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165

Palmerston North
Boys' High School
Established 1902

To..... Date.....

Please find attached comments re: draft
curriculum. Please address any correspondence
to me. Regards
Tim O'Connell



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Palmerston North Boys' High School
Established 1902

DRAFT CURRICULUM RESPONSE

INTRODUCTION

This response to the Draft Curriculum Document represents the general view of Palmerston North Boys' High School staff. Department, Curriculum Committee and whole staff meetings have occurred and the views of individuals and groups have been heard and discussed.

Quantifying the responses according to the structure of the feedback questionnaire will, in the view of many, serve little purpose as it was felt the questions do not invite comments on how features of the Draft Curriculum are viewed. It was generally agreed that the nature of the questions in the requested response form suggests that there is an air of fait accompli about the document. The questions do ask about the general intent and direction of the document. However, there is no invitation to comment on any aspect specifically. The questions are also structured in such a manner that inevitably the responses will, in many cases, indicate the obvious, and in other respects cover such a range that it will hardly be possible to draw conclusions.

It is unlikely that responses to the questionnaires will direct significant changes to the document.

GENERAL INTENT OF THE DRAFT CURRICULUM

Notwithstanding the above, there is general agreement that the Draft Curriculum will:

- reinforce the educational direction our school is taking and inform the future direction of our school curriculum;
- provide flexibility for schools to design their own curricula;
- have an impact on and provide a direction for learning that New Zealand students need.

The document is quite easy to understand and all aspects described will have some impact on the design of a new curriculum in our school.

It is appropriate to make further comments on the key areas of the document.

OVERVIEW:

It needs to be acknowledged that teachers will be the determinant of desired curriculum outcomes. The overview statement is correct in suggesting that curriculum documents will set the direction for learning but it is effective teaching that will ensure that the nation's school leavers are equipped for lifelong learning.

VISION:

The vision is not encapsulated clearly. A simple pithy statement needs to be the focus of a vision. This will allow everybody to gain an immediate idea of what New Zealand compulsory education is trying to achieve.



Reference to entrepreneurialship in the vision and in specific curriculum areas appears to be over emphasised and should be deleted. Suggesting young people need to be enterprising is more generic and reference to this is sufficient. All young people don't have to be entrepreneurial to be successful and New Zealand's economy doesn't make this demand on everyone.

There should be stronger references to students acquiring knowledge to be empowered, not just seekers, users and creators of knowledge.

PRINCIPLES:

There is strong agreement with the general principles. However, Excellence can have a multitude of meanings. Rather than seek personal excellence it would be clearer to make the statement, ***Students are encouraged to perform to their potential.***

VALUES:

The values are very much in alignment with the values of Palmerston North Boys' High School and we strongly agree with the intent of this area of the curriculum. However, certain aspects are not made entirely clear:

- There appears to be some inconsistency between what values are and what "New Zealand students are encouraged to value". This statement should be changed to "**The values sought in New Zealand students are:**"
- In making this statement references to the incongruous statements *community and participation* and *care for the environment*, which are in fact actions, should be replaced with statements aligned to the values they represent.

KEY COMPETENCIES:

The five areas of competencies stated are also clearly aligned to our school philosophy, which essentially focus around educating in a manner that builds character and confidence. We endorse them and feel that they provide a sound base for curriculum development in our school.

Literacy is only mentioned once in the document. It is a key competency that is required across all learning areas and a statement should be made to this effect.

LEARNING AREAS:

The general descriptions of the learning areas (p13) are clearly described and they are endorsed by this school. However, again it needs to be stated for each area or in an overarching statement emphasising that effective teaching will allow/guide students towards / students to discover, explore, learn, use

In describing each learning area (pages 14-23) there is one significant inconsistency.

The omission of any statement on **Why study in the Arts?** undermines the value of study in this learning area.

Furthermore, to give balance to all curriculum areas the statements for Health and Physical Education and Science should be condensed to one page. For Health and Physical Education the content on p17 should be integrated in responses to the questions and these should not be specific reference to Home Economics.

The main concerns held regarding the different curriculum areas is the lack of direction for the development of certain subjects. It is incongruous that NCEA subjects and senior secondary school subjects not covered by the eight learning areas are outside the scope of the Draft Curriculum document.

Specific knowledge should be required by all students in specific areas at certain curriculum levels. In this regard the curriculum should be more prescriptive in certain areas. (These are referred to under separate learning areas.)

EFFECTIVE PEDAGOGY:

The statements made in this section accurately state the essential attitudes and practices that need to occur in order to create effective teaching and learning environments.

COMMENTS ON SPECIFIC LEARNING AREAS:

English

- The draft curriculum for English has made a logical division between two strands which then encompass the oral, written and visual forms of the language. There is a logical progression with the achievement objectives in each strand through Levels 4-8 and these can be easily used in a working document such as a departmental scheme.

Mathematics and Statistics

- Integrating the previous Mathematical processes strand into the three new strands provides a context for skills and processes to be applied rather than to exist as what appeared to be an appendage.
- The changes in Statistics now requires students to comment on what the data informs. This is an improvement on simply going through the mechanical processes of drawing graphs.
- There appears to be a greater emphasis on teaching methods rather than content. However, the lack of prescriptive material to direct what all students should know is a concern.

Health & Physical Education

- The philosophical goals of Health and Physical Education at Palmerston North Boys' high School are:
 - Learning to take responsibility for making physical activity a regular part of our lifestyle.
 - Learning to respond positively to challenging situations.

The draft curriculum allows the school to meet these goals.

- The key competencies of the draft curriculum fit in well with the new objectives.

Science

- The direction this curriculum is moving is supported by the science teaching pedagogy that exists in our school. There is sufficient flexibility to enable schools to set learning priorities according to local needs. However, the curriculum needs to be more prescriptive and teachers need to be given guidance on what key areas of scientific concepts and skills need to be taught.
- New Curriculum demands stronger communication skills, particularly writing, and it reinforces earlier comments that literacy skills must have a cross-curricula focus.

Technology

- The move away from defined technological areas has not addressed the increasing need that industry has for trade skills.
- The previous curriculum and the implications in the draft new Curriculum suits a minority of academic students. Furthermore, for these students to advance in technology they are required to continue their studies in science and mathematical areas and, in our school, encouraged to continue with a language rich subject.
- The Technology curriculum does expose students to what technology is about at junior levels but the lack of emphasis on practical skills is of little help to employers. There is an urgent need to state the importance of developing skills in order to be able to “make things”. Currently there is an over emphasis on the process and the Technological Practice strand does nothing to alleviate this shortcoming.
- Presenting a curriculum, albeit in a draft form, without the completed objectives is unacceptable. It not only adds to the confusion that already exists about technology education in New Zealand, it devalues the entire learning area.
- Graphics as a subject taught in New Zealand schools is assumed to be associated with Technology, yet there is no reference to specific graphics knowledge in the Technology curriculum. The basis of Graphics teaching in our school is a 1991 document.

Arts

- The Arts Curriculum now places context first. From a pedagogical perspective this allows an understanding of what learning in the arts is setting out to achieve.
- Acknowledging and promoting E-learning reinforces the opportunities that technology provides to enhance learning outcomes and it will promote student interest in the arts.

Languages

- The development of this learning area is welcomed. Opportunities for second language learning are vital if New Zealand is to take its place in the ever expanding global economy.

- The draft curriculum ties in well with the recently developed language curriculums. However, more direction must be given if the non-European foreign languages are to be developed.
- The new key competencies fit in well with learning a second language.

Social Sciences

- The Social Sciences learning area is more generalised and the new objectives, despite being broader, are logical and well developed. They will allow this school to develop suitable teaching and learning programmes.
- These are some concerns that the less prescriptive nature of the draft curriculum will allow some students not to be exposed to essential contexts. There needs to be some compulsion on what New Zealand students need to know, in order that they have an appropriate awareness of the world they live in. This is particularly evident from both economic and historical perspectives.
- Accounting is not specifically mentioned in the draft Curriculum. The increasing awareness of enterprise and its association with economic and social development suggests that reference to Accounting needs to occur in the context of Social Sciences.

CONCLUSION:

Many developments in the proposed curriculum find favour in our school. A curriculum founded on a vision and supported by principles and values not only directs teaching and learning in academic sense, it also provides an educational foundation on which to develop the personal and interpersonal skills and attitudes.

Some suggestions have been made on how the vision, principles and values statements can be strengthened so they more accurately describe the intent of school education in New Zealand.

Our response expresses a concern about the lack of content and sufficient detail about what needs to be taught in some learning areas. It is understood that there will be tier two (prescriptive) and tier three (resourcing) documents developed to support the new curriculum. Schools need to be provided with information to confirm that this is in fact support work in progress, and teachers need to know the timeframes for such developments in order to unpack and deliver the new curriculum.

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