

A collaborative approach

Warnbro Community High School

Warnbro Community High School is centred around five learning teams that are vertically grouped in years 8 and 9.

Each team comprises 120 students with six teachers providing curriculum leadership in six of the eight learning areas. Currently, Indonesian and Physical Education are taught by 'visiting' teachers.

The teaching is a collaborative approach with the teachers sharing the responsibility of developing open-ended tasks and IEPs. The uniquely designed class laboratories that are available to the middle school allow for a flexible approach and actively encourage integration.

Organisation is dependent upon student needs and opportunities that arise during the planning cycle. There is a strong commitment to cross-curriculum design models, and this is encouraged through students contributing to their own learning through participatory planning and cooperative learning strategies.

Establishing relevant and realistic outcomes for each student and student group helps to ensure success for all students. Students are expected to take on responsibility and to participate in decisions about their learning. The model of learning encourages this to happen and the notion of engagement is important in the

How students interpret strands in everyday language

Skills you need to obtain levels in the Investigation, Communication and Participation strand

In this strand, you investigate the ways people interact with each other and with their environments so that you can make informed decisions and implement relevant social action.

What you can do	Level
You can provide ideas and find information for an investigation. You can sort the information so that you can understand and explain it.	1
You can use a focus question provided to collect relevant information. You can present your findings and compare them with others.	2
You can plan and carry out an investigation using more than one source. You can interpret your findings to justify personal decisions.	3
You can successfully find sources and use appropriate data-gathering techniques for an investigation. You can consider various perspectives and make generalisations from your findings.	4
You can create appropriate questions to be investigated. You can select appropriate material and methods of recording from a range provided. You can support conclusions with evidence and make generalisations from your findings to represent a particular viewpoint.	5
You can set up your own hypothesis, choosing appropriate sources and recording techniques. You can justify your own conclusions by logically examining the viewpoints of others.	6
You can set up, adapt and modify hypotheses to examine an issue. You can validate values and conclusions drawn by yourself and others using the evidence you have gathered.	7
You can present, design and conduct a balanced investigation. You can form valid conclusions by judging conflicting and inconsistent information and values.	8

Figure 13: Warnbro Community High School student information sheet

everyday considerations of teachers. The effect of this on students is that it helps to raise self-esteem and perpetuates an atmosphere of success.

Warnbro has three major foci:

- ◆ the creative arts
- ◆ technology
- ◆ environmental science.

It is an expectation that these will be developed through the cross-curriculum planning that occurs in the learning teams. Teachers are developing their skills in the writing of IEPs and open-ended tasks. Special learning needs for extension at both ends of the continuum are

better accommodated through these strategies and reinforce the concept of developmental learning.

To help teachers integrate the foci more readily, the school has developed its own instructional pathways that link process skills

Instructional Pathways (Years 8, 9 and 10) - Cross-curriculum

Cross-curriculum skills and processes form the strategies through which learning area skills and concepts can be developed. Investigating, planning, producing, evaluating and communication are the processes used for exploring concepts in all learning areas. Stepping Out literacy and learning strategies and frameworks and writing genres support cross-curriculum processes across all learning areas. Teachers are advised to model skills and strategies to students to make explicit the processes and skills required of the students in a particular task.

Investigating

Interprets written and verbal instructions and identifies the problem.

Generates a variety of ideas.

Locates information from a variety of resources. Conducts independent research.

Teaching strategies and processes

- ◆ Written instructions are clearly written in language suitable to the developmental level of the student.
- ◆ Students may rewrite or restate the instructions in their own words to show understanding.
- ◆ Instructions may be discussed as a class group and key words identified that assist students to understand the investigation.

- ◆ **Brainstorming.** This generates ideas quickly and exhibits the level of students' background knowledge (individual and/or group work).
- ◆ **Call out.** This promotes reflection on and refinement of initial ideas and exhibits the extent of individual students' knowledge. It also assists other students to generate ideas (whole class).
- ◆ **PMI chart.** This provides a framework for exploring an issue and teaches students to consider different points of view.

- ◆ **Notemaking frameworks.** These provide scaffolds for students to structure their notes for writing effectively.
- ◆ **Notemaking/summarising.** This assists students to improve their comprehension skills and helps them think through the ideas in a text. It also assists students to distinguish between main ideas and supporting detail and to translate their understandings without copying.
- ◆ **Skimming and scanning.** These techniques teach students to gain a general impression of the main ideas of a text.
- ◆ **Resumés, library, books, encyclopaedias and vertical files.** Use information processing framework. Library research framework. 'Be definite' search strategy.
- ◆ **Internet.** Use Internet search record sheet.
- ◆ **CD-ROM.** Use a notemaking framework.
- ◆ **Telephone calls.** Prepare phone conversation and questions of inquiry.
- ◆ **Facsimile.** Obtain fax pro formas. Prepare a draft copy and write legibly.
- ◆ **Letter writing.** Use correct letter writing format.
- ◆ **Interviews.** Prepare interview questions that will promote fact finding.
- ◆ **Newspapers.** Use a notemaking framework.
- ◆ **Brochures.** Use a notemaking framework.
- ◆ **Video recording.** Use a notemaking framework.
- ◆ **Periodicals.** Use a notemaking framework.

Figure 14: Warnbro Community High School instructional pathways (years 8, 9 and 10)

directly back to the *Curriculum Framework*. This document is the foundation and starting point for all teachers in the school. It looks at the eight learning areas and also the cross-curriculum implications. It highlights the work to be covered and gives a framework for this to occur, including the Stepping Out literacy and learning strategies and writing genres that support the cross-curriculum processes.

Planning curriculum is dependent on flexibility and teachers in the learning teams are encouraged to use the collaborative opportunities given to them to integrate across learning areas.

This is achieved by not following a traditional timetable. The teams maximise time to suit the program being delivered. An example might be a greater emphasis on team teaching utilising the modern facilities available in the middle school.

The collaborative team model is dependent on teachers' willingness to share, compromise and take on responsibility.

It means deciding together the concepts and skills to be taught and the available resources, such as rooms and equipment.

The major school foci for technology, environment and creative arts must be addressed by the teams in their planning. For example, within the school plan each of these foci is a priority. Responsibilities for teachers are clearly articulated and through the collection of MIS data the evidence of work

in these areas will be easily seen. This also has the effect of a tangible integrating link across all learning teams, even though each individual team will be making different choices. The student open-ended checklist is an example of how such planning and integration can occur.

Student Checklist for open-ended tasks	
Key Processes	Tasks you must complete
Understanding the task	Listen to instructions. Read question. Keyword question. Rewrite question in own words.
Generating ideas	Brainstorm possible ideas. Write topics/questions to investigate.
Information gathering	Use more than one source of information. Use structured overviews/note-taking sheets. Only take down key ideas.
Extrapolating	Study your notes. Connect ideas/issues together. Make new connections.
Making generalisations	Draw conclusions from what you have found out. Use evidence to support your conclusions.
Presenting your results	If written, then show evidence of drafting.

B. Rogers 1998

Figure 15: Warnbro Community High School student checklist

Teachers are also encouraged to examine the concept of a 'meta-curriculum' – that is, the way in which all things are interrelated – and the ability of the *Curriculum Framework* to act as a valuable diagnostic tool.

These interrelated processes make students aware of the learning processes required for future life learning and the transfer skills they need.

For example, prediction is a skill used to estimate in mathematics, forecast in current events, anticipate in a novel and hypothesise in a science experiment.

These skills are part of all learning areas and the teachers are developing a greater awareness of them to better link cross-curriculum strategies. An example in the Humanities

Skills/Processes (Figure 16) demonstrates these links between skills and processes in the Society and Environment Learning Area.

To ensure a balanced offering to all learning teams, teachers are encouraged to 'horse-trade' their skills with other teams. For example, if one team feels that they are not equipped to offer materials, they can swap expertise with another team. It is realised, however, that many of the outcomes overlap learning areas and, as teachers gain a greater understanding of the outcomes, more opportunities for achieving them will become evident.

Teaching in a learning team entails developing skills across a range of subject areas. Specialist teachers are appointed to the teams and they are the major contributors to their learning areas in the team.

The environment of collaboration is, however, essential to run successful programs. The school is constantly reviewing its offerings and great importance is placed on teachers' professional development. For new teachers entering a learning team, the support of the team members is vital.

The *Curriculum Framework* is a document that should be revisited constantly, in conjunction with the Student Outcome Statements. True integration and collaboration are reliant on a sound overall knowledge of the frameworks, and teachers at Warnbro recognise they cannot be 'stand alones' in the teaching strategies being developed.

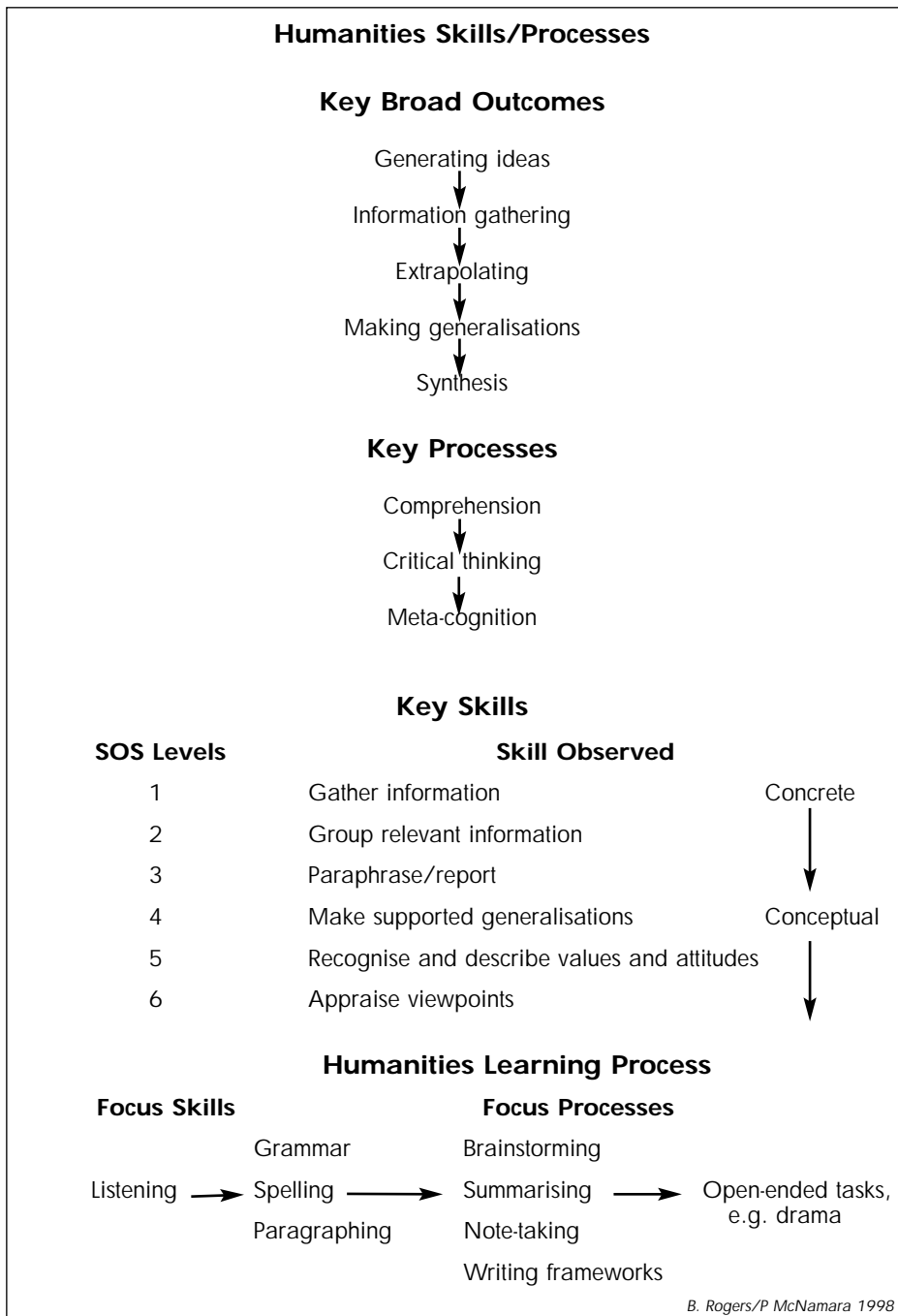


Figure 16: Warnbro Community High School humanities skills/processes planning sheet