to build momentum? (e.g. F-6 Spelling results, Years 7-9 Maths)
- Is there a particularly strong curriculum leader or strong team of teachers that could trial and showcase a new approach, to help refine the change process and demonstrate the benefits of the new approach to other staff?
- How will you communicate successes?

4. Appoint or develop the leaders you need



Principals can't do this work alone. Senior leaders and curriculum leaders are vital to implementing this change day-in-day-out.



Questions to ask yourself and your leadership team

- What expertise do your leaders already have and what expertise do you need to build (e.g. expertise in designing and adapting detailed and sequential curriculum plans and materials, instructional coaching, leading teams)?
- How can you build the expertise you need in your leadership team (e.g. by training staff in-house, mentoring, or drawing on external expertise and training)?
- How can you give curriculum leaders the time they need? What can you take off their plate? Who can support them with their work?
- How can you ensure curriculum leaders have the authority needed to lead change in their teams? How can you set and reinforce expectations for all your staff?



Photo: A teacher and students at Serpentine Primary School. Photo courtesy of Serpentine Primary School and Dome Photography.

5. Decide whether to build, buy, or share curriculum materials



You should carefully consider whether to build, buy, or share curriculum materials. Whatever approach you take, investing time in professional learning is a must. Teachers need to spend time 'getting to know' new curriculum materials by practising using them in training sessions and in class, and working with other teachers to adapt materials where necessary.



Questions to ask yourself and your leadership team

- What curriculum materials already exist in your school? Are they of high quality or do they need to be improved?
- What existing external curriculum materials could you draw on and adapt for your school? Are there any schools that you can share materials with?

6. Plan for the long-term



Our case study schools show the need for long-term planning. Implementing this change across a school can take five years or more. Principals should plan with this time-horizon in mind.

Principals should step out how change will occur over several years, and plan for staff turnover and onboarding of new staff. To make sure change is lasting, leaders must keep monitoring and refining their approach.



Questions to ask yourself and your leadership team

- What will you start with in your first year? What will you implement in subsequent years?
- What support will your staff need now and in future?
- How will you maintain your commitment to this change, even when other things come up?
- How will you know if your approach is working, or whether you need to adapt your approach?
- Who can you lean on to support you as a school leader in spearheading this change?

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