

Managing the change process: beginning the movement to an outcomes approach

Hedland Senior High School

As a new head of department, David Price set himself some goals at the beginning of 1997 that included having an English staff who were:

- ◆ relaxed and knowledgeable about the English Learning Area Statement and Student Outcome Statements;
- ◆ convinced an outcomes approach leads to improved student learning; and
- ◆ over a two-year period, starting to use the English Learning Area Statement and Student Outcome Statements in planning, monitoring, assessing and reporting.

What he did not count on at the beginning of the year was the outstanding cooperation and assistance provided by the English staff, the district office SDO, the central office English Consultant, a timetable that allowed time to get together, and supportive principals in 1997 and 1998. Without all these ingredients David believes progress would not have been as rapid as it was.

The basic plan for 1997 and 1998

In 1997, the Learning Area Statement (made up of the national statement and draft WA learning area statement ideas) and Student Outcome Statements were used to:

- ◆ professionally develop staff (using the monitoring, planning, assessing and reporting cycle to manage the component parts of the process);
- ◆ inform collaborative planning;
- ◆ construct common open-ended assessment tasks and simple, effective feedback pro formas;
- ◆ liaise with like-minded departments;
- ◆ plan the shift from grades to outcomes, streamed to largely unstreamed; and
- ◆ plan student centred classes and student and parent involvement for 1998.

In 1998, an outcomes approach was implemented through:

- ◆ integrated monitoring, planning and assessment using the frameworks; and
- ◆ enhanced feedback to individual students and their parents through assessment observation sheets, portfolios and more accurate and articulate reporting.

The action research process

The first year involved intensive discussion and professional development in Term 1, centring on:

- ◆ a shared vision;
- ◆ the complexity of the learning area;
- ◆ the full range of Student Outcome Statements issues; and
- ◆ planning to take an outcomes focus to the classroom in Term 2.

The vehicle for this was an 'assessment program outline' on picture books with the year 8s. This would represent the culmination of the detailed work done in Term 1.

The Term 2, 1997 assessment program outline was originally planned to be a two-week outcomes 'taster' experience to authenticate the issues that they had been working through: 'What does English look like?', 'Objectives versus outcomes', 'What changes between levels?', 'Grades versus levels', 'Justifying levels', and 'Changing monitoring, assessment and teaching practice'.

The staff began to make a number of connections between what had been done previously and the possibilities arising from using the frameworks. The programs produced provided

COURSE OUTLINE YEAR EIGHT	
<p>MODULE (PHASE OF DEVELOPMENT)</p> <p>Picture Book THEME</p> <p>Picture books comprise a genre where written and graphical conventions are used and experimented with to appeal to a wide audience, through a range of themes, narratives, settings and characters.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retrieval chart • List conventional features of PBs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - group work - brainstorm - joint construction - partner work - dicta-gloss - journals • Categorize <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - age - gender - content/theme <p>Find examples where the conventions are broken to achieve a particular purpose / effect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific examples • Retrieval • Comparisons
<p>RATIONALE</p> <p>English staff have chosen to focus on picture books because they are accessible to a wide range of students, offering degrees of sophistication and meaning at a range of levels. Picture books are therefore an ideal medium for students to demonstrate achievement in a range of English skills, text areas and outcome levels.</p>	<p>Respond to a narrative expressed as a film, short story or a poem and make comparisons with picture books of the same narrative type (might not be the same story e.g. Cinderella or Prince Charming as a picture book where the gender roles are reversed).</p>
<p>COURSE OUTCOMES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students demonstrate an ability to reproduce the conventions of the genre for a target audience. • Students demonstrate an ability to manipulate a range of text and content, developing ideas that are appealing and challenging to themselves and a target audience. • Students are able to combine elements of theme, plot, character and setting to achieve a purpose. 	<p>COURSE OUTLINE YEAR EIGHT</p>
<p>STRATEGIES / CONTENT</p> <p>Students are exposed to a wide variety of examples from the genre.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit library • Make a list of PBs • Read PBs • Share PBs • Read PBs to siblings/pccrs • Take in a collection of PBs (varied) • Read PBs in library, write down what they read, what they like etc. • Oral feedback to class • Interesting points • Box of PBs in the classroom • Focus questions <p>Students explore features of picture books by individuals, series, particular authors and illustrators.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retrieval chart • Questioning techniques • Brainstorm • Focus questions: teacher and student generated • Proformas linked to focus questions • Lists • Conventions of PBs • Encourage students to identify their favourite books • Students explain their responses to PBs • Students link content to themes through discussion • Predicting: question / summarize / question <p>Decide upon the written and graphical conventions of the genre.</p>	<p>ASSESSMENT and CRITERIA</p> <p>Respond to picture books orally and in writing using note taking proformas as guides to the conventions of language, graphics and the construction of picture books.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • <p>Review a picture book</p> <p>Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe in full what the book is about. • Describe the characters and what they are like. • Describe the setting of the book • Say if there is a theme, or a main idea and what it is. • Say something about how the book is written and what the pictures are like. How would you describe the way it is written and the style of the pictures? • Say whether you like it or not and say why or why not. • Describe the audience you think it is for and why. • Say what you think makes this book special. • Present the review to the class. <p>Produce a picture book</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • <p>Produce a listening proforma for the audience listening to the picture book.</p>
<p>THEME / MODULE (PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT)</p> <p>POETRY</p> <p>Humorous poems and a range of forms. Try to move beyond the lyric and haiku, but cover them to show that poetry often conforms to particular conventions, depending on the form.</p>	
<p>STRATEGIES / ACTIVITIES: TEACHING / LEARNING EMPHASIS: Behavioural, cognitive and affective.</p> <p>Purpose</p> <p>The purpose of this module is to introduce students to a range of poetic forms and to foster an appreciation of poetry, i.e. that its purpose is often to entertain and to persuade.</p> <p>Before</p> <p>Brainstorm what students know about poetry. In groups: Name poems they already know. Collect the responses on the board under the headings of types, features of poetry, purpose, examples and topics.</p> <p>In groups: students select a poem for class reading or presentation and say why they selected it. As each group presents their poem, fill out the retrieval chart begun at the start of the module. Model this with the class.</p> <p>During</p> <p>In groups: examine a poem to be presented to other groups in a jigsaw. Students will have notes on six poems showing the conventions of the form.</p> <p>After</p> <p>Students develop their own anthology of poetry showing a variety of forms. The collection should include one or two poems of their own creation.</p> <p>Reflection</p> <p>Students write a justification for their selection and a reflection on their poem presentation and group work.</p>	<p>ASSESSMENT TASKS (open ended) and CRITERIA (pointers)</p> <p>Prepare a personal anthology of collected poems for a particular group; eg. grade 5s.</p> <p>Include some of the teacher's choice of poems. Examples of four different forms of poetry and reasons for your choice.</p> <p>1. What will we look for?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • retell • making references • read aloud meaningfully • identify purpose and audience • identify features such as form, structure, devices • link linguistic conventions and devices, form to meaning • relate the understandings of the poetry to personal experience <p>2. Uses basic strategies to locate, select and read a range of simple poetry.</p>
<p>RESOURCES</p> <p>Texts</p> <p><u>Fun With Poetry</u> <u>Light on Poetry</u></p> <p>Frameworks</p> <p>Retrieval chart: title, type, features, topic, purpose etc.</p> <p>Journals</p>	
<p>RELEVANT STUDENT OUTCOMES</p> <p>Reading - all strands. Writing - all strands</p>	

Figure 18: Hedland Senior High School year 8 English course outlines

almost a term's work for most classes. In hindsight this could be considered too long for most classes, but for some students it represented a major breakthrough in the outcomes they were demonstrating.

The program outline, which still required each teacher to fill in the specific assessment criteria (which Student Outcome Statements are not designed to list), was organised around ideas that were generated as a collaborative group and contained elements of both the national English Learning Area Statement and the group's understanding of what changed between Student Outcome Statements levels.

Staff were encouraged to determine their own assessment criteria for mid-term review and design any pro formas they felt could assist with monitoring and recording. Out of this came what the group considered one of the most useful things they produced. This was a simple feedback sheet that was later to play a significant role in improving teachers' ability to articulate what was in their minds about particular students and then to communicate this to students and parents.

After implementing the program, the group reviewed what had been learnt in Term 3 and agreed to further explore:

- ◆ themes to collaboratively program;
- ◆ issues of open-ended assessment; and
- ◆ the effect of improved monitoring on planning.

Course Outline Rationale

The purpose of the Course Outline is to give teachers and students a shared starting point from which more detailed programs can be developed to suit the needs of particular classes, especially as student outcome information is collected and fed into teachers' planning processes. The course outline documents:

Outcomes

- ◆ Outcomes are key things students should be able to understand and be able to do or the qualities they should develop as a result of a learning or series of learning activities.

Theme or Project

- ◆ A theme or project designed to provide the students with the opportunity to demonstrate their level of knowledge, skill and understanding related to the identified outcomes.

Course Outcomes

- ◆ Specific objectives can be identified as a result of monitoring the level of achievement of student outcomes. They describe what a teacher will do, what the student will do, the subject matter to be covered, or the expected student learning. Objectives are the organisers of the learning experiences.

Assessment Tasks

- ◆ Assessment tasks are varied in terms of structure and form (oral, written, video, project, open-ended, etc.). Assessment tasks also have clearly-stated criteria that are determined by the teachers and students. The criteria are transparent to the students and indicate clearly how their performance is to be measured. Criteria may be derived from within or what changes between Student Outcome Statements levels, syllabuses, First Steps continua, Stepping Out materials and those brainstormed by the faculty or individual. Assessment tasks are kept in a student work file to support teacher judgements when providing feedback to students and parents. These will form the basis of portfolios at a later date.

Resources

- ◆ Resources are what will be required for the students to use and refer to during the teaching/learning cycle.

The course outline is structured to emphasise that the teaching/learning process is outcomes-based. What students should be able to do, understand and value, as a result of the learning cycle (and the feedback/monitoring loop within it) is what is important, not what the teacher is going to teach. These outcomes are described explicitly to students and parents and they are derived from the *Curriculum Framework*, the learning area statement, the Student Outcome Statements and collaborative decisions about what is appropriate for a particular phase of schooling or student group.

Figure 19: Hedland Senior High School course outline rationale

Version 1

HEDLAND SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
FEEDBACK SHEET

NAME: _____ YEAR: _____

ASSIGNMENT: _____

READING:

WRITING:

VIEWING:

SPEAKING & LISTENING:

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT RECORD

Outcomes achieved:

	Use of Texts	Contextual Understanding	Conventions	Processes And Strategies	Level (summary)
Reading					
Writing					
Viewing					
Speaking & Listening					

Where to from here?

English Feedback Sheet Rationale

The purpose of the feedback sheet is to provide students, teachers and parents with a record of student performance in the strands and substrands. It is to provide explicit information to students about what they are achieving and what they need to do to improve. It assists teachers to articulate what they are thinking about student achievement and to ensure that quality information is given to parents.

Observations about student performance as a result of assessment tasks, classroom observation or discussion are recorded in the relevant sections of the matrix. The matrix can be used to:

- ◆ provide feedback to students;
- ◆ identify areas of strength and weakness;
- ◆ plan future teaching/learning programs;
- ◆ provide feedback to parents; and
- ◆ inform subsequent teachers about students' performance.

The feedback sheet can be used either at the end of a project/learning experience or as a summary at the end of a term or semester. Student work samples can be used to support the observations made on these sheets.

The sheet has a section in which to record student level achievement. Achievement is described in terms of Student Outcome Statements levels in each of the strands and substrands. These judgements are supported by the work samples and the anecdotal summaries.

The 'Where to from here?' section is critically important for teacher and student in planning how to move to the next level. The observations are made in terms of the criteria, skills and understandings embedded in the programs and assessments and they are very much influenced by what changes between outcome levels.

Version 2

HEDLAND SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
FEEDBACK SHEET

Name: _____ Term: _____

Year: _____

Anecdotal summary of student performance.

Strand	Use of Texts	Contextual Understanding	Conventions	Processes and Strategies
Speaking and Listening				
Viewing				
Reading				
Writing				

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT RECORD

Outcomes Achieved	Level (Summary)				Where to from here?
	Use of Texts	Contextual Understanding	Conventions	Processes & Strategies	
Speaking & Listening	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Viewing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Reading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Figure 20: Hedland Senior High School feedback sheet rationale and samples

The process was suspended during Term 3 so staff could assess in their own minds what it meant to 'go all the way', deal with unrelated industrial issues affecting teachers at the time and assess the benefits of newly-released Curriculum Council draft materials.

In Term 4, a moderation exercise showed that the reflection and previous 'action research' had put staff in a position to:

- ◆ internalise the change from talking about student work in terms of grade to talking about student development in terms of the outcome levels and what changes between levels;
- ◆ discuss future directions and where they were as a staff with a good sense of what an outcomes approach meant for planning and assessment;
- ◆ talk comfortably about their judgements and standards and collaborate with primary teachers to work out what some years 6, 7 and 8 benchmarks might be;
- ◆ comment on how useful the previous professional development was in assisting them to lead a change process in the school; and
- ◆ evaluate how the Student Outcome Statements expanded the planning and assessment process by making what is expected of students, what is taught and what is learnt closer and more explicit.

In Term 4, planning for 1998 was undertaken.

In 1998, the outcomes approach was implemented in all English classrooms and the learning process and reflection continued through staff meetings, professional development and collaborative sessions.

The focus shifted to reporting that was meaningful and informed.

Strong links were also made with Science staff and some Health and Physical Education staff to implement outcomes-focused education in a more coordinated way.