

Kindergarten to Year 2

Curriculum implementation at Wairoa 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.

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](#)

Reviewed by: Curriculum and Reform; Educational Standards; Teaching Quality and Impact; Inclusion and Wellbeing

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Implementing a new curriculum

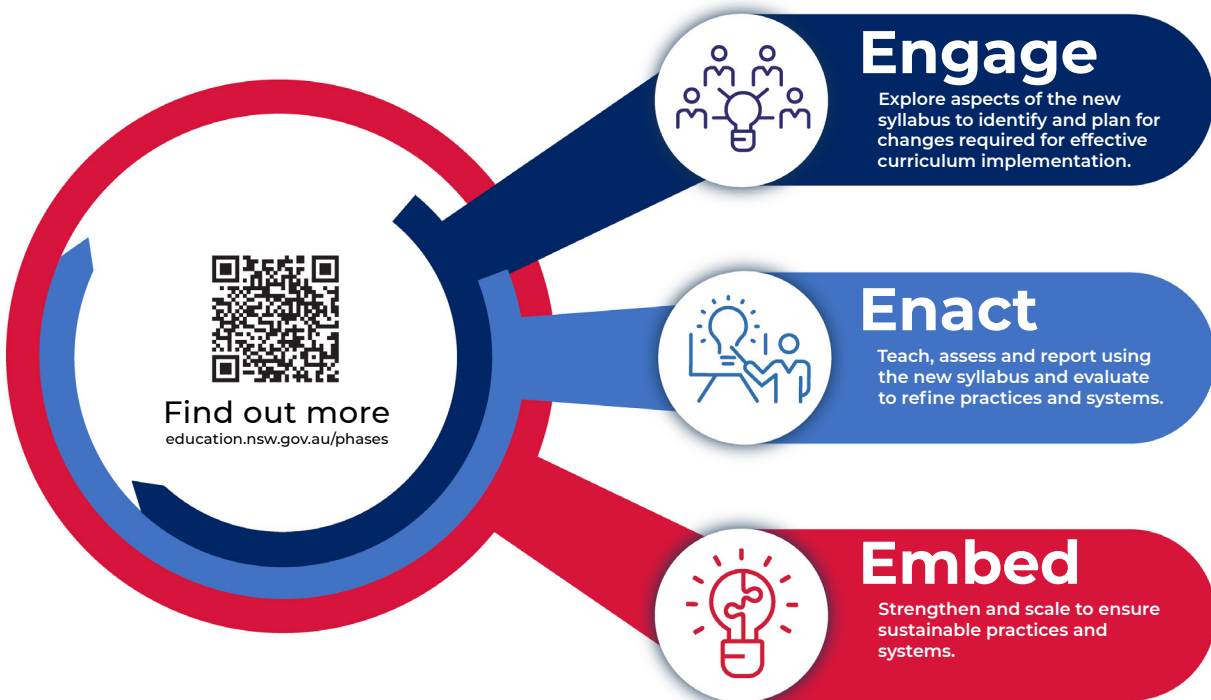
The NSW Curriculum Review, released in June 2020, was the first major review of the entire NSW school curriculum since 1989. Informed by research and extensive consultation with thousands of teachers, parents and education experts, it concluded that change was needed. In response, the NSW Government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

Wairoa School is a school for specific purposes (SSP) located on the land of the Bidjigal people and is within walking distance of Bondi Beach. The school caters for students with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities with additional complex needs. Most students travel to the school on assisted school transport from suburbs in the east and inner west of Sydney. There are currently 70 students enrolled at Wairoa School, 17% of whom identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and 60% of whom are from a language background other than English. The school has a FOEI of 74.¹ There are 11 classes at the school which cater for students from Kindergarten to Year 12, and all students have a personalised learning and support plan (PLSP). The school has a mix of early-career teachers and experienced teachers, and many staff members are new to teaching at SSPs.

Implementing new curriculum at Wairoa School – an overview

As an early adopter school in 2022, all teachers at Wairoa School engaged in professional learning about the new curriculum and began implementing it in their classrooms. Wairoa School's core purpose is to support students with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities with additional complex needs to access the curriculum. Given the critical need to uphold this core purpose, all teaching staff at Wairoa School became familiar with the curriculum changes and learnt how to make the new syllabus outcomes accessible for students. To achieve these overarching goals, the school has adopted a systematic framework as part of their implementation approach. The framework underpins the curriculum implementation strategies described below and involves the following 3 ordered steps:

1. The leadership team develops their understanding of curriculum changes before staff are introduced to the changes.
2. The leadership team transfers their knowledge and skills to support teachers.
3. Teachers apply their learning to create quality experiences for students.



What has worked to implement new curriculum at Wairoa School

- Effective leadership and change management approaches including **selecting key leaders to drive implementation** and **using school leader expertise to identify and respond to professional learning needs**
- Adapting school structures and processes, including **school leaders explicitly modelling how to tailor the curriculum for students with disability**
- Developing quality classroom-based practices for curriculum delivery by **using executive release time to provide in-class support** and **allocating time for 'show and tell' to encourage teacher collaboration**

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.

Effective leadership and change management approaches

Selecting key leaders to drive implementation

A key approach that has supported Wairoa School to implement the new curriculum has been using expert staff members to lead the school through the changes. The principal strategically selected the deputy principal and assistant principal of Kindergarten to Year 6 as the key leaders to drive the school's implementation of the new curriculum. The pair were chosen because of their expertise in upskilling staff to support students with disability and because of their direct insight into the curriculum changes. In particular, the deputy principal has 21 years of experience teaching students with disability and has mentored beginning teachers at the school. She also has deep knowledge of the curriculum changes through her involvement in teacher expert networks and has provided feedback about the curriculum to the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA). The assistant principal of Kindergarten to Year 6 was also well placed to lead the curriculum changes given her expertise in teaching students with disability and her experience upskilling teachers. She was also involved in trialing the new Literacy and Numeracy Precursor Indicators for students with additional needs and provided feedback on how they align to the English and mathematics K-10 syllabuses. Teachers reported the trust and respect they have for the deputy principal and Kindergarten to Year 6 assistant principal to lead the school's implementation journey because of their extensive knowledge and skills.

“Having someone that really knows from the beginning ... that knows everything like [the deputy principal] did ... made me confident that she knew what was going on and I could fully believe in her.”

Frida Nielson, Teacher



Using school leader expertise to identify and respond to professional learning needs

“I think it's knowledge ... knowing what's going on and why we're doing it. The more we learn, the easier it gets to adapt to it ourselves as well.”

Sarah Wilson, Teacher

The deputy principal and assistant principal of Kindergarten to Year 6 use their experience to identify and provide responsive professional learning opportunities for teachers. For example, they review available online professional learning, including the microlearning modules developed by the department (refer to 'Resources to support curriculum implementation' text box), and [NESA's online professional learning activities](#). The leaders then provide teachers with advice about the order and timing of curriculum implementation professional learning most relevant to their school context. They also organise weekly professional learning sessions that all teaching staff attend. These after-school sessions are targeted towards teacher needs in response to the curriculum changes. For example, leaders have recently been working on strengthening teachers' skills in assessing student progress on the access content points.² Selecting relevant professional learning for teachers has been critical in shaping teachers' understanding of the 'what' and 'why' of the new curriculum. Equipping teachers with this knowledge has contributed to teachers' positive attitudes towards the curriculum changes.

² [Access content points](#) are a new feature of the K-10 syllabuses that have been developed to support students with significant intellectual disability who are working towards Early Stage 1 outcomes. Teachers can use the access content points on their own or they can be combined with the content for each outcome.

Adapting school structures and processes

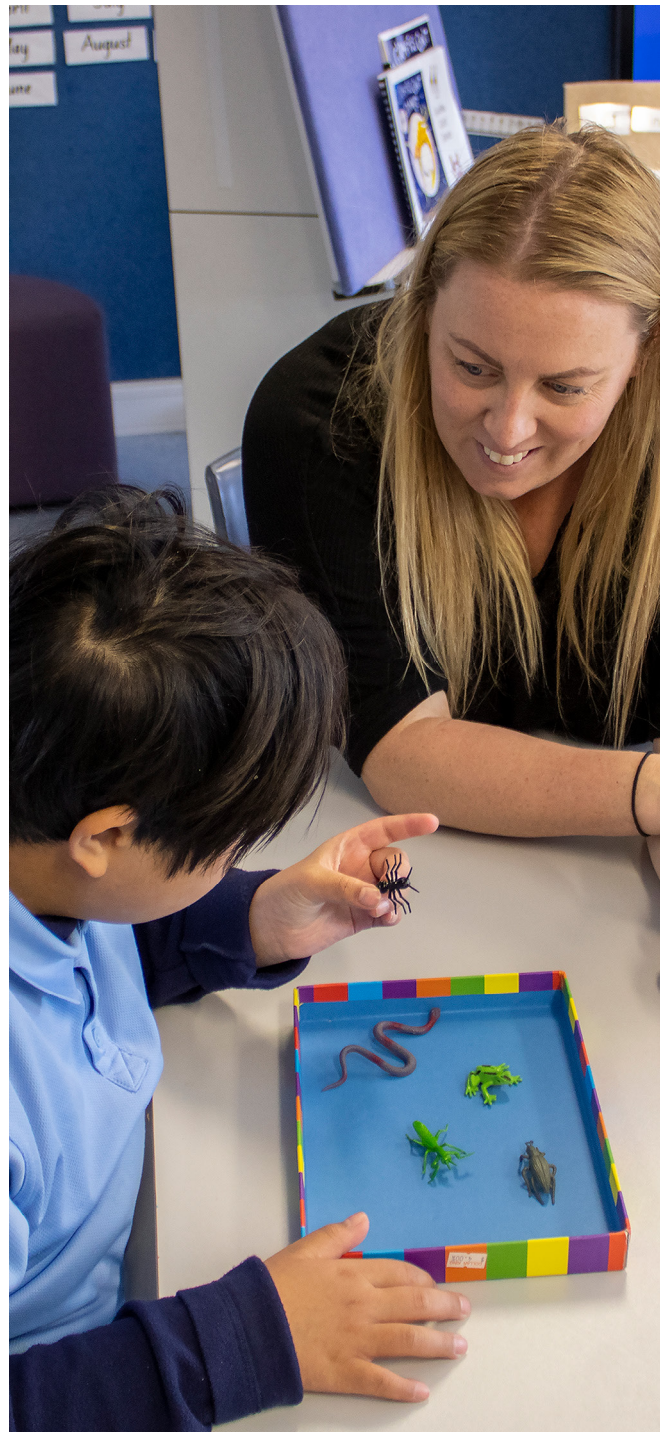
School leaders explicitly modelling how to tailor the curriculum for students with disability

The leadership team uses professional learning sessions to explicitly model how to use the access content points to adapt the curriculum for students with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities who are working towards Early Stage 1 outcomes. As this is the first time the NSW primary curriculum has included detailed content for students with significant intellectual disability, teachers require explicit support in selecting the appropriate access content points for students.

“We really didn’t want it to be daunting and overwhelming for staff because then they won’t be along for the ride with us.”

Angela Rudd, K–6 Assistant Principal

The leadership team at Wairoa School has demonstrated how to navigate the online access content points and how to tailor the suggested examples in the syllabuses to support their students. In Terms 1 and 2 of 2022, the leadership team also showed teachers how the access content points could be linked to the sample units (refer to ‘Resources to support curriculum implementation’ text box). For example, by using the sample units as a guide, the leadership team was able to create a simplified weekly overview that contained the syllabus outcomes, lesson content and access content points. In Term 3, the leadership team stopped creating the weekly overview so that teachers could develop the confidence to independently plan for students. One teacher reported how the initial modelling from the leadership team supported her to create a simplified unit overview (refer to Appendix). Taking ownership of teaching and learning is an indication to the leadership team that teachers are successfully engaging with the new curriculum, and it is a key next step for all teachers.



“Then bit by bit we drew back input-wise [on the planning], and asked [teachers] to do more and more, so eventually in Term 4 they would go off and do most of it once they were just given the new unit.”

Angela Rudd, K–6 Assistant Principal

Developing quality classroom-based practices for curriculum delivery

Using executive release time to provide in-class support

“I really didn’t want the process of me observing very regularly to be intimidating, it’s been very supportive – the whole process is to be supportive to upskill people.”

Penelope Earp, Deputy Principal

Strategic use of executive release time also supported staff during the first year of implementing the new curriculum at Wairoa School. The deputy principal and assistant principal used their executive release time to observe, collaborate and reflect on the implementation of the new curriculum. Rather than using formal observation, they adopted a collaborative team-teaching approach, so teachers felt less like they were being evaluated. In their observations, they provided verbal feedback on how teachers were implementing the curriculum and modelled practices where teachers needed support. The specific support and time the leaders spent in the classroom varied according to the knowledge, skills and confidence teachers displayed throughout the different phases of implementation. For example, during the early phase of implementation the leaders often provided in-class support on a daily basis. The teachers reported the value of having expert support in the classroom to encourage critical reflection on teaching practices and its impact on student outcomes. The deputy principal and assistant principal also met regularly to reflect on their observations, which often guided the development of units and implementation practices. For example, their early observations identified that teachers required additional support in differentiating resources for the conceptual approach to the sample units in English, so the leadership team gave teachers specific advice on how to differentiate the resources for particular groups of students. Using executive release time to observe, collaborate and reflect on implementation has enabled the leadership team to upskill teaching staff in a hands-on and supportive way.

“[It is helpful] reflecting on your own teaching and learning situations with the students ... if someone comes and observes you and then you have to talk it through, you reflect on why did I do this? Or what were the outcomes of it?”

Frida Nielson, Teacher

Allocating time for ‘show and tell’ to encourage teacher collaboration

In addition to weekly staff meetings, teachers meet one morning per week before school to share their experiences of implementing the new curriculum. Initially, the meetings provided teachers with additional professional learning about the new curriculum. However, as the teachers began to find value in discussing their implementation practices, the leadership team dedicated the meeting to allowing teachers to ‘show and tell’ their experiences. Each week, teachers are encouraged to share experiences such as planning and programming using the new syllabuses, differentiating learning using the access content points, adjusting resources or assessing student growth.

These meetings have motivated staff to trial new practices and share creative resources with each other. For example, the teachers and the leadership team highlighted the positive impact of one teacher sharing how she engaged students with the text *Giraffes Can’t Dance* by setting up a sensory topic table about giraffes. This inspired collaborative discussions among the teaching staff about adopting similar engagement practices, and teachers began to share creative resources with each other. These meetings have also encouraged teachers to spontaneously engage in informal professional discussions throughout the school day.



Where to from here

The leadership team plans to continue strengthening teachers' skills to differentiate and adjust teaching and learning for students to access and participate in the curriculum. In particular, all Kindergarten to Year 12 teachers will be involved in drafting the school's primary English and mathematics scope and sequences to align with the new curriculum. Teachers will also work collaboratively to develop units for the K-6 English and mathematics syllabuses, which will include relevant access content points. The school leaders aim to hold an information session for parents about how the school has adapted their practices in response to the new syllabuses. Parents will also be invited into the classrooms during the school's annual 'Maths and English Day' to see the new curriculum in action.

Acknowledgements

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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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Appendix

Below is an incomplete example of how one teacher at Wairoa School created a unit overview for the new K–10 English syllabus.

An example of creating a unit overview for the new curriculum

Component	Outcome	Access points	Activities
Component A	Phonological awareness ENE-PHOAW-01 – identifies, blends, segments and manipulates phonological units in spoken words as a strategy for reading and creating texts	Phonological awareness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jump, clap or tap rhythms in rhymes, chants and songs Join in known rhymes, chants and songs Repeat words that rhyme Match images of words that rhyme Say the first phoneme of own name Recognise which words in a set begin with the same phoneme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Own name – initial sound recognition / photo recognition Gerald and Giraffe – matching pictures and letter G Match real giraffe Match character giraffe Spot the giraffe in class and env and walk around to spot images
	Print conventions ENE-PRINT-01 – tracks written text from left to right and from top to bottom of the page and identifies visual and spatial features of print	Features of print <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond to images or words used to represent people, places and objects in a text Respond to symbols in the environment or in a text Identify the topic of a book from its cover Match lower- and upper-case letters in some familiar words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matches visuals / pictures during 1:1 reading of the book Identifies the book from choice of 2 Matches characters from choice of 2 or more to show understanding of book theme Own name – initial sound recognition / photo recognition Gerald and Giraffe – matching pictures and letter G
	Reading comprehension ENE-RECOM-01 – comprehends independently read texts using background knowledge, word knowledge and understanding of how sentences connect	Understanding and connecting sentences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond to a single sentence to demonstrate understanding Monitoring comprehension <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond to text Recalling details <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Match a prompt to a familiar story 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify / select character / object relating to the story
Component B	Oral language and communication ENE-OLC-01 – communicates effectively by using interpersonal conventions and language with familiar peers and adults	Listening for understanding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look at or acknowledge an object or person with intent to communicate Look at or acknowledge a communication partner Respond to a question to indicate choice Respond to indicate enjoyment or preference Social and learning interactions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeat or imitate phonemes and/or words as part of a social interaction Accept or reject action, request or comment Use consistent behaviours to indicate likes and dislikes Oral narrative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond to questions about people, events or objects in the present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe Gerald – Xavier Others – label – long legs / long neck / head Feelings activity – match feelings to Gerald’s Tapping sticks – syllables – own name and Gerald and word giraffe Rhyming words – dance / prance fall / ball smile / while Initial sound match – alliteration – animals – crazy chimp / angry alligator / clever crocodile Book creator – other animals – non-fiction Opposite animals – verbs First / then / after – x3 key events Fact Vs Fiction – sorting – Venn diagram Describe Gerald / describe a giraffe – Xavier Sort emotions of Gerald vs characteristics of a real giraffe – happy and embarrassed = Gerald / long neck, tall legs – giraffe Jigsaw of a giraffe / Gerald