Integrated Curriculum Overview

RATIONALE

- The Integrated Curriculum Approach is an integral feature of the curriculum program at St Joseph’s School.
- Planning is focussed on the skills and processes involved in learning and accessing knowledge as well as on content.
- The concepts and issues which are developed in the curriculum programme not restricted to a particular discipline or Key Learning Area. They are broad in nature and an Integrated Curriculum allows for exploration and development at varying levels of complexity.
- The concept of Integrated Curriculum focuses mainly on the nature of the child as a learner and the processes involved in the development of thinking and learning.
- The Integrated Curriculum is interdisciplinary and demonstrates the independent nature of Key Learning Area disciplines.
- It is important to teach through an Integrated Curriculum since children naturally tend to have a holistic view of the world.
- The Integrated Curriculum is compatible with our understanding of the ways in which children learn and develop.
- An Integrated Curriculum attempts to make learning relevant and meaningful to the child. It employs informal approaches to learning and involves children in active inquiry.
- An Integrated Curriculum approach capitalises on student’s experiences, assisting them to a greater understanding of their world.
- In planning integrated units of work it is vital to take into account the diversity of our school community. We focus on Indigenous Studies and Studies of Asia. We also offer studies in L.O.T.E (Italian) to provide a European perspective. Such culturally inclusive studies enable students to make links between their rich cultural heritage and the topics being studied. This gives them a frame of reference and invariably influences their ability to engage in the learning process across all Key Learning Areas. It provides a rich and exciting context for learning.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

We believe that children learn best through an Integrated Curriculum because ….

- The Integrated Curriculum concept focuses mainly on the child as a learner.
- It focuses on the processes involved in the development of thinking and learning. It allows children to use higher order thinking skills.
- It promotes greater understanding since links between key learning areas are deliberately maintained and fostered.
- It is ‘understanding driven’ – the ultimate goal of teaching and learning becomes one of enhancing students’ understanding of the way the world works.
- It gives children a more holistic view of the world. It makes learning ‘whole.’
- Topics are explored in context.
- It attempts to make learning relevant and meaningful to the learner.
- It allows the teacher to incorporate a variety of teaching techniques and strategies to cater for all children’s needs and preferred learning styles.
- It involves children in active enquiry learning rather than passive absorption of facts and knowledge.
- It capitalises on children’s experiences and gives scope for the provision of a wide range of further meaningful experiences.
- It allows scope to explore cultural perspectives relevant to the groups of children in the class.
- It encourages children to develop skills of critical reasoning so that they are capable of making informed judgements.
Integrated Curriculum Overview

- It enables teachers to combine the appropriate level of complexity with the needs, interests and abilities of each child.
- It provides wide scope for individual children to explore interests and develop abilities.
- It equips children with the tools and skills necessary for learning independently across a wide variety of disciplines.

STUDIES OF ASIA

BELIEF STATEMENTS

At St Josephs School we believe it is important to include Studies of Asia in the curriculum for the following reasons:

- Asian religions, literature, philosophy and art are a part of our world’s heritage.
- The Asian region is a large area of our planet with a great diversity of people, cultures, ethnicity, languages and traditions.
- To provide interesting and enriching experiences for teachers and students.
- The world is moving towards the ideal of a “global village” and most of the world’s population live in places in Asia. So we believe we need to move away from the Euro centric view of education.
- To be inclusive of the backgrounds of the students in our school and to provide the opportunity for the sharing of “stories”.
- It cannot be assumed that all students are aware of all aspects of their culture and therefore need to be given the opportunity to share stories of their cultures.
- All peoples and cultures are in themselves diverse and we respect these differences and value the peoples of the world.
- Our closest neighbours are in Asia, Australia is geographically placed in Asia and these places are very accessible to Australians.
- To bridge the gap between places in Asia as well as recognising the unique features of all places in our region.
- We need to teach about the diversity and similarities of peoples, places and cultures, to promote tolerance and understanding.
CROSS-CURRICULUM PERSPECTIVES:

Where possible, we include multiple perspectives in our units of work. These are outlined below.

DEFINITIONS

INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES

Any effective and legitimate infusion of Indigenous perspectives into the curriculum demands a commitment to consultation with Indigenous people.

Indigenous people’s experience and their views on issues which concern them must be seen as the core and heart of all learning. The active participation of Indigenous people will enrich the learning and ensure appropriateness of content. In the classroom situation, one of the most effective ways of developing respect for and understanding of Indigenous people is for students to experience positive and direct interaction with them.

As with all dynamic societies, various Indigenous groups will hold quite different points of view regarding any given issue. It will be important to canvass a range of opinions in order to have a more complete picture of how Indigenous people might feel about a particular issue, noting, however, that there is no singular and definitive Indigenous attitude, voice and point of view.


ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Environmental education in the CSF encompasses three major components:

- Education about the environment, which focuses on key knowledge and understanding of the ecological functioning of the environment. This is located primarily within the Science and SOSE key learning areas.

- Education in the environment. This provides for students to experience the environment and develops positive attitudes and values towards stewardship of the environment. Opportunities for education in the environment are found especially in SOSE and Health and Physical Education.

- Education for the environment, which focuses on students taking action for the protection or conservation of the environment. This includes the development of skills to enable students to be active and informed participants in environmental decision-making policy. This is located primarily in the SOSE, Science and HPE key learning areas.

Specific references to environmental education are indicated by the use of an icon in the text.

CIVICS AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

The CSF aims to help students to become active and informed citizens. This requires them to develop understanding about key elements of Australia's legal, economic and political systems. It requires an understanding of the history of the country and its people. It requires an understanding of the values that the community shares and an awareness of the rights and responsibilities of citizens. Much of the underlying knowledge of civics and citizenship is found in the SOSE key learning area.

Opportunities to explore elements of the attitudes and values associated with developing active citizenship occur across key learning areas.

Specific references to civics and citizenship education are indicated by the use of an icon in the text.

REF: http://www.vcaa.edu.au CSF Overview

STUDIES OF ASIA

The following principles should apply to planning, designing and implementing teaching and learning about Asia:

- Studies of Asia should be incorporated into existing curriculum at all levels. All students should have the opportunity to experience some Asia-related learning in all years of schooling.
- Learning about Asia should challenge stereotypes about peoples and cultures.
- There should be balance between in-depth, sustained studies of selected countries and broader, more general studies that explore themes, topics or issues.
- Where possible, in-depth studies of particular Asian societies should be accompanied by a study of the language of that society. Conversely, study of an Asian language should be accompanied by in-depth studies of the societies that speak that language.
- Studies of Asia should help students to critically analyse representations of Asian peoples and nations in the media, literature and other sources.
- Cultural and national similarities and differences should be approached with knowledge, respect and empathy.
- Opportunities to involve students from Asian countries or other members of Asian communities should be explored and incorporated into school programs where appropriate. Opportunities for students to have direct personal experience of Asian cultures should be created.
- Studies of Asia should be compatible with the policies and programs of education jurisdictions throughout Australia.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES WITHIN THE CURRICULUM

Educating for a global perspective – often termed ‘global education’ – has many facets and definitions. It is known by various names, for instance, development education, international education and world studies.

What all these approaches have in common is an emphasis on awareness and understanding of the causes and effects of global ecological, social, technological, economic and political interdependence – the global perspective – as well as support for a commitment to bringing that perspective into the curriculum.


A global perspective offers students and teachers:
- An approach which takes into account the whole of human society and the environments in which people live;
- An emphasis on the future, the dynamic nature of human society, and each person’s capacity to choose and shape preferred futures;
- An opportunity to explore important themes such as change, interdependence, identity and diversity, rights and responsibilities, peace building, poverty and wealth, sustainability and global justice;
- A focus on cooperative learning and action, and shared responsibility; an emphasis on critical thinking and communication;
- An opportunity to develop positive and responsible values and attitudes, important skills and orientation to active participation


VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Catholic Schools are required to provide a comprehensive curriculum that integrates religious formation, general and vocational education. Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs need to become fully integrated and sustainable features of secondary schooling. Vocational learning programs that address generic skills and competencies should be included in the curriculum of the compulsory years. These programs include career education, which has an important role in increasing student awareness about the rapidly changing nature of work and careers. Students need access to specialised and diverse forms of knowledge, skills and competencies; and workplace learning opportunities to enable them to gain insight into and access to the world of work. Catholic schools need to be active partners in working at a local level for the purpose of improving provision and transition.

CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

Students in catholic schools come from a range of backgrounds and bring a diversity of cultural knowledge and experience to learning. Catholic school communities reflect a society that is increasingly culturally diverse.

Catholic schools educating in a culturally diverse society play a significant part in:
- recognising cultural diversity as a social reality that contributes to the vitality of the community and to the collective wisdom of individuals and society
- responding to the cultural diversity of their own school communities
- making an active contribution through education to social justice and social cohesion

Catholic schools meet the educational needs of LOTE background students by developing a culturally inclusive curriculum. A culturally inclusive curriculum provides a framework within which the cultural and linguistic knowledge and experience of students is valued. All aspects of school organisation, curriculum development, teaching and learning have scope and potential to be culturally inclusive. Schools developing a culturally inclusive curriculum:
- interpret ‘culture’ broadly to include intersecting elements of gender, class, race, ethnicity and religious background
- recognise that all teaching and learning takes place within a cultural context
- acknowledge diversity not only between but within various social or cultural groups
- seek to maintain the dignity and status of all languages and cultures
- build on cultural and linguistic knowledge and experience as a foundation for teaching and learning


INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

The CSF encourages full use of the flexibility and value for teaching and learning programs provided by the increased application of information and communications technology (ICT). The CSF assumes that students will use a range of information and communications technologies from the earliest years.

The CSF acknowledges that through the effective use and integration of ICT students are quickly developing new capabilities and that teachers have greater choice in creative teaching, assessment techniques and connections to students learning at home.

The knowledge and skills in each key learning area incorporate many new possibilities opening up through developments in information technology.

Specific references to information and communication technology are indicated by the use of an icon in the text.

REF: http://www.vcaa.edu.au CSF Overview
GENDER PERSPECTIVES

Gender as a social construct is subject to the shaping influences of dominant societal attitudes, beliefs, expectations and behaviours as these relate to males and females. A gender perspective in curriculum responds to the need to understand the impact of the social construction of gender on school life. It proposes challenges for action at practical and policy levels for schools and for the Catholic education sector.

A gender perspective within the curriculum requires:

• Awareness of the many ways gender is inscribed within teaching and learning activities
• Examination of teaching practices for evidence that gender perspectives have been foregrounded appropriately and effectively
• Knowledge about educational implications of the social construction of gender
• Structures supportive of balanced participation of girls and boys in all aspects of a school's life.

Development of a socially perceptive curriculum involves a process for teaching and learning that is sensitive and responsive to the people served by a school, in the past, the present and the future. Inherent in this process are definitions of identity, both personal and collective, and therefore issues of gender are central to the curriculum processes. Where gender is situated within curriculum processes, the issues are not likely to be ignored, over-emphasised or marginalised.

For many years, gender issues in education have focused on the inflexibility of stereotypes, equity of access to resources and career pathways, and balanced participation and representation in curriculum activities. Recently, work in gender has shifted to consider groups of students at risk of disadvantage because of group membership, combined with gender, for example some groups of boys in relation to literacy achievement. School communities can approach gender issues in curriculum planning and development from both these directions by considering the needs of defined groups as well as working with access, equity and participation issues.

Leadership and School Environment: Developing a Supportive School Culture Gender perspectives are implicated in the relational life of a school because femininity and masculinity are socially negotiated constructs. Leadership can encourage the development of positive relationships in a school through:

• defining clearly expectations of staff and students in relation to the values expressed in the school's vision statement
• enabling imagination to be an influence in decision-making processes
• encouraging participation through establishing supportive structures and innovative programs

Leaders need to be alert to the possibility that differences in power, based on stereotypical constructs of femininity and masculinity, could lead to injustices and dishonesty in relationships within a school community.

INTEGRATED LEARNING AND TEACHING
(Notes from Rita Messiano – Curriculum Co-ordinators Meeting 31/8/95)

Integrating children’s learning across curriculum

Need to put our focus on integrated learning.

What is meant by integration?

- To make connections.
  To transfer knowledge and skills.
- Dictionary meaning – to pull together, make whole.
  i.e. in this context ...making learning whole.

What is learning?

- Gaining knowledge of specific content.
- Gaining skills to do particular things.
- Gaining understandings that lead to making judgements / forming values.
- Transfer of learning and skills.

How does it best happen?

- When there is a purpose.
- When we can engage in learning.
- When there are outcomes / success.
- When there are opportunities for trial and error.
- When there is collaboration with others. (See Teaching and Learning Policy)

Key Learning Areas – Through Investigative Approach.

Religious Education
- Experience Shared
- Insights Reinforced
- Reflection Deepened
- Faith Expressed

Science
- Predicting
- Observing
- Explaining

Technology
- Investigating
- Designing
- Producing
- Evaluating

Studies of Society and Environment
- Investigating
- Communicating
- Participating.

Health and Physical Education
- Decision Making
- Choosing
- Reflecting
- Acting

Mathematics
- Problem Solving

English
- Listening, Speaking
- Reading, Writing

The Arts
- Creating
- Making
- Presenting

Languages Other Than English
- Participating
- Interacting
- Communicating.
Explaining the Model

In this model, the starting point for planning is the content associated with the Key Learning Areas of Science, Studies of Society and Environment, Technology and Health and Physical Education. Together these areas deal with ‘life experience’. They contain the rich concepts that drive effective learning. Organising the curriculum in this way is a helpful means of achieving balance; we know what it is we are integrating.

The subject areas in the right hand box are those through which the children come to make sense of their world. Language, for example, is the vehicle through which so much of our daily experience is processed. We depend on our ability to use language, maths and the arts in order to inquire, gather information, analyse and communicate our understanding to others. In this way, there is no ‘competition’ between learning areas. One area cannot be seen as more important than another because each is integral to the other. The ‘subjects’ that deal with the social, physical, biological and personal worlds give substance and meaning to the forms of perception and expression. In turn, the forms of expression and perception enable us to make sense of life experience.

Each form of expression and perception has different processes and conventions. Children must develop mastery of these processes and conventions in order to be efficient learners. If we don’t help children to learn the processes and conventions, we don’t help them to express themselves. These conventions are best taught in the broader context of an integrated program because their purposes become much clearer to the learner. In this model the integrated program helps the teacher to determine the most appropriate context for teaching many of the conventions and processes, although there will be times when these conventions are, necessarily, taught outside the integrated framework.

The four threads that underpin this model indicate the ‘ways of working’ that facilitate the learning process for students and, ultimately, help to ensure that connections are made. The model, then, becomes not only an explanation of the relationship between ‘subjects’ but an approach to teaching and learning characterised by inquiry, reflection, co-operation and ongoing assessment and evaluation.

A balanced curriculum has the following features:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BALANCED CURRICULUM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integration (integrated content)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connected curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural and necessary links.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holistic learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus on significant concepts and understandings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planned on a sequential proforma which shows the process of inquiry that will be followed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher and learner work together.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from ‘Planning Curriculum Connections – Whole School Planning for Integrated Curriculum’ by Kath Murdoch and David Hornby.
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SELECTION OF TOPICS

The selection of worthwhile content is essential if integrated curriculum is to be effective. This content can be ‘packaged’ in the form of particular topics, around which units of work are developed. The topics selected for these units of work need to deal with content of significance.

The Curriculum and Standards Framework advocates a set of key concepts and understandings in the areas of Science, Technology, Studies of Society and Health and Physical Education. It is from these curriculum areas – in which the focus is on learning about the way the world works – that authentic and purposeful topics can be drawn. These curriculum areas also assist in the identification of big ideas or broad concepts that are used in the planning of topics.

Topics used as the basis of integrated units of work should lend themselves to a worthwhile exploration of meaningful content that relates to and extends students’ life experiences and understanding of the world.

Integrated Unit Topics:

- Provide a window on the world and a meaningful context for the development of learning outcomes across the curriculum.
- Working towards an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the ‘big ideas’ – of powerful conceptual systems.
- Integrated unit topics are vehicles for ……
- Working towards learning outcomes across a range of learning areas.

Adapted from ‘Planning Curriculum Connections – Whole School Planning for Integrated Curriculum’ by Kath Murdoch and David Hornsby.
Rich concepts provide ‘umbrellas’ under which specific topics may be placed. The following list appears in ‘Planning Curriculum Connections – Whole School Planning for Integrated Curriculum’ by Kath Murdoch and David Hornsby.
HOST CONTENT AREAS

At St Joseph’s School topics for integrated units are selected from the broad content areas of Science, Technology, Studies of Society and Environment and Health and Physical Education. These dimensions provide us with a range of perspectives on how the world works. When selecting topics teachers seek a balance between these perspectives.

Many of the topics selected for integrated units of work lend themselves to a wide range of activities and it can be difficult to keep investigations focussed and purposeful. When planning units of work teachers at St Joseph’s select three Key Learning Areas from which to draw concepts, strategies and activities. From these three areas one is selected as the host content area. This provides the main focus for the unit of work. During the course of each year, each of the Key Learning Areas which have been identified as content areas (i.e. Science, Technology, Studies of Society and Environment and Health and Physical Education) will be explored in depth as a host content area – one per term. This will ensure that a balance between Key Learning Areas, strands and related concepts and skills is achieved.

The host content area acts as a ‘container’ for the unit – giving teachers and students a stronger sense of purpose. For instance, the topic of transport can be investigated as much from the perspective of physical science as it can from a social or environmental stance. By selecting Science as the host content area for the unit a teacher can focus on concepts such as motion, force and energy. By selecting SOSE as one of the two other Key Learning Areas the teacher can also focus on people’s use of transport. This will enrich the topic and add an extra dimension, but will not be the main focus of the topic.

At St Joseph’s School we do not have a preconceived list of topics that are prescribed over a two year cycle. Instead we prefer to monitor the exploration of host and other content areas over the course of each year. This allows the teachers to have autonomy over the selection of topics and allows them to pursue their own general interests as well as the interests and needs of the children in the class. The content areas and strands are monitored using a monitoring sheet.

The following pages give an overview of topic selection over the past few years.
ASSESSMENT

At St Joseph’s School, assessment within the Integrated Curriculum takes a variety of forms. These may include the following:

**Ongoing records**
- Anecdotal records
- Annotated class lists
- Checklists
- Running record sheets
- Teacher diaries and logs

**Proforma list of learning outcomes**
- Records of progress towards learning outcomes
- Checklist of stages in achieving learning outcomes

**Observation of students**
- Informal observation
- Checklists and notes
- Watching work in progress
- Systematic observation
- Presentations;
  - To the class or other classes
  - At assembly

**Student records**
- Student folios
- Student journals
- Work-in-progress folders
- Learning log-record in during each lesson, assess at the end of the unit
- Diaries
- Contracts

**Talking with students**
- Informal conversations
- Conferences (keep a log of the conference)
- Interviews
- Questioning
  - individuals
  - class
  - small group
- Asking open-ended questions

**Keeping a record of practical work**
- Three-dimensional models
- Work samples
- Class and group projects

**Media**
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- Photographs of work
- Videotaping students at work, plays, presentation, practical work
- Audiotaping of student discussions, presentations

Student self-assessment
- Student-devised Class and group projects
- Self-assessment formats
- Group discussion
- Concept mapping
- Peer assessment

CATERING FOR A RANGE OF STUDENTS

The units of work developed by teachers at St Joseph’s School must cater for the needs of a range of students. In particular:

- Learning centres and other activities incorporate strategies, approaches and processes based on Gardner’s Multiple Intelligence Model, Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Processes and de Bono's 'Six Thinking Hats'
- The range of questions, and open-ended tasks allow students of different abilities to participate in the classroom program.