Highvale PS - Concept Curriculum Overview

The Australian Curriculum http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/ is being progressively implemented in all states and territories across Australia. AusVELS is the Victorian version of the Australian Curriculum http://ausvels.vcaa.vic.edu.au/ . It provides a coherent and comprehensive set of prescribed content and common achievement standards from Foundation (Prep) – Year 10, which schools use to plan student learning programs, assess student progress and report to parents.

The content of the AusVELS Curriculum includes both the knowledge and skills which all students have the opportunity to learn as a result of their schooling. In addition, Highvale Primary School aims to expand upon and extend these knowledge and skills so that teaching and learning is particular to the needs of our student cohort and utilises local resources and experts.

The Highvale PS Concept Curriculum is an essential component of our School teaching and learning program. It utilises 'Concepts', big transferable ideas that transcend time, place and situation. Conceptual learning is designed to go beyond learning facts. It is designed to stimulate the development of abstract ideas and higher level thinking to make sense of what is learnt so that learning can be applied meaningfully.

The Concept Curriculum is constructed to enhance both 'vertical' and 'horizontal' learning. Students are taught specific Key Understandings which are informed by AusVELS and link back to the Concept. All students develop key understandings sequentially (vertically) from Prep-Year 6. Significantly, the Concept Curriculum also provides a framework through which teachers provide opportunities for students to investigate these Key Understandings and expand their learning further through guided inquiry challenges (horizontal). As well, students are taught to make meaningful connections across Concepts (horizontal).

Through the Concept Curriculum students are exposed to new ideas and understandings around a diverse range of traditional learning disciplines. These include areas such as Science, Humanities, History, Geography, Economics, Civics and Citizenship, Languages, The Arts, Health and Physical Education, Technology, English and Mathematics. As well, Concept inquiry units incorporate the development of interdisciplinary learning skills (general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities) which can be developed through each learning area. These skills are transferable across a range of learning areas and help students to become highly successful learners. These include skills in the areas of inquiry, literacy, numeracy, communication, information technology, personal and interpersonal learning, design, creativity and technology and thinking processes. Where appropriate, the Concept focus for each school term will provide context for learning in explicit English and Mathematics lessons. Likewise, students will often use the explicit English and Mathematics skills they have learnt to pose questions, read and research, collate, analyse, graph and present solutions to 'challenges' they have devised as part of their Concept inquiry.

The intent of every Concept inquiry unit is for students to develop a deep understanding about an important concept. To do this we use a guided inquiry framework known as Challenge Based Learning (CBL). Students are effectively guided through an inquiry learning process which culminates in their investigation into a related problem or issue known as the 'challenge'. Generally the challenge involves an action at the class, school or community level but can go further, even nationally or global. Challenge Based Learning includes explicit teaching of the Key Understandings and the opportunity for students to inquire and investigate their questions further to resolve their challenge and make a positive difference in their school, family or community.

Initially students are presented with a 'Big Idea' about the Concept. The 'Big Idea' is a broad issue or idea which is introduced to students through an engaging 'Pitch' such as a purpose made video which may be revisited during the CBL processes. The 'Essential Question' to be investigated is discussed with students. This serves as a link between students' lives and the big idea. The question should be answerable through research, help focus students' efforts, and provide a framework for their challenge. From the Essential Question, an appropriate 'challenge/s' is derived. Usually the challenge is immediate and actionable and is important to students at their level and the broader community. Once challenge/s are defined, students are guided by their teacher to develop 'guiding questions'. These assist students to identify what they need to know as well as the resources and activities they will require to answer their questions. Having thoroughly researched the guiding questions, students are now able to identify possible solutions to their challenge and plan how they will implement it. Students are supported to do this by their teacher and peers if working in a 'Challenge Team'.

An important component of the challenge is the reflection. Through feedback from their peers and teachers, students develop their understanding of the effectiveness of their actions. What worked, what didn't and why. An example might be from our School 'Sustainability' Concept. A group of Year 5 and 6 students may have chosen the challenge of reducing the school's paper footprint. They might have chosen to keep track of how much paper is used per day. Once they decide what to measure, the students can determine a baseline and take measurements over a few days or a week. Students should also choose the method or methods they will use to capture the information. These could include surveys, anecdotal notes and visual evidence using eLearning tools and programs.

Throughout the project students begin to learn to document their experience using audio, video, photography, a reflective diary or similar. Near the culmination of the challenge, students decide upon the presentation of the solution and record their reflections. As an example, the presentation may be a three-to-five minute solution video which includes a description of the challenge, a brief description of the learning process, the solution, and the results of the implementation.

Often, these will then be shared with students and members of the school community. This can be accomplished through a safe online environment or through our Gallery Walks. This provides students with the opportunity to visit each other's classrooms across the school to discover learning about the same Concept but at various points of the learning continuum. As well, it will often be appropriate to have a public event with school participants and the community to celebrate their efforts and thank those who have assisted.

The construct of the Concept Curriculum ensures our school can respond to the learning needs of students and government curriculum expectations as they evolve. Flexibility within planning of learning and teaching ensures that teaching teams have the responsibility and autonomy required ensuring Key Understandings are current and regularly moderated across levels. With this autonomy, teaching teams must ensure that each of the required AusVELS domains, general capabilities and cross-curricular capabilities are taught and assessed. The creation of a viable curriculum through which all students are engaged, have the opportunity to learn and be assessed against the curriculum being taught is fundamental to achievement of our School purpose.

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AusVELS

Physical, Personal and Social Learning	Discipline-based Learning	Interdisciplinary Learning
Civics and Citizenship	The Arts	Communication
Health and Physical Education	English AC	Design, Creativity and Technology
Interpersonal Development	The Humanities	Information and Communications Technology
Personal Learning	The Humanities - Economics	Thinking Processes
	The Humanities - Geography	
	The Humanities - History AC	
	Languages	
	Mathematics AC	
	Science AC	

AC marks domains that are part of the Australian Curriculum

Odd Year Concepts:

Odd Years Cycle	Year Level	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4
		Identity Humanities/History/Civics & Citizenship **'Learning to Understand Ourselves'**	Sustainability Patterns & Systems - Biological **'Learning to Understand and Care for our World'**	Strength Health - Resilience – Physical and Mental Strength **'I am Strong'**	Discovery Science/Systems **'Earth and Beyond'**
	Prep	Events in My Life	Basic Needs and Wants	Belonging	Seasons and Weather
	Year 1 and 2	Then and Now –My Community	Growth Change and Development	Safety and Security	Climate and Natural Resources
	Year 3 and 4	Cultural groups in our Country	Living, Non-Living and Life Cycles	Needs Wants Safety Risk and Challenges	Earth – Day and Night & Physical Changes
	Year 5 and 6	Australia as a Nation	Effects of Natural Disasters and our Environment	Resilience and Self Esteem	Earth, Planets and Physical Changes

Even Year Concepts:

	Year Level	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4
Even Year Cycle		Community Humanities/History/Civics & Citizenship **'Learning to Understand and Live Well with Others'**	Wellbeing Health - Human Development **'Taking Care of Ourselves as we Grow'**	Creativity 'Design Creativity & Technology' '**I Can Create'**	Change Science -Patterns & Systems/Physical & Chemical **'Can it Change?'**
	Prep	Me and My Family	Personal Care Food and Family	Designing & Creating a product using familiar concepts	Size Shape and Materials
	Year 1 and 2	My school and local community	Healthy and Unhealthy Development	Design, Create & Evaluate a product using familiar concepts	Changing Materials
	Year 3 and 4	Decision makers in our community	Taking Care	Designing Together in Teams	Changes of State
	Year 5 and 6	We live in a democratic, multicultural society	Health Promotion and Wellbeing	Team Design Briefs	Different Ways to Energise – (Renewable Energy)

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Odd Year Cycle

Identity

Learning to understand ourselves

Students develop an understanding of personal identity through values, an awareness of different perspectives and their role as individual learners. They learn about the importance of developing positive relationships and the role technology and the media plays in the way we communicate, are communicated to and the impact on our individual and collective identity. Students develop skills that enable them to communicate clearly and effectively with others, locally and globally. They investigate their own cultural identity, those of their peers and the local, national and global communities. They explore a range of cultural groups including indigenous Australians and the historical events and issues which have impacted on Australia the nation as it is in the 21st century.

Sustainability

Learning to understand and care for our world

Students develop an awareness of environmental issues at the local, national and global levels and the importance of becoming proactive citizens. They explore natural systems and phenomena and develop their understanding of how things in our environment interact, adapt and change. Students begin to develop a vocabulary to discuss things like needs and wants relating to environmental and economic issues that interest or impact on them personally or within the broader community. They develop their use of scientific language and processes to investigate the world in which they live and investigate solutions and actions in response to these issues. Students are encouraged to care and accept individual and collective responsibility for the environment and understand that by doing so they are contributing to environmental sustainability.

Discovery

Earth and Beyond

Students explore Earth's geography and features extending to its place in the solar system and as part of a larger universe. They discover how the world works by exploring human and physical characteristics of local and global environments and systems; describing their interdependence and relationships. They investigate how cycles on Earth, such as day and night, eclipses and the seasons relate to Earth's rotation and its orbit around the sun. Students learn that significant contributions to the advancement of science have been made by people from a range of cultures. They investigate the impact on Earth of these scientific and technological advances and consider implications, locally and globally for a sustainable future.

Strength

I am strong

Students explore the physical, social, emotional, mental and spiritual dimensions of health. They develop an understanding of the importance of living a safe, healthy and active life. Students explore how a healthy lifestyle is developed, as they shift their focus from their inner to their social world and the needs of others.
Students learn to consider and reflect upon how health and wellbeing are related to an individual's choices, values, beliefs and behaviours. They continue to develop an understanding of the skills that enhance resilience, improve self-awareness and build confidence through a range of contexts. Students explore and develop skills in effective communication, self-management and thinking to support the development of positive relationships and their health and wellbeing needs.

Even Year Cycle

Community

Learning to understand and live well with others.

Students explore their place in society from being part of a family and within familiar environments to the broader and global community. They develop an understanding of Australia's democracy, its heritage and traditions and what it means to be part of this system of government. Students investigate the need to have rules at home and school as well as laws in broader society. They investigate the ethical and social responsibilities when communicating with others and build skills to adapt to and use emerging and evolving communication technologies in their world. Students develop an understanding of the importance of being an active and informed Australian citizen and engage in communication as a way to express ideas and feelings, emphasising respect, responsibility, tolerance, inclusion, independence, freedom and cultural awareness.

Wellbeing

Taking care of ourselves as we grow.

Students begin to form understandings about the links between physical activity and health. They use scientific language and processes to investigate how individual choices, including food, physical activity and drugs/medicines affect the systems within the human body and how scientific processes are used to improve the quality of our lives. They also learn that they need energy to maintain their activity levels and that it is important to make wise choices when considering foods to sustain energy. They become more skilled at observing what makes familiar environments safe or unsafe and healthy or unhealthy. Their increasing capacity to question allows them to consider how they would respond to different scenarios where their health or safety could be threatened.

Creativity

I can create

Students develop the understanding that people use creative and inventive thinking which help them meet human needs and wants. They explore past and present products to identify needs and purposes for innovation. They are encouraged to be curious and imaginative while exploring the need and significance of design and technology in the world. Students become familiar with design briefs as a way of hypothesising, posing and investigating problems and creating solutions for a particular purpose. They explore and experiment with a variety of materials and the tools to complete tasks and produce innovative products.

Change

Can it change?

Students learn that there are natural and man-made substances which have different properties and features. They develop an understanding that substances can change and new substances are produced. They explore physical changes such as changes of state and examine changes in solids, liquids and gases. Students examine how chemical reactions result in the production of new substances and investigate forces, friction and ways to create energy. They learn to recognise patterns in their world and develop the concept of a system and its interacting components.

Students learn to use their senses to observe and gather information, describing, making comparisons, sorting and classifying. They learn to recognise that questions can be investigated scientifically and that Science involves testing predictions by gathering data and using evidence to develop explanations of events and phenomena.