A new curriculum for schools in the Cayman Islands

Overview
Aims and guiding principles

Draft for consultation

Building Brighter Futures

CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT
This document marks an important step in the process of education reform in this country. The Government is committed to improving our education system and to ensuring that students achieve the highest possible standards. Cayman’s future depends on a high quality and dynamic school education system to provide all students with the foundation of skills, values, knowledge and understanding necessary for lifelong learning, employment and full participation in society. The aims and guiding principles that are outlined in this paper provide a good starting point for a new curriculum that will prepare our students for an increasingly competitive international market place. This curriculum review will make a major contribution to the development of our nation and the quality of life for its people.

The aims and principles for the new curriculum are guided by the mission statement of the Ministry of Education, which is:

The Ministry of Education seeks, in partnership with stakeholders, to provide all students with opportunities to acquire the skills, knowledge, attitude and values to prepare them to be successful and productive lifelong learners and citizens in an ever changing global society, through a broad, relevant, and balanced national curriculum.

The Honourable Alden McLaughlin, Minister for Education, Training, Employment, Youth, Sports and Culture
May 2006
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Rationale for revising the national curriculum

In September 2005 the new Minister for Education, the Honourable Alden McLaughlin, called for a national education conference, to which all government school teachers, education officers, inspectors, and representatives from parents’ associations, preschools, private schools, the business sector and students were invited. During the conference, entitled, “Defining Challenges, Finding Solutions, Together”, participants assessed the current state of education in the Cayman Islands and suggested ways forward.

The Minister opened the conference with a statement of belief that human capital and education are the cornerstones upon which hinge the social, economic and cultural well-being of our society. In the foreword to the National Consensus document he went on to say:

“The Government has received tough messages from the stakeholders in our education system. They have told us that the way we administer the education services in these islands must change, and they have told us that the quality of the education product must be improved. Our response is to accept the hard truths, take the difficult decisions and make the critical changes that are necessary to improve education in these Islands. Change brings disquiet, resistance and even casualties, but change we must, and change we shall. I gave a personal commitment to the young people of the Cayman Islands – to work tirelessly to improve education in this country, and to constantly evaluate our progress in the interest of always doing better. I stand by that commitment.”

Feedback from the conference indicated that there was room for improvement in several key areas of the education system. One of these areas was the school curriculum. Although participants identified several strengths of the existing curriculum, there was much support for a radical review.

“In summary, the main thrust of these recommendations is the call for a comprehensive review and revision of the current national curriculum and how students are assessed, for all levels and stages of education, from pre-school to high school and beyond.”

In addition to the reasons for change put forward by the conference participants and other members of the community, there are other national and international factors that suggest that the time is right for a review of the curriculum. Some of these factors include:

- The global, social, political and economic changes facing Cayman
- The growing diversity in Caymanian society along with the need to embrace Caymanian culture
- Changing demands of employers
- A growing understanding of how students learn, from research into the brain
- A greater understanding of the importance of early childhood experiences and the need for continuity from pre-school through to tertiary education
- Current thinking about how students should be assessed to optimise their learning
- An understanding of the need to adopt different approaches to teaching in order to respond to the changing world in which students live, their different learning styles and the impact of new technologies
- The increasing globalisation of society

Finally, there is evidence to suggest that too many of our students are leaving high school with very few recognised qualifications and in several cases, very poor standards of literacy and numeracy. Employers are unhappy with the quality of school leavers’ attitudes towards work and their weak communication skills. Our current curriculum is clearly not as effective as it should be.
The Educated Caymanian

There was a strong consensus as to what educators, other stakeholders and members of the community want for our students. Suggestions from conference participants were incorporated into a ‘profile of the educated Caymanian’, which states that an educated Caymanian will:

- Be enthusiastic and motivated about learning, and will continue to extend his/her knowledge and skills after leaving school
- Be literate, numerate and adept at using information and communication technology
- Be a good communicator
- Be creative and appreciative of the arts
- Have a positive outlook and a high self-esteem
- Be well-rounded, good at finding solutions to problems, flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances and demands
- Have a strong work ethic and willingness to become an honest, reliable and responsible member of the work force
- Be respectful of God, him/herself, others, people from different backgrounds, the environment and property
- Be proud of and knowledgeable about the Caymanian culture, whilst respectful of other cultures and beliefs
- Be a good team player, civic-minded and willing to serve
- Have an awareness of global issues affecting aspects of life in the 21st century

Historical perspective

The Cayman Islands government has been involved in the business of education for well over a hundred years. In 1887 it provided a modest investment of fourteen pounds, ten shillings and six pence, to help provide salaries for individuals who had started their own schools. In 1920, the Government introduced a law to regulate education, which by then was compulsory for all seven to fourteen year-olds.

For the first forty years of the last century, the educational needs of the islands were met only through its primary schools. In 1949 a high school was established, which became part of a comprehensive system in 1971, and in 1979 a middle school was introduced. Tertiary education on Grand Cayman began with the establishment of the International College of the Cayman Islands, followed by the Community College in 1976. In 2004 the Community College’s status changed to that of a University College.

By 1982, expenditure on education had risen to $6.23 million.

In 1991, a review of education resulted in plans to establish a national curriculum and in the opening of pre-schools. Since then, various additions, modifications and re-writes have been performed on the national curriculum.

The government continues to invest significantly in education.
The context of the Cayman Islands

The rapid economic development of the Cayman Islands from the late seventies has had an impact on what is expected of our school leavers. These changes have transformed the environment in which we live. The young people who leave our schools today enter a very different job-market from that experienced by their parents or grandparents.

One of the consequences of the country’s progress is that we have become a multinational society. However, our schools do not reflect this diversity. Because of the limited spaces available in the 13 government schools (three on Cayman Brac and 10 on Grand Cayman), these are restricted mainly to Caymanians. On Grand Cayman, children of other nationalities are taught almost exclusively in private schools, of which there are currently nine.

The curriculum defined

We have adopted the definition of the curriculum given by AV Kelly as “all the learning which is planned and guided by the school, whether it is carried on in groups or individually, inside or outside the school.” (Kelly 1983)

The curriculum affects us all. It reflects what we value and desire for our children. It should communicate not only what skills and values should be learned, but how it should be taught and assessed.

Hence, the revision of the curriculum is a mammoth undertaking, as it will involve a review of everything that happens in our schools and classrooms. There will need to be new teaching and assessment approaches as well as changes to the content. These changes will inevitably cause anxiety and uncertainty as teachers’ and administrators’ ways of working are challenged. There will need to be a huge commitment to in-service training for teachers and on-going support to ensure that everyone understands the new aims and goals for the curriculum and how it must be taught. Not only must teachers and school leaders know what to do, but they must be helped to put the ideas into practice.

Who is it for?

The national curriculum that is defined in this document is intended for students of compulsory school age, from five to sixteen years. The curriculum should build on the programme for children under compulsory school age and prepare students for tertiary education after they have left school.

How the review was undertaken

The review began with the national conference described earlier. This provided a mandate for change and set out the nation’s view of an ‘educated Caymanian’. The National Consensus document specified what contributors considered to be strengths of the curriculum and listed areas that needed improving. The document set out ten strategies that would lead to improvements in education. Strategy 2 was a review of the national curriculum.

Teachers across the Cayman Islands were invited to participate in a taskforce to review the curriculum. Over fifty volunteered. From these volunteers a smaller taskforce was identified to take forward the first phase of the curriculum reform, which culminated in this document. Members of the overview task force are listed in Appendix 1. The group members met on several occasions and carried out extensive research before preparing this document. They looked at what other countries are doing and explored various international curricula and research. A selection of the numerous texts that were referred to is included in the bibliography (Appendix 2).
Aims and outcomes

The aim of the new national curriculum

The aim of the national curriculum is to provide, in partnership with all stakeholders, a broad, relevant, balanced, and integrated learning framework that promotes students’ physical, emotional, intellectual, social, spiritual, cultural and moral development, and enables them to become critical thinkers, problem solvers, lifelong learners and productive citizens in an ever changing global society.

The stakeholders

The job of education is not solely the responsibility of educators. There are many stakeholders who need to understand the aims and principles of the new national curriculum. The stakeholders include:

- Parents
- Students
- Educators
- Government
- Employers
- Public service groups
- Other groups and members of the community

Learning outcomes for students

The outcomes for students have been grouped into the following four categories

- Intellectual
- Cultural
- Attitudinal
- Behavioural

The outcomes are set out in more detail below. They reflect and build on those described in the ‘Educated Caymanian’.

Intellectual outcomes

By the time they leave our schools, students should

- Be literate, numerate, and adept at using information and communication technology (ICT)
- Have an awareness of global issues affecting aspects of life in the 21st century
- Be able to use their local dialect and standard English to think, learn, and communicate effectively in a variety of contexts
- Be able to apply mathematical reasoning skills and knowledge to solve problems and make sense of statistical and other information
- Be able to use scientific methods to solve problems and apply scientific perspectives to better understand their world and make responsible decisions
- Be able to evaluate and use a wide variety of technologies to improve their performance in school and work-related areas and generally enhance the quality of life
- Demonstrate an understanding of how history, geography, and cultural forces have shaped the past and the present
- Have had the opportunity to acquire some technical and vocational skills, which give them more opportunities and options to be successful in the workplace
- Have studied another modern foreign language
Aims and outcomes

Cultural outcomes

By the time they leave our schools, students should

• Be proud of and knowledgeable about their Caymanian heritage and of Caymanian culture at local and national levels, whilst respectful of and knowledgeable about other cultures and beliefs
• Be creative and appreciative of the arts (dance, drama, visual art and music)
• Be able to apply their appreciation of the arts to many facets of life and work

Attitudinal outcomes

By the time they leave our schools, students should

• Have a positive outlook and a high self-esteem
• Have a strong work ethic and willingness to become an honest, reliable, and responsible member of the work force
• Be respectful of God, themselves, others, people of all ethnic and religious backgrounds, the environment and property
• Act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness, justice and respect for the dignity of the individual, groups and communities
• Be a good team player, civic-minded, and willing to serve
• Be able to interact and work effectively with others, showing empathy, compassion and respect towards their needs and feelings
• Demonstrate respect for human rights, and fulfil the responsibilities of citizens in a democratic society
• Value work and learning of all types, not only for their practical benefits, but also for the sense of purpose and satisfaction that they can bring
• Be able to develop relevant, well-prepared plans for entering the world of work or continuing their education
• Be open-minded and willing to listen to the views, values and perspectives of others

Behavioural outcomes

By the time they leave our schools, students should

• Be enthusiastic and motivated about learning, and willing to continue to extend their knowledge and skills after leaving school
• Appreciate the importance of keeping fit and staying healthy
• Be well-rounded, efficient problem solvers, flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances and demands
• Be able to reflect on their own learning and experiences, and to assess and understand their own strengths and limitations
• Be able to demonstrate a commitment to peace, social justice, tolerance, and the protection of the environment and apply a global perspective in their attitudes and behaviour

“All children can learn”
Principles and structure of the new Cayman Islands National Curriculum

General principles

The curriculum must be based on the principle of equality of opportunity and entitlement for all. Educators and stakeholders need to hold firm to the belief that all children can learn. Expectations for what students can achieve must be raised, if the Cayman Islands is to compete successfully in an increasingly global economy.

The United States has adopted the slogan of ‘no child left behind’. In Britain, they have chosen the strapline, ‘every child matters’. Cayman Islands educators share both worthy aims, but our motto is “Every child can achieve excellence”

The curriculum must be internationalised and on a par with the best curricula around the world. It should equip our students for further studies anywhere in the world and have credibility with employers and providers of further and higher education at home and abroad.

The content of the curriculum must be reduced to ensure that there will be time for students to develop the skills, attitudes and competencies described in this document. The current curriculum is overloaded and must be pruned at each level.

The curriculum will be subject to regular review through a consultative process and will take into account the latest ideas from research and international developments.

Guiding principles for the content

The following points are those that will need to be taken into account when the curriculum content is developed.

Continuity

- The curriculum will be coherent and continuous from pre-school through tertiary.
- Learning experiences will be organised in a spiral approach, where concepts are revisited, but in more depth in successive years. To achieve this, a curriculum map will be provided to show when different concepts, skills and other competences should be taught.

International

- The content will draw from an international context while responding to local requirements and interests.
- The language of the curriculum will be British English, but students also should be aware of alternative American spellings.

Focus on key skills

- The curriculum will ensure that literacy, numeracy and ICT are given prominence.
- The development and application of literacy and numeracy must be integrated into all subjects, planned for, taught and assessed – not just left to English and mathematics lessons.
- ICT must be included in all curriculum areas as well as a discrete subject.
Principles and structure of the new Cayman Islands National Curriculum

Suitable for students of all abilities and special needs

• The curriculum must encourage high expectations and challenging but attainable goals for all students.
• The content must ensure that the needs of all students can be met, through different outcomes and teaching approaches, where appropriate.
• It will be rigorous enough to cater for exceptionally talented students.

Alignment between standards, content and teaching approaches

• There will be identifiable learning outcomes (standards) for students at each stage or year group and each subject, which will be shared with students of all ages.
• There will be identifiable curriculum content for each stage and age range - but manageable in volume, so that the expectations are realistic and achievable, and not constraining the development of students’ skills.
• Guidance will be provided on teaching approaches, so that students can achieve the stated learning outcomes.
• Text books will be suggested, to be used as a teaching resource, and not to dictate what is taught, how or when.

Broad, balanced and relevant

• The curriculum will be broad and balanced and promote students’ intellectual, physical, emotional, creative, spiritual, moral and cultural development.
• The curriculum will include the performing and visual arts for students of all ages, as subjects in their own right and as vehicles for teaching other areas.
• The curriculum content must be relevant to the needs, interests and age of students, as well as to life in the Cayman Islands in the 21st century.
• Curriculum for older students will include life skills, community service, work experience and aspects of technical and vocational education.
• Curriculum subjects are listed in the next section.

How it will be taught

The way that the curriculum is brought to life in the classroom is as important as what it includes. The new curriculum must be taught in a manner that reflects current best practice. In recent years there have been significant developments in our understanding of how people learn, with implications for pedagogy. There are accepted ideas about, for example, the importance of the learning environment, emotional intelligence, multiple intelligences and different learning styles. These ideas need to be incorporated into how teachers plan their lessons, relate to students, organise their classrooms, teach new ideas and assess students’ progress.

The new Cayman Islands curriculum will involve a radical change in the way that many teachers teach. The emphasis will be less on direct instruction, although this will still have a place, and more on students developing understanding, using and applying skills, exploring, investigating and learning for themselves. Students will be expected to be less dependent on the teacher and more self-reliant, independent learners. Independent research will be an expectation for students of all ages.

“Teach less, learn more”
The new curriculum will encourage diversity and flexibility in teaching and learning approaches to accommodate all learning styles. Teaching will stimulate curiosity and inquiry in order to foster a spirit of discovery and enjoyment of learning. Teachers will provide opportunities for students to work individually and collaboratively, and to apply their skills and knowledge across a broad range of areas.

Respectful and constructive relationships are the starting point for successful teaching and learning. Teachers should foster respect, responsibility and tolerance by being good role models of these values and practising them within their own communities.

The curriculum must be relevant to students’ needs, interests and aspirations as well as being rigorous and built on a foundation of good empathetic relationships.

“Rigour, relevance and relationships”

The new curriculum will involve the use of a wide range of technologies. ICT will be incorporated into each subject area. In addition, teachers will be expected to make use of technology to enhance their teaching and to cater for different learning styles.

Teachers will be encouraged to deploy imaginative approaches, including music, visual stimulation and movement, to make students’ learning enjoyable and memorable.

Teachers will plan lessons that meet the needs of all students, including those with special educational needs and those who are very able. Teachers must have high expectations for all students and encourage students to have high expectations of themselves. Teachers should believe that all students can succeed.

“How students will be assessed”

The goal of education is to help students learn and succeed. The most important purpose of assessment is to identify strengths and weaknesses in students’ performance in order to help them make good progress. Assessment is the means by which we know whether students have achieved in a particular area and what more needs to be done.

We subscribe to the importance of assessment for learning, which is a formative process. Assessment for learning is defined as ‘the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there’. (Assessment Reform Group, 2002)

There are many different forms of and approaches to assessment and teachers will be given guidance and training on how to apply a broad range of methods.
Principles and structure of the new Cayman Islands National Curriculum

The focus will be on teacher-assessment, but with planned opportunities for group moderation so that common standards are developed across schools. Assessment will be integrated into the teaching and not just be left to tests or examinations at the end of the year.

At the same time we need to be able to use assessment to compare our students’ achievements with the best across the world, so that we maintain high standards and a competitive edge. Thus our assessment must be able to be benchmarked against other schools across the world.

The curriculum structure

Early childhood curriculum

The development of an appropriate curriculum for children before they enter compulsory schooling is paramount. The curriculum for primary age students needs to dovetail with that devised by the Early Childhood Unit for children under five years of age.

Primary Years

Primary schools will be expected to include the following subject areas:

- Language (English and a foreign language)
- Mathematics
- Science
- Social studies (history and geography)
- Drama
- Music
- Visual arts
- ICT
- Design technology
- Personal, social and health education
- Physical education
- Religious education

Secondary Years

Secondary schools will be expected to include the following areas:

- English
- Mathematics
- Science
- Foreign language
- Humanities (history and geography)
- Design technology
- ICT
- Arts (music, dance, drama and visual art)
- Physical education
- Personal, social and health education (Life skills, including careers education and citizenship)
- Religious education
- Vocational studies (particularly for older students)
- Community service and work experience

The approach will be subject-focused but with planned cross-curricular links. There will be explicit learning outcomes/attainment targets for each subject area and year group.
Next steps

Training for teachers

The changes that have been described for the new curriculum will involve a major programme of training for teachers. Teachers in the Cayman Islands come from a wide variety of backgrounds and have different expectations of how to teach. There will need to be intensive training for existing teachers and school leaders to familiarise them with the requirements of the new curriculum and how it should be taught and assessed. There will need to be careful induction for teachers who are new to the islands, who will be expected to become familiar with what for them are likely to be new approaches.

The support will be carefully planned to ensure that all government school teachers are shown how to implement the new curriculum and how to assess students. In addition there will be ongoing support and coaching to help teachers as they begin to implement the new curriculum. There will be a role for the Inspectorate and Education Department personnel to monitor the implementation of the new curriculum and to feed back information into the training and support programme.

Information for stakeholders

As well as being a significant change for the schools and teachers, the new curriculum will need to be explained to other stakeholders, particularly parents and employers. There will need to be information and training programmes for parents and employers and other members of the community so that they can be helped to understand the new curriculum and their role in supporting students’ education.

Policies and guidance

The new curriculum will have implications way beyond the scope of this document. Some examples of other policy and legal changes that will need to be reviewed as a result of the new curriculum include:

- Revision of the education law
- Policy on teaching and learning
- Policy on assessment
- Guidance on curriculum time allocations
- Review of the guidance for the teaching of students with special educational needs
- Policy on teaching of gifted and talented students
- Standards for teachers
- Policies on literacy, numeracy and ICT across the curriculum

Next phase of the review

The next phase will involve preparation of learning outcomes for students, followed by details of the curriculum content and teaching approaches. Alongside this will be guidance on how students will be assessed.

The training programmes and support for teachers and school leaders will be planned and implemented.
Appendices

Appendix 1

MEMBERS OF THE CURRICULUM OVERVIEW TASKFORCE

Clive Baker, teacher Cayman Brac High School
Carla Bodden, Deputy Principal The Lighthouse School
Herbert Crawford, Senior Education Officer
Brian Chapell, Lecturer UCCI
Jordana Clarke, IT trainer Walkers (former teacher)
Jacqueline Ebanks, teacher Montessori-by-the-Sea
Peter Embleton, Principal St Ignatius High School
Alan Hewitt, Deputy Principal John Gray High School
Willean Hill, Librarian George Town Primary School
Helena McVeigh, Chief Inspector of schools (Chair)
Vikki Myrie, teacher Creek and Spot Bay Primary School
Kiva Powell, teacher Savannah Primary School
Malcolm Saunders, teacher George Hicks High School
Pachent Smythe, Inspector
Annette Vaughan, teacher John A Cumber Primary School
Allison Wallace, Deputy Red Bay Primary School
Appendices

Appendix 2

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following list represents a selection of some of the documents that were researched as part of the review process.


2) About the National Curriculum (England): www.qca.org


4) Assessment for learning, QCA, www.qca.org.uk

5) Assessment for Learning, Beyond the Black Box, Assessment Reform Group (1999)

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9) Curriculum reform in Barbados: www.caribecd.org


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39) The curriculum and assessment, recording and reporting in primary schools in the Cayman Islands: Review of findings 1997-2001

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44) Using Brain Research and Data to Continuously Improve Learning, Ronald Fitzgerald (2005)

45) Virtues project: www.virtues.com
Your feedback

Consultation Questionnaire

Your feedback and comments are vital in making the new national curriculum the best it can be.

Please complete our easy three minute questionnaire online at www.brighterfutures.gov.ky/curriculum.

To request a hard copy of the questionnaire call 945 6308 or send an email to carmen.levy@gov.ky. Completed hard copies of the questionnaire should be submitted either by fax to (345) 945 6309, or by mail to: Ms. C. Levy, Schools’ Inspectorate, PO Box 10039APO, Bank of Bermuda Building, 36 Dr. Roy’s Drive, George Town, Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands.

Please submit your completed questionnaire on or before 30th September, 2006.

You can download this document online by visiting www.brighterfutures.gov.uk/curriculum.

We appreciate your comments.