

South Australian Curriculum, Standards and Accountability Framework

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Overview of the document

38 page framework within which the curriculum in South Australian schools is to be developed and reviewed. The document outlines a single, cohesive Birth to Year 12 curriculum entitlement for all learners.

Keywords

Curriculum; knowledge; essential learnings, learning areas; key ideas; standards; constructivist learning.

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PART 1 THE SACSA FRAMEWORK: THE VISION AND THE CONTEXT

The crucial role of the educator in making our futures in changing times

- Argues that the challenge facing educators is to construct and implement a curriculum when the knowledge base of our society is expanding rapidly. Notes that “This includes the shift to a knowledge and service-based society with an accompanying:
 - acceleration in the rate of development and transfer of knowledge

- development of new technologies and forms of communication
- growth of knowledge-mediated industries and services.” (p. 5)
- Notes the following social and curriculum effects of this shift:
 - educational institutions no longer have the dominant role in knowledge generation and transmission (‘democratisation’ of knowledge);
 - the capability to manage knowledge and understand its power becomes critical;
 - old boundaries developed around location, class, age, gender, ability, race and ethnicity are breaking down; and
 - exposure to globalising cultures are challenging traditional authority structures.
- States that the SACSA Framework reflects these realities. (p. 6)

The educational response to change

- States that “The demands of living in today’s knowledge-based, globalising society make education more important than ever.” (p. 6)
- Argues that a curriculum response to the emerging, rapidly changing and future demands of a knowledge economy and society needs to be constructed, which has implications for:
 - the kinds of knowledge and skills that children and students need; and
 - the values and dispositions that we want to foster.
- Invokes the recent (1996) UNESCO Delors Report with regard to the fostering of “powerful thinking and acting on a global scale.” (p. 6)
- Also invokes the 1999 declaration National goals for schooling in the 21st century.
- Notes that the SACSA Framework is not a total recasting of existing curriculum frameworks, but the result of reassessment of current guidelines in the light of analysis of contemporary society. (p. 7)
- Outlines the distinctive new aspects and qualities of the SACSA Framework as follows:
 - A focus on learning through Essential Learnings: Drawing on a constructivist view of learning, five Essential Learnings are identified: Futures, Identity, Interdependence, Thinking and Communication. Notes that together with concepts and processes drawn from the Learning Areas, they provide the connecting threads for the whole curriculum: “These are understandings, capabilities and dispositions which are developed through the Learning Areas and form an integral part of children’s and students’ learning from birth to Year 12 and beyond.” (p. 7)
 - A focus on coherence in the Framework: Notes that the holistic development of learners is fostered by providing a coherent Birth to Year 12 framework. States that “holism also relates to coherence at any phase... Thus holism and the importance of making connections are central.” (p. 7)
 - A focus on Enterprise and Vocational Education: States that “The SACSA Framework encourages a culture of lifelong learning which integrates general education, enterprise and vocational education.” (p. 7)
 - A focus on equity: Notes that education is central to the making of a fairer society; the flexibility of the Framework enables programs to be devised which do not privilege or exclude particular groups; and that equity is made a central curriculum consideration. (p. 7)

- A focus on standards: Notes that children's and students' learning is to be referenced "in relation to levels of performance or standards expected at particular points in their education." Notes that the developing capabilities of children and students are depicted along a "continuum of ever improving performance", a change from the curriculum profiles where emphasis was on profiling learners' accomplishments at any time along the continuum of their learning. (p. 8)
- States that "The SACSA Framework supports a futures-oriented curriculum while building on existing practices." (p. 8)

PART 2 THE SACSA FRAMEWORK: THE RATIONALE

The coherence of the SACSA Framework

- States that "The SACSA Framework describes a single, cohesive Birth to Year 12 curriculum entitlement for all learners within children's services and schools." (p. 9)
- Notes that the Framework focuses on coherence of the whole rather than the parts and provides flexibility through its breadth while ensuring curriculum continuity.
- Makes the following points regarding its Birth to Year 12 nature:
 - It allows for more flexibility in educational programs, so they might better suit the needs and interests of individual learners.
 - It encourages the active involvement of parents and caregivers in their children's education.
 - It facilitates collaboration between educators within and across the various phases of education.
- Notes that the Framework places a premium on the relationship between the educator and the learner and that it:
 - allows for more flexibility in educational programs, so they might better suit the needs and interests of individual learners;
 - encourages the active involvement of parents and caregivers in their children's education; and
 - facilitates collaboration between educators within and across the various phases of education.

The common aspects of the SACSA Framework

- Notes that the basic principle is that all children and students should have access to a common curriculum entitlement.
- Argues that because curriculum can work in ways which favour some and exclude others, the challenge is to devise programs which do not privilege or exclude particular groups.
- Notes that there is a tension between the commitment to a common curriculum entitlement and the concept of different approaches meeting diverse needs.
- Notes that the SACSA Framework seeks to resolve this tension "by representing a number of key and common aspects which operate to integrate the Framework and provide its holism and coherence", including:
 - "a conception of learning drawn from constructivist learning theories
 - a view of whole-of-curriculum learner capabilities which are captured in Five Essential Learnings
 - a focus on Enterprise and Vocational Education

- a focus on Equity Cross-Curriculum Perspectives, that places at the heart of the curriculum the knowledges and cultures of those groups which traditionally have been marginalised
- a commitment to high expectations and ongoing monitoring of learning against the Outcomes described within the Standards in the SACSA Framework.” (p. 10)

Constructivism and the SACSA Framework

- Notes that the theoretical basis for the conception of learning in the SACSA Framework is provided “by the family of theories that are grouped under the title ‘constructivism’”. (p. 10)
- Notes that the central thesis of constructivism is that the learner actively constructs their own learning in a supportive social environment but that learners also actively give personal meanings to a given situation, within frames of cultural understandings made up of knowledge both stable and dynamic. (pp. 10-11)
- States that this means that:
 - “the learner selects, interprets and transforms information; constructs hypotheses; and makes decisions, relying on a cognitive structure to do so
 - mental models provide the means by which an individual interprets and organises experience in order to elaborate and extend current understandings, and their overall framework of knowledge.” (p. 11)
- Notes that the SACSA Framework “describes a set of parameters within which educators work to design their own teaching, and promotes contexts within which children and students construct their own learning.” Notes that “the curriculum framework is best understood in terms of knowledge across fields, rather than as rigidly boxed into discrete subjects.” (p. 11)
- Suggests that the pedagogy best suited to this process is “engagement in interactive talk”. (p. 11)
- Notes that teaching within the Framework involves:
 - professional judgement as to where learners are and what they need next; and
 - recognition that children and learners learn collaboratively, “within challenging but low-threat environments”. (p. 11)
- Concludes that “SACSA teaching/learning principles derive from a constructivist view” and notes the following:
 - “Learning is the process of constructivist knowledge.
 - Learning is not linear; it involves learners extending, elaborating, reorganising, reformulating and reflecting upon their own frameworks of knowledge.
 - Learning involves building on prior knowledge.
 - Learning is making explicit the implicit conceptions, frameworks and explanatory systems in the minds of learners, which shape how they interpret and what they learn. Learners’ conceptions are embedded in their culture and tied to their use of language.
 - Learning occurs in a context, and the understandings about the context are part of what is learned.
 - Learning involves learners communicating their questions, intuitions, conjectures, reasons, explanations, judgments and ideas in a variety of forms.
 - Learning involves developing knowledge, skills and dispositions to think and act in ways which determine individual effort, the setting of personal goals,

self-assessment and awareness of the uses (and misuses) or abuses of knowledge.

- Learning involves the progression of learners through cycles of growth.” (p. 12)

Essential learnings and the SACSA Framework

- Notes that social commentators now refer to our youth as the ‘options generation’ as there are a constantly changing and rich variety of options open to them. (p. 12)
- States that “The challenge is to develop the personal resources and flexibility to take advantage of what is on offer, to possess the capabilities to apply knowledge, skills and experiences to new and different contexts and situations, and to be able to act responsibly with regard to others.” (p. 12)
- Notes that in the SACSA Framework, these capabilities have been identified as “Essential Learnings”. (p. 12)
- States that “These understandings, capabilities and dispositions are personal and intellectual qualities, not bodies of knowledge, and they are developed throughout life. They are intended to broaden the options for, and so enrich the lives of, all people in our society.” (p. 13)
- Identifies the five Essential Learnings within the SACSA Framework as: Futures, Identity, Interdependence, Thinking and Communication.
- States that the Essential Learnings foster the capabilities to:
 - “develop the flexibility to respond to change, recognise connections with the past and conceive solutions for preferred futures (Futures)
 - develop a positive sense of self and group, accept individual and group responsibilities and respect individual and group differences (Identity)
 - work in harmony with others and for common purposes, within and across cultures (Interdependence)
 - be independent and critical thinkers, with the ability to appraise information, make decisions, be innovative and devise creative solutions (Thinking)
 - communicate powerfully (Communication).” (p. 13)
- Elaborates briefly on each Essential Learning and provides an overview diagram of the Essential Learnings.

Literacy, numeracy and information and communication technologies and the SACSA Framework

- States that “Literacy, numeracy and information and communication technologies (ICTs) are key dimensions of all Essential Learnings, and in particular the Communication Essential Learning. Skills, knowledge and understandings in these are explicitly interwoven throughout the Curriculum Scope and Standards for all Learning Areas in the SACSA Framework.” (p. 16)

Enterprise and Vocational Education and the SACSA Framework

- Notes that a further common aspect of the SACSA Framework is a focus on Enterprise and Vocational Education, in accordance with the National Goals of Schooling.
- Notes that knowledge, skills and attitudes for Vocational Learning are developed through five components:
 - The seven Key Competencies (these are listed and described);

- Enterprise Education;
 - Career Education;
 - Work-based learning; and
 - Community-based learning. (p. 17)
- Notes that Vocational Education and Training is the other major component, and refers to nationally accredited and industry-specific entry level training programs.

Equity and the SACSA Framework

- States that “Another common aspect which contributes to the holism and coherence of the SACSA Framework is a commitment to the belief that education is a major factor in the creation of a more just society.” (p. 18)
- Discusses conceptualising equity in the SACSA Framework and notes that the starting point for thinking about equity is a recognition of the increasing complexity and diversity of social relations, and of the knowledges, languages and cultures that different individuals and groups possess in a post-modern world. (p. 18)
- Notes that a second social objective is that of opportunity and accessibility. (p. 19)
- Discusses developing equity through the SACSA Framework and notes the following:
- The SACSA Framework places a value on critically understanding and acting to confront the forces which shape unjust social practices and relations. (p. 19)
 - If the SACSA Framework is to be a curriculum entitlement, it must be inclusive of all learners, an aspiration that requires:
 - an inclusive curriculum building upon learner diversity, providing every learner with learning and assessment experiences which optimise their opportunities; and
 - equity perspectives to be represented across the curriculum, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives; Multicultural perspectives; Gender perspectives; Socio-economic perspectives; Disability perspectives; and Rural and isolated perspectives. (pp. 19-20)

Standards and the SACSA Framework

- Advises that the final common aspect of the SACSA Framework lies in its approach to learner assessment, one which comes from a base of outcomes-based education.
- Notes that outcomes-based education is represented in the SACSA Framework in three complementary forms:
- Developmental Learning Outcomes in the Birth to Age 5 range, which describe a child’s learning and development over time;
 - Curriculum Standards from Reception to Year 10; and
 - Year 12 standards.

PART 3 USING THE SACSA FRAMEWORK

The structure of the SACSA Framework

- States that “As a single connected framework from Birth to Year 12, the SACSA Framework aims to support continuity for all learners through children’s services and schooling.” (p. 23)
- Presents a table representing the key elements of the Framework, including:
- Curriculum Bands, through which the scope of learning is organised;

- Curriculum Scope which is organised around Learning Areas; and
- Standards. (p. 24)

The Curriculum Bands

- Notes that the learning and assessing within the Birth to Year 12 continuum are organised through four Curriculum Bands. (p. 23)
- Notes that the Bands represent aspects of learners' physical, social, emotional and cognitive development and include the following:
 - Early Years Band.
 - Primary Years Band.
 - Middle Years Band.
 - Senior Years Band. (p. 23)
- Discusses progression in learning across the Bands and notes that differentiation on Learning across the Bands is achieved by interrelating the following:
 - “tasks which become increasingly extended and abstract
 - tasks which become increasingly complex in ideas and structure
 - conditions which involve different kinds and amounts of support.” (p. 25)

Curriculum Scope

- Notes that the Curriculum Scope describes the span of knowledge, skills and dispositions associated with learning from Birth to Year 12.
- Notes that it is organised into a number of Learning Areas, through which learners are introduced to bodies of knowledge and that in the SACSA Framework, the Learning Areas have been transformed and redefined by the interweaving of the Essential Learnings, Equity Cross-curriculum Perspectives and Enterprise and Vocational Education.
- Identifies the Learning Areas for children from Birth-Age 3 as follows:
 - “the psychosocial self
 - the physical self
 - the thinking and communicating self.” (p. 25)
- Identifies the Learning Areas for children from Age 3-Age 5 as follows:
 - “self and social development
 - arts and creativity
 - communication and language
 - design and technology
 - diversity
 - health and physical development
 - understanding our world.” (p. 25)
- Identifies the Learning Areas for children from Reception-Year 12 as follows:
 - “arts
 - design and technology
 - English
 - health and physical education
 - languages
 - mathematics
 - science
 - society and environment

- religious education is a ninth Learning Area for some non-governmental schools.”
- Notes that the R-12 Learning Areas are structured through strands.
- Advises that Key Ideas comprise the fundamental concepts of a Learning Area, and are developed in complexity across the Bands. (p. 26)

Standards

- Notes that the Standards in the SACSA Framework represent the expectations we have of all learners, providing a common reference point for use in monitoring, judging and reporting on learner achievement over time.
- Notes that through monitoring of learners’ progress and careful diagnosis of strengths and areas for improvement, educators constantly adjust their pedagogies and the ‘scaffolding’ which supports children’s and students’ progress in learning.
- Advises that Developmental Learning Outcomes describe the dimensions of learning and development towards which children make progress.
- Notes that Curriculum Standards are based on a standards-referenced approach to assessment, which relies heavily on educators using professional judgments in considering an interrelated set of performance characteristics. Makes the following further points:
 - This means educators need to be explicit about what is expected of learners.
 - It entails a shift in emphasis from curriculum profiles to referencing students’ performance in relation to described standards.
 - There is an implication that students will be provided with the support needed to meet the expected standards. (p. 26)
- Advises that the Standards are aligned with the years of schooling, as follows:
 - “Towards the end of Year 2 Standard 1
 - Towards the end of Year 4 Standard 2
 - Towards the end of Year 6 Standard 3
 - Towards the end of Year 8 Standard 4
 - Towards the end of Year 10 Standard 5.” (p. 27)
- Notes that the Standards provide a picture of expected progress.
- Notes that Standards 1-5 are made up of three key aspects:
 - Outcomes;
 - Examples of evidence; and
 - Annotated work samples. (p. 27)
- Notes that Year 12 Standards represent the performance expected of students at the end of Year 12 and that:
 - They comprise the Essential Learning capabilities demonstrated along with standards from externally developed curriculum.
 - External curriculum is quality assured at this level.

Putting the SACSA Framework into operation

- Outlines practical measures to be taken to put the SACSA Framework into operation, with directions for planning and assessing using the SACSA Framework through
 1. Curriculum planning using the SACSA Framework. (pp. 28-30)
 2. Assessing using the SACSA Framework. (pp. 30-31)

Implications for teaching, learning and assessing

- Advises that teachers use the Framework to construct curricula which are:
 - appropriate to the learners they teach; and
 - consistent with the constructivist theories upon which the Framework is based.
- Lists several conditions necessary for children's and students' learning. (p. 31)

Implications for Curricular design

- Lists some implications for curricular design in point form. (p. 32)

Conclusion

- Notes that the SACSA Framework seeks to support educators in the central task of adapting the curriculum to meet changing circumstances and provides a common resource for developing and reviewing the curriculum in South Australian education sites. (p. 32)
- Concludes that “The implementation phase of the SACSA Framework marks a beginning to the process of curriculum renewal. It signals the start of a new round of exciting curriculum debate and action, which will benefit learners and is the lifeblood of a dynamic education system and a healthy democracy.” (p. 33)