POLICY ON CURRICULUM

Implementation Date: July 2013
Review Date: May 2015

Aim
As a state, Victoria is in a period of transition regarding its adoption of the national curriculum. Its transition model is called AusVELS and at this time (2014), we have curriculum documentation for literacy, numeracy, science and history. The other key learning areas will be rolled out over time and we will need to adopt or adapt to these in the years to come. This policy aims to outline the curriculum to be used at Zeerust Primary School. Its intention is to be a pragmatic document, cognisant of the organisational and pedagogical challenges facing the school, while at the same time supporting the guidelines of the national curriculum, and the intent outlined by the Victorian government in, ‘Towards Victoria as a Learning Community’ (TVLC).

Introduction
The student body at Zeerust Primary School is divided into two classes referred to as the junior and the senior rooms. At the time of writing, the junior room is comprised of foundation through to grade 2s, whilst the senior room consists of grades 2 to 6. We recognise that even within a single level classroom there may be a wide variety of skills and talents among children, and in a multi-level classroom like the two at Zeerust PS, these differences can be even more exaggerated. Scope and sequence documents as might be found in larger schools are not as effective in a small rural school like ours and therein lies the challenge of having ‘a curriculum’ as required by the government’s TVLC.

Time Constraints and a Balanced Curriculum
There are just twenty-five hours of teaching time each school week. In 2013 we used 14 hours for literacy and numeracy. The department further directs that 30 minutes is to be spent on fitness each day, with a further period to be spent on skill acquisition. At Zeerust we comply with the daily fitness requirement and spend two hours each week on skill acquisition (4.5hrs). Contracted specialists (visual art, LOTE and library) take up three hours of face-to-face teaching time per week which leaves 3.5 hours per week to cover all other KLA. Excursions, incursions and camps also impact on the syllabus so the only way to deliver on all
learning areas is to integrate curriculum and to be flexible in our delivery over a given time cycle.

**The SixRs**

In a nutshell, the SixRs are about pedagogy in reading, writing, ‘rithmatic, reasoning, researching and retelling, and all of these can find a place in the new national curriculum. The SixRs relate to literacy and numeracy and using different ways of thinking, like scientific, artistic, and historical thinking, to know something and to tell others about it. The SixRs is about enquiry, independence and direct instruction.

The SixRs is fundamentally an *enquiry-based* learner model: Through question generating we identify what it is we either don’t know now or what we want to know next. This learning is centred on a particular theme, concept, process or idea and these may be found in the government curriculum documents, whereupon a particular grade level will be identified. This becomes our ‘average’ learning point and this needs to be stretched or shrunk to meet the needs of the other students.

The SixRs is fundamentally an *independent* learner model: For example, in Mathletics our students work at their own pace and are advanced as quickly, or as slowly, as their ability indicates. In spelling, our twice yearly testing identifies a spelling age, and from this an appropriate spelling book can be issued to the student. In both spelling and Mathletics the grade or chronological age of the student is not relevant to the learning material provided, only ability is.

The SixRs is fundamentally a *direct instruction* teaching model: For example the on demand tests for number shows the student’s conceptual understanding of different themes in mathematics and reading, and from this we are able to uncover those processes not yet understood by the class, as a group, and specifically teach these.

In the final analysis, it is the teaching staff, led by the principal, who will use their professional judgement about the pedagogical approach and curriculum to be delivered to the school in general, and in their classrooms in particular.

**Syllabus**

A three-year curriculum plan has been developed for the school. This excel document outlines our general approach to curriculum delivery for literacy, numeracy and integrated studies. Together, these are described as the six ways of thinking. A copy is available in the Zeerust Curriculum Folder.

**Thinking Mathematically**

AusVELS – Mathematics scope and sequence

The maths curriculum is delivered via Mathletics an on-line program which follows the national curriculum. At Zeerust students work at their own pace on the curriculum provided on-line. As each grade is completed by the student they are advanced to the next level as and when this occurs not at the end of the year.

This approach is supported with diagnostic testing (number fluency assessment and on-demand testing) and follow-up teaching to address class-wide learning deficits around concepts.

The school has an Action Plan for Numeracy which outlines in some detail our approach to this area of learning. Some 5 hours a week are spent on numeracy.

**Thinking with Language**

AusVELS - English scope and sequence

AusVELS – History scope and sequence

Thinking with language takes in literacy (reading, writing and speaking & listening) and incorporates the learning of history in the same time allowance). Thinking with language also includes LOTE (on-line French and a Japanese Teacher).

The school has in place an Action Plan for Literacy which outlines in some detail our approach to this area of learning. It is kept in the Zeerust Curriculum Folder.

Some 9 hours a week are spent on literacy.
About 1.5 hours are spent on LOTE each week.
History is addressed in term 4 (see planner).

**Thinking Scientifically**

Relevant VCAA webpages:

This way of thinking promotes scientific method. Any ‘science’ subject that does not involve experimentation will be addressed as ‘thinking systematically’. Biology, chemistry and physics will each be covered as term-long subjects once over three years.

Science is dealt with in Term 3 and some 2 hours of time are devoted to this. Thinking scientifically underpins aspects of literacy and numeracy. Teaching staff may access the Zeerust Curriculum Folder for more details of this way of thinking as well as an action plan for integrated studies.

**Thinking Systematically**
Subjects inviting students to think systematically are civics and citizenship, economics, environmental education (sustainability) and geography. Introducing systems thinking in your teaching means that your students are not exposed to discrete pieces of information in a piecemeal fashion rather they approach issues in a holistic way. Civics and citizenship (C&CV) needs to be addressed each year and so is combined with one of the other big picture subjects. C&C and economics, C&C and environmental education, and C&C and geography. Teaching staff may access the Zeerust Curriculum Folder for more details of this way of thinking as well as an action plan for integrated studies.

Systematic thinking is dealt with in Term 2 and some 2 hours a week is devoted to it. Systematic thinking underpins aspects of literacy and numeracy.

**Situated Thinking**

This teaching and learning is about getting ready for the world and how the individual student can relate to it as the main focus. The topics include financial literacy, health & PE, home economics, and information technology. This type of thinking is about learning in a social context where the learning is not abstract but immediate and the application of the knowledge occurs at once because the student is engaged in the process. The level of involvement may be peripheral at first but with time it is expected that the student will become more involved in what is going on. It is participatory learning in a process.

PE and fitness are mandated and we devote 30 minutes a day to fitness and 2 hours a week to PE. A total of 4.5 hours per week.

Drug education is also mandated and this is dealt with in Term 1. Some 2 hours a week is devoted to this topic.

Financial literacy is a special mathematical topic but one dealt with as situated thinking. In Term 2 some 2 hours a week is devoted to it.
A policy for H&PE exists in addition to this policy. Teaching staff may access the Zeerust Curriculum Folder for more details of this way of thinking as well as an action plan for integrated studies.

**Thinking Aesthetically**

Relevant VCAA webpages:

Learning is an aesthetic way means learning the conventions, tools, formulas and processes of a subject. These subjects, for the purpose of this policy, are the performing and the visual arts and technology. The solutions to an artistic or a technology problem can be judged on its elegance, the process of arriving at the solution can be weighed, and finally the student can feel satisfaction from what they do.

The students undertake two hours of visual art each fortnight and about 60 minutes of singing per week over three days. During term four at least 2 hours a week is spent preparing drama pieces for the school concert. Technology is a feature of Term 4 too (2 hours a week).

Teaching staff may access the Zeerust Curriculum Folder for more details of this way of thinking as well as an action plan for integrated studies.

From grade 3 onwards, more and more of the curriculum is reported on to parents, whereas the foundation to grade 2 curriculum is much more basic and is related back to literacy, numeracy and the arts.

**Evidence**

A component of the transition will be in assessment and reporting and QuickVic™, our reporting software, will be modified to report on the AusVELS outcomes as they are rolled out. It is expected that each teacher will use triangulated data to report on student achievement against the standards. For example, a grade for reading by a senior student might be derived from, the BURT, ODT (reading), and the Scholastic Lexile test.

As well as reporting to parents, evidence will be gathered by teachers around how effective the learning has been around a particular learning area. Hattie’s, Effect Size measure is particularly useful for this because almost any on-going test that includes the same cohort if students can be used for this purpose.

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