WELCOME to the first edition of

*St Columba’s CURRICULUM MATTERS*

The purpose of *Curriculum Matters* is to provide another link between St Columba’s School and our families where information concerning curriculum is shared. In this forum, curriculum will essentially mean ‘teaching and learning’. As a school community, we believe we have an important role in sharing with parents and care givers information about their child / children’s education, and that we report to you about learning. This publication is one way we believe this can be achieved.

The focus of each edition of *Curriculum Matters* will change, ranging from very broad topics to those that are quite specific. Whilst we have ideas for future focus topics, we welcome ideas from parents and invite you to provide us with feedback. No matter what the focus, each edition will be relevant to all families as it will consider what is happening with teaching and learning here at St Columba’s, as well as in the broader educational context.

*Curriculum Matters* will be published periodically and will be available both in hard copy and electronically via the school website. Keep an eye out in the school newsletter for forthcoming publication dates, and please, take the time to read and consider each publication. In addition, it’s important to remember that class teachers also play an important role in informing you about teaching and learning here at St Columba’s, so be sure to tap into parent/teacher gatherings and keep an eye out for class/year level newsletters. These class updates are another way of making the information shared through this publication particularly meaningful to your child /ren’s learning.

Now, for our first *Curriculum Matters* focus...

**What Directs the Curriculum at St Columba’s?**

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*Curriculum Directions*

- St Columba’s Identified Priorities
- BCE Priorities
- Commonwealth Government Priorities
- State Government Priorities
At the heart of our teaching and learning at St Columba’s School is your child/ren, the learner/s. Their current knowledge, understanding, skills and capabilities together with their interests are key in establishing our starting points of learning. In addition to the learners, priorities of our school community as a whole, as well as Brisbane Catholic Education, and the Queensland and Commonwealth Governments are significant.

As a school, we continually monitor our strengths and achievements, as well as recognize areas in teaching and learning where we need to provide greater emphasis. These areas change over time.

Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE) acts as another significant influence upon teaching and learning. In particular, office staff support schools to implement quality school curriculum programs consistent with current Queensland (and soon Australian) syllabuses and guidelines, as well as in the area of Religious Education and faith development.

Historically, Queensland Government syllabuses and guidelines, developed by the Queensland Studies Authority, have proved to be a significant component in directing teaching and learning, particularly through the Key Learning Areas (KLAs). The Authority supports eight of these, namely English, Mathematics, Science, Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE), Technology, The Arts, Health and Physical Education (HPE) and Languages. Catholic schools’ ninth KLA of Religious Education is directed and supported by BCE. Beyond the curriculum focus of the KLAs, the state government also guides assessment and reporting practices. (For more information visit: www.education.qld.gov.au/qcar) ¹

In most recent time, the Commonwealth Government has emerged as a major player in the teaching and learning aspect of education. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) has been established and is responsible for:

- A national curriculum from Kindergarten to Year 12 in specified learning areas.
- A national assessment program aligned to the national curriculum that measures students’ progress.
- A national data collection and reporting program that supports:
  - Analysis, evaluation, research and resource allocation; and
  - Accountability and reporting on schools and broader national achievement.

ACARA’s role in developing the Australian curriculum is guided by the 2008 Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians. The work and influence of ACARA is planned in stages. The first phase of development of the Australian curriculum for English, Mathematics, Science and History is well under way. Draft syllabus in these KLAs will be released in February, with the final documents expected midyear, ready for implementation in 2011. A second phase of work has begun to develop the Australian curriculum for Languages, Geography and The Arts. Until these and the remainder of the KLAs are finalised, schools, including St Columba’s, will continue to draw from the state based syllabus documents. As a third phase of Australian curriculum development, ACARA will provide advice on how the remaining learning areas and subjects listed in the 2008 Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians might best be addressed. (For more information visit: www.acara.edu.au)

As can be seen, there are a number of key influences in directing our teaching and learning at St Columba’s, which in turn call for alignment and balance. What is also emerging is that we, like every school community in Australia, are in a phase of transition as we move from entirely state (and BCE) developed curriculum materials to the staged implementation of commonwealth developed materials. By design, this will mean that the plans we have for our learners will need to be somewhat fluid. Be assured, however, as a dedicated educational community, we are committed to strategically planning for and delivering quality teaching and learning where our learners remain at the heart.

Our Assistant Principal, Margo Carwardine, is happy to discuss with parents and care givers any questions they may have in relation to curriculum directions.

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¹ Last Tuesday, our Premier Anna Bligh, announced proposals in relation to the future of some areas of education in Queensland. These included a more comprehensive provision of the kindergarten / pre-prep year, a targeted campaign for parents to read to children, the shift of Year 7 into secondary, a review of university courses for pre-teaching degrees, and the establishment of a single statutory body / education authority to oversight schooling in Queensland. The proposals have been released in a green paper for public consultation entitled A Flying Start for Queensland Children. This paper will be open for consultation between now and the end of June. The green paper and associated information can be found at the Queensland Government website at www.qld.gov.au (see the left hand sidebar).