

Kindergarten to Year 2

# Curriculum implementation at Fairfield West 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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# Implementing a new curriculum

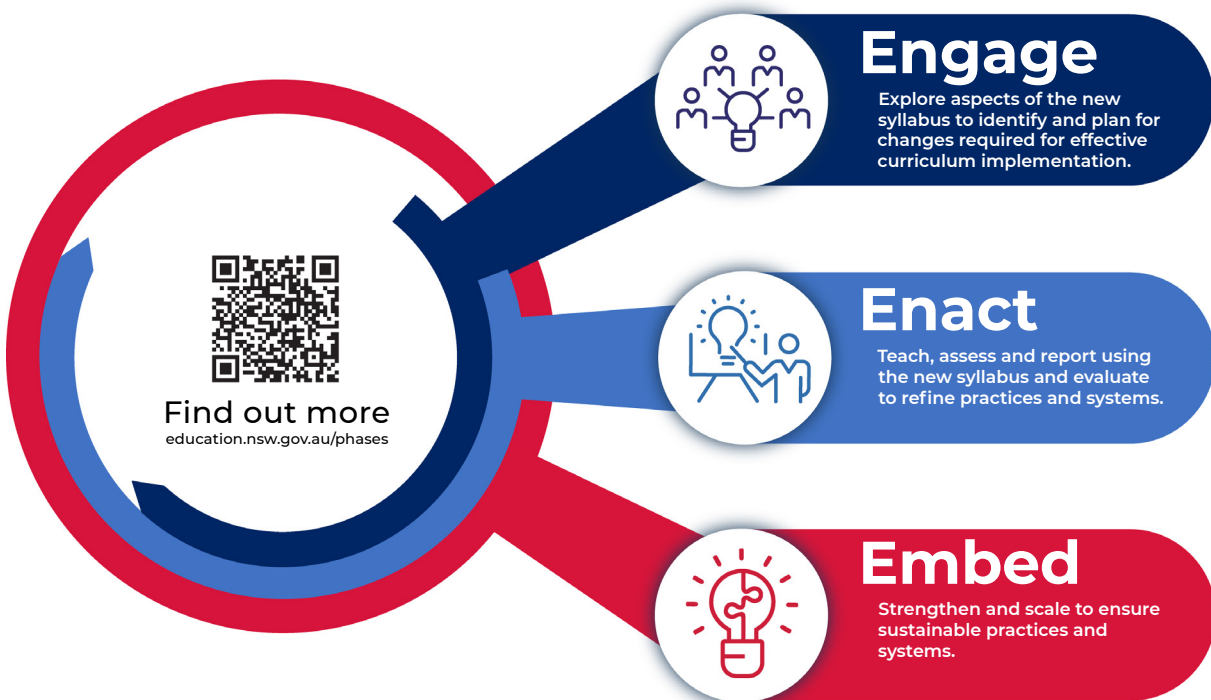
The NSW Curriculum Review, released in June 2020, was the first major review of the entire NSW school curriculum since 1989. Informed by research and extensive consultation with thousands of teachers, parents and education experts, it concluded that change was needed. In response, the NSW Government 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

Fairfield West Public School is a large primary school with a culturally diverse population, located on Darug land in south-west Sydney. The school has a current enrolment of around 650 students and a high level of educational disadvantage, with a FOEI of 166.<sup>1</sup> More than 30% of students are new arrivals from a refugee background, 85% are learning English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D), and more than 90% have a language background other than English. The school has a support unit with 8 classes for students with disability. Fairfield West Public School receives substantial equity and needs-based funding under the Resource Allocation Model (RAM) to address the additional learning needs of its students and reduce the impact of disadvantage on student outcomes.<sup>2</sup> The school employs 89 teaching staff and its executive team has 11 members, including 2 deputy principals, 2 full-time assistant principals, curriculum and instruction (AP, C&I) and 4 off-class assistant principals. While just over half of the staff at the school have more than 10 years of teaching experience, about one-third are early-career teachers in their first 5 years of teaching. Fairfield West Public School fosters a culture of high expectations for every student and teacher, where staff take collective responsibility for student learning and celebrate success as one. There is a strong focus on supporting students' diverse learning strengths and needs through curriculum differentiation.

## Implementing new curriculum at Fairfield West Public School – an overview

As Fairfield West Public School was an early adopter school in 2022, all Kindergarten to Year 6 teachers engaged in professional learning about the new curriculum and 3 Year 1 teachers implemented the new curriculum in their classrooms.

School leaders and teachers believe embedded school cultures and structures served as a good foundation for effective implementation of the new curriculum. They see clear alignment between the new curriculum and the school's ongoing focus on continual improvement of teaching and learning. Since the school was involved in Early Action for Success (EAfS), staff had engaged in related professional learning in previous years and were familiar with the pedagogical approaches underpinning the new syllabuses. School leaders have also built on the instructional leadership processes they established during their EAfS involvement. As part of its Strategic Improvement Plan (2021–2024), the school established a new instructional leadership team, which is led by one of the deputy principals and includes the 2 AP, C&Is and 4 other assistant principals. This instructional leadership team is critical for driving the school's approach to implementing the new curriculum. It has adopted a set of strategies that align with the school's values and identified the established or additional processes, staffing and resources needed to enact them.



### What has worked to implement new curriculum at Fairfield West Public School

- Creating a school culture receptive to the new curriculum by **supporting teachers to face new challenges with an open mind** and **communicating change by aligning with shared school goals and research**
- Effective leadership and change management approaches, including members of the newly formed **instructional leadership team working 'elbow to elbow' with classroom teachers**
- Adapting school structures and processes, including **providing dedicated shared release time for teachers to work collaboratively, promoting cohesive curriculum delivery through a whole-school approach to professional learning, and organising a whole-school timetable for consistent literacy and numeracy practices**

1 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.

2 The Resource Allocation Model (RAM) is a needs-based funding model which underpins the allocation of resources based on the unique context of each school and levels of student need.

# Creating a school culture receptive to the new curriculum

“We have a shared moral purpose at the school to fuel the hearts and minds of all students. ... Students are fuelled to reach for the stars. Our school motto is ‘Aim high.’”

**Genelle Petruszenko, Principal**

## Supporting teachers to face new challenges with an open mind

Staff at Fairfield West Public School highlighted the importance of their school culture in setting the stage for their implementation of the new curriculum. Teachers reported their willingness to engage with new ideas and take on challenges that support the school’s common purpose for student learning and wellbeing. This culture of open-mindedness is grounded in staff feeling safe and supported to try new things to improve their practice, which the principal has made a deliberate effort to nurture. She leads by example, modelling her expectations and following through with supporting actions and structures.

“That culture of change and being flexible ... that’s what we encourage the students to have and we should be the same. ... That’s embedded from the executive down.”

**Madeleine Costello, AP, C&I**

The AP, C&Is and Stage 1 assistant principal explained there is a flow-on effect from how the principal fosters this safe and supportive culture in the executive team, which they in turn model for their own teams of teachers. For example, meetings are run in a way that encourages open and honest communication. Everyone is expected to voice their ideas, ask questions and share what is and is not working for them. The principal or team leader contributes too, and also listens to their team, receives feedback and promotes collaborative problem-solving. These kinds of interactions contribute to teachers reporting that they trust that the school leaders will support them through challenges. This reinforces their willingness to face new challenges, including implementing new curriculum, with an open mind.

## Communicating change by aligning with shared school goals and research

School leaders engage all staff through clear and regular communication that explicitly aligns the curriculum changes with whole-school values and the shared goal of improving student outcomes. School leaders also explicitly discuss with teachers the research basis for the curriculum changes and how these changes can improve student learning. This resonates with teachers, as the school community strongly values research-based practice and professional learning. The Year 1 teachers stay up to date with research because they are always looking to improve their practice to help their students succeed. For example, they previously completed research-based professional learning on effective reading and embedded the strategies into their classroom practice.<sup>3</sup> The visible alignment of the new curriculum with the school’s shared values and goals makes it easier for teachers to embrace the change and persevere through the challenges of implementation. Teachers recognise it as part of their commitment to ongoing improvement for the purpose of getting the best out of their students.

“The core business is student outcomes, so we want to know as teachers that we’re doing the best things possible to be able to get the best possible student outcomes. If that is in the minds of teachers, then instead of feeling resistant to change, [they feel] ‘this is the best thing for my students.’”

**Madeleine Costello, AP, C&I**



<sup>3</sup> The NSW Department of Education has developed a suite of professional learning on [Effective reading in the early years of school](#) to support Kindergarten to Year 2 teachers in applying evidence-based teaching practices.



## Effective leadership and change management approaches

### Instructional leadership team working 'elbow to elbow' with classroom teachers

School leaders and teachers attribute their effective implementation in part to the instructional leadership model in the school. The principal uses RAM funding to operate an instructional leadership team, with 7 members who work 'elbow to elbow' with teachers on programming, teaching practices, data analysis and reflection with all Kindergarten to Year 6 classroom teachers. The instructional leadership team works together to sustain evidence-based teaching and ongoing improvement across the whole school.

The school's instructional leadership team has been spending extra time supporting the 3 Year 1 teachers who are enacting the new syllabuses. For example, they regularly work with the Year 1 teachers to unpack the syllabus content and upcoming sample units (refer to 'Resources to support curriculum implementation' text box). This involves looking at students' data for the National Literacy and Numeracy Learning Progressions (using PLAN2) against the overarching unit outcomes to see where their students are and where they need to go. They work collaboratively to determine where to target their teaching and plan units to best meet their students' complex learning needs. The AP, C&Is and the Stage 1 assistant principal also co-teach with the Year 1 teachers 2 to 3 times per week. The exact co-teaching structure varies based on the unit and students' needs, but the focus is on differentiating learning experiences to sufficiently challenge all students. Co-teaching also provides opportunities to model a particular teaching strategy for a unit of work and observe each other's lessons. Critically, time in team meetings is dedicated to reflecting on how the team-teaching lesson went.

School leaders and teachers at Fairfield West Public School reported that this 'elbow to elbow' model of instructional leadership works well. Teachers feel supported to embed their professional learning through the regular opportunities to give and receive actionable feedback. Importantly, the deep level of collaboration helps to build relational trust among staff. Teachers spoke of feeling supported and confident to teach the new syllabus content because they know they have a strong support system in the school leadership.



“Co-teaching is fantastic. ... We can work together, do small group activities, come together at the end and be like, ‘Was that a good lesson? Was it not? Where are we going to go tomorrow? Do we need to revise this? What do you think?’ That’s been really good for us.”

**Danielle Biddlecombe, Teacher**





## Adapting school structures and processes

### Providing dedicated shared release time for teachers to work collaboratively

The Fairfield West Public School executive team uses its resourcing strategically to timetable the release from face-to-face (RFF) teaching time for each stage team all together in a weekly 2-hour block. The RFF is deliberately scheduled as one block of time to allow for detailed planning, data analysis and collaborative professional learning. These joint RFF sessions have dedicated time to engage all Kindergarten to Year 6 teachers in collaborative professional learning and planning to support curriculum implementation. Additionally, the principal strategically schedules an extra hour per fortnight of joint RFF for the teachers delivering the new syllabuses. Teachers reported that this extra release time in the school day has helped them to manage the workload associated with implementing new curriculum.

An assistant principal and an AP, C&I run each joint RFF session in a structured way to make the most of the group's collaboration time. Teachers share how their classes are going, analyse student data, plan for upcoming units and engage in reflective practice. They discuss how implementing the syllabuses is working with their classes and share ideas on how to improve. For example, the Year 1 cohort's diverse language backgrounds and EAL/D proficiency levels means differentiation is complex. Teachers spoke of how regular collaboration time to discuss approaches to differentiation and share ideas and resources has been extremely beneficial. They also attribute their strong collaborative relationships to having these regular opportunities for professional dialogue and facing challenges together as a team.

“One of our biggest things we found as a team is having joint RFF –having time dedicated each week to collaborate as a team and work on the programs, and discuss the changes that have been made, and discuss how our children are going. Looking at writing samples or looking at maths samples and having the time to really understand what changes have been made.”

Kristee Manosin, Teacher





## Promoting cohesive curriculum delivery through a whole-school approach to professional learning

Fairfield West Public School takes a whole-school approach to collaborative professional learning as it prepares to embed the new curriculum across the school. School leaders expect all Kindergarten to Year 6 teachers to engage in professional learning about the new curriculum. School leaders recognise that what students learn in Stage 1 sets the foundation for their learning in later years, and teachers need to understand the syllabuses for Kindergarten to Year 2 students to know where their Year 3 to 6 students have come from in their learning and where they need to go. This strategy also allows the school greater flexibility with its staffing, as all teachers will have engaged in the preparation to understand the new syllabuses and the evidence behind them.

“If a Year 6 teacher is coming down to Year 1 next year it’s not going to be a massive shock for them. They’ve been prepared. They’ve been on this journey as well, and they’ll have a deeper understanding of where everything’s come from and how the syllabus works. ... Consistency across the whole school is key.”

**Shaunagh Compton, Stage 1  
Assistant Principal**

The instructional leadership team works together to develop a structured program that sets out the professional learning over the term in allocated stage team RFF time. The instructional leadership team incorporates the microlearning modules developed by the department (refer to ‘Resources to support curriculum implementation’ text box) to support curriculum implementation into this schedule. Teachers collaboratively complete the modules and then reflect on how they apply to their context with the AP, C&I and an assistant principal. This is achievable because the microlearning modules are designed to be short, flexible and available on demand.

“The [microlearning] modules ... they feel really doable – achievable for the teachers to do during their RFF. They’re just 10- to 15-minute little pockets of things and we can do them as a team and have some great conversations.”

**Shaunagh Compton, Stage 1  
Assistant Principal**

## Organising a whole-school timetable for consistent literacy and numeracy practices

School leaders and teachers explained that already established whole-school routines have helped the implementation of the new curriculum by providing consistency and clear expectations for both staff and students. For example, the school has timetabled ‘non-negotiable’ learning blocks for English and mathematics. These are large, uninterrupted blocks of time in which every class in the school focuses on English and mathematics at the same time every day. While the learning blocks were put in place before the new curriculum, staff believe it is a helpful structure that supports their implementation and prepares the school for scaling up the curriculum changes. The structure emphasises students’ learning needs in literacy and numeracy as the focal point of the school day. It supports a common understanding across the school that students’ literacy and numeracy are whole-school priorities met through the collective action of all staff. This sets up the new K–2 English and mathematics curriculum as a collective responsibility for consistent practice based on teachers’ shared understandings of teaching literacy and numeracy.

“[The learning blocks mean that] the students are on the same learning journey, and it’s allowed the consistency, not only for the teachers, but also for the students. ... Having such consistent blocks in their learning, the students are really well regulated, and they know what’s expected of them.”

**Kristee Manosin, Teacher**





## Where to from here

Fairfield West Public School plans to continue its strategies to embed the new curriculum in its practices and structures. In 2023, in line with the mandatory rollout of the new syllabuses in Kindergarten to Year 2 classes, the school is scaling implementation from Year 1 to all of Kindergarten to Year 2. The instructional leadership team will support the teachers to implement the new curriculum and will work with teachers to use the sample units provided by the department. The leadership team will also begin preparing for the implementation of the new curriculum in Years 3 to 6. The school plans to use the [curriculum reform release time](#) to give teachers time to complete the microlearning modules. Fairfield West Public School will continue to support teachers through targeted professional learning. In particular, this will include supporting teachers to become familiar with navigating the digital curriculum platform, understanding the evidence and pedagogical practices underpinning the curriculum, creating ongoing assessments to monitor student progress and using data to inform differentiated teaching and learning programs. Teachers and school leaders are planning to share more in-depth information with parents and carers about what the curriculum changes mean for student learning at Fairfield West Public School.

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## 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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