

Submission re: New Zealand Curriculum;
Draft for consultation 2006

On 26th October, the teachers from Lake Taupo Christian School and Totara College of Accelerated Learning (Dannevirke) met to discuss this document. Both schools are 'special character' schools; integrated Christian schools.

We would like to acknowledge the strengths in this draft document as well as point out our concerns.

Overview

This states that 'The New Zealand Curriculum will apply to **all** school children . . . ' (p7).

The 'New Zealand Curriculum framework' published in 1993 was worded slightly differently: 'The New Zealand Curriculum is the official policy for . . . in New Zealand schools.' (p3)

Does this new statement still give parental choice to the current exceptions such as homeschoolers and private schools?

Vision, Principles and Values

Strengths

*Confident, connected, actively involved and life long learners; this is an admirable aim.

*The term 'connected' gives scope for each person to become a valued member of the community. It recognises that schools provide a structured and caring environment where students begin to learn these skills.

*The 'community' is referred to on a number of occasions as important.

*Diversity values differences in opinion and belief. As Christian schools, we are part of this diversity as we provide an alternative choice for parents when they are deciding on the type of schooling they want for their children. We view diversity as an important feature of New Zealand society and New Zealand schools.

*'Spiritual wellbeing' should be the principle basis of the learners needs. The ability of the student to integrate moral and social issues into their lives is determined by this. This is a strength in the special character of Christian schools which allows us to develop a strong sense of spiritual wellbeing in our students and we believe helps them to become well adjusted, responsible members of society.

Concerns

*The value of 'content' is not mentioned. We feel that the implications of this will leave the majority of New Zealanders uninformed or misinformed. Will the majority be knowledgeable enough to contribute to society or will there be only the expert few who reach this level and have this voice?

*The term 'creators of knowledge' could be open to interpretation and could lead to creation of untruths. This statement requires clarification.

*The term 'connected' needs to be expanded on so that the importance of parents as the learners' primary relationship providers is recognised.

*The term 'community' which we assume means parents, students, teachers and BoT members is too inclusive. We believe that parents should be recognised separately because of the importance of their role in the learning process.

*'Parents' are not mentioned at all and 'Families are only mentioned once. This undermines the rights of parents to be involved in their children's education and ignores the importance of their support. This document needs to promote this relationship.

*Exploring value systems and negotiating solutions will not lead to future success in our society. As Christian schools we are able to build on a foundation which can become the basis for decision making throughout life and we value this. We feel that state schools could be disadvantaged in this area because of the diversity of opinion in New Zealand society. Will this create indecision and teach people to back down on their own values? Will it create confusion over which values to adopt?

Key Competencies

Managing Self

Strengths

*We recognise and value 'managing self' as an important capability. We feel that Christian values are the best foundation for this and that good role modelling is paramount.

Concerns

*More emphasis needs to be placed on the importance of 'good role modelling by parents, teachers and the wider community.

*Goal setting and fulfilling those goals needs to be included. This should consist of teaching strategies for setting mid, short and long term goals and for achieving them.

* Students with disabilities also need to be seen as potentially 'full members' of New Zealand society. We are concerned that these minority students do not fit this draft curriculum model.

Relating to others

Strengths

*Relating to others involves listening to and caring for others, Christian values fit in well here as they teach the value of a person's identity and self worth.

Weaknesses

*The key word 'negotiate' and could result in settling for the lowest common denominator. We prefer students to communicate with a strong sense of self.

Participating and Contributing

Strengths

*This has been an important aspect of school life in the past.

Concerns

*There is a shift in this document which defines participating and contributing as including activities which are outside school boundaries. Participation on a more global scale, such as 'on line communities', diminishes our ability to protect our students from malicious influences.

*By placing this in the draft curriculum, we see a need for the Ministry of Education to institute safeguards for our students.

Thinking

Strengths

*Students are discovers of knowledge that already exists.

*The inclusion of 'thinking' gives scope for discerning between truth and opinion.

*Consideration of different learning styles encourages students to understand how they learn and this helps them to learn better.

Concerns

*It is important to teach strategies for discerning between right and wrong information. The use of the web requires that this skill be taught.

*We reject the claim that all knowledge is good and just need interpretation.

Using Language, Symbols and Texts

Strengths

*This has been an important role of schools for many years as it teaches students to understand and use language and information.

Learning Areas

*We acknowledge that there are differences between the NZ Curriculum Framework and this Draft Curriculum. As Christian teachers, the Science' section concerns us.

Science

Concerns

*There has been a lot of research into 'evolution' but there is no concrete evidence to support this theory. (E.g. how a cell is formed, how one species becomes another species, etc.)

It appears that a whole subheading of the 'achievement objectives' has been based on an unproven theory.

We accept the need at senior levels for students to be aware of and understand this theory but we question the level of priority it has been given.

Could this subheading be changed to 'Diversity'?

Effective Pedagogy

Strengths

*This is the first time that this has been included in a 'Curriculum Document'.

Concerns

*One theory of learning (co-constructivism) appears to be over emphasised.

Could this limit the way that teachers teach? Is this suggesting that all students learn the same way?

*If we only use one teaching style we will not be teaching students how to learn using other styles which they could encounter later on in their lives. This would put them at a disadvantage.

*This Document does not make allowances for future learning theories.

Making Connections

*The wording 'unnecessary duplication of content' ignores the 'learning spiral' which allows students to repeat their learning and then build on it.

Supportive Learning Environment

*A teacher's professional culture also includes their personal values. Students learn best when what they are learning is role modelled. A teacher's professional culture cannot be separated from their personal values system.

Conclusion

As two Christian Schools, we have dissected this document thoroughly. We appreciate the chance to give this feedback and look forward to your response as the document is finalised.

Totara College of Accelerated Learning, Dannevirke.

TOTARA COLLEGE

of Accelerated Learning

Ministry of Education
Private Box 1666
Draft Curriculum Feedback
WELLINGTON

November 20, 2006

ATTENTION: Draft Curriculum Feedback

Please find enclosed our submission on the Draft Curriculum.

Thank you



D Max
Principal Totara College