

# National English Curriculum: ALEA Queensland Response to Framing Paper

## Aims:

**Point 15:** This element needs to offer a disclaimer that its focus is on subject English literacies and that teachers of subject English cannot take responsibility for understandings and productions in key learning areas that have their own specialised literacy demands. This leitmotif is repeated in comments below. It is based on understandings that emphasise that each field of knowledge has its own sets of knowing (content knowledge) and ways of representing knowing (literacies). Wyatt-Smith and Cumming (2003) refer to subject specific ways of representing knowing as curriculum literacies. Their thesis is there is no single literacy that can be spread homogenously across all curricula.

## Reference:

- Wyatt-Smith, C. & Cumming, J. (2003). Curriculum Literacies: Expanding domains of assessment. *Assessment in Education*, 10(1), (47-59).

## Beginnings and Basics:

**Point 30, Dot point 2:** Needs to advance a complementary traditional and functional approach as the 'common' vocabulary. The utility of a functional approach inheres in its exploration of how language varies according to the sociocultural contexts in which it is both produced and consumed, the choices available to producers of text, and to consumers of text. Whilst a traditional metalanguage and understanding is important, particularly for the development of syntactical knowledge, a functional grammar centres on knowledge about language, in particular its function in meaning making. It is a tool for both comprehension and text construction.

## The teaching of grammar:

**Points 32-34:** Need to advance a complementary traditional and functional approach, as detailed above.

## General capabilities across the curriculum:

**Points 46-48:** Whilst it is acknowledged that certain skills and understandings advanced in subject English will translate to skills and understandings in other key learning areas, it is not

the remit of teachers of subject English to take responsibility for skills and understandings in key learning areas that have their own specialised literacy demands.

### **Stages of schooling:**

**Point 73:** A *year-by-year curriculum*, as proposed in the framing paper, privileges a psycho-developmental approach along a chronological continuum. It also reifies student identities into a 'normal/abnormal' continuum. A curriculum written by 'stages' recognises the disparate starting points and rates of development for individual students as socio-cultural factors rather than chronological/developmental factors. .

### **Stage 1 (typically 5-8 years of age)**

**Point 76:** Place and function of grammar and its particular metalanguages in these early years is implicit. The value of making it explicit in the early years of school is borne out in Moreau and Sharrad (2005) in their work with early years 'at-risk' students.

Reference:

- Moreau, S. & Sharrad, N. (2005). Enticing reluctant boys into peer writing communities. In B. Comber and B. Kamler (eds). *Turn-around Pedagogies: Literacy Interventions for At-risk Students*. PETA: Newtown.

**Point 78:** So that element 3 is not seen as only 'whole language' the place and function of overt instruction and its associated metalanguages needs to be made explicit.

### **Stage 2 (typically 8-12 years of age)**

**Point 79:** Students must also *demonstrate* their increasingly sophisticated understanding of grammar and language features.

### **Stage 3 (typically 12-15 years of age)**

**Characteristics of learners: Consolidating identities and curriculum specialisations:** This subtitle needs to specify 'English' curriculum specialisations. It is not the responsibility of teachers of subject English to provide for the idiosyncratic literacy needs of all key learning areas.

**Points 82 and 84:** Absence of references to metalanguage (vocabulary) for talking about language (point 82) and engagement with text (point 84).

### **Assessment**

**Point 94:** The assumption that there is a measureable transfer of knowledge from subject English to the reading and writing of texts central to other curriculum areas is inherently problematic. It reifies subject English as the ‘literacy’ bastion and undoes the progressive work on understandings of key learning areas as having their own discrete literacy demands (see also Gee, 2008).

Reference:

- Gee, J. P. (2008). *Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in Discourses*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Routledge: London.

**General Comments:**

The framing paper makes mention of the professional development demands on teachers for the literature element (informed appreciation of literature, point 65), yet the professional development demands of element 1 (language) and element 3 (literacy) are not detailed. Elements 1 and 3 make significantly new demands of the existing teaching force, and as such must be adequately addressed if a national curriculum is to garner success.

# National Science Curriculum: ALEA Queensland Response to Framing Paper

## Terms used in this paper:

**Point 21:** Disagree that the term ‘scientific literacy’ is well understood in the science education community. Suggest return to ‘scientific literacy’ to foreground literacy and its focus on the semiotics of text deconstruction and construction. The nomenclature of ‘scientific capabilities’ suggests a privileging of (manual) skills over the oft implicit literacy demands of producing and consuming science and its texts. The dearth of references to literacy throughout the framing paper weakens the argument that ‘scientific literacy’ is well understood within the science education community.

Understandings, such as that promoted by Wyatt-Smith and Cumming (2003) emphasise that each field of knowledge has its own sets of knowing (content knowledge) and ways of representing knowing (literacies). These subject specific ways of representing knowing are curriculum literacies; in the case of science, they are scientific literacies. Wyatt-Smith and Cumming’s (2003) two year study of the literacy demands of school science highlight the need for explicit instruction to progress students’ scientific literacies. Wellington and Osborne (2001) contend that the greatest barrier to learning school science lies with learning how to engage with and produce its complex representations. Likewise, Lemke (2000) purports that learning in the subject of science includes learning to use and express its specialised language in meaningful and multi-modal ways. Without these multiple modes there can be no science; science cannot be separated from its integrated modes of representation (Hand & Prain, 2006).

Norris and Phillips’ (2003) caution on the over-emphasis of the derived sense of literacies (being knowledgeable, learned and educated in relation to science), at the expense of the fundamental sense of literacies (reading and writing science-specific texts). Their point is that scientific literacy in its general sense is diminished by not having acquired scientific literacy in its fundamental sense. Empirical evidence supports their argument that ‘reading and writing are inextricably linked to the very nature and fabric of science, and, by extension, to learning science’ (Norris and Phillips, 2003, p. 226).

References:

- Hand, B. & Prain, V. (2006). Moving from Border Crossing to Convergence of Perspectives in Language and Science Literacy Research and Practice. *International Journal of Science Education*. 28(2-3), (101-107).
- Lemke, J. (2000). Multimedia Literacy Demands of the Science Curriculum. *Linguistics and Education*. 10(3), 247-271.
- Norris, S. & Phillips, L. (2003). How Literacy in its Fundamental Sense is Central to Scientific Literacy. *Science Education*. 87, 224-240.
- Wellington, J & Osborne, J. (2001). *Language and literacy in science Education*. Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press.
- Wyatt-Smith, C. & Cumming, J. (2003). Curriculum Literacies: Expanding domains of assessment. *Assessment in Education*, 10(1), (47-59).

### **Structure of the curriculum:**

**Point 41:** Despite Point 21 advocating for the inclusion of ‘scientific literacy’ as a sub-component of ‘scientific capabilities’, there is neither overt nor implicit reference to the specific literacy demands of this key learning area.

### **Stages of schooling:**

**Point 44:** A *year-by-year curriculum*, as proposed in the framing paper, privileges a psycho-developmental approach along a chronological continuum. It also reifies student identities into a ‘normal/abnormal’ continuum. A curriculum written by ‘stages’ recognises the disparate starting points and rates of development for individual students as socio-cultural factors rather than chronological/developmental factors. .

### **Stage 2 (typically from 5 to 8 years of age)**

#### **Point 49: Science inquiry skills**

- Asking questions and beginning to investigate
- Exploring, curiosity and wonder
- Using evidence to support ideas

All of the above involve these young students as literacy learners, who need to be engaged as code breakers, text participants, text users and text analysts (Freebody & Luke, 1990).

Reference:

- Freebody, P. & Luke, A. (1990). ““Literacies” programmes: Debates and demands in cultural context’. *Prospect: A Journal of Australian TESOL*, 11, 7-16.

### **Stage 2 (typically from 8 to 12 years of age)**

#### **Point 51: Science inquiry skills**

‘Communicating investigations and explanations to others’ needs to recognise a detailed focus on the language and literacy demands. Science content development cannot happen outside of scientific literacy.

### **Stage 3 (typically from 12 to 15 years of age)**

#### **Point 55: Science inquiry skills**

‘Gathering data’ needs to be supplemented with ‘analysing semiotics of data (re)presentations’.

#### **Pedagogy and Assessment:**

**Point 59:** Need for overt instruction in development of metalanguage for talking about consuming and producing science texts.

**Point 62:** Assessment that front ends the specific literacy repertoires demanded by the task have improved the engagement and results of ‘average’ and ‘below average’ students (see Wyatt-Smith & Klenowski, 2008).

#### Reference:

- Wyatt-Smith, C. & Klenowski, V. (2008). *Examining how moderation is enacted within an assessment policy reform initiative: You just have to learn how to see.* (2008). Available [http://www.iaea2008.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/ca/digitalAssets/164828\\_Wyatt-Smith.pdf](http://www.iaea2008.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/ca/digitalAssets/164828_Wyatt-Smith.pdf).

## National Mathematics Curriculum: ALEA Queensland Response to framing paper

### Considerations:

**Point 33:** Use of SES as the sole identifier of student groups and their outcomes oversimplifies the argument and unfairly constructs families and communities as deficit. Other significant factors that are rendered invisible in this representation include high teacher mobility, low teacher experience, difficulties in attracting teachers with subject specialisation, higher community unemployment, more student mobility etc. The relationship between the structure and design of curriculum and pedagogy and outcomes with particular groups must also be recognised.

### Connections to other learning areas:

**Point 41 (English):** Conflation of subject 'English' with 'literacy' renders invisible the idiosyncratic literacy demands of mathematics as a key learning area. Teachers of subject English cannot take responsibility for understandings and productions in key learning areas that have their own specialised literacy demands. This leitmotif is based on understandings that emphasise that each field of knowledge has its own sets of knowing (content knowledge) and ways of representing knowing (literacies). Wyatt-Smith and Cumming (2003) refer to subject specific ways of representing knowing as curriculum literacies. Their thesis is there is no single literacy that can be spread homogeneously across all curricula.

According to Zevenbergen (2001) students are experiencing difficulties in working through the literacy demands of worded texts. The grammatical challenges they present are explored in many studies, each revealing that there are various underlying language and structural patterns hindering students' interpretation of a range of mathematical discourses (Padula, Lam & Schmidtke, 2001; Zevenbergen, 2001; MacGregor, 2002; Kalogeropoulos, 2005; Monroe & Panchyshyn, 2005; O'Halloran, 2005; Parkin & Hayes, 2006). Worded maths texts that contain lexical ambiguities or are lexically dense, such as words that possess multiple meanings (including those with same spellings or related meanings), the use of symbols and less familiar lexical terms and the complex semantic structures that involve operation cues, are often misinterpreted by students (Zevenbergen, 2001; Monroe & Panchyshyn, 2005). The grammatical density of the sentences, such as those containing more content words and fewer grammatical words, and complex and lengthy noun and verb groups present linguistic

challenges that serve to confound young students (Parkin & Hayes, 2006). O'Halloran (2005, p. 75) notes that 'the major process type found in mathematical language appears to be the relational process', one often not encountered by young children in subject English. The research on worded maths texts illustrates the possible difficulty students may experience when faced with making meaning from and then transposing worded texts into numerical number stories (Zevenbergen, 2001).

The connection with subject English, however, could be the application of its carefully articulated metalanguage (grammar) to render opaque the intricacies of concrete, worded and diagrammatical mathematical representations.

#### References:

- Kalogeropoulos, P. (2005). Language misconceptions: results. *Prime Number*. 20(2), 16-22.
- MacGregor M. (2002). Using words to explain mathematical ideas. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*. 25(1), 78-88.
- Monroe, E & Panchyshyn, R. (2005). Helping students with words in word texts. *Australian Primary Mathematics Classroom*. 10 (4), 27-29.
- O'Halloran, K. L. (2005). *Mathematical Discourse: Language, Symbolism and Visual Images*. New York: Continuum.
- Padula, J., Lam, S. & Schmidtke, M. (2001). Syntax and word order: important aspects of mathematical English. *Australian Mathematics Teacher*. 57(4), 31-35.
- Parkin, B. & Hayes, J. (2006). Scaffolding the Language of Maths. *Literacy Learning: The Middle Years*. 14(1), 23-35.
- Wyatt-Smith, C. & Cumming, J. (2003). Curriculum Literacies: Expanding domains of assessment. *Assessment in Education*, 10(1), (47-59).
- Zevenbergen, R. (2001). Mathematical literacy in the middle years. *Literacy Learning: the Middle Years*. 9(2), 21-28.

#### **Stages of schooling:**

**Point 61:** A year-by-year curriculum, as proposed in the framing paper, privileges a psycho-developmental approach along a chronological continuum. It also reifies student identities into a 'normal/abnormal' continuum. A curriculum written by 'stages' recognises the

disparate starting points and rates of development for individual students as socio-cultural factors rather than chronological/developmental factors. .

DRAFT

# National History Curriculum: ALEA Queensland Response to framing paper

## Historical Understanding

**Point 39:** If as Sam Wineburg suggest, ‘Historical thinking is not a natural act’, then its specific literacy demands also need to be a part of overt instruction. Where else in the school subject listings will the specific literacy demands of historical thinking be scaffolded?

**Point 40.7:** The mechanism which shapes the form of historical knowledge must be made manifest through scaffolded instruction. In other words, students need access to a carefully developed model of language and its associated metalanguages. A traditional grammar is necessary for syntactical work. A complementary grammar, functional grammar, is necessary for appreciating the disparate modes of historical text, the critical dimension of texts and their functioning. Without a carefully scaffolded metalanguage, how can teachers of history talk to their students about the form/s and function/s of historical texts?

## Literacy

**Point 44:** A definition of ‘literacy’ needs to be proffered. The claim that ‘through the study of history students learn how to find information, how to read texts with critical discernment and how to create their own texts that present the results of historical understanding clearly and logically’ is contestable. Unless the significant literacy demands of this field are part of overt instruction, there is the significant risk to the depth of engagement and critical use of history text production and consumption. The development of the literacy demands requires teachers to have a substantial knowledge of models of language and their associated metalanguages. They must also have the confidence and pedagogies to scaffold their students’ understandings of language and literacies for engaging in the consumption and production of historical texts.

## Stages of schooling:

**Point 62:** A *year-by-year curriculum*, as proposed in the framing paper, privileges a psycho-developmental approach along a chronological continuum. It also reifies student identities into a ‘normal/abnormal’ continuum. A curriculum written by ‘stages’ recognises the disparate starting points and rates of development for individual students as socio-cultural factors rather than chronological/developmental factors. .

### **Stage 1 (typically 5 to 8 years of age): Standards**

**Point 67:** The 'basic appreciation' element treats history as incontestable fact. There is a place for critical literacy and textual analysis in the earliest years of school. The scaffolding of such skills must not be avoided, rather foregrounded, in these formative years. Examples of the ways young students can be engaged in the critical dimension are explored in 'Why wait? A way into teaching critical literacies in the early years' (Ludwig & Holm, 2006).

Reference:

- Ludwig, C. & Holm, S. (2006). *Why wait? A way into teaching critical literacies in the early years*. Curriculum Corporation: Carlton.

### **Conclusions:**

**Point 122:** Discussion about teacher professional development needs to also include developing substantive knowledge of the literacy demands of the history key learning area and pedagogies for teaching across ALL stages of schooling. History teachers are also LITERACY teachers, and as such need on-going professional development in realising the highest level of literacy content knowledge and pedagogies for literacy teaching. Teachers of subject English cannot take responsibility for understandings and productions in key learning areas that have their own specialised literacy demands. This leitmotif is based on understandings that emphasise that each field of knowledge has its own sets of knowing (content knowledge) and ways of representing knowing (literacies). Wyatt-Smith and Cumming (2003) refer to subject specific ways of representing knowing as curriculum literacies. Their thesis is there is no single literacy that can be spread homogenously across all curricula.

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