Literacy Policy

Catholic Education Office
Diocese of Wollongong

“"I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full”"

John 10:10
PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS

The Catholic school is founded on the Gospel values of justice, equity and transformation. Catholic schools are concerned with the formation of questioning Christians who have:

“respect for others; conscientious responsibility; a sincere and constant search for truth; a calm and peaceful critical spirit; a solidarity with, and service toward all other persons; a sensitivity for justice; (and) a special awareness of being called to be positive agents of change in a society that is undergoing continuous transformation” (Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith. n.64).

Consequently, the development of a high standard of literacy is essential if students are to become active participants in, and shapers of, society. Catholic educators believe that:

- to participate effectively in society, individuals need to develop an active literacy that allows them to use language to enhance their capacity to think, create and question
- literacy learning is life long and extends beyond the school context to the wider community
- literate individuals are better equipped to effectively participate in a technologically advanced society
- all students should be given the opportunity to develop their literacy levels to their full potential
- explicit teaching and efficient use of time are necessary for effective literacy learning to occur
- well-developed literacy skills enhance literacy learning across all key learning areas
- literacy and numeracy involve complementary skills
- the early years of schooling are critical in the shaping of effective literacy learning and
- all K-12 teachers are teachers of literacy and must take responsibility for literacy learning

What is Literacy?

Literacy is a dynamic, socially constructed phenomenon involving the integration of listening, speaking, reading, viewing, writing and critical thinking. A literate individual is one who is able to utilise language in order to enhance their capacity to think, create and question, and thereby to participate more effectively in society.
1.0 School Literacy Policy

1.1 Schools will develop a literacy policy in consultation with teaching staff and the wider community that reflects the expectations of the Diocesan Literacy Policy.

1.2 School literacy policies will take account of each school’s context and needs and will contain a statement that describes the values, beliefs and understandings underpinning the policy.

1.3 School literacy policies will reflect the priorities developed by each school community through a consultative process.

2.0 School Literacy Plan

2.1 In consultation with the Catholic Education Office, teaching staff and the wider community, schools will develop a literacy plan that is embedded in the school strategic plan.

2.2 Schools should design a literacy plan that will:
   2.2.1 identify key focus areas
   2.2.2 have an agreed set of outcomes
   2.2.3 outline the strategies that will be used to achieve these outcomes
   2.2.4 detail how the effectiveness of strategies will be evaluated
   2.2.5 identify the indicators that will be used to measure student achievement
   2.2.6 detail the personnel responsible for each focus area
   2.2.7 are signed off with the appropriate Head of Cluster Services
   2.2.8 are published and made available to the school community

3.0 Assessment

3.1 Schools will employ a range of tools to assess and report on student achievement.

3.2 The following measures must form part of the school’s overall assessment and reporting procedures:
   3.2.1 For Primary schools: Early Literacy Assessment (ELA), Observation Survey, Basic Skills Test (BST), Primary Writing Assessment (PWA)
   3.2.2 For Secondary schools: English Language and Literacy Assessment (ELLA), School Certificate English-literacy Test

3.3 All assessment information collected will form part of the ongoing assessment and observation that teachers use to:
   3.3.1 monitor and report on students’ progress at system, school and community levels
   3.3.2 evaluate the effectiveness of learning and teaching programs and
   3.3.3 design more effective learning and teaching programs
4.0 Learning and Teaching

4.1 Schools are expected to implement relevant Diocesan literacy strategies including Good First Teaching and Reading Recovery.

4.2 Reading Recovery programs must be implemented in accordance with Diocesan guidelines and staffing allocations.

4.3 Learning and teaching strategies should be driven by the imperative to meet the diverse learning needs of individual students.

4.4 All primary and secondary schools must ensure that literacy strategies to support students’ literacy development are embedded in learning and teaching programs across key learning areas.

5.0 Time Allocation

All primary schools will allocate a minimum of 1 1/2 hours to a literacy block. It is preferable that this block is daily and uninterrupted. However, in the early years it is strongly recommended that this literacy block be 2 hours. This will allow schools to meet the requirements of the English K-6 syllabus and the Good First Teaching course while providing scope for the integration of other key learning areas. This block will include shared and guided instruction and opportunities for independent practice.

6.0 Professional Development

The Principal and school leadership team will, in consultation with teaching staff, devise and implement a plan for professional development in response to literacy needs that is embedded in the school strategic plan. This will include participation in Diocesan professional development activities.