



Achievement standards

'The curriculum should make clear to teachers what is to be taught, and to students what they should learn and what achievement standards are expected of them. This means that curriculum documents will be explicit about knowledge, understanding and skills, and that they will provide a clear foundation for the development of a teaching program.' That's a starting principle outlined by the National Curriculum Board in *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum*, released in May.

According to *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum*, 'Achievement standards will be described for each year of schooling (from Kindergarten to Year 10), providing a description of the quality of learning... that most students might be expected to achieve and which represents a standard deemed adequate to enable the student to make further progress in the learning area. This achievement standard will be linked to a C grade when reporting to parents.'

Writing about Britain's assessment system, Ken Boston, former chief executive of Britain's Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and previously head of the New South Wales Department of Education and Training, said testing and teaching to the test could reduce a national curriculum to a dry husk. '(The problem) is not the tests themselves so much as the high stakes attached to them, the archaic method of delivery and marking, and the multitude of invalid uses to which the results are put,' Boston wrote. He resigned last December after problems at the QCA's National Assessment Agency led to delays in providing the results of tests for millions of 11- and 14-year-old students. The QCA board finally accepted his resignation in March.

LINKS:

www.ncb.org.au/vervel_resources/Shape_of_the_Australian_Curriculum.pdf

Money, money, money

THE MAY BUDGET FINDS PLENTY FOR EDUCATION, REPORTS **STEVE HOLDEN**.

Treasurer Wayne Swan tabled his second Budget in May, describing it as a Budget 'forged in the fire of the most challenging global economic conditions since the Great Depression.'

'It is a budget that supports jobs today by investing in the infrastructure we need for tomorrow,' Swan said. That investment includes \$62.1 billion for Australian schools from 2009-12, Minister for Education and Training Julia Gillard observed. It also includes \$2.6 billion for higher education for 2009-10, totalling \$5.3 billion over the next six years.

Gillard's \$62.1 billion for schools includes the Building the Education Revolution (BER) program to spend \$14.7 billion over the next three years, via state and territory education departments for government schools and relevant block grant authorities for non-government schools, to build or upgrade Australia's schools. According to Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, the BER is 'the largest single school modernisation program in Australia's history.'

The BER program has triggered a flurry of activity across schools and school systems now racing to operate within the Commonwealth government's tight timeline. Primary schools, special schools, and Kindergarten to Year 12 schools get \$12.4 billion for large-scale infrastructure through the Primary Schools for the 21st Century program. Construction at schools approved in the first round must start this month, with construction at schools in the second round to start in July or August, with third-round schools beginning construction by December 2009. All projects are supposed to be completed by March 2011.

Secondary schools get \$1 billion for up to 500 new science laboratories and lan-

guage learning centres through the Science and Language Centres for 21st Century Secondary Schools program, with schools funded on the basis of demonstrated need, readiness and capacity to complete construction by June 2010.

Every school will receive between \$50,000 and \$200,000, subject to size, based on February 2009 census enrolment, from a \$1.3 billion pool to refurbish existing infrastructure and undertake minor building works through the National School Pride program, with 60 per cent of projects to commence in this financial year and the remaining 40 per cent to commence next financial year.

In higher education, meanwhile, the Commonwealth government will commit close to \$2.6 billion from the Education Investment Fund (EIF) for priority infrastructure projects in Australia's tertiary institutions and research agencies for the 2009-10 financial year, with a total of \$5.3 billion for the next six years.

The 2009-10 funding includes:

- \$934 million for 11 teaching and learning projects, eight research-based projects, and 12 vocational education and training projects around the nation
- \$901 million for 21 research projects in space, marine, climate and nuclear science, and
- \$750 million for future funding rounds from the EIF.

Gillard explained after the Budget announcement that the Commonwealth government intended on a phased-in implementation of the recommendations made in last year's Bradley review of higher education and the Cutler review of innovation to do with deregulating higher education, reforming student welfare and funding research.