

QUALITY CURRICULUM PROGRAMS FOR ALL STUDENTS

The Board of Senior Secondary School Studies and the Queensland School Curriculum Council set the syllabuses for Queensland students. Education Queensland then prepares materials to help state schools deliver these syllabuses, especially in the junior years. Schools select which subjects to offer in years 9 to 12, and prepare their own work programs and materials.

The School Opinion Survey found that parent satisfaction with the usefulness of what their children learned at school improved from 72 per cent in 1997 to 78 per cent in 1998. About 60 per cent of high school students were satisfied with the variety of subjects from which they could choose.

Student choices

Most secondary schools offered some new subjects in years 11 and 12, or revised the content of their existing subjects, or both. The most common new subjects in 1999 were business communication and technology, physical education, and industrial skills.

On average, a state high school offered a choice of forty year 12 subjects: twenty-four Board subjects (used for selection to university), six Board-registered subjects, seven Study Area Specifications (for vocational certificates) and three TAFE subjects. Vocational subjects were more available in Queensland than in any other school system in Australia.

The consultations during the *Queensland State Education 2010* project established strong support for a greater range of pathways from school (especially senior secondary school) to further education and training.

The percentage of students studying English dropped, possibly due to students choosing instead English communication, which does not count for university entrance.

Languages were extended to year 5 students in 85 per cent of schools. Over 50 000 students studied Japanese, the most popular language. A number of primary schools added a new foreign language. Hopevale and Bloomfield State Schools introduced programs in Aboriginal languages.

Table 3: Subjects studied by more than 10 per cent of year 12 state school students

Subject	Participation rate %		Change
	1998	1999	
English	86	81	-5
mathematics A	54	52	-2
mathematics B	37	35	-2
biological science	29	29	0
multi-strand science	22	21	-1
health and physical education	17	19	2
chemistry	18	18	0
art	19	17	-2
drama	15	15	0
physics	16	14	-2
English communication	10	14	4
legal studies	14	13	-1
geography	14	13	-1
hospitality practices (introduction to hospitality)	8	11	3
accounting	12	11	-1
information processing and technology	11	11	0
computer studies (general studies)	7	10	3
ancient history	10	10	0

Source: Board of Senior Secondary School Studies, provisional (mid year) data.

Instrumental music, an elective subject, was taught to over 45 000 students in over 750 schools. This is the largest instrumental music program in a single school system anywhere in the world.

The document *Framework and guidelines for the teaching of Aboriginal Studies and Torres Strait Islander Studies* was distributed.

Twenty-five schools piloted the new national Discovering Democracy curriculum.

A review was conducted into guidance services, which advise students on career and subject options.

Curriculum quality

Schools have acted on their survey feedback, as the following example indicates.

'We bought new texts so that we could better teach the numeracy and literacy basics. This was a need identified in response to parent concerns at the beginning of 1998. Quality curriculum initiatives, delivered in this manner, engendered a strong work ethic and a sense of achievement by the students.'

(Bedourie State School)

During the year, primary schools began to implement the new preschool curriculum guidelines. The guidelines deal with understanding children, partnerships with parents, play, flexible learning environments, and foundation learning areas. They will improve preschool teaching and better link preschool with primary curricula.

A small number of schools trialled new syllabuses in science, health and physical education, studies of society and environment, and languages other than English in years 1 to 10. These syllabuses will enhance the primary school teaching of science in particular, and strengthen links between primary and secondary teachers.

All of the new curricula emphasise outcomes for students. Rather than focus on whether students have covered a given number of topics, they concentrate on what students know and can do, and how it is relevant to real life.

Most schools conducted an annual review of substantial parts of their curricula, to ensure that it was up to date and relevant to their students. This required substantial work by teachers to review their programs and prepare new programs and materials.

Many schools, both primary and secondary, allocated extra time to teach literacy and numeracy.

'A major focus was the extent to which subject areas focused on literacy when teaching content. As a starting point, the Literacy Committee evaluated the English junior curriculum and rewrote work programs. Students in English are now being taught the basic literacy skills they need to produce a range of genres and the assessment program tests the extent to which they achieve these skills.'

(Redcliffe State High School)

Students with a severe disability undertake modified programs, through individual education plans. These plans have goals to suit the student, such as functional mathematics, functional English, lifeskills and personal issues. During the year, the Advisory Council on Special Education Needs produced a report on outcomes for students, which recommended that school syllabuses for years 1 to 10 include foundation levels, and that individual education plans be related to syllabus outcomes.

Enrichment and extension

Forty-two thousand students participated in the Tournament of the Minds.

Students who are academically very successful could undertake independent, negotiated studies, move quickly to higher classes (including dual enrolment at university), and do advanced subject-specific studies.

Eight schools operated as centres for gifted education and talent development. Residential workshops for seventy-seven of the most gifted instrumental music students, and forty-five of the most gifted art students, were held during the year.

Outlook

- New curricula for primary and junior secondary in science, health and physical education, studies of society and environment and languages other than English will be introduced over the next 3–4 years.
- A new curriculum/pedagogy/assessment framework for primary and junior secondary schooling will be piloted. Based on the 2010 findings and strategies, it will focus on defining the basic skills for the future at each level, such as critical and creative thinking, problem solving and lifelong education.