



CURRICULUM NEWS

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

PLANNING FOR 2010 AND BEYOND



basic education

Department:
Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

A MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION



Mrs Angie Motshekga, MP
Minister of
Basic Education



Mr Enver Surty, MP
Deputy Minister of
Basic Education

In the State of the Nation Address presented to the Joint Sitting of Parliament in Cape Town on 03 June 2009, the President of the Republic of South Africa, Mr JG Zuma, stated that: "Education will be a key priority for the next five years. We want our teachers, learners, and parents to work together with government to turn our schools into thriving centres of excellence".

As Minister of Basic Education, I am pleased to inform you that I have, as a matter of priority, taken steps to investigate the challenges experienced in the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement. A task team of curriculum experts consulted widely with teachers and other stakeholders and handed a report to me in September 2009. The major focus of the report was on how to relieve teachers and schools of some of the challenges experienced as a result of the current curriculum and assessment policies and leave more time for teaching and learning. The report also recommends targeted support for teachers and schools.

The purpose of this newsletter is to inform all role players in education, and in particular, principals and teachers, of the changes that will take place from January 2010. This is part of a Five Year Plan for the improvement of learning and teaching as one of the government's key priorities. We are not changing the vision of the curriculum transformation process that started after 1994, but we are implementing changes in order to strengthen curriculum implementation. We are striving to achieve quality education for all, inclusive of learners who are vulnerable and experience barriers to learning.

From January 2010, the Department will:

- **Require only one file for administrative purposes from teachers**
- **Discontinue the use of learner portfolios in all subjects/ learning areas from January 2010**
- **Reduce the number of projects required by learners**
- **Emphasise the importance of textbooks in teaching and learning**

Details of what the Department's expectations are for teachers and principals are spelt out in this newsletter.

The Department of Basic Education will also extend the **Foundations for Learning Programme to all primary schools in 2010**. The Programme for Foundation and Intermediate Phase (Grades R-6), launched in March 2008, will be implemented in all schools, supported by teaching and learning support materials to be distributed by the Department.

This newsletter is the first of a series of updates by the Department of Basic Education as part of its campaign to ensure that all South Africans are kept informed of the developments in education. As President Zuma says: "Education is a societal issue."

With my best wishes

Mrs Angie Motshekga, MP
Minister of Basic Education

1.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPING A SINGLE TEACHER FILE

Teachers will only develop a single teacher file in spite of the number of learning areas or subjects that they teach.

In this section, the following questions will be answered:

- **What is the importance of a teacher file?**
- **What are the essential requirements of a teacher file?**

Explanations will be given of the following:

- Annual Work Schedule
- Assessment Plan
- Formal Assessment Tasks and memoranda
- Indication of Textbook(s) and any other resources to be used
- Record sheets containing learners' marks for each **formal assessment task**
- Any intervention that is planned by the teacher to assist learners especially those who are experiencing barriers to learning.

What is the importance of a teacher file?

Each teacher must keep a single teacher file for planning and moderation purposes.

What are the essential requirements of a teacher file?

The file must consist of:

- Annual work schedule
- Assessment Plan
- Formal Assessment Tasks and memoranda
- Indication of Textbook(s) and any other resources to be used
- Record sheets containing learners' marks for each formal assessment task
- Any intervention that is planned by the teacher to assist learners especially those who are experiencing barriers to learning.

Annual Work Schedule

- The teacher should have a work schedule for each learning area or subject for the year for each grade.
- The content to be taught and learned should be organised into terms and weeks and be based on the content as listed in the *Content or Core Knowledge and Concept Frameworks*, and/or presented in the textbook.
- The annual work schedule should indicate weeks, content, assessment activities, date completed and comments. It will ensure that the content for one academic year is sufficiently covered in the time allocated per learning area or subject.
- Any support in response to a learner who experiences barriers to learning must be included in the planning.
- All the necessary resources that the teacher identifies will be recorded as part of the lesson plan, including adapted resources.

Assessment Plan

- An assessment plan is based on the assessment requirements as set out in the *National Protocol on Assessment: Recording and Reporting*.
- The teacher must have an assessment plan for the year for each grade. This plan should indicate the formal assessment tasks such as tests and exams (and other forms of assessment selected for a learning area or subject) that will assess the knowledge and skills for that particular learning area or subject.
- The assessment plan for each learning area or subject and grade must be reflected in the school's formal assessment plan for the year and be communicated to learners and parents in good time, preferably at the beginning of the school year.

Formal Assessment Tasks and Memoranda

- Formal assessment tasks should be carefully designed assessment tasks, consisting of a variety of forms of assessment, that cover the content taught to that point.
- All tests and examinations are part of the *Formal Programme of Assessment*.
- All marking memoranda, grids or rubrics and checklists, etc are to be included.
- Any comments for strengthening assessment activities can be noted and used for planning for the following year.
- Any adaptation to tasks for learners who experience barriers to learning is to be recorded as part of the plan.

Textbook or other Learning and Teaching Support Materials (LTSM) selected

- The teacher's file should indicate which textbooks are being used.
- Any other support materials selected by a teacher to support teaching and learning in the classroom should be included in the teacher's file.

Record sheets

The record sheets reflect the performance of the learners in the formal assessment tasks as set out in the Assessment Plan.

The following should be recorded:

- The learners' names and their marks
- The date of the formal assessment task
- The content topic that is the focus of the task
- The maximum mark for the task
- The learning area or subject (in the case of a teacher teaching more than one learning area or subject)

2. LEARNER PORTFOLIOS

Learner portfolios as separate, formal compilations of assessment tasks are no longer required but the assessment of learners' performance must continue!

In this section, the following questions will be answered:

- **What happens to learner portfolios as a separate set of documents?**
- **What is assessment in the curriculum?**
- **How should evidence of learner performance be collected and recorded?**

What happens to learner portfolios as a separate set of documents?

Learner portfolios are no longer required from January 2010. Evidence of the learner's work need not be kept in a "special file" called a "portfolio". Both formal and informal assessment tasks can be kept in work books, exercise books or other relevant subject-specific formats such as ledgers, cash and journal books for EMS and Accounting, as well as folders on servers or CDs for Computer Applications Technology and Information Technology.

What is assessment in the curriculum?

Assessment in the National Curriculum Statement (Grades R-12) is an integral part of teaching and learning. There are several types of assessment including:

- **Formal assessment:** Formal assessment tasks are marked and formally recorded by the teacher. The number of tasks required and to be recorded by the teacher are specified in the *National Protocol on Assessment: Recording and Reporting*. These tasks make up the *Programme of Assessment*. They are a core part of the teacher's planning. Teachers should factor into their planning any additional support needed by learners who experience learning difficulties.



Formal assessment is an essential part of teaching and learning. The evidence of learners' performance in formal tasks provides feedback with regards to the content, concepts and skills that have been acquired by the learner in a specific learning area or subject. The marks of those tasks will be used for promotion and progression of learners to the next grade and to give feedback to parents and various stakeholders in this regard. The feedback will also indicate what support is planned for learners who are not able to master all the content, concepts and skills and need more time or reinforcement.

- **Informal or daily assessment:** Informal or daily assessment is made up of those tasks that are regarded as stepping stones to monitor or assess the progress of the learner in the subject classroom and to prepare them for the formal tasks. Examples of these tasks include class-work, home-work and verbal question and answer sessions. Informal or daily assessment tasks need **not be recorded**. Teachers may let learners assess their own work to further reinforce learning. The teacher then ensures that corrections are done. These assessments also allow more opportunities for learners to develop and practise what they have learnt and can do. Most critically, they inform the teacher on where learners are experiencing difficulties and what early steps should be taken to assist learners to overcome these challenges.

How should evidence of learner performance be collected and recorded?

Both formal and informal assessment tasks can be kept in work books, exercise books or other relevant subject-specific formats. (For example ledgers, cash and journal books for EMS and Accounting, as well as folders on servers or CDs for Computer Applications Technology and Information Technology.) Selected tasks will also be used to inform and track individual performance in order to provide support to individual learners.

This evidence should be made available by teachers and/or learners whenever needed by the HOD, SMTs, curriculum advisors, teaching and learning support staff, other education officials or parents.

3.

PROJECT BASED ASSESSMENT AS PART OF FORMAL ASSESSMENT IN GRADES 4-12

The number of projects as an assessment requirement must be reduced to one project per year per Learning Area or Subject.

In this section, the following questions will be answered:

- **What is a project?**
- **The number and nature of projects in Grades 4-12**
- **Support from the Department of Basic Education in 2010**
- **Planning and managing projects at provincial level**

What is a project?

- A project is only one of the various forms of assessment used to assess knowledge (content and concepts) and skills.
- The project allows learners to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in an integrated manner that is unique to each learning area or subject.
- Projects allow for a variety of ways in which the learning styles and needs of learners can be accommodated.

The number and nature of projects in Grades 4-12

- Only one project per grade per year in applicable learning areas or subjects is to be completed by learners. Learners who experience barriers to learning must be accommodated by allowing them additional time.
- In Grades 10-12 the *Practical Assessment Task* (PAT) may represent a project in the 16 subjects with PATs. Some of these subjects may however, have a project as well.
- As far as possible, teachers can use an integrated project across learning areas to assess a range of skills and content knowledge.

Support from the Department of Basic Education in 2010

- **Guidelines for each subject/ learning area (Grades 4 - 12) will be developed** by the Department of Basic Education for teachers in 2010. These guidelines will assist teachers in planning and managing the use of projects as part of their formal assessment programme.
- **The Department will develop a list of possible project types** that teachers can use. These lists will be distributed to schools and teachers in 2010. Types of projects will vary across learning areas and subjects and will also cater for varying learner competencies. However, teachers may still set their own projects that are specific to their contexts.
- **Exemplars of good projects** will be made available to teachers, together with guidance on how learner diversity can be accommodated.

Planning and managing projects at provincial level

- School management teams will ensure that projects covering different learning areas or subjects are spread across the year.
- During school support visits, Curriculum Advisors will moderate the planning of projects to be set.

4. THE IMPORTANCE OF TEXTBOOKS

Textbooks play a vital part in teaching and learning. Textbooks must be used by teachers and learners to enhance their teaching and learning.

The following questions will be answered:

- **Why are textbooks important in teaching and learning?**
- **What is the role of the textbook?**
- **How should teachers use textbooks?**
- **Why should we stress the importance of textbooks to learners and their parents?**
- **What is a national catalogue of textbooks?**

Why are textbooks important in teaching and learning?

- The textbook is one of the most effective tools through which to deliver the curriculum and support assessment.
- The textbook can ensure curriculum content and assessment coverage, and it can also offer appropriate pacing and weighting of content and assist teachers with lesson and year planning.
- Each learner should have a textbook for each of his/her subjects to take home, do homework, and study from or to prepare for subsequent lessons, tests and exams.

What is the role of the textbook?

- A textbook interprets and presents the knowledge (content and concepts) and skills as listed in the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) for all learning areas and subjects and in the *Content and Core Knowledge and Concepts Frameworks*.
- The concepts and content are presented in an organised, systematic and synthesized fashion. The content is sequenced and paced in such a way as to assist the teacher with planning and teaching.
- The textbook provides examples of problems, informal daily teaching and learning activities and suggestions for formal tasks.
- In addition, good textbooks are usually written in a manner that allows adaptation of the content for learners who experience barriers to learning. Textbooks must accommodate learner diversity and be made available in accessible format, e.g. in Braille, large print or audio text.



How should teachers use textbooks?

- Teachers should use their textbooks to plan along with other resources and curriculum guideline documents.
- In doing so, the teacher should compare the content and activities presented in the textbook to those listed in the Content Framework for the subject in order to identify any gaps.
- Teachers can apply information from text books when differentiating teaching and learning to accommodate a range of learner needs.
- Teachers should use the textbook to plan their work schedule, lesson plans, daily assessment tasks as well as their formal assessment tasks.

Why should we stress the importance of textbooks to learners and their parents?

- The importance of textbooks must be made known to learners and parents.
- They should be strongly encouraged to treat all books with respect and to understand that they remain the property of the school.
- Schools should ensure that textbooks are returned at the end of each year by learners.

What is a national catalogue of textbooks?

- In order to compile a National Catalogue of textbooks for schools, the Department of Basic Education invites publishers to submit their textbooks. The Department scrutinizes the textbooks through a screening and quality assurance process. The Department recommends changes to be made where necessary to ensure that the textbooks cover the curriculum. It is important that the textbooks will engage learners in quality learning activities in order to master the subject knowledge (content and concepts) and skills. Only textbooks that meet the criteria for good textbooks are selected and placed in the catalogue. The screening process is repeated in cycles to ensure that textbooks are regularly updated in terms of new technology and trends as well as current content.
- A National Catalogue of Textbooks for Grades 10-12 has been in use in schools for a number of years. Schools and teachers of Grades 10-12 will continue to use the catalogue to inform their selection of textbooks each year.
- A National Catalogue of approved textbooks for Grades R-9 will be finalized in 2010 for implementation in 2011. Textbook orders for 2011 for Grades R-9 must be based on the National Catalogue.



For all enquiries:

Department of Basic Education

CALL CENTRE: 0800 202 933

THUTONG EDUCATION PORTAL: <http://www.thutong.doe.gov.za>



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