

Kindergarten to Year 2

# Curriculum implementation at Berrigan Public School

## A case study of K–10 English and mathematics

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation



# About this resource

In 2022, 396 schools across NSW participated in a pilot project to enhance the NSW Department of Education's development and delivery of comprehensive support for implementation of the new English and mathematics K-10 syllabuses.

These early adopter schools implemented the new English and mathematics syllabuses with their Year 1 cohorts, testing supports such as microlearning modules, scope and sequences, and sample units. [Implementation support](#) developed and refined in 2022, as a result of feedback from participating schools, is available to all schools ahead of mandatory implementation of the new syllabuses for Kindergarten to Year 2 from 2023.

This case study by the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) is part of a series on how early adopter schools have begun implementing new curriculum. Each case study shares how the focus school has engaged with the new syllabuses and explores key themes in how they approached curriculum implementation responsive to their context. The evidence base for the case studies can be found in the department's [curriculum implementation research toolkit](#).

## When and how to use

School leaders and teachers can read, consider, discuss and implement strategies highlighted in the case study and its accompanying discussion guide as part of school-developed [High Impact Professional Learning \(HIPL\)](#).

The appropriate time to use this resource may differ for each school, leader and teacher.

### School leaders can:

- unpack the case study and [curriculum resources](#) as part of whole-school professional development and/or stage or grade team meetings
- access the phases of curriculum implementation and role-specific resources to support reflection and planning for effective implementation of curriculum
- access their school's data to lead discussions with staff about areas for improvement at a classroom and whole-school level.

### Teachers can:

- read the case study and curriculum resources and reflect on current practice
- access the phases of curriculum implementation and role-specific resources to support reflection and planning for effective implementation of curriculum
- consider which practices could be implemented in the classroom to lift student achievement, and discuss their thoughts with colleagues
- reflect on the impact of implementation.

**Contact:** Email feedback about this resource to [info@cese.nsw.gov.au](mailto:info@cese.nsw.gov.au).

You can also subscribe to the [CESE newsletter](#) and connect with us on [Yammer](#).

**Alignment to system priorities and/or needs:** NSW Curriculum Reform, NSW Department of Education Literacy and numeracy priorities, School Success Model, School Excellence in Action, Mathematics Strategy 2025

**Alignment to School Excellence Framework:** Learning domain – curriculum, assessment; Teaching domain – professional standards, effective classroom practice, data skills and use; Leading domain – educational leadership, school planning, implementation and reporting

**Alignment with other existing frameworks:** [High Impact Professional Learning](#), [What works best](#), [Curriculum planning and programming, assessing and reporting to parents K-12](#), [Literacy K-12](#), [Numeracy K-12](#), [Aboriginal Education](#), [Inclusive Education for students with disability](#), [High Potential and Gifted Education](#), [Multicultural Education](#), [Controversial Issues in Schools](#)

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**To be reviewed:** CESE publications are prepared through a rigorous process. Resources are reviewed periodically as part of an ongoing evaluation plan.

# Implementing a new curriculum

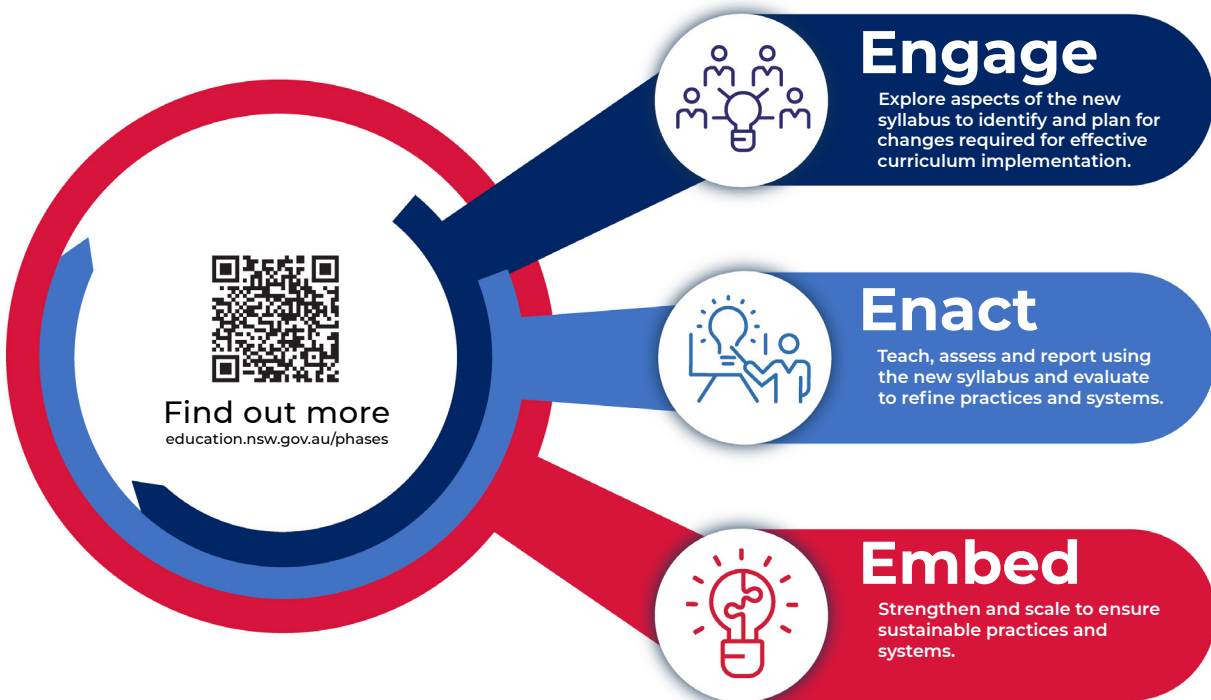
The NSW Curriculum Review, released in June 2020, was the first major review of the entire NSW school curriculum since 1989. Informed by research and extensive consultation with thousands of teachers, parents and education experts, it concluded that change was needed. In response, the NSW Government is reforming the curriculum to ensure that every student ‘learns with understanding, builds skills in applying knowledge, and makes excellent ongoing progress in their learning’.

In NSW, the curriculum can be thought of as the learning expectations and educational opportunities represented by syllabuses. It provides essential learning for all students and opportunities for them to show what they know, understand and can do. The curriculum also provides flexibility for teachers to meet students’ needs and interests.

The NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) is responsible for developing new syllabuses that adopt and adapt the Australian Curriculum for NSW schools. Syllabuses clarify the learning expectations of a subject or discipline, including outcomes and content, and form the basis for the development of teaching and learning programs. NSW Government schools plan for learning based on mandated syllabus documents and current departmental policies and procedures.

## Phases of curriculum implementation

Effective curriculum implementation is an iterative process for school leaders and teachers, rather than a singular event. The phases of curriculum implementation (engage, enact, embed) can be used as a guide to support activities and reflective thinking when implementing a new syllabus. School leaders and teachers can find a range of resources aligned to the phases of curriculum implementation on the department’s website.





## School context

Berrigan Public School is a small primary school located on the land of the Bangarang people in the rural, agricultural town of Berrigan. The town is about 20 minutes from the Victorian border in the southern Riverina. The school has a current enrolment of 64 students, 9% of whom identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and 11% of whom are from a language background other than English. Nearly half (46%) of the student population is in the bottom quartile of socio-educational advantage and the school has a FOEI of 108.<sup>1</sup> There are 4 classes at Berrigan Public School, all of which are cross stage except for one Year 6 class. There are 6 teachers at the school, including the teaching principal and teaching assistant principal, curriculum and instruction (AP, C&I). The school prides itself on being a strong community that works together to support student outcomes.

“[We are] a small but mighty rural school ... high expectations for everybody, and we work as a team.”

Dorothy Dore, Principal

## Implementing new curriculum at Berrigan Public School – an overview

As Berrigan Public School was an early adopter school in 2022, all Kindergarten to Year 6 teachers engaged in professional learning and the new curriculum was implemented in one Kindergarten / Year 1 class. This class was co-taught by the principal for 2 days per week and the AP, C&I for 3 days per week. Since the principal's arrival at the school in 2018, Berrigan Public School has undergone pedagogical shifts to improve students' English and mathematics outcomes. The school has invested in professional development opportunities that focus on synthetic phonics and explicit teaching in English to improve students' decoding and language comprehension skills. As the evidence behind these pedagogical shifts aligns to the new curriculum, the principal welcomed the opportunity of being selected to implement the curriculum as an early adopter school. Due to the school's rural location and limited access to casual staff, the school has been creative and flexible with their approach to implementing the new curriculum.



### What has worked to implement new curriculum at Berrigan Public School

- Effective leadership and change management approaches including **creating a 2-person teaching team to tackle the new syllabuses and leading change with a student-centred approach**
- Developing quality classroom-based practices for curriculum delivery by **using the department's sample units as a 'scaffold' to design teaching and learning experiences**
- Adapting school structures and processes, including strengthening **collective efficacy through professional learning, using technology to create opportunities for collaboration and evaluation, and 'building the bridge' for successful transition to school**

<sup>1</sup> Distribution of socio-educational advantage (SEA) school-level data was accessed from [My School](#), ACARA, in October 2022. Family Occupation and Education Index (FOEI) is a school-level index of educational disadvantage related to socioeconomic background. The average FOEI value is 100. A higher FOEI value indicates a higher level of disadvantage.

## Effective leadership and change management approaches

### Creating a 2-person teaching team to tackle the new syllabuses

Strategically placing teachers on particular classes at the beginning of the year has supported the school to implement the new curriculum. The principal recognised that in a school as small as Berrigan Public School there was a risk of teachers feeling isolated if asked to implement the new curriculum alone. Given the principal's curriculum expertise in teaching Kindergarten to Year 2, at the beginning of the school year she deliberately placed herself to teach the Kindergarten / Year 1 class for 2 days per week and assigned another experienced teacher (the AP, C&I) to the class for the other 3 days. This created a knowledgeable 2-person team to tackle the learning journey of the new curriculum together. It has also provided the principal with the ongoing opportunity to engage deeply with the new curriculum and gain firsthand understanding of the challenges and successes of implementation.

### Leading change with a student-centred approach

The principal recognises the critical importance of building a school culture that embraces change for students. Since the principal's arrival in 2018, she has supported teachers to make significant pedagogical changes in the classroom by identifying a common goal among staff: to improve student outcomes. This student-centred perspective continues to be the core message she communicates to teachers in response to the curriculum changes. Being directly involved in curriculum implementation allows the principal to model that while there are challenges that come with change, the changes are critical to improve student outcomes. The principal's student-centred approach has been highly effective in supporting teachers to also view the changes in this positive way.

“Challenge is fine. ... Being a little bit uncomfortable is fine, because that will help you clear the air and say, ‘What can I do to make this work? I need to make this work. It's important for the kids.’”

**Dorothy Dore, Principal**

## Developing quality classroom-based practices for curriculum delivery

### Using the sample units as a ‘scaffold’ to design teaching and learning experiences

The principal at Berrigan Public School strategically uses the English and mathematics K-2 sample units to support the implementation of the new curriculum (refer to ‘Resources to support curriculum implementation’ text box). The sample units represent one approach to designing experiences for the new syllabuses. Following deep engagement with the syllabuses, the sample units can be adapted to suit the school context and needs of students. The principal wanted to take the opportunity to use the sample units given that they support evidence-based practices. At the beginning of the year, the principal set clear expectations that she and the AP, C&I would use the sample units as a ‘scaffold’ when programming. In particular, this includes selecting the learning intentions, success criteria and content from the sample units that are most relevant for their cohort of students. Both the principal and AP, C&I reported how the sample units have significantly reduced their programming workload. They also credited the sample units with improving both students' confidence and their English and mathematics outcomes.

“I look at the overview. What's the big idea? What's the learning intention? What are we looking for? Okay. Here's some sort of skeleton for me to work with.”

**Dorothy Dore, Principal**







## Adapting school structures and processes

### Strengthening collective efficacy through professional learning

Berrigan Public School prioritises creating a collective responsibility for implementing the new curriculum through targeted professional learning experiences. Each fortnight, staff meetings are dedicated to professional learning tailored towards staff needs and the curriculum reform. The leadership team highlights the importance of building a common understanding among all teachers to ensure they have the knowledge and skills needed to teach the new English and mathematics syllabuses. This is especially important in a small school where class allocations from year to year can be uncertain. The leadership team has found that the microlearning modules developed by the department (refer to ‘Resources to support curriculum implementation’ text box) are a useful professional development resource, as they are able to select modules that are most relevant to staff needs. For example, at the beginning of 2022, teachers completed the modules ‘An overview of the mathematics K–2 syllabus’ and ‘Engaging with the English K–2 syllabus’ to support their understanding of the syllabus changes. As staff complete the microlearning modules together in staff meetings, there are opportunities for rich discussions and the teachers can clarify their understanding. The leadership team also reported how effective this strategy was early in the engage phase of implementation.

“[In staff discussions I’ve said] ‘You’ve got to build this knowledge, and we’re going to do this as a team.’ ... We have put a lot of effort into professional learning and to working together to build that common understanding.”

**Dorothy Dore, Principal**

The AP, C&I follows up the microlearning modules with tailored sessions to strengthen teachers’ skills in implementing the new curriculum. For example, she identified that teachers required targeted support on how to use PLAN2 with the new syllabuses. She explicitly modelled how to enter assessment data into PLAN2 to show how it can be used to identify and monitor groups of students in literacy and numeracy. The AP, C&I noted the explicit links between version 3 of the National Literacy and Numeracy Learning Progressions and the new syllabuses. She believes that PLAN2 has become an invaluable tool for all teachers to build their confidence and capability in monitoring student learning. In building teachers’ knowledge and skills through targeted professional learning opportunities, the principal believes that teachers will be supported to further improve student outcomes.

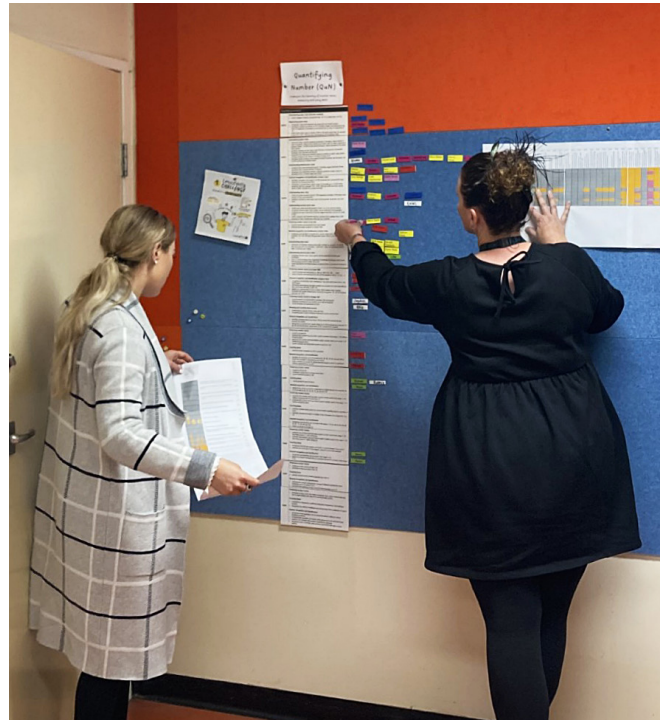
## Using technology to create opportunities for collaboration and evaluation

Creative use of technology helps the principal and AP, C&I collaborate and reflect on the enactment of the curriculum while overcoming the challenges of having limited release time together. The particular forms of technology the principal and AP, C&I use include recording students' reading, uploading student work samples to Seesaw, using Google Drive to access the school's programming documents, and video recording each other teaching. However, what the leadership team finds most supportive is using the digital versions of the sample units. Both the AP, C&I and principal believe 'working digitally' enables them to better document the content covered in a lesson and record teacher reflections through the interactive commenting and highlighting tools. They reported that this strategy helps them to maintain consistent communication with each other.

The principal and AP, C&I also find value in using technology to flexibly maximise opportunities for lesson observations and to reflect on teaching practices together. For example, the AP, C&I explained how the principal has video recorded her using the whole-part-whole explicit teaching strategy in English. This enables the pair to review the recordings independently and arrange a later time to discuss their reflections. Overall, creative use of technology supports the AP, C&I and principal to overcome the challenge of having limited release time together to collaboratively evaluate the implementation of the new curriculum.

**“We find it really hard out here [with the staffing shortages], and that’s where we would have to think on our feet and be creative.”**

**Venita Bacchetto, AP, C&I**



## ‘Building the bridge’ for successful transition to school

**“We just really want to build the bridge ... [for] the transition into mainstream school. And to really have [incoming Kindergarten children] in readiness to learn. ... So, we’re trying to get those building blocks to be a bit more connected.”**

**Venita Bacchetto, AP, C&I**

Berrigan Public School used the new curriculum as an opportunity to strengthen its relationship with the local long day care centre, Berrigan Children’s Centre, to improve the continuity of learning as students transition to school. The principal and AP, C&I explained the importance of working with the Centre to adopt a shared understanding of what the curriculum changes mean for students entering the school. The principal and AP, C&I held an information session for the early childhood educators where they shared resources such as decodable texts and explained the changes and evidence underpinning the new English and mathematics syllabuses. The leadership team also ran an information session for parents from the Centre to inform them about the curriculum changes. The AP, C&I and principal see these conversations as a starting point for building a strong preschool to Year 2 learning journey for their students.



## Where to from here

The principal and AP, C&I plan to continue building on the strong start and momentum they have had implementing the new syllabuses. Together, they will work collaboratively to further deepen their knowledge of the early years syllabuses and explore the evidence base underpinning the syllabuses. The principal and AP, C&I also plan to familiarise teachers with the new 3–6 section of the K–10 English and mathematics syllabuses, and to align their scope and sequences to the changes. The principal is motivated to ensure that all teachers continue completing the relevant microlearning modules to build their knowledge about the ‘why’ of the curriculum changes.

## Acknowledgements

CESE would like to thank Dorothy Dore (Principal) and Venita Bacchetto (Assistant Principal, Curriculum and Instruction) from Berrigan Public School for their valuable input to this case study.



## Resources to support curriculum implementation

The NSW Department of Education has developed a suite of resources to support the implementation of the new curriculum.

### Professional learning

Schools can access a range of [professional learning resources on the new curriculum](#). As part of these resources, the department has developed online microlearning modules to support teachers’ knowledge and skills for effective curriculum implementation, including:

- [English K–2 microlearning](#)
- [Mathematics K–2 microlearning](#)
- [Curriculum planning K–12 professional learning](#).

### Sample units

The department has also developed sample units to support the implementation of the new curriculum. The sample units represent one approach to designing teaching and learning experiences for Kindergarten to Year 2 and can be adapted to suit the school context and students’ needs. The department provides:

- [English K–2 units](#)
- [Mathematics K–2 units](#).

### Leading curriculum K–12

There is also a range of [advice and resources available to support school leaders to lead effective curriculum implementation in their schools](#).

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